



Committee and date

Development Services
Scrutiny Committee

13 July 2010

7.00pm

Item No

6

Shrewsbury North West Relief Road

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Summary

This report summarises the outcome of consultations which have been carried out on the North West Relief Road and updates the committee on the current position on the project.

Recommendations

The committee is asked to

- A. Note outcome of the consultations
- B. Note the recent announcement by Government relating to transport projects
- C. Make any comments on the report which it wishes Cabinet to consider when it receives a report on the project at its meeting on 4 August 2010.

Report

Background

1. At its meeting on 18 November 2009, Cabinet received a report on Shrewsbury North West Relief Road (NWRR) and agreed that preparation of the project business case should continue, that public consultation should be carried out and that it should receive a further report in July 2010 prior to submission of the business case to the Department for Transport (DfT).

2. Public consultation was subsequently carried out in April and May 2010 and the deadline for receiving responses to the consultation was 17 May 2010.
3. Public consultation and the submission of the business case in August 2010 were part of a scheme programme leading to construction starting in 2014 and opening of the road in 2016.

Consultation Process

4. Development Services Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 15 December 2009 received and agreed a report on the outline plan for public consultation on the Shrewsbury North West Relief Road (NWRR).
5. The consultation was carried out primarily through a series of manned exhibitions at six locations in and around Shrewsbury over seven days, through the Shropshire Council website and using the approximately 1850 residents comprising the Citizens' Panel.
6. In each case people were able to see the details of the project and were invited to return a questionnaire seeking views on the relief road. Questionnaires were also available at other locations in Shrewsbury including Shirehall, Guildhall and The Quarry Swimming and Fitness Centre. A copy of the questionnaire is attached to this report at Appendix A.
7. Prior to finalising the questionnaire, a draft was circulated for comment to the No Way group, Shrewsbury Business Chamber and the Shrewsbury Town Centre Residents Association. The questionnaire was amended following receipt of comments.
8. The same three groups were invited to attend the public exhibitions and to have their own relevant literature available to the public at these venues. The No Way group did attend all the exhibitions and distributed leaflets setting out their opposition to the project.
9. The consultation process and the various views on the project were extensively covered by the local media.
10. A series of stakeholder meetings with Environment Agency, Natural England, English Heritage and others were also held following on from similar meetings held in 2007.

Consultation Results

11. A copy of the consultation report has been placed in the Members' library and has been published on the council's website. The executive summary of the report is attached to this report at Appendix B.

- 12. Overall around 2000 responses were received which is higher than either the 2005 (1165 responses) or 2003 (829 responses) consultations.
- 13. Data on the access and response to the consultation through various media is shown below

Attendance at exhibitions (not including The Darwin Shopping Centre)	450
Completed questionnaires returned from exhibitions and other locations	978
Completed questionnaires returned from Citizens Panel	878
Completed questionnaires on line returned	141
E mails (Questions / comments) to the consultation mailbox	103
Calls to Customer Service Centre	23
Web enquiries to Customer Service Centre	21
Hits on consultation home webpage	1487
Views of drive through / fly through videos on website / YouTube	2214

- 14. A clear majority of those responding (74%) considered that traffic in the town centre of Shrewsbury is a problem and 72% that traffic on routes in and out of Shrewsbury was a problem.
- 15. Views on how those problems should be addressed were less clear as indicated below

Question	Agree or strongly agree	Disagree or strongly disagree
The North West Relief Road should be built	59%	33%
Other options should be used to manage traffic (but without the North West Relief Road)	38%	47%

- 16. This compares with the following results from the consultation carried out in 2005 and shows an increase in support for NWRR.

Question	Agree or strongly agree	Disagree or strongly disagree
A NWRR should be promoted to address problems caused by traffic in the town centre	53%	41%
Methods other than building a new road should be promoted to solve traffic problems	48%	38%

Project programme

17. In late April 2010 the DfT wrote to all scheme promoters advising them that it would not consider business cases for future schemes until after a “stocktake” as part of a new Government’s Comprehensive Spending Review. Because of the uncertainty in future programme which this brought, the council decided, in response to that letter, to complete the consultation but to stop work on both the preparation of the business case and the appointment of a contractor.
18. Subsequently in June 2010 the Secretary of State for Transport has confirmed that the future budget for transport projects would be determined as part of the spending review which would report in the Autumn and that the consideration of which schemes would be part of a future programme and of the process for approving transport schemes would follow the conclusion of that review. Until the outcome of this review DfT has put on hold all transport projects which are not already committed.
19. In developing the current transport programme the region, through the Regional Transport Partnership, has had a leading role. It is unclear what role the region will play in the prioritisation of schemes in a new programme. Following the conclusion of the spending review in October and further discussions within the region and with DfT a report will be made to Cabinet on the implications of the review on the future programme of the project and on any other potential investment in transport infrastructure in Shrewsbury.

Scheme expenditure

20. The Local Transport Plan budget for 2010/11 includes £1,064,000 for preparation of NWRR. This includes for consultation, submission of the business case, appointment of a contractor and preparation of a planning application.
21. Expenditure this year to date on the scheme is approx £172,000. Reallocation of the savings on expenditure on NWRR will be considered in the context of the £956,500 reduction in the 2010/11 budget for integrated transport in Shropshire recently announced by government.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Development Services Scrutiny Committee 15 December 2009

Shropshire Council Cabinet 18 November 2009

Development Services Scrutiny Committee 22 September 2009

Human Rights Act Appraisal

in progressing the NWRR it is acknowledged that there may be instances where consideration needs to be given to striking the balance between the interests of the public generally and the possible interference with private/personal rights. There are however statutory powers that exist in this regard and there will be an assessment of whether it is reasonable and proportionate to use those powers as and when those instances arise.

Environmental Appraisal

The impacts of the scheme are assessed within the business case in accordance with DfT guidance.

Risk Management Appraisal

Previous reports have identified the financial risk in developing the NWRR before DfT funding is secured. This will be reviewed when further advice is available from DfT.

Community / Consultations Appraisal

Covered in report

Cabinet Member

Martin Taylor-Smith

Local Member

All members with Shrewsbury electoral divisions, David Roberts (Loton), Roger Evans (Longden), John Everall (Tern)

Appendices

Appendix A – Consultation questionnaire

Appendix B – Consultation Report Executive Summary

Appendix A – Consultation Questionnaire



Shrewsbury North West Relief Road

Building a relief road is being considered as a possible solution to Shrewsbury's traffic and transport problems, as well as increasing its attractiveness for residents, businesses and visitors.

Now we'd like to hear from you – do you think a relief road would benefit the town?

Q1. This question is about whether you think there is a problem to start with. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

<i>Please tick one box for each of the statements below</i>	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Traffic on routes in and out of Shrewsbury is a problem.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Traffic in the town centre of Shrewsbury is a problem.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Traffic is getting worse over time.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Traffic should be reduced in the town centre.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Current levels of traffic affect the quality of life for residents of Shrewsbury.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Current levels of traffic deter shoppers and visitors to Shrewsbury.	<input type="checkbox"/>					

Q2. This question is about what things should be done to manage traffic for the future and how strongly you agree or disagree with the options?

<i>Please tick one box for each of the statements below</i>	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Improve public transport services frequency, quality and facilities.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Create more cycle paths/lanes and secure cycle parking.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Improve footpaths and crossing points for pedestrians.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Build the North West Relief Road.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Improve Park and Ride capacity, frequency and extended operating hours.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Increase car parking charges in the town centre.	<input type="checkbox"/>					

Please use the comments box at the end of the questionnaire if there any other options you would like to add

Shrewsbury North West Relief Road

Q3. You may feel that a combination of these options would best solve future traffic problems in Shrewsbury. Please rank the options in order of preference from 1 being the most preferred down to 6 the least preferred.

<i>Please rank your combination of options and indicate how effective you think they would be in reducing congestion</i>	Rank	Very effective	Effective	Least effective but nice to have	Not effective
Improve public transport services, frequency, quality and facilities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Create more cycle paths/lanes and secure cycle parking.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improve footpaths and crossing points for pedestrians.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Build the North West Relief Road.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improve Park and Ride capacity, frequency and longer operating hours.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increase car parking charges in the town centre.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please use the comments box below if there any other options you would like to add

Q4. In conclusion, how strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

<i>Please tick one box for each</i>	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
There is no need to do anything.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
The North West Relief Road should be built.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Other options should be used to manage traffic (but without the North West Relief Road).	<input type="checkbox"/>					
The North West Relief Road should be built with some other options to manage traffic.	<input type="checkbox"/>					

Is there anything else you would like to add? _____

Comments

It would also greatly help us to analyse the responses if you could provide your postcode

Your postcode

This questionnaire and further information is available online at www.shropshire.gov.uk. Alternatively, you can email nwrr.consultation@shropshire.gov.uk or call 0345 6789006 with your comments and any questions you have. Please return the questionnaire by 17th May 2010 in the freepost envelope provided or post to **North West Relief Road consultation, Shropshire Council, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, Shropshire. SY2 6ND**

Shropshire Council will use the information you provide to analyse views on transport issues. Information will be used in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and will not be shared with other agencies unless legally obliged to do so.

Thank you for taking time to visit this exhibition and completing the questionnaire.

Appendix B – Consultation Report Executive Summary

The North West Relief Road Consultation Report June 2010

Executive summary

Introduction

The North West Relief Road (NWRR) is a proposed single carriageway road which would run from the Churncote roundabout west of Shrewsbury where the A5 dual carriageway ends to the roundabout on the Ellesmere Road, west of Battlefield.

The purpose of the NWRR is to relieve traffic and congestion on roads approaching Shrewsbury town centre and within the centre delivering benefits in and around Shrewsbury. The general concept of the NWRR has been around for over twenty years and previous consultations have taken place – most recently in 2003 and 2005. There is now a need for the Council to decide whether to submit a business case to the Department of Transport for funding and support, and this consultation is an important part of the decision-making process.

The format for the consultation and analysis

The aim of the consultation was to involve as many local people as possible. To this end a range of activities supported by press, posters and on line publicity were carried out between the period April -May 2010, including exhibitions, questionnaires, a Citizens' Panel survey, on line surveys and stakeholder meetings. The target audience for the consultation included Shrewsbury residents and residents to the west and north of the town, local businesses, key stakeholders and Shropshire residents who visit, work and/or shop in Shrewsbury.

In total 1997 responses were received by the 17th May, comprising 1,119 responses from the general public via postal and online questionnaires and 878 responses from the Shropshire Citizens' Panel, indicating views about what should be done in general about traffic, and also in terms of the final choice as to whether the NWRR should be built. Responses were also supplemented with 800 comments and letters.

In analysing the results all survey responses have been amalgamated, but in addition the Citizens' Panel results have been contrasted with the views of the general public who chose to visit exhibitions or complete a survey. In the main, the results of the two groups are similar but significant differences have been highlighted.

The results

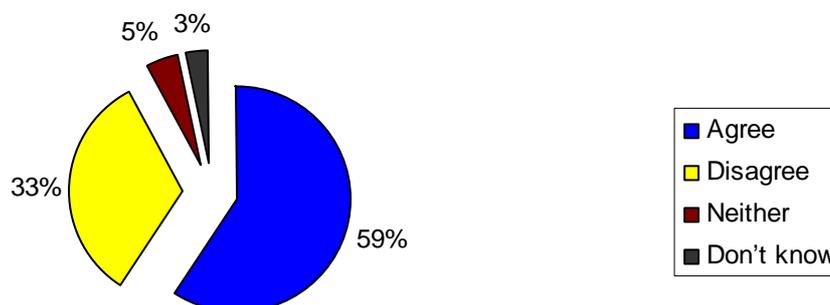
There is overwhelming agreement that traffic is a big problem in Shrewsbury and that something needs to be done. Traffic is getting worse and adversely affecting the quality of life of both residents and visitors. Thus support for doing nothing has declined since 2005 and is now advocated by only a small minority.

In terms of what should be done there is majority support for improving public transport and cycle facilities, better footpaths and crossings, and extending Park and Ride. In contrast there was little support for reducing traffic by increasing car parking charges. Some people thought the improvement measures such as more cycle paths/lanes, secure cycle parking, improved footpaths and crossing points for pedestrians would be sufficient in themselves to solve traffic problems (38%), but the majority supported the need for the NWRR which was considered the most effective measure to solve future traffic problems in Shrewsbury.

Overall, 59% thought that the NWRR should be built compared to 33% who were against it, 3% did not know and 5% neither agreed nor disagreed.

Figure 1

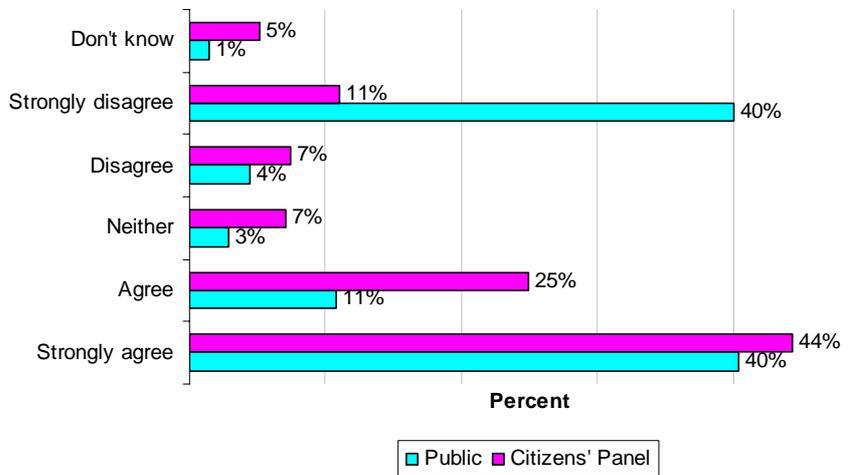
The North West Relief Road should be built.
(All respondents)



Results from the Citizens' Panel were even more supportive with 69% agreeing compared to 51% of the general public. In addition a higher proportion of the general public disagreed strongly, whereas the Panel and the public were similar in agreeing strongly.

Figure 2

The North West Relief Road should be built.
(Public compared to the Citizens' Panel)



Conclusion

There is no doubt that local people are aware of the benefits and disbenefits of a NWRR and that strong views are held both in favour of and against the project. However there is also a growing feeling that the debate has gone on long enough and that a decision needs to be made.

The consultation has concluded that the majority agree that traffic is a problem in Shrewsbury and that there is a strong view that 'doing nothing' is not an option.

It is also clear that the majority of local people are in favour of building the NWRR and that this majority has increased, albeit it by a small percent; when compared to the 2005 consultation.