

Appendix J

Background:

Bridgnorth is reliant on funding from Shropshire Council to ensure that it continues to be a vibrant town and that its residents benefit from a full range of Council services. We have, in recent months, seen that Shrewsbury centric policies and cuts have undermined some of these vital services such as last years closure of our Highway depot.

Our constituents also live in a town that sits on the banks of the River Severn and we are all acutely aware of the more frequent threats of flooding that are associated with rapid Climate Change. We fully supported Shropshire Councils Climate Emergency declaration in May 2019 which stated that:

“Local authorities have an important role to play in encouraging behavioral changes that will help to reduce emissions both locally and further afield. It can ensure its policies encourage a rapid transition to carbon zero or net zero in all sectors that support the economy and people of Shropshire, including decisions on planning and economic development”.

Bridgnorth Town council has also adopted its own Climate Motion committing it to reducing Carbon emissions.

The construction of the North West Relief Road (NWRR) near Shrewsbury seems to be at odds with both County finances and the declared Climate Emergency and will have a detrimental impact on the residents of Bridgnorth through loss of funding and ongoing increased Climate change related flooding.

Shropshire Council has agreed to finance the NWRR which at 2017 estimates was thought to be a contribution of £12 million. However, they will also be liable for any overspend which, with inflation and the rising cost of raw materials, will be substantial. A full business case, submitted last year, for an almost identical bypass in Norwich has put the cost of that scheme at £200 million whereas Shropshire Council believe the NWR can be built for just £80 million. We don't believe that this liability is a risk worth taking.

The construction of the NWWR will lead to 50,000 tonnes of extra CO2 emissions, contributing to Climate Change and flying in the face of the Council's Climate Emergency declaration and its target to be Net Zero by 2030. The carbon compensation for the NWWR is the equivalent of Shropshire Council planting an extra 1.4 million trees.

The NWRR has also proved unpopular with other Town Councils in Shropshire with Oswestry and Ludlow both formally objecting and Shrewsbury Town Council not only formally objecting to the road but also taking the unprecedented step of raising their objection in a letter to the Minister at the Department of Transport. Shropshire residents showed their disapproval of the road with over 4,500 objecting to the Planning Application (with only 200 in support). It was also one of the main reasons for the shock departure of Peter Nutting, the Council Leader at last year's local elections.

Further info:

<https://www.bettershrewsburytransport.org/whats-wrong-with-the-north-west-road/>

On the finances:

“The council is struggling to cope with the effect of a decade of austerity but plans to find at least £28.5M for the road (i.e. £220 per household in Shropshire) plus £54.4M from central

government and £4.2M from The Marches LEP. Originally the council estimated that the link road would cost £109M, yet it then seemed to think that it could build it for only £87M – up to £8.5M of potential overspend has already been identified by the council and we can only expect this to grow: overspends of 20% are not uncommon on this type of project. We have recently reviewed the costs of other, very similar schemes, and concluded that the final cost of the scheme is likely to be in around £130M (meaning Shropshire will have to find nearly £100M to pay for the road). All of this overspend will have to be paid for by Shropshire residents. The council has now revised the design to remove the crawler lane for HGVs on the viaduct across the river valley which it says will reduce the price by £7M but it claims that it still hasn't re-visited the original £87M budget.

Draft Letter: To Leader of Shropshire County Council and Minister of transport, CC'd to Philip Dunne MP

To whom it may concern,

On (date) Bridgnorth Town Council voted to formally object to construction of the North West Relief Road around Shrewsbury.

The objection is on the grounds that Bridgnorth is reliant on funding from Shropshire Council to ensure that it continues to be a vibrant town and that its residents benefit from a full range of Council services. We have, in recent months, seen that Shrewsbury centric policies and cuts have undermined some of these vital services such as last years closure of our Highway depot.

The County Council is already struggling to cope with the effect of a decade of austerity and now plans to find at least £28.5M for the road (i.e. £220 per household in Shropshire). Originally the County Council estimated that the link road would cost £109M, but then only budgeted £87M. Up to £8.5M of potential overspend has already been identified by the Council. Overspends of 20% are not uncommon on this type of project. All of this overspend will have to be paid for by Shropshire residents, including those of Bridgnorth with no additional service provision provided for the town.

In addition, the construction of the NWRR is at odds with the declared Climate Emergency and Climate policies of both Shropshire Council and the Bridgnorth Town Council Climate Motion. Increased Carbon emissions created by this road will add to the already worsening climate related flooding that Bridgnorth is already dealing with.

Bridgnorth Town Council now formally requests that Shropshire Council withdraw its plans to construct the North West Relief Road and that they will ensure that Shropshire Council resources are applied fairly across the whole county including Bridgnorth. Furthermore, Bridgnorth Town Council demands that Shropshire Council act with urgency to realise their target of being Net Zero by 2030 to help safeguard the lives and livelihoods of the residents of Bridgnorth who are already experiencing climate related harm through increased flooding.

Yours Sincerely,