

Questions and Answers

Executive

Thursday, 17th December, 2015

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17 December 2015

Questions and Answers



Public Questions as specified in the Council's Procedure Rules of the Constitution

a) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Transport and Emergency Planning by Mr John Gardner:

“The report on the Council’s website entitled ‘West Berkshire Local Development Framework – Phase 4 Newbury and Thatcham’ concludes that the Junction Mitigation revised option is the best way forward for managing traffic resulting from development in Sandleford. Can you confirm that you will be following this conclusion and if not what is your alternative plan?”

The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Transport and Emergency Planning answered:

The planning application for the development of up to 2,000 houses at Sandleford has now been submitted. It has a Transport Assessment (TA) based on more recent traffic surveys that will assess the impact of the development and recommend mitigation to accommodate the additional traffic. The assessment has yet to be reviewed by highway officers. However I can confirm that the officers will be looking to implement as much as possible of the Junction Mitigation revised option which will encourage more traffic to route around the B4640 and the A34. Much of this will depend on how negotiations for funding from the developer proceed. A priority could be to encourage northbound traffic from the A339 to travel towards the A34 by signage and road markings at the A339 and B4640 Swan Roundabout, along with reducing the northbound A339 from two lanes from the Swan Roundabout to the St Gabriel’s School access. This would enable a right turn facility into the School for safer access along with the provision of a pedestrian and cycle crossing point for the footpath from Sandleford.

It is essential that as much as possible is done to reduce the impact of the development on the A339 through the centre of Newbury, due to the mounting concern regarding traffic congestion and the Air Quality Management Area.

Therefore the assessment will also include bus, pedestrian and cycle routes to and from the development. Highway officers will work with the developer to facilitate necessary improvements to encourage bus usage, walking and cycling to and from the proposed development.

Park and Ride is not currently being considered as recent studies have found that such a facility would not be viable.

The Chairman asked: *“Do you have a supplementary question arising directly out of the answer to your original question. A supplementary should be relevant to the original question and not introduce any new material?”*

Mr John Gardner asked the following supplementary question:

Generally that sounds like good news to me. The main benefits that WSP (traffic consultants) set out were network performance sustainable traffic options, pedestrians sign routes, an opportunity for park and ride, and possibly an improved bus route. If as you say you are still looking at those when will you come to some sort of conclusion on how far you are going to implement the recommendations from WSP?

The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Transport and Emergency Planning answered:

I think we definitely want these kinds of improvements, it just depends on the length of the negotiations. We want to make this happen as much as possible. If you want a written answer I'm happy to provide one.

Mr John Gardner said:

I would like a written answer.

(b) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Education, Property and Broadband by Mr Peter Hudson:

"With reference to the proposed 2016/17 budget cuts, specifically the removal of the Mortimer to Willink school bus, West Berkshire Council have identified an available route about which they have publicly stated that the step off points along the route are "adequate for small numbers of walkers". This route impacts 233 children who may be accompanied by an adult so the number of walkers at any one time could be in excess of 300. Does West Berkshire Council consider this to be a small number of walkers?"

The Portfolio Holder for Education, Property and Broadband answered:

Highways have confirmed that, in accordance with the national standards, the step off facilities are adequate for small numbers of walkers. I've walked the route and I share their view. When assessing the availability of a route for entitlement to free transport, the national standard looks at whether an accompanied child could travel the route. The standard does not take into account the volume of walkers on a route.

The consultation covers two aspects. Firstly, outlining the basis for the assessment used to describe the route as an available route, and secondly, seeking feedback from the residents about the impact of the proposal and any other matters they wish us to consider.

The question to be considered after the consultation has closed is whether the residents have indicated that they will indeed use the walking route, and if so, whether the volume of walkers has a significant impact on the route. This would not affect the Highways assessment, but it would be for the Education Service to consider in the analysis of the responses.

A large number of responses have asked us to consider:

- Firstly, the impact of the significant majority walking the route on road step offs and the wear and tear on the footpath;
- Secondly, the impact of the significant majority of the children being taken by car on traffic volumes.

These are matters that officers will consider in due course, as you know the Consultation has only just closed, and will be included in their summary document for Members to consider.

The Chairman asked: *"Do you have a supplementary question arising directly out of the answer to your original question. A supplementary should be relevant to the original question and not introduce any new material?"*

Mr Peter Hudson asked the following supplementary question:

Do I understand then, is the Council now going to re-evaluate the viability of the route given the numbers of children and parents who will now be expected to walk it?

The Portfolio Holder for Education, Property and Broadband answered:

I'd refer you to my answer Mr Hudson, in that part of the consultation is aimed at trying to establish, in this particular case, how many walkers will be likely to use the route and when we know that either through consultation or perhaps use of the changes through time then the Council will be able to respond.

Members' Questions as specified in the Council's Procedure Rules of the Constitution

No Member questions were submitted in relation to items not included on the agenda.

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