

Meeting with Owen Paterson 12.1.18 to discuss potential Relief Road around Wem

Present

Cllr Edward Towers, (Mayor Wem Town Council), Cllr Tim Wilton- Morgan (Wem Rural Parish Council), Owen Paterson (MP), Steve Davenport, Steve Brown, Matt Johnson (Shropshire Council).

P O'Hagan – (Town Clerk Wem Town Council), C. Warner (Parish Clerk Wem Rural Parish Council).

Owen Paterson welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked Steve Brown for providing information relating to the amount of housing that would need to be built in order to fund a relief road. Steve Brown explained that his calculation of 11000 houses which would need to be built in order to provide enough funding for a relief road through the Community Infrastructure Levy and Neighbourhood Fund was a very rough one and did not account for differences in house size and affordable housing allocations.

Edward Towers presented the results of the survey carried out to look at future housing development in Wem and stated that the Town Council had supported the majority view from the survey that Wem should have less than 250 houses built over next the 20 years and that this had been fed into the Local Plan Review.

He reported that residents overwhelmingly supported the need for a relief road in Wem and that 52% of respondents were willing to support the need for additional housing for a relief road.

Carole Warner reported on the Wem Rural Survey and stated that this was a web based survey and had had a much lower response. However there was support for a relief road but questions were raised on the route of the road as this could impact on local residents especially in the Barkers Green area.

A discussion took place on the fact that if extra homes were built in order to fund a relief road the traffic from these new homes would impact detrimentally on the town center as those new residents would have to access the town and it could ultimately mean that even if a relief road was to be built there may well be very little reduction in town center traffic. A suggestion was put forward that one approach was maybe to create a 2 center town a model currently being followed by Shrewsbury to create residential centers that are self-sustaining and reliant on their own services and amenities.

The importance of the need for a proposed route to be scoped out was raised, if national funding were to become available it was important that a project proposal was worked up and ready to go. Steve Brown explained that they did not have funding to work up a scoping project of this nature as the relief road was not currently a priority project for the county. The Town Council was encouraged to have conversations with the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership and Midlands Connect so see whether funding for a scoping project could be drawn down from these agencies. It was also outlined that in order for a project of this nature to be supported it must have the support of the Unitary Councillors for the area.

Penny O'Hagan stated that the Town Council did not have the capacity or specialist knowledge to start negotiations on funding for a scoping project and would need the support and specialist knowledge of Shopshire Council officers to proceed with this.

It was agreed that

- Steve Brown would hold a meeting to discuss the proposals for a relief road with Unitary Councillors for Wem along with representatives from Economic Development and Planning.
- Matt Johnson would request an indicative figure from WSP as to the cost of the production of a desk top study into the location of a relief road.
- Matt Johnson would raise the issue with the Marches Local Economic Partnership (LEP) at the next Transport Advisory Group meeting to be held in March to see whether any funding could be secured via the LEP.
- Owen Paterson would raise the matter with Midlands Connect to see if any funding can be drawn down from this organisation.

A discussion took place on the need for a Town Councillor to be given a remit to progress this project and ensure continuity.

Next meeting to be held in April 2018 exact date tbc.

Meeting ended at 12.15