

**Response from the meeting of the Cabinet on the
O&S Committee's Comments – 8 July 2021**

Item Number: 4 – A46 Link Road Next Steps

Requested by: Labour, Green & Lib Dem Groups.

Reasons Considered:

Labour Group:

The conditionality of WDC's support in the proposed response to WCC is such as to suggest that WDC is not able to give its support at this time to the new transport corridor. This conditionality does not mention the current uncertainty about current population figures for Coventry and therefore the need for new housing south of the City on which much of the case depends. In addition, the impact of the University's plans for growth and its master plan, in the context of its declaration of a climate emergency, is a significant factor that is too little taken account of in determining whether and what nature new transport infrastructure should take. The Group also has a question about how the Council itself will be informed or included in the decision to respond to the motion which it passed unanimously.

Green Group:

Due to the reputational risk to the council of this proposal going directly against its Climate Emergency declaration.

We would like the following 6 sets of questions to contribute to the debate:

1. The response to our earlier questions stated that a sustainability analysis "will be undertaken as part of the OBC and subsequent FBC submissions."
 - a. Can you commit to presenting this analysis to the Climate PAB more than 30 days prior to the FBC submission so that they can inform Cabinet of their views before Cabinet decides whether to endorse the submission?
2. The recent report by the Committee on Climate Change states that "New roads should only be built if they can be shown not to increase emissions".
 - a. Isn't this proposed new road therefore worse than 'business as usual' at a time when rapid reductions in emissions are needed to stabilise the climate?
 - b. Do you agree that the one-time carbon emissions from just constructing Phase 1 would be about 17000 tCO₂e (assuming total costs are ~£38M)? And that carbon emissions from Phase 2 construction could reach 46000 tCO₂e?
See <https://www.transportforqualityoflife.com/u/files/The%20carbon%20impact%20of%20the%20national%20roads%20programme%20FINAL.pdf>
 - c. pages 18-19. "Construction carbon ranged from 60-730 tCO₂e per £1 million expenditure, with an average of 456 tCO₂e per £1 million"
 - d. Doesn't this mean that the Phase 1 will produce nearly 6 times more emissions than WDC's proposed annual savings (~3000 tCO₂e) through

WDC's Climate Action Plan Ambition 1 i.e. if WDC goes completely zero carbon?

3. The University of Warwick has announced plans for an Eco Park.
 - a. Can you confirm that this would involve closing Gibbet Hill Road or reducing motorised traffic flowing along it?
 - b. Doesn't the new road amount to transferring carbon emissions and poorer air quality from the University site to other residents of Warwick District?
 - c. Is the exporting of the University's carbon emissions and pollution part of the business case for this new road?
4. The new road will destroy green belt and grade 2/3 agricultural land.
 - a. The response to our earlier questions stated that "there should be mitigation for any biodiversity loss arising from the scheme": how many acres of green belt will be destroyed and how much more biodiverse land will the scheme create?
5. The proposed letter to WCC does not fully reflect the feelings presented in the February debate at Full Council regarding this issue.
 - a. Can Cabinet consider rewording section 3.46 to read:

"In summary, it is suggested that this Council should write to WCC as the organisation leading the A46 Link Road project along the following lines:

- That this Council *can only continue to be* supportive of WCC (and CCC) progressing the development of the A46 link road scheme *if it aligns with all our Councils' climate emergency declarations. Consequently, support is* subject to the following:
- That WDC officers should remain actively involved and continue to have a seat on the Programme Board for delivery of this project
- Phase 2 work shall progress albeit as part of a comprehensive and wider project to deliver sustainable travel options in the area and address identified issues/capacity needs. *There must* be a clear understanding of how it fits into the wider project for meeting the transport needs and supporting sustainable travel in the area. This needs to be seen also in the context of the SWLP consideration of strategic options and that this may require a masterplan of the wider area for this part of the SWLP area (A further report may be required to the WDC Cabinet on this aspect)
- *WCC uses an alternative name to the 'A46 Link Road' for this project* which highlights the sustainable travel options which are in keeping with our Climate Emergency declarations
- That WCC (and CCC) do not take any decisions about applying for planning permission for the A46 Link Road phase 2 until WDC has made a strategic decision in the context on the Local Plan on the preferred spatial strategy for the location of development to meet the needs of South Warwickshire

- That WCC, in conjunction with transport planners at CCC, undertakes a reassessment of traffic flows forecasted based on likely new patterns of working and commuting following the Covid-19 pandemic
 - That WCC undertakes a sustainability analysis of the Link Road scheme, *which would need to demonstrate a reduction in carbon emissions relative to not going ahead with this project*
 - That WCC costs the best possible active travel option that does not include new road building to determine which option is better in terms of economic growth, air quality, biodiversity and reducing carbon emissions
 - That WCC progresses the University of Warwick/Coventry South railway station/transport interchange and the development of VLR s as quickly as is realistic *and briefs WDC officers in a timely manner*
 - That WCC supports WDC in providing the necessary evidence to support the case for the link road through the SWLP, subject to alignment with the preferred spatial strategy
 - That WCC ensures that the link road project is consistent with key themes in the emerging Local Transport Plan 4 and can justify the scheme in this context throughout scheme development
 - That WCC acknowledges WDC's support, subject to the points raised in this paragraph, in their proposed report to WCC's Cabinet about next steps."?
6. Given the unanimous support for the Full Council motion on this issue, can the Cabinet pass this back to Full Council to seek its approval?

Liberal Democrat Group:

We would like to discuss how it fits with our Climate Emergency Action Plan and potentially make a recommendation to Cabinet.

Scrutiny Comment:

Councillor Cooke, the Portfolio Holder – Place & Economy informed the Overview & Scrutiny Committee that at the meeting of the Cabinet on 8 July, his intention was to move an amendment to point 3.46 in the report, to make it more neutral, along the lines that "This Council will continue to be involved in the work with WCC (and CCC) to progress the work on the A46 link road".

The original text read "That this Council is supportive of WCC (and CCC) progressing the development of the A46 link road scheme....".

The Committee welcomed and endorsed the amendment to point 3.46 in the report as explained by Councillor Cooke and made the following recommendations**:

1. any sustainability analysis that comes to this Council as part of the OBC and subsequent FBC submissions, is presented to the Climate PAB more than 30 days

prior to the FBC submission so that the PAB may inform Cabinet of its views before Cabinet decides whether to endorse the submission¹; and

2. that a third recommendation in the report be added (2.3) so that the wording in the letter to be sent to WCC (identified in point 3.46 in the report), be amended to reflect the suggestions made in italics as follows:

That this Council *can only continue to be* supportive of WCC (and CCC) progressing the development of the A46 link road scheme *if it aligns with all our Councils' climate emergency declarations. Consequently, support is* subject to the following:

- That WDC officers should remain actively involved and continue to have a seat on the Programme Board for delivery of this project
- Phase 2 work shall progress albeit as part of a comprehensive and wider project to deliver sustainable travel options in the area and address identified issues/capacity needs. *There must* be a clear understanding of how it fits into the wider project for meeting the transport needs and supporting sustainable travel in the area. This needs to be seen also in the context of the SWLP consideration of strategic options and that this may require a masterplan of the wider area for this part of the SWLP area (A further report may be required to the WDC Cabinet on this aspect)
- *WCC uses an alternative name to the 'A46 Link Road' for this project* which highlights the sustainable travel options which are in keeping with our Climate Emergency declarations
- That WCC (and CCC) do not take any decisions about applying for planning permission for the A46 Link Road phase 2 until WDC has made a strategic decision in the context on the Local Plan on the preferred spatial strategy for the location of development to meet the needs of South Warwickshire
- That WCC, in conjunction with transport planners at CCC, undertakes a reassessment of traffic flows forecasted based on likely new patterns of working and commuting following the Covid-19 pandemic
- That WCC undertakes a sustainability analysis of the Link Road scheme, *which would need to demonstrate a reduction in carbon emissions relative to not going ahead with this project*
- That WCC costs the best possible active travel option that does not include new road building to determine which option is better in terms of economic growth, air quality, biodiversity and reducing carbon emissions
- That WCC progresses the University of Warwick/Coventry South railway station/transport interchange and the development of VLR s as quickly as is realistic *and briefs WDC officers in a timely manner*

¹ Councillor Kohler will liaise with the Chair of the PAB to ensure that the PAB is aware of the recommendation O&S made.

- That WCC supports WDC in providing the necessary evidence to support the case for the link road through the SWLP, subject to alignment with the preferred spatial strategy
- That WCC ensures that the link road project is consistent with key themes in the emerging Local Transport Plan 4 and can justify the scheme in this context throughout scheme development
- That WCC acknowledges WDC's support, subject to the points raised in this paragraph, in their proposed report to WCC's Cabinet about next steps.

** At the O&S Committee meeting 6 July, the Committee made two recommendations to Cabinet. The following day, advice was received from the Deputy Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer that it was not within the Cabinet's purview to place actions on the Climate PAB and therefore the first recommendation the Committee had made to Cabinet could only be treated as a comment. The Deputy Chief Executive's advice was that Councillor Kohler should contact the Chairman of the Climate PAB directly to make the PAB aware of the Committee's recommendation.

Cabinet Response:

Councillor Rhead, Portfolio Holder for Climate Change, stated that there was a need to have a balanced view before considering restricting the building of roads. If there was not to be a link road as had been advised by Highways England, the Council would be putting in jeopardy the whole development, which would in turn mean the five year plan might also be in jeopardy so a balanced view was needed.

In relation to the recommendation 2 from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Cooke stated that the Council had a local plan which was approved by the inspector, and which said the Council had to build a set amount of houses in a certain period, and the inspector had approved a plan with sites that had been outlined, such as this link road, that would enable the Council to deliver that plan. To now put forward the points raised in recommendation 2, would be something he would worry about. In order to get the five year housing supply and to deliver on our local plan, a number of difficult things needed to take place, including the building of this link road, and he did not think the Council would be able to deliver it without building this link road. Although he had sympathy with the proposals put forward from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, there needed to be a balance of the pluses and minuses. This was not a District Council scheme, it was a Warwick County Council and Coventry City Council scheme in which Warwick District Council were consultees, but at the same time there was a third-party, Highways England. Highways England would be looking at those presenting the project, and the consultees, and Warwick District Council had agreed to be a secondary sponsor of the project and had supported it all the way down the line. For that reason, if there was a change in tone too much that would set alarm bells ringing. As a result, he did not intend to accept the amendments in recommendation 2 from

the Overview & Scrutiny Committee. When put to a vote, the recommendation 2 from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was rejected.

Councillor Cooke subsequently proposed the report as laid out, and subject to the amendment to paragraph 3.46 in the report.

Resolved that

- (1) the update on the A46 Link Road project, be noted; and
- (2) Warwick District Council's continued involvement in the process for the development of the Link Road scheme, be agreed, noting the potential benefits and importance of infrastructure delivery in the area; and authority be delegated to the Head of Development in consultation with the Place and Economy Portfolio Holder to write to Warwickshire County Council to this effect, subject to the points identified in paragraph 3.46 of the report.

Item Number: 6 – Climate Change Ambitions for South Warwickshire

Requested by: Labour Group

Reason Considered:

It is disappointing that the ambition for 2030 has been diluted (and wonder if the Council should be asked to endorse the change given it set the original ambition), but we would want Scrutiny to consider and comment to Cabinet on how infographical information can be used to show progress against the new targets and guide the priority of actions and investment. This would help the public understand the impact of the actions taken as well. In that context we would want that information to include better financial data about investments made and grants attracted by the deployment of the CAF in both WDC and SDC. We also believe it to be an error that Ambition 1 in Appendix 1 refers to the new South Warwickshire Council when no such decision has been taken - the paper on consultation that is also before both Scrutiny Committee makes the point that we should go into consultation on merger without predisposition or predetermination

Item Number 10 – Net Zero DPD

Requested by: Liberal Democrat Group

Reason Considered:

We would like to discuss the potential for our Affordability targets to clash with our Climate Emergency Action Plan and potentially make a recommendation to Cabinet.

Scrutiny Comment:

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee considered Items 6 and 10 together and supported the recommendations in them both.

Cabinet Response:

The Cabinet approved the recommendations in both Items 6 and 10 as laid out in the reports.

Item Number: 11 – Warwick District Leisure Development – Kenilworth Facilities

Requested by: Councillor Milton & Green Group

Reason Considered:

Councillor Milton: Due to the potential impact on residents in respect of the proposal in recommendation 2.8 to keep the Leisure Centres closed from now on and to seek alternative outcomes.

Green Group: *The number of residents impacted and the significance of that impact)*

Thank you for the responses given so far, but we wish to discuss the costs and benefits of closure other than 'cost to the taxpayer' given the massive benefit social, mental and also financial if, as we expect, there is a boom in demand for leisure after lockdown is lifted.

How has the 80K deficit been calculated for the 2021 spring-summer period when the demand is unknown yet potentially very high post-vaccine-lockdown? Why use an argument based on a relatively small, hypothetical deficit to deprive Kenilworth residents/council tax-payers of all leisure facilities in the town when the total subsidy to the operators nears £1 million.

Question from the Labour Group regarding appendix A:

This Risk assessment has no mention of the impact the much extended closure of Leisure amenities in Kenilworth may have on residents at this very difficult time.

Scrutiny Comment:

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee recommended that the amended recommendation 2.8 should be further amended to include consultation with both the Leadership Co-ordination Group (LCG) and all Kenilworth District Councillors over when and which facilities should be re-opened.

Executive Response:

In relation to the recommendation from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Rhead felt that singling out the Kenilworth Councillors was not appropriate, as this was a matter for Warwick District Council as a whole. When put to a vote, the recommendation from the Overview and Scrutiny was rejected. Councillor Rhead subsequently proposed the report as laid out, and subject to the amendments in the addendum, which were then approved.