

Ward Councillor Report: July 2023

Master's House Landscaping

The work commenced 10th July.



Viaduct Housing Development

No further information at present. The application for layout of the first phase was refused redirection to the Planning Committee – which I am very concerned about, because of the concerns raised by Severn Trent regarding the lack of treatment capability for foul and surface water.

Unfortunately, this matter is dealt with under a different planning condition. By separating out the planning conditions applied at outline permission stage in different applications for discharge, it means that a fragmented approach is taken to the development as a whole.

I remain concerned that planning officers have refused Severn Trent a Grampian Condition on the Viaduct Site. It seems reckless to me that permission is granted to build homes without any agreement or plan to deliver being in place for the treatment infrastructure to be delivered to service those and future properties.

Sewage handling issues are also being experienced on developments elsewhere in the town. This is a problem that will only get worse if it's not properly handled by planning officers, public realm contractors and Welsh Water and Severn Trent water companies.

McCarthy & Stone Development of 'Masefield's Meadow'

This application has now been approved for redirection to Committee. No date has yet been set for its hearing. Please can the Town Council appoint someone to make representation at the committee meeting.

Update of the Local Plan

The minority Conservative administration has put on hold the major public consultation on the first half of this plan while they consider additional evidence base documents and review whether the policies developed through 2-years of public and parish consultation align with this administration's priorities.

Following questions asked of the Leader at Full Council last Friday, this appears to be so that housing numbers can be tested against the sums of money needed from developers to restart the initiative to build roads to the west of the city to open up council-owned land for housing.

Since Ledbury has suffered terribly from predatory and unplanned development as a consequence of over-inflated housing growth targets being signed-up to by the Conservatives back in 2015 – This is a very concerning and disappointing development.

I would encourage the Town Council to proceed with its plans to stand up a working group to the Planning Committee charged with developing detailed responses to consultations on the updated plan policies when they are eventually made public.

Frith Wood Access

No update received from Forestry England yet on resolution of the use of their level access into the wood for walkers.

Parking Problems and Traffic Regulation Orders

Following consultation feedback, improvements to the proposed Woodleigh Road scheme are being considered by Herefordshire Council. Draft schemes to deal with problem parking in Masefield Avenue, Queen's Court and Belle Orchard and Belle Orchard Close will be consulted upon shortly.

Gully and Drain Clearance

The risk to local residents from flash flooding continues as heavy rainfall events persist in the area. Residents and councillors should use the 'Report it' function on the council website to record blocked ditches and gullies as quickly as possible: <https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/report-problem> Or use the report it app <https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/reportingapp/>

Household Support

Grants, advice and assistance continue to be available for households facing hardship. 100% discount on Council Tax continues for qualifying households and £1.7m has been allocated to continue support in a variety of ways during 2023. The Talk Community website has a range of helpful links as a starting point for reference: <https://www.talkcommunity.org/money-on-your-mind/>

Consultations

The following live consultations are available for comment:

- Consultation on the Minerals and Waste Local Plan (MWLP) Main Modifications:
<https://consultations.herefordshire.gov.uk/consultations/article/101/consultation-on-the-minerals-and-waste-local-plan-mwlp-main-modifications>

Pause and Review on Hereford Library location

Following strong feedback from partners, the public and councillors, weak financial evidence and concerns about the impact on vulnerable groups, Cabinet have decided to keep the Maylords Orchard option alive as the location of a 21st century Library and Learning Resource Centre for the city, whilst officers investigate whether Shire Hall is a feasible, deliverable, affordable and socially progressive location.

The pause and review decision continues to jeopardise the delivery timeline for the project and undermine the broader Stronger Towns project board and its decision-making processes. The strength of the entire library network will be impacted by the strength and suitability of the city library as the hub for the network.

Councillor Responsibilities

In addition to my chairman and vice chairman roles on, respectively, Scrutiny Management Board and Children and Young People's Scrutiny, I have been appointed to represent Herefordshire Council on the following outside bodies:

- Police and Crime Commissioner's Panel
- Lower Severn Internal Drainage Board
- Wye Navigation Advisory Committee
- English Severn & Wye Regional Flood & Coastal Committee
- Local Government Association
- NMiTE Strategic Working Group

County Council initiatives

There is now a minority Conservative-led administration in charge in Herefordshire. No Leader's Report was again produced in June or July. Hopefully Talk Community and Talk Parish initiatives will continue. I encourage councillors and particularly committee chairs to sign up for automatic alerts on issues of interest via the council's website:

<https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKHEREF/subscriber/new>

Councillor Liz Harvey

IOC & Independents for Herefordshire – Ledbury North Ward Member – 31 July 2023