

COUNCIL MEETING – 26 SEPTEMBER 2019

QUESTIONS FROM ELECTOR UNDER PROCEDURE RULE 9

1. From Sharon O'Reilly to Councillor Nazir

“What Rights Of Protection, from Slough Borough Council Landlords do Council Tenants have, when a Privately owned Adjoining Property has had the adjoining Party Wall illegally taken down on their side without planning permission?”

Reply

If a home owner intends to carry out building work that impacts on a council owned home there is a clear process that should be followed to protect both the tenant and our property.

The home owner submits all their party wall information and this is sent to Neighbourhood Services – the team that is the landlord for council homes. Neighbourhood Services then arrange with the Repairs, Maintenance and Investment service partner (Osborne) to agree whether to use the suggested party wall surveyor or make alternative arrangements. The building work would then continue as per the agreement between the home owner and the council.

If this process is not followed (due to human error or administrative oversight), Neighbourhood Services will take all necessary steps to return their property to the condition it would have been in had the process been followed. In most cases this will mean that remedial work is undertaken at no cost to the tenant.

Some building work (regardless of whether there are party wall implications) does not require planning permission. This is what is known as “permitted development” and the home owner does not need to secure any permission from the planning authority to carry this out. In most cases where building work falls under permitted development a home owner will apply for a Certificate of Proposed Lawful Use. This formal certificate confirms that the work was carried out without the need for planning permission to be sought.

If building work does not require planning permission there is no opportunity for neighbours or others to formally object to the work. Even if neighbours speak to a planning officer and voice their concerns this will not impact on whether or not the work continues.

If during the building work any neighbour has concerns about nuisance caused by the building work the local council (Environmental Health) can protect residents in 3 specific ways:

Controlling hours of noisy work – Control of Pollution Act 1974 provides guidelines around the hours when noisy building work is permitted.

Preventing burning of building waste – Environmental Protection Act 1990 allows enforcement to be taken if building waste is burnt and not disposed of properly.

Prevention of excessive dust – Environmental Protection Act 1990 allows enforcement to be taken if there is excessive dust being created from the building work.

Before any enforcement work is undertaken (under the above legislation or any other) officers need to make professional judgements about whether enforcement is proportionate and reasonable. Our corporate Enforcement Policy is clear that enforcement should always be a last resort once engagement and education has taken place.

2. From Lee Pettman to Councillor Swindlehurst

“Given the latest council failure surrounding Slough High Street, failing to win any money from the Government’s Future High Streets fund, does the Councillor think residents should just give up now on any chance this administration will ever do anything to breathe new life into our town centre?”

Reply

This is basically a different version of the question asked by your colleague at our last council meeting. I answered that by saying that the council would have an update ready to present to scrutiny towards the end of October after our 8-10 weeks of more intensive negotiations was complete. I will also ask the Mayor for permission to make a presentation to November Council on the town centre so all members can hear of the developments and the progress of our discussions with British Land.

Over the summer we have continued to make improvements to the High Street;

- We secured £5,000 of funding for our ‘open doors’ project to support social enterprise activity
- There is now a street market on the High Street two times a month
- There was a “yes” vote to establish a Business Improvement District, worth £2 million over the coming years from April
- We are currently soda blasting the pavements on the High Street to improve their appearance
- We secured £26,000 from the Community High Street Clean Up Fund
- We have made significant investments in renovating Hatfield Car Park and will shortly be replacing the lifts, painting and renovating Herschel car park
- Osbornes have redecorated Home Slough’s gallery space and installed kitchen and toilet facilities to support their exhibitions and events

- Jasper Group are currently undertaking construction works for a new retail/commercial and residential development following their receipt of planning permission
- Planning committee in October will be determining an application for the transformation of the former BHS site into 78 new residential dwellings with flexible retail and commercial space
- Works will shortly be commencing at the former Alpha Street North car park to transform the site into 14 new social/council homes

On top of the £1 billion of investment British Land will be bringing to the town centre work is also underway on another £700 million of town centre investment. You will have noticed work well under way on the former library site which will bring 2 new hotels. No doubt you will have read the September cabinet report regarding the future of the TVU site and we expect to sign the option agreement for its development in the next few weeks having already completed the demolition works of the previous buildings occupying the site.

So there is much to look forward to and much currently going on. And although I appreciate your desire to make a political point, I'd suggest you wait until our October update report to learn more about the regeneration of the town centre.

3. From Gurcharan Singh Manku to Councillor Swindlehurst

“Please tell me when playing area (Kings Reach) for children is being created as promised in Labour manifesto in May local elections. Knowing that this land is not owned by SBC, what is the time line for this project?”

Reply

We had indicated to residents that the play area for younger children was likely to be installed in September/October; and the Council's play/parks teams have been making good progress on delivering this project. Tenders have been invited and the tender evaluation process has occurred as planned, but there have been some delays with procurement which has slipped the timetable for completion by a few weeks. The play equipment should be installed by mid-December, and before the Christmas break at the latest.

You are worried that the land where the project will be located is not owned by the council – I can confirm these concerns are unfounded. The land where it is proposed to locate the new play area is owned by the council

4. From Charlie Olsen to Councillor Swindlehurst

“Following the Council’s adoption in July of a new approach to climate change strategy, can the Councillor confirm when residents can expect to see a clear action plan for the borough?”

Reply

Slough Borough Council is renewing our carbon management plan, and finalising our transport vision over the next 6 months and combined with our existing Low Emission Strategy will prepare our climate change action plan with key targets and objectives which will be ready over the next 12 months.

Meanwhile Slough has achieved the following:

- **Electric Vehicles:** We operate an electric vehicle pool fleet to reduce carbon emissions. So far over 30,000 miles have been driven avoiding over 7 tonnes of CO2. We are in the process of rapidly expanding this programme.
- **Electric Chargers:** Slough Borough Council has installed over 40 public charging point connections across the borough which includes 2 rapid 50kW charging stations.
- **Street Lighting:** Slough Borough Council has replaced its street lighting with LEDs which is saving over 1,800 tonnes of CO2 annually
- **Renewable Energy:** Slough now has Solar PV installations at 5 sites including our new HQ site where we have just installed 152 panels.
- **Building Energy Efficiency:** Slough is in the process of retrofitting its sites to increase energy efficiency and decrease carbon emissions. So far 11 sites have been completed reducing the energy footprint of these buildings by over 20%.

5. From Chandra Muvvala to Councillor Swindlehurst

“Would the Councillor agree that the proposed Stoke Wharf development on the site of the Bowyer Recreation Ground will put additional pressure on the local area – parking, noise and pollution – and therefore will not be good for local residents?”

Reply

I am grateful for the opportunity to correct the misinformation that local Conservative activists have been spreading regarding this development.

Firstly Slough’s Labour administration values Bowyer Recreation Ground as a vital and important community asset. It is the only open green public space in the immediate vicinity, and the Council’s plans retain the majority of the important green space. But we must recognise that there is a need for significant improvement at the park in terms of accommodating more active use and improving the quality of its landscaping – particularly given its location within the canal basin. This proposal presents not only the opportunity, but also the financial means to do this.

The site was first identified for development in the Local Development Framework Site Allocations Development Plan in 2010. This document set the principle of allowing residential development on the strip of the site fronting the canal and that the specific development on the canal basin maximise the attractiveness of the canal and the basin. Furthermore it stated that 'any residential development [of the canal basin] must be in keeping with the park and create additional access points and lines of sight to the canal, enhancing the current access provision.'

Residents can be confident that any proposed development of the site will not only improve the area providing a high quality residential led development, it will also significantly improve the existing open space in and around the canal basin – including the creation of a new formal park for the area and enhanced access to the canal.

In October 2016 the Cabinet at the time took a report that granted an option to SUR to progress the Stoke Wharf Development scheme. In accordance with section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 notices were published in the local press on 6th and 13th January 2017 to provide residents an opportunity to register objections to this development – none were received.

In February 2017 Cabinet was presented with an update report regarding the development of the canal basin which set the working assumption that the development would contain around 200 housing units and include the retention and improvement of the public open space at Bowyer Recreation Ground.

In June 2017 the Council purchased the completed the acquisition of the Travis Perkins site at the basin and set aside a budget of £500,000 for the demolition of the existing buildings on the site to make way for regeneration.

SUR have recently consulted on their proposed plans in advance of submitting their planning application. Upon submission we expect to see improved visual and physical connectivity between the park and canal, retained and improved play areas and greenfield landscaping to be established around the development and canal moorings. We of course expect any detailed plans regarding the residential element of the development to be in keeping with the park – as stated in the 2010 document.

As has been set out consistently since 2010 a small proportion of the existing open space will be lost to allow the development to occur. The development will be compliant with council policy which ensures any open space lost must be replaced or compensatory enhancements delivered. In the case of this site the open space will be vastly improved and the recreation ground will receive the investment it needs to increase its active use and create a formal park which seamlessly merges with the canal to create an attractive environment.

The next stage of the process will be for detailed proposals to come before the Council's planning committee and this will be your next opportunity to make your views known on the proposal – either in response to the consultation or in person at the committee meeting.