

Questions from Members of the Public

Council – 16th July 2020

Question 1 from Mr Michael Smith to the Leader of the Council

Question

As a resident on Queensway Estate, I have been patiently waiting for 6 years now, but there is still no visible evidence on the ground that any regeneration work has actually started. Can you assure me that there won't be any further delays to the Better Queensway project as I want to move into my new home as soon as possible?

Answer

Thank you for your question and your patience in waiting for this scheme to get off the ground.

To commence a project such as this, the largest of its kind in modern times in Southend, a significant amount of preparatory work has to be undertaken to ensure that a project of such scale can be delivered and that the risks involved are understood and addressed. Following a robust procurement process a preferred bidder, Swan Housing, was chosen in February last year as the Council's partner to deliver a viable Scheme.

The Council and Swan have been working in partnership over the past 16 months to progress the project. This has included extensive consultation with residents and stakeholders to help inform the scheme. Work to develop this will continue with the phases of the project but the next step is agreement of the final proposals, being discussed later this evening, which is a requirement of the partnership before a planning application can be submitted. In this case it's intended to be a hybrid application which will be outline for the whole site and detailed for the highway and then to be followed by an application for the first phase of housing later this year. This is a significant milestone in the progression of the scheme.

Once these proposals are agreed it can then continue on its challenging timetable and the residents will be kept updated and consulted in this regard.

My Cabinet colleagues and I are committed to getting this scheme off the ground without further delay and, if Council agrees, we will be in a position to start works on site in the early part of next year.

Question 2 from Mr Ian Ward to the Leader of the Council

Question

As an elderly leaseholder, and veteran of all the BQ meetings, I am concerned about my investment, financial and emotional, in the Queensway Estate. Can you assure me that my personal estate is going to survive continued delays in the Better Queensway development?

Secondly, I am concerned that the Government grant will be forfeit if Southend Council doesn't start building soon, and that will mean years of wrangling all for nothing. How do you answer that?

Answer

Thank you for your question and showing such an interest in this once in a lifetime project and showing your support in attending all the meetings. The interests of existing tenants and leaseholders will remain at the heart of the scheme.

The Government, through their Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) has pledged £15Million pounds towards this scheme which is, in the main, to deliver the road infrastructure. This grant is tied to timescales which are directly linked to the speedy delivery of the scheme. These funds, in bringing the underpass up to grade will significantly offset the future costs of maintaining the underpass currently considered to be many millions of pounds in the coming years that the Council would not otherwise, in these challenging times, have to spend.

The Administration is committed to ensuring this funding is not lost through any further delay and that this fantastic scheme, including the additional 100 affordable homes at social rent secured by the Administration, bringing the total number of affordable homes to 612, is delivered.