

COUNCIL – 16 OCTOBER 2024

PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Questions to Portfolio Holders / Committee Chairs

(A) Question from Jennifer Huygen

Could the Council please publish the response to Cllr Robin Parker's supplementary question of the July Council meeting, answering the question on the timeline for the lighting request in Fairlands Valley Park and the request for a regular progress report to Members?

Answer (Councillor Simon Speller):

The response to Councillor Parker's question is for Councillor Parker to share but I can give full assurance to Jennifer Huygen that I will cover the latest position in my Leaders Update later on in this meeting.

(B) Question from Rebecca Watts

Have biodiversity assessments been conducted on the new development sites located in the released green belt land in Stevenage? Will assessments be conducted on future developments located in green belt/grey belt areas?

Answer (Councillor Simon Speller):

Thank you for the question. For recent planning applications in the last few years, yes. Stevenage has been at the leading edge of biodiversity improvements including those related to new developments. Since 2022, we have had a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to secure 10% improvements in biodiversity over what is there before any development. This is known as biodiversity net gain (BNG) and has now been embodied in central government regulations. Since April 2024, there has been a legal requirement that new developments achieve a BNG of 10% improvement over what is there, this can be achieved on and off site, and has been secured on all major developments in Stevenage.

I am proud that Stevenage has a Biodiversity Action Plan, and that Cabinet have approved a further update to this Plan. We will continue to work with Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust, our fantastic green space volunteers, friends of parks and others over the months and years ahead.

(C) Question from Teun van Leeuwen

I appreciate the regeneration of Market Square and the improvement of the streetscape for pedestrians. Despite the guidance on one-way streets in LTN (1/20) cycle infrastructure design, no cycling contraflow has been implemented. This is unfortunate, as the policy guidance in the same document states that the road width allows for this (see para 7.3.4 and 7.3.5). Please, can SBC explain how they would expect a person leaving from the cycle parking of the

indoor market to safely cycle to any destinations inside and outside of the town centre that are South of the indoor market? Please consider that cycling is done by people of all ages and includes tricycles, cycles used for mobility purposes, and cargo bikes.

Answer (Councillor Simon Speller):

Thank you for your comments. The public realm improvements around Market Square improve the appearance and seating options for pedestrians and Market Square users. It is quite a challenging location, in effect, a service road with limited space. The road flow does not change as part of the plans and the limited space does not allow for the safe provision of a cycle route. The current users of the Indoor Market cycle space can continue to walk their cycle to and from the cycle routes nearby.

I am thrilled to see the commencement of the new Beryl Bikes scheme and as a passionate advocate for cycling also continue to work with Cllr Briscoe and others, to look for opportunities to attract funding and support for further cycling improvements.