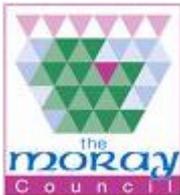


The Moray Council



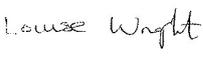
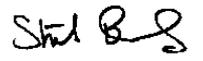
ETM – Elgin Western Distributor Road DMRB Stage 2 Public Consultation Report

Draft

March 2011

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this document is to report on the public consultation that has taken place as part of the DMRB Stage 2 assessment for the Elgin Western Distributor Road project.

The report forms part of a series of documents on the Western Distributor Road project being undertaken by Jacobs Consultancy on behalf of The Moray Council under the auspices of the Elgin Traffic Management framework.

The consultations and exhibitions took place over the week commencing 24th January 2011. Presentations were carried out to Elgin Community Council, Elgin North Forum and Elgin South Forum between Monday 24th and Wednesday 26th January and the public exhibitions were held over Thursday 27th and Friday 28th January 2011.

Following on from the public exhibitions, questionnaires were issued in order to receive further feedback from the public. The response rate for the questionnaires was high, with around one questionnaire returned for every 2.25 members of the public who attended the exhibitions. The questionnaire returns have been analysed and the results are presented in section 5 of this report. The geographic spread of those who attended the exhibitions and questionnaire returns is also presented in section 4 of the report.

The results show that there is no real consensus, from members of the public, regarding the preferred scheme option. Despite half the respondents reporting being affected by congestion Elgin at regular intervals throughout the day, many were hesitant to indicate a preferred scheme option. The comments section of the questionnaire highlights that many are concerned about the longevity of the options in providing a feasible, cost effective, long term solution to traffic issues in Elgin. Many were also concerned about the impact the options would have on residential areas, particularly in the South West area of Elgin.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Background

This report forms part of a series of reports on the Western Distributor Road project being undertaken by Jacobs Consultancy on behalf of The Moray Council under the auspices of the Elgin Traffic Management framework.

A Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) Stage 1 report has been undertaken, building on previous transport planning work using the Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) process. This information formed part of the formal report to the Economic, Infrastructure and Development Committee.

As part of the DMRB Stage 2 assessment, a public consultation was carried out. This report details the outcome of that consultation. It should be read in conjunction with the two other documents that form part of the Stage 2 assessment:

- DMRB Stage 2 Engineering Assessment Report; and
- DMRB Stage 2 Main Issues Report.

2.2 Report Purpose

The purpose of this document is to report on the public consultation that has taken place as part of the DMRB Stage 2 assessment. It includes details of how the consultation was undertaken, the number of people attending, press and media coverage and an analysis of the responses to the consultation.

3 CONSULTATION ARRANGEMENTS

3.1 Introduction

In order to provide a means of engaging with the public in an organised and structured way, discussions were held with officers of The Moray Council. Following these, it was decided that the most effective way of engagement was to provide a public consultation exhibition. The exhibition would be staffed, giving the public the opportunity to ask questions, seek clarification and raise issues. The exhibition was arranged for a two-day period between Thursday 28th and Friday 29th January 2011.

In order to publicise the exhibition, a press release was issued by the Moray Council to the local press on 17th January 2011.

Advertising in the local press was considered to be the most fair and equitable way of bringing the exhibition to the attention of the public, as the potential impacts in terms of changes to journeys covered much if not all of Elgin and beyond.

3.2 The Exhibition

3.2.1 Location and General Arrangements

The Elgin Library was selected as the location for the exhibition, as it is located in the centre of town and is easily accessible by foot, bus or car. The library is also a well used community facility, meaning that the exhibition would receive a large amount of 'pass by' interest from those visiting the library.

3.2.2 Media and Council Members

A session for the press was held on the afternoon of Wednesday 27th January 2011 to promote further coverage during the period of the exhibition.

A session for Council Members was held on the morning of Thursday 28th January 2011 prior to the exhibition being open to the public.

3.3 Community Council Liaison

Prior to the public exhibition taking place, officials from The Moray Council met with representatives of the following Community Councils:

- Elgin Community Council;
- Elgin North Forum; and
- Elgin South Forum.

3.4 Materials

Written information was provided at the exhibition in three forms described in the following sections.

3.4.1 Exhibition Boards

In order to convey the background, process, information, findings and conclusions thus far of the project, a series of 19 exhibition boards were developed. These were

mounted on an exhibition 'island' at A1 format public to walk around and read the information presented. The boards were also shown in slide-show format on a large-screen television. This option was provided for convenience if people wished to remain in one place and watch the boards in a 'cinema' setting. The boards also form part of the material available to the public on the Council's website. A copy of the boards is contained in Appendix A.

3.4.2 Exhibition Handout

A handout was developed, to give those attending the exhibition, a summary version of the salient points of the exhibition boards. A copy of the handout is contained in Appendix B.

3.4.3 Questionnaire

A key element of any public consultation process is capturing feedback, comments, opinions and issues from the public engaged in the process. In order to undertake this, a questionnaire was designed. The questionnaire consisted of a series of questions where respondents were asked to state their preference. At the end of the questionnaire, space was provided for additional information or comments to be provided. A copy of the questionnaire is included in Appendix C.

3.4.4 Website

Throughout the consultation process, the content of the exhibition boards and the summary handout were made available on the Council website. An electronic version of the questionnaire was also available for completion online. The provision of the exhibition material online allowed the public to view the material after the exhibition had finished.

4 EFFECTIVENESS OF CONSULTATION

4.1 Introduction

This section presents evidence regarding the effectiveness of the consultation and sets out the attendance of the exhibitions, in comparison to the subsequent questionnaire return rate.

4.2 Attendance

The level of public interest and attendance at the exhibition was high. On Thursday 28th January 2011 234 people attended. On Friday 29th January 240 people attended. This gives a total attendance of 474 over the two-days. It should be noted that this takes account of multiple attendances as entry was only recorded once for each person.

The geographic spread of exhibition attendees from the wider Moray area is shown in Figure 4.1 and from Elgin specifically in Figure 4.2. The figures show a good level of attendance from the wider Moray area, with the majority of attendees concentrated in Elgin. In particular, there were a greater number of attendees from the South West of Elgin, an area that would be directly impacted by potential strategies.

The geographic spread of questionnaires returned is shown in Figure 4.3, which shows that the majority of responses are concentrated in the South West of Elgin. Figure 4.4 highlights questionnaire returns from those that attended the exhibitions; this figure also shows a greater response rate from exhibition attendees in the South West of Elgin.

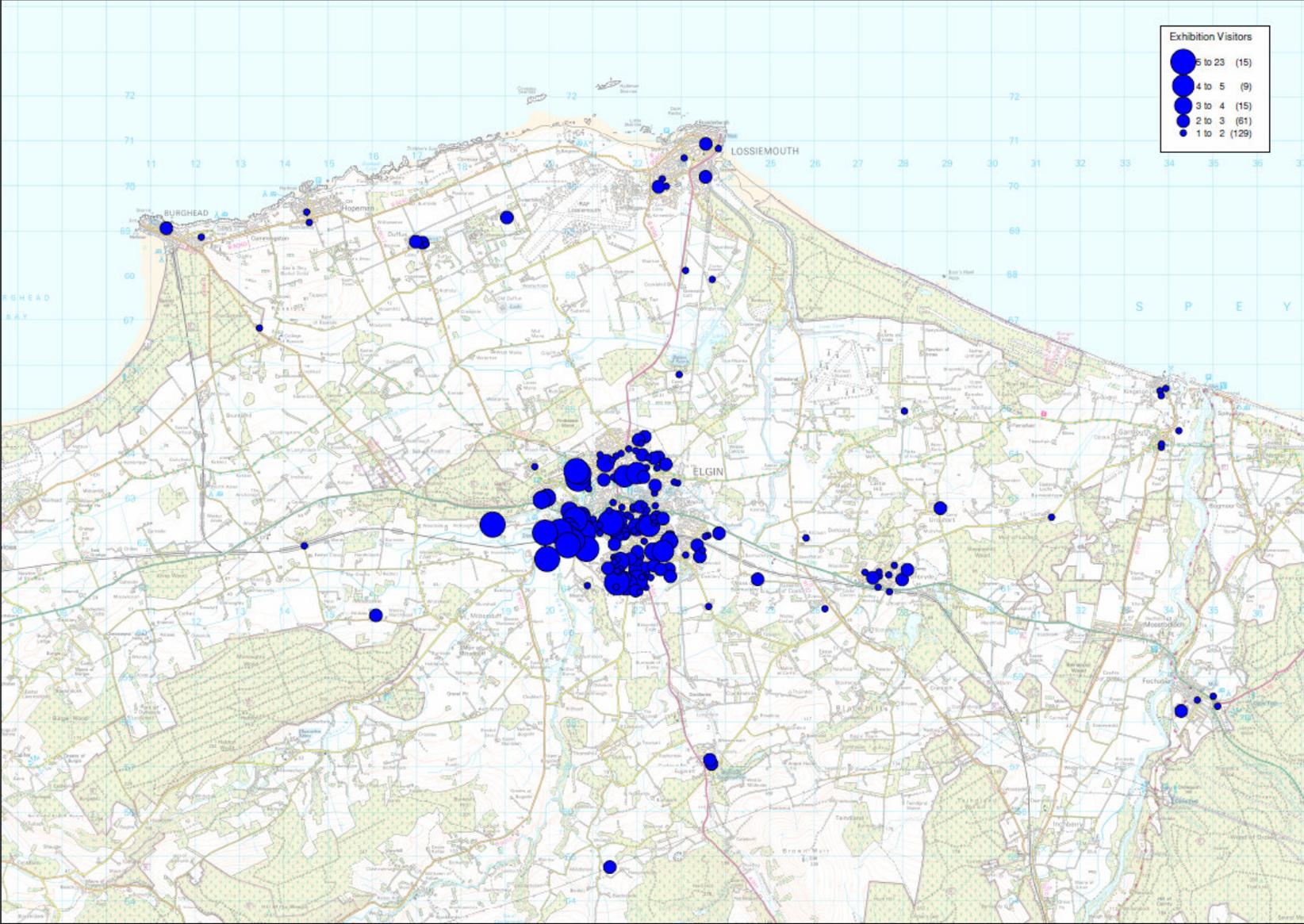


Figure 4.1 Geographic spread of exhibition attendees

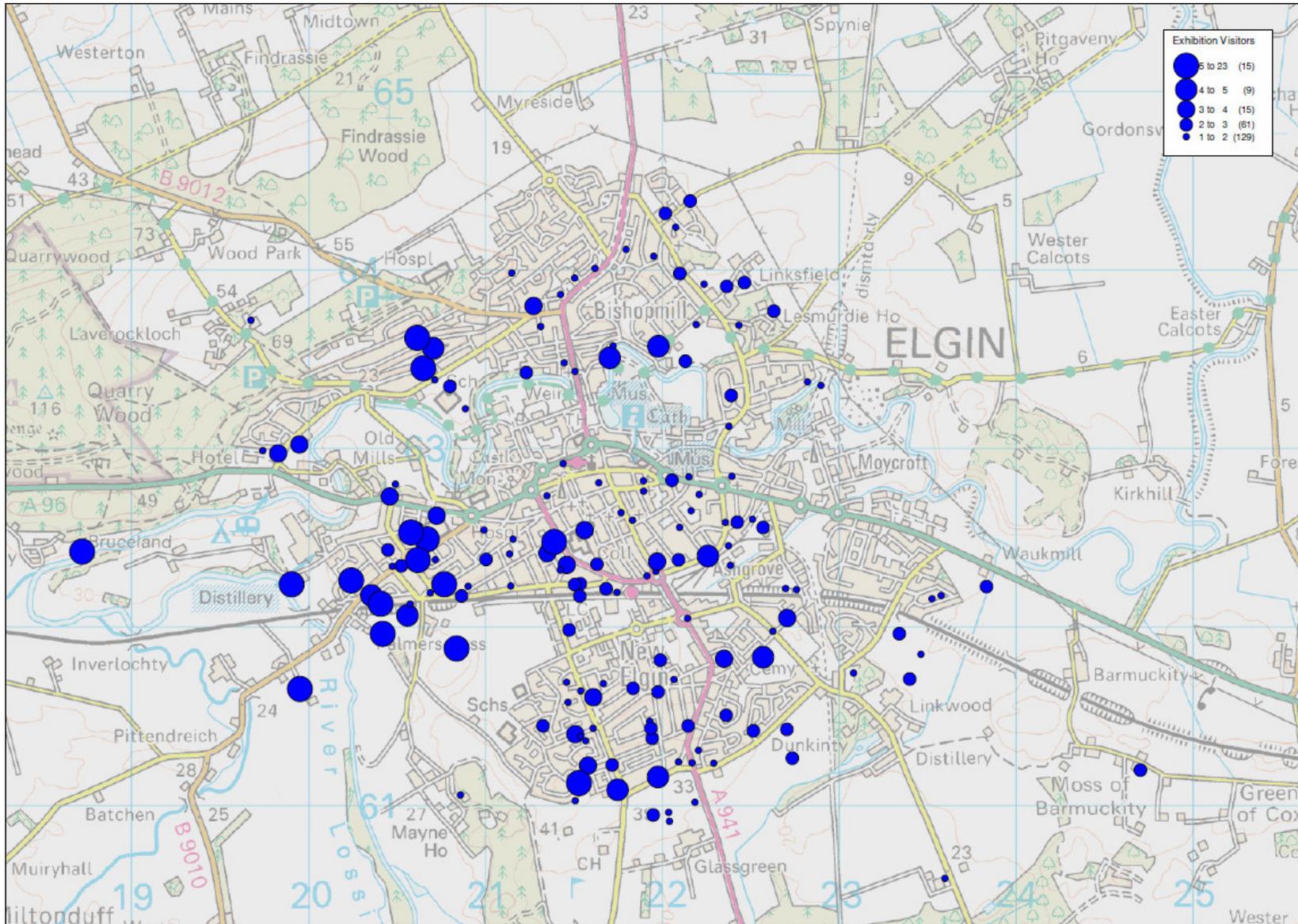


Figure 4.2 Exhibition attendees in Elgin

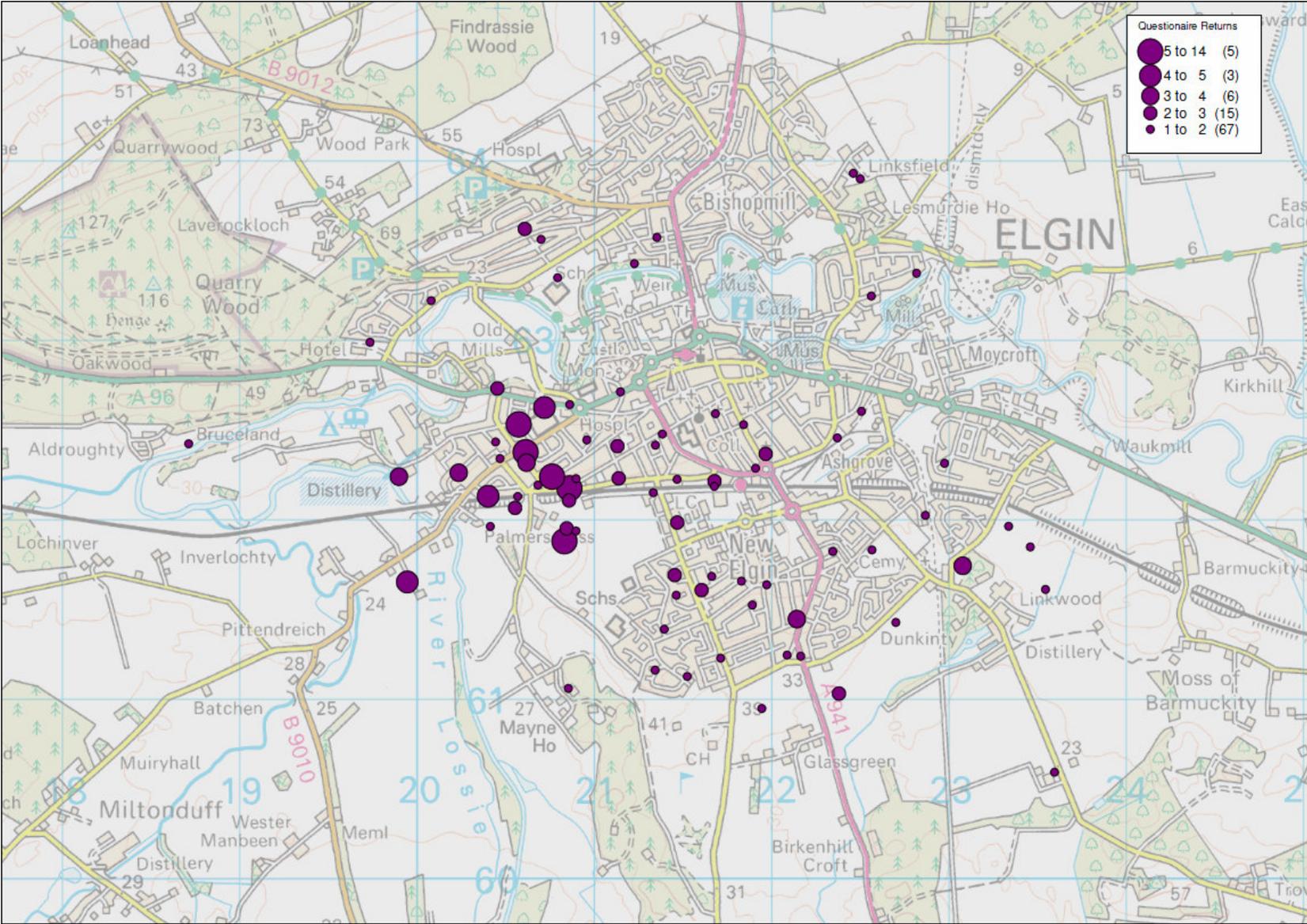


Figure 4.3 Questionnaire returns

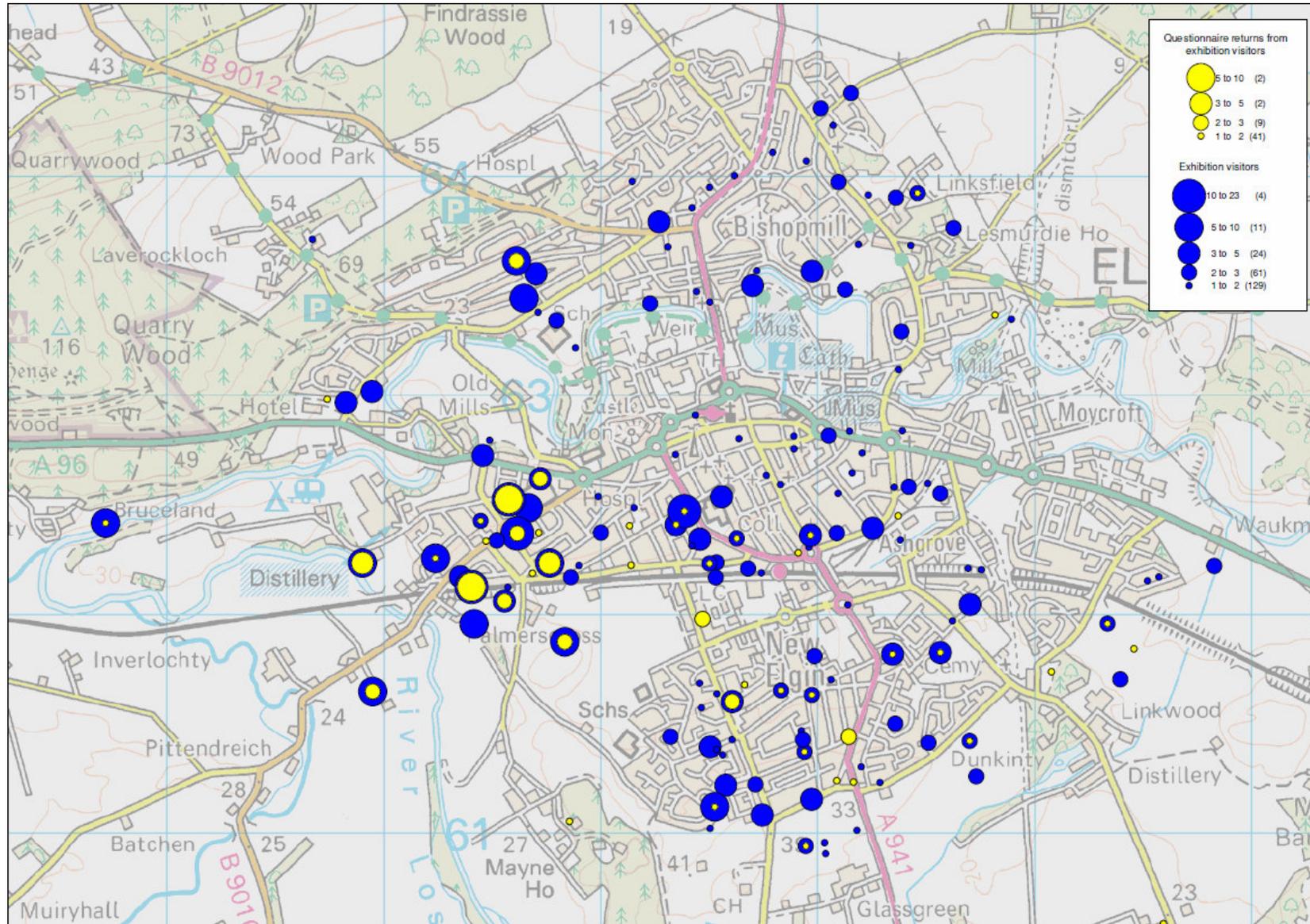


Figure 4.4 Questionnaire returns of exhibition attendees

4.3 Questionnaire Returns

The questionnaire returns were made either in hard copy format or electronically via the Council's website. Submissions were also made via letter and these have been included below. The number of questionnaire returns is set out in the table below.

Table 1 Questionnaire Returns

Process	Number of Returns
Written copy submitted during the exhibition	23
Electronic submission via the Council's website	82
Questionnaire return (by letter or similar)	74
Non-questionnaire return (by letter or similar)	3

A full analysis of the questionnaires is provided in Section 5.

The ratio of questionnaire returns to the number attending the exhibition is one response to every 2.25 attendees.

4.4 Media Coverage

Following the press briefing held on Wednesday 27th January 2011, large and prominent articles about the proposals were carried by both the Northern Scot and the Press and Journal.

5 ANALYSIS OF QUESTIONNAIRE RETURNS

5.1 Introduction

This section details the results of the questionnaire, on a question by question basis, followed by an analysis of the survey results.

5.2 Questionnaire Results

The questionnaire comprised seven questions. A copy of the questionnaire is available in Appendix C.

Question 1 asked whether the response was from an individual or a group or organisation. The majority of the 179 questionnaire returns were made by individuals, with six responses made on behalf of a group or organisation.

Question 2 asked for address details of the respondent. This has permitted the geographical spread of responses to be analysed as shown previously in Figures 4.1 to 4.4.

Question 3 asked if / where the exhibition material had been viewed. A large proportion of respondents, 61%, viewed the exhibition in person at Elgin Library; 18% viewed the exhibition online on the Council's website; 16% of respondents viewed the exhibition both online and in person and only 5% of respondents did not view the exhibition at all.

The extent to which people are currently affected by congestion in Elgin was considered in Question 4. Figure 5.1 highlights the percentage of respondents affected by congestion during the weekday and Figure 5.2 during the weekend. Half the respondents, 52%, reported being regularly affected at certain times of the weekday and 43% during the weekend. In comparison, 25% of respondents were rarely or never affected by congestion during the weekday and 31% during the weekends. The percentage of respondents who were occasionally affected by congestion was 23% during the weekdays and 25% during the weekends.

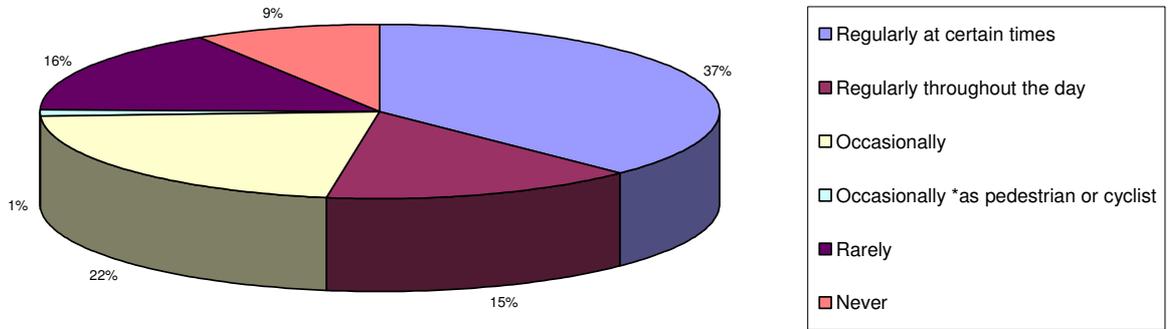


Figure 5.1 Question 4 - (Weekday) To what extent do you consider traffic congestion in Elgin affects you at present?

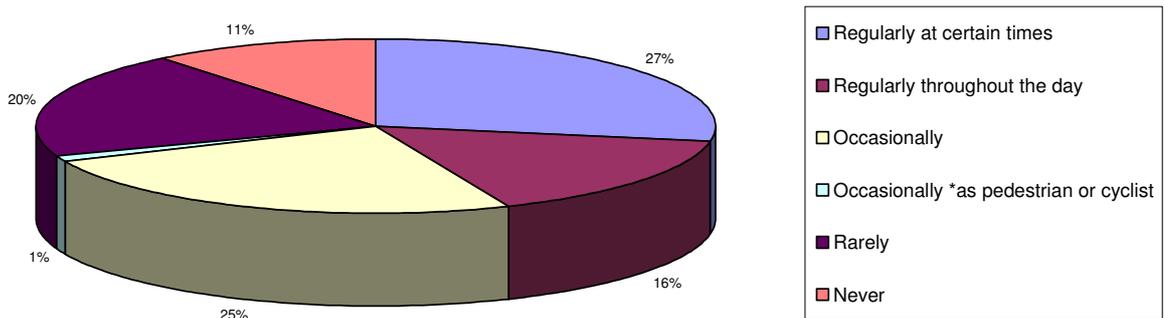


Figure 5.2 Question 4 - (Weekend) To what extent do you consider traffic congestion in Elgin affects you at present?

Following on from this, Question 5 asked respondents to rate how much they agreed or disagreed with the statement that “*the current road network in Elgin will be capable of dealing with future transport demands*”. The results are shown in Figure 5.3 below. Given that the majority of respondents felt they were regularly affected by traffic congestion in Elgin, Question 5 established that 39% of respondents strongly disagreed and 35% of respondents disagreed that the current road network in Elgin will be capable of dealing with future transport demands. Just 15% agreed and 6% strongly agreed with the statement.

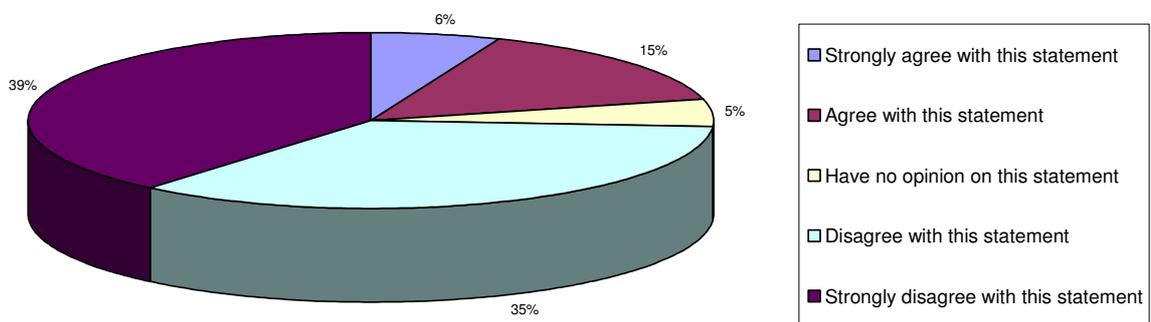


Figure 5.3 Question 5 - “The current road network in Elgin will be capable of dealing with future transport demands”

Question 6 of the questionnaire highlighted that opinion was split among the four route choices as the preferred strategy, with approximately 25% of people preferring to not progress any of the options. However, considering the written comments, it is clear that many people were reluctant to support any of the available options because they would prefer a full bypass to go ahead. The rural outer route was the most popular route choice, with 25% preferring it, compared to 19% preferring the existing network enhancements, 17% keen to take the rural inner route forward and 13% preferred the urban inner route (Figure 5.4).

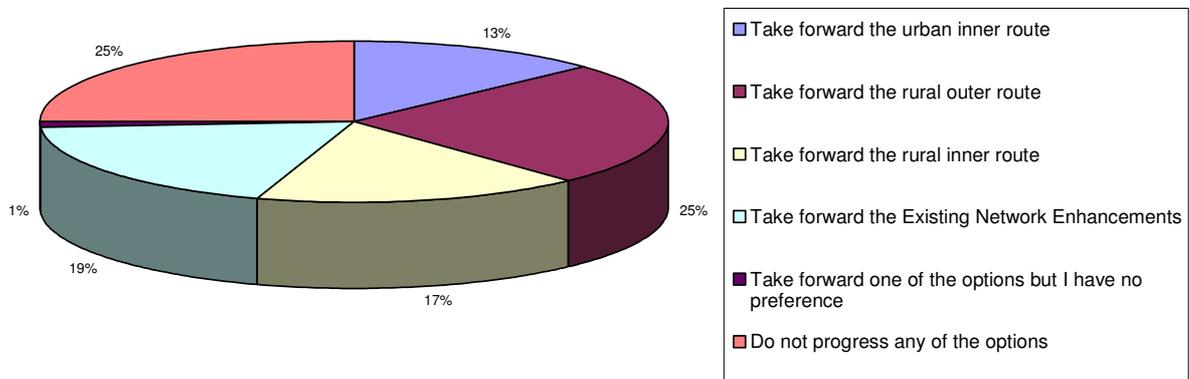


Figure 5.4 Question 6 - What is your preferred strategy?

Question 7 provided an opportunity for respondents to outline any additional information or comments that they would like considered. The responses from this section were grouped into nine distinct themes:

- Cycle, pedestrian and public transport facilities;
- School safety;
- Environment (air, vibration, noise, wildlife);
- Traffic and residential concerns;
- Long term option / Bypass;
- Compulsory purchase / demolition;
- Not cost effective;
- Town centre improvement; and
- Lack of need for the scheme now / future.

Respondents often discussed a number of issues in their responses. Figure 5.5 below shows how frequently each topic was mentioned.

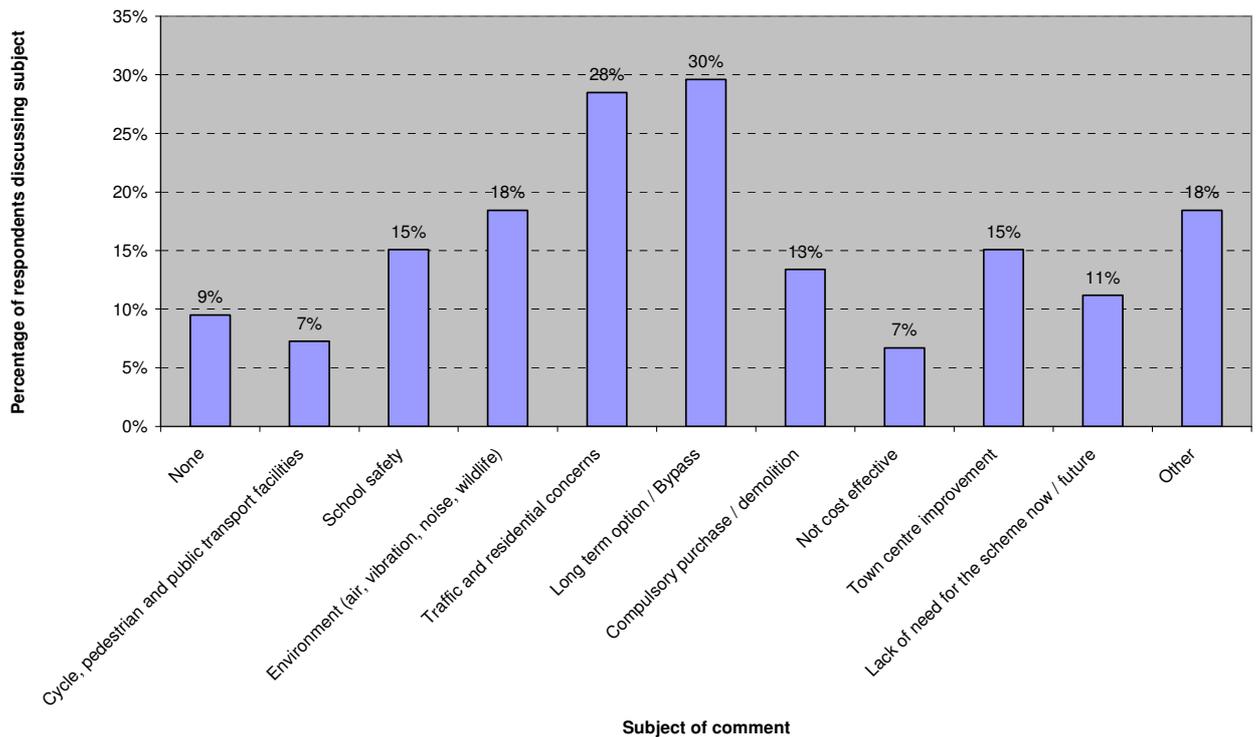


Figure 5.5 Question 7 – Summary of comments received

The most frequent theme commented upon was an eagerness for a feasible, cost effective long term option to be taken forward, however for many this meant a bypass of Elgin. There was a general feeling from many of these respondents that one of the Outer options should be taken forward, as this could form part of a bypass in the future. Other respondents expressed a preference for none of the schemes to be taken forward and the money saved to be used for a bypass at some point in the future.

The second most frequent issue raised in Question 7 was a concern about the increased congestion in existing residential areas and the impact on residents if an urban scheme was progressed. There were concerns about an increase in pollution, a reduction in air quality, an increase in noise levels and the effect that traffic would have on their properties, either through a decrease in property value or the impact of vibrations on structures. Many people were also concerned that residential streets being proposed as part of an urban route would not be able to cope with the level of traffic and the fact that parking may have to be restricted. There were also concerns about the increase in traffic impacting on safety for school children on Edgar Road.

A number of respondents discussed issues relating to the town centre, with the number of pedestrian crossings and roundabouts often cited as a reason for the increased level of congestion. A number of people suggested that these should be reduced. There was however support for town centre road improvements.

There was support for a new crossing over the railway, although some debate over where it should be located.

There was concern that although a consultation process was being carried out, that the preferred route had already been chosen, especially as a number of properties have already been purchased by The Moray Council. There were also concerns that the urban route had previously been proposed and rejected and a feeling that this option should not have been reintroduced.

While there was support for the scheme, several respondents pointed out that traffic in Elgin may reduce with the closure of the RAF airfields and as such, these schemes would be superfluous. People were also concerned that even if the scheme is required that there may not be any money available for it.

5.3 Question Analysis

Initial analysis shows that there is no clear consensus regarding the preferred option. This section will consider the other factors that may influence the preferred option of respondents.

5.3.1 Analysis based on exhibition attendance / material viewed

Of the respondents who did not attend the consultation, 49% preferred not to progress any of the options; this was closely followed by 38% whose preferred option was to take forward the existing network enhancements (ENE) (Figure 5.6). Similarly, of the respondents that viewed the exhibition online, 30% preferred the option of not progressing any of the schemes; this was followed by 26% whose preferred option was the rural outer route and 19% who supported ENE (Figure 5.7).

Respondents who attended the exhibition in person demonstrated a more equal split in opinion between the route options; with 29% preferring the rural outer route, 20% none of the options, 19% rural inner route, 16% urban inner and 16% ENE (Figure 5.8). Those that attended both the exhibition in person and online, opinion was similarly split between the route options; with 30% preferring the urban inner route, 26% the rural outer route, 22% the rural inner route, 11% do nothing and 11% ENE (Figure 5.9).

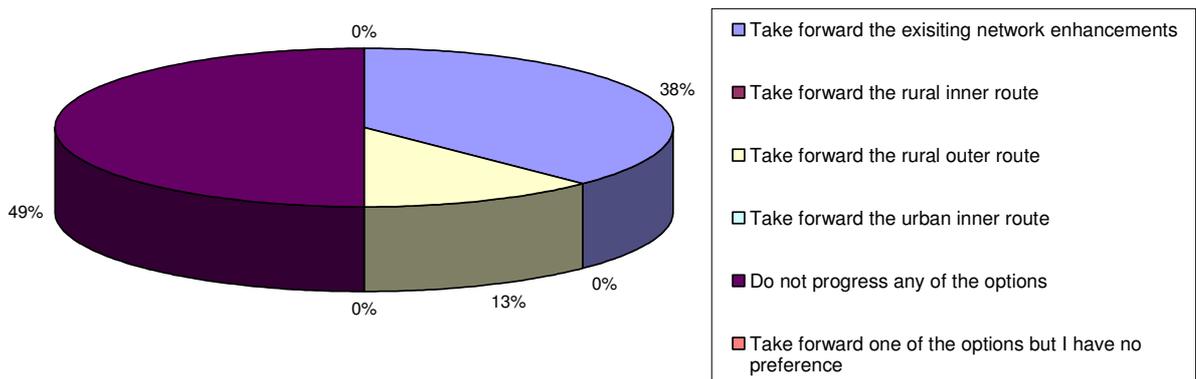


Figure 5.6 Preferred option of respondents who did not attend the exhibition

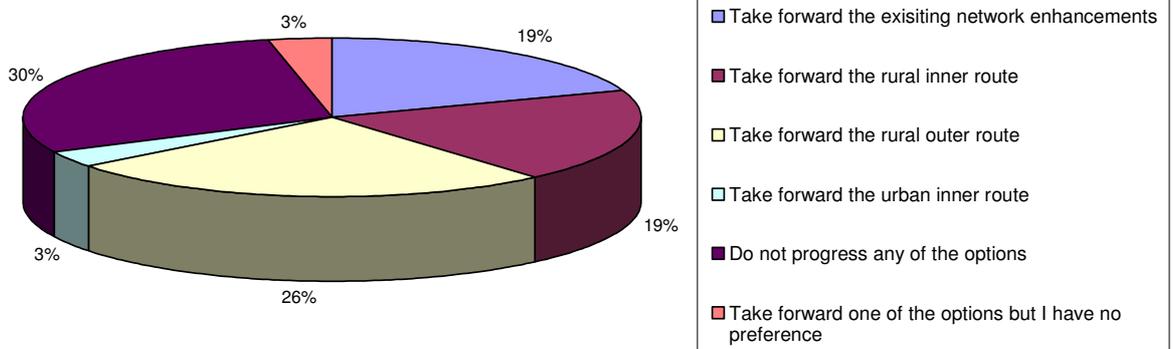


Figure 5.7 Preferred option of respondents that viewed the exhibition online

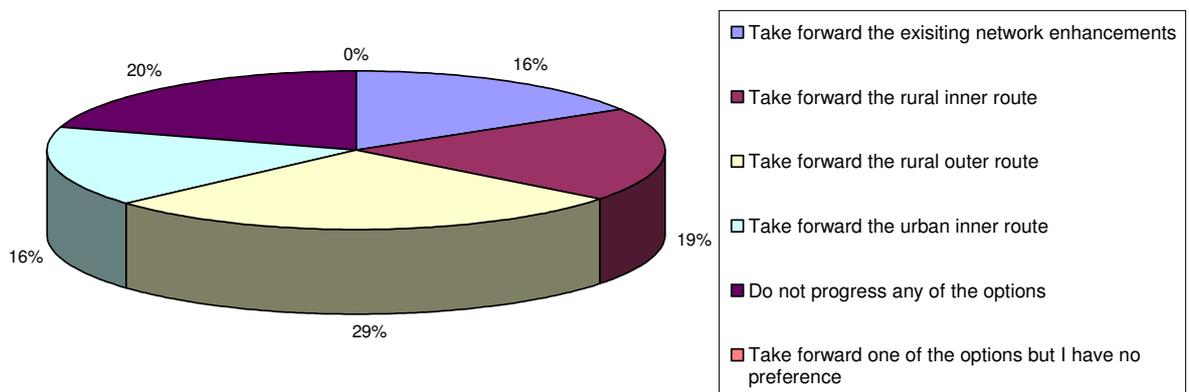


Figure 5.8 Preferred option of respondents who viewed the exhibition in person

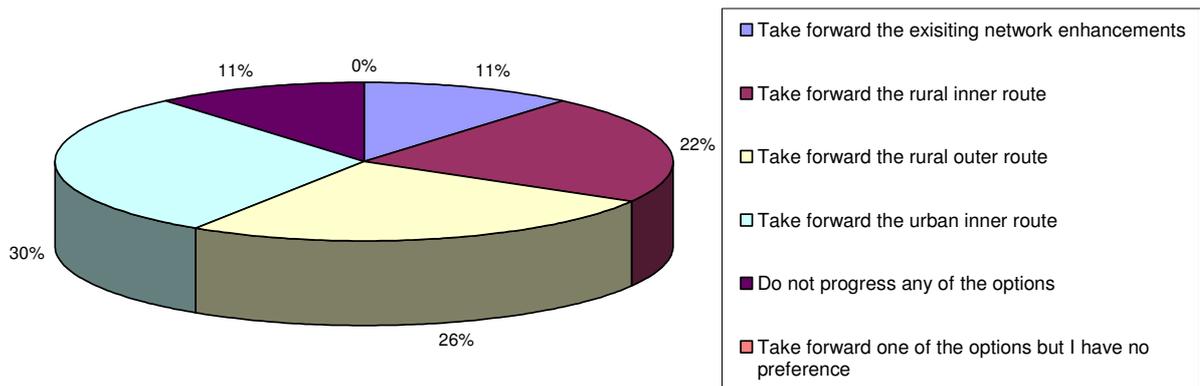


Figure 5.9 Preferred option of respondents who viewed the exhibition in person and online

5.3.2 Analysis based on the affect of congestion

Respondents who are rarely or never affected by congestion in Elgin, during the weekday, are less likely to see the need for any scheme, which was reflected in the survey, with 50% stating their preferred option would be not to progress any of the options (Figure 5.10). This was also the case for respondents only occasionally affected by congestion (Figure 5.11). It was only respondents who stated that they were regularly affected by congestion that were willing to consider route options; a majority of 38% preferred the rural outer route option (Figure 5.12). The preferred options followed a similar pattern for those affected by congestion at the weekends as shown in Figures 5.13, 5.14 and 5.15.

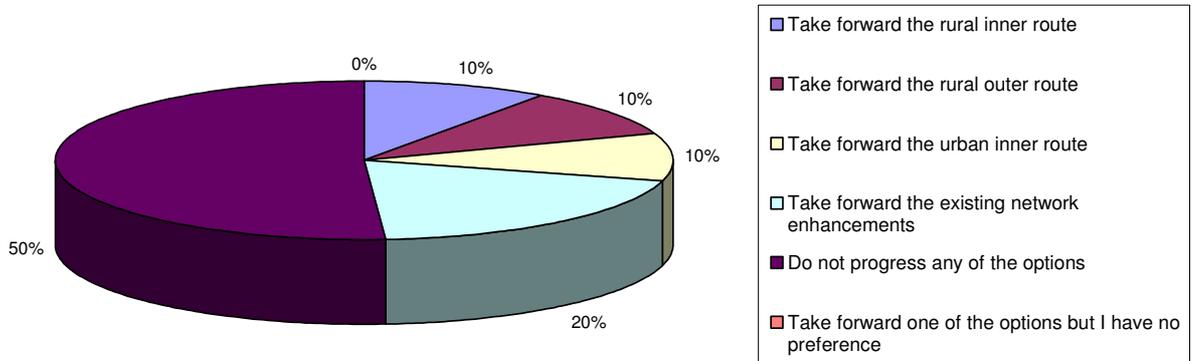


Figure 5.10 Preferred option of respondents who are rarely / never affected by congestion in Elgin (Weekday)

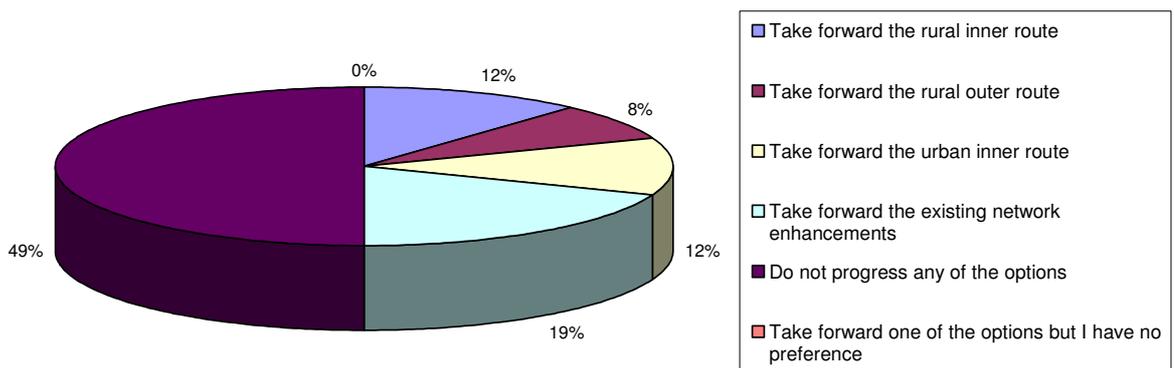


Figure 5.11 Preferred option of those occasionally affected by congestion in Elgin (weekday)

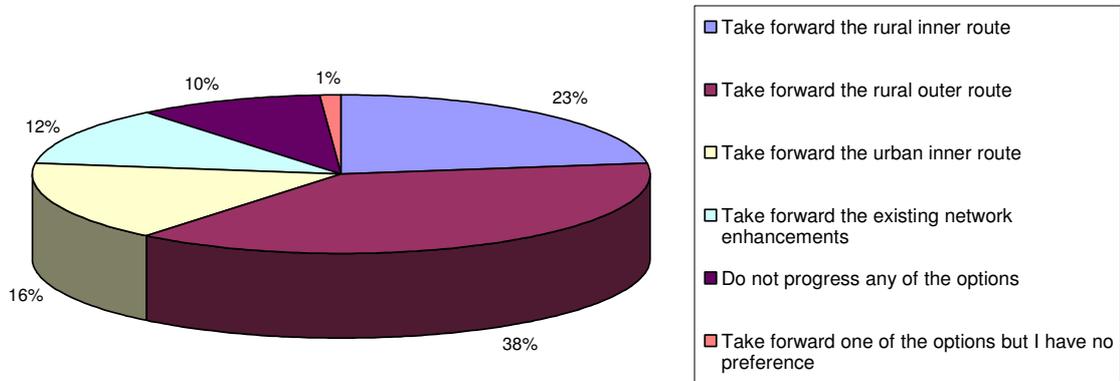


Figure 5.12 Preferred option of respondents regularly affected by congestion in Elgin (weekday)

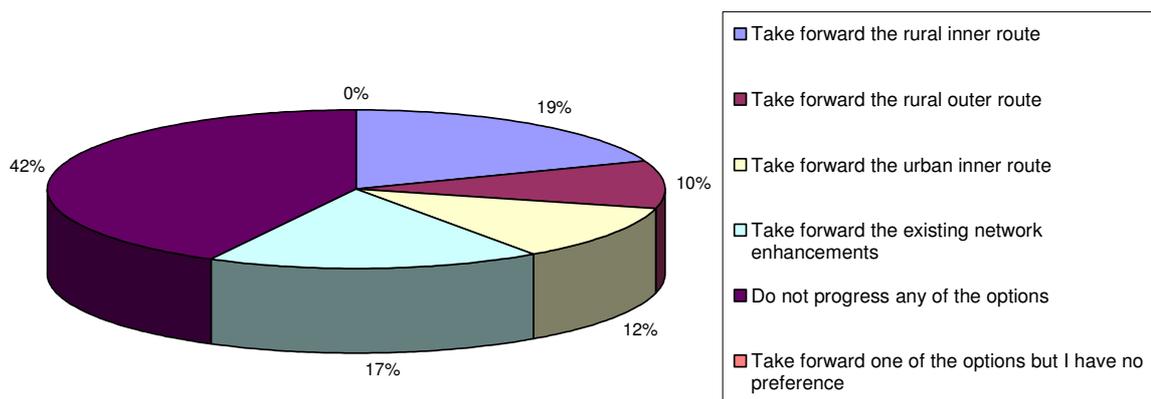


Figure 5.13 Preferred option of respondents rarely / never affected by congestion in Elgin (weekend)

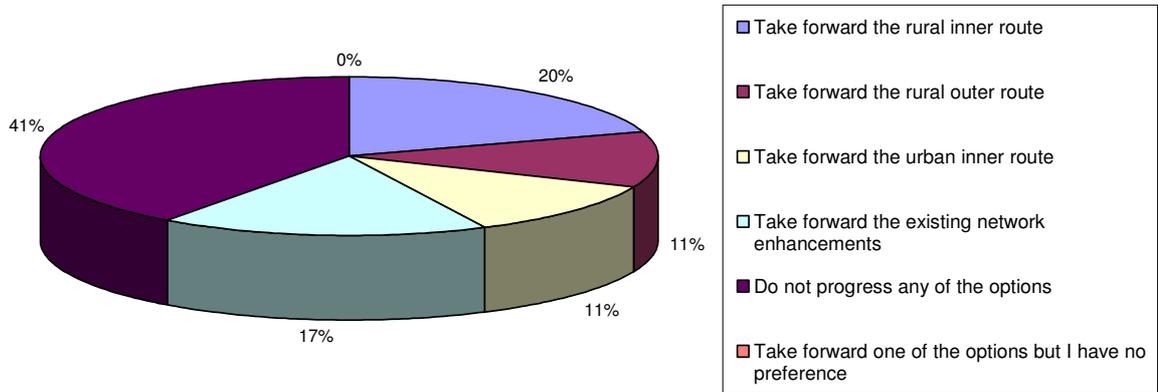


Figure 5.14 Preferred option of respondents who are occasionally affected by congestion in Elgin (weekend)

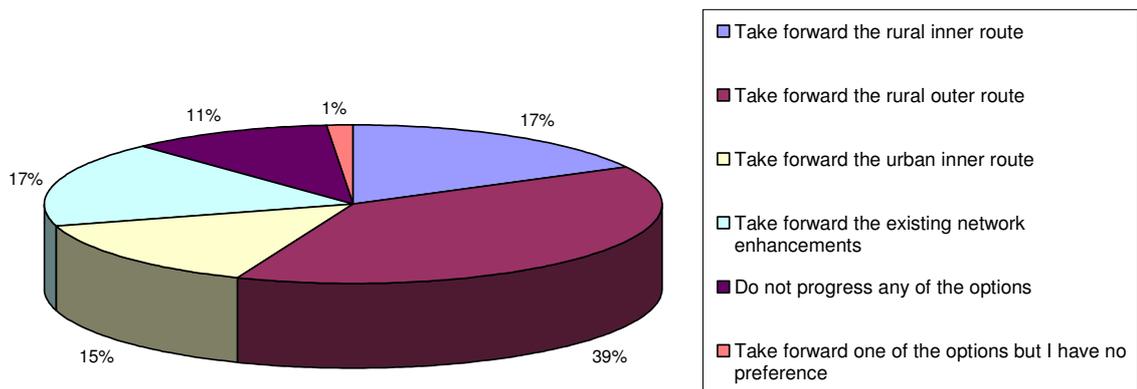


Figure 5.15 Preferred option of those regularly affected by congestion in Elgin (weekend)

5.3.3 Analysis based on the statement “The current road network in Elgin will be capable of dealing with future transport demands”.

The preferred option of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “The current road network in Elgin will be capable of dealing with future transport demands” was not to progress any of the options (Figures 5.16 and 5.17). Those that disagreed and strongly disagreed with the statement, again, showed a greater split in opinion regarding options to progress; with 24% preferring the rural inner route, 23% the ENE and 22% the rural outer route (Figure 5.18 and 5.19). Of those respondents who had no opinion on the statement, 49% preferred the urban inner route (Figure 5.20).

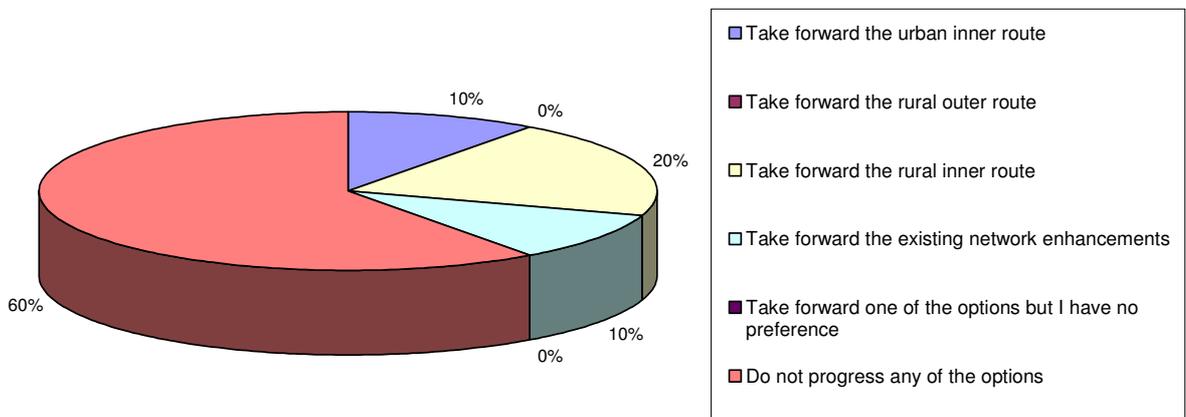


Figure 5.16 Preferred options of respondents who strongly agree with the statement

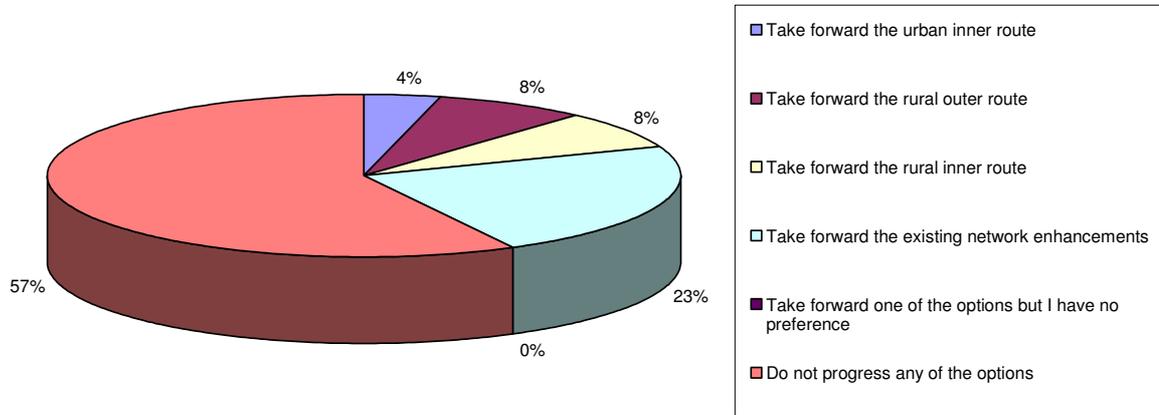


Figure 5.17 Preferred options of respondents who agree with the statement

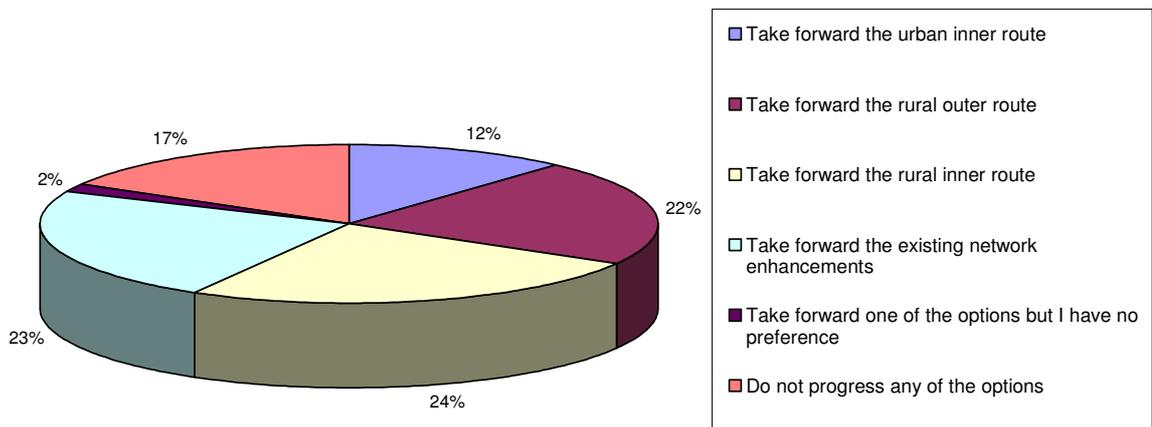


Figure 5.18 Preferred options of respondents that disagree with the statement

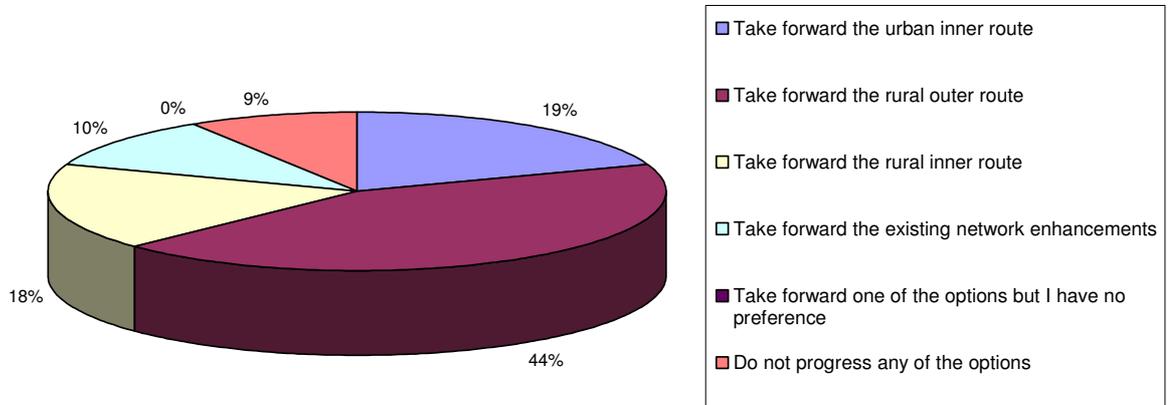


Figure 5.19 Preferred option of respondents that strongly disagree

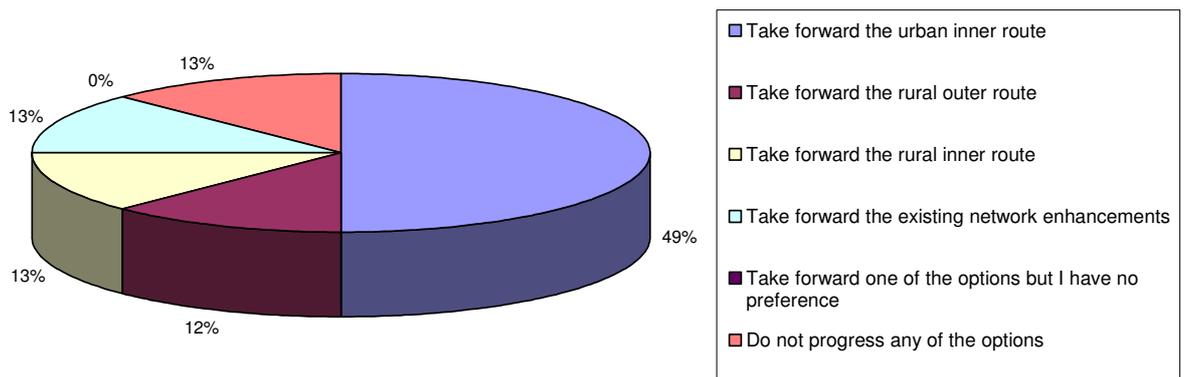


Figure 5.20 Preferred option of respondents with no opinion on the statement

5.3.4 Preferred option based on postcode area

The preferred option of respondents from postcodes in the South West of Elgin was the rural outer route, as shown in Figure 5.21. The main difference in route preference between residents in the south west of Elgin and all other areas was a greater preference to take forward the ENE and less of a preference for the urban inner route; this can be seen in Figures 5.22 and 5.23.

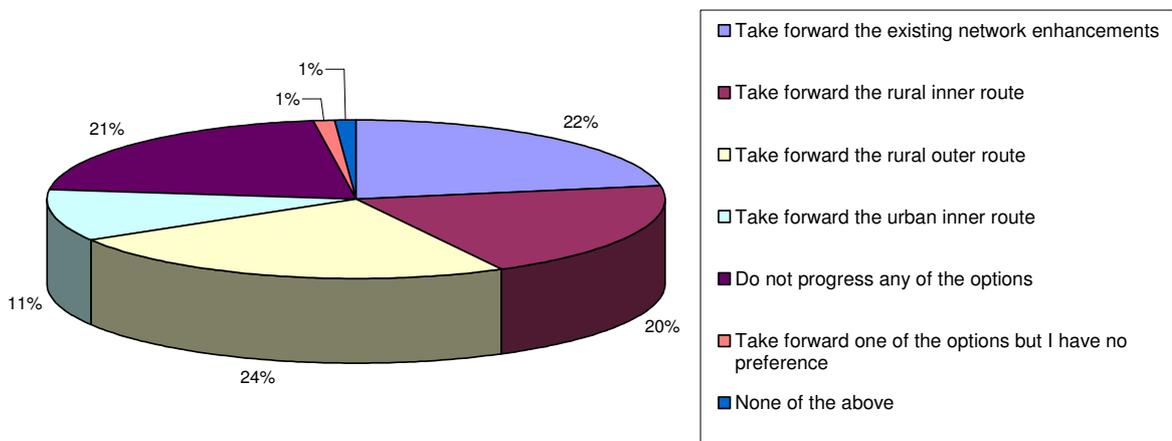


Figure 5.21 Preferred option of respondents from South West Elgin postcode area

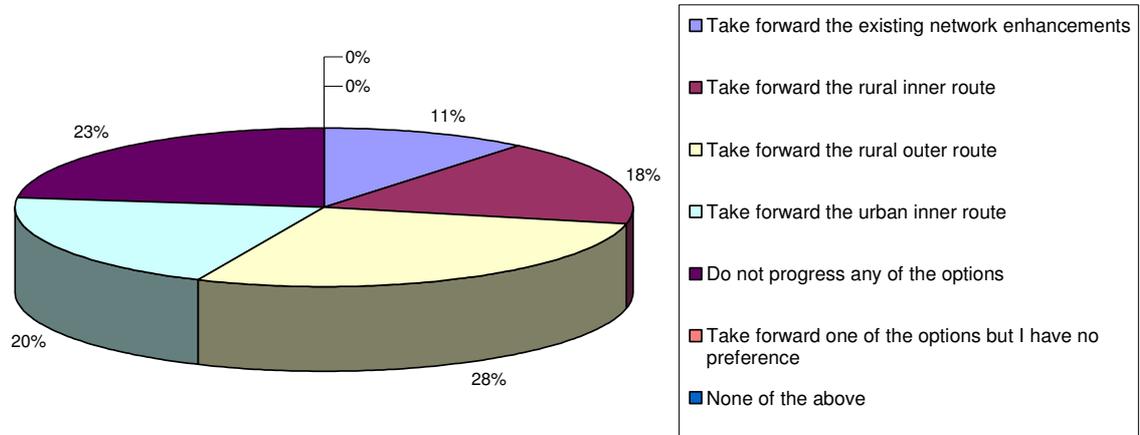


Figure 5.22 Preferred option of respondents in all other postcode areas

Following on from this, a greater proportion of respondents from the south west of Elgin had concerns regarding the impact additional traffic would have on residential areas, as shown in Figure 5.23. The majority of respondents from all other areas were keen that the option that should go forward would provide the best long term solution and this is shown in Figure 5.24.

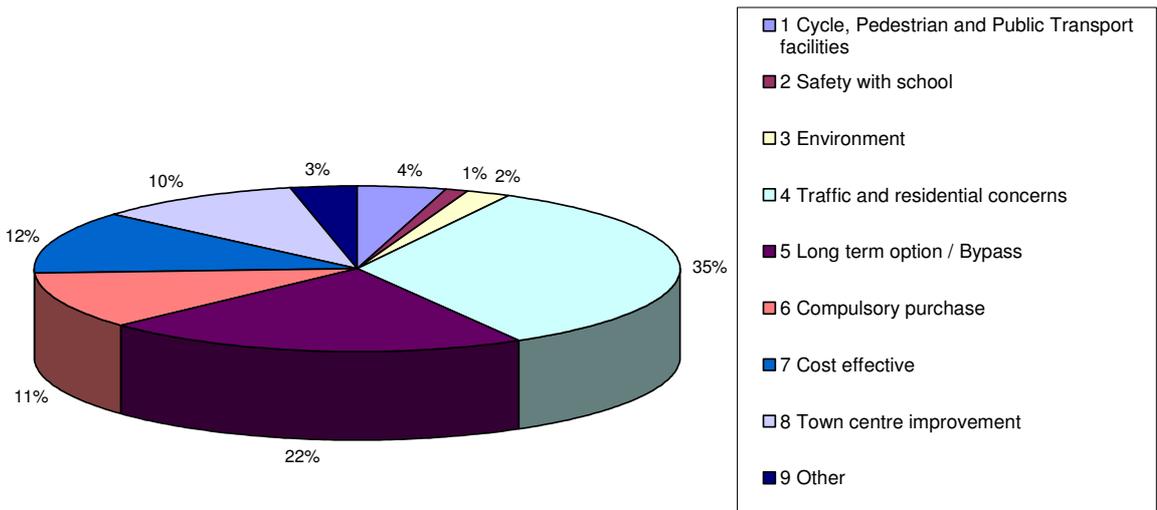


Figure 5.23 Comments of respondents from South West Elgin postcode area

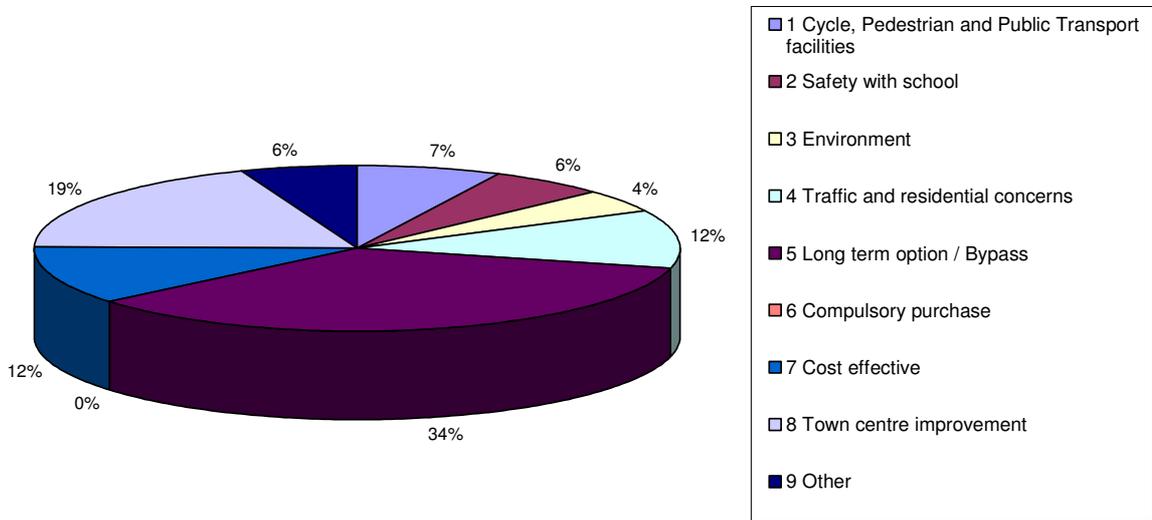


Figure 5.24 Comments of respondents in all other postcode areas

5.4 Commercial Interests

A number of responses to the public consultation were received from or on behalf of companies that operate in the Elgin area.

Two of these responses were from businesses that were concerned about the impact the options would have on their business.

6 SUMMARY

In summary, the questionnaires indicate that there is no real consensus regarding the preferred option to be taken forward.

The results of the questionnaires indicated that:

- The majority of respondents viewed the exhibition in person;
- Half the respondents reported being regularly affected by congestion in Elgin;
- Following on from this, most respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that the current road network in Elgin will be capable of dealing with future transport demands.
- Opinion was split relatively evenly across the design options, with roughly 25% of people preferring to not progress any of the options. Considering the written comments from Question 7, many respondents were reluctant to support any of the options, instead favouring a bypass going forward;
- The main theme of the comments called for a feasible, cost effective, long term option, either by saving money and building a bypass later or by considering the outer routes as the first stage of a bypass.
- Many people also highlighted a concern regarding the potential impact on residential areas, including issues such as lost of property value, an increase in traffic on unsuitable streets, air and noise quality and safety issues.

Analysis of the results of the questionnaires indicated that:

- Respondents who had attended the exhibitions were more likely to prefer an option, however, there was no consensus on a specific scheme;
- Respondents from the South West of Elgin had concerns regarding the impact of additional traffic on residential areas and the preferred option was the rural outer route.
- Respondents from all other areas preferred ENE and were keen that the best long term option should go forward.

APPENDIX A EXHIBITION BOARDS

APPENDIX B EXHIBITION HANDOUT

APPENDIX C QUESTIONNAIRE