

CONFIDENTIAL

ITEM: 19
PAGE: 1

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**REPORT TO: ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE ON
28 APRIL 2004**

**SUBJECT: PROPOSED NEW ROAD LINK - EDGAR ROAD TO A96,
ELGIN**

BY: DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

1. Reason for Report

1.1 The Committee is asked to agree to Officers carrying out public consultation on a recommended route for a new road link between Edgar Road and the A96 in Elgin.

2. Background

2.1 The proposed road link from the west end of Edgar Road, northwards across the railway to Wittet Drive, and then joining the A96 on the West Road is a fundamental part of the *Elgin Roads Strategy* within the Council's Development Plan. The strategy takes account of the likely impacts of development and traffic growth within the town and proposes a number of improvements to the road network to enable developments to proceed.

2.2 The release of significant land holdings around the south and east of the town for residential development has been conditional upon specified road works being carried out to improve traffic flows around the periphery of the town, and also from the periphery into the town centre. Clearly one of the major problems with the road network in Elgin is the lack of adequate road crossings over the railway to the south of the town centre. The Roads Strategy in the Development Plan has therefore included proposals to relieve the present congested route of New Elgin Main Street in particular, and ultimately to provide additional railway crossings to remove pressure from the single bridge between the Laichmoray and Edgar Road roundabouts.

- 2.3 Transport assessments carried out for successive development proposals in Elgin South and in the Edgar Road and Linkwood Road areas, consistently indicate that junction improvements at the Laichmoray Roundabout and the Edgar Road Roundabout alone will not provide sufficient capacity for the predicted future increases in traffic. When development proposals in this part of Elgin have been assessed for traffic impact, the current approach is for the Council to accept financial contributions from prospective developers towards a wider traffic solution. The size of any contribution still must be based on the likely impact that each development would have on the two roundabout junctions, but the agreement with each developer is based on the Council being able to allocate the funds towards the provision of works elsewhere in Elgin, provided it relieves traffic congestion in the area of the existing New Elgin Road railway bridge.
- 2.4 The Development Plan identifies the following proposed road improvements which collectively would provide an effective new crossing of the railway, and a also a new road link between the retail area of Edgar Road, the A96 and much of the west of the town:
- TSP 12 Edgar Road extension – Wittet Drive*
TSP 13 New Railway Bridge Wittet Drive / Edgar Road extension
TSP 14 New Roundabout A96 / Wittet Drive
- These are identified on Plan D in **Appendix 1**.
- 2.5 The Development Plan acknowledges that the line of the road shown is indicative only and an examination of alternative routes in this vicinity has recently been carried out to determine the best scheme to enable consultation on the proposals to begin. Plans indicating some of the alternatives examined and the Officers' preferred options are contained in **Appendix 1**.
- 2.6 The proposed route passes through a designated residential site R9 Bilbohall North. The Development Plan states that "the site is partially constrained by the proposals for a road link from Edgar Road to Wittet Drive (proposed TSP13)". The Council has now received a planning application for this site and the prospective developer has requested that the extent of land acquisition for the road link should be determined as soon as possible in order that the proposed residential development may proceed. It is anticipated that the route through the site can be determined after the consultation process on the scheme is reported back to this Committee.
- 2.7 The proposed road link between Edgar Road and Wittet Drive (TSP 12) has been assessed primarily giving consideration to the likely impact on existing residential properties on Wittet Drive and Wards Road, the likely impact on the natural wetland areas at The Wards (policies ENV 2 and CF2) and estimated cost. The implications for achieving an acceptable bridge over the railway are also a major influencing factor. All of the alternatives examined would operate similarly in terms of traffic benefits.

- 2.8 The preferred option for this link would require the construction of a new roundabout on the extended line of Edgar Road, with the proposed route turning to the north at this point to cross the railway and join Wittet Drive. At this point the route differs slightly from the line shown indicatively in the Development Plan but does provide more flexibility for future road links, possibly to an Elgin Bypass to access future residential development at R15, Bilbohall South to improve access to the High School and also minimise the effect on the natural wetlands. No consultation has taken place with others yet regarding the impact on the wetlands, but it is hoped that moving the route slightly further away from the site than the proposal shown in the Development Plan will be welcomed. A number of options were explored for the route from this point northwards to Wittet Drive, including one which would pass entirely to the west of the town as a whole (see Plan C in **Appendix 1**). This route would almost coincide with a possible line for part of an Elgin Bypass. Although recent detailed traffic assessments have not been carried out, it is reasonable to conclude that this would not be an effective traffic solution to the problems anticipated at the east end of Edgar Road, and construction costs would be relatively high due to the additional river and railway bridges (£8M to £10M). The preferred option follows the line shown in the Development Plan over the railway and joining the bottom end of Wittet Drive.
- 2.9 Levels at the proposed railway bridge would require Wards Road to be closed to traffic. Traffic volumes on The Wards would reduce and drivers would be encouraged to use the new, more suitable, road link. Local access for some residents would be slightly more awkward as a result, but any necessary detours would be short. Garden ground would need to be acquired from some properties at the south end of Wittet Drive and existing driveways would have to be satisfactorily accommodated by careful design at the detailed stage.
- 2.10 Wittet Drive is a residential road, but due to its carriageway width and geographical location it has operated effectively as a distributor road for the south-west quadrant of the town, curtailed mainly by the inadequate junction with the A96 Trunk Road. On-street parking for the most part is unrestricted on Wittet Drive despite the fact that most properties already have either private drives or rear access for vehicles. It is anticipated that this situation would have to be reviewed and it is anticipated that satisfactory arrangements can be accommodated for residents.

- 2.11 Options have also been examined for the proposed new roundabout at the junction of Wittet Drive and the A96 (TSP 14). The Development Plan indicates a new junction on the site of the existing one. The existing junction is very constrained, with properties close to both roads and significant level problems immediately on the north side of the A96. The likely cost of this junction improvement is in the order of £1M. Another option would be to construct a new roundabout on the A96 to the west of the existing junction as shown on Plan B in **Appendix 1**. This would require the acquisition of two existing properties near the bend in Wittet Drive together with parts of a few gardens. It would however leave a larger number of houses near the existing junction unaffected and would remove all through traffic from a number of frontages at the north end of Wittet Drive. This option would provide more flexibility for an effective junction design on the Trunk Road which would minimise delays for both A96 and distributor road traffic. It is estimated that the cost of this option would be in the order of £1M to £1.5M. It is proposed to consult on both of these options. Construction costs quoted for any elements of this scheme are in broad outline only at this stage.
- 2.12 The town suffers from a number of “bottlenecks” both on the Trunk Road and on the local road network. No one improvement scheme will solve all of these problems, but the scheme under consideration here would provide significant improvements to traffic flows, not least because it includes a new major railway crossing. There would inevitably be some disruption and inconvenience to some residents in the west end of Elgin but all steps would be taken at every stage to minimise this and to deal with ensuing problems sympathetically.
- 2.13 The collection of developer contributions towards the cost of this scheme continues. A number of major development proposals are still being assessed and negotiations will continue to seek fair financial contributions from developers, commensurate with the scale of the traffic impact that their proposals are likely to have on the existing road network. It is unlikely that developer contributions alone will be sufficient to fund this improvement. At present there is no allocation in the Capital Plan for the scheme, and subject to approval of this report and to future consultations, this will be the subject of a future report to this Committee.
- 2.14 At this stage only approval in principle is being sought for officers to take the recommended scheme to consultation. Clearly it is proposed that, subject to Committee approval, the first and most urgent consultations would be carried out individually with those property owners who would be directly affected by the proposals. After that, consultations would require to be widespread with the Community Council, the Scottish Executive, various affected groups, and a comprehensive public exhibition of proposals. The outcome of the consultation process would be reported back to this Committee.

3. The Proposals

- 3.1 It is proposed that the Director of Environmental Services be instructed to carry out public consultation on the preferred route of a Wittet Drive Link Road as set out in para 2.14 of this report, and as shown on Plans A & B in **Appendix 1**, and to report the outcome of the process to a future meeting of this Committee.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 The study of options for this scheme was carried out in-house and costs are contained within the £50,000 allocated from the **2003/2004 Capital Allocation** for Wittet Drive Link investigations. Future consultation work can be accommodated within this same budget heading if carry-over for 2004/2005 is made available.
- 4.2 There are no further cost implications for the road scheme at this stage as only approval for consultation on an approved route is sought in this report. Any request for Capital Allocation in future years for a scheme to be constructed would be the subject of future Committee Reports.

5. Staffing Implications

- 5.1 There are staffing implications for carrying out comprehensive public consultations on this scheme. The full staffing implications to enable delivery of this and other schemes is the subject of a separate report to this Committee.

6. Environmental Implications

- 6.1 The proposed scheme will improve road safety and traffic flows over a wide area within Elgin, and whilst there may be some local negative environmental impacts which will be minimised as much as possible, overall environmental benefits will accrue to the town. An Environmental Statement and Environmental Action Plan would be required.

7. Sustainable Development Implications

- 7.1 The social, economic and environmental issues have been considered in brief and a full assessment will be required as the scheme develops. Future consultation will be widespread and fair. Some environmental and social aspects will require mitigation and the long term scheme is considered to be sustainable.

8. Consultations

- 8.1 The Accountancy Manager has been consulted and is in agreement with the financial implications within this report
- 8.2 The Principal Solicitor (Commercial and Conveyancing) has been consulted and is in agreement with the report
- 8.3 Martin Wanless, Principal Planner has been consulted and his comments have been incorporated in the report.
- 8.4 The Local Member for the southern part of the proposed route, Councillor Burns, has been consulted. Councillor Bissett, the Local Member for the remainder of the proposed route is on holiday and could not be consulted.

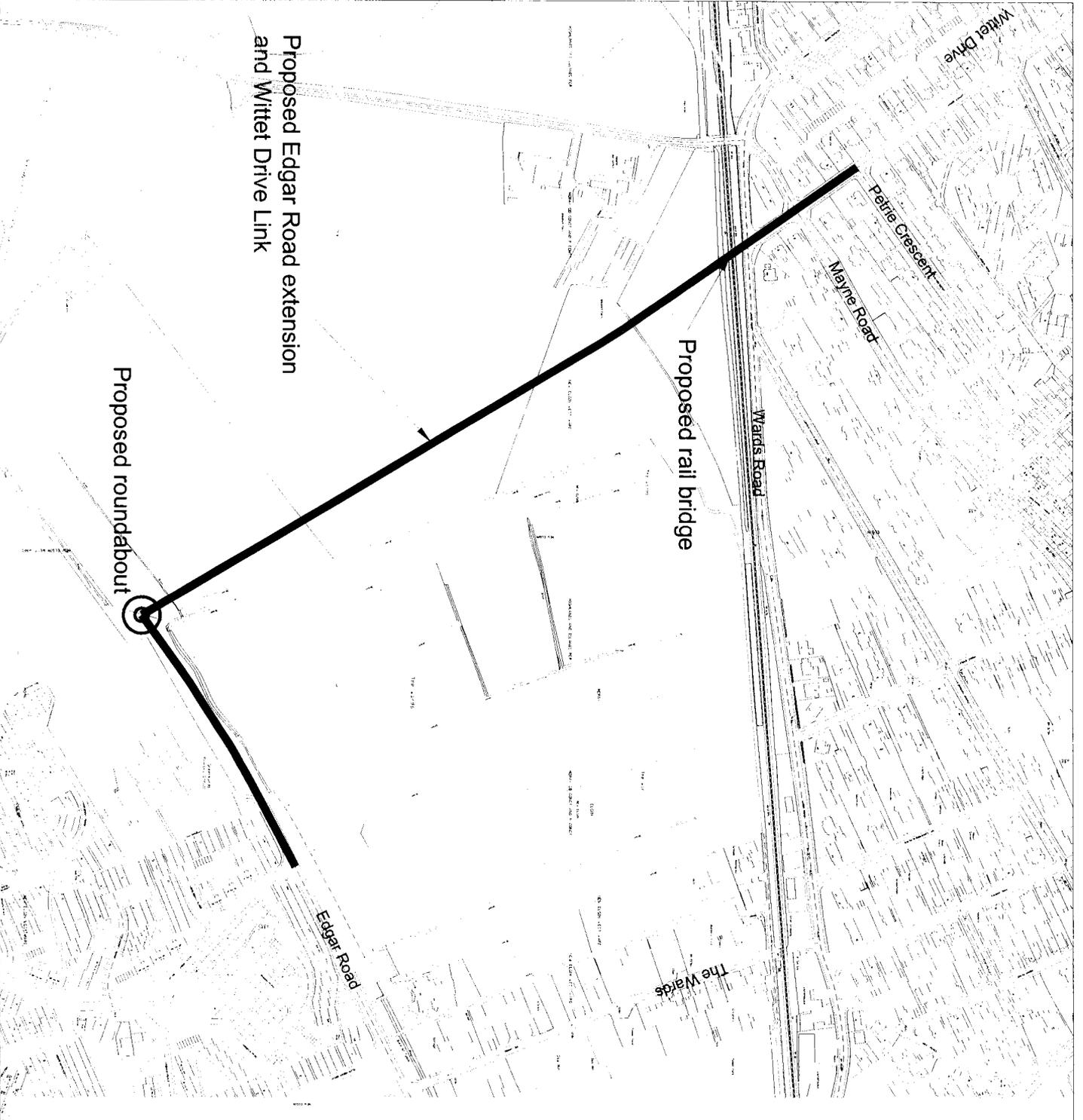
9. Corporate Plan

- 9.1 The report encompasses the main aims of the Economic Development programme by maintaining and enhancing suitable transport facilities and infrastructure for residents, visitors, businesses and workers.

10. Recommendations

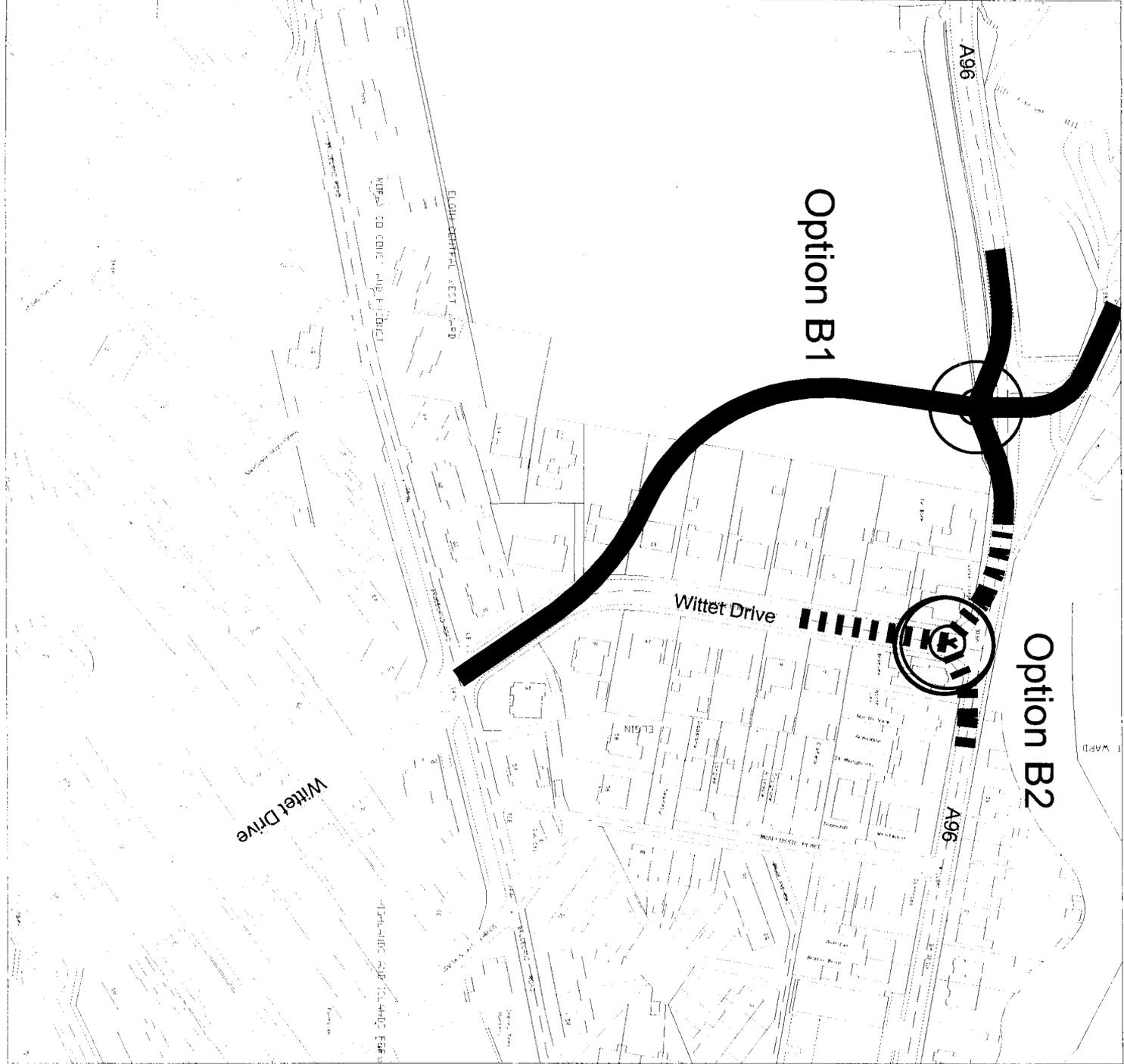
- 10.1 The Committee is asked to instruct the Director of Environmental Services to carry out public consultation on the recommended route for the Wittet Drive Link Road, as shown on Plans A & B in Appendix 1, and all as set out in para 2.14 of the report, and to report the outcome of this process to a future meeting of this Committee.**

Author of Report: Transportation Manager
Background Papers: None
Ref:



APPENDIX 1

**Plan A) EDGAR ROAD
- WITTET DRIVE
1:5000**



APPENDIX 1

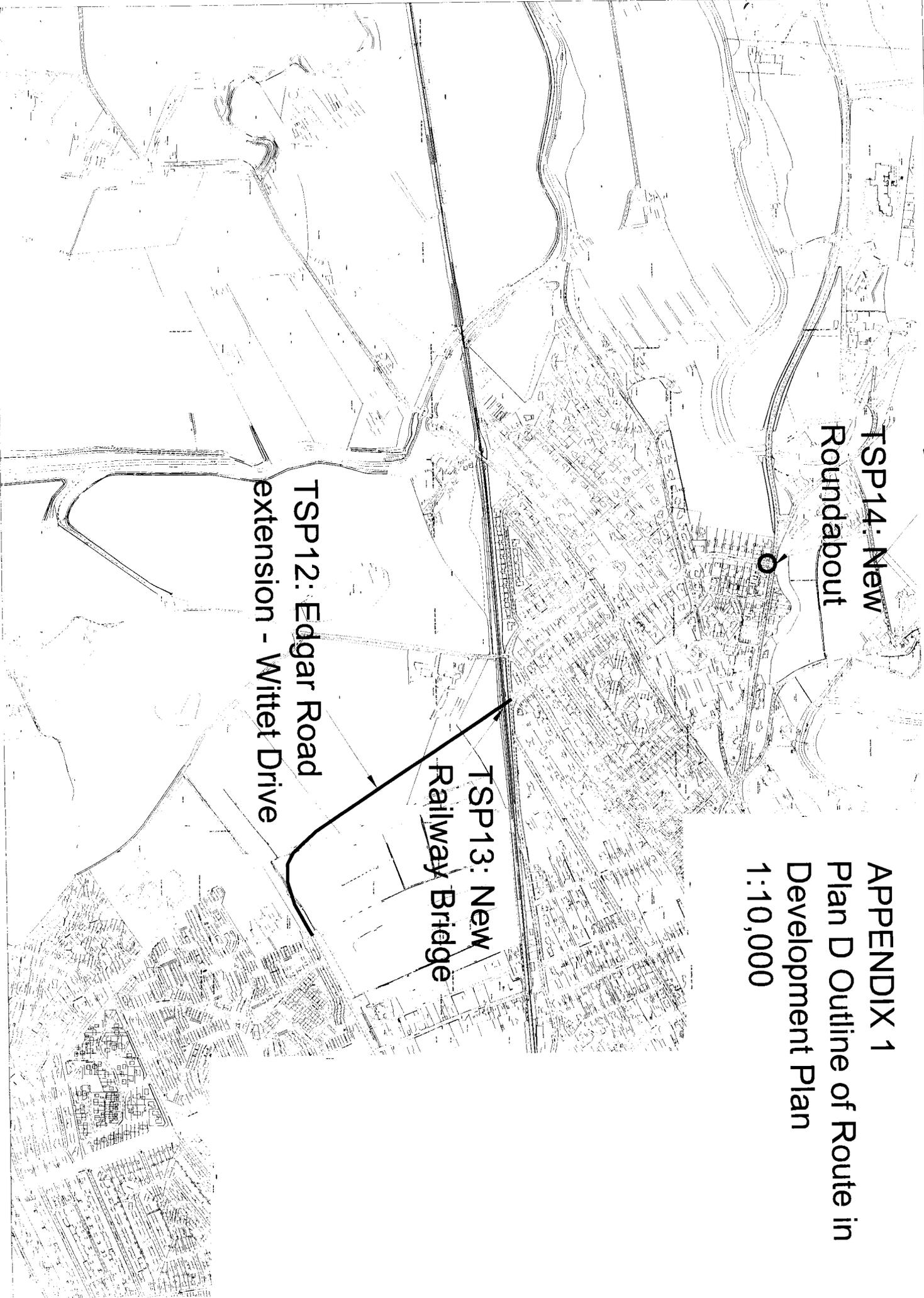
**Plan B) WITTET
DRIVE/A96
1:2000**

APPENDIX 1

Plan C) POSSIBLE OUTER
ROUTE
1:10,000



APPENDIX 1
Plan D Outline of Route in
Development Plan
1:10,000



TSP14: New
Roundabout

TSP13: New
Railway Bridge

TSP12: Edgar Road
extension - Wittet Drive

THE MORAY COUNCIL

EXTRACT FROM MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

28 APRIL 2004

COUNCIL OFFICE, ELGIN

PRESENT

Councillors E. Aldridge (Chairman), J.C. Hogg (Vice-Chairman), T.M. Bothwell, A.R. Burgess, R.J. Burns, A.E. Coutts, L. Gorn, J. Hamilton, R. Hossack, A. Keith, J.A. Leslie, S.D.I Longmore, E. McGillivray, G. McIntyre, R.H. Shepherd, R. Sim, J. Stewart, W.P. Watt, A.R. Wilson and I.R. Young

IN ATTENDANCE

The Director of Environmental Services, the Head of Development Services, the Head of Direct Services, the Head of Financial Services, the Development Control Manager, the Planning and Development Manager, the Principal Solicitor (Commercial and Conveyancing), the Principal Planning Officer (Development Control), the Consultancy Manager, the Area Engineer West, the Senior Estates Surveyor and the Principal Committee Services Officer, Clerk to the Meeting.

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillors R.F. McIntosh, Bisset, Divers, Paul and Urquhart.

20. PROPOSED NEW ROAD LINK - EDGAR ROAD TO A96, ELGIN (Para 9)

There was submitted a report by the Director of Environmental Services seeking the Committee's approval to Officers carrying out public consultation on a recommended route for a new road link between Edgar Road and the A96 in Elgin.

The Committee agreed to instruct the Director of Environmental Services to carry out public consultation on the recommended route for the Wittet Drive Link Road, as shown on Plans A and B in Appendix 1 of the report, and all as set out in para 2.14 of the report, and to report the outcome of this process to a future meeting of this Committee.