

REPORT TO: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES COMMITTEE ON 28 JUNE 2011

SUBJECT: ELGIN TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT – WESTERN DISTRIBUTOR ROAD

BY: HEAD OF DIRECT SERVICES

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 This is a follow-up report as requested by the Economic Development and Infrastructure Services Committee at the March 2011 meeting.
- 1.2 The Committee is asked to note the points identified below and to approve the recommendations.
- 1.3 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section G (18) of the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to dealing with the preparation and implementation of traffic management schemes.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- (a) **note the new information contained in the report regarding commitments in the Local Plan and the economic indicators, and approves the Inner Urban Route with a new bridge crossing the railway and a major junction improvement on the A96 West Road, at or near the north end of Wittet Drive, using Wittet Drive as the route of the future improved Elgin Western Distributor Road.**
- (b) **approve that further more detailed appraisal work, including land survey work, should be carried out by Jacobs consultants and internal staff on the junction options for joining the Western Distributor Road to the A96 West Road.**
- (c) **agree that a report should be submitted to the next meeting of this Committee with a recommendation for a specific junction arrangement for the Elgin Western Distributor Road and the A96 West Road based on the results of the appraisal work.**

3. ECONOMIC AND PLANNING BACKGROUND

3.1 National Economic context:

The Scottish Government's Economic Strategy has the following purpose:

“to focus the Government and public service in creating a more successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish through increasing sustainable economic growth”.

Local Economic context

- 3.2 There has been significant progress recently in addressing local economic development, with the Council playing an important role. This is now the responsibility of the Council. As recently as Monday 20 June 2011, whilst on a ministerial visit to Moray, Fergus Ewing MSP and Minister for Enterprise confirmed the significance of transport infrastructure to sustainable economic growth.
- 3.3 In addition, two former Scottish Ministers with responsibility for Transport (i.e. Tavish Scott and Stewart Stevenson), during past visits to Elgin, have emphasised the importance of The Moray Council delivering on their own road infrastructure programme, including a distributor road in the west of Elgin, if the Council are to expect Government to improve the A96 in Elgin.
- 3.4 The Draft Moray Economic Strategy recognises the importance of good transport links in general to the economy of Moray, both now and in the future. Our reliance on good external transport links is obvious, but the report also stresses the importance of accessibility within Elgin, as the main centre of economic activity.

The report identifies key transport interventions to enable the Elgin City for The Future to perform its regional function efficiently, and one of these is the need to create

“an effective method of traffic distribution outside of the town centre that enables the urban road network to function efficiently.”

- 3.5 The Draft Elgin City for The Future (ECF) report states clearly that

“this study recognises the need for a complete and functional distributor road network to ensure that the traffic related to the proposals in the town centre can be managed.”

- 3.6 The main ECF proposals for the town centre are unlikely to be achieved if the transport requirements cannot be delivered. One of the mainstays of the masterplan is that the severance effect of Alexandra Road on pedestrians must be significantly reduced. The report recognises that an A96 bypass of Elgin will not achieve this as the need for managing local traffic, which makes up approximately 75% of the volume, is more critical.

“A more effective solution would be to complete a series of distributor roads around the town to allow better access to non-central partswould remove a greater proportion of vehicles from the town centre than the bypass proposals”.

“Furthermore, many of the problems within the town centre are caused by the conflict of east-west and north-south traffic..... the distributor road system would also benefit traffic on the north-south axis, thereby providing yet more benefit.”

“By allowing ease of movement around the town periphery, the distributor roads would remove the dominance of the A96 and A941 opening up development opportunities elsewhere in Elgin. They would also distribute traffic more evenly and remove pressure in a number of key congestion hotspots such as Edgar Road, as well as the town centre”.

3.7 The report also refers to development of the “twin” centres of Edgar Road and the town centre, as a dual centre model, sharing investment *“and with improved linkages.”*

3.8 Transportation consultants, Buchanans, who did the traffic modelling work required to support the transport elements of the ECF report, found that without a Western Distributor road in place, the traffic flows at junctions on A96 Alexandra Road would be considerably higher, and advises that

“This would increase the size of the junctions required and could require the use of third-party land and Compulsory Purchase procedures”.

This is consistent with the findings of our framework consultants Jacobs.

3.9 Local Plan 2000 included proposals for a number of major developments mainly in the south of Elgin, and this required significant major transport infrastructure improvements (TSP's) to be provided alongside the developments to cater for the generated traffic. The approved Plan included a proposed new crossing of the railway at the south end of Wittet Drive and a major improvement scheme for the A96/Wittet Drive junction. On the basis of this, major retail developments on Edgar Road were given planning consent. Many of the developments, including the whole Elgin South housing development, progressed whilst only some of the road infrastructure improvements were built.

3.10 This situation has continued into the current Local Plan. The proposed road infrastructure improvements (TSP's) are still clearly identified in the Plan but the delivery of them has not kept pace with the traffic generators. The road improvements on the southern edge of the town, which were regarded as “easy wins,” have been completed, but the essential links with the remainder of the road network, one of which requires some property acquisition, and for which the Council has collected developer contributions, are now overdue. This is reflected in the level of congestion evident in many parts of the town, and is now a real constraint for developing even those sites which are currently designated in the Local Plan.

4. Planning and Development Implications

4.1 A number of transport improvement proposals (TSPs) were approved by the Council for inclusion in both the current and previous Local Plans as far back as the Local Plan 2000. This was to cater for the future traffic volumes which would be generated by a large land release in the south of Elgin and was the outcome of considerable discussions/consultations with a consortium of

developers who accepted in principle the need for a range of infrastructure improvements. This extended beyond simply “roads” and included aspects such as Community Facilities; i.e. open space/playing fields; neighbourhood shops, footpaths/cycleways, landscaping/tree planting in addition to road network improvements.

- 4.2 These proposals were consolidated in the Elgin South Masterplan, which was subject to wide consultation and resulted in the land use and infrastructure framework which is being worked to today.
- 4.3 Moray Local Plan 2008 continued the commitment to these “Southside Road Improvements”, which extends around the south of Elgin from A96 East to A96 West. Specific reference is made in the Plan to the provision of additional railway crossings to support development of land in the south east and south west of Elgin and to relieve congestion on the existing network, specifically New Elgin Road. Developers who have chosen to develop in these areas will have made decisions based on the infrastructure improvements being delivered. Most infrastructure improvements required from developers have been constructed, but the Council have not delivered on their own Local Plan road infrastructure commitments.
- 4.4 By the time of publication of this plan, several of the TSP improvements had been implemented and no longer feature on the Elgin Settlement Map as “dotted lines”. Remaining TSPs in SW Elgin include:
- TSP7: Junction improvement Birnie Road / Sandy Road
 - TSP8: Sandy Road / Glen Moray Drive Realignment
 - TSP9: Junction Improvement Edgar Road / Glen Moray Drive / Wards Road
 - TSP10: Edgar Road extension – Wittet Drive
 - TSP11: New railway bridge Wittet Drive – Edgar Road extension
 - TSP12: New roundabout A96 / Wittet Drive

The proposals now under consideration are listed above as TSP’s 10, 11 and 12. These are shown on an extract from Moray Local Plan 2008 Proposals Map for Elgin in **Appendix 1**. These have previously been approved by the Council for inclusion in the last two adopted Local Plans and many development proposals have been approved and others have been designated on the assumption that these infrastructure improvements would be delivered.

- 4.5 The 2008 Plan also brought forward three new housing sites (R6 West of High School; R9 Birnie Road; R10 Glassgreen) whose combined capacity was 200 units. The site already designated at R5 Bilbohall (S) was reduced in size and its capacity changed from 320 to 75.

- 4.6 The designations of these 4 sites were all made subject to road improvements being carried out, and their contribution to the TSP programme.
- 4.7 Thus the South Side Road Improvements represent the infrastructure that would have to be delivered in order to accommodate the planned release of land for 1,220 houses. Some of these have been carried out, particularly the eastern segment from A96 to A941. Funding has been obtained from developers as a contribution towards the remainder, although there are time limits within which this must be spent. Site capacities of residential sites have changed, with the numbers obtaining planning consent generally exceeding the figures proposed in Local Plan designations. This has resulted in more traffic being generated than was allowed for when the road infrastructure improvements were agreed.
- 4.8 In effect, housing developments have taken place in advance of the supporting infrastructure/road improvements being carried out. These developments are not all yet complete and are already putting pressure on the network. Other designated sites are waiting to come on stream, and a number of bids have been made for new sites to come forward in the new Local Plan, (due to be adopted in 2013/14).
- 4.9 If the anticipated road system is not provided, then there will need to be a fundamental re-think on longer term development, not just in the south of Elgin, but overall. Even residential developments built in the north of the town, where there is currently a land allocation for 465 houses, will create many new car trips to existing retail outlets south of the railway, and without the certainty of a new railway crossing further retail development in this area to the south will be constrained.
- 4.10 The completion of the anticipated road infrastructure improvements will be a key consideration for Elgin's future development, and this will also have an impact on whether the remaining Local Plan development designations can be accommodated on the road network.
- 4.11 As indicated earlier in this report, the decision on a Western Distributor road is also a significant factor in determining whether the Elgin City of The Future proposals in the town centre can be delivered and whether third-party land would have to be acquired at a number of locations to construct the proposed traffic signal junctions on Alexandra Road.

5. Road Infrastructure Background

- 5.1 Reference is made to the report to the Economic Development and Infrastructure Services Committee on 8 March 2011 (Para 8 of the minute refers) where a further report was requested for submission to a future meeting indentifying the differences between:
- a. Progressing the existing Network Enhancement whilst retaining the Urban (Inner) Route in the Local Plan;

- b. Progressing the Existing Network Enhancements with a traffic signal layout for the A96/Wittet Drive junction whilst retaining the Urban (Inner) Route in the Local Plan;
- c. Progressing the Existing Network Enhancements with a traffic signal layout for the A96/Wittet Drive junction and the Urban (Inner) Route be discounted from any further consideration;
- d. Progressing the Existing Network Enhancements option without the construction of a roundabout or traffic signals at the north end of Wittet Drive junction and the Urban (Inner) Route is discounted from any further consideration.
- 5.2 Reference is also made to the Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee of 15 June 2010 (Para 4 of the minute refers) which advised members of the 3-stage nationally recognised process being followed as part of the option appraisal.
- 5.3 Estimated costs for elements of the Inner Urban Route have been reported previously and a breakdown of costs for the Network Enhancements package is also available. These are summarised in the table below and a plan showing the location of each improvement scheme is contained in **Appendix 2**.

Urban (Inner) Route:	Overall Cost: £12.7M	
	Edgar Road to Bilbohall (aka Housing access road)	£3M
	Bilbohall to Wittet Drive (including bridge)	£5.8M
	Wittet Drive	£0.8M
	New A96/Wittet Drive junction (including either extensive earthworks north of existing junction or new link road west of the junction)	£3.1M
Network Enhancements	Overall Cost: £7.2M	
	New A96/Wittet Drive junction (including either extensive earthworks north of existing junction or new link road west of the junction)	£3.1M
	Minor improvements to Dr Grays roundabout and on South Street	£0.1M
	Junction improvement at Hay St /	£0.1M

	Moray St	
	Junction improvement at Laichmoray roundabout.	£0.25M
	Junction improvement at Edgar Road roundabout	£0.25M
	Possible dualling of Alexandra Road	£3.4M

- 5.4 The current investigations and recommendations relate to Stage 2 which is essentially the route selection stage, before detailed design of infrastructure is carried out, and therefore the impact on land or property cannot be determined with accuracy at this stage. Care needs to be taken to avoid progressing into Stage 3 before the appropriate decisions are taken to avoid misleading conclusions about land or property acquisition. Notwithstanding this, some more detailed work has been done and the results of this are outlined in Para 8.4.
- 5.5 Traffic capacity analysis and outline design work is continuing at the A941, New Elgin Road / Edgar Road junction which is also part of the Network Enhancements package. This work is being funded jointly by Sainsbury's and Springfield Properties in order to inform the review of the Transport Assessment for the proposed retail development on Linkwood Road, and to satisfy an outstanding planning condition related to Elgin South housing development.
- 5.6 The analysis so far confirms observations that on Saturdays this junction and the adjacent roundabout at Laichmoray are now 'oversaturated' (i.e. the volume of traffic wishing to use the junction exceeds its physical capacity), resulting in excessive vehicle queuing and 'rat-running' in nearby residential and commercial streets. This is also the case at some peak periods on weekdays. When junctions approach 'saturation' the normal gradual increase in observed traffic queues and delays with increases in traffic volumes no longer applies. At this stage, queues and delays increase exponentially, and small increases in traffic flows produce large increases in vehicle queues and delays increase rapidly. This has been witnessed in recent years at key junctions in Elgin where the actual traffic volume increase has been relatively small.
- 5.7 Further analysis of the situation at this location indicates that if all the "committed developments" from the Local Plan and those which already have planning permission were developed, and if Robertson's Edgar Road retail development was fully occupied, the road network would not cope with the anticipated 20% increase in traffic volumes. This increase is in the order of 30% above current levels if the traffic from the proposed Sainsburys and the old sawmill site (OPP 1) are included. The fundamental problem is that not all traffic that requires to cross the railway at this point can do so. This obviously will also have a significant impact on proposals for any further development in the town as a whole, and near this location in particular.
- 5.8 The proposed solution to this has been identified for the past 10 years, and that is to extend Edgar Road in a westerly direction, then create a western distributor road by constructing a road northwards to cross the railway and at

the same time provide access to housing development sites at Bilbohall. When land was purchased by the Council for the affordable housing development at Bilbohall it was assumed that the Local Plan road infrastructure proposals would follow, and that the site would be served by a distributor road.

6. The Network Enhancements Package

- 6.1 In addition to the proposed improvement at the A96 / Wittet Drive junction and improvements at Laichmoray roundabout and A941 / Edgar Road junction, this package of measures originally proposed also included dualling part of the A96, Alexandra Road, a one-way system on the west section of South Street, and traffic signals at Hay Street / Moray Street junction.
- 6.2 More than half of all the benefit which would be derived from this package accrues from improving the A96 / Wittet Drive junction, at a cost of approximately £3m (this varies according to the option chosen). Much of the remaining benefit comes from the improvements which will have to take place to satisfy existing planning conditions at the A941 / Edgar Road junction, and improvements at Laichmoray roundabout.
- 6.3 The proposal to dual the section of Alexandra Road between Tesco and Halfords has been assessed separately as part of the Elgin City of the Future project, and the recommendations in that report are for localised road widening rather than dualling.
- 6.4 The remaining proposals to install traffic signals at Hay Street / Moray Street junction (approximately £100k) and to rationalise traffic movements on South Street between Dr. Gray's roundabout and Comet roundabout are included to help traffic flow on the network, but neither of these produce additional traffic capacity on the road network. Therefore, without the main elements of the package identified above, they will only provide local improvements and there is no significant benefit to the overall traffic situation by funding the construction of these schemes alone.
- 6.5 The reason why the proposal to improve the A96 / Wittet Drive junction is of fundamental importance to the package is that it allows Wittet Drive to function as a distributor road. The current simple T- junction arrangement makes right - turning movements in or out of Wittet Drive difficult, with few gaps in A96 traffic, particularly at peak times. This is made worse by the limited visibility for drivers turning out of Wittet Drive due to the garden walls of some properties on the A96.
- 6.6 The main weakness of the Network Enhancements package alone, as emphasised in previous reports, is that it does not provide Elgin with a new crossing of the railway. The urgent need for a new bridge is the reason that officers' recommendations have consistently included it as an improvement proposal. This, together with an improved junction at A96 / Wittet Drive are fundamentally considered to be the key to providing a transport network which allows Elgin to develop, and for this reason they have figured prominently in the last two adopted Local Plans.

- 6.7 In order to provide as much of the information requested at the previous Committee meeting as possible, Jacobs consultants have carried out preliminary junction design work for different types of junction improvement at the A96 / Wittet Drive junction. Members will recall that this improvement is an essential element of both the Network Enhancements package and the Inner Urban route proposal.

7. Traffic Signals at A96 / Wittet Drive

- 7.1 A proposal to install traffic signals on the existing A96 / Wittet Drive junction layout, as part of the proposed Decora garden centre development, has previously been rejected by those who are responsible for the A96 trunk road. Transport Scotland wrote to the Council stating clearly that this solution failed to meet the necessary design standards for visibility between signal stoplines and therefore the layout was considered unsafe. At a meeting of officials in April this year they reaffirmed that view. It is also evident that traffic signals without significant widening of the junction would have insufficient capacity to cope with the anticipated traffic flows.

- 7.2 Investigations show that in order to get a compliant junction design using traffic signals, the acquisition of properties would be necessary. Detailed design to establish precisely which properties would have to be acquired is not appropriate at this stage of the process. However indications are that it would be a similar number to that required for a roundabout but that the current vehicle access arrangements onto the A96 from some other properties fronting onto the trunk road would be adversely affected. Traffic signal options which might slightly reduce the number of properties affected would have significant traffic capacity constraints, resulting in excessive vehicle queuing on the A96 which is unlikely to be acceptable to Transport Scotland.

8. Roundabout at A96 / Wittet Drive

- 8.1 As stated in earlier reports, an optimised roundabout design at the A96 / Wittet Drive junction, which required no property acquisition, was previously submitted to Transport Scotland for their consideration, and this was also rejected as it significantly failed to meet the safety design standards.

- 8.2 A number of roundabout layouts at the existing junction have been considered as part of this process. All of these layouts are likely to require a similar number of properties and, as in the case of a traffic signal junction, there will also be other properties where vehicle access onto the A96 would be constrained due to the close proximity of a major junction.

- 8.3 Early indications were that a roundabout on the A96 near the Sheriffmill Road junction, the option which affects properties at the bend in Wittet Drive rather than at the A96 junction, might require slightly fewer properties than a roundabout located at the existing junction. Therefore Jacobs have carried out further design in an attempt to establish with greater certainty the likely number of properties required to provide an acceptable junction improvement between A96 and Wittet Drive. It was not seen as appropriate at this stage to

carry out a detailed land survey of the area and this limits the accuracy and level of confidence associated with the findings.

- 8.4 Even with the limitations of not having detailed topographical survey data the consultants are reasonably confident that an acceptable alignment can be achieved by acquiring just two properties. In addition however some garden land would be required from the two adjacent properties, but it is likely that this could be replaced by transferring any land surplus to the road requirements back to these two property owners. The precise extent of land required cannot however be guaranteed without first carrying out a detailed survey of the area.
- 8.5 Whilst it would be preferred if a satisfactory solution could be found that required no property acquisition, it is likely that this option would have less property impact than others and would have additional benefits when compared with the alternatives:
- Additional house sites could be made available from R8 designated housing site if the 2 displaced households wished to remain at Wittet Drive
 - Better access to R8
 - Reduced rat-running in surrounding streets, particularly in Brucelands Road
 - A relatively traffic-free section for residents at the north end of the existing Wittet Drive
- 8.6 Conclusions at this stage are that in general a roundabout solution is likely to provide the required traffic capacity with shorter queues and less delays than traffic signal options. This will provide a more effective distributor road to relieve congested parts of the road network elsewhere in the town and it is also likely to be more acceptable to Transport Scotland as it would create fewer delays to trunk road traffic.

9. Transport Scotland Approval

- 9.1 Further discussions have taken place with Transport Scotland on the possible solutions at the A96 / Wittet Drive. They have indicated general agreement in principle, with a preference for a roundabout on the A96 constructed to the west of the existing Wittet Drive junction and to Transport Scotland design standards. This is consistent with national design guidelines for major junctions which indicates that traffic volumes of approximately 20000 and 9000 vehicles per day on main road and side road respectively are best suited to a roundabout. They would not insist that the existing junction was closed but would require some form of traffic management to restrict its use to local traffic only. The location of a roundabout further to the west reduces the potential conflict with properties fronting the A96.

- 9.2 They stipulated that significant vehicle delays should not be introduced on the A96 trunk road, and as advised above, they repeated their opposition to installing traffic signals onto the existing junction layout at A96 / Wittet Drive. They also stressed that even a larger signal junction at this location would result in trunk road delays, and that it would also result in a number of existing driveways of houses fronting the A96 being made unusable due their close proximity to traffic signals. Formal approval for any junction improvement would only come at a later stage when detailed designs are made available.

10. Developer Contributions

- 10.1 Significant developer contributions, obtained through legal agreements, are currently held by the Council. A number of these are conditional on providing traffic relief to the A941 New Elgin Road bridge and the two adjacent roundabouts at Laichmoray and Edgar Road. As there is insufficient scope for improvements at these two junctions to cater for future traffic volumes, it was recognised many years ago that the only feasible alternative is to provide another crossing of the railway to the west of the A941 to effectively “spread the load”. Contributions were accepted on the basis of the approved TSP’s in the adopted Local Plan and failure to deliver transport improvements in line with the conditions will require the Council to pay back up to £750k plus interest to developers.

11. Traffic Flows

- 11.1 The A941 New Elgin rail bridge carries nearly 25,000 vehicles per day at its peak.
- 11.2 There is an element of public perception on the part of residents who would be affected, that Wittet Drive is not suitable for use as a distributor road. Wittet Drive is generally over 8.5m wide and predicted traffic flows under the Urban (Inner) option are estimated to rise from around 3500 vehicles per day currently to about 9500. It is important to note that this is not “new traffic” but is the result of traffic redistribution from other roads and streets in the town, many of which also have residential properties fronting narrower carriageways than on Wittet Drive. In fact historically there used to be an “Elgin Bypass” road sign at the junction of A96/Wittet Drive, and the route was used as a bypass of Elgin town centre by some A96 traffic, helped by the generous road width.
- 11.3 There are some properties on Wittet Drive that do not have off-street parking and measures would be put into place to allow for this whilst not restricting traffic flow.
- 11.4 By comparison Pansport Road/Lesmurdie Road is on average 7.3m wide and has a current traffic flow of over 11,000 vehicles per day. It too has a number of properties that have no off-street parking.
- 11.5 Similarly Main Street/New Elgin Road carries up to 12,000 vehicles (less than 7m wide) and North Street takes about 17,000 on a street no wider than Wittet

Drive. Again both of these streets have frontage properties with no off-street parking. Morriston Road already carries up to 8000 vehicles per day.

- 11.6 Wittet Drive is formally designated as part of Elgin's distributor road network and is not unique when compared with other distributor roads fronted by residential properties. The distributor road designation was approved by this Committee in April 2010 after a public consultation exercise and the only public comment received in relation to Wittet Drive was that the Council should create a link between Edgar Road and Wittet Drive.

12. Summary

- 12.1 Failure to make provision for the major infrastructure improvements which have been the mainstay of Elgin's transport proposals in the last two Local Plans effectively disconnects the land-use proposals in the Plan from the infrastructure requirements. In particular, if the proposed railway crossing from the Inner Urban Route option is abandoned now it will constrain development in key parts of the town due to the difficulties already evident in the Edgar Road and New Elgin Road areas. Development pressures in Bilbohall may result in the route being unavailable in the future and extensive work has been carried out to demonstrate that there are no viable alternatives to this crossing point of the railway in West Elgin.
- 12.2 Whilst some improvement can be achieved at the A941/Edgar Road junction the scope for this is limited, and without a new rail crossing there is no other method of improving traffic flow in this area. This will result in the Council having to repay considerable sums of developer contributions which have been accumulated over a number of years.
- 12.3 Without a significant improvement at the junction of A96 / Wittet Drive the distributor road function is ineffective. Even if a railway crossing is protected, the scheme would clearly not realise its full potential without a functional access to the A96. Traffic will continue to increase on The Wards, with its junction problems at either end, and queues and delays will worsen at the north end of Wittet Drive as drivers run out of options for crossing the town.

13. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) **Single Outcome Agreement/ Service Improvement Plan**

This report is in line with National Outcome 1 and Local Outcome 3: "Moray will benefit from an improved and safer transportation infrastructure".

Service Priority 2 (Elgin Traffic Management Plan) of the Service Improvement Plan.

National outcome 9 “We live in well-designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need.”
Local priority 4 “ housing and homelessness – more people in Moray will have access to affordable housing” – completion of the Western Distributor Road will enable access to land designated for much needed affordable housing in Elgin

(b) Policy and Legal

Only if a decision is made to approve an option where property is required would statutory blight apply and property acquisition may be necessary thereafter.

(c) Financial implications

The Financial Plan for 2011/12 was approved at a special meeting of the Council on 10 February 2011 subject to individual budget allocations being approved by the appropriate service committee.

£250k has been allocated for the development of options for a Western Distributor Road.

(d) Risk Implications

Should a decision be taken to Do-Nothing or defer a decision indefinitely, there will be implications for the forthcoming review of the Local Plan. The local plan needs a decision on this matter, in order to consider the prospects for new land designations and future development in Elgin.

There are currently a number of major planning applications under consideration and dealing effectively with these would be severely constrained. Some residential sites in the current local plan can only come forward when TSP improvements are in place.

If the Urban (Inner) Route is abandoned it is likely to result in a planning application to build further houses on the alignment and would leave the legacy of any future rail crossing only being possible much further west and at considerably higher cost whilst being less effective for congestion relief. It would also have a considerable long-term impact on the future development of Elgin.

Should a decision be deferred indefinitely, all properties currently “at risk” will remain so.

If the Bilbohall housing access road is designed before a decision on the distributor road options is made there is a risk of abortive work and additional cost to the Council.

If there is a decision to “Do Nothing” there is a risk that previously capitalised development costs of approximately £1m might have to be written off to revenue.

If there is a decision to not proceed with a scheme which will provide effective traffic relief to New Elgin Road, or a decision to defer indefinitely, then repayment of the developer contributions already received (£750,000 plus interest) will follow.

A significant seven figure sum would require to be repaid to owners of land at Bilbohall if the proposed affordable housing does not proceed.

(e) Staffing Implications

None.

(f) Property

None.

(g) Equalities

None.

(h) Consultations

A Scott, Principal Solicitor (Commercial and Conveyancing) has been consulted and her comments have been taken into consideration.

M Palmer, Corporate Director (Corporate Services), has been consulted and his comments have been taken into consideration.

L Paisey, Principal Accountant has been consulted and comments have been taken into consideration.

M Cross, Principal Planning Officer has been consulted and comments have been taken into consideration.

D Duncan, Principal Planning Officer has been consulted and comments have been taken into consideration.

G Sutherland, Planning and Economic Development Manager has been consulted and his comments have been taken into consideration.

J Stewart, Head of Housing and Property has been consulted and has no comments to make.

14. CONCLUSIONS

14.1 The Committee is asked to note the new information contained in the report regarding commitments in the Local Plan and the economic

indicators, and to approve the Inner Urban Route with a new bridge crossing the railway and a major junction improvement on the A96 West Road, at or near the north end of Wittet Drive, using Wittet Drive as the route of the future improved Elgin Western Distributor Road.

The Committee is also asked to approve further more detailed appraisal work, including land survey work, to be carried out by Jacobs consultants and internal staff on the junction options for joining the Western Distributor Road to the A96 West Road.

The committee is asked to agree that a report should be submitted to the next meeting of this Committee with a recommendation for a specific junction arrangement for the Elgin Western Distributor Road and the A96 West Road based on the results of the appraisal work.

Author of Report: G Holland, Transportation Manager

Background Papers:

Ref:

Extract from Moray Local Plan 2008 Proposals Map

