

**REPORT TO: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES COMMITTEE ON 18 DECEMBER 2012**

**SUBJECT: ELGIN WESTERN LINK ROAD – REPORT 1: OUTLINE DESIGN**

**BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR: ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES**

**1. REASON FOR REPORT**

- 1.1 To advise Committee of the outcomes of the recent public exhibition and to seek approval of the developed outline design.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (G) (16) of the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to all functions of the Councils as Roads Authority including safety, the detailed planning, design and construction, improvement, maintenance and lighting of roads, bridges and other structures.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

**2.1 It is recommended that Committee:**

- a) **note the outcomes of the community engagement, the workshops and recent exhibition;**
- b) **approve the outline design for progressing to a planning application and;**
- c) **authorise investigation into potential enhancements from Edgar Road to Sandy Road as identified in the Local Plan.**

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Reference is made to the update report submitted to this Committee on 23 October 2012 (Para 4 of the minute refers) and to the Elgin Western Link Road Report 2 – CPO submitted to this meeting.
- 3.2 A public exhibition was held on 10 and 11 October 2012. The event explained the need for, and the background to the scheme. It also showed a revised design following the June 2012 workshop.
- 3.3 The exhibition recorded 341 people attending over the two days. A march organised by the Elgin Designing Streets Action Group (EDSAG) demonstrating against the proposals brought out a large number of people with 2 separate petitions handed in during the event however it is expected that these will be properly submitted at the time of the planning application.
- 3.4 It was clear at the exhibition that a significant number of people were under the impression that the Council planned a “city-centre bypass” and were diverting A96 traffic around the south side of Elgin, implying greater traffic flows than is predicted. This is reflected in the leaflets and other messages distributed by EDSAG in advance of the exhibition.
- 3.5 About 150 feedback sheets have been received following the exhibition. The majority of these were not in favour of the scheme and suggested that either

the scheme should be scrapped or a proper bypass should be built. A copy of all the feedback sheets has been sent to all Elected Members.

- 3.6 Following the exhibition and in advance of a public meeting held by EDSAG, the list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on the Council's website was updated to counter the various misunderstandings and assumptions. This list will continue to be developed. In addition, the first of a series of newsletters is being prepared to help advise both the local residents and the wider public of the significant issues and of scheme progress.
- 3.7 Following the workshop in June 2012 and the recent public exhibition, a Stakeholder Design Appraisal Report has been prepared and is attached as **APPENDIX 1**.
- 3.8 The key design changes arising from engagement with the community and other stakeholders are outlined below and are shown on the plans contained in the last six pages of **APPENDIX 1**:
- A signalised junction on the A96 in lieu of a roundabout. This provides benefits for pedestrians and cyclists in addition to requiring less land and avoiding the removal of large trees.
  - Following consultation with the residents at the north end of Wittet Drive, it is proposed to streetscape the section that will become redundant as a through-route. This will help discourage its use by all except residents.
  - A "gateway" will be incorporated to highlight to drivers turning off the A96 that they are entering a different type of street.
  - Wittet Drive will be reduced in width from 8.3m to 6.6m to accommodate parking, streetscaping and to help manage traffic speeds.
  - Pedestrian crossing facilities will be provided at various locations and include traffic signals at Pluscarden Road junction.
  - A single-span bridge over the railway will be masonry clad and be screened where possible.
  - Pedestrian crossings of the road be "at-grade" (road level) rather than by way of an underpass.
  - The extension of Edgar Road will allow parking and will include a new signalised junction allowing access to the proposed High School and future housing sites.
  - There is now an opportunity for provision of an off-carriageway parent drop-off / pick-up facility shared between both Greenwards Primary and the new Elgin High School. This will provide parking and safe access for pupils to and from the schools.
- 3.9 The timetable for the new High School project is such that the extension of Edgar Road and the new junction will likely form part of the proposed works

for the High School. These elements will be included in the planning application for the school.

- 3.10 It is noted that the scheme is not a major application under Planning legislation, however due to its sensitivity, adopting the major application process represents good practice. It is proposed the outline design identified in this report will form the basis of the pre-application consultation.
- 3.11 Should Edgar Road be extended, whether to facilitate the High School and additional housing and/or as part of the Western Link Road, this will result in higher volumes of traffic at the Edgar Road / Glen Moray Drive / The Wards junction (referred to as TSP9 in the Local Plan). Investigations should now commence to consider junction options.
- 3.12 The junction of Birnie Road / Sandy Road (TSP7) and the south end of Sandy Road has recently been widened by the developer associated with the R9 Birnie Road site. The remainder of Sandy Road and Glen Moray Drive require consideration as they form the connection from the south of Elgin to the Western Link Road. This is identified in the Local Plan as TSP8 (Sandy Road / Glen Moray Drive Realignment).

#### **4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

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

The Western Link Road, in line with the National Scheme, is consistent with Outcome 1 and the Local Outcome 3; (Moray will benefit from an improved and safer transportation infrastructure).

The Scheme will unlock land designated for affordable housing. This complies with National Outcome 10 (We will 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).

The Moray Economic Strategy acknowledges the importance of providing an effective road network to distribute traffic across Elgin.

##### **(b) Policy and Legal**

There is no policy or legal issues arising from the recommendations.

##### **(c) Financial implications**

The Capital Plan for the current year identifies adequate budget to progress the design and submission of a planning application for the Western Link Road.

In the event that the High School works are likely to commence sooner than the Link Road requiring an extension of Edgar Road, budgets may have to be adjusted accordingly.

The current Capital Plan allocation for the development of the Western Link Road can accommodate initial design work on Glen Moray Drive and Sandy Road.

**(d) Risk Implications**

Incorporating feedback from the community and stakeholder groups into the design will help mitigate against potential objections to a planning application.

A project risk register is in place and will be developed further throughout the design.

**(e) Staffing Implications**

There are no staffing implications of the recommendations.

**(f) Property**

The acquisition of property is covered in a separate report to this Committee.

**(g) Equalities**

There are no equalities issues arising from this report.

**(h) Consultations**

The Educational Resource Manager has been consulted and has no comments to make.

L Paisey, Principal Accountant has been consulted and is in agreement with the report.

**5. CONCLUSION**

**5.1 There has been considerable community and public engagement over the past few months and this has led to significant amendments to the design of the scheme to enhance the sense of place and cater for pedestrians and cyclists.**

**5.2 A large number of people are against the principle of the scheme however this could be influenced by misinformation that has been in circulation.**

- 5.3 Design work should commence to investigate options at Edgar Road / Glen Moray Drive / The Wards junction as it is acknowledged that whether for the High School, housing and/or the Western Link Road there will be a significant change to the traffic flows.**
- 5.4 Consideration also needs to be given to proposals for improving the remainder of Glen Moray Drive and Sandy Road to enable proper utilisation of the other improvements and improve links from the south side of Elgin to the north side.**

Author of Report: F Knight, Senior Engineer (Design)

Background Papers:

Ref: