

REPORT TO: MORAY COUNCIL ON 7 DECEMBER 2016

SUBJECT: TRANSPORT STRATEGY FOR ELGIN

BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR (ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE)

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 The Council is asked to approve the draft Elgin Transport Strategy.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Council in terms of Section II (11) of the Scheme of Administration relating to strategies of a corporate nature.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that the Council:

- i) agrees that the core projects within the Elgin Transport Strategy provide a positive framework for the future needs of Elgin, subject to an appropriate business case for schemes, and affordability (including the provision of external funding);
- ii) approves the one-off virement of £35,000 from Roads Construction Consent budget to develop the business case for the core strategic interventions to enable the Council to make an informed decision in relation to the capital plan;
- iii) approves the core projects within the Elgin Transport Strategy as the settled view of the Council, enabling it to be used as material consideration for planning applications;
- iv) approves the approach outlined for calculating developer obligations for transport as set out in section 7 of the report;
- v) notes that a further report will be submitted to the Economic Development & Infrastructure Services Committee in relation to retention/disposal of the council owned properties on Wittet Drive;

- vi) **approves the application for external funding to support the core projects identified within the strategy; and**
- vii) **approves the draft Elgin Transport Strategy for public consultation, noting that the final version will be brought to Council following consultation;**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 At a special meeting of the Council on 7 June 2016 it was agreed to approve expenditure of £100,000 to prepare a new transport strategy for Elgin (Para 2 of the minute refers).
- 3.2 Work on the transport strategy commenced immediately after the decision to proceed and included stakeholder engagement, option identification and appraisal, traffic modelling, high level costing of interventions, development of a developer obligations strategy and the preparation of a final technical report along with a summary document written to support and inform further public consultation.
- 3.3 By preparing a Transport Strategy for Elgin at this time, it can support the current Local Development Plan (LDP). The long term horizon for this strategy, at 2030, runs parallel with the current Local Development Plan which has a document life of 5 years, but takes a 20 year approach to land use designations.

The main issues report for the next Local Development Plan will be prepared by October 2017, and this strategy will form the basis for informing the transport infrastructure requirements to be considered to enable the growth forecast in the next LDP.

- 3.4 Through the LDP, Moray 2026 and the Moray Economic Strategy the growth and vitality of Elgin and Moray is a clear priority. Elgin is forecast to see significant growth – particularly in housing – between 2016 and 2030, with an additional 2,700 houses forecast to be built in that period, as well as employment land at Barmuckity and Newfield, and new schools to accommodate growth. Even with robust active travel planning, this level of growth drives a material increase in car trips. This strategy is aimed at providing for that growth, whilst encouraging as much mode shift to walking / cycling as can be feasibly achieved. Without a strategy, or a clear plan of how the Council proposes to create an appropriate infrastructure, given the forecast growth there are two significant consequences. The first is that, considering best practice and exercising due professional judgement around network capacity, officers representing the council's function as roads authority are likely to feel under increasing pressure to recommend refusal on significant planning applications because of their consequential impact on the wider transport infrastructure, certain aspects of which are already constrained without that any additional traffic loading. Secondly, the council will be highly restricted in its ability to agree developer obligations in relation to transport impacts outwith the site boundary for major developments as there would be no

framework which could be pointed to as evidence of the legitimacy of the obligation. This would lead to a position of increased congestion without developer funding to contribute to any cross cutting solution.

4. **PROCESS**

4.1 The strategy has been developed, as required, in line with Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG), and in line with Development Planning & Management Transport Appraisal Guidance (DPM-TAG). Scottish Planning Policy specifically states that “the relationship between transport and land use has a strong influence on sustainable economic growth, and this should be taken into account when preparing development plans”.

4.2 The strategy takes account of the following factors which are either required or provided as guidance:

- Links to national and regional transport & planning policy / guidance
- Consideration of all modes of travel, in line with the Scottish Government’s hierarchy of modes
- Robust data review
- Significant consultation
- Be based around an objectives led appraisal process

4.3 The vision and objectives for the strategy were set in consultation with the stakeholder group, and in line with transport appraisal guidance, as follows:

A forward looking transport strategy that ensures Elgin is a desirable, vibrant and healthy place to live, work and visit for all.

- *Make it easier for people to get between home, work, social activities and services*
- *Make how long it takes to get around Elgin more predictable and consistent*
- *Reduce the time it takes to get around Elgin by bicycle, on foot or by public transport*
- *Make journeys feel and be safer*
- *Get more people using public transport, bicycle and walking for all or some of their journey, rather than using cars*
- *Enhance Elgin’s appearance by sensitively integrating any physical changes*

4.4 Having set the vision and objectives for the strategy, a long list of options was generated by officers and the consultants that could potentially deliver the objectives and provide benefits to Elgin’s transport network. This long list included options that had been proposed by the public and stakeholders.

The options covered all modes of transport – walking, cycling, public transport, and car, and also a comprehensive geographic spread across Elgin.

The options were then assessed in a two stage process. Firstly, the long list was assessed to identify which options could successfully deliver the strategy objectives. Secondly, the remaining objectives were assessed to see how they might be implemented. The options were then collated into logical packages that worked as a whole and assessed against additional criteria of deliverability, feasibility and headline cost.

The output of this process is a core package of interventions that are considered fundamental to the success of the strategy, and an aspirational package that includes options that would be highly effective in meeting the strategy objectives, but are not fundamental to success. There are also options put forward that are not incorporated as Elgin-wide plans, but have been reviewed and will facilitate access to development land if taken forward by site developers. The core and aspirational packages are divided into short term (by 2018), medium term (by 2022) and long term (by 2030) interventions balancing the time needed to develop and identify funding with the growth in network demand over time. It is proposed that the council focuses on the core package of interventions, whilst retaining the aspirational interventions for any ad-hoc funding that may arise in the future that cannot be used on the core schemes.

- 4.5 In parallel with this, guidance has been prepared on how the Council may seek financial contributions from developers as Developer Obligations, in a way that is transparent, proportionate, necessary and objectives driven. This is described in more detail in Paragraph 7 of this report.

5. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 Extensive public engagement has been carried out to inform the draft strategy.
- Key stakeholders have been involved in setting the strategy vision and objectives
 - identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats
 - providing feedback on the broad intervention types proposed

A full list of stakeholders can be found at **Appendix 1**.

- 5.2 Members of the public were invited to participate in an online survey to provide robust background data, and establish current public perception on Elgin's transport network. Over 800 people completed the survey, and the results have informed the objectives and the options considered. A summary of the survey results, along with detail of the full engagement process, can be found on the member's portal and is available publicly on request.
- 5.3 Members of the public were also invited to participate in drop-in sessions at the St Giles Centre and Dr Gray's Hospital. These sessions were well attended and highlighted a range of issues and locations of concern to the public. Of particular

note was the strength of feeling around the performance of current scheduled bus services, and this feedback has been passed directly to Stagecoach.

- 5.4 Analysis of the feedback has shown a strong correlation between the locations and types of network constraint shown by transport modelling and those highlighted by the public, which is reassuring moving towards options that address the areas of constraint.

6. **DRAFT TRANSPORT STRATEGY FOR ELGIN**

- 6.1 The draft Elgin Transport Strategy focusses on a way of keeping Elgin moving whilst growing up to 2030. A summary of the draft strategy is attached as **Appendix 2**. The full technical report has been placed on the members' portal and is available publicly on request.

- 6.2 The packages of interventions proposed through the strategy

- Improve access to Elgin for all
- Improve Journey time reliability
- Provide reductions in journey times for walking, cycling & public transport
- Enhance safety for all travellers
- Drive mode shift to sustainable travel methods
- Integrate physical changes in a way that compliments or enhances Elgin's attractiveness

Fundamentally the whole strategy provides significantly improved network capacity compared against a do-nothing scenario.

- 6.3 The interventions can be grouped by type into 'themes' as follows:

- Active Travel and Streetscape
- Junction Improvements
- New Road Links
- Parking
- Public Transport
- Traffic Management (including speed limit review)
- Travel Behaviour Change Activities

- 6.4 The intention is that the core package is at the heart of the strategy and forms the Council's plan going forward, including additional work on the business case and funding sources. Options from the aspirational package could be brought forward if bespoke funding becomes available. The development specific options will be retained for discussion with those proposing developments as they come forward for consideration as planning applications.

- 6.5 The content of the core package is outlined in Appendix 2. These are schemes that work well together to deliver overall benefit to Elgin's transport network in the

short, medium and long term to 2030. The interventions cover all the themes outlined in paragraph 4.4, and include an additional rail crossing in the town centre, access across the railway to the Bilbohall site, conversion of roundabouts to signalised junctions on the A941 and A96, improvements to public transport, pedestrian & cyclist infrastructure, and targeted activities to change travel behaviour from car use to cycling/walking.

The image below is reproduced in larger scale with accompanying text in Appendix 2.

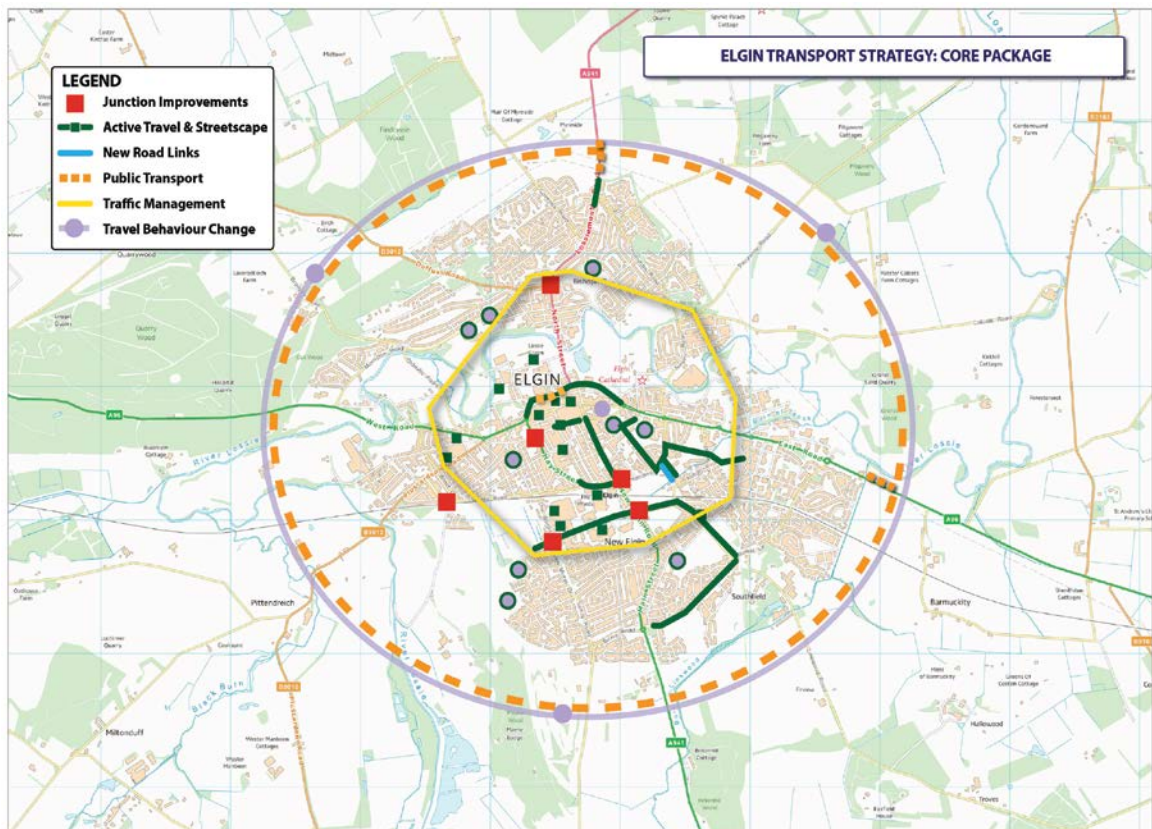


Fig 1 – core package measures

- 6.6 The interventions in the core package marry up with areas that the model shows as being constrained. They also deliver on a number of factors identified by stakeholders – eg strong dissatisfaction with roundabouts, and how pedestrian crossings and road junctions work (or don't) with each other, the need for additional road capacity crossing the railway and frustrations with Edgar Road and Laichmoray roundabouts.
- 6.7 Implementation of the options outlined in the strategy will deliver improvements to Elgin's transport network from 2018, but the real impact is from 2022 where the schemes – particularly the new rail crossing – provide improvements across all of the network. As a result of the interventions from 2022 the network will operate

within capacity in the morning peak, and in the evening peak there will only be a section of the A941 at Boroughbriggs that is over capacity. There is global improvement in journey times across the network.

In the long term to 2030 with no improvements to the network infrastructure there will be significant deterioration in traffic conditions. With a bypass of Elgin this does provide some improvement on the existing A96, but there would still be significant issues around key areas of constraint such as the A941 rail bridge. With or without a bypass the long term package of interventions reduces journey times and therefore improves journey time reliability.

Overall, there is a high confidence that the core package delivers the strategy objectives and creates significant improvements in network capacity.

These benefits can be seen in graphic form in Appendix 2.

- 6.8 High level cost estimates have been made in order to give an indication of the quantum of works involved in delivering the strategy, and also to assist with the agreement of developer obligations. This information is indicative, and precedes any detailed design or business case submission. Initial cost estimates for the core package (a suite of over 30 interventions) is £20-30 million. Of this amount c£20 million is an early estimate for construction and materials, with c£10 million for land acquisition, utilities diversions and other costs.
- 6.9 At this stage it is a strategy that is being proposed, with a view to gaining consensus from Council that this is the right thing to do in principle. This approach is about developing a series of integrated interventions rather than the past approach of ad hoc localised interventions as separate sites are developed. The next steps – which are covered in more detail in paragraph 9 – include preparing the full business case for the core package, and considering funding sources and affordability.

7. DEVELOPER OBLIGATIONS

- 7.1 Members are being asked to approve the core projects identified in the strategy and approve officers consulting the wider document. In the meantime it can be used as a material consideration in relation to major planning applications for the purposes of seeking developer obligations towards the core projects. In order to do this, the Council is asked to adopt the core projects within the strategy as the current settled view of the Council. This is akin to an approval in principle and does not preclude changes to the strategy through the consultation process, but does give the requisite degree of certainty in relation to the planning process. This is a similar approach to that taken with the adoption of the Proposed Plan in the LDP process.
- 7.2 In order to more robustly secure obligations in respect of developments which have an impact on Elgin's transport infrastructure, guidance has been prepared on a new approach for transportation. This will ultimately be included in the next review of the Developer Obligations supplementary guidance.

Having reviewed national guidance, the approaches taken by local authorities across Scotland, and recent legal challenges there are key points to consider in any strategic approach to developer obligations;

- The guidance should be specific to the area under consideration
- The obligations from developers and the costs of interventions should reflect the demand on the network
- Guidance should be clear and concise
- There should be clarity on what is being funded
- There should be strong ongoing monitoring of the delivery and success of interventions

Developer obligations must satisfy the tests set out in Planning Circular 3/2012 of necessity, purpose, relationship, scale & kind and reasonableness.

The transport model for Elgin which has been used to underpin the transport strategy provides a robust basis for understanding the specific impacts of major developments. The strategy provides a range of infrastructure interventions to help accommodate development growth, and has high level costs associated with it so that the funding 'ask' is clear from an early stage.

- 7.3 Any mechanism for developer obligations should be **necessary** in relation to the impact of the development and the solution proposed, **proportionate** in scale and kind to the respective impact of the development, **transparent** in how it is calculated and monitored and **objectives led** in demonstrating how it addresses the specific objectives set in the transport strategy.
- 7.4 A number of options were considered in relation to the method for quantifying the impact of development – the size of the developed area (square metres), the number of person trips generated, the number of peak car trips, and the number of all day car trips. Peak car trips have the closest relationship with the constraints on Elgin's transport network, and the objectives of the transport strategy.
- 7.5 Obligations will be sought on a quadrant basis – with developers contributing to interventions relevant to their impact. All developers will be asked to contribute proportionately to town centre interventions.
- 7.6 In order to inform the actual financial contribution, a spreadsheet tool has been created which takes trip rates from the Elgin traffic model for each planned development, and apportions the impact across the package of interventions in the transport strategy. By using this approach the impact of background growth can be compared to development related growth. A range of scenarios on different trip rates can also be tested.
- 7.7 Alongside the background growth, an assessment has been made of pre-existing demand. There are also some measures in the core package which should not be

funded by development – such as implementing an Active Travel Plan for Moray Council as an employer. Recognising these factors it is proposed that developer contributions will be sought for 50% of the overall core package costs.

- 7.8 The Council is in possession of existing developer obligations which were being held for the Western Link Road scheme. These obligations are aimed at alleviating infrastructure problems in the Sheriffmill Road, Edgar Road and Laichmoray roundabout areas. These contributions total: £652,176

Other relevant existing developer obligations include £65,000 in relation to improvements at the current South Street / Hay Street roundabout and £149,980 to mitigate the impact of the Thornhill development at Ashgrove Road / East Road.

All of these have potential to be used towards delivery of the interventions in the strategy. It should be noted that these monies are time limited and will have to be returned to the developers if not spent on an appropriate intervention in accordance with the terms of the legal agreements entered into by the agreed expiry date, the earliest of which is April 2018. Subject to approval of the strategy it is the view of officers that these contributions can be used before their expiry dates in the delivery of the core package.

8. BILBOHALL & WITTET DRIVE

- 8.1 The developers of the various sites at Bilbohall (Moray Council, Grampian Housing Association, Scotia and Robertsons) are preparing a strategic masterplan for the area that will establish key design principles for housing development, address common infrastructure requirements and provide a framework for connectivity between the various sites and the surrounding area. Central to the masterplanning process will be an understanding of the transportation constraints which currently affect the sites and the development of proposals that will enable land to be released for housing. The masterplan will provide phasing proposals for housing development that will be informed by a transportation assessment of the impact of each phase on the local road network. The masterplan will identify the network improvements and interventions required to support the delivery of the housing. The proposals and interventions contained in the the masterplan should be compatible with the emerging Elgin Transport Strategy.

The draft strategy includes interventions in the core package (options I4C and I3G) which propose a new pedestrian / cyclist footbridge alongside the existing bridge at Bilbohall Road and some associated changes to traffic priorities on the north of the railway. This would enable two way traffic over the existing bridge. Subject to a transport assessment this may relieve the known constraint around access. It should be noted that there is no intention to create a desire-line through the Bilbohall site for road users, and transportation officers will strongly recommend an indirect road route through the Bilbohall site.

The developers of the Bilbohall site may be eligible for either grant or loan monies from the Scottish Government's Housing Infrastructure Fund.

- 8.2 The Council currently owns five properties on Wittet Drive that were bought in relation to the Western Link Road scheme. Officers have considered different options in relation to disposal or retention of these properties, and will make a recommendation in a separate report to committee once Council has established its position on this draft transport strategy.

9. NEXT STEPS

- 9.1 It is proposed that the draft Elgin Transport Strategy will be consulted with members of the public from 8 December 2016 until 16 February 2017.
- 9.2 Not only is public engagement and consultation a matter of good practice, it is considered a key element of any Transport Appraisal that the interests of stakeholder are considered in an inclusive, open, transparent and appropriate manner. The transport strategy has been developed with widespread public and stakeholder involvement to date, and it is proposed to continue in this manner with an open 10 week consultation process to enable all relevant views to be sought and incorporated.
- 9.3 The consultation process will include:
- A consultation page on the Council's website going live on 8 December 2016.
 - Drop in sessions based in at least three locations around Elgin during January 2016.
 - Press releases before and during the consultation.
 - The use of the Council's social media feeds to raise awareness of the consultation.
 - Letters/emails advising of the consultation sent to Community Planning Partners, Community Councils and Associations, key stakeholders and consultees, agents, developers and other interested parties.
 - Stakeholder event in January 2017 to elicit feedback and views from key stakeholders.
- 9.4 The feedback from the consultation will be consolidated into a report, and any proposed changes to the transport strategy arising from the consultation will be put into a final draft strategy for Council approval.
- 9.5 Members will note that at this stage they are being asked to approve the principles of the strategy – that the vision and objectives are right, and that the practical interventions will achieve the required benefits in terms of keeping Elgin moving to 2030.
- 9.6 In order to move forward in materialising the interventions, the next step is to fully assess the business case for the core package. This will establish that the core package provides value for money as well as achieving the transport network

requirements. This business case will also demonstrate the robustness of the plan and costings in relation to developer obligations.

- 9.7 As term contractor Jacobs have provided a cost to establish the business case, capped at £35,000. This is based on quantifying benefits using:

- DfT Transport User Benefit Appraisal (TUBA),
- Standalone junction modelling to take regard of more detailed junction performance data
- Health Economic Assessment Tools in relation to sustainable travel interventions
- Wider Economic Benefits assessments of all options

There will also be more detailed costing work on the proposed rail crossing and various signalised junction improvements. This will include route alignment work, bridge specification, and desk based investigation of ground conditions and utility locations.

- 9.8 Once more detailed costs and benefits have been established, this will provide a BCR range which creates a clear picture on the business case for the interventions, enabling the Council to make decisions on the affordability of the proposed package. This will also enable external funding to be sought – including the Housing Infrastructure Fund, and potentially consideration of interventions as part of a City Region type deal. As regards the latter, whilst the existence of an over arching strategic framework is not in itself sufficient to support inclusion in such a funding bid – the infrastructure must contribute to the bid vision, address identified gaps and meet other funding tests - this does provide evidence of a holistic assessment of need which is helpful in terms of the assessment phase of this process.
- 9.9 Screening work on strategic environmental impacts has been carried out and a Strategic Environmental Assessment will be required for the strategy. Work to scope this out is underway and the SEA process will run in parallel with consultation.

10 SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Moray 2026 A Plan for the Future/ Service Plan

The Service Plan acknowledges the need for improving the traffic management within Elgin. Many of the targets in Moray 2026 are dependent on supporting infrastructure, such as population growth. This draft Transport Strategy identifies a preferred package of interventions to address transportation issues in Elgin.

(b) Policy and Legal

While the WLR is included in the Moray Local Development Plan 2015 a revised strategy is required to influence the next Local Development Plan, and to enable the agreement of appropriate Developer Obligations in relation to planning applications.

(c) Financial implications

The outcome of the transport strategy and the actions identified will require to be included in the Council's capital plan in order to seek external funding and developer obligations towards the cost. Whilst an indicative amount can be noted at this time, a fuller business case is required for Council to make an informed decision on including the detail of the strategic interventions in the capital plan. The cost for delivering the more detailed business case will cost £35,000.

Roads Construction Consent income budget within Transportation is anticipated to be £40,000 higher than expected. It is proposed that £35,000 of this budget be vired to meet the cost of developing a business case for the next stage of the Transportation Strategy.

(d) Risk Implications

Without a clear plan for delivering transport infrastructure interventions in a strategic manner, there is a risk that Elgin's road network or transport mode split will not develop in a way that can meet the increasing demand from population and employment growth. There is also the risk that appropriate contributions from developers towards the cost of infrastructure provision will not be collected.

(e) Staffing Implications

There are no staffing implications arising from this report. Whilst there is a demanding workload in consulting the strategy and commissioning the development of the business case, this will be resourced within the existing transportation team. The development of the business case will be progressed by Jacobs as term contractor on transport management matters, under the supervision of the Transportation Manager and Senior Engineer – Transport Development.

(f) Property

The new Transport Strategy will influence the decision to sell or retain/demolish properties that the Council purchased in preparation for the construction of the WLR.

(g) Equalities

There are no equalities issues with this report. Participants of the Moray Council's Access to Streets project have been involved in the stakeholders events and their views have been incorporated in the overall consultation. Further development of the strategy will be screened for impacts on groups protected by the Equality Act 2010 and Equality Impact Assessments will be carried out as appropriate in consultation with the Equal Opportunities Officer and in consultation with relevant stakeholders.

(h) Consultations

The Corporate Director (Economic Development and Infrastructure), the Head of Direct Services, the Head of Legal & Democratic Services, the Head of Housing & Property, the Head of Development Services, the Head of Financial Services, the Democratic Services Manager, and the Equal Opportunities Officer have been consulted and any comments taken into account.

11. CONCLUSIONS

- 11.1 A new transport strategy for Elgin has been developed. The draft strategy aims to cater for the planned growth of Elgin to 2030, and provide a package of interventions that all partners can contribute to appropriately, keeping Elgin moving to 2030 and beyond.**
- 11.2 The transport strategy and associated guidance also provides a framework for robustly agreeing developer obligations towards transport infrastructure requirements to cater for growth associated with development.**

Author of Report: Nicola Moss, Transportation Manager

Background Papers: