

**REPORT TO: SPECIAL ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE
30 AUGUST 2007**

SUBJECT: ELGIN STAG PART 2 REPORT

BY: DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To present the Elgin STAG Part 2 Report carried out by Halcrow Consultants for The Moray Council.
Note: Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) is the method of appraisal for transport policies and projects throughout Scotland.
- 1.2 To seek approval for a strategic and phased approach to take forward transport options in Elgin. This will provide confirmation of the position to be taken in responding to objections to the Local plan Review.
- 1.3 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section E(13) of the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to the function of the Council as Roads Authority.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **The Committee is invited to note the contents of the Halcrow Elgin STAG Part 2 Reports (issued as Appendix A) to Elected Members:-**
- (i) Summary Report**
 - (ii) Elgin STAG Report**
 - (iii) Appraisal Summary Tables**
 - (iv) Environmental Assessment Report;**
- 2.2 **The Committee is invited to approve:-**
- (i) Retention of all TSP options in the Moray Local Plan with amendment to the A96/Wittet Drive junction**
 - (ii) The development of an Elgin Traffic Management Plan with a phased delivery programme in line with the Regional transport Strategy (2007-2012/2012-2017/2017-2023)**
 - (iii) Allocation of Option A to the short-term delivery programme and to proceed with detailed design work and to submit a report to Full Council for the Capital Programme**
 - (iv) Allocation of options B, C, D, E, F, G to the Medium-term delivery programme**
 - (v) Delegation of Member/Officer party to urgently meet with Scottish Ministers concerning Elgin Bypass options/programme**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Moray Structure Plan 2007, Moray Local Plan 2000 and Previous Elgin Transport Options Committee Reports

- 3.1.1 The Moray Structure Plan 2007 confirms that Elgin is the primary centre within Moray, with the largest population and the main centre for retail, commercial and leisure provision. The town will be the focus for significant investment within Moray and will accommodate the largest proportion of proposed new development. Elgin has 20,000 residents, with a large catchment population of close to 100,000. This has meant a healthy demand from developers, retailers and other service providers.
- 3.1.2 The current Moray Local Plan 2000 was approved by Scottish Ministers on 26th April 2000. Two transportation related planning objectives from the Moray Local Plan 2000 are copied below:
- to secure the provision of a bypass road with a commitment from the Scottish Office Environment Department to adopt a bypass for Elgin on to the A96 Trunk Road Capital Programme;
 - to improve traffic circulation in New Elgin and to link new development in the south of the town to road improvements
- 3.1.3 A number of TSP schemes under the headings of Elgin Bypass, South Side Road Improvements, Public Transport and Cycling Network are identified in the Moray Local Plan 2000 for Elgin.
- 3.1.4 These TSP schemes have been retained in the emerging Moray Local Plan and have attracted a number of objections, which depending upon the decisions of the Council will require to be defended at Public Local Inquiry later this year.
- 3.1.5 Since the approval of the Moray Local Plan 2000 a number of reports were presented to the Environmental Services Committee relating to transport options for Elgin. On 01 September 2004 the Environmental Services Committee approved the commissioning of a traffic model for Elgin and a STAG study for transport solutions on the west side of Elgin. The scope of this was subsequently sidened by stakeholders to consider all of Elgin.

Committee Date	Report Title
13 March 2002	Elgin Bypass
06 August 2003	Elgin Bypass and Traffic Management
01 September 2004	Proposed New Road Link – Edgar Road to A96

3.2 Elgin Transport Model and Elgin STAG Pre-Appraisal and Part 1 Report

3.2.1 Halcrow Consultants were appointed in February 2006 for the Transportation Professional Services Call-off Term contract including the Elgin Transport Model and the Elgin STAG Study.

3.2.2 Halcrow held a pre-appraisal workshop with a broad spectrum of stakeholders and the following key planning objective was adopted:

“to provide a quicker, safer and more reliable transport system in and around Elgin while accommodating future development”.

3.2.3 The Elgin STAG Part 1 Report was presented to the Environmental Services Committee on 30th August 2006 (para 8(b)(i) of minute refers) and it was agreed that ‘Traffic Management’ and ‘Link & Junction Improvement’ themes were complementary to the planning objectives and should be taken forward to the Elgin STAG Part 2 appraisal.

3.2.4 The Elgin Vissim Model was used to test 20 different options and an Interim Review Report was issued as a report for noting to the Environmental Services Committee members in April 2007 (background papers including copies of Committee reports (November 2005 – April 2007) and the reports referred to in this section have been placed in the Member’s Library). The Interim Review Report identified 7 transport options to be taken forward for the full STAG Part 2 appraisal. The Elgin Vissim Model has been used to test these options. The options correspond with the indicative lines shown on the Elgin Modifications Map apart from the details of TSP12 at the A96/Wittet Drive Junction.

Option Reference and Type			Description
4	A	Edgar Rd – A96	Wittet Drive Link (TSP10-12) *modified at north end
6	B		Morrison Road Link (part TSP2)
13	C	Bypass	Bypass North (TSP1)
14	D		Bypass South (short) (TSP2)
15	E		Bypass South (long) (TSP2)
16	F	Combination	Southern Distributor + Option (4) A
17	G		Southern Distributor + Option (6) B

3.3 Elgin STAG Part 2 Report

3.3.1 Halcrow have produced a Summary Report as well as the full Elgin STAG Part 2 Report, including Appraisal Summary Tables (AST), and an Environmental Assessment Report. Copies of these reports have already been issued to Elected Members (**Appendix A – not attached**). Halcrow Consultants will make a short presentation to the Committee.

- 3.3.2 To enable appraisal it is necessary to develop a 'Do-minimum' scenario which accurately reflects the changes which are committed to occur irrespective of the conclusions of the STAG exercise.
- 3.3.3 The year 2012, at the end of the Local Plan period, is used for comparison/reference for all of the 7 options. The Do-minimum scenario reveals a significant increase in traffic and reduction in average vehicle speed over the period 2006-2012. A comparison of traffic volumes and average speeds between the 2006 (Base) and the Do-minimum (reference case 2012) is shown at **Appendix B** attached to this report. It is clear that the 'Do-minimum' option would not mitigate the traffic problems being experienced in Elgin and something strategic has to be done and may be counter to the case for an Elgin Bypass.
- 3.3.4 The potential closure of the A941 New Elgin Road Railway Bridge was tested using the Elgin Vissim Model and revealed extreme pressures on the remaining links during some periods of the simulation. This highlights the potential consequences of this Railway Bridge ever being closed and therefore the need for a new crossing of the railway line in Elgin. A comparison of traffic flows between the existing railway crossings and the A96 trunk road is shown for March/April 2007 below. The annual average daily traffic (AADT) crossing the New Elgin Road Railway Bridge in 2006 was 21,400 vehicles.

Railway Crossing	Traffic		A96 Trunk Road	Traffic
Reiket Lane	5,143		East Road (West of Ashgrove Road)	25,076
Ashgrove Road	3,327		Alexandra Road (Bus Station)	24,478
New Egin Road	21,731		West Road (West of River Lossie)	16,600
The Wards	6,475			

- 3.3.5 The STAG appraisal has three key purposes:
- It will demonstrate whether a proposal is socially, environmentally and economically deliverable and is technically and financially feasible and acceptable to stakeholders
 - It will reveal the extent to which a proposal fulfils the planning objective and helps planners arrive at a value for money solution to identified transport problems
 - It will demonstrate to decision makers the full set of likely impacts of the proposal against the Government's five objectives of environment, safety, economy, integration and accessibility (and the distribution of these impacts across social and spatial groups).
- 3.3.6 The following paragraphs summarise the main findings from the Halcrow reports based on the Government's five objectives.

Environment

- 3.3.7 All schemes show a range of Environmental Impacts and Residual Effects across the different environmental aspects. A summary table is shown at **Appendix B** to this report. The variation of impact for the 7 options range between moderate beneficial to major adverse. The options that show a major adverse impact are noted as follows: Options C, D and E have major adverse noise and vibration impacts; Option C has a moderate to major adverse impact upon biodiversity in the area. Full details are contained within the Environmental Assessment Report.

Safety

- 3.3.8 The safety objective considers road accidents and security. An analysis of the changes in the annual vehicle kilometres suggests there will be negligible overall impacts on accident rates across Elgin.
- 3.3.9 It is noted that options that create increased future traffic levels on existing roads increase the probability of accidents occurring on these roads to different degrees. This includes Options A, B, F and G. However, any concern should also be set within the broader context with road accident figures for the A96 and A941 showing a relatively low number of recorded accidents. It is anticipated that security benefits across the 7 options will be marginal and the magnitude of any adverse localised impacts are likely to be low. There will be a trade-off between localised impacts against the wider benefits to Elgin as a whole. Mitigation measures and road safety audits will be part of the detailed design process for any scheme that is taken forward.

Accessibility and Inclusion

- 3.3.10 Accessibility and Social Inclusion considers access to work, education and training, health and shopping as well as impact on particular social groups. Option A will improve access to and from the Edgar Road Retail Zone, Dr Gray's Hospital, The First Day Hospital for the Elderly, education and training facilities, proposed future housing land and the centre of Elgin. Option B will improve access similar to Option A, however will provide a less direct route for pedestrians and cyclists. The Bypass options will promote improved access to the key employment sites in the centre of Elgin and the proposed Business Parks (Business Park East and Business Park West). The combination options will provide access conditions much the same as Option A. Social Inclusion impacts are likely to be modest with widespread deprivation not a significant factor within Elgin.

Integration

- 3.3.11 Transport, land-use and policy integration have been considered. The adoption of the key planning objective means that options appraised through the STAG process will achieve integration across all three aspects of integration.

Economy

3.3.12 The Economic appraisal involved use of the Transport User Benefit Appraisal (TUBA) model (Department for Transport) that considers a 60 year period for each option. A number of different costs and benefits are included: option costs, travel time savings, vehicle operating costs, maintenance delays, carbon benefits, developer contributions, operating costs, and indirect tax revenue. TUBA produces values discounted to 2002 prices. The economic costs and benefits are expressed as a Benefit to Cost ratio (BCR). The Benefit to Cost ratio is a value for money measure, which indicates how much benefit would be obtained in return for each unit of cost to the public sector. A Benefit to Cost ratio (BCR) value below 1.0 produces economic benefits that are less than the economic costs.

3.3.13 The Benefit to Cost ratio (BCR) values for each option are shown in ascending order below:

Option	G	B	E	D	C	F	A
BCR	0.45	0.50	0.50	0.52	0.53	0.86	1.7

3.3.14 The only option to show a Benefit to Cost ratio above 1.0 is Option A. This option has higher benefits compared to the costs and be considered to provide value for money. The Monetary Economic Summary is set out in **Appendix B** to this report.

3.4 Strategic Approach to take Transport Options Forward

3.4.1 The Elgin STAG stakeholders identified a very broad range of transport problems in Elgin. Many of these related to the A96 and A941 strategic roads. The key planning objective was adopted and used throughout the STAG process. The 7 options that have undergone the full STAG Part 2 appraisal complement the key planning objective with varying degrees of benefit, cost, environmental and social impact.

3.4.2 The social and accessibility impacts of the options are presented in the Elgin STAG Part 2 Report. However, a potentially critical aspect of the delivery of all of the 7 options will be the requirement for land and property. All 7 options will require land outwith the boundary of the public road and not in the Council's ownership. The Elgin STAG Part 2 Report includes the land and property costs in the overall costs for each of the options.

3.4.3 There is not a one-scheme fix for the transport conditions in Elgin. There is a need to address the growing congestion problems in Elgin in a phased way.

3.4.4 There are a number of junctions across Elgin that show peak hour congestion and are likely to require some intervention to reduce queues and delays over and above any strategic scheme that is taken forward. These junctions include A941/Morrison Road, A941/Lesmurdie Road and others identified in the new Moray Local Plan.

- 3.4.5 There is a need for an Elgin Traffic Management Plan to be developed that will identify specific measures to be taken forward by Moray Council as the Local Roads Authority, Scottish Executive as the Trunk Roads Authority and Developers as part of the mitigation for the impact of their developments.
- 3.4.6 The predicted traffic conditions in Elgin cannot wait for a long-term (over 10 years) improvement project, something has to be done in the short-term to achieve the key planning objective: to provide a quicker, safer and more reliable transport system in and around Elgin while accommodating future development. The Elgin Traffic Management Plan should have a delivery programme consistent with the Moray local Plan and the Regional Transport Strategy. This will be: Short-term 2007 – 2012, Medium-term 2012 –2017 and Long-term 2017 – 2023.

Bypass Options

- 3.4.7 The primary role of a Bypass is to provide a route for long distance traffic travelling to destinations beyond the community that is bypassed.
- 3.4.8 The Aberdeen to Inverness Transport Corridor Study, undertaken on behalf of Transport Scotland, Hitrans and Nestrans, shows that the traffic levels on the A96 either side of Elgin warrant a higher carriageway standard (wide single carriageway or dual 2-lane all purpose carriageway).
- 3.4.9 The Bypass schemes (Options C, D and E) show some of the highest overall benefits, however they also show some of the highest overall costs. These schemes will wholly involve the Scottish Executive for funding, design, statutory procedures and construction procurement.
- 3.4.10 It is recommended that the Bypass options are retained in the Moray Local Plan and are allocated to the Medium-term delivery programme. The Scottish Executive's Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR) is currently under way and is due to be completed in late 2008. Due to this short timescale and the growing traffic levels on the A96 trunk road in Elgin it is considered necessary to propose an additional recommendation for a delegation of Elected Members and Council Officers to meet with the Scottish Executive concerning the Elgin Bypass and a delivery programme.

Edgar Road to A96 Options

- 3.4.11 Early consultation in 2004 indicated that a significant number of residents on Wittett Drive were against the proposed road link between Edgar Road and the A96. There are sustained objections to a number of the proposed TSP schemes contained in the new Moray Local Plan. These include those TSP schemes relating to the options that have been considered through the STAG process. It should be noted that many of the TSP schemes will probably require land and in some cases property, to deliver any improvements on the transport network.

- 3.4.12 Extensive investigations have been carried out to try and identify alternative road layouts for Option A that would minimise the requirement for land and property but still deliver the full performance of the original Option A layout. The outcome of this is that whilst a roundabout could probably be physically constructed immediately north of the existing A96/Wittett Drive junction location the geometry would not be compliant with current trunk road design standards for a distributor road joining the trunk road. The feasibility of a roundabout north of the A96/Wittett Drive junction will be explored with the Scottish Executive but at present this is not considered to be a viable option. For these reasons it must be assumed that the construction of Option A would require property acquisition. Information received from Network Rail, since 2004, concerning track height clearances allows lower road levels to be achieved and therefore less impact in the vicinity of the proposed new railway bridge.
- 3.4.13 Option A has a Benefit to Cost ratio (BCR) of 1.70 and complements the planning objectives, provides significant benefits, provides access to employment and services, creates access to areas identified for future land-use and has a mainly neutral environmental impact. There are localised disbenefits that will need to be addressed through mitigation measures brought forward in the detailed design stage.
- 3.4.14 The construction of Option A would require property acquisition. Transportation officials have reviewed the Elgin STAG Part 2 Report and consider the wider benefits for Elgin to be so strategically significant that it is recommended that Option A is retained within the Moray Local Plan and is allocated to the short-term delivery programme 2007 -2012. It is recommended that work starts on the detailed design and a report is prepared for the Full Council to consider progress with design and funding for Option A. Further public consultation at more detailed level would take place if the recommendation is approved.

Combination Options

- 3.4.15 The Combination schemes (Options B, F and G) show a range of benefits from £12.1m to £27.1m and a range of costs between £24.2m to £45.0m. These schemes will have to be delivered by the Local Roads Authority through funding from developer contributions, external funding (such as Hitrans) and Council funding.
- 3.4.16 Options B, F and G have a Benefit to Cost ratio (BCR) less than 1.0. These options will be required to enable certain land-uses to be taken up and future appraisals may be undertaken using more up-to-date traffic and other updated information to re-evaluate the Benefit to Cost ratio (BCR). It is recommended that Options B, F and G are retained in the Moray Local Plan and are allocated to the Medium-term 2012 –2017 delivery programme.

4. **SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

(a) Corporate Development Plan/Community Plan/Service Improvement Plan

This report contributes to:

CDP Environmental Programme 4 Transport

CDP Environmental Programme 5 Development Plan

SIP 5 Working with the community to plan for the future

(b) Policy and Legal

The existing and new Moray Local Plan present TSP schemes (transport network improvements) for Elgin.

There are sustained objections to a number of the TSP schemes identified in the Moray Local Plan for Elgin. These include the options considered in the Elgin STAG Part 2 Report. A decision by the Council to take forward any of the options considered in the Elgin STAG Part 2 Report will have an immediate impact for the position to be taken by the Council at the Public Local Inquiry.

Under the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 local road authorities can construct and maintain roads. A decision to take forward any of the specific transport improvement options will mean that a number of statutory procedures will have to be followed and will include the submission of a detailed planning application.

(c) Resources (Financial, Risks, Staffing and Property)

The funding for Option A will involve capital funding from a number of sources. The Council has allocated capital funding to 'Elgin Traffic Management and Car Parking' and there are some developer contributions already paid and others pending the go-ahead of development.

Option A has an estimated cost of £13.9m that includes project risk and optimism bias (as defined in Her Majesty's Treasury Green Book).

There is a need to prepare a detailed funding package to enable Option A to be taken forward.

(d) Consultations

The Chief Financial Officer, Chief Housing Officer, Principal Solicitor, Head of Development Services, Principal Planners (Development Services) and Head of Estates have been consulted and comments received have been incorporated in the report.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1** It is clear that a specific transport improvement option to satisfy the adopted planning objective for the Elgin STAG Study needs to be taken forward to alleviate existing congestion and forecast traffic conditions.
- 5.2** All 7 options are identified in the Moray Local Plan in order to enable the proposed land-uses to be taken forward. Despite only one option showing a Benefit to Cost ratio (BCR) above 1.0 it is recommended that they are all retained in the Moray Local Plan to ensure the capability of full land-use opportunities identified in the Moray Local Plan. The Council would be required to defend this position at the impending Local Plan Public Inquiry.
- 5.3** All 7 options have adverse impacts to a varying degree and require land for the delivery of the option. Option A has a requirement for land and property. It is considered that the wider benefits for Elgin are so strategically significant that it is recommended that Option A is allocated to the short-term delivery programme for Elgin and detailed design and identification/allocation of funding is taken forward as quickly as possible.
- 5.4** It is recommended that all other options (Options B, C, D, E, F and G) are allocated to the Medium-term delivery programme.
- 5.5** Due to the forthcoming Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR) it is recommended that a delegation of Councillors and Council Officials urgently seek meeting with the Scottish Transport Minister concerning the future programming of an Elgin Bypass.

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Background Papers:
Ref: GRH/RJG/PA