

The Highland Council

City of Inverness Area Committee – 2 June 2016

Agenda Item	7
Report No	CIA/23/16

Approaching Inverness Project

Report by Director of Development and Infrastructure

Summary

This report provides an update on the Approaching Inverness Project and seeks Members' approval to proceed with the recommended demonstration projects.

1. Background

- 1.1 The quality, character and impact of entrances to / routes through the City of Inverness are important factors, influencing how the City is perceived and the values attributed to it by visitors, residents, businesses and potential investors. In recognition of the potential for improvements, £145k is allocated within the Development and Infrastructure Town and Countryside Regeneration Capital Programme for the delivery of the Approaching Inverness Project.
- 1.2 This project is intended to deliver one or more demonstration projects based upon priorities identified within a supporting Approaching Inverness Strategy, which is intended for future use as non-statutory supplementary planning guidance. The draft Approaching Inverness Strategy and Design Guide can be viewed on the Highland Council Members' Intranet.
- 1.3 Landscape architects, WSP UK Ltd, were commissioned to undertake detailed analysis, and identify ways to enhance the quality and the sense of place experienced on key approaches and through routes, in order that these would better complement city status, and provide an attractive and welcoming environment within the public realm.
- 1.4 A cross-service steering group, in which Transport Scotland was also represented, has guided the development of the Strategy.
- 1.5 Members of Wards 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 20 have attended two consultation events at which they contributed to both the direction of the Strategy and the identification of potential demonstration projects.
- 1.6 The outcome of this commission is the draft Approaching Inverness Strategy and Design Guide, which will be launched on the Highland Council website on 6 June for a public consultation period of ten weeks. The draft Strategy sets out design guidance for all the main routes into the city and identifies potential improvement works for the key routes.

1.7 Once finalised, it is intended to showcase the Strategy through delivery of demonstration projects. These projects will show how the design guidelines can be implemented, with the aspiration that other organisations and individuals may deliver further improvements in due course. By stimulating incremental changes in the approaches to / routes through the City. It is intended to encourage more widespread improvements over time, to attract further funding from external and internal sources, and to develop possible synergies with other Council initiatives e.g. Community Links Plus.

2. Demonstration Project Options

2.1 Whilst the Strategy identifies wide ranging and significant potential for improvements, the more ambitious of these will remain aspirational for the foreseeable future, being limited by financial and / or other significant constraints. For example, proposals to deliver enhancements at the Longman A9 roundabout remain aspirational due to major road layout changes intended by Transport Scotland.

2.2 A candidate short term Approaching Inverness demonstration project is expected to be:

- a clear showcase for the Approaching Inverness Project;
- capable of replication;
- inspiring to others;
- affordable within existing or attainable budget; and
- deliverable within realistic constraints.

2.3 Seven candidate demonstration project options, spread across the city, have been identified, each highlighting some of the design principles and interventions proposed within the Strategy. Each project is more fully described in **Appendix 1**:

1. A9 Longman arrival at Inverness: improve verge edges, plant tree boundary and re-landscape Longman Roundabout in 'Highland style'.
2. A82 Longman Road: tidy verge edges, avenue tree planting and shrub planting along central reservation.
3. A82 Telford Roundabout: re-landscape roundabout in 'Highland style', tree and shrub planting on hard, unused surfaces.
4. A862 Clachnaharry Road: cycle lane, pavement, traffic calming and measures.
5. NCN1 Kessock Bridge / Longman arrival zone: provide safe, segregated cycle way; resurface section immediately after Kessock Bridge and planting within NCN corridor to soften landscape.
6. City Gateway Structures: seven possible locations – preferred option beside A82 at Clachnaharry.

7. B865 Millburn Road: improve tree planting in central reservation, plant avenue trees in verges.

3. Proposals for implementation

3.1 Each demonstration project option has merit and would bring enhancement to the City. The following three projects are considered to best meet the criteria provided in paragraph 2.2 above and to allow demonstration of more than one type of intervention:

- City Gateway structure at Clachnaharry;
- A82 Telford Roundabout improvements, in partnership with Transport Scotland; and
- A82 Longman central reservation improvements, in partnership with Transport Scotland.

3.2 Detailed project cost estimates will be prepared subject to agreement in principle by this Committee to progress with these projects.

4. Implications

4.1 Resources

Capital funds have been allocated within the Development and Infrastructure Service Town and Countryside Regeneration Capital Programme. Opportunities to add external funds will be taken when available.

4.2 Legal and Risk

Limitations presented when working in partnership with third parties.

4.3 Equality and Rural

Opportunities and constraints are considered as an integral part of the project planning process.

4.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever

Opportunities and constraints are considered as an integral part of the project planning process.

4.5 Gaelic

Opportunities for the inclusion of Gaelic are considered as an integral part of the project planning process and may be of particular relevance to gateway structures.

Recommendation

The Committee is asked to:

- agree the demonstration projects as per paragraph 3.1 for implementation; and
- agree that the draft Strategy is issued for public comment.

Designation: Director of Development and Infrastructure

Date: 13 May 2016

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Background Papers: The draft Approaching Inverness Strategy and Design Guide can be viewed on the Highland Council Members' Intranet.

Inverness City Committee

2 June 2016

Approaching Inverness

Appendix 1

Demonstration Project Options

Seven candidate demonstration project options have been identified through Steering Group and Councillor consultation events.

Option 1: A9 Longman Arrival at Inverness

This option would provide an arrival experience that is both more formal and urban in appearance, and more distinctively 'Highland' than is currently the case.

Proposals:

- Re-landscape the Longman Roundabout in a 'Highland style' featuring:
 - A more distinct hill;
 - A group of pine trees;
 - A feature dry-stone wall;
 - Low-maintenance wildflower grass; and
 - A neat paved edge.
- Create broad, neat grass verges and plant a formal avenue of trees along either side of the A9, continuing round into the Longman Road.
- Regrade the embankments at the start of the Longman Road to make maintenance easier.

Image 1 – Proposed Improvements A9 Longman Arrival

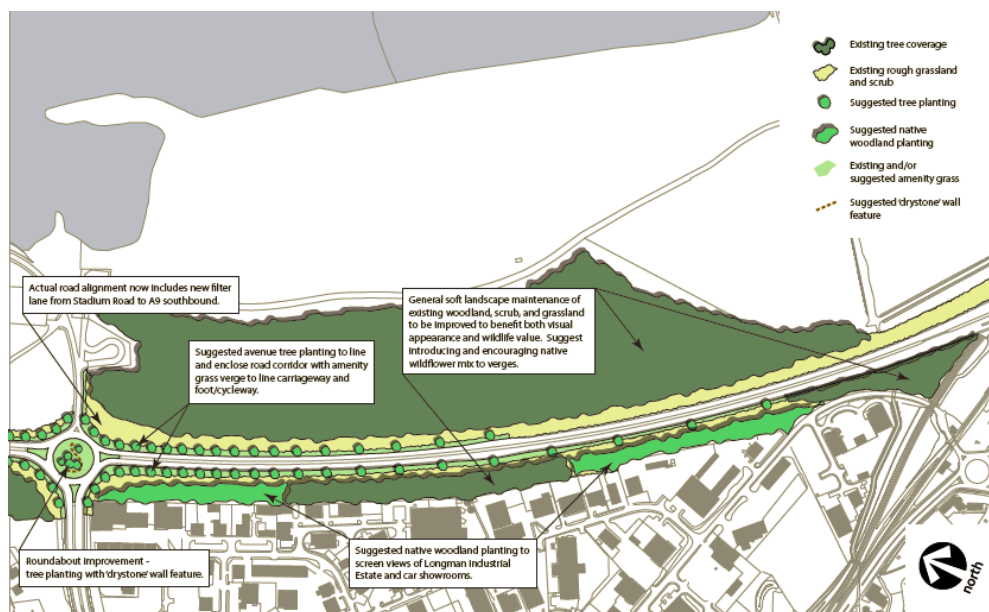


Image 2 – A9 Northbound - before



Image 3 – A9 Northbound - after



Key Opportunities and Constraints

- Land lies in the ownership of Transport Scotland, with whom THC would work in partnership for delivery.
- Plans to replace Longman Roundabout with grade-separated junction; timescale unknown and poses risk to capital investment.

Deliverability

In terms of value for money there isn't adequate justification for investment in re-landscaping the roundabout or planting a formal avenue of trees due to TS future plans.

Option 2: A82 Longman Road

This option would provide a defined green edge to soften the expansive industrial corridor and create a boulevard appearance.

Proposals:

- Cut back existing scrub woodland on the north side and create a tidy edge.
- Avenue tree planting either side of the road – trees spaced such that in long oblique views down the street they create the required enclosure, but that in close views the commercial premises are visible behind them.
- Hedge or band of low maintenance shrubs along the central reservation to reduce the apparent width of the carriageway and upgrade hard surfacing to edges of reservation.

Image 4 – A82 Longman

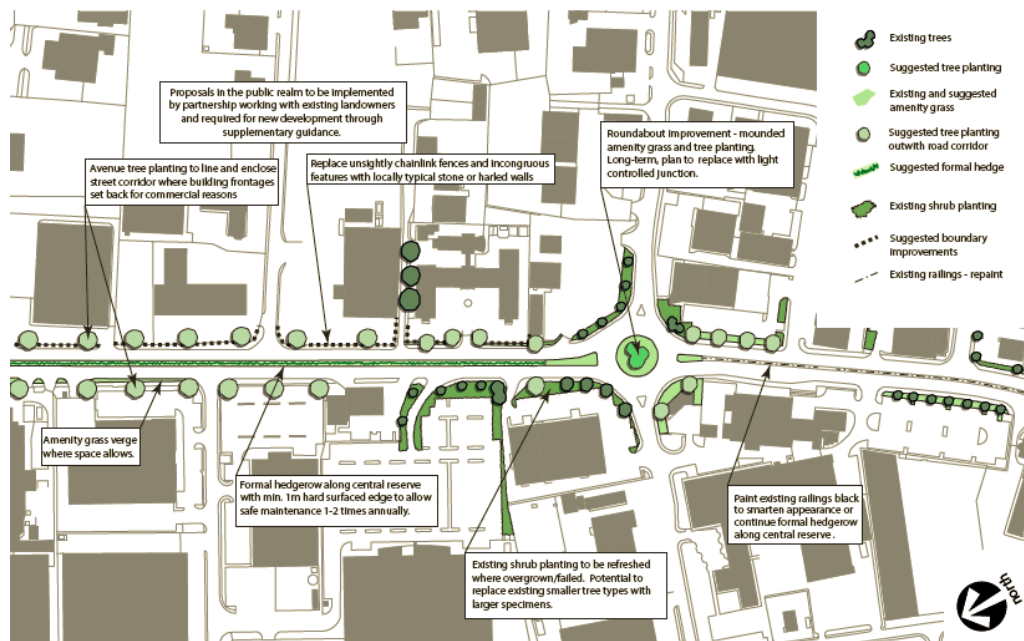


Image 5 – A82 Longman Before



Image 6 – A82 Longman After



Key Opportunities and Constraints

- Heavy traffic flow.
- Significant underground services.
- Little or no space within the road corridor.
- Opportunity to work in partnership with Transport Scotland.
- Limited space within the public realm.
- High profiled, busy route.
- Opportunity to soften up an otherwise hard landscape

Deliverability

Planting along the central reservation is both affordable and has agreement from TS, making this option both achievable and potential to have a positive impact. Planting trees to create an avenue is less deliverable in the short-term as it would require working with several partners. This could be achieved outwith the remit of this project and most likely through future development management.

Option 3: A82 Telford Roundabout

The intention of this option is to show what could be done with improvements to all urban roundabouts (and particularly those along the A82) to create a more pleasant experience for road users and local residents and to reinforce the Highland character.

Proposal:

- Creating a distinctive ‘Highland’ style landscape on the roundabout with mounded amenity grass and tree planting.

Image7 – Telford Roundabout



Image 8 – Telford Roundabout – before



Image 9 – Telford Roundabout – after



Key Opportunities and Constraints

- Potential to work in partnership with Transport Scotland.
- Heavy traffic flows.
- Significant underground services.
- Soften an expansive hard landscape.

Deliverability

A good location to showcase what can be achieved. This option is affordable and TS are supportive of improvements suggested.

Option 4: A862 Clachnaharry Road

There is an opportunity with this proposal to tie in with the Muirtown and South Kessock Development Brief which overlaps with much of the route corridor.

Proposals:

- Traffic calming and public realm enhancements
 - Road marking changes;
 - Pavement (footway) and parking spaces: and
 - Relocation of the traffic signals at the bridge to allow construction of footway to connect to the monument.
- Improvements to east end of village
 - Extension of the footway on the north side of the road to provide safer pedestrian access to the canal;
 - Rumble strips to alert drivers;
 - Cycle lanes reinforced by colour marking; and
 - Removal of centre white lines.

Image 10 Canal Junction – before



Image 11 Canal Junction – after



Image 12 – Clachnaharry Village – before



Image 13 – Clachnaharry Village - after



Key Opportunities and Constraints

- Heavy traffic flow.
- Numerous existing junctions and traffic signals including signalled pedestrians.
- Similar schemes have been shown to reduce driver confidence and thus reduce driving speed
- Tie in with Muirtown and South Kessock development brief

Deliverability

Complex option, highly dependent on external funding, which is currently uncertain.

Option 5: NCN1 Kessock Bridge to Shore Street Roundabout

This option would enhance the main cycle approach from the north into the city, softening the heavily industrial area with improved landscaping and widening the cycle corridor where possible.

Proposal: Green Space Zone

- Within the NCN1 corridor
 - Clear shrub verges back and seed with amenity grass to widen cycle route and create a less hostile, neglected space;
 - Resurface route;
 - Improve active maintenance of adjacent soft landscape/woodland.
- Outwith the NCN corridor (would require partnership working)
 - Plant avenue trees along boundary of car park to soften views of industrial buildings and overflow carpark;
 - Improve active maintenance of wider soft landscape/woodland.

Image 14 NCN1 Green Space Zone



Image 15 NCN 1 Green Space Zone – before



Image 16 NCN 1 Green Space Zone – after



Proposal: Industrial Zone

- In public realm
 - Provide safe, segregated cycle route
 - Improve and exploit pocket spaces, e.g. Cromwell's Monument
 - Plant street trees and amenity shrubs where possible to soften and structure the streetscape

Image 17 – NCN1 Industrial Zone

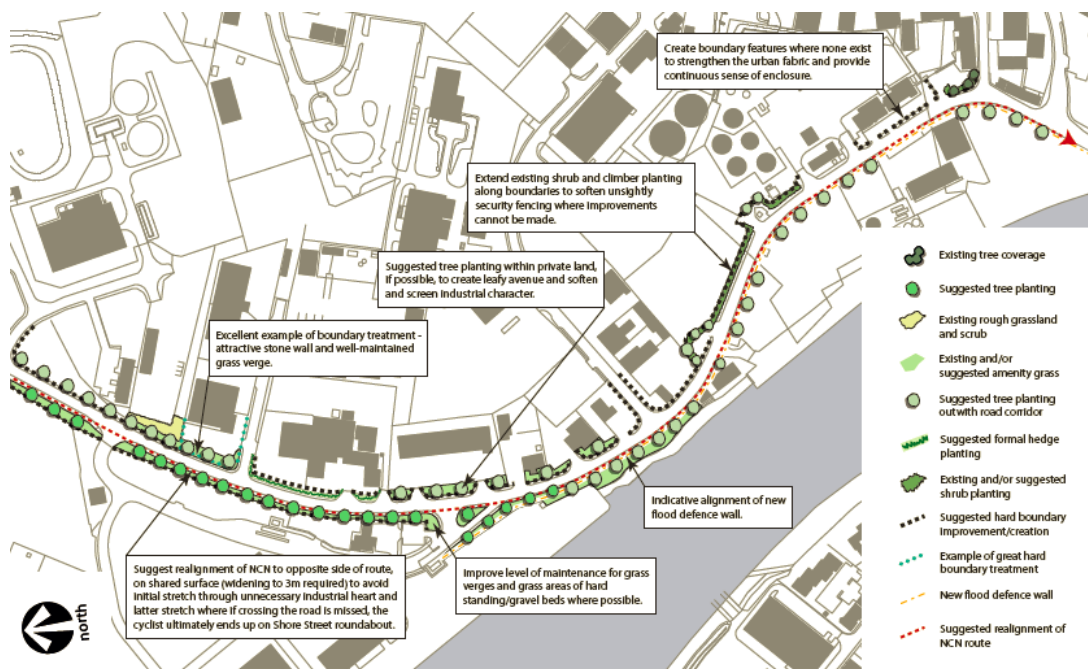


Image 18 – NCN1 Industrial Zone – Before



Image 19 – NCN1 Industrial Zone - after



Proposal: Arrival Zone

- In public realm
 - Provide safe, segregated cycle route and take route clearly over Shore Street roundabout, or along Innes Street to underpass;
 - Plant street trees and amenity shrubs where possible to soften and line road;
 - Improve soft landscaping on Shore Street roundabout to mark positive entrance feature.

Image 20 – NCN1 Arrival Zone

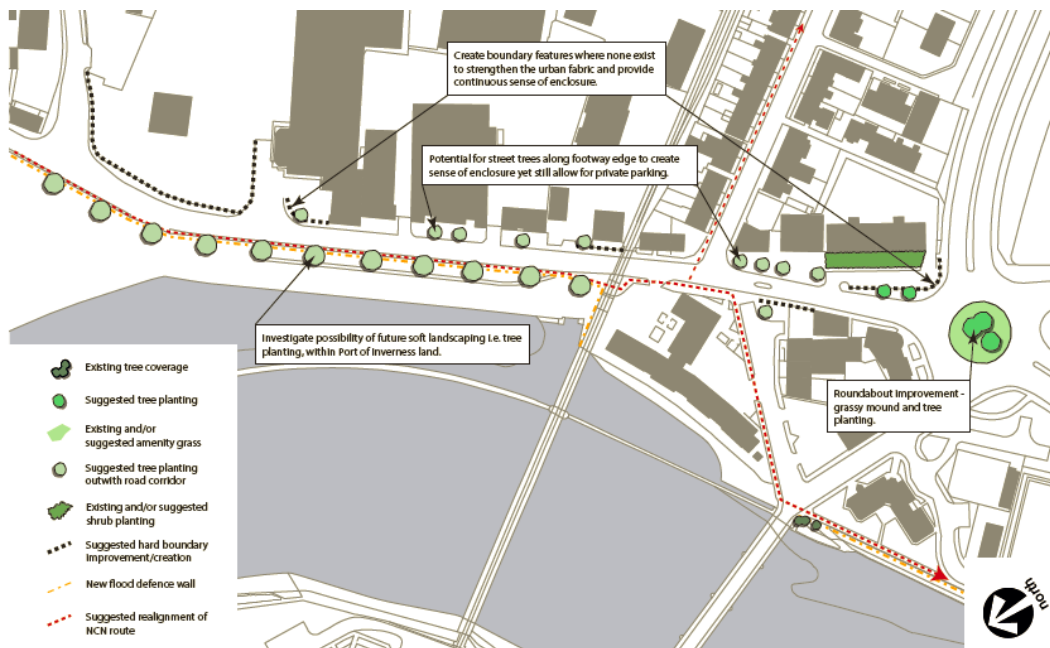


Image 21 – NCN1 Arrival Zone – before



Image 22 – NCN1 Arrival Zone – after



Key opportunities and Constraints

- HGV access.
- Restricted corridor width and limited areas of public realm.
- Potential to work with in partnership with other stakeholders, including Sustrans.
- Provide safe, segregated cycle route.

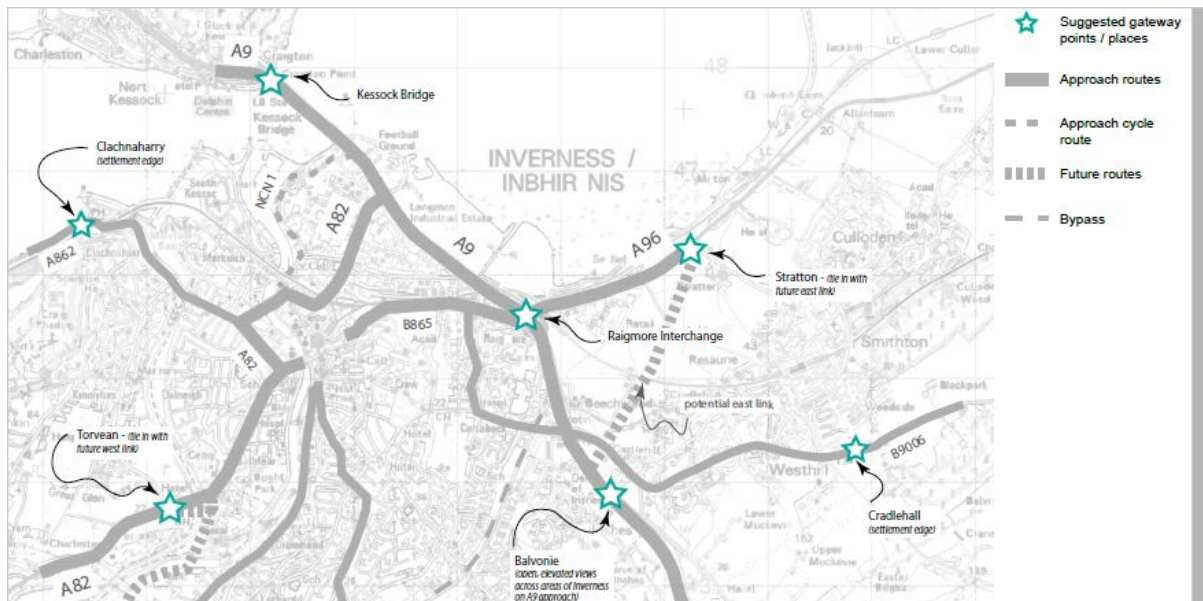
Deliverability

Other sources of funding are available for improving cycle paths and this option could potentially be better suited for delivery by HC Transport Planning.

Option 6: City Gateway Structures

A total of seven suggested gateway feature locations, five of them located on main approach routes and two on secondary approaches, as illustrated in map below.

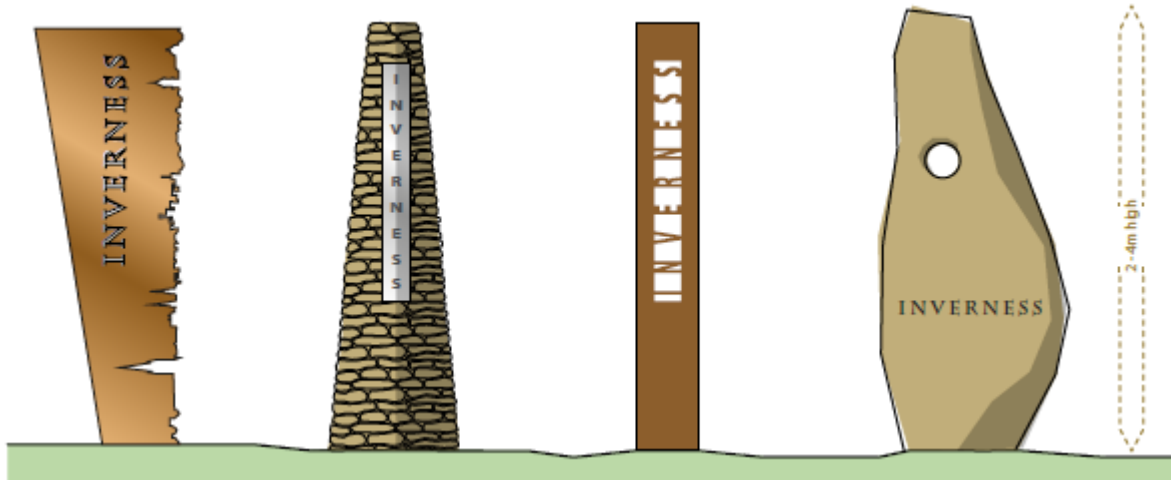
Image 23 – Gateway locations



The design, scale and prominence of a gateway would relate to the hierarchy on which it was located i.e. a more prominent gateway feature would be designed for the A9 than would be for the B9006.

The following provides some sample gateway features that may be appropriate for the identified locations, to signal arrival into the City of Inverness and portray an attractive and proud image for visitors and local residents alike.

Image 24 – Gateway Examples



Key Opportunities and Constraints

- Create a sense of place.
- Enhance existing HC developments.
- Landownership / consent.
- The design/ could be selected through an architectural competition which would provide high profile.
- Opportunity to specifically showcase Approaching Inverness Strategy

Deliverability

Subject to landowner consent this proposal is deliverable. An installation at Clachnaharry could support objectives highlighted in the South Kessock and Muirtown Development Brief and contribute to enhancing the overall area. This option is also replicable and an obvious showcase of strategy.

Option 7: B865 Millburn Road

This option would build on previous attempts to create a green urban approach to the city on an otherwise hard linear corridor.

Proposal:

- Improve existing tree pits in the central reservation, replace weak tree specimens and plant additional street trees with appropriate rooting zone to complete avenue.
- Refresh existing shrub planting down central reserve and extend along tree line.
- Plant further trees along verges where space is available, to strengthen the avenue and help structure the townscape

Image 25 – Millburn Road

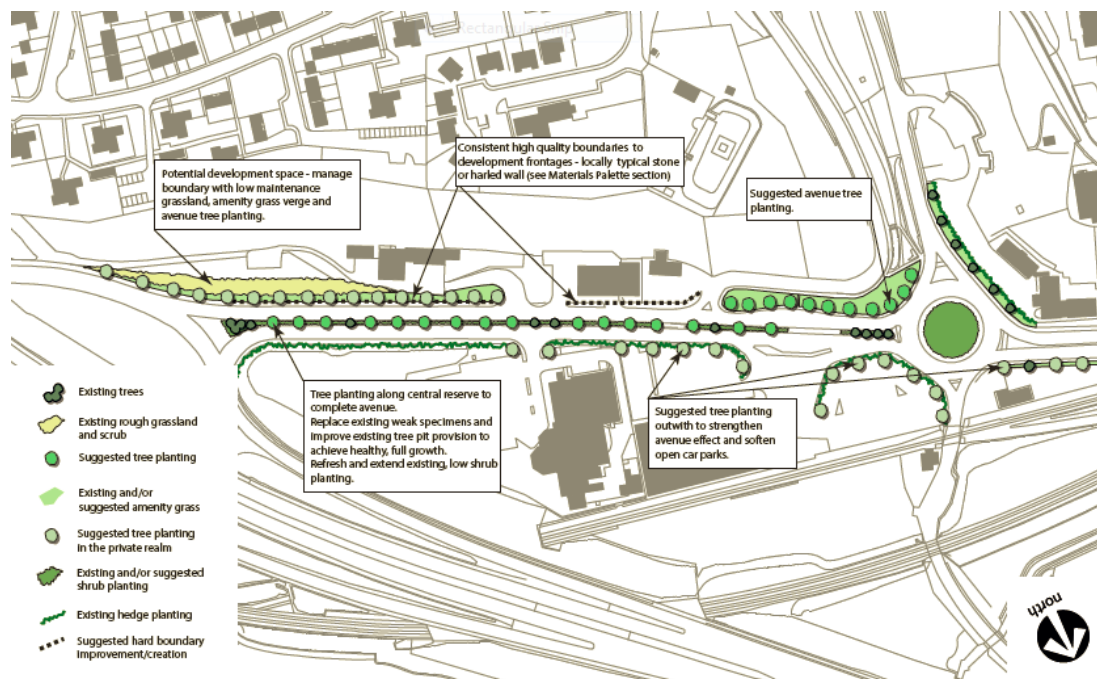


Image 26 – Millburn Road – before



Image 27 – Millburn Road – after



Image 28 – Millburn Road 2 - before



Image 29 – Millburn Road 2 - after



Key Opportunities and Constraints

- Heavy traffic flows.
- Significant underground services.
- Little or no space within the road corridor.
- Network Rail along significant stretch of northern edge.
- Salt contamination from road.
- Highland Council managed road, so no restrictions of partnership working.
- Add value to 2015 cycle improvement project.
- Future maintenance restraints.

Deliverability

Millburn Road has recently been upgraded, so not necessarily the best location for added investment. Effort to further soften this landscape would enhance what is already there but there are concerns of future maintenance commitments.