

Agenda Item	8
Report No	CIA/37/21

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: City of Inverness

Date: 18 November 2021

Report Title: Inshes Junction Improvements - Update

Report By: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 Inshes Corridor is one of the busiest parts of the city's transport network and as a result has capital programme funding allocated toward making improvements. The committee approved a public consultation in May 2021 which commenced June 2021. Due to the current Covid-19 restrictions the consultation has been undertaken online. It was hoped to have a public event but this has not been possible. The online consultation has had many responses and progress is noted in this report.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 The report seeks approval to proceed with the statutory approvals, planning permission and detailed design of the scheme based on a revised Option 1 as amended by section 6.2 this report. A copy of the revised Option 1 plan is in **Appendix 1** of this report.

3 Implications

- 3.1 **Resource** -The scheme is included in the capital programme report approved by Full Council on 7 March 2018. This was reviewed and updated on 7 January 2021 (rescheduled from 17 December 2020). The project budget was identified as £6.695m.
- 3.2 **Legal** - The land acquisition for the project may require a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) and will therefore require approval from committee. A separate committee paper will be prepared for Full Council when the planning drawings have been prepared.
- 3.3 **Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural)** - An Equalities Impact Assessment will be prepared on design options taken forward to ensure that the needs of all users of the corridor are accommodated.

- 3.4 **Climate Change / Carbon Clever** - The scheme focuses on active travel and public transport improvements which offer the opportunity to respond directly to the climate and ecological emergency and reduce the carbon footprint of transport in Highland, as well as reducing other forms of pollution and improving air quality.
- 3.5 **Risk** - The scheme budget relies on developer contributions. The land required for the scheme may require a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO). The scheme will impact on the existing access for the Inshes retail park. This interface needs to be managed during construction. The improvements planned for Inshes junction are essential to ensure a coordinated approach with the planned Transport Scotland A9/A96 Inshes to Smithton project (East Link). Both are committed Inverness and Highland City-Region Deal projects. Without improvements at Inshes the East Link road cannot connect into the rest of the network. Timescales outlined in the Capital programme are aligned to deliver improvements to Inshes in advance of the East Link project, without which, the committed timescales may not be met.
- 3.6 **Gaelic** - Council policy will be followed regarding bi-lingual signing therefore no impact.

4 Background

- 4.1 The public consultation revolved around the revised options to amend the layout of the existing roads infrastructure rather than replacement of the roundabout junction.
- 4.2 Over 590 items of correspondence have been received during the consultation through the online portal by email and post and are summarised below:-
 - 369 comments from the online portal
 - 94 emails
 - 127 letters/written feedback

It should be noted that some individuals have provided multiple responses on the online portal.

The vast majority of comments/feedback provided from all means of communication are related to the proposed link road to Drakies from the Eagle Roundabout.

5 Comments received – Inshes Corridor

- 5.1 Feedback provided on the Inshes Corridor. The points raised are summarised below:-

Comment received	Response
<p>General concern that none of the proposals will address traffic issues associated with past, current and future development on the south side of Inverness. The development of additional housing will lead to more congestion and increased traffic.</p>	<p>The scheme has been developed within the Local Plan and development briefs for the City. It is accepted that creating more capacity in the road network is not the answer and the scheme therefore seeks to manage the traffic more efficiently on the existing network.</p>

Concern regarding the impact on traffic lights on vehicles emissions due to waiting at the red lights	The scheme will create a network where the reliability of journey times are improved through the peak periods, as low emission and electric vehicles increase emissions will reduce.
Consideration for grade separation of the junction to separate traffic streams	This is not possible at this location; the proximity of existing development means there is insufficient space.
Continuation of cycle lanes through junctions and segregation of cycle lanes. In addition, consideration should be given to full grade separation	There is an improved cycle provision provided in Option 1. Full grade separation for pedestrians is technically possible but is not currently being considered for this site. A similar scheme is being considered by Falkirk Council and the link below illustrates the proposal. The price tag is around £67m (10 times our current budget). https://www.falkirk.gov.uk/services/business-investment/docs/a9/A9%20and%20A904%20Draft%20boards.pdf?v=202107061513
Loss of mature trees on current access to retail park	There will be some tree felling required for the scheme. This will be considered during the planning application and any mitigation planting will be defined within the planning conditions.
Negative impact on traffic with the provision of dedicated bus lanes	The introduction of bus lanes would reduce the amount of carriageway available for all other traffic. This does have an impact on the wider network and is not the favoured option.
Existing roundabout too small for the number of vehicles using it.	The six-arm roundabout does not perform well under existing or future conditions. Reduction to four arms creates opportunities to improve the capacity of the junction and manages the traffic flows more efficiently
Potential increase in traffic past the Inshes Church adding to current issues of rat running	This will be monitored, and mitigation provided to manage traffic speeds.
Maintain a left turn only exit from Old Perth Road onto Perth Road from the Drakies Estate	It is possible within the design to leave a priority junction for left turn vehicles at this point. Consideration will be given at the planning stage for the new access Drumossie Avenue / Perth Road to give an opportunity for residents to comment.

5.2 Issues raised during the consultation will be considered further during the next stage of design development. Potential to develop a FAQs style document to deal with some of the queries regarding grade separation, traffic lights, bus lanes etc. to close out the consultation and to help during future consultation phases.

6 Comments received – Eagle roundabout access to Drakies

6.1 The vast majority of comments received have been in relation to the provision of a link road to Drakies from Eagle Roundabout. The correspondence is summarised into the following points:-

- Loss of green space/buffer;
- Potential impact of link road on the playground and recreational activities e.g., joggers and dog walkers;
- Safety concerns due to increased vehicles near to the primary school and nursery;
- Increased vehicles numbers and speeds through the Drakies estate. Concern about the estate becoming a rat run for traffic to avoid queuing at Inshes;
- The link road being used as an access to allow development of the Drakies park into housing;
- Environmental concerns including increased air and noise pollution; and
- Concerns about the Lidl development and impact on traffic and the scheme and how this may impact Drakies.

No positive feedback was received for the proposed link road to Drakies.

6.2 It is clear from the volume of resident's responses that the Drakies community do not consider that an additional access to the Sir Walter Scott Drive would be an advantage. It is recommended therefore that the Drakies Link Road is removed from scheme as an amended version of Option 1.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy

Date: 27 October 2021

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Background Papers: Inshes Junction Improvements [Report](#)
Capital Programme 2018/19 [Report](#)
Capital Expenditure Monitoring to 31 December 2015 [Report](#)
Inshes and Raigmore Development Brief [Report](#)
Inshes and Raigmore Development Brief – Issues and Options and
Inshes Junction Improvements Phase 2 [Consultation](#)

