

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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<b>COMMITTEE</b>	Net Zero, Environment and Transport
<b>DATE</b>	3 September 2024
<b>EXEMPT</b>	No
<b>CONFIDENTIAL</b>	No
<b>REPORT TITLE</b>	Westhill to Aberdeen City Centre Active Travel Improvements
<b>REPORT NUMBER</b>	CR&E/24/254
<b>DIRECTOR</b>	Gale Beattie
<b>CHIEF OFFICER</b>	David Dunne
<b>REPORT AUTHOR</b>	Will Hekelaar
<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE</b>	7,8

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### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update Members on a preferred package of active travel improvements arising from the Multi-Modal Transport Corridor Study for the Westhill to Aberdeen City Centre corridor (elements within the Aberdeen City boundary only), and seek approval for next steps.

### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 Notes the outcomes of the Detailed Appraisal (Appendix 2) undertaken for the Westhill to Aberdeen City Centre Multi-Modal Transport Corridor Study;
- 2.2 Agree that those measures, described in paragraph 3.11 of this report, relevant to the Aberdeen City area, form a preferred package of active travel improvements on the Westhill to Aberdeen City Centre corridor; and
- 2.3 Instruct the Chief Officer – Strategic Place Planning to report an Outline Business Case for the elements of the preferred package within the city boundary to the Finance and Resources Committee at the earlier opportunity.

### 3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 Aberdeen City Council (ACC), in partnership with Aberdeenshire Council and Nestrans, commissioned transport consultants Stantec to carry out a Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) based appraisal of options for transport improvements between Westhill and Aberdeen, primarily along the A944 (Lang Stracht) and A9119 (Queens Road/Carden Place) corridors. A map of the corridor is shown in Appendix 1.
- 3.2 Preliminary Appraisal outcomes were reported to the City Growth and Resources Committee in [October 2020](#). This Preliminary Appraisal noted a requirement for improved active travel facilities along the route, and identified

a long list of options that were recommended to be taken forward to Detailed Appraisal and Outline Business Case (OBC). Members of the City Growth and Resources Committee agreed the findings of the study and instructed the Chief Officer – Strategic Place Planning to develop an OBC for the recommended package identified by the Preliminary Appraisal.

- 3.3 Recognising that the active travel options under consideration could provide a direct and attractive cycle route into the city centre, and thus support the movement principles of the Aberdeen City Centre Masterplan (CCMP), in [December 2022](#), Council instructed *the Chief Officer - Strategic Place Planning to report back the Outline Business Case for the A9119 cycle route (Carden Place (including Queens Cross Roundabout), Skene Street and Rosemount Viaduct) by December 2023, in order to provide an active travel link from the West End into the heart of the City Centre.* This instruction was subsequently revised by Council in [February 2024](#). Recognising that segregated cycle facilities were now planned along the length of Union Street, Council agreed that *proposals for a Queens Cross to City Centre cycle route be re-absorbed into the wider Westhill to Aberdeen Active Travel Route Outline Business Case (OBC), and instruct the Chief Officer - Strategic Place Planning to report the OBC to the Net Zero, Environment and Transport Committee later in 2024.*
- 3.4 Again working with Aberdeenshire Council and Nestrans, Detailed Appraisal was completed in 2022 (Appendix 2). This involved developing the options generated at Preliminary Appraisal into four end-to-end corridor-wide options, subjecting these to qualitative appraisal against the project objectives and STAG criteria (Environment; Climate Change; Health, Safety and Wellbeing; Economy; Equality and Accessibility), and undertaking public and stakeholder engagement on the options, including engagement with local schools along the corridor. These options were:
- Option A – Prioritise active travel on the A944 and A9119;
  - Option B – Prioritise public transport on the A944 and A9119, with cycle routes parallel to the A944 and A9119;
  - Option C - Prioritise active travel on the A944 and public transport on the A9119, with a parallel A9119 cycle route; and
  - Option D - Prioritise active travel on the A9119 and public transport on the A944, with a parallel A944 cycle route.
- 3.5 Upon completion of Detailed Appraisal, officers proceeded to further assess Option B (Appendix 3, Figure 1). This was on the basis that this option minimised any potential conflicts with Aberdeen Rapid Transit (ART) proposals, given that it remained to be determined at that time whether an ART route from the west would approach the city centre via the A944 or A9119. Given the spatial constraints, particularly on the A9119, it was felt that accommodating cycle provision on nearby parallel routes would enable the maximum bus priority on both corridors to be accommodated, thus supporting future delivery of ART on either corridor. As significant concerns were raised during previous consultation by stakeholders and members of the public regarding proposed cycle routes parallel to the A944, the next stage of assessment considered only routes parallel to the A9119.

- 3.6 Targeted stakeholder consultation took place in autumn 2023 on designs for the Option B active travel proposals. Feedback was clear from local cycling groups that their preference was for cycle routes to follow main road corridors and they would not support routes being accommodated on parallel streets. It was suggested that such routes would be poorly used compared to main roads, with issues of directness, visibility, safety and maintenance cited.
- 3.7 In [June 2024](#), the outcomes of the ART routeing appraisal were reported to the Net Zero, Environment and Transport Committee. At that meeting Members agreed a desired network upon which to continue to develop the business case for ART, with the proposed route from the west following the A944 Lang Stracht. This decision enabled officers to re-consider opportunities to develop a cycle route on the A9119 Queens Road/Carden Place, in the knowledge that this would likely not conflict with ART proposals going forward.
- 3.8 Work therefore progressed to develop Outline Designs for the following links and variants:
- Section 1: Main Route - Westhill to A944/A9119 junction;
  - Section 2:
    - Main Route Option - A944/A9119 junction to the City Centre via A9119 Queen's Road and Carden Place;
    - Alternative Parallel Route A - A944/A9119 junction to City Centre via King's Gate, Rubislaw Den North and Carden Place, with two variants:
      - Variant 1: Formal cycle facilities on Moray Place and Rubislaw Den North;
      - Variant 2: Quiet route measures on Moray Place and Rubislaw Den North; and
    - Alternative Parallel Route B - A944/A9119 junction to City Centre via King's Gate, Rubislaw Den South and Carden Place, with two variants:
      - Variant 1: Formal cycle facilities on Rubislaw Den South;
      - Variant 2: Quiet route measures on Rubislaw Den South.

Figures 2-5 in Appendix 3 provide a high-level overview of proposals for each of the above sections and variants, and identifies some of the risks and issues noted at this early Outline Design stage that will require more detailed assessment and consideration in subsequent stages of design.

- 3.9 A Cycling Level of Service (CLoS) Assessment (Appendix 4) was undertaken to understand the quality of cycle provision that could be achieved on each section and variant, and the extent to which designs align with Cycling by Design, Transport Scotland's best practice cycle design guidance. Based on the core design principles of Safety, Directness, Coherence, Comfort and Attractiveness, each link and variant was awarded a score. The CLoS Assessment concluded that, for all of the options and variants, the proposed improvements increase the score for each section substantially, such that a High Level of Service can be achieved on each section. The main route option along the A9119 offers the best level of service for cycling of all the options and variants, with a CLoS score of 84% across the entire route, from a baseline of

24%. The CLoS and accompanying Risk Register further highlight risks associated with each link and variant, and proposed mitigation measures, as well as opportunities for how designs could be further enhanced. These risks and opportunities will continue to be monitored and, where necessary, mitigated and addressed, should the project proceed through further design stages.

3.10 Public and stakeholder consultation on the designs and option variants took place during July and August 2024, with more than 1,000 responses submitted via the online questionnaire or email. This number of respondents is higher than would normally be expected for this type of consultation and, as was also the case with the consultation on the Draft Local Transport Strategy (reported elsewhere on this Agenda), it is officers' view that a large proportion of respondents took the opportunity afforded by the consultation to make specific comments on detailed traffic management proposals associated with the City Centre Masterplan, and not necessarily the proposals for the Westhill to Aberdeen corridor. Of those respondents who felt that there was a need to improve walking, wheeling and cycling connectivity between Westhill and Aberdeen, more than double the proportion favoured the main route option over the parallel route options. A number of individual comments were received on the design details presented, which will be taken into consideration should the work proceed to the next stage of design. The Consultation Report is provided in Appendix 5.

3.11 The CLoS Assessment and the outcomes of the consultation have therefore helped identify the preferred option variant for Section 2 – the main route option. The preferred package of measures identified by ACC officers and project partners therefore comprises:

- Section 1 - Westhill to A944/A9119 junction:
  - A 2-way segregated cycle track along the A944 between Westhill and the A944/A9119 junction, with some sections of shared pedestrian and cycle route where full segregation is more challenging to deliver;
  - Quiet route measures on Old Lang Stracht and path improvements between Old Lang Stracht and the A944;
  - Improved pedestrian and cycle crossing facilities;
  - Footway widening and resurfacing, where appropriate.
- Section 2 - A944/A9119 junction to the City Centre:
  - A 2-way segregated cycle track along the A9119 between the A944/A9119 junction and the Queen's Road / King's Gate / Hazlehead Avenue junction, with small sections of shared pedestrian and cycle route and on-road quiet route measures where full segregation is more challenging to deliver;
  - 1-way with-flow segregated cycle lanes along the A9119 between the Queen's Road / King's Gate / Hazlehead Avenue junction and the Skene Street / Rosemount Viaduct junction, with some sections of shared pedestrian and cycle route where full segregation is more challenging to deliver;

- 1-way with-flow segregated cycle lanes along Rosemount Viaduct between the Skene Street / Rosemount Viaduct junction and Schoolhill;
- Improved pedestrian and cycle crossing facilities;
- Footway widening and resurfacing, where appropriate.

Detailed plans of the above are included as Appendix B of the CLoS Assessment (which itself forms Appendix 4).

Opportunities for further active travel improvements on the A944 alongside ART will be considered as part of ART Infrastructure development.

- 3.12 In terms of next steps, Members of this Committee are asked to note the outcomes of the Detailed Appraisal exercise, and agree that the package of measures described in paragraph 3.11 comprise a preferred package to go forward to Outline Business Case. This Outline Business Case would then be reported to the Council's Finance & Resources Committee for consideration in line with the currently approved Committee Terms of Reference.

#### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Funding has been provided by Nestrans to undertake the outline design work, consultation and to develop the Outline Business Case (OBC) during 2023/24 and 2024/25. Costs associated with implementing the preferred option will be quantified as part of the OBC. There is currently no identified budget to proceed beyond OBC stage, therefore any progress beyond that stage would be dependent on the sourcing of continued external funding.

#### **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 None at this stage - there may be legal implications arising from delivery of the recommended improvements, and these will be identified and quantified at OBC and subsequent design stages.

#### **6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The proposals aim to encourage and enable more walking, wheeling and cycling between the west of the city and the city centre and to / from a number of local communities and destinations in between. Should this encourage more people to use active travel in preference to the private car, this will have benefits in terms of carbon emissions and air quality, supporting the Council's Net Zero and air quality obligations. Transport is also a key social determinant of health that can have significant impacts on both physical and mental health, and the overall wellbeing of people and communities.
- 6.2 It should be noted that Environmental considerations are part of the STAG criteria which has influenced the recommendations of this report in terms of the preferred option to be taken forward. Any subsequent design stages will consider whether an Environmental Impact Assessment is required to inform any environmental implications of the project.

## 7. RISK

7.1 The assessment of risk contained within the table below is considered to be consistent with the Council's Risk Appetite Statement.

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H)  *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
<b>Strategic Risk</b>	The Council has a number of objectives relating to transport, health and the environment that the delivery of the recommended improvements could contribute to. Failure to deliver the proposals could therefore put the Council's ability to fully achieve such objectives at risk.	Progress recommended package to Outline Business Case (OBC).	L	Yes
<b>Compliance</b>	The project may require land acquisition.	Assess and quantify requirements in subsequent design stages.	M	Yes
<b>Operational</b>	There may be operational risks associated with the maintenance of new infrastructure.	Assess and mitigate risk in subsequent design stages.	M	Yes
<b>Financial</b>	There is currently no funding allocated to the project beyond OBC.	Identify and seek to take advantage of external funding sources before progressing beyond OBC.	M	Yes
<b>Reputational</b>	Failing to progress identified improvements risks undermining the Council's commitment to sustainable travel and net zero carbon.	Progress recommended package to OBC.	M	Yes

<b>Environment / Climate</b>	There are environmental risks associated with not providing safe and attractive alternatives to private car use, in terms of achieving net zero carbon and air quality obligations.	Progress recommended package to OBC.	M	Yes
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## 8. OUTCOMES

<b><u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN 2023-2024</u></b>	
	<b>Impact of Report</b>
<b>Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement</b>  <u><a href="#">Working in Partnership for Aberdeen</a></u>	<p>The proposals within this report support the delivery of the following aspects of the policy statement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>We seek to invest in our road and pavement network, ensuring active and green travel is at the forefront of any new projects and a review of existing transport infrastructure is progressed taking account of the need to expand the city cycle network;</i></li> <li><i>Reviewing our cycle and active transport network, and work with Aberdeen Cycle Forum to deliver our shared vision of making Aberdeen a cyclist friendly city and provide covered secure cycle storage in suitable locations across Aberdeen; and</i></li> <li><i>Improving cycle and active transport infrastructure, including by seeking to integrate safe, physically segregated cycle lanes in new road building projects and taking steps to ensure any proposal for resurfacing or other long-term investments consider options to improve cycle and active transport infrastructure.</i></li> </ul>
<u><a href="#">Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-26</a></u>	
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	The proposals within this report support the delivery of LOIP Stretch Outcome 11 – <i>Healthy life expectancy is five years longer by 2026</i> , in that the proposed improvements should encourage more walking, wheeling and cycling. Increasing physical activity is linked with increasing life expectancy.
Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes	The proposals support the delivery of LOIP Stretch Outcomes 13 - <i>Addressing climate change by reducing Aberdeen's carbon emissions by at least 61% by 2026 and adapting to the impacts of our</i>

	<i>changing climate, and 14 - Increase sustainable travel: 38% of people walking and 5% of people cycling as main mode of travel by 2026, in that they should encourage a shift from motorised to active and sustainable forms of transport with associated emissions reduction.</i>
<b>Regional and City Strategies</b>	<p>The proposals support delivery of the Nestrans Regional Transport Strategy, specifically the aim of <i>Increasing the number of people travelling actively for health and the environment</i>, and the following key priority: <i>Safe and segregated active travel connections within and connecting to Aberdeen City Centre from the main commuter towns, in line with and to complement the objectives of the Aberdeen City Centre Masterplan. Wherever possible routes should be segregated and road space reallocation should also be considered to allow cyclists, pedestrians and wheelers (especially those less confident and able) sufficient space.</i> Westhill to Aberdeen City Centre is specifically mentioned as a priority corridor.</p> <p>The proposals support the emerging Local Transport Strategy, with its focus on prioritising clean and healthy transport.</p> <p>Proposals also support the Net Zero Mobility Strategy Strategic Aim, <i>We will reduce travel demand, play a key role in enabling a transition to low / zero emission vehicles and facilitate more walking, wheeling and use of public transport to reduce emissions while increasing the safety of road users</i>, and Strategic Objective, <i>Extend and improve active travel networks for healthy, safer, and sustainable choices.</i></p>

## 9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
<b>Integrated Impact Assessment</b>	New Integrated Impact Assessment has been completed.
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b>	Not required.
<b>Other</b>	The appraisal process had considered the impacts of the preferred option on the Environment; Climate Change; Accessibility and Social Inclusion; Economy; Health and Wellbeing; Deliverability; and Public Acceptability.



## 10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

CPM/20/174 Aberdeen to Westhill Transport Corridor Study  
RES/22/290 City Centre Update  
RES/24/039 City Centre Streetscape Update  
CR&E/24/161 Aberdeen Rapid Transit – Recommended Network Routeing

## 11. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Study Area Map  
Appendix 2 - Detailed Appraisal Report  
Appendix 3 - Route Plans  
Appendix 4 – Cycling Level of Service (CLoS) Assessment  
Appendix 5 – Consultation Report

## 12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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Appendix 1 – Study Area Map

