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ABERDEEN
CITY COUNCIL

12 September 2013

Keith Brown MSP
Minister for Transport and Veterans
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Dear Mr Brown

**Haudagain Roundabout Improvements - Aberdeen City Council
Advanced Purchase of Affected Properties**

In advance of our meeting to discuss the delivery of the key transport improvements at the Haudagain Roundabout in Aberdeen, we would wish to raise a further issue for your consideration.

As you will be aware, and has been previously commended by the Scottish Parliament, the transportation improvements are not only vital from a strategic transportation point of view but are also part of a wider integrated plan of much needed regeneration for the local area.

The City Council is actively working with your colleagues in Transport Scotland to support the delivery of the transportation improvements together with the regeneration objectives and is utilising the unfolding detailed information to influence the regeneration plans and to ensure sensitive re-homing for those directly affected by the new infrastructure.

Approximately 120 homes (mostly Council owned, a few owner/occupiers) are likely to be directly affected by the Haudagain Improvements and the City Council has already initiated a process of ceasing re-lets on the strength of your commitment to delivering the Haudagain Improvements. It will be some months before we have sufficient detail to know exactly which properties will be affected and in the meantime we are developing a plan to re-home the affected families where existing stock permits, as well as pursue the provision of appropriate new homes. At the same time, City Council and Transport Scotland officers are working on effective communication strategies to ensure that all those affected have access to up to date and accurate information, informing them of process and housing issues.

GORDON MCINTOSH
DIRECTOR



The City Council's regeneration plans will continue to be informed by the emerging detail from on-going discussions with Transport Scotland and one of the key elements of these plans will be information on the likely amount of compensation the Council will receive in relation to those properties within our ownership that will be directly affected by the transport improvements. This information will inform what further funding requires to be found to enable the delivery of the regeneration plans, which includes those individuals and families directly affected by the transport improvements. At a recent meeting with the District Valuer and Transport Scotland, it became apparent that such financial information would not usually be discussed until after conclusion of all statutory procedures, which by the current programme would suggest summer 2017 at the earliest. However, we consider that date to be too far into the future; rather, we would like to see an expedited procedure on acquisition which would assist not just the Council in fulfilling its housing and regeneration objectives and responsibilities but also allowing Transport Scotland to undertake the Haudagain Improvements more effectively and efficiently thus creating a win-win situation for all parties.

You will be aware from developing other schemes across the country that the long and uncertain timescales for the statutory procedures and design processes cause anxiety for property owners and occupiers. Indeed the Scottish Government in 2007/08 agreed to enter into discussions with some of the affected landowners in advance of the conclusion of the statutory procedures for the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route – but following the issue of the draft Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPO). This decision was welcomed by the affected parties and helped considerably to alleviate their concerns.

Aberdeen City Council plans to commence construction of new homes to rehouse affected tenants within the next couple of years to help residents in this case and to allay their stated fears regarding re-letting and the possibility of dispersal of the community. It would be of great assistance in developing such re-housing proposals and reducing the fears of affected tenants if we were in a position to understand the likely compensation values of affected properties. This information and early receipt of compensation prior to the conclusion of the statutory process will significantly influence the success of the development of our regeneration objectives.

Officers from the Council and Transport Scotland have been working hard to foster the principle of the transport improvement and the area's regeneration being seen as complementary to one another and being taken forward together as an integrated project. The City Council is very keen to see this type of joined-up thinking in the development of projects and is fostering this approach through their dealings with your officials. It would be a significant advantage to the development process if the early purchase of some or indeed all of the properties could be agreed to provide evidence to tenants of the transport improvement and regeneration being taken forward together.

Recent discussion with your officers and the District Valuer suggest that a decision on early discussion and purchase of identified affected properties prior to the issue of the draft CPO cannot be taken by Transport Scotland within the CPO rules and that this approach requires a request from the City Council as the main property owner to you as the Transport Minister and a decision taken by The Scottish Ministers.

We would therefore request that you continue to support the integration of these vitally needed transport and regeneration proposals in this area by agreeing to instruct Transport Scotland and the District Valuer to agree to the early purchase of identified properties where officers agree that such an early purchase would be beneficial to all concerned in this integrated project.

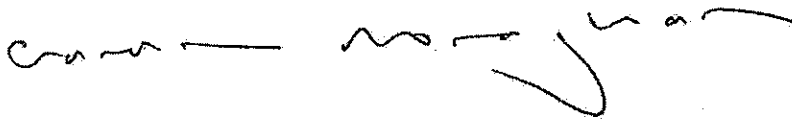
We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely



Pr **Councillor Barney Crocket**
Leader – Aberdeen City Council

and



for **Valerie Watts**
Chief Executive

