

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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COMMITTEE	<b>Enterprise, Strategic Planning and Infrastructure</b>
DATE	<b>3 June 2014</b>
DIRECTOR	<b>Gordon McIntosh</b>
TITLE OF REPORT	<b>Report back to Committee on the Notice of Motion by Councillors Boulton and Delaney – Hazlehead to Westhill Road (A944) Pedestrian crossings and suitable bus lay-bys</b>
REPORT NUMBER	<b>EPI/14/061</b>

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**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 This is a background report which responds to Councillor Boulton and Delaney's notice of motion from the Council meeting on the 13<sup>th</sup> March 2014 to "instruct officers to provide a report to the next Enterprise, Strategic Planning and Infrastructure meeting including the financial implications on the most efficient way to progress pedestrian crossings and suitable bus lay-bys on the Hazlehead to Westhill Road, the A944 in the vicinity of the residential area by Kingswells Church and the Five Mile Garage".

**2. RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 2.1 There are no recommendations at this stage.

**3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 The costs associated with the implementation of a bus lay-by and footpath link on the A944 at Kingswells Church, Five Mile Garage and the Smiddybrae Industrial Units are in the region of £65,000 per location. The annual maintenance costs incurred would be £500 per location. These costs do not however allow for any works associated with the relocation of any services that are encountered at each site.
- 3.2 The preliminary costs associated with the implementation of a Puffin Crossing on the A944 near Kingswells Church, Five Mile Garage and Smiddybrae Industrial Units are £58,000 per location. The annual maintenance costs incurred would be £5,300 per year per location.

- 3.3 The requirement to purchase land to accommodate each new layby and footpath link would increase the installation costs by an estimated £20,000 per location.

#### **4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 none.

#### **5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES**

- 5.1.1 The notice of motion has been raised due to concerns expressed to the local members, Councillor Boulton and Delaney, by residents regarding the revision to bus stop facilities that are seen to serve the Kingswells Church area and the loss of bus facilities serving the community close to the Five Mile Garage.

The A944 corridor is a principal arterial route to the city and its environment and carries high volumes of both commuter and commercial traffic.

In recent years traffic volumes have significantly increased due to expansion and developments at Westhill and beyond and also the recent introduction of the major development at Prime Four.

Significant traffic growth can be anticipated along this corridor over the next few years as the Local Development Plan is implemented.

Due to the changing nature of this development corridor and traffic growth, alterations have been necessary to the major junctions with the introduction of reduced speed limits for which the most recent change to a 40mph is proposed for the near future.

A major junction which will provide a link between the A944 and AWPR is to be built approximately mid-way between Kingswells and Westhill and will add to the complexities of traffic movements on the corridor.

The changing nature of traffic on the A944 and requirements of the new development has resulted in the provision of public transport services being altered and revised.

The two areas in question are generally considered separately due to their geographical relationships.

##### **Kingswells Church**

- 5.1.2 Prior to the introduction of the Prime Four Development, the Kingswells Church area was served by bus stops on the A944 to the east of the Kingswells Roundabout and on Fairley Road. A number of services were available from both Stagecoach (numbers X17, X18 and 210) and First Bus (number 11), as shown in Appendix A. These stops, although being identified by Stagecoach as having a generally light usage, did not provide any designated pedestrian facilities

- 5.1.3 The introduction of the Prime Four Development required the upgrading of the Kingswells roundabout to accommodate the increased traffic volumes. The junction improvement included the introduction of an additional

carriageway lane on the westbound leg of the A944, either side of the roundabout. This resulted in the relocation of the existing westbound bus layby at Kingswells Church. Within the design of the junction realignment and improvements the opportunity to rationalise bus infrastructure and safe crossing facilities on this section of the A944 were taken. As part of the development scenario the opportunity was taken to relocate the existing bus layby at the Kingswells Church to the west of the roundabout to serve both the Prime Four Development and Kingswells Church area. This was in an effort to rationalise and improve safe pedestrian movements for both the Kingswells community and visitors to the Prime Four Development. New bus laybys with an associated controlled pedestrian crossing facility were therefore installed to provide a safe means of movement for pedestrians. The new crossing facility was seen to enhance safe pedestrian movements.

- 5.1.4 The new bus layby facilities at the Prime Four Development meet the adopted standards with the residential community within the vicinity of the Kingswells Church as they are within 400 metres with those beyond that within the 800 metres maximum walking distance to the bus stop (as shown in Appendix C). As the new bus stop and crossing provide a safer means of movement for pedestrians, within a reasonable distance of the Kingswells Church stop, officers have not considered reintroducing the former stop.
- 5.1.5 The reintroduction of the bus stop at Kingswells Church would require the installation of both a bus layby with footpath link and Puffin Crossing. Due to land constraints, the costs associated with the installation of these measures are £65,000 and £58,000 respectively, with associated annual maintenance costs of £500 and £5300 respectively. Land costs associated with the installation of the layby would increase the cost of the layby by a further £20,000. These costs however do not allow for the relocating of any utility company apparatus encountered within the limits of the works which may impact significantly on the costs.
- 5.1.6 Residents within Kingswells are currently able to use direct bus services between Kingswells and Aberdeen provided by First Bus (service numbers X40 – the Park and Ride Service and 11). These services remove the requirement for residents to use the bus stops previously provided on the A944.

Bus Services within Kingswells	Frequency of Service
X40 (Park and Ride)	From 05:44 every 15 minutes
11	From 07:43, limited service

**Bus Stops at Five Mile Garage / Smiddybrae Industrial Site**

5.2.1 Previously, Stagecoach services buses between Aberdeen and Westhill would stop on the A944 within laybys at the Kingswells Church. They also operated a 'hail and ride' system on the A944 between Kingswells and Westhills. This was restricted to locations at the Smiddybrae Industrial Units access road (in the westbound direction), and at the Five Mile Garage (in the eastbound direction) as shown in Appendix B. The stopping point at the Smiddybrae Industrial Units was at the junction of the access road to the industrial site and the A944 and the stopping point at the Five Mile Garage was at the existing layby to the east of the garage. Neither location provided suitable facilities to allow the bus to pull completely off the carriageway, as such it would partially obstruct the inside lane of the carriageway whilst stationary. These locations had no provisions for pedestrian crossing. The bus service numbers and frequency of service are listed below:

Bus services between Aberdeen and Westhill	Frequency of Service
X17	Every 10 minutes from 04:50 to 23:25
X18	Limited service
210	Limited service

5.2.2 Stagecoach approached Police Scotland seeking their advice in relation to safety issues at these locations. After assessing the sites Police Scotland concluded that they could not support the buses stopping at these locations as the dropping off points involved the buses stopping wholly or partially on a "live" lane of a dual carriageway subject to a 50mph speed limit and a high collision history with no pedestrian facilities.

5.2.3 A site meeting to discuss the matters raised by Police Scotland was organised by Stagecoach on the 5 February 2014. Representatives from Aberdeen City Council's Traffic Management Section, Aberdeenshire Council's Public Transport Unit, Stagecoach and Police Scotland attended the meeting. The existing stopping points, along with various alternative locations were investigated and discussed. It was agreed that whilst the existing sites had no pedestrian accident history, there was a high level of collision history within the vicinity of the stops. Various options, including introducing a smaller "shuttle bus" link between the Kingswells Park and Ride site and Westhill were discussed. Stagecoach informed the meeting that the current service was running at or near capacity, and as the existing uptake of commuters on this section of carriageway was low, it did not warrant the introduction of such a service at this time. As no suitable alternative locations could be identified due to visibility issues and land constraints, along with the low uptake of the service at these locations, the decision was taken by Stagecoach to withdraw the stopping points from service. Any member of the public wishing to use the bus service would therefore be required to walk to the new facilities at the Prime Four

Development, some 900 metres or so east of the Five Mile Garage bus stop.

- 5.2.4 The representative from Aberdeen City Council's Traffic Management Section did highlight the upcoming Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR) and subsequent interchange between the Five Mile Garage and Ardene Vets Surgery. However after discussion with the AWPR team it was confirmed that no provision for public transport had been identified as part of the AWPR works and any works required would be at the expense of Aberdeen City Council.
- 5.2.5 A meeting to address concerns raised by residents was arranged by Councillor Boulton on the 26<sup>th</sup> February 2014. Representatives from Aberdeen City Council's Traffic Management section and Stagecoach were in attendance. At the meeting the issues were discussed and various solutions investigated. The representative from ACC's Traffic Management Section did suggest that the upcoming redevelopment of the Ardene Vets access road might provide an opportunity to approach the developer with the request that a bus layby be incorporated into the design. On further investigation it was highlighted that planning permission had already been granted for the new access road, but no provision had been conditioned for any public transport facilities.
- 5.2.6 Stagecoach did highlight the proximity of the former stops to the new stops at the Prime Four Development. As an existing footpath link was already in place between the two locations, it was felt that it was reasonable to assume that members of the public wishing to use the service could in fact walk the additional 885 metres or so to the new stops. Cllr Boulton did express reservations about the shared surface link due to ongoing pedestrian / cyclist conflicts. Whilst it was agreed that there was a narrow section of shared surface near the Ardene Vets Surgery, it was felt that as the pedestrian/ cyclist figures were so low, any conflict would be minimal. ACC's representative approached the Aberdeen Cycle Forum to ask that they remind their members to respect other footpath users at this location for which a response was received to indicate that this would be forwarded to members in the immediate future.
- 5.2.7 The local members, along with Aberdeen City Council's Public Transport Unit have received several complaints from local residents in relation to the loss of public transport services. The relatively low number of enquiries may be due in part to the limited number of residents that would in fact have used the bus service on a regular basis - the number of properties within the vicinity of the Five Mile Garage and Smiddybrae Industrial Units are 8 and 13 respectively (as shown in Appendix C). Figures obtained from Stagecoach indicate that the average daily usage of the Five Mile Garage stopping point (from figures obtained between 19 August to 15 September 2013 - as this was a full school day period and no holidays) was 9 persons. This figure however does not indicate the number of pedestrian pick up and drop off movements throughout the day, nor the origin points and movement patterns of the pedestrians in

question. Having assumed a worst case scenario for the purposes of calculating the Pedestrian / Vehicle value, the figure calculated provides a value of  $0.33 \times 10^8$ . This confirms that crossing movements over the A944 would still be of a level as not to meet the criteria for the introduction of any pedestrian crossing facilities.

- 5.2.8 The introduction of any new bus layby would depend on finding a suitable location at or near the sites previously used. These locations would have to provide safe means of use by both the bus and pedestrians. The costs associated with the construction of the layby and footpath, relocation of services, provision of Puffin Crossings and purchase of land would be £143,000.00 per location. The annual maintenance costs would be £5800 at each site.
- 5.2.9 Prior to the removal of the bus stops on the A944 between Hazlehead and Westhills there was only one recorded pedestrian incident. Unfortunately, this was a fatality at the Kingswells Church bus layby in August 2013. The mitigating circumstances surrounding the incident identified that the layby and road layout were not a contributory factor to the accident. It is considered the recently introduced crossing facilities for the revised layout on this section will enhance pedestrian safety for those wishing to access public transport.
- 5.2.10 Aberdeen City Council are currently looking at a scheme which will involve constructing a through bus access link from the Kingswells Park and Ride directly to the A944 and potentially through the Prime Four Development. This is to be co-funded by Transport Scotland and NESTRANS and could in the future open up public transport services to the north of the A944, especially if services eventually run through the Prime Four site. It is anticipated that the initial phase of these works will be implemented by Spring 2015.

## **6. IMPACT**

- 6.1 The content of the report meets with the local Community Plan objectives to continually improve road safety and maximize accessibility for pedestrians and all modes of transport.
- 6.2 The proposals are in line with the Council's Transportation Strategy to improve safety for all road users by continuing to reduce the number of casualties in traffic collisions.
- 6.3 The contents of this report link to the Community Plan vision of creating a "sustainable City with an integrated transport system that is accessible to all".

The projects will contribute to the delivery of the Smarter Mobility aims of *Aberdeen – The Smarter City*: "We will develop, maintain and promote road, rail, ferry and air links from the city to the UK and the rest of the world. We will encourage cycling and walking", and "We will provide and

promote a sustainable transport system, including cycling, which reduces our carbon emissions.”

This project supports the 5 year Corporate Business Plan which includes an aim of delivering a fully integrated transport network to support movement and economic growth which the proposals

## **7. MANAGEMENT OF RISK**

Having assessed the risks identified with the proposals and the potential to impact negatively or positively on the decision required of the Committee it has been assumed that the risk is low. The introduction of the designated bus lay-bys and pedestrian crossing facilities at the Prime Four Development has rationalised pedestrian movements in the area and reduced the risks to both pedestrians and drivers associated with the former bus stopping points at the Five Mile Garage. Aberdeen City Council, whilst supporting the comments made by Police Scotland, were not implicit in the decision to terminate the bus stopping points at the Five Mile Garage, this decision was ultimately taken by Stagecoach.

## **8. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

*“Notice of Motion from Councillor Boulton – “Instructs officers to provide a report to the next Enterprise, Planning & Infrastructure meeting including the financial implications on the most efficient way to progress pedestrian crossings and suitable bus laybys on the Hazlehead to Westhill Road, the A944, in the vicinity of the residential area by Kingswells Church and the Five Mile Garage”*

## **9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS**

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### **Consultees comments**

Enterprise, Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Committee

**Convener: Councillor Barney Crockett** – has been consulted 07/05/14

**Vice Convener: Councillor Angela Taylor** – has been consulted 07/05/14

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## **Councillors**

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**Councillor Marie Boulton** – has been consulted 07/05/14

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**Councillor M Tauqueer Malik** – has been consulted 07/05/14

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**Councillor Aileen Malone** - has been consulted 07/05/14

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**Councillor David Cameron** – has been consulted 07/05/14

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**Councillor Steven Delaney** – has been consulted 07/05/14

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**Councillor Len Ironside** - has been consulted 07/05/14

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## **Council Officers**

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Lorna Inglis, Secretary to Head of Finance, Corporate Governance – ***has been consulted and the comments received have been included***

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Jane MacEachran, Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Corporate Governance - ***has been consulted***

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Ciaran Monaghan, Head of Service, Office of Chief Executive – ***has been consulted***

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Gordon McIntosh, Director of Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure – ***has been consulted***

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Hugh Murdoch, Head of Asset Management and Operations, Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure - ***has been consulted and the comments received have been included***

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Margaret Bochel, Head of Planning & Sustainable Development, Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure - ***has been consulted***

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Mike Cheyne, General Manager Operations, Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure – ***has been consulted and the comments received have been included***

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Neil Carnegie, Community Safety Manager, Housing and Environment – ***has been consulted***

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Dave Young, Account Manager, Corporate Governance – ***has been consulted***

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Willie Young, Convener, Finance, Policy and Resources – ***has been consulted***

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Laura Watson, Service Co-ordinator

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