

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	City Growth and Resources
DATE	28 October 2020
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Bridge of Dee West Active Travel Corridor
REPORT NUMBER	COM/20/159
DIRECTOR	-
CHIEF OFFICER	Gale Beattie
REPORT AUTHOR	Kevin Pert
TERMS OF REFERENCE	3.2 and 3.3

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1. This report advises Members of the outcomes of the Bridge of Dee West Active Travel Corridor study and seeks Committee approval to undertake preliminary and detailed design works for Phase 1 – connecting Robert Gordon University (RGU) to Deeside Way as the next stage as detailed in the Executive Summary- Appendix A and full report- Appendix B.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee: -

- 2.1 Agree the outcomes of the options appraisal study as detailed in the appendices;
- 2.2 Instruct the Chief Officer – Strategic Place Planning to undertake preliminary and detailed design of Phase 1 – connecting RGU to Deeside Way as the next stage of the project.
- 2.3 Instruct the Chief Officer – Strategic Place Planning to explore any opportunities to link this study with the Bridge of Dee – River Crossing Capacity Study, including public and development led funding opportunities.
- 2.4 Notes that these active travel proposals help to support the Councils ambitious Net Zero carbon plans for Aberdeen.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 This project, identified as ‘Access to Universities’ in the Active Travel Action Plan 2017-2021, aims to provide a new pedestrian and cycle route between the Bridge of Dee and the Robert Gordon University.
- 3.2 In August 2019, an options appraisal study was commissioned, grant funded by Sustrans - Places for Everyone, to identify a preferred route along the corridor between the existing infrastructure at the Bridge of Dee, westwards to connect with the Deeside Way west of Robert Gordon University (RGU) and RGU itself.
- 3.3 The options appraisal study ran from August 2019 to April 2020 and included consultations by way of public drop-in sessions, workshop as well as an online questionnaire presenting identified problems, opportunities, and design options for active travel improvement in the corridor to respondents for feedback.
- 3.4 Following responses received from the consultations, route options sifting and assessment using a STAG-based approach, the outcome of the study is a phased (see Figure 1) and incremental approach to delivering active travel improvements in the study area, with a first phase of connecting RGU to Deeside Way, followed by a further two phases (Garthdee Road Improvements and provision of a shared use foot & cycleway on the western section of Garthdee road) informed by the monitoring and evaluation of the benefits and impacts of Phase 1, and so on. *(Please see details in appended Executive Summary and full report. Details of phase 1 can be found from pages 106-114 of the full report and phase 2 from pages 97-105.)*

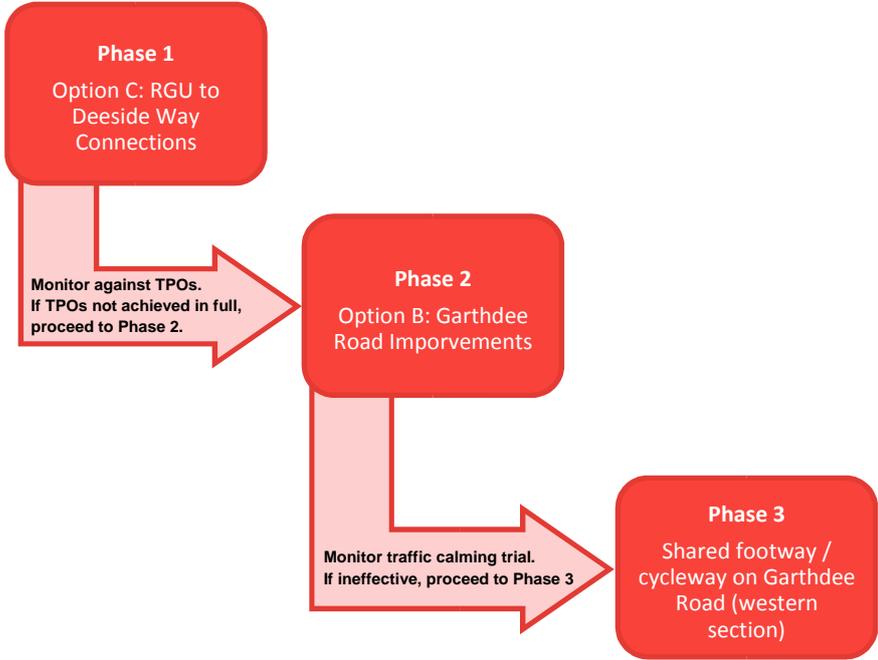


Figure 1: Recommended Three Phase Strategy

- 3.5 Indicative cost for Phase 1 is estimated at £723,000; Phase 2 and 3 combined are estimated at £1,550,000. These estimates are only based on construction cost estimates. *(Please see Appendix C for details.)*

3.6 A further report would be submitted to the Committee following completion of the design process.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report. Sustrans provides 100% of funding for design stages. A bid will be submitted to Sustrans Places for Everyone for the next stage of the design work.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

Category	Risk	Low (L) Medium (M) High (H)	Mitigation
Strategic Risk	The risk of a shortfall in contribution towards the Council's strategic objectives and outcomes of 38% of people walking and 5% of people cycling as main mode of travel by 2026 as detailed in the LOIP.	L	Seek and obtain approval from committee to further the project to the next stage.
Compliance	N/A	N/A	N/A
Operational	The risk of customer need and demand not being met, and new methods to improve customer service and reduce demand not being utilised given the demand for active travel infrastructure provisions following the impact of COVID-19 on sustainable travel, noting the significant increases in walking	L	On obtaining committee approval, progress project works to the next stage and continue to work with consultees to deliver walking and cycling infrastructures that are fit for purpose and future-proof.

	and cycling since lockdown was first brought in on 23 March 2020. Risk of public perception of unwillingness to take actions to address vulnerabilities to projected climate impacts.		
Financial	External funding application might not be successful.	L	Ensure application process and requirements are adhered to, to reduce the risk of application not being successful.
Reputational	Similar risk of public perception as operational risk above.	L	Follow through on works leading to the next stage and continue to work with consultees to deliver a walking and cycling infrastructure that is fit for purpose and future-proof.
Environment / Climate	Risk of not achieving the aims of the Council's Net Zero Vision and Infrastructure Plan.	L	Follow through on works leading to the next stage and continue to work with consultees to deliver a walking and cycling infrastructure that is fit for purpose and future-proof.

7. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u>	
	Impact of Report
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement	This report seeks approval to further progress works to the next stage following conclusion of the options appraisal study stage which identified options for active travel

<p>The proposals within this report support the delivery of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ <u>PLACE Policy Statement 3</u> - <i>Refresh the local transport strategy, ensuring it includes the results of a city centre parking review; promotes cycle and pedestrian routes; and considers support for public transport.</i> ✓ <u>PLACE Policy Statement 4</u>- <i>Cycle hire scheme</i> ✓ <u>ECONOMY Policy Statement 4</u> – <i>Increase city centre footfall through delivery of the City Centre Masterplan, including the redesigned Union Terrace Gardens.</i> 	<p>improvement of which on implementation, supports the delivery of Place policy statement 3 with regards to providing and promoting cycle and pedestrian routes.</p> <p>Ultimately, the active travel infrastructure that will result from this project will support the delivery of Place policy statement 4, as Aberdeen will have a robust cycle and pedestrian network that will encourage cycle hire.</p> <p>The infrastructure resulting from this project will also support the City Centre Masterplan delivery aim of increasing footfall to the city centre.</p>
<p>Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan</p>	
<p>Prosperous Place</p>	<p>The proposals within this report supports the delivery of LOIP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Stretch Outcome 14 Addressing climate change by reducing Aberdeen's carbon emissions by 42.5% by 2026 and adapting to the impacts of our changing climate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● key driver 14.1 - Reducing emissions across the city through delivery of Aberdeen's Sustainable Energy Action Plan 'Powering Aberdeen'. <p>Creating new active travel route and or upgrading existing ones to standard increases the attractiveness of walking</p>

	<p>and cycling and supports influencing a behavioural change and modal travel choice shift to an active travel means; thereby contributing to this outcome target of reducing harmful carbon emissions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Stretch Outcome 15 38% of people walking and 5% of people cycling as main mode of travel by 2026 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • key driver 15.1 - Supporting different ways for active travel in everyday journeys, using partners and volunteers to address safety, infrastructure, fitness, well-being, and confidence. <p>Again, introducing a comprehensive active travel network by implementing new infrastructure or upgrading existing ones, will help increase the appeal of sustainable travel within the City and in turn contribute to the target figures in stretch outcome 15.</p> <p>The proposal in this report also supports the Aberdeen Local Development Plan Policy NE1 - Green Space Network; one of the key policies in creating prosperous places that enhances the Green Space Network and connectivity to the surrounding and wider Network and habitats.</p>
Prosperous People	<p>The proposal within this report supports the delivery of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Stretch Outcome 11 Healthy life expectancy (time lived in good health) is five years longer by 2026. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • key driver 11.3 - Increasing satisfaction and use of community facilities and green environment to increase the health and well-being for older people and people managing long term conditions <p>Infrastructures resulting from this project aligns with the public's desire for a comprehensive active travel network around the City, which will enable anyone (able-bodied/disabled, high/low income, etc) to travel by their preferred means, actively and safely.</p>

	<p>It is also well known that an active lifestyle contributes to personal well-being health-wise and thus can improve life expectancy.</p>
<p>Regional and City Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Regional Transport Strategy (<i>draft 2040</i>), ✓ Strategic Development Plan ✓ Regional Economic Strategy ✓ Local Development Plan, ✓ Local Transport Strategy- Active Travel Action plan ✓ Net Zero Vision for Aberdeen 	<p>The proposal within this report supports Regional and Local Transport Strategies, which all aim to deliver a sustainable transport system.</p>
<p>UK and Scottish Legislative and Policy Programmes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ National Transport Strategy ✓ Cycling Action Plan for Scotland ✓ Scottish Planning Policy ✓ National Walking Strategy ✓ Cleaner Air for Scotland Strategy 	<p>Infrastructure arising from this project will contribute to a joined-up active travel network and support the objectives of the Scottish Planning Policy, Scottish National Transport Strategy, Cycling Action Plan for Scotland, National Walking Strategy, Cleaner Air for Scotland Strategy, and compliance with UK and Scottish legislation on Air Quality Standards and Objectives.</p> <p>A comprehensive, attractive and cohesively joined up active travel network will supplement the ambitions of a LEZ zone in Aberdeen as it would be easy to sustainably travel into the city centre from around.</p> <p>Additionally, Scottish Planning Policy identifies qualities of successful places as being places with public spaces that are better linked into a route that is well used by people walking, places that encourage cycling and places that pedestrians go to and from which are connected by more direct routes. A coherent and joined up active travel network will contribute to making Aberdeen a city with successful places. An objective that infrastructure from this project contributes to.</p>

8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Equality & Human Rights Impact Assessment	Full impact assessment will be undertaken as part of the next phase of the project following approval of the recommendation in this report.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required
Duty of Due Regard / Fairer Scotland Duty	Not applicable

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

10. APPENDICES

Appendix A – Executive Summary
Appendix B – Full Report
Appendix C – Options Cost Estimate

11. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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Appendix A

Executive Summary



Aberdeen City Council

BRIDGE OF DEE WEST - ACTIVE TRAVEL CORRIDOR

Options Appraisal Study - Executive Summary



Aberdeen City Council

BRIDGE OF DEE WEST - ACTIVE TRAVEL CORRIDOR

Options Appraisal Study - Executive Summary

TYPE OF DOCUMENT (VERSION) PUBLIC

PROJECT NO. 7062153

OUR REF. NO. 7062153_EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DATE: JUNE 2020



QUALITY CONTROL

Issue/revision	Issue 1
Remarks	Executive Summary of Final Report
Date	04/06/2020
Prepared by	Chris Harris
Signature	
Checked by	Paul White
Signature	
Authorised by	Paul White
Signature	
Project number	7062153
Report number	FR_ES_001
File reference	7062153_Rol

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

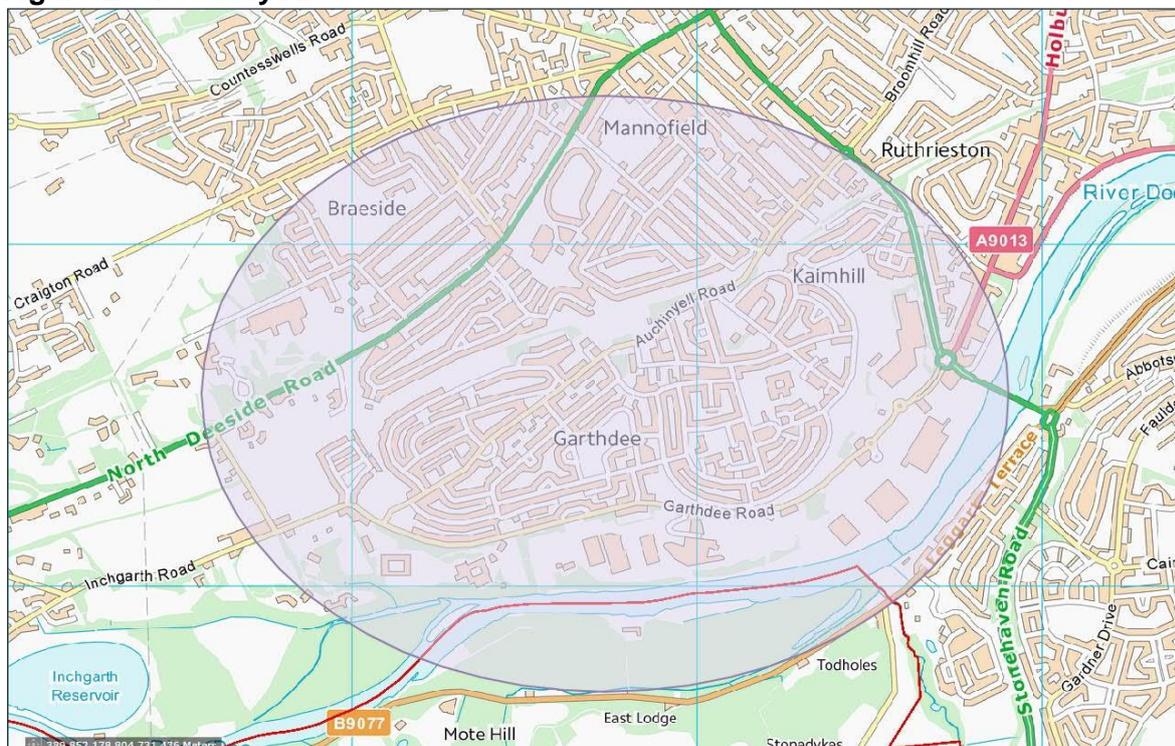
WSP UK Ltd. (WSP) has been commissioned by Aberdeen City Council (ACC) to undertake an active travel feasibility study for the Garthdee area of Aberdeen based on the principles set out in Transport Scotland's Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG).

This Executive Summary presents an overview of the different phases of the study, together with the key findings and recommended next steps.

The study area

The study area was defined at the project inception by ACC and is shown in Figure ES-1 below. It centres on the Garthdee area, and also includes Kaimhill, Mannofield and Braeside.

Figure ES-1 - Study Area



Why is this study required?

The construction of the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR) has addressed some of Aberdeen's transport challenges, including diverting strategic vehicular traffic away from the central city transport network. This change in transport conditions has allowed more focus on delivering the actions set out by ACC within their *Local Transport Strategy* and *Active Travel Action Plan*. Specific to the study area are actions including improving leisure access to the riverside along the River Dee and also improving active travel (walking, wheeling and cycling) connections to the Robert Gordon University (RGU) Garthdee campus.

What studies have been undertaken?

The main study has focussed around undertaking a STAG-based options appraisal for improving active travel connections within the study area. The STAG-based process involves the following steps:

- Determine the constraints which bind the study and issues which may have an effect on the study area.
- Establish the problems and opportunities related to transport within the study area.
- Develop Transport Planning Objectives (TPOs) which specify the aims of the study and will allow testing of options or intervention packages.
- Identify the long list of options to address the identified problems.
- Undertake sifting of options to exclude those which are not viable for further consideration under the appraisal process.
- Engage with stakeholders and the public to inform the study and provide feedback on developed options.
- Appraise options against TPOs and STAG criteria to evaluate their suitability for implementation.
- Undertake a cost / benefit analysis of the short-listed options.
- Present the recommended package of measures for the study area.

To support the main study the following supporting studies have been undertaken:

- Ecological Assessments
- Flood Risk Assessment
- Traffic modelling of potential interventions
- Stakeholder engagement
- Public consultation
- Engineering design and preliminary costings

What problems have been identified within the study?

The following existing or potential problems have been identified which have been considered when developing the long list of options for the study:

- There is currently poor active travel mobility within the study area, especially along Garthdee Road and connecting to / from the RGU campus
- Implementing active travel options on Garthdee Road may impact on bus journey times
- Active travel options may impact on environmentally sensitive areas, such as the River Dee corridor and Deeside Way.
- The topography of the study area presents challenges to people moving on foot, wheel or by cycle.

What potential opportunities have been identified within the study

The following potential opportunities have been identified which have either informed the study or could complement the study outcomes:

- Improving active travel connection within and through the study area could help to address the existing social isolation.
- There are areas within the study area where route options could be used to enhance the existing conditions for biodiversity.

- Alternatives to infrastructure solutions could support an increase in cycling within the study area. This includes the roll-out of affordable electric bike hire / purchase for local residents and / or RGU students. This would address the issue of challenging longitudinal gradients along Garthdee Road.

What are the TPOs which guide the study?

Following a detailed review of all available evidence, four study-specific Transport Planning Objectives (TPOs) were identified. These were validated and agreed through discussions with the Core Project Group (which included invited officers from ACC, Aberdeenshire Council, Nestrans and Sustrans), as well as engagement with key stakeholders. The four TPOs were:

- **TPO 1** - To increase the modal share of trips made by active travel (walking, wheeling and cycling) along the strategic corridor
- **TPO 2** - Enhance the social inclusion of the Garthdee area.
- **TPO 3** - Ensure connectivity for walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport to the retail parks, existing cycle infrastructure, places of work and leisure trip generators in the area.
- **TPO 4** - Ensure transportation proposals enhance conditions for biodiversity along each linear route corridor where interventions are proposed.

What are the short-listed options?

Following the development of a long-list of over twenty design options, these were refined through a number of review sessions with the Core Project Group, engagement with stakeholders and the public and a preliminary appraisal of options against a wide range of social, environmental and technical criteria. This process resulted in three potential options being taken forward for more detailed consideration.

The three options are presented in detail within Appendix G, and are summarised as:

Option A – A new shared path connection between the Bridge of Dee and the RGU campus, running along the north bank of the River Dee. This option includes a supporting path connection from the riverside path to Garthdee Road via the Sainsbury's store and B&Q store access road.

Option B – Pedestrian improvements and a segregated cycleway between Bridge of Dee and the RGU campus running along Garthdee Road. In addition, traffic calming measures on the western section of Garthdee Road, between the RGU campus and Garthdee Farm Gardens, are proposed to permit on-street cycling.

Option C – New path connections between the RGU campus and the Deeside Way to provide safer and more attractive routes for people connecting between the Garthdee area and the City Centre.

Option C also originally included improvements to the Deeside Way, however following the outcomes of the more detailed appraisal, these interventions were subsequently excluded.

What are the study outcomes and proposed way forward?

The outcomes of the options appraisal and cost benefit analysis were considered together to identify a recommended way forward for the project's next stages. These recommendations were phased to allow for a period of monitoring and evaluation prior to developing the business case/s for more capital-intensive interventions.

Phase 1 Recommendations

The Deeside Way corridor is very well aligned with the main regular movement patterns between the study area and City Centre. Therefore, it was considered that investment in improving linkages between the study area and this route would provide significant active travel benefits. In addition, compared to delivering on-road infrastructure on Garthdee Road (Option B), or a new path along the north bank of the River Dee (Option A), Option C was considered relatively good value for money.

On this basis it is recommended that in Phase 1 **Option C (excluding any interventions on the Deeside Way)** should be taken forward.

Phase 2 Recommendations

The package of measures included under Phase 1 (Option C) should be implemented and postconstruction monitoring and user surveys undertaken to determine the extent to which the Phase 1 measures achieve the TPOs.

In the event that minimal progress is made towards achieving the TPOs results from the Phase 1 measures it is recommended that further investment in active travel infrastructure should be made within the study area. It was considered that **Option B**, which involves the delivery of improvements for walking, wheeling and cycling along Garthdee Road, between the Bridge of Dee and the Deeside Way, should be taken forward in Phase 2.

By bringing forward Option B as a second phase scheme, it would enable sufficient scheme justification to have been established to overcome the expected political challenges and increased capital costs (relative to Option C) of implementing the scheme. Phase 3 recommendations

It should be noted for Option B, on the western section of Garthdee Road, on-street traffic calming measures are proposed to affect a reduction in motor vehicle speeds to an average speed which is considered suitable for on-carriageway cycling (20 – 25mph)¹. It was considered that these measures could be taken forward in Phase 2 as temporary (removable) measures which could be trialled over a period of 12 months and their effectiveness monitored.

If at the end of this trial period, it is considered that traffic calming measures would be sufficient to support on-carriageway cycling by the majority of potential users then more permanent traffic calming features could be installed.

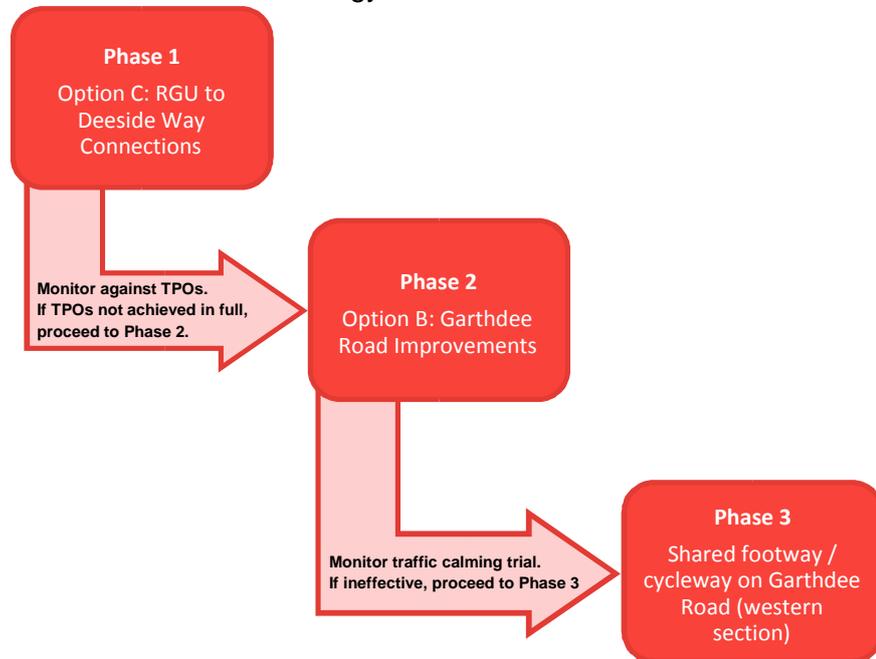
However, if at the end of this trial period it is considered that traffic calming measures will not be an effective long-term solution to support on-carriageway cycling, an alternative approach could be taken forward as Phase 3. This could involve converting the existing 3-metre-wide footway on the south side of Garthdee Road to a shared footway/cycleway.

In line with *Places for Everyone* guidance, this proposal has not been presented within the design for this Option B, as shared-use footway / cycleways are not a preferred design solution. Shared-use footway / cycleways can have detrimental impacts on pedestrians, especially sensory-impaired pedestrians. On this basis, and in line with the Equality Act 2010, these measures should only be implemented where it has been demonstrated that no alternative reasonable solution is available.

¹ Cycling By Design, Transport Scotland (2011)

With regards to Option A (Riverside Path), it was considered that the ecological and hydrological constraints, together with the forecast construction costs and land agreements made it the least suitable option to implement within the context of this study.

The proposed three phase recommendation strategy is summarised below:



The monitoring and evaluation process required to inform the inter-phase decision making has been set out within the study. This includes a combination of baseline and post-construction surveys, as well as incorporating existing data sources, where possible.

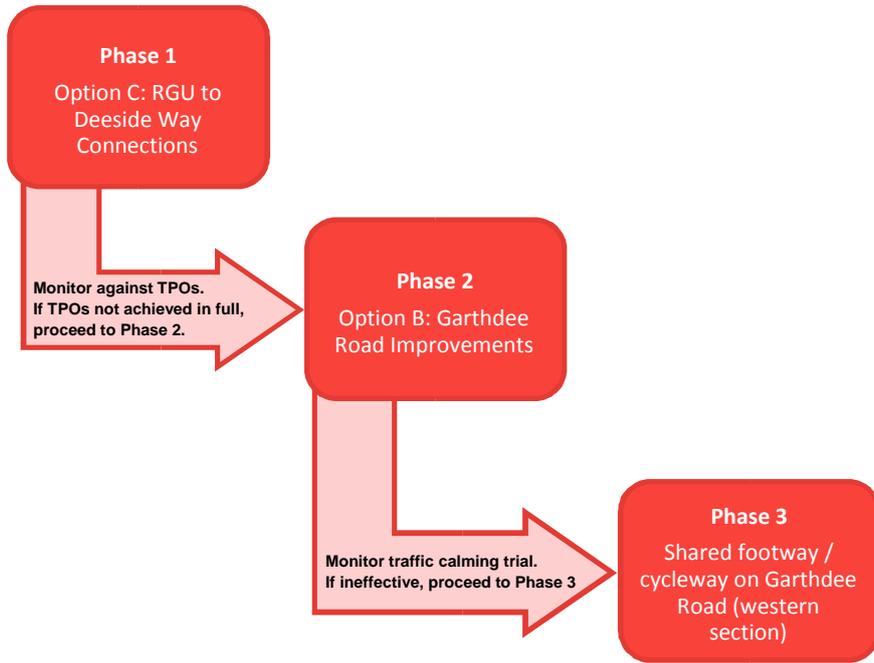


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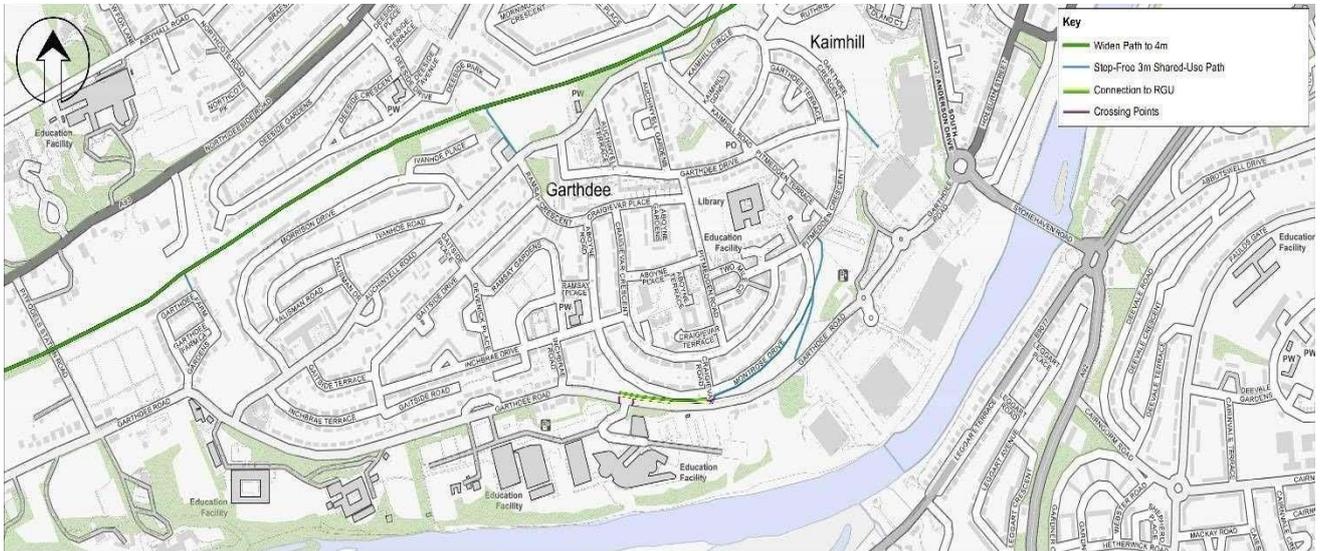
RECOMMENDED THREE PHASE STRATEGY AND PHASE OVERVIEW



Recommended Three Phase Strategy

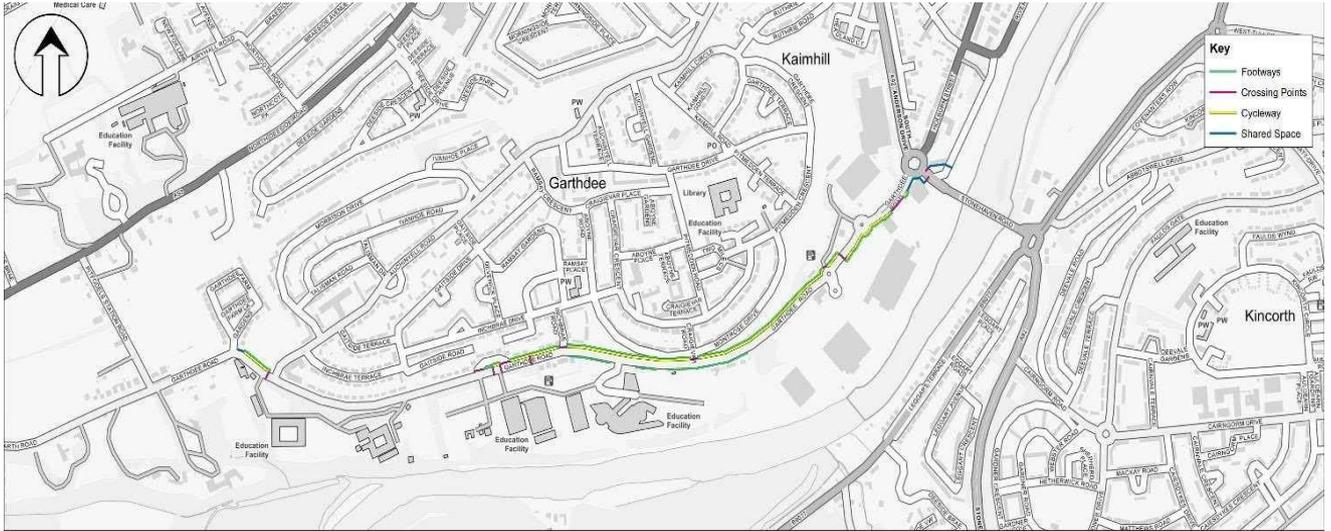
- PHASE 1:**

Option C Overview



- **PHASE 2 & 3:**

Option B Overview



** Note: Phase 2 and 3 is Option B split into two phases. Please see full report for details.*