



Aberdeen City Council

BRIDGE OF DEE WEST - ACTIVE TRAVEL CORRIDOR

Options Appraisal Study - Executive Summary



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

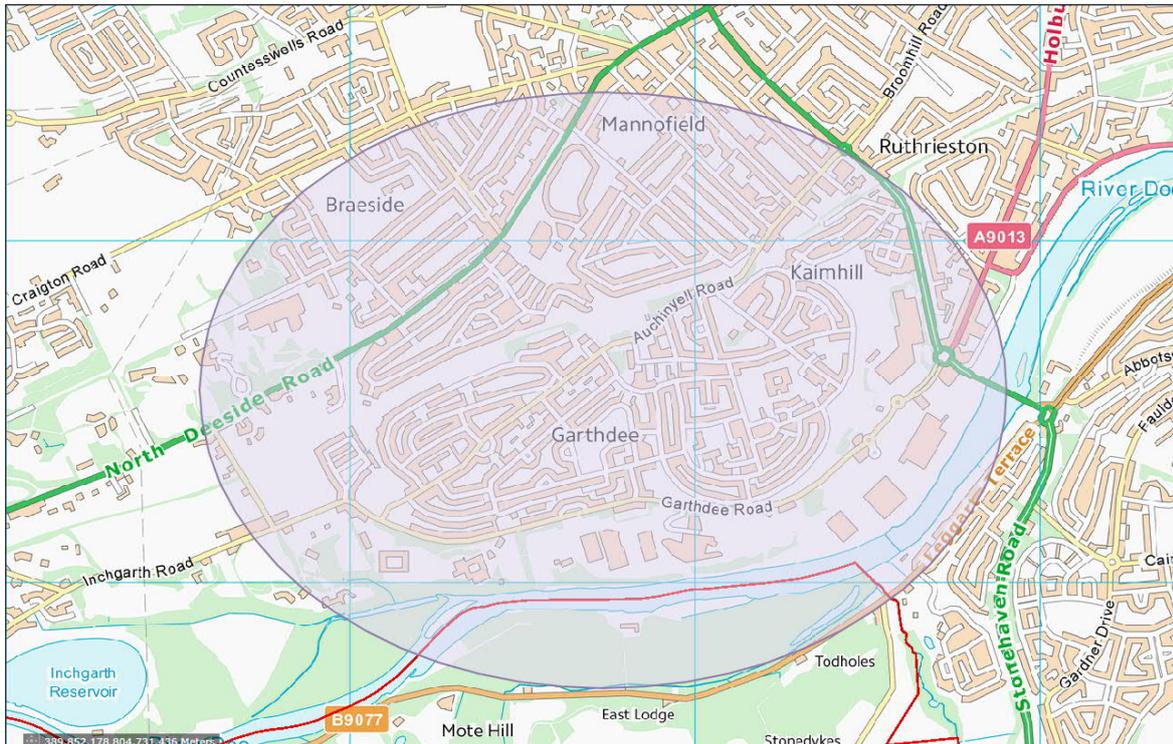
WSP UK Ltd. (WSP) has been commissioned by Aberdeen City Council (ACC) to undertake an active travel feasibility study for the Garthdee area of Aberdeen based on the principles set out in Transport Scotland's Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG).

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 post-construction 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.

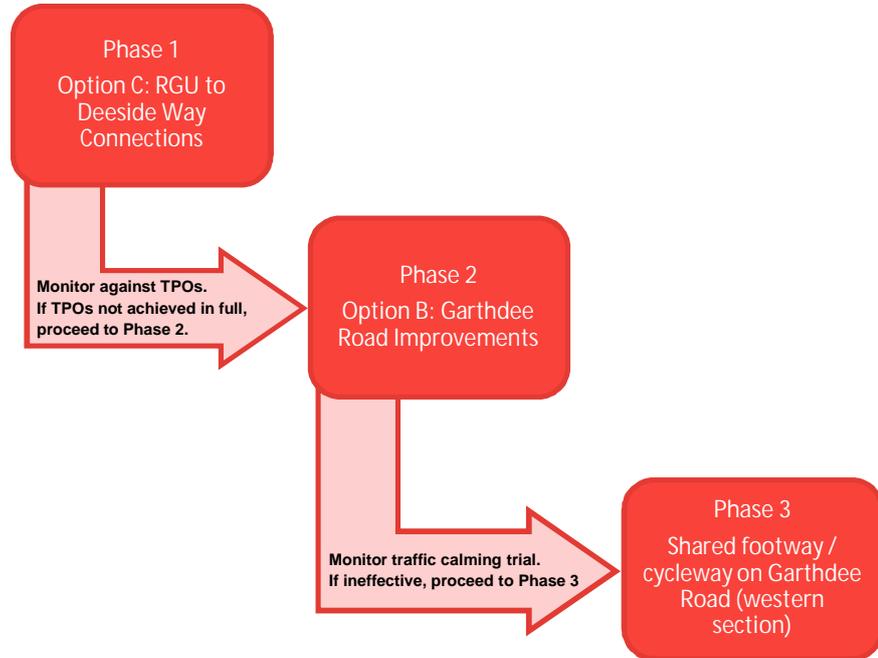
In line with *Places for Everyone* guidance, this proposal has not been presented within the design for this Option B, as shared-use footway / cycleways are not a preferred design solution. Shared-use footway / cycleways can have detrimental impacts on pedestrians, especially sensory-impaired

¹ Cycling By Design, Transport Scotland (2011)

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.

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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