



**REPORT TO: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE
SERVICES COMMITTEE ON 5 NOVEMBER 2019**

SUBJECT: ELGIN TRANSPORT STRATEGY

**BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT AND
FINANCE)**

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Committee of revised outputs from Elgin Traffic Modelling and their potential impact on Elgin Transport Strategy.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (F) (17) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to traffic management.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **It is recommended that Committee approve extending the backstop date of Elgin Transport Strategy to 2035 in light of the revised outputs from Elgin Traffic Modelling.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Elgin Transport Strategy was approved by a special meeting of Moray Council on 9 August 2017 (para 3 of the minute refers). The Strategy sets out the interventions required to enable growth in line with the Local Development Plan without exacerbating constraints on the transport infrastructure and network.
- 3.2 Traffic Modelling is carried out by the Transportation team (with the work done by a third party specialist) to predict the demands on the road infrastructure in the future – i.e. how busy will the roads be, and what level of congestion will be seen. For Elgin a specific model has been used for a number of years. It is good practice to refresh the models with up to date information (planned housing development, current information about road use etc) and to have a model re-build on average every 3-5 years to ensure predictions are as accurate as possible.
- 3.3 At a strategic level the outputs from the model are used to inform Elgin Transport Strategy and the Local Development Plan (LDP). The model is also used to carry out assessments of the impact of various proposed developments on Elgin's road infrastructure.

- 3.4 In the latter part of 2018 and into 2019 Elgin's traffic model was rebuilt by Jacobs. The outputs of the model have now been provided and interpreted for our use.
- 3.5 There are some key points about the new model build and the latest model results:
- Technological advances with SatNav data, and additional data sources from the A96 dualling programme team have provided a greater wealth of data than has historically been used (previous data quantity was adequate for modelling, but additional data provides greater robustness)
 - The build out rate for the Local Development Plan has changed since the modelling was carried out for Elgin Transport Strategy and shows a slower build out rate
 - The additional local plan sites from the latest (proposed) LDP (MLDP 2020) have been incorporated in the model. This information is new and was not available for the last model run.
 - There is now relatively detailed information about the proposed alignment of the dualled A96. Whilst the previous model had assumed a route to the south of Elgin, the latest information shows the junctions with the local road network far closer to the town centre of Elgin than previously modelled. This information was not available for the last model run and could not have been predicted.
 - All current modelling assumes dualling of the A96 by 2030 based on the detailed information published by Transport Scotland in December 2018.
- 3.6 The new model still shows significant congestion within Elgin town centre because of network capacity in future years (2030 and 2035) with no interventions. Congestion is particularly evident on the eastern side of Elgin along the current A96 route between the A941 and Pinefield. Delays are also evident on the A941 rail bridge, and on the A941 between the River Lossie and Morrision Road, with traffic avoiding Pansport roundabout by using Reiket Lane and the A941 rail bridge.
- 3.7 Because the dualled A96 provides greater relief to the local road network than previously modelled, the benefit of an additional north-south crossing of the railway is not as compelling in 2030 (Elgin Transport Strategy's target year). The dualling programme will broadly reduce delays and congestion over the A941 rail bridge back to levels expected to be observed in 2020, as traffic re-routes on to the existing A96 alignment replacing the current through movements.
- 3.8 However, the continued demands of growth mean that by 2035, even with the dualled A96 in place, levels of delay and queuing at the Pansport and Edgar Road roundabouts are anticipated to be at a level requiring further intervention.
- 3.9 In short, the revised outputs from the latest modelling indicate that whilst the existing constraints do not diminish, the predicted level of traffic from future growth that created the need for an additional north-south road crossing of the

railway in Elgin is reduced in the medium term, deferring the need, by 5 years to 2035. Continued modelling runs in line with future developments and LDPs will keep this position informed.

3.10 There are 3 options available:

1. Make no changes to Elgin Transport Strategy. This means that funding for the additional rail crossing needs sourcing imminently in order to commence the appraisal and design process. Based on the estimate in the Elgin Transport Strategy, and the costs identified for the Developer Obligations Supplementary Guidance, the cost of the bridge would be in the region of £10m. At the time of writing no developer obligations have been paid in relation to this infrastructure investment, although future development is predicted to contribute towards this element. An infrastructure first approach could be taken to 'forward fund' the investment.
2. Remove the additional rail crossing from Elgin Transport Strategy. Whilst the immediate need for the crossing has eased, the modelling still indicates network constraints. Without a long term solution this would require an acceptance of the increased congestion and network constraints that would be created south of Elgin town centre, with the consequent impacts on journey time and reliability. This would also create a difficulty in considering planning applications – the network constraints would be identified by the council as roads authority when assessing planning applications but without an acknowledged solution – council would have to accept the impacts or seek to refuse applications. If applications that impacted on the network in this area were approved without seeking to implement (or seek funding for) a known solution then this would be out of kilter with the Council's position on committing to infrastructure solutions in other cases. If applications were refused because of the network constraints there would be the consequent impact on growth and development in Elgin.
3. Agree that an additional north-south crossing of the railway will still be needed to provide acceptable journey times around Elgin, but this need is deferred by 5 years in light of the proximity of the proposed junctions on the dualled A96 as detailed above. This is the recommended option. As there is still an identified need for an intervention, inclusion of a road over rail crossing as a committed strategic plan of the council in relation to Developer Obligations would still be justifiable. Each Developer Obligation for transport is based on the Transport Assessment for the specific development, with Elgin Transport Strategy and the TSPs in the LDP indicating the strategic solutions. With most section 75 agreements having a 'life span' of 15 years, any future contributions for a rail crossing to be delivered for 2035 could still be used. If there are funding opportunities that allow the scheme to be brought forward at an earlier date then these would be pursued. Similarly, the outputs of further modelling runs will reflect any changes in local circumstances and will highlight whether the need for an additional north-south crossing is accelerated, for example if there were any delay to the A96 dualling programme.

4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))

Both the Corporate Plan and LOIP priorities, particularly those relating to the economy and the environment are dependent on the provision of supporting infrastructure. This Transport Strategy identifies a preferred package of interventions to address transportation issues in Elgin.

(b) Policy and Legal

A transport strategy is required to support the LDP and to enable the assessment of appropriate Developer Obligations in relation to planning applications.

(c) Financial implications

The financial implications are set out above.

(d) Risk Implications

Without a clear plan for delivering transport infrastructure interventions in a strategic manner, there is a risk that Elgin's road network or transport mode split will not develop in a way that can meet the increasing demand from population and employment growth. There is a risk that planning consent for developments may be granted, but approval of individual schemes may not be granted when further developed. There is also the risk that appropriate contributions from developers towards the cost of infrastructure provision will not be collected. There is also a risk that any delay in delivering the Transport Strategy schemes beyond the committed date could lead to contributions from developers (or any other funding party) being returned, with a subsequent shortfall in funding.

(e) Staffing Implications

There are no staffing implications arising from this report. The resource implications of any of the potential future work packages will be considered as part of the programme management gateway process.

(f) Property

There are no specific property issues arising from this report.

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

There are no equalities issues with this report. Participants of Moray Council's Access to Streets project were involved in the development of the Elgin Transport Strategy. An equality impact assessment will continue to be carried out during all further stages of the development and implementation of the strategy.

(h) Consultations

The Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment & Finance), Legal Services Manager, Principal Accountant (P Connor), Principal Planning Officer (Development Planning & Facilitation), Equalities Officer and Committee Services Officer (T Sutherland) have been consulted and their comments incorporated into this report.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The results of the latest traffic modelling indicate that the requirement for an additional road crossing of the railway has been deferred by 5 years, and it is recommended that the backstop date for Elgin Transport Strategy is amended accordingly.**

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Background Papers:
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