

## Annex C

Letter Correspondence - Extracts in relation to orange and violet routes and online through Inverurie

From	To	Date	Extract:
Aberdeenshire Council	Transport Scotland	19/12/2018	<p>Moreover, the Council's planning and environmental services have highlighted key environmental considerations for each route and this is set out as an <b>Appendix</b> to this letter and should provide a starting point for further assessment of the options within these disciplines.</p> <p><b>4. Deselected Options</b></p> <p>4.3 The Council notes the de-selection of Route Improvement Strategy D, on-line variant, on the existing A96 alignment between Port Elphinstone and Blackhall roundabouts. It is appreciated that this is due to both physical constraints imposed by the available width of the current road corridor, the high environmental impacts that would be imposed on the residential properties directly adjacent to the upgraded route and the significant difficulty of delivering a grade separated junction at Blackhall roundabout. The Council wishes to see greater detail on the rationale for the de-selection of this option.</p> <p><b>5. Routes to the North East or South West of Inverurie</b></p> <p>5.1 The publication of initial route options by Transport Scotland pulls into sharp focus the requirement to reconcile local and individual impacts, whilst seeking opportunities to maximise wider strategic benefit for the wider area and region.</p> <p>5.2 The Council considers that the greatest strategic benefits for the area can be achieved by pursuing a route option that is as close as possible to the existing line of the A96.</p> <p>5.3 Any route that is considered should deliver the following strategic benefits:</p>

- a) Relief of traffic pressure in Inverurie by enabling businesses and households in the Oldmeldrum, Rothienorman and Uryside catchment areas to access the trunk road network without having to pass through the centre Inverurie.
- b) Consequential facilitation of the future development of Inverurie and its town centre;
- c) Opportunities to aid economic development associated with enhanced access to the strategic road network for communities and businesses to the north and north-east of the current A96 and A947 corridors; and
- d) Respond to development opportunities in the Oldmeldrum area, and further to the north such as Turrif.

#### **6. Deliverability of Options**

6.2 At Tavelty, particular challenges are formed by the proximity of the soon to be constructed Railway Station, cemetery, existing grade separated junction and business park. Transport Scotland's project team will be required to meet SEPA and local authority requirements that any structure over the River Don at this location does not impact on the flood plain, and that there is no associated increase in flood risk within the river system and flood risk management area.

6.3 The Council highlights the specific design requirement for any proposed crossing of the River Don, and at other locations, for there to be no adverse impact on the flood plain, and no associated increase in flood risk within the wider river system.

#### **10. Environmental Impacts and Opportunities**

10.2 {extract} It should be noted that options V1/G1 and O1 would have a direct impact on Pitscurry Moss Local Nature Conservation Site (LNCS) [REDACTED] and Transport Scotland will need to consider the impacts through the options assessment.

**Appendix – A96 Dualling Project, Detailed Planning and Environmental Considerations**

**Landscape Impacts**

4. The gradient and exposure of some routes ( [REDACTED] Violet and Orange) will mean that some parts of these routes will be very visible in parts.
5. The V3 route will be visually prominent as a major crossing of the Don Valley will be required north of Kintore, the route will then need to ascend the hillside from some distance before cutting back across the side of Hill of Selbie. There is therefore potential for significant landscape impacts, subject to detailed design and mitigation.
6. The landscape impact of the Orange Route will depend on detailed design but the main impact is likely to be from the Don Valley crossing which lies within and is an important part of the Area of Landscape Sensitivity. The Don Valley is sensitive in landscape terms and the crossing would affect the setting of St Apolonarie’s Chapel which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. The Orange Route requires two major river crossings, which can lead to greater potential for environmental impacts during construction.
7. Routes V1/G1 and O1 all descend a steep slope to cross the burn south of Durno, and careful design will be required in this area to avoid adverse visual impacts. Equally the intersection appears that it could have a direct impact on Pitscurry Moss LNCS.

**Listed Buildings and Cultural Heritage**

14. {extract} Direct impact on listed buildings and scheduled monuments has been largely avoided by the routes chosen, however all have a potential impact on historic assets. Key locations are the confluence of [REDACTED], Violet and Orange routes where the setting of the scheduled Pitscurrie Cairn at Whiteford may be prejudiced.
16. The violet route may have potential for impacts on Keithall Designed Landscape and Balbithan House.

			<p>17. V2 passes close to Harlaw Battlefield but avoids the key focus of the Battlefield which is the plateau to the south of the route.</p> <p><b>Natural History</b></p> <p>23. {extract} Specific interest is provided by the confluence of [REDACTED], Violet and Orange routes at Whiteford.</p> <p>24. The Orange Route impacts on the long established woodland associated with Thainstone House Hotel.</p> <p><b>Development Impacts</b></p> <p>30. Overall, very little land zoned for existing development is impacted upon by the proposals. The Orange route (O3) at Crichie passes through an employment land designation. This has shown no prospect of being brought forward and is probably compensated for in the Thainstone Mart development sites. The Violet route (V2) impacts upon a proposed (but unsupported) bid site north of the Uryside development.</p> <p>33. The Orange Route opens up Ardennes for development, but any of the routes proposed would achieve this. Violet Routes and Orange Routes both place some constraints in respect of future growth of the footprint of Inverurie.</p>
Transport Scotland	Aberdeenshire Council	14/05/2019	<p>NOTE: All references to the 'FAQ document' are in respect of the FAQ document published on the Transport Scotland Website:</p> <p><a href="https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/44941/frequently-asked-questions-east-of-huntly-to-aberdeen-a96-dualling.pdf">https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/44941/frequently-asked-questions-east-of-huntly-to-aberdeen-a96-dualling.pdf</a></p>

			<p><b>The Council wishes to see greater detail on rationale for the de-selection of Improvement Strategy D, on-line variant on existing A96 between Port Elphinstone &amp; Blackhall roundabout</b></p> <p>We believe that you are referring to Improvement Strategy B rather than D which was considered as part of the DMRB Stage 1 Strategic Assessment. As outlined in our response B2 in the enclosed FAQ document, the re-use/widening of the existing A96 has been investigated thoroughly as part of the early assessment work. The section between Port Elphinstone and Blackhall roundabout was found to perform poorly against the environmental and engineering criteria, including the proposed dual carriageway unavoidably encroaching into and permanently impacting on residential and commercial properties, including the need for demolition. Based on this, an online dual carriageway upgrade of the A96 through Inverurie was not considered further as part of the DMRB Stage 2 assessment.</p> <p><b>TS project team must meet SEPA and local authority requirements in respect of any structure over the River Don - No adverse impact on the flood plain, and no associated increase in flood risk within the wider river system.</b></p> <p>Please refer to our response B8 and C4 in the enclosed FAQ document. We have held meetings with both SEPA and Aberdeenshire Council flooding officers and have obtained the flood model commissioned by Aberdeenshire Council which we will use to assess the route options. Engagement will continue with both SEPA and the council throughout the development of the scheme.</p> <p><b>Environmental impacts and Opportunities</b></p> <p>We note the Council's comments in relation to the environmental impacts and opportunities in particular the specific comments on various route options. In addition we thank you for the further information provided in the Appendix which has been passed on to AmeyArup to assist in the environmental assessment process. Information on the assessment process being followed can be found in Section C of the enclosed FAQ document.</p>
Aberdeenshire Council	Transport Scotland	12/07/2019	The Council acknowledges that each route option has strengths and weaknesses however we would reiterate our view that, where practicable, an alignment as close as possible to the existing A96 is preferable, notwithstanding our understanding that the greatest benefits to the

local and wider area would accrue from links which enable traffic from the north east of Inverurie to access a dualled A96 without having to cross the town centre, as is currently the case.

Officers have an interest on the interaction of the proposed alignment with the new Kintore station and how traffic from the A96 into and from Kintore will be managed effectively. Furthermore we wish to avoid any further pressure being placed on Port Elphinstone and Blackhall roundabouts, which form the accesses to the south and north of Inverurie from the existing A96.

Included with this letter is an appendix with a series of more detailed technical observations from Council officers for your consideration.

**Appendix - A96 Dualling Project, Aberdeenshire Council response to Transport Scotland on the consultation on Initial Route Options for Dualling of the A96 – East of Huntly to Aberdeen**

**Detailed Planning, Environmental and Transportation Considerations (July 2019)**

**Overview**

- 1 All remaining routes are considered deliverable and each provides a range of positive and negative points.

**Planning and Environment**

- 1 **Built Environment**

1.2 Orange route – this route appears to have a potential impact on the setting, (to a greater and lesser extent) of the following assets:

- Bridgend, Kintore
- Hangar Cairnhall
- Thainstone House

1.3 Violet route – potentially has more impact than other routes in relation to the number of protected sites, where their setting could be impacted on:

- Bourtie House
- Garden Cottage, Bourtie
- Keithhall and Garden and Designed Landscape
- Balbithan House
- Hangar, Kintore
- Bridgend, Kintore
- Friends Meeting House, Kinmuck

## 2 Cultural Heritage

2.1 Direct impact scheduled monuments has been largely avoided by the routes chosen, however all have a potential impact on historic assets. Key locations are the confluence of [REDACTED], [REDACTED], Violet, and Orange routes where the setting of the scheduled Pitscurry Cairn at Whiteford may be prejudiced. [REDACTED].

2.2 The Violet route may have potential for impacts on Keithhall Designed Landscape and Balbithan House. The Violet route passes close to Harlaw Battlefield but avoids the key focus of the Battlefield which is the plateau to the south of the route.

## 3 Landscape Impacts

- |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|
|  |  |  | <p>3.1 The gradient and exposure of some routes (Red, Violet, and Orange) will mean that some parts of these routes will be very visible in parts.</p> <p>3.2 The Violet route will be visually prominent as a major crossing of the Don Valley will be required north of Kintore. The route will then need to ascend the hillside for some distance before cutting back across the side of Hill of Selbie. There is therefore potential for significant landscape impacts, subject to detailed design and mitigation.</p> <p>3.3 The landscape impact of the Orange Route will depend on detailed design but the main impact is likely to be from the Don Valley crossing which lies within and is an important part of the Area of Landscape Sensitivity. The Don Valley is sensitive in landscape terms and the crossing would affect the setting of St Apolonarie's Chapel which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. The Orange route requires two major river crossings, which may lead to greater potential for environmental impacts during construction.</p> <p>3.4 The Violet and Orange routes all descend a steep slope to cross the burn south of Durno, and careful design will be required in this area to avoid adverse visual impacts. Equally the intersection appears that it could have a direct impact on Pitscurry Moss Local Nature Conservation Sites (LNCS).</p> <p><b>4 Natural Heritage Designations</b></p> <p>4.2 The confluence of [REDACTED], [REDACTED], Violet, and Orange routes at Whiteford would directly impact upon Moss of Pitscurrie LNCS. If this route choice is likely to progress, as seems likely given the current alignments, then we would suggest early discussion with the relevant LNCS panel members (who select these sites and provide advice on them). This discussion would explore options for retaining an area of the site and mitigating impact and also for suitable compensation for the impact on this site.</p> <p><b>5 Woodland Loss and Fragmentation</b></p> <p>5.2 The Orange route impacts on the Ancient Woodland (LEPO) associated with Thainstone House Hotel and along the south River Don corridor (Roquharold and Crichtie). In addition the route seems likely to impact on the Thainstone House TPO (AC TPO 16).</p> |
|--|--|--|--|

**6 River Don Floodplain**

6.1 The Violet route crosses the floodplain of the Don with associated breeding and overwintering birds which would need to be carefully considered as part of the EIA.

**7 Natural Heritage Mitigation/Compensation/Enhancement**

7.1 The development of the road will put in place a significant barrier to species movement. The identification of significant habitat networks that may be disrupted by the various route options will aid the route appraisal process. Mitigation and compensation for direct loss of habitat but also for loss of habitat connectivity will be required. There are a number of key issues for nature conservation along the route corridors, such as giant hogweed along the River Ury that would provide a focus for compensation project work.

**8 Public Access**

8.1 Access along any core paths or identified public Rights of Way that are crossed by the route needs to be maintained during construction and operation. In particular we would highlight that:

- The Orange route crosses a public Right of Way near the River Don – the Old Kemnay Road.

8.2 Aberdeenshire Council and local groups are progressing the development of a public access route joining Oldmeldrum to Inverurie – the Meldrum Meg Way (MMW). The Violet route crosses the alignment of the MMW at ‘Uryside Junction’. This route should be incorporated into the planning for Uryside Junction should the Violet route be favoured.

**9 Development Impact**

9.1 Overall, very little land zoned for existing development is impacted upon by the proposals. The Orange route at Crichton passes through an employment land designation. This has shown no prospect of being brought forward and is probably compensated for in the Thainstone Mart development sites. The Violet route impacts upon a proposed (but unsupported) bid site north of the Uryside development.

9.2 The Violet route would provide potential to consider further development north east of Inverurie.

9.4 The Orange route opens up Ardennes for development, but any of the routes proposed would achieve this. Violet and Orange routes both place some constraints in respect of future growth of the footprint of Inverurie.

### **Transportation**

#### **12 Orange/Violet routes**

12.1 Experience of the AWPR would suggest that significant impacts and unintended consequences can be felt on existing towns and junctions from better transport links leading to changes in traffic patterns. In respect of the Inverurie there are concerns regarding the proposed access to the A96 from the north and the south which need to be carefully considered.

12.2 The proposed local distributor route from Blackhall Road to Blackhall roundabout follows an alignment which is currently a primarily residential street and unclassified road. The trip attraction of this route is likely to have a detrimental impact on residents of Burghmuir Avenue and Burghmuir Road and requires further consideration.

12.3 The Drimmies junction is useful but will require close attention in terms of traffic modelling and design to make it work.

12.4 We anticipate significant development at the end of Inverurie nearest the Blackhall Road Junction. There is currently significant congestion issues around that area of Burghmuir Drive and the roundabout leading up to the A96 roundabout. There will be a need to

ensure that any junction realignment as part of the dualling does not acerbate this by increasing the peak traffic flows onto these junctions.

- 12.5 There is a risk that the proposed Thainstone Junction will acerbate issues at Port Elphinstone and this needs to be given further consideration.
- 12.6 The Uryside junction(s) design and locations should be re-examined as we feel the proposed layout is suboptimal in terms of the existing 'new link road' and access to Uryside. The Uryside junction represents a convoluted route to access Oldmeldrum.
- 12.7 The access to the A96 from Oldmeldrum/Rothienorman is crucial irrespective of the route option chosen and careful consideration needs to be given of how traffic from this direction will access the A96 without continuing to cause congestion in Inverurie town centre.
- 12.8 Careful consideration will require to be made of the impact on the Kintore railway station, currently under construction, from the proposed Tavelty junction. The size and alignment of the junction could impact on the siting of the station and we expect the new station to be a significant trip generator in itself. There may be the opportunity to look at sitting the junction further west to give more options for design and location.
- 12.9 We would also have concerns around the type of junction proposed at Tavelty in the initial design due to its tight gyratory nature.
- 12.10 We would welcome discussions on the access at Tavelty might act as a transport interchange between bus, train and road and would be pleased to explore this with you as the project develops.