

Kingswells-Bucksburn Link
Route Alignment Study

Aberdeen City Council
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1 Introduction

In the last 20 years the suburb of Kingswells has grown dramatically from a small settlement to current population of approximately 4000. However, development of Kingswells has largely relied on access to and from the area by private car with no dedicated links to surrounding neighbourhoods for non motorised users.

For a number of years Aberdeen City Council has received representations from the communities of Bucksburn and Kingswells requesting the creation of a link between the two communities for non-motorised users. The present provision for access between the two communities relies on busy roads without footway provision or rough narrow paths and farm tracks meandering through the separating farmland.

Secondary school children living in Kingswells are zoned to attend Bankhead Academy in Bucksburn. The lack of a safe pedestrian/ cycle route to the school and the distance of the existing school from Kingswells means almost all pupils attending the Academy from Kingswells are either collected by school bus or driven there by parents. Through the Councils 3R's project, Bankhead Academy is to merge with Marlpool School to form Bucksburn Academy. Construction of this new Academy is underway at the site of the Beacon Centre. When constructed the Academy will be only 3km from the centre of Kingswells however, as described previously there is no safe route for school children between the two communities. The creation of the new Academy at a closer location presents a new opportunity to encourage sustainable travel to school by Kingswells pupils, but the existing path infrastructure is seen as a major barrier by parents and school travel plan coordinators.

To the south of Kingswells NESTRANS are currently extending the Westhill Cycleway further into the City, improving commuter access to businesses in the City Centre and to the south. However, at present there are no formal cycle routes from Kingswells to the large employment centres to the north of the City in Dyce and Bridge of Don. In order to link into National Cycle Route 1 at Persley, cyclists must negotiate busy roads with high speeds or go cross country on narrow rough tracks, neither very appealing to the potential cycle commuter.

In October 2007 Faber Maunsell were commissioned by Aberdeen City Council to study the links for non motorised users between the Kingswells and Bucksburn areas of the City. The study examines the aspirations of the local communities and the Council with regards to a non-motorised link and assesses the possible alignments for a new link.

2 Policy and Guidance

2.1 Policy and Guidance

This section provides a background to the policy and guidance considered throughout the study.

2.2 National Policy

2.2.1 *National Cycling Policy*

In 1996 the National Cycling Strategy was published and it now forms the basis by which many Local Authorities created their policy targets for cycling. The National Cycling Strategy currently informs the targets set within the cycling chapter of Aberdeen City Council's Local Transport Strategy. The strategy aims to promote and encourage cycling, with aspirations to double cycling by 2002 and again by 2012.

2.2.2 *Scotland National Transport Strategy*

In 2006 the Scottish Executive published Scotland's National Transport Strategy. The Strategy recognises the important role walking has in reducing road congestion, air pollution and improving people's health. The Strategy commits the administration to the promotion of walking/ cycling for journeys under 5km, with funding for capital projects, School Travel Plan Co-ordinators and promotion.

2.2.3 *Land Reform Act*

In 2003 the Land Reform Act established a clear legal basis for responsible access to land by the general public. It established rights of access for travel and recreation over private and publicly owned land for among others walkers, cyclists and equestrians so long as individuals adhere to the guidelines produced on responsible access. The Act has allowed the public to use existing paths responsibly with confidence in their rights to access land across the country.

The Scottish Outdoor Access Code has been developed to support the Act by:

- summarising access rights;
- setting out the responsibilities of access users and land managers;
- providing practical guidance on rights and responsibilities in common situations; and
- providing advice on where to get further help and information.

The Code provides a high level of detail on the particular responsibilities for a wide number of activities but to summarise the main essence of the code is that access rights come with responsibilities and individuals need to take responsibility for their own actions, respect the interests of others and care for the environment.

2.3 Local Transport Policy

At present Aberdeen City Council's Local Transport Strategy is being updated and a final draft consultation document has been circulated. Therefore in order to give the most complete policy context for this study, reference has been made to both the existing LTS and the final draft which will supersede it by the end of the year.

2.3.1 *Walking Policy (Existing LTS)*

Strategies and targets for the development of walking in Aberdeen are contained within the Local Transport Strategy. The LTS aims to encourage more short journeys to be made on foot,

stating that in 1991 only 14% of residents walked to work despite two – thirds of workers living within 4km of their place of employment. The Strategy recognises the health benefits to individuals who walk regularly and that safety is a prime concern when trying to encourage greater levels of walking. Emphasis is placed on the positioning of pedestrians high in the road hierarchy, prioritising road space for vulnerable road users particularly where there is a latent demand for more pedestrian use.

Two policies and three targets have been developed within the strategy but it is targets highlighted below which are of most relevance.

WT2 – To increase by 20% the proportion of people walking to work by 2011.

WT3 – By 2010, to reduce pedestrian casualty rate to less than 130, whilst increasing the number of people walking. (1980's average 366)

2.3.2

Walking Policy (2008/12 LTS)

The new LTS again recognises the important contribution walking can make towards healthy life style, reducing pollution and road congestion. It also establishes the 5Cs (Connected, Convenient, Comfortable, Convivial, Conspicuous) principle at the heart of walking provision.

The LTS has a number of objectives, which increased levels of walking and cycling would assist in achieving. The most relevant are listed below:

4.4.1.3 To increase the share of travel by the most sustainable modes to promote economic growth without associated traffic growth.

4.4.3.1 To reduce carbon emissions from road transport.

4.4.3.3 To reduce levels of air pollution throughout the City.

4.4.4.1 Improve accessibility to jobs and services to support social inclusion.

4.4.5.3 To promote healthy living by encouraging safe walking and cycling.

To achieve these objectives the LTS proposes a large number of actions, the most relevant to this study are listed below:

IMP PED1 ACC, in partnership with NHS Grampian, is committed to facilitating active travel and raising awareness of the associated health benefits.

IMP PED3 ACC will develop and implement a Core Paths Plan, to promote a network of paths throughout the City suitable for the purposes of giving the public reasonable access through the City.

IMP PED4 ACC will continue to implement measures designed to improve accessibility for pedestrians and the attractiveness of walking.

2.3.3

Cycling Policy (Existing LTS)

Strategies and targets for the development of cycling in Aberdeen are contained within the Local Transport Strategy. The LTS embraces the national targets outlined in the NCS aiming to

deliver a fourfold increase in cycling by 2011. The strategy recognises the need for improved facilities for cycling and identifies cyclist safety as a key factor in encouraging more people to cycle. Emphasis is placed on bringing about these improvements by encouraging developers to provide cycle links, incorporating cycling into traffic management scheme, such as bus priority projects and working in association with 'Safer route to schools' schemes.

Four policies and five targets have been developed within the strategy but it is the policies and targets highlighted below which are of most relevance:

CP2 – To implement a strategic cycle network for Aberdeen.

CT1 –To increase commuting cycling trips to at least 8% by 2011(compared to 1991 figure of 1800 work trips by bicycle per day, just less than 2% of all workers).

CT2 – By 2010, to further reduce the casualty rate for cyclists to less than 30 casualties per year.

2.3.4

Cycling Policy (2008/12 LTS)

Like walking, the new LTS promotes cycling as a cheap, healthy and non-polluting form of transport, which can provide a quick and hassle free means of undertaking short trips within the City.

It states that consultation with those who do not currently cycle has highlighted a number of issues that need to be addressed to encourage greater cycling activity. First and foremost being the perceived safety on the road for cyclists. Whilst more experienced cyclists are happy to use the road network as it stands, one of the perceived barriers for new cyclists is the lack of a coherent cycling network both on and off the road.

In recognition of this it states the Council will continue to invest with its partners in strategic off-road routes linking communities to major centres of employment, hospitals, universities and schools.

The LTS objectives relevant to cycling are broadly the same as those mentioned above under walking policy. However, a number of cycling specific actions have been developed to support these. The most relevant are listed below.

IMP CYC3 ACC will continue to invest with partners in strategic off-road routes linking communities to major centres of employment, hospitals, universities and schools. ACC will also continue to improve cycle routes linked into the Core Paths Plan and the City's parks and greenspace networks.

IMP CYC4 ACC will continue to work with Sustrans, Nestrans and Aberdeenshire Council, as well as partner organisations, developers and landowners, to ensure significant developments to the National Cycle Network (Route 1) and other strategic routes through Aberdeen.

2.3.5

Cycling Strategy

Under the existing LTS the Council has developed its Strategy for cycling in the city. There are 5 stated objectives of the study:

Objective 1: To maximise the role of cycling as a transport mode, available for a wide range of purposes, particularly for short city journeys to work.

Objective 2: To develop a safe, convenient, efficient and attractive transport infrastructure which encourages and facilitates cycling and which minimises reliance on, and discourages unnecessary use of, private cars.

Objective 3: To increase cycling's role as a means of leisure, for tourism and recreation throughout the City and into Aberdeenshire.

Objective 4: To ensure that policies to increase cycling and meet the needs of cyclists are fully integrated into the Structure Plan, Local Plan, Transportation Policy Documents, the Road Safety Plan and in all complementary strategies.

Objective 5: To set a framework of policies and delivery mechanisms designed to achieve the targets set within this document.

The Strategy contains 24 policies and 9 targets, the following are most relevant to this study:

Policy 3: Cycle Networks. The aim is to provide high quality route networks for cyclists. For commuting, priority will be given to main arterial routes and links to suburbs and settlements surrounding Aberdeen. Cycling for recreational purposes will require links from the main settlements to places of recreation and interest. The overall route network will comprise the road network, modified where necessary using traffic restraint, traffic calming measures and off-road paths to enable safe, convenient and pleasant access to destinations.

Policy 4: Priority to be given to the following types of route:

- i) major routes which service utility cycling trips; such as around schools, routes from residential areas to significant journey attractors such as retail centres, major employment centres, public transport interchanges, hospitals, other education facilities and leisure facilities;
- ii) other connecting routes used for utility cycling, including inter-urban links; and
- iii) recreational and tourist routes (for which prime responsibility will lie with the Learning and Leisure Service).

Policy 5: Route networks will achieve high standards of coherence, directness, safety, attractiveness and comfort, and design criteria will adopt the hierarchical approach recommended by the IHT/DOT/CT/Bicycle Friendly Association Publication: "Cycle-Friendly Infrastructure, Guidelines for Planning and Design" (1996) and the National Cycle Network "Guidelines and Practical Details", where appropriate.

Target 1: To contribute to a national doubling of commuting cycling trips in Aberdeen by 2001 and further doubling by 2011 (compared to 1991 figures of 1,800 travel to work trips by bicycle per day, just under 2% of all workers).

Target 3: To implement a strategic cycle network for Aberdeen by 2001.

Target 4: To increase the proportion of pupils (particularly secondary school age) cycling (or walking) to school.

2.3.6

Horse Riding Policy

The Council has no formal transport policy on horse riding as it is viewed primarily as a recreational activity, given its costly nature and the practical issues associated with using a horse as a daily mode of transport. However, the Land Reform Act affords equestrians the right to responsibly use the path network. As such, horse riding falls under Action Policy 5 in the Council's Access Strategy.

2.3.7

Access Strategy

Published in 2004 'Aberdeen's Strategy for Access to the Outdoors' sets out the Council's vision for 'A well used network of safe, clear and enjoyable routes linking people and places that every person in Aberdeen want to, and is proud to use to get from one place to another for work or for leisure'. Through the Strategy a number of Action Themes and policies are promoted which are applicable to this study.

AT1: Community Involvement: Engage widely with local communities during the planning, implementation and delivery of local networks.

AT2: Health: Encourage people to be more active by improving opportunities for access close to where people live.

AT4 Transport and Connections: Contribute towards achieving a well-integrated and accessible transport network by enhancing and improving access opportunities between people's homes, employment, shopping, education and other facilities.

AP5 Access for All: Provision of access will take into account all user types and abilities. Improvements to existing, and the installation of new paths will wherever practicable and possible be accessible to all.

AP9 New Path Links: Work towards linking isolated green or open spaces and creating new links to and between the existing path networks.

2.4 Design Guidance

A number of publications provide guidance on the design of paths for non-motorised users. The publications taken into account for guidance during this study are listed below:

2.4.1 *Design Manual for Roads and Bridges; Provision for non-motorised users*

A Highways Agency/ Scottish Executive publication of trunk road design standards which contains specific guidance on the design of facilities for non-motorised users.

2.4.2 *The National Cycle Network - Guidelines and Practical Details*

A Sustrans publication; setting out the design philosophy and criteria for the National Cycle Network.

2.4.3 *Making Ways for the Bicycle - A guide to construction of traffic-free paths*

A Sustrans publication; setting out the design philosophy and criteria for off-road cycle path development and construction.

2.4.4 *Cycling by Design*

A Scottish Executive publication; setting out the design philosophy and criteria for the development and construction of cycling infrastructure.

2.4.5 *Equestrian Access Factsheets*

A British Horse Society, Scottish Natural Heritage and Paths for All Partnership joint publication; providing practical information on providing access for horses and riders.

2.4.6 *Countryside Access Design Guide*

A Scottish Natural Heritage publication; providing guidance on the design of access control structure for use in the countryside.

3 Link Aspirations

3.1 Initial Consultation

For a number of years Aberdeen City Council has received representations from the communities of Bucksburn and Kingswells requesting the creation of a link between the two communities for non-motorised users. This desire was identified through the Community Planning process within both Kingswells and Bucksburn, with the 'You Said It' report, produce in 2005 making reference to the concept. The first stage of this study set out to capture more specifically the aspirations of the two communities for the link.

3.2 Community Workshops

In December 2007 key stakeholders from each community were invited to a consultation workshop to discuss the possibilities of a link.

No route options were presented at the workshop; instead groups were asked to consider the issue and possibilities a link could give to the area. The workshop aimed to get the two communities involved at the earliest stage of the planning process to ensure that any scheme will provide for the needs of the local community now and into the future.

A straw pole of the 18 workshop members was undertaken to gain an initial indication of the support or otherwise for a link between the two communities. The members were asked:

If they felt the existing travel options between Kingswells and Bucksburn were **sufficient**;

- 94% of the members voted that the existing options were inadequate.

And if links for non-motorised users should be **improved**;

- 59% voted yes, with the rest undecided as they would like to see more detailed proposals.

3.3 Workshop Discussions

The workshop groups were asked to discuss six main topics. The views expressed by the groups are summarised below:

3.3.1 *Start/ End points for Route*

The first topic discussed in the separate groups was where in Kingswells and Bucksburn should be linked. The following points and issues were raised:

- Any link should not rely on users accessing it via Kepplehills Road due to busy traffic;
- Residential streets within Bucksburn were believed to be quiet enough to link directly into;
- Consideration should be given as to how any new link will connect to the existing pedestrian/ cycle facilities towards Dyce and the Airport;
- It was felt very important that there is a link to the new Bankhead Academy;
- Any link should connect with the existing rough path network;
- In Bucksburn the start point for the link should be somewhere along Newhills Avenue, possibly Howes Road;

- It was felt that an improved connection to the Link from Northfield would be more important than Newhills as the existing rough path to Northfield is already well used;
- In Kingswells the start point for the Link should be somewhere along Kingswells Avenue possibly via upgraded existing rough paths parallel to Congraig Gardens;
- A direct route would be more appealing to commuter/ school children using the route, however the upgrading of existing routes would be acceptable; and
- Some members expressed the view that when the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route is constructed the expected reduction in traffic on rural roads would mean they could be safely used by pedestrians and cyclists.

3.3.2

User Groups

Groups were asked to consider that if the Link was to be created, what types of user it should cater for. The following points and issues were raised:

- The overall feeling was that the route should be open to all non motorised users;
- There should be no access to motorcycles;
- The link should be primarily for commuters, but should also have a recreational value;
- The general view was that farmers and farm machinery should be afforded some level of access and that the preference would be for them to have access only to cross the Link, rather than travelling along the route. Concerns centred around the interaction between farm vehicles and children using the route and also the potential damage tractors and cattle could cause along the route;
- Several concerns were raised regarding equestrian use, though it was felt that if managed correctly it would be acceptable;
- It was felt that upgrading the Kingswells to Bucksburn road for use by cyclists should be considered so that existing paths could be upgraded for the sole use of walkers;
- Concerns were raised over the route being too accessible and potentially creating antisocial behaviour; and
- Concerns were raised as to whether parents would allow their children to use the link as it may feel remote.

3.3.3

Type of Path

Groups were asked to consider what form the facility should take in terms of its operation. The following points and issues were raised:

- There was split opinion as to whether the route should be segregated (e.g. space apportioned between different users such as pedestrians and cyclists) or shared (e.g. no demarcation);
- Some concern was raised that the route may become a fast commuter route for cyclists spoiling the enjoyment for other users, though the general feeling was that there would be little conflict between recreational walkers and commuting cyclists as the times the user groups would be on the path would vary;
- It was discussed that a segregated path may be safer for pedestrians, but that it is likely that pedestrians would stray from their side in any event;

- Although there were some concerns with equestrian use of the route, it was felt that a segregated equestrian facility would be too wide and would have a greater impact on the surrounding environment; and
- Discussions on the most suitable width of path took place and whether marking would be appropriate: it was felt that a 'path for all' would be most suitable for this environment with no markings.

3.3.4

Path Surfacing

Groups were asked to consider what type of surfacing they would like to have along the new link. The following points and issues were raised:

- There was a definite dislike for concrete paving and loc bloc surfaces as it was considered visually unattractive given the rural surroundings;
- An unbound surface of dust/ gravel was considered a visually appealing option, but cyclists felt the ride quality would be a concern;
- It was also suggested that dust/ gravel paths make users muddy in wet weather and the dust in dry weather can reduce the lifespan of moving parts on bikes;
- Tarmacadam was considered acceptable and would help with the management of horses on this route as it would slow them down, however concerns were raised that its appearance could urbanise the rural setting;
- Tarmacadam was considered the most suitable for commuting cyclists;
- There was a dislike for coloured surfaces on the whole but some felt that it could be considered acceptable if an appropriate finish could be achieved; and
- It was suggested that in boggier places something similar to the existing boardwalk section could be used.

3.3.5

Design and Appearance of the Link

Groups were asked to consider what the overall appearance/ 'feel' of the corridor should be. The following points and issues were raised:

- The need for seating requirements was discussed and it was suggested that these could be in the form of a piece of art. However, some felt that existing seating and benches are vandalised and new seating will attract antisocial behaviour, though it was discussed that if the route was well used antisocial behaviour would not be an issue and perhaps seating could be added at a later date;
- Conflicting options regarding lighting were discussed. Some felt that there should be no lampposts due to the rural setting. Low level lighting or motion sensing and solar powered units were discussed as alternatives that may be more appropriate for the setting;
- It was voiced that if the link was to be unlit it would be less attractive for children using the route in the winter months. It was felt that if the route was lit, parents would be happier to allow their children to use it;
- There was general support for the route to be developed into a wildlife corridor;

- The general feeling was that public art was not considered necessary and would look out of place; and
- Signing should be provided along the route, but its style should be in keeping with the natural surroundings.

3.3.6

Other Points of Note

As the groups discussed the above topics a number of other points were raised that do not directly relate to the topic headings. These points are presented below:

- That even the construction of a 'lesser' scheme should be considered, so that in time, if significant numbers of users are attracted to the Link, it could be upgraded;
- That there should be further promotion of the existing path network whether the new link goes ahead or not; and
- Concerns were raised that the route should not impinge on the existing District Wildlife Sites.

3.4

Tenant Farmer Consultation

The majority of the land between Bucksburn and Kingswells is owned by Aberdeen City Council. A large proportion of this land is leased to private individuals for farming. If a new link is to be provided between the two communities it is likely to cross or pass near to, up to four farms. In order to make the farmers aware of the study; its possible implications and to gather their general views on a new link and access between the two areas, individual meetings were offered. Three of the four agreed to meet with the study members and a summary of their thoughts and concerns are given below:

- They take no issues with responsible access over their land;
- However, they all experience problems with kids vandalising fences/ gates, littering and fire raising;
- Feel there maybe be demand for a route but they would have concerns with any new path which cut through land, introducing people and their associated issues further into the farms and would therefore like to see any new path follow farm boundaries;
- Concerned about the impact any new path would have on existing Rural Stewardship Schemes; and
- That any wide well surfaced path would encourage illegal motorcycle use in the area.

The main concern appeared to be that any improvement in access would increase the current problems caused by a small irresponsible minority.

3.5

New Academy Consultation

Through the Councils 3R's project, Bankhead Academy is to merge with Marlpool School to form Bucksburn Academy. Construction of this new Academy is underway at the site of the Beacon Centre.

When constructed the Academy will be only 3km from the centre of Kingswells. Discussions with the 3R's project management team have highlighted that cycling to the Academy will be promoted with extensive cycle storage facilities being provided within the grounds of the school and also additional storage will be provided at the community facilities such as the swimming pool and library on the campus. The main pupil access to the school will be via the residential Cloverfield Gardens road and the main community access via Kepplehills Road. As part of the new Academy development a signal controlled crossing is to be provided on Kepplehills Road

near the community access. How users of a Kingswells-Bucksburn link would route between the Academy access points and the link will inform the link start/ end point location process.

3.6

Conclusion

Throughout the consultation exercises there is clear support for improving the link between Kingswells and Bucksburn but there are a number of concerns on how a new link would impact on its surrounding environment and if it will increase antisocial behaviour along its route. These and all of the other points above have been considered in the preparation of the assessment criteria for the route option appraisal in Chapter 4.

4 Planning Objectives

4.1 Objectives

The planning objectives that will be used to appraise the route options are laid out below. The main drivers for the development of the route objectives have come from the community consultation exercise and local and national planning guidance.

4.2 Objective Development

The planning objectives for this study have been developed following consultation with a variety of sources. These include the study objectives to consider the feasibility of a link, the aspirations of the local community, as laid out in Chapter 3 and the national guidance explained below.

4.2.1 *DETR Encouraging Walking*

In 2000 the national government published through the DETR a guide to support their aim to make walking easier, more pleasant and safer for daily travel. The *“Encouraging Walking: advice to local authorities”* guide recommends the 5Cs, as developed by the London Planning Advisory Committee, as criteria for assessing the existing environment for walking. The criteria, laid out below, are also applicable in the planning of new facilities.

Connected – Easy access to public transport and other key destinations without meeting dead ends and busy roads which are not easy to cross.

Convenient – Direct routes without unnecessary detours and restrictions.

Comfortable – Quality surfaces, appropriate width and unobstructed footpaths with good lighting and safety from vehicle traffic.

Convivial – Friendly, busy streets which are interesting to walk in, meet people, go shopping or have a sit down.

Conspicuous – Clear signposts, visible street names and publicised walking routes.

4.2.2 *National Cycle Network Guidelines*

The National Cycle Network Guidelines and Practical Details were published in 1997 to aid planners and designers. The guidelines set out the design philosophy and criteria for the National Cycle Network and can be summarised by the qualitative objectives detailed below. These are very similar to 5Cs promoted by Aberdeen City Councils' new LTS.

Safety: Minimise the danger to cyclists, pedestrians and other users and promote a feeling of security.

Coherence: The route should share a continuity of design characteristics. It should be possible to provide seamless linkage into other local networks.

Directness: In order to encourage people to cycle and where it is expected that it will function on a utility basis, the route should aim to be shorter and quicker than the comparable route for motorists. However, it should be noted that the attractiveness is likely to be of more importance where the route is to be used for recreational purposes.

Attractiveness: Places of interest, tourist attractions and attractive views should all be incorporated where possible in order to promote cycling as a pleasurable experience.

Comfort: New paths for pedestrians and cyclists should aim to provide a durable and serviceable smooth running surface. Negotiation of junctions should be easy and the crossing of major roads simplified. Long uphill stretches should, where possible, be free from motorised traffic and routes adjacent to main roads should be avoided.

Furthermore, the guidance notes that the standard of the provision should be appropriate to attract the following users:

- A sensible 12 year old child cycling unaccompanied;
- Family groups with younger, supervised children; and
- All novice cyclists, aged 12 years and above.

4.3

Planning Objectives

With all of the above mentioned sources taken in to consideration the following Planning Objectives were developed:

Objective 1: To provide a formal non-motorised link between the communities of Kingswells and Bucksburn.

Objective 2: Minimise the danger to pedestrians, cyclists and other users and promote a feeling of security.

Objective 3: To provide seamless linking into other local networks.

Objective 4: To be direct, to provide a route comparable in time and convenience to route adopted by motorists.

Objective 5: To be attractive, by linking to areas of interest and being sympathetic to its landscape setting.

Objective 6: To provide a comfortable and durable smooth running surface, with clear and straight forward manoeuvres for cycles.

Objective 7: To minimise the links' impact on the local environment.

5 Option Assessment

5.1 Assessment Criteria

To assess the route alignment options developed for the link, a set of assessment criteria has been developed from the seven basic planning objectives. These criteria are set out below with a description of how each has been considered.

5.1.1 *Bucksburn Linkage*

Does the proposed alignments' start/ end point, on the Bucksburn side, provide good opportunities for onward linkage for non-motorised users?

5.1.2 *Kingswells Linkage*

Does the proposed alignments' start/ end point, on the Kingswells side, provide good opportunities for onward linkage for non-motorised users?

5.1.3 *Directness*

Does the alignment provide a sufficiently direct route between the two communities to offer an attract alternative to motorised modes?

5.1.4 *Gradient*

Does the alignment keep the amount of height gain and loss to a minimum along the re-route?

5.1.5 *Farm Severance*

Is the proposed alignment likely to adversely impact farm operation by creating severance. Existing farmed areas are shown in figure 2?

5.1.6 *Field Impact*

Will the proposed alignment reduce field size or split fields in to less workable areas?

5.1.7 *District Wildlife Sites Impact*

Will the proposed alignment be detrimental to the existing District Wildlife Sites. Existing DWSs are show in figure 3?

5.1.8 *Flooding*

Does the proposed alignment risk being flooded or creating/ exacerbating flooding nearby?

5.1.9 *Remote Homes*

Would the proposed alignment encourage a larger number of people to pass close by an existing home which is currently remote?

5.1.10 *Motorised Vehicle Use*

What level of motorised vehicle use would be expected on the route?

*5.1.11**Footpath Linkage*

Does the proposed alignment provide good opportunities for linking into existing rough footpaths?

*5.1.12**Attractiveness*

Does the alignment afford good opportunities for the development of an attractive and interesting environment?

5.2**Assessment**

Each of the alignment options shown in figure 1 has been assessed using the criteria outlined above. For each criterion a score between -3 and +3 has been given, with the negative scores indicating a concern with the route and positive scores signifying a benefit. The following tables contain the assessment of each route option.

Route Option 1 Assessment		
Criteria	Score	Summary
Bucksburn Linkage	-1	Although the route links into the residential roads of Bucksburn the main corridor for access would be the busy Kepplehills Road.
Kingswells Linkage	+1	Although the route provides good linkage into the north of Kingswells, links further south are less straight forward.
Directness	-1	This route takes a circuitous route following the existing public road network between Bucksburn and Kingswells.
Gradient	-3	This route climbs up to Newhills creating a long steep section from Bucksburn to Newhills.
Farm Severance	0	This route only passes through Overhills Farm and follows the existing road when doing so.
Field Impact	-2	This route follows field boundaries but due to level differences with and proximity to the adjoining road the land required for construction maybe significantly wider than the path.
DWS Impact	0	The route avoids all District Wildlife Sites.
Flooding	0	This route is unlikely to be detrimental to flooding in the area however; it will have to cross a small burn and changes to existing drainage ditches maybe required.
Remote Homes	-1	Although homes along the route currently experience high volumes of vehicle traffic this alignment would increase the numbers of more mobile users near to properties, with the increase likelihood of these users walking/ cycling between buildings and across nearby fields.
Motorised Vehicle Use	-2	The route follows the busy Kingswells Bypass which maybe unpleasant, also the alignment would have to cross a number of farm access tracks which adjoin the road. Additionally access to farm vehicles would have to be maintained on the section following existing track.
Footpath Linkage	+1	The route is slightly detached from the existing footpath network however; there would still be opportunities for linking.
Attractiveness	-2	Due to its proximity to the road and lack of mixed natural surroundings it is not a particularly attractive route.

Route Option 2 Assessment		
Criteria	Score	Summary
Bucksburn Linkage	-1	Although the route links into the residential roads of Bucksburn the main corridor for access would be the busy Kepplehills Road.
Kingswells Linkage	+1	Although the route provides good linkage into the north of Kingswells, links further south are less straight forward.
Directness	+1	Its northern start point and kinks to avoid fields reduce the directness of the route.
Gradient	+2	This alignment follows a gentle down hill slop from Overhills to Bucksburn.
Farm Severance	-2	This alignment crosses 2 farms, Overhills and Holmhead. Overhills would experience a minor impact as the route follows the existing public road through the farm however; Holmhead would be split from its fields to the south.
Field Impact	-1	The alignment does not cross any fields but sticks boundaries using land at their margins, with around a third of the route over existing tracks.
DWS Impact	0	The route avoids all District Wildlife Sites.
Flooding	0	This route is unlikely to be detrimental to flooding in the area.
Remote Homes	-2	The proposed alignment goes very near to Netherhills farm which currently sees little public footfall.
Motorised Vehicle Use	-2	The route follows the busy Kingswells Bypass which maybe unpleasant. However; access to farm vehicles would have to be maintained on the section following existing tracks.
Footpath Linkage	+1	The route is slightly detached from the existing path network however; there would still be opportunities for linking.
Attractiveness	-2	Due to its proximity to the road and lack of mixed natural surroundings it is not a particularly attractive route.

Route Option 3 Assessment		
Criteria	Score	Summary
Bucksburn Linkage	-1	Although the route links into the residential roads of Bucksburn the main corridor for access would be the busy Kepplehills Road.
Kingswells Linkage	+1	Although the route provides good linkage into the north of Kingswells, links further south are less straight forward.
Directness	+1	Its kinks to avoid fields reduce the directness of the route.
Gradient	+2	This alignment follows a gentle down hill slope from Overhills to Bucksburn.
Farm Severance	-3	This alignment crosses 2 farms, Overhills and Holmhead. Both would be split from their fields to the south.
Field Impact	-2	The alignment crosses two small fields and then sticks to boundaries using land at field margins, with around a third of the route over existing tracks.
DWS Impact	-1	The route passes through the north west corner of the Burnbrae Moss District Wildlife Sites and then follows its northern boundary.
Flooding	-1	This route is unlikely to be detrimental to flooding in the area however; the Burnbrae Moss has some particularly sodden ground which would have to be negotiated during construction.
Remote Homes	-2	The proposed alignment goes very near to Netherhills farm which currently sees little public footfall.
Motorised Vehicle Use	-2	Access to farm vehicles would have to be maintained on the section following existing tracks.
Footpath Linkage	+1	The route is slightly detached from the existing footpath network however; there would still be opportunities for linking.
Attractiveness	+1	Views along the route and the mixed natural surroundings are attractive but the extent of gorse bushes and the proximity to farm buildings reduces the attractiveness of this option.

Route Option 4 Assessment		
Criteria	Score	Summary
Bucksburn Linkage	+1	Although the route links into the residential roads of Bucksburn a small diversion is required to join Newhills Avenue.
Kingswells Linkage	+1	Although the route provides good linkage into the north of Kingswells, links further south are less straight forward.
Directness	+3	This route is very direct only taking small diversions to avoid cutting fields.
Gradient	+2	This alignment follows a gentle down hill slope from Overhills to Bucksburn.
Farm Severance	-3	This alignment crosses 2 farms, Overhills and Holmhead. Both would be split from their fields to the south.
Field Impact	-2	The alignment crosses two small fields and then sticks to boundaries using land at field margins.
DWS Impact	-1	The route passes through the north west corner of the Burnbrae Moss District Wildlife Sites and then follows its northern boundary.
Flooding	-1	This route is unlikely to be detrimental to flooding in the area however; the Burnbrae Moss has some particularly sodden ground which would have to be negotiated during construction and must cross a small burn.
Remote Homes	0	The proposed alignment avoids all the remote homes in the area.
Motorised Vehicle Use	-2	Access to farm vehicles would have to be maintained over the small section following existing tracks.
Footpath Linkage	+1	The route is slightly detached from the existing footpath network however; there would still be opportunities for linking.
Attractiveness	+1	Views along the route and the mixed natural surroundings are attractive but the extent of gorse within the Burnbrae Moss is particularly oppressive.

Route Option 5 Assessment		
Criteria	Score	Summary
Bucksburn Linkage	+1	Although the route links into the residential roads of Bucksburn a small diversion is required to join Newhills Avenue.
Kingswells Linkage	+1	Although the route provides good linkage into the north of Kingswells, links further south are less straight forward.
Directness	+2	This route is direct. Only taking small diversions to avoid cutting fields.
Gradient	+1	This alignment follows a gentle down hill slope to Bucksburn however; there is a small hill to be negotiated within Burnbrae Moss.
Farm Severance	-3	This alignment crosses 2 farms, Overhills and Holmhead. Both would be split from their fields to the south.
Field Impact	-1	The alignment sticks to field boundaries using land at their margins.
DWS Impact	-3	The route passes through the Burnbrae Moss District Wildlife Site, currently a remote area with little access by the public.
Flooding	-1	This route is unlikely to be detrimental to flooding in the area however; the Burnbrae Moss has some particularly sodden ground which would have to be negotiated during construction and must cross a small burn.
Remote Homes	0	The proposed alignment avoids all the remote homes in the area.
Motorised Vehicle Use	-2	Access to farm vehicles would have to be maintained over the sections following existing tracks.
Footpath Linkage	+2	The route is slightly detached from the existing footpath network however; it would provide a good link into the north of Kingswells and there are other opportunities for linking to paths to the south.
Attractiveness	+1	Views along the route and the mixed natural surroundings are attractive but the mass of gorse within the Burnbrae Moss is particularly oppressive.

Route Option 6 Assessment		
Criteria	Score	Summary
Bucksburn Linkage	+1	Although the route links into the residential roads of Bucksburn a small diversion is required to join Newhills Avenue.
Kingswells Linkage	+3	The route provides good opportunities to link into the heart of Kingswells.
Directness	+2	This route is direct only taking small diversions to avoid cutting fields.
Gradient	-2	This alignment requires the negotiation of the small glen formed by the Bucks Burn creating a significant loss in height which must be regained when travelling in both directions.
Farm Severance	-2	This alignment crosses 3 farms, Overhills, Holmhead and Greenferns. The route passes through the southern tip of Overhills farm. Holmhead would be split from its fields to the south and for Greenferns the route would pass through its existing community woodland.
Field Impact	-2	The alignment cuts through a number of small or set-aside fields at its Kingswells end and then sticks to field boundaries using land at their margins to the Bucksburn end.
DWS Impact	0	The route passes along the boundaries of the Burnbrae Moss and Bucksburn Valley District Wildlife Sites.
Flooding	-2	This route must cross the Bucks Burn which is known to break its banks following prolonged wet spells which could inundate any new path; it must also cross another small burn.
Remote Homes	0	The proposed alignment avoids all the remote homes in the area.
Motorised Vehicle Use	-2	Access to farm vehicles would have to be maintained over the sections following existing tracks.
Footpath Linkage	+3	The route follows a number of existing paths and tracks linking well to the surrounding network.
Attractiveness	+2	Views along the route and the mixed natural surroundings are attractive with scope to utilise and enhance existing picnic areas.

Route Option 7 Assessment		
Criteria	Score	Summary
Bucksburn Linkage	+2	The route links into the residential roads of Bucksburn.
Kingswells Linkage	+3	The route provides good opportunities to link into the heart of Kingswells.
Directness	0	The following of existing tracks makes this route less direct than others.
Gradient	-2	This alignment requires the negotiation of the small glen formed by the Bucks Burn creating a significant loss in height which must be regained when travelling in both directions.
Farm Severance	-2	This alignment crosses 3 farms, Overhills, Holmhead and Greenferns. The route passes through the southern tip of Overhills farm. But crosses Holmhead and Greenferns mainly by existing tracks causing no additional severance.
Field Impact	-1	The alignment cuts through a number of small or set-aside fields at its Kingswells end and then follows existing tracks for more than half its length.
DWS Impact	0	The route passes along the boundaries of the Burnbrae Moss and Bucksburn Valley District Wildlife Sites.
Flooding	-2	This route must cross the Bucks Burn which is known to break its banks following prolonged wet spells which could inundate any new path.
Remote Homes	-2	The proposed alignment goes very near to Redmyres farm which currently sees a relatively small number of recreational walkers.
Motorised Vehicle Use	-3	Access to farm vehicles would have to be maintained over a large portion of the route.
Footpath Linkage	+3	The route follows a number of existing paths and tracks linking well to the surrounding network.
Attractiveness	+1	Views along the route and the mixed natural surroundings are attractive with scope to utilise and enhance existing picnic areas however; towards Bucksburn House the outlook becomes more industrial and less attractive.

Route Option 8 Assessment		
Criteria	Score	Summary
Bucksburn Linkage	+1	Although the route links into the residential roads of Bucksburn a small diversion is required to join Newhills Avenue.
Kingswells Linkage	+3	The route provides good opportunities to link into the heart of Kingswells.
Directness	+2	This route is direct only taking small diversions to follow field boundaries.
Gradient	-2	This alignment requires the negotiation of the small glen formed by the Bucks Burn creating a significant loss in height which must be regained when travelling in both directions.
Farm Severance	-3	This alignment crosses 3 farms, Fernhill, Holmhead and Greenferns. The route passes through the northern fields of Fernhill. Holmhead would be split from its fields to the south and for Greenferns the route would pass through its existing community woodland.
Field Impact	-2	The alignment cuts through two medium size fields at Rough's Cairn and a number of other smaller or set-aside fields at its Kingswells end. For a third of its length it sticks to field boundaries using land at their margins.
DWS Impact	0	The route passes along the boundaries of the Burnbrae Moss and Bucksburn Valley District Wildlife Sites.
Flooding	-2	This route must cross the Bucks Burn which is known to break its banks following prolonged wet spells which could inundate any new path.
Remote Homes	0	The proposed alignment avoids all the remote homes in the area.
Motorised Vehicle Use	-2	Access to farm vehicles would have to be maintained over a small portion of the route.
Footpath Linkage	+3	The route follows a number of existing paths and tracks linking well to the surrounding network.
Attractiveness	+2	Views along the route and the mixed natural surroundings are attractive with scope to utilise and enhance existing picnic areas.

Route Option 9 Assessment		
Criteria	Score	Summary
Bucksburn Linkage	+2	The route links well into the residential roads of Bucksburn.
Kingswells Linkage	+3	The route provides good opportunities to link into the heart of Kingswells.
Directness	0	The following of existing tracks makes this route less direct than others.
Gradient	-2	This alignment requires the negotiation of the small glen formed by the Bucks Burn creating a significant loss in height which must be regained when travelling in both directions.
Farm Severance	-2	This alignment crosses 3 farms Fernhill, Holmhead and Greenferns. The route passes through the northern fields of Fernhill. But crosses Holmhead and Greenferns mainly by existing tracks causing no additional severance.
Field Impact	-2	The alignment cuts through two medium size fields at Rough's Cairn and number of other smaller or set-aside fields at its Kingswells end; then follows existing tracks for more than half its length.
DWS Impact	0	The route passes along the boundaries of the Burnbrae Moss and Bucksburn Valley District Wildlife Sites.
Flooding	-2	This route must cross the Bucks Burn which is known to break its banks following prolonged wet spells which could inundate any new path.
Remote Homes	-2	The proposed alignment goes very near to Redmyres farm which currently sees a relatively small number of recreational walkers.
Motorised Vehicle Use	-3	Access to farm vehicles would have to be maintained over a large portion of the route.
Footpath Linkage	+3	The route follows a number of existing paths and tracks linking well to the surrounding network.
Attractiveness	+1	Views along the route and the mixed natural surroundings are attractive with scope to utilise and enhance existing picnic areas however; towards Bucksburn House the outlook becomes more industrial and less attractive.

Route Option 10 Assessment		
Criteria	Score	Summary
Bucksburn Linkage	+2	The route links well into the residential roads of Bucksburn.
Kingswells Linkage	+3	The route provides good opportunities to link into the heart of Kingswells.
Directness	-2	This alignment takes a circuitous route to utilise existing tracks to the south.
Gradient	-1	This alignment requires the negotiation of the small glen formed by the Bucks Burn creating a significant loss in height which must be regained when travelling in both directions.
Farm Severance	-2	This alignment crosses 3 farms, Fernhill, Holmhead and Greenferns. The route splits the northern fields of Fernhill, but crosses Holmhead and Greenferns mainly by existing tracks causing no additional severance.
Field Impact	-1	The route sticks to field boundaries using land at their margins and for two thirds of its length follows existing tracks.
DWS Impact	0	The route avoids all District Wildlife Sites.
Flooding	-2	This route must cross the Bucks Burn which is known to break its banks following prolonged wet spells which could inundate any new path.
Remote Homes	-3	The proposed alignment goes through Greenferns farm and very near to Redmyres farm which both currently see a relatively small number of recreational walkers.
Motorised Vehicle Use	-3	Access to farm vehicles would have to be maintained over the majority of the route.
Footpath Linkage	+3	The route follows a number of existing paths and tracks linking well to the surrounding network.
Attractiveness	+1	Views along the route and the mixed natural surroundings are attractive with scope to utilise and enhance existing picnic areas however; towards Bucksburn House the outlook becomes more industrial and less attractive.

5.3

Preferred Route Alignment

From the assessment tables routes 4, 6 and 8 all come through as strong candidates for the route alignment.

Option 4 provides a direct link between Kingswells and Bucksburn. It offers good linkage into Bucksburn but at Kingswells the start point makes linking into the heart of the community problematic. Additionally two major issues with option 4 are created by the land it crosses. The crossing of the Burnbrae Moss DWS and the development of some of its land for the link would be discouraged by the City Council due to the loss of habitat and the disturbance to wildlife from increased public access. The option also crosses through the middle of two farms Overhills and Holmhead. Overhills would be split in two with some fields reduced in size; additionally there is a possibility that increased public access to farm land could increase the nuisance experienced by the farmers. Holmhead is such a large farm that all the route options cross it in some form and option 3 is no exception sticking to field boundaries, there will also be concerns about improved public access increasing the nuisance incidents but these are common with all options.

Option 6 provides a direct link between Kingswells and Bucksburn. It offers good linkage into Bucksburn and Kingswells with possibilities to open routes into the heart of the communities. It avoids the DWS in the area but crosses a number of small fields near to Kingswells on Overhills farm. These fields are used at present but are on the very periphery of the farm and may be made less usable by their reduction in size. On Greenferns farm some large fields are crossed however, these fields are not used for agriculture but planted as community woodland. Therefore the impact on their current use would be minimal. Holmhead is such a large farm that all the route options cross it in some form, option 6 is no exception sticking to field boundaries. All three farms have concerns about improved public access increasing the nuisance incidents but these are common with all options. Negotiating the Bucks Burn glen and the fields towards Bucksburn mean this option has significant changes in height along the route.

Option 8 is essentially a variation of option 6's Kingswells start point, linking into the existing wide footpath parallel to Concraig Gardens. It has many of the same issues but crosses Fernhill farm land avoiding Overhills. Additionally it would also have to break through or travel over a Consumption Dyke to link with the existing footpath. The decision between the two start points is one that would be best made following a more detailed investigation of the design options.

5.3.1

Further consideration

Although Option 1 scored poorly in the option appraisal, there have been strong indications of support for this corridor from certain groups of the Kingswells community, mainly due to specific concerns with the aesthetics and user suitability of the other cross-country alignments. Therefore it maybe prudent for the Council to consider including this alignment in the wider public consultation and investigating it further to ensure that in the long term the two communities are provided with a facility they appreciate and wish to use.

5.4

Recommendation

Considering the assessment of the options described above, Faber Maunsell would recommend taking forward option 6 as an alignment corridor for further study and public consultation considering the possible variations in option 8. Option 6 provides a direct route between the two communities while minimising the impact on nearby farms, DWSs and keeping interaction with farm vehicles to a minimum. Also given the apparent community support for option 1 it could also be taken forward for further study and public consultation to truly gauge the public support for this alignment and gather any concerns over a more direct route.