

**FALKIRK COUNCIL**

**Subject: NEW COMMUNITY SCHOOLS – ST MUNGO’S RC HIGH SCHOOL  
ACCESS OFF A9**  
**Meeting: POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**  
**Date: 12 JUNE 2007**  
**Author: DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 In terms of the Community Schools Project, the Gateway Consortium will be building four new high schools within the Council area being Denny High School, Falkirk High School, Grangemouth High School and St Mungo’s High School. Gateway will not be carrying out off site road works associated with the new schools which shall be the responsibility of the Council. Such off site road works cover items such as footway and cycling infrastructure, traffic calming and, in some cases, significant junction improvements.
- 1.2 In the particular case of St Mungo’s High School, the detailed planning permission for the new school contains a condition requiring the creation, by the roads authority, prior to the opening of the new school, of a new access from the A9. This report considers the main options for the location, form and layout of such a new access that have been the subject of an extensive feasibility study.

**2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 In total 10 options were considered as part of the feasibility study for access from the A9 to the new St Mungo’s High School. The options have varied in cost from approximately £258,800 for a signal controlled junction to £958,425 for a four arm roundabout.
- 2.2 There is no straightforward solution as the following issues must be taken into account:
- **New St Mungo’s High School** – up to 20 school buses require to gain access to the school from the A9 at both morning drop off and end of day pick up times. In addition, the approach adopted will require to safely accommodate staff, visitor and parent traffic to and from the school;
  - **St Francis Primary School** – St Francis Primary School is located across Merchiston Avenue from both the existing and new St Mungo’s High Schools. At the beginning and end of the primary school day there are considerable demands for staff access and egress and parent drop off/pick up;
  - **Pedestrian and Cycling Infrastructure** – as part of the Council’s Safer Routes to School policy, infrastructure requires to be in place to encourage pupils and staff to walk and cycle to school.

- **Merchiston Road Housing Development** – associated with the provision of the new St Mungo’s High School there is an area of land at the junction of Merchiston Road and Merchiston Avenue that will be sold by the Council for development as a housing site. In order to allow the anticipated receipt to be realised, it is hoped that encroachment of off site roads works onto this area can be avoided. The road system put in place also requires to take account of the demands of additional housing in this area.
- **Dollar Industrial Estate** – under Falkirk Council’s Local Plan (finalised Draft (Deposit Version)) this site is affected by Policy EP3, Existing Business and Industrial Areas with Potential for Redevelopment. Policy EP3 states that:  
*“(1) Within the business and industrial areas with potential for redevelopment identified on the Proposals Map, the Council will consider favourably proposals for comprehensive redevelopment for other uses which:*
  - *are appropriate in terms of the character of the surrounding area;*
  - *are satisfactory in terms of environmental, access, traffic generation and other detailed considerations; and*
  - *comply with other Local Plan policies.**Pending any such redevelopment, use of these sites for Class 4, 5 or 6 development will continue to be supported.*  
*(2) Changes of use or redevelopment of other business/industrial land or premises within the Urban Limit which are not safeguarded under Policy EP2 may be permitted subject to amenity, environmental, access, traffic generation and other detailed considerations.”*

A relevant consideration is, accordingly, whether the road layout adopted would diminish the potential for future development within this area or require further road works to be carried out at a later date to support future development.

### 3. PROPOSED OPTIONS

- 3.1 As mentioned above, 10 options were considered as part of the feasibility study stage. These 10 options, through development and refinement, distilled down to the following four options.

#### A. Signal Controlled Junction

This option, shown on Plan A, involves a 3-arm signal controlled junction being provided with pedestrian phasing. This would link the A9 directly onto Merchiston Road. The A9 would require to be widened to accommodate the requirement for two lane approaches on that road.

Merchiston Road (south) would be closed off to vehicular traffic at the Tophill Entry Junction with the length of remaining road maximised to facilitate vehicles dropping off and picking up children. The proposed housing access could be accessed from this length of road. Both Merchiston Road north and south would require to be realigned further east to accommodate the required traffic signal layout on Merchiston Road.

Although this is the cheapest option, estimated between £342,000 and £438,500, it would require land from the housing site and St Francis Primary School to realign the road. Traffic engineers are also concerned at the short queue length on Merchiston Avenue, with two minor roads feeding into this road. At the busiest periods this could

lead to blocking of the carriageway. There is also a concern that the signals will cause further congestion on the A9 due to the pedestrian phase and the short stacking lane.

This option would exclude any potential development at Dollar Industrial Estate without substantial further road works being carried out.

**B. 3-Arm Roundabout with Additional Parking (St Francis)**

This option, shown on Plan B, involves a 40 metre diameter, 3-arm roundabout located west of Merchiston Road / Merchiston Avenue junction. The estimated cost of this junction is between £644,000 and £837,350.

Access from the housing estate and the primary school would converge on Merchiston Road, close to the access/egress of the roundabout.

This option would exclude any potential development at Dollar Industrial Estate without substantial further road works being carried out.

**C. 50 Metre ICD 4-Arm Roundabout**

This option, shown on Plan C, involves a 50 metre diameter roundabout located about 50 metres southwest of Merchiston Road/Merchiston Avenue junction and offset approximately 20 metres west of the A9 in the existing playing fields. The estimated cost of this junction is between £745,000 and £958,425.

This option requires significant realignment of the A9 and Merchiston Avenue approaches and therefore would require significant land take from Sunnyside Playing fields.

This option would exclude any potential development at Dollar Industrial Estate without substantial further road works being carried out.

**D. Revised Merchiston Roundabout**

This option, shown on Plan D, involves the addition of a fourth arm to the existing Merchiston Roundabout. The estimated cost of this junction is between £580,000 and £744,000.

The existing Falkirk Northern Distributor Road (FNDR) south approach would require to be realigned and tie into the west side of Merchiston Roundabout. This realignment would be required to create a safe angle of approach for traffic into the roundabout. The realignment would have to take place through the Sunnyside Playing Fields, which would affect one of the pitches.

This option has the benefit that it reduces any conflict between the traffic for the schools, the housing site and any potential development that may take place at Dollar Industrial Estate. The cost includes the construction of a car park within St Francis Primary School, a cycleway north and south along Merchiston Road, a controlled pedestrian crossing on the A9 and a separate access to the housing site on Merchiston Road south.

The disadvantage of this proposal is that it would impact on Sunnyside Playing Fields as noted above. The design shows the minimum amount of land take required. Consultation has been carried out with Community Services given the impact on the playing fields.

Several options are being examined amending the layout/size of the pitches and also the potential acquisition of land adjoining the playing fields to compensate for the loss of pitch area although this could be problematic.

Option D is the option preferred by the roads engineers, Planning, the School Co-ordinator for St Mungo's High School and St Francis Primary School. It is also the only solution that addresses all the issues raised in para 2.2 above.

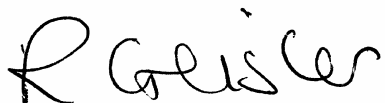
#### **4. POLICY, FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The proposed junction improvement at St Mungo's High School is one of the off site road works associated with the Community Schools Project and in this case the development of a new St Mungo's High School. It will contribute towards the achievement of the Council's educational, economic, Local Plan and transport policies.
- 4.2 As part of the planning conditions contained in the Detailed Planning Permission for the development of the new St Mungo's High School, this junction requires to be operational prior to the school opening.
- 4.3 The Council will require to apply for Planning Permission for the works to create the proposed junction.
- 4.4 The budget allocation for this project is £580,000.

#### **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

##### **5.1 It is recommended:**

- (a) that officers are authorised to take forward Option D detailed above as the preferred option, finalise the detailed design for Option D and thereafter submit an application for Planning Permission for Option D; and
- (b) that, if Planning Permission is granted for Option D, the Director of Development Services is authorised to take all necessary steps to take forward the construction and completion of Option D.



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Director of Development Services

Date: 5<sup>th</sup> June 2007

Contact Officer: Julie Cole, Tel. 01324 504727

## **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

### **Feasibility Drawings**

Anyone wishing to inspect these documents should contact Julie Cole on 01324 504727