

# Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal Joint Committee

**Friday 7 June 2024**

## **A720 Sheriffhall Roundabout Project**

**Item number 5.2**

### **Executive Summary**

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Transport Scotland (TS) has submitted this summary report for the A720 Sheriffhall Roundabout project, which is being delivered by TS as part of the Edinburgh and South East Scotland (ESES) City Region Deal, to inform the members of the Joint Committee of the progress and current status of the project.

Following the undertaking of a Public Local Inquiry (PLI) for the proposed Scheme in early-2023, the independent Reporter's report was issued to the Scottish Government on 10 October 2023. The Scottish Government is now taking the necessary time to consider the recommendations within the independent Reporter's report to inform a decision on whether or not to proceed to complete the statutory process for the project as promoted.

While Transport Scotland is keen to see the improvements delivered as soon as possible, the statutory right for individuals to have their say on proposals cannot be set aside.

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## A720 Sheriffhall Roundabout Project

### 1. Recommendations

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- 1.1 To note the progress update provided below that, following conclusion of the Public Local Inquiry (PLI) for the project, the Scottish Government is now taking the necessary time to consider the recommendations within the independent Reporter's report to inform a decision on whether or not to proceed to complete the statutory process for the project as promoted.

### 2. Background

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- 2.1 The existing A720 Sheriffhall roundabout is currently the only junction on the Edinburgh City Bypass that is not grade-separated, which means the City Bypass is at the same level as the A7 and A6106 local approach roads. This at-grade, six-way junction, often experiences significant queuing, especially during peak hours.
- 2.2 The purpose of the proposed Scheme is to separate local traffic from strategic traffic on the bypass, thus improving traffic flow journey times, journey time reliability and safety for all users. The upgrading of the Sheriffhall Roundabout will remove a barrier to both local and strategic movements and provide benefits for businesses, travellers and local communities, as well as reducing severance across the junction for all travellers including those travelling by bus, walking and cycling. Additionally, grade separating the Junction will provide a continuous uninterrupted dual carriageway along the Edinburgh City Bypass, providing consistency with the other junctions which are all grade separated.
- 2.3 The proposed Scheme is being delivered as part of the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal (ESES CRD) signed in 2018, which includes Scottish Government funding for strategic transport improvements in the next 15 years, including up to £120 million specifically to support improvements for the grade separation of Sheriffhall Roundabout. Any financial risk to deliver the project sits with Scottish Ministers and not the City Deal partners. The ESES CRD Joint Committee ratified their support for the proposed Sheriffhall Roundabout Scheme at the [meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2021](#).
- 2.4 Following publication of Draft Orders and the Environmental Statement for the proposed Scheme in December 2019, the number of sustained objections dictated that a Public Local Inquiry (PLI) was required. The PLI, overseen by an independent Reporter appointed by the Planning and Environmental Appeals Division of Scottish

Government (DPEA) was held in early-2023. Following conclusion of the PLI, the Reporter's report was issued to the Scottish Government on 10th October 2023, and is currently being considered before a decision is made on whether to proceed with the statutory process for the proposed Scheme as promoted.

### **3. Main report**

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#### **Overview of the A720 Sheriffhall Roundabout Scheme**

- 3.1 The proposed Scheme is a grade-separated junction arrangement providing new high-quality grade-separated active travel routes across the junction for all approach roads that connect with the wider network. It separates local traffic from the strategic traffic on the A720, relieving the significant congestion at this location, improving road safety, journey times and journey time reliability for all road users. The proposed Scheme also facilitates planned development in the ESES region.
- 3.2 Improved operating conditions at the junction will provide significant improvements in bus journey time and also reliability compared to the present, providing opportunities for operators to plan for improved services. The proposed Scheme also provides additional ducting to facilitate future full signalisation and enable the future deployment of bus priority signal systems should partners desire.
- 3.3 Modelling the effects of the proposed Scheme indicates a reduction in average journey times, for all road traffic including buses, on the local roads passing through the roundabout at year of opening, compared to the "no-scheme" scenario.
- 3.4 Further to a request from City Region Deal partners, Transport Scotland undertook a review of the public transport and active travel elements, which confirmed that every practical opportunity had been taken to maximise the benefits of these elements within the proposed Scheme whilst not creating additional impacts for local landowners, residents and business.
- 3.5 The active travel elements in the proposed Scheme will provide high quality facilities to address severance challenges and deliver a step change in accessibility for walking and cycling.

#### **National and Regional Context**

- 3.6 During the PLI, Transport Scotland presented extensive evidence regarding the national, regional and local policy context and justification for the proposed Scheme (this can be found on the DPEA website as linked at item 6.1.4).
- 3.7 Sheriffhall is an important part of the transport network in the South East of Scotland and sits within a wider national and regional context, as outlined below.
- 3.8 The grade-separation of Sheriffhall formed one of a number of recommendations of the first Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR1) within the ESES region which together provided a multi-modal package of rail, park and ride and other interventions. The proposed Scheme has continued to be a committed scheme since then, and as such was therefore out of scope for the second Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR2), however it is aligned with delivering the vision,

priorities and outcomes set out in both STPR2 and the National Transport Strategy 2 (NTS2).

- 3.9 The proposed Scheme is included within a number of local authority planning strategies, including the City of Edinburgh Council's Local Development Plan and Midlothian Council's Local Development Plan.
- 3.10 It is within this wider national and regional multi-modal package of interventions to enhance the operation and safety of the strategic and regional transport networks that the grade-separation of Sheriffhall is being taken forward to address issues on a key route in the region, supporting the communities and economies served by the A720.

### **Next Steps/Timetable**

- 3.11 The draft Orders and Environmental Statement for the proposed Scheme were published on 5 December 2019. On closure of the statutory consultation period on 31 January 2020, there were 2,771 objections to the draft Orders, a high proportion of which were submitted through the campaign on the Scottish Green Party website (2,701) and are based on or around a standard objection template.
- 3.12 In recognition of the high number and nature of representations received, it was agreed with City Region Deal partners that the proposed Scheme would be reviewed to ascertain whether further improvements to active travel and public transport facilities would be feasible – this is the review referenced above under point 3.4.
- 3.13 Following conclusion of the review active travel and public transport facilities and the subsequent ESESCRD Joint Committee's ratification of their support for the proposed scheme, Transport Scotland concluded the process of issuing formal responses to all those who submitted an objection. Given the nature and volume of remaining objections, a Public Local Inquiry (PLI) was considered to present the most expedient method of moving the proposed Scheme forward. Excessive time spent in pre-inquiry negotiations would unnecessarily prolong the statutory processes necessary to deliver and construct the proposed Scheme.
- 3.14 Consequently, Transport Scotland sought Ministerial approval and subsequently made arrangements with the Planning and Environmental Appeals Division (DPEA) for a PLI to be held. DPEA appointed an independent Reporter to take forward the PLI for the proposed Scheme in May 2022.
- 3.15 The PLI for the proposed Scheme was held from 31 January to 8 February 2023, during which the appointed independent Reporter heard evidence from a number of objectors along with Transport Scotland as the Promoter (published documentation can be found on the DPEA website as linked at item 6.1.4 below). Following a period of consideration of all the evidence presented and heard during the Inquiry, the Reporter submitted their report to the Scottish Government on 10 October 2023. This report is now under active consideration before a decision is made on whether or not to proceed to complete the statutory process for the proposed Scheme as

promoted. Public Local Inquiry Reports issued to the Scottish Ministers remain confidential until Ministers have made their final decision.

- 3.16 Delivery of the proposed Scheme can only commence if approved under the relevant statutory procedures and thereafter a timetable for its progress can be set.

#### **4. Financial impact**

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- 4.1 The City Region Deal, signed in 2018, includes a commitment by the Scottish Government of up to £120m to support improvements to the A720 City Bypass for the grade separation of Sheriffhall Roundabout. Any financial risk to deliver the project sits with Scottish Ministers and not the City Deal partners.

#### **5. Alignment with Sustainable, Inclusive Growth Ambitions**

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- 5.1 The proposed A720 Sheriffhall scheme will provide a significant strategic contribution to the City Region Deal Themes 1 (Accelerating inclusive growth), 2 (Removing the physical barriers to growth) and 4 (Targeted employability and skills interventions).
- 5.2 It will also provide opportunities for greater levels of movement by public transport, complemented by wider proposals being progressed by partners through the emerging Bus Service Improvement Partnership for the region and work to be progressed through the Scottish Government's Bus Partnership Funding award to the region.
- 5.3 The multi-modal design of the proposed scheme will also help facilitate the delivery of future transport projects such as the proposed Orbital Bus route and the potential south-east extension of the Edinburgh tram network to Dalkeith.
- 5.4 In addition, during the construction phase, community wealth building practices will be adopted in procurement and employment to encourage maximum benefit to local communities and supply chains. Furthermore, community benefit arrangements will provide further opportunities for local employment, training and contributions to regional good causes.
- 5.5 An environmental assessment was undertaken and an Environmental Statement published by Transport Scotland in December 2019.

#### **6. Background reading/external references**

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- 6.1 Further background/reading includes the following:
- 6.1.1 [City Region Deal: Accelerating Growth Agreement](#), August 2018
- 6.1.2 [Draft Orders and Environmental Statement - A720 Sheriffhall Roundabout scheme](#), Transport Scotland, December 2019
- 6.1.3 [A720 Sheriffhall - Public Transport & Active Travel Review Report](#), Transport Scotland, December 2020
- 6.1.4 [DPEA Case File - A720 Sheriffhall Roundabout - Public Local Inquiry portal](#), The Scottish Government Planning and Environmental Appeals Division

6.1.5 [A720 Sheriffhall Roundabout](#): ESESCR Deal Joint Committee report 3  
September 2021

## 7. Appendices

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7.1 None.