

**Winchburgh Developments Limited**

**Response to City of Edinburgh Council Broxburn to Maybury Public Transport  
and Active Travel Improvements consultation**

**August 2023**

## **Introduction**

The following response is submitted on behalf of Winchburgh Developments Limited (WDL) to the invitation to comment on the proposed Broxburn to Maybury Public Transport and Active Travel Improvements consultation by the City of Edinburgh Council.

Winchburgh Developments Limited is the principal landowner and development manager for the ongoing strategic expansion of Winchburgh which will deliver over 4,000 new homes, employment and commercial development, new schools, a new Town Centre with significant retail and commercial occupiers and formal and informal open spaces. When complete, Winchburgh will be a town the equivalent in size to Linlithgow.

## **Response**

The principal concern raised by Winchburgh Developments Limited is that the proposed improvements are restricted only to a fixed road corridor on the approach to the City from the west. They do not encourage active travel, relying predominantly on carriage widening and bus provision. The proposed limited cyclist improvements may bring partial benefits to those areas closest to the City but, by prioritising bus provision will do little or nothing to encourage cycling from other areas further west.

They seek only to make limited improvements within the available corridor that, in the context of public transport problems identified later in this submission, will do little to change the travel patterns or attitudes of travellers.

The proposed improvements start at the far eastern edge of East Broxburn, which is predominantly industrial in nature and at distance from the closest main residential areas within the settlement. With only an asserted ten-minute improvement in peak time bus journey times, this is little / no incentive to local residents to take the bus over car.

The proposed improvements do not provide any linkage improvements to other local areas of population e.g. Winchburgh. They are disconnected from such areas. This is little / no incentive to these residents to take the bus over car.

They do not address the bottleneck problem of the Newbridge Roundabout itself and the relationship with traffic using the M9 approach to access the City. There is no diagram provided to show any improvements proposed to the A9 at its western junction with the Newbridge Roundabout itself.

## **Bus provision**

The consultation takes no cognisance of the problems facing bus service operators in terms of staffing and vehicle provision which is resulting in the active withdrawal of essential public transport services not only in the West Lothian Council area but across Scotland. Many such services are now having to rely on public subsidy to continue. A recent example is the formal withdrawal of the 600 service from Winchburgh which has removed the ability of those who need to use public transport to be able to access Livingston for work, recreation and healthcare reasons for a number of months and only a subsidised service to be introduced as a temporary replacement. In order to replace the bus link from Livingston to Winchburgh West Lothian Council has recently committed up to £422,875 from WDL's Public Transport S.75 Contributions to pump-prime a new service to be operated for a minimum of one year by Lothian Country.

The proposed improvements do not address the ongoing issue of service reliability.

The proposed improvements along the fixed A89 corridor provide no improved services or links to other settlements within the vicinity of that and will do nothing to serve other communities that are not able to access that route.

The proposed improvements may reduce bus journey times but do not take account of the wider problems facing public transport operators to provide the services in the first place.

## **Delivery of a Winchburgh Rail Station**

The planning permission in principle for the strategic expansion of Winchburgh includes the delivery of a rail station on the Edinburgh- Glasgow Rail line within the centre of the expanded village. This will form part of a wider transport and access strategy for the expanded settlement to include active travel walking and cycling routes and enhanced public transport provision to / from and within Winchburgh. The proposed rail station will form part of a sustainable transport network and will be co- located with a new mobility hub adjacent to a new town centre incorporating active travel links including e-bike provision, EV charging and bus public transport links. It will encourage and promote walking, wheeling, cycling and link to public transport networks (both local and regional).

The delivery of such facilities is actively supported and encouraged by Policy 13 of National Planning Framework 4 and its supporting text. Within Winchburgh WDL will, collectively, improve, enhance and provide active travel infrastructure, public transport infrastructure and a new multi-modal hub. The Report referenced below demonstrates that it will deliver a modal shift from the private car. It is not clear that the consultation proposals along the A89 will do so at this time.

Within the Section 75 legal agreement associated with the Winchburgh strategic expansion planning permission in principle, there is a requirement for a financial contribution to road improvement within the A89 / Newbridge road corridor. Winchburgh Developments Limited contends that such monies would be better spent as part of a package of funding that to be agreed between the private and public sectors to support Winchburgh station as a regional transport project.

A new Winchburgh rail station is already programmed into the rail timetable for the Edinburgh- Glasgow rail line.

Rail transport can accommodate much greater volumes of passengers than bus transport.

The delivery of a rail station at Winchburgh is predicated on an agreed business plan. The geographical sphere of influence of a new rail station stretches well beyond the settlement itself as far as Falkirk and Linlithgow. Whilst both settlements have rail stations, the capacity of those to accommodate additional passengers is restricted due to accessibility and parking availability, A new rail station at Winchburgh will actively encourage additional patronage on the rail network.

In 2023, Winchburgh Developments Limited commissioned SYSTRA to carry out an Economic Impact Assessment of the delivery of a rail station at Winchburgh. That Report has been completed and is appended to this submission. The findings of that Report are as follows.

With the introduction of a new rail station, trips on congested roads to central Edinburgh would be replaced with train journeys taking less than 15 minutes compared to the current 35-45 minute bus journey time and up to 55 minute private car journey time.

An estimated 1,658 car journeys could be taken off the road per day with a new station at Winchburgh, which would amount to around 419,490 car journeys annually. This will remove a significant proportion of traffic using the Newbridge junction, reduce carbon emissions and meeting Scottish Government environmental objectives including those set out in National Planning Framework 4. Remaining road users would benefit from reduced congestion and society would benefit from reduced levels of greenhouse gases and improved air quality.

The benefits of a station would be spread beyond Winchburgh itself and not related to a discrete bus corridor. The station would be located at the last viable point for intercepting traffic on the M9 before it reaches the congested M8/M90, Newbridge junction and local roads into Edinburgh. This means the station would have a park and ride function as part of a wider mobility hub facility, with an immediate catchment area to the north and west of Winchburgh covering Linlithgow, Falkirk, Bo'ness and Grangemouth.

It is estimated that a new rail station at Winchburgh could cause a 15% mode shift away from car for flows towards the whole of the Edinburgh City Council area, which is a figure based on the proportionate mode share for commuters travelling to Edinburgh destinations from Linlithgow and Polmont.

A Winchburgh rail station and associated mobility hub would be a much more attractive option than Polmont and Linlithgow both of which have small car parks which are challenging to expand, and thus help to increase rail mode share into Edinburgh.

A Winchburgh rail station would have role in attracting people from a wider catchment heading westwards towards Glasgow.

A Winchburgh rail station would have a wider catchment population of around 26,822 people. This wider catchment is approximately twice the walk-up catchment of the currently consented Winchburgh development once it is completed (anticipated population of 13,210).

A Winchburgh rail station would stimulate regional economic growth by providing a safe reliable public and fast transport link directly into the Capital. This would extend over the West Lothian Council and Falkirk Council areas.

A Winchburgh rail station would support direct benefits to passengers of £2.4m per annum and generate at least £3.5m of decongestion benefits each year including improved air quality and a reduction in greenhouse gases (zero emission links from electric trains), noise, air pollution, infrastructure costs, accidents costs and congestion to other road users.

The development of a new station, whilst justified in the long term, has a large up-front cost, which is likely to be unaffordable for a single funding body, either public or private sector. With a wider role to play in the transport network of West Lothian, Winchburgh station would be quite unlike the infrastructure delivered to date in the area which has a much more local focus. The development of the station therefore needs to follow a partnership approach between public and private sectors, reflecting the station's wider role. This suggests that the development of the station should be funded through partnership between the public and private sector to ensure timely delivery and that benefits to wider society are realised.

## **Conclusion**

Winchburgh Developments Limited fully supports the delivery of a new rail station at Winchburgh to serve the expanding settlement and surrounding area. The economic and environmental benefits of such a station are clear and set out in the attached SYSTRA Report. Such a station would have major regional benefits. Winchburgh Developments Limited cannot deliver this station alone but has invested significant sums to deliver the road and structural infrastructure that provides the basis for making the station a reality. Delivery of the station would need to be in partnership with Transport Scotland, Network Rail and other public bodies.

The proposals advanced through the proposed Broxburn to Maybury Public Transport and Active Travel Improvements consultation by the City of Edinburgh Council are limited in scope and geography and will not, necessarily, remove any significant volume of private cars from the road network for reasons given above.

A new rail station at Winchburgh will have a much greater sphere of influence than would public transport improvements and would have a much greater impact than road improvements suggested.

It is, therefore, recommended to the City of Edinburgh and West Lothian Councils, the Scottish Government, Network Rail and Transport Scotland that the funding involved in the delivery of the proposed Improvements and within the Winchburgh planning permission in principle Section 75 legal agreement be redirected, in part or as a whole, towards the delivery of a new rail station at Winchburgh.