Essich Road Masterplan Consent Area (MCA)

Issues and Actions Note of Project Group Meeting
Meeting 4: Technical Matters Discussion 2

19 October 2026 – Online Meeting

Attendees

The Highland Council & its transport consultant (THC)
Holm Community Council (HCC) and
Essich & Torbreck Community Association (ETCA)
Tulloch Homes & its transport consultant (Tulloch)

Technical Issues Raised (by Topic)

Transport Assessment Scoping

- Each party outlined their opinions on what the Transport Assessment (TA) should include and address, and what assumptions should be made within it.
- The use of microsimulation models, new traffic counts, sensitivity analysis, and the most appropriate trip rates (including appropriate comparator locations) were all discussed.
- ETCA recorded an opinion that national and Highland Council policy and guidance should be used to assess "compliance" of any transport solution suggested for the MCA site.
- THC stated that any relaxation or deviation from standards should be explained and justified. All credible transport solutions should be assessed and if ruled out then reasons stated. The principle will apply that any solution should not create net detriment to road safety at this location relative to existing circumstances.
- THC/Tulloch also explained that national and Highland policy and guidance was of different ages and therefore not always consistent with each other and needed to be interpreted and applied taking account of this inconsistency and local circumstances.
- THC stated that it will offer formal advice to Tulloch on the required scope of the TA.
- The future timetable of the TA was discussed and the need for an additional meeting of all interested parties to discuss it when a scoping view has been

issued by THC. It was agreed that all parties should have the opportunity to input throughout the TA process including transport solution option development.

- It was noted that determining the most appropriate transport solutions for any development site was an iterative process.
- ETCA referenced the National Transport Strategy and the transport hierarchy within it that establishes a policy preference for travel by more environmentally sustainable modes rather than by private car.
- ETCA stated that a cumulative impact assessment should form part of the TA and that the definition of "committed" development should be wider than just those proposals with planning permission. In particular, expected but not yet consented developments and associated HGV movements close to Knocknagael substation should be included.
- ETCA requested that the TA should assess the capacity of the Essich Road / SDR junction relative to forecast traffic levels including its ability to cater for more HGV turning movements. Also, that the TA should include consideration of construction traffic and sensitivity testing.

Road Engineering & Other Detailed Transport Considerations

- It was noted that the Essich Road engineering drawings drawings are currently under review and further comments from a senior THC road engineer are pending.
- THC invited local community comment on the detail of these drawings and whether local residents wished the design to prioritise active travel movement or traffic flow along the Essich Road corridor.
- It was noted that the detailed transport solutions for the MCA site will also be an iterative process and will be refined as better evidence becomes available.
- ETCA recorded dissatisfaction that the community had not been involved in the collaborative development of transport options at an earlier stage. ETCA requested that alternative access and transport options be assessed before any preferred solution is adopted and highlighted the importance of demonstrating why options were discounted. Discussion took place regarding access from the west, Essich Road realignment and alternative alignments around the Big Burn housing group. However, ETCA didn't express an opinion in favour of any transport solution as being acceptable to serve the MCA development.
- ETCA did express a preference for a transport solution that prioritised active travel above movement by vehicles and that Essich Road should be the principal active travel route.
- ETCA stated that existing turning movements into and out of the Big Burn housing group properties are hazardous and that this will only worsen with

increased traffic from the MCA development and SSE Knocknagael Substation construction traffic.

- The influence of buildings, speed limits, road width and road alignment on road safety were discussed
- ETCA highlighted that service and delivery vehicle parking and access should be considered in the transport solution for the Big Burn housing group section of Essich Road.
- THC provided an update on discussions about land availability for transport solutions.

Actions

No.	Action	Who
1	Further comments on the five HGA drawings and alternative transport solutions for the Essich Road corridor are invited.	All
2	A formal TA scoping response to be prepared and issued.	THC
3	Discussions regarding land availability to continue.	THC/Tulloch
4	Existing community evidence, including microsimulation modelling to be reviewed.	ETCA/Tulloch / THC
5	The TA scoping document to be discussed following its finalisation. The TA will include assessment of alternative transport solutions and reasons for discounting any option documented. These alternative transport solutions will be subject to optioneering but will include: online widening (including active travel provision) and realignment of Essich Road; widening and realignment of Essich Road to bypass the Big Burn housing group (including active travel provision); and, a new road access from the west (Torbreck). Additional meeting(s) to evolve and discuss the TA.	All
6	Site visits to take place between 2:30 and 4pm on Monday 2 November prior to in-person workshop that evening at 6pm.	All