
PEEBLES TRANSPORT STUDY

Report by Director of Environment and Infrastructure

ENVIRONMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

8 November 2012

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report updates Members on the current position in terms of the Peebles Transport Study and seeks approval to continue to the next phase of the project.**
- 1.2 The Peebles Transport Study has considered a range of options to help address the traffic issues which are likely to arise in Peebles as the town continues to grow in the future.
- 1.3 The study has shown that the capacity of Tweed Bridge could be reached over the next few years and this could act as a constraint on economic development in the town and encourage localised traffic congestion throughout the town centre.
- 1.4 A total of eight potential new bridge options were considered and appraised in terms of set planning objectives and Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) Criteria. Other measures were considered, but only a new crossing was seen to meet the long term development needs of the town.
- 1.5 The bridge options that are located closer to the town centre offer greater economic benefits and reduce the reliance on Tweed Bridge. However, as you travel away from the town centre towards the East, the environmental impact of a new bridge reduces.
- 1.6 The results of the appraisal process suggest that bridge options B3, B7 and B8 provide the best balance in terms of meeting the objectives of the study. It is recommended that these options form the basis of future analysis.
- 1.7 It is proposed that a further consultation exercise with the local community along with additional design work is organised to explore these recommended options in more detail, with a view to finalising a preferred route option thereafter.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 I recommend that the Committee:

- (a) Notes the contents of the report produced by the consultants and agrees that bridge options B3, B7 & B8 should be taken forward to the next stage of the process;**
- (b) Agrees that an additional consultation exercise should be held in Peebles to help identify a preferred bridge option.**

3 PEEBLES TRANSPORT STUDY

- 3.1 Following concern that there was insufficient detailed information on how future developments might impact on the traffic flows within the town, Colin Buchanan and Partners was commissioned in 2005 to undertake a transport study for Peebles. As part of this study, six possible options for a second bridge crossing in Peebles were considered. This initial assessment indicated that the recommended location for a new bridge crossing was Option B1 – Old Rail Alignment. A plan showing the initial bridge options has been provided in **Appendix A**.
- 3.2 In October 2006 a developer contribution of £75,000 was provided by Taylor Woodrow to the Council for the purposes of undertaking a study which would look at the feasibility of providing a new river crossing for the town.
- 3.3 An initial consultation exercise with statutory consultees and local interest groups regarding the possibility of a new river crossing was carried out by Scottish Borders Council at the end of 2008. The general outcome of this exercise was the Option B1 – Old Rail Alignment was the preferred option.

Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG)

- 3.4 Scottish Borders Council commissioned Transport Consultants MVA in August 2010 to undertake an appraisal of the transport issues associated with the medium to long term development of the town, using Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG).
- 3.5 STAG normally consists of a two part appraisal process;

STAG Part 1 – A set of potential solutions are appraised against the specific objectives of the study and five key criteria detailed in the STAG guidance; namely, Environment, Safety, Economy, Integration and Accessibility and Social Inclusion. The Part 1 appraisal is normally a qualitative assessment to determine whether options should be taken forward to the next stage;

STAG Part 2 – A more detailed consideration of the options that have been taken forward from the Part 1 assessment, with a view to recommending any options that may address the issues of the study.

Another key component of the STAG process is consultation with the general public, local interest groups and other interested parties. The consultation element should help inform the decision making process.

STAG 1 Report

- 3.6 The STAG 1 Report was completed in November 2010. This report included consultation with statutory consultees and local interest groups.
- 3.7 The results of the STAG Part 1 Report were as follows:
- New Bridge Crossing – Option B1 – Taken forward to the STAG Part 2 Appraisal;
 - New Bridge Crossing – Option B2 – Taken forward to the STAG Part 2 Appraisal;
 - New Bridge Crossing – Option B3 and B4 – Taken forward to the STAG Part 2 Appraisal;

- New Bridge Crossing – Option B5 and B6 – It was recommended in the report that both of these options should **not** be taken forward to the STAG Part 2 Appraisal;
- Improved Bus Links – Taken forward to the STAG Part 2 Appraisal;
- Improved Cross-River Shared Access Route – Taken forward to the STAG Part 2 Appraisal;
- Parking Management* – It was recommended in the report that this option should **not** be taken forward to the STAG Part 2 Appraisal.
- Active Travel Campaign* – It was recommended in the report that this option should **not** be taken forward to the STAG Part 2 Appraisal.

Refer to **Appendix A** for bridge crossing options.

*The report indicated that Parking Management and an Active Travel Campaign did not meet the objectives of the study in isolation. However, these options could possibly be implemented in the future in association with a preferred solution.

Public Consultation

- 3.8 A public exhibition was held in the Eastgate Theatre, Peebles on the 30th and 31st March 2011. The exhibition was deemed to be a success, with good feedback and a good number of completed questionnaires received.
- 3.9 The percentage of people that strongly agreed or agreed that there is a need for a new bridge over the River Tweed in Peebles was 60%, with 28% of people either strongly disagreeing or disagreeing with that statement.
- 3.10 It must be noted that Options B5 and B6 were initially discounted by the consultants as part of the STAG 1 Report. However, it was decided to include these options in the consultation process because there was a degree of support for these options.
- 3.11 Two additional bridge options were suggested during the consultation event and were deemed to be worthy of further testing. These options were located to the East and West of Kerfield Park and were detailed as routes seven and eight.

Further Developments

- 3.12 Six routes were initially tested in the 2005 study. However since that time, the physical characteristics of the town have changed and two of the proposed route options (options B4 and B5) are now unrealistic.
- 3.13 Therefore four of the original route options plus the two additional route options suggested at the consultation event were taken forward to the STAG 2 appraisal. The set of alignments to be tested are noted below and are shown in **Appendix B**:
- Route B1 – Old Rail Alignment;
 - Route B2 – Whitestone Park;
 - Route B8 – Kerfield West;
 - Route B3 – Cavalry Park West;
 - Route B7 – Cavalry Park East;
 - Route B6 – Whitehaugh.

Planning Perspective

- 3.14 The requirement for a bridge crossing to serve the potential future development of south east Peebles is recognised in the Consolidated Local Plan. The plan proposes that it should be part of an overall Master Plan to be brought forward alongside the review of the Local Development Plan.
- 3.15 The future strategic requirement for housing land is currently part of the examination into the SESplan (Edinburgh and South East Scotland) Strategic Development Plan
- 3.16 It is anticipated that the examination report will be produced in Spring 2013. This will provide input to the Local Development Plan currently being prepared by the Council which in turn, will provide the context for the future development in Peebles and the requirement for a bridge.
- 3.17 It should be noted that as part of the consultation response to the Main Issues Report of the Local Development Plan, there are proposals from potential developers in South East Peebles to contribute towards a new bridge.

STAG 2 Report

- 3.18 Scottish Borders Council commissioned Transport Consultants MVA in September 2011 to undertake a STAG 2 appraisal of the transport issues associated with the town.
- 3.19 A key part of the STAG 2 analysis was to produce a more robust quantitative approach to assessing the economic impact of the proposals along with an assessment of the key environmental impacts and the provision of an estimated construction cost for the proposed bridge options.
- 3.20 The consultants developed a traffic model for Peebles which provided details of future traffic movements within the town. The base year for the modelling process was 2011 and three future years were explored; 2019, 2024 and 2032. In addition a high growth scenario was identified where the potential longer term development sites on the southern side of the river were also included. From existing traffic count data it was noted that the maximum recorded two-way traffic flow on Tweed Bridge was approximately 970 vehicles per hour and 940 vehicles per hour on the High Street.
- 3.21 From the modelling exercise it could be noted that traffic levels in Peebles were forecast to grow by up to 28% by 2032, with traffic congestion increasing by 90%. In the 2032 High Growth Scenario, these values increased to 37% and 115% respectively.
- 3.22 In 2032, the highest levels of traffic growth were found on Tweed Bridge and in the central area of the town. By around 2020, the theoretical capacity of the bridge (1250 vehicles per hour for two-way flow) was reached and thereafter conditions continued to deteriorate.
- 3.23 In terms of the economic impact of a new road bridge in Peebles, the traffic model indicated that a new bridge would deliver considerable travel time savings in the town and would potentially reduce the traffic levels on Tweed Bridge and the High Street. The economic impact of the six options reduces as you move from West to East with option B1 providing the best results.

- 3.24 In terms of the environment, the construction of a new bridge and associated infrastructure could have a significant impact on the town. These impacts included proximity to households, reduction in green space, noise, visual impacts and severance. The report identified that these impacts reduced as you moved from the West to the East with option B6 arguably providing the least environmental impact and option B1 providing the greatest environmental impact.
- 3.25 In summary, the STAG analysis carried out by the consultants has considered a range of options to try and address the traffic and development related issues that are likely to arise in the future.
- 3.26 It has been shown that the capacity of Tweed Bridge will be reached by approximately 2020. Beyond this point, increased levels of traffic and localised congestion could begin to act as a constraint on the economic development of the town.
- 3.27 Although a number of options were considered, the study has shown that an additional bridge across the River Tweed is the best option for the town. A total of eight potential new locations for a bridge were considered. In very broad terms the potential alignments have less economic and environmental impact as you travel from west to east. Importantly, all bridge options except Option B6 future-proof Tweed Bridge against future traffic levels.
- 3.28 Testing all of the bridge options against the set criteria, it is apparent that Options B3, B7 and B8 provide the best balance in terms of meeting the objectives. These alignments that are shown in **Appendix C**.

Next Steps

- 3.29 To undertake some additional engineering analysis on the proposed route options to help inform the additional consultation process. The extent and form of this additional analysis will be budget dependant. However, it is hoped that an initial idea of the type of structure required will be tabled along with an associated costing exercise, offering more detail on the projected costs of bridge construction.
- 3.30 From the initial analysis undertaken by the consultants, recent events in the local area and from meetings with local interest groups and members of the public, it is apparent that the flooding related aspects of these proposals will need careful consideration. It is proposed that further work on the flooding related impact of a new road bridge will be undertaken to help inform the additional consultation process.
- 3.31 To initiate an additional consultation exercise with the local community to help determine views on an acceptable finalised route option for the town. It is expected that the consultation exercise will take the form of a series of workshops, held in association with local members, key local organisations and relevant interest groups. It is proposed that the workshops will be facilitated by an experienced independent consultant and will focus on options B3, B7 and B8 as detailed in the Peebles Transport Study.
- 3.32 As noted in 3.17, there have been initial proposals from developers to help contribute to a new road bridge over the River Tweed as part of responses to the Main Issue Report of the Local Development Plan. It is unlikely that any proposed contribution from developers will fully cover the costs of constructing a new bridge. Therefore, it is recommended that the additional

costing exercise should help initiate the inclusion of this proposal within the Council's Financial Plan.

- 3.33 On conclusion of the additional consultation process and on the basis that agreement on a preferred route can be achieved, the next stage would include the identification and inclusion of an appropriate reference within the Local Development Plan process.
- 3.34 In the current financial climate, it is very difficult to try and forecast the possible development and construction of this type of proposal. However, our initial expectations are that the development of a structure of this type could be initiated by 2020, assuming that the appropriate levels of support are received.
- 3.35 It is the intention to closely monitor traffic levels in the central area of Peebles with a view to gauging the capacity of Tweed Bridge and the surrounding area. It is recommended that this information should be made available to the local community on a regular basis.

4 IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Financial

The Peebles Transport Study provided a cost estimate for the construction of a new road bridge in Peebles. The cost estimate was based on 2005 prices and included:

- Bridge construction;
- Road construction;
- Junction construction;
- Contingency; and
- Optimisation bias.

The bridge options have been ranked in terms of estimated cost, with the least expensive option ranked number 1.

Rank	Total Construction Costs (£m)*	Option
1	£4.350	B2
2	£4.510	B3
3	£4.720	B7
4	£4.730	B6
5	£4.870	B8
6	£5.85	B1

*It should be noted that the estimated costs did not include an allowance for land acquisition, major utility works or potential proposals resulting from flood risk assessment work.

4.2 Risk and Mitigations

The study has shown that the capacity of Tweed Bridge will be reached by approximately 2020. Thereafter there is a risk that traffic levels within the town could begin to act as a constraint on economic development without the planned development of a new bridge crossing to alleviate the pressure on the existing infrastructure. There are also inherent risks to the town of relying on a single road crossing over the River Tweed, should there be a deterioration of the existing structure due to flooding or incidental damage.

There is also a risk that Scottish Borders Council will not be able to allocate suitable financial resources to the promotion of this project without contributions from the private sector.

4.3 **Equalities**

An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out on this proposal.

4.4 **Acting Sustainably**

You could argue that the provision of a new road bridge for Peebles does not necessarily provide a particularly sustainable transport option for the town. However, the two main alternatives to a new bridge detailed in the Peebles Transport Study were improved bus services and an improved walking and cycling network. On their own these alternative options do not really meet the key objectives of the study. However, the provision of a new bridge could help to improve public transport provision and provide an enhanced walking and cycling network in Peebles and therefore they should be considered as complementary to the final bridge option proposals.

4.5 **Carbon Management**

The overall effect on carbon emissions is not known. However there will be a balance associated with the development of the town and the proposed reduction in traffic volumes in the centre of Peebles.

4.6 **Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation**

There are no changes to be made to the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation as a result of these proposals

5 **CONSULTATION**

The Chief Financial Officer, the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, the Head of Audit and Risk and the Clerk to the Council have been consulted on this report and comments received have been incorporated in the final report.

Approved by

Director of Environment and Infrastructure

Signature

Author(s)

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Background Papers:

Previous Minute Reference: Executive – 6 September 2011

Note – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Jacqueline Whitelaw can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

Contact us at Jacqueline Whitelaw, Environment and Infrastructure, Scottish Borders Council, Council Headquarters, Newtown St Boswells, Melrose, TD6 0SA, Tel 01835 825431, Fax 01835 825071, email eitranslationrequest@scotborders.gov.uk.

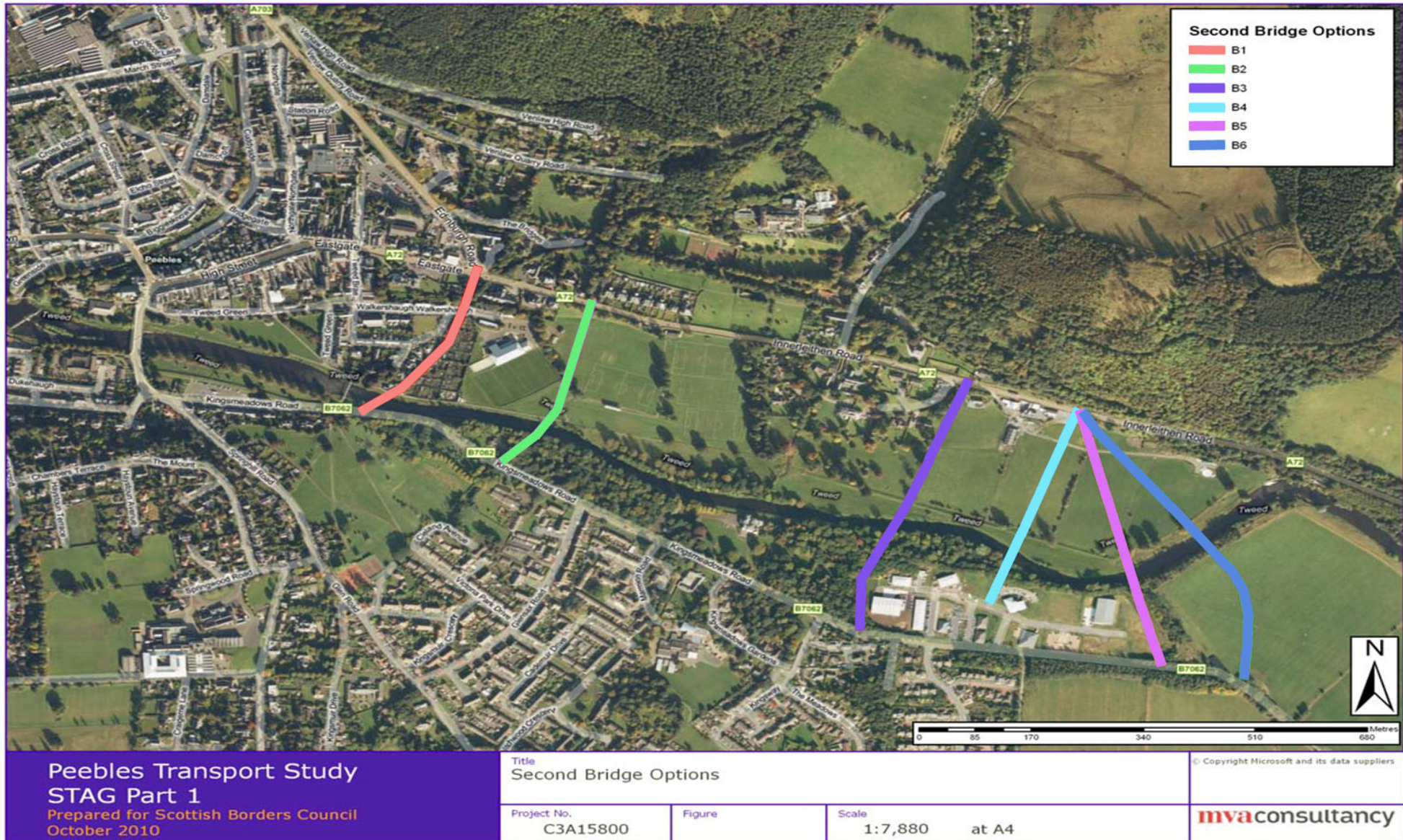
Appendices

Appendix A – Original Bridge Options

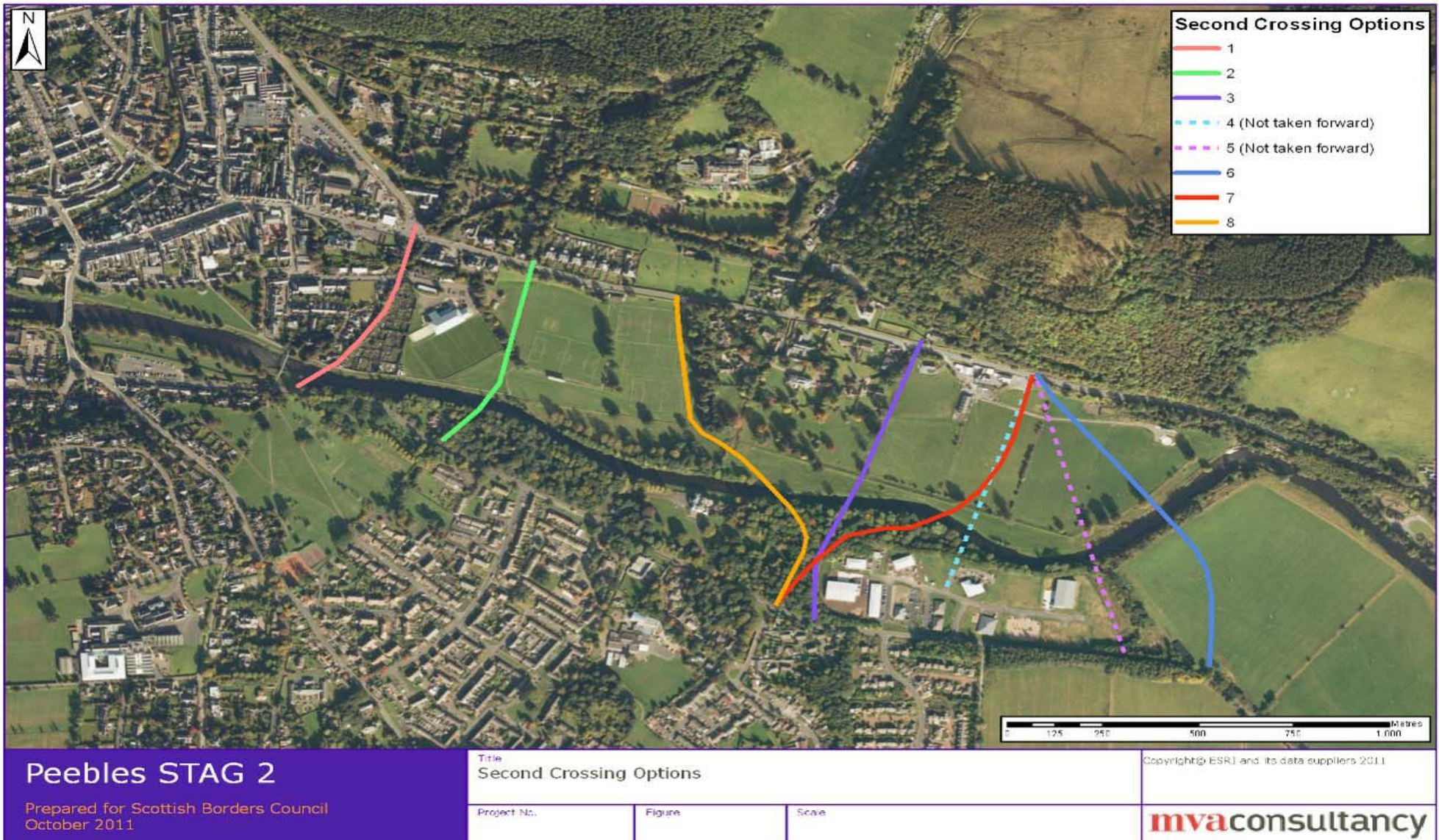
Appendix B – Amended Bridge Options

Appendix C – Options to be Taken Forward

Appendix A – Original Bridge Options



Appendix B – Amended Bridge Options



Appendix C – Options to be taken forward

