Halcrow Group Limited

Active Travel Regional Audit

Dingwall Pilot Audit

Final Summary Document

April 2009

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Active Travel Regional Audit
Dingwall Pilot Audit
Final Summary Document
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Contents Amendment Record

This report has been issued and amended as follows:

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Contents

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Halcrow Group Ltd was commissioned by HITRANS, the Highlands and Islands Regional Transport Partnership to:

- develop a methodology to audit existing active travel infrastructure
- provide baseline information on existing infrastructure provision for active travel
- recommend priorities for future investment

1.1.2 The overall aim is to assess where best to apply available funding in order to increase the potential for active travel, and ideally to see an increase in the numbers of people choosing to walk or cycle.

1.1.3 In particular, the key purpose of the audits is to identify:

> "A practical network of high quality routes suitable for cycling within each settlement that provides convenient and safe access to all major destinations"
> AND
> "A network of routes for pedestrians focused upon railway stations, bus stations, major employment areas, local shopping areas, leisure/recreation centres, hospitals and main trip generators"

1.1.4 This document summarises the main findings of the methodology as applied to Dingwall.

2 Walking and Cycling in Dingwall

2.1 Overview of current conditions for Active Travel

2.1.1 The town of Dingwall has a population of 5,026 people with a total of 2,163 households. Nearly half of the residents are in full time employment and just over 1,000 are in full time education. Census data has been used to provide an indication of current travel patterns in the town. With nearly 56% of all trips within the town less than 5km there is significant potential for the transfer of a proportion of these journeys to more sustainable modes.

2.1.2 For journeys to work a notable culture of walking exists with nearly 49% of people walking to work within Dingwall. Just less than 3% of people cycle to work which appears very low, but it is twice the Scottish national average.

2.1.3 Apart from two isolated dedicated cycle tracks, there are no facilities for cyclists in the town. A number of one way streets act as a further deterrent to cycling and it is not unusual to see cyclists abusing them.

2.1.4 Route 1 of the National Cycle Network is signed in some sections, but without a map, the route is difficult to follow. The section of route from Dingwall to Maryburgh is in poor repair with a number of barriers and no coherent or specific facilities on the section from Pitglassie Farm to Dingwall town centre. The signed route along Tulloch Avenue is unsuitable due to the number of HGVs and general traffic using the route. Furthermore, there are substandard width advisory cycle lanes on Old Evanton Road which can encourage motorists to pass too closely to cyclists.

2.1.5 There is very little cycle parking in Dingwall; in particular there is no provision within the main retail zone on the High Street, or at the main Council office. Cycle parking is available at the two supermarkets in the town, but in one location they are placed too closely together and in the other, placed too close to the building. Hence, in both locations they are difficult to use and bicycles were observed locked to railings close to the main entrance. Cycle parking is available at the train station.

2.1.6 Pedestrians have the added advantage of a good network of footways with controlled crossing points at major junctions.

2.1.7 For both pedestrians and cyclists, a major deterrent is the topography of the town. To the north of the railway and out towards Knockbain Road, the settlement is built on the side of a hill. For the very young, elderly or disabled, this can be a daunting barrier to walking or cycling.

2.1.8 Within the Local Plan for Dingwall, a new link road is proposed in the north of Dingwall to link the A862 that eventually joins the A9 and the A834 to Ullapool. The proposed relief road joining the A862 to the A834 will create an east/west link that avoids the town centre. It is important that the proposed new road has provision for active travel with dedicated walking and cycling facilities with appropriate crossings and access to existing infrastructure and services.

Traffic Flow and Accident Data

2.1.9 The Transport Scotland Automatic Traffic Counter in Dingwall (located on the A834 Mill Street/Strathpeffer Road) shows that the average daily flow of two-way traffic through the town is 7,396 vehicles. HGVs make up 4-5% of this traffic, although this has grown to almost 7% in 2006.

2.1.10 Accident data from 2002 to 2007 provided by Highland Council shows that of the pedestrian injury accidents, most were attributed to pedestrians walking or running out onto the carriageway, but did not comment on the speed of the impacting vehicle.

2.1.11 There are two main areas in which recorded accidents occurred:

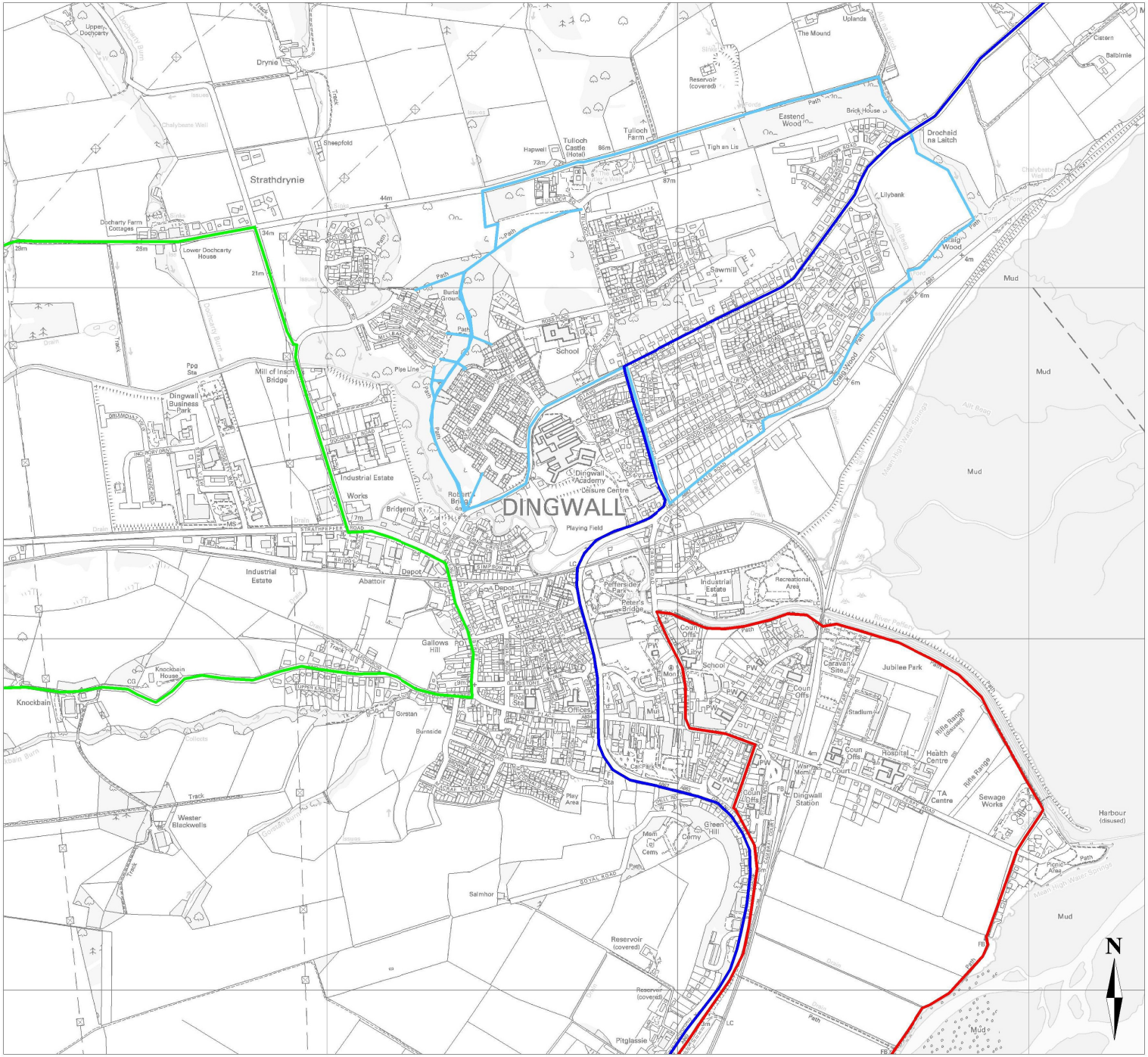
- the town centre
- the residential areas to the north of the town, which includes the secondary school and leisure centre

2.1.12 It is apparent that the number of accidents is not significantly high for the nature of the road network and the volumes of traffic. A summary of the accident statistics is shown in table 3-1 below.

User Group	Number of Incidents	Slight Injury	Serious Injury	Fatality
Pedestrians	11	9	1	1
Cyclists	3	2	1	0
Vehicle(s) Only	16	11	5	0
Total	30	22	7	1

Table 2-1: Summary of Accident Statistics in Dingwall 2002 - 2007

2.1.13 The existing walking and cycling routes in Dingwall are presented in Figure 5 overleaf.



LEGEND

- National Cycle Network Route 1
- Tulloch Castle Walk
- Canal and Firth Walk
- Knockfarrel and Fodderty Walk

Client	HITRANS	Drawn	NH	Date	23/11/07
Project	Active Travel Regional Audit Pilot Study	Checked	CK	Date	23/11/07
Title	Dingwall: Existing walking/ cycling routes	Authorised	JP	Date	23/11/07
Figure No.	Figure 5	Scale	NTS		
Filename	U:\Transport Planning\Active projects\CTOAJD Dingwall Pilot HITRANS Active Travel Audit\Mapping\JPEGs				

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2.2 Current Issues

2.2.1 The on street audit of Active Travel infrastructure in Dingwall identified a number of key issues that act as a disincentive for active travel.

1) Planning

- New developments designed with priority for motorised traffic rather than pedestrians, cyclists and public transport

2) Access Issues to New Dingwall Academy School and Public Library

- Poor connectivity to new school for sustainable modes
- Opportunity to provide high quality pedestrian and cycle routes between the north and south of the town for residents could be lost
- Restricted access to new library

3) Pedestrian crossings

- Pedestrian phases are very short or non existent
- Staggered crossings with narrow islands or pens constrict pedestrians, especially those with prams

4) Cycle Parking

- No cycle parking in town centre
- Poor quality cycle parking at main supermarkets

5) Availability of car parking

- Large, free car parks in the town centre and at main supermarkets
- Free and abundant on street parking

6) Lack of information on walking and cycling routes

- Maps of existing walking and cycling routes are difficult to find

7) Lack of cycle facilities, design issues and maintenance of existing routes

- Existing off road cycle tracks are blighted by barriers and poor quality dropped kerbs and poor maintenance
- Poor continuity on National Cycle Network Route 1
- No advanced stop lines at signalised junctions
- One way streets without contraflows for cyclists
- No specific facilities for cyclists in the town

2.3 SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) Analysis of Active Travel in Dingwall

Strengths	***Weaknesses***
High levels of walking Availability of pedestrian footways Consultation showed high levels of support for walking and cycling Low levels of crime Presence of National Cycle Network in the town Some existing off road cycle tracks Good quality cycle parking at the Leisure Centre Cycle parking proposed for new Dingwall Academy and public library	Steep topography Free and plentiful car parking Poorly designed pedestrian crossings Lack of cycle parking One way streets Lack of cycle facilities New Dingwall Academy and public library is designed with priority for private car Main supermarkets are designed with priority for private car and have poor quality cycle parking
Opportunities	***Threats***
New housing developments have opportunity to 'build in' walking and cycling Opportunity to 'build' onto existing National Cycle Network New Dingwall Academy and public library site has excellent potential to provide new walking and cycling routes Walking and cycling maps are relatively cheap to produce Potential to transfer large number of local journeys to more sustainable modes Cycle parking is relatively cheap to install Proposed new link road from A862 to A834 could incorporate route for walking and cycling	Continuing loss of opportunities to provide walking and cycling infrastructure through planning gain Refusal to allow existing routes through the new Dingwall Academy and library to be used will severely restrict potential for walking and cycling between the north and the south of the town Low levels of investment in walking and cycling infrastructure Lack of co-ordinated approach to promote walking and cycling (Transport/Planning/NHS/Education)

3 Proposed Dingwall Active Travel Network

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 Following the application of the Active Travel Methodology, a number of routes for walking and cycling have been identified that link the residential areas to the main trip generators/attractors to form a Dingwall wide strategic active travel network. The main trip generators/attractors for Dingwall that were identified from the audit are:

- pedestrianised town centre
- Dingwall train station
- hospital and health centre on Ferry Road
- Dingwall Business Park
- two main supermarkets
- Pefferside Park
- new Dingwall Academy incorporating new public library (not yet open)
- Dingwall Leisure Centre
- Dingwall Primary School

3.1.2 The Active Travel methodology was developed to assess existing and proposed routes for pedestrians and cyclists and is based on the following key parameters:

- A desktop study including demographics, travel to work patterns, public transport information and traffic data
- Consultation with the Local Authority and other key groups
- On-site audits
- Application of a 'prioritisation filter' used to identify those corridors where there is the greatest potential for modal shift

3.2 Walking and Cycling Network

3.2.1 Through the methodology, the following routes have been identified as providing the most direct and coherent routes to key destinations. The routes will eventually provide a holistic network for Dingwall to enable people to make journeys to all parts of the town. The routes are:

Walking Network

- Route P1 - Station Road
- Route P2 - High Street/Ferry Road
- Route P3 - Craig St/Tulloch St/Church St
- Route P4 - Gladstone Avenue/Grant St
- Route P5 - Mill Street/Millcraig Rd/Pefferside Park/Meiklefield Rd

- Route P6 - Newton Road
- Route P7 - Tulloch Avenue/Woodlands Road/Balnabeen Drive/Urquhart Road
- Route P8 - School Links including Ross Place to Chestnut Drive
- Route P9 - Old Evanton Road/Back Rd/Roberts's Bridge/Maggies Drive
- Route P10 - Docharty Road
- Route P11 - Strathpeffer Road
- Route P12 - Deas Avenue Estate

Cycling Network:

- Route C1- Hospital and Train Station to Town Centre and northeast Dingwall
- Route C2 - Maryburgh to Schools
- Route C3 - Town Centre to Business Park
- Route C4 - Business Park to east links

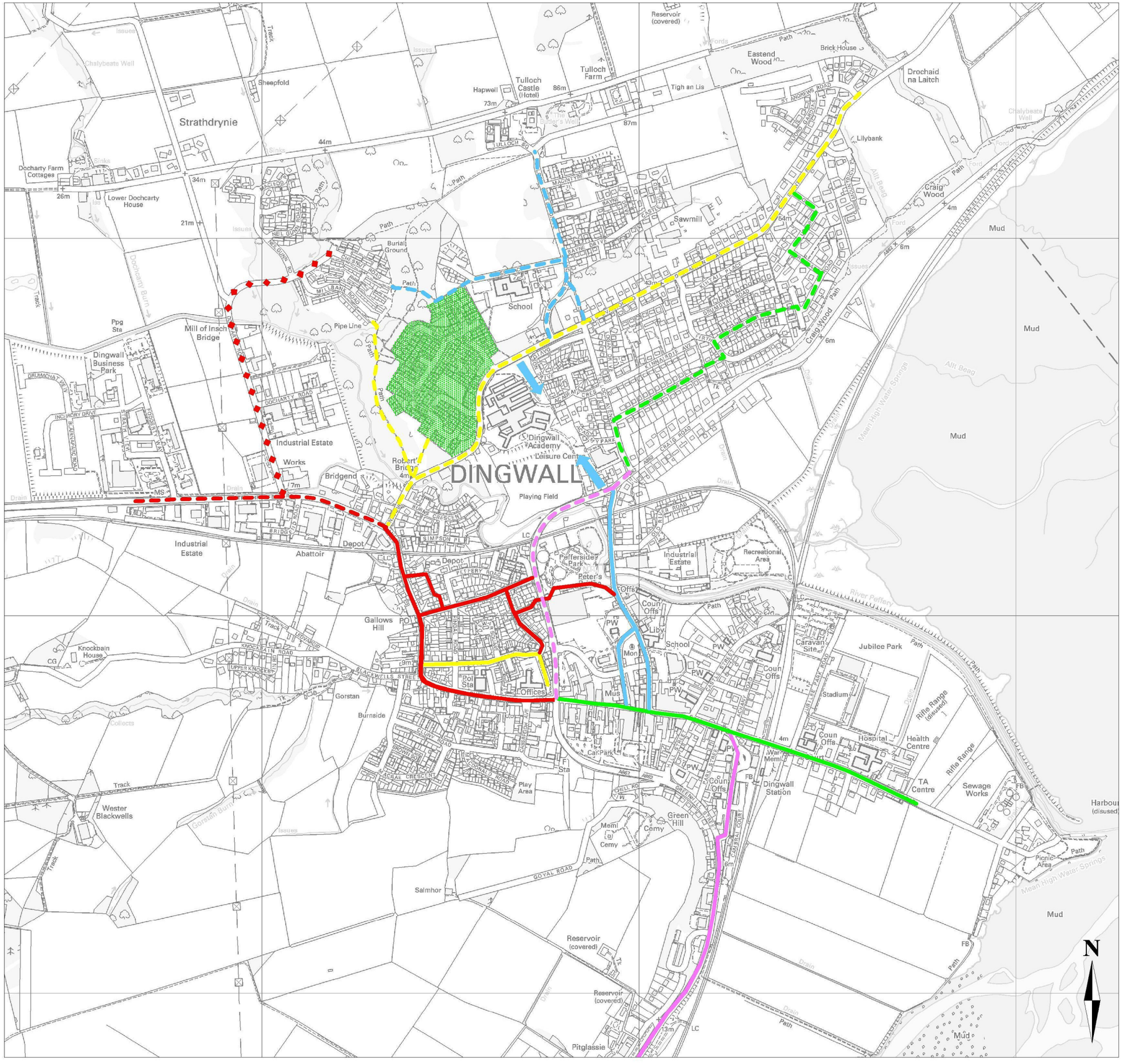
3.2.2 The Action Plan in the following section identifies the key priorities in the development of the aforementioned routes along with 'softer' initiatives to promote active travel in Dingwall.

3.2.3 It is important to note that through the consultation process it became clear that there is a desire for a cycle route from Dingwall to Strathpeffer. There have been two popular suggestions for the route:

- use existing tracks through Fodderty then cross the railway to the disused railway line to Strathpeffer
- Knockbain Road to a track that links to the disused railway line to Strathpeffer

3.2.4 Although outwith the scope of this study, it is a long distance route that could be implemented to encourage tourism or recreation.

3.2.5 The proposed walking and cycling networks are shown in Figures 6 and 7 on the following page.



LEGEND

- Station Road (P1)
- High Street/Ferry Road (P2)
- Craig Road/Church Street/ Tulloch Street (P3)
- Gladstone Avenue/Grant Street (P4)
- Mill Street/Millcraig Road/ Pefferside Park (P5)
- Newton Road (P6)
- Tulloch Avenue/Woodlands Road/ Balnabeen drive/Urquhart Road (P7)
- School Links (P8)
- School Desire Lines
- Old Evanton Road/Back Road/ Roberts Bridge / Maggies Drive (P9)
- Docharty Road (P10)
- Strathpeffer Road (P11)
- Deas Avenue Estate (P12)

Client: HITRANS	Drawn: NH	Date: 23/11/07
Project: Active Travel Regional Audit Pilot Study	Checked: CK	Date: 23/11/07
Title: Dingwall Walking Route Network	Authorised: JP	Date: 23/11/07
Figure No.: Figure 6	Scale: NTS	
Filename: U:\Transport Planning\Active projects\CTOAJD Dingwall Pilot HITRANS Active Travel Audit\Mapping\JPEGs		

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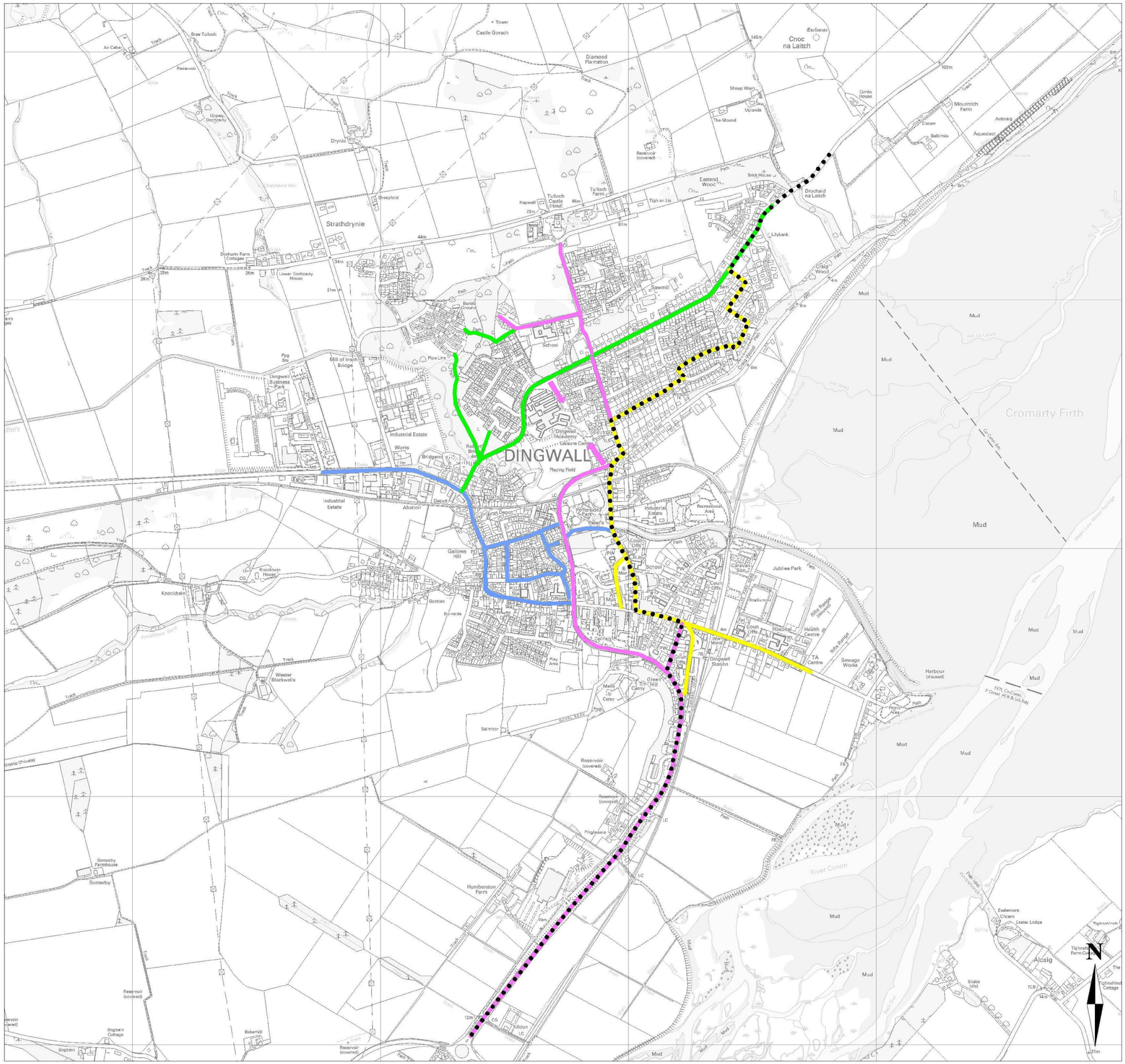

LEGEND

— Route C1: Hospital and Train Station to Town Centre and Northeast Dingwall

— Route C2: Maryburgh to Schools

➡ School desire lines

— Route C3: Town Centre to Business Park

— Route C4: Business Park to East Links

•••••• Suggested alternative to National Cycle Network Route 1

Client HITRANS	Drawn NH	Date 30/11/07
Project Active Travel Regional Audit Pilot Study	Checked CK	Date 30/11/07
Title Dingwall Proposed Cycling Route Network	Authorised JP	Date 30/11/07
Figure No. Figure 7	Scale NTS	

Filename
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4 Prioritised Action Plan

4.1 The Solutions

4.1.1 This prioritised Active Travel Action Plan sets out the key measures needed to encourage walking and cycling in Dingwall. As well as incorporating the strategic Dingwall Active Travel Network, it also includes the development of a map which is an effective tool in the promotion of walking and cycling.

4.1.2 The Prioritised Action Plan therefore encompasses infrastructure improvements and promotional measures and has the following broad objectives:

Objective 1: Provide quality conditions for walking and cycling

Objective 2: Increase cycle parking provision

Objective 3: Promote active travel and its status

Objective 4: Improve the contribution to active travel from other projects – particularly the planning process

4.1.3 The following measures are the key priorities for encouraging active travel in Dingwall:

- **Priority 1**: Dingwall Schools Accessibility Plan
- **Priority 2**: Maryburgh to Dingwall School Walking and Cycling Route
- **Priority 3**: Install Cycle Parking in Dingwall Town Centre
- **Priority 4**: Improve Active Travel Infrastructure through planning gain
- **Priority 5**: North Dingwall Walking and Cycling Corridor
- **Priority 6**: Improve links to Business Park
- **Priority 7**: Town centre, train station and hospital to North Dingwall
- **Priority 8**: Develop an Active Travel Map

4.1.4 Each of these individual priorities are summarised below and form part of the wider Dingwall Active Travel Network outlined in chapter 3.

4.2 Priority 1 Recommendation: Dingwall Schools Accessibility Plan (Dingwall Active Travel Network reference Route C2, P8)

4.2.1 The new Dingwall Academy incorporating a new public library has now been built on the playing fields, south of the existing school. The planning application showed a number of paths through the site that have the potential to link residential areas to the site, but under existing management plans, locked gates will prevent access outside of school opening and closing times.

4.2.2 The new public library will also be housed in the new Academy so it is important to strike the right balance between preventing unwanted public access to the Academy, whilst still allowing access to this important public facility via active travel modes. The site presents an opportunity to create north to south and east to west, traffic free paths that will connect the large residential area in the north of the town to the library, leisure centre and links further south to the town centre. Without access through the site, residents will be forced to use Tulloch Avenue which is an unpleasant environment for pedestrians and cyclists due to the high levels of HGVs and their journeys will also be longer and more convoluted, making active travel options less attractive.

4.3 Priority 2 Recommendation: Maryburgh to Dingwall School Walking and Cycling Route (Dingwall Active Travel Network reference Route C2, P6)

4.3.1 There is great potential to encourage more children to cycle and walk to school within Dingwall and the existence of the traffic free path from Maryburgh towards Dingwall is a key piece of infrastructure to encourage this aim. The provision of links from where the cycle track ends on Station Road to the Academy and the primary school is a potential scheme which could also provide a route to the town centre.

4.4 Priority 3 Recommendation: Install Cycle Parking in Dingwall Town Centre (Dingwall Active Travel Network reference Route C1, C3)

4.4.1 For motorists and cyclists alike, the availability of convenient, secure and free parking can be the principal motivation for carrying out some journeys. High quality cycle parking is relatively cheap to install, is virtually maintenance free and helps to raise the profile of cycling. A more expensive covered cycle parking compound may be suitable in some locations.

4.5 Priority 4 Recommendation: Improve Active Travel Infrastructure through planning gain

4.5.1 There have been some improvements in Active Travel infrastructure in Dingwall that have been secured through planning gain but it is now imperative that active travel is a key consideration as Dingwall continues to expand. Walking and cycling facilities to new developments in the town must be attractive, easy to use and have distinct advantages over motorised modes, such as shorter distances, acceptable gradients and priority at junctions. Failure to provide for the needs of pedestrians and cyclists at the planning stage will lead to the 'building in' of sedentary and unhealthy lifestyles for generations to come.

4.6 Priority 5 Recommendation: North Dingwall Walking and Cycling Corridor (Dingwall Active Travel Network reference C3, C4, P9, P11)

4.6.1 This east/west corridor in north Dingwall is an important strategic link as it creates a route linking the main residential areas to the Business Park, schools and local shops. There are sections of existing shared use footway and cycle track that would benefit from maintenance plus the improvement and extension of links to them.

4.7 Priority 6 Recommendation: Improve Links to Business Park (Dingwall Active Travel Network reference C3, C4, P9, P11)

4.7.1 The business park is key trip attractor in Dingwall and is served by a section of high quality off road footway has been constructed from Docharty Road to the business park. The path is not currently designated for use by cyclists although it is well used by them. Footways from Bridgend Avenue to the Docharty Road would benefit from resurfacing and the installation of dropped kerbs and tactile paving.

4.8 Priority 7 Recommendation: Town Centre, train station and hospital to North Dingwall (Dingwall Active Travel Network reference C1, P3, P7)

4.8.1 This route is a strategic active travel corridor from the main residential area to the town centre, train station and hospital. The route also has the potential to form an alternative National Cycle Network route 1 to avoid the busy Tulloch Avenue and the sawmill. The one-way streets are a deterrent to cycling and for the most part, facilities for pedestrians are good. Improvements to traffic signal timings and improvements to the footway are the main issues for pedestrians.

4.9 Priority 8 Recommendation: Develop an Active Travel Map

4.9.1 An active travel map serves a number of functions: it can help people to find new routes to places they initially thought they could only drive to and also promotes routes that were previously unknown to them, especially when considering a wider recreational network. A map can include other public service information such as health messages and safety information and help promote local shops. Advertising from other organisations can help pay for costs.

5 Conclusions

5.1.1 From the on site audits and the application of the methodology it is clear that the site of Dingwall Academy is key to providing infrastructure to encourage walking and cycling. It is the largest development in Dingwall so it is vital to ensure that it does not become a significant physical barrier between the north and the south of the town. This barrier will become more pronounced as residential areas to the north of the town continue to expand.

5.1.2 However, the compact nature of Dingwall suggests that it has significant potential to become an 'Active Travel Town' and with potential significant expansion in the near future there is a great opportunity to work with developers to create infrastructure that has physical activity built into the design and layout. The provision of high quality cycle parking for new flats and houses with direct and overlooked walking and cycling facilities that are well lit and offer more direct routes than car routes are some of the measures that can provided in order to leave a more sustainable, healthy and attractive legacy for the future residents of Dingwall.

5.1.3 This report identifies a proposed active travel network for Dingwall and provides a sound basis for ensuring that future development helps improve and contribute towards the implementation of this network.