

Screening Workshop Report

East Airdrie Link Road

This Screening Workshop Report is part of a series of pilot reports prepared following the completion of a Capital Investment Health Impact Assessment (CHIA) screening workshop.

The CHIA, developed by Glasgow City Region and Public Health Scotland, through the Health Foundation's Economies for Healthier Lives programme, is a toolkit to be used in the development and delivery of capital infrastructure projects that ensures that decisions made at every level – from design, to build and operate – focus on reducing health inequalities.

1 Background Information

The East Airdrie Link Road (EALR) is a key project within North Lanarkshire Council's City Deal Infrastructure Investment Programme. It is currently the largest Glasgow City Region City Deal project, with significant capital investment of around £185.3m million.

EALR will connect from the M8 at Newhouse to the A73 south of Cumbernauld at Riggend. It will also provide the primary road access for the proposed Monklands Replacement Hospital at Wester Moffat. The project includes a proposal for:

- 10km of new road to the east of Airdrie,
- 5km of active travel within existing built-up area.

EALR aims to improve connectivity between residential areas, areas of employment and facilitate economic benefits, thus seeking to address socio economic inequalities and improve health outcomes in the area.

The approved EALR Outline Business Case sets out the project objectives and establishes the case for change, and through the Green Book Treasury the 5-business case establishes the scope of the project, the outputs and projected outcomes.

2 Workshop Summary

This is a report of a workshop held on 20th February 2025 to discuss the potential impacts on health and equity of EALR proposals. Participant organisations/departments included:

- Public Health Scotland
- North Lanarkshire Council – City Deal
- North Lanarkshire Council – Community Planning
- North Lanarkshire Council – Greenspace
- North Lanarkshire Council – Spatial Planning
- North Lanarkshire Council - Transport Planning
- North Lanarkshire Council - Active Travel
- North Lanarkshire Council - Environmental Health
- AtkinsRéalis Consultants
- NHS Lanarkshire (Health Improvement and Public Health)
- Glasgow City Council – Clyde Metro/Public Health
- Glasgow City Region, Programme Management Office/Economies for Healthier Lives

Lyndsay Noble, North Lanarkshire City Deal Manager, welcomed participants before providing an overview of the EALR projects and associated proposals. The group then took part in a facilitated discussion, using the health and equity impact checklist, to identify how EALR was likely to affect different populations and health determinants. This discussion was led by Dr Margaret Douglas, Public Health Consultant, at Public Health Scotland.

This report details potential impacts identified by workshop participants. Further evidence is needed to investigate impacts identified and discussed in the workshop.

The report includes:

- A summary of key points raised during the workshop by stakeholders.
- A detailed workshop discussion.
- Suggestions made during the discussion to enhance outputs and outcomes and minimise any impacts.
- Research questions to explore and understand impacts and outcomes.
- Approaches to how impacts and outputs and outcomes will be potentially addressed.

Please note due to the EALR providing access to the Monklands Replacement Hospital, a number of points were raised that are related to the Hospital Project. These points were captured and referred onto the NHS Lanarkshire, Monklands Replacement Hospital team.

Where other stakeholders are responsible or best placed to address and action the suggestion/recommendation, this has been identified in the report.

3 Summary of Key Points

The main health and equity impacts discussed included:

- a) Potential to improve access to hospital and other sites for cars and other road vehicles, however those without access to a car (29% of people in North Lanarkshire) will not benefit unless there are accompanying changes to public transport and/or active travel routes.
- b) Potential risks (perceived and actual) of limited active travel and public transport provision to health and with potential for negatively impacting most vulnerable groups e.g. those experiencing poverty, who have a disability, older people, children and young people, people who suffer from poorer health, those who may need to visit the hospital more often.
- c) Public transport provision, specifically a bus link to the hospital was a key recommendation from the Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment (FSD) of the proposed new Monklands Hospital, undertaken by NHS Lanarkshire in 2021. To be noted but referred to MRP/NHS Lanarkshire team.
- d) Reduction in leisure and active travel space/land – with potential impacts on loneliness and the disruption of social networks.
- e) Potential differential traffic impact, meaning that balance of benefits and risks is still unclear and will vary for different people:
 - some areas along existing A73 are likely to have less traffic.
 - some other areas along/close to new road are likely to have increased traffic.
 - new road can potentially lead to ‘induced demand’ with higher overall levels of traffic affecting surrounding area.
- f) Potential impacts of increased or reduced motorised traffic include air pollution, noise, road injuries and physical inactivity. Those most susceptible include older or younger people and people with existing ill health. It should be noted that the EALR, due to its scale and strategic nature and availability of land, is proposed out with the existing urban areas.
- g) Potential issue in relation to investing in road for motor vehicles but less investment in active travel routes.

- h) Potential for loss of greenspace and woodland areas, impacting biodiversity but also potentially leading to physical inactivity or social disconnect, particularly impacting members of local walking groups.
- i) Potential benefits in relation to unlocking housing development in the area, addressing current housing challenges. However, this could carry a risk of additional reliance on private vehicle use/access if no adequate public transport is available. This will be Local Development Plan (LDP) led – note that LDP is in development.
- j) Potential benefits in relation to direct job creation during construction phase and also indirectly through attracting new businesses due to improved access to the area. This has the potential to increase access to existing job opportunities, more so for those with access to a car than those without.
- k) Potential benefits of enhancing and unlocking development can lead to new or expanded businesses – but there is a need to consider social and environmental variables alongside market drivers to prevent the proliferation of businesses such as drive-throughs with potential negative impacts on health, particularly impacting on existing physical inactivity and obesity issues.
- l) Carbon emissions, net zero and air quality implications of building and operating a road, including potential increased traffic demand mentioned above.
- m) Travellers' sites not currently active in the area but may need to be explored as improved connectivity may mean requirement to accommodate traveller communities passing through area.
- n) Challenges with communication and community engagement, particularly around clarity in relation to EALR and New Monklands Hospital construction and operation. They both overlap and interconnect but have separate decision-making processes and independent lead organisations. While both organisations have separate decision-making processes/independent lead organisations joint technical groups, a joint Project Interface Board has been established to ensure the collective oversight and management of the interfaces between the two projects. The Planning process for the road will enable people to participate, have an influence and comment on the proposals.
- o) Potential impacts the EALR may have on a number of environmental factors including nature networks, biodiversity, woodland, access to greenspace and wildlife and the need for mitigation to be identified. The Environmental Impact Assessment process as part of the planning application for the EALR will address these aspects and mitigation requirements.
- p) Potential challenges in relation to safety, including:
 - construction safety.
 - design of bridges to prevent suicide.
 - safety of the road – engineering design to reduce risk of collisions and consider personal safety issues e.g. for lone female drivers in event of breakdown.

4 Suggested Actions

In the discussion, the group suggested some recommended actions to enhance the health, and equity impacts of EALR proposals and mitigate any negative impacts where possible. These are summarised below for Design, Build and Operate stages:

4.1 Design

- a) In designing the EALR, it will be important to safeguard and invest in active travel routes, ensuring that they are well lit, safe and respond to community needs.
- b) In designing, building and operating EALR, ensure close engagement with NHS Lanarkshire Infrastructure Team to allow for access and connectivity issues in relation to the new Monklands Hospital to be addressed collaboratively.
- c) In designing and building EALR, collaborate with transport operators, transport planning and NHS Lanarkshire to understand and address potential increased risk of suicide in area, posed by new structures required by the new road. The Active Travel link proposed by NHS Lanarkshire can potentially be a risk – to be passed to NHS Lanarkshire.
- d) In designing the EALR, to increase safety, include best practice in road engineering to reduce speed and collisions and consideration of personal safety given the remoteness of some of the road.
- e) In designing and building EALR, North Lanarkshire Council to continue collaboration with local educational institutions, particularly secondary schools and colleges, to provide placement and apprenticeship opportunities as part of project development, with targeted support for care experienced young people and others at risk of poor employment outcomes. This will be facilitated by Community Benefits and links made with our Brighter Futures Programme of Work. North Lanarkshire Council to devise a targeted Community Benefits Plan for EALR taking into account local priorities, inequalities in the area and opportunities to ensure under-represented groups can access job opportunities created or facilitated.
- f) In designing and building EALR, North Lanarkshire Council and partners to continue to engage with local communities to reduce uncertainty and feeling of lack of control or influence, improving communication, and building trust with local communities, particularly those identified as most vulnerable to potential risks or key beneficiaries.
- g) In designing the EALR, North Lanarkshire Council and partners to consider Traveller communities provision, including appropriate signage and communications.

4.2 Build

- a) In building and operating EALR, North Lanarkshire Council to engage and collaborate with SPT, other Regional and local transport planning partners to address future public transport provision.

- b) In building the EALR, it will be important to safeguard or relocate nature routes.
- c) In building EALR, North Lanarkshire Council's approach to align with Community Wealth Building principles and Glasgow City Region Sustainable Procurement Strategy to ensure the realisation of community benefits.

4.3 Operate

- a) In operating of the EALR, North Lanarkshire Council and partners to limit or ban harmful advertising (junk food, gambling, fossil fuels etc).
- b) In operating EALR, North Lanarkshire Council and partners to take concerted effort to attracting businesses which will bring wider social and environmental benefits to the area, capitalising on areas of strength such as health sciences and avoiding the proliferation of drive throughs and unhealthy food outlets.

5 Research Questions

The group identified several questions about the impacts. These are listed below.

It was raised during the discussion that 29% of people in North Lanarkshire don't have access to a car, and that older people, young people and disabled people were more likely to be reliant on public transport and active travel. Relating to this statistic, it would be beneficial to obtain further information on the following:

1. What is the level of latent demand for active travel and for public transport in North Lanarkshire?
2. What are the levels of car ownership in areas surrounding the project and in areas with travel needs within the project movement corridor?

It was raised during the discussion that the project could have positive benefits on traffic on existing road networks and for local businesses, but also that some connections and access routes could be impacted.

To gain a better understanding of these benefits and impacts, the following questions will be investigated:

3. What is the impact of EALR on traffic in surrounding areas, e.g. A73?
4. What is the evidence of the impact of new EALR/changes to A73 traffic on local businesses?
5. What are the impacts of the EALR on businesses?

It was discussed that due to the scale of the project, there will be different communication needs and ability to manage change across groups. A strong engagement and communication strategy incorporating a range of potential approaches is needed.

To help shape the engagement and communication strategy for the project, the following questions will be investigated:

6. What is best practice in community engagement in road planning/delivery/operation schemes?
7. What are transport users' and residents' perceptions of the impacts of EALR? What influences these perceptions?

Methods for gathering evidence to address these questions will be devised by the Project Team.

6 Detailed Discussion

The group identified that East Airdrie Link Road (EALR) may affect the following groups of people:

- Local communities along the proposed road – change in access arrangements may change in relation to private vehicle access and public transport provision (consideration of reality v perception).
- Landowners or those who live close to the proposed link road.
- Broader population in the region who may use the new road to travel to other destinations.
- People who currently use the routes that may be affected by new road to travel to and from work, leisure, or education.
- Local employers.
- Local businesses.
- People experiencing poverty.
- People who have a disability.
- Older people.
- Children and young people.
- Public sector services and organisations.
- People with an interest in the environment.
- Agricultural businesses.
- Travellers.
- People who may benefit from employment opportunities.

- People who use the new hospital – patients, visitors, and staff.
- People who can drive and people who cannot drive.
- People with respiratory and other health conditions affected by air quality.
- People who have to make frequent trips to hospital due to health conditions.

The group discussed the need for cumulative impacts to be considered by the Environmental Impact Assessment.

6.1 Impacts by Population Group

The group discussed the populations on the health and equity impact checklist as follows:

Children and Young People

- This group are more reliant on public transport therefore good public transport and active travel opportunities will be important.
- There may be potential opportunities for employment for younger people, including during the construction phase of EALR.
- There is an opportunity for the hospital contractor to work with local schools, as keen to increase proportion of young people into construction and future hospital roles.
- Younger people are at a higher risk of suicide. There are high suicide attempts from rail in North Lanarkshire, and therefore potential opportunities for roads campaigns should be considered.
- Nature trails and walking routes used by younger children/nurseries may be impacted.
- There may be safety issues of having a building site next to a school. Routes to schools maybe affected by disruption during the construction stage (bus routes also).

Older People

- More reliant on public transport. More likely to have mobility needs.
- More likely to be using the hospital (as patients and visitors) and more likely to have respiratory conditions which may be impacted by air quality.
- More resistant to change.
- Less likely to have internet and access to be aware of and respond to consultations. Different forms of communication required.
- Older/Retired people walking groups who make use of quieter roads and woodlands.

Working Age Population

- Hospital staff potentially benefiting from lower journey times, better journeys to and from work (if they are drivers, may face barriers if non-drivers).
- Benefit from enhanced connectivity to local businesses and services.
- Benefit from enhanced connectivity to work and employment opportunities.
- Potential benefits from reduced journey/commuting time/more reliable journey times.
- Potential challenges with car parking in local area – increased demand and need for increased capacity. This is an issue to be referred to NHS Lanarkshire.

Disabled People

- People most vulnerable to issues with change and disruption.
- Additional traffic on routes to the new road.
- Accessibility in relation to consultation e.g. visually impaired. (More relevant to the hospital).
- Communication issues in relation to signage and new route.
- Inclusive design of active travel infrastructure, consider lighting but also impact on the environment.
- People sensitive to light and noise, particularly at junctions.
- More reliant on public transport due to low income and therefore potentially worst impacted by limited provision.

Sexual Orientation

- Limited baseline data about LGBTQi+ – would benefit from data collection (in collaboration with NHS Lanarkshire) to improve understanding, develop inclusive employment interventions, and track progress.

Race and Ethnicity

- Consideration of potential Travellers' site, based on previous there is a likelihood they would just travel through and stay for a few weeks rather than long term. May require designated sites with appropriate access, including signage.
- Language and accessible communications for ESOL.
- People who are non-English speakers – follow Scottish Government guidance on signage.
- More reliant on public transport due to low income.

- Minority ethnic populations more likely to experience poverty and rely on public transport.
- Potentially worst impacted by lack of affordable public transport links to and from hospital.
- May have English as an additional language and require tailored communication.
- Language and accessible communications for ESOL.
- Sign language and road signage aligned with national regulations.

Women and Men

- Women more likely to work shifts, lower paid jobs, use and rely on public transport.
- Community safety if break down on roads.
- Need for good lighting on active travel from safety perspective.
- Men potentially more likely to benefit from employment. Opportunity to promote jobs with girls as well within schools and promote broader aspect of the construction phase – Finance, Admin, Human Resources.

Homeless People

- Housing opportunities, benefit from support to access affordable homes.
- May be at increased risk from increased traffic/air and noise pollution.

People in Remote, Rural or Island Locations

- Perceived further disconnection/becoming more remote.
- Digital connectivity limited, leading to perceived or actual isolation.
- May be at increased risk from increased traffic/air and noise pollution during construction and operational phase if their homes are impacted by new road.

People Living in Poverty

- Poorer health outcomes – higher access of services.
- More reliant on public transport and less car ownership.
- More opportunities in relation to access to employment.
- Community wealth building – potential for community benefits e.g. replacement greenspace, local businesses, and skills.

Other Population Groups

- Veterans
 - Impact of noise.
- People involved in the criminal justice system
 - Opportunities for involvement in community service and employment.
- Trauma
 - Impact of noise.
- Care experienced
 - Target for employment.
- Carers
 - Issues accessing hospital.
- Students
 - Opportunities to link with colleges for future employment.
 - Should improve access to colleges for students.
- Low literacy or numeracy
 - Communication requirements.

6.2 Health Determinants

The group then discussed the health determinants on the checklist as follows:

Economic Environment

The EALR has the potential to provide significantly increased connectivity and improve access for businesses. This can lead to new and expanded businesses in the area but also housing development. This will be LDP led.

It will be important to consider broader social and environmental drivers rather than solely market impact in decision making, ensuring that drive-throughs for example are not the majority of all businesses created in the area.

The group also discussed the importance of:

- Advertising boards along the road and potential marketing opportunities – potential for policy on how they are used. e.g. potentially limiting harmful advertising.
- Ensuring balance of employment opportunities to ensure local residents can access.
- Ensuring that contractors and employers are living wage employers and utilising local procurement guidance to support local employment and enhance local community benefits.
- Supporting and facilitating access to new jobs at new hospital – replicate wording re procurement and community benefits.

Social Environment

Issues such as severance and community displacement were recognised, as well as issues of uncertainty and sense of limited control and influence from the community in decision making. It was suggested that it would be important to:

- Communicate and engage with communities and stakeholders to provide a sense of control and influence in the process, reducing uncertainty and confusion.
- Be mindful of language used during process – providing clarity and acting with transparency.
- Important to note that there is often more of a focus on negative comments and views, but that communication and engagement can help capture benefits and positive comments. Often challenging to record support for a given project.

Place and Physical Environment

Noise and Air pollution were highlighted as an issue – it can be improved in some areas but worsen in others as a result of increased traffic and car journeys.

The repurposing of land for the road may lead to loss of forestry, woodland and greenspace which can potentially lead to loss of biodiversity corridors and disconnect nature networks at a regional level and loss of land currently used for recreational purposes.

There will be direct environmental impacts during the construction such as dust, increased traffic, noise, and air pollution more broadly.

The group highlighted potential for negative messages about road building and impact on the environment, including emissions. The limited provision of active travel infrastructure may also be an issue – EALR providing 5k of active travel on 10k route.

The group suggested that there are measures to support public transport provision, but it will be important to consider:

- Route needs to be attractive to be commercially viable. Council to influence.
- There is an opportunity for community transport models. Opportunity to have a bus audit to highlight need. However, there are challenges with long term funding.

There will potentially be opportunities for renewable energy generation, there already is a windfarm which can benefit from enhanced connectivity and expand.

Not discussed at the session but highlighted afterwards: increased volume of traffic has the potential to increase risk of higher incidence of road traffic accidents (RTAs) and may result in increased physical inactivity. EALR design meets DMRB – Road Safety Audits to be carried out across three stages.

Access to and Quality of Services

There is understanding of the opportunity provided by North Lanarkshire Council investment but also the impact this may have had on other services budgets and on other local projects.

EALR has the potential to improve access and connectivity to local council services, though it is accepted that there will be some disruption during construction phase.

As outlined above, there is the potential for new housing development, where appropriate, but it is important to consider the need for better sustainable transport opportunities (referred to above in relation to impact on different groups and also environmental impacts). This will be LDP led.

Commercial and Environmental Influences on Physical and Mental Health

There are a number of potential business development opportunities, but it will be important to be cautious to avoid drive-throughs and advertising with an impact on healthy food, nutrition, and obesity, as well as physical inactivity, all of which are issues in North Lanarkshire

7 Workshop Participants

- Colin Anderson, NHS Lanarkshire
- Elspeth Russell, NHS Lanarkshire
- Fiona Maguire, North Lanarkshire Council
- Gordon Laing, North Lanarkshire Council
- Gregor Yates, Glasgow City Council
- Hayley Andrew, North Lanarkshire Council
- Helen Hassall, Public Health Scotland
- Jodie Allan, North Lanarkshire Council
- Josephine Haigh, Public Health Scotland
- Kirsty Gray, North Lanarkshire Council
- Lesley Biggam, North Lanarkshire Council
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- Stuart McLaughlan, North Lanarkshire Council