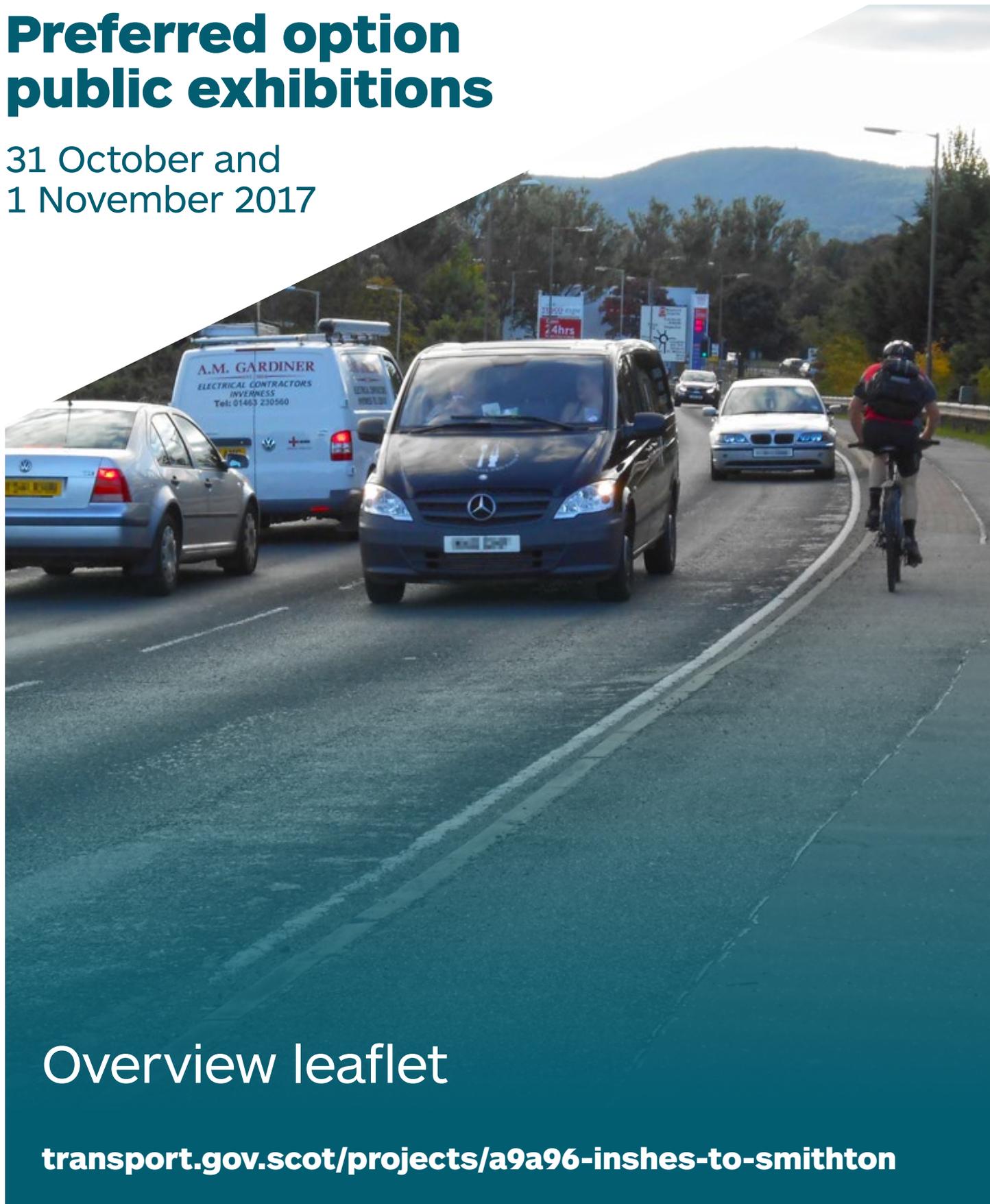


A9/A96

Inshes to Smithton scheme

Preferred option public exhibitions

31 October and
1 November 2017



Overview leaflet

transport.gov.scot/projects/a9a96-inshes-to-smithton

Introduction

In 2014, Transport Scotland held public exhibitions to present the outcome of the A9/A96 Connections Study. Transport Scotland then appointed Jacobs to take forward the next stage of the options assessment process for the A9/A96 road connection between Inshes and Smithton.

Following a sifting process, three options each with an 'A' and 'B' variant to reflect the alternative alignments close to Ashton Farm were progressed for further assessment. These were presented to local communities in August 2016 to seek vital public feedback on the options being developed.

Refinement of the options has taken account of the vital feedback from the exhibitions. For instance a change was made to the design options at Cradlehall roundabout in order to minimise the impact on the mature trees along Caulfield Road North.

This leaflet provides an overview of the outcome of the option assessment work, and the preferred option for the for the A9/A96 Inshes to Smithton scheme.



Looking west from Cradlehall towards Raigmore

Scheme assessment

Transport Scotland carries out a rigorous assessment process to establish the preferred option for a road improvement scheme.

The preparation and development of road schemes follows the scheme assessment process set out in the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB). This three-stage assessment process covers engineering, environment, traffic and economics.

Throughout this process Transport Scotland consults a large number of people and interested bodies.

The options assessment (DMRB Stage 2) process for the A9/A96 Inshes to Smithton scheme has been completed.



Looking east from Inshes towards Smithton

Inverness & Highland City-Region Deal

As part of the Scottish Government's commitment within the £315 million Inverness & Highland City-Region Deal which was signed in January 2017, Transport Scotland is progressing plans for a single carriageway road connecting Inshes to Smithton in Inverness.

Central to the Deal is improving access to and within communities. The Deal will improve connectivity through investment in transport including the development of the A9/A96 Inshes to Smithton scheme.

The A9/A96 Inshes to Smithton scheme is interdependent with other projects and plans being progressed by The Highland Council, as well as being dependent on the proposed A96 Dualling Inverness to Nairn (including Nairn Bypass) project.

Preferred option

For the DMRB Stage 2 Assessment process, three options, each with variants 'A' and 'B' to reflect alternative alignments close to Ashton Farm, were considered.

Following this options assessment, Option 3 has been identified as the preferred option.

This includes:

- Approximately 2.4km single carriageway
- Junctions at Ashton Farm and Cradlehall
- New link to Inverness Retail and Business Park
- Bridge over the Highland Main Line Railway
- Increasing capacity of Inshes overbridge to two lanes in each direction
- Lane to be added on A9 southbound to assist merging and diverging traffic.

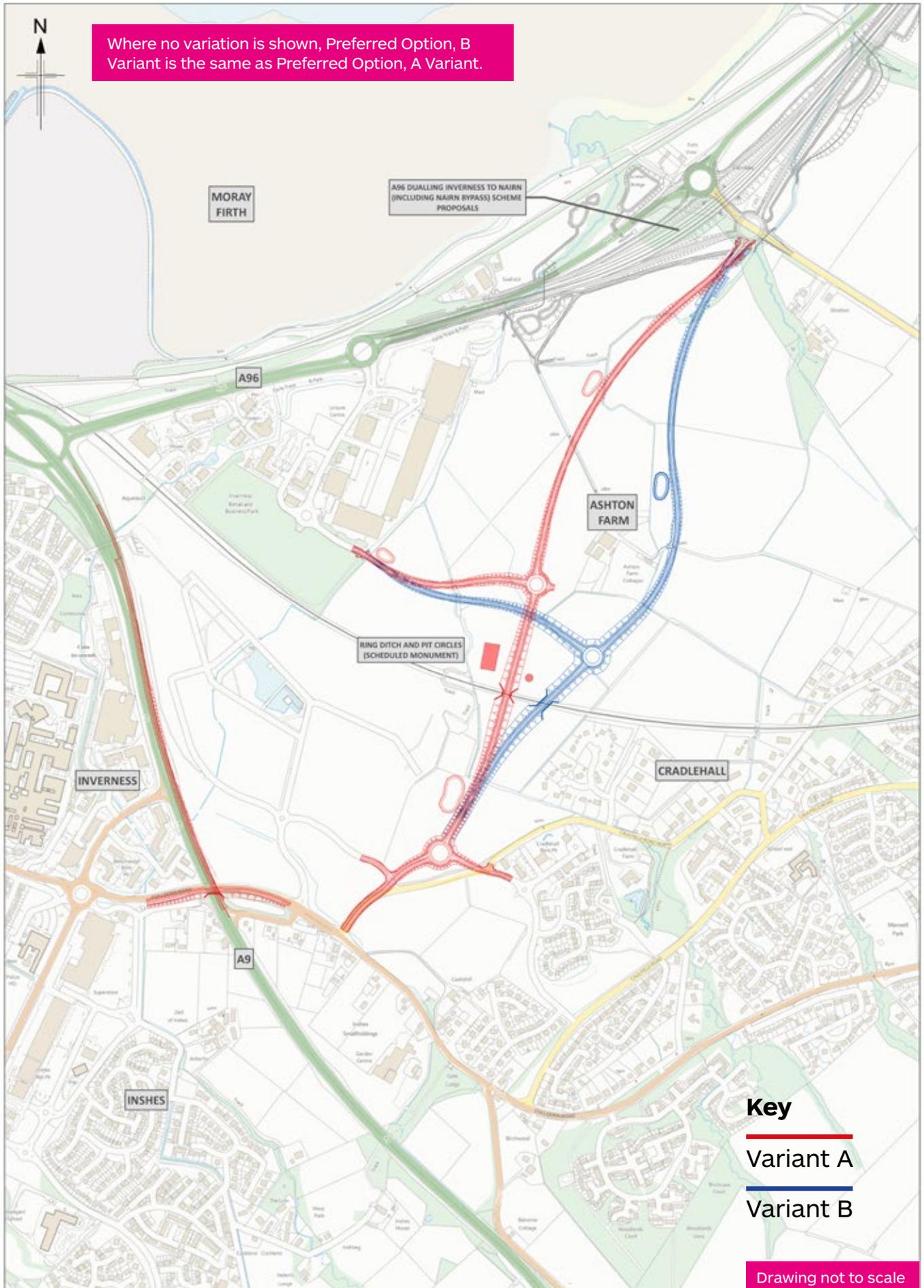


Large versions of maps for all options considered are available on the Transport Scotland website.

Options assessment

The following is a summary of the options assessment and the reasons why option 3 is the preferred option:

- **Option 3** has less adverse noise impacts. **Options 1 and 2** adversely affect a greater number of properties
- **Option 3** has the least impact upon landscape character and visual amenity. It avoids the necessity for significant road embankments to the west of Cradlehall Roundabout which **Options 1 and 2** would require
- **Option 3** requires no property demolition, requires the least land take and impacts the lowest number of land interests. **Options 1 and 2** are likely to require the demolition of properties
- **Option 3** will increase the capacity of Inshes overbridge to two lanes in each direction within the established travel corridor. This avoids significant impact on the operation of Inshes Retail Park and the Dell of Inshes road network
- **Option 3** requires the least construction material. It does not require major road embankments over Culloden Road and the A9
- **Options 1 and 3** are predicted to have lower impact on ecology and nature conservation. All options have the potential to affect habitat for bats and badgers
- **Option 3** has the greater safety benefit compared to **Options 1 and 2**. All options reduce the traffic levels on local roads within Smithton and Culloden residential area resulting in less potential conflict between vehicles and non-motorised users (NMUs)
- **Option 3** offers a reduction in traffic levels and improvements in journey times on the trunk road network, although the reductions are less than those that would be achieved with **Options 1 and 2**
- **Options 1 and 2** have the potential to significantly deteriorate the operation of the network at Inshes Retail Park and Dell of Inshes Road. **Option 3** overall provides a more balanced level of operational performance across the road network
- All of the options provide good value for money, with **Option 3** having the lowest estimated scheme cost
- All options impact the scheduled monument near Ashton Farm to the same extent. **Option 3** does not impact historic building elements of Castlehill House (Category B listed building). **Options 1 and 2** negatively impact the setting of the house
- All options enable the Scottish Government's drive for economic growth by assisting the realisation of The Highland Council's plan for development of Inverness to the east of the A9
- All options have the potential for both adverse and some positive impacts upon the environment. There are no potential impacts so significant that an option should be discounted on the basis of any individual environmental criteria
- All options have a similar impact in relation to air quality
- All options will function as a travel corridor through the Inverness East development area. Further assessment of NMU and public transport facilities will be undertaken during the Stage 3 assessment process working in conjunction with The Highland Council, and new facilities will be implemented with the design
- All options would have an impact on road users during construction. **Option 2** would have the greatest impact, due to the need to demolish and rebuild Inshes overbridge, and **Option 1** would have the lowest impact
- All options have the potential to impact upon drainage and flooding which may require mitigation and will be considered at Stage 3.



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The preferred option variants shown are indicative and will be developed further during the next stage of design development.

Preferred option (cont.)

The preferred option will be developed further during the next stage of design development.

This includes refinement of the roads design, layout and location of junctions, Non-Motorised User (NMU) facilities and consideration of private accesses.

Environmental Impact Assessment

The potential negative environmental effects, identified at this stage, will be investigated in more detail through the DMRB Stage 3 Environmental Impact Assessment process, taking into account the alternative alignments close to Ashton Farm.

The design will be developed to avoid environmental impacts where possible, and appropriate mitigation will be designed where required.

Further consultation will also be undertaken with statutory bodies and other consultees.



Artist's impression of Preferred option – variant A

Non-Motorised User (NMU) facilities

Suitable provision for NMUs is an important part of the scheme. Provision for NMUs will be incorporated as the scheme develops, in consultation with local interest groups.

As part of the DMRB Stage 2 Assessment process, we have identified and assessed impacts on existing NMU links and this was included in the overall consideration of options.

NMU provision for the preferred option will be designed and developed during the DMRB Stage 3 Assessment and will be developed in conjunction with The Highland Council's emerging masterplan for Inverness East.

NMU provision

The following objectives have been set in terms of NMU provision:

- To maintain continuity of the existing National Cycle Network Route 1 as it passes through the scheme corridor
- To maintain continuity of the existing core path at Ashton Farm as it passes through the scheme corridor
- To maintain continuity of other existing NMU routes as they pass through the scheme corridor
- To take account of the proposed East Inverness Active Travel Corridor (EIATC) in the development of the scheme design
- To recognise and exploit opportunities to provide for existing and potential future NMU desire lines that pass through the scheme corridor and the surrounding area.



Existing NMU provision linking Inverness Retail and Business Park to UHI



Ashton Farm core path

What happens next?

Transport Scotland's design consultant, Jacobs, will take forward the development and assessment of the preferred option for the scheme (DMRB Stage 3 Assessment) and will look to publish draft Road Orders, Compulsory Purchase Order and an Environmental Statement for the A9/A96 Inshes to Smithton Scheme in 2019.

The draft Road Orders will define the line of the developed preferred option.

The draft Compulsory Purchase Order will define the extent of the land needed to deliver the scheme.

The Environmental Statement will record a detailed assessment of the impacts of the developed preferred option and will outline any mitigation required.

The next stage of the assessment process will include:

- Consultation with affected parties
- Further consultation with statutory bodies, Community Councils and other relevant interest groups
- Design development of the preferred option (including junction layouts)
- Development of NMU facilities
- Ground investigation works
- Identification of the land required for the scheme and preparation of draft Orders
- Environmental Impact Assessment of the developed preferred option
- Development of suitable mitigation measures to reduce impact on the environment.



Artist's impression of Preferred option – variant B

Comments and feedback

Transport Scotland welcomes your comments and feedback. Please take time to consider the information presented here today and provide any comments you may have as soon as possible and by **13 December 2017**.

You can provide your comments to us by:

- Using the relevant feedback form and leaving it in the Feedback Box at the exhibition
- Feedback forms are also available to download on the Transport Scotland website
- Email or post your comments to us.

Email to: a9a96-inshes-smithton@transport.gov.scot

Post to: **A9/A96 Inshes to Smithton team, Transport Scotland, Buchanan House, 58 Port Dundas Road, Glasgow G4 0HF**

Further information

For further information on the A9/A96 Inshes to Smithton scheme, please visit the Transport Scotland website:

transport.gov.scot/projects/a9a96_inshes-to-smithton

Please submit your comments to us as soon as possible and by **13 December 2017**.

A9/A96 Inshes to Smithton scheme leaflet and exhibition panels can be made available in alternative formats on request by contacting the project team.

JACOBS

