



Appendix A26.2 – Extracts from SNH Landscape Character Assessments

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This is an area of undulating ground that fringes the higher hills to the west of Aberdeen, dropping to a largely flat area around Clinterty at its north-western extreme. The height range is from approximately 70 metres in the north-west to 150 metres nearer Brimmond, where a stronger hill character takes over. Eastward views are limited by the series of hills which rings the western edge of Aberdeen. There are, therefore, no views to the city, but in other directions the extensive area of undulating wooded farmland that forms the bulk of the countryside westwards is obvious. Bennachie is visible from the north-west of the area.

Agriculture is the main landuse, consisting of both arable and pasture with the latter becoming more prevalent with increasing height. Fields are divided by either stone dykes or post-and-wire fences. The dykes are overgrown in places, and are sometimes emphasised by clumps of gorse. Occasional hedgerows are located towards the south of the area. There are small areas of woodland, but they are limited in extent and the area consequently has a largely open character. However, small clumps of trees near buildings and the presence of shelterbelts add variety to the agricultural areas. Some of the shelterbelts are wholly coniferous, which is an unusual feature.

Although the village of Blackburn lies just to the north, settlement within the area itself is sparse, particularly in the south, and it mainly comprises scattered traditional-style farmsteads and cottages. The latter are often located in small clusters of two or three. They are generally associated with tree planting. There are also some more modern-style buildings but these are also often associated with tree clumps and they are, therefore, integrated into the landscape. Minor roads cross the area. Views to the masts on Brimmond Hill are clear, and the urban areas of Westhill and Blackburn are also visible. The main man-made element within the area is the agricultural college at Clinterty. This consists of a range of modern buildings, some of which are partially screened by coniferous tree belts. A travelling people's site is located within woodland near to the college.

Summary of Distinctive Landscape Features:-

- The varied topography, ranging from hill slopes to flat ground;
- The mixture of tree clumps and shelterbelts - occasionally wholly coniferous;
- The scattered settlement pattern, becoming sparser towards the south-east;
- College buildings at Clinterty with conifer screening;
- Views to adjacent residential areas;
- Views north-westwards.

Sensitivity to Landscape Change

Visibility

The northern part of the area has a high visibility, as it can be viewed from the A96 Aberdeen to Inverness trunk road, one of the main approach roads to the city from the west. The southern part of the area has a medium level of visibility. It can be seen from nearby roads and areas of settlement, and glimpsed from the A96 Aberdeen - Inverness trunk road. It can also be seen from the recreational vantage points of the Four Hills, of which Brimmond Hill is the highest.

Built Development

The village of Blackburn lies on the northern edge of the area and Westhill can be seen from the south. The Aberdeen College campus at Clinterty, and the travelling people's site nearby are relatively large developments. Apart from this, individual houses, occasionally sited in small groups, are the main form of development. They are scattered throughout the area, but are more sparsely distributed in the south.

Transportation

The proposed Blackburn bypass will have some impact on the north of the area, as it is intended to run to the south of the village. Existing minor roads generally run north - south. The landform to the south of the area means that any new east - west routes would entail built structures, and, therefore, they could be visually obtrusive.

Extraction / Landfill

The sloping topography of much of the area, its proximity to the A96 and several residential developments, and its predominantly open character, make the area sensitive to this type of development.

Agriculture and Forestry

At present there are not many trees in the area. Those that do exist occur mostly in small groups associated with buildings. The open character provides continuity with the adjacent moorland on the higher ground of Brimmond Hill, but occasional trees occur along boundaries. Large or medium scale planting would alter this existing open character. The field pattern is less distinct than in some other character areas.

Recreation

Informal recreation, such as cycling on the minor roads, could be accommodated without altering the existing character. However, extension to or construction of any associated car parks or buildings could be visible.

Summary of Sensitivity to Landscape Change:-

The area itself has a rural character despite the presence of nearby large residential areas which, together with the nearby presence of the main north-western approach to the city, make it visible, particularly the north of the area. The character area has a varied settlement pattern and a variety of field boundaries. Its open character acts as a foreground to higher moorland on Brimmond Hill.

Landscape Guidelines

Conserve

- Tree and shelterbelt management, to retain these distinctive characteristics;
- Maintain open character;
- Maintain stone dykes and hedgerows.

Enhance

- Consider phasing-in mixed tree species in place of conifers at Clinterty college to increase its integration with the surrounding landscape.
- Consider some additional boundary tree planting.

This area consists of smooth, rounded hills that reach a height of 266 metres (Brimmond Hill) and 200 metres (Elrick Hill). They form part of the distinctive curve of hills which encloses Aberdeen to the west. Panoramic views are possible from the summits of the hills: eastwards to the sea and westwards over the undulating farmland to Bennachie and the Grampian foothills

Agriculture on the lower slopes of the hills gives way to unenclosed moorland closer to the summits. The faint outlines of abandoned fields can be seen on the higher slopes of Brimmond Hill. Elrick Hill has areas of mixed or broadleaved woodland up to its summit, but Brimmond Hill is treeless. This provides a contrast with the extensive areas of coniferous plantation which cap the other hills in the range around the west of the city.

The cluster of masts on the summit of Brimmond Hill is a distinctive feature for some distance, and is the dominant man-made element in the area. Otherwise, one or two traditional farm steadings, and some cottages within woodland on Elrick Hill, are the only signs of settlement within the area itself. A minor road runs between the two hills, and a maintenance track leads up to the masts on the summit. A footpath network has been laid out on the hills as part of the Four Hills Country Walks Project.

Summary of Distinctive Landscape Features:-

- A very visible area of high ground;
- Forms part of "ring" of hills around the western edge of the urban area;
- Unenclosed moorland on Brimmond Hill;
- The presence of telecommunications masts;
- The area forms a strong, visible contrast with the urban area.

Sensitivity to Landscape Change*Visibility*

This area is highly visible from many surrounding viewpoints, including much of the city and several of the main approach roads to Aberdeen.

Built Development, Transportation, Extraction / Landfill

The high visibility, steep slopes and open moorland that are characteristic of this area make it sensitive to new built development, transport infrastructure or landfill / extraction landuses. However, significantly increasing the number of masts on the summit of Brimmond Hill could have a greater clustering effect, and this might have a detrimental impact on the area.

Agriculture and Forestry

Moorland is the characteristic vegetation type and landuse of this area, which is unusual within the district. Anything that reduced the area or quality of this resource would have a significant effect on the character of the area and on views from outwith it. There is therefore limited or no potential for increasing forestry or agricultural influence in the area.

Recreation

The area is currently used as part of the Four Hills Country Walks Project in the hinterland of Aberdeen, with some areas of low-key car parking to service these routes. Extension in the form of built development, even small-scale, could be difficult to integrate.

Summary of Sensitivity to Landscape Change:-

The area forms a distinctive landmark from the city and surrounds, with a characteristic open moorland vegetation that is unusual within the district. There are very limited options for any development without seriously affecting the existing rural character that currently provides a visible strong contrast to the city.

Landscape Guidelines

Conserve

- Unenclosed moorland on Brimmond Hill should be maintained as a contrast to the vegetation on the other hills in the area west of the city; preparation of a moorland vegetation management plan is recommended;

Enhance

- Some native trees could be introduced on lower slopes, and on Elrick Hill to link with existing woodland patterns, without losing the open character of the hilltop on Brimmond Hill.

This area has a plateau-like landform. Predominantly flat at its lower, eastern end, it rises gradually to the lower slopes of Brimmond Hill to the west. The variation in height is from 140 to 190 metres, approximately.

Agriculture is the major landuse, with improved pasture being the dominant vegetation type. Part of the area is used as experimental ground by the nearby agricultural college at Craibstone. The fields are divided by fences, or by stone dykes. Many of the dykes are overgrown, and occasional lines of scrubber vegetation follow old field boundaries. Small boundary trees are infrequently dotted along some fence lines.

The minor roads - some single track with passing places - which cross the area are the main man-made feature within the area itself. However, there are views to the masts on Brimmond Hill, and the industrial estate and airport at Dyce. Extensive views are possible to the north to Tyrebagger Hill, Dyce, and beyond to the Gordon countryside. Brimmond Hill immediately to the west blocks any more distant views in that direction, and extensive coniferous plantations immediately east of the area limit eastward views. Southwards, the landform itself prevents long views, as it forms a wide shoulder at Kepplestone / Kirkhill.

Summary of Distinctive Landscape Features:-

- The plateau landform, forming a foreground to Brimmond Hill;
- The open character with very few trees;
- Predominantly agricultural land use;
- Extensive views.

Sensitivity to Landscape Change*Visibility*

The visibility of this flat, open area is low to medium. Apart from the minor roads that cross it the area can be seen only from some distance away, for example from Dyce, as part of the setting for Brimmond Hill.

Built Development

The area is largely undeveloped and its altitude makes it visible from, and closely associated with, the adjacent hills. It is therefore sensitive to further development.

Transportation

Other than widening the existing minor roads, there is little opportunity for new transport infrastructure, given the terrain and location of the area. New routes would have a major impact in this character area.

Extraction / Landfill

There is some small-scale existing tipping, but there is no tree cover or landform variation to screen further development of this sort.

Agriculture and Forestry

Most of the area is managed as agricultural land by Craibstone College. The field pattern is not as distinct as elsewhere in the district, where stone dykes are more frequently used as field boundaries. However, there are occasional individual trees along boundaries which are distinctive, because the altitude of the area means that they are frequently seen silhouetted against the sky. There is limited scope for increasing the amount of woodland in the area without compromising the current characteristically open nature of the area.

Recreation

There is some potential for cycling routes along the minor roads, and linking the Four Hills project with housing areas on the edge of the city. There are few opportunities for formal recreation. Although a golf course is being constructed just beyond the north-western edge of the area, it is unlikely to be highly visible from the area.

Summary of Sensitivity to Landscape Change:-

The area is predominantly rural in character, and it acts as a foreground to Brimmond Hill. It is open rather than wooded, and there is little existing development.

Landscape Guidelines

Conserve / Manage

- Manage existing hedgerow trees;
- Restore stone dykes.

Enhance

- Consider limited expansion to the numbers of boundary trees.

This is a wide, shallow, saucer-shaped landform which rises gently on all sides except the east, where a break in slope drops more steeply down to Bucksburn and the urban area. Heights range from 100 to 200 metres. Views are generally enclosed by the rising landform outwith the area. However, the altitude of the area allows views to the industrial estate at Dyce and the radar installation at Perwinnes, as well as the nearby urban edge.

Within the area agriculture is the main landuse. Large, square fields, divided by either post-and-wire fences or stone dykes, are used for both arable and pasture. There are no large areas of woodland. However, extensive shelterbelts, particularly in the southern half of the area, contribute to the variety of vegetation types. There are also some hedgerows, although they tend to be "gappy". A moss occupies low-lying ground in the centre of the area.

Settlement is limited within the area, but consists of both modern and traditional buildings. The individual farmsteads and cottages that are the most common type of development tend to be traditional in style. A large institutional building is the most prominent modern development. Minor roads run round the edges of the area, but the marshy ground in the lowest part of the area precludes links directly across it. Part of the urban edge is adjacent to this area.

Summary of Distinctive Landscape Features:-

- The wide, "saucer-shaped" landform;
- The open character of the central area around the moss;
- The range of hedgerow trees and shelterbelts, sometimes lining minor tracks (beech is the dominant species);
- Stone walls and occasional hedgerows form distinctive field boundaries;
- The abrupt edge of the urban area at Kepplehills Road / Bucksburn;
- Views to the hills west of Aberdeen, Dyce and Perwinnes.

Sensitivity to Landscape Change

Visibility

This area is quite highly visible, as it can be seen from the Kingswells road and from the surrounding residential edge of Bucksburn and Sheddocksley. It can also be seen from Brimmond Hill.

Built Development

The area is adjacent to the urban edge of the city, but it is visually separated from it by a line of mature trees. Within the area, the existing settlement pattern consists of individual houses that are quite widely scattered, with varying amounts of tree cover that help to integrate existing small-scale development. Much of the landform is gently sloping, and new development could easily interrupt the smooth basin topography that at present can be appreciated as a whole.

Transportation

The existing minor roads (to Kingswells) are busy, but tend to follow the contours of the landform, and are therefore - apart from their traffic - not highly visible.

Extraction / Landfill

The area would be sensitive to development of this type because of the open, sloping landform and higher level views provided by the busy roads around the edge of the area.

Agriculture and Forestry

A characteristic of the area is the amount of definition provided by boundary vegetation - gorse and occasional trees or hedges, as well as the more common stone dykes. The area would be sensitive to any proposals that diluted this. There is scope for increasing the amount of woodland in the area, if it were planted in the form of clumps or belts. Other, larger-scale types of woodland could affect the open character of the central area.

Recreation

There are opportunities for informal provision for recreation, such as footpaths and cycle or equestrian routes, on existing tracks.

Summary of Sensitivity to Landscape Change:-

The area has a distinctive landform and boundary vegetation. It is predominantly rural in character despite its proximity to the city and views of parts of the built-up area.

Landscape Guidelines

Conserve / Manage

- Maintain the existing, distinctive tree / woodland pattern;
- Maintain the moss area for wildlife value;
- Maintain dykes and hedgerows.

Enhance

- Extend the tree pattern to help integrate urban edge.

Here, there is an undulating topography that rises to hilly ground on its west and south sides. Cloghill and Newpark Hill reach heights of 200 and 184 metres respectively. To the north, the ground rises to Brimmond Hill which lies just outside the character area. The lowest point in the area, at its eastern end, lies at approximately 140 metres. Views are limited to the north, west, and south by the higher surrounding ground. Eastwards, they extend across the flatter ground of the adjacent area, but beyond this the drop in height generally precludes views to the city, which is located on lower ground east of the break in slope.

Landuse is varied, with agriculture, woodland and developed areas all occurring within or immediately adjacent to the area. The small to medium-sized fields, in which pasture is more common than arable crops, are bounded by dykes more often than fences. The boundaries are often reinforced by single trees and gorse. Several of the stone walls are notable examples of consumption dykes. The area is well-wooded, although this is due to the presence of tree clumps, boundary trees and shelterbelts rather than large areas of woodland. Tree species are both broadleaved and coniferous.

The adjacent urban area of Kingswells visually dominates the area. The modern settlement has developed to the north of the original village. In some areas its edges have been planted with trees, although these have not yet reached a significant size, and the development tends to form an abrupt edge with the adjacent landscape. One minor but busy road crosses the area, and minor tracks branch from it. Views to the masts on Brimmond Hill are possible.

Summary of Distinctive Landscape Features:-

- The varied topography;
- The amount and variety of woodland forms - shelterbelts, clumps and boundary trees;
- Stone dykes (including notable examples of consumption dykes) dividing farmland into small fields;
- Abrupt urban edge of parts of Kingswells immediately adjoining the character area;
- The degree of visual enclosure due to the surrounding landform;
- Views to masts on Brimmond Hill.

Sensitivity to Landscape Change

Visibility

The area has a medium level of visibility. Although it is fairly well visually contained by rising ground, thereby limiting inward views from outside the area, the road running through it is busy.

Built Development

The intimate scale of the area and the rising slopes of the land limit the potential for development. There is no precedent for commercial or industrial development, and the scale of the area and the proximity of a large residential community would make its location difficult.

Transportation

The Western Peripheral Route alignment, if it ran through this area, should take particular account of the many fine consumption dykes that are such a feature here. The edge of the road should be carefully planned, preferably avoiding continuous lines of trees but with planting in parts, to reflect the existing pattern of trees in this landscape. Other road developments would be obtrusive given the sloping landform.

Extraction / Landfill

This area would be sensitive to this type of development, as it would be highly visible on the slopes of the area, and, even if it were located on lower ground, would be close to housing and a busy transport corridor.

Agriculture and Forestry

This area would be sensitive to a further reduction in rural character, despite the location of Kingswells within it. Agriculture, and the notable consumption dykes that frequently form field boundaries, is a major part of this. The varied woodland is also characteristic, generally occurring in small clumps or belts and located on higher slopes and around hill tops. This pattern could be extended a little without losing the present character of the area.

Recreation

Low-key informal recreation could be appropriate. Walks or cycle routes following the field dykes could provide educational opportunities.

Summary of Sensitivity to Landscape Change:-

This is a small-scale area with a generally rural character, containing notable consumption dyke field boundaries, and adjacent to a discrete large settlement.

Landscape Guidelines

Conserve / Manage

- Maintain and manage the characteristic woodland;
- Maintain stone dykes.

Enhance

- Increase structure planting around settlement

This area comprises the shallow valley of the Denburn. It extends from Hazlehead Park in the south to a ridgeline between Kingswells and Sheddocksley in the north. The landform encloses the area, allowing restricted views of the city edge around Sheddocksley to the east and Kingswells to the west. From the higher slopes views to the hills further west can be gained.

The primary landuse is agriculture. However, there is also a Local Nature Reserve at Den of Maidencraig, within which large areas have recently been planted with trees. There is a recreational footpath at the eastern end of the reserve. The main route east out of Aberdeen follows the line of the valley. Walled field boundaries form a distinctive feature of the area. In some places they have been formed into consumption dykes of considerable size, and are designated as ancient monuments. There is some native hazel woodland at Maidencraig, but little other woodland (except the new planting mentioned above). Along the valley floor there is some scrub, but apart from this trees tend to be isolated, or located in clumps often associated with buildings. Nonetheless, the character of the area is fairly open. The mature (to over-mature) beech trees lining the main road as it enters the built-up area form a notable feature.

Part of the extended settlement of Kingswells is situated at the western end of the area. Farm steadings and cottages are dotted throughout the area, mainly on the rising slopes although the derelict Mill of Maidencraig is located in the valley bottom. Kingswells House and Whytemyres House are situated on either end of the elongated area have architectural merit and are set in wooded policies, but it is the clock tower of Woodend Hospital within the urban area immediately to the east which forms the most notable man-made feature. The area also contains a main road route, as outlined above.

The urban edge of the city in this area generally follows the landform well, and it therefore avoids an overly-abrupt or harsh junction with the adjacent rural area. However, there is little "definition" to the urban edge - there are few trees located here, and the car park for the nature reserve is, consequently, rather prominent.

Summary of Distinctive Landscape Features:-

- The small-scale valley landform;
- The beech trees that line the main road into the city;
- Stone dykes, occasionally consumption dykes;
- Frequent, scattered buildings, generally traditional in style;
- Views to architectural landmarks.

Sensitivity to Landscape Change

Visibility

This area is located on the western edge of the city, and is highly visible from the busy A944 Alford road, which is well-used by commuters, as is the "Lang Stracht" road on the opposite side of the valley.

Built Development

The western edge of Aberdeen is visible from the area. There is a lack of both flat land and tree cover, and the high visibility of the area makes it sensitive to development. The existing settlement is primarily traditional in style and small scale. Buildings are often clustered into small groups, and are frequently associated with small clumps of deciduous trees. However, there is little existing woodland or tree cover to provide screening or provide a feature for integrating development.

Transportation

Upgrading of the existing road corridor, which runs east-west along the line of the valley, would be likely to have limited impact - depending upon the detailed design. Any new roads or structures which ran across the east-west "grain" of the landscape would be more obtrusive.

Landfill / Mineral Extraction

The open character of the landscape, the sloping ground, and its high visibility all make this area sensitive to this type of development. It would be difficult to mitigate successfully.

Agriculture / Forestry

Areas of forestry occur in adjacent landscape character areas, and can be seen from this zone. Additional woodland and tree planting could be accommodated in this area, particularly if it echoed the current pattern, for example forming small clumps adjacent to buildings. Key views to nearby city landmarks should be left clear of obstructions. The existing pattern of stone dyke field boundaries is distinctive, and should be retained where feasible, possibly with grant aiding to facilitate this.

Recreation

The existing informal recreational use could be extended with little impact on the area. The current wildlife project at Maiden Craig proposes to extend its links eastwards along a wildlife corridor at Woodend and Fernlea and into the urban edge. Similar links to Hazlehead to the paths are possible. However, tree planting to ensure integration with existing elements should be considered.

Summary of Sensitivity to Landscape Change:-

This character area has a predominantly open, small-scale valley landform. It is highly visible from busy approach roads to Aberdeen, and has, overall, a rural character, despite the views and proximity to the nearby city.

Landscape Guidelines

Conserve / Manage

- Manage the beech trees that line main road into city to ensure continuance of this feature;
- Reinstate / conserve stone dykes, particularly near roads.

Enhance

- Consider planting more trees on urban edge to "soften" it;
- Consider encouraging more tree planting around buildings within the rural fringe area;

This area consists of a low, gently rounded hill that forms the southern outlier of a ring of high ground to the west of the city. The hill visually encloses the lower land and prevents wider views. However, from higher ground wide views of parts of the city and surrounding farmland can be gained.

Generally, the lower slopes are in agricultural use, with the upper slopes devoted to coniferous forestry plantations. The woodland provides a strong contrast with the lower pastoral farmland. There are only a few isolated boundary trees or clumps, and this increases the contrast between the afforested higher ground and the open character of the lower slopes.

The few buildings in this area are traditional farm steadings located on the lower slopes. They generally have a few trees associated with them that form a deciduous clump around the buildings.

Summary of Distinctive Landscape Features:-

- Hill landform;
- The contrast between dense forestry plantation on upper slopes and agriculture on lower ground;
- Sparse settlement - what is present is traditional, and associated with small clumps of trees;
- Visual links with other hills fringing the western edge of Aberdeen.

Sensitivity to Landscape Change*Visibility*

This area has a high visibility because of its height and its proximity to both Westhill and the busy A944 western approach to Aberdeen. It is too low to be prominent in views from within the city itself.

Built Development

The slopes in this area are considerable and constrain the potential for development. Any development would also be very visible from the western approach road, and from Westhill. The existing settlement pattern is sparse, with a few individual houses and farmsteads on the lower slopes.

Transportation

Upgrading the minor roads in the area could have a significant impact because of its elevation and visibility from nearby areas.

Extraction / Landfill

This area would be sensitive to this type of development because of its visibility and the sloping ground that would make screening difficult.

Agriculture and Forestry

The existing balance between agriculture, which covers the lower third, approximately, of the slopes; and forestry which caps the hill, is characteristic. There is only very limited scope to extend the forestry in its distinctive large plantations without altering this balance. Management and felling of the mature trees will have considerable visual impact, but if replanting is carried out this should only be temporary, and may increase the diversity and age range of the forest.

Recreation

Informal recreation based on the forests occurs already with minimal landscape and visual impact.

Summary of Sensitivity to Landscape Change:-

This is a highly visible area of rural character that lies adjacent to a busy approach road to the city.

Landscape Guidelines

Conserve / Manage

- Maintain the mixture of open ground and forestry plantation;
- Maintain stone dykes;
- Maintain rural character of scattered traditional farmsteads tucked into the landform.

Enhance

- Diversify the woodland cover.

This area has a raised, gently sloping plateau containing a very shallow basin or depression-like form. The rising ground east of Kingswells to the north, and coniferous plantations to the west and east, generally enclose the area. However, long distance views can be gained south-eastwards towards the hills at Tullos and Kincorth. To the north-east, the multi-storey tower blocks around Northfield are visible from parts of the area, thereby establishing a visual link with the city.

The primary landuse of the area is agriculture, of which a large proportion is given over to horse grazing and recreational riding. Paths and bridleways extend west and east into the adjoining woodland areas. There are several large-scale coniferous plantations adjoining the area, but the area itself contains few trees. Occasional small boundary trees and pockets of gorse and broom occur, but overall the area has an open character.

There are only a few buildings in the area, mainly located towards the edges of the area, or alongside the minor roads which traverse it. Most are traditional in style, and many are associated with clumps of trees.

Summary of Distinctive Landscape Features:-

- The plateau-like landform;
- The open character within the area;
- The mixture of dykes and fences dividing the fields;
- Extensive views from parts of the area eastwards to the city.

Sensitivity to Landscape Change*Visibility*

This area is closely visible only from the busy Cults - Kingswells (Loanhead) road, but parts of it can be glimpsed from the "Lang Stracht" road into Aberdeen. Long views from it are possible to Altens and the flats at Northfield.

Built Development

The topography of the area is quite flat. However, despite the distant views to the city that are possible from this area, there is no immediate precedent for large-scale built development. The existing settlement pattern is of individual houses, located at fairly frequent intervals throughout the area, but mostly associated with the road network. There are usually small groups of trees adjacent to the houses.

Transportation

Any new routes that crossed the break of slope at the edge of the character area would have an impact from here, as it could result in views of a "notched" skyline.

Extraction / Landfill

The open and flat nature of this landscape would make such developments very open to view and possibly difficult to screen well. They might also interrupt the eastward views towards the city that are a characteristic at present.

Agriculture and Forestry

The predominant agricultural land use has a fairly strong field pattern, enclosed by both dykes and fences, and it would be sensitive to anything that altered this. Forestry, in the form of large plantations, is located on the edge of the area. Some extension of these plantations, if the more central area remained unplanted, could be accommodated. There are few boundary trees, and limited scope for further extension without altering the existing open character of the area.

Recreation

The nearby areas at Countesswells and Hazlehead provide informal walks and horse trails. However, there is less potential within the area itself other than in the adjacent forests. The minor roads in the area are too busy for the encouragement of safe cycling, walking or horse-riding.

Summary of Sensitivity to Landscape Change:-

This is an area of open, rural character with limited woodland structure other than on its edges. It has a sparse settlement pattern, making new development difficult to locate despite the flattish topography.

Landscape Guidelines

Conserve / Manage

- Dyke maintenance to aid retention of the existing field pattern;
- Retain views to south-east.

Enhance

- Some limited tree planting along field boundaries to extend the existing sparse pattern.

The landform of this area is very gently undulating - almost flat. It is the vegetation pattern that dominates the character of the area, with open areas contained within the surrounding woodland. Views are restricted by the woodland and the extensive tree planting within the park. Parts of the area are poorly drained and has associated scrubby and regenerating growth.

The area has been laid out partly as a municipal park with close mown grass, ornamental rose gardens, sculpture, shrubberies and trees; and partly as informal open ground among mixed woodland, which includes an element of coniferous plantation. There is a whole range of recreational facilities present, including playing fields, a golf course and a riding school. In addition to the recreational uses there are two commercial garden centres and a rifle shooting club. The area is criss-crossed by footpaths, bridleways, and drives.

There are few buildings within the area, and those that are present are generally well-screened by trees. The roads throughout the area are narrow, almost single-track. Low stone dykes are used quite extensively as boundaries, particularly at the eastern end of the park.

Summary of Distinctive Landscape Features:-

- The woodland, which is large in both scale and variety, and which enables screening of the various landuses in the park from outside viewpoints;
- The presence of the parkland, ornamental, and recreational areas;
- The balance between open space and woodland;
- Stone dykes, which are generally well-maintained.

Sensitivity to Landscape Change

Visibility

This area has a low visibility from outside because it is surrounded by woodland. However, it is a popular recreational resource that has a high level of visibility from within.

Built Development

Despite the flat land and screening effect of the woodland, the predominant recreational landuse acts as a constraint to development. Existing buildings consist of sports pavilions and occasional cottages (some of which have been converted to commercial use), generally located close to the woodland. The existing level of commercial / recreational activities, i.e. the garden centre and riding school, have little significant affect upon the landscape due to their location within woodland.

Transportation

There are only minor roads through the area at present, often single lane width and lined with drystone dykes.

Extraction / Landfill

The area would be highly sensitive to this type of development which would be inappropriate in the parkland setting.

Agriculture and Forestry

Agriculture has a minor role in this landscape and is largely limited to horticultural areas on the outskirts of the park. The woodland is by far the predominant landuse. It has both scenic and recreational value, and it is a fundamental resource of the area.

Recreation

Given the range of the existing recreational development, the woodland cover and public access, there is little scope for major recreational change at present. Intensification of elements such as car parking, road access, and lighting could have some impact upon the existing the landscape character.

Summary of Sensitivity to Landscape Change:-

This is a distinctive type of landscape that is well-wooded, with open ground used for sports and recreation.

Landscape Guidelines

Conserve / Manage

- Woodland management;
- Maintenance of stone dykes.

Enhance

- Diversify the age and species mix of the woodland by appropriate woodland management;
- Underplant some of the specimen trees;
- Upgrade hard details throughout the park - consider replacing the chain link fencing, for example, and co-ordinate details to reflect more strongly the historical background of the park;
- Sensitively manage any improvements to buildings and ancillary elements.

This area has a gently undulating topography. It slopes down from high points of approximately 130 metres in the east to a large, wide lower-lying hollow in the west. There are long distance views north-westwards to Bennachie and the surrounding hills from parts of the area; elsewhere, where the topography allows, the outline of the South Deeside hills forms a distinctive terminal to southerly views.

The land use is predominantly agriculture, with more pasture than arable. There is little use of dry stone walling and the definition between fields is therefore relatively indistinct, although in places the boundaries are reinforced by gappy lines of gorse or broom. The lower, flatter ground in the west of the area contains some pockets of scrubby vegetation. There are few significant boundary or shelterbelt trees, but coniferous plantations of various sizes are present particularly in the east. Much of the woodland is straight-edged, but as this corresponds to the adjacent field boundaries it does not appear incongruous. There are pockets of scrub alongside overgrown dykes, but despite this the landscape generally has a rather open appearance.

Settlement is sparse and consists of isolated farmsteads and crofts which are dotted throughout the area, generally avoiding the higher ground. They are usually associated with clumps of trees, and traditional-style buildings are more common than modern. The town of Westhill, although outside the character area, is visible to the north-east. Minor roads serve the area, with the Peterculter to Westhill route being the busiest.

Summary of Distinctive Landscape Features:-

- The gentle, smoothly rolling topography;
- The generally open appearance of the landscape, particularly on lower ground;
- The relatively indistinct field boundaries;
- The presence of blocks of coniferous trees;
- Scattered individual dwellings associated with clumps of deciduous trees;
- Views to the countryside beyond, to Bennachie, and to Westhill.

Sensitivity to Landscape Change

Visibility

This area has a medium to low level of visibility. The western parts can be seen from a distance from Gairlogie and also, possibly, glimpsed from Westhill. The busy Peterculter - Westhill road passes through the centre of the area. The other roads that pass through the area are quieter.

Built Development

The existing sparse settlement pattern consists of individual houses and steadings located on rising ground, often backed by plantations or groups of trees. Buildings avoid the lowest ground and are occasionally grouped in small clusters. There is no existing precedent for large-scale development, and the terrain is either sloping or poorly drained, as well as being traversed by several overhead power lines.

Transportation

The existing narrow roads tend to be located on higher ground and run parallel to the contours. Any new routes that broke with this pattern could be obtrusive, particularly if they crossed the lower ground on structures or embankments.

Extraction / Landfill

The scale of the area is large and parts of it have an open aspect. There is an existing large sand and gravel quarry in the east of the area. An enlargement of the working area would have a corresponding increase in landscape and visual impacts. Opening a new extraction area would also have significant impacts, despite the precedent provided by the existing quarry.

Agriculture and Forestry

The area is fairly open in character, despite the presence of substantial areas of commercial forestry on the rising slopes of the area. There are also usually one or two trees near houses in the area. There is potential for some extension to the forestry, and also to increasing the smaller groups of trees near houses. The agricultural landuse is dominant, with large fields and a less distinct enclosure pattern than in other character areas.

Recreation

There is limited potential for informal recreation within the area, although the quiet roads might form part of a longer cycle or horse-riding route. The commercial forests are unlikely to present many opportunities for recreation compared with areas closer to the city.

Summary of Sensitivity to Landscape Change:-

This is an open, predominantly agricultural area with sparse settlement and an area of mineral extraction.

Landscape Guidelines

Conserve

- Maintain stone dykes

Enhance

- Maintain, and possibly extend, the tree clumps, particularly around buildings.
- Occasional tree planting along the Peterculter road would frame views from the road.

Restore

- Restoration of the extraction site to agriculture will alleviate its visual and landscape impacts in the long term.

The topography of this area is diverse and undulating. Long distance views are possible, from some viewpoints, to the horizon formed by the south Deeside hills and the Grampian foothills in the south-west. However, the area is visually enclosed by rising land or woodland, and many outward views can be restricted as a result.

The landuse is predominantly agricultural, with a mixture of arable and grazing. There is also a good deal of woodland present throughout the area. It occurs in a variety of types:- as coniferous plantation, as mixed woodland, as clumps, as shelterbelts and as boundary trees. This contributes significantly to the considerable variety of this landscape. The lower-lying, more poorly-drained areas tend to have a scrubber vegetation cover, with fringes of coarse grasses, gorse and broom occurring along some field boundaries. The small- to medium-sized fields are divided by either stone walls (mostly) or fences. The policy woodlands of Countesswells House lie towards the eastern edge of the area, near which there is a notable avenue-like feature of, predominately, beech trees on one of the minor roads.

The larger settlements which border the south of the area are generally hidden from view from most of the area by intervening trees. Generally, where their edges are visible, they are reasonably well integrated into the surrounding rural landscape by mature tree and shrub planting, which also mitigates their impact when they are seen as a whole. Within the area, buildings tend to be traditional in style and are frequently associated with clumps of trees. They are predominantly farmsteads and cottages, many of which have been modernised.

Summary of Distinctive Landscape Features:-

- The topographical variety;
- The extent and variety of woodland and trees, and the resulting mix of wooded and open areas;
- Buildings usually traditional in style, associated with clumps of trees and occasionally occurring in small groups;
- Suburban edges are generally visually contained by planting;
- The "softening" effect of mature trees within the built-up area;
- Stone dykes as well as fences as field boundaries;
- Occasional avenue-like effect of trees lining minor roads (e.g. near Countesswells);
- Distant views to hills.

Sensitivity to Landscape Change

Visibility

This area has a medium level of visibility. It can be seen from several minor roads, and it contains many residential properties. However, the amount of woodland tends to restrict views into the area, and it cannot easily be seen from the nearby urban area. The westernmost part is overlooked by Peterculter and, therefore, has a higher degree of visibility.

Built Development

Large residential areas lie on the southern edge of the area, but their visual impact is reduced by the intervening landform and trees. Within the area the existing settlement pattern consists of scattered individual houses, mostly associated with clumps of trees. The ground is predominantly undulating, which could restrict its suitability for development. The fact that areas of Peterculter overlook the west of the area increases the number of people on whom development would have an impact.

Transportation

There is a network of minor roads throughout the area. Minor widening of these routes, which currently follow the contours, should have little impact. However, constructing new rural routes not associated with the settlement pattern would be potentially significant in landscape and visual terms.

Extraction / Landfill

The proximity of residential settlement, and the distinctively undulating and “small-scale” topography would make it difficult to locate this type of development in the area.

Agriculture and Forestry

The area has a strong field pattern, generally formed by stone dykes (occasionally consumption dykes). The boundaries emphasise the underlying sinuous landform. The amount and range of woodland and tree cover is a notable characteristic of the area, one which would be altered by significant changes to the proportion of forestry to open space.

Recreation

The undulating ground and sequence of minor, generally quiet, roads provides opportunities for informal recreation that would be unlikely to have significant visual or landscape impacts. It may be possible to provide linking routes to the riverside. A golf course in the west of the area is the main type of “formal” sports provision.

Summary of Sensitivity to Landscape Change:-

This is an area of agriculture, woodland, and settlement of varying densities. The undulating ground limits the potential for further development, and the area has a rural character despite its proximity to large residential areas.

Landscape Guidelines

Conserve / Manage

- Woodland and shelterbelt management and maintenance to retain the distinctive variety of woodland (i.e. a range of sizes, from clumps to plantations; and shapes, from parkland to square plantations which tie-in with adjacent field boundaries);
- Stone dyke maintenance;
- Management of the “avenue” feature near Countesswells.

This area has a large-scale valley landform within which the River Dee meanders along a flood-plain of varying width that is enclosed by gently sloping hillsides. The river forms the administrative boundary, so only the north side of the valley lies within the city of Aberdeen. The valley gradually narrows eastwards to a relatively confined channel within the built-up area of the city. The hillsides of the valley landform effectively restrict views to those along the valley. From the higher parts of the valley sides, especially towards the western end of the area, long distance views can be gained towards the Grampian foothills and mountains.

Better alluvial soils along the valley floor generally present an opportunity for arable agricultural use, although flooding is likely to occur. The valley is well-wooded on both sides. Broadleaved trees generally border the valley floor and lower reaches of the sloping valley sides. Coniferous plantation is located higher on the valley sides. Some scrubby vegetation occurs along the valley floor and on adjacent low banks, some of which are artificial levees.

Several large, distinct clusters of settlement are strung along the northern side of the valley such as Peterculter, Milltimber, Cults and Bieldside. Green wedges of open agricultural space are located between and around them. The settlements are well-planted with trees which, along with the trees on their edges, help to integrate the built-up areas with the surrounding rural area. Where this does not occur, for example at newer developments closer to the river, the buildings are a more intrusive feature. There are also recreational uses such as parks and golf courses, and there is a reservoir located on the valley floor towards the eastern end of the area.

Summary of Distinctive Landscape Features:-

- The large-scale valley landform that stretches from the countryside right into the city;
- The extent and variety of woodland, particularly within older settlement;
- The contrast between developed north bank and rural south bank;
- Views of River Dee.

Sensitivity to Landscape Change

Visibility

This is an area of high visibility, containing, and being overlooked by, large areas of residential development on the north bank, and with transport routes following the valley corridor.

Built Development

There is a considerable amount of built development in the area, but it is almost uniformly well-integrated with significant numbers of mature trees. Houses on the edge of the settlement area that are not associated with trees tend to be obtrusive. Additional land available for construction is limited, as the river flood plain is an inappropriate location. The area is sensitive to development, and the potential for flooding adds a further limitation.

Transportation

The existing road routes follow the valley landform, running east-west on both banks. Existing river crossings are highly visible in this landscape, and any new bridges would also have considerable impacts.

Extraction / Landfill

Such development might be seen from traffic routes as well as residential areas. There is no existing precedent for extraction or landfill.

Agriculture and Forestry

The flood plain is cultivated, its fields generally divided by post-and-wire fences, creating a generally open character that is reinforced by the lack of trees on the valley floor. In contrast, the side slopes of the valley are profusely covered with trees, mostly deciduous. Trees also surround the occasional agricultural fields on the valley sides that contribute significantly to the ratio of developed to undeveloped space.

Recreation

Access to the riverside would form an attractive recreational area for many people.

Summary of Sensitivity to Landscape Change:-

The area has a distinctive landscape that is well-settled, but has contrasting areas of woodland and agriculture. The river itself is a distinctive focus.

Landscape Guidelines

Conserve / Manage

- Maintenance and management of existing woodland.
- Avoid development on the valley floor. It provides a visual contrast with surrounding land.
- Maintain the skyline, unbreached by development, on both valley sides.
- Seek to maintain the contrast between opposite valley sides. The undeveloped south bank is seen by many people, both residents and travellers, on the well-settled north side.

Enhance

- Consider establishing native shrubs along the sides and embankments of the old railway footpath.

The landform in this area consists of a gently rounded linear ridge of elevated ground comprising Kincorth and Tullos hills. This forms the south-eastern horizon to the city and is an important skyline feature. From the top of the hills, panoramic views can be obtained of most of the city and its surrounding countryside. The eye is particularly drawn to the line of the River Dee and the Grampian foothills beyond.

The hills are predominantly used for recreation, although the northern edge of Tullos Hill is currently used for the dumping of domestic waste. Relics of previous use can be found in the shape of bronze age burial cairns, wartime camps and nineteenth century quarries. Few trees are located on the hills, although the remnants of Tullos Wood are located in the area. There are pockets of heather heath which are being invaded by gorse.

There is no settlement within the area, but it is surrounded on all sides by urban development in the form of roads, industrial estates, housing, and the landfill site. Pylons and radio masts are located along the western edge of the area.

Summary of Distinctive Landscape Features:-

- The hill topography forms a distinctive edge to the city and screens some industrial development from parts of Aberdeen;
- It has an open character and is dominated by heath vegetation;
- It allows wide views over the city.

Sensitivity to Landscape Change*Visibility*

This is an elevated area of high visibility that can be seen from the A90 trunk road and areas of adjacent housing, as well as from many viewpoints within the city itself.

Built Development, Transportation, Extraction / Landfill

The area would be highly sensitive to any type of built development or industrial process, having a sloping landform that is largely open to view. It forms the southern skyline from the city, and this could not be breached without considerable detriment to the landscape. On the lower slopes of the northern side of Tullos Hill there is a large landfill site which is mainly viewed from the adjacent areas rather than from the hill itself. (*See also the description for Landscape Character Area 23, Girdle Ness and Nigg Bay.*)

Agriculture and Forestry

Agriculture is not a current landuse in the area. There is some regenerating woodland along the edge of the open hilltop, the extension of which could be encouraged to some extent whilst still maintaining a variety of vegetation cover over the hill.

Recreation

The area is currently used for informal recreation. Low-key facilities such as small carefully designed and sited car parks could be provided without significant alteration to the existing character.

Summary of Sensitivity to Landscape Change:-

This is a highly distinctive and visible area of high ground to the south of the city with extremely limited potential for development.

Landscape Guidelines

Conserve

- Retain the undeveloped character as a contrasting backdrop to the city;
- Keep skyline free from development.

Enhance

- Manage vegetation to retain variety and increase ecological interest;
- Reinstate tipping on exposed hillsides for recreational use.

This area consists of a narrow strip of farmland which slopes gently down to the tops of adjacent rugged coastal cliffs. Extensive views eastwards to the sea can be gained, although these may be obscured in parts by the railway embankment. Views inland are generally restricted due to rising land and the industrial development which is located on it.

Landuse is mainly agricultural, although there is an association with fishing at Burnbanks in the south of the area, and recreation is connected with Doonies Model Farm in the north. There is also a coastal footpath along the top of the cliffs. Exposure and salt spray limit the range of vegetation. However, there are some wind-stunted trees around Altens Farm, Burnbanks and Loirston Manor. Apart from this, agricultural grassland is the dominant vegetation type.

The main settlement in the area is the seasonal fishing village of Burnbanks. Scattered traditional-style farmsteads are located throughout the area, and there are views to the large Altens industrial estate that is located immediately west of the area. Minor roads traverse the area, and the main Aberdeen - Edinburgh railway route follows the line of the coast.

Summary of Distinctive Landscape Features:-

- Coastal cliffs;
- The open, agricultural character;
- The presence of a main railway line;
- Minor roads;
- Views to the sea;
- Views to the adjacent industrial estate.

Sensitivity to Landscape Change*Visibility*

This area has a high level of visibility from the main Aberdeen - Edinburgh railway line, and from the minor but busy coast road that follows it. Apart from this it is only seen from within the area, including the minor roads that link the adjacent Altens industrial estate to the coast road.

Built Development

There are no existing large-scale housing areas: residential settlement in the area is sparse, occurring as occasional steadings or pairs of cottages. In contrast, the Altens industrial estate located immediately inland, if expanded coastwards, would reduce the present characteristic open-ness of the area.

Transportation

The existing coast road could be sensitively upgraded or widened with limited impact. New roads running perpendicular to the coast could be more obtrusive, unless they followed and replicated field boundaries.

Extraction / Landfill

The lack of existing tree cover into which screening could reasonably be linked, the sloping ground which would make earth-mound screening difficult, and the visibility from the busy coast road and main railway line, would make this type of development difficult to accommodate.

Agriculture and Forestry

At present, the open agricultural land allows views to the cliff edge and sea beyond. Part of the area is run as a model farm. Loss of this open character would significantly affect the area. However, there is potential for woodland planting along the inland boundary of the area at the industrial estate. This would lessen the impact of the abrupt edge of the industrial area, improve the setting of the public attraction of the model farm, and could enhance the value of the area for wildlife.

Recreation

Extension to the model farm is feasible, and would be unlikely to have a significant impact on the area. The coastal footpath and links to it could be upgraded or improved.

Summary of Sensitivity to Landscape Change:-

This is an area of open coastal farmland with limited opportunities for development, but some scope for enhancing its landscape.

Landscape Guidelines

Conserve

- Maintain stone dyke field boundaries.

Enhance

- Tree and shrub planting on the eastern flank of the industrial estate would help to integrate it more with its surroundings. The trees may attain the distinctive wind-shorn shape of coastal woodland.

This area has a shallow valley landform located between Kincorth Hill and the higher ground around Banchory-Devenick. The minor burn it contains is a tributary of the Dee, and the whole valley slopes gently down to the north where it meets the river. (The burn forms part of the Aberdeen City boundary, and only the eastern side of the valley lies within the City.) The high ground around the valley restricts views on all sides except towards the north where the western half of the city, and the nearby edge of Kincorth residential area, are visible. The land around Mastrick and Northfield forms the northern horizon. The topography of the Dee valley leads the eye westwards although long distance views are limited.

Agriculture is the dominant landuse, with the land being divided by stone dykes into fields that are almost square in shape. Fences are often used to reinforce the dykes. There are few trees within the valley area, although the lower, eastern part of the burn contains a number of native broadleaved trees. Many boundary dykes are overgrown with coarse grasses and scrub.

Although the city is dominant in views from the area there are few buildings within the area itself. The buildings tend to be located on the higher ground on the valley sides and are mostly traditional in style, although many have been modernised. The A90 trunk road linking Aberdeen to the south runs along the eastern edge of the area, which therefore forms a main approach corridor to the city.

Summary of Distinctive Landscape Features:-

- Shallow valley landform;
- Stone dykes dividing land into small fields;
- Sparse traditional settlement;
- Views northwards to the city.

Sensitivity to Landscape Change*Visibility*

This is an area of high visibility, being open to views from the adjacent A90 Aberdeen to Edinburgh trunk road, which is the main southern approach to the city; and also from nearby residential areas.

Built Development

The area would be sensitive to most types of built development, despite the proximity of a large residential area, and views of much of the city itself to the north. This is because of the sloping ground of most of the area, which could make development obtrusive, as well as its lack of woodland context with which new buildings could be associated and thereby integrated. The high visibility of the area also increases its sensitivity to new development.

Transportation

The existing main road in the area is dual-carriageway, and follows the contours of the hillside. Any routes that crossed the landform would be more dominant in the landscape.

Extraction / Landfill

The area is too open, visible, and sloping to easily accommodate this type of landuse.

Agriculture and Forestry

Agriculture is the main landuse of the area which is divided into fields by dykes that provide a strong field pattern. Forestry is limited to an area of woodland within the Den of Leggart at the northern end of the area. There are a few small boundary trees, and some along the trunk road route. Consequently, there is only limited scope for extending the woodland without significantly altering the character of the area. Such planting might shorten the distinctive views that are currently possible across much of the city from the southern approach road.

Recreation

The potential of the area for recreation is limited by its openness and proximity to the busy main road. However, links between the residential area east of the road and Kincorth Hill should be possible.

Summary of Sensitivity to Landscape Change:-

This is an open area, forming a rural aspect in the foreground of the main southern approach to the city.

Landscape Guidelines

Conserve / manage

- Maintain stone dykes;
- Maintain the distinctive views across the city.

Enhance

- Encourage / maintain tree planting in clumps around houses to reinforce existing pattern;
- Extend some of the existing tree planting alongside the A90 to “filter” views.

This area has a flattish landform that forms a shallow basin-like depression around Loirston Loch in the north. It rises gently in even slopes to the higher ground which surrounds it at Kincorth Hill in the north, and at Blue Hill and Banchory-Devenick in the west. From higher points within the area views can be gained of the western parts of the city. However, views are generally restricted by the higher ground, and also by the area of industrial development at Altens to the north-east.

Landuse is divided between the urban industrial and residential developments in the north and east of the area, and the predominantly agricultural use that occurs elsewhere. Loirston Loch and the area immediately around it are being developed as a recreational facility. There are very few trees within the area except to the east of Loirston Loch and around some of the traditional farm steadings south of the loch. Apart from this, the vegetation generally consists of improved agricultural grassland.

Large-scale urban settlement is dominant to the north and east of the area, spreading from the two arterial roads of the A90 and A956 which serve Aberdeen and its harbour respectively. There is an existing quarry at Blackhills, and a large lorry depot and scrapyard near the railway line. Traditional farmsteads and cottages are located throughout the urban fringe which makes up the rest of the area. They are frequently situated in small groups close to roads.

Summary of Distinctive Landscape Features:-

- The presence of Loirston Loch;
- The presence of nearby large scale industrial development;
- Major roads traversing the area;
- The open character of the landscape, with few trees and little variety of vegetation;
- The frequently abrupt edge of the urban area.

Sensitivity to Landscape Change*Visibility*

The north of this area in particular is highly visible, especially from the busy harbour link road (Wellington Road) off the A90.

Built Development

The existing pattern is of small clusters of mostly traditional-style buildings to the west and south. Glimpses of nearby residential areas in Cove and Aberdeen are possible, but they do not provide a strong precedent for similar development within the area itself. There are also considerable amounts of large-scale commercial and industrial development in the north of the area, where it links with the industrial estate at Altens on the south-eastern edge of Aberdeen.

Transportation

The existing harbour link road traverses the area. Widening this would have an impact on the adjacent Loirston Loch, as well as on a prominent group of trees nearby. Other roads in the area are generally minor, and unlikely to be significantly upgraded. Any new routes would have a significant impact in the north of the area which is currently busier than the south, where new routes would have local impacts.

Extraction / Landfill

This type of development would be highly visible, although there is a precedent in the existing quarry at Blackhills.

Agriculture and Forestry

At present woodland occurs in smallish clumps of mixed species, often associated with buildings. Some extension to this pattern would be possible, but the views to the nearby hills and towards the Dee Valley from certain viewpoints should be retained. Urban fringe farming is a significant landuse in the area, and there are some distinctive field boundaries in the form of dykes and occasional fences with gorse clumps.

Recreation

Existing informal recreation associated with the Loch and elsewhere does not have a significant impact on the area. There are possibilities for increasing pedestrian links with other areas, for example to Kincorth Hill.

Summary of Sensitivity to Landscape Change:-

This is an open and visible area that would be sensitive to several types of development.

Landscape Guidelines

Conserve / Manage

- Maintain stone dyke field boundaries.

Enhance

- Consider additional tree planting along roadsides and in clumps / small areas of woodland to help integrate the urban edge with the surrounding rural fringe.

4.3.1

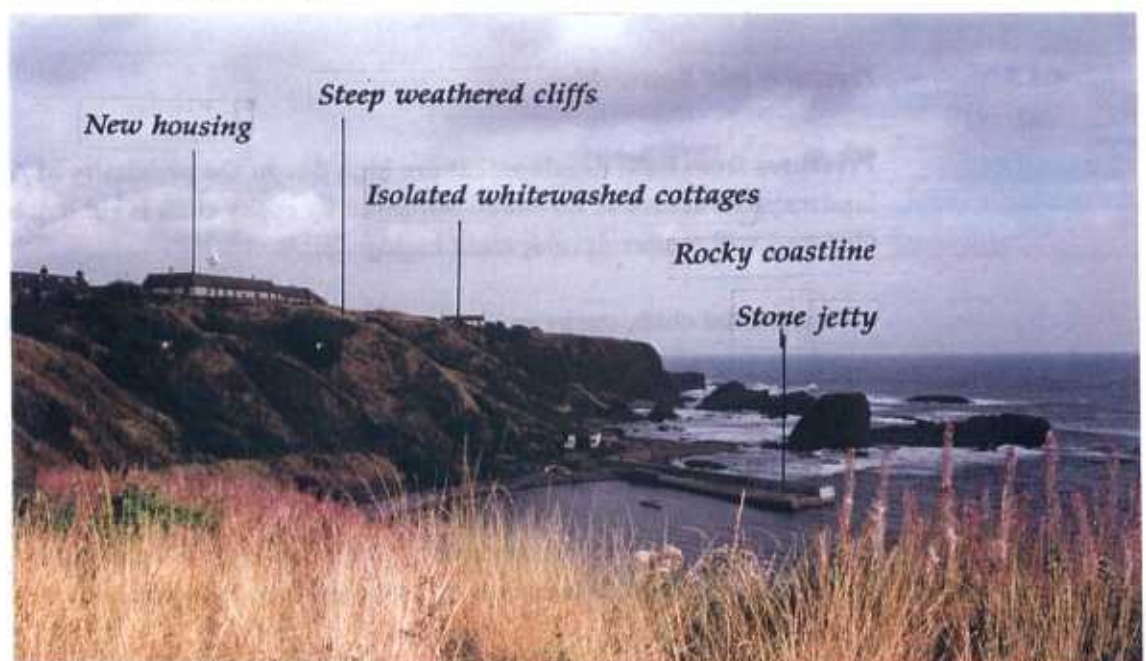
Landscape Description

Kincardine Cliffs (Area 2) describes about 30km of coastline between Aberdeen and Inverbervie. It is an essentially rocky coastline although the lithology changes dramatically at Stonehaven, where the hard schists that extend from *the Mounth* (Area 18) are replaced by the Old Red Sandstone of Strathmore.



This transition marks the Highland Boundary Fault, although at the coast the distinct boundary which is seen further west, is almost imperceptible. Despite this, its character is a persistent one of mostly steep rugged slopes and cliffs merging quickly into the farmed hinterland of *Garvock and Glenbervie* (Area 9) and *Kincardine Plateau* (Area 13). Raised beaches are a common feature and villages sit often within a narrow wave cut platform between the old and the new shorelines. Sea cliffs are most characteristic in the northern part of the area, for instance at Crawton. Further south, the softer rocks present a gentler edge, often grass covered and frequently eroded, exhibiting land-slip.

It is a densely inhabited area, particularly north of Stonehaven where the foothills of the Grampians extend almost to the sea, forcing the main road and settlements into a narrow corridor of land. Old fishing villages such as Findon, Muchalls and Catterline occur within sheltered coves or perched on cliff tops and typically include small, white-washed or pebble dashed cottages. Modern expansion often extends back from these old villages into the farmland, including substantial areas of new housing; for example at Portlethen and around Stonehaven. Stonehaven retains a distinct core which descends to the sea.



Sea views are fundamental to the character of *Kincardine Cliffs* (Area 2) providing an immense sense of scale when viewed from cliff tops. Cold hard winds often add to a sense of exposure that derives from these lofty views, rippling the grass or throwing rain and seaspray over the cliff top. The character of the shoreline is equally dependent on the sea, sometimes lashed by wind and waves, sometimes tranquil within a sheltered bay.

4.3.2

Key Characteristics

- Steep, weathered coastal cliffs with stacks and arches especially between Stonehaven and Aberdeen.
- Cliff erosion prevalent in some areas, particularly on sandstone cliffs south of Stonehaven.
- Raised beach platforms can give deep stepped profile to the coastline.
- Grass and scrub covered slopes on shallower cliffs; bare rock on steep slopes.
- Farmland extends to edge of cliffs.
- Major communications corridor behind the cliffs, notably the A90 and east coast railway.
- Settlements cluster on cliff tops; older villages and harbours nestle at cliff base accessed by steep roads down to the sea.
- Extensive new development at edge of coastal towns.
- Expansive views out to sea provide vast sense of scale.
- Weather is fundamental to character; coast is often windswept or lashed by rain and spray; resulting sense of exposure is great.

4.3.3

Pressures and Sensitivities

Pressures from built development are high due to the proximity of Aberdeen; the landscape structure of farmland bordered by rocky cliffs is robust, but exposed cliff tops will render development highly visible.

- The coastal cliffs, stacks and arches are sensitive to nearby built development which may affect their setting.
- The open and exposed character of the landscape on cliffs is sensitive to changes in land use and scale of development.
- The major force for landscape change is from new built development outwith or extending existing settlements, the latter risking coalescence of existing coastal communities.

- Pressures of development within small stone harbours could lead to loss of their intimate character.
- Exposure to wind along cliff tops may attract windfarm development.
- Long seaward views will encourage caravan and camp sites.

4.4.4

Specific Guidance

Aim: To enhance the traditional clustered settlement patterns and vernacular building style.

- New development on the coast which is clustered in form and limited in extent will reflect traditional patterns and will be acceptable in principle; linear development along communication routes may lead to amorphous strip development, lacking sense of identity.
- Isolated houses and small developments which reflect traditional architectural styles and finishes, such as whitewashed walls, will be more appropriate within the cliffline landscape.
- Small fishing villages on and below sculpted cliffs are features of the landscape and conservation of their character and setting is important; new development which is separated from these villages will help to preserve their identity and that of the harbour settings.

Aim: To conserve and enhance the open space character of the cliff edge.

- Historical features, such as clifftop castles, churches and archaeological remains, benefit from an open setting that emphasises their exposure and enhances views; development near to such features will detract from this.
- The maintenance of drystone dyke field boundaries will enhance landscape structure.
- The rural character of the clifftops may be conserved by restricting the use of urbanising elements such as street lighting and signage outside the main settlements.
- In this exposed landscape, extensive use of shelterbelts around development will appear out of place and may emphasise built development; clumped groups of native species will be more appropriate.
- Windfarms along the coastal edge will be highly visible and may be at variance with the character of small clustered settlements; in more open and undeveloped stretches, they will introduce a prominent, artificial feature, but may also enhance the windswept aspect of the landscape.

5.10

CENTRAL WOODED ESTATES

AREA 12

5.10.1

Landscape Description

Central Wooded Estates (Area 12) occupies a substantial area east of Bennachie between the Don and Dee valleys, and extends up to the edge of Aberdeen, a strategic location that has encouraged the creation of well-wooded estates.



Its topography varies from broad sweeping valleys and hills to pockets of more confined, small-scale relief. There is a related change in landscape pattern, with large open arable fields in some areas and small fields of pasture enclosed by drystone dykes in others. Dense woodland is, however, a consistent feature, be it small coniferous plantations, thick clumps and shelterbelts of beech, large mixed broadleaf policies associated with estates, or meandering riverside glades along the Don and the Dee.

The woodland, particularly when combined with the relatively complex landform, provides numerous enclosed pockets of intimate landscape which contrast with sudden long distance views when one moves into more open areas. The effect of changing relief and farming patterns and a strong woodland structure creates an especially varied landscape at local level.

Settlement is widespread; the area's proximity to Aberdeen has encouraged scattered new housing of assorted styles and most towns in the area are fringed by modern residential development. Although the woods and estates dictate the landscape pattern, a network of roads and pylons randomly criss-cross the area and in some areas these have an important visual influence.



5.10.2

Key Characteristics

- Rolling landscape of low hills and wide valleys.
- Strong woodland structure associated with numerous estate policies, adding rich and diverse texture.
- Clumps of trees atop mounds and hillocks, often bounded by circular stone walls; mature shady beech avenues; conifer plantations distributed amongst broadleaves.
- Mixed farmland with varying size and pattern of fields.
- Mosses within lowland hollows where birch and Scots pine predominate.
- Numerous and varied archaeological features, including henges, carved stone balls, recumbent stone circles and pictish monuments.
- Numerous towns and villages, many subject to recent residential expansion.
- Frequent settlement with a variety of sizes and styles of architecture; local vernacular stone buildings with conversions and extensions, modern bungalows and houses.
- Long views across open farmland contrast with sudden enclosure by woodland as one passes through area.

5.10.3

Pressures and Sensitivities

This landscape is experiencing significant pressures for new built development owing to its proximity to Aberdeen. However, abundant woodland can provide local screening.

- Broadleaf policy woodlands are susceptible to neglect and decline.
- Other landscape features such as drystone dykes and copses are susceptible to damage from built development and road improvements; larger woods are susceptible to fragmentation.
- Numerous archaeological sites, particularly recumbent stone circles, are vulnerable to damage and loss of setting.
- Alterations and extensions to local vernacular building, will deplete local styles.

5.10.4

Specific Guidance

Aim: To conserve wooded character.

- Broadleaf woodlands which are managed to conserve a mix of species and resist conifer domination will help to maintain a well balanced woodland structure.

- Conifer plantations can enhance this woodland structure, but stark geometric shapes can conflict with the more natural shapes of the broadleaf woods; planting of diverse, rounded shapes and use of a broadleaf edge will reflect existing broadleaf woods and create a more natural character.
- Areas of lowland moss with birch and pine also enhance the landscape diversity and increase the sense of enclosure and small scale.
- Accommodation of landscape features in the early planning stages of road development will help to avoid loss and fragmentation of woods and may provide opportunities to improve woodland structure through landscape measures.

Aim: To conserve the setting of estates and archaeological features.

- Woods, shelterbelt and drystone dykes enhance the setting of estates and archaeological features; maintenance and enhancement of these will help create a more unified landscape structure.
- The immediate setting of archaeological features can be enhanced by providing a buffer which excludes farming and other development and incorporates landscaping measures, thereby maintaining the setting.
- Open views from and to stately homes and castles improves the setting of these buildings and establishes them as landmarks in the landscape.

Aim: To integrate new development in the landscape.

- Native broadleaf trees may be used to integrate and contain new housing estates and soften the edge of urban developments.
- In exposed locations, simple styles and forms of housing are more appropriate, especially where they may compete with views of more distinguished landmarks; development should avoid exposed locations especially where such visual conflict might occur.
- Use (or re-use) of local stones can help to integrate buildings in the landscape; conversion of old derelict buildings should also be encouraged.
- Sites for quarrying should maximise use of existing woodland and landform screening, and projects should employ appropriate site restoration subsequently.

5.11 KINCARDINE PLATEAU

AREA 13

5.11.1 Landscape Description

The *Kincardine Plateau* (Area 13) includes a wedge of land to the south west of Aberdeen which forms the agricultural foothills of *The Mounth* (Area 18).



The area's gently rolling relief is underlain by schists which descend gradually from the moors to the coastal cliffs around Portlethen and Newtonhill giving a transition from an upland to intensive agricultural character. In this regard the area has similarities with **Farmed Moorland Edge** but its open character, widespread arable farmland along its eastern edge and occurrence of significant development pressures have led to the inclusion of this area in the **Agricultural Heartland** type. Its sloping relief presents many opportunities for long distance views and the sea has a strong influence on the character of the area.

This transition from upland to coastal edge results in a diverse landcover and complex landscape pattern that lacks a unified and coherent pattern. Some areas with field dykes enclosing pasture and clumps of forestry have a clear structure, but there are frequent signs of neglect such as encroaching gorse scrub, weed infestation, regenerating birch, tumbledown dykes, discarded farm machinery, pockets of boggy rush and gappy shelterbelts. While these might add visual interest, they are rarely profuse enough to establish a strong landscape theme or pocket of distinctive character.



Settlement pressure is apparent and scattered bungalows, houses and modern farm buildings are more prevalent than vernacular structures. Grey stone is also often encountered as a modern building material and a number of old cottages and farm buildings have been restored. Equestrian centres are quite common in this area, encompassing areas of low intensity farmland.

5.11.2 *Key Characteristics*

- Undulating landform falling gently towards coast.
- Pasture and marginal farmland with rocky outcrops and scrubby patches of derelict pasture or unimproved marshy land with rush infestation.
- Exposed mounds and hills with windblown trees and sculptured stands of Scots pine.
- Regenerating birch scrub on pockets of moss.
- Derelict pastures with encroaching gorse and weeds, giving disorderly character.
- Gradual transition between strong moorland character to west and coastal character to east.
- Strong development pressures evident: modern houses mixed with extensions and converted traditional stone farmsteads.

5.11.3 *Pressures and Sensitivities*

Landscape change stems from the neglect and dereliction of field boundaries and the increasing pressure for new built development close to Aberdeen and the Dee Valley.

- Farmland is susceptible to neglect, with encroachment of gorse and weeds and dereliction of farm buildings and drystone dykes.
- The setting and integrity of archaeological remains are sensitive to damage.
- Vernacular buildings are prone to neglect; traditional stone farm houses are sensitive to extensions and conversions which may alter their character.
- Ad hoc new housing development may result in an uncoordinated mix of styles.
- Exposed locations may attract windfarm developments.

Aim: To enhance the diversity of landuses and textures.

- The landscape shows signs of neglect with encroachment by weeds and scrub; targeted grants for habitat improvement and stone dyke restoration could encourage a more coherent and unified approach in order to enhance landscape diversity.
- The reduced grazing pressure on selected areas will result in the regeneration of gorse, birch and Scots pine.
- Wind-blown Scots pine stand out as sculptural elements in the landscape; management of these will help to conserve a key feature in the landscape.

Aim: To accommodate new built development without detriment to the open landscape character.

- Traditional farmhouses which accommodate modest extensions are better integrated than those whose excessive extensions alter the character of the original building.
- Landscape planting with native species can provide a more natural setting for built development and help to integrate it with the landscape.
- Ornamental hedgerows, ranch style or suburban fencing and concrete cappings are out of character in this landscape; more desirable options include drystone dykes and native hedging.