

**A96 Dualling Programme**  
**Strategic Environmental Assessment**  
**Tier 2 Environmental Report**

Appendix G - A96 Dualling Landscape Review  
(shortlisted Improvement Strategy Options)

**May 2015**



## Executive Summary

While there was no detailed consideration of the sensitivity of different landscape character types at the Tier 1 SEA sifting of broad alternative options, it was recognised that landscape character and sensitivity were important assessment issues, therefore a Landscape Review was undertaken to inform Tier 2 detailed assessment stage.

The purpose of the review was to develop an understanding of the sensitivity of the landscape within the improvement strategy options in response to the A96 Dualling Programme.

The review comprised:

- A general landscape character description encompassing a narrative of the alternative options and general area descriptions such as pinch points and openness, rivers and water, landform, communities and visibility.
- A review of the sensitivity of the Local Character Areas by reviewing the SNH Landscape Character Assessments for Moray and Nairn, South and Central Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen. There are no nationally or regionally designated landscape areas within the study areas.
- A woodland assessment to identify potential changes to character areas that could be brought about by potential impacts of road development.
- A drive through and visual assessment of the terrain and character of the landscape across the A96 study areas in September 2014.

By bringing together all of these elements of assessment, an indicative sensitivity assessment was developed for the landscape within each of the alternative improvement strategy options. The assessment was undertaken using a set of criteria, as recommended by DMRB IAN135/101. A commentary was also provided on landscape character and the predicted risk of effect dualling may have on it, has been provided.

In addition to the individual impacts of the improvement strategy options the review highlighted that the general character of a dualled route passing through this landscape must also be taken into consideration within the design process and emphasised that it is vital the existing landscape setting is considered within the scale and location of a dualled route.

## Landscape Review

### Background

At a SEA Scoping Workshop in December 2013, and in their scoping response in January 2014, SNH made recommendations that landscape issues should be incorporated within the core set of criteria for SEA assessment. It was recognised that landscape character and sensitivity are important issues; therefore, a Landscape Review was undertaken to inform the detailed assessment stage.

There are no nationally or regionally designated landscape areas within the A96 study areas; however, local landscape designations have been identified and considered within the improvement strategy option study boundaries. This has been accompanied by a review of the sensitivity of the Local Character Areas outlined in SNH Landscape Character Assessments for Moray and Nairn, South and Central Aberdeenshire, and Aberdeen. These assessments were collated to produce the SNH Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) mapped in Figure 1.

The SNH wildness map of 2014 identified 42 'wild' areas, none of which lie within the area around the existing A96 or improvement strategy options. However the SNH Relative Wildness of Scotland 2014 map (see Figure 2) was reviewed and considered within the Landscape Review.

Areas of woodland within the SEA study area sections were considered in relation to the possible changes on local landscape character if the woodlands had the potential to be impacted by dualling.

In September 2014, drive throughs along the existing road networks within the improvement strategy options extents were undertaken to develop direct understanding of the terrain and character of the local landscapes. Views were documented with photographs and written commentary on locations and options, throughout.

### Approach

In line with SEA approach and for analysis purposes, improvement strategy options have been split initially using A96 SEA section breaks, and then further into 'segments' by drawing a line perpendicular to the existing A96 where any other options within that section start or end

The purpose of this approach is to ensure that options which do not span the full length of a section, can be compared on a like for like basis with the appropriate 'segments' of alternative options.

Each segment table includes a general landscape character description encompassing a narrative of the alternative improvement strategy options and general area descriptions such as pinch points and openness, rivers and water, landform, communities and visibility.

The review then provides a landscape sensitivity for each of the segments. Table 1 sets out indicative criteria for assessing landscape sensitivity, as recommended by DMRB IAN135/10<sup>1</sup>.

Finally a commentary on landscape character and the predicted risk of effect dualling may have on it, is provided. Table 2 sets out the broad factors which have been taken into account in assessing the potential for environmental effects and their likely scale, nature, probability and duration.

The review findings have been directly fed into the assessment matrices presented in Appendix H, I and J.

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<sup>1</sup> Highways Agency (2010) Interim Advice Note 135/10: Landscape and Visual Effects Assessment

Table 1 Indicative criteria for assessing landscape sensitivity

Sensitivity	Indicative Criteria for Assessing Landscape Sensitivity
<b>High</b>	<p>Landscapes which by nature of their character would be unable to accommodate change of the type proposed. Typically these would be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Of high quality with distinctive elements and features making a positive contribution to character and sense of place.</li> <li>• Likely to be designated, but the aspects which underpin such value may also be present outside designated areas, especially at the local scale.</li> <li>• Areas of special recognised value through use, perception or historic and cultural associations.</li> <li>• Likely to contain features and elements that are rare and could not be replaced.</li> </ul>
<b>Medium</b>	<p>Landscapes which by nature of their character would be able to partly accommodate change of the type proposed. Typically these would be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comprised of commonplace elements and features creating generally unremarkable character but with some sense of place.</li> <li>• Locally designated, or their value may be expressed through non-statutory local publications.</li> <li>• Containing some features of value through use, perception or historic and cultural associations.</li> <li>• Likely to contain some features and elements that could not be replaced.</li> </ul>
<b>Low</b>	<p>Landscapes which by nature of their character would be able to accommodate change of the type proposed. Typically these would be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comprised of some features and elements that are discordant, derelict or in decline, resulting in indistinct character with little or no sense of place.</li> <li>• Not designated.</li> <li>• Containing few, if any, features of value through use, perception or historic and cultural associations.</li> <li>• Likely to contain few, if any, features and elements that could not be replaced.</li> </ul>

Table 2 Defining Potential Effects for A96 Dualling SEA Tier 2 Assessment

Risk/ Magnitude of Effect	Typical Characteristics of Effects
<b>Major</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Typically long term, permanent effects which are unlikely to be avoidable and may be difficult to mitigate, even partially</li> <li>• Likely to directly affect an environmental designation, resource/ feature or other receptors, e.g. through spatial loss or a direct effect on critical aspects of the resource's functions</li> <li>• Total loss of, or alteration to, key features of the baseline such that post development characteristics, or quality, would be fundamentally affected</li> <li>• Mitigation through design unlikely to offset, or significantly reduce, the likely scale of the effect</li> </ul>
<b>Moderate</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Typically medium to long term effects which are unlikely to be avoidable, but will generally reduce over time and/ or can be substantially mitigated</li> <li>• Longer term permanent effects on non-designated resources/ features or other receptors, e.g. through spatial loss or indirect effects on critical aspects of the resource's functions</li> <li>• Loss of, or alteration to key features of the baseline resource such that post development characteristics or quality would be partially changed</li> <li>• Potential to indirectly result in permanent changes to the setting of important or designated sites</li> </ul>
<b>Minor</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential to result in temporary (short term) but small in scale and/ or reversible changes which are either likely to be avoidable or can be substantially mitigated</li> <li>• Permanent or medium term effects on resources/ features or other receptors which will be small in scale and not likely to result in a material loss of the resource or critical aspects of its functions</li> <li>• Small changes to the baseline resource which are detectable, but the underlying characteristics or quality of the baseline resource would be similar under post-development conditions</li> <li>• Potential to indirectly result in short or medium term effects, such as on the setting of designated sites, which can generally be mitigated</li> </ul>
<b>Negligible</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very slight or no detectable change to baseline resources, features or receptors</li> <li>• Very likely to be avoidable within the option area</li> </ul>

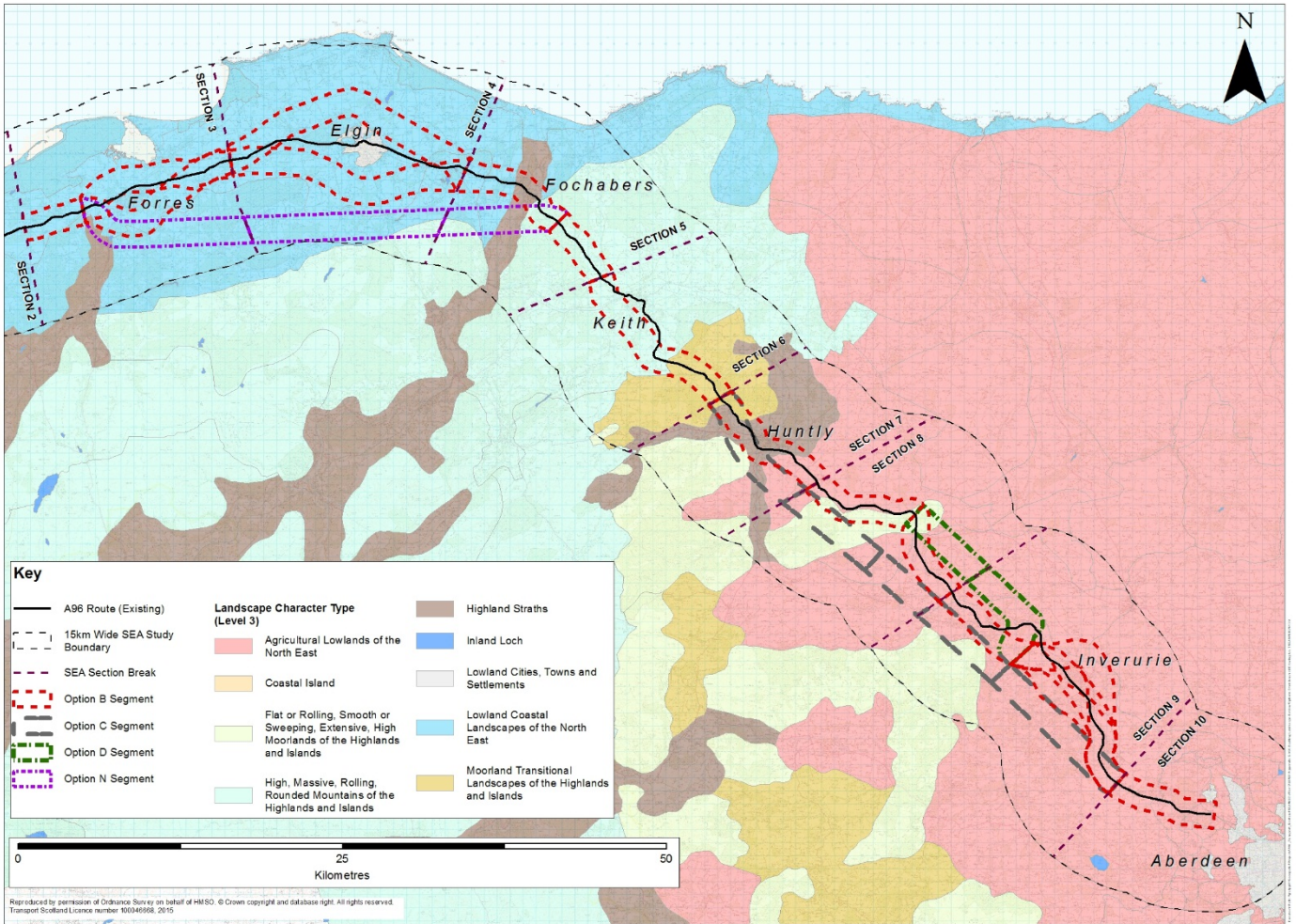


Figure 1 - A96 SEA Sections and Improvement Strategy Options with SNH Landscape Character Assessment (Level 3) Types

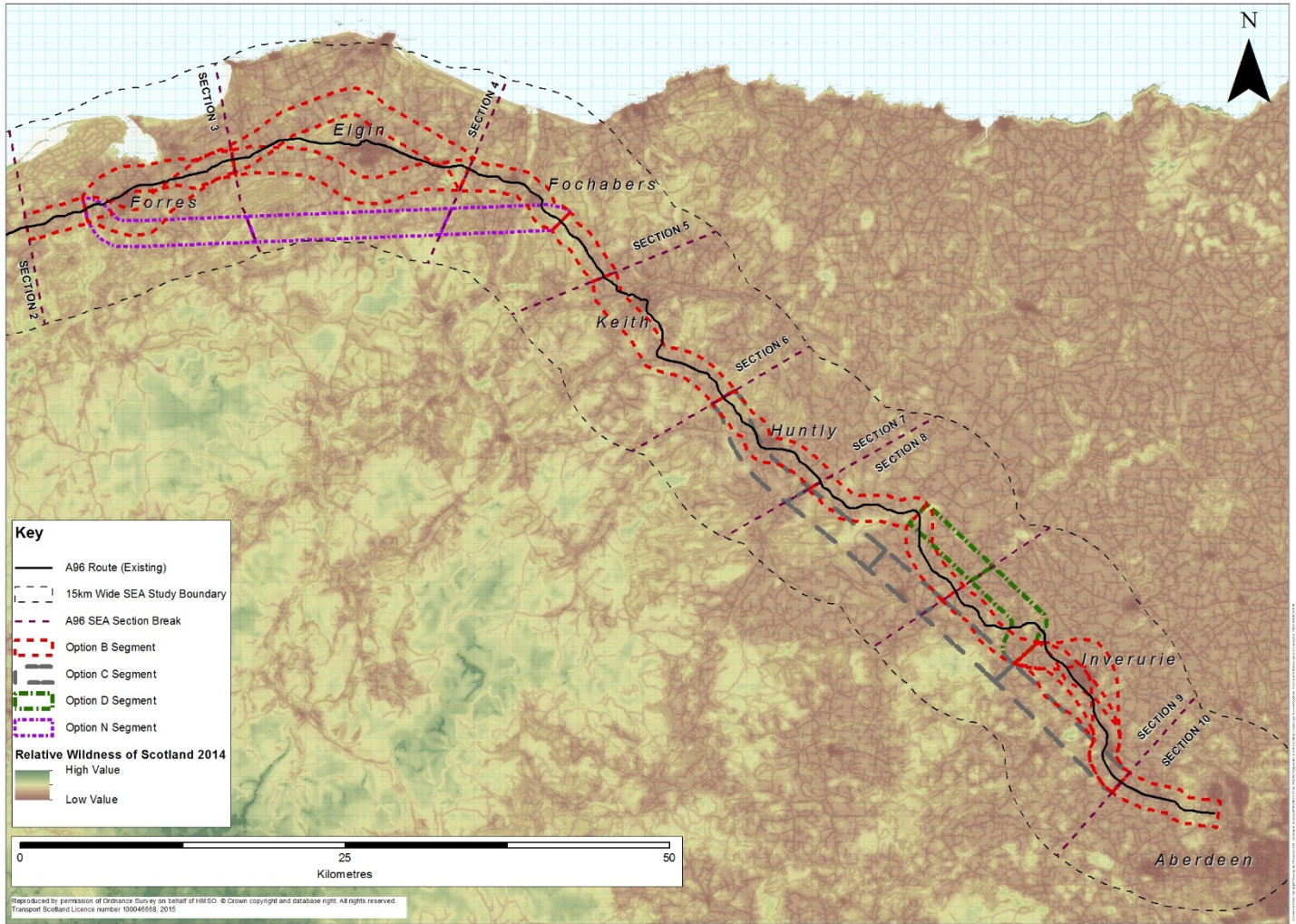


Figure 2 - A96 SEA Sections and Improvement Strategy Options with SNH Relative Wildness of Scotland 2014



### Route Section 3: Hardmuir Wood to Alves

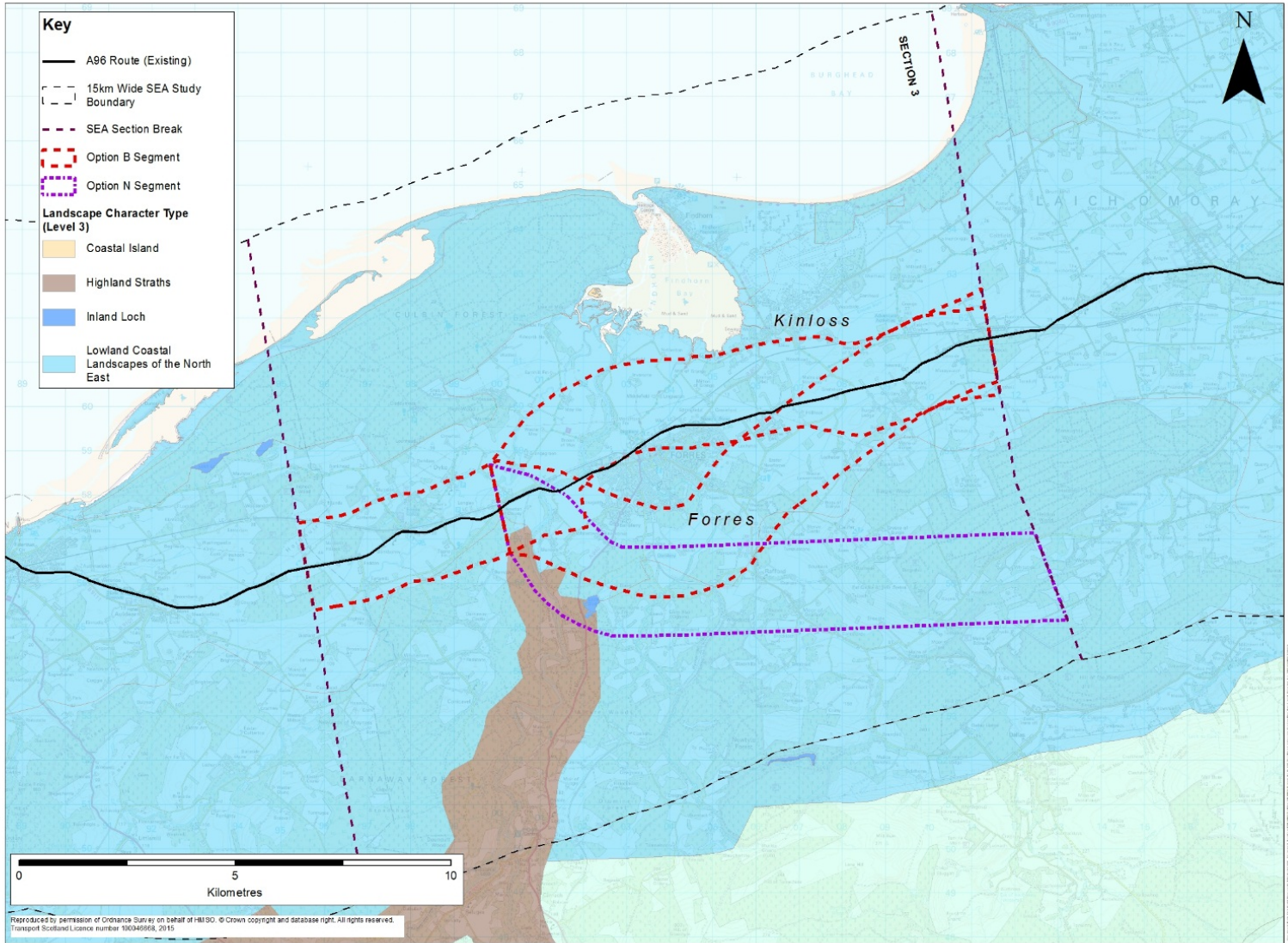


Figure 3 - Section 3 Options with Landscape Character Areas

**Table 3 - Section 3 Landscape Constraints**

There are no national designations within the project area, so this has been scoped out of this part of the report.

<b>WEST OPTION B</b>		
<b>Commentary on Level of Environmental Landscape Constraint</b>		
<b>SECTION 3: Hardmuir Wood to Alves</b>		
West Option B- approximately 940Ha.		
<b>Landscape Character Types (Level 3)</b>	<b>Landscape Designations</b>	<b>Woodland Character</b>
-Highland Straths -Lowland Coastal Landscapes of the North East	None	The landscape of the segment is of a generally an open character with some woodland planting, either adjacent to, or set back from, the existing A96.
<p><u>Commentary on Landscape Character and Sensitivity:</u></p> <p><b>Landscape Character Overview</b> The landscape character is generally of a lowland agricultural landscape, with patches of ancient woodland adjacent throughout.</p> <p><b>Landscape Character Types</b> There are two Landscape Character Areas within segment; mainly the <i>Lowland coast landscapes of the north-east character</i> type, and a small area of the <i>Highland Straths</i> at the south-east corner of the segment. The gentle landscape of the coastal lowlands provides long open views with shelter and visual screening being defined by narrow belts of woodland. Farmland with evenly sized fields are prevalent within this area.</p> <p><b>Settlements</b> The Brodie Estate is located to the north of the existing A96, and Brodie Castle is situated within the segment. The 71 hectare estate has landscaped gardens, a large pond, a walled garden, a woodland walk, an adventure playground and a nature trail with observation hides for watching wildlife. Maintaining the character and setting of these parklands may be constraint to dualling.</p> <p>The settlements of Brodie and Blinkbonny are situated in the middle of the segment. Properties in these settlements are potential visual receptors, as are Brodie Countryfare Visitor Centre and the Old Mill Caravan Park and Inn. As the existing A96 currently runs through this segment and is an established part of the local landscape, its sensitivity is reduced.</p> <p><b>Railway</b> The railway line lies to the runs through the segment, to the north of the existing A96, and may be a constraint to dualling.</p> <p><b>Woodland</b> The Darnaway Forest spans half of the breadth of the eastern end of the segment and forms an important part of the character of the landscape.</p>		
<p><u>Indicative Landscape Sensitivity - Low</u></p> <p>• <b>Landscapes which by nature of their character would be able to accommodate change of the type proposed. Typically these would be: not designated and are likely to contain few, if any, features and elements that could not be replaced.</b></p> <p>There are no national landscape designations within the segment. The character of the area is of open fields with some wooded areas. The settlements of Brodie and Blinkbonny are sensitive receptors. The railway line is a major constraint to the north of the existing road. The existing A96 currently runs through this segment and it is an established part of the local landscape which reduces its sensitivity. The character of the landscape can absorb a dualled route without a significant impact to its quality and character.</p>		
<p><u>Risk of Effect - Minor</u></p> <p>• <b>Small changes to the baseline resource which are detectable, but the underlying characteristics or quality of the baseline resource would be similar under post-development conditions</b></p> <p>The landscape character of the segment is of open fields with some wooded areas, and the existing A96 runs through the segment and is an established part of the local landscape; a dualled route therefore likely to cause only minor adverse effect on the overall landscape character. There is potential for visual effects on the properties in Brodie and Blinkbonny, however as the existing A96 is an established part of the local landscape, effects are predicted to be minor. There is potential for minor adverse effects on woodland areas to the north along the existing A96. Where appropriate, screening by new planting may be incorporated to mitigate visual effects in the longer term.</p>		

FORRES OPTION B NORTH		
SECTION 3: Hardmuir Wood to Alves Forres Option B North- approximately 2550Ha.		
Landscape Character Types (Level 3)	Landscape Designations	Woodland Character
-Highland Straths -Lowland Coastal Landscapes of the North East	None	The landscape within this segment is very open and flat. There are small patches of woodland scattered throughout the segment, however Alves Wood, a large area of coniferous woodland, spans more than half the breadth of the segment in the east.
<p><u>Commentary on Landscape Character and Sensitivity:</u></p> <p><b>Landscape Character Overview</b> The landscape character consists mainly of flat lowland agricultural land. There are a small patches of woodland throughout the segment and Alves Wood spans more than half the breadth of the segment in the east. To the east of Forres, the River Findhorn winds its way through the segment from the south to the north, heading towards Findhorn Bay.</p> <p><b>Landscape Character Types</b> There are two Landscape Character Areas within the segment; mainly the <i>Lowland coast landscapes of the north-east</i> character type, and a small area of the <i>Highland Straths</i> at the south-west corner of the segment. The gentle landscape of the coastal lowlands provides long open views with shelter being defined by narrow belts of woodland. Farmland with evenly sized fields are prevalent within this area.</p> <p><b>Other Designations</b> The segment contains part of the Long Distance Path, The Moray Coastal Trail. The coastline and settlements of Moray are linked by a waymarked coastal trail of approximately 50 miles from Findhorn to Cullen. The path is extended from Findhorn to Forres along a section of cycle route which crosses the segment and access, as well as visual amenity, may be a constraint to dualling.</p> <p><b>Settlements</b> The northern suburbs of Forres, the Village of Broom of Moy, and the southern part of Kinloss, including Kinloss Abbey, are located within the segment. These small communities contribute positively to the character of the area, and may be sensitive receptors to dualling.</p> <p><b>Railway</b> The railway line runs directly through the segment, and any new crossing point may have a visual impact on the flat lowland landscape. Any new structures would need to be carefully designed to be in-keeping with the local landscape character.</p> <p><b>Rivers</b> The River Findhorn crosses the segment and any new raised structure within this mainly flat landscape, could have a visual impact. The River Findhorn in this location is not designated as an Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV).</p>		
<p><u>Indicative Landscape Sensitivity - Low/Medium</u></p> <p>• <b>Landscapes which by nature of their character would be able to partly accommodate change; comprised of commonplace elements and features creating generally unremarkable character but with some sense of place.</b> There are no national landscape designations within the segment. The landscape character consists mainly of flat lowland agricultural land. There are a few small patches of woodland throughout the segment and Alves wood is located in the eastern part of the segment. The northern suburbs of Forres, the Village of Broom of Moy, and the southern part of Kinloss, including Kinloss Abbey, are located within the segment and are sensitive receptors. The landscape in this area is quite flat and it would be sensitive to any new elevated structures required to cross the railway and the River Findhorn. The landscape can absorb the inclusion of a dualled route without significant impact to its quality and character.</p>		
<p><u>Risk of Effect - Moderate</u></p> <p>• <b>Loss of, or alteration to key features of the baseline resource such that post development characteristics or quality would be partially changed</b> The character is of open fields with some wooded areas, which could generally be maintained, and absorb a dualled route with a potential moderate effect. It is predicted that small population centres could be avoided through route alignment, however a dualled route could have an adverse visual effect on properties. Crossing the railway and river is unavoidable and new infrastructure would be required and this could have a permanent adverse visual effect on the landscape. Screening may be appropriate to provide longer term mitigation, however any new structures would need to be carefully designed to be in-keeping with the local landscape character.</p>		

FORRES OPTION B SOUTH		
SECTION 3: Hardmuir Wood to Alves Forres Option B South- approximately 2630Ha.		
Landscape Character Types (Level 3)	Landscape Designations	Woodland Character
-Highland Straths -Coastal Lowlands of the North East	None	There are large areas of woodland within the segment, especially at its western extent. Out with the areas of woodland the landscape is quite flat and open especially to the west and south of Forres. Towards the east end of the segment, the levels are more undulating, with woodland on the hillsides. Alves Wood, a large area of coniferous woodland, spans more than half the breadth of the segment in the east.
<p><u>Commentary on Landscape Character and Sensitivity:</u></p> <p><b>Landscape Character Overview</b></p> <p>The landscape character within the segment south is a mixture of wooded areas and flat lowland agricultural land. The terrain is undulating, with the land becoming hillier to the south. There are large areas of woodland to the south-west of Forres and on the outskirts of the town. The land is more open to the east until with Alves Wood spanning more than half of the segment breadth at the eastern extent.</p> <p><b>Landscape Character Types</b></p> <p>There are two Landscape Character Areas within the segment; mainly the <i>Lowland coast landscapes of the north-east</i> character area, and a small area of the <i>Highland Straths</i> at the south-east corner of the segment. The gentle landscape of the coastal lowlands provides long open views with shelter being defined by narrow belts of woodland. There are, however, more wooded areas to the south of Forres within this segment. Farmland with evenly sized fields are also prevalent within this area.</p> <p><b>Other Designations</b></p> <p>The segment contains part of the Long Distance Path, The Dava Way. It runs across the segment along the dismantled old Highland Railway line and is off road and safe from traffic. It passes through a pleasing mix of farmland, woodland and moorland from the Spey Valley to cross Dava Moor before descending to the Moray Firth. As the path passes through this segment, access, as well as visual amenity, may be a constraint to dualling.</p> <p><b>Settlements</b></p> <p>The southern suburbs of Forres, the small hamlet of Mundole and the north most part of Rafford Village are located within the segment. These small communities contribute positively to the character of the area, and may be sensitive receptors to dualling. Dallas Dhu Distillery is also located within the segment and this picturesque, historically designated feature in the landscape may be a constraint to dualling.</p> <p><b>Woodland</b></p> <p>The Darnaway Forest is located at the western edge of the segment.</p> <p><b>Rivers</b></p> <p>A new bridge across the River Findhorn may be required, and any raised structure within the mainly flat landscape, could have a visual impact. The River Findhorn in this location, is not designated as an AGLV.</p>		
<p><u>Indicative Landscape Sensitivity - Medium</u></p> <p>• <b>Landscapes which by nature of their character would be able to partly accommodate change; comprised of commonplace elements and features creating generally unremarkable character but with some sense of place.</b></p> <p>There are no national landscape designations within the segment.</p> <p>The character is of open fields with some wooded areas. There are a larger areas of woodland to the south-east of Forres, which could potentially be impacted, however, these wooded areas could also help to conceal a dualled route, thereby potentially reducing the sensitivity of the landscape.</p> <p>The picturesque, historically designated Dallas Dhu Distillery is a key constraint as this is a sensitive feature in the landscape and integral to the character of the area. As the landscape in this area is quite flat it would be sensitive to any new structures required to cross the River Findhorn.</p> <p>Generally the landscape can be maintained, and absorb a dualled route without a significant impact to its quality and character.</p>		
<p><u>Risk of Effect - Moderate</u></p> <p>• <b>Loss of, or alteration to key features of the baseline resource such that post development characteristics or quality would be partially changed</b></p> <p>The character is of open fields with some wooded areas, which could generally be maintained, and absorb a dualled route with a moderate effect.</p> <p>It is predicted that small population centres and Dallas Dhu Distillery could be avoided through route alignment, however a dualled route could have an adverse visual effect on properties.</p> <p>Crossing the railway and river is unavoidable and new infrastructure would be required and this could have a permanent adverse visual effect on the landscape. Screening may be appropriate to provide longer term mitigation, however any new structures would need to be carefully designed to be in-keeping with the local landscape character.</p>		

FORRES OPTION N		
SECTION 3: Hardmuir Wood to Alves Forres Option N- approximately 2660Ha		
Landscape Character Types (Level 3)	Landscape Designations	Woodland Character
-Highland Straths -Inland Loch -Lowland Coastal Landscapes of the North East	River Findhorn AGLV Pluscarden AGLV	There are large areas of woodland located throughout the segment. The landscape to the west is quite flat and open, further east there are some large areas of woodland, such as Limekilns Wood, on more slightly undulating land. Further east the land is more hilly with vast areas of woodland on the side of the hills, for example, those on Burgiehill.
<p><b>Commentary on Landscape Character and Sensitivity:</b></p> <p><b>Landscape Character Overview</b></p> <p>The landscape character south of Forres, consists of large areas of woodland in an undulating landscape, with some areas of agricultural land on the lower plains. Further east the land becomes hilly with steep slopes, and open and extensive views over the Moray Firth are afforded from the higher ground.</p> <p><b>Landscape Character Types</b></p> <p>There are three Landscape Character Areas, within the segment; mainly the <i>Lowland coast landscapes of the north-east</i> (1), and a small area of the <i>Highland Straths</i> (2) at the south-east corner of the segment. The Loch of Blairs, an <i>Inland Loch</i> (3), is located to the south-west of the segment. These areas are further described as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The gentle landscape of the coastal lowlands provides long open views with shelter being defined by narrow belts of woodland. There are, however, more wooded areas to the south of Forres, and the terrain starts to get hillier and more wooded further to the south and east within the segment. Farmland with evenly sized fields are also prevalent within this area.</li> <li>2. The highland straths area is located adjacent to the River Findhorn, and consists of the river valley landform, and some woodland.</li> <li>3. The Loch of Blairs is located to the south-west end of the segment, approximately 3km south-east of Forres. It is within the Loch Wood, adjacent to the existing Old Military Road running south from Forres. It is a beautiful inland loch of almost 50 acres, surrounded by native woodland. It is used for boat fishing and is regularly stocked with rainbow trout. Ospreys also fish here. The Loch is towards the very south of the segment, and there is potential to avoid it.</li> </ol> <p><b>Landscape Designations</b></p> <p>The River Findhorn AGLV is located to the very south-west of the segment, and is only a very small area. The Pluscarden AGLV is located to the south-east extent of the segment, and extends towards A96 SEA Section 4.</p> <p><b>Other Designations</b></p> <p>The segment contains part of the Long Distance Path, The Dava Way. It runs across the segment along the dismantled old Highland Railway line and is off road and safe from traffic. It passes through a pleasing mix of farmland, woodland and moorland from the Spey Valley to cross Dava Moor before descending to the Moray Firth. As the route passes through this segment, access, as well as the visual amenity may be a constraint to dualling.</p> <p><b>Settlements</b></p> <p>The small hamlet of Mundole, and the villages of Rafford and Moor of Granary are situated within the segment. These small areas of communities contribute positively to the character of the area, and may be sensitive receptors to dualling. Dallas Dhu Distillery is also located within the segment and this picturesque, historically designated feature in the landscape may be a constraint to dualling.</p> <p><b>Woodland</b></p> <p>The Darnaway Forest is located at the western edge of the segment and just south of Mundole, there is a large area of linked woodland which spans the breadth of the segment; this includes Limekilns Wood, Fairyhills Wood, Keymoss Wood, Office Wood, Loch Wood and Cothall Wood. Further east there are many smaller areas of woodland, which may be possible to avoid.</p> <p><b>Wildness</b></p> <p>There is an area at Todholes to the east of the segment which is considered to be of a high wildness value. It spans half the segment breadth, and may be sensitive to dualling.</p> <p><b>Terrain</b></p> <p>The ground levels the east of the segment climb from 25m AOD (Above Ordnance Datum) at Mundole, to 250m AOD at Burgiehill. Panoramic views towards the Moray Firth are afforded from the higher terrain, which could be constraint to dualling and may have the potential to visually impact the flatter plains.</p> <p><b>Rivers</b></p> <p>The River Findhorn crosses the segment at its western extent and is not designated as an AGLV at this location.</p>		
<p><b>Indicative Landscape Sensitivity - Medium/High</b></p> <p>• Landscapes which by nature of their character would be unable to accommodate change; of high quality with distinctive elements and features making a positive contribution to character and sense of place.</p> <p>There are no national landscape designations within the segment.</p> <p>The character is predominately of open fields with pockets of wooded areas. There are large areas of woodland to the south-east of Forres, which could potentially be avoided through route alignment, however further east along the segment the areas of woodland would be more challenging to avoid.</p> <p>The River Findhorn AGLV and the Pluscarden AGLV are located within the segment and are key sensitive constraints.</p> <p>Where the terrain rises, the landscape character would be sensitive to any new infrastructure which would be viewed from the north on the side of the hills.</p> <p>As the landscape in the west of the area is quite flat, it would be sensitive to any new elevated bridge structures required to cross the River Findhorn.</p> <p>To the east of the segment (at Todholes) there is a large area of high wildness value which could be sensitive to a dualled route.</p> <p>Although the landscape character and value can generally be maintained, there would be some moderate impacts on the landscape.</p>		
<p><b>Risk of Effect - Moderate</b></p> <p>• Loss of, or alteration to key features of the baseline resource such that post development characteristics or quality would be partially changed</p> <p>The River Findhorn AGLV and the Pluscarden AGLV are located within the segment but can be avoided through route alignment.</p> <p>There are large areas of woodland to the south-east of Forres, which could potentially be avoided through route alignment, however further east along the segment the areas of woodland would be more challenging to avoid and could have a significant effect on the quality and character of this landscape.</p> <p>Existing and proposed woodland could help to conceal a dualled route, potentially reducing its visual effect particularly if new planting was used to reinforce the woodland structure and extent.</p> <p>It is predicted that small population centres could be avoided through route alignment, however a dualled route could have an adverse visual effect on the properties.</p> <p>Crossing the River Findhorn is likely to be difficult to avoid and new infrastructure would be required. This could have a permanent visual effect on the landscape.</p> <p>Screening may be appropriate, however any new structures would need to be carefully designed to be in-keeping with the local landscape character.</p> <p>Generally the landscape character can be maintained and absorb a dualled route with potential moderate effects on the landscape character.</p>		

**Route Section 4: Alves to Lhanbryde**

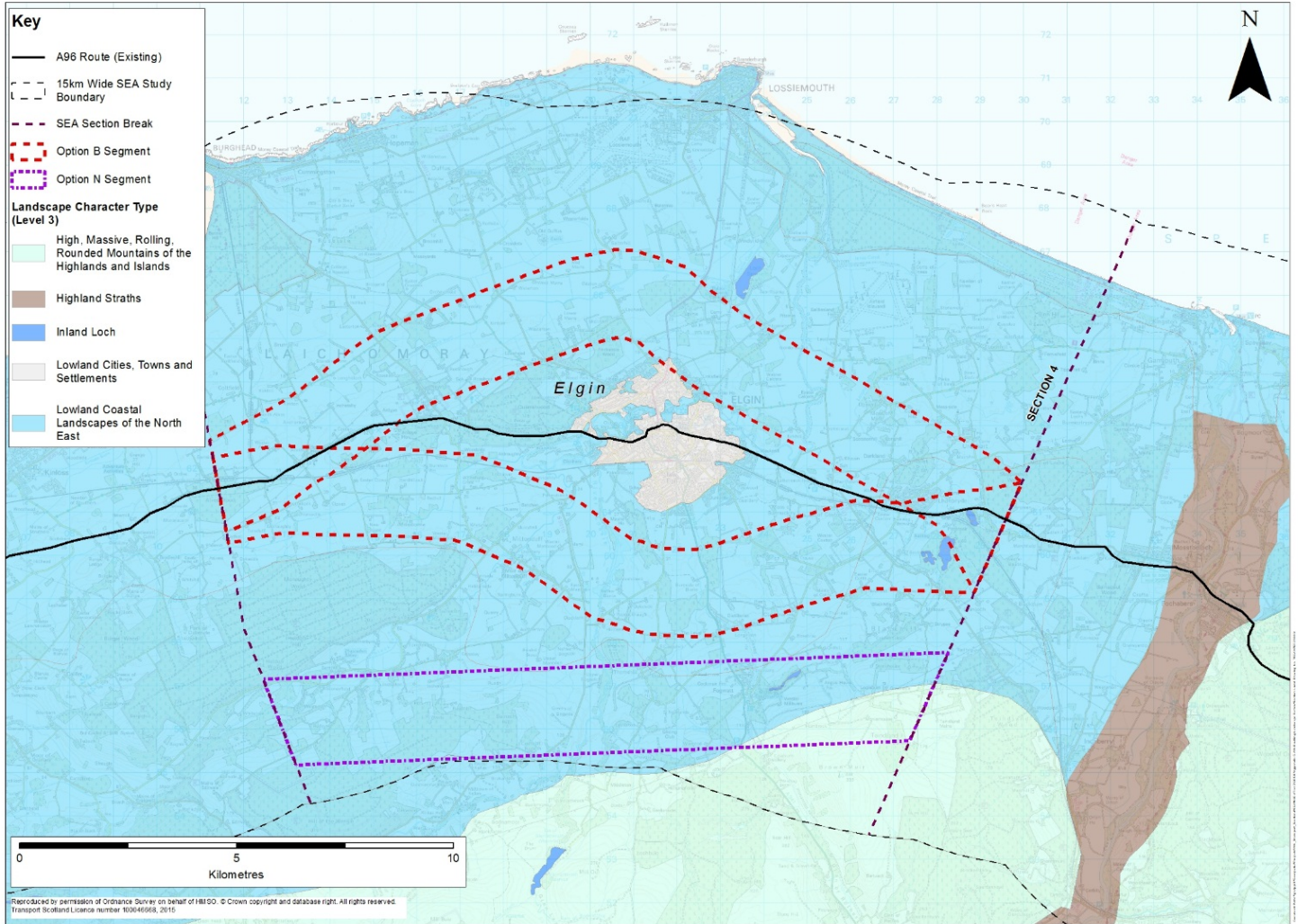


Figure 4 Section 4 Options with Landscape Character Areas

**Table 4 - Section 4 Landscape Constraints**

There are no national designations within the project area, so this has been scoped out of this part of the report.

<b>ELGIN OPTION B NORTH</b>		
<b>Commentary on Level of Environmental Landscape Constraint</b>		
<b>SECTION 4: Alves to Lhanbryde</b>		
Elgin Option B North- approximately 4220Ha		
<b>Landscape Character Types (Level 3)</b>	<b>Landscape Designations</b>	<b>Woodland Character</b>
-Lowland Coastal Landscapes of the North East - Lowland Cities, Towns and Settlements - Inland Loch	None	The landscape is generally very open and flat with some gentle undulations, and there are small patches of woodland scattered within the segment. Alves Wood, a large area of coniferous woodland, spans half of the breadth of the segment at its western extent. Lochnabo/ Threapland Woods and Sleepieshill Wood are located at the eastern extent of the segment, near Loch Na Bo and Loch Oire; both are long establish plantation woodlands. Other larger wooded areas include Crooked Wood north of Llanbryde, and part of Findrassie Woods north-west of Elgin. Quarry wood is also located just beyond the southern extent of the segment, to the east of Elgin.
<u>Commentary on Landscape Character and Sensitivity:</u>		
<b>Landscape Character Overview</b>		
The landscape character consists mainly of flat lowland agricultural land. Alves Wood and Loch na Bo/ Threapland Woods are situated at the western and eastern extents of the segment respectively; there are also smaller patches of woodland throughout.		
<b>Landscape Character Types</b>		
There are three Landscape Character Areas, within the segment; mainly the <i>Lowland coast landscapes of the north-east</i> (1), and a small area of the <i>Lowland Cities, Towns and Settlements</i> (2) in the middle of the segment. Loch Oire and Loch na bo, both <i>Inland Loch</i> (3), are located at the eastern extent of the segment. These areas are further described as:		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The gentle landscape of the coastal lowlands provides long open views with shelter being defined by narrow belts of woodland. There are some areas of woodland, and farmland with evenly sized fields are also prevalent within this area.</li> <li>2. The urban character area within this part of the segment is Bishopmill, a suburb in north Elgin, which is located within the flat coastal landscape area type. This is the current northern edge of the settlement of Elgin.</li> <li>3. Loch Oire is a 5.7ha lowland loch located near to Llanbryde. It is used for fishing and is a haven for wildlife. Loch na bo is a picturesque but little known man-made loch about 500m south-west of Loch Oire on the opposite side of the railway. It is surrounded by woodland and is full of wildlife, including red squirrels, Daubenton (water) bats, minks, and swans and has a pleasant 3km woodland walk which circulates the loch.</li> </ol>		
<b>Settlements</b>		
The villages of Alves, Newton, Llanbryde, and the edge of Urquhart are located within the segment, as well as some individual properties. These small areas of communities contribute positively to the character of the area, and may be sensitive receptors to dualling.		
The northern suburb of Elgin, Bishopmill, is also located to the south of the segment, north of the city, as part of the urban sprawl of Elgin. The view to the north from this edge has the potential to be affected by dualling, however Elgin's future growth may extend even further north from here.		
<b>Rivers</b>		
The River Lossie crosses the breadth of the segment just east of its centre. Any new crossing infrastructure may have a visual impact on the landscape and should be designed sensitively to fit into the local landscape character.		
<b>Indicative Landscape Sensitivity - Medium/ Low</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Landscapes which by nature of their character would be able to partly accommodate change; comprised of commonplace elements and features creating generally unremarkable character but with some sense of place.</b></li> </ul>		
There are no national landscape designations within the segment.		
The character of the segment is of open fields with some woodland areas and this landscape could generally be maintained and absorb a dualled route without a significant effect on its quality and character.		
The villages of Alves, Newton, Llanbryde, and the edge of Urquhart are located within the segment, as well as some individual properties scattered throughout.		
The landscape in this area is quite flat it would be sensitive to any new elevated structures required to cross the River Lossie		
Loch Oire is located at the eastern extent of the segment and could be a major constraint to dualling.		
<b>Risk of Effect - Moderate</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Loss of, or alteration to key features of the baseline resource such that post development characteristics or quality would be partially changed</b></li> </ul>		
It is predicted that small population centres could be avoided through route alignment, however a dualled route could have an adverse visual effect on the properties.		
Crossing the River Lossie is unavoidable and a new structure could have a permanent adverse visual effect on the landscape. Any new infrastructure would need to be designed sensitively and where necessary, and appropriate, screening can be incorporated, to protect views.		
Although it is predicted that Loch Oire could be avoided through route alignment, visual effects would have to be minimised through sensitive design.		
The character of the area is of open fields with some wooded areas, which could generally be maintained, and absorb a dualled route with a potential moderate effect.		

<b>ELGIN OPTION B SOUTH</b>		
<b>SECTION 4: Alves to Lhanbryde</b>		
<b>Elgin Option B South- approximately 3790Ha</b>		
<b>Landscape Character Types (Level 3)</b>	<b>Landscape Designations</b>	<b>Woodland Character</b>
-Lowland Coastal Landscapes of the North East - Inland Loch	None	The landscape is generally very open and flat, and there are patches of woodland scattered throughout the segment. Alves Wood, a large area of coniferous woodland, spans half of the breadth of the segment at its western extent. Lochnabo/ Threapland Woods and Sleepieshill Wood are located at the eastern extent of the segment, near Loch Na Bo and Loch Oire; both are long establish plantation woodlands. Other areas of woodland within segment include a 36ha scots pine woodland adjacent to Miltonduff; and the combination of Mayne Wood, Birkenhill Wood and Wood of Level, which are all connected south of Elgin and span over half of the breadth of the segment
<p><u>Commentary on Landscape Character and Sensitivity:</u></p> <p><b>Landscape Character Overview</b></p> <p>The landscape character consists mainly of flat lowland agricultural land. Alves Wood and Loch na Bo/ Threapland Woods are situated at the western and eastern extents of the segment respectively; there are also smaller patches of woodland throughout.</p> <p><b>Landscape Character Types</b></p> <p>There are two Landscape Character Areas, within the segment; mainly the <i>Lowland coast landscapes of the north-east</i> (1) character area, and there are also two <i>Inland Lochs</i> (2) to the south-east of the segment; Loch Oire and Loch na Bo. These areas are further described as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The gentle landscape of the coastal lowlands provides long open views with shelter being defined by narrow belts of woodland. There are some areas of woodland, and farmland with evenly sized fields are also prevalent within this area.</li> <li>2. Loch Oire is a 5.7ha lowland loch located near to Llanbryde. It is used for bank fishing and is a haven for wildlife. Loch na Bo is a picturesque but little known man-made loch about 500m south-west of Loch Oire on the opposite side of the railway. It is surrounded by woodland and is full of wildlife, including red squirrels, Daubenton (water) bats, minks, and swans and has a pleasant 3km woodland walk which circulates the loch.</li> </ol> <p><b>Settlements</b></p> <p>The hamlet of Miltonduff and Paddockhaugh are located within the segment, as well as some individual properties. These small areas of communities contribute positively to the character of the area, and may be sensitive receptors to dualling.</p> <p>Chivas Bros Miltonduff distillery at Mitonduff, and Longmorn &amp; Benriach (Glenlivet) distilleries at Longmorn are located within the segment and the setting of their picturesque buildings form part of the landscape character of the area; both distilleries are part of the history of the area from the 1800s.</p> <p><b>Woodland</b></p> <p>There are patches of woodland scattered throughout the segment and there is one area south of Elgin, where woodland crosses over half of the breadth of the segment.</p> <p><b>Wildness</b></p> <p>Loch na Bo is considered to be of a high wildness value.</p> <p><b>Terrain</b></p> <p>The ground levels in the area start to become hillier towards the south of the segment, especially towards the east towards the Black Hills, which could present a challenge to dualling.</p> <p><b>Railway</b></p> <p>The railway runs to the north of Alves Wood, through Elgin and adjacent to the existing A96 at Llanbryde, until it heads south through Threapland Woods where it crosses the segment breadth. Any new crossing infrastructure may have a visual impact on the landscape, and should be designed to be in-keeping with the local landscape character.</p> <p><b>Rivers</b></p> <p>The River Lossie crosses the breadth of the segment just west of its centre. Any new crossing infrastructure may have a visual impact on the landscape and should be designed sensitively to fit into the local landscape character. south-west of Elgin, which will require a new bridge to encompass a dualled carriageway. This should be designed sensitively to fit into the local landscape character.</p>		
<p><u>Indicative Landscape Sensitivity - Medium</u></p> <p>• <b>Landscapes which by nature of their character would be able to partly accommodate change; comprised of commonplace elements and features creating generally unremarkable character but with some sense of place.</b></p> <p>There are no national landscape designations within the segment.</p> <p>The character of the area is open fields with some woodland areas, which could generally be maintained. The landscape can absorb the inclusion of a dualled route without having a significant effect on its character and quality.</p> <p>Directly south of Elgin, woodland crosses most of the 2km segment which could be challenging to avoid.</p> <p>Landscape in the segment is generally flat would be sensitive to any new structures required to cross the railway and River Findhorn.</p> <p>The sensitive setting of the distilleries is a key constraint within this segment.</p> <p>Loch Oire and Loch na Bo are identified as constraints within this segment.</p> <p>The railway line at the east and west extents of the segment is a constraint.</p>		
<p><u>Risk of Effect - Moderate</u></p> <p>• <b>Loss of, or alteration to key features of the baseline resource such that post development characteristics or quality would be partially changed</b></p> <p>It is predicted that small population centres could be avoided through route alignment, however a dualled route could have an adverse visual effect on the properties.</p> <p>Crossing the railway and river is unavoidable and new infrastructure would be required and this could have a permanent adverse effect on the landscape. Screening may be appropriate to provide longer term mitigation, however any new structures would need to be carefully designed to be in-keeping with the local landscape character.</p> <p>Although it is predicted that Loch Oire and Loch na Bo could be avoided through route alignment, visual effects would have to be minimised through sensitive design.</p> <p>The character of the area is of open fields with some wooded areas, which could generally be maintained, and absorb a dualled route with a potential moderate effect.</p>		



ELGIN OPTION N		
SECTION 4: Alves to Lhanbryde Elgin Option N- approximately 2300Ha		
Landscape Character Types (Level 3)	Landscape Designations	Woodland Character
-Coastal Lowlands of the North East - High, Massive, Rolling, Rounded Mountains of the Highlands and Islands - Inland Loch	Pluscarden AGLV The Pluscarden Area of Special Control	The landscape is generally open, with some areas of woodland scattered within the segment. Blackhill Wood/ Westernton and Wangie Woods are located to the west of the segment and span more than half of its breadth. The rest of the areas of woodland areas (Easterton Wood, Foths Wood, Cockmuir Wood, Birkenbaud Wood and Millbuies Wood) are dispersed throughout the centre of the segment.
<p><u>Commentary on Landscape Character and Sensitivity:</u></p> <p><b>Landscape Character Overview</b></p> <p>The landscape character consists mainly of open agricultural land and some wooded areas. The terrain is hilly with the slopes of the Hill of Wangie, Buiach Hill and Brown Muir running along the south of the segment, and Heldon Hill along the north.</p> <p><b>Landscape Character Types</b></p> <p>There are three Landscape Character Areas, within the segment; mainly the <i>Lowland coast landscapes of the north-east</i> (1), a small area of <i>High, Massive, Rolling, Rounded Mountains of the Highlands and Islands</i> (2) to the south-east, and Millbuies Loch, an <i>Inland Loch</i> (3), to the south-east of the segment. These areas are further described as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The gentle landscape of the coastal lowlands generally provides long open views with shelter being defined by narrow belts of woodland. This part of the character area has a more undulating landscape, although is still very open with long views. There are some areas of woodland, and farmland with evenly sized fields also prevalent within this area.</li> <li>2. The upland landscape of the highlands consists of a moor-forest mosaic character; Brown Muir hill defines this area type with an open moorland landscape on its northern slopes.</li> <li>3. Millbuies Loch is a pretty loch, set in woodland, located just east of Fogwatt, 4 miles south of Elgin, within Millbuies Country Park. It was created by the damming of streams to provide angling facilities on the loch. As well as being used for boat trout fishing, the wildlife adds to the special tranquil atmosphere; deer, birdlife, squirrels can all be observed. There is a featured path around the loch and it is set up for families.</li> </ol> <p><b>Landscape Designations</b></p> <p>Although Pluscarden Abbey itself is out-with the segment, its setting and surrounding land form Pluscarden AGLV which is located to the west of the segment and extends to the south and west.</p> <p>The Pluscarden Area of Special Control has been identified around the Pluscarden Benedictine Abbey as an additional safeguard. The Moray Local Plan 2008 (page 55) states that, "This area has been designated in order to safeguard and protect the very special character and setting of the Abbey and its exceptional environment."</p> <p><b>Settlements</b></p> <p>The villages of Fogwatt and Tomshill and the hamlet of Barnhill are located within the segment, as well as some single dwelling/ farms. These small areas of communities contribute positively to the character of the area, and a dualled route running through this area may have an adverse visual effect. However it is possible that these settlements could be avoided through route alignment and the existing population would benefit from the road in other ways.</p> <p>Glenlossie distillery (1876) is located at Tomshill and is a charming building in a picturesque setting. This character should be maintained to protect the landscape setting.</p> <p><b>Woodland</b></p> <p>There are small areas of woodland between 20 and 70ha scattered within the N segment. Blackhill Wood/Westernton and Wangie Wood are located to the west of the segment and almost straddle the segment north-south. This is a constraint to this end as it would be challenging to avoid all of this woodland with a route through. The rest of the areas of woodland are located in the central section of the segment (Easterton Wood, Foths Wood, Cockmuir Wood, Birkenbaud Wood and Millbuies Wood), and are more spread out. However it would be difficult to run a route through this part of the segment without affecting some of the woodland. There is also an area of plantation woodland on the north slopes of Wangie Hill, belonging to the Auchtertyre Estate and the Pluscarden Estate which extends over a large area. It may not be such as issue to run through this area, as it appears to be a working forest.</p> <p><b>Wildness</b></p> <p>There are a couple of small areas to the south of the segment near to the B9010 which are considered to be of a high wildness value. These areas are on highly undulating terrain, so would be unlikely to be impacted by the dualling proposals.</p> <p><b>Rivers</b></p> <p>The River Lossie runs across the segment, however at this location it is not very wide, so would not prove to be a huge constraint.</p> <p><b>Terrain</b></p> <p>The terrain within this part of the N segment is very undulating with hills on both north and south of the segment creating a valley in the centre. The Hill of Wangie to the west is 319m AOD, and Brown Muir along the south-east of the segment extends to a height of 339m AOD. Heldon Hill to the north is 238m AOD, but at Pluscarden Abbey the levels are only 60m AOD. This undulating landscape will have an impact on where the route may be able to run through, and additional infrastructure may be required.</p>		
<p><u>Indicative Landscape Sensitivity - Medium/ High</u></p> <p>• Landscapes which by nature of their character would be unable to accommodate change; likely to be designated, but the aspects which underpin such value may also be present outside designated areas, especially at the local scale; areas of special recognised value through use, perception or historic and cultural associations.</p> <p>There are no national landscape designations within the segment, however Pluscarden AGLV spans the segment to the west and is identified as a key constraint.</p> <p>The character of the area is generally of open fields with some wooded areas, which can absorb the inclusion of a dualled route without a significant effect on its quality and character, however where there is a more undulating landscape, a sensitive design approach will be required.</p> <p>Areas of woodland to the west and within the centre of the segment may be challenging to avoid.</p> <p>Glenlossie distillery and its setting is a key constraint within the segment.</p>		
<p><u>Risk of Effect - Moderate</u></p> <p>• Loss of, or alteration to key features of the baseline resource such that post development characteristics or quality would be partially changed</p> <p>It is predicted that small population centres could be avoided through route alignment, however a dualled route could have an adverse visual effect on the properties.</p> <p>There is potential for adverse effects on areas of woodland to the west and within the centre of the segment, and potential for adverse effects on the sensitive setting of the distilleries.</p> <p>While there is some potential for adverse effects on the hilly terrain to the north and south of the segment, the character of the segment is generally of open fields with some wooded areas, which could be maintained and absorb a dualled route with a potential moderate effect.</p>		

### Route Section 5: Lhanbryde to west of Keith

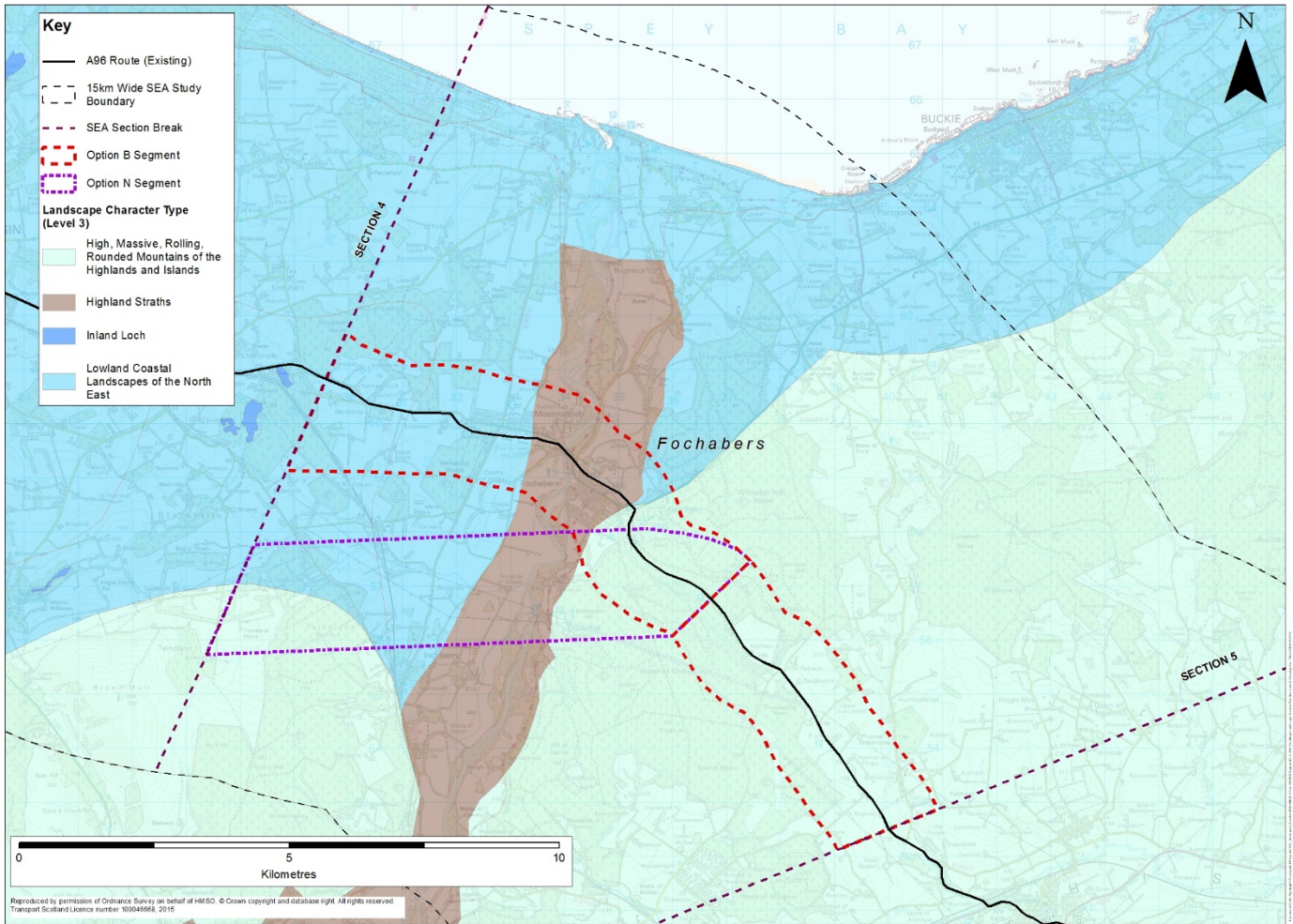


Figure 5 - Section 5 Options with Landscape Character Areas

**Table 5 - Section 5 Landscape Constraints**

<b>WEST OPTION B</b>		
<b>Commentary on Level of Environmental Landscape Constraint</b>		
<b>SECTION 5: Lhanbryde to west of Keith</b>		
<b>West Option B- approximately 1800Ha</b>		
<b>Landscape Character Types (Level 3)</b>	<b>Landscape Designations</b>	<b>Woodland Character</b>
-Lowland Coastal Landscapes of the North East -Highland Straths -High, Massive, Rolling, Rounded Mountains of the Highlands and Islands	None	The landscape is a mix of open farmland, with Sleepieshill Wood and then Barnacoul Wood in the west and Leitch's Wood, Slorach's Wood and Whiteash Hill Wood forming a dense woodland spanning the eastern extent of the segment; this woodland is used extensively for recreation. There is a small wooded area adjacent to the River Spey as it passes to the west of Fochabers.
<b>Commentary on Landscape Character and Sensitivity:</b>		
<b>Landscape Character Overview</b>		
The landscape character consists of three different types of landscape. The western extent is a gently undulating, open landscape with some scattered woodland, the centre includes the urban area of Fochabers, and the eastern extent is a wooded, hilly landscape.		
<b>Landscape Character Types</b>		
There are three Landscape Character Areas, within the segment; mainly the <i>Lowland coast landscapes of the north-east</i> (1), a stretch of <i>highland straths</i> (2) in the centre, and a stretch of <i>High, Massive, Rolling, Rounded Mountains of the Highlands and Islands</i> (3) to the east. These areas are further described as:		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The gentle landscape of the coastal lowlands generally provides long open views with shelter being defined by narrow belts of woodland. This part of the character area has a more undulating landscape, although is still very open with long views. There are some areas of woodland, and farmland with evenly sized fields also prevalent within this area.</li> <li>2. The broad farmed valley landscape of this part of the 'highland straths' is dominated by the broad, sinuous River Spey and its distinctive flat floodplain and valley bottom. It is sensitive to change, particularly those which may affect the distinctive balance of woodlands and farmland in the area.</li> <li>3. The upland landscape of the highlands consists of a moor-forest mosaic character. Within this part of the segment, the character of the area is of dense woodland, which is also sensitive to change.</li> </ol>		
<b>Other Designations</b>		
The segment contains part of the Long Distance Path, The Speyside Way. It runs for over 60 miles between Buckie, on the Moray Firth, and Aviemore at the heart of Strathspey, following the valley of the River Spey for much of the way. The route passes through some of Scotland's most beautiful landscapes; by rivers and mountains, over moorland and along forest paths. As the route passes through this segment, access, as well as the visual amenity may be a constraint to dualling.		
<b>Settlements</b>		
The segment contains the village of Mosstodloch, the town of Fochabers and some individual properties, mainly to the west of the segment, all of which contribute positively to the character of the area and may be sensitive receptors to dualling.		
<b>Woodland</b>		
Sleepieshill Wood to the west of the segment, and Barnacoul Wood in its centre, span over half of its breadth. Similarly, Leitch's Wood, Slorach's Wood and Whiteash Hill Wood form a dense woodland which span the whole of the segment breadth at its western extent. These extensive wooded areas cover the slopes of Scotch Hill to the south and Whiteash Hill to the north.		
Bellie Wood is a small strip of deciduous wood adjacent to the River Spey where Ash, Alder and Wych Elm are dominant.		
<b>Terrain</b>		
The terrain is flat to the west of the segment until the River Spey valley in the centre. The topography then becomes steeper towards the east, where at the river levels are around 20m AOD which rise to 264m AOD at the top of Whiteash Hill, just outside the north-east corner of the segment; this landscape could be challenging to dualling.		
<b>Rivers</b>		
The River Spey runs through the segment, just west of Fochabers. The current A96 is single carriageway across the existing bridge, and any new crossing infrastructure may have a visual impact on the landscape and should be designed sensitively to fit into the local landscape character.		
<b>Railway</b>		
The railway runs across the south-west corner of the segment		
<b>Indicative Landscape Sensitivity - Medium</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Landscapes which by nature of their character would be able to partly accommodate change of the type proposed. Typically these would be: comprised of commonplace elements and features creating generally unremarkable character but with some sense of place and locally designated, or their value may be expressed through non-statutory local publications.</b></li> </ul>		
There are no national landscape designations within the segment.		
The long distance path the Speyside Way runs through the centre of the segment.		
The settlements of Mosstodloch and Fochabers are potential visual receptors and the River Spey crossing is a constraint.		
A dualled route would need to cross the River Spey which, although is not an AGLV at this point (it becomes an AGLV 300m to the south), provides a prominent and positive contribution to the area and is a local visual amenity.		
The steep sides of the hills to the east of the segment are a key constraint.		
The character of the area is predominately open fields with some wooded areas. There are some large areas of woodland to the east of the segment which may be challenging to avoid. Generally though, the landscape character can be maintained, and absorb the inclusion of a dualled route with a moderate impact to the quality of the landscape.		
<b>Risk of Effect - Moderate</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Loss of, or alteration to key features of the baseline resource such that post development characteristics or quality would be partially changed</b></li> </ul>		
Dualling could have an adverse visual effect on the properties within the segment.		
Crossing the River Spey is unavoidable and new infrastructure may be required to accommodate a dualled route across the river. This could have a permanent adverse visual effect on the landscape. Any new structures would need to be carefully designed to be in-keeping with the local landscape character.		
There is potential for adverse effect on the terrain through the segment due to the hilly landscape which is a constraint to both the north and south of the segment.		
The landscape character is predominately open fields with some wooded areas. There are some large areas of woodland to the east of the segment which may be challenging to avoid. Generally though, the landscape character can be maintained, and absorb the inclusion of a dualled route with a moderate adverse effect to the quality of the landscape.		

WEST OPTION N		
SECTION 5: Lhanbryde to west of Keith West option N- approximately 1790Ha		
Landscape Character Types (Level 3)	Landscape Designations	Woodland Character
-Lowland Coastal Landscapes of the North East -Highland Straths -High, Massive, Rolling, Rounded Mountains of the Highlands and Islands	Speyside AGLV	The landscape is a mix of open farmland, with areas of woodland which span the segment breadth at its east and west extents. Teindland Wood is a conifer plantation woodland located to the west, which has the B9103 running through the edge of it. It is used for recreation also, particularly horse trails. The Wood of Ordiequish on Ordiequish Hill, Slorach's Wood, Leitch's Wood and Whiteash Hill Wood form a continuous stretch of woodland to the east of the segment. The existing A96 runs through this woodland area. This woodland is also used extensively for recreation.
<p><u>Commentary on Landscape Character and Sensitivity:</u></p> <p><b>Landscape Character Overview</b></p> <p>The landscape character consists of two different types of landscape. The western and eastern extents of the segment are hilly and covered in woodland; the centre of the segment is a gently undulating, open landscape which includes the River Spey valley.</p> <p><b>Landscape Character Types</b></p> <p>There are three Landscape Character Areas, within the segment; <i>Lowland coast landscapes of the north-east</i> (1) in the north-west of the segment, a stretch of <i>highland straths</i> (2) in the centre, and two areas of <i>High, Massive, Rolling, Rounded Mountains of the Highlands and Islands</i> (3) in the east and south-west. These areas are further described as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The gentle landscape of the coastal lowlands generally provides long open views with shelter being defined by narrow belts of woodland. This part of the character area has a more undulating landscape, although is still very open with long views. There are some areas of woodland, and farmland with evenly sized fields also prevalent within this area.</li> <li>2. The broad farmed valley landscape of this part of the 'highland straths' is dominated by the broad, sinuous River Spey and its distinctive flat floodplain and valley bottom. It is sensitive to change, particularly those which may affect the distinctive balance of woodlands and farmland in the area.</li> <li>3. The upland landscape of the highlands consists of a moor-forest mosaic character. Within this part of the segment, the character of the area is of dense woodland, which is also sensitive to change.</li> </ol> <p><b>Other Designations</b></p> <p>The segment contains part of the Long Distance Path, The Speyside Way. It runs for over 60 miles between Buckie, on the Moray Firth, and Aviemore at the heart of Strathspey, following the valley of the River Spey for much of the way. The route passes through some of Scotland's most beautiful landscapes; by rivers and mountains, over moorland and along forest paths. As the route passes through this segment, access, as well as the visual amenity may be a constraint to dualling.</p> <p><b>Landscape Designations</b></p> <p>Strath Spey is designated as an AGLV in the Moray Local Plan 2008, and is an area of broad farmed valley, which is dominated by the wide sinuous River Spey and its distinctive flat floodplain and valley bottom. It is sensitive to change, particularly changes which may affect the distinctive balance of woodlands and farmland in the area.</p> <p><b>Settlements</b></p> <p>There are no towns, villages or hamlets within the segment, however there are some individual properties which contribute positively to the character of the area and may be sensitive receptors to dualling.</p> <p><b>Woodland</b></p> <p>There are dense areas of woodland to both the eastern and western extents of the segment.</p> <p>Teindland Wood is a conifer plantation woodland located to the west, which has the B9103 running through the edge of it. It is waymarked and used for recreation, particularly horse trails.</p> <p>The Wood of Ordiequish on Ordiequish Hill, Slorach's Wood, Leitch's Wood and Whiteash Hill Wood form a continuous stretch of woodland to the east of the segment. The existing A96 runs through this woodland area. This woodland is also used extensively for recreation, more specifically, 'Moray Monster Trails' off-road mountain biking trails run through all these woodlands.</p> <p>There are also two notable viewpoints located within the woodlands, looking out over the adjacent landscape. Dualling has the potential to impact adversely on the character of the woodland and the landscape in general.</p> <p><b>Terrain</b></p> <p>There are steep hills to the western and eastern extents of the segment and then River Spey valley in the centre; this landscape could be challenging to dualling.</p> <p><b>Rivers</b></p> <p>The River Spey flows through the centre of the segment and is part of the AGLV; any new crossing infrastructure may have a visual impact on the landscape and should be designed sensitively to fit into the local landscape character.</p> <p><b>Railway</b></p> <p>The railway runs from through the breadth of the segment, from Blackburn in the north, towards Inchberry in the south. There is currently a small crossing over the railway at Orbliston, however, any new crossing infrastructure may have a visual impact on the landscape, and should be designed to be in-keeping with the local landscape character.</p>		
<p><u>Indicative Landscape Sensitivity - High</u></p> <p>• <b>Landscapes which by nature of their character would be unable to accommodate change of the type proposed; Likely to be designated, but the aspects which underpin such value may also be present outside designated areas, especially at the local scale.</b></p> <p>There are no national landscape designations within the segment, however the Speyside AGLV and the long distance path the Speyside Way run through the centre of the segment.</p> <p>A dualled route would need to cross the River Spey which, although is not an AGLV at this point (it becomes an AGLV 300m to the south), provides a prominent and positive contribution to the area and is a local visual amenity.</p> <p>Railway line is a key constraint within the segment.</p> <p>There are areas of woodland which may be difficult to avoid and the steepness of the terrain makes the landscape very sensitive.</p> <p>The landscape character of the areas consists of two different types of landscape; to the west and east of the segment the landscape is hilly and covered in woodland; the centre of the segment is more open with a river valley within and gently undulating landscape. Both landscape characters are very sensitive to dualling.</p>		
<p><u>Risk of Effect - Major</u></p> <p>• <b>Total loss of, or alteration to, key features of the baseline such that post development characteristics, or quality, would be fundamentally affected</b></p> <p>There is potential for adverse visual effects the on the individual properties scattered throughout the segment.</p> <p>Crossing the River Spey and Railway is unavoidable and new bridge infrastructure would be required. This could have a permanent adverse visual effect on the landscape and any new structures would need to be carefully designed to be in-keeping with the local landscape character.</p> <p>The segment is within a relatively remote landscape with little in the way of settlement and other infrastructure, and dualling would have an adverse effect on the sensitive landscape characters within the segment.</p>		

EAST OPTION B		
SECTION 5: Lhanbryde to west of Keith East Option B- approximately 1090Ha		
Landscape Character Types (Level 3)	Landscape Designations	Woodland Character
-High, Massive, Rolling, Rounded Mountains of the Highlands and Islands	None	The landscape is a mix of open farmland, with a large area of ancient woodland, formed by the Wood of Ordiequish on Thief's Hill and Whiteash Hill Wood on Whiteash Hill/ Gallows Hill, which spans the segment breadth at its western extent. This woodland is used extensively for recreation. Douglasshiel Moss, and Gow Moss also link to the above woodland, but are not classed as ancient woodland.
<p><u>Commentary on Landscape Character and Sensitivity:</u></p> <p><b>Landscape Character Overview</b> The landscape character consists of hilly, woodland covered land to the west of the segment, which becomes more open and undulating to the east.</p> <p><b>Landscape Character Types</b> There is only one Landscape Character Area within the segment; <i>High, Massive, Rolling, Rounded Mountains of the Highlands and Islands</i> which can be further described as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The upland landscape of the highlands consists of a moor-forest mosaic character. To the west of the segment, the character of the area is of dense woodland. It is sensitive to change. Further east the landscape opens up to rolling farmland with some woodland at the edges of the segment.</li> </ul> <p><b>Settlements</b> The hamlet of Aultmore is located to the east of the segment, just off the B9016, and there are some individual properties throughout which contribute positively to the character of the area. The buildings of the Aultmore distillery are located within Aultmore, and also add character to the rolling landscape. All may be sensitive receptors to dualling.</p> <p><b>Woodland</b> The landscape is a mix of open farmland, with a large area of ancient woodland, formed by the Wood of Ordiequish on Thief's Hill and Whiteash Hill Wood on Whiteash Hill/ Gallows Hill, which spans the segment breadth at its western extent. This woodland is used extensively for recreation. Douglasshiel Moss, and Gow Moss also link to the above woodland, but are not classed as ancient woodland.</p> <p><b>Terrain</b> There are steep, wooded hills to the east of the segment, with the existing A96 running through a valley between them. To the east of the segment, the levels become more rolling and there is less woodland..</p>		
<p><u>Indicative Landscape Sensitivity - Low</u></p> <p>• <b>Landscapes which by nature of their character would be able to accommodate change of the type proposed. Typically these would be: likely to contain few, if any, features and elements that could not be replaced.</b></p> <p>There are no national landscape designations within the segment. The character of the area to the west of the segment is hilly and covered in woodland, this becomes more open and undulating to the east. There are large areas of woodland to the east of the segment which may be difficult to avoid. Properties within the segment may be sensitive receptors. The steep sides of the hills to the north of the segment are a key constraint, however the open landscape of the southern extent would allow for a dualled route more easily without affecting the terrain. Generally, the landscape can absorb a dualled route without a significant impact to its quality and character.</p>		
<p><u>Risk of Effect - Minor</u></p> <p>• <b>Small changes to the baseline resource which are detectable, but the underlying characteristics or quality of the baseline resource would be similar under post-development conditions</b></p> <p>There is the potential for visual effects on the scattered properties within the segment, however as the existing A96 is an established part of the local landscape, effects are predicted to be minor. Although there is potential for adverse effects on the hilly terrain to the north of the segment, the overall landscape character of open rolling hills, with a more dense wooded area to the west, can be maintained and absorb a dualled route with a potential minor effect.</p>		

### Route Section 6: west of Keith to west of Huntly

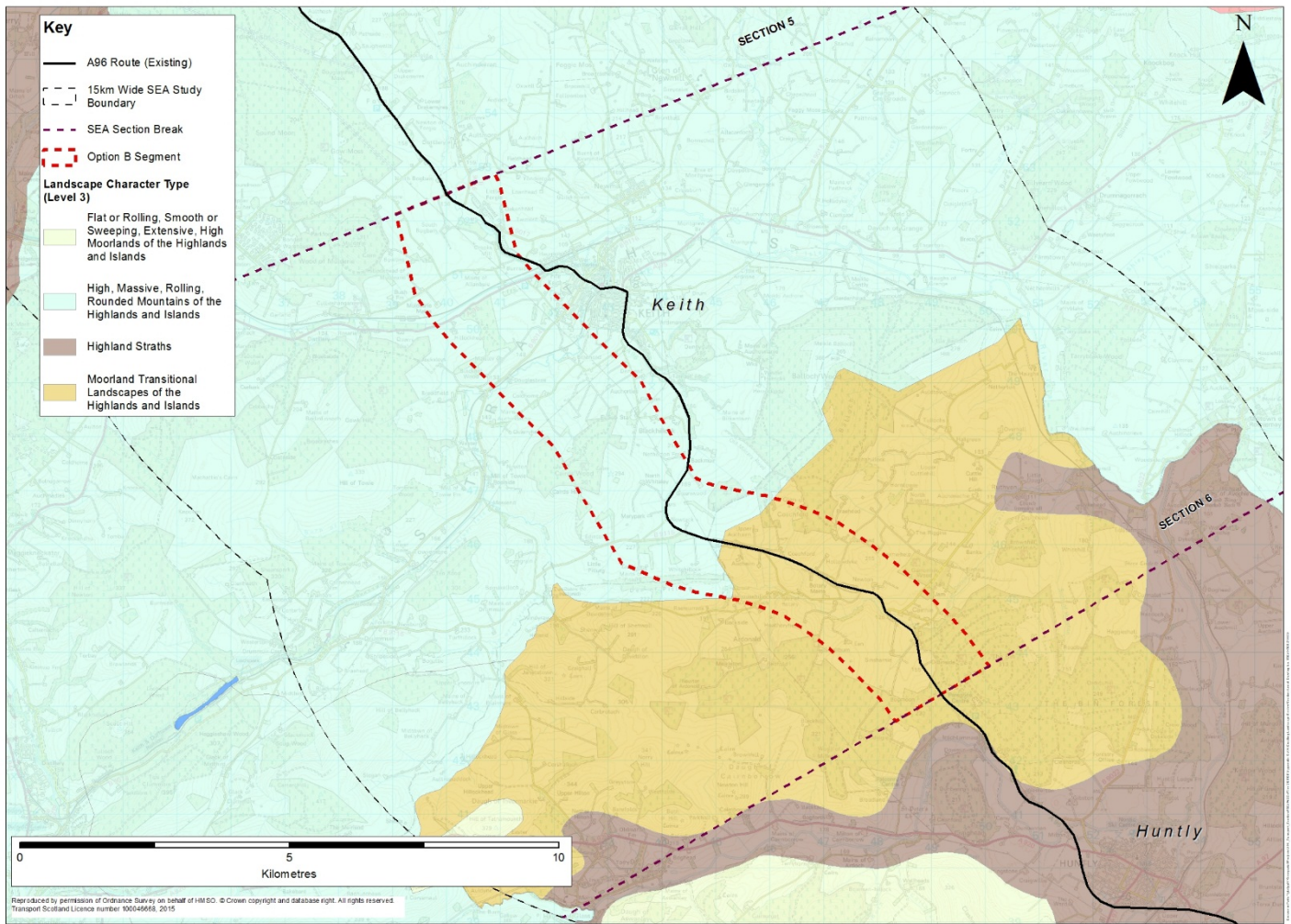


Figure 6 – Section 6 Options with Landscape Character Areas

**Table 6 - Section 6 Landscape Constraints**

There are no national designations within the project area, so this has been scoped out of this part of the report.

Commentary on Level of Environmental Landscape Constraint		
SECTION 6: west of Keith to west of Huntly Option B- approximately 2750Ha		
Landscape Character Types (Level 3)	Landscape Designations	Woodland Character
-High, Massive, Rolling, Rounded Mountains of the Highlands and Islands -Moorland Transitional Landscapes of the Highlands and Islands	None	The woodland character within the segment is generally of a hilly, open landscape with some patches of woodland scattered through the area. The areas of woodland which span over half of the breadth of the segment are: Hillochhead Wood and Wood of Maisley which are connected and located centrally within the segment to the east of Keith. Some of this woodland is farmed. Cairds Wood which is located about south of Keith and is a large conifer woodland on the slopes and top of Cairds Hill. The northern part of The Bin Forest which is located at the southern extent of the segment and is used for recreation.
<p><u>Commentary on Landscape Character and Sensitivity:</u></p> <p><b>Landscape Character Overview</b></p> <p>The landscape character is generally of a hilly, open landscape with patches of woodland and a patchwork of individual dwellings/ farms. The segment skirts Keith at its northern end and runs south through open landscape and over Cairds Hill, to The Bin hill and forest at its southern extent. The existing A96 runs through the centre of the southern half of the section.</p> <p><b>Landscape Character Types</b></p> <p>There are two Landscape Character Areas within the segment; mainly <i>High, Massive, Rolling, Rounded Mountains of the Highlands and Islands</i> (1), and an area of <i>Moorland Transitional Landscapes of the Highlands and Islands</i> (2) to the east of the segment. These are further described as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The upland landscape of the highlands consists generally of a moor-forest mosaic character, with gently graded valleys to the higher lands of the open uplands. Within the east of the segment, the character of the area is quite open with some blocks of woodland. The terrain is undulating with Cairds Hill punctuating the landscape south of Keith.</li> <li>2. The farmed moorland landscape is essentially a transition landscape between the Moorland Plateaux and the Agricultural Heartland. The Daugh of Cairnborrow is a wedge of rough upland farmland between the moors of the Clashindarroch Forrest and The Scalp and the agricultural Heartland of the River Deveron. Specifically within the segment, the land consists of low hills with a rich mosaic of fields including farms with scattered farm buildings within a small scale landscape pattern. The pressures on the landscape generally stem from commercial forestry, and derelict buildings and monuments.</li> </ol> <p><b>Settlements</b></p> <p>The north of the segment skirts the eastern edge of Keith, the village of Cairnie is located in the south-eastern extent and there are many individual properties/ farms scattered throughout. All contribute positively to the character of the area and may be sensitive receptors to dualling.</p> <p><b>Woodland</b></p> <p>The woodland character within the segment is generally of a hilly, open landscape with some patches of woodland scattered throughout. Cairds Wood spans more than half of the segment breadth, is located south of Keith and is a large conifer woodland on the slopes and top of Cairds Hill. To the southern extent of the segment, the Bin Forest spans over half its breadth and is a sensitive part of the landscape. It was first planted in the 1840s with fir tree seeds brought back from North America by the famous Scottish plant-hunter David Douglas; originally planted to supply timber, this forest now offers many walking trails. Hillochhead Wood and Wood of Maisley are connected and span over half of the segment breadth to the east of Keith; some of this woodland is farmed. Other woodland areas located within the segment include: Cottage wood is located to the edge of the segment directly east of Keith and is used for recreation. The edge of Balloch Wood, on the largely forested Meikle Balloch Hill is located within the segment at the Glen of Coachford, It has forest paths and tracks used for recreation and the moorland summit rises clear of the conifers and gives extensive views over Moray and Aberdeenshire. Pitlurg Woodland and the Dean of Pitlurg are small areas of woodland located in the centre of the segment.</p> <p><b>Wildness</b></p> <p>The Den of Pitlurg is considered to be of a high wildness value.</p> <p><b>Terrain</b></p> <p>The terrain throughout the segment is very hilly, with the slopes of the Hill of Mulderie to the north, Cairds Hill in the centre, and the slopes of Black Hill in the south-west; this landscape could be challenging to dualling.</p> <p><b>Rivers</b></p> <p>The River Isla runs through the north of the segment, however it is not very wide along this stretch.</p> <p><b>Railway</b></p> <p>Two railway lines run across the north of the segment into Keith. Both lines are at a low point in the terrain, however any new crossing infrastructure may have a visual impact on the landscape, and should be designed to be in-keeping with the local landscape character.</p>		
<p><u>Indicative Landscape Sensitivity - Medium/Low</u></p> <p>• <b>Landscapes which by nature of their character would be able to partly accommodate change of the type proposed. Typically these would be: comprised of commonplace elements and features creating generally unremarkable character but with some sense of place.</b></p> <p>There are no national landscape designations within the segment. The character is predominately a hilly, open landscape with pockets of woodland and a patchwork of individual dwellings/ farms. The existing A96 is an established part of the local landscape, reducing the sensitivity of the landscape. The western edge of Keith and the village of Cairnie are located within the north and south extents of the segment respectively, and a number of individual properties are scattered throughout, all contributing positively to the character of the area. There are areas of woodland to the west of the segment which may be difficult to avoid and to the south end of the segment, the Bin Forest is a sensitive part of the landscape. The railway line crossings the north of the segment, and hilly terrain throughout, are considered key constraint Landscape character can generally be maintained, and absorb the inclusion of a dualled route without significant impact on the quality of the landscape.</p>		
<p><u>Risk of Effect - Moderate</u></p> <p>• <b>Loss of, or alteration to key features of the baseline resource such that post development characteristics or quality would be partially changed</b></p> <p>There is potential for adverse effects on the Bin Forest due to the proximity of the forest to the existing A96 and the adjacent hilly terrain. It is predicted that properties could be avoided through route alignment, however a dualled route could have an adverse visual effect receptors. Two crossings of a railway line are unavoidable and new infrastructure would be required and this could have a permanent adverse impact on the landscape. Screening may be appropriate to provide longer term mitigation, however any new structures would need to be carefully designed to be in-keeping with the local landscape character. Although there is potential for adverse effects on the hilly terrain in the segment, generally the character of the area could be maintained, and absorb a dualled route with a potential moderate effect.</p>		

**Route Section 7: west of Huntly to east of Huntly**

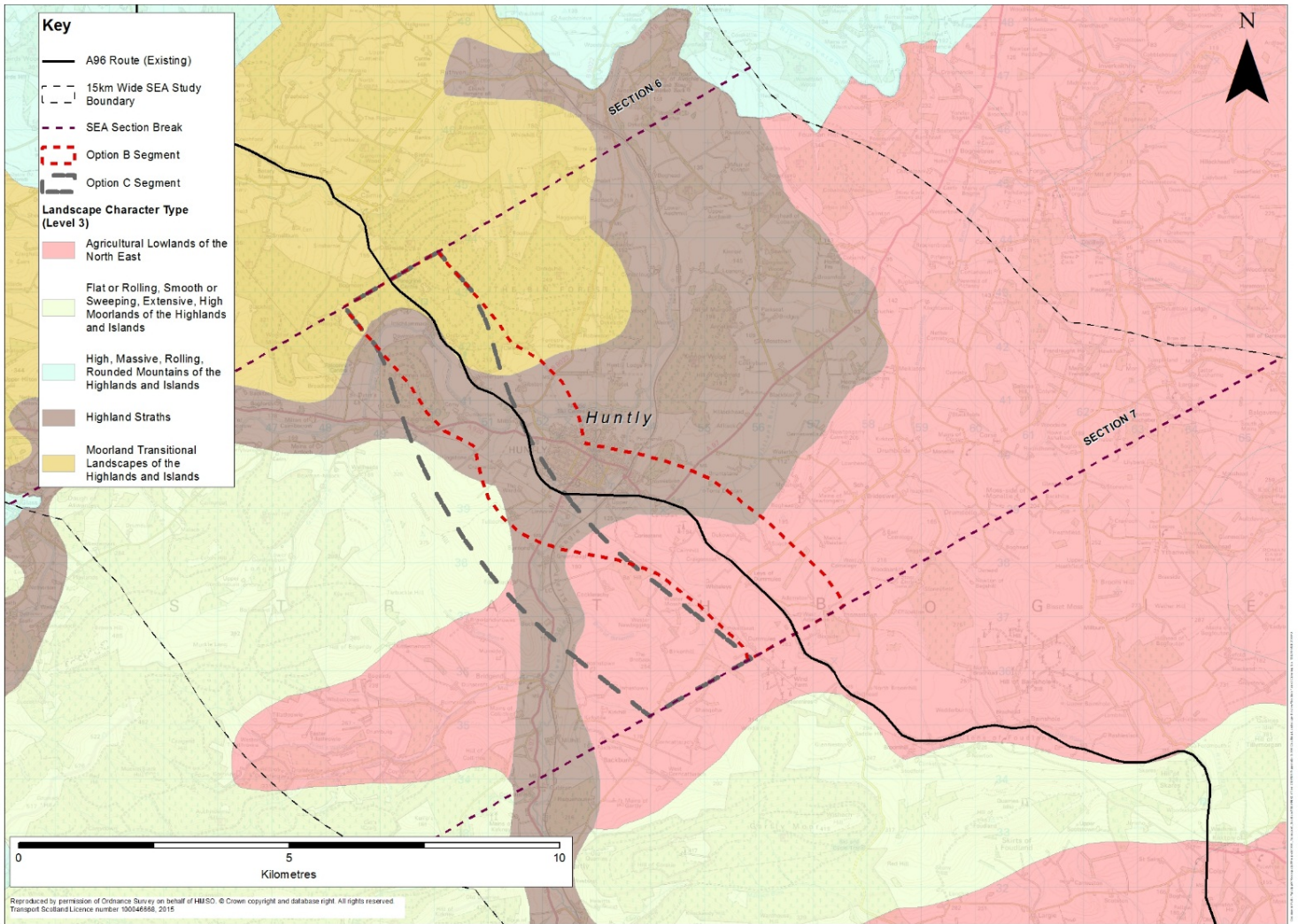


Figure 7 – Section 7 Options with Landscape Character Areas



**Table 7 - Section 7 Landscape Constraints**

There are no national designations within the project area, so this has been scoped out of this part of the report.

<b>OPTION B</b>		
<b>Commentary on Level of Environmental Landscape Constraint</b>		
<b>SECTION 7: west of Huntly to east of Huntly</b>		
<b>Option B- approximately 2090Ha</b>		
<b>Landscape Character Types (Level 3)</b>	<b>Landscape Designations</b>	<b>Woodland Character</b>
-Moorland Transitional Landscapes of the Highlands and Islands - Highland Straths - Flat or Rolling, Smooth or Sweeping, Extensive, High Moorlands of the Highlands and Islands - Agricultural Lowlands of the North East	None	The woodland character within the segment is of a hilly, open landscape with a large area woodland to the north. The areas of woodland which span over half of the breadth of the segment are: The southern part of the Bin Forest which is located in the northern extent of the segment and is used for recreation. Dunbennan Wood on Dunbennan Hill which is located in the north-west of the segment and has tracks running through it.
<p><u>Commentary on Landscape Character and Sensitivity:</u></p> <p><b>Landscape Character Overview</b></p> <p>The landscape character is generally of rolling hills with some dense woodland to the north of the segment. The river valleys of the Deveron and Bogie run either side of the urban settlement of Huntly located in the middle of segment. The existing A96 runs through the centre of the length of the segment.</p> <p><b>Landscape Character Types</b></p> <p>There are four Landscape Character Areas, within the segment; a small area of <i>Moorland Transitional Landscapes of the Highlands and Islands</i> (1) to the west, a large area of <i>Highland Straths</i> (2) and small area of <i>Flat or Rolling, Smooth or Sweeping, Extensive, High Moorlands of the Highlands and Islands</i> (3) in the centre and <i>Agricultural Lowlands of the North East</i> (4) to the east. These are further described as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The farmed moorland landscape is essentially a transition landscape between the Moorland Plateaux and the Agricultural Heartland. The Daugh of Cairnborrow is a wedge of rough upland farmland between the moors of the Clashindarroch Forrest and The Scalp and the agricultural Heartland of the River Deveron. Specifically within the segment, the land consists the woodland and hillside of the Bin Forest.</li> <li>2. The Deveron and Bogie Straths form the segment's Highland Straths. The farmed valley landscape is dominated by the broad, sinuous River Deveron and Bogie its distinctive flat floodplain and valley bottom. It is sensitive to change, particularly to new features which may affect the distinctive balance of woodlands and farmland in the area. This landscape type dominates the segment and includes the settlement of Huntly.</li> <li>3. The moorland plateaux landscape of the Grampian Outliers lie at the transition between the high mountains of the Cairngorms and the lowland farmland of the northeast coastlands. The character is of a smooth undulating landform with extensive tracts of conifer plantation covering the slopes, with promontories presenting spectacular views. The small area of this character type includes the steep slopes of Clashmach Hill, east of Huntly, which is open farmland.</li> <li>4. The northern rolling lowlands are a swathe of farmland in a large scale simple pattern, with smooth sweeping landform curves which draw the eye across the terrain. Thick woodland shelterbelts follow the landform. Long distance views are afforded from the elevated locations. The large scale rolling hills are sensitive to new elements which may disrupt their smooth forms and visual flow.</li> </ol> <p><b>Settlements</b></p> <p>The segment includes the market town of Huntly in its centre and a number of individual properties/ farms scattered throughout. All contribute positively to the character of the area and may be sensitive receptors to dualling.</p> <p><b>Woodland</b></p> <p>The woodland character within the segment is of a hilly, open landscape with a large, sensitive woodland area of The Bin Forest to the north. It was first planted in the 1840s with fir tree seeds brought back from North America by the famous Scottish plant-hunter David Douglas; originally planted to supply timber, this forest now offers many walking trails.</p> <p>Additionally, Dunbennan Wood on Dunbennan Hill spans half the segment breadth in the north-west. It is run by the Forestry Commission and has a number of tracks running through it.</p> <p><b>Terrain</b></p> <p>The terrain levels in the north-west are steep, starting around 130m AOD at Westerton and climbing to 312m AOD at the summit of Bin Hill. The levels fall into the river valleys at Huntly in the centre of the segment and rise again in the south east with the Clashmach Hill and Ba Hill being prominent in the landscape.</p> <p><b>Rivers</b></p> <p>The sinuous Rivers Deveron and Bogie flow to the north and south of Huntly respectively. Both are currently crossed by the existing A96 however, any new crossing infrastructure may have a visual impact on the landscape and should be designed sensitively to fit into the local landscape character.</p> <p><b>Railway</b></p> <p>The railway line crosses the breadth of the centre of the segment near Huntly; the existing A96 passes under it.</p>		
<p><u>Indicative Landscape Sensitivity - Low</u></p> <p>• <b>Landscapes which by nature of their character would be able to accommodate change of the type proposed. Typically these would be: likely to contain few, if any, features and elements that could not be replaced.</b></p> <p>There are no national landscape designations within the segment.</p> <p>The character to the north of the segment is hilly and covered in woodland, which then becomes more open and undulating to the south and east of the segment. There are large areas of woodland to the north of the segment which may be challenging to avoid. The A96 is an established part of the local landscape, and therefore is an existing precedent, which reduces its sensitivity.</p> <p>Part of the town of Huntly is located in the centre of the segment and a number of individual properties scattered throughout.</p> <p>To the north and south of the segment the steep slopes are key constraints to dualling, however the open landscape of the central part would accommodate a dualled route more easily.</p> <p>It is considered that the landscape character can be maintained, and absorb a dualled route without significant impact on the quality of the landscape.</p>		
<p><u>Risk of Effect - Minor</u></p> <p>• <b>Small changes to the baseline resource which are detectable, but the underlying characteristics or quality of the baseline resource would be similar under post-development conditions</b></p> <p>It is predicted that properties could be avoided through route alignment, however a dualled route could have an adverse visual effect on receptors.</p> <p>Although there is the potential for adverse effects on the hilly, wooded terrain in the north of the segment, generally the landscape character could be maintained with minor effects.</p>		

<b>OPTION C</b>		
<b>SECTION 7: west of Huntly to east of Huntly</b>		
<b>Option C- approximately 1940Ha</b>		
<b>Landscape Character Types (Level 3)</b>	<b>Landscape Designations</b>	<b>Woodland Character</b>
-Moorland Transitional Landscapes of the Highlands and Islands - Highland Straths - Flat or Rolling, Smooth or Sweeping, Extensive, High Moorlands of the Highlands and Islands - Agricultural Lowlands of the North East	None	The woodland character within the segment is of a hilly, open landscape with a large area woodland to the north. The areas of woodland which span over half of the breadth of the segment are: The southern part of the Bin Forest which is located in the north of the segment and is used for recreation. Dunbennan Wood on Dunbennan Hill which is located in the north-west of the segment, and has tracks running through it. Bahill wood, which is located in the south of the segment, is a small hill of thickly planted Fir trees and is the property of his Grace the Duke of Richmond.
<p><u>Commentary on Landscape Character and Sensitivity:</u></p> <p><b>Landscape Character Overview</b></p> <p>The landscape character is generally of rolling hills with some dense woodland to the north of the segment. The river valleys of the Deveron and Bogie run through the middle of the segment and the existing A96 runs through the length of its northern half.</p> <p><b>Landscape Character Types</b></p> <p>There are four Landscape Character Areas, within the segment; a small area of <i>Moorland Transitional Landscapes of the Highlands and Islands</i> (1) to the west, a large area of <i>Highland Straths</i> (2) and small area of <i>Flat or Rolling, Smooth or Sweeping, Extensive, High Moorlands of the Highlands and Islands</i> (3) in the centre and <i>Agricultural Lowlands of the North East</i> (4) to the east. These are further described as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The farmed moorland landscape is essentially a transition landscape between the Moorland Plateaux and the Agricultural Heartland. The Daugh of Cairnborrow is a wedge of rough upland farmland between the moors of the Clashindarroch Forrest and The Scalp and the agricultural Heartland of the River Deveron. Specifically within the segment, the land consists the woodland and hillside of the Bin Forest.</li> <li>2. The Deveron and Bogie Straths form the segment's Highland Straths. The farmed valley landscape is dominated by the broad, sinuous River Deveron and Bogie its distinctive flat floodplain and valley bottom. It is sensitive to change, particularly to new features which may affect the distinctive balance of woodlands and farmland in the area. This landscape type dominates the segment and includes the settlement of Huntly.</li> <li>3. The moorland plateaux landscape of the Grampian Outliers lie at the transition between the high mountains of the Cairngorms and the lowland farmland of the northeast coastlands. The character is of a smooth undulating landform with extensive tracts of conifer plantation covering the slopes, with promontories presenting spectacular views. The small area of this character type includes the steep slopes of Clashmach Hill, east of Huntly, which is open farmland.</li> <li>4. The northern rolling lowlands are a swathe of farmland in a large scale simple pattern, with smooth sweeping landform curves which draw the eye across the terrain. Thick woodland shelterbelts follow the landform. Long distance views are afforded from the elevated locations. The large scale rolling hills are sensitive to new elements which may disrupt their smooth forms and visual flow</li> </ol> <p><b>Settlements</b></p> <p>The western edge of the market town of Huntly is located within the segment and a number of individual properties/ farms scattered throughout. All contribute positively to the character of the area and may be sensitive receptors to dualling.</p> <p><b>Woodland</b></p> <p>The woodland character within the segment is of a hilly, open landscape with a large, sensitive woodland area of The Bin Forest to the north. It was first planted in the 1840s with fir tree seeds brought back from North America by the famous Scottish plant-hunter David Douglas; originally planted to supply timber, this forest now offers many walking trails.</p> <p>Additionally, Dunbennan Wood on Dunbennan Hill spans half the segment breadth in the north-west. It is run by the Forestry Commission and has a number of tracks running through it.</p> <p>Bahill wood, located to the East of the Cocklarachy in the south of the segment, is a small hill of thickly planted Fir trees and is the property of his Grace the Duke of Richmond.</p> <p><b>Terrain</b></p> <p>The terrain levels in the north are steep, starting around 130m AOD at Westerton and climbing to 312m AOD at the summit of Bin Hill. The levels fall into the river valleys near Huntly (139m AOD) at the segment's centre and rise again in the south east with the Clashmach Hill (375m AOD), Tarbuckle Hill, Ba Hill and The Broback (254m AOD) being prominent in the landscape. This landscape could be challenging to dualling.</p> <p><b>Rivers</b></p> <p>The sinuous Rivers Deveron and Bogie cross the segment to the north and south respectively and the River Deveron is currently crossed by the existing A96. Any new crossing infrastructure may have a visual impact on the landscape and should be designed sensitively to fit into the local landscape character.</p> <p><b>Railway</b></p> <p>The railway line, and adjacent A97, cross the breadth of the segment in its centre, following the River Bogie valley.</p>		
<p><u>Indicative Landscape Sensitivity - Medium</u></p> <p>• <b>Landscapes which by nature of their character would be able to accommodate change of the type proposed. Typically these would be: likely to contain few, if any, features and elements that could not be replaced.</b></p> <p>There are no national landscape designations within the segment.</p> <p>The landscape character within the segment consists of four character types; hilly with some dense woodland to the north, becoming more open to the south at the river valley, through the hills adjacent to Huntly where the sensitivity of the landscape increases to the open, agricultural areas in the south where a dualled route be highly visible in the landscape.</p> <p>The large areas of woodland to the north of the segment may be difficult to avoid</p> <p>The edge of Huntly is located to the eastern extent of the segment, and there are also individual properties scattered throughout.</p> <p>It is considered that the landscape character can be maintained, and absorb a dualled route without significant impact on the quality of the landscape.</p>		
<p><u>Risk of Effect - Moderate</u></p> <p>• <b>Loss of, or alteration to key features of the baseline resource such that post development characteristics or quality would be partially changed</b></p> <p>It is predicted that properties could be avoided through route alignment, however a dualled route could have an adverse visual effect on receptors.</p> <p>Although there is the potential for adverse effects on the hilly, wooded terrain in the north of the segment, generally the landscape character could be maintained and absorb a dualled route with moderate effects.</p>		

### Route Section 8: east of Huntly to Old Rayne

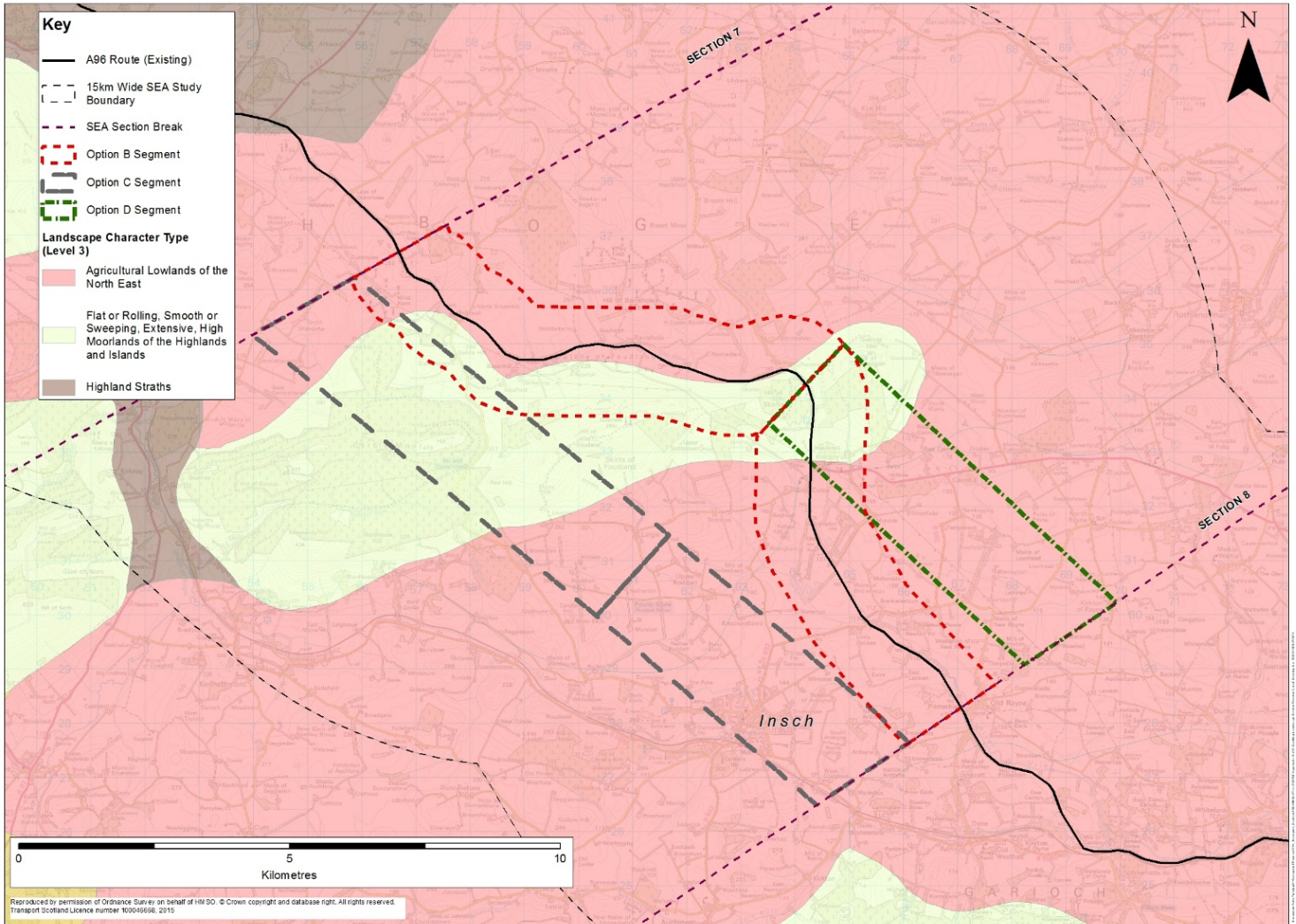


Figure 8 – Section 8 Options with Landscape Character Areas

**Table 8 - Section 8 Landscape Constraints**

There are no national designations within the project area, so this has been scoped out of this part of the report.

<b>WEST OPTION B</b>		
<b>Commentary on Level of Environmental Landscape Constraint</b>		
<b>SECTION 8: east of Huntly to Old Rayne</b>		
<b>West Option B- approximately 1710Ha</b>		
<b>Landscape Character Types (Level 3)</b>	<b>Landscape Designations</b>	<b>Woodland Character</b>
- Agricultural Lowlands of the North East - Flat or Rolling, Smooth or Sweeping, Extensive, High Moorlands of the Highlands and Islands	None	The segment is generally of steep hills with a few small areas of woodland within the segment. The Rowans is an area of Native Woodland in the north-western extent of the segment, Rack Moss in the south-west is owned by the Forestry Commission and the Hill of Skares conifer wooded slope at the eastern extent is owned by the Bognie Estate.
<u>Commentary on Landscape Character and Sensitivity:</u>		
<b>Landscape Character Overview</b>		
The landscape character is generally of steep hills with some woodland at the eastern and western extents of the segment; the slopes of the hills are mostly swathes of farmland. Dummies windfarm is located at the western extent of the segment and is prominent in the landscape. The existing A96 runs through the centre of the length of the segment which follows the Glens of Foudland.		
<b>Landscape Character Types</b>		
There are two Landscape Character Areas, within the segment; an area of <i>Agricultural Lowlands of the North East</i> (1) to the north and <i>Flat or Rolling, Smooth or Sweeping, Extensive, High Moorlands of the Highlands and Islands</i> (2) to the south. These are further described as:		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The northern rolling lowlands are swathes of farmland in a large scale simple pattern, with smooth sweeping landform curves which draw the eye across the terrain. Thick woodland shelterbelts follow the landform. Long distance view are afforded from elevated locations. The large scale rolling hills are sensitive to elements which may disrupt their smooth forms and visual flow.</li> <li>2. The moorland plateaux landscape of the Grampian Outliers lie at the transition between the high mountains of the Cairngorms and the lowland farmland of the northeast coastlands. The character is of a smooth undulating landform with extensive tracts of conifer plantation covering slopes, with promontories presenting spectacular views.</li> </ol>		
<b>Settlements</b>		
There are individual properties scattered throughout the segment, with several around Bainshole Farm in its centre; these may be sensitive receptors to dualling. There is an enhanced layby on the existing A96 near Ramstone Brae which provides notable open views to the north.		
<b>Woodland</b>		
There are a few small areas of woodland within the segment. The Rowans is an area of Native Woodland in the north-western extent of the segment, Rack Moss in the south-west is owned by the Forestry Commission and the Hill of Skares conifer wooded slope at the eastern extent is owned by the Bognie Estate.		
<b>Terrain</b>		
The terrain throughout the segment is very steep and the Glens of Foudland (around 200m AOD), the Hill of Banishole (318m AOD) and the Hill of Foudland (467m AOD) dominate its eastern half. The existing A96 follows a valley at around 190m AOD with the Hill of Skares rises steeply up to 329m AOD at the eastern extent; this landscape could be challenging to dualling.		
<b>Windfarm</b>		
Dummies wind farm is located at the western extent of the segment and is a very prominent feature in the landscape. Now owned by Ikea, it was developed and built by Eco2, started operating in April 2007 and consists of seven Vestas turbines.		
<u>Indicative Landscape Sensitivity - Low/ Medium</u>		
<p>• <b>Landscapes which by nature of their character would be able to partly accommodate change of the type proposed. Typically these would be: comprised of commonplace elements and features creating generally unremarkable character but with some sense of place.</b></p> <p>There are no national landscape designations within the segment.</p> <p>The landscape character is of steep hills where the slopes are mostly swathes of farmland, and there are a few small forested areas to the west and one to the east. Dummies windfarm is located at the western extent of the segment and is prominent in the landscape, thereby reducing the sensitivity in this part of the segment. Similarly, the existing A96 is an established part of the local landscape, which further reduces its sensitivity and the enhanced layby on the dual carriageway is a positive feature which highlights the impressive views to the north.</p> <p>Individual properties, scattered through the segment and the hilly landscape throughout are constraints to dualling.</p> <p>It is considered that the landscape character can be maintained, and absorb a dualled route without a significant impact on the quality of the landscape.</p>		
<u>Risk of Effect - Minor</u>		
<p>• <b>Small changes to the baseline resource which are detectable, but the underlying characteristics or quality of the baseline resource would be similar under post-development conditions</b></p> <p>It is predicted that properties could be avoided through route alignment, however a dualled route could have an adverse visual effect on receptors.</p> <p>The enhanced layby is a positive feature along existing A96, which highlights the impressive views north and dualling has an opportunity to maintain and/ or enhance this type of feature.</p> <p>The landscape character could be maintained with minor effects as the precedent of a road running through the landscape is already in place.</p> <p>Although there is the potential for adverse effects on the hilly terrain of the segment, as the existing A96 is an established part of the local landscape its character can generally be maintained with minor effects.</p>		

WEST OPTION C		
SECTION 8: east of Huntly to Old Rayne West Option C- approximately 1570Ha		
Landscape Character Types (Level 3)	Landscape Designations	Woodland Character
- Agricultural Lowlands of the North East - Flat or Rolling, Smooth or Sweeping, Extensive, High Moorlands of the Highlands and Islands	None	The segment consists of open farmed slopes on hilly terrain with Gartly Moor Forest, a large woodland on Gartly Moor, spanning the segment in its centre. It is used for recreation and on a clear day there are excellent views of Bennachie, Dunnydeer and the surrounding Aberdeenshire countryside.
<p><u>Commentary on Landscape Character and Sensitivity:</u></p> <p><b>Landscape Character Overview</b></p> <p>The landscape character is generally of steep hills, with a large expanse of woodland crossing the segment breadth in its centre. The slopes of the hills are mostly swathes of farmland and Dummuies windfarm, located in the north-west corner of the segment, is prominent in the landscape.</p> <p><b>Landscape Character Types</b></p> <p>There are two Landscape Character Areas, within the segment; of <i>Agricultural Lowlands of the North East</i> (1) to the north and south of the segment and <i>Flat or Rolling, Smooth or Sweeping, Extensive, High Moorlands of the Highlands and Islands</i> (2) in the centre. These are further described as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The northern rolling lowlands are swathe of farmland in a large scale simple pattern, with smooth sweeping landform curves which draw the eye across the terrain. Thick woodland shelterbelts follow the landform. Long distance view are afforded from elevated locations. The large scale rolling hills are sensitive to elements which may disrupt their smooth forms and visual flow. The northern slopes of Wind's Eye Hill and the southern slopes of Stone Hill are within this character type.</li> <li>2. The moorland plateaux landscape of the Grampian Outliers lie at the transition between the high mountains of the Cairngorms and the lowland farmland of the northeast coastlands. The character is of a smooth undulating landform with extensive tracts of conifer plantation covering slopes, with promontories presenting spectacular views. Gartly Moor is within this character type.</li> </ol> <p><b>Settlements</b></p> <p>There are individual properties scattered throughout the segment and these may be sensitive receptors to dualling.</p> <p><b>Woodland</b></p> <p>Gartly Moor Forest spans the centre of the segment and has many ski and cycle trails, including a combination of forest road and off-road cycling, run by Forest Enterprise Cycle Trails. On a clear day there are excellent views of Bennachie and Dunnydeer to the south-east, as well as the surrounding Aberdeenshire countryside, from the top of Wishach Hill (422m AOD).</p> <p><b>Terrain</b></p> <p>The terrain in the segment is very hilly with Wind's Eye Hill (314m AOD) in the north, Wishach Hill in Gartly Moor (419m AOD) in the centre and Red Hill and Stony Hill to the south. Terrain levels decrease to 180m AOD in the segment's southern extent.</p> <p><b>Windfarm</b></p> <p>Dummuies wind farm is located in the north-west corner of the segment and is a prominent feature in the landscape. Now owned by Ikea, it was developed and built by Eco2, started operating in April 2007 and consists of seven Vestas turbines.</p>		
<p><u>Indicative Landscape Sensitivity - High</u></p> <p>• <b>Landscapes which by nature of their character would be unable to accommodate change of the type proposed; of high quality with distinctive elements and features making a positive contribution to character and sense of place.</b></p> <p>There are no national landscape designations within the segment.</p> <p>The landscape character of the area is predominately steep hills, with a large block of woodland in the centre and swathes of farmland on the slopes.</p> <p>Although Dummuies windfarm, located at the northern edge of the segment, is prominent in the landscape and partially reduces its sensitivity, the rest of the segment landscape is relatively remote with little in the way of settlement or other infrastructure.</p> <p>A dualled route would therefore substantially change the character of this area as the landscape is very sensitive to change.</p>		
<p><u>Risk of Effect - Major</u></p> <p>• <b>Total loss of, or alteration to, key features of the baseline such that post development characteristics, or quality, would be fundamentally affected</b></p> <p>There is potential for adverse visual effects on individual properties scattered throughout the segment.</p> <p>The steep, hilly landscape and complex landforms throughout the segment mean that there is potential for major significant adverse effects on landscape character through dualling.</p>		

EAST OPTION B		
SECTION 8: east of Huntly to Old Rayne East Option B- approximately 1400Ha		
Landscape Character Types (Level 3)	Landscape Designations	Woodland Character
- Flat or Rolling, Smooth or Sweeping, Extensive, High Moorlands of the Highlands and Islands - Agricultural Lowlands of the North East	None	The segment consists mainly of open farmland with some woodland shelterbelts and larger areas of woodland to the north. The Hill of Skares has a conifer wooded slope owned by the Bognie Estate and there is a woodland on the southern slopes of the Hill of Tillymorgan which is owned by the Williamston Estate.
<p><u>Commentary on Landscape Character and Sensitivity:</u></p> <p><b>Landscape Character Overview</b></p> <p>The landscape character is of steep hills to the north, moving into gently rolling terrain to the south. The landscape consists mainly of open farmland with some woodland shelterbelts and larger areas of woodland to the north. The existing A96 runs through the centre of the length of the segment.</p> <p><b>Landscape Character Types</b></p> <p>There are two Landscape Character Areas, within wide segment; an area of <i>Flat or Rolling, Smooth or Sweeping, Extensive, High Moorlands of the Highlands and Islands</i> (1) to the north and <i>Agricultural Lowlands of the North East</i> (2) to the south. These are further described as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The moorland plateaux landscape of the Grampian Outliers lie at the transition between the high mountains of the Cairngorms and the lowland farmland of the northeast coastlands. The character is of a smooth undulating landform with extensive tracts of conifer plantation covering slopes, with promontories presenting spectacular views.</li> <li>2. The <i>Agricultural Lowlands of the North East</i> has two sub-types within it in this area; to the north part, the <i>northern rolling lowlands</i> which are swathes of farmland in a large scale simple pattern, with smooth sweeping landform curves which draw the eye across the terrain. Thick woodland shelterbelts follow the landform. Long distance view are afforded from elevated locations. The large scale rolling hills are sensitive to elements which may disrupt their smooth forms and visual flow. Most of the character type consists the <i>Insch Basin</i>, which is formed of an extensive area of largely flat and gently rolling farmland, with large geometric fields, and little substantial woodland planting.</li> </ol> <p><b>Other Designations</b></p> <p>Williamston House Estate and Gardens and Designed Landscapes are located in the north-east of the segment near Colpy, and span over half the segment breadth. They are a rare example of the artist Theodore Haughton's garden design and are heavily influenced by early 20th century continental style, relying more on structure and foliage texture than flower colour.</p> <p>Newton house, just south of Williamston House Estate is also a designated Gardens and Designed Landscapes spanning over half the segment breadth. The walled garden is an outstanding work of art, separated into a series of rooms and containing a wide range of plants. The wider designed landscape makes an impressive setting for the significant architectural features.</p> <p>These historic environment assets and their setting are sensitive to change.</p> <p><b>Settlements</b></p> <p>The villages of Old Rayne and Pitmachie are located at the south-eastern edge of the segment and there are a number of individual properties scattered throughout the segment; all may be sensitive receptors to dualling.</p> <p>There is an enhanced layby and parking area with a café facility on the existing A96 in the north of the segment, at the base of the Hill of Skares; it affords long views south over the rolling landscape.</p> <p><b>Woodland</b></p> <p>The segment consists mainly of open farmland with some woodland shelterbelts and larger areas of woodland which span over half of the segment breadth to the north. The Hill of Skares has a conifer wooded slope owned by the Bognie Estate and there is a woodland on the southern slopes of the Hill of Tillymorgan which is owned by the Williamston Estate.</p> <p><b>Terrain</b></p> <p>The terrain is very steep in the north of the segment at the Hill of Skares (329m AOD), however the landscape is flatter, with rolling hills south of Colpy (150m AOD).</p> <p><b>Rivers</b></p> <p>The River Urie runs through the centre of the length of the segment, alongside the existing A96; any new crossing infrastructure may have a visual impact on the landscape and should be designed sensitively to fit into the local landscape character. Loch Insch Fishery is located in the centre of the segment, to the west of the existing A96.</p>		
<p><u>Indicative Landscape Sensitivity - Low/Medium</u></p> <p>• <b>Landscapes which by nature of their character would be able to partly accommodate change of the type proposed. Typically these would be: Locally designated, or their value may be expressed through non-statutory local publications.</b></p> <p>There are no national landscape designations within the segment.</p> <p>The landscape character of the area comprises steep hills to the north of the segment, with some woodland shelterbelts breaking up the open swathes of farmland to the south. The existing A96 is an established part of the local landscape, which reduces its sensitivity and the enhanced layby on the dual carriageway is a positive feature which highlights the impressive views to the south.</p> <p>Williamston House and Newtown House Gardens and Designed Landscapes (GDLs) are key constraints as they span half of the segment breadth to the north of the existing A96.</p> <p>There are individual properties scattered throughout the segment and some small villages to the south.</p> <p>The hilly terrain to the north of the segment may be a constraint to dualling and although the open landscape to the south is less constrained, it is still sensitive to change. It is considered that the landscape character can be maintained, and absorb a dualled route without significant impact on the quality of the landscape.</p>		
<p><u>Risk of Effect - Moderate</u></p> <p>• <b>Loss of, or alteration to key features of the baseline resource such that post development characteristics or quality would be partially changed</b></p> <p>There is the potential for visual effects on the properties and villages within the segment, however as the existing A96 is an established part of the local landscape, effects are predicted to be minor.</p> <p>The enhanced layby is a positive feature along existing A96, which highlights the impressive views south and dualling has an opportunity to maintain and/ or enhance this type of feature.</p> <p>There is potential for adverse visual and setting effects on Williamston House and Newtown House Gardens and Designed Landscapes due to their size and location within the segment.</p> <p>There is potential for adverse effects on landscape in both the hilly terrain to the north of the segment, and the more open landscape to the south.</p> <p>However, the landscape character of the area could be maintained and absorb a dualled route with potential moderate effects as the existing A96 is an established part of the local landscape.</p>		

EAST OPTION C		
SECTION 8: east of Huntly to Old Rayne East Option C- approximately 1120Ha		
Landscape Character Types (Level 3)	Landscape Designations	Woodland Character
- Agricultural Lowlands of the North East	None	The segment consists of rolling farmland with no significant areas of woodland.
<p><u>Commentary on Landscape Character and Sensitivity:</u></p> <p><b>Landscape Character Overview</b>  The landscape character of the area comprises a rolling agricultural landscape which is relatively remote and has little in the way of infrastructure.</p> <p><b>Landscape Character Types</b>  There is only one Landscape Character Areas, within the segment; <i>Agricultural Lowlands of the North East</i>. It is further described as;  It has two sub-types within it in this area; to the north part, the <i>northern rolling lowlands</i> (Area 4) are described as swathe of farmland in a large scale simple pattern with smooth sweeping landform curves which draws the eye across the terrain. Thick woodland shelterbelts follow the landform. Long distance views are available from the elevated locations. The large scale rolling hills are sensitive to elements which may disrupt their smooth forms and visual flow. Most of the character type consists of Area 5, the <i>Insch Basin</i>, which is formed of an extensive area of largely flat and gently rolling farmland, with large geometric fields, and little substantial woodland planting.</p> <p><b>Other Designations</b>  The Picardy Stone Symbol Stone is located in arable farmland in the north of the segment. A designated Scheduled Monument it stands at around 180m OD and is a 2m-high monolith is carved from hard whinstone streaked with quartzite. Its south face is incised with three of the most widely used Pictish symbols: a double-disc and Z-rod at the top, a tightly-coiled serpent and Z-rod in the centre and a simple mirror at the bottom.  Inschfield stone circle is the remains of a stone circle of prehistoric date of which only 3 stones survive.  Both monuments are located in the northern extent of the segment</p> <p><b>Settlements</b>  The village of Insch is located to the south-west of the segment. The village extends almost the full breadth of the segment, and therefore would be sensitive to change. There are also many individual properties located within the segment which may be sensitive receptors to dualling.</p> <p><b>Woodland</b>  A few woodland shelterbelts are located in the segment</p> <p><b>Terrain</b>  The open rolling agriculture landscape makes the landscape more sensitive to the inclusion of any new features, as they would potentially be more visible.</p> <p><b>Railway</b>  The railway clips the south-west edge of the segment, and could potentially be avoided.</p> <p><b>Indicative Landscape Sensitivity - High</b>  • <b>Landscapes which by nature of their character would be unable to accommodate change of the type proposed. Typically these would be: of high quality with distinctive elements and features making a positive contribution to character, and sense of place and areas of special recognised value through use, perception or historic and cultural associations and cultural associations.</b>  There are no national landscape designations within the segment.  The landscape character of the area comprises rolling agricultural landscape which is relatively remote and has little in the way of infrastructure.  The village of Insch is located at the southern extent of the segment and there are a number of individual properties located throughout.  Scheduled Monuments, the Picardy Stone Symbol Stone and the Inschfield Stone Circle stand in fields to the northern extent of the segment.  A dualled route would substantially change the character of this area as the landscape is very sensitive to change.</p> <p><b>Risk of Effect - Major</b>  • <b>Total loss of, or alteration to, key features of the baseline such that post development characteristics, or quality, would be fundamentally affected</b>  There is potential for adverse visual effects the on the properties within Insch and those scattered throughout the segment.  Although it may be possible to avoid the Scheduled Monuments to the north of the segment through route alignment, there remains the potential for adverse effects on their landscape setting.  The relatively remote, rolling agricultural landscape of the segment means that there is potential for major significant adverse effects on landscape character through dualling.</p>		

<b>EAST OPTION D</b>		
<b>SECTION 8: east of Huntly to Old Rayne</b>		
<b>East Option D- approximately 1340Ha</b>		
<b>Landscape Character Types (Level 3)</b>	<b>Landscape Designations</b>	<b>Woodland Character</b>
- Flat or Rolling, Smooth or Sweeping, Extensive, High Moorlands of the Highlands and Islands - Agricultural Lowlands of the North East	None	The segment consists mainly of open farmland with some larger areas of woodland to the north. The Hill of Skares has a conifer wooded slope owned by the Bognie Estate and there is a woodland on the southern slopes of the Hill of Tillymorgan which is owned by the Williamston Estate. The 1km tree-lined drive of Freefield House in the south of the segment is an historic feature in the landscape.
<p><u>Commentary on Landscape Character and Sensitivity:</u></p> <p><b>Landscape Character Overview</b></p> <p>The landscape character is of steep hills to the north, moving into gently rolling terrain to the south. The landscape consists mainly of open farmland with some larger areas of woodland to the north. The existing A96 runs through the north-west corner of the segment.</p> <p><b>Landscape Character Types</b></p> <p>There are two Landscape Character Areas, within wide segment; an area of <i>Flat or Rolling, Smooth or Sweeping, Extensive, High Moorlands of the Highlands and Islands</i> (1) to the north and <i>Agricultural Lowlands of the North East</i> (2) to the south. These are further described as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. The moorland plateaux landscape of the Grampian Outliers lie at the transition between the high mountains of the Cairngorms and the lowland farmland of the northeast coastlands. The character is of a smooth undulating landform with extensive tracts of conifer plantation covering slopes, with promontories presenting spectacular views.</li> <li>4. The <i>Agricultural Lowlands of the North East</i> has two sub-types within it in this area; to the north part, the <i>northern rolling lowlands</i> which are swathes of farmland in a large scale simple pattern, with smooth sweeping landform curves which draw the eye across the terrain. Thick woodland shelterbelts follow the landform. Long distance view are afforded from elevated locations. The large scale rolling hills are sensitive to elements which may disrupt their smooth forms and visual flow. Most of the character type consists the <i>Insch Basin</i>, which is formed of an extensive area of largely flat and gently rolling farmland, with large geometric fields, and little substantial woodland planting.</li> </ol> <p><b>Other Designations</b></p> <p>Part of Williamston House Estate and Gardens and Designed Landscapes is located in the north-west of the segment. It is a rare example of the artist Theodore Haughton's garden design and is heavily influenced by early 20th century continental style, relying more on structure and foliage texture than flower colour. This historic environment asset and its setting are sensitive to change.</p> <p><b>Settlements</b></p> <p>The village of Kirkton of Rayne is located at the south-eastern extent of the segment and there are a number of individual properties scattered throughout the segment; all may be sensitive receptors to dualling.</p> <p>There is an enhanced layby and parking area with a café facility on the existing A96 in the north of the segment, at the base of the Hill of Skares; it affords long views south over the rolling landscape.</p> <p><b>Woodland</b></p> <p>The segment consists mainly of open farmland with some larger areas of woodland which span over half of the segment breadth to the north.</p> <p>The Hill of Skares has a conifer wooded slope owned by the Bognie Estate and there is a woodland on the southern slopes of the Hill of Tillymorgan which is owned by the Williamston Estate.</p> <p>There is a large area of woodland to the east of Kirkton of Culsalmond, bordering the A920 and the 1km tree-lined drive of Freefield House in the south of the segment, crosses over half of the segment breadth and is an historic feature in the landscape.</p> <p><b>Terrain</b></p> <p>The terrain is very steep in the north of the segment at the Hill of Skares (329m AOD), however the landscape is flatter, with rolling hills south of Kirkton of Culsalmond (148m AOD).</p>		
<p><u>Indicative Landscape Sensitivity - High</u></p> <p>• <b>Landscapes which by nature of their character would be unable to accommodate change of the type proposed. Typically these would be: of high quality with distinctive elements and features making a positive contribution to character, and sense of place and areas of special recognised value through use, perception or historic and cultural associations.</b></p> <p>There are no national landscape designations within the segment.</p> <p>The landscape character comprises steep hills in the north which flow into gently rolling swathes of farmland, to the south of the segment. In the northern extent of the segment, the existing A96 is an established part of the local landscape, which reduces its sensitivity and the enhanced layby on the dual carriageway is a positive feature which captures the impressive views to the south.</p> <p>Williamston House Gardens and Designed Landscapes are located at the north western edge of the segment, increasing the local sensitivity of the landscape. Additionally, the 1km tree lined drive of Freefield House spans more than half of the breadth of the segment and is an historic and sensitive feature in the landscape.</p> <p>There are individual and groups of properties scattered through the segment and the village of Kirkton of Rayne to the south.</p> <p>The hilly terrain to the north of the segment may be a constraint to dualling and although the open landscape to the south is less constrained, it is still sensitive to change. It is considered that a dualled route would have a significant impact on the landscape character within this segment.</p>		
<p><u>Risk of Effect - Major</u></p> <p>• <b>Total loss of, or alteration to, key features of the baseline such that post development characteristics, or quality, would be fundamentally affected</b></p> <p>There is potential for adverse visual effects on the properties scattered throughout the segment.</p> <p>Although it may be possible to avoid the Gardens and Designed Landscapes of Williamston House through route alignment, there remains the potential for adverse effects on their landscape setting.</p> <p>The tree-lined drive of Freefield House may prove difficult to avoid due to its size and location and there is the potential for adverse visual and setting effects on this feature.</p> <p>The enhanced layby is a positive feature along existing A96, which highlights the impressive views south and dualling has an opportunity to maintain and/ or enhance this type of feature.</p> <p>There is potential for adverse effects on landscape in both the hilly terrain to the north of the segment, and the more open landscape to the south and there is potential for major significant adverse effects on landscape character through dualling.</p>		



### Route Section 9: Old Rayne to Kintore

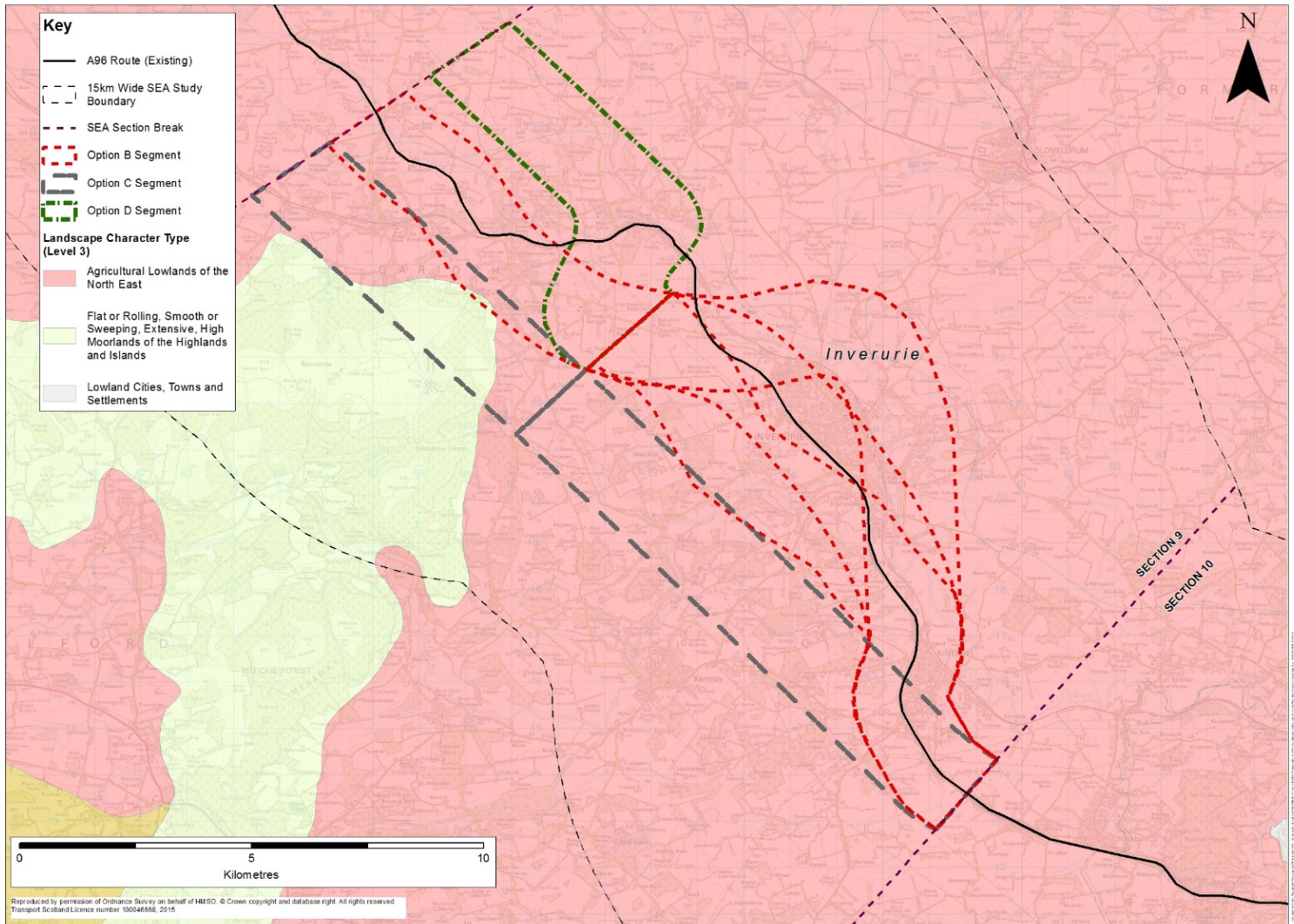


Figure 9 - Section 9 Options with Landscape Character Areas

**Table 9 - Section 9 Landscape Constraints**

<b>WEST OPTION B</b>		
<b>SECTION 9: Old Rayne to Kintore</b>		
<b>West Option B- approximately 1490Ha</b>		
<b>Landscape Character Types (Level 3)</b>	<b>Landscape Designations</b>	<b>Woodland Character</b>
- Agricultural Lowlands of the North East - Flat or Rolling, Smooth or Sweeping, Extensive, High Moorlands of the Highlands and Islands	None	The landscape is a mix of gently rolling open farmland and some small hills to the northern and southern extents of the segment and the hills of  A linked section of woodland runs through the centre of the segment and some small wooded areas are scattered within the rest of the segment. Dawmoor Wood a native woodland located south of Garioch links to the woodland around Crowmaille House and on the side of the hill of Knockolochie and continues to Logie Woodlands around Home Farm. It may be challenging to avoid the linked woodland.
<u>Commentary on Landscape Character and Sensitivity:</u>		
<b>Landscape Character Overview</b>		
The landscape character comprises two character types; gently rolling open farmland and some small hills to the northern and southern extents of the segment, and the hills of Bennachie at the western edge and pockets of woodland in the centre of the segment. There are 2 overhead power lines which also run across the segment in the south-east, and are a highly visible element within the landscape, The existing A96 is an established part of the local landscape in the north		
<b>Landscape Character Types</b>		
There are two Landscape Character Areas, within the segment; mainly <i>Agricultural Lowlands of the North East</i> (1). However there is a very small area of <i>Flat or Rolling, Smooth or Sweeping, Extensive, High Moorlands of the Highlands and Islands</i> (2) to the west. These are described further as;		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The <i>Agricultural Lowlands of the North East</i> has two sub-types within it in this area; to the north part, the character type consists of Area 5, the <i>Insch Basin</i>, which is formed of an extensive area of largely flat and gently rolling farmland, with large geometric fields, and little substantial woodland planting. To the south the <i>Central Wooded Estates</i> (Area 12), which occupies a substantial area east of Bennachie between the Don and Dee Valley. The character consists of rolling landscape of low hills and wide valleys, with a strong woodland structure associated with numerous estate policies adding rich and diverse texture. There are mixed farmland with varying size of field patterns, and numerous towns and villages and archaeological features.</li> <li>2. The moorland plateaux landscape of the Grampian Outliers (Area 17) lie at the transition between the high mountains of the Cairngorms and the lowland farmland of the northeast coastlands. The character is of a smooth undulating landform with extensive tracts of conifer plantation covering slopes, with promontories presenting spectacular views. The small area is on the slopes of Craighshannoch by Maiden castle.</li> </ol>		
<b>Other Designations</b>		
There are a number of Scheduled Monuments within the segment, typical of the landscape character type:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maiden Castle fort is located at the edge of the segment to the west. It is a Scheduled Monument and comprises a fort of later prehistoric date. It is situated at the north end of a rocky spur, in deciduous woodland, at the foot of the north east flank of Bennachie and at around 200m AOD. The monument is of national importance because it is a good example of a well-preserved small prehistoric fort with bank and outer ditch remaining, situated in a strategic location commanding a large area of cultivable land.</li> <li>• Maiden Stone is directly in the centre of the segment, slightly to the south. It is comprises of a Pictish cross-slab dating to the second half of the 1st millennium AD. The monument stands in arable farmland at around 160m OD adjacent to a minor road. It comprises a red granite slab measuring approximately 3m high by about 0.9m broad and about 0.3m thick.</li> <li>• There are also Candle Hill Stone Circle and Logie House Symbol Stones, which are of archaeological importance to the area.</li> </ul>		
<b>Settlements</b>		
There are some small villages within the segment; Old Rayne is located to the north, Mill of garden and Kirkton of Oyne to the centre and Chapel of Garioch to the south. Additionally there are many individual properties scattered throughout the segment which may be sensitive receptors to dualling.		
There are a two enhanced laybys adjacent to the A96, in the centre of the segment. The southbound provides a connection to the Woods of Logie. The northbound one has an open view to the rear of the layby allowing for views out. There is potential for the enhancement of these lay-bys		
<b>Woodland</b>		
The woodland character consists of a linked section of woodland through the centre of the segment and some small wooded areas scattered within the rest of the segment, ;Dawmoor Wood a native woodland located south of Garioch links to the woodland around Crowmaille House and on the side of the hill of Knockolochie and continues to Logie Woodlands around Home Farm. It may be challenging to avoid the linked woodland.		
It may be possible to avoid the additional areas of woodland which are scattered within the segment, including Harthill Firbogs, and the Mill of Carden woodland		
<b>Terrain</b>		
There are some small hills to the north-west (Brownhills) and south-east (Gallow's Hill - 176m AOD), and the hill of Bennachie (529m AOD) overlooks the segment from the west. With low lying plains with the river valley (River Urie) at around 90m AOD. The terrain to the north along the river valley is very open and would be sensitive to change. The southern part of the segment is hillier and s would also be sensitive to change, as any infrastructure could be viewed from further away.		
<b>Rivers</b>		
The River Urie runs through the segment, although it may not be necessary to cross it.		
<b>Railway</b>		
The railway runs diagonally across the centre of the segment in the centre. It is likely that the railway will need a crossing point and any new crossing infrastructure may have a visual impact on the landscape, and should be designed to be in-keeping with the local landscape character.		
<u>Indicative Landscape Sensitivity - Medium</u>		
<p><b>• Landscapes which by nature of their character would be able to partly accommodate change of the type proposed. Typically these would be; comprised of commonplace elements and features creating generally unremarkable character but with some sense of place; Locally designated, or their value may be expressed through non-statutory local publications; likely to contain some features and elements that could not be replaced.</b></p> <p>There are no national landscape designations within the segment.</p> <p>The landscape character comprises two character types; gently rolling open farmland with some small hills to the northern and southern extents of the segment, and the hills of Bennachie at the western edge. The existing A96 is an established part of the local landscape in the north which reduces its sensitivity, and the enhanced laybys on the dual carriageway are a positive feature which capture the views to the south. There are also pockets of woodland in the middle of the segment, the railway line crossing the centre of the segment and two, highly visible overhead power lines which run across its south-east corner, further reducing the local landscape sensitivity.</p> <p>There are a number of Scheduled Monuments and Listed Buildings throughout the segment which increase its landscape sensitivity, and there are a number individual properties and small villages scattered through the segment.</p> <p>The hilly terrain to the south and west of the segment is a constraint to dualling and although the open landscape of the river valley in the centre is less of a constraint, it is still sensitive to change.</p> <p>It is considered that the landscape character within the north can be maintained, and absorb a dualled route without a significant impact on the quality of the landscape, however a route to the south of the segment would be very sensitive along the hillside.</p>		
<u>Risk of Effect - Moderate</u>		
<p><b>• Loss of, or alteration to key features of the baseline resource such that post development characteristics or quality would be partially changed</b></p> <p>There is the potential for visual effects on the properties and villages within the segment, however as the existing A96 is an established part of the local landscape in the north, risk of effects here are predicted to be less. The enhanced layby is a positive feature along existing A96, which highlights the impressive views south and dualling has an opportunity to maintain and/ or enhance this type of feature.</p> <p>It is predicted that historic environment assets could be avoided through route alignment, however a dualled route could have adverse visual and setting effects.</p> <p>There is potential for adverse effects on landscape in both the hilly terrain to the south and west of the segment, and the more open landscape in its centre.</p> <p>However, the landscape character of the area could be maintained and absorb a dualled route with potential moderate effects as the existing A96 is an established part of the local landscape.</p>		

WEST OPTION C		
SECTION 9: Old Rayne to Kintore West Option C- approximately 1500Ha		
Landscape Character Types (Level 3)	Landscape Designations	Woodland Character
- Agricultural Lowlands of the North East - Flat or Rolling, Smooth or Sweeping, Extensive, High Moorlands of the Highlands and Islands	None	The landscape is a mix of gently rolling open farmland, areas of woodland and the steep slopes of the Bennachie hills, specifically Craigshannoch. Pittodrie Estate coniferous woodlands including Farquharson and Bedehouse Woods and are around the base of Craigshannoch Hill.
<p><b>Commentary on Landscape Character and Sensitivity:</b></p> <p><b>Landscape Character Overview</b></p> <p>The landscape character of the area consists of two character types; gently rolling open farmland and the steep slopes of the Bennachie hills, specifically Craigshannoch, spanning the centre of the segment which have some wooded areas at their base.</p> <p><b>Landscape Character Types</b></p> <p>There are two Landscape Character Areas, within the segment; mainly <i>Agricultural Lowlands of the North East</i> (1) and there is an area of <i>Flat or Rolling, Smooth or Sweeping, Extensive, High Moorlands of the Highlands and Islands</i> (2) to the middle. These are described further as;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The <i>Agricultural Lowlands of the North East</i> has two sub-types within it in this area; to the north part, the character type consists of Area 5, the <i>Insch Basin</i>, which is formed of an extensive area of largely flat and gently rolling farmland, with large geometric fields, and little substantial woodland planting. To the south the <i>Central Wooded Estates</i> (Area 12), which occupies a substantial area east of Bennachie between the Don and Dee Valley. The character consists of rolling landscape of low hills and wide valleys, with a strong woodland structure associated with numerous estates adding rich and diverse texture. There is mixed farmland with varying size of field patterns, and numerous towns and villages and archaeological features.</li> <li>The moorland plateaux landscape of the Grampian Outliers (Area 17) lie at the transition between the high mountains of the Cairngorms and the lowland farmland of the northeast coastlands. The character is of a smooth undulating landform with extensive tracts of conifer plantation covering slopes, with promontories presenting spectacular views. This area is on the slopes of Craigshannoch by Maiden castle.</li> </ul> <p><b>Other Designations</b></p> <p>There are a few Scheduled Monuments within the segment, typical of the landscape character type:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maiden Castle fort to the east of the segment half way down the segment. It is a Scheduled Monument and comprises a fort of later prehistoric date. It is situated at the north end of a rocky spur, in deciduous woodland, at the foot of the north east flank of Bennachie and at around 200m AOD. The monument is of national importance because it is a good example of a well-preserved small prehistoric fort with bank and outer ditch remaining, situated in a strategic location commanding a large area of cultivable land.</li> <li>There are also Gowk Stone, Hatton of Ardoyne stone circle and Westerton of Petmathen, standing stone, which are of archaeological importance to the area.</li> </ul> <p><b>Settlements</b></p> <p>The small village of Oyne is located within the north east corner of the segment at the bottom of Berry Hill. Additionally there are many individual properties scattered throughout the segment which may be sensitive receptors to dualling.</p> <p><b>Woodland</b></p> <p>Pittodrie Estate coniferous woodlands including Farquharson and Bedehouse Woods are located around the base of Craigshannoch Hill. This wooded area spans the whole of the segment, so would be very sensitive to change.</p> <p><b>Terrain</b></p> <p>The landscape to the north and south of the segment is generally of rolling hills. To the centre of the segment the steep slopes of Craigshannoch Hill dominate the landscape and rise up to around 430m AOD (from around 200m AOD).</p> <p><b>Rivers</b></p> <p>The Gadie Burn runs through the north of the segment.</p> <p><b>Railway</b></p> <p>The railway runs the breadth of the segment in the north and it would require a crossing point at some point. Any new crossing infrastructure may have a visual impact on the landscape, and should be designed to be in-keeping with the local landscape character.</p>		
<p><b>Indicative Landscape Sensitivity - High</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Landscapes which by nature of their character would be unable to accommodate change of the type proposed. Typically these would be: of high quality with distinctive elements and features making a positive contribution to character and sense of place.</b></li> </ul> <p>There are no national landscape designations within the segment.</p> <p>The landscape character of the area consists of two character types; gently rolling open farmland and the steep slopes of the Bennachie hills, specifically Craigshannoch, spanning the centre of the segment which have some wooded areas at their base.</p> <p>There are a number of Scheduled Monuments and Listed Buildings within the segment which increase it landscape sensitivity, and there are individual properties scattered throughout and the small village of Oyne to the north-east.</p> <p>The railway line runs across the northern extent of the segment and is a constraint to dualling.</p> <p>The steep slopes of Craigshannoch Hill in the centre of the segment are a constraint to dualling and although the open landscape in the rest of the segment is less of a constraint, it is still sensitive to change.</p> <p>It is considered that a dualled route would have a significant impact on the landscape character within this relatively remote segment.</p>		
<p><b>Risk of Effect - Major</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Total loss of, or alteration to, key features of the baseline such that post development characteristics, or quality, would be fundamentally affected</b></li> </ul> <p>It is predicted that historic environment assets could be avoided through route alignment, however a dualled route could have adverse visual and setting effects.</p> <p>Although it is predicted that properties could be avoided through route alignment, there is the potential for visual effects on the properties and villages within the segment.</p> <p>Crossing the railway is unavoidable and new infrastructure would be required which could have a permanent adverse visual effect on the landscape. Any new structures would need to be carefully designed to be in-keeping with the local landscape character.</p> <p>There is potential for adverse effects on landscape due to the steep sides of Craigshannoch Hill which dominate in the centre of the segment.</p> <p>Dualling in this relatively remote landscape could have a major adverse effect on the character of the landscape.</p>		

WEST OPTION D		
SECTION 9: Old Rayne to Kintore West Option D- approximately 1740Ha		
Landscape Character Types (Level 3)	Landscape Designations	Woodland Character
- Agricultural Lowlands of the North East	None	The landscape is a mix of gently rolling open farmland with Gallows Hill to the south. There are medium sized areas of woodland scattered within the central part of the segment. These include; Durno Woodland on Gallows Hill which stretches over a large part of the width of the segment and an area of woodland to the south of the existing A96 opposite Mill of Pitcaple. Other smaller wooded areas in the segment include; Glenlogie Wood, Pitscurry Wood, and Mill Wood.
<p><u>Commentary on Landscape Character and Sensitivity:</u></p> <p><b>Landscape Character Overview</b></p> <p>The landscape character comprises gently rolling open farmland with Gallows Hill to the south. The hills of Bennachie are visible to the west and there are some woodland areas scattered through the segment.</p> <p>There are 2 overhead power lines which run through the segment, and are highly visible elements within the landscape.</p> <p><b>Landscape Character Types</b></p> <p>There is only one Landscape Character Areas, within the segment; <i>Agricultural Lowlands of the North East</i>. It is described further as</p> <p>The <i>Agricultural Lowlands of the North East</i> has two sub-types within it in this area; to the north part, the character type consists of Area 5, the <i>Insch Basin</i>, which is formed of an extensive area of largely flat and gently rolling farmland, with large geometric fields, and little substantial woodland planting. To the south the <i>Central Wooded Estates</i> (Area 12), which occupies a substantial area east of Bennachie between the Don and Dee Valley. The character consists of rolling landscape of low hills and wide valleys, with a strong woodland structure associated with numerous estate adding rich and diverse texture. There is mixed farmland with varying size of field patterns, and numerous towns and villages and archaeological features.</p> <p><b>Other Designations</b></p> <p>There are a number of Scheduled Monuments within the segment, typical of the landscape character type:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Maiden Stone is directly in the centre of the segment, slightly to the south. It is comprises of a Pictish cross-slab dating to the second half of the 1st millennium AD. The monument stands in arable farmland at around 160m OD adjacent to a minor road. It comprises a red granite slab measuring approximately 3m high by about 0.9m broad and about 0.3m thick.</li> <li>• The Durno Roman Camp clips the edge of the segment. It comprises the cropmarked remains of a Roman temporary camp, surviving as the buried deposits of the camp's defences, visible in aerial photography, and the interior area bounded by them. The camp at Durno covers a substantial area currently used mainly for arable farming, but also with some plantation forestry, stock fields and paddocks. It lies across the summits of three small hills on the E bank of the River Urie. It is unlikely to be sensitive within the segment, as it only runs across the very edge.</li> <li>• There are also the Law cairn and the Pitscurry cairn which are of archaeological importance to the area.</li> </ul> <p>There are also many listed buildings within the segment. One notable building is the 15<sup>th</sup> century Pitcaple Castle and Tower located just north of the A96, east of Whiteford.</p> <p><b>Settlements</b></p> <p>The small villages of Durno, Whiteford and Chapel of Garioch are located within the segment. Additionally there are many individual properties scattered throughout the segment which may be sensitive receptors to dualling.</p> <p><b>Woodland</b></p> <p>The landscape consists mainly of rolling agricultural land with some small and medium sized areas of woodland scattered within the central part of the segment. The medium sized areas of woodland include; Durno Woodland on Gallows Hill which stretches over a large part of the width of the segment and an area of woodland to the south of the existing A96 opposite Mill of Pitcaple. Other smaller wooded areas in the segment include; Glenlogie Wood, Pitscurry Wood, and Mill Wood.</p> <p><b>Terrain</b></p> <p>The terrain varies from rolling hills to the north of the segment and the lower river valley to the south. The terrain rise up steeply at Gallows Hill, up to 176m AOD.</p> <p><b>Rivers</b></p> <p>The River Urie runs across the southern part of the segment where it is joined by the Burn of Durno. Any new crossing infrastructure may have a visual impact on the landscape and should be designed sensitively to fit into the local landscape character.</p> <p><b>Railway</b></p> <p>The railway runs across the southern part of the segment. The railway would likely need to be crossed, any new crossing infrastructure may have a visual impact on the landscape and should be designed sensitively to fit into the local landscape character.</p>		
<p><u>Indicative Landscape Sensitivity - Medium/ High</u></p> <p>• Landscapes which by nature of their character would be unable to accommodate change of the type proposed. Typically these would be: of high quality with distinctive elements and features making a positive contribution to character and sense of place and areas of special recognised value through use, perception or historic and cultural associations.</p> <p>There are no national landscape designations within the segment.</p> <p>The landscape character comprises gently rolling open farmland with Gallows Hill to the south. The hills of Bennachie are visible to the west and there are some woodland areas scattered through the segment.</p> <p>The existing A96 is an established part of the local landscape in the south which reduces its sensitivity. The railway line also crosses the south of the segment and two, highly visible overhead power lines run through it, further reducing the local landscape sensitivity. However, the landscape would be sensitive to any new elevated structures required to cross the River Urie and the railway in the south.</p> <p>There are a number of Scheduled Monuments and Listed Buildings throughout the segment which increase its landscape sensitivity, and there are a number individual properties and small villages scattered through the segment.</p> <p>The hilly terrain of Gallows Hill to the south of the segment is a constraint to dualling and although the open landscape throughout the rest of the segment is less of a constraint, it is still sensitive to change.</p> <p>It is considered that a dualled route could have a significant impact on the landscape character within this segment.</p>		
<p><u>Risk of Effect - Moderate</u></p> <p>• Loss of, or alteration to key features of the baseline resource such that post development characteristics or quality would be partially changed</p> <p>There is the potential for visual effects on the properties and villages within the segment, however as the existing A96 is an established part of the local landscape in the south, risk of effects here are predicted to be less.</p> <p>It is predicted that historic environment assets could be avoided through route alignment, however a dualled route could have adverse visual and setting effects.</p> <p>Crossing the railway and the River Urie is unavoidable and new infrastructure would be required which could have a permanent adverse visual effect on the landscape. Any new structures would need to be carefully designed to be in-keeping with the local landscape character.</p> <p>There is potential for adverse effects on landscape in both the hilly terrain of Gallows Hill to the south and the more open landscape elsewhere in the segment.</p> <p>However, the landscape character of the area could be maintained and absorb a dualled route with potential moderate effects as the existing A96 is an established part of the local landscape in the south.</p>		

INVERURIE OPTION B NORTH		
SECTION 9: Old Rayne to Kintore Inverurie Option B North- approximately 3160Ha		
Landscape Character Types (Level 3)	Landscape Designations	Woodland Character
Agricultural Lowlands of the North East	None	The landscape consists mainly of rolling agricultural land with some woodland to the east of Inverurie. The woodland around Keith Hall spans the breadth of the segment to the west of Inverurie. Hall Forest, a small conifer woodland, is located opposite Kintore. There are also other small patches of woodland within the segment, but these are not significant.
<p><u>Commentary on Landscape Character and Sensitivity:</u></p> <p><b>Landscape Character Overview</b></p> <p>The landscape character comprises gently rolling open farmland following the river valley from north to south. There are some small hills and an areas of woodland which span over half of the breadth of the segment at its eastern extent.</p> <p>There are 2 overhead power lines which also cross the segment to the north, and 2 to the south which are a highly visible element within the landscape.</p> <p><b>Landscape Character Types</b></p> <p>There is only one Landscape Character Areas, within the segment; <i>Agricultural Lowlands of the North East</i>. It is further described as;</p> <p>The <i>Agricultural Lowlands of the North East</i> has three sub-types within it in this area;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In a small area to the north, the character type consists of Area 5, the <i>Insch Basin</i>, which is formed of an extensive area of largely flat and gently rolling farmland, with large geometric fields, and little substantial woodland planting.</li> <li>Another small area to the north-east is <i>Formartine Lowlands</i>. This comprises of a tract of gently rolling farmland that forms the backdrop to the coastal farmland. The view of the sea is an aspect of the character, but the rest is similar to the other agricultural lowlands types.</li> <li>The main area consists of the <i>Central Wooded Estates (Area 12)</i>, which occupies a substantial area east of Bannachie between the Don and Dee Valley. The character consists of rolling landscape of low hills and wide valleys, with a strong woodland structure associated with numerous estate policies adding rich and diverse texture. There are mixed farmland with varying size of field patterns, and numerous towns and villages and archaeological features.</li> </ul> <p><b>Other Designations</b></p> <p>There are 19 Scheduled Monuments within the segment, important features typical of the landscape character type. A selection of these are noted below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Balquhain Castle is located to the north-east of the segment. - The monument comprises the remains of a tower house, additional buildings and associated barmkin of later medieval date, surviving as a series of upstanding walls and earthworks on a paddock and pasture field at around 95-100m AOD. It lies at the top of a steep slope leading down to Strathnaterick Burn.</li> <li>The Bass and Little Bass, motte-and-bailey castle - The monument comprises a 12th-century motte-and-bailey castle known as the Bass of Inverurie and Little Bass, now visible as substantial earthworks. It lies in an area now occupied by a cemetery adjacent to the River Urie.</li> <li>Caskieben moat, moated site and symbol stone 170m north of Keith Hall - The monument comprises a ditched enclosure or moated site likely to be of high-medieval date, and a relocated earthfast Pictish symbol stone of early-medieval date.</li> <li>Deer's Den, roundhouses - The monument comprises the cropmarked remains of at least seven roundhouses of probable Iron-Age date (late 1st millennium BC/early 1st millennium AD). They are sited in pasture to the west of the A96 trunk road at Kintore.</li> <li>East Blairbowie, standing stone, Brandsbutt Stone, symbol stone &amp; Mains of Balquhain stone circle are some of the archaeological stone features in the area.</li> </ul> <p>Keith Hall is designated as a Garden and Design Landscape, and is located across the segment to the east of Inverurie. It is a good example of the late 18th century parkland design of Thomas White Senior. The woodland canopy makes an important scenic contribution and the ornamental gardens are of note.</p> <p><b>Settlements</b></p> <p>A small section of Inverurie is included in the segment at the southern edge making this edge of the town sensitive to the dualling. The town of Kintore is located within the south end of the segment. The existing A96 bypasses the town to the west and is currently dualled.</p> <p>Additionally there are many individual properties scattered throughout the segment which may be sensitive receptors to dualling.</p> <p><b>Woodland</b></p> <p>The woodland around Keith Hall fully spans the breadth of the segment to the west of Inverurie. Additionally Hall Forest, a small conifer woodland, is located opposite Kintore. There are also small patches of woodland within the segment, but nothing of significance.</p> <p><b>Terrain</b></p> <p>The open rolling landscape along the river valley within the segment has less physical constraints in comparison to hillier areas but is still sensitive to change.</p> <p><b>Rivers</b></p> <p>The River Urie and River Don run through the segment and meet to the south of Inverurie. Any new crossing infrastructure may have a visual impact on the landscape and should be designed sensitively to fit into the local landscape character.</p> <p><b>Railway</b></p> <p>The railway runs from the north to the south of the segment. Any new crossing infrastructure may have a visual impact on the landscape and should be designed sensitively to fit into the local landscape character.</p>		
<p><u>Indicative Landscape Sensitivity - High</u></p> <p>• <b>Landscapes which by nature of their character would be unable to accommodate change of the type proposed. Typically these would be: Areas of special recognised value through use, perception or historic and cultural associations.</b></p> <p>There are no national landscape designations within the segment.</p> <p>The landscape character comprises gently rolling open farmland following the river valley from north to south. There are some small hills and an areas of woodland which span over half of the breadth of the segment at its eastern extent.</p> <p>The existing A96 is an established part of the local landscape in the northern and southern extents, which reduces its sensitivity, as do the overhead power lines at either extent. The railway line also runs through the segment further reducing the local landscape sensitivity. However, the landscape would be sensitive to any new elevated structures required to cross the railway or the Rivers Urie and Don.</p> <p>The significant number of Scheduled Monuments and Listed Buildings throughout the segment, and Keith Hall Gardens and Designed Landscapes which span more than half its breadth, are highly sensitive historic assets which contribute to the landscape character.</p> <p>There are many individual properties scattered through the segment and it skirts the highly populated area of Inverurie to the north-east, with the town of Kintore located in the centre of its southern extent.</p> <p>It is considered that a dualled route could have a significant impact on the landscape character within this segment.</p>		
<p><u>Risk of Effect - Major</u></p> <p>• <b>Total loss of, or alteration to, key features of the baseline such that post development characteristics, or quality, would be fundamentally affected</b></p> <p>The large number of historic assets and their location within or close to highly populated areas, means that a dualled route could have adverse visual and setting effects on all sensitive receptors.</p> <p>River and railway crossings are unavoidable and new infrastructure would be required which could have a permanent adverse visual effect on the landscape. Any new structures would need to be carefully designed to be in-keeping with the local landscape character.</p> <p>The slopes of the river valleys and hills could be a constraint to dualling and although the open farmland is less of a constraint, adverse effects on the landscape of both are predicted.</p> <p>Dualling in this segment has the potential to have a major adverse effect on the character of the landscape.</p>		

INVERURIE OPTION B SOUTH		
SECTION 9: Old Rayne to Kintore Inverurie Option B South- approximately 2670Ha		
Landscape Character Types (Level 3)	Landscape Designations	Woodland Character
- Agricultural Lowlands of the North East	None	The landscape consists mainly of rolling agricultural land with some woodland areas scattered throughout. There is a larger linked area of woodland to the west of Port Elphinstone. The woodland is mainly mixed woodland with some conifer plantations.
<p><u>Commentary on Landscape Character and Sensitivity:</u></p> <p><b>Landscape Character Overview</b></p> <p>The landscape character comprises rolling, agricultural land with small hills and medium sized woodland areas through the segment. There is a golf course to the west of Inverurie.</p> <p>There are 2 overhead power lines which also cross the segment to the north, and one to the south, and are a highly visible element within the landscape. The existing A96 is an established part of the local landscape</p> <p><b>Landscape Character Types</b></p> <p>There is only one Landscape Character Areas, within the segment; <i>Agricultural Lowlands of the North East</i>. It is further described as; The <i>Agricultural Lowlands of the North East</i> has only has the one sub-types within it in this area;</p> <p>The main area consists of the <i>Central Wooded Estates</i> (Area 12), which occupies a substantial area east of Bennachie between the Don and Dee Valley. The character consists of rolling landscape of low hills and wide valleys, with a strong woodland structure associated with numerous estate policies adding rich and diverse texture. There are mixed farmland with varying size of field patterns, and numerous towns and villages and archaeological features.</p> <p><b>Other Designations</b></p> <p>There are around 13 Scheduled Monuments within the segment, typical features of the landscape character type. A selection of these are noted below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• St Apolinaris' Chapel and burial ground - The monument comprises the remains of a chapel, dedicated to St Apolinaris. The first mention of a chapel in the area occurs in 1190, and this chapel appears to date from earlier than the 13th century</li> <li>• Deer's Den, roundhouses - The monument comprises the cropmarked remains of at least seven roundhouses of probable Iron-Age date (late 1st millennium BC/early 1st millennium AD). They are sited in pasture to the west of the A96 trunk road at Kintore.</li> <li>• Broomend, henge, standing stones and symbol stone - The monument comprises a henge and avenue of prehistoric date (probably late 3rd to early 2nd millennia BC), which lies on an E facing slope in a much altered landscape, approximately 175m NNE of Broom Lodge.</li> <li>• East Blairbowie, standing stone, and Tuach Hill, stone circle and enclosure are some of the archaeological stone features in the area.</li> </ul> <p><b>Settlements</b></p> <p>A small part of Port Elphinstone is located within the segment. The town of Kintore is located within the south end of the segment. Additionally there are many individual properties scattered throughout the segment which may be sensitive receptors to dualling.</p> <p><b>Woodland</b></p> <p>The landscape consists mainly of rolling agricultural land with woodland scattered throughout. There is a larger linked area of woodland to the west of Port Elphinstone – including Crichtie plantation, Duncan's forest and Roquharold Hill. The woodland type is mainly mixed woodland with some conifer plantations. To the north there is Knockinglews, and woodland on the hill of Ardtannes and Coldwells woodland.</p> <p><b>Terrain</b></p> <p>The terrain is generally of a rolling landscape as the route flows south, with many small hills through the segment. To the north the Hill of Blairbowie and Knockinglews are on the west with Dilly Hill to the east. West of Inverurie are the Hills of Ardtannes, Roquharold Hill, Corsman Hill and the hill adjacent to East Aquhorthies. To the south of the segment is Shaw Hill and then the landscape becomes less hilly as it meets Kintour. The rolling hills will make the landscape terrain more sensitive to change.</p> <p><b>Rivers</b></p> <p>The River Don is a significant landscape feature which runs through the segment north of Kintore and west of Port Elphinstone. The existing A96 currently crosses the watercourse north of Port Elphinstone. Any new raised structure within this mainly flat landscape, could have a visual impact</p> <p><b>Railway</b></p> <p>The railway runs to the east of the existing A96 in the segment between Port Elphinstone and Kintore. The road is already dualled along this section.</p>		
<p><u>Indicative Landscape Sensitivity - Medium</u></p> <p>• <b>Landscapes which by nature of their character would be able to partly accommodate change of the type proposed. Typically these would be: comprised of commonplace elements and features creating generally unremarkable character but with some sense of place.</b></p> <p>There are no national landscape designations within the segment.</p> <p>The landscape character comprises rolling, agricultural land with small hills and woodland areas through the segment. The existing A96 is an established part of the local landscape in the southern extent which reduces its sensitivity, as do the highly visible overhead power lines which cross the segment's northern and southern extents.</p> <p>The River Don spans the segment breadth, as does a strip of woodland to the west of Port Elphinstone, and both may be difficult to avoid. The landscape would be sensitive to any new elevated structure required to cross the Rivers Don.</p> <p>There are many individual properties scattered through the segment and it skirts the highly populated area of Inverurie to the west, with the town of Kintore located in the centre of its southern extent. In addition, there are large number of historic environment assets which, due to their dispersal, may be difficult to avoid.</p> <p>It is considered that the landscape character could accommodate a dualled route without significant impact to its quality.</p>		
<p><u>Risk of Effect - Moderate</u></p> <p>• <b>Loss of, or alteration to key features of the baseline resource such that post development characteristics or quality would be partially changed</b></p> <p>It is predicted that properties and historic environment assets could be avoided through route alignment, however a dualled route could have adverse visual and setting effects on receptors, however as the existing A96 is an established part of the local landscape in the south, risk of effects here are predicted to be less.</p> <p>There is potential for adverse effects on the woodland scattered throughout the segment as it may not be possible to avoid all areas.</p> <p>Crossing the river Don is unavoidable and new infrastructure would be required which could have a permanent adverse visual effect on the landscape. Any new structures would need to be carefully designed to be in-keeping with the local landscape character.</p> <p>There is potential for adverse effects on landscape in both the hilly terrain and the more open landscape in the segment.</p> <p>However, the landscape character of the area could be maintained and absorb a dualled route with potential moderate effects as the existing A96 is an established part of the local landscape in the south.</p>		

INVERURIE OPTION B INNER		
SECTION 9: Old Rayne to Kintore Inverurie Option B Inner- approximately 2710Ha		
Landscape Character Type (Level 3)	Landscape Designations	Woodland Character
- Agricultural Lowlands of the North East	None	The landscape consists mainly of rolling agricultural land with some woodland areas to the centre and south of the segment, west of the A96. The woodland is mainly mixed woodland with some conifer plantations.
<p><u>Commentary on Landscape Character and Sensitivity:</u></p> <p><b>Landscape Character Overview</b></p> <p>The landscape character comprises a rolling terrain of agricultural land with small hills to the west of the segment, settlements to the east and woodland scattered throughout. The existing A96 runs through the centre of the segment and is an established part of the local landscape</p> <p>There are two overhead power lines which also cross the segment to the north, and two to the south, and are a highly visible element within the landscape.</p> <p><b>Landscape Character Types</b></p> <p>There is only one Landscape Character Areas, within the segment; <i>Agricultural Lowlands of the North East</i>. This is further described as;</p> <p>The <i>Agricultural Lowlands of the North East</i> has only has the one sub-types within it in this area;</p> <p>The main area consists of the <i>Central Wooded Estates (Area 12)</i>, which occupies a substantial area east of Bennachie between the Don and Dee Valley. The character consists of rolling landscape of low hills and wide valleys, with a strong woodland structure associated with numerous estate policies adding rich and diverse texture. There are mixed farmland with varying size of field patterns, and numerous towns and villages and archaeological features.</p> <p><b>Other Designations</b></p> <p>There are around 20 Scheduled Monuments within the segment, typical features of the landscape character type. A selection of these are noted below:</p> <p>Balquhain Castle is located to the north-east of the segment. The monument comprises the remains of a tower house, additional buildings and associated barmkin of later medieval date, surviving as a series of upstanding walls and earthworks on a paddock and pasture field at around 95-100m above sea level. It lies at the top of a steep slope leading down to Strathnaterick Burn.</p> <p>The Bass and Little Bass, motte-and-bailey castle - The monument comprises a 12th-century motte-and-bailey castle known as the Bass of Inverurie and Little Bass, now visible as substantial earthworks. It lies in an area now occupied by a cemetery adjacent to the River Urie.</p> <p>East Blairbowie, standing stone, Brandsbutt Stone, symbol stone &amp; Broomend, henge, standing stones and symbol stone are some of the archaeological stone features in the area.</p> <p><b>Settlements</b></p> <p>There are many individual properties scattered through the segment and it includes half the town of Inverurie to the east, the village of Port Elphinstone further south, and the town of Kintore at its southern extent. The existing A96 bypasses Kintore to the west and is a dual carriageway.</p> <p>Additionally there are some individual properties scattered throughout the segment which may be sensitive receptors to dualling.</p> <p><b>Woodland</b></p> <p>The woodland areas are mainly in the centre and south of the segment. The woodland is mainly mixed woodland with some conifer plantations. There is an area of woodland to the west of Port Elphinstone which includes parts of Crichtie plantation and Duncan's forest. Woodland to the south comprises Hall Forest, Ann's Forest and Broomhill Plantation.</p> <p><b>Terrain</b></p> <p>The terrain is generally of a rolling terrain with small hills to the west of the segment and settlements to the east. The settlements are in the river valley on generally flat land. To the west, the land is more undulating with small hills such as Blackhill of Davah. The rolling hills will make the landscape terrain to the west more sensitive to change.</p> <p><b>Rivers</b></p> <p>The River Don is a significant landscape feature which runs through the segment north of Kintore and west of Port Elphinstone. The existing A96 currently crosses the watercourse north of Port Elphinstone. Any new raised structure within this mainly flat landscape, could have a visual impact</p> <p><b>Railway</b></p> <p>The railway runs to the east of the existing A96 in the segment between Port Elphinstone and Kintore. The road is already dualled along this section.</p>		
<p><u>Indicative Landscape Sensitivity - Low</u></p> <p>• <b>Landscapes which by nature of their character would be able to accommodate change of the type proposed. Typically these would be: not designated and likely to contain few, if any, features and elements that could not be replaced.</b></p> <p>There are no national landscape designations within the segment.</p> <p>The landscape character comprises rolling terrain with small hills to the west of the segment, settlements and a golf course to the east and woodland scattered throughout. The existing A96 runs through the centre of the segment and is an established part of the local landscape which reduces its sensitivity, as do the highly visible overhead power lines which cross the segment's northern and southern extents.</p> <p>The River Don spans the segment breadth and the landscape would be sensitive to any new elevated structure required to cross it.</p> <p>There are many individual properties scattered through the segment and it includes half the town of Inverurie to the east, the village of Port Elphinstone further south, and the town of Kintore at its southern extent. In addition, there are large number of historic environment assets which, due to their dispersal, may be difficult to avoid.</p> <p>It is considered that the landscape character could accommodate a dualled route without significant impact to its quality.</p>		
<p><u>Risk of Effect - Minor</u></p> <p>• <b>Small changes to the baseline resource which are detectable, but the underlying characteristics or quality of the baseline resource would be similar under post-development conditions</b></p> <p>It is predicted that properties and historic environment assets could be avoided through route alignment, however a dualled route could have adverse visual and setting effects on receptors; as the existing A96 is an established part of the local landscape throughout the segment, risk of effects are predicted to be less.</p> <p>There is potential for adverse effects on the woodland scattered throughout the segment as it may not be possible to avoid all areas.</p> <p>Crossing the River Don is unavoidable and new infrastructure would be required which could have a permanent adverse visual effect on the landscape. Any new structures would need to be carefully designed to be in-keeping with the local landscape character.</p> <p>The landscape character could be maintained and absorb a dualled route with potential minor effects as the existing A96 is an established part of the local landscape in throughout.</p>		

INVERURIE OPTION C		
SECTION 9: Old Rayne to Kintore Inverurie Option C- approximately 2470Ha		
Landscape Character Type (Level 3)	Landscape Designations	Woodland Character
- Agricultural Lowlands of the North East	None	The landscape is generally undulating with large areas of woodland. The landscape to the south is more flat and open, then after about 3km to the north there are some areas of woodland on an undulating land form, such as Tom's Forest. Further north the land gets hillier with larger areas of woodland on the rolling hills, such as around the House of Aquahorthies, which almost straddles the segment.
<p><u>Commentary on Landscape Character and Sensitivity:</u></p> <p><b>Landscape Character Overview</b></p> <p>The landscape character consist of large areas of woodland and farmland on an undulating terrain, Further north the land become hilly. There are 2 overhead power lines which also cross the segment to the south, and are a highly visible element within the landscape.</p> <p><b>Landscape Character Types</b></p> <p>There is only one Landscape Character Areas, within the segment; <i>Agricultural Lowlands of the North East</i>. This is further described as: The <i>Agricultural Lowlands of the North East</i> has only has the one sub-types within it in this area; <i>Central Wooded Estates</i> (Area 12), which occupies a substantial area east of Bennachie between the Don and Dee Valley. The character consists of rolling landscape of low hills and wide valleys, with a strong woodland structure associated with numerous estate policies adding rich and diverse texture. There are mixed farmland with varying size of field patterns, and numerous towns and villages and archaeological features.</p> <p><b>Other Designations</b></p> <p>There are five Scheduled Monuments within the segment, typical features of the landscape character type:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ratch-hill, settlement, field system &amp; enclosures - the remains of a later prehistoric settlement. The settlement has at least 6 circular house stances, with a system of field banks and field clearance cairns around. There are also the remains of two enclosures. One of these may be a small henge, a ceremonial site of an earlier period.</li> <li>• Old Braco, chapel and enclosure - the remains of a late-medieval chapel and its enclosure built sometime after AD 1420</li> <li>• Deer's Den, roundhouses - the cropmarked remains of at least seven roundhouses of probable Iron-Age date (late 1st millennium BC/early 1st millennium AD). They are sited in pasture to the west of the A96 trunk road at Kintore.</li> <li>• East Aquhorthies, stone circle - a recumbent stone circle of prehistoric date.</li> <li>• Castle of Hallforest - the remains of the Castle of Hallforest, an early towerhouse constructed in the 14th century. The monument stands in fairly level farmland with a prominent stony bank about 10m to the N.</li> </ul> <p><b>Settlements</b></p> <p>The town of Kintore is located within the south of the segment. Additionally there are many individual properties scattered throughout the segment which and may be sensitive receptors to dualling.</p> <p><b>Woodland</b></p> <p>There are large areas of woodland throughout the segment. To the north there is a large area of woodland around the House of Aquahorthies, which almost spans the segment. In the centre of the segment there is another large wooded area on Brown Hill and Black Hill at Aquhythie. Further south there is Tom's Forest and Hall Forest.</p> <p><b>Terrain</b></p> <p>The terrain has a hillier undulating landscape to the north of the segment, which becomes flatter as it reaches Kintore. The rolling hills will make the landscape terrain to the north more sensitive to change.</p> <p><b>Rivers</b></p> <p>The River Don crosses the breadth of the segment at its centre the segment around the centre of the segment. Any new crossing infrastructure may have a visual impact on the landscape and should be designed sensitively to fit into the local landscape character.</p>		
<p><u>Indicative Landscape Sensitivity - High</u></p> <p>• <b>Landscapes which by nature of their character would be unable to accommodate change of the type proposed. Typically these would be: of high quality with distinctive elements and features making a positive contribution to character and sense of place.</b></p> <p>There are no national landscape designations within the segment.</p> <p>The landscape character comprises gently undulating terrain with a hillier landscape located in the north of the segment. There are large areas of woodland throughout the segment, some which span the breadth of the segment and may be difficult to avoid. The existing A96 runs through the southern extent of the segment and is an established part of the local landscape which reduces its sensitivity, as do the highly visible overhead power lines in the south.</p> <p>The town of Kintore is located to the south of the segment and there are some individual properties scattered throughout. In addition there are a number of historic environment assets located within the segment which are highly sensitive features.</p> <p>The River Don spans the segment breadth and the landscape would be sensitive to any new elevated structure required to cross it.</p> <p>The rolling hills and relatively remote landscape mean that the segment landscape character would be highly sensitive to dualling.</p>		
<p><u>Risk of Effect - Major</u></p> <p>• <b>Total loss of, or alteration to, key features of the baseline such that post development characteristics, or quality, would be fundamentally affected</b></p> <p>It is predicted that historic environment assets could be avoided through route alignment, however a dualled route could have adverse visual and setting effects. Although it is predicted that properties could be avoided through route alignment, there is the potential for visual effects on the properties and the town of Kintore within the segment.</p> <p>Crossing the River Don is unavoidable and new infrastructure would be required which could have a permanent adverse visual effect on the landscape. Any new structures would need to be carefully designed to be in-keeping with the local landscape character.</p> <p>The undulating terrain in the north of the segment may be a constraint to dualling and although the open terrain to the south is less of a constraint, adverse effects on the landscape of both are predicted.</p> <p>Dualling in this relatively remote landscape could have a major adverse effect on it character.</p>		



**Route Section 10: Kintore to proposed junction with the AWPR**

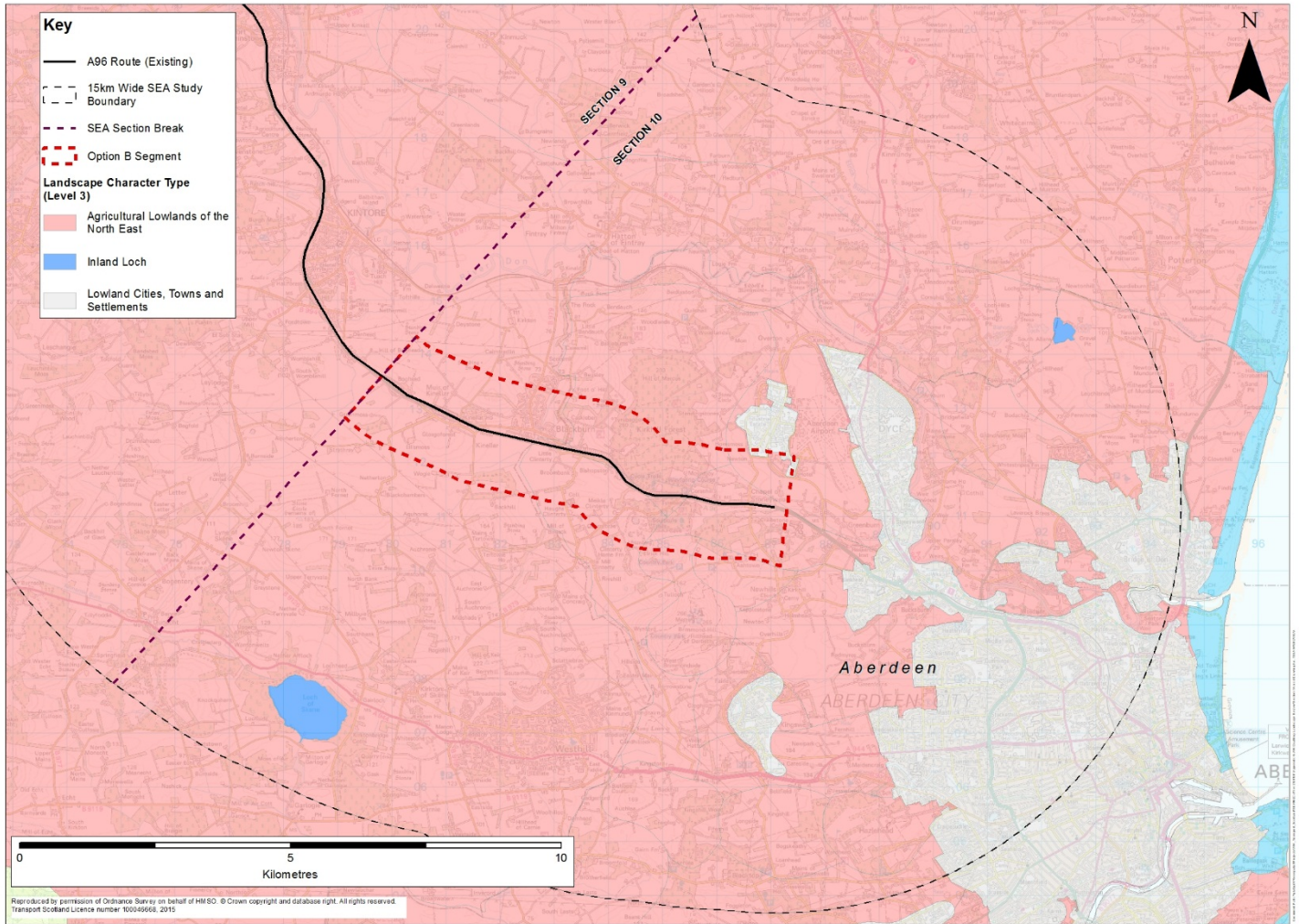


Figure 10 – Section 10 Options with Landscape Areas

**Table 10 - Section 10 Landscape Constraints**

There are no national designations within the project area, so this has been scoped out of this part of the report.

Commentary on Level of Environmental Landscape Constraint		
<b>SECTION 10: Kintore to proposed junction with the AWPR</b>		
Option B- approximately 1620Ha		
Landscape Character Type (Level 3)	Landscape Designations	Woodland Character
- Agricultural Lowlands of the North East - Lowland Cities, Towns and Settlements	None	The landscape is of a generally open landscape with a large area of woodland in the centre. Kirkhill Forest is located to the north of the A96, east of Blackburn. To the south of the road is Clinterty Woods. Both are used for recreation.
<p><u>Commentary on Landscape Character and Sensitivity:</u></p> <p><b>Landscape Character Overview</b></p> <p>The landscape character of the area comprises undulating terrain which is predominately farmland. There are some large woodlands of Kirkhill Forest, Clinterty Woods and Elrick Hill Country Park to the east of the segment. The A96 is an established part of the local landscape</p> <p><b>Landscape Character Types</b></p> <p>There is are two Landscape Character Areas, within the segment; mainly <i>Agricultural Lowlands of the North East</i> (1 + 2) and a small area of <i>Lowland Cities, Towns and Settlements</i> (3) to the far north-east. These areas are further described as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The <i>Agricultural Lowlands of the North East</i> has only has the one sub-type from the 'Aberdeenshire Landscape Character Assessment' within it in this area; this is the <i>Central Wooded Estates</i> (Area 12), which occupies a substantial area east of Bennachie between the Don and Dee Valley. The character consists of rolling landscape of low hills and wide valleys, with a strong woodland structure associated with numerous estate policies adding rich and diverse texture. There are mixed farmland with varying size of field patterns, and numerous towns and villages and archaeological features.</li> <li>2. The east of the segment is split into 4 sub-types as per the 'Aberdeen Landscape Character Assessment' – <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <b>Hill</b> (Tyrebagger Hill/Kirkhill and Brimmond &amp; Elrick Hills)</li> <li>b. <b>Open Farmland</b> (Clinterty &amp; West Brimmond Farmland, and East Elrick)</li> <li>c. <b>Wooded Farmland</b> (Craibstone)</li> <li>d. <b>Valley</b> (Dyce Plain)</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. <i>Lowland Cities, Towns and Settlements</i> - The urban character area within this part of the segment is the industrial estate to the west of the airport.</li> </ol> <p><b>Other Designations</b></p> <p>There are three Scheduled Monuments within the segment, typical of the landscape character type:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Little Clinterty, standing stone – It comprises a single standing stone likely to date to the late Neolithic or Bronze Age. It survives as an upstanding monolith at the north east corner of a private garden that lies south of Blackburn and the River Don.</li> <li>• Hillhead of Clinterty, hut circle – It comprises the remains of a hut circle of late Bronze-Age or Iron-Age date, visible as a low heather- and gorse-covered annular bank.</li> <li>• St Mary's Chapel and graveyard - It comprises the remains of a 14th-century chapel and graveyard, visible as upstanding remains. The monument is situated on a moderate S-facing slope, enclosed by a 19th-century stone wall. It lies near the Inverurie road at Chapel Farm.</li> </ul> <p>To the south-east of the segment is Elrick Country Park, which is a protected area.</p> <p><b>Settlements</b></p> <p>The commuter town of Blackburn is located within the segment. Additionally there are many individual properties scattered throughout the segment which may be sensitive receptors to dualling There is also a significant road viewpoint at Tyrebagger Hill.</p> <p><b>Woodland</b></p> <p>There is the large woodland of Kirkhill Forest east of Blackburn. This working forest has a mountain bike fun park as well as walking tracks, and there are prominent views all round from the Tappie Tower, a Victorian folly. Opposite, to the south of the road, is Clinterty Woods which is also used for recreation including a sculpture trail.</p> <p><b>Terrain</b></p> <p>The terrain comprises a low rolling landscape.</p>		
<p><u>Indicative Landscape Sensitivity - Low</u></p> <p>• <b>Landscapes which by nature of their character would be able to accommodate change of the type proposed. Typically these would be: not designated and likely to contain few, if any, features and elements that could not be replaced.</b></p> <p>There are no national landscape designations within the segment.</p> <p>The landscape character of the area comprises undulating terrain which is predominately farmland, although there are large woodlands of Kirkhill Forest, Clinterty Woods and Elrick Hill Country Park to the east of the segment. The A96 is an established part of the local landscape, and therefore is an existing precedent, which reduces its sensitivity.</p> <p>There are a three Scheduled Monuments which are widely dispersed throughout the segment and add to the landscape character.</p> <p>Blackburn is situated in the northern part of the segment and spans half its breadth; there are also individual properties scattered throughout the segment. An existing dualled section of the A96 runs along the southern edge of Blackburn, and is an established part of the landscape.</p> <p>It is considered that the landscape character can absorb a dualled route without a significant impact to its quality.</p>		
<p><u>Risk of Effect - Minor</u></p> <p>• <b>Small changes to the baseline resource which are detectable, but the underlying characteristics or quality of the baseline resource would be similar under post-development conditions</b></p> <p>It is predicted that properties could be avoided through route alignment, however a dualled route could have visual effect on receptors</p> <p>There is potential for landscape effects on the woodlands in the segment, and although the Scheduled Monuments and Country Park could be avoided through route alignment, there remains some potential for effects on their setting.</p> <p>The character of the area could be maintained as the existing A96 is an established part of the local landscape and effects are predicted to be minor.</p>		





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