

# PROPOSED ABERDEENSHIRE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2020 RESPONSE FORM

As part of the production of the Local Development Plan, a 'Main Issues Report' was published in January 2019. The responses from these consultations have helped to inform the content of the Proposed Local Development Plan ("the Proposed Plan").

The Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan will direct decision-making on land-use planning issues and planning applications in Aberdeenshire for the 10-year period from 2021 to 2031. The Proposed Plan was agreed by Aberdeenshire Council in March 2020 as the settled view of the Council. However, the Proposed Plan will be subjected to an independent examination and is now open for public comment.

**This is your opportunity to tell us if anything should be changed in the Proposed Plan, and why.**

When writing a response to the Proposed Plan it is important to specifically state the modification(s) that you would wish to see to the Plan.

This is the only remaining opportunity to comment on the Proposed Plan. The reasons for any requested changes will be analysed and reported to Scottish Ministers. They will then appoint a person known as a Reporter to conduct a public examination of the Proposed Plan, focusing particularly on any unresolved issues and the changes sought.

Ministers expect representations (or responses) to be concise (no more than 2000 words) and accompanied by limited supporting documents. It is important to ensure that all of the information that you wish to be considered is submitted during this consultation period as there is no further opportunity to provide information, unless specifically asked.

Please email comments to [ldp@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:ldp@aberdeenshire.gov.uk) or send this form to reach us by 17 July 2020.

We recommend that you keep a copy of your representation for your own records.



## ACCESSIBILITY

If you need information from this document in an alternative language or in a Large Print, Easy Read, Braille or BSL, please telephone 01467 536230.

Jeigu pageidaujate šio dokumento kita kalba arba atspausdinto stambiu šriftu, supaprastinta kalba, parašyta Brailio raštu arba britų gestų kalba, prašome skambinti 01467 536230.

Dacă aveți nevoie de informații din acest document într-o altă limbă sau într-un format cu scrisul mare, ușor de citit, tipar pentru nevăzători sau în limbajul semnelor, vă rugăm să telefonați la 01467 536230.

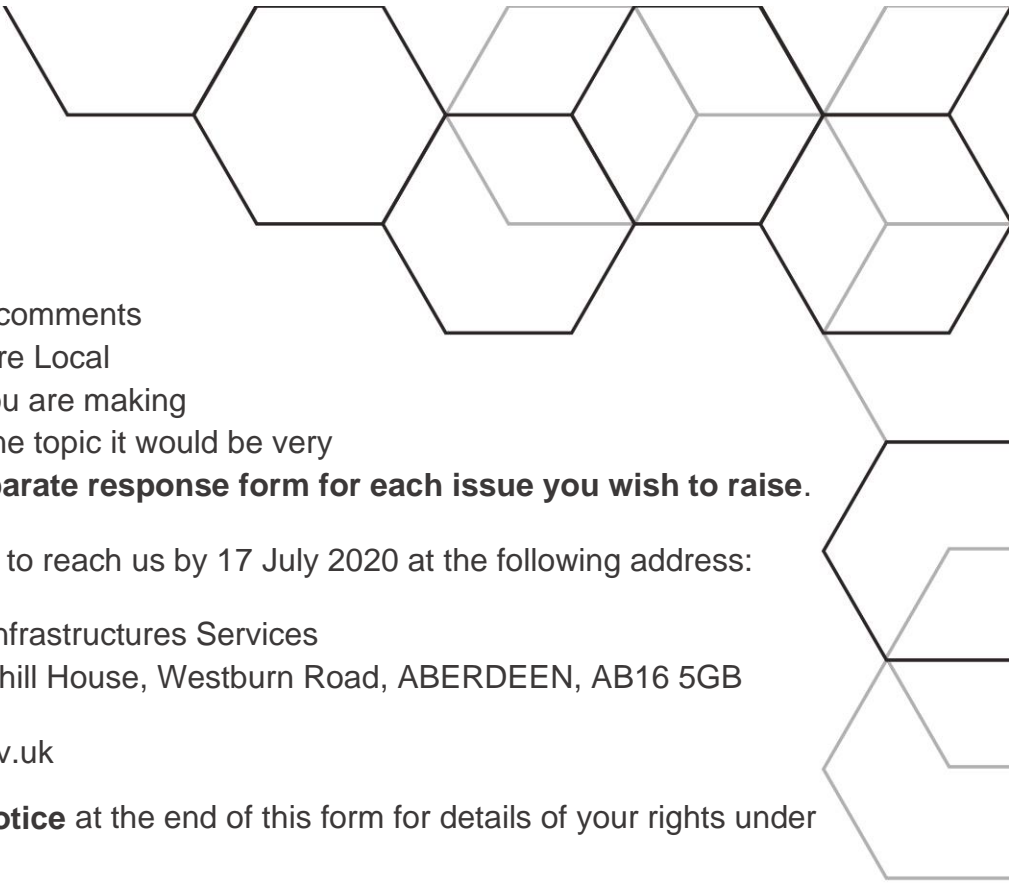
Jeśli potrzebowali będą Państwo informacji z niniejszego dokumentu w innym języku, pisanych dużą czcionką, w wersji łatwej do czytania, w alfabecie Braille'a lub w brytyjskim języku migowym, proszę o telefoniczny kontakt na numer 01467 536230.

Ja jums nepieciešama šai dokumentā sniegtā informācija kādā citā valodā vai lielā drukā, viegli lasāmā tekstā, Braila rakstā vai BSL (britu zīmju valodā), lūdzu, zvaniet uz 01467 536230.

Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan  
Woodhill House, Westburn Road, Aberdeen, AB16 5GB

Tel: 01467 536230  
Email: [ldp@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:ldp@aberdeenshire.gov.uk)  
Web: [www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/ldp](http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/ldp)  
Follow us on Twitter @ShireLDP

If you wish to contact one of the area planning offices, please call 01467 534333 and ask for the relevant planning office or email [planning@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:planning@aberdeenshire.gov.uk).



Please use this form to make comments on the Proposed Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2020. If you are making comments about more than one topic it would be very helpful if you could fill in **a separate response form for each issue you wish to raise**.

Please email or send the form to reach us by 17 July 2020 at the following address:

Post: Planning Policy Team, Infrastructures Services  
Aberdeenshire Council, Woodhill House, Westburn Road, ABERDEEN, AB16 5GB

Email: [ldp@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:ldp@aberdeenshire.gov.uk)

Please refer to our **Privacy Notice** at the end of this form for details of your rights under the Data Protection Act.

## YOUR DETAILS

Title:	Mr
First Name:	David
Surname:	Wardrop
Date:	22.07.20
Postal Address:	Wardrop Strategic Planning Limited, [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
Postcode:	[REDACTED]
Telephone Number:	[REDACTED]
Email:	[REDACTED]

Are you happy to receive future correspondence only by email? Yes ☐ No ☐

Are you responding on behalf of another person? Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes who are you representing? Taylor Wimpey (East Scotland) Ltd | The Mitchell Partnership

☐ Tick the box if you would like to subscribe to the Aberdeenshire LDP eNewsletter:

*An acknowledgement will be sent to this address soon after the close of consultation.*

# YOUR COMMENTS

Please provide us with your comments below. We will summarise comments and in our analysis will consider every point that is made. Once we have done this we will write back to you with Aberdeenshire Council's views on the submissions made. We will publish your name as the author of the comment, but will not make your address public.

**Modification that you wish to see** (please make specific reference to the section of the Proposed Plan you wish to see modified if possible, for example Section 9, paragraph E1.1):

**Taylor Wimpey/The Mitchell Partnership formally object to the non allocation of land at Souterford and Lofthillock, Inverurie (the subject lands) for residential uses for circa 450 new private, affordable and accessible homes; a primary school; and, a riverside park.**

## **Reason for change:**

**In addition to the matters raised in objections raised by Homes for Scotland to the need for ALDP 2021 to identify additional residential land, which are endorsed by Taylor Wimpey/The Mitchell Partnership, there are settlement specific requirements for land in addition to that proposed for development in Inverurie as proposed within ALDP 2021 to be identified for housing and, as required, a new primary school.**

**As will be set out further in this objection and the supporting Site Brochure and Transport Statement, the subject lands are particularly well placed to contribute to wider housing land requirements and local needs.**

**Accordingly, it is submitted that land at Souterford be allocated for residential development for circa 450 residential units and, as required, a new primary school, together with an extensive riverside park.**

## **Background**

Land at Souterford has previously been assessed by the Council as suitable for residential development with the subject lands identified as a future housing area within ALDP 2012. For a number of reasons, including a focus on securing a grade separated interchange at Crichton and overall housing land allowances, despite the clear suitability for a residential development in this particularly sustainable location, the subject lands remain unallocated.

With the need for new residential land allocations an expected consequence of the outcomes from the Examination of the Aberdeen and Shire SDP, there is now a context that offers an opportunity for the subject lands to finally be identified for much needed new homes.

Land that has been allocated in 2012 and 2017 iterations of ALDP has not sufficiently affected several key issues affecting Inverurie; namely affordable homes and land for a new primary school. In respect of the latter, Inverurie remains a High Priority Settlement as defined within the Local Housing Strategy 2018-23.



In identifying key deficiencies and the fundamental need for new land to be identified within the town, this objection and the supporting Site Brochure and Transport Statement robustly set out the case for why the subject lands are particularly well suited to help resolve both the wider housing land supply matters as well as more local matters.

### **Strategic Context**

The allocation of this highly sustainable land is wholly consistent with the spatial strategy set out within both the current Aberdeen and Shire SDP and the emerging replacement SDP which currently sits with Scottish Ministers. Souterford lies within the Aberdeen – Huntly Strategic Growth Area. The proposed SDP confirms that *“The Strategic Growth Areas will be the main focus for development in the area up to 2040. Over this period, we expect that at least 75% of all homes built and employment land developed will be in the Strategic Growth Areas.”* para 3.8 and that within the Aberdeen – Huntly SGA *“The Inverurie Business Improvement District aims to capitalise on existing resources and build a stronger, more sustainable, town for the future.”*

Significantly for Inverurie, the proposed SDP confirms that *“The Strategic Growth Area is served by a dual carriageway to Aberdeen, and the Scottish Government has committed to upgrading the A96 between Aberdeen and Inverness over the lifetime of this Plan.”* para 3.38

It is further noted that proposed SDP confirms that the A96 dualling project is likely to provide for grade separated junctions, including those at Inverurie, with options considered for bypassing the town. Until this infrastructure is in place, the SDP notes that development opportunities in this area will likely be limited.

The non allocation of the subject lands was also set against a proposed SDP Housing Land Allowance that had informed the proposed ALDP housing land allocations with an overall allocation of circa 1,000 units in excess of the SDP’s Housing Land Allowance.

With the increase in the proposed SDP’s Housing Land Allowance included within the Report of Examination, this housing land supply ‘buffer’ of circa 1,000 homes, will decrease to just circa 80 homes. As referenced within Homes for Scotland’s submissions to the proposed ALDP 2021, this ‘buffer’ very quickly becomes a significant deficit and therefore shortfall.

Whilst this is set out in more detail within Homes for Scotland’s submissions on this issue, which Taylor Wimpey support, it is submitted that the identification of the subject lands will go some way to restoring the level of housing land supply which was considered by officers to be required during their preparation of the proposed ALDP 2021 and, indeed, as required to address the significant housing land shortfall now identified within the submissions made by Homes for Scotland to the proposed ALDP 2021.

### **Settlement Specific : Affordable and Accessible Homes**

Inverurie, with land allocated for around circa 2,300 new residential units within the proposed ALDP 2021, would at first appear to have a considerable level of land allocated for residential purposes. However, this position continues to hide the reality of the situation which is summarised as a far lower level of affordable homes delivery and a lack of choice of housing offer.

A generous supply of housing land is critical particularly given that the town is one of the settlements identified as High Priority for affordable housing as defined by the Local Housing Strategy 2018 – 23.

When this is considered against the residential land allocations proposed within ALDP 2021, the inability of this plan to meaningfully address this key issue is clear. In broad terms, the proposed ALDP 2021 allocations in the town amount to 2300 units. Of these, close to 2,000 units have planning permission (predominantly at Uryside/Portstown [REDACTED]; and, at Crichton [REDACTED]). With the former delivering just 10% against an LDP requirement of 25%, just 120 units rather than 300 affordable units will be delivered. Whilst Crichton is to deliver 75 affordable units out of the first phase of 300 units, this does not make inroads to the under delivery from the current residential land allocations in the town.

This would lead to a significant under provision of 180 affordable homes over the plan period. This is against a backdrop of considerably more affordable homes being required in the town. Without additional land being allocated for residential purposes, the proposed ALDP 2021 will again fail to address this clear deficiency.

The identification of new allocations at Land to the West of Bennachie View Care Home (OP15) and to the West of Conglass (OP16) could see the delivery of a further 180 new homes of which 45 (@ 25%) would be required as affordable. Without prejudice to Taylor Wimpey's specific objections to their allocation in the place of Souterford, their allocation would still not see sufficient affordable housing being delivered in the town.

To ensure that the proposed ALDP 2021 can facilitate a far more positive response to this issue land, which is effective, must be identified for additional private and associated affordable/accessible housing. As articulated within the Site Brochure accompanying this objection land at Souterford and Lofthillock offers the most logical and sustainable location for this necessary land. This comprises circa 450 new homes of which 112 homes (25%) are affordable homes and a further 45 homes (10%) are accessible homes. This is a significant commitment that will contribute to the considerable affordable housing shortfall that will continue without intervention.

#### *Choice*

The Inverurie housing land allocations are dominated by just two developers with a very similar housing offer which is dominated by larger detached units. Taylor Wimpey's delivery of potentially smaller family homes (2, 3 and 4 bed) will add a choice of housebuilder and of the range of house size. This is considered to complement the existing situation.

#### **Settlement Specific : Primary School Education Provision**

A new primary school with a 540 pupil capacity was fairly recently completed. It is understood that due to the limited site area there is no opportunity to extend this school beyond its current capacity.

A review of the Council's school programming sets out the following in respect of Uryside PS. As built, the school has a capacity for 589 pupils. As of 2018, the school roll was 315 pupils. This is projected forward by the Council to 2023 where the roll rises to 535 pupils. However, by 2023, there are still 296 new residential units to be completed on land allocated within proposed ALDP

2021 within the Uryside PS catchment area. Quite clearly there appears to be an insufficient amount of space within Uryside PS to accommodate the pupils expected to come from the consented houses.

Given that the capacity of the new school is projected to be reached within the plan period, it is not unreasonable to expect the Council to include a solution as part of the Inverurie town strategy within this new LDP.

Land, with the potential for up to a twin stream primary school is included within Taylor Wimpey/The Mitchell Partnership's proposals at Souterford. It is suggested that this additional new school offers the opportunity to address this future capacity issue as well as providing space for pupils from Souterford and Lofthillock.

In addition to the land required for a new primary school at Souterford being provided to the Council, a significant financial contribution could be secured through the usual planning obligations from the housing allocation sought by Taylor Wimpey/The Mitchell Partnership towards the cost of delivery.

In considering this it is important to note that as planning permission has been granted for the Uryside/Portstown development and that there are no other allocations in the catchment area there is no opportunity for the Council to revisit the level of contribution which has been secured via the s75 obligation towards primary school education at Uryside.

### ***Souterford and Lofthillock***

Reference is drawn to the accompanying Site Brochure which provides details of the opportunities presented by the subject lands.

In respect of the uncertainty of the route of the A96 dualling it is noted that the Council have taken the view that the identification of new residential land is to be delayed until clarity is provided. Notwithstanding this, the proposed ALDP 2021 does indeed include new land allocations at OP15 and 16 for circa 180 new residential units. The rationale for identifying land here rather than at Souterford and Lofthillock, which is far more sustainably located, is challenged and is set out in more detail within Taylor Wimpey / The Mitchell Partnership's formal objections to OP15 and OP16.

As articulated within Transport Statement and through the proposed allocations elsewhere in the town by the Council, it is submitted that the A96 dualling has no bearing on the suitability of the subject lands for residential development and, as required, a new primary school.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

In identifying new development land, it is critical that this land is both effective and suitable for the form of development proposed here. It is considered that land at Souterford and Lofthillock could deliver land for a new primary school as well as for circa 450 residential units of which 112 (25%) would be 'affordable' housing and a further 45 (10%) would be 'accessible' housing. As articulated within the Site Brochure, there is the opportunity of extending the current riverside park into Souterford.

It can be confirmed that the subject lands are free from any technical constraint; are very sustainably located; and, can be delivered in the first period of the LDP. An allocation can positively contribute to the delivery of affordable and accessible new homes and offer choice including smaller family homes.

Given the need to identify additional land for both housing and, potentially, a new primary school, it is submitted that the subject lands should be identified for the uses proposed in this objection either as a new residential land allocation or, as a secondary position, given the council's position on the A96 dualling 'uncertainty' and/or the time period of ALDP 2021, as 'future housing land' to allow an appropriate degree of certainty to be provided going forward.

# PRIVACY NOTICE



## LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN PUBLIC COMMENT

The Data Controller of the information being collected is Aberdeenshire Council.

The Data Protection Officer can be contacted at Town House, 34 Low Street, Banff, AB45 1AY.

Email: [dataprotection@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:dataprotection@aberdeenshire.gov.uk)

Your information is being collected to use for the following purposes:

- To provide public comment on the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan. The data on the form will be used to inform Scottish Ministers and individual(s) appointed to examine the Proposed Local Development Plan 2020. It will inform the content of the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2021.

### Your information is:

Being collected by Aberdeenshire Council	X
--	---

### The Legal Basis for collecting the information is:

Personal Data	
Legal Obligations	X

Where the Legal Basis for processing is either Performance of a Contract or Legal Obligation, please note the following consequences of failure to provide the information:

It is a Statutory Obligation under Section 18 of the Town and Country (Scotland) Act 1997, as amended, for Aberdeenshire Council to prepare and publish a Proposed Local Development plan on which representations must be made to the planning authority within a prescribed period of time. Failure to provide details requested in the 'Your Details' section of this form will result in Aberdeenshire Council being unable to accept your representation.

Your information will be shared with the following recipients or categories of recipient:

Members of the public are being given this final opportunity to comment on the Proposed Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan. The reasons for any changes that the Council receives will be analysed and reported to Scottish Ministers. They will then appoint a person to conduct a public examination of the Proposed Plan, focusing particularly on the unresolved issues raised and the changes sought.

Your name and respondent identification number (provided to you by Aberdeenshire Council on receipt of your

submission) will be published alongside a copy of your completed response on the Proposed Local Development Plan website (contact details and information that is deemed commercially sensitive will not be made available to the public).

In accordance with Regulation 22 of the Town and Country (Development Planning) (Scotland) Regulations 2008 where the appointed person determines that further representations should be made or further information should be provided by any person in connection with the examination of the Proposed Plan the appointed person may by notice request that person to make such further representations or to provide such further information.

Your information will be transferred to or stored in the following countries and the following safeguards are in place:

Not applicable.

The retention period for the data is:

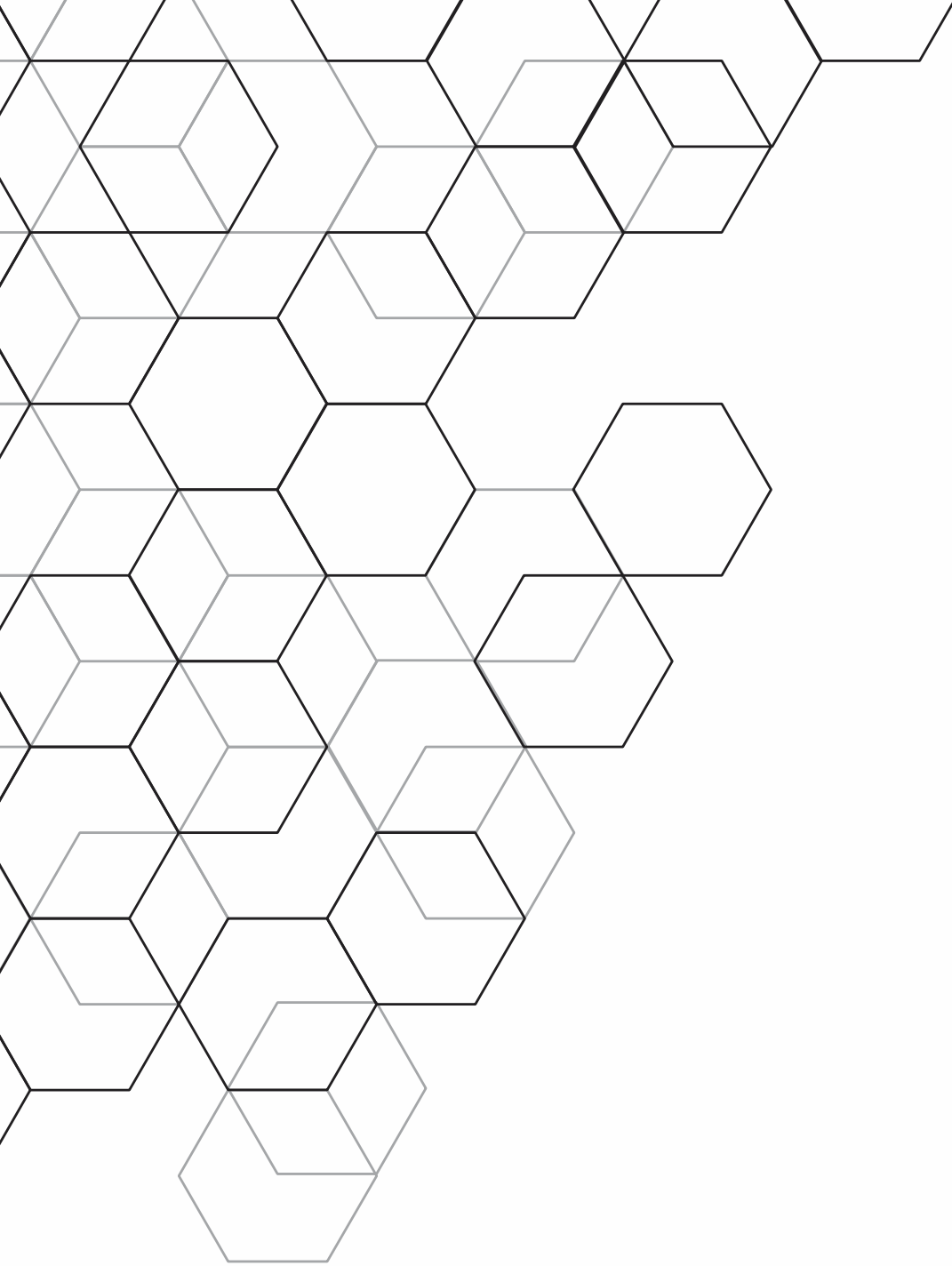
Aberdeenshire Council will only keep your personal data for as long as is needed. Aberdeenshire Council will retain your response and personal data for a retention period of 5 years from the date upon which it was collected. After 5 years Aberdeenshire Council will review whether it is necessary to continue to retain your information for a longer period. A redacted copy of your submission will be retained for 5 years beyond the life of the Local Development Plan 2021, possibly until 2037.

The following automated decision-making, including profiling, will be undertaken:

Not applicable.

Please note that you have the following rights:

- to withdraw consent at any time, where the Legal Basis specified above is Consent;
- to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office (after raising the issue with the Data Protection Officer first);
- to request access to your personal data;
- to data portability, where the legal basis specified above is:
  - (i) Consent; or
  - (ii) Performance of a Contract;
- to request rectification or erasure of your personal data, as so far as the legislation permits.





July 2020

## Land at Souterford and Lofthillock, Inverurie

Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2021

Proposed Plan: Site Representation



# > Contents

<b>1. Background</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4. Souterford and Lofthillock</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>5.9 Conclusions</b>	<b>41</b>
1.1 Introduction	4	4.1 Introduction	22	5.10 Mitigation	42
1.2 Site description	5	4.2 Site Appraisal	22	<b>6. Constraints and Opportunities</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>2. Planning context</b>	<b>6</b>	Site Features	22	6.1 Summary	43
2.1 National Planning Framework	6	Visibility	22	<b>7. Proposal</b>	<b>46</b>
2.2 Scottish Planning Policy (2014)	6	Topography	26	7.1 Concept	46
2.3 Strategic Development Plan	8	Arboriculture	28	Vision	46
2.4 Emerging Replacement Strategic Development Plan	9	Cultural Heritage	30	Proposal	46
Introduction	9	Ecology	31	Designing in Context	46
Key Principles	9	Ecology Surveys Since 2015	31	7.2 Access Strategy	48
Delivery of New Homes	9	<b>4.3 Accessibility</b>	<b>32</b>	General	48
Connections	10	Introduction	32	Accessibility	48
2.5 ALDP 3 Main Issues Report	10	Pedestrian network	32	Walking, cycling and public transport	48
Inverurie	10	Cycle routes	32	Vehicular access	48
Inverurie and Port Elphinstone	10	Public transport	34	7.3 Landscape Strategy	50
Planning Objectives:	10	Transport Summary	34	Working with the constraints	50
Conclusion	10	<b>4.4 Technical Appraisal</b>	<b>35</b>	Reinforcing a Legible Development Structure	50
<b>3. Place: Inverurie</b>	<b>13</b>	Introduction	35	Enables enhanced biodiversity and protects existing assets	50
3.1 Description	13	Ground conditions	35	Offers Attractive Amenity Space To Enhance Local Living	50
Inverurie today	13	Flooding	36	Contribute toward place identity.	50
3.2 History	14	Services	37	7.4 Internal Street Network	52
Description	14	Summary	37	7.5 SUDs and Servicing Strategy	52
The Growth of Inverurie	14	<b>5. Keith Hall Designed Landscape</b>	<b>38</b>	Surface Water Drainage and SUDs	52
3.3 Cultural Heritage	16	5.1 Introduction	38	Foul Drainage	52
3.4 Landscape Setting	16	5.2 Reference Material	39	Creating Place	52
Landscape character	16	5.3 Keith Hall	39	<b>8. Sustaining Inverurie</b>	<b>54</b>
Topography	18	5.4 Brief History	39	8.1 A Walkable Place	54
Setting	19	5.5 The Inventory listing	40	8.2 Meeting Local Need	54
3.5 Future Growth	20	5.6 Boundaries and extents	40	<b>9. Summary</b>	<b>56</b>
		5.7 The North Drive: history	40		
		5.8 The North Drive: today	41		



# Figures

**Figure 1: Location Plan**

**Figure 2: Local Area**

**Figure 3: Extract from Aberdeenshire LDP 2012**

**Figure 4: Extract from Aberdeenshire Adopted Local Development Plan 2017**

**Figure 5: Plan of Inverurie**

**Figure 6: Designations**

**Figure 7: Topography: Elevation Analysis**

**Figure 8: Topography: Slope Analysis**

**Figure 9: Landscape Setting**

**Figure 10: View towards Bennachie from Lofthillock**

**Figure 11: Future Growth Constraints**

**Figure 12: Landscape Features**

**Figure 13: Site Appraisal**

**Figure 14: Site Height Band Analysis**

**Figure 15: Site Slope Analysis**

**Figure 16: Tree Survey**

**Figure 17: Accessibility Diagram**

**Figure 18: Constraints**

**Figure 19: Development Principles**

**Figure 20: Diagram of exemplar vehicular access point into the Souterford site off Oldmeldrum Road (1)**

**Figure 21: Indicative Masterplan**

**Figure 22: Access Strategy**

**Figure 23: Landscape Strategy**

**Figure 24: Placemaking and Connections Strategy**

**Figure 25: A Walkable Place**



# 1. Background

## 1.1 Introduction

This is a submission to Aberdeenshire Council by Taylor Wimpey in support of their objections to the non-allocation of land at Souterford and Lofthillock, Inverurie, within the proposed ALDP 2021.

This document addresses issues around landscape and masterplanning, and brings together a number of technical studies in order to create a complete picture which together demonstrate that this site offers effective and logical growth for Inverurie.

Placemaking is at the heart of the Scottish planning system, and accordingly this document considers context first by considering the form and history of Inverurie itself, moving onto an assessment of what should guide the future growth of Inverurie.

There then follows an appraisal of Souterford and Lofthillock and a review of the technical constraints and opportunities which will influence the development of the site area. The site lies on the north-west corner of the Keith Hall Designed Landscape so due consideration has been given to the Designed Landscape and how the northern drive and adjacent fields contribute toward this. Finally, indicative proposals have been drawn up for the site and the embedded principles are described along with the presentation of an indicative masterplan. Site capacity, allowing for the constraints and opportunities identified is estimated as being circa 450 across the two sites, allowing for a new Primary School and assuming that of those houses 25% will be affordable and 10% as accessible for all abilities.

Inverurie has grown rapidly over the last 25 years; in order to conserve some of its intrinsic character in the face of such change it is essential that the next areas of growth should be sensitive to “place” and offer something positive back to the town. Not just new homes but an attractive environment within which they sit.

This has been the starting principle for proposals for new development at Souterford and Lofthillock.



Figure 1: Location Plan

NTS @ A3







## 1.2 Site description

Souterford and Lofthillock are located to the east of Inverurie. They are two distinct areas of land which are separated by the northern driveway access to the Keith Hall Estate but linked by a historic underpass to the driveway via an attractive (and listed) stone bridge, and by Oldmeldrum Road, the B9170.

Souterford is closest to Inverurie, around 7 minutes walking distance from the railway station. Its western edge is formed by the River Urie, the south and east by the mature woodland of the Keith Hall Estate and the north by Oldmeldrum Road. Part of the land is undevelopable as it falls into the Urie flood plain; the whole area is currently under agricultural use.

A ruined cottage lies within the north-western corner of the site; this is not a protected feature.

Lofthillock is beyond Souterford on the other side of the mature woodland approach to Keith Hall. Its north-western edge is formed by Oldmeldrum Road and looked onto by new housing development, to the north-east by a farm track and the south-east by a historic field boundary which sits on a topographical “shoulder” and to the south-west by the woodland of the north drive. The land is under agricultural uses.

The total land area is some 31.5 hectares (almost 78 acres).

Figure 2: Local Area



# 2. Planning context

## 2.1 National Planning Framework

NPF 3 aims to facilitate new housing development where there is continuing pressure for growth. House building makes an important contribution to the economy. Planning can help to address the challenges facing the housing sector by providing a positive and flexible approach to development. In particular, provision for new homes should be made in areas where economic investment is planned or there is a need for regeneration.

Following the Planning (Scotland) Bill receiving royal assent in July 2019, the preparation of National Planning Framework 4 has commenced with a 2021 implementation date anticipated. Until then, NPF 3 will remain in place. Given the Council's intention to have the examination stage of ALDP 2021 concluded prior to the publication of NPF4, the current NPF3 will remain material.

## 2.2 Scottish Planning Policy (2014)

According to SPP "Planning should take a positive approach to enabling high-quality development and making efficient use of land to deliver long-term benefits for the public while protecting and enhancing natural and cultural resources." (paragraph 2) Within SPP, Outcome 1 seeks "a successful, sustainable place – supporting sustainable economic growth and regeneration, and the creation of well-designed, sustainable places."

Importantly, the SPP introduces a presumption in favour of development that contributes to sustainable development.

The SPP recognises NPF 3 aim of seeking to strengthen the role of the city regions and towns. The SPP sets out how this should be delivered by locating the right development in the right place. The SPP continues by noting that "Delivering high-quality buildings, infrastructure and spaces in the right locations helps provide choice over where to live and style of home, choice as to how to access amenities and services and choice to live more active, engaged, independent and healthy lifestyles."

The SPP requires that Development plans should:

- be consistent with the policies set out in this SPP, "including the presumption in favour of development that contributes to sustainable development";
- "positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of the plan area in a way which is flexible enough to adapt to changing circumstances over time";

- be up-to-date, place-based and enabling with a spatial strategy that is implemented through policies and proposals; and
- "set out a spatial strategy which is both sustainable and deliverable, providing confidence to stakeholders that the outcomes can be achieved."

SPP also requires that planning should take every opportunity to create high quality places by taking a design-led approach. This requires spatial strategies within development plans to promote a sustainable pattern of development appropriate to the area.

Both the NPF and SPP recognise that planning's purpose is to create better places. The SPP comments that "Placemaking is a creative, collaborative process that includes design, development, renewal or regeneration of our urban or rural built environments. The outcome should be sustainable, well-designed places and homes which meet people's needs."

Planning should direct the right development to the right place. To achieve this spatial strategies within development plans should promote "a sustainable pattern of development appropriate to the area." The SPP sets out a range of criteria against which decisions should be guided. In doing so, planning should support development that is designed to a high-quality, which demonstrates the six qualities of successful place comprising:

- Distinctive
- Safe and Pleasant
- Welcoming
- Adaptable
- Resource Efficient
- Easy to Move Around and Beyond

In respect of housing, the SPP requires local development plans in city regions to allocate a range of sites which are effective or expected to become effective in the plan period to meet the housing land requirement of the strategic development plan up to year 10 from the expected year of adoption. They should provide for a minimum of 5 years effective land supply at all times. In allocating sites, the SPP requires planning authorities to be confident that land can be brought forward for development within the plan period and that the range of sites allocated will enable the housing supply target to be met.

Other than delivering housing, the SPP confirms that the planning system should:

- consider green infrastructure as an integral element of places from the outset of the planning process;
- assess current and future needs and opportunities for green infrastructure to provide multiple benefits;
- facilitate the provision and long-term, integrated management of green infrastructure and prevent fragmentation; and,
- provide for easy and safe access to and within green infrastructure, including core paths and other important routes.

In doing this, the SPP requires that local development plans should seek to enhance existing and promote the creation of new green infrastructure. This should be done through a design-led approach, applying standards which facilitate appropriate provision, addressing deficits or surpluses within the local context. The standards delivered through a design-led approach should result in a proposal that is appropriate to place, including connections to other green infrastructure assets.

## 2.3 Strategic Development Plan

As the replacement Strategic Development Plan 2021 is currently with Scottish Ministers and is therefore not yet approved, the current Strategic Development Plan, approved in 2014, remains material until such time as the replacement Strategic Development Plan is formally approved.

Approved in 2014, the SDP notes that "We need to face up to the challenges and grasp the opportunities ahead to be able to maintain and improve the attractiveness of the region as a place to live, visit and do business." In seeking to achieve this, the SDP sets out that "We will have acted confidently and taken the courageous decisions necessary to further develop a robust and resilient economy and to lead the way towards development being sustainable,



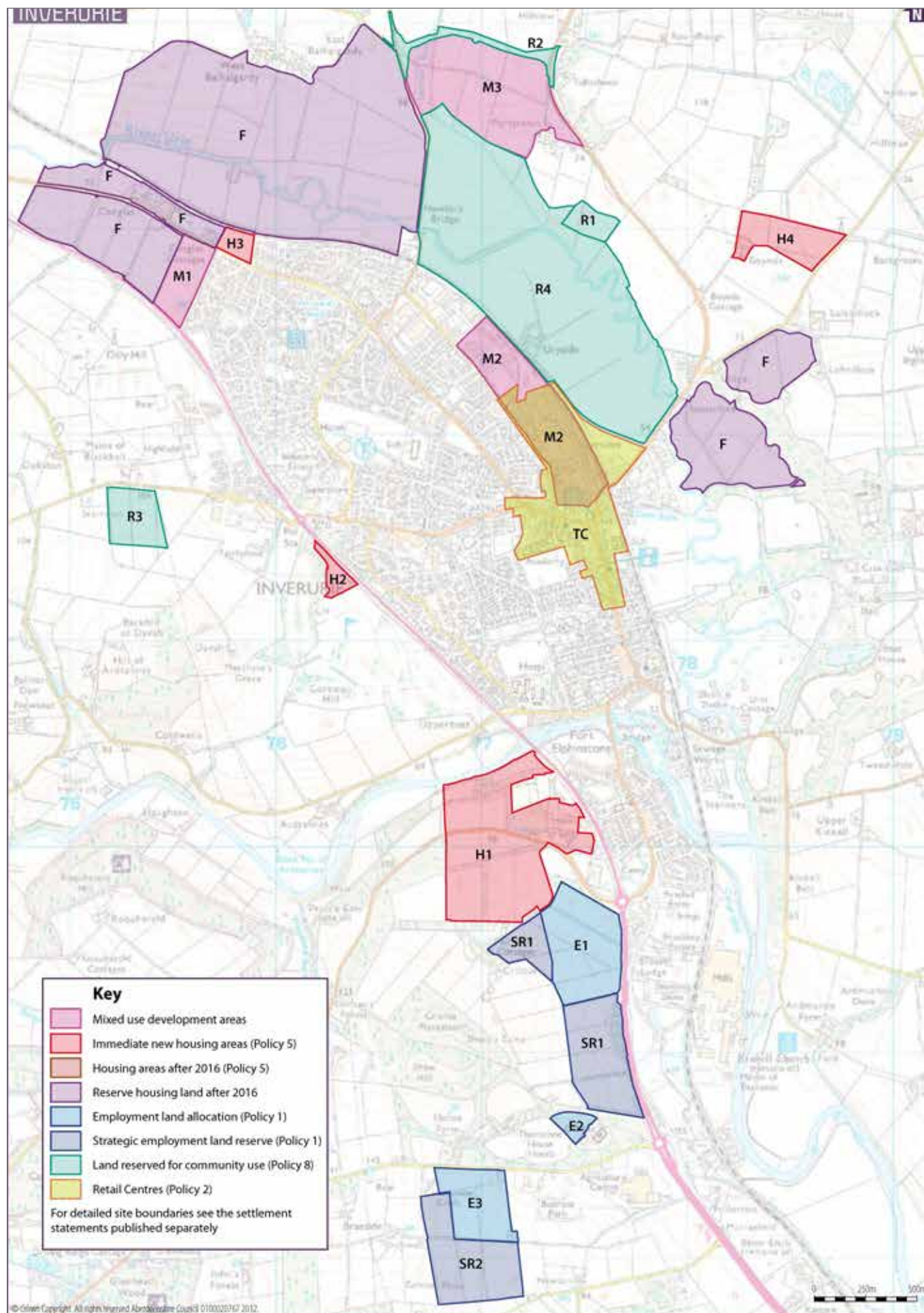


Figure 3: Extract from Aberdeenshire LDP 2012

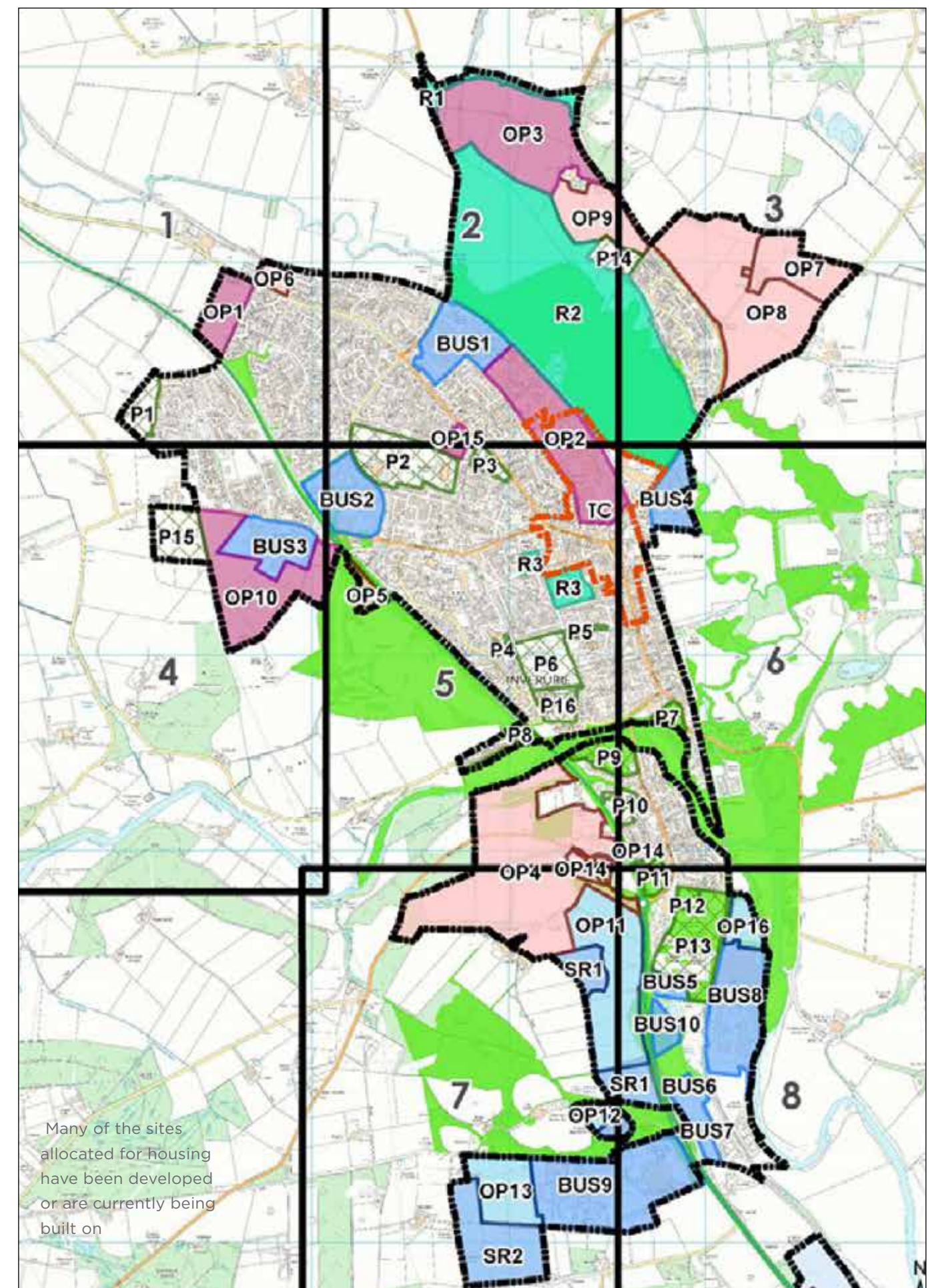


Figure 4: Extract from Aberdeenshire Adopted Local Development Plan 2017





including dealing with climate change and creating a more inclusive society.”

The main aims of the plan are to:

- “provide a strong framework for investment decisions which help to grow and diversify the regional economy, supported by promoting the need to use resources more efficiently and effectively; and to
- take on the urgent challenges of sustainable development and climate change.”
- To support these main aims, the plan also aims to:
- “make sure the area has enough people, homes and jobs to support the level of services and facilities needed to maintain and improve the quality of life;
- protect and improve our valued assets and resources, including the built and natural environment and our cultural heritage;
- help create sustainable mixed communities, and the associated infrastructure, which meet the highest standards of urban and rural design and cater for the needs of the whole population; and
- make the most efficient use of the transport network, reducing the need for people to travel and making sure that walking, cycling and public transport are attractive choices.”

The SDP concludes by confirming that “We are committed to all the aims as a whole. This is the only way we will be able to achieve our vision.”

As is set out further in this masterplan report and within the accompanying documents the proposed allocations at Souterford and Lofthillock for private and affordable/accessible housing; a new primary school and a riverside park are wholly in accordance with the SDP’s aims and can be considered to help in the identified outcomes being achieved.

Inverurie is located within and is the principal town within the Aberdeen to Huntly Strategic Growth Area; one of the four Strategic Growth Areas (SGA) identified by the SDP. The SDP confirms that the SGA’s are “the main focus for development in the area up to 2035” and that “all four strategic growth areas should focus on creating sustainable mixed communities with the services, facilities and infrastructure necessary for the 21st century.”

In respect of the housing land requirement the SGA is divided into two;

Inverurie – Blackburn and Huntly to Pitcaple. For the former, the SDP sets out the housing allowances as follows:

Period	Existing LDP	2017-2026	2027-2035
Allowance	1000	1500	4500

The SDP understands that in these areas there will be a significant need for new and improved infrastructure including inter alia new primary schools, open space and improvements to roads as well as walking, cycling and bus networks. The SDP seeks to explore opportunities to put in place a strategic walking and cycle network which builds on the current networks being developed in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire towns by linking these together. This is to be done in a way which creates opportunities for improvements to the natural environment by linking habitats, species and open space in green networks.

In doing this the aim of the SDP is to provide a strategic policy context that affords the best opportunities to create “successful sustainable mixed communities.” The SPP acknowledges that the financial costs are considerable and that a significant part of the cost will have to be paid for by developers and landowners.

A key part of creating sustainable communities is the provision of a mix of the type and size of homes, as well as their tenure and cost. There is also the need to make sure that new homes are designed to a high standard and that they respect and improve the existing qualities of the area. The SDP confirms that developments must provide a wide range of options, from starter homes to large detached houses and that providing affordable housing is also critical to delivering sustainable mixed communities.

More generally, the SDP acknowledges that if the population grows to the levels aimed for, there will need to be “an increase in the number of homes which are built each year.”

It is also worth noting the SDP’s position regarding sustainable development and climate change. The SDP’s objective is for “To be a city region which takes the lead in reducing the amount of carbon dioxide released into the air, adapts to the effects of climate change and limits the amount of non-renewable resources it uses.” A key element in achieving this is the identification of sustainably located land for housing where walking is a real choice.

In conclusion, the NPF 3, SPP and the SDP all provide a context that offers support for an allocation at Souterford and Lofthillock for private and affordable/accessible residential and associated primary school.

## 2.4 Emerging Replacement Strategic Development Plan

### Introduction

*Following the conclusion of the examination of the proposed Strategic Development Plan, a report was submitted to Ministers on the 17th January 2020. Their decision is currently awaited.*

*The main outcome of the Report of Examination is the recommended modification to the respective Local Development Plans’ housing allowances. This sees, for the period 2020 – 2032, an increase from 8,335 new houses to 10,214 new houses; and increase of 1,879 homes. The consequence for ALDP 2021 is that the Housing allowance within the ‘Shire over this period will increase from 4,168 new homes to 5,107 new homes.*

*It is worth noting that in preparing the proposed draft plan in 2019, including site identification, and in taking this through the various local area, Infrastructure Services and full Council meetings, the allocations included within the proposed ALDP were made against this lower housing allowance backdrop. The consequence of this is that officers clearly identified the need to allocate land well in excess of the numbers required to specifically meet the allowance with the proposed SDP.*

As a consequence of the increased housing allowance included within the proposed SDP Report of Examination, this ‘buffer’ has reduced from 1,019 units to just 80 units. Despite the potentially significant outcomes of the Report of Examination, it is worth noting that no additional allocations were identified by officers.

Turning to site specifics, the following key messages remain consistent between the proposed SDP and the outcomes of the Report of Examination.

### Key Principles

The proposed SDP recognises that this Strategic Growth Area contains several thriving Aberdeenshire communities, and “*significant development will take place in the road and rail corridor stretching from Huntly to Blackburn over the Plan Period.*” In respect of Inverurie, the proposed SDP notes, and indeed supports, the Inverurie Business Improvement District aims to capitalise on existing resources and “*build a stronger, more sustainable, town for the future*”.

The proposed SDP notes that the Strategic Growth Area is served by a dual carriageway to Aberdeen, and the Scottish Government has committed to upgrading the A96 between Aberdeen and Inverness over the lifetime of this Plan. The Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan should explore opportunities for increasing active travel use and connections to settlements through green networks along the A96 corridor. The A96 dualling project is likely to provide for grade separated junctions, including those at Inverurie, with options considered for bypassing the town. Until this infrastructure is in place, development opportunities in this area will likely be limited. In this it is anticipated that the proposed route will become known during the period of the preparation of ALDP 3. This certainty will allow consideration of new sustainably located land allocations within the town.

Finally, the proposed SDP notes that significant phased improvements are also planned to the Aberdeen to Inverness railway line, with more services, shorter journey times and further improvements for a more local rail service. This will build on the opening of a new rail station at Kintore.

### Delivery of New Homes

The proposed SDP notes that the population of the City Region has been growing for a number of years and, over the next 20 years, Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire are both projected to have population increases above the overall Scottish growth rate.

The proposed SDP considers that a total Housing Land Requirement of just over 64,000 new homes over the period to 2040 will, in their view, make sure that sufficient land is available at a local level to cope with higher levels of demand than the Councils’ currently expect, without resulting in an excess oversupply.

According to the Councils’, the proposed SDP suggests that “*it is possible that no further housing land allocations could be made for the next Local*

*Development Plans. However; a considerable proportion of current allocations are strategic allocations, and if any of these sites failed to come forward, there is a risk that the housing land supply may not be maintained. As such, additional allocations are proposed over the period 2020 to 2032, with a Strategic Reserve of housing land that may be identified for the period 2033 to 2040*”.

In order to support sustainable communities, the best use of infrastructure, and increased levels of housing delivery, the proposed SDP divides these allocations are on an 80% / 20% basis between the Aberdeen Housing Market Area and the Rural Housing Market Area respectively.

The proposed SDP does recognise that some new development will need to take place on greenfield sites in order to help deliver the Councils’ Vision and future strategy for growth. “*Reducing travel distances and making walking, cycling and public transport more attractive to people will be important considerations, particularly for any new greenfield development sites that are proposed.*”

In this, the proposed SDP sets out that allocations should be small scale in nature, and should not be extensions to any existing, strategic, development sites that have been subject to a masterplanning exercise. It will be up to the Local Development Plans to determine whether a proposal is “small scale” or not, giving due regard to its context and deliverability. Additionally, the affordable requirements of these allocations should be delivered in the early stages of development.

The proposed SDP confirms that Local Development Plans may choose to make provision for additional Strategic Reserves for Housing for the period 2033 to 2040 in line with Table 3 of the proposed SDP.

### Connections

The proposed SDP sets out to promote the link between land use and transport to make sure that “*all new development is conveniently located and designed in such a way as to encourage walking, cycling and the use of public transport*”. It correctly recognises that walking and cycling are the most environmentally friendly forms of transport and should be encouraged as a way to achieve important health, social and environmental benefits. The proposed SDP claims that it will “*help ensure sustainable land use patterns to*

*reduce the need to travel and promote improved connections between both local and strategic active travel networks and public transport.*”

## 2.5 ALDP 2021

### MAIN ISSUES REPORT

#### Inverurie

In respect of the town, within Appendix 2 Part 2 Appendix Garioch Settlements of the MIR the following is set out.

#### Inverurie and Port Elphinstone

Inverurie is a thriving market town which sits in the Don Valley and straddles both the River Don and the River Ury. It is located within a Strategic Growth Area and acts as a significant service and retail centre for the Garioch area and beyond. The town centre is not geographically central but provides a focal point and is dominated by the Town Hall and the informal open area in front. Within the town centre are many successful locally owned shops, an increasing number of larger national and international chain stores, a range of businesses and services, along with public art and signage that provide character and identity.

Inverurie and Port Elphinstone are classified as a single settlement, but the bridge across the Don between the two is a key gateway feature with the flood plain providing a significant open space buffer. The town will play a key role in delivering both housing and employment development to meet requirements within the strategic growth corridor, and this will help to support Inverurie and Port Elphinstone’s role as a sub-regional service and retail centre.

The provision of affordable and accessible housing is a priority for the town. However, there are significant challenges in relation to traffic congestion, and uncertainty regarding both the Scottish Government’s proposals to dual the A96 Aberdeen to Inverness currently restricting options for future expansion. Nevertheless, there remain significant development opportunities within and adjoining the town centre, at Uryside/ Portstown and within the Crichton area.

### Planning Objectives

- To meet housing need in the wider Strategic Growth Area as defined by the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan.
- To support community facilities and services.
- To increase provision of community growing spaces such as allotments.

Notwithstanding these objectives, which would support a residential land allocation at Souterford and Lofthillock, neither are identified for residential land use within the MIR.

In rejecting both, the MIR sets out, for both, that “The proposed site is situated adjacent to the settlement boundary. There are a number of constraints associated with the site including the presence of prime agricultural land, flood risk to the east of the site and impact on the Keithhall Inventory Garden and Designed Landscape- a nationally important heritage asset. Additionally, the site cannot be considered until a preferred route for dualling of the A96 has been selected and timescale for delivery is known.”

The Inverurie part of the MIR then provides the following conclusion(s).

### Conclusion

Inverurie and Port Elphinstone has experienced growth given its location within a Strategic Growth Area. There is sufficient effective land allocations to meet housing demand during the Plan period. To allocate further development opportunities at this stage may prejudice delivery of existing sites and is considered to be premature given that further development pressure will exacerbate current infrastructure constraints.

The options for the A96 dualling at this location are not yet known and this currently restricts long term spatial planning for the town. Once confirmation of the route and delivery a timetable is set for the A96 dualling project this may constitute the criteria that results in a mid-term review of the Plan.

This submission provides a robust response to the matters considered by the Council that they consider to count against residential land allocations. It is accepted that there is uncertainty in regard to the route of the A96 dualling. Whilst it is hoped that this will become clearer through the period of the preparation of the proposed ALDP 3, it is submitted that given the sustainable location of Souterford and Lofthillock, this current uncertainty should not prevent the sites being allocated.

Further, it is suggested that the Council's intention not to allocate new housing land in Inverurie does not help redress that critical lack of affordable housing being provided or committed to through the currently allocated sites.

### PROPOSED ALDP 2021

Following consideration by the local Garioch Committee in August 2019, and subsequent Infrastructure Services and Aberdeenshire Committee's, land at Souterford and Lofthillock remains unallocated for development purposes.







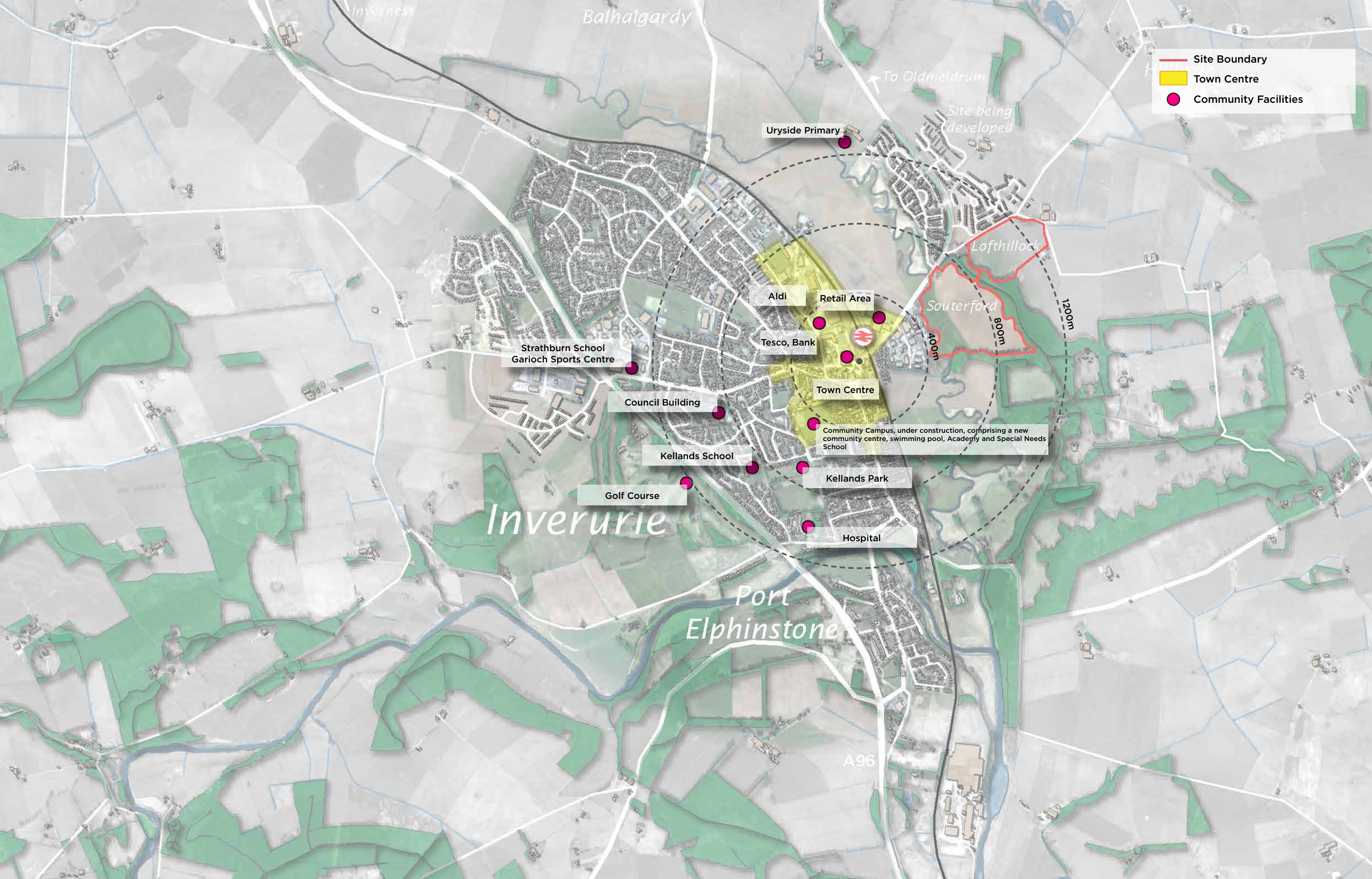


Figure 5: Plan of Inverurie

NTS @ A3





# 3. Place: Inverurie

## 3.1 Description

### Inverurie today

Inverurie is the third largest settlement in Aberdeenshire, lying to the north-west of Aberdeen on the A96. It is well connected to Aberdeen, a major employment centre, by rail and road. Additional rail connection services into Aberdeen have recently been introduced so that Inverurie now benefits from an every half hourly 21 minute service to Aberdeen and 2 hour service to Inverness. The design of the upgrade of the A96 which currently connects Huntly, Inverurie and Aberdeen to dual carriageway is in progress.

Inverurie town centre is a significant retail and service centre for a large rural catchment area. Community service provision is currently being improved, with the addition of a new high quality 'Community Campus', comprising a replacement of the existing Inverurie Academy, Inverurie Swimming Pool and Garioch Community Centre, within a centrally located site, walking distance away from the Souterford and Lofthillock sites. External facilities include an all-weather pitch, a MUGA and an external play area.

The town also offers a number of existing high quality facilities, including a large town hall and the Carnegie library, a number of comparative retail outlets, cafes and restaurants, banks, a post office, and leisure facilities. There are four Primary Schools within the town. Inverurie has a monthly Farmers Market.

Local facilities are shown adjacently and the distances to nearby facilities are shown in the diagrams.



Inverurie Train Station, within walking distance of the site



A new Community campus is being built within the town centre



Existing amenities within Inverurie



The new Uryside Primary School



The town hall within the centre of Inverurie, a twenty minute walk from the site



Inverurie is growing rapidly, with new houses apparent along the road leading towards Hillbrae, backing onto the Lofthillock site



## 3.2 History

### Description

Inverurie lies in a strategically important location on the north bank of the River Don, opposite the village of Port Elphinstone, and on the west bank of the River Urie. This strategic location has influenced its development.

The two rivers meet at the south east corner of the town at The Bass, motte and bailey built by the Earl of Garioch in the 1100s. This was used as a base by Robert the Bruce before his defeat of the Earl of Buchan in May 1308 at the Battle of Inverurie, sometimes also known as the Battle of Barra. Near the motte and bailey of The Bass lie Pictish symbol stones, suggestive of inhabitation at a much earlier time within the same location.

Inverurie lends its name to a second battle, when on 23 December 1745 1100 Jacobites defeated 500 Hanoverian troops in what was to be the third-last battle to be fought on British soil. A cairn on the bank of the River Don today marks the site of the battle.

The most celebrated battle within the area is however the Battle of Harlaw. On 24 July 1411 an advancing army of Highlanders under Donald, Lord of the Isles were fought to a standstill by a rapidly gathered army of Lowlanders under the Earl of Mar at the Battle of Harlaw, two miles north of Inverurie. The battle was one of the most savage and bloody to be fought on Scottish soil, and today its site is marked by a large memorial erected to commemorate the 600th anniversary of the battle.

Inverurie grew steadily between bouts of conflict. A monastery was established nearby by about 1000, and Inverurie received its charter as a burgh in 1195. Steady growth continued and a grammar school appeared in 1606. The River Don was bridged in 1797, and in 1805 the Aberdeenshire Canal opened with its terminus at Port Elphinstone – built to service the canal and named after one of its leading, local financial backers. Port Elphinstone was always considered separate to Inverurie with its own identity. Intended to continue further, the canal stopped there.

It was relatively quickly replaced by the Great North of Scotland Railway which reached Inverurie in 1854, and was built along the line of the canal, before then completing the link from Aberdeen to Inverness in 1858. A section of the canal remains at Port Elphinstone, connecting with the River Don.

The railway generated growth for Inverurie. It became a significant junction, with branch lines heading off in various directions, and railway workshops and a large area of new railway housing were built. The branch lines closed one by one through the mid-1900s, with the last going in the Beeching cuts of 1966. The locomotive works followed in 1969. The main line station remains, with the original station building still in use, and the easy commuting to Aberdeen by rail has influenced further additional growth of Inverurie.

Inverurie is rich in other historic remains located close to the town. The ruins of the medieval Kinkell Church can be found to the south; Easter Aquhorthies (Field of Prayer), a stone circle, lies two miles west of Inverurie and dates back some 4,000 years; and a Pictish symbol stone, the Brandesbutt Stone, is on the north east of Inverurie.

### The Growth of Inverurie

The last 150 years can be tracked through analysing the historic maps from first edition Ordnance Survey to the present day. Change is summarised as follows:

**1869:** Inverurie is a very linear settlement, built almost entirely along roads with the Square forming a focus and heart to the settlement and small industries dotted around the edges. The railway line gives the town an eastern flank. Within this context Keith Hall Estate is dominant within the landscape. To the south, Port Elphinstone appears planned out and industrial in character. Separate from Inverurie.

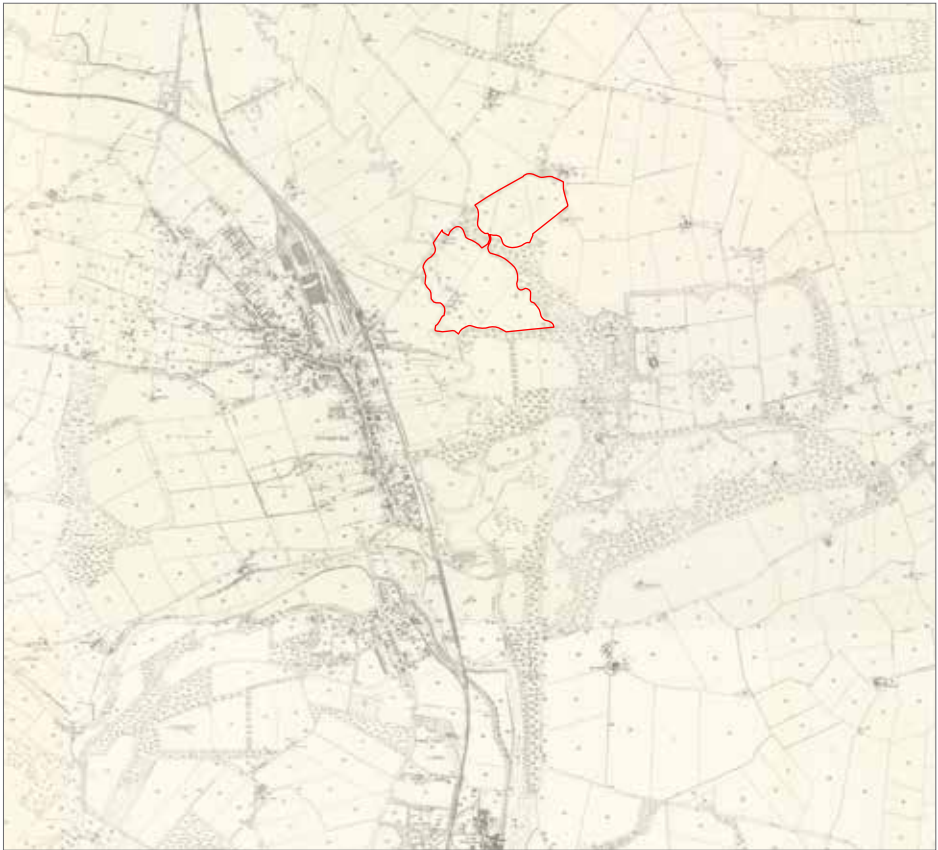
To the west lies another policy landscape at Davo House.

**1900:** Within 30 years the railway has influenced change in Inverurie; increased development between town and station and goods yards to the north, but essentially Inverurie remains a linear settlement.

**1926:** Inverurie begins to depart from being linear into an expanded settlement, particularly at the north of the town. Places such as “Gallows Field” become lost.

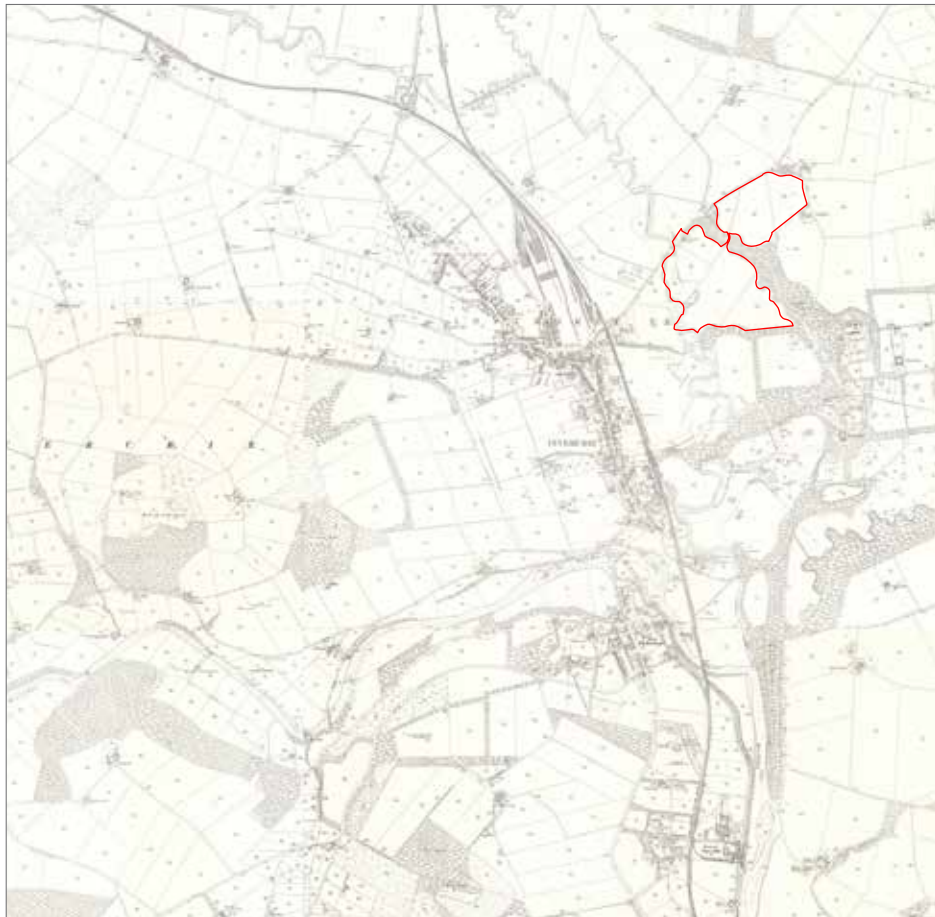


1869

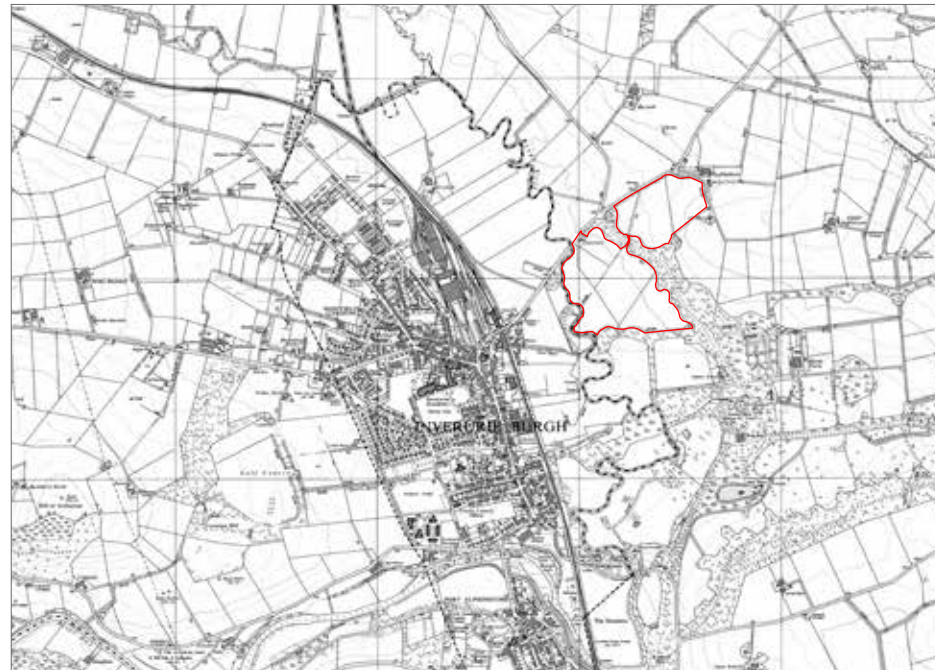


1926





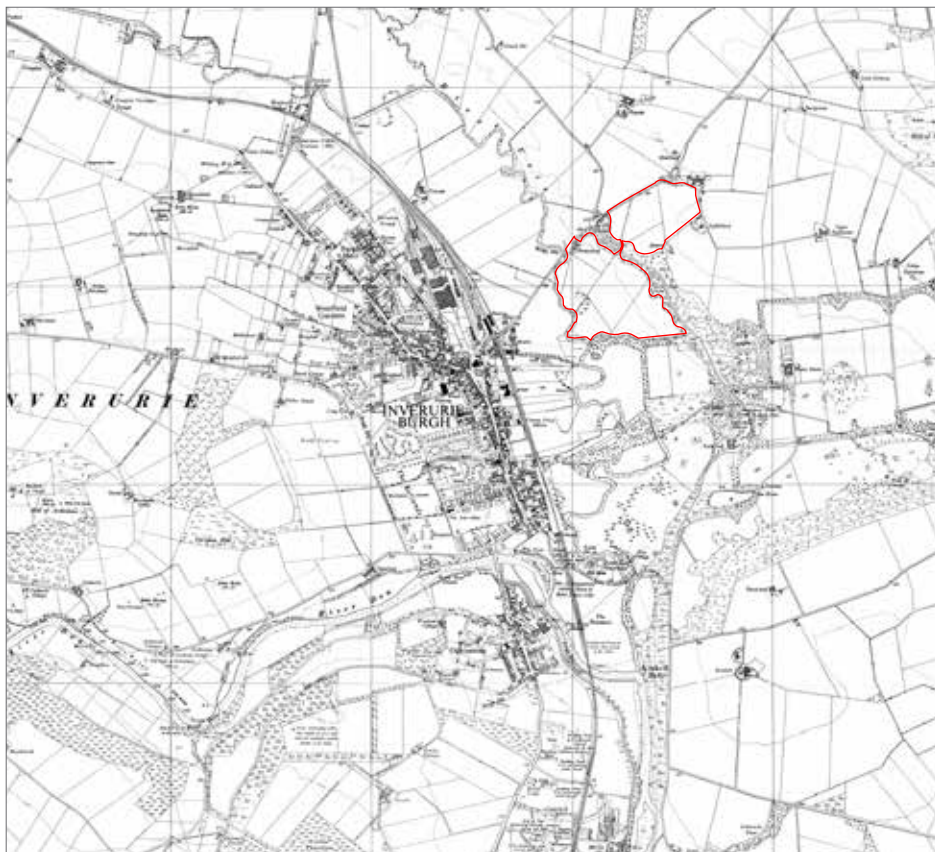
1900



1966



1985



1955



Current



Historic images of Inverurie

NTS @ A3



Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland.



### 3.3 Cultural Heritage

**1955:** in the intervening 30 years, despite the Second World War, Inverurie undergoes significant growth and loses its original sense of being linear in form as it expands to the west and with further infill into the existing urban area. Community facilities are built servicing the increased population such as the hospital and police station. A small amount of industrial development crosses the railway line near the station.

Growth then slows, continuing at a steadier pace, but with some expansion of Port Elphinstone evident during this time, until the late 1980s when Inverurie sees another growth surge just as plans for the alignment of the A96 are coming on stream.

Changes since **the late 1980s** encompass some 30 years but have included significant change which is altering the whole perception of the town. This centres around extending beyond what had become established defensible edges to the town; the A96 was built and became a new western edge but is now being breached despite issues over connectivity. This will also constrain options for the future upgrade of the road to dual carriageway. Development has crossed east of the railway line as well, across the Urie floodplain and into the other side of the valley.

This then raises questions as to the next stages of Inverurie's development; rapid growth as opposed to incremental growth brings disbenefit as well as benefits. This is looked at in more detail within section 3.5, Future Growth.

Inverurie has many cultural assets which are important in giving the town a sense of identity. These are noted on the accompanying Designations Plan alongside the Core Path proposals.



Historic image of central Inverurie

### 3.4 Landscape Setting

#### Landscape character

Landscape Character is defined within the “Central Wooded Estates Landscape Character Area” as defined within the “South and Central Aberdeenshire: Landscape Character Assessment” prepared by ERM on behalf of SNH in 1998. Landscape classification is a means of sub-dividing the landscape into different areas which have common characteristics. Landscape types differ in their range of landscape features and the patterns these create and consequently their ability to accommodate different types of development. Some areas may be particularly sensitive, others more resilient.

The Central Wooded Estates occupy a substantial area of landscape to the east of Bennachie between the Don and Dee Valleys, and extends up to the edge of Aberdeen, a strategic location that has encouraged the creation of well-wooded estates. Bennachie is the highest hill in the area, distinctive in form (sometimes referred to as the Mither Tap), located to the north-west of Inverurie and seen from viewpoints within a wide area. Views from Bennachie extend to the edge of Aberdeen.

The Landscape Character Assessment notes that “the topography varies from broad sweeping valleys to pockets of more confined, small scale relief. Dense woodland is...a consistent feature and when combined with the relatively complex landform, provides numerous enclosed pockets of intimate landscape which contrast with sudden long distance views when one moves into more open areas”. The Assessment goes on to note that the landscape “varies from broad sweeping valleys and hills to pockets of more confined, small scale relief” and that “dense woodland is, however, a consistent feature, be it small coniferous plantations; thick clumps and shelterbelts of beech, large mixed broadleaved policies associated with estates, or meandering riverside glades along the Don and the Dee”.



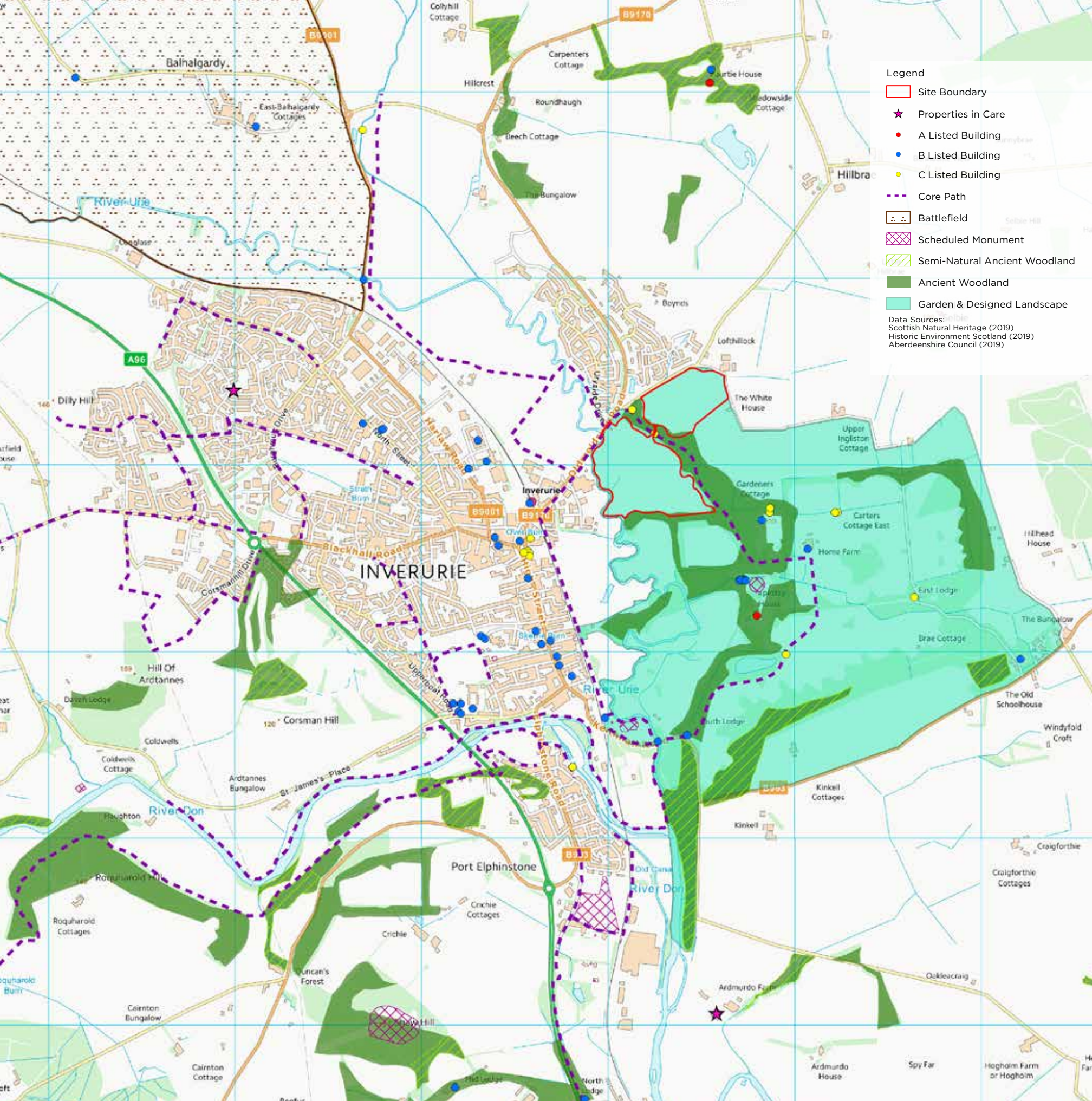


Figure 6: Designations

Key Characteristics of the landscape character area identified within the assessment include (inter alia)

- “Rolling landscape of low hills and wide valleys;
- Strong woodland structure associated with numerous estate policies, adding rich and diverse texture;
- Mixed farmland with varying size and pattern of fields;
- Frequent settlement with a variety of sizes and styles of architecture; local vernacular stone buildings with conversions and extensions, modern bungalows and houses;
- Long views across open farmland contrast with sudden enclosure by woodland as one passes through the area”.

The Assessment also provides Specific Guidance for future changes within the landscape character area through a series of aims. These include

- To conserve the setting of estates and archaeological features;
- Woods, shelterbelts and drystone dykes enhance the setting of estates and archaeological features; maintenance and enhancement of these will help create a more unified landscape structure.
- Open views from stately homes and castles improve the setting of these buildings and establishes them as landmarks in the landscape.”

In terms of new development, “native broadleaved trees may be used to integrate and contain new housing estates and soften the edge of urban developments”.

These are aspects which should be accounted for when assessing capacity for development within the landscape as also set out elsewhere including within PAN 44 “Fitting New Development into the Landscape”. Inverurie is typical of this landscape character area and these principles should be respected within new development proposals.



Topography

Inverurie sits within a valley floor, surrounded by low hills as is evidenced by the attached diagram. The original settlement core was orientated in a north-west/ south-east direction as a response to this and at a low elevation that corresponded to transport routes.

On the diagram the gradation of colour shows this clearly, and highlights Inverurie moving up the slopes of the valley. The darker the colour the higher the landform with the exception of hill crests, which are white.

The second diagram shows how Inverurie sits within the landscape in terms of slope; steepest land is shown in red, orange and yellow. Traditionally Inverurie has sat at slope levels defined by the lower greens but is now moving onto steeper slope areas.

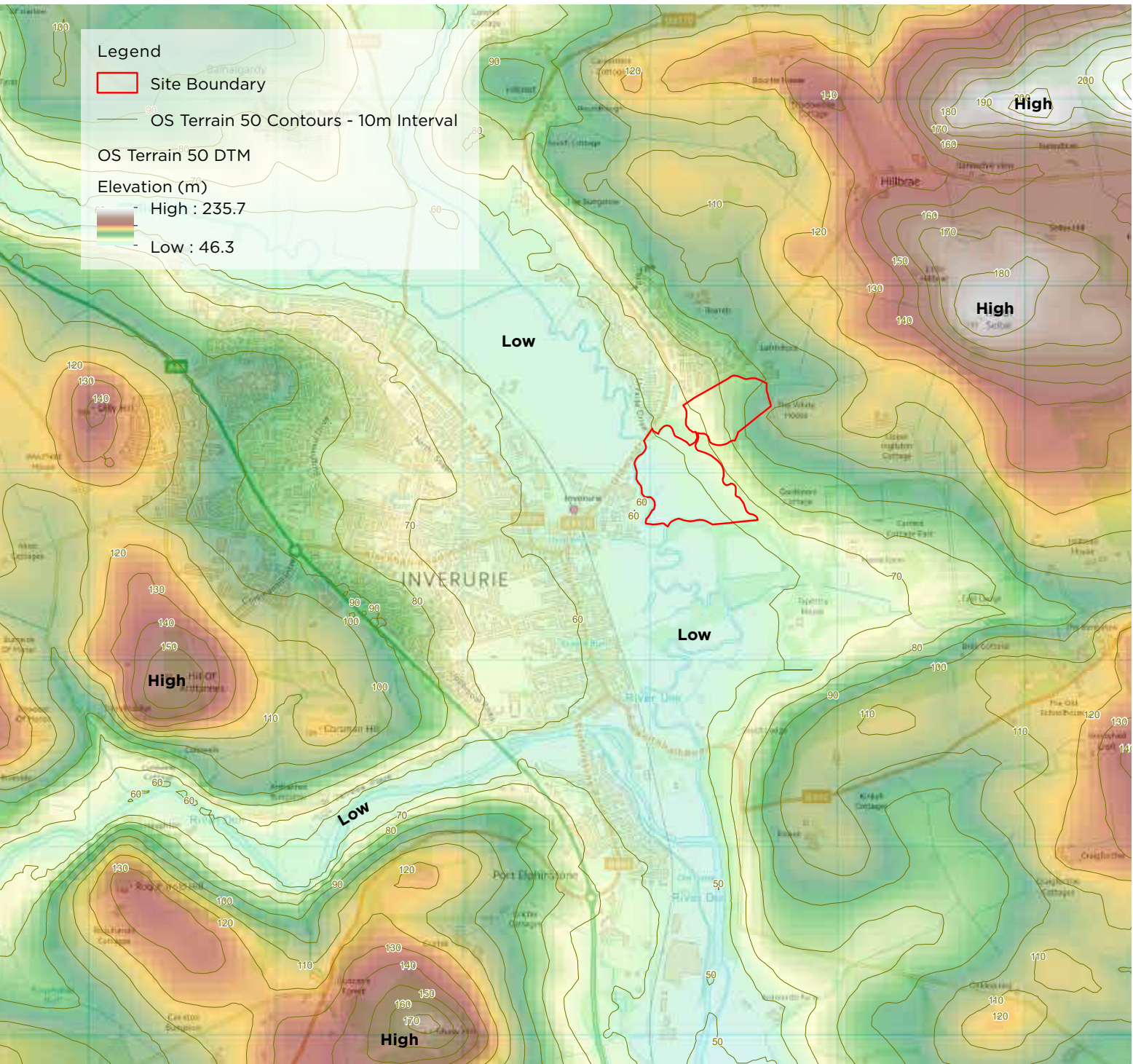


Figure 7: Topography: Elevation Analysis

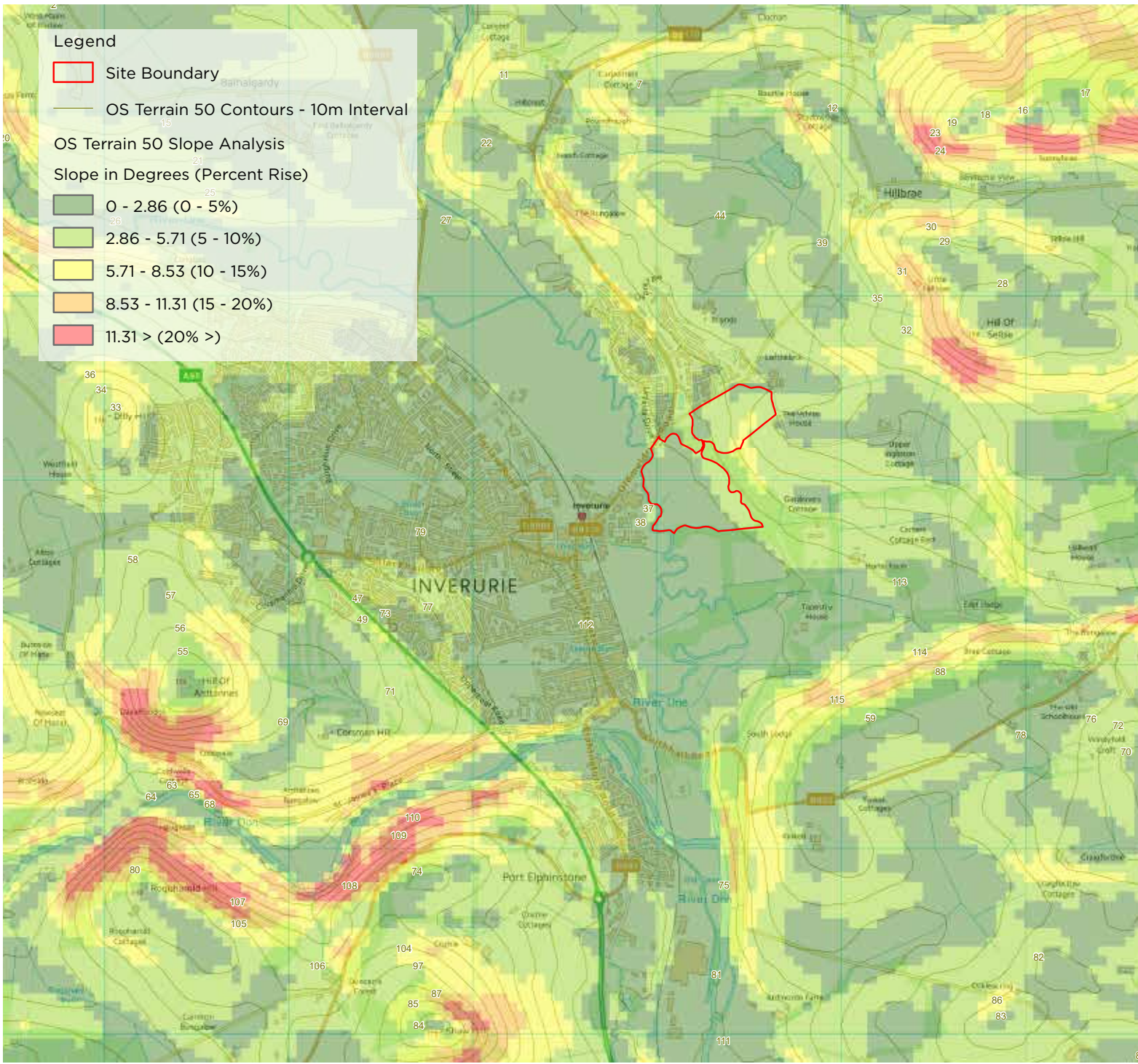
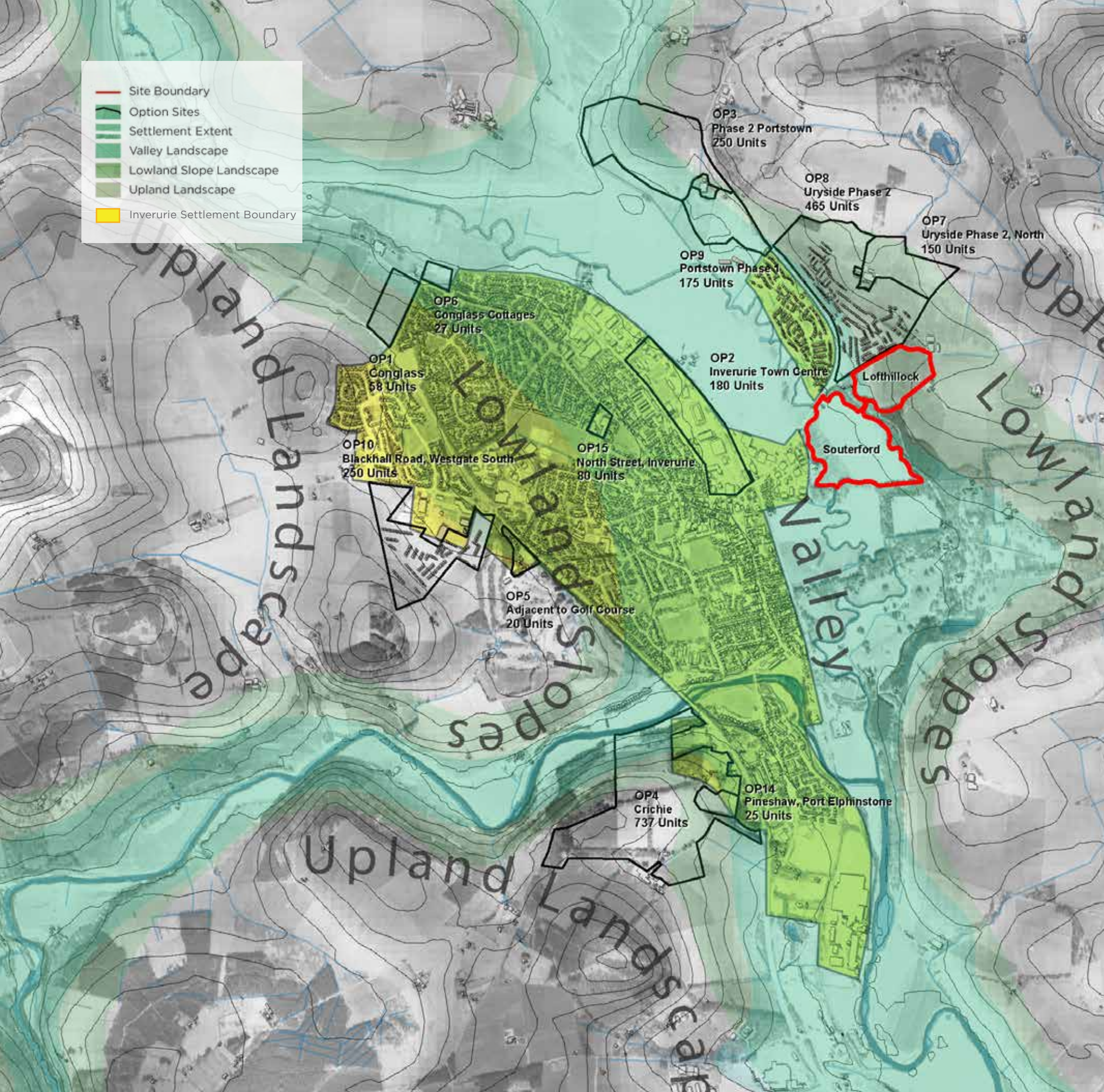


Figure 8: Topography: Slope Analysis





NTS @ A3



Figure 9: Landscape Setting



Figure 10: View towards Bennachie from Lofthillock

## Setting

Inverurie traditionally has been set within those hill forms ensuring that there were limited long range views of the settlement area and these were further broken up by planting along the A96, the Estate policy landscapes, and riparian edges to the watercourses. As Inverurie expands quickly this traditional characteristic has been eroded through cutting into hillforms and only limited evidence of new planting providing the softening suggested by the landscape character assessment. The setting of Inverurie is increasingly being defined by development as a result.



## 3.5 Future Growth

Inverurie has grown rapidly since the 1980s; largely attributable to the oil boom of Aberdeen and in spite of the closure of the paper mill at Port Elphinstone which was a major employer. At some stage during an expansion of this speed, there should be due consideration given as to where the best areas of growth should be in terms of how it will impact on communities, the environment, the economy and the perception and function of place which balances with the need for growth.

Whilst the planning system controls and guides land release, it is a developer-led system which in itself is a constraint that may not always lead to decision-making that considers all of these in the best interests of the settlement as a whole.

Inverurie sits on the valley floor of the Urie, and its confluence with the Don; the valley is not especially wide nor especially dramatic but does elevate into upland landscape and a change of landscape character. This might be considered to be the natural containment to a settlement. The other natural feature constraining development is flooding and the flood zone associated with the River Urie. **It is highly unlikely that the flood zone will ever be breached but Inverurie is currently expanding into ever elevated areas of landscape which are impacting considerably on “place”. This is particularly noticeable where new development breaches “hill tops” and “steep valley sides” as shown on the diagram.**

Manmade features which might be considered to control growth would be the A96 and the railway line; Inverurie has breached both of these, particularly with the construction of Osprey Village at Uryside and 2 large releases west of the A96.

New development takes several years to establish into being part of the

community; currently new development at Inverurie appears stark, and with construction on site at the north-western, western, and north-eastern approaches it also could be perceived as omnipresent.

Recent developments pre-date latest policy on Designing Streets, and green networks and place-making which should all impact positively on the future developments being planned out now, in order to create a better new urban form that relates to the town and works with the environment.

Opportunities for future major growth are clearly limited and require proper consultative decision-making which considers all aspects for sustainable masterplanning in addition to other factors such as the dualling of the A96. In the meantime, Souterford and Lofthillock are located within 10 minutes walking and cycling of Inverurie town centre, facilities and the railway station. Landform is consistent with the existing established urban area. The site offers a much greater degree of logic for allocation than many of the other sites around the edge of Inverurie and its close proximity to the town allows for sustainable, active living that will support local business and services.

One key barrier to development here was previously seen to be access, and that development within this area would be predicated on the construction of the proposed eastern bypass; this would have bounded Souterford and sliced into the Keith Hall estate. This proposal has now been dropped; the Northern Link Road (marked on the accompanying diagram) opened in December 2016 and Aberdeenshire Council Transportation has confirmed previously that even in the absence of the eastern bypass they would be satisfied with development at Souterford and Lofthillock as long as it followed the opening of the Northern Link Road. This constraint, which is discussed in more detail within the Transport Planning report accompanying this representation, has therefore now been lifted.

The only constraint left is policy constraint, which is the other constraining factor to settlement growth. For Inverurie, this constitutes the battlefield site to the north-west of the town and the Designed Landscape to the east. There are also several tracts of ancient woodland, some of which fall into the Crichton allocation OP4. These are all important assets for the town in terms of its cultural heritage.

Souterford and Lofthillock lie within the north-west edge of the Designed Landscape; given the balance of housing need, particularly affordable, how Inverurie's recent changes are shaping up, and principles for sustainable living it is prudent to consider then whether the land is integral to that designation. If not the case, then consideration should be given for how it could be designed in order to offer an attractive and effective alternative to development in Inverurie that will bring something positive to the town.

These are aspects which are considered within the next sections of the report.



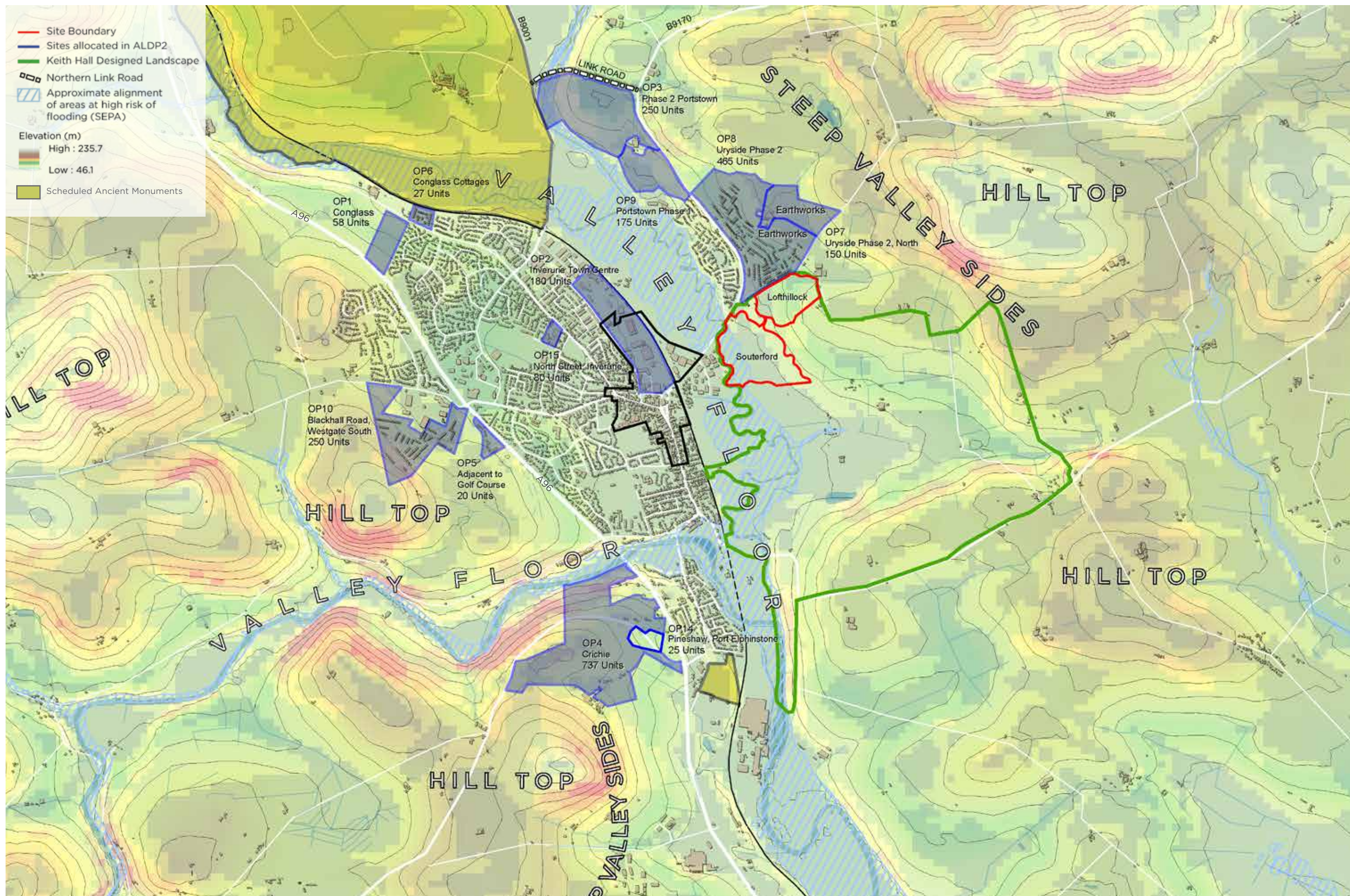


Figure 11: Future Growth Constraints



# 4. Souterford and Lofthillock

## 4.1 Introduction

Having looked at the Inverurie context, this section of the report looks at Souterford and Lofthillock in more detail. This encompasses site appraisal, covering issues of landscape, ecology, and cultural heritage; accessibility and connectivity; and finally technical appraisal work covering ground conditions, flooding and utilities. Within these sections is a summary of what, if any, the issues arising from detailed study will mean for the development of a masterplan.

## 4.2 Site Appraisal

### Site Features

The site has been in agricultural use since as far back as can be identified. There are very few physical features as a result of this; the abandoned Souterford Cottage and associated former garden area, rough grassland in association with the flood protection zone and a former quarry which latterly became a tip on the edge of Lofthillock. The site borrows from surrounding assets however, mainly the mature woodland. These are marked up on the accompanying plan.

### Visibility

In terms of visibility it is easiest to consider the two parts of the site in isolation as intervisibility between the two is very limited. The northern boundary, Oldmeldrum Road, curves and there is no viewpoint where both sites can be viewed together.

The mature woodland allows a significant amount of screening of the land areas and would also offer a great degree of containment to development parcels offering good capacity for development which would be enhanced by additional planting.

Souterford rises gently from the Urie in a north-easterly direction. The highest point is just on the tree line of the northern drive to Keith Hall. The tip of this can be just seen when standing on the bridge at Inverurie Station. As one moves along Oldmeldrum road from the station, the site slowly reveals itself and there are views into the site from the point at which one reaches the flood area of the Urie beyond the retail park. These views are contained by the woodland edge. Once past the woodland edge, views are stopped by the mature canopy when travelling south from the B9170. There are views of Souterford cottage from Uryside Drive, when travelling south. Overall, Souterford is well contained as a site, with its strongest relationship being with the town on the basis of topography and visibility.



Figure 12: Landscape Features

NTS @ A3







Looking East towards the site from Inverurie Recycling Centres Entrance (1)



Looking West towards the site from Souterford cottage (2)



Looking towards Lofthillock from a South East edge of the site (3)



Looking towards Lofthillock from near North Lodge. New houses are visible along the sites Northwestern boundary (4)



Looking towards the new houses in Osprey Heights lining the road towards Hillbrae Farm from the Lofthillock site (4)



Lofthillock sits at a higher elevation than Souterford. It too is contained by mature woodland, on its south-eastern edge. The site cannot be seen from Inverurie centre although the property, in fact two properties, on the eastern edge of the site can be seen above the trees from the same viewpoint referred to above (as shown below). Only the building can be seen, not the landscape below. It cannot be seen from Souterford as it is occluded by the trees of the northern drive.

There are views into the site from the edge of the site which sits on the Oldmeldrum Road; there is some planting along this edge and some level differences but enough to hide it from view; views are relatively open and are seen in the context of the next phase of Uryside which is currently on site. Lofthillock is also a west facing slope, and from the high point there are views

across Inverurie and toward Bennachie (as shown on previous page). There will therefore be distant views toward Lofthillock which should be considered further as design proposals are progressed.

As described within this document, there are also views into each of the sites from the northern access drive to Keith Hall. It could be considered that this was never the design intention, and that the original design was to ensure a dense enough cover to limit any views however in winter the current condition of the woods does allow this.

Key principles derived from an initial view appraisal which should be applied to a masterplan:

- Keep a sense of a tree lined horizon in views from Inverurie centre through limiting the extent of development below the tree line;
- Capitalise on the sense of belonging to the town along Oldmeldrum Road;
- Reflect the Uryside boundary treatment on the Lofthillock side in order to ensure the existing road has a consistent edge and use available opportunities to slow speeds;
- Continue the woodland edge around new development to define it within the countryside and integrate it into the rural edge within long distance views;
- Keep the Lofthillock development at an elevation where it does not appear above the trees.



View toward Souterford from the edge of the town centre (6)



Furthest extent of Lofthillock seen within the context of Inverurie (7)







Topography

The attached diagrams set out the elevation and slope analysis for the site and are based on the detailed information within the topographical survey that has been done of the whole site area. This bears out that Souterford is at a lower elevation than Lofthillock; Lofthillock is at an elevation commensurate with that across the road at Uryside.

Both areas of the site contain sloping ground although Lofthillock is sloping across most of the site area and is west facing. The steeper slopes (green with dark brown) should be avoided for development and could be used to accommodate landscape and some increased slope to enable other building areas. The area around the existing property on the eastern edge should also be kept clear of development, which consolidates principles derived from the visual appraisal.

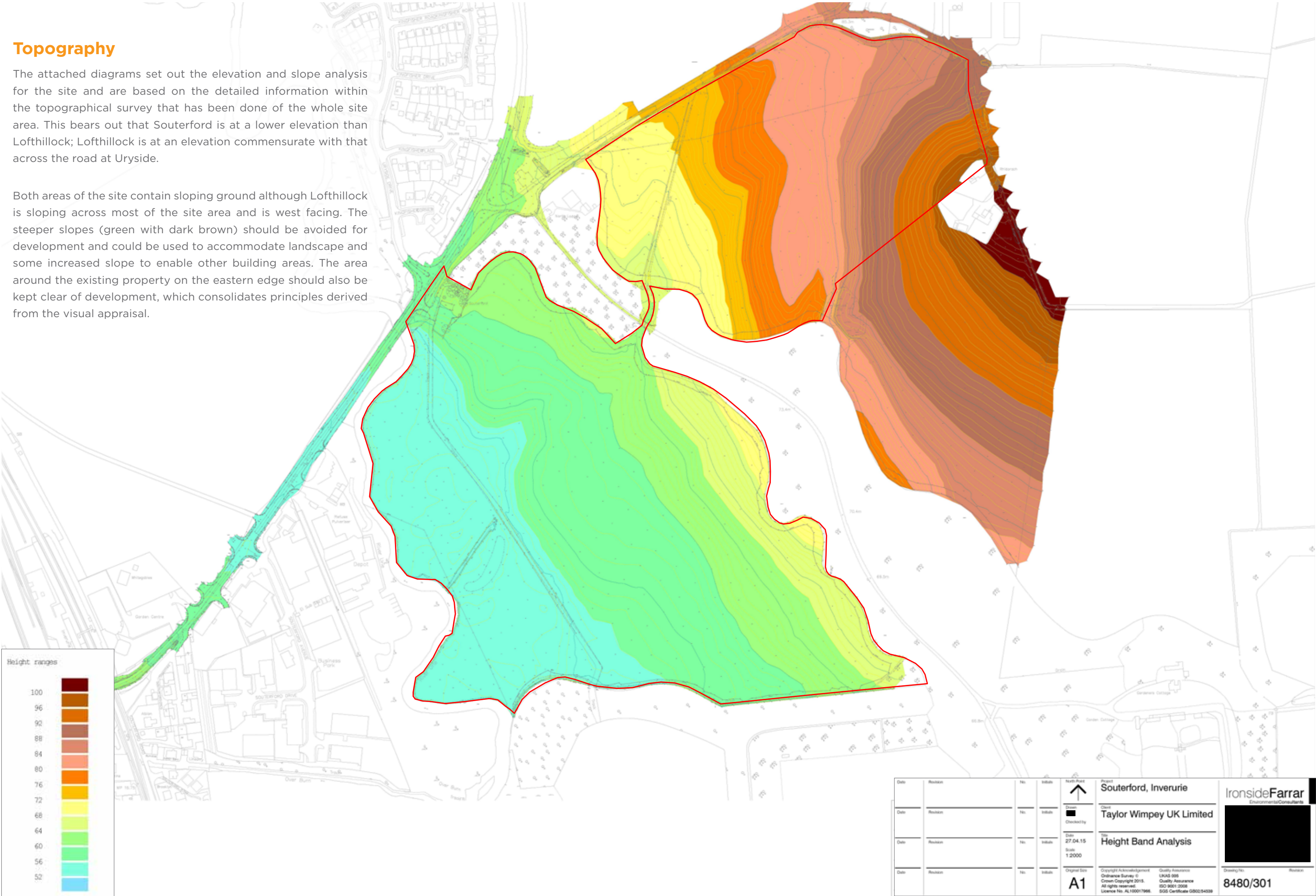


Figure 14: Site Height Band Analysis



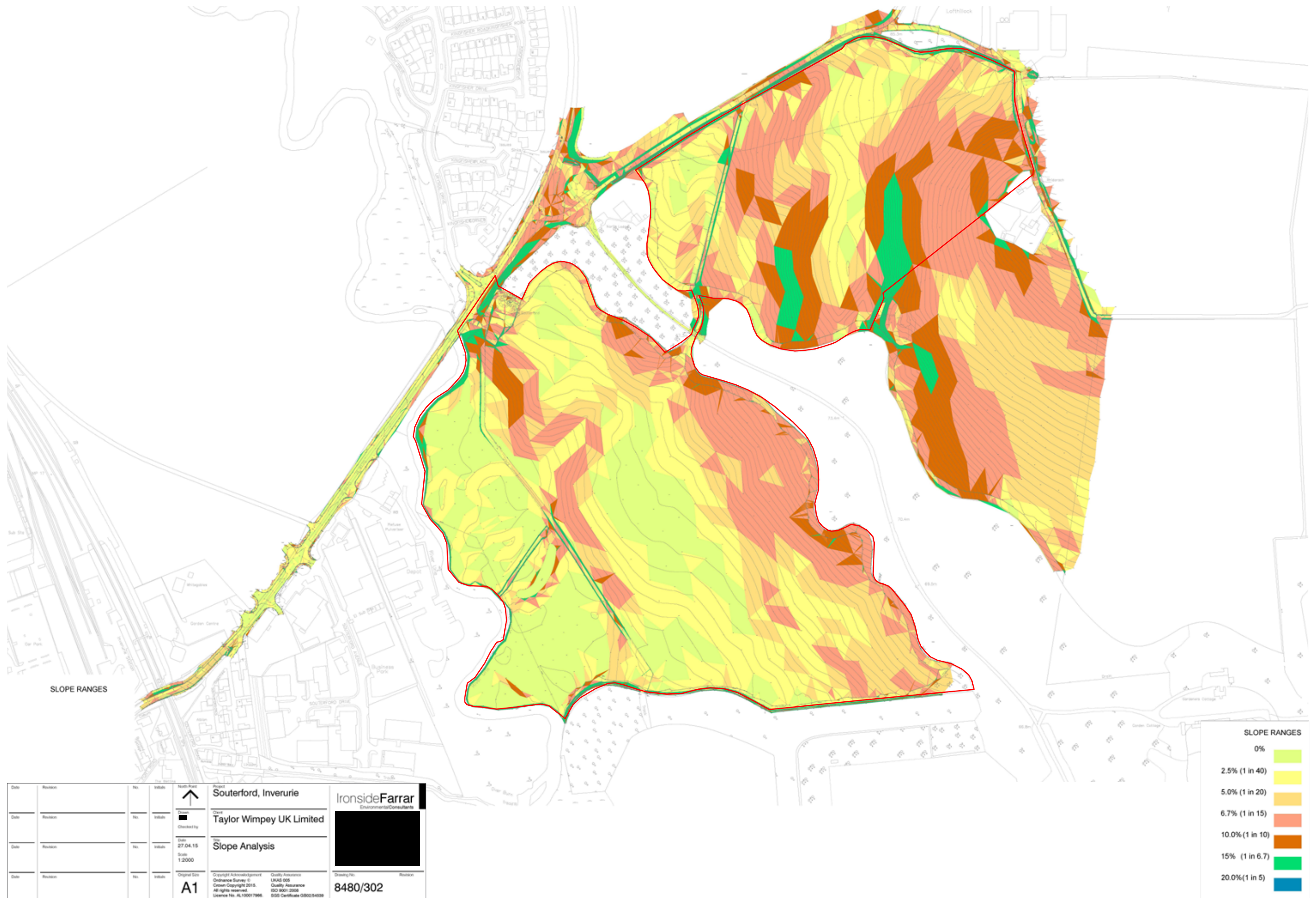


Figure 15: Site Slope Analysis





## Arboriculture

An arboriculture survey was carried out by Donald Rodger Associates in 2015. As highlighted on the Landscape Features diagram, there are very few trees within the site. These are located around Souterford Cottage. Mature trees, the northern access to Keith Hall, line the eastern and southern edges of Souterford and the western edge of Lofthillock. A copse of mature trees lies to the north of Lofthillock and some field trees line the edge of the B9170.

These add character to the development sites and carry constraints regarding canopy and root protection areas.

There are eight single specimen trees in total; the trees are generally in full maturity for their respective species and comprise of 3 sycamore, 2 ash and single specimens of elm, goat willow and Norway maple. These species are common to the area. With the exception of the goat willow (T2), the trees appear to be of planted origin and have been established within the enclosed garden ground of the cottage of Souterford.

Two of the trees are suffering from severe problems relating to decay, and as such they have a limited future life expectancy. Most of the trees display suppressed and imbalanced crown development.

Most of the trees lining the south-western edge of Lofthillock are beech and are possibly an overgrown hedge; these are large and form a dense canopy edge. They are in full maturity at 30m in height and whilst outwith the site, their crowns impinge by 10-12m into the proposed site area.

Those trees lining the north and eastern edge of Souterford, also part of the Keith Hall estate, are mixed woodland. For some of this edge there is, like Lofthillock, a single row of mature beech which may also have started life as a boundary hedge.

The southern edge of Souterford is also a belt of mature woodland but noticeably different in character to the other blocks consisting largely of ash and elm with some sycamore and beech. The canopy is more irregular and the trees are in poorer condition with notable Dutch Elm disease and others either dead or in terminal decline.

Not directly affecting development, but important in terms of consideration of the Designed Landscape, is the large block of sitka spruce south of Lofthillock and behind the line of beech. At 60 years old this is at maturity and approaching harvesting age.

Key principles regarding development proposals in relation to arboriculture are as follows:

- Ensure that any development extends beyond the canopy line;
- Take cognisance of the recommended building stand-off line within the arboriculture report;
- The trees outwith the development boundary but which impinge upon it are a valuable asset;
- The few trees which lie within the site are less valuable and could be removed and replaced by other trees if necessary.



Photo 4



Photo 7



Photo 1



Photo 10





Photo 14



Photo 20



Photo 26

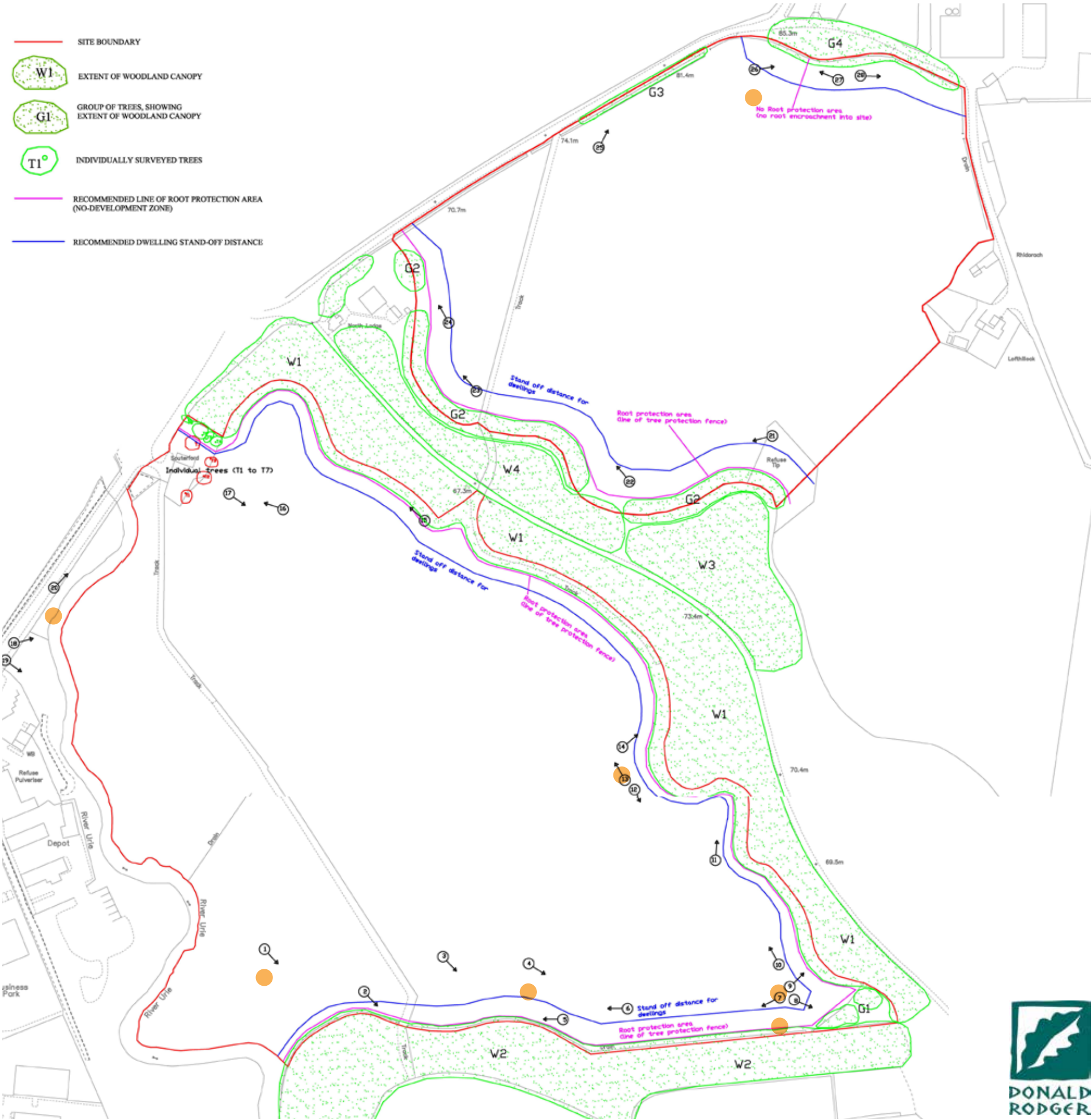


Figure 16: Tree Survey



### Cultural Heritage

The site does not contain any Scheduled Ancient Monuments. Two Category C listed features are in close proximity to the site, both in connection with Keith Hall Estate. The North Lodge gatehouse dates back to 1854 and lies within the woodland edge at the northern entry point to Keith Hall.. Trees screen the building from the site, although the lodge is directly across the road from the Uryside development currently on site.

The other feature is a bridge which lies within the Keith Hall Designed Landscape but which is visible from the site as a feature and which arches over the proposed connection between Lofthillock and Souterford. Built between 1806 and 1812, historically, looking at the 1869 map, the bridge spanned over a connecting path between the two parts of the site. Only remnants of the path remain.

Souterford Cottage, next to the B9170, is dilapidated. This is not a listed structure and is visible on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1869 in association with larger additional buildings which have then been removed by the 1900 OS edition.

Reviewing the Historic Maps dating from Roy's Military Map of 1747 to the Ordnance Survey series the land has always been in agricultural use.

Most significantly, the proposed development site lies within the Keith Hall Designed Landscape. This encompasses a large expanse to the east of Inverurie and includes the Category A listed Keith Hall at its centre; once a single estate, it was broken up in the 1980s. The history of the estate and the potential effects of development on it are discussed in more detail within section 5.

In terms of developing proposals for the site, key principles regarding cultural heritage which can be applied are as follows:

- The bridge is a feature which can be highlighted through using it as a vista; re-opening a path underneath it and using the features in place already as far as possible (refer to photograph) will aid with place identity;
- Screen the lodge house from Souterford and Lofthillock through planting in order to retain the original character;
- The Designed Landscape is considered further on within the report within section 5.



Bridge



View to the connecting path from the bridge



Souterford Cottage



North Lodge House



## Ecology

An ecological survey was carried out in April 2015 by Nigel Rudd consultant and complements earlier surveys from 2011 and 2013. This section summarises his report which is included in full alongside this representation. The process involved walkovers of the site and surrounding area consistent with the Phase 1 Habitat Survey method, recording habitat and vegetation types, evidence of protected species and noting management and use.

Six habitat types were identified during the survey. They were:

- Broadleaf woodland
- Plantation conifer woodland
- Semi-improved grassland
- Running water
- Arable
- Garden

The habitat resource of the land is very restricted, with most of the more valuable habitat arising outside the site boundary.

Bats and red squirrels have been shown to be present in the vicinity of the Souterford and Lofthillock land but not using the land. Otters have been shown to use the Souterford land.

The habitat resource of the site is unexceptional and of negligible habitat value. The western field at Souterford has value as otter foraging habitat but this has to be put into the context of the species having a territory that extends to several kilometres along the River Urie and associated watercourses.

Key principles for development regarding ecology are as follows:

- Exploit the opportunities for biodiversity arising from adjacent woodland through the creation of habitat networks into the site area;
- Ensure opportunities for biodiversity along the Urie are met allowing enhancement of otter territories.
- Enhancement will include incorporating wetland/ wet grassland and open water for foraging.

## Ecology Surveys Since 2015

Ecology surveys have been carried out over the land at Souterford and later also Lofthillock. Up to 2015 formal surveys were carried out and submitted to Aberdeenshire Council in support of planning applications/local plan submissions for residential development use of the land. Since 2015 the author of the reports has undertaken informal inspections of the land, in 2017 and 2019, to determine whether there have been significant changes in the ecological status of the land that would prejudice future residential use.

The 2017 and 2019 walkovers revealed negligible change in the ecological status of the land. The habitat opportunity is unchanged; semi-improved grassland pasture and arable, with broadleaved woodland and running water on the boundaries. No evidence was found of protected species using the fields, but otters use the River Urie to the west and there is potential for the species to forage over the adjacent wet pasture. The formal surveys have concluded that future development of the land would not compromise the conservation status of otters using the river. Housing layouts put forward to date have ensured residential areas are set back from the river thereby safeguarding the interests of the species.

Red squirrels use the woodland between the two fields. The species use woodlands and there would be no threat to woodland from development of the two tracts of land. Indeed, the masterplans would ensure that the integrity of the woodland is maintained and possibly enhanced.

The habitat resource of the land has not changed since the 2011 ecology surveys and should the land be developed this would result in the loss of low value habitat which would be replaced by more diverse types with a consequent enhancement of the ecological status of the land.

## 4.3 Accessibility

### Introduction

This section of the report discusses the existing transport network surrounding the potential allocation areas. In line with current best practice, the accessibility of the sites has been considered using the following hierarchical approach:-

- pedestrians;
- cyclists;
- public transport; and
- private car.

### Pedestrian network

There are existing, formalised, pedestrian linkages leading from the site areas to several key locations by way of Oldmeldrum Road. These include a recycling centre, a business / employment area, Inverurie railway station, Inverurie town centre and the existing developed area to the west of Oldmeldrum Road (Osprey Village). Informal linkages also exist in the area within the Keith Hall estate. The town centre is intervisible with the location of the site access to Souterford.



New walking route through the floodplain leading to the new Uryside Primary School and associated resources

Oldmeldrum Road, running past the western boundary of Souterford, is provided with partial footway on its eastern side and continuous shared cycleway / footway on its western side. The existing formal crossing points in the vicinity are as follows:

- a signalised pedestrian phase is provided on all four arms of the Inverurie
- a signal controlled pedestrian crossing is located just north of the railway bridge on Oldmeldrum Road; and
- dropped kerb provision is available at all key crossing points.

In addition, a number of core paths identified within the Aberdeenshire Council Core Paths Plan are located close to the site areas with the routes described below:

- Core Path 408.3 – located on Oldmeldrum Road, the path also serves Keithhall and the east of the railway line forming a looped route lying generally to the south and east of the sites;
- Core Path 408.11 – located to the north of the retail park access, the track accesses existing business / residential property and continues northwards along the eastern side of the railway. This track links with;
- Core Path 408.10 – which is accessible from within the Osprey Village area and incorporates a bridge crossing of the river Urie;
- An extract of the Core Paths plan is included within Transport Planning's accompanying report.

### Cycle routes

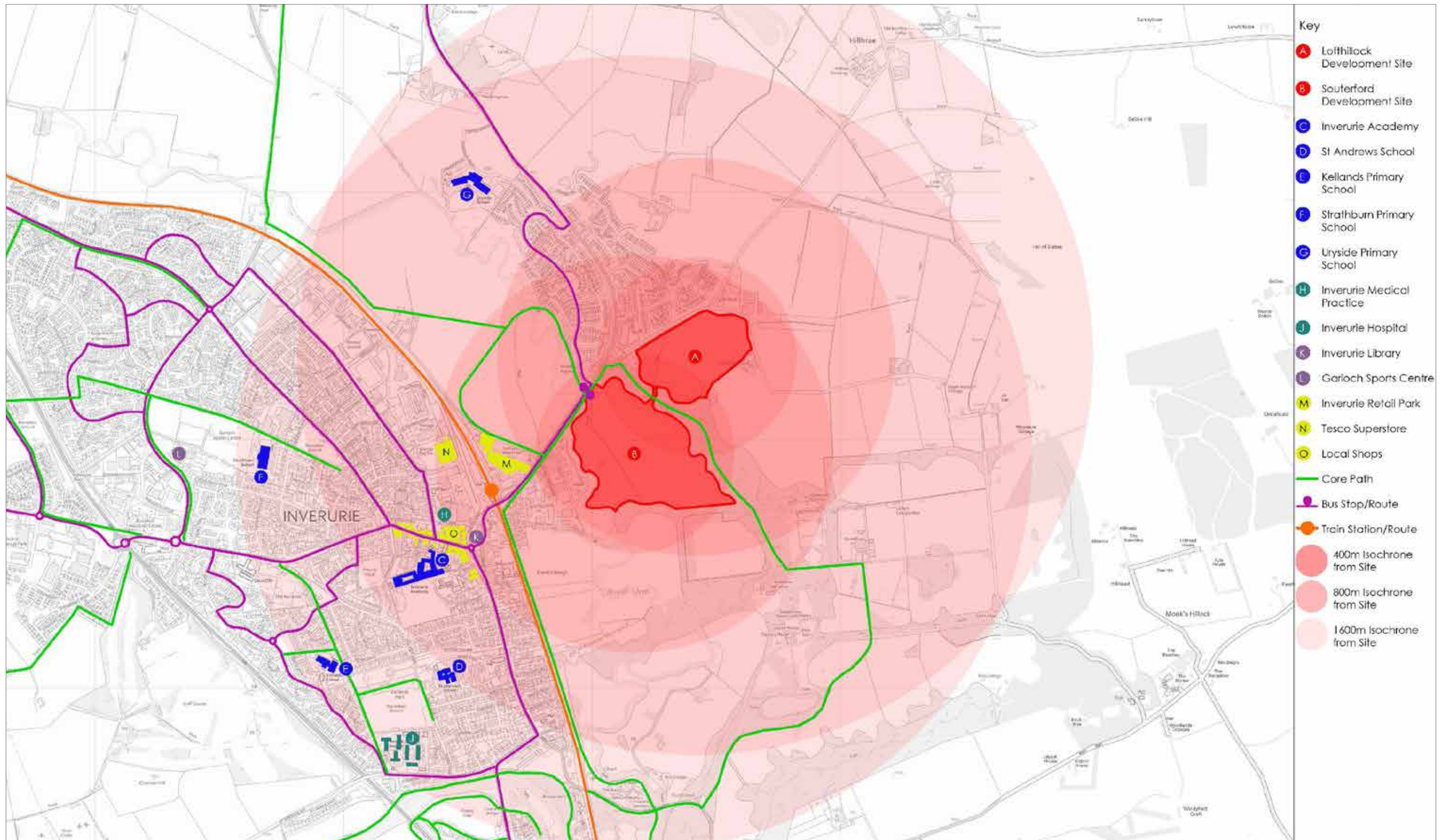
Formalised cycle routes within Inverurie are limited and no national routes pass through the town going Aberdeen to Inverness. There is however a newly complete cycle route along the A96 which links Inverurie and Kintore.

The existing footway on the west side of Oldmedrum Road is 3m wide and is able to be shared by pedestrians and cyclists. This route runs to the edge of the town centre and would take five minutes.

The signal crossing on the Inverurie Retail Park access arm of the four way signalled junction lies on this route and incorporates 'Toucan' cycle crossing facilities.

That route then continues to serve cycle parking within the retail area and across the railway bridge, accessing cycle storage facilities at Inverurie rail station. The route also affords connectivity with the core path network.







Public transport

Bus services

Oldmeldrum Road is a bus route served by a number of services. Stops are located on Oldmeldrum Road. These bus stops are within walking distance of the site areas. The stops are presently simple flag stops.

Key services in the area of the sites can be seen in the service map that is on display in the town. The extract from the plan shows services 777, 49, 452, 240 and 248 pass the site.

In addition to the Oldmeldrum Road stops, Inverurie Interchange lies within walking distance in the town centre. Located on Market Place outside the town hall, the interchange has high quality illuminated bus shelters, ‘txt2traveline’ details, raised and dropped kerbs to assist the boarding and alighting of passengers, improved roadside publicity and modern passenger information and journey planning facilities.



Bus services in Inverurie



Old Souterford cottage where access is proposed into the site

Rail

Inverurie rail station lies within walking distance of the sites. The station is accessible by means of Oldmeldrum Road and has ramped access to platform 2 and level access to platform 1. Cycle parking is present at the station. This station is served by trains running to and from Aberdeen and Inverness. Key service listings (at the time of writing) are noted in the table below.

Network Rail, in 2019, aims to introduce a half hourly train service from Aberdeen to Inverurie. A new hourly service from Inverurie to Elgin is also in the pipeline.

Route Summary	Frequency	
	Mon-Fri & Sat	Sun
Inverurie - Aberdeen	22 trains per day	11 trains per day
Inverurie - Inverness	11 trains per day	5 trains per day

Local road network

The B9170 Oldmeldrum Road runs to the west of both sites and connects Inverurie with Oldmeldrum to the north. There are a number of existing accesses and junctions along the road serving a mix of commercial and residential areas. The carriageway varies in width along its length.

The Lofthillock site is bounded to the north by an existing unclassified road which connects at its west end with Oldmeldrum Road.

Directly opposite the Souterford site on the B9170, there is an existing priority junction affording access to a residential development area known as Osprey Village (Uryside Drive).

South of this point, Oldmedrum Road carries further junctions accessing a recycling centre (priority controlled ghost island(s)), the Inverurie Retail Park and a business area (signal controlled crossroads), a garden centre (priority junction) and Souterford Road (priority junction).

At this point, the rail bridge is reached and south of the bridge, the main network of roads and junctions within the town centre is reached.

Transport Summary

The sites are very well-situated in relation to the existing transport network. Foot / cycle paths are available within direct reach of both sites and provide onward linkages to the facilities in the town.

Existing public transport services operate immediately past the site areas on the B9170 and these services combine to offer regular, frequent services to key local destinations including Inverurie town centre.

Inverurie rail station also lies close by within walking distance.

Finally, the sites lie within a short travel distance of the main road network, notably the A96 which provides access to the wider network of north-eastern Scotland.



Inverurie Train station



# 4.4 Technical Appraisal

## Introduction

This part of the report summarises the baseline situation regarding the technical aspects in developing a masterplan for Souterford and Lofthillock. It draws on the work by Ironside Farrar contained within the accompanying “LAND AT SOUTERFORD AND LOFTHILLOCK, INVERURIE: Ground Conditions, Flood Risk and Utilities Appraisal Report”.

The site is split between the southern site (Souterford) and the northern site (Lofthillock) and are presented as such in the review below.

Souterford - A review of site historical land use has concluded that the site has been in agricultural usage throughout recorded history. An unoccupied property, Souterford, is located on the north west corner of the site and is recorded since the mid to late nineteenth century. No other forms of development are noted within the site other than agricultural usage.

Notable features in recorded history are the line of a watercourse running from north east to south west (potentially culverted through the site). This watercourse appears as a ditch discharging to the River Urie on the west boundary of the site

No aspect of site history is considered to present a constraint to development of the site.

## Ground conditions

A preliminary ground investigation over part of the Souterford site identified firm to stiff sandy silts and dense sands as generally providing suitable bearing capacity for normal strip foundations. Western and south western areas of the site are identified as containing shallow ground water and loose, soft silt/ sand deposits resulting in a reduced bearing capacity is available in these areas. The western and south western areas however fall within the flood risk areas and are not proposed for development in any event.

Cut and fill earthworks are considered feasible utilising existing site materials reducing therefore the requirement for imported materials.

Site soils are indicated to be unsuitable for disposal of surface water via soakaways however areas of the site adjacent to the meadow/flood risk areas are considered suitable locations for site related SUDs facilities.

There is no available information on the ground conditions within the Lofthillock site area. It is noted that there is a gravel pit/quarry/refuse tip shown on the south eastern boundary and that any risks associated with this would need to be investigated further.

No aspect of ground conditions are considered to represent a constraint to development of the site.

## Contamination Risk

A contamination risk assessment has been undertaken for a portion of the Souterford site and identifies no on-site risks other than minor fly tipping associated with the existing unoccupied property.

The risk assessment identifies a contamination risk from the refuse tip to the south east of Lofthillock and suggests that further investigation will be required to define the risk and identify any mitigation required including gas protection measures.

Mitigation/ remediation of the infilled quarry is anticipated to be possible within normal development of the site. Therefore no aspect of contamination risk is considered to represent a constraint to development on the site. Some mitigation of identified risks will be required.

The potential for ground gas from natural soils has been identified and detailed stages of ground investigation would address this matter further. This issue is addressed at any development location as a matter of course and the risk at this location is no different from other locations in the vicinity. Mitigation can easily be provided if required.

The potential for ground gas from natural soils has been identified and detailed stages of ground investigation would address this matter further. This issue is addressed at any development location as a matter of course and the risk at this location is no different from other locations in the vicinity. Mitigation can easily be provided if required.

## Summary

The Souterford and Lofthillock sites are subject to no development constraints as a result of site history, ground conditions or contamination risk. The sites therefore offer an effective allocation from a technical risk perspective.

Flooding

Flood Risk Assessment Status

The Souterford site has been the subject of previous Flood Risk Assessment and there is a good understanding of the existing flood risks associated with the development of the site.

Previous study work identified areas of the site adjacent to the River Urie as falling within the extent of the 200 year return flood with an allowance for climate change. There are no proposals to develop within this flood envelope and further study work is being undertaken at the moment to model the 450 year and 1000 year return events. The developing site masterplan will exclude development from the updated flood envelopes.

The Lofthillock site is at a higher level than the Souterford site and therefore is not at risk of flooding from the River Urie.

As detailed layouts are prepared the finished floor levels will be set in accordance with best practice and Scottish Planning Policy.

Scottish Planning Policy in relation to Flooding and Drainage establishes a series of general principles and the ability of the Souterford and Lofthillock sites to respond to these principles are indicated in the table below.



River Urie

Scottish Planning Policy Criteria	Souterford & Lofthillock FRA Compliance
Consideration given to the possibility of flooding from all sources	Fully Complies
New development should be free from significant flood risk from any source	Fully Complies
In areas characterised as medium to high flood risk new development should be focussed on built up areas and all development must be safeguarded from the risk of flooding	Fully Complies
New development should not materially increase the probability of flooding elsewhere	Fully Complies
New development should not add to the area of land which requires flood prevention measures	Fully Complies
New development should not affect the ability of the functional flood plain to attenuate the effects of flooding by storing flood water	Fully Complies
New development should not interfere detrimentally with the flow of water in the flood plain	Fully Complies
New development should not compromise major options for future shoreline or river management	Fully Complies

It is therefore concluded that the Souterford and Lofthillock sites can be developed with flood risk taken into account and that the area proposed for development is SPP compliant and fully capable of development in this respect.

Surface Water Drainage and SuDS

The location of the site adjacent to the River Urie together with the wide meadow area affords adequate opportunity for a full site SUDs provision in accordance with SEPA, Scottish Water and Aberdeenshire Council requirements. A site SUDs system designed in accordance with the CIRIA SUDs Manual and the Scottish Water publication Sewers for Scotland (fourth edition) will be possible and the following criteria can be achieved:

Development proposals to include a surface water management train based approach and source control measures included.

- Attenuation of development site run off to a green field run off equivalent.
- Sites to be split into catchments with Lofthillock discharging through on-site SUDs facilities to the existing drain at the western boundary and Souterford discharging via on-site SUDs facilities to the River Urie.
- Permissible discharge to the existing drainage channel at the Lofthillock catchment will be at a rate of approximately 23 litres per second.
- The Souterford site will have a permissible discharge to the River Urie of approximately 28 litres per second.
- Surface water treatment via detention pond(s) and/or basins placed adjacent to the meadow area in the Souterford catchment and above the critical flood levels.
- Road and other hard surfaces to include SUDs measures as permitted by Aberdeenshire Council.
- The site can therefore be effectively drained of surface water in a fully SUDs compliant manner.



Foul Drainage

It is proposed to discharge the foul water from the development to a pumping station sited at a low point to the south of the Souterford site. The Lofthillock site will discharge by gravity to this low point also. The foul water will then be pumped to a connection point at the Uryside Pumping Station, where it will discharge by rising main to the existing Scottish Water network.

A DIA carried out in 2011 identified the requirement for further study work to understand the impact on the Uryside PS and identify any upgrades required to serve the development.

Network and Treatment Works system capacities will require to be confirmed by Scottish Water via pre development enquiries as previous study work will require to be updated. Scottish Water remain committed to providing network capacities for development via their capital programmes.

The Scottish Water Waste Water Treatment Works for Inverurie has undergone a substantial upgrade since the 2011 DIA was completed and capacity is currently showing as 555 residential units.

The site can therefore be considered as effectively drained of foul water to the existing Scottish Water system.

Services

Water Supply

A water supply connection (280mm diameter pipe and terminal hydrant) to the site was installed during 2008 and has the capacity to supply in excess of 300 units. It appears that Scottish Water have taken the opportunity to provide the supply given the previous allocation of the site and in tandem with serving the Orchard development to the north.

A WIA carried out in 2011 states that proposed development has no detrimental impact to the surrounding network and capacity exists to serve the development. The WIA will require to be updated to take account of further development in the area in the intervening years; at present no water supply issues are anticipated.

Pre Development Enquiry (PDE) submissions will require to be made to Scottish Water for the scale of development currently proposed in the normal manner.

The site can therefore be considered to be effectively supplied with water servicing.

Gas Supply

A medium pressure gas supply is located on the site boundary within the south west verge of Oldmeldrum Road. Medium pressure supplies tend to have large capacities and are one step above the pressure utilised to provide supplies to domestic properties.

The site can therefore be considered to be effectively supplied by gas servicing.

Telecoms Supply

BT Openreach are obliged under their operating licence to ensure properties have access to telecom supplies and will fund the extension of off-site infrastructure to a site boundary.

An existing below ground BT Openreach network of ducting, cabling and chambers is located within the verge/footway of Oldmeldrum Road.

The site can therefore be considered to be effectively supplied with telecoms.

Electrical Supply

Scottish and Southern Energy are the principal power network operator for the area and will make power supplies available for the site. The site is located in close proximity to major power servicing for the town of Inverurie and no particular constraints are envisaged.

An existing overhead electricity line of 11kV crosses the Lofthillock site, this will be diverted and undergrounded through the proposed development layout.

Renewable Energy

The site has a generally south west facing aspect with open ground further south and west and therefore offers maximum opportunity for solar gain advantages.

Summary

The site is considered to represent an appropriate allocation on the basis of effective utility and site servicing capabilities.

The Souterford and Lofthillock sites have been studied in detail and no technical restrictions to its potential for development have been identified.

It is concluded that the Souterford and Lofthillock sites form an effective land allocation with due consideration having been given to ground conditions, flood risk, utility and drainage servicing.



# 5. Keith Hall Designed Landscape

## 5.1 Introduction

The proposed development site is within local private ownership, on land controlled by Taylor Wimpey. It also lies within the north-west corner of the Keith Hall Designed Landscape, a land area of 402.8Ha, the focus of which is Keith Hall itself.

Souterford and Lofthillock are in agricultural use and, looking at historic maps, has always been so i.e. not formerly part of a deer park or designed pastoral setting. They were acquired from the Estate by the present owners in 1957.

The development site is effectively split by the northern approach to Keith Hall; access to the Estate is via the north lodge gate, next to the Category C Listed lodge building, and a driveway then leads through mature woodland toward the heart of the Estate, past the walled garden and stable blocks and on toward Keith Hall. There is however a round-arch road bridge on the driveway, granite, and also Category C Listed, which was built to span a field access between the two sites between 1806 and 1812. Souterford and Lofthillock therefore have a history of being farmed together, with a clear desire for physical separation from the Estate.

The importance of the Designed Landscape is attributable to the essence of it having been designed by Thomas White Senior, a landscape gardener who was a pupil of Capability Brown. He was an advocate of the “Beautiful” style, in fashion at the time. These were composed landscapes that were regular and pastoral “a tribute to nature- but a nature that was improved and made ideal” (source SNH, “Designed Landscapes in Scotland, notes on their planting and management”). Thomas White and his son, also Thomas White, were prolific between 1780 and 1820. Keith Hall was commissioned in 1794 and was implemented over a number of years. Unfortunately, the original White plan is not available.

The purpose of this section of the report is to consider how the development sites relate to the Designed Landscape, the implications of development on this, and how the impacts of development could be best mitigated through the design of development proposals.



View of Keith Hall from the Core Path; Views of the house are very limited



## 5.2 Reference Material

Source material which has been referred to as background has included the Keith Hall entry in the Inventory of Historic and Designed Landscapes held by Historic Scotland, the “Appraisal of Potential Effects of a Proposed Inverurie Bypass Upon Keith Hall Designed Landscape and Other Cultural Heritage Features” prepared by SKM landscape architects in October 2013 and the “Keith Hall Designed Landscape Reappraisal” prepared by Tim McCann on behalf of Taylor Wimpey in July 2014.



The Ornamental Lake



The South Lodge

## 5.3 Keith Hall

The Keith Hall Designed Landscape was Inventory listed in 1987. Even historic landscapes are dynamic and the Estate has developed since the 17th century. The landscape as we see it today was established in the 18th/ early 19th century with substantial additions in the mid-19th century and further changes in the mid-20th century.

Keith Hall lies at the heart of the Estate, a Category A Listed country mansion which incorporates the Z plan tower of Caskieben Castle that originally stood on the site. In design it resembles a French chateau and is considered to be one of the best examples of early Renaissance architecture in Scotland. The Keith Estate dates back to the granting of land to the Keiths in the 14th century and the majority of what we consider to be the Estate today still remains in the family. From the 17th century they became Earls of Kintore; the current holder of the title is the 14th Earl but doesn't live on the Estate. Whilst Keith Hall lies at the heart of the Designed Landscape it is not the focus of it; the Hall was sold off in 1985 along with 10 Ha of land and divided into six houses and eight flats. The land around the house is private, limits views from the public path network within the estate and ensures privacy for those within the properties.



Former Stables

## 5.4 Brief History

The distinct periods of major change for the Keith Hall estate can be summarised as followed:

- The original formal landscape around Keith hall was extended in the “Beautiful” style following plans drawn up by Thomas White in 1794 for the 6th Earl of Kintore;
- Between 1806 and 1812 architect William Smith built new stables, altered the estate offices, built the bridge within the north drive and kennels and stables;
- In 1854 William Ramage of Aberdeen altered the house, gardens and the North Lodge was built;
- In 1903 improvements were made to the gardens, and the lake south of the house was created, by the trustees of the 9th Earl;
- In 1914 the Earls trustees sold the Estate which at that time was over 6,000 acres;
- In 1930 the 10th Earl repurchased the House and a small part of the original estate;
- The House, and gardens around the House, were sold in 1985.

Bancon Developments have recently been promoting land within the estate for housing development and it can be reasonably assumed that this is at the instruction of the Estate; this would signal further significant change for the landscape and the estate.



Home Farm



## 5.5 The Inventory listing

All sites within the Inventory listing are deemed to be of national importance. Keith Hall is included because 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”. It is assessed as having the following importance within the assigned category values all the Inventory listings are assessed against:

**Work of Art: High**

A significant example of the work of Thomas White.

**Historical: High**

The distinct periods of development of the designed landscape and the association with the Earls of Kintore since 1663 give Keith Hall high historic value.

**Horticultural, Arboricultural and Silvicultural: Little**  
**Architectural: outstanding**

Due to the setting of the A Listed Keith Hall

**Scenic: Outstanding**

The canopy of the woodland around the park contributes to the surrounding scenery and gives Keith Hall outstanding scenic value.

**Nature Conservation: Some**

Age of woodland, and water margin habitats, give some value.

## 5.6 Boundaries and extents

The designated area is bounded to the north by the B9170 and a minor road, to the east by a minor road, to the south by the B993 and to the west by the River Urie, with small parts of the designated area on the western bank. It takes in a variety of land uses. Working from the house outwards, it may be broken down roughly as follows:

- the gardens and policies around the house;
- open parkland with scattered trees and clumps of trees;
- wooded driveways to the north and south;
- plantations around the edges of the parkland;
- plantation between the River Don and the B993 (the Kinkell Belt);
- Inverurie cemetery;
- housing in the south-eastern corner; and
- arable farmland and farms.

The importance of the Designed Landscape is recognised and not in dispute; this was reinforced by the most recent study referred to, that which was prepared on behalf of Taylor Wimpey in 2014 and submitted as part of the Main Issues Report planning process. Within that, the author recommended that there should be a re-evaluation of the existing Inventory assessment with areas of agricultural land around the edge of the listing could now be removed, including the land at Souterford and Lofthillock.

This short assessment builds on that. Satisfied that there is no visual relationship between the northern approach and the Hall, and that the function of the north drive is to bring the visitor into the heart of the estate it is this area alone which is being reviewed as part of this development proposal.

## 5.7 The North Drive: history

As mentioned previously, there is no record of the present day existence Thomas White Senior’s landscape plan.

The best information to go on concerning how this part of the Estate relates to the history of Keith Hall are Roy’s mid-century map of the mid-18th century, Gibb’s map of “Map of the north eastern districts of Aberdeenshire” of 1858 and the historic Ordnance Survey maps from 1867 onwards.

Roy’s map shows that the gardens and policies started as an early formal design (see below). An axial avenue extends southwards of the Hall, flanked with lawns and with woodland enclosures beyond. The site is relatively contained and Souterford and Lofthillock are within what is presumably the agricultural hinterland.

Thomas White was commissioned some 40 years after this; without his plan it is difficult to know exactly what is attributable to him however some information can be understood from the Gibb map prepared some 70 years later (See adjacent page). Regarding the north drive, there is no woodland planting and the north drive itself is shown as a simple ordinary access road leading down to the estate. Lofthillock (or Lofty hillock as it was then) and Souterford are clearly discernible as open agricultural fields.

These elements were, then, only added when the landscape was remodelled by William Ramage in the 1850s; presumably the bridge, the lodge and the avenue were all realised at the same time and the access road became a private road. They could be deduced as not being part of the original White plan.



Roy’s map of the mid 18th century (extract) Early, formal designs pre-dating Thomas White.





Extract from Gibb's map of 1858 showing no designed planting north of the Keith Hall kennels. This pre-dates the North Lodge and planting along the North Drive.



The 2nd edition ordnance survey of 1900 following further alterations by William Ramage. The North Drive appears to have become a private road demarcated by the North Lodge and substantial planting has been carried out. This is the structure still evident today.

## 5.8 The North Drive: today

Observation on the North Drive today, its relationship with the adjacent land, and the condition of the woodland, can be supplemented by the Arboricultural Survey undertaken by Donald Rodger Associates and whose report is included within this submission.

The drive is used as access to the dwellings and walled garden business located within the north of the Estate; access to the house is via the south lodge hence the north entrance is quieter. It is a designated core path within the proposed Aberdeenshire Core Paths Plan but it not signposted as such. Nonetheless it is known locally and is notably well-used for access to walks through the estate; it can be assumed that usage has further increased since the construction of Osprey Village.

The woodland along the drive is all of a similar age but also includes a younger Sitka spruce plantation estimated at 60 years old. The plantation is in reasonable health and ready for cropping although would have benefited from a thinning regime during its life time.

An avenue is defined as “a broad road in a town or city, typically having trees at regular intervals along its sides”; here, there are no large trees planted at regular intervals in either single or double rows and the character of the north drive is of a road through woodland rather than that of a grand approach via a traditional avenue.

The woodland is mostly considered to have a remainder life span of around 20 years although that which is to the east of the drive, north of the Sitka, is a bit younger and healthier.

As the photographs shown on the following page illustrate, there are open views toward both parts of the site through the woodland. There are clear views to Inverurie across the Souterford land; views to Lofthillock are apparent but are occluded in part by the density of the Sitka spruce plantation.

There is limited understorey, as is apparent on these photographs, albeit these were shot at Easter time when the leaves were not yet out. There is also evidence of informal usage of the woods, which can be seen in trampled paths. Dutch Elm disease is also present although trees haven't been removed.

The woodland along the drive is largely edged by beech which is close together and speculation by the arboriculturist is that this was once a hedgerow which has now overgrown.

## 5.9 Conclusions

The conclusions which can be drawn from the analysis set out above are as shown:

- The northern drive may not have been part of the original design intention by Thomas White; certainly it was implemented as a scheme at a much later date;
- There is no vista along the drive or visual relationship with some of the key components of the Designed Landscape;
- The design intention behind the woodland approach is unclear; particularly with respect to the relationship between the drive (and the Designed Landscape) and the adjacent land;
- The two fields remained linked by an underpass to the north drive allowing them to be managed together by building a bridge as part of the work; there was never any intention to physically link the fields with the drive;
- This suggests that a grand plan of a north lodge approach was not part of the original design intention as established by Thomas White;
- Originally the woodland was lined by hedgerows; it could be deduced that there would only have been limited views, if any, intended across farmland from the northern drive reinforced by the fact that the Estate didn't want to link their farmland with the driveway and went to the expense of building a stone bridge in order to allow that.

- There is no vista along the drive or visual relationship with some of the key components of the Designed Landscape;

- The design intention behind the woodland approach is unclear; particularly with respect to the relationship between the drive (and the Designed Landscape) and the adjacent land;

- The two fields remained linked by an underpass to the north drive allowing them to be managed together by building a bridge as part of the work; there was never any intention to physically link the fields with the drive;

- This suggests that a grand plan of a north lodge approach was not part of the original design intention as established by Thomas White;

- Originally the woodland was lined by hedgerows; it could be deduced that there would only have been limited views, if any, intended across farmland from the northern drive reinforced by the fact that the Estate didn't want to link their farmland with the driveway and went to the expense of building a stone bridge in order to allow that.

In summary, whilst the Designed Landscape is valued as a “Good example of the late 18th century parkland design of Thomas White Senior” this part of the Keith Hall Designed Landscape cannot categorically be linked to that. There is also nothing to suggest that there was an original design intention to form a relationship between the woodland northern approach to Keith Hall (which extended options for private access to the Hall), with the adjacent fields forming a pastoral setting. That link came later. In essence the fields at Souterford and Lofthillock are not considered to be intrinsic to the Designed Landscape.

The importance of the Designed Landscape is also attributed to the canopy and its scenic value; this has been recognised elsewhere within this submission, and indeed that the woodland edge and the character it gives are important assets to the site area. Mitigation ensuring that the trees are accommodated within any development proposals is set out below.



# 5.10 Mitigation

Mitigation proposals for the North Drive arising from new development at Souterford and Lofthillock should seek to redress the following:

- Redefine the woodland approach as a robust piece of landscape: this can be achieved through design along the edges of the woodland, but Taylor Wimpey should also seek to work with the landowner in carrying out a management programme to revitalise the adjacent woodland areas;
- Work with the constraints suggested by Donald Rodger Associates in applying distances from roots and to building lines to ensure there is no damage to the trees as a result of development;
- Maintain some sense of connection between the access and Inverurie through selected axis routes but bolster and redefine the existing woodland edge with additional trees and large shrubs; this will be reinforced through the development layout. Creating a “wall of development” along the boundary would be inappropriate and would screen views to the trees from the existing urban area;
- The woodland area to the south of Souterford is approximately where the character of Designed Landscape changes into a rural pastoral landscape (at the present time) and development should be kept well back from there in order to protect the sense of tranquillity.



View to Souterford from Core Path through Keith Hall: Inverurie visible through the trees. Poor woodland management, no emerging understorey and evidence of trampling.



View to Lofthillock from Core Path through Keith Hall. Poor woodland management, no emerging understorey and evidence of trampling



# 6. Constraints and Opportunities

## 6.1 Summary

Constraints are outlined on the following plan and highlight those aspects identified in the previous section into a single drawing. These encompass the following aspects:

- Slope and elevation: other sites in Inverurie are allocated and being built on with steeper land and at a higher elevation to mixed success. The aim at Lofthillock, the higher of the two parts of the development site will be to
  - Keep clear of high ground at the top of the site;
  - Keep clear of the steepest parts of the site.
- Keep development off the flood plain using it as playing field and open space provision for the school, and planted as a biodiversity parkland space. Proposals should be developed in association with the ecologist in order to ensure the appropriate habitat for otters can be provided; links should be made with the emerging Uryside Park proposals;
- Respect the existing trees of Keith Hall estate by keeping proposals clear of the root protection zone and buildings away from the fall area; layout should minimise illegal garden tipping into the wood and avoid threats to biodiversity;
- The woods offer an opportunity for the creation green habitat networks;
- SUDs should be designed into the layout at the outset;
- Keep development back from the south-east edge of Souterford to respect previous consultation comments by the Environment Team at Aberdeenshire Council and Historic Environment Scotland.

The resultant development principles are highlighted in Figure 19 on the following page.

There are no existing inhabited buildings within the development site area. The cottage at Souterford is not listed, the trees within the garden area are not considered a major asset; these could be removed in order to enable an appropriate layout. At Lofthillock, two existing properties lie on the north-eastern edge in separate ownership. In order to respect their attractive views and privacy the following principles should be put in place:

- Plant up the field boundary forming the development edge to help screen development, provide linked habitat and redefine the edge of an expanded Inverurie;
- Take access to Oldmeldrum Road hence away from the properties;
- Keep development clear off the ground and plant around the edge to maintain privacy and retain views.



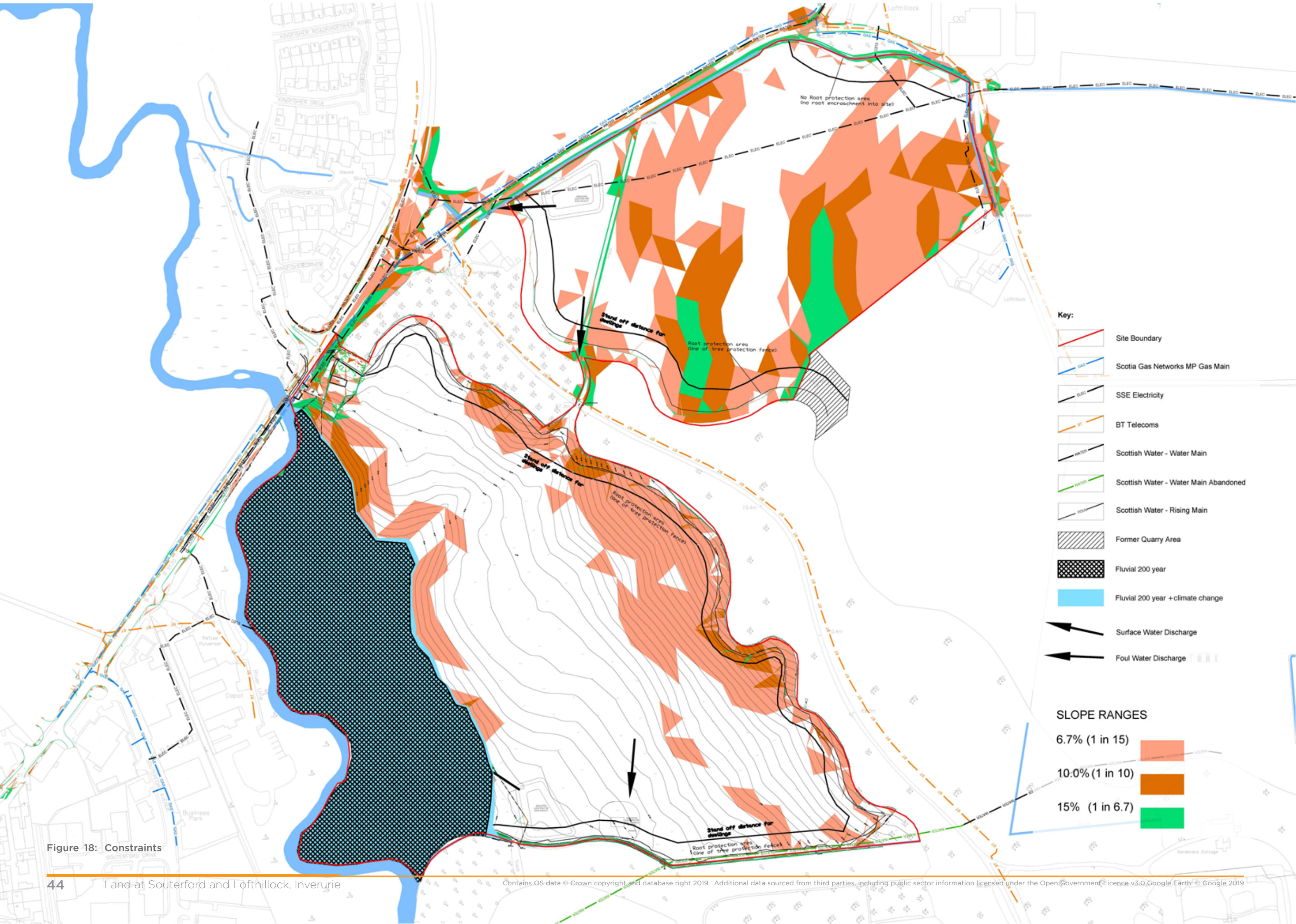


Figure 18: Constraints





Figure 19: Development Principles



# 7. Proposal

## 7.1 Concept

### Vision

The site is within an attractive and distinctive area, and on the edge of a Designed Landscape hence some general design principles regarding development form and character should be noted in order to understand that the site can be both effective and aspirational in design.

The indicative masterplan opposite illustrates how residential development could be accommodated within the proposed development area in line with the principles set out on the previous pages and described below.

The overarching vision is to create new development that will fit well with Inverurie, maximising excellent links to the town centre and contributing to the urban environment in a positive way. Inverurie has expanded rapidly over a short space of time and new development at Souterford and Lofthillock should offer something distinctive which works with the site natural assets rather than repeating what is on offer close-by. General principles which will help realise this vision will include:

- Properties generally toward the front of the plot creating an intimate built environment - one which will be designed to allow for the car but without allowing it to dominate;
- Development densities should be reduced out towards the fringes rather than a solid urban edge;
- Work with the topography and views to Bennachie to relate the development to Inverurie;
- Address all open space through development;
- Use of trees and landscape to integrate the built up area into the surrounding countryside and reduce the impact on approaches from the rural edge;
- Clear definition of the public and private realm with no leftover areas of space;
- Diversity of architecture form- through different typologies, (which will accommodate 25% affordable, 10% accessible and the remainder a choice of size and type) and through land for community facilities, potentially a Primary School;
- Unity through common building features;
- An appropriate mix of quality materials such as render colours;

- Design proposals should seek a fully integral linkage between landscape, SUDs, street design and the architecture of the housing. Form of individual buildings and site arrangement should also maximise opportunities for passive solar energy gain.

### Proposal

The proposal is for circa 450 new homes offering a variety of type and a Primary School. The Primary School is shown on the plan within the Souterford site; this would allow good local access, as well as a biodiversity park within the floodplain, offering education opportunities- however equally there could be benefits to siting the school at Lofthillock.

### Designing in Context

Existing edges, landscape and landform will be used to define and contain development. Souterford and Lofthillock are separated by mature woodland, but connected via the road network and by a path under a feature bridge; this allows them to be designed a single entity but with different characters within each area that would be reinforced by densities and landscape design.



Existing entry into the Souterford site can be reworked with a signalised crossing junction, as per below, to enable sufficient vehicular access into the site

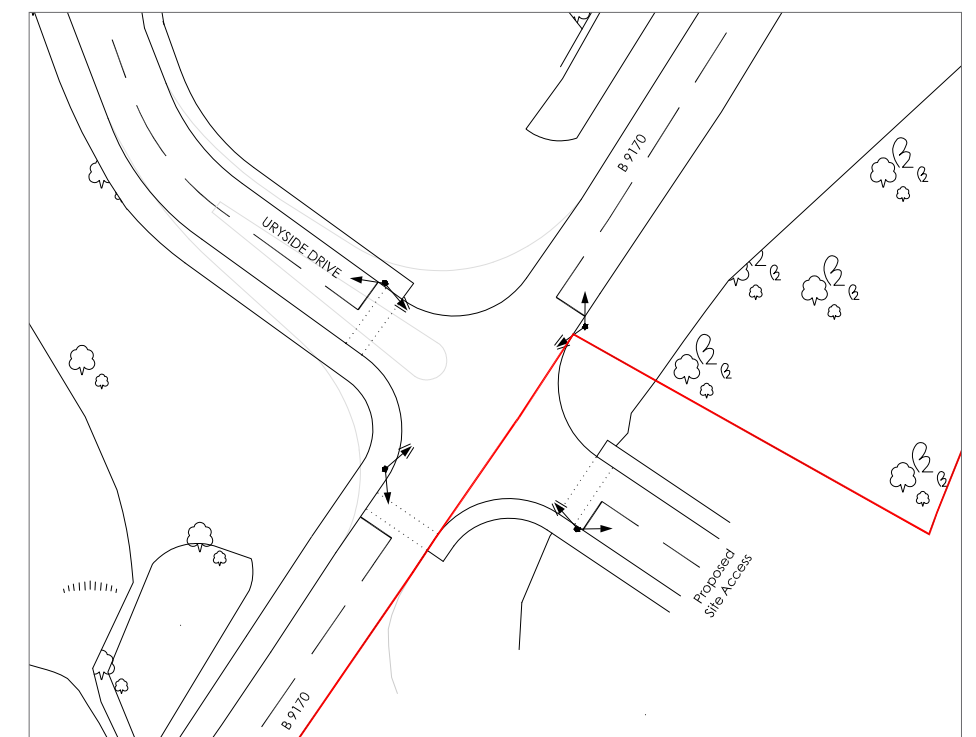


Figure 20: Diagram of exemplar vehicular access point into the Souterford site off Oldmeldrum Road (1)







## 7.2 Access Strategy

### General

A preliminary access strategy has been drawn up and is based on site capacity for circa 450 dwellings of a variety of size and tenure and a new primary school which could be located on the Souterford site. The internal pedestrian and vehicle connections within each site parcel will be designed in accordance with national policy guidance contained in the document Designing Streets that aims to ensure permeable developments based around a connected concept. Preliminary proposals within the site areas are shown on Figure 22.

### Accessibility

The accessibility diagram within Section 4 indicates the existing local facilities available in the area surrounding the site.

PAN75 Planning for Transport considers that 1600m is the threshold for walking to local facilities whereas Transport Assessment Guidance considers journey times of 20–30 minutes (up to 2450m). The sites lie within a 1600m walk of the majority of the local facilities within the local area including:

- Uryside primary school;
- Inverurie Academy;
- GP practices;
- local retail provision;
- Inverurie rail station; and
- employment opportunities in a range of local sites.

### Walking, cycling and public transport

In relation to walking, it is proposed to complete the footway link along the east side of Oldmeldrum Road between the Souterford site and the Retail Park signals.

Provision of the signal controlled junction on Oldmeldrum Road to access Souterford would also permit inclusion of pedestrian crossing facilities, enabling connectivity southwards using the west path of Oldmeldrum Road.

The Lofthillock and Souterford sites are able to be linked for walking and cycling using an historic underpass, but the frontage of the Lofthillock site would also contain footway alongside the unclassified road that bounds the site.

Areas to the north of the unclassified road are presently under development and opportunities may also exist to connect across the road to and through that site allowing further connections to the northwest.

In relation to cycling, marking the western footway of Oldmeldrum Road to indicate shared foot / cycle use should be made.

A contribution towards additional cycle storage at Inverurie rail station is also recommended; a cycle journey from the furthest point of Lofthillock to the railway station would take no more than 10 minutes.

A review of the core path connections and the cycle provision available may also enable toucan crossing provision within the new Souterford signal set.

A review of bus stop provision should also be made with a view to considering shelter and real time provision at the stops closest to the site; this would also benefit the adjacent Uryside development.

### Vehicular access

Vehicular access is proposed to the Souterford site from a new signal controlled junction to be created on the B9170. This junction would effectively replace the existing priority junction serving Osprey Village.

In relation to Lofthillock, this site can be appropriately accessed through provision of simple T junction arrangements onto the unclassified road to the north of the site. An extension of the urban environment is already underway with development occurring to the north of this road and addition of street lighting, footway provision and speed limits would round off this development area.

Further detail on the access arrangements are shown on Sketches TP013/SK004 and TP013/SK006 contained within the accompanying Transport Planning Ltd report.

## 7.3 Landscape Strategy

The strategy is that the development should work with the landscape in order to generate green framework that:

- works creatively with the constraints;
- reinforces a legible development structure;
- enables enhanced biodiversity and protects existing site assets;
- offers attractive amenity space to enhance local living;
- contributes toward place identity.

Integrating green space as part of the development proposal from the outset is good practice and meets the principles regarding green networks contained within the SPP.

### Working with the constraints

The key constraints that influence development form are as follows:

#### Topography

Souterford is relatively unconstrained regarding topography; Lofthillock has some steeper slopes. The aim will be to work with this and keep the steeper areas clear of development at the same time using these areas to enhance visual amenity, break up development form and provide green linkages.

#### Flood Risk

Lofthillock is unconstrained regarding flooding. Part of Souterford is within the flood risk area for the River Urie. There is an opportunity to utilise this land as a biodiversity park, with a meadow landscape and associated planting that can withstand fluctuating conditions. This will continue the seep of landscape along the Urie from the other side of Oldmeldrum Road. Whilst development is not proposed for this area, it can include informal space in association with a potential new primary school that could be built out of the flood plain and close to the access to the site.

#### Site Assets

The site benefits considerably from the mature trees which lie on several of the boundaries to Lofthillock and Souterford. Whilst these are outwith the development site boundary the constraints regarding their proximity have been addressed within the indicative masterplan layout. These have also been the starting point for a “green framework” which will form an enhanced habitat network throughout the site area.



- Site Boundary
- Signal controls with new pedestrian crossing facilities
- ➔ Vehicular access
- ↔ Connecting cycle/ footpath via underpass to Keith Hall North Drive
- - - Complete footpath link
- - - New shared foot/ cycleway
- - - Signed for shared cycle/ footway
- Primary street network
- - - Secondary street network
- Shared space
- Other pathway links
- Existing Routes

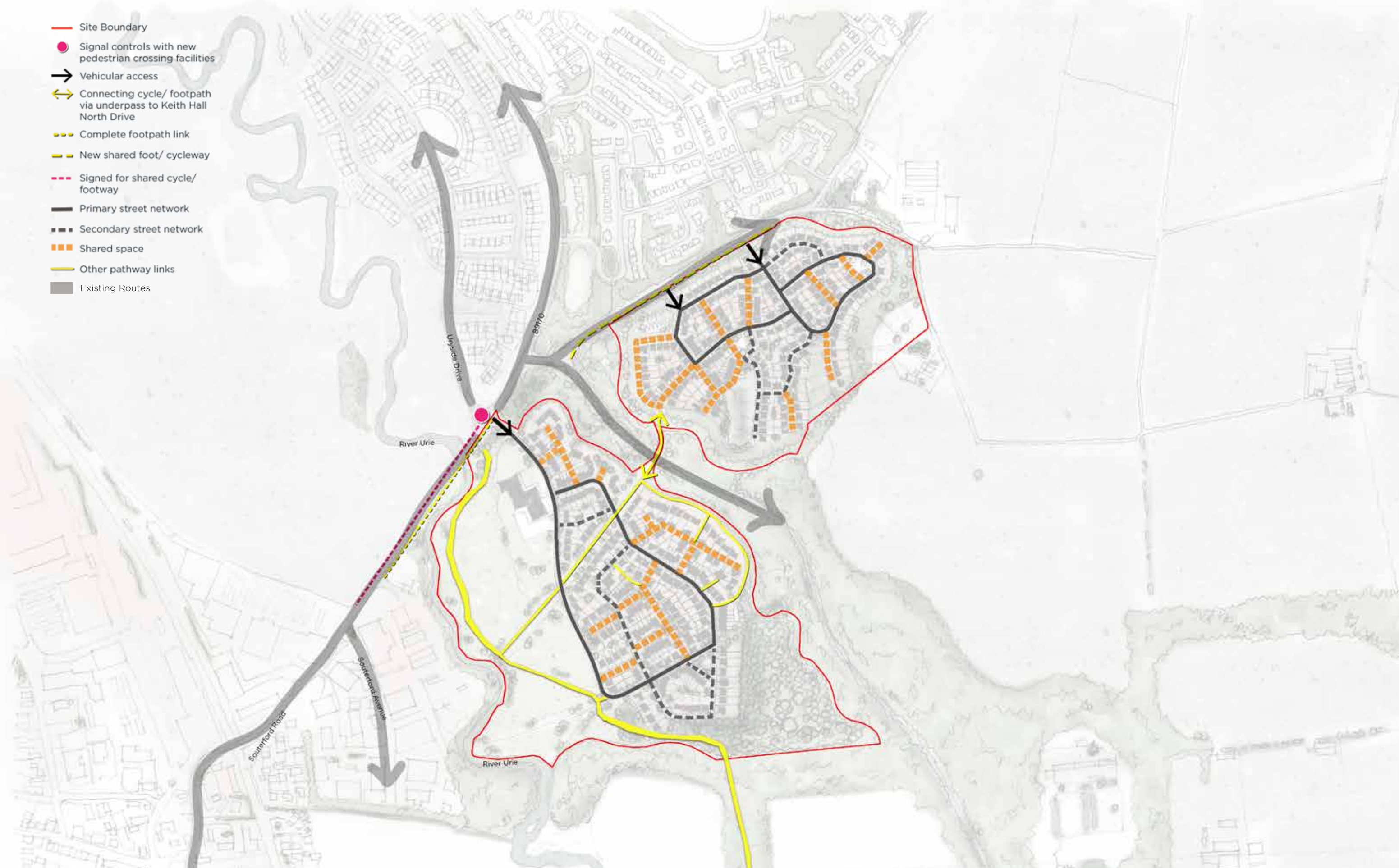


Figure 22: Access Strategy



## Reinforcing a Legible Development Structure

A legible development structure aligns with the key principles of successful placemaking of ensuring the development is welcoming, distinctive and easy to move around and beyond: feeling comfortable and finding ones way around easily.

This is achieved through reinforcing the main street routes through planting, relating green space to the urban development form i.e. not left-over space once the house layout is established, and by ensuring all open space is overlooked and connected.

## Enables enhanced biodiversity and protects existing assets

As established previously the environmental assets sit on the edge of the site, outwith the boundary but add considerable character and identity. The constraints that the existing trees impose will be respected; the existing site area is currently under agricultural use with limited ecological value. There is considerable scope therefore to increase biodiversity through significant new planting which can link with the mature native trees along the edge to create linked habitat networks. SUDs can also add to the ecological value if well-designed, and planting up the flood plain area using native species could also create a valuable and biodiverse asset to central Inverurie.

## Offers Attractive Amenity Space To Enhance Local Living

Aberdeenshire LDP guides open space provision with a total suggested open space and public realm within the site boundary being around 40%.

The indicative masterplan is currently showing total open space of around 12.4ha within a 31.5 Ha site which is 40%; this allows for green space and SUDs and excludes the street network which has opportunities for high quality, slower-speed public realm which will increase the provision further.

Amenity space will range from green space in which to walk, and help orientate toward getting to place, to somewhere to sit, kick a ball around or picnic or somewhere to play. Species selection should be native and offer seasonal interest wherever possible. Should a Primary School be required, there are opportunities to create spaces to enhance learning especially within the Biodiversity Park.

## Contribute toward place identity.

The landscape can aid identity by being distinctive in its design; taking reference from the adjacent Keith Hall landscape.

- Planting up part of the flood plain with suitable species so that the recycling plant can be screened and the character of the Urie can be enhanced;
- Creating a green corridor through Souterford allowing direct views to the listed bridge structure where there is also access to Lofthillock;
- Use of landscape design to guide access on the other side of the bridge
- Use of species choice street trees to guide users through the principal street network;
- Taking advantage of views toward Bennachie;
- Recognising the importance of the buildings on the higher ground in views toward Lofthillock and keeping views of them clear of development.

## 7.4 Internal Street Network

The internal street network will be designed in accordance with Designing Streets hence will put place first, and be as permeable as possible. A clear hierarchy will established within the street structure allowing easy orientation within and out of the site. Speeds should be kept as low as possible through design not intervention. Streets will also offer opportunity for integrated SUDs and play following discussions with the Council as design progresses.

Some key principles which have been applied at indicative masterplan stage are as follows:

- A preliminary hierarchy is outlined on the accompanying plan showing how permeability can be achieved;
- The access between the Souterford and Lofthillock development areas should be well designed in order to make it easy to find, attractive to use and respectful of the cultural value of the bridge;
- All streets should be overlooked even where shared rear courtyards are being used in order to allow all open space to be overlooked.





Figure 23: Landscape Strategy



## 7.5 SUDs and Servicing Strategy

A preliminary SUDs scheme has been drawn up and is shown on the indicative masterplan drawing, highlighting the location and size requirements for SUDs ponds/ basins which will be developed further as part of the detailed design stage.

### Surface Water Drainage and SUDs

The location of the site adjacent to the River Urie together with the wide meadow area affords adequate opportunity for a full site SUDs provision in accordance with SEPA, Scottish Water and Aberdeenshire Council requirements. A site SUDs system designed in accordance with the CIRIA SUDs Manual and the Scottish Water publication Sewers for Scotland (second edition) will be possible and the following criteria can be achieved:

- Development proposals to include a surface water management train based approach and source control measures included;
- Attenuation of development site run off to a green field run-off equivalent;
- Sites to be split into catchments with Lofthillock discharging through on-site SUDs facilities to the existing drain at the western boundary and Souterford discharging via on-site SUDs facilities to the River Urie;
- Permissible discharge to the existing drainage channel at the Lofthillock catchment will be at a rate of 23 litres per second;
- The Souterford site will have a permissible discharge to the River Urie of approximately 28 litres per second;
- Surface water treatment via detention pond(s) and/or basins placed adjacent to the meadow/ biodiversity park area in the Souterford catchment and above the critical flood levels;
- Road and other hard surfaces to include SUDs measures (for example porous paving and biodiversity strips) as permitted by Aberdeenshire Council.

The site can therefore be effectively drained of surface water in a fully SUDs compliant manner.

### Foul Drainage

It is proposed to discharge the foul water from the development to a pumping station sited at a low point to the south of the Souterford site. The Lofthillock site will discharge by gravity to this low point also. The foul water will then be pumped to a connection point at the Uryside Pumping Station, where it will

discharge by rising main to the existing Scottish Water network.

A DIA carried out in 2011 identified the requirement for further study work to understand the impact on the Uryside PS and identify any upgrades required to serve the development.

Network and Treatment Works system capacities will require to be confirmed by Scottish Water via pre-development enquiries as previous study work will need to be updated. Scottish Water remain committed to providing network capacities for development via their capital programmes.

The site can therefore be considered as effectively drained of foul water to the existing Scottish Water system.

As outlined within section 4.4.4 there is no constraint to servicing the site with regard to all necessary utilities.

## 7.6 Creating Place

Creating a sense of place within Souterford and Lofthillock, and overall, enhancing Inverurie's, will be done in a variety of ways.

Firstly, there is an opportunity to create a memorable sense of identity on the edge of Souterford. If this is a primary school it will act as a landmark at a prominent point facing Oldmeldrum road. Improving this edge is important as Oldmeldrum Road is a principle foot and vehicular access route into "Osprey Village" and the new development to the east, and currently exists as a clearing which suggests departure from Inverurie. It does little to create transition between, and unification of, old and new, which would enhance Inverurie's sense of place.

The area adjacent to River Urie will be preserved and enhanced as an attractive wetland park, mirroring the treatment of this green corridor north of Oldmeldrum Road. A footpath will be installed within this, as there is to the north, and the two will connect. The footpath within the site will run along River Urie as the accompanying diagram shows, branching off in places to allow access into the areas of housing, but ultimately continuing through the site to connect with the core path which runs around Keith Hall Estate. Along the footpath, there will be benches so that people can sit next to the river.

Within the areas of housing, robust, continuous frontage lining the main streets will create sense of place along important movement corridors. There will be street trees installed where possible along these primary streets to create street edges defined also by greenery. The trees aim to enhance the countryside setting of the development.

Boundaries will be robust ; hedges and feature walling would create a continuous and attractive edging around the plots.

Paving in back courts and secondary streets will be different from that of the main streets to mark a differentiation from car zones to pedestrian priority areas.





Figure 24: Placemaking and Connections Strategy



SUDs planted for biodiversity



Diversity of public realm paving materials



Use of landscape to aid legibility



Integrated high quality green recreation spaces



High quality paving, planting and boundary treatment in the public realm



Potential for public art to celebrate place identity



# 8. Sustaining Inverurie

## 8.1 A Walkable Place

The aim of new development at Souterford and Lofthillock should be that it not only offers new homes but ensures that something comes back- to the benefit of wider Inverurie. The underlying principle of sustainable development is that it should offer attractive living within a pleasant environment with safe roads and paths which allow people to walk easily to where they want to go and to access a wide range of facilities. This is a matter not for design but starts with site selection. Souterford and Lofthillock could bring the following benefits to those living there and to residents and businesses further afield.

One of the greatest advantages the site holds is its proximity to Inverurie town centre. With the exception of Uryside, none of the existing proposed development sites can offer this. Most sites are at a distance where most people would get into their car, and once in a car there is no reason why the destination needs to be Inverurie. Souterford can be reached within 7 minutes by foot from the train station; this proximity allows a quality of life where commuting is easy as is shopping at the retail park, use of the garden centre, and use of cafes at the station, the edge of the town centre and at the garden centre. This gives an attractive quality of life; it also gives increased usage of these businesses thus sustaining them for the future and maintaining a sense of vibrancy about Inverurie. This is key to future investment in the town and to its promotion as a destination.

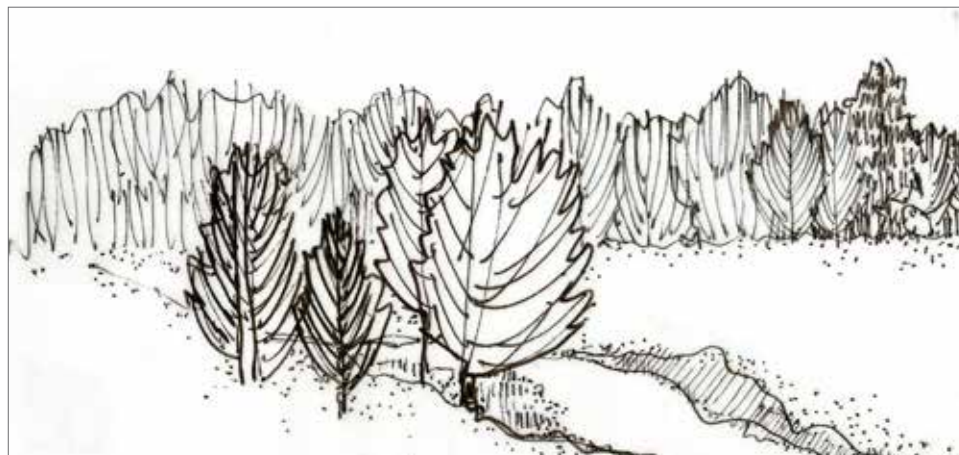
This close proximity is illustrated by the accompanying graphic, showing some montage views of how the Souterford development could be seen within the urban environment and these are set at 2.5 minute intervals along the route.

## 8.2 Meeting Local Need

There is a chronic shortfall of affordable housing within Inverurie and housing of mixed size and tenure. This development would provide 25% affordable and 10% accessible housing within a total number of around 450 new homes across the site area. This will contribute toward the shortfall.

In addition, there is an opportunity for a new primary school to be located at Souterford within a land area of around 2.5 hectares. This would be well located for pupils walking to school and parents with onward journeys; a signature building at this point would benefit the urban townscape as the extent of development which has risen over the last 10 years is losing any sense of distinctiveness to this approach into the town.

Natural site features of the Ury, the riparian edge, and the woodland avenue utilised to create areas for nature learning, and enhanced and protected biodiversity.



Densities should reflect the urban edge, with new housing orientated to overlook open space. Increased biodiversity, drainage and environmental cooling achieved through tree planting



Create streets putting people first, which naturally slow speeds and accommodate safe access, a mix of car accommodation and a sense of identity.





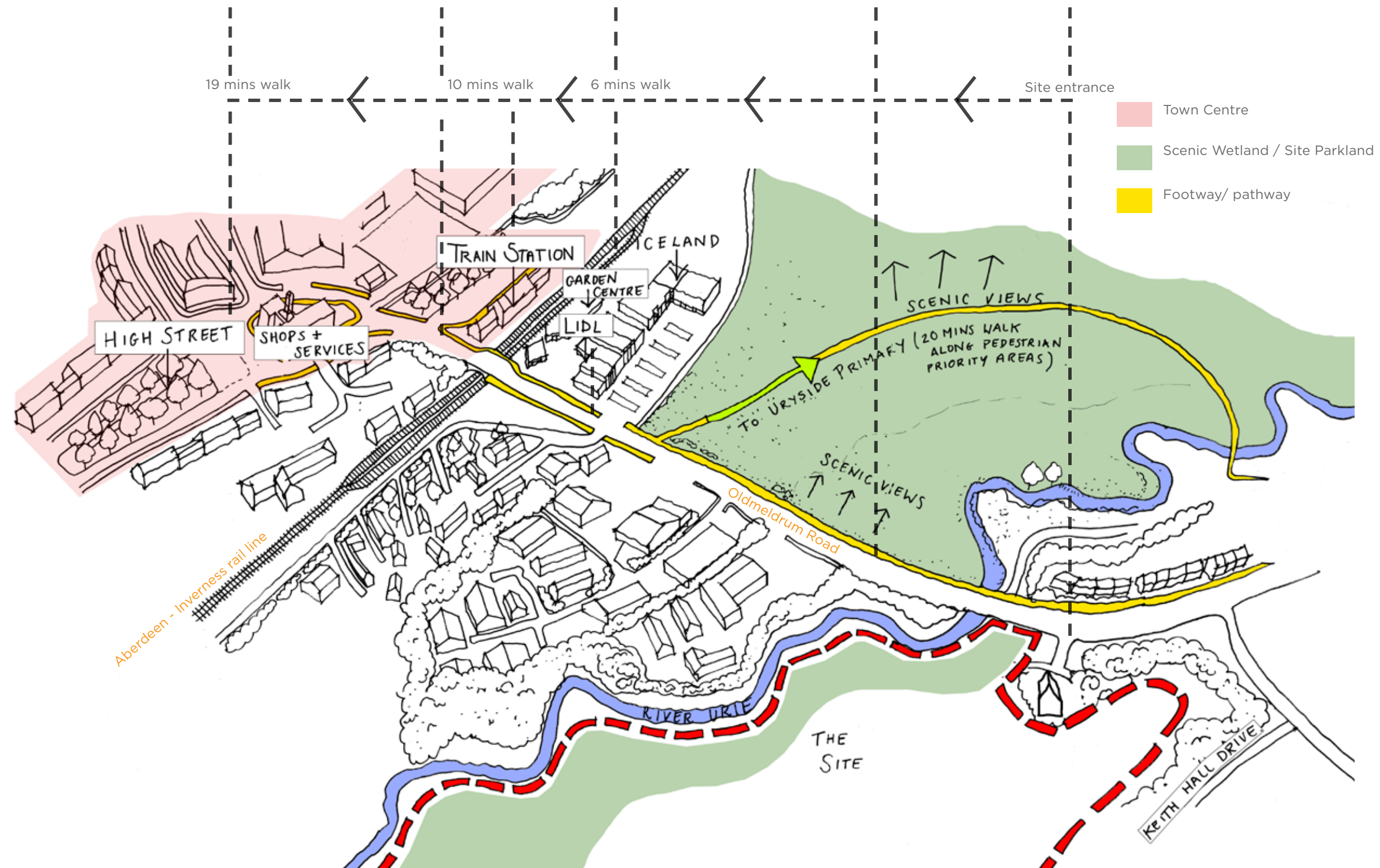


Figure 25: A Walkable Place



# 9. Summary

This document has been prepared in support of the formal objections by Taylor Wimpey against the non-allocation of land at Souterford and Lofthillock within the proposed ADLP 2021. It sets out proposals for around 450 new homes, a Primary School and affordable and accessible housing provision.

Inverurie is growing rapidly and is now expanding beyond its natural defensible boundaries and cutting into the hills which surround it. This is not only changing the setting and perception of the town but development is increasingly divorced from the town centre.

Souterford and Lofthillock are linked together by both a historic underpass and Oldmeldrum Road. They lie close to the town centre and railway station, in fact it is under 10 minutes' walk from Souterford to Inverurie train station and a variety of local facilities can be easily reached. Together they constitute 31.5 Hectares of land which is currently in greenfield use.

Development has previously been constrained by wider access issues within the town, a constraint now lifted through the opening of the new North Link Road. The principle of growth within this part of Inverurie has been well-established through the continued construction of Uryside.

The site lies within the north-west edge of the Keith Hall Designed Landscape, and straddles the North Drive. Souterford is to the south of it and Lofthillock to the north. Comments on previous design proposals at Souterford have been considered within the proposals submitted here alongside a review of the Designed Landscape. This part of the Keith Hall Estate was designed and implemented much later than the rest; it was not part of the original design plan and there is evidence to suggest that it was never the intention for the North Drive to have a pastoral relationship with the adjacent fields.

This Masterplan Framework addresses all issues around landscape and masterplanning and brings together a number of technical studies in order to create a complete picture which together demonstrate that this site offers effective and sustainable growth for Inverurie.

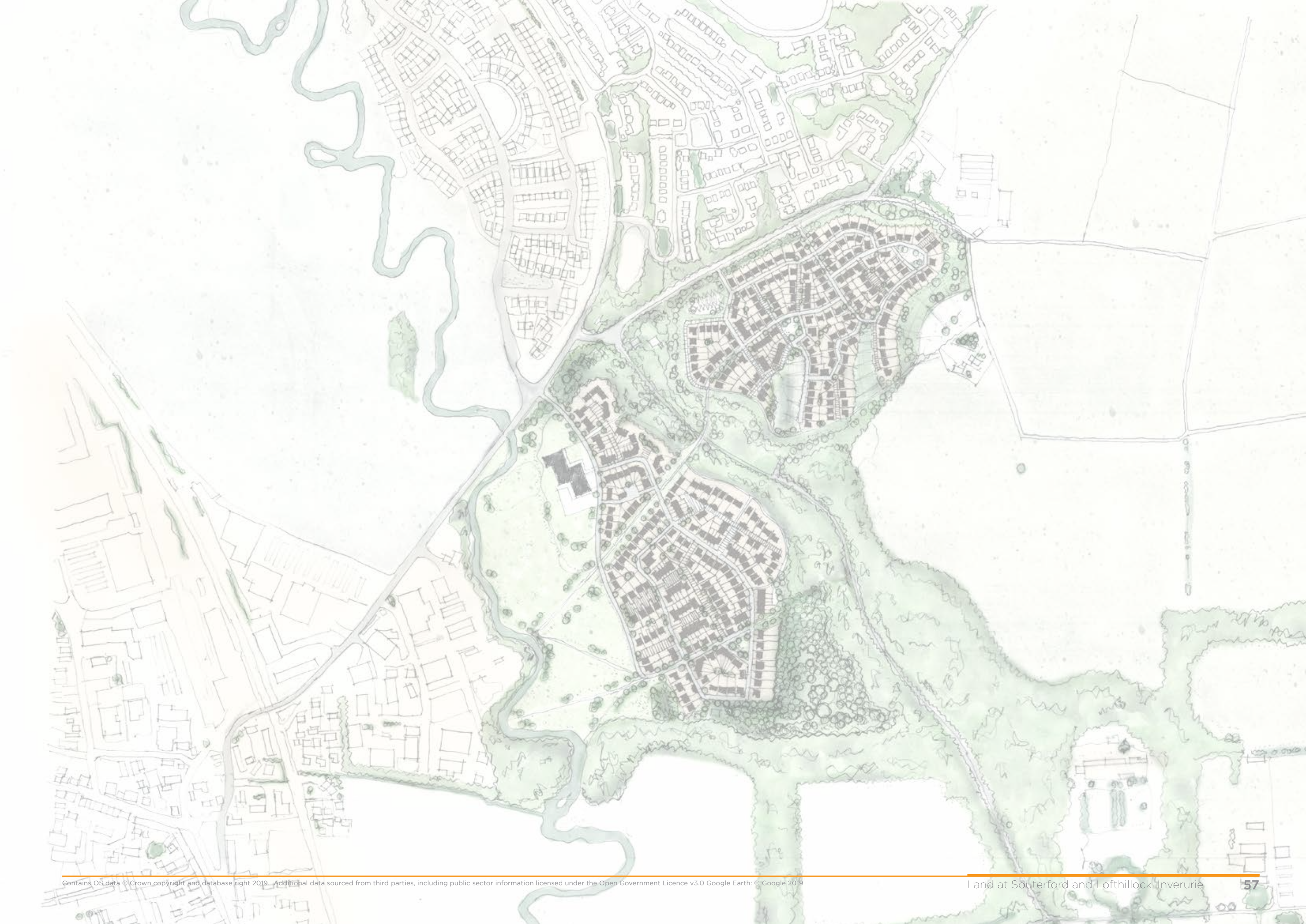
Placemaking is at the heart of the Scottish planning system and accordingly this document considers context first by considering the form and history of Inverurie itself, moving onto an assessment of what should guide the future growth of Inverurie. The appropriate technical appraisals have also been summarised here, setting out the case that the site is effective for development.

Finally, indicative proposals have been drawn up for the site which respect the constraints and opportunities, and the embedded principles are described along with the presentation of an indicative masterplan. Site capacity, allowing for the constraints and opportunities identified is estimated as being circa 450 across the two sites, allowing for a new Primary School and assuming that of those houses 25% will be affordable and 10% as accessible for all abilities.

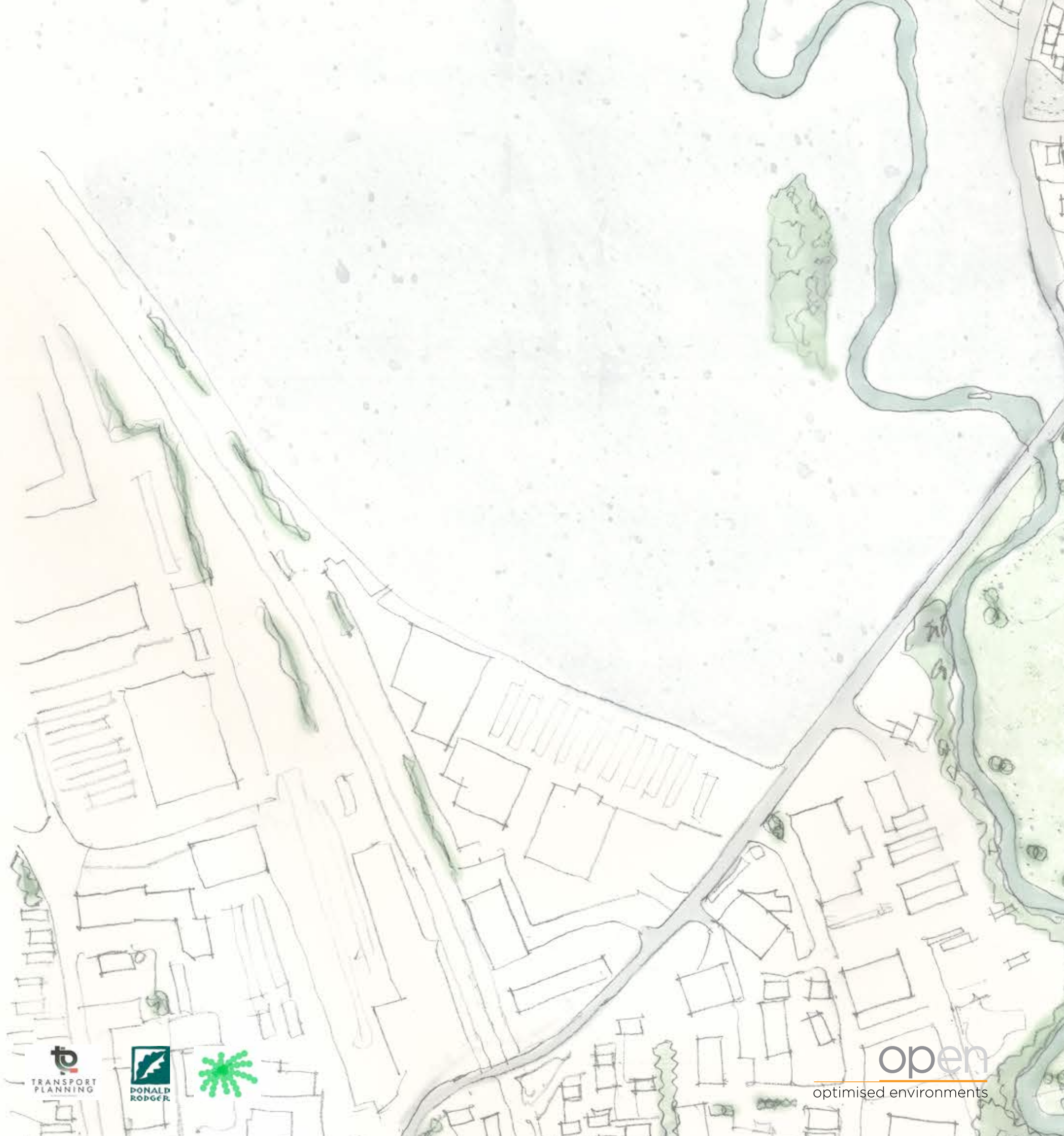
For Inverurie to conserve some of its intrinsic character, in the face of the current rapid rate of development, it is essential that the next areas of growth should be sensitive to “place” and offer something positive back to the town. Not just new homes but an attractive environment within which they sit.

This has been the starting principle for proposals for new development at Souterford and Lofthillock; allocation along the principles set out here would offer logical and sustainable growth for Inverurie.













- 1. This drawing is to be read in conjunction with all other drawings and specifications.
- 2. Do not scale off this drawing. Written dimensions to be taken only.
- 3. Any discrepancies found between this drawing and other drawings and specifications in the construction documents must be referred to the Landscape Architect prior to work commencing.
- 4. This drawing must not be copied in whole or in part without prior written consent of Optimised Environments Ltd.

© Crown copyright and database rights 2020 Ordnance Survey 0100031673.

KEY  
Site Boundary (31.5ha)

Issue	Revision	Initial	Date
-	-	-	-

open  
optimised environments  
optimised environments ltd

[Redacted]  
[Redacted]  
[Redacted]  
[Redacted]  
[Redacted]

Client  
Taylor Wimpey

Project  
Land at Souterford and Lofthillock

Drawing Title  
Site Boundary

Scale Bar  
50m 100m 150m 200m 250m  
North

Scale: 1:5000@A3 Date: 10.07.2020

By: DR Status: INFORMATION

Checked: KE Approved:

Drawing Number  
150773\_RLB\_Souterford+LH  
Rev  
-