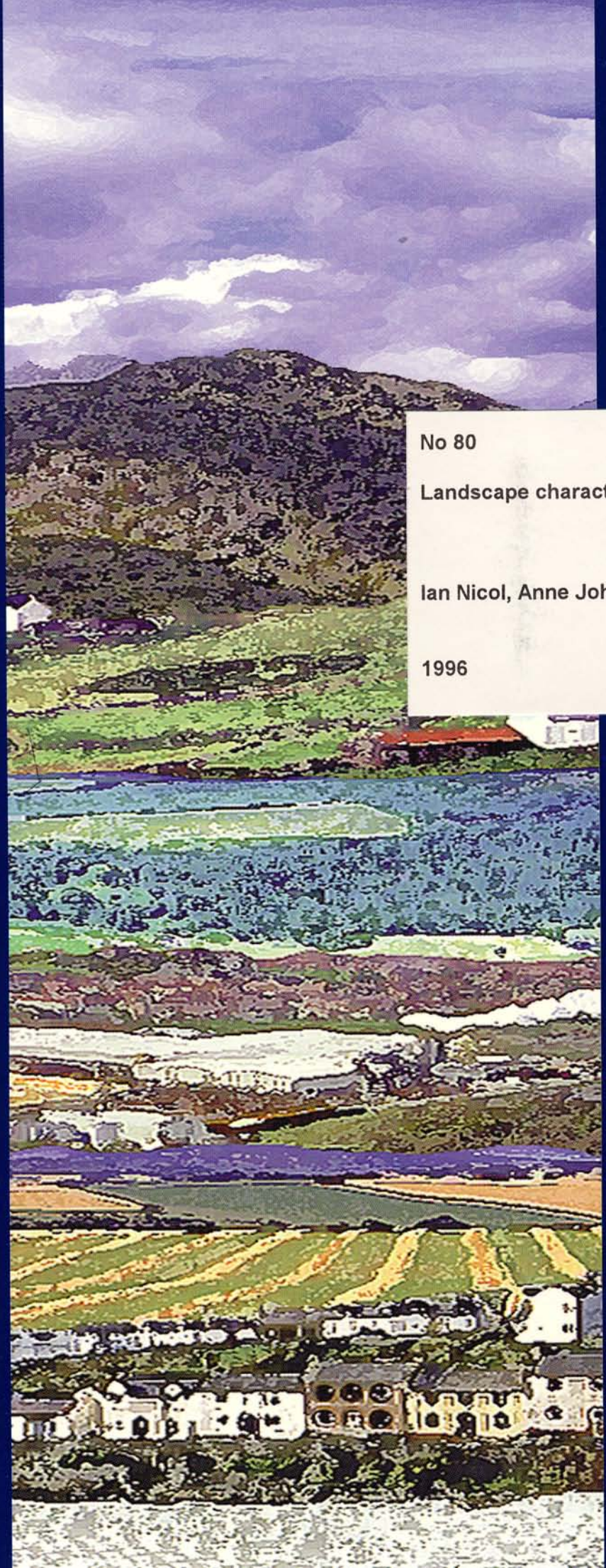

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Landscape character assessment of Aberdeen

Ian Nicol, Anne Johnston, Laura Campbell

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REVIEW

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Landscape Character Assessment of
ABERDEEN

FINAL REPORT

ABERDEEN
CITY COUNCIL

SCOTTISH
NATURAL
HERITAGE

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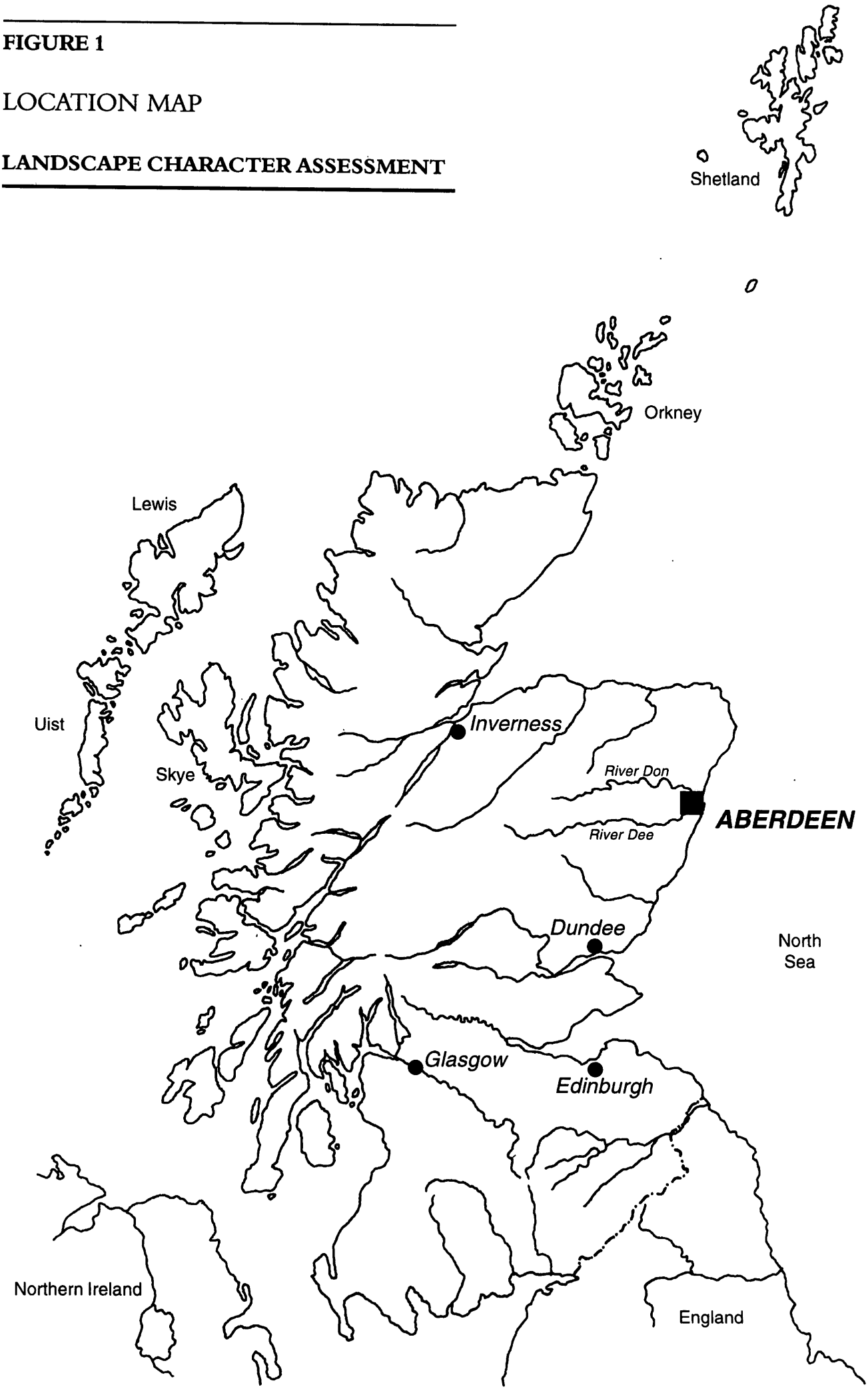


PREFACE

This report forms part of the National Programme of Landscape Character Assessment, which is being carried out by Scottish Natural Heritage in partnership with local authorities and other agencies.

The National Programme aims to improve our knowledge and understanding of the contribution that landscape makes to the natural heritage of Scotland.

This study was carried out jointly by staff from Aberdeen City Council and Scottish Natural Heritage (North East Region). It provides a detailed assessment of the landscape character of the city of Aberdeen; considers the likely pressures and opportunities for change in the landscape; assesses the sensitivity of the landscape to such change and includes guidelines indicating how landscape character may be conserved, enhanced, or restructured as appropriate.

The report will be of interest to all those concerned with land management and landscape change. More specifically, it is intended to provide the landscape context for SNH staff responding to planning and landuse related casework. It is also hoped that the information it contains will be of use to Aberdeen City Council in the production of its local plans.

The views contained within this report represent those of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect the policies and views of either SNH or Aberdeen City Council.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Background

1.1 Although landscape can be defined most simply as "the appearance of the land," in a fuller sense it also comprises the interaction through time of geological, ecological and human influences. These processes are continual, and a key characteristic of landscape is the fact that it is constantly changing. The speed of such change has quickened with humans' increasing technical ability to alter their surroundings. Concurrently, recognition of the importance of landscape in representing the condition of the natural and cultural resource has increased.

1.2 As a result of this growing awareness, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and many local authorities are collaborating to produce baseline landscape data for the whole of Scotland. The individual district- or regional-wide studies within the series of landscape assessments identify what is present in the landscape we see today, try to understand how it evolved, and to consider how it might alter given current pressures for change. This report undertakes this for the City of Aberdeen.

Aberdeen

1.3 Aberdeen is located in the north-east of Scotland. It is a harbour town that is largely situated between the two valleys of the rivers Dee and Don. The influence of these coastal and river landscapes upon its development has been considerable. They are elements have helped to create a strong sense of identity.

1.4 The two river valleys are instrumental in forming visible and distinctive links with the surrounding landscape. They bring elements of the countryside and associated flora and fauna right through the city, and are a main characteristic of Aberdeen. The valleys, and the ring of low hills which encloses the western side of the city, provide views of the countryside from many points even within the built-up area and imbue the city with a diverse character.

1.5 The townscape of Aberdeen is renowned for its individuality: built distinctively from local stone, it is known as "the Granite City". This unique quality, and the importance of the setting in which the town sits, have helped to prompt this study. The report concentrates on the rural surroundings of the city because, despite the significant contribution made by "brownfield" developments, that is where many development pressures and forces for change are concentrated, and where they would have greatest impact on the landscape. This report makes no attempt to assess the character of the urban area itself. However, views out from the city to the surrounding countryside are considered in the report.

Landscape Assessment

1.6 "Landscape assessment" is a generic term for the process of describing, analysing, and classifying landscape. It can also be used as a basis for evaluating landscapes, but this is not part of the present study, as *landscape evaluation* involves attaching a value, based on specific criteria, to a particular landscape, or landscape type, or landscape feature. Evaluation is not an essential component of landscape assessment. *Landscape description* includes the collection and presentation of information about landscapes. *Landscape classification* is a more analytical procedure that sorts the landscape into different units each of which has a distinct, consistent character (Countryside Commission (1993) *Landscape Assessment Guidance*). Classification can be carried out at various scales: two were used in this study (see paragraph 1.8). At one extreme, a broad classification would be based on a regional scale; at the other all identified areas could be progressively broken down to extremely small areas, as every piece of landscape is unique to some degree. However, it is by recognising common landscape components and their patterns that enables classification to be achieved at a more sensible level.

1.7 The components that form a landscape and affect its sensitivity to future change, and that are therefore used in analysing its character are:-

(1) Landform,
(2) Vegetation,
(3) Human influences (such as the settlement pattern), and

The interaction of these is what produces a particular landscape, and the study of how they have combined over time is the study of landscape evolution (Chapter 3 in this report). These components are also used as criteria when classifying landscapes. How it was carried out in this study is detailed in the following paragraphs.

Purpose of the Study

Landscape Classification

1.8 Two levels of classification were carried out in Aberdeen: at a broad scale, resulting in five Landscape Character Types; and at a more detailed scale, which resulted in twenty-seven Landscape Character Areas that "fit into" the larger Character Types. (This terminology of landscape character types and areas is the one used in the national programme of assessments co-ordinated by Scottish Natural Heritage.)

1.9 The broader scale classification (described in Chapter 6) looks at the city area as a whole and draws out only the most obvious differences. At this level of detail the classification and descriptions act as a summary of the landscape character of the city. They have been amalgamated from the more detailed area descriptions so that the two are not contradictory, but they also work at a "common sense" level of what people may instinctively know to be the major components of the Aberdeen landscape.

1.10 The criteria used to arrive at the broad-brush classification were two landscape attributes, i.e. landform (principally), and vegetation. Using broad topographical features, areas of coast, hills, and major valleys were easily identified (see map, Figure 11). The large area of more indeterminate landform amongst these features was further divided to a more useful level of classification by including major differences in vegetation. Therefore, all of this area has been labelled "farmland", further classified into either "wooded" or "open" (i.e. not well-wooded).

1.11 To arrive at the more detailed level of classification, the other landscape component of human aspects was added to a closer assessment of vegetation patterns and landform. This resulted in the identification of twenty-seven Landscape Character Areas (see map, Figure 12). This level of analysis revealed differences within the larger Landscape Character Types. For example, an area of similar topography could contain areas with significantly different settlement or vegetation patterns. The description of each Landscape Character Area aims to draw out the differences that make each Area distinctive.

Sensitivity to Landscape Change

1.12 For each Landscape Character Area, the pressures for change that are likely to affect the landscape were identified. These included built development; improved or new transportation routes; landfill and mineral extraction works; changes in agricultural and forestry; and new recreational facilities. The various development types were assessed for their likely impact on each Landscape Character Area, in order to provide an indication of its sensitivity to change. This was based on how visible an area is, judged from public viewpoints such as major roads, as well as on the potential for an area to accommodate development as indicated by its character, for example by extending any existing tree planting patterns.

Landscape Guidelines

1.13 Based on the landscape character of each area, and further developed from the sensitivity analysis, specific landscape guidelines are drawn up for the Character Areas. These identify how the existing character may be conserved, restored, or enhanced as appropriate. It should be noted that the guidelines address landscape and related issues only; the socio-economic and political aspects which inevitably affect land and its use are outwith the scope of this study. The guidelines were also used as a check for the accuracy of the Landscape Character Areas themselves: adjacent areas with the same guidelines, for example, indicated that the Areas might look different, but that they had similar underlying character.

Uses of the Study

1.14 It is hoped that this landscape assessment will be used in casework by Scottish Natural Heritage staff and others; and by Aberdeen City Council as a contribution to the preparatory survey work which is being undertaken as part of the review of its Local Plan. In this sense, it will form only part of the far wider range of social, economic and physical factors which the City Council will need to consider in adopting a balanced development strategy for the future. The final report may also provide a landscape basis for input into a review of countryside policies. In addition, it may provide a basic level of information for monitoring future landscape change.

1.15 It must be emphasised further that this study focuses solely upon landscape and visual issues. It aims, by descriptive and analytical means, to help lead to an understanding of the existing landscape setting of Aberdeen and the links between it and its surroundings. It also serves to point towards ways in which the landscape setting of the city may be modified in future and which may need to be adjusted once a development strategy has been agreed. This will depend on the manner in which the pressures for change are managed; how the varying sensitivities to change of individual areas are dealt with; and whether positive steps are taken through development policies and project work to modify, conserve, restore, or enhance particular elements of the landscape. It is generally observed that urban / suburban development can happen rapidly, with varying consequential visual impacts. However, landscape amelioration to counter adverse effects tends to evolve slowly.

1.16 The Landscape Character Assessment of Aberdeen will form part of a series of reports co-ordinated by Scottish Natural Heritage that will cover the whole of Scotland. In landuse policy terms, the report will also form part of a series of background documents, topic papers and survey records produced as a preliminary contribution towards the current review of the Development Plan for Aberdeen City. It will also serve a useful purpose in the identification of future, or support of existing, landscape project work around the city urban fringe, and possibly extending into the built-up area itself.

Format of the Report

1.17 Following this introduction, Chapter 2 describes the methodology that was used to carry out the study. Chapter 3 contains an account of the evolution of the landscape of the Aberdeen area, looking at both physical and human aspects of the process. Chapter 4 details the forces for landscape change which are likely to affect the area, while Chapter 5 outlines the visual aspects of the landscape. Chapter 6 describes and maps the Landscape Character Types which have been identified. It should be noted that the boundaries of the individual Landscape Character Types or Areas are not finite. They merely indicate an approximate threshold between areas that have broadly different attributes.

1.18 In Chapter 7, the twenty-seven Landscape Character Areas are mapped and described. The key characteristics of each Area, together with its sensitivity to change, are detailed. Finally, guidelines are given to indicate how the character of each area might be conserved, enhanced or restored. It should be emphasised that these guidelines are not prescriptive, but are intended to provide a guide for how the distinctive landscape setting of Aberdeen, as it exists at present, could be taken into account when making decisions about the development of the city.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 The methodology used in this study was based on the *"Landscape Assessment Guidance"* (CCP 423) published in 1993 by the Countryside Commission. Basically a combination of desk study and field survey, the process is a structured, methodical way of describing and analysing the landscape. The following description of the methodology is divided into several distinct steps, but in reality the procedure is "iterative", with less separation between the various stages of work than is implied below. Although 1:50,000 is a more usual scale for this type of work, the Aberdeen study was based on 1:25,000 scale maps. This particular approach was taken because of the relatively small size of the district, the greater level of detail that was required from the report, and the importance of both the landmarks within the city and its landscape setting. For this study, as an addition to the standard method, an assessment of the degree of visibility of various areas near the city was carried out. It is the first time that this scale and visibility "analysis" has been used within the SNH series of assessments.

Familiarisation

2.2 The first stage was a brief field survey of the whole study area. This was in order to form an overview of the range of landscapes and the relative variety between them.

Background Research

2.3 This was carried out to provide an understanding of how the landscape of the Aberdeen area has evolved into its present state, and it formed the basis for the chapter in the report on landscape evolution. It involved assessing both the physical and cultural impacts and how they have affected the environment. The bibliography lists the references that were used.

Desk Study

2.4 Based on a 1:25,000 O.S. map, an outline of areas with broadly similar landform (outwith the built-up area) were identified. This initial classification was used as a basis for the more detailed analysis in the field. About 20 separate areas were identified at first; following field work and further desk study a finer-grained network of 27 character areas was arrived at.

2.5 The field survey forms, although based on a standard form, were modified to suit local circumstances. For example, drystone dykes were added to the types of field boundary; and commercial buildings were added to types of development because of their prevalence on the urban edge in the study area. The standard form also included four factors of "impression", namely degree of wildness, beauty, management and productivity. However, these were not used in the field assessment as they were thought unnecessary in achieving a classification of landscape character types within the study area, and could be misleading. A copy of the survey form is included in Appendix 2.

2.6 During the desk study the viewpoints at which the field survey forms would be used were identified. All viewpoints had to be publicly accessible as well as providing reasonably typical views of the area being assessed. Generally, two survey points within, or adjacent to, each draft character area were noted. There was also the overall aim of achieving an even distribution of viewpoints across the study area to try to ensure that no small, or subtly different, character areas were missed.

Field Survey

2.7 The classification field survey was the most lengthy part of the procedure. Its purpose was to assess the landscape as perceived from the ground - which is how people experience landscape - and it is fundamental to the assessment process. At each viewpoint, a field survey form was separately completed by both members of the assessment team, and a panoramic photograph was taken.

Classification

2.8 The more detailed landscape character areas were identified first, before being grouped into broader areas of landscape character type. It was during this stage that the number of draft character areas was increased to twenty-seven, an indication of the variety of landscape within the city area especially to the west; and also illustrative of the degree of perceived spatial intimacy around the urban area. These character areas were then aggregated into 5 broad landscape character types that correspond to the usual scale of working for character assessment used by SNH, i.e. 1:50,000. These also tie-in with character areas that have been identified in the landscape assessments for adjacent study areas. Each character area and type has been mapped (see figures) and described (see Chapters 6 and 7).

Consultations

2.9 These were carried out within the local authority and the north east region of SNH. The main purpose was to identify the forces for change that were likely to affect the landscape of Aberdeen. The landscape assessment of the adjoining (former) Gordon District Council area was also consulted to ensure that there was compatibility between the two administrative areas.

Degree of Visibility

2.10 An assessment of the degree of visibility of areas was carried out as a separate part of the landscape assessment. The significant viewpoints were identified as main through roads and main routes of entry to the city. Significant elements in views from locations along these routes were noted. The exercise was used to note the visual aspects and impressions on approaching the city. It was also used as one criterion in assessing the relative sensitivity of areas to various types of new development; i.e. the more visible an area was from major viewpoints, the more sensitive to development it could be assessed as being. It would also, by implication, have more potential effects upon the landscape setting of the city as perceived by the population. This aspect is covered for each landscape character area.

Sensitivity to Change

2.11 In this study this was assessed during a separate field survey conducted using specifically designed survey forms. This was because of the importance of identifying areas that would be most affected - in landscape and visual terms - by development; and the possibility of this type of information feeding in to future Development Plan processes. A copy of the sensitivity to change survey form is attached in Appendix 2.

Guidelines

2.12 For each landscape character area, guidelines indicating how its present landscape character could be retained or enhanced are given. This is not meant to imply that further development is necessarily unacceptable. The intention is to indicate how change might affect the area, and to show how it could be accommodated more easily in landscape and visual terms. Determining whether future development might be acceptable or otherwise for particular areas is not the remit of this study. However, it is hoped that subsequent decisions on such topics will be made following the assessment in this report, and that this study will form one component in the preparation of a suitable checklist of aims and objectives for the future management of the landscape character of the city. In addition, it is hoped that this report may be useful in the preparation of a comprehensive landscape strategy for the future maintenance, enhancement or restoration of parts of the Aberdeen landscape.

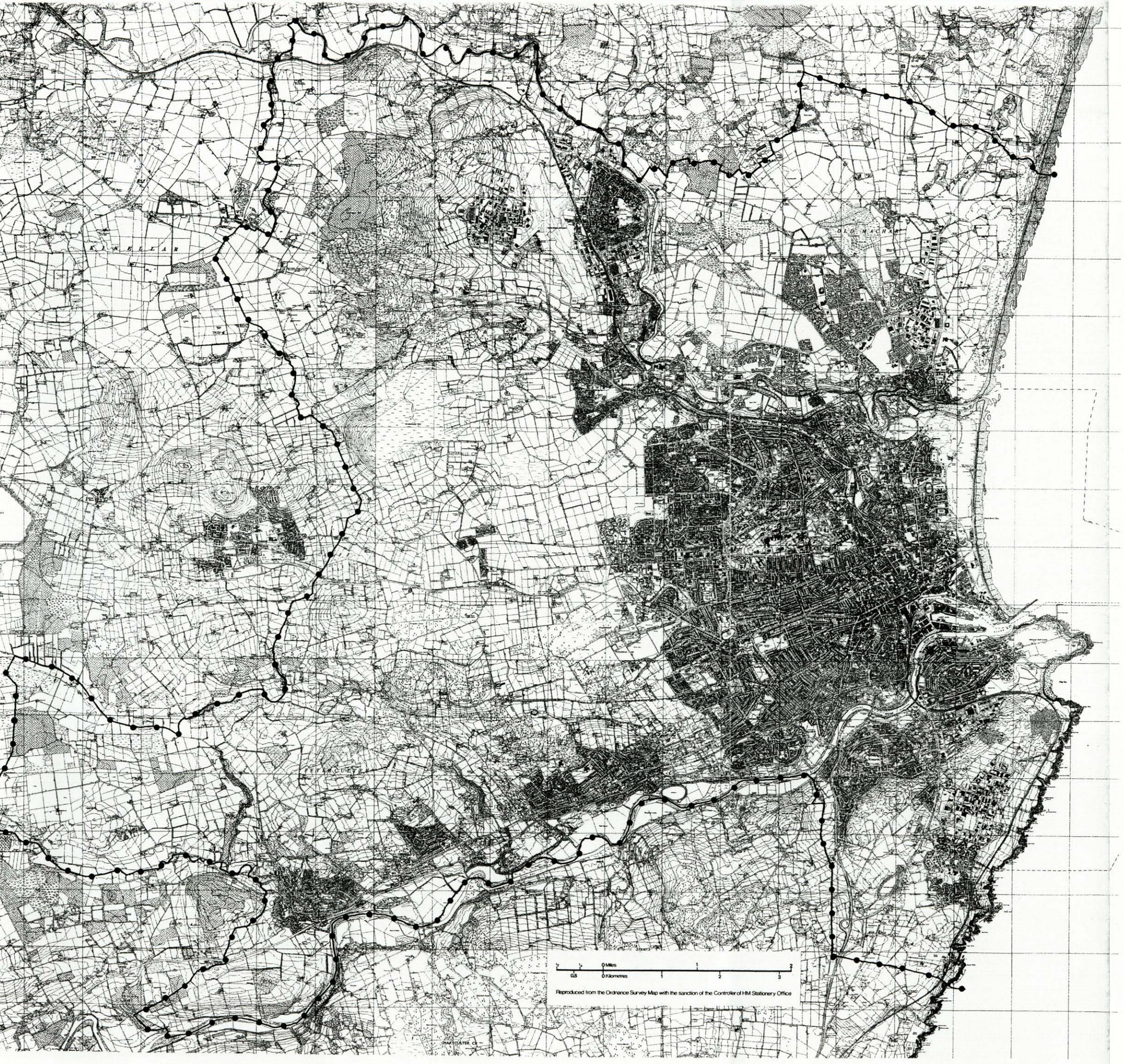


FIGURE 2

STUDY AREA

CITY BOUNDARY

ABERDEEN CITY

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMEN

3.0 LANDSCAPE EVOLUTION

INTRODUCTION

3.1 The landscape of Aberdeen has been formed by the interaction of a variety of factors. These include physical influences such as geology, climate and vegetation, and also how humans have altered the resulting natural environment. Clearly, the influence of humans in an area as developed as Aberdeen has been profound. However, the development of the city has been gradual and, before technology reached its present advanced stage, it involved a more direct response to the natural landscape. This chapter outlines the physical and human forces that have formed the current landscape of Aberdeen, and tries to make clear the interaction between them.

PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

Solid Geology

3.2 The oldest rocks in the study area are metamorphosed sedimentary rocks, dating from the pre-Cambrian to Cambrian geological eras, which were originally deposited when Scotland was located on the south-eastern edge of the Laurentian-Greenland continent (Craig 1991), between 1200 and 600 million years ago. These rocks are know as Dalradian and, over time, they have been subjected to several periods of deformation during regional (large-scale) metamorphism. This has resulted in highly complex structures that are difficult to interpret, as each deformation episode masked the evidence of previous events. The most intensely metamorphosed rocks in the area are found near Aberdeen (BAAS 1963). Within the study area, the cliffs from Aberdeen southwards, for example at Girdle Ness, provide exposures that display many complex structural features (Whittow 1992). The most resistant of the metamorphic rocks are quartzites (BAAS 1963), and they are associated with the high ground in the area, such as Brimmond and Tyrebagger Hills.

3.3 The Dalradian sequence is interrupted in places by intrusions of igneous rocks. These were intruded into the surrounding rocks during the Caledonian Orogeny (i.e. mountain-building episode) (Craig 1991), which occurred approximately 400 to 460 million years ago. The largest outcrop in the study area underlies much of the west of the city, extending from north of Dyce southwards to the Dee. The famous Rubislaw Quarry is located within this area of granite. Now no longer worked, at 142 metres it was probably the deepest quarry of its type in the world (BAAS 1963). Up to Victorian times most of the buildings in Aberdeen were constructed from solid granite, until rising costs prevented the stone being used for more than facing or decorative work. This prevalent use of granite is the most noted characteristic of the city. Rubislaw and the quarry at Kemnay supplied stone for building docks and lighthouses as well as houses and municipal buildings (Whittow 1992).

3.4 Near the coast, and up to about 2 km inland, Aberdeen north of the River Dee is underlain by an outcrop of Old Red Sandstone, comprising un-metamorphosed sedimentary rock in the form of conglomerate, sandstones, and various argillaceaous (clay-rich) horizons. The sediments that formed it were deposited in Devonian times, between approximately 345 and 395 million year ago (Whitten & Brooks), in a semi-arid climate when Scotland was between 20 and 30 degrees south of the equator (Trewin et al, 1987). The Old Red Sandstone was deposited, possibly in the form of alluvial fans, directly onto the old Dalradian surface that had been revealed by extensive intervening erosion. The unconformity between these layers of rock can be seen in a low cliff face on the southern bank of the Don just east of the Brig o' Balgownie (Trewin et al, 1987).

3.5 The coast where the Old Red Sandstone occurs consists of the wide sandy beach at Aberdeen, the shifting estuary of the Don, and the dune system to the north where the links are now used for golf. In complete contrast, where the Dalradian rocks form the coastline south of Aberdeen, the coast takes the form of cliffs. The rocks here are interspersed by igneous (dolerite) dykes that were injected into the existing rock approximately 295 million years ago, during the late Carboniferous period, when Scotland was located near the equator. These dykes were more easily eroded than the surrounding metamorphic rocks, and the differential erosion that occurred has resulted in the highly varied coastline of today (Whittow, 1992).

Drift Geology

3.6 The present landform of Aberdeen is the result of various erosional and depositional processes acting on the underlying solid geology over time. Generally, the more resistant rocks form the higher ground while softer rocks have been subject to greater erosion. In comparison with the west of the country, the drier north-east of Scotland was eroded less by rivers and glaciers, but glaciation has still been the most significant recent agent of erosion and deposition. During the Quaternary period (from 2 million to 10,000 years ago) many separate glaciations occurred, but understandably only the last, termed the Devensian (approximately 11,500 years ago), has left a noticeable onshore record (Trewin et al, 1987).

3.7 The Cairngorm plateau and the Mounth were probably major sources of the ice sheets that flowed roughly eastwards. The high ground would have been glacially eroded with deposits occurring on lower ground, for example along much of the Dee valley (Trewin et al, 1987). The vast quantities of meltwater that resulted when the glaciers shrank due to the warming climate deposited large amounts of eroded material, and had sufficient power to carve out channels in the substrate. Zones of relative weakness, for example existing river valleys or fault lines, were deepened the most.

3.8 Both the Dee and the Don currently follow meltwater channels that were cut into bedrock. The Dee used to outflow at Nigg Bay, south of its present estuary, but the old channel was infilled with glacial deposits, including some erratics of Scandinavian origin (Trewin et al, 1987). This is possible evidence of the wastage of older ice sheets than the Devensian (Munro 1986). The Don has also changed its course through what is now Seaton Park. The constricted and shallow outlet of the river negated its use as a harbour, but its steep course and rapids downstream from Cothall near Dyce ensured its use as a power source for fabric and, subsequently, paper mills. In contrast the mouth of the Dee, after considerable dredging, formed the basis of the important harbour of Aberdeen. (Whittow, 1992)

3.9 Other meltwater features such as valley side-terraces and eskers were formed in the area: for example the ridge between the Dee and Don estuaries, at either end of which the early, separate settlements of Aberdeen were located (Whittow, 1992; BAAS, 1963) is an esker. The small-scale undulating topography between Tyrebagger and Brimmond Hills is due to kames being deposited by meltwater, and the spillways that were carved into the hillsides by ice, water and debris (BAAS, 1963).

3.10 Away from the meltwater channels widespread rock debris, or till, was plastered over the lower terrain by the retreating ice. It is likely that much of this boulder clay that was moved by the ice was developed from local material (Munro 1986). The painstaking work of clearing the larger stones from the boulder clay to improve the cultivability of the soil resulted in the distinctive drystone dykes that form field boundaries in many parts of the area. The sand and gravel morainic mounds in the area - Ferryhill, Woolmanhill, and Broad Hill for example - are distinctive in the topography of Aberdeen itself (BAAS, 1963).

3.11 In the 11,500 years or so since the last ice sheets melted, minor changes to the drift geology of the area have continued to occur. There is evidence of peri-glacial activity throughout the Aberdeen area and hinterland (Munro 1986). It may be that this coincided with the last glaciation in Scotland - the Loch Lomond Readvance - which did not directly affect the area around Aberdeen, but which would have been accompanied by a lowering of temperature across the country. The changes in sea level as the glaciers melted resulted in the raised beach deposits that are located between the mouths of the rivers Dee and Don (Munro 1986). In addition to the present day beach and dune systems along the coast at Aberdeen, recent deposits include the alluvium that occurs along the stream valleys, and, at a larger scale, in the valleys of the Dee and Don. Peat deposits also occur in the area, particularly in the poorly-drained basins that were the result of glacial erosion (Munro 1986).

Climate

3.12 As it is located on the east side of the country, Aberdeen has a relatively low rainfall compared to the west of Scotland. However, its consequent exposure to cold easterly winds in winter can result in a considerable amount of snow, although there tends to be less at the coast than at higher altitudes. The easterly aspect also makes the city vulnerable to haar (sea mist), particularly in spring. (BAAS, 1963)

3.13 The variation in slope, height and aspect (see Figure 5) within the city has influenced the sequence of its development. The early buildings and suburbs were located on open ground or south-facing slopes: Deeside, for example, is highly built-up on its north bank, but its southern side remains largely undeveloped. In contrast, the newer housing area of Kincorth is located on the north-facing bank of the Dee. Higher ground was also avoided until more recently because of its greater exposure to wind and longer length of snow lie: the Northfield area, for example, was built relatively recently. (BAAS, 1963)

Soils

3.14 Soils can be broadly classified according to the parent material that formed them. However, this basic division is complicated by the interaction of other factors including climate, vegetation, time, and human influences. It is common in north-east Scotland for soils to have better drainage on hill slopes than in flatter areas, although this will be locally dependent on soil parent material, soil texture and degree of slope (BAAS, 1963).

3.15 As would be expected given the geology of the area, most of its soils are formed from glacial till that was derived from granitic rocks. In the study area it is known as the Countesswells association (a soil association is a series of soils that share a common parent material). Variations within this depend on how freely-drained the soil is, with better-drained soils generally occurring on higher ground. Soils formed from a different parent material are found in the river valleys and tributaries, where they developed on alluvium or meltwater-sorted sands and gravels. (MLURI Soil Survey of Scotland, Aberdeen Sheet 77, 1962)

3.16 The stony nature of the till-derived soils is revealed by the extensive use of drystone dykes to demarcate fields. Rock outcrops occur fairly frequently, and woodland and trees are often grown where the ground is too stony for cultivation (BAAS, 1963). The length of the growing season decreases as altitude increases, and a height of approximately 240 metres is often the limit for cultivation (BAAS, 1963). Forestry is feasible above this, and this is reflected in the pattern of tree-capped hills in the west of the study area. The majority of agricultural land around the city has a medium capability classification under the Macaulay Land Use Capability system. There are very few areas of higher quality land, except in the alluvial soils next to the rivers Dee and Don.

Vegetation

3.17 The topography of the area provides a wide range of plant habitats, from coastal cliffs and dunes to river valleys and hill slopes. While the coastal habitats are largely unchanged from their natural state due to their limited usefulness (except, relatively recently, for recreation), the inland areas have been significantly altered by humans over time. The natural vegetation of much of the inland reaches of the study area would have been woodland. This developed after the last glaciation when the climate, ameliorated by the presence of the North Atlantic Drift, gradually became suitable for tree growth. (Craig, 1991)

3.18 At first, dwarf shrub species such as crowberry and juniper were dominant. Tree species spread from the south of the country, with birch being established there about 10,000 years ago and hazel arriving slightly after this. Roughly 2,000 to 3,000 years later the birch-hazel woodland was succeeded by oak woods, and the species mix became richer (Craig 1991). Ash and elm would have been present with the oak on well-drained soils; on wetter soils it would have been accompanied by alder, hawthorn, hazel, willow, rowan and birch. (Edlin 1976). By approximately 6,500 to 5,000 years ago the forests had reached their maximum extent and diversity. The subsequent cooler, wetter climate, combined with increasing felling, brought about a decline in the woodland cover and a corresponding increase in peat, heath and grassland. (Craig, 1991)

3.19 Pollen analysis (Rackham, 1986) indicates that oak-hazel woodland was the most likely type around Aberdeen, and in much of lowland Scotland. The altitudinal limit for this type of woodland was probably around 300 metres (Edlin 1976). The higher ground and poorer soils would have been more likely - as at present - to support pine and birch woods (Tansley, 1968). In the 12th and 13th centuries there was a large royal forest close to Aberdeen, including "the Stocket" and Hazlehead, which was granted to the City in 1313 by King Robert I (Edlin 1976). Currently, in favourable locations in Aberdeenshire, beech (native in the south of England) can become established, but it is thought unlikely to be able to develop indefinitely (Tansley, 1968).

3.20 Throughout the country the extensive native woodlands were gradually felled for fuel, timber, and to clear ground for agriculture. The clearance began to reach a significant scale in the early seventeenth century (Tansley, 1968), accelerating through the following centuries until only pockets remained in the more inaccessible locations, such as steep river valley sides. The cleared areas were used for livestock rearing and cultivation. A trend among landowners that gathered pace in the eighteenth century (Tansley, 1968) to replant trees on a large scale only partially re-stocked the cleared countryside. Sycamore, beech and sweet chestnut were amongst the species planted (Edlin 1976). Within the study area, the policy woodlands at Grandholme and Hazlehead may be examples of this activity.

3.21 The present landcover is illustrated on Figure 6, and primarily consists of extensive areas of agricultural land, both pasture and arable. Moorland occurs on a few areas of hilltop (Brimmond Hill and Elrick Hill); elsewhere forestry plantation is the dominant hill-top vegetation. Deciduous woodland is notable in areas of old policy planting; also on steep areas of river bank, for example at Seaton Park near the Brig o' Balgownie; and in established suburban areas, particularly along Deeside.

FIGURE 3

SIMPLIFIED SOLID GEOLOGY

This Map has been reduced from the 1:50000 Series Geological Map.

SEDIMENTARY ROCKS

DEVONIAN (UNDIVIDED)

- Conglomerate, with subsidiary horizons of sandstone and clay

METASEDIMENTARY ROCKS

DALRADIAN SUPERGROUP (not in stratigraphical order)

Aberdeen Formation

- Psammite
- Psammite, semipelite and subsidiary pelite with very sparse calc-silicate ribs
- Pelite and semipelite with sparse calc-silicate ribs

Ellon Formation

- Cordierite-bearing sheared and recrystallised psammite, semipelite and pelite; amphibolite bands

Collieston Formation

- Psammite, meta-greywacke, knotted schist with calc-silicate ribs
- Quartz-plagioclase-garnet-cordierite-gniess with xenoliths of quartzite and of hornfelsed pelitic, semipelitic and calc-silicate rocks
- Hornfelsed rocks, commonly containing sillimanite and spinel (Host shown by symbol where known, eg Qs)
- Calc-silicate rock

- Minor occurrence of calc-silicate rock
- Minor occurrence of calc-silicate rock with thin limestone

IGNEOUS AND METAMORPHOSED IGNEOUS ROCKS

INTRUSIVE AND VEIN ROCKS

Permo-Carboniferous

- **Dolerite** and **basalt** (dykes)

Igneous rocks associated with the Caledonian Orogeny

Non-metamorphosed

Post-Tectonic

- **Felsite** (sheets and dykes)
- **Lamprophyre** (undivided) (dykes)
- **Explosion breccia**
- **Granodiorite** (major intrusions of Clinterty and Crathes)

Locally affected by metamorphism

Late-to Post-Tectonic

- **Granite pegmatite**, locally garnetiferous (veins and sheets)
- **Foliated muscovite-biotite-granite** (vein complexes and major intrusions)
- **Tonalite**
- **Diorite**

Belhelvie, Insch and Udny-Pitmedden complexes

- **Gabbro** and **norite**
- **Troctolite**
- **Peridotite**

Metamorphosed

Pre-to Syn-Tectonic

Originally dykes and sheets

- **Amphibolite** and **hornblende-schist**
- **Amphibolite** and **hornblende-schist** with subsidiary bands of **pelite** and **semipelite**
- Minor occurrences of amphibolite and hornblende-schist, attitude unknown
- **Metamorphosed ultramafic rocks**

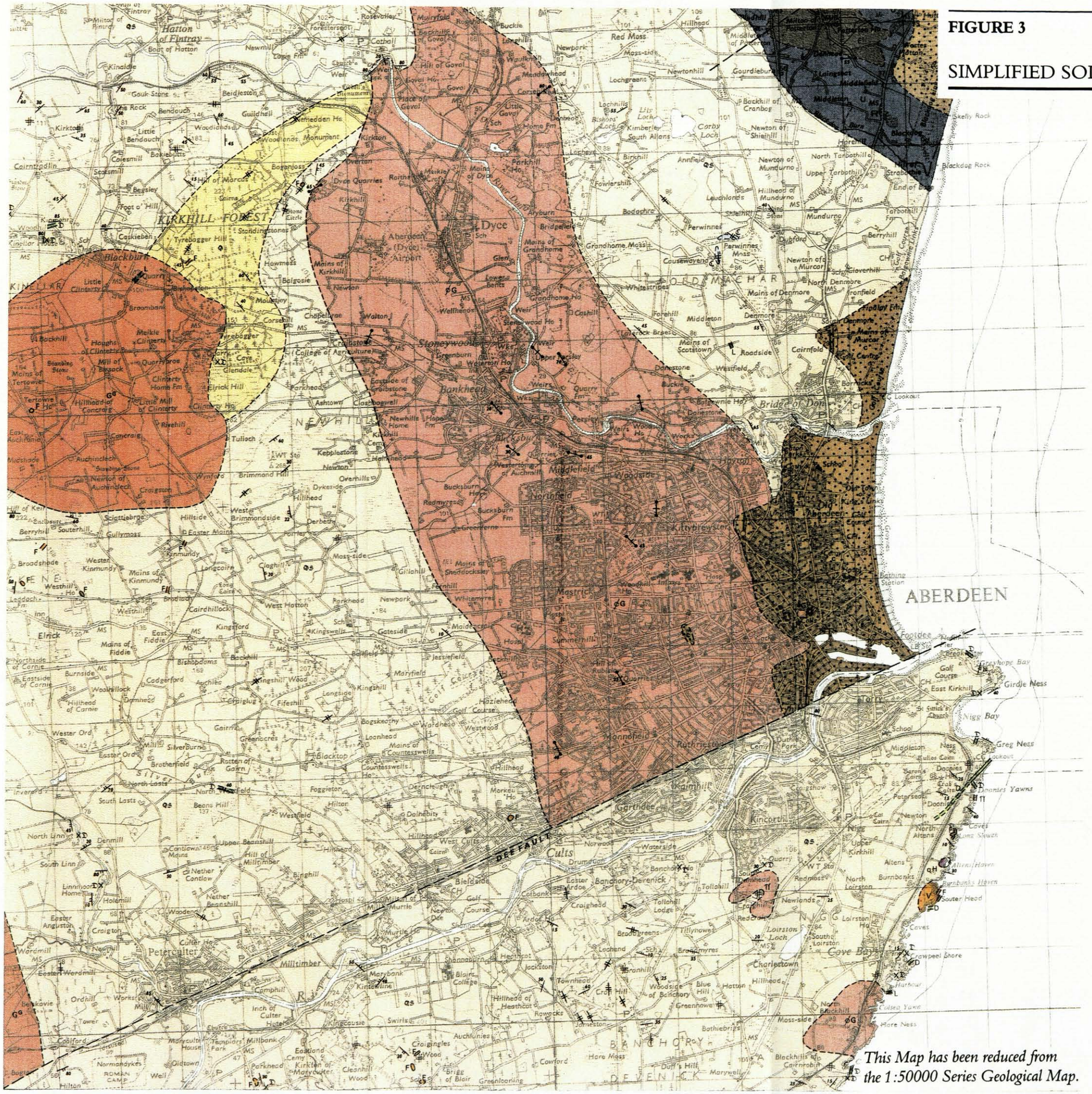
- Geological boundary
- Geological boundary, including boundaries delineated by geophysics
- Fault

Broken lines denote uncertainty

- Bedding inclined, dip in degrees
- Foliation/banding horizontal
- Foliation/banding inclined, dip in degrees
- Foliation/banding vertical
- Foliation/banding, generalised disposition horizontal
- Schistosity/cleavage, dip in degrees
- Schistosity/cleavage vertical
- Primary layering in igneous rocks, dip in degrees
- Primary layering in igneous rocks, vertical

FIGURE 3

SIMPLIFIED SOLID GEOLOGY



This Map has been reduced from the 1:50000 Series Geological Map.

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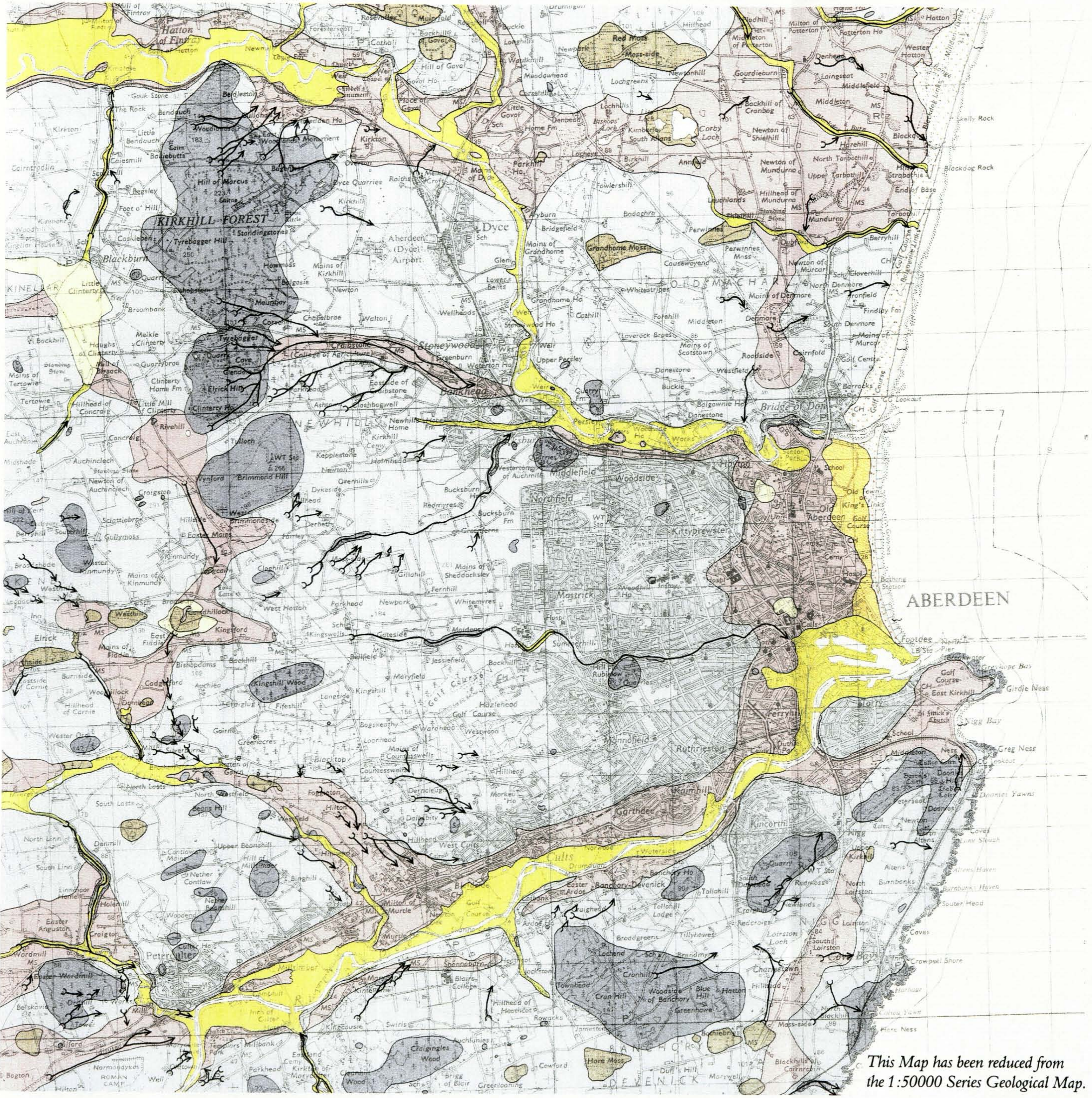


This Map has been reduced from the 1:50000 Series Geological Map.

FIGURE 4

SIMPLIFIED DRIFT GEOLOGY

EXPLANATION

RECENT AND PLEISTOCENE

Blown sand: dunes and mounds of cross-bedded fine sand, locally containing shell debris

Peat: mainly basin peat deposits, formed in poorly drained hollows and shallow lakes

River alluvium: flood-plain, river-terrace and alluvial-fan deposits of clay, silt, sand and gravel

Lake alluvium: clay, silt or sand deposited in former lake basins

Present beach deposits: soft mud, silt, sand, shingle and boulders deposited within the intertidal zone

Raised beach deposits, Post-Glacial: flat coastal spreads of sand and gravel, and estuarine flats of clay, silt and sand

Glacial meltwater deposits: moundy deposits and terrace-like spreads of water-sorted sand and fine to coarse gravel, locally containing layers or lenses of silt or clay. The moundy deposits are in many places covered by a thin impersistent layer of till

Laminated or massive clay, probably deposited in supra-glacial and pro-glacial lakes or, possibly, in a coastal marine environment

Till: widespread mantle of glacially deposited rock debris, consisting of unsorted, generally unstratified, clay, sandy clay or sand, usually containing many pebbles and boulders, but locally almost stoneless

? PRECAMBRIAN TO PERMO-CARBONIFEROUS

Bedrock at or near surface: mainly Dalradian schists and gneisses with major intrusions of granite, gabbro, etc., overlain around Aberdeen and Balmedie by Old Red Sandstone conglomerates and sandstones. Quartz-dolerite dykes of Permo-Carboniferous age are also present

Boundary of superficial deposit

Glacial drainage channel

Glacial drainage channel, one side only preserved

Glacial drainage channel, direction of water-flow uncertain

ABERDEEN CITY

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

FIGURE 5

TOPOGRAPHY

CONTOUR INTERVAL (in feet)

- 000 - 100
- 100 - 200
- 200 - 300
- 300 - 400
- 400 - 500
- 500 - 600
- 600 - 700
- 700 - 800
- 800 - 900

ABERDEEN CITY

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

FIGURE 6

SIMPLIFIED LANDCOVER

URBAN

WOODLAND

AGRICULTURE

DUNES, MOORLAND, GRASSLAND

0 Miles 1 2

0.5 0 Kilometres 1 2 3

NORTH

ABERDEEN CITY

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

HUMAN INFLUENCES

Early Settlers

3.22 Mesolithic flint-working sites uncovered during the course of archaeological excavations at The Green, close to the mouth of the River Dee, provide some of the earliest evidence for semi-permanent settlement in the Aberdeen area. These "hunter-gatherer" communities would have been the first to exploit the natural resources of the rivers, coast and woodlands and may have contributed to clearance of parts of the natural vegetation cover. Surviving burial cairns, occupying a prominent position on the Tullos ridge to the south of the present City, indicate the presence of late Neolithic and Bronze Age communities who farmed the land and kept domesticated animals, although no traces of associated settlements have yet been uncovered.

3.23 Pictish symbol stones which stand in the Kirkyard of the Chapel of St Fergus at Dyce are pointers to the communities which lived in the area in the 8th and 9th centuries, about whom very little is known. One of the stones is decorated with a Christian cross which provides tangible evidence of the adoption of Christianity by the native population, to set alongside the dedications of various churches and chapels to Celtic saints and the tradition that St Machar, a disciple of Columba of Iona, was the first to introduce Christianity to this part of the North East.

Twelfth to Eighteenth Centuries

3.24 It has been suggested that the dedication of the chapel at Fittie (Footdee) to St Clement, a saint revered by Danish sea-faring communities, may point to a small settlement in the mouth of the estuary founded by traders from across the North Sea in the 11th century. The dedication of the parish church of Aberdeen to St Nicholas also speaks of the strong maritime influence which shaped and characterised the burgh of Aberdeen which developed around the natural harbour at the mouth of the River Dee, and which was created a Royal Burgh in the reign of David I (1124 - 1153).

3.25 The River Don estuary was narrower than the Dee and constantly changed through the repeated deposition of silt and sand. As a result, it was not suitable for development as a harbour. In the 12th century, a small religious centre grew up close to the River Don, focused on St Machar's Church, the cathedral of the Diocese of Aberdeen. This settlement - Old Aberdeen - was created a Free Burgh of Barony in 1498 and it functioned as a distinct and separate community from "New" Aberdeen in the south, having its own social, political, religious, and economic infrastructure, until both towns merged in 1891.

3.26 With the advent of the oil boom in the mid 1970's, and the associated re-development of much of the City centre, the opportunity arose to excavate several sites within the bounds of the former medieval burgh. The information thus uncovered, carried out in tandem with documentary research, has revealed much about the growth and character of Aberdeen over several centuries; its trading links with a vast hinterland, the sea-borne import and export trade upon which the economy depended, and the day-to-day decisions of the Burgh Council which ultimately influenced and dictated most aspects of life in the town.

3.27 By 1300 the street pattern, which survived unaltered until the late 18th century, was well established. It was centred around the focus of the main roads leading to and from the harbour. Broad Street / Gallowgate formed the main route from Old Aberdeen and the north whilst Castle Street formed part of the road to the south and also served as the link between the castle at one end of the burgh and the parish church at the other. A number of other streets radiated out form this outline, among them Shore Brae, Futty Wind, Upper and Nether Kirkgate and Putachieside. The hummocky terrain that was the result of glacial deposition would have influenced the alignment of these routes. For example, the road linking Old and New Aberdeen was built on a north-south orientated ridge of morainic deposits.

3.28 Of major importance to the prosperity of the burgh were the watercourses which provided power for the town mills and water for the many small industrial activities which flourished in the town. The Loch, which lay to the immediate north-west of the burgh, provided much of the supply through its outlet the Mill Burn, while the Denburn and Puttachie Burn were of importance in the south-western sector of the town. Over time the Loch dried out, leaving the area of marshland that was recorded on the earliest map of Old and New Aberdeen, drawn in 1661. Marshland also precluded the early growth of settlements beside the link road between the two burghs where the leper hospital stood in isolation until the development of the Mounthooly and Spital areas in the late 18th century.

3.29 Most of the buildings in the 12th - 14th century burgh were constructed of timber which was weather- and water-proofed by the addition of daub, and thatched with heather, rushes or straw. Only St Nicholas Church, the Tolbooth, and the Friaries were built of stone. Continual re-building of the relatively flimsy, fire-prone buildings occurred. This required a constant source of timber, and consequently the surrounding forest was gradually cut back. As the pressure of population increased, new houses were built with their gable ends to the street. The addition of extra stories was used as a means of accommodating more and more people in the same limited area, rather than expanding into the surrounding countryside to any significant extent.

3.30 By the 15th century, a distinctive pattern of land-holding was well established with the long-riggs (or tenements) partitioned into foreland, inland and backland, with the houses of the wealthier burgesses and merchants situated on the street frontage and the homes of poorer, more self-sufficient Aberdonians on the backlands. Gradually, stone - usually granite - became the preferred building material for those who could afford it, giving rise to fine examples of 16th century burgh architecture which survive in portions of Provost Skene's House (Guestrow) and Provost Ross's House (Shore Brae). Sandstone, quarried some distance away, was restricted to prestigious buildings or small intricate details and by the beginning of the 18th century brick was making an appearance.

3.31 Due to the need of timber for construction as well for farmland, the native forests around the town were gradually cut back, and from the twelfth century onwards much of the area was converted to pasture or open heath. Only two fragmented areas of woodland, at Stocket and Nigg, remained up to mediaeval times as royal hunting forests. These were subsequently passed to the burgesses of Aberdeen along with other "Freedom Lands" granted by King Robert the Bruce in the fourteenth century.

3.32 To the west and north of the burgh, the cleared croftlands provided a proportion of the grains and cereals milled at the town's mills and also some of the root crops consumed by the burgh's population. The area of cultivated fields continued right up to the edge of the town and small remnants of the medieval rig-and-furrow have survived. The cleared fields produced barley, oats, and root crops, or provided pasture for livestock. Beyond this area were moors and marshes through which very poor roads passed. Fishing rights on the Dee and Don were highly prized and tended to be monopolised by the burgh oligarchy which passed them on from generation to generation. Similarly, the right to collect shellfish from the shores was restricted by the council.

3.33 Aberdeen acted as a market for the surrounding rural areas with produce sold and exchanged around the fish and flesh crosses in the Castlegate close to the Burgh Tolbooth. The hinterland also provided the raw materials for the export trade: wool, hides, skins, tallow and salmon made up the bulk of cargoes sent to ports in present day Belgium and the Netherlands. Manufactured goods and luxury items formed the main imports with wines, spices, clothing and precious metals reaching the burgh alongside the more mundane, but necessary, timber, grain, wax and iron.

3.34 Aberdeen today comprises an amalgamation of several once distinct and separate communities which developed around the periphery of the medieval burgh. The fishing village of Fittie, the burgh of Torry, Ferryhill district and the weaving village of Gilcomston were only incorporated within Aberdeen in the last century. Traces of field systems outwith the bounds of the present urban area point to the presence of small farming communities which developed at some distance from the medieval town but which now form part of the modern conurbation, for example Bankhead, Bucksburn, Kinsgwells and Dyce.

3.35 Effective interaction with a wider hinterland (which stretched beyond present day Inverness to the north, and south to Montrose) assumes a certain level of sophistication existed in terms of communication, transport, and travel networks in the late medieval period. Sea transport formed one of the quickest and most effective ways of moving goods and people from place to place although the existence of rough roads also connected Aberdeen to the inland burghs, for example Kintore, Inverurie and Huntly. The Don Valley Canal was constructed at the start of the nineteenth century to link the Inverurie / Port Elphinstone area to the north-west with the city, mainly for the marketing of agricultural produce. With the Turnpike Road Act of 1800 a programme of widening and improving the existing road network in the County was instigated, linking Aberdeen with a country-wide system of highways.

Late Eighteenth Century Onwards

3.36 Within Aberdeen in the late 18th century, several new streets were constructed which dramatically changed the appearance of the town. St Katharine's Hill, a major landmark, was flattened to aid the construction of Union Street. King Street provided easy access from the Castlegate to the new Don Bridge (opened in 1830) and the laying out of George Street, St Nicholas Street and Rosemount Viaduct opened up access to the city centre. These developments, together with the construction of Victoria Bridge over the River Dee, opened the way for the outward expansion of the town, especially to the west and south. Along the coastal strip the Links were flattened and reduced in size to make way for additional housing.

3.37 Aberdeen harbour, which had proved adequate to cope with the demands of medieval shipping despite the constantly changing character of its shallow basin, was continually re-shaped throughout the 19th century. The North Pier was built in 1815, followed by the construction of Trinity, Waterloo and Regent Quays in 1829; the building of several wet docks; and the diversion of the channel of the River Dee to its present course in 1874. From 1839 Aberdeen Clipper ships, operating out of the improved facilities, dominated the China Tea Trade. Aberdeen was also particularly attractive as a site for the new factory production of textiles and paper, given the presence of its two rivers which could be harnessed for water power. The Don, with a steep gradient between Dyce and the sea, was especially suited to such exploitation and a series of mills was built along its banks.

3.38 In 1850 the railway reached Aberdeen with the first station built at Ferryhill, prior to the construction of the Ferryhill Viaduct which made it possible to re-locate the main station at Guild Street. This sparked off additional housing and industrial development along the course of the Dee, with the Victoria Bridge opening in 1881. Soon Aberdeen was at the centre of a comprehensive rail network which radiated out in all directions from the city and provided links between small communities in the north and west of the city. More recently, the development of the airport at Dyce has widened links with other parts of the country while the only railway routes to have survived the 1960's cuts are those to Dundee and the south, and north to Inverness. There has been rapid building and expansion of the city during this century, which required extension to its administrative boundaries. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the city area was around 27 square kilometres in area; in 1950 it was 47 square kilometres; and in 1970 it was approximately 186 square kilometres.

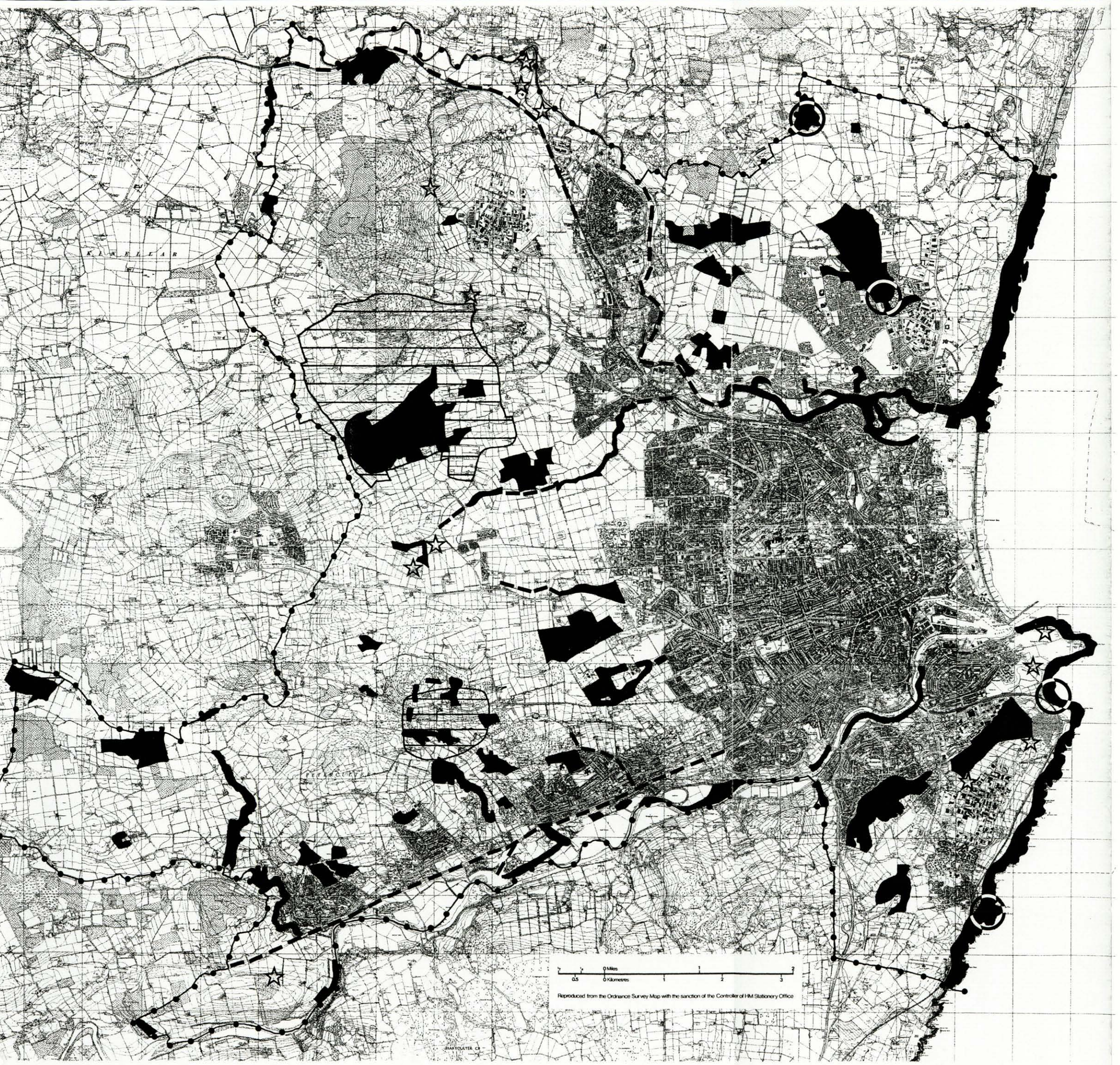


FIGURE 7

CONSERVATION SITES

DISTRICT WILDLIFE SITES

WILDLIFE CORRIDORS

SITES OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST

SITES OF INTEREST TO NATURAL SCIENCE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

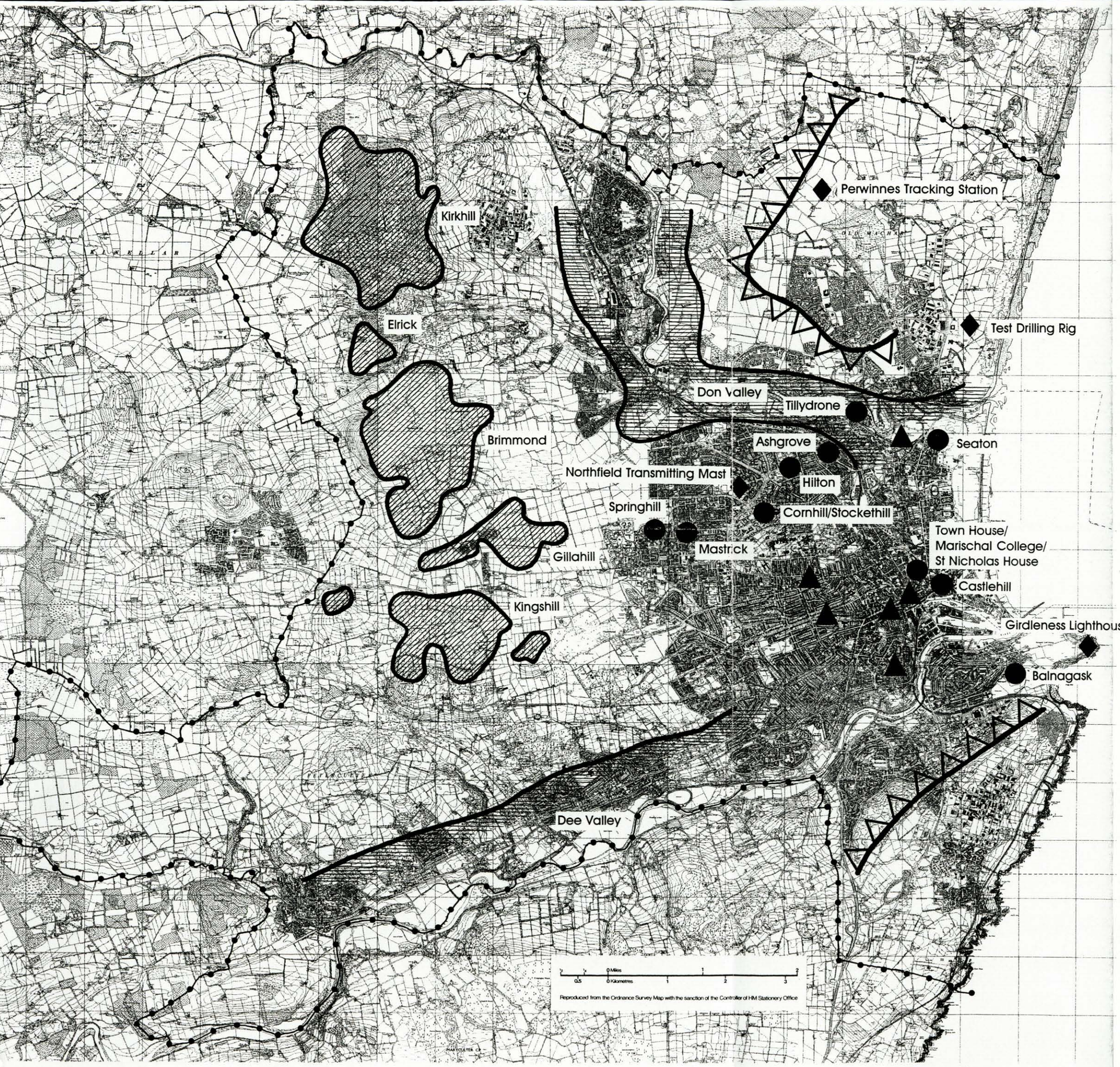
NB Some sites may have multiple designations

ABERDEEN CITY

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

FIGURE 8

LANDMARKS AND FEATURES



HILLS OVER 150 M HIGH

VALLEYS BELOW 60M THRESHOLD

SKYLINE PLATEAU AROUND 90M HIGH

MULTI-STOREY BUILDINGS

CHURCH SPIRES

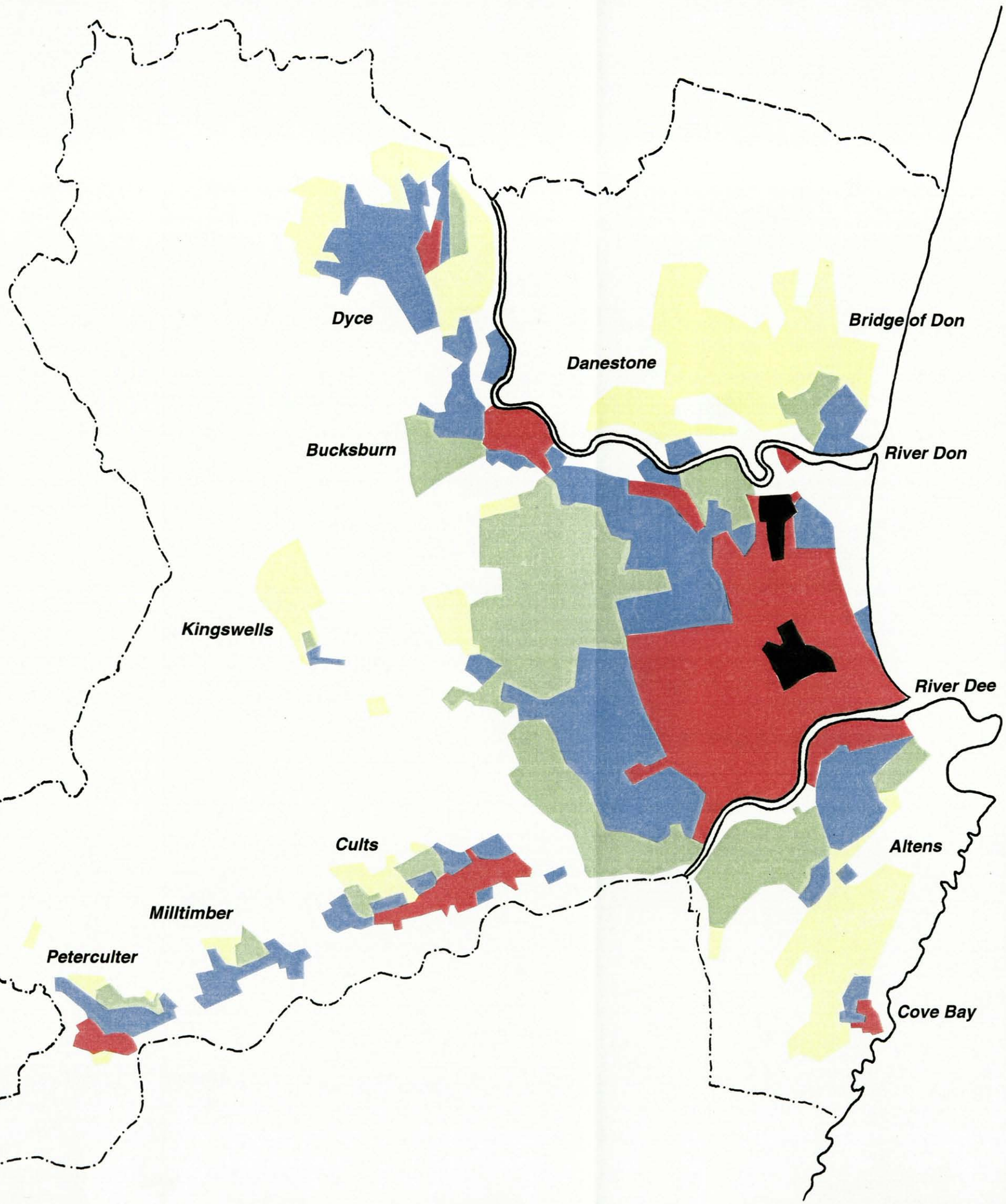
OTHER LANDMARKS

ABERDEEN CITY

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

FIGURE 9

DEVELOPMENT OF THE CITY



THE MEDIEVAL CITY

EXTENT OF URBAN GROWTH c.1900

EXTENT OF URBAN GROWTH 1900-1

EXTENT OF URBAN GROWTH 1945-1

EXTENT OF URBAN GROWTH 1970-1

ABERDEEN CITY

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

4.0 FORCES FOR CHANGE

Background

4.1 It is widely recognised that Aberdeen has a diverse and attractive environment for those who live, visit and work in the city. On its doorstep are varied seascapes, river valleys, hills and woods, and, a short distance away, mountain ranges. In terms of its economy it has generally managed to buck the trends of recession, and can be considered a dynamic and prosperous area.

4.2 As a result, there is a continual demand for new sites for housing, industry and commerce, and also for institutional needs, recreational and tourist facilities. Typical city problems of traffic circulation and congestion are also evident.

Opportunities

4.3 Aberdeen is regarded as urban, but almost sixty percent of its area comprises countryside. Opportunities for change occur throughout this area, for example as a result of shifts in agricultural practice which encourage the diversification of farmland and buildings, or the stimulation of woodland planting through enhanced grant schemes. They may also arise from the increased tendency for the urban population to seek leisure pursuits in the country, and to press for improved pedestrian access to it.

Constraints

4.4 The high proportion of open countryside around the city; the degree of undulation in the landform which allows some areas to remain hidden from general view; and the wide variety in landscape character present in the area might tend to suggest that the various demands for increased opportunities in the countryside for development of various types could be met fairly easily. Landscape character, however, is only one of the forms of physical constraint which need to be considered in conjunction with any changes to the area around Aberdeen. For example, areas which are too high and which suffer from climatic exposure, or are too low and are subject to flooding, may be unsuitable. Other significant factors may include areas with steep slopes or difficult access, or which have an aspect which has low solar energy gain or high energy loss.

4.5 In terms of agricultural and forestry production, Structure and Local Plans contain policies aimed at the protection of both prime quality agricultural land and woodland. It should be noted in this context, however, that there are very few areas of prime quality agricultural land around the city, and it is the lower quality grazing land which forms the highest proportion of land use in the district. In respect of woodland, at around 14% landcover, the city has a low level of woodland compared to some other areas in the north-east where the average is around 20%.

4.6 Towns generally grow by absorbing local landscapes and smaller settlements as they gradually expanded outwards. The individual identity of such places can be very important to the cultural and visual character of the larger area. New developments, of whatever type, require consideration of the availability and costs of providing new services, for example for such things as electricity, gas, water, sewerage, roads, and connections to public transport and the overall transportation network. All of these can have considerable impacts upon the local environment. In particular, the 1970's growth of the oil and gas industry in Aberdeen generated expansion of industrial estates, the airport, and an arrangement of cross-country pipelines for gas and oil. All of these have had effects, in terms of noise, pollution, or safety, upon adjoining land uses.

Balance

4.7 There is a need to address all of these issues and demands for development to ensure a continued buoyant economic climate. Continued pressure for development in the countryside around the city should not be allowed to lead to a reduction in the attractiveness of its surroundings. A balance should be struck between the competing aspects of rural conservation and city expansion in a manner which ensures progress can be made in both fields. Landscape Character Assessment can provide some understanding as to what it is that makes the character of the setting of the city so important and help towards achieving a necessary balance.

Development

4.8 The pressure for development around Aberdeen, and therefore the potential effects upon its landscape setting, can be considered under five main headings:-

Housing,

Employment / Industry / Commerce,

Transportation,

Leisure / Recreation, *and*

Other.

4.9 At the time of writing, the vehicle for articulating these development needs is the Development Plan, which comprises The Grampian Structure Plan, February 1995 (abbreviated hereafter to SP) which is currently before the Secretary of State for approval; and The Aberdeen City-wide Local Plan, September 1991 (abbreviated to LP) which is now under review. The development strategy of the SP indicates that, preferably, new developments should be focused upon the redevelopment of brownfield sites within the city, or around existing settlements, and especially in areas which can enhance the role of public transport. By these means, land outside settlements, especially within the Green Belt, should be treated as a scarce resource in terms of its management and use. (SP Strategy 4)

4.10 The Local Plan indicates that in Green Belt there is an embargo against development unless it concerns uses which must be located in the countryside, those directly related to nature conservation, or to uses already occurring in the Green Belt. The Plan expands further on these types of uses.

4.11 To allow existing areas of Green Belt to have some permanence, and to allow for some development flexibility into the future, some areas around the city have been identified as areas for potential development. These act as areas of search requiring further detailed examination as to their suitability for development as part of the Development Plan process. These areas are located primarily to the south, south-west, and west of the city area, and at the existing settlements of Peterculter, Milltimber, Cults, Kingswells, Dyce, and Bridge of Don.

4.12 This part of the report will consider each of the five headings listed above in paragraph 4.8, referring where necessary to the relevant part of the Development Plan.

Housing

4.13 In terms of land take, the need for housing is potentially the principal force behind change to the landscape of the city. The current population of Aberdeen is 219,597, and it is forecast to rise to 220,827 by the year 2001. Even if the population was to remain static there would still be a likely need for new houses as the trend continues for average household sizes to drop and the household formation rate to rise. National Planning Guidelines require that the local authority maintain a minimum five year effective housing land supply whilst avoiding over-allocation. (SP Housing Policy 4) Over the past few years, 1,200 house units have been built each year, on average, in the city, and there is an estimate that around 4,300 new houses are required up to the year 2006.

4.14 It is relevant to note that the National Planning Policy Guidance No.3 - Land For Housing - outlines the Government policy for housing in the countryside that should be based on the principles of:-

- encouragement of development in existing settlements;
- avoidance of coalescence between settlements; *and*
- discouragement of isolated development in the open countryside unless it is clearly identified in Development Plans.

4.15 In effect, apart from brownfield sites in the city, which account for the highest proportion of housing sites (3,400), four specific areas which have been allocated housing allowances by the Structure Plan up to the year 2006, to meet this projected need. Most of these allowances have now been taken up. They are:- Oldmachar / Bridge of Don (north), Kingswells (west), Lower Deeside (south-west), and City South. Another area at Countesswells, which had received an allocation in previous years, has been given a zero allocation under the current Development Plan.

4.16 In addition to the numbers of new houses to be built around the city, other issues are relevant to a proper consideration of likely landscape change - for example, the use of materials and colours; the ability to retain or protect hedgerows, trees, and stone walls as part of the construction; the provision and structuring of open space; and effective linking to adjoining areas, particularly to the countryside. The needs of the new residents should be considered too, in terms of social, health and shopping facilities, which might subsequently entail an expansion of the physical area for the development.

4.17 It is likely that, as far as housing is concerned, significant pressures for development will occur around the periphery of existing settlements and within Countryside Around Towns areas.

Employment / Industry / Commerce

4.18 Over the past five years, this type of development has averaged 14.5 hectares per year on industrial sites. The Development Plan seeks to maintain a seven year supply of industrial and business land at any one time, whilst avoiding over-zoning, and having regard to infrastructural capacity and environmental policies. (SP Employment land Policies 5 and 7) In particular, the SP requires the provision of general land for such purposes of between 50 and 70 hectares at any one time. To meet this requirement an area to the south of the city has been approved for industrial development. (SP Employment Land Policy 5) In addition, two major Business Parks of between 15 and 20 hectares in size are required, one to the north-west and the other to the south of the city (SP Employment Land Policy 14), and, subject to review in the light of demand, a major industrial site to the north-west.

4.19 Associated matters which may have an impact upon the surrounding landscape concern the size, scale, colour and massing of new industrial or commercial buildings, and the ability of the development to accommodate a meaningful landscape structure that will ensure a good landscape "fit". It should also be recognised that existing developments may enjoy permitted development rights so that some elements of design, such as materials and colour, may not be open to local planning authority consultation or control.

Agriculture

4.20 In respect of the agricultural industry, it has been noted above that there is a general presumption against the permanent loss of prime and productive land (SP Natural Resources Policy 13). Some aspects of the Common Agricultural Policy have already produced visual and physical changes to the landscape. These mainly concern set-aside and farm diversification. The Development Plan seeks to encourage appropriate forms of agricultural diversification (SP Natural Resources Proposal 16).

4.21 Planning applications for the conversion of farmland to golf courses or off-road vehicle tracks have been received for land to the west of the city. In addition, the general tendency for splitting-up farm units with the new owners of smaller holdings applying different management techniques to the land and vegetation, or instituting changes in land use, or in seeking permission for individual houses in the countryside, can create visible signs of landscape change.

4.22 A feature of much of the rural landscape is the abundance of drystone dykes built along field boundaries from the moraine and granite-based debris which littered the ground after the last Ice Age. In some places, they form massive constructions called consumption dykes where collected stone has been deposited by farmers over the centuries. Many of the field dykes are now crumbling in disrepair, have become overgrown, or have been topped by ordinary post-and-wire fences to keep in livestock. Others have been physically removed, either to remove the problem, to use as building material elsewhere, to form larger farming units, or to make way for developments. Their loss will inevitably mean an erosion of a distinctive element in the character of the countryside fringe of Aberdeen.

Forestry

4.23 In respect of forestry, an earlier paragraph remarked upon the shortage of tree cover in the district. Not only is this lack of trees around a formerly forested area to be regretted, there is a continuing erosion of this limited resource, and, in general, existing trees are in poor health or condition through lack of appropriate management. There is also a steady decline in the presence of traditional field boundary trees and hedges, and very few are being replaced. Meanwhile, where trees are being planted, there has been a steady divergence away from native and traditional species. Instead of exhibiting a typical dominant oak woodland, there is a preponderance of sycamore and beech, with cypress becoming the suburban majority. Such changes inevitably alter traditional landscape character over time.

4.24 In the field of commercial forestry, an additional recent trend which has been appearing concerns the disposal of some of the Forestry Commission woodlands. Here, in addition to some complaints about the reduced continuity of public access, some of the new owners of the smaller blocks have appeared to have taken the opportunity to realise the value of the standing timber by clear-felling and then offering the sites for re-sale before they have been restocked. This may not remove the sites from forestry cover in the long term, but the drastic and immediate change to the visual scene in the short term caused by the practice of planting even-aged stands and clear-felling has connotations for the landscape. The call for consideration of alternative methods of forestry management as practised in other countries, such as continuous cover, closer to the urban edge, is bound to continue. It is notable that some developers have acquired, or have options on, commercial woodland close to the city as part of their future development portfolio. The Local Plan includes a policy that there will be a presumption against the development of existing forest areas where there are suitable alternative sites. (LP District Wide Policies Par. 9.2.2)

4.25 The Regional Forestry Strategy, outlined in the Structure Plan, defines the majority of countryside around Aberdeen as "preferred areas" which are considered "available for forestry". Given the scale and intimacy of the fringe around the city, this can potentially represent significant changes to the landscape character and setting of the city. The District Council has produced a Community Woodland Plan which combines the thresholds of local resident populations with the deficiency in woodland cover and existing recreational use, and indicates that areas to the north around Bridge of Don, to the north-west around Sheddocksley and Bucksburn, and to the south at Cove would benefit from such recreational woodland creation.

Transportation

4.26 The presence of two rivers with a restricted number of crossing points, the evolution of a radial system of roads, and the important role of the city as a regional centre, have combined, along with a growth in car ownership, to produce an increasingly congested traffic system. The approach of the Communications Strategy of the Structure Plan has developed into a number of policies which, as far as any significant effects upon the more rural areas of the city are concerned, can generally be summarised as:- the construction of a bypass road (the Western Peripheral Route, SP Transportation Proposal 4), and the provision of park and ride facilities (SP Transportation Proposal 12). The overall intention can be summarised as discouraging car use; encouraging the use of public transport, cycling and walking; and easing the congested state of urban roads and car parks.

4.27 The line of the Western Peripheral Route has not been finalised by the City Council at the time of writing. Whichever route is chosen, it is likely to require new, or enhanced, river crossings of the Dee and subsequently the Don; and to introduce significant linear effects upon rural areas to the west of the city. It is also possible that, when a route has been finalised, any adjoining land between the new road and the existing urban areas may become a target for development pressures.

4.28 The development of Park and Ride facilities will probably involve sites in the vicinity of road junctions on major arterial roads, especially on the line of the western peripheral route. These will require to be sites which adjoin the road, are visible, fairly flat and that cover quite a large area. It should be noted that the Local Plan indicates that there will be a presumption against developments which are liable to adversely affect the amenity of the main approaches to the city. (LP District Wide Policies par. 9.2.11)

4.29 The Structure Plan contains other proposals for upgrading road and rail routes in the area, but their combined effect upon the landscape character of the area is unlikely to be significant.

Recreation

4.30 The diversity of the landscape around Aberdeen creates the opportunity for a wide range of recreational pursuits. These range from water - based activities around the beach and river areas to rock climbing on the cliffs, and other countryside pastimes such as cycling, walking, and horse riding. The potential for formalising or extending the range of these pursuits is recognised in the Development Plan, in particular the potential for enhancing public access from urban areas into the countryside, and linking the existing areas of recreational open space and other facilities. The local authority has been involved in pursuing this objective by means of the Four Hills Country Walks Project, the Loirston Recreation Area and Tullos Community Woodland Plan.

4.31 However, access problems are commonly experienced around many areas of the urban fringe, both from the point of view of the potential user, and the landowner. This is exacerbated by a number of trends - an increase in the awareness of countryside and wildlife issues; a rise in the number of people wishing to walk, or cycle into the countryside, perhaps for fitness; and a rise in the number of horses being owned and exercised. These trends not only introduce potential conflicts onto relatively narrow paths or tracks, but can cause gradual erosion of ground surfaces. This might suggest the introduction of segregated paths, or even duplication of routes, depending upon the degree of use.

4.32 The incidence of vandalism near to the urban areas, and other forms of anti-social behaviour such as litter disposal or loose dogs, can disrupt farming activity and create an antagonistic attitude by landowners. A rise in the number of new owners of countryside properties unaware of, or not prepared to tolerate passive encroachment on their domain can also give rise to ill feeling. It is notable that very few recognised Rights of Way exist around the urban area, many pathways having been used in a permissive way without the need to assert any right to use them. As developments have pushed the urban fringe outwards, the likelihood of the original inhabitants of an area, who might have been displaced anyway, being able to declare continuous usage of a path or track over twenty years has been slight.

4.33 There is also an increasing move towards all-weather, or indoor, facilities to cater for a variety of leisure and recreational activities in order to offset the harsh climatic exposure of the north-east coastal area. These can introduce large, almost industrial-style buildings into the urban fringe landscape, along with associated arrangements for fencing, flood-lighting and car parking. In other respects, visual changes to the appearance and character of parts of the countryside have occurred mainly through the introduction of larger scale recreational uses such as golf courses. Forces for smaller scale recreational changes are likely to occur close to the urban edge of the city and around outlying settlements. They are likely to be more actively pursued in connection with farm diversification, development proposals which accord with the Development Plan, plans for community woodland, land under the control of the local authority, and as part of a recognised project.

Other

4.34 Pressures for change to the landscape of the area can focus on the following potential issues:-

Mineral Extraction

The current mineral extraction policy operates on three tiers (SP Natural Resources Policy 22). The first two tiers act as constraints to a greater or lesser degree and are aimed in general at protecting such things as prime agricultural land, designated conservation sites, coastal and riverside areas, urban areas or those allocated for development. The areas where most change is likely to occur concerns the third tier sites where extraction will be permitted subject to individual site and local circumstance. These sites are primarily located to the north and west of the city, and at Cove to the south.

Waste Disposal

It is now the responsibility of the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency to prepare a national waste disposal plan. Sites available for such use are in short supply and there is critical competition for them. Efforts are being made in the direction of waste reduction and recycling, but there is still likely to be pressure for disposal of industrial and domestic waste by way of landfill. Finding a suitable area, given the nature of a landfill site and the increasing number of operational and anti-pollution regulations that have to be met, is likely to be a difficult task.

Large Spatial Developments

The Development Plan recognises that, in some cases, large space users such as institutions for educational, medical, recreational or other special community needs may require development land in the countryside. This may be either because no other ground is available, or because their scale and use make an urban location inappropriate. Whilst the development plan accommodates such proposals where proper justification can be made, and stipulates that any proposals are designed to be as unobtrusive as possible, it is likely that some large-scale developments will have a significant effect upon the appearance of parts of the local landscape.

Masts

As electronic communications, including satellite tracking and defence measures, have advanced, pressure has intensified towards siting new transmission masts on high ground around the city. Taken in conjunction with electricity poles and pylons, the countryside area is liable to become increasingly cluttered with such equipment. Since these elements are necessary for modern living, care must be taken to limit any adverse impacts upon landscape setting by reviewing alternative arrangements and by the sensitive selection of sites and service routes.

Renewable Energy

Central Government has encouraged the development of power generation from renewable sources such as wind power, hydro, landfill gas, municipal and industrial waste and energy crops, or agricultural and forestry waste. National Planning Policy Guidance 6 recommends that local planning authorities incorporate appropriate policies within development plans for projects using these types of technology. Some installations may have a range of landscape and visual impacts depending on size, location and proximity to centres of population.

5.0 VISUAL ASPECTS

Introduction

5.1 One of the aims identified in the study was to assess how the surrounding area acts as a landscape setting for the city. This was found to involve several related visual aspects:-

(i) A perception or appearance of the city as a whole, and how -or if - it relates to the landscape that surrounds it;

(ii) Landmarks within and around the city, i.e. features that are either prominent or easily recognisable, or both;

(iii) The degree of visibility of areas surrounding the city.

5.2 Viewpoints for assessing these qualities in Aberdeen were restricted to main through routes. This was for practical reasons, and also because they provided busy and public vantage points. In addition, the perception of the city was felt to be particularly important from the main approaches to Aberdeen, as both an initial impression for visitors, and recognisable features for residents. This aspect linked in with identifying prominent city landmarks, but views out of the city to its surroundings were also seen as being important in how the city visually links with its surroundings.

5.3 Developing from this, the degree of visibility of areas around the city was thought to affect their sensitivity to change. These geographically specific visual aspects are included within the individual Landscape Character Area descriptions in Chapter 6. The current chapter considers the broader visual aspects of the study, i.e. views of the city as a whole, and landmarks.

Perception of the City

5.4 Aberdeen is fortunate in having a dramatic setting between hills and the coast, although this can be appreciated from only a few viewpoints. Topography plays a critical role in providing views across the city, i.e. it is only from high viewpoints that "overviews" of significant areas of the city are possible. Therefore, the roads through the river valleys that are such a feature of the landscape of the city do not generally provide good viewpoints of it. In contrast, the A96 near Tyrebagger Hill and the A90 near Kincorth Hill do allow views across the city and its setting between hills and the sea. The A92 road from the north gives a strong sense of a coastal location, but the surrounding hills are less significant. Those roads that do not allow an appreciation of the city and its hinterland can still provide a "sense of arrival", particularly if there is a clear edge between city and country, or if particular landmarks can be seen. For example, the B9119 enters the city through a distinctive beech avenue near a Victorian hospital tower. Along such wooded approaches, the impact of the different seasons on the appearance of the city and its surroundings can be particularly dramatic.

5.5 The bridges across the rivers Dee and Don are probably the most evocative gateways to Aberdeen. The railway from the south also crosses the river, where the sudden change from its coastal route into the built-up area at Balnagask is a distinctive part of its approach to the city. The northern approach by rail does not provide such a distinctive entry to Aberdeen. Obviously, arriving by air provides a quite different approach to the city, one that lacks the gradually-revealed contrast between the country and the built-up area. However, the views from taxiing aircraft of the nearby farmed and wooded slopes are a distinctive aspect of arriving at Dyce.

Landmarks (see Figure 8, Landmarks and Features)

5.6 City landmarks can be roughly categorised as topographical, archaeological or historical, and prominent modern buildings or structures. Of the topographical features, the hills which most commonly occur in views from within the city are Brimmond Hill, Tyrebagger Hill, and Elrick Hill to the west; and Tullos and Kincorth hills to the south. The valleys of the Don and Dee are also topographical features, but these only become prominent in views from their crossing points, particularly the Bridge of Don and Brig of Dee, or transport routes that follow them (the A93 and A96, and minor roads). The coastline is the other major topographic feature that is unique to the city, but the presence of the town limits distant views to it except from high points or coastal routes.

5.7 Historical and archaeological features tend to be less obvious although they are set in a very evocative landscape. The consumption dykes west of the city are distinctive, but cannot be seen from afar. Similarly, the burial cairns on Tullos and Kincorth Hills are not very prominent. More noticeable historic structures are the cluster of towers and spires that indicates the location of the city centre even from a distance and the Girdle Ness lighthouse. The granite tower of Woodend Hospital is a feature in western approaches to the city.

5.8 Prominent modern buildings and structures are amongst the more noticeable city landmarks. For example, the many high rise buildings that were constructed during the 1960's and 1970's create skyline features which can be seen from many viewpoints. Those at Seaton and Northfield are particularly prominent. Telecommunications structures also tend to be highly visible, for example the Northfield transmitter, the masts on Brimmond Hill, and the radar system at Perwinnes. A feature in views in the north of the city is the test drilling rig near the Exhibition Centre. Oil-related development has resulted in several large-scale buildings which can be locally prominent, for example the large offices on rising ground to the south of the city. A more subtle modern development is the greater variety of colours and materials that are now used in new developments, often on the edge of the city. This can have an effect on residential development, for example in red or orange roofs, as well as the larger-scale commercial estates where reflective materials are often used. This is in contrast to the traditional prevalence of grey that is strongly associated with the city.

FIGURE 10

DEGREE OF VISIBILITY

MAJOR ROAD VIEWPOINTS

VISIBLE AREA
(Numbers refer to the viewpoint from which the visible area is see

NB The hatching does not reflect the total visible area available from any viewpoint, but generally serves to indicate a prominent feature or approximate location.

NORTH

ABERDEEN CITY

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

6.0 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPES

Introduction

6.1 Five broad-scale landscape character types have been identified within the Aberdeen area, and they are illustrated in Figure 11. Where relevant, they correspond to the adjacent character zones that have been identified in the earlier study of Aberdeenshire Central (previously known as Gordon District). As described in the Introduction, the main criterion for identifying Landscape Character Types was broad-scale topography, with major vegetation pattern variations (i.e. well-wooded or not) used to differentiate further the large area of more indeterminate landform within the study area. The urban area, which was taken as including the large satellite residential areas outwith the main city area, was not part of the study.

Major River Valleys

6.2 The two main river valleys of the Dee and Don are major landscape features within the area, and were undoubtedly instrumental in the location of the city (as described in Chapter 3). Unusually, each valley widens and becomes less constricted upstream, away from the sea. For example, the Don forms a narrow, steep-sided gorge at Seaton Park, close to its estuary, and provides a distinctive valley setting for mills and development just upstream at Braes of Don. There are also several tributaries that flow into the rivers Dee and Don within the study area. The only ones of significance are the Burn of Leuchar west of Peterculter, the Bucksburn, the Denburn at Maidencraig, and the Burn of Leggart. They do not, however, equal the scale and importance of the Dee and Don valleys.

6.3 The vegetation cover of each valley is roughly similar, consisting of open ground on the valley floor with woodland on the side slopes. The large amount of mature tree cover is a distinctive characteristic, as is the occurrence of open space between development. Both valleys are highly built-up, but they have developed differently in this respect. The Dee is residential, its development upstream of the Bridge of Dee being limited to the northern side (the only bank within the study area). The Don has been used as a source of water power for two hundred years or so, and is lined with mills from Dyce downstream to Seaton Park. Whilst the mills themselves are relatively unobtrusive, being located on the valley floor, residential development followed them, and is located on both sides of the valley.

6.4 Both valleys have developed as transport corridors, and major roads follow the landform: eastwards to Braemar along the Dee, and north-eastwards along the Don towards Inverness. This, in addition to the large residential areas that are located on the hill sides, makes each valley highly visible and therefore relatively sensitive to new development. However, topography limits views to those available from within the valleys themselves, and the two landscape features that Aberdeen is best known for are relatively unobtrusive. Nevertheless when seen, for example from the crossing points, they have a highly recognisable and dramatic quality.

Hills

6.5 This landscape character type occurs in two areas within the city, most notably to the west where it forms a distinctive western edge to the city. There is also a smaller area to the south, i.e. Kincorth and Tullos Hills. Defined by topography, this character type forms the highest ground in the study area, reaching a height of 266 metres at Brimmond Hill. Smooth slopes predominate, and all the hills have gently rounded landforms.

6.6 The vegetation cover is highly contrasting, occurring as open moorland on Brimmond, Tullos and Kincorth hills, with wooded summits elsewhere, most notably at Tyrebagger. Man-made objects are limited in extent but highly visible due to their elevated location, and consist of the masts on the summit of Brimmond Hill, and the landfill site on the northern flank of Tullos Hill. There are several historic and archaeological sites located on the hills, in contrast with the relative lack of modern development.

6.7 Given the elevation of this character type, it is highly visible. From within the city, Tyrebagger and Brimmond hills in particular are landmarks that terminate views from several locations. Tullos and Kincorth hills have a less distinctive outline, but their high ridge forms a skyline feature on the southern edge to the city. The barrier the hills present when travelling from the south or west means a heightened "sense of arrival" on seeing the city suddenly opened to view from a relatively high viewpoint. The high visibility of these areas makes them correspondingly sensitive to new development.

Coast

6.8 Together with the valleys of the Dee and Don, this character type is probably the most distinctive in the city. The high contrast between the sea and the land that occurs anywhere along the coast is heightened in Aberdeen by the inclusion of a sandy beach and dunes near to a harbour city. This type is narrower than its equivalent in the Aberdeenshire (Central) landscape assessment, due to the proximity of development to the coast.

6.9 Despite obvious similarities, there is considerable variety within this character type. It ranges from the smooth sandy beaches and dunes of Aberdeen Bay to the craggy rocky coast south of the Girdle Ness headland. Vegetation is primarily natural or semi-natural, although there are fields of improved pasture close to the cliff-top in the south, and areas of farmland on the edge of the type near Murcar in the north.

6.10 The settlement pattern in the area is also varied. It includes the distinctive fishing village of Footdee and the outer reaches of the harbour complex, but the most visible types of development today are based on recreational use. They include the golf courses on the links at Donmouth and Balnagask, which have modified the landscape only slightly; and also the highly developed promenade, cafes and formal recreational facilities at Aberdeen Beach.

6.11 The visibility of the character type is high, particularly where it is adjacent to the city itself; and in the north, where the Peterhead road enters the city and allows views across to the coastal area. The southern part of the type is viewed from a minor coastal road, but also by the Aberdeen - Edinburgh railway line.

Open Farmland

6.12 Both types of farmland broadly correspond to the "Rolling Agricultural Landscape" identified in the Aberdeenshire (Central) assessment. The open farmland is an extensive character type that forms much of the immediate hinterland of the city outwith the river valleys. To the west it forms the eastern flanks of the enclosing hills. Although it occurs at varying heights, from near sea level up to approximately 150 metres, the relatively even topography and open character with few trees are distinguishing characteristics. Generally the landform is gently rolling, with low-lying peat-filled basins at a few locations, but only at Loirston Loch and Corby Loch are there significant water bodies.

6.13 Agriculture is the predominant landuse, with the fields often being bordered by drystone dykes formed from boulders removed from the glacial till-derived soils. Post-and-wire fences are also used, but hedgerows are rare. Woodland occurs, but not in significant amounts. The traditional settlement pattern in this character type consists of scattered farmsteads that are often associated with small clumps of trees. In the present day there is considerable pressure from the expanding city to increase the amount of development into these areas adjacent to Aberdeen.

6.14 The views that are possible from within the area vary according to altitude and topography, but can be fairly wide due to the lack of visually enclosing woodland. The visibility of the character type depends on its location: those areas that are close to main approach routes to the city are highly visible. Other areas, even adjacent areas, can be almost hidden from the city and its transport routes by intervening topography. The sensitivity to development of any of these areas can be quite high because of their open character, but there will be variations due to factors such as visibility that are not uniform across the whole character type.

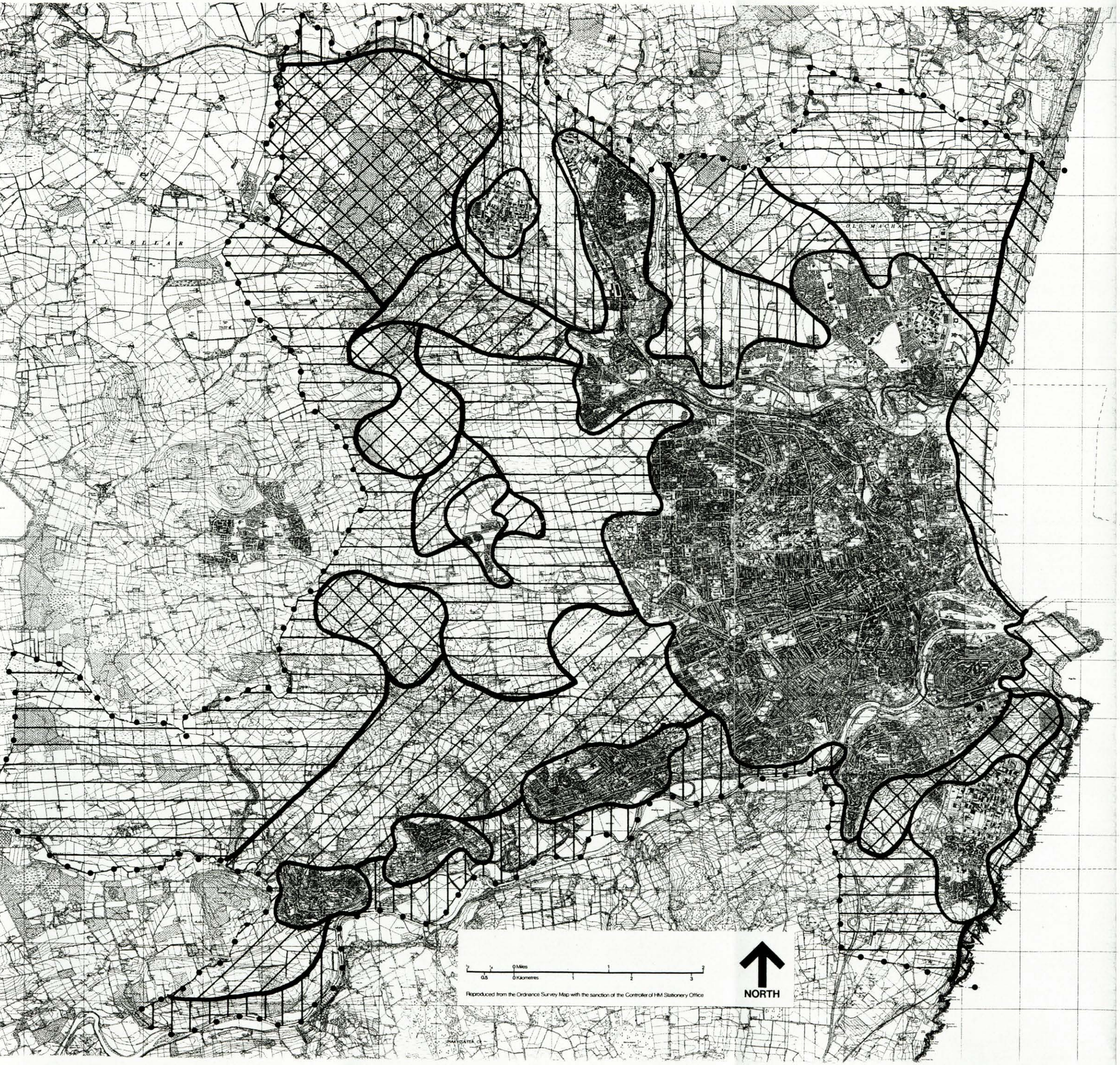
Wooded Farmland

6.15 This character type tends to adjoin the Major River Valleys type. Within it, topography is generally undulating, sometimes strongly. Its distinguishing characteristic is the large amount of woodland and trees that it contains. The variety in which the woodland can be found, for example plantations, shelterbelts, or clumps of trees around buildings, adds to the diversity of the landscape. Apart from woodland, agriculture is the main landuse, in which, like the Open Farmland character type, fields are mostly divided by stone dykes or post-and-wire fences.

6.16 Settlement is often relatively sparse, consisting mostly of scattered traditional-style farmsteads and cottages. These are generally associated with clumps of trees. The amount of woodland often limits views, both from within the type and towards it. In one or two areas the altitude or topography allows longer views, for example to the city, or to the distant hills in the west. As the type borders the major river valleys, few areas contain major routes, and this further limits its visibility, although there are exceptions to this generalisation. The presence of woodland can provide a precedent into which further planting could be linked, but in many cases the balance between woodland and open space is characteristic; one which further planting or development would, clearly, affect. As with the other character types, many areas around the city have a predominantly rural character despite their proximity to the city, and this has to be considered when assessing the likely impacts of change.

FIGURE 11

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPES



URBAN AREA

VALLEY

HILL

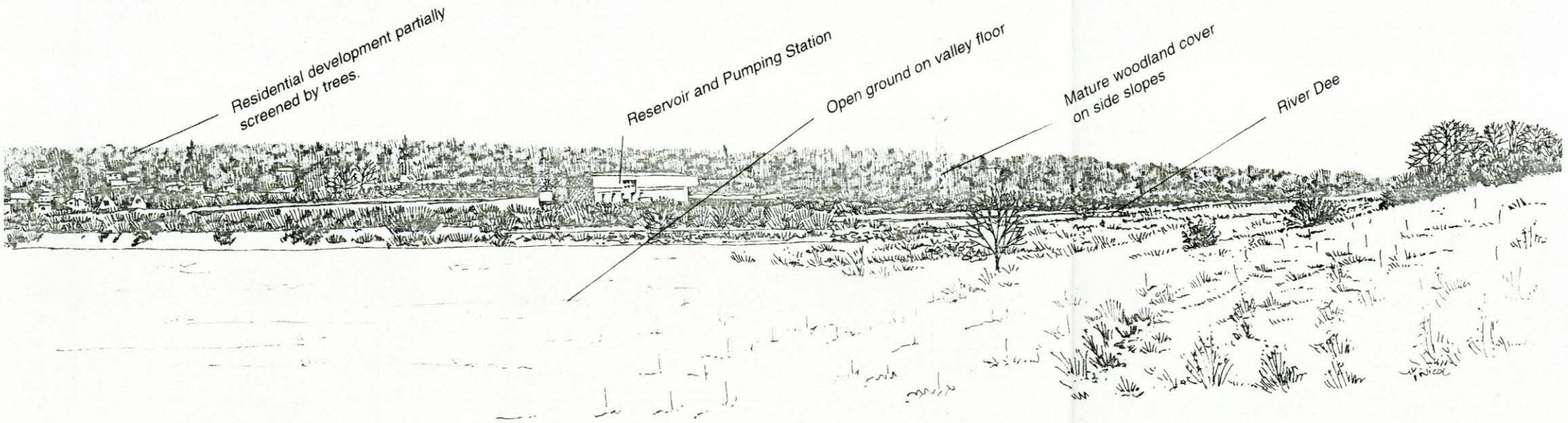
OPEN FARMLAND

WOODED FARMLAND

COAST

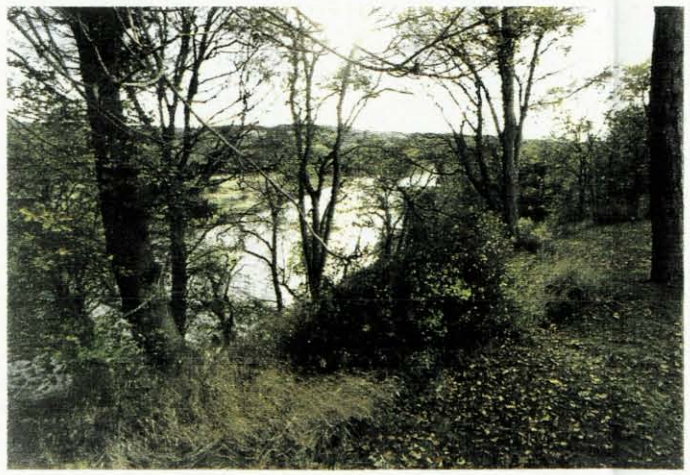
ABERDEEN CITY

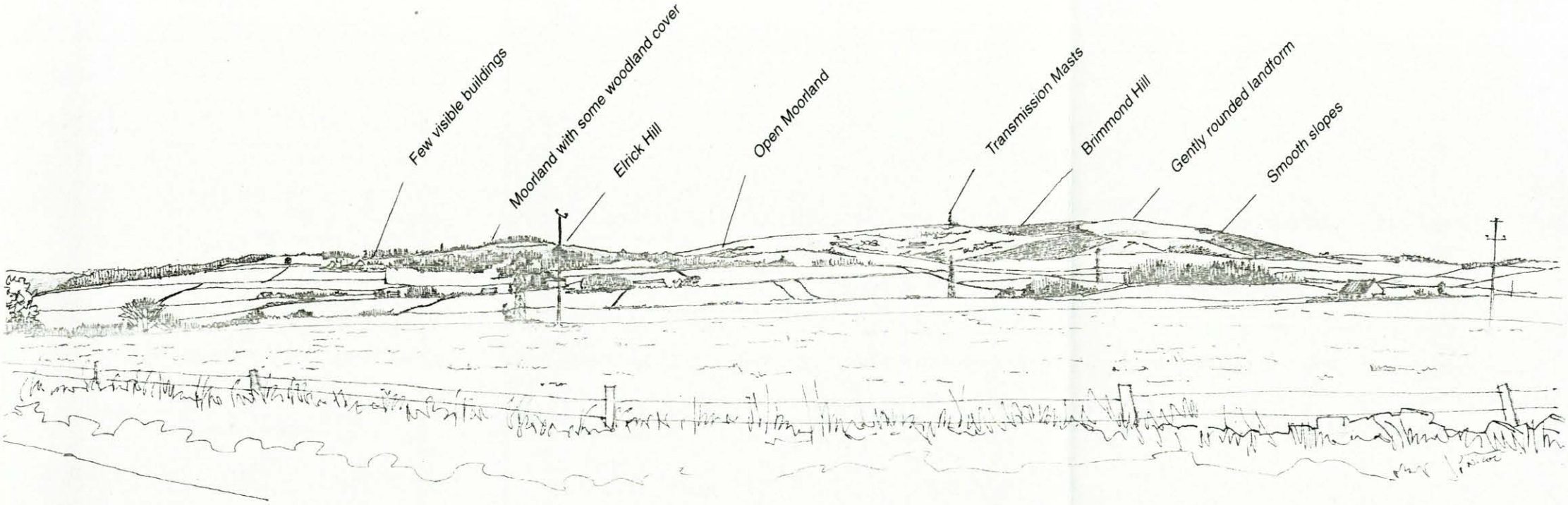
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

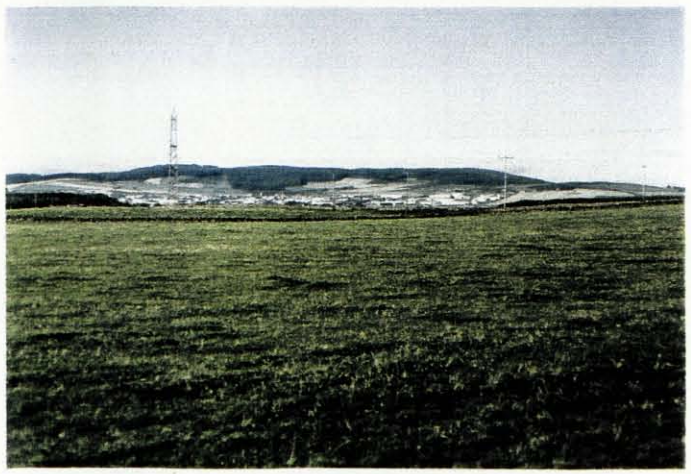


MAJOR RIVER VALLEY LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE

This character type comprises the valleys of the Rivers Dee and Don. The vegetation cover is broadly similar throughout, with open ground on the valley floors and mature woodland on the side slopes. Major arterial roads and development follow the valley landform. The built character of each valley is different. The residential developments on the Dee are partially screened by woodland; housing areas along the Don tend to be more exposed. The Don valley also exhibits an historical industrial component of mill buildings along the river-side, which is absent from the Dee.

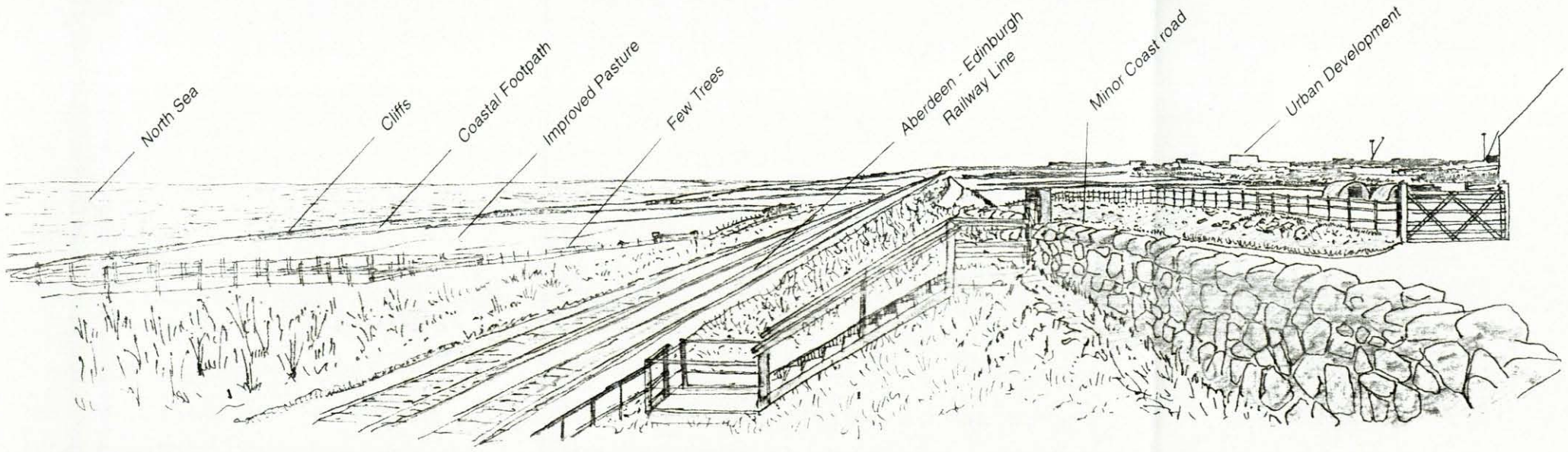






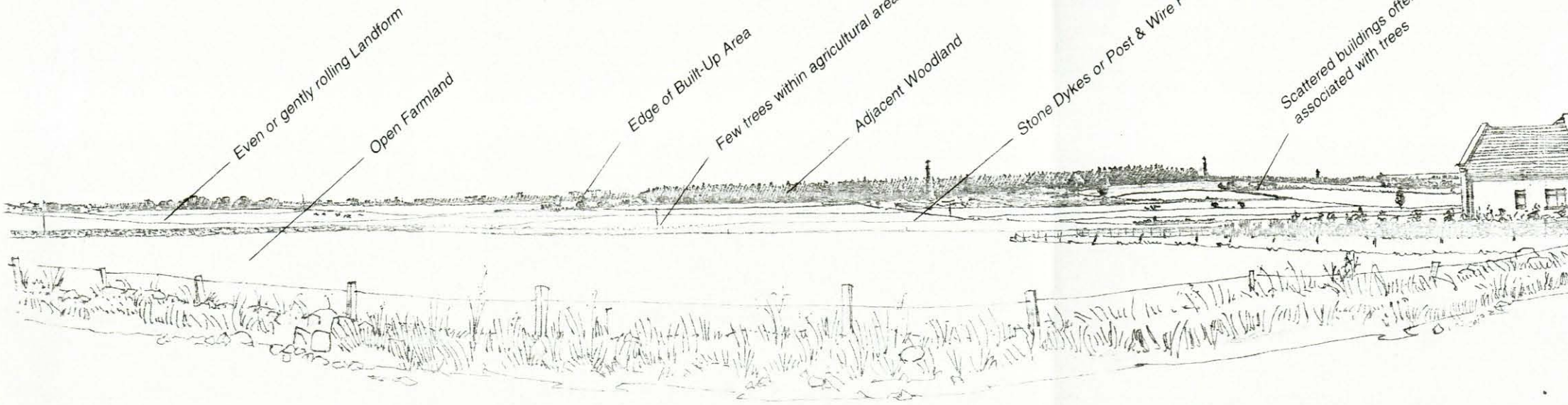
HILL
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE

This type comprises the highest ground in the study area and forms distinctive landmarks or skyline features when viewed from within, or approaching the City. It is characterised by a gently rounded landform with predominantly smooth slopes. The vegetation cover on summits varies from open moorland to plantation woodland. Man-made elements, such as buildings or telecommunication masts, are limited in number but tend to be more visible due to their higher elevation.



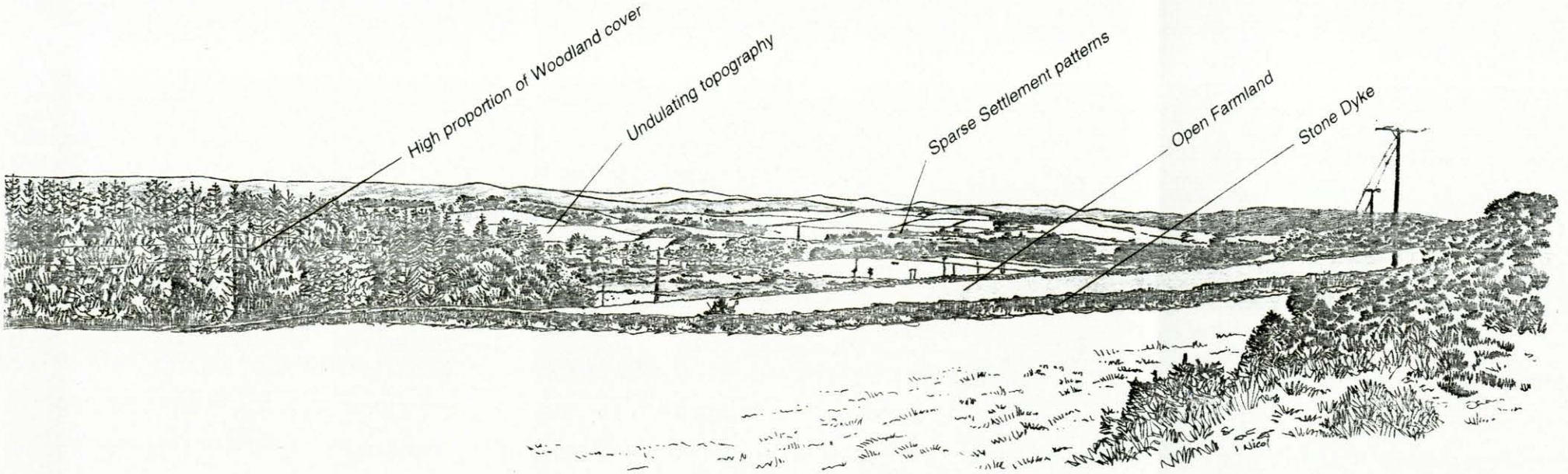
COAST
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE

A highly distinctive linear, and relatively narrow landscape character type. It ranges from smooth sandy beaches and dunes around Aberdeen Bay, to the rocky cliffs to the south of Girdleness. The vegetation is primarily semi-natural with farmland generally running along its' western edge. Closer to the built-up area, the character type has a recreational emphasis.



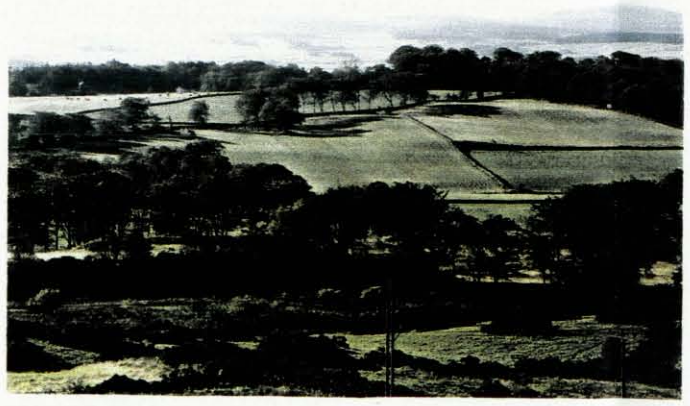
OPEN FARMLAND
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYP

An extensive landscape character t
which forms much of Aberdeen's agr
tural hinterland. It has a gently ro
landform of open character with relati
few trees. Farmsteads are scattered
ten associated with small clumps of tr
Fields are often bordered by dryst
dykes, many of which have been repla
or reinforced, by post and wire fences



WOODED FARMLAND LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE

A diverse, undulating and rural landscape which tends to be located close to the major river valleys. It is mainly agricultural but contains a high proportion and variety of woodland cover either as plantations, shelterbelts or clumps of trees around the scattered, traditional-style buildings. The congruity of open fields to woodland is an important characteristic.



7.0 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

Introduction

7.1 In the following section, the twenty-seven Landscape Character Areas are described. As described in Chapter 1, the criteria for identifying the Character Areas were detailed topography and vegetation pattern, together with settlement pattern, i.e. the distribution of houses, industrial buildings, roads and so on. For each character area its key landscapes characteristics are drawn out, its sensitivity to potential new development is assessed, and draft guidelines are listed. Sensitivity to change has been assessed depending on how visible the area is based on, for example, the presence of nearby roads and residential areas. Broadly speaking, the more visible an area is the higher its sensitivity to change has been rated.

7.2 The landscape character areas, listed in order of writing, are:-

1 Upper Don Valley
2 Tyrebagger Hill / Kirkhill
3 Dyce
4 Braes of Don
5 Perwinnes
6 Potterton
7 Murcar
8 Aberdeen Links
9 Clinterty / West Brimmond farmland
10 Craibstone
11 Lower Don valley
12 Brimmond Hill
13 East Elrick
14 Newhills
15 Kingswells
16 Maidencraig
17 Gairnhill
18 Kingshill /Bogskeathy
19 Hazlehead
20 Anguston / Leuchar / Easter Ord
21 Countesswells / Milltimber / Kennerty
22 Dee Valley
23 Girdle Ness / Nigg Bay
24 Kincorth and Tullos Hills
25 Doonies / Cove Coast
26 Den of Leggart
27 Loirston

UPPER DON VALLEY AREA 1

This area consists of the southern side of a valley landform that is enclosed by gently sloping and undulating hills. The landform continues beyond the river Don which marks the administrative boundary. The valley character is strong in this area, in contrast to both down-stream and up-stream where the topography becomes flatter and wider and loses much of its enclosing nature. The hillsides channel long views along the east - west trending valley and block views to north and south. To both east and west the topography changes and wider views beyond the Don valley can be glimpsed, for example to the industrial estate at Dyce.

The main landuses are agriculture and woodland. The valley floor and lower hill-slopes are farmed, the fields being divided by a mixture of dykes and fences. There is a significant amount of woodland in this and adjacent areas. Woodland, generally consisting of broadleaved species, occurs as occasional lines of boundary trees and as clumps. Southwards, where the land rises, the amount of tree cover increases to include large areas of planted woodland and forestry, which is frequently coniferous.

The area is relatively sparsely settled, with occasional traditional farmsteads located on the lower hill slopes; there are none on higher ground. The flood plain itself is free of housing but the ruins of St Fergus' Church at Dyce with its adjacent cemetery, sited on a spur of higher ground near the river, are a feature. A line of high voltage power lines follows the line of the valley, the pylons descending the western end of the hillside to run eastwards along the valley floor. Also prominent on the low flat area is a large sand extraction site at the eastern end of the character area. Liddell's Monument, a small masonry obelisk, is located within the quarry and it stands on an island remnant of high ground amongst the workings. The remnants of the gravel ridge may hold evidence of Bronze Age activity.

Summary of Distinctive Landscape Features:-

- The large-scale valley landform;
- The amount and variety of tree cover, occurring as clumps, belts and in sizeable areas of woodland;
- Prominent sand extraction site;
- St Fergus' Church and Liddell's Monument
- Views to River Don;
- Views eastwards to adjacent urban and industrial areas, and westwards to distant hills.

Sensitivity to Landscape Change

Visibility
This area is not visible from the main urban area. However, it is open to views from the busy minor road to Hatton of Fintray nearby. Despite its proximity to Aberdeen, it has a strongly rural character.

Built Development
There is no visible precedent within the area for large scale residential, industrial or commercial built development. The existing settlement pattern is of individual or very small loose clusters of houses. The floodplain location precludes built development and the flat land would prevent effective topographic screening from elevated ground in adjacent areas. Land not adjacent to the river is sloping, and development of it could be visually obtrusive.

Transportation
As a river valley, the existing communication routes (a minor road and the Aberdeen - Inverness railway line) follow the line of the valley. Any new routes that did not follow this pattern would involve river crossings and would be highly visible.

Extraction / Landfill
There is an existing large gravel pit in the base of the valley. Previous areas have been restored to agricultural use, but the current working area is highly visible. There are also areas set aside for the processing and storage of building materials. An increase in the proportion of worked to restored area would have a consequent visual impact.

Agriculture / Forestry
The existing pattern of woodland is a feature of the area, and provides the opportunity for some extension without significantly altering its character. An intention to retain similar levels of open space, allowing views to the river, would limit the amount of woodland that could be planted, although road-side trees and occasional tree clumps could be accommodated. Felling of areas of forestry in adjacent character areas would have a visual impact on this area.

Recreation
The minor roads through the area are generally quiet, and may allow use for cycle routes. The river itself is an attractive element, and may provide the opportunity for a riverside walk or cycle route, using the valley as a physical link between the rural hinterland and the city.

Summary of Sensitivity to Landscape Change:-

Development on the floodplain or rising ground would be prominent or difficult to screen. The area has a rural character despite its proximity to the city.

Landscape Guidelines

Conserve / Manage
- Manage woodland to retain the well-wooded characteristic of the area.
- Felling coupes and any new way-leaves would need to be carefully sited and designed in this area, which is notable for its lack of straight lines (river meanders, hills are undulating)
- Retain open space near the river
- Maintain stone dyke boundaries.

Restore
- Reinstatement / restoration of quarry workings to follow existing valley floor pattern.

TYREBAGGER HILL / KIRKHILL AREA 2

This is a large area of smoothly rounded hill ground which rises to a height of 233 metres. The area forms the southern side of the Don valley and the northern end of the belt of hills that curve around the western edge of Aberdeen. The height of the landform in the area affords long views in all directions:- east and south over the city towards the sea, and north and west over the Don valley and farmland beyond.

Coniferous plantation and farmland constitute the dominant landuses of the area. The coniferous woodland distinctively caps the hill in a single plantation, down to a height of approximately 150 metres. Smaller plantations are located on the lower slopes to the west, north and east. Below these, mixed shelterbelts and clumps of trees divide the open areas of farmland. The shape of agricultural fields on the upper slopes is emphasised by the adjacent forestry which follows their boundaries. Lower on the hill, dykes and fences are both used to edge fields. In several places the boundary fences are reinforced by lines of gorse and, occasionally, trees.

Settlement is sparse, consisting of a few traditional - style farmsteads served by minor roads. The most obvious man-made features are the high voltage electricity lines cross the north-east corner of the area, and the A96 Aberdeen - Inverness trunk road which crosses the southern extremity of the area.

Summary of Distinctive Landscape Features:-

- The large - scale hill landform with rounded slopes;
- The mixture of woodland and agriculture, particularly the coniferous - capped hill;
- Its prominence in views from many parts of the city and surrounding area.

Sensitivity to Landscape Change

Visibility
The height of this area makes it highly visible, and it forms the termination of many viewpoints from within the city and several approach roads. Its eastern flank is adjacent to the airport and Dyce industrial estate, and the A96 trunk road skirts the hill to the south. It provides a visible rural contrast with the nearby areas of built development, and a pleasant backdrop to north western approaches to the city which includes air traffic at the airport.

Built Development
The sloping topography and consequent lack of level ground would make construction of built development difficult. The existing settlement pattern is of scattered individual traditional-style dwellings. On the upper slopes, the removal of forestry that would be required could heighten the impact of built development by interrupting the vegetation pattern which at present is large scale and simple.

Transportation
Additional roads in this area would probably be highly visible because of its elevation and topography.

Extraction / Landfill
The steepness and elevation of the area would make this kind of activity highly visible from adjacent roads and residential and commercial areas.

Agriculture and Forestry
The existing plantations and shelter belts could be extended, but the diversity of forestry and agriculture is notable on this visible area. A similar proportion of woodland to open space should be maintained to retain this characteristic.

Recreation
Access to the hill is limited in some places by the forestry, but many paths open to the public criss-cross the area. Part of the hill forms a section of the Four Hills Country Walks Project. Extensions to walking / cycling / horse-riding routes may be feasible without significantly altering the character of the area.

Summary of Sensitivity to Landscape Change:-

Higher levels of development would alter the existing rural character of this area, which provides a visual contrast with nearby urban areas, which is a landmark in many views from within the city and surrounding areas, and an attractive feature to visitors entering from the north-west.

Landscape Guidelines

Conserve / Manage
- Manage woodland, including shelterbelts, to maintain the characteristic proportions of woodland to open space;
- Maintain boundary vegetation.

Here, the Don valley widens out into a broad, shallow "basin" landform, in contrast to the more enclosed stretches of river immediately up- and down-stream. The topography of the area itself is predominantly flat and even, with the ground rising gently to the lower slopes of Kirkhill and Tyrebagger hills in the west from the river Don to the east.

The landuse in and around the area is varied. Commercial and residential areas and transport infrastructure dominate the developed parts of the area, but farmland is located on the fringe on the rising ground to the west. Stone dykes are the commonest type of field boundary, and they divide the sloping fields into a prominent pattern. Woodland cover is very limited in extent in this area. However, small pockets of woodland occur within the area, and these link with extensive coniferous plantations situated in the character area immediately to the west. Much of the farmland is improved grassland. There are some pockets of low scrubby vegetation or rough grassland in areas adjacent to the industrial estates.

Man-made elements dominate this area. Aberdeen Airport (Dyce) is located within the plain, with a large industrial estate adjacent to its western edge. Between the airport and the river lies the large residential area of Dyce, in which a small traditional-style core is surrounded by modern areas of more recent expansion. Roads encircle and cross the area, including the main road to Banff and the Inverness to Aberdeen trunk road. Wide views are possible to the undulating farmland that extends northwards from the opposite bank of the Don and eastwards to the city.

Summary of Distinctive Landscape Features:-

- Topography - a plain gently sloping up from the River Don to hill land on the fringe;
- The predominantly open character with few trees;
- The proximity of the large, busy airport and heliport;
- The proximity of extensive industrial estates - a cluster of large-scale buildings of varied colours;
- The proximity of large residential areas;
- A strong field pattern formed by stone dykes;
- Wide views from higher viewpoints to farmland and hills as well as the urban area.

Sensitivity to Landscape Change

Visibility
This area is highly visible despite its relatively low altitude, as it can be seen from the Aberdeen - Inverness trunk road and railway line, as well as from several nearby built-up areas. It can, of course, also be seen from the airport, which is the point of entry to Aberdeen for many people.

Built Development
There is already such an extent of built development within and near the area that extension to it might be fairly easily accommodated in visual terms, provided that the skyline was not breached. However, it may be that the physical capacity of lower-lying flatter ground has almost been reached. At present, development in the area is visually "contained" by the lower slopes of Tyrebagger Hill. This prevents the scale and number of the buildings being overwhelming, and brings a rural character in visual proximity to parts of the urban area. Expansion of development above a certain height (probably in the region of 100 metres) would compromise this.

Transportation
As with built development, construction of transport infrastructure on the flatter, lower ground would be unlikely to have a significant impact. On higher ground, the upgrading of routes or construction of new ones would probably be highly visible.

Extraction / Landfill
Disused quarries exist on the rising slopes, but they are becoming overgrown and are therefore less highly visible. New quarrying or landfill on the higher areas, or re-opening of the existing quarries, however, would open them to view from some distance. There is little scope for extraction or landfill on the flatter ground, which is close to either the airport or existing development.

Agriculture and Forestry
The agricultural fringe on the higher ground forms a significant component of this area. The field boundaries are generally formed from stone dykes, and this forms a distinctive element in the landscape that is noticeable when arriving in Aberdeen by air when the dykes contribute to the recognisably local character of the city.

Recreation
The opportunities for recreation are limited by the existing amount of development. However, there are possibilities of low-key routes linking with the nearby Four Hills Country Walk Project, and perhaps also for riverside routes.

Summary of Sensitivity to Landscape Change:-

It is a highly visible area which is located near to several main approaches to the city. Parts of it have a distinctive rural character at present. Development higher up the hillside would be highly visible and prominent.

Landscape Guidelines

Conserve / Manage
- Avoid expansion higher up the surrounding land;
- Maintain stone dykes.

Enhance
- Increase the amount of tree planting, to link with well-wooded adjacent areas, and to help to screen and integrate existing development;
- Tree planting along the river and road-sides would help to screen views of the industrial estate from nearby historical sites such as the Dyce churchyard.

BRAES OF DON AREA 4

This area has a very gently rolling - almost flat - topography, that varies in height by only about 20 metres in total. At its southern edge a change in slope forms a shoulder above the northern bank of the lower Don valley. Views are of similar nearby areas of wooded, agricultural land. Towards the south of the area there are glimpses of the lower Don valley and the city.

Within the area, agriculture and woodland are the main landuses, although an area of residential development is also located within and adjoining it. The area is well-wooded, with approximately one-third of its area being under trees. In the north and west these trees are principally located in large areas of woodland, either mixed or broadleaved, whereas to the east and south shelterbelts and clumps of trees are more dominant. The line of mature trees along the ridgeline above the Don valley at Whitestripes is a distinctive landmark for some distance. Grandholme Moss is a noticeable feature on the lower ground of the area. The farmland is more pasture than arable, with the land divided into medium-sized fields by both stone dykes and post-and-wire fences.

Within the area itself there is little visible development. High voltage power lines cross the area from north to south, and the area is served by several minor, but busy, roads. The housing area on the north-western edge of Bridge of Don forms the major man-made element adjacent to the area, although it is visible from only certain points within the zone.

Summary of Distinctive Landscape Features:-

- The mixture of farmland and woodland;
- The presence of distinctive shelterbelts;
- The "un-softened" edge to urban development within the area;
- Varying degrees of visibility of residential development;
- Nature conservation interests on Grandholme Moss;
- The presence of stone dykes as field boundaries.

Sensitivity to Landscape Change

Visibility
In the main, this area cannot be seen from many other viewpoints, but the row of mature ridgeline trees on the southern edge of the area at Whitestripes is a landmark that is visible from many parts of the city.

Built Development
Glimpses of the housing at Bridge of Don are possible, but it is visually contained by significant lines of boundary trees. Apart from this urban edge, there are only scattered isolated houses, which are generally associated with small clumps of trees.

Transportation
Any new roads traversing the area would have significant impacts, but improvements, such as minor widening of existing roads, would be unlikely to have a major visual effect.

Extraction / Landfill
The proximity of residential development and the vegetation pattern in the area would make it difficult to integrate this type of development into the landscape.

Agriculture and Forestry
There is a high proportion of woodland in the area at present, in a variety of forms ranging from plantation to shelterbelts. New planting could link into this fairly easily. Discrete blocks and a range of species, with the retention of areas of open space, would not conflict with the existing pattern. The stone dyke field boundaries emphasise the field pattern.

Recreation
The area has considerable potential for cycle, pedestrian and equestrian routes, which could be easily accessed from the Bridge of Don housing area. This would be likely to have minimal landscape impacts. On open ground, however, any formalised facilities including buildings and an associated infrastructure of car parks, lighting and roads could be obtrusive.

Summary of Sensitivity to Landscape Change:-

The area has a degree of visual separation of the area from the city, and has a predominantly rural character. The existing woodland pattern is distinctive, and is important in reducing the visual impacts of nearby development in adjacent landscape character areas. Part of the woodland forms a distinctive landmark from the city.

Landscape Guidelines

Conserve / Manage
- Tree and woodland management to retain a balance between open and wooded ground and retain the distinctive tree belt landmark;
- Maintain the stone dykes - particularly the distinctive coursed dykes associated with shelterbelts (that usually comprise beech trees).

The topography of this area is gently rolling, with shallow basins at both north and south centred on the depressions of Perwinnes Moss and Corby Loch respectively. The ground varies in height from approximately 65 metres to 100 metres at the highest point. It is rather higher than adjacent character areas, and wide views are therefore possible from it. In the south the edge of the urban development can be seen, but in most directions the views are of open farmland and, more distantly, areas of woodland.

Improved pasture and rough grassland form the main vegetation types, with post-and-wire fences being the usual type of field boundary. There are only small areas of woodland. To the north there is an area of open water and marshy ground. There is also a small area of marsh vegetation, which is of botanical interest and designated as a SSSI, in the extreme south of the area at Scotstown Moor. Sand extraction occurs on the eastern edge of the area.

The area itself is sparsely settled, principally in the form of scattered traditional farmsteads, although it borders the expanded Bridge of Don housing estates to the east. A busy minor road, the B997 crosses the area, and other smaller roads also traverse it. The most obvious man-made element is the radar installation at Perwinnes. The movement and large size of the radars increase their visibility.

Summary of Distinctive Landscape Features:-

- The presence of Corby Loch and Perwinnes Moss and their nature conservation interests;
- Few trees, and fences rather than dykes as field boundaries;
- The sparse, scattered settlement pattern;
- The radar installation;
- Mineral extraction;

Sensitivity to Landscape Change

Visibility
This area has a low visibility, being hidden from view from the city, and generally seen only from the minor, but busy, roads that pass through it.

Built Development
The lack of adjacent infrastructure, the preponderance of poorly drained ground, the nearby local nature reserve at Scotstown Moor, and the lack of visual continuation with the existing urban fringe all combine to make this area sensitive to development.

Transportation
The existing minor road through the area is very busy with both car and commercial traffic. Widening of current roads could probably be incorporated quite easily, but structures that crossed the bowl-shaped terrain would be obtrusive.

Extraction / Landfill
There are some existing extractive sites in the area and nearby. The proximity of nature conservation interests limits the scope for extending these.

Agriculture and Forestry
Some new planting could link into adjoining areas of existing woodland, e.g. around the Ashwood development area. Large-scale planting would alter the existing open-ness of much of the character area. The predominant landuse is agricultural, and the area would be sensitive to any changes that altered its current open character.

Recreation
The busy roads and the nearby nature conservation interests could limit the potential of this area for informal recreation. However, low-key "cross-country" routes for pedestrian and cycle or equestrian use could be implemented without detriment to the landscape character.

Summary of Sensitivity to Landscape Change:-

The area has an open rural character and a rolling topography that would make it sensitive to development. The separateness of the area from the city means that it is generally hidden from wider views.

Landscape Guidelines

Conserve
- Maintain the open character of the area;
- Maintain nature conservation interests around Corby Loch and Perwinnes Moss.

Enhance
- Some small areas of tree planting could be introduced.

POTTERTON AREA 6

This area has a smoothly undulating topography, ranging in height from 50 to 100 metres. The land slopes down eastwards towards the coast. Views are limited by rising land to the west, and, at a greater distance, to the south. Wider views are possible northwards over similar land and eastwards towards the sea.

Agriculture - both arable and grazing - is the dominant landuse. The fields, which are medium-sized, are divided by dykes. These are generally in poor condition and are frequently reinforced by post-and-wire fences. Gorse is quite common along field boundaries and there are occasional hedgerows, particularly in the north of the area. There are no large areas of woodland, but the presence of single lines of trees as slender shelterbelts forms a significant landscape feature.

Settlement is sparse, comprising scattered traditional-style farmsteads. Outwith the area views to the urban residential and commercial areas at Denmore are possible, and also to the radar station at Perwinnes. Some of the extensive gravel workings situated to the east of the area are now landfill sites; others have been restored to agricultural use.

Summary of Distinctive Landscape Features:-

- Agriculture dominant, with little woodland;
- The distinctive shelterbelts;
- Sparse settlement;
- Stone dykes and occasional hedgerows as field boundaries;
- Views eastward to the sea;
- Views to the urban edge.

Sensitivity to Landscape Change

Visibility
This area is visible from several areas. These include the A92 Aberdeen - Peterhead trunk road; parts of the urban area at Bridge of Don; and, from a distance, the blocks of flats at Northfield.

Built Development
At present there are relatively few buildings within the area. They consist mostly of individual steadings that are widely scattered and generally traditional in style. The undulating topography of the area has influenced the settlement pattern, with most buildings being located in sheltered hollows as well as being associated with a group of trees. Groups of buildings, other than that of a single farmstead, tend not to occur. Large-scale development would not fit in with the existing pattern. Buildings are located below the skyline when viewed from the A92 or other roads.

Transportation
The existing road network within the area consists of minor roads, generally oriented north - south with smaller connecting routes running east - west. Any new routes, such as the western peripheral road, that crossed the undulating landform of this area could be obtrusive, and should be carefully sited to follow the topography as much as possible.

Extraction / Landfill
Extraction on higher ground would be difficult to screen - it would involve bunding and tree belts, which would take some time to become effective. Some existing sites are located on lower ground, where they are generally better or more easily screened.

Agriculture and Forestry
The extent of agriculture in this area is a notable characteristic. Stone dykes are prominent as field boundaries, and the area would be sensitive to alterations to this pattern. Large or medium-sized blocks of woodland would tend to alter the character, although extension of the tree belts or small tree groups around buildings, may not.

Recreation
Access to the area is limited and the minor roads are quite busy. The views from the area, and the diversity of landform and vegetation, mean that the area could be attractive for informal recreation. It is also close to Scotstown Moor, to which links might be established. Low-key recreational development would be unlikely to significantly affect the landscape character of the area.

Summary of Sensitivity to Landscape Change:-

The open, agricultural, and relatively un-settled character, together with the undulating landform are notable, and could make new development difficult to locate here. Buildings are accommodated below the skyline.

Landscape Guidelines

Conserve / Manage
- Manage tree belts to ensure their retention;
- Maintain stone dyke field boundaries;
- Maintain hedgerows.

Enhance
- Expand areas of tree belts.

The landform of this area is unvaried, with a gentle overall slope from a height of 50 metres in the west to 20 metres near the coast. Extensive views in all directions are possible, particularly out over the sea and along the coast.

Agriculture, principally grazing, is the dominant landuse. The large fields are divided by dykes and fences. There is no forestry, although there are clumps of trees around many of the buildings in the area, and, infrequently, thin lines of trees, or gorse, along field boundaries.

The Aberdeen to Peterhead trunk road runs through the area, and several cottages and farmsteads are located along it or are accessed from it. These buildings occur frequently and are mostly traditional in style. Some buildings have been extended beyond their original size and therefore have a greater impact, for example the hotel at Mill of Mundurno. The urban fringe is prominent, with large commercial buildings in a range of corporate liveries creating a colourful edge to the city approaches. Landfill sites are located to the north and west of the area, based on old mineral extraction areas.

Summary of Distinctive Landscape Features:-

- The low-lying, flattish topography;
- The open character;
- Occasional clumps of trees around traditional buildings;
- Many scattered houses;
- The abrupt urban edge at industrial estate;
- The presence of the trunk road;
- The presence of landfill sites;
- Views to sea and along coast.

Sensitivity to Landscape Change

Visibility
This area lies on one of the main approach roads to Aberdeen, the A92 trunk road from Peterhead, and is therefore highly visible.

Built Development
The existing settlement pattern consists of frequent, scattered houses that are often associated with the road and occasionally occur in small groups. Large-scale commercial development is present on the southern edge of the development. Extension of the present road-side development pattern could lead to ribbon development, and there is no visible precedent for large-scale housing. There is an existing large-scale industrial / commercial estate on the urban edge, and other, separate industrial areas such as a cement works within the area. The coalescence of these areas would significantly increase their impact and scale.

Transportation
No significant change to the existing road system that would have a major impact on the landscape is likely. The dual-carriageway trunk road is already a major feature of the landscape.

Extraction / Landfill
Former extractive areas, which are currently being landfilled with waste, exist to the west of the area. Their degree of visibility depends on how successful the screening treatment of the workings is. Screening is most effective where it echoes the rolling nature of the surrounding landform.

Agriculture and Forestry
At present, much of the area consists of urban fringe agriculture. The area would be sensitive to anything that altered its wide, open nature. There are a few low stone dykes as field boundaries, and occasional hedge remnants (principally gorse and hawthorn). Solid blocks of woodland would lessen the openness of the area, although some small tree groups could be accommodated, as could screen plantings for existing development on the western edge of the area, where it would link visually with inland character areas beyond.

Recreation
Golf courses on the adjacent links are currently the main recreational resource near this area. There is limited public access to the coast as a result. There is little existing provision for formal or informal recreation.

Summary of Sensitivity to Landscape Change:-

This is an open, coastal landscape with considerable amounts of existing development, but which is sensitive to new development in terms of its siting and integration. Its location on the main northern road access to the city increases its visibility and sensitivity to the impacts of development.

Landscape Guidelines

Enhancement
- Planting trees around buildings could echo the pattern of traditional development and aid integration into the landscape without losing its characteristic open-ness.
- Management of existing planting / new planting at the industrial estate could help to integrate it with the surrounding more rural landscape.

ABERDEEN LINKS AREA 8

This is an area of distinctive topography consisting of shore, dunes and links. It is generally horizontal in form, although the short, steep seaward slopes of the dunes and promenade introduce minor variety to this. The height rises from sea level to a maximum of twenty metres. Views are panoramic and extensive, following the north-south sweep of the coast from the lighthouse at Girdle Ness in the south to fade out northwards towards Balmedie and Forvie. Inland, views are possible over the urban edge to Tyrebagger Hill and the rising ground near it.

Landuse is mainly recreational although part of the area, at Donmouth where the river reaches the sea, is designated as a nature reserve. Further north, where golf courses occupy the links, access is more restricted. Typical dune vegetation of marram grass with finer, close mown expanses of grass further inland form the main vegetation types. At Donmouth in particular there is coastal erosion, with the dunes being reduced by wave action. There are few trees, apart from the ornamental planted areas near the exhibition complex on the periphery of the area.

The esplanade and the buildings which are located on the inland side of it are the main man-made elements within the zone. Various recreational facilities, such as a golf driving range and a major football stadium, are located on the edge of the area. Two golf courses are located north of the Don. The eastern periphery of the city, with high-rise flats, forms an abrupt inland edge to the zone. In the north, away from the urban area, settlement is sparse, being limited to occasional farmsteads and golf clubhouses. The bridge across the river Don is a traditional masonry structure which carries the main road north out of the city.

Summary of Distinctive Landscape Features:-

- The coastal topography and features - dunes, beach, links;
- A strong contrast with the adjacent urban edge (which is rather cluttered and abrupt);
- Recreational facilities and buildings, some with typical seafront architecture;
- Lengthy coastal views.

Sensitivity to Landscape Change

Visibility
This is an area that is highly visible from the residential areas that abut it; from the many recreational and sports facilities that lie adjacent to it; and also from the popular esplanade route that passes through it.

Built Development
The open space that surrounds the existing buildings is valuable as a contrast with the urban edge and as a visual link with the beach and shore. It would be highly sensitive to new built development.

Transportation
The esplanade is very busy with traffic as well as pedestrians. It is elevated in relation to the surrounding land and any new routes linking with it, therefore, would be likely to have a significant impact on the area.

Extraction / Landfill
There is historical precedent for using the area for dumping (long since restored), but any new extraction or landfill developments would be likely to have unacceptably high impacts.

Agriculture and Forestry
There is no agriculture in the area. There is some tree planting, with scope for extending the planting of trees in groups around the housing and some recreational developments to help ameliorate the impact of the abrupt urban edge.

Recreation
Recreation is the primary use of the area - golf; football; informal use of open areas; the promenade; and the beach itself. The area would be sensitive to new built developments with the associated car parking, roads etc., due to its high visibility.

Summary of Sensitivity to Landscape Change:-

This is a highly visible area of distinctive seafront character which would be sensitive to new built development.

Landscape Guidelines

Conserve / Manage
- Retain distinctive seafront features / architecture;
- Maintain the open character, in particular the large expanse of open space south of Donmouth;
- Manage coastal erosion;
- Manage recreational pressure.

Enhance
- Some tree and shrub planting on the inland edge could be accommodated without losing the characteristic open-ness of most of the area, and should help to "soften" the urban edge;
- Varying the mowing regimes of the open grassed areas could introduce visual variety and increase the wildlife potential of the area.

CLINTERTY and WEST BRIMMOND FARMLAND AREA 9

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

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

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

Summary of Distinctive Landscape Features:-

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

Sensitivity to Landscape Change

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

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

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

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

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

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

Summary of Sensitivity to Landscape Change:-

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

Landscape Guidelines

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

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

CRAIBSTONE AREA 10

This area has a strongly undulating, hummocky landform, which forms a small-scale landscape. It ranges from 80 to 150 metres in height and it forms a distinctive approach to the city from the north-west. Westwards, views are limited by the rising ground at Tyrebagger, but eastwards long views are possible over the city and the lower Don valley to the sea.

Woodland and agriculture are the most significant landuses. The area is well-wooded with coniferous forestry plantations being dominant. Grazing is more common than arable, with the fields being divided by either stone dykes or post-and-wire fences. Gorse is present along some field boundaries.

Within the area settlement is sparse. Occasional traditional-style farmsteads and cottages are located both as isolated buildings and in small clusters at road junctions. A research institute and college are located in the area. The college is in well-wooded grounds, and not visible from the main road, while the research institute is open to view from the Aberdeen-Inverness trunk road which runs through the area. The car parks and forest walks located within the coniferous plantations are hidden from view from the road.

Summary of Distinctive Landscape Features:-

- The hummocky, small-scale landform;
- The proportion and variety of woodland;
- Stone dykes as field boundaries;
- The research institute complex;
- Views eastwards to the city and coast, forming part of a distinctive approach to Aberdeen.

Sensitivity to Landscape Change

Visibility
This area is highly visible from the A96 trunk road, the main north-western approach route to the city. It has a strongly hummocky landform that frames distinctive views eastwards to the coast.

Built Development
The small-scale, hummocky landform and the sparse settlement pattern make this area highly sensitive to development.

Transportation
The A96 route corridor follows a low alignment through the area. Currently a dual carriageway, any widening would have a significant impact on the small-scale landscape around it. Any new routes that followed a different alignment would be likely to have an even greater impact on the area.

Extraction / Landfill
The scale and visibility of the landscape is such that this type of development would be likely to have considerable impacts. The nature of the undulating landform could make screening and restoration difficult.

Agriculture and Forestry
The existing mix of open space and woodland is characteristic and emphasises the distinctive landform. Significant change to it would have a high impact on the area.

Recreation
There is existing use of the forests in the area for informal recreation, with forest walks, wayfaring and sculpture trails, and associated car parks. Extension to this within the forest may be possible without detriment to the existing character.

Summary of Sensitivity to Landscape Change:-

The high visibility of the area and its small-scale and undulating landform would make it sensitive to any built development. In addition, the rural character of the area provides a contrast with the nearby urban area.

Landscape Guidelines

Conserve / Manage
- Ensure retention of some clear views to the characteristic hummocky landform;
- Manage the woodland to retain the diversity of tree cover to open space in the area;
- Maintain stone dykes.

LOWER DON VALLEY AREA 11

This area is a large valley with a narrow floodplain through which the River Don winds. At the eastern end, nearer the sea, the river becomes more constricted, flowing between tightly enclosing, steep banks. Further west, the valley sides are located further from the river and are more gently sloping. Views outwith the valley are restricted, and from higher viewpoints on the sides the river is often hidden from view. The valley stretches through the urban area. It is therefore visible to many people from the transport corridor which follows the valley; from the bridging points of the river; or from the residential areas.

A variety of landuses is present in the area. Recreational use is located on parts of the valley floor, where the flat ground is used for sports pitches, as well as on higher ground, for example at the Aberdeen University playing fields. In the upper reaches on the north bank, agriculture (both grassland and arable) is more prevalent. Woodland occurs extensively throughout the area, on the steep valley sides downstream, and as policy woodland around Grandholme at the western end of the area. In between, shelterbelts and clumps of trees are prominent.

There are extensive man-made elements in the area. Large-scale residential areas are situated on the slopes of the lower valley, and several industrial premises are located on the valley floor or low on the sides. These are principally paper and textile mills, but also include other uses, for example a dairy. Main roads and a railway line form a transport corridor that makes use of the valley landform. Three bridges cross the river, two of which, at Persley and Donmouth, are prominent features. They also provide striking viewpoints of the area.

Summary of Distinctive Landscape Features:-

- The large-scale valley landform;
- The amount and diversity of woodland and tree planting, particularly the shelterbelts;
- The balance between open and built-up areas;
- The occasional use of stone dykes as field boundaries;
- Transport and industrial uses associated with the valley and the river;
- Visibility of parts of the open valley slopes from within the city;
- Views along the valley.

Sensitivity to Landscape Change

Visibility
Much of this area is highly visible from a range of viewpoints that include large areas of residential development; major city road routes; and the Aberdeen - Inverness railway line.

Built Development
The upstream parts of the area have a much lower number of buildings than the downstream areas. However, these are often in close proximity to large scale industrial development, and have views across to residential areas of the city. Throughout the area either the flood plain or the sloping topography of the valley sides tend to preclude development. In the highly developed lower section of the area the areas of open space make a significant contribution to the character of the area on the highly visible side slopes of the valley. Infilling these areas would be detrimental to the existing landscape character and would have significant visual impacts from many viewpoints.

Transportation
Any new roads traversing north - south would require embankments or bridges and would be visually obtrusive. The major roads in and near the area are all very busy. They tend to be open to view and unscreened by hedgerows or roadside trees.

Extraction / Landfill
Such development would be likely to have significant impacts due to the proximity of residential areas and the topography of the area.

Agriculture and Forestry
In both parts of the area, landscape structure is provided by woodland. Upstream, mostly deciduous woodland dominates the steep river banks, and it also occurs in clumps and belts away from the river. Some extension to this farm woodland type of landscape could be carried out without losing the rural aspects of the area, and could also increase the screening of the factories that are one of its features. Downstream, the area will become sensitive in the future to the over-maturity, and possible loss, of the even-aged shelterbelts that are so distinctive.

Recreation
The river valley and its associated transport corridor could provide opportunities for informal recreation routes out of the city. Downstream, some of the existing areas of open space consist of sports pitches.

Summary of Sensitivity to Landscape Change:-

The area has a distinctive landform, being one of the main river valleys of Aberdeen. The mixture of open space to developed areas is characteristic, as is the extent and variety of woodland; these attributes would be sensitive to change.

Landscape Guidelines

Conserve / Manage
- Tree and woodland management and retention, particularly where it "softens" urban and industrial development;
- Maintain stone dykes;
- Retain open areas to maintain the character of the area and its characteristic skyline.

Enhance
- Extend tree planting along Balgownie Road to continue the distinctive sky-line trees;
- The shelterbelt pattern could be extended to the edge the of housing areas, to better integrate these areas with the landscape;
- Tree and shrub planting along the roadsides could help to screen traffic from residential areas as well as vice versa;
- Investigate the possibilities of encouraging tree planting within gardens to help integrate the housing areas with their surroundings.

BRIMMOND and ELRICK HILLS AREA 12

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

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

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

Summary of Distinctive Landscape Features:-

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

Sensitivity to Landscape Change

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

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

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

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

Summary of Sensitivity to Landscape Change:-

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

Landscape Guidelines

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

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

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

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

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

Summary of Distinctive Landscape Features:-

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

Sensitivity to Landscape Change

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

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

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

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

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

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

Summary of Sensitivity to Landscape Change:-

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

Landscape Guidelines

Conserve / Manage
- Manage existing hedgerow trees;
- Restore stone dykes.

Enhance
- Consider limited expansion to the numbers of boundary trees.

NEWHILLS AREA 14

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

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

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

Summary of Distinctive Landscape Features:-

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

Sensitivity to Landscape Change

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

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

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

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

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

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

Summary of Sensitivity to Landscape Change:-

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

Landscape Guidelines

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

Enhance
- Extend the tree pattern to help integrate urban edge.

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

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

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

Summary of Distinctive Landscape Features:-

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

Sensitivity to Landscape Change

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

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

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

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

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

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

Summary of Sensitivity to Landscape Change:-

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

Landscape Guidelines

Conserve / Manage
- Maintain and manage the characteristic woodland;
- Maintain stone dykes.

Enhance
- Increase structure planting around settlement

MAIDENCRAIG AREA 16

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

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

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

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

Summary of Distinctive Landscape Features:-

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

Sensitivity to Landscape Change

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

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

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

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

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

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

Summary of Sensitivity to Landscape Change:-

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

Landscape Guidelines

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

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

GAIRNHILL AREA 17

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

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

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

Summary of Distinctive Landscape Features:-

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

Sensitivity to Landscape Change

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

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

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

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

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

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

Summary of Sensitivity to Landscape Change:-

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

Landscape Guidelines

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

Enhance
- Diversify the woodland cover.

KINGSHILL / BOGSKEATHY AREA 18

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

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

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

Summary of Distinctive Landscape Features:-

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

Sensitivity to Landscape Change

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

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

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

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

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

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

Summary of Sensitivity to Landscape Change:-

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

Landscape Guidelines

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

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

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

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

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

Summary of Distinctive Landscape Features:-

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

Sensitivity to Landscape Change

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

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

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

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

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

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

Summary of Sensitivity to Landscape Change:-

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

Landscape Guidelines

Conserve / Manage
- Woodland management;
- Maintenance of stone dykes.

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

ANGUSTON / LEUCHAR / EASTER ORD AREA 20

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

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

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

Summary of Distinctive Landscape Features:-

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

Sensitivity to Landscape Change

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

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

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

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

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

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

Summary of Sensitivity to Landscape Change:-

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

Landscape Guidelines

Conserve
- Maintain stone dykes

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

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

COUNTESSWELLS / MILLTIMBER / KENNERTY AREA 21

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

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

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

Summary of Distinctive Landscape Features:-

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

Sensitivity to Landscape Change

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

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

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

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

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

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

Summary of Sensitivity to Landscape Change:-

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

Landscape Guidelines

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

DEE VALLEY AREA 22

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

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

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

Summary of Distinctive Landscape Features:-

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

Sensitivity to Landscape Change

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

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

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

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

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

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

Summary of Sensitivity to Landscape Change:-

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

Landscape Guidelines

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

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

GIRDLE NESS / NIGG BAY AREA 23

This area includes the exposed and elevated headland of Girdle Ness at the mouth of the River Dee, and the shallow depression of Nigg Bay and its hinterland. The area is bounded to the south by the hummocky form of Tullos Hill. The shallow area inland from Nigg Bay was a previous location of the Dee estuary. The landform of the area varies from the craggy shoreline rocks to the smooth grassy expanses of the golf course and Nigg Bay hinterland areas.

There is little tree cover within the area, most of which is devoted to recreational uses as public open space and a golf course. Close-mown grass forms most of the vegetation cover of the area. There is very little variation from this, despite the proximity of the area to the urban edge.

The only buildings within the area itself are the Old Torry Battery, Girdle Ness Lighthouse, the ruins of St Fittick's Church, and the long sea sewage outfall treatment works. The western edge of the area is dominated by the adjoining urban developments of Torry and Balnagask. The southern extremity adjoins the main railway line south and the rising ground of Tullos Hill, the lower flanks of which are used as a municipal refuse site. Coastal roads run round the rim of the area.

From within the area outward views are varied, ranging from the urban area and the rising flank of Tullos Hill to views of the sea eastward of Nigg Bay. From Girdle Ness and the high ground south of Torry there are extensive northward views across the harbour, city, and the beach curving away towards Balmedie. From the lower ground close to the railway line views are possible to the industrial estates at Tullos as well as the residential areas of the city. Girdle Ness is a focal point from many areas outside the character area.

Summary of Distinctive Landscape Features:-

- Distinctive coastal landform;
- The open character of the landscape, particularly close to the coast;
- The large expanse of mown grassland between the railway and Balnagask;
- Occasional but distinctive buildings - e.g. ruined chapel, sewage treatment works;
- Views of the city and coast.

Sensitivity to Landscape Change

Visibility
This is an area of high visibility that is overlooked by the large residential area at Balnagask, as well as the Aberdeen to Edinburgh railway line, the busy coastal roads heading north and south from Nigg Bay, the harbour entrance, and, from a distance, the beach esplanade.

Built Development
Despite the large-scale housing adjacent to the area (at Balnagask) and the long-sea sewer outfall treatment works, the over-riding characteristic of the area is its open-ness and relatively undeveloped nature. It is highly sensitive to built development.

Transportation
The rail route and roads currently skirt the coast and the area. New routes could have significant impacts in this open area.

Extraction / Landfill
There is an existing large waste tip on the adjacent character area at Tullos Hill, which is visible from the housing at Balnagask. An increase in the size of the working area would probably have a significant impact on the area.

Agriculture and Forestry
Agriculture is not a current landuse, and existing woodland and tree planting are limited in extent. There is some scope for deciduous or mixed clumps of trees near the housing area to soften the abrupt edge of the urban area. Unusually, given that trees are commonly found at such locations, there are none at the ancient kirkyard.

Recreation
There is a golf course on the high ground near Girdle Ness, a children's play area near the churchyard (at some distance from the housing area), and the northern end of the coastal footpath is located just outwith the area. Apart from these facilities, informal recreation is the primary use of the large area of grassed open space that makes up a large proportion of this area.

Summary of Sensitivity to Landscape Change:-

This is a distinctive open, coastal area used primarily for recreation, and with few opportunities for further development without detriment to its existing character.

Landscape Guidelines

Enhance
- Consider tree planting, of an appropriate scale and species, around St Fittick's church; near the housing to soften the harsh urban edge; and on Tullos Hill to screen the landfill site. Further planting could change the distinctive open character of the area.
- Consider removing the low bund behind Nigg Bay to allow wider views to the sea, although this would need to be balanced with any wish to screen the present informal car parking area;
- Consider moving the play equipment closer to housing, where it would be more easily accessed, and where it would be visually associated with the residential area rather than with the wide open grass spaces.
- Consider upgrading the fence between the golf course and housing.

KINCORTH AND TULLOS HILLS AREA 24

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

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

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

Summary of Distinctive Landscape Features:-

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

Sensitivity to Landscape Change

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

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

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

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

Summary of Sensitivity to Landscape Change:-

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

Landscape Guidelines

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

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

DOONIES TO COVE COAST AREA 25

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

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

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

Summary of Distinctive Landscape Features:-

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

Sensitivity to Landscape Change

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

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

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

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

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

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

Summary of Sensitivity to Landscape Change:-

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

Landscape Guidelines

Conserve
- Maintain stone dyke field boundaries.

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

DEN OF LEGGART AREA 26

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

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

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

Summary of Distinctive Landscape Features:-

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

Sensitivity to Landscape Change

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

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

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

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

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

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

Summary of Sensitivity to Landscape Change:-

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

Landscape Guidelines

Conserve / manage
- Maintain stone dykes;
- Maintain the distinctive views across the city.

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

LOIRSTON AREA 27

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

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

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

Summary of Distinctive Landscape Features:-

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

Sensitivity to Landscape Change

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

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

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

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

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

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

Summary of Sensitivity to Landscape Change:-

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

Landscape Guidelines

Conserve / Manage
- Maintain stone dyke field boundaries.

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

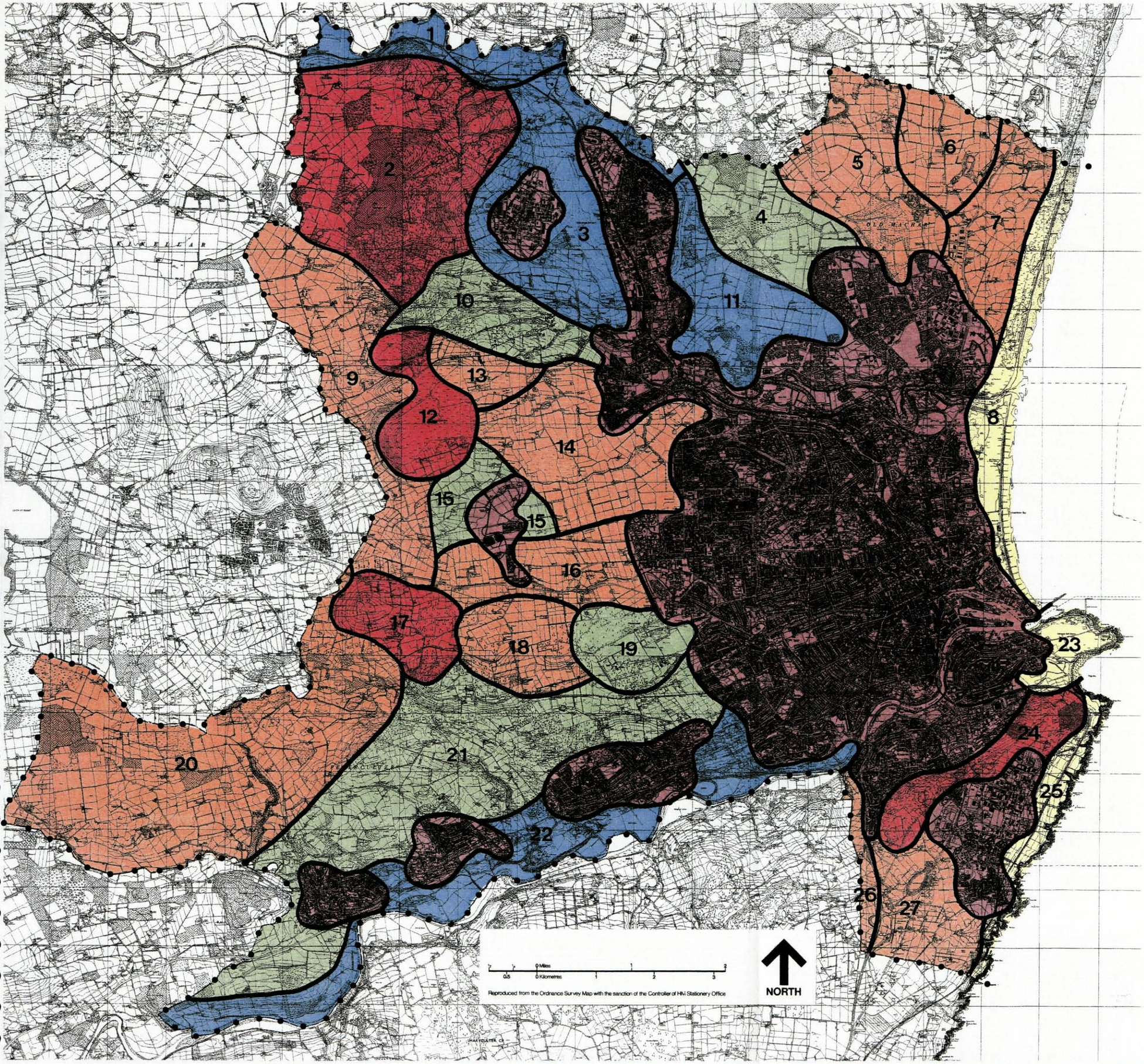


FIGURE 12

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

5	CHARACTER AREA BOUNDAR
	URBAN AREA
	VALLEY
	HILL
	OPEN FARMLAND
	WOODED FARMLAND
	COAST

NB Colours correspond to Landscape Character Types (see Figure 11)

ABERDEEN CITY

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

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FIELD SURVEY FORMS

APPENDIX 2

Samples of both types of field survey forms used - for the landscape character classification survey, and the subsequent sensitivity-to-change assessment - are attached.

ABERDEEN LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT
FIELD SURVEY SHEET

Survey Sheet 1: Description

Field Survey Form

Viewpoint No: Location: Date:

Film/Photo Nos.: Direction of View:

Brief Description: Describe the main elements and features of the landscape, and the way in which they are organised.

Landscape Elements: Mark those which are:- *** dominant; ** significant; * evident

Landform
flat
sloping
undulating
hilly
valley
other

Landcover
agricultural
pasture
arable
large field
small field
woodland
coniferous
deciduous/mixed
heathland/moorland
scrub
bracken
grassland (unimproved)
bog

industry
commercial
residential
recreation
other

Features
beach
sand dunes
cliff
quarry
tip
open drains
burns
river
loch / reservoir
sea

settlement
isolated — modern
urban — traditional
church / landmark

footpath
track
road — major — minor
rail
car park
other
telegraph poles
pylons / masts
fences
stone dykes
hedges
trees — isolated — boundary
shelterbelts — clumps
other

Survey Sheet 2: aesthetic factors and guidelines

Aesthetic factors: Circle those factors that apply

Scale	Intimate	Small	Medium	Large
Enclosure	Confined	Enclosed	Open	Exposed
Texture	Smooth	Textured	Rough	Very Rough
Colour	Monochrome	Muted	Colourful	Garish
Diversity	Uniform	Simple	Diverse	Complex
Form	Vertical	Sloping	Rolling	Flat
Balance	Harmonious	Balanced	Discordant	Chaotic
Movement	Dead	Still	Calm	Busy
Pattern	Random	Organised	Regular	Linear

Note any other special aesthetic factors, including attractors and detractors:-

Guidelines: What conservation or enhancement measures might be appropriate to strengthen or improve the landscape character of this area?

ABERDEEN DISTRICT LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT
PHASE TWO FIELD SURVEY FORM

SENSITIVITY TO LANDSCAPE CHANGE - *Likely forces for change - score through if not considered probable for the area:-*

HOUSING ESTATE

INDIVIDUAL HOUSES

COMMERCIAL

INDUSTRIAL

TRANSPORTATION

LANDFILL/EXTRACTION

FORESTRY

AGRICULTURAL

RECREATION OTHER

MITIGATION - *Indicate how, or if, the above development pressures might be successfully integrated into the landscape of the area.*

GUIDELINES - *Indicate what measures may be appropriate to Conserve, Enhance, or Restore (delete as appropriate) the area.*

VISIBILITY - *assess relatively (high, medium, low) and indicate viewpoints (main transport routes in particular)*

RECREATION POTENTIAL

Scottish Natural Heritage

Scottish Natural Heritage is a government body established by Parliament in 1992, responsible to the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Our task is to secure the conservation and enhancement of Scotland's unique and precious natural heritage - the wildlife, the habitats, the landscapes and the seascapes - which has evolved through the long partnership between people and nature.

We advise on policies and promote projects that aim to improve the natural heritage and support its sustainable use.

Our aim is to help people to enjoy Scotland's natural heritage responsibly, understand it more fully and use it wisely so that it can be sustained for future generations.