Landscape Character Areas: Agricultural Heartland

Landscape Character Type: The Agricultural Heartland; the main influence on the landscape is agriculture. These areas, although different in relief are all distinguished by a patchwork of mixed agricultural and scattered woodland and by the presence of numerous towns and villages.

Overview
The Agricultural Heartland is an extensive landscape character area stretching from Maud in the east to Turriff in the west. It is a gently rolling landscape, although there are places where the landform drops and rises more sharply. The landscape is largely open, allowing views to neighbouring character areas. This is a well settled area, there are a number of significant villages dotted throughout the area.

Agricultural Heartland Location:

Key Landscape Features
- **Landform** A rolling landform with open views to neighbouring. Given the expanse of the area, there are variations throughout the area, and the landscape can be steeper in places.
- **Vegetation** Scattered broadleaved trees are frequently found in shelterbelts along hill ridges, and around farms. There is some variation throughout the area, and the area is more heavily wooded to the north of the area, with coniferous plantations and woodland.
- **Field Pattern** In the main, the field pattern is of large fields bound with post and wire fencing. However, there are also smaller scale fields, with stone dykes and tumbledown dykes features.
- **Settlement** A relatively well settled landscape. There are a number of villages; Strichen, New Deer, New Pitsligo and Cuminestown and small hamlets such as New Byth, Garmond and Auchnagatt.
- **Other** To the north around New Pitsligo, moorland is a feature. Red sandstone, often dark in colour, is a feature to the west of the area.
Specific Guidance

General
- Integration of new buildings can be achieved by locating development close to existing buildings, shelter belts, hedgerows and trees.

Trees and Woodland
- Frequent scattering of broadleaf trees in shelterbelts along hill ridges, around farms.
- Occasional small coniferous blocks.
- Wherever possible new development can be integrated by planting native trees to replicate copses traditional planted for shelter.

Dwellings
- Farmsteads occur frequently and are regularly spaced along roads (both minor and major roads).
- There is a variation in size between large and small farmsteads and dwellings.
- Traditional development is largely screened, and new development should continue this feature.
- Dark red sandstone is a feature to the west of the area.
- Muted colours have traditionally been used, and bright colours appear out of place.

Boundaries
- Post and wire fence.
- Beech and thorn hedges to the south and east of the area.
- Occasional stone walls and consumption dykes to the north.
- Coniferous hedges and fencing used for plot boundaries can be very intrusive in rural locations.

Other
- Moorland characteristics occur in pockets to the north of the area
Landscape Character Areas: Central Wooded Estates

Landscape Character Type: The Agricultural Heartland; the main influence on the landscape is agriculture. These areas, although different in relief are all distinguished by a patchwork of mixed agricultural and scattered woodland and by the presence of numerous towns and villages.

Overview
The area occupies a substantial area to the east of Bennachie between the Dee and Don Valleys, extending to the western edge of Aberdeen. It is a diverse landscape, but with the common feature of woodland; ranging from wooded policies to small clumps. The topography varies from broad sweeping valleys and hills to pockets of confined small scale / hillier relief. The landscape is variable locally, with changing relief, and farming patterns. The scale of development varies across the area, with more dense development towards the northern part of the area.

Central Wooded Estates Location:

Key Landscape Features

Sensitivity
An area of increased landscape sensitivity exists to the south of the area, due to the qualities of the Deeside Corridor including; the river valley, mixed woodland, and deciduous trees. This area is coincident with what was historically identified as an Area of Landscape Significance.

Landform
A rolling landform with low hills and wide valleys. Valleys and mature woodland occasionally creates enclosed pockets. There are pockets of more confined, small scale relief. There are occasionally long and open vistas.

Vegetation
Strong woodland structure, associated with estate policies. Also clumps of trees, often atop mounds and hillocks. Mix of mature and regenerating woodland. Conifer plantations are distributed amongst broadleaves resulting in a lot of mixed woodlands.

Field Pattern
Mixed farmland meaning a varied field pattern from large fields associated with intensive farming to traditional fields bound with stone dykes. Estate farmland – bound by stone dykes is a feature throughout much of the area.

Settlement
A well settled area including the sizable settlements such as Inverurie, villages such as Monymusk and also hamlets such as Chapel of Garioch. Settlements are more prolific to the north of area. The eastern parts of the area can be noticeably void of development, particularly given the distance from Aberdeen.

Other
There are numerous large estates in the area. Quarrying occurs throughout the area. There are occasional views into neighbouring character areas.
### Specific Guidance

**General**
- Strong woodland structure but large policy woodlands susceptible to neglect and decline
- Drystone dykes and copses susceptible to damage
- Protect open views from and to stately homes / castles and maintain their setting.
- Sites for quarrying should maximise use of existing woodland and landform

**Trees and Woodland**
- Woodland is a key feature of the area.
- Areas of lowland moss with birch and pine enhance the landscape diversity and increase the sense of enclosure and small scale.
- Native broadleaf trees may be used to integrate and contain new housing estates and soften the edge of urban developments.
- Broadleaf woodlands with a mix of species help maintain a well balanced woodland structure.
- Conifer plantations can enhance woodland structure but stark geometric features should be avoided and more diverse rounded shapes with a broadleaf edge will create more natural character.
- Beech lined avenues are a feature in places.

### Dwellings

- Use of local stones can help to integrate buildings in the landscape
- Conversion of old derelict buildings should also be encouraged.
- Alterations and extensions to local vernacular buildings will deplete local styles.
- Inappropriate suburban boundary treatments dilute the character of the area.
- Dwellings are often associated with woodland screening or hedging.

### Boundaries

- Woods, shelterbelt and drystone dykes (occasionally with coping stone) enhance estate settings. These should be maintained to create a more unified landscape structure.
- Outwith estates, drystone dykes feature in much of the area, although they are sometime tumbledown dykes.
- Hedging is a feature throughout much of the area, although varies from well maintained beech hedges to scrubby gorse.
- Post and wire fencing is also a common boundary treatment.
- Slatted wooden fencing or harled walls generally do not fit with the landscape character.

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**Mix of coniferous and broadleaf woodland**

**Vernacular 1 ½ storey dwelling associated with mixed woodland.**

**Beech lined avenue**

**Inappropriate suburban boundary treatment**

**Boundary treatment appropriate to the rural setting incorporating stone dyke.**

**The modern house is of greater scale, but screening / tree planting assists in integrating the development of traditional and modern dwellings.**
Landscape Character Area: Formartine Lowlands

Landscape Character Type: distinguished by a patchwork of mixed agriculture and scattered woodland, and by their numerous towns and villages, linked by a network of main roads and lanes

Overview
The Formartine Lowlands comprise of gently rolling farmland that forms a backdrop to The Coastal Farmland identified in the Banff and Buchan Assessment. Views of the sea are an aspect of its character but in other ways it is similar to the other Agricultural Heartland areas identified in landscape assessments.

The land rises gradually to the west, and vantage views across much of the area are possible from points east of Oldmeldrum. Much of the area was reclaimed from moorland to accommodate resettled crofters, but it now provides a rich agricultural resource. Open geometric fields of mixed farming, bordered by post and wire fencing and derelict dry stone dykes, dominate the area. Woodland is scarce and that which occurs is often associated with estates policies. Settlements are scattered throughout the area with most farms being unsheltered by trees. Silos and other tall structures such as pylons are prominent against the horizon. The gentle eastward falling relief allows for long views across the area and towards the North Sea horizon in the distance.

Formartine Lowlands Location:

Key Landscape Features

Landform A gently undulating lowland plateau with low lying hollows of poorly drained, scrubby, rushy pasture supporting rough grazing for sheep. The open character provides expansive views across landscape.

Vegetation Prominent lines of trees and estates such as Pitmeddon and Auchmacoy with associated woodlands giving local variation in character.

Field Pattern An extensive area of open farmland with large geometric fields with post and wire fencing. Drystone dykes are rare owing to absence of rocks.

Settlement Relatively large, compact settlements such as Pitmeddon, Ellon, Newmachar and Oldmeldrum. Large farms with modern storage buildings and diverse building styles.

Other Roads and transmission lines criss-cross area, the latter often very visible. There are quite numerous archaeological remains including carved stone ball and pictish monuments. In addition, the area around the lower Ythan estuary is coincident with what has historically been identified as an Area of Landscape Significance.
Specific Guidance

General
- Where the landscape character is flat and open it has extensive visibility making it susceptible to impact from pylons, wind turbines and masts.
- Settings of estates are sensitive to intensive agriculture and loss of features such as woodlands.
- Golf courses are a pressure owing to the flat rolling landform and proximity to Aberdeen.
- Creation of landscaped buffer zones will help to preserve and enhance archaeological remains.
- Reduced intensity of farming may result in succession of scrub and woodland;

Dwellings
- The large scale landscape may accommodate large houses and farms, but the settlement patterns are distinctive and susceptible to extension and loss of identity.
- Houses are generally screened by trees or the landscape
- The development should follow the existing pattern; whether it is road-side or off-road.
- Piecemeal development and prominent farm buildings can intrude into views; good design measures and use of simple forms and shapes reduces the prominence of such features.

Other
- Agricultural Buildings are generally green in colour which blends well with the landscape.
- Small scale wind turbines associated with farmsteads and individual houses are a feature where the landscape is undulating

Woodlands and Boundary Treatments
- Plantations which reflect the form of adjacent policy woods will extend the visual influence of woodland in the landscape.
- Woodlands and shelterbelts may be used to screen and contain new built development, whilst improving the woodland structure of the landscape.

Undulating landscape and dispersed houses

Farmhouse and steading screened by woodland

Farm well screened by undulating landscape
Landscape Character Area: Garvock and Glenbervie

Landscape Character Type: The Agricultural Heartland; the main influence on the landscape is agriculture. These areas, although different in relief are all distinguished by a patchwork of mixed agricultural and scattered woodland and by the presence of numerous towns and villages.

Overview
The Garvock and Glenbervie landscape character area is dominated by an extensive area of rolling farmland which not only encompasses Garvock Hill but also includes the farmland around Glenbervie at the edge of the Highland Boundary Fault. The character of the area stems from its relief: a series of sweeping, rolling hills that present distant views up and down the terrain. From the east, views into the Mearns and across to Strathfinella Hill and the Kincardine Plateau are dramatic, emphasising the scale of this area. The area is host to numerous villages located along the Bervie Water. Farm steadings appear within dense patterns of development and are generally sheltered by trees. In some areas, individual new dwellings have encroached upon the landscape.

Key Landscape Features
Sensitivity An area of increased landscape sensitivity exists west of Drumlithie to Auchenblae, as shown by the shaded area, due to the qualities of the rolling landform with broadleaf woodland and occasional hedges. This area is coincident with what was historically identified as an Area of Landscape Significance.

Landform Large scale landscape with open rolling ridges. The bold geometric field pattern is poorly defined by field boundaries but crop patterns emphasise the characteristic patchwork. Large fields of arable land and pasture and red soils, presenting an array of colours.

Vegetation Broadleaf woodlands and shelterbelts are widespread and enhance the landscape pattern. Coniferous plantations are small and have little influence on the landscape. There is a scarcity of hedges and dykes.

Settlement Scattered settlement pattern with varied architectural styles including large stately homes in a variety of materials, traditional cottages made of local red sandstone, and modern suburban style development. Evidence of built development pressure, particularly around existing settlements on major communication routes such as Lochside outside St Cyrus.

Other Radio masts are prominent on high points. Numerous archaeological remains, including recumbent stone circles and carved stone walls. Long distance views across the Howe of the Mearns to The Mounth.
Specific Guidance

General
- The large scale rolling hills are sensitive to elements which may disrupt their smooth forms and visual flow, particularly on ridges and hilltops.
- Wind turbines will be prominent in more open and undeveloped stretches.
- The pronounced agricultural pattern is sensitive to changes in land use and management which may alter its ordered appearance.
- Long uninterrupted views are sensitive to intrusive elements that disrupt the flow or the scale of the landscape features.
- Widespread archaeological remains are susceptible to damage.

Dwellings
- Development may be accommodated by careful siting within the shelter of the rolling landform.
- Ridgeline development will be very prominent, and may disrupt the landscape pattern and should therefore be avoided.
- Dwellings outwith settlements are widely dispersed and new dwellings should be grouped with existing dwellings to maintain openness.
- Dwellings should be single or 1½ storey. Two storeys will be acceptable in limited circumstances depending on their setting. Dwellings should be harled or have a stone finish. To the east of the character area white wash is more common and this may be an appropriate finish in these areas.
- Stone dykes and hedging are successful boundary treatments for dwellings.
- Piecemeal, small scale development may distract the eye from large scale and simple landscape pattern.
- New houses may be integrated more successfully if they are associated with existing or expanded shelterbelts and woodland blocks. Woodland shelter can be used to visually link buildings and isolated stands of trees rather than patchy woods.
- Where development is screened, alternative finishes could be explored.

Agricultural Buildings
- Large agricultural buildings are common in this area. Due to their scale these buildings should aim to use the landform or mature shelter belts as a backdrop or screening. Green or grey/blue corrugated sheeting should be used depending on the backdrop. Buildings should be grouped together and not dispersed over the farm.

Boundaries
- The restoration and improvement of drystone dykes and hedges will emphasise the landscape structure.

Trees and Woodland
- New development should avoid the removal of woodland. Woods add structure to the landscape but are susceptible to neglect and depletion.

Roads
- Roads and pylons may be intrusive but are accommodated better when following the smooth patterns of landform and natural breaks of slope. Linear features that break up curves in the landform will create visual disharmony.
Landscape Character Area: Howe of Alford

Landscape Character Type: The Agricultural Heartland; the main influence on the landscape is agriculture. These areas, although different in relief are all distinguished by a patchwork of mixed agricultural and scattered woodland and by the presence of numerous towns and villages.

Overview
The Howe of Alford Landscape Character Area forms a wide concave bowl of farmland, uniformly flat at its centre where it is bisected by the River Don, but rising gently at the periphery into moorland and upland farming. This area is characterised by intensive farming and regularly scattered settlements. The woodland is predominantly broadleaved.

Howe of Alford Location:

Key Landscape Features
Landform Expansive basin of farmland with gently rising sides. Landscape framed by amphitheatre of dark moorland ridges.
Field pattern / Land-use This area is characterised by intensive farming. Open patchwork of fields interrupted by sparse lines of trees and gappy hedgerows.
Vegetation Shelterbelts, walls and beech avenues signify presence of estates which flank the River Don. The woodland is predominantly broadleaved.
Settlement Settlement concentrated centrally around Alford and along the River Don, but otherwise dispersed as isolated cottages and farms. Variety of architectural styles, including modern houses.
Other Numerous archaeological remains, particularly Neolithic, notably recumbent stone circles and carved stone balls. A small area to the west and north of the area is coincident with what has historically been identified as an Area of Landscape Significance.
Specific Guidance

Dwellings
- This character area can accommodate a broad range of house types and styles reflecting the mix of existing housing stock in the character area.
- Single and 1½ storey dwellings are the most common and new dwellings should seek to reflect the size and form of traditional dwellings in the surrounding area.
- Exceptionally larger 2 to 3 storey dwellings may be accommodated and several traditional examples can be found in the character area. These should be situated on their own and not grouped with other dwellings and should have a backdrop/frame of woodland.
- The pattern of development in the character area varies from farm centric development to development along roadsides. The pattern prevailing in the area should be replicated.
- Development should be concentrated in groups where this is a feature
- Infill development can be used to unite dispersed assemblages of building providing a more compact visual focus, but new dwellings should not however disrupt nucleated settlement patterns.
- Colours can be important, and muted natural tones can be appropriate.

Trees and Woodland
- Woodland screening of development should where possible be extended to link in with existing woodland.
- Clumped planting may be used to break up the linearity of roads and around buildings to make them less prominent in the open landscape.

General
- The flat basin with its open farmland patchwork is sensitive to elevated and large scale structures these being highly visible and intrusive. Limited elevated structures may be confined to the basin edges without loss of the central open character.
- Landmarks in the landscape such as castles are an important focus for views and development should be located away from these landmarks to avoid competing for prominence or compromising their setting.
- Agricultural buildings should generally be of a smaller scale as larger buildings can appear intrusive within the open character of the landscape. Where necessary buildings should be located and engineered to sit as low in the landform as practical, to avoid overly prominent rooflines.

Boundary Treatments
- Development should seek to restore or conserve stone dykes and hedgerows as this helps maintain the strong geometric field pattern of the character area.
- New boundaries should reflect existing boundaries in the area.
- Wooden ranch style fencing should be avoided as this can result in building appearing out of place in the landscape. Stone dykes and hedging are more successful boundary treatments.
- Clump planting may help to break up strong linear features.
Landscape Character Area: Howe of Cromar

Landscape Character Type: The Agricultural Heartland; the main influence on the landscape is agriculture. These areas, although different in relief are all distinguished by a patchwork of mixed agricultural and scattered woodland and by the presence of numerous towns and villages.

Overview
The area is best viewed from the Queen's View where the land falls away into a wide sweeping basin. It is characterised by large rectilinear fields, occasional geometric blocks of neat plantation woodland and is evenly scattered with modern farmsteads. This landscape is strongly influenced by its encircling skyline of dark moorland ridges which frame views within it and form an imposing backdrop. Roads criss-cross the landscape but are well absorbed within it, following its field pattern and screened by undulating relief and woods.

Howe of Cromar Location:

Key Landscape Features

**Sensitivity** This character area is of increased landscape sensitivity due to the characteristics described below. This area is coincident with what was historically identified as an Area of Landscape Significance.

**Landform** Wide sweeping basin with rising sides contrasting with the flat to gently rolling relief at heart of area. Imposing backdrop of dark moorland ridges.

**Field pattern / Land-use** Large-scale patchwork of rectilinear fields emboldened by crop patterns, thick shelterbelts and conifer plantations.

**Vegetation** Blocks of plantation wood dominated by agricultural landscape. Policy woodlands around Tarland.

**Settlement** Scattered settlements concentrated below slopes. Development is evenly scattered with modern farmsteads.

**Other** Numerous archaeological remains, particularly carved stone balls.
Specific Guidance

**General**
- New build development can exert pressure on the pattern of scattered farms and the network of woodland; visibility is high especially from raised edges. The character area is sensitive to elements which may disrupt the flow of the landform. New development which avoids open expanses and ridgelines will be more balanced and less intrusive.
- Land use is sensitive to change which would alter the proportion of woodland or weaken the strong field pattern.

**Dwellings**
- Nucleated settlements within the bottom of the basin are characteristic of the landscape; ad hoc development or linear growth will disrupt settlement character and encroach into the open landscape. The character area is particularly sensitive to new scattered or suburban style buildings in the countryside.
- Dwellings should generally be located within or close to farm buildings with isolated new dwellings only in exceptional cases.
- Dwellings outwith settlements should generally be single or 1½ storey with a traditional form. Dwellings should reflect the grey colour and stone found in the character area.
- Dwellings often front directly onto the road and this orientation should be replicated where appropriate.
- Stone dykes and hedging are successful boundary treatments for new dwellings.

**Agricultural Buildings**
- These should generally be tucked into the landform, grouped with existing farm buildings and be well screened by trees. A mix of broadleaf and conifers would reflect the character area whilst providing some year round screening.
- The low lying valley floor and dark moorland edge means anything with height will appear prominent and therefore careful siting of larger buildings will be necessary.
- Cladding should generally be of muted neutral colours.

**Boundaries**
- Conserved and maintained drystone dykes, hedgerows, shelterbelts or boundary fencing reinforce the robust field pattern.

**Trees and Woodland**
- Broadleaf shelterbelts and clumps of trees can be used to contain built development, screen structures and enhance the woodland structure.
- As a sweeping and expansive landscape distant views are important to the experience of the area and planting of trees along roadsides will block views across the basin and should be avoided.
Landscape Character Area: Howe of the Mearns

Landscape Character Type: The Agricultural Heartland; the main influence on the landscape is agriculture. These areas, although different in relief are all distinguished by a patchwork of mixed agricultural and scattered woodland and by the presence of numerous towns and villages.

Overview
The Howe of the Mearns has steep moorland slopes which rise up behind it marking the line of the Highland Boundary Fault. A colourful landscape dominates the area with vivid fields of red soils and bright green pastures while at other times fields of rape and daffodils present a startling patchwork of colours. Small coniferous plantations and pockets of scrubby birch moss are scattered over the flat expanse, and broadleaf estate woodlands and shelterbelts frame views across the Mearns. Its agricultural wealth has nurtured the growth of villages, farms, estates and many large historic buildings. The distinctive character of this landscape is derived from its large pattern of fields, crops and woodlands which can be seen from elevated locations such as the moorland ridge in the north and the Garvock Hills in the south.

Howe of the Mearns Location:

Key Landscape Features
Landform Almost uniformly flat. Expansive views framed by surrounding upland.
Field pattern / Land-use Intensive agriculture. Large geometric fields that possess an array of colours.
Vegetation Mature (and over-mature) beech woodlands and straight beech avenues with stone walls associated with scattered estates. Small coniferous plantations and pockets of rowan and birch coppice stand out within the expanse.
Settlement Red stone houses, bridges and stone dykes giving warmth to the landscape, but mixed with newer houses of diverse styles and materials.
Other Corridor for road and rail links. An area to the north-west of Fettercairn is coincident with what has historically been identified as an Area of Landscape Significance.
Specific Guidance

**General**
- The landscape is highly visible and any landscape change will be widely seen.
- The colourful farmland tapestry is sensitive to homogenisation of land uses.
- The setting of estates and features associated with these are sensitive to neglect. Policy grounds, woodlands and gardens that are well maintained have a positive impact on landscape character.

**Dwellings**
- Traditional styles and colours of buildings are distinctive and susceptible to replacement by modern materials. Extensions and conversions should aim to use traditional materials reflective of the original building.
- Buildings are highly visible in the flat landscape, particularly in the more open eastern part of the Howe. Dwellings are very sparsely distributed across the character area. Small groups of buildings that form a more coherent visual focus than numerous isolated buildings will be preferable however larger groups are more appropriately located in a town or village.
- Dwellings are generally a maximum of 1½ storeys. The red colour of the landscape is a key characteristic which can be reflected in use of local sandstone or in materials that reflect this theme. There are some traditional white washed cottages and farmhouses and it may be appropriate to reflect this feature in new dwellings (particularly small scale dwellings) in areas where sandstone buildings are less of a feature.
- Beech hedges or stone dykes are traditional boundary treatments and similar materials should be used to enclose new dwellings.
- Street lighting would be highly intrusive in this open landscape and should be avoided in countryside areas; if necessary, good design measures should be used to minimise light spillage.

**Trees and Woodlands**
- Broadleaf avenues are pronounced in the landscape and the management and replacement of over-mature trees will benefit these important features.
- Shelterbelts are well established in the character area and extension of these or linkages with hedgerows can help accommodate new development within the landscape by reinforcing these features in the landscape.

**Agricultural Buildings**
- Large scale new agricultural buildings will have an impact on the landscape due to its uniformly flat landform. Where possible buildings should be set against a backdrop of mature trees and grouped with existing buildings.

**Roads**
- Clearly defined transport and infrastructure corridors will confine the extent of impact from linear infrastructure.
- Various good design measures can be utilised to help integrate roads with the landscape. Landscape planting is key but should avoid emphasising linearity and clumped planting tends to break up lines.
Landscape Character Area: Insch Basin

Landscape Character Type: The Agricultural Heartland; the main influence on the landscape is agriculture. These areas, although different in relief are all distinguished by a patchwork of mixed agricultural and scattered woodland and by the presence of numerous towns and villages.

Overview
The Insch Basin is an extensive area of largely flat farmland, dominated by large rectilinear fields with a geometric patchwork. The diverse landscape is further enhanced by small clumps of broadleaf and coniferous woodland, along with houses, farms and villages which are scattered densely across the landscape. Internal views can be cluttered, but views from outwith show a mosaic of colours and shapes. There is a chain of conical hills extending across the centre of the area to link the Moorland Plateaux of Ridge of Foudland and Bennachie, but despite patches of coniferous forest on these hills, the strong farmland character of the basin prevails.

Insch Basin Location:

Key Landscape Features

Landform Extensive area of largely flat and gently rolling farmland with a chain of conical hills extending across the centre of the area. Despite patches of coniferous forest on these hills, the strong farmland character of the basin prevails.

Field pattern Large rectilinear fields with a colourful geometric patchwork of arable and pasture land. Tumbledown dykes have been replaced or reinforced and in some areas replaced by post and wire fencing along field boundaries.

Settlement The flat and gently rolling farmland is studded evenly with farms. Modest farmhouses made of local stone are characteristic as well as smaller traditional cottages, many enlarged to accommodate modern dormer windows.

Vegetation Little substantial woodland planting with tree cover confined to shelter belts, hilltop clumps and beech avenues. To the west of the character area there are some small plantation woodlands and views to larger plantations out with the character area. The diverse landscape is enhanced by small clumps of broadleaf copse and small coniferous woodlands.

Other The character area is rich in archaeological remains, most notably recumbent stone circles. Internal views can be cluttered, but views from out show a mosaic of colours and shapes. Open views to Bennachie are an important feature. A small portion of the area to the south of Ardoyne is coincident with what has historically been identified as an Area of Landscape Significance.
Specific Guidance

Dwellings
- The pattern of development is dispersed farmsteads and individual cottages with relatively modest feus. Dwellings are generally set back from the roadside except in villages.
- Groups of large bungalows set on their own do not relate well to the character of the area.
- Generally dwellings should be no more than 1½ storey as this a key characteristic of the area.
- Large scale houses can appear out of scale and insensitive.
- The spread of new buildings and styles in the rural landscape can be limited by encouraging new building in existing settlements or adhering to traditional nucleated forms.
- There are a few linear and nucleated groups where infill could be sensitively located. Infill development should reflect the scale and orientation of existing buildings within the group. The settlement pattern of scattered, isolated farmsteads and nucleated villages is sensitive to infill that could result in coalescence or loss of village identity.
- Dwellings should either be granite to reflect the traditional farmhouses or harled in muted colours. Strongly contrasting colours should be avoided.

Boundary Treatments
- Drystone dykes and hedges help to define field structure and merit conservation; replacement by post and wire fencing has weakened this character.
- Stone dykes are successful in defining house feus, and ornamental hedges, ranch or suburban style fencing and concrete capping of walls should be avoided.
- Mixed planting may be used to define settlement edge as well as to augment woodland structure.

Agricultural Buildings
- New agricultural buildings should generally be located alongside existing farmsteads. The character to the west of the area is for smaller agricultural buildings with larger buildings being found more to the east of the character area.
- Buildings should avoid breaking the skyline and shelter planting can help large buildings to fit within the landscape.
- The colour of cladding is important with muted greys and greens working well. Blue tends to stand out in the landscape.

Trees and Woodland
- Landscape planting of broadleaf trees around new development provides a more natural setting and helps integrate development with the landscape. In this character area clumps/clusters of broadleaf trees around development is characteristic as is linear/shelterbelts.
- Woodland copses are distinctive landscape features, enhancing repeating patterns of landscape. Linking these copses through hedgerows and creation of a more pronounced woodland structure will benefit the landscape.

General
- The conical landforms attract the eye across the basin and are therefore prominent features on which development of any type will be extremely conspicuous.
- Large gardens with suburban style fencing are not characteristic of this area.
Landscape Character Area: Kincardine Plateau

Landscape Character Type: The Agricultural Heartland; the main influence on the landscape is agriculture. These areas, although different in relief are all distinguished by a patchwork of mixed agricultural and scattered woodland and by the presence of numerous towns and villages.

Overview
The Kincardine Plateau Landscape Character Area has an open character with widespread arable farmland along the eastern edge. The rolling hills and sloping relief provides opportunities for long distance views. There is a transition from upland to coastal edge which results in a diverse land cover varying from enclosed fields, to gorse scrubland, regenerating woodland and tumbledown dykes. There is no strong landscape theme or distinctive character.

Kincardine Plateau Location:

Key Landscape Features
Landform Undulating landform falling gently towards the coast. Gradual transition between strong moor land character to the west and the coast to the east. Occasional exposed mounds
Vegetation Pasture and marginal farmland with rocky outcrops and scrubby marshland patches. Derelict pasture with encroaching gorse and weeds. Hills with windblown trees.
Land use Widespread arable farmland along the eastern edge.
Settlement Dwellings well screened by trees and hedging.
Specific Guidance

Dwellings
• The pattern of development varies throughout the area, where development fronts onto the road this pattern should be continued and large gardens in front of the house should be avoided.
• Where development is grouped, i.e. around steadings, this pattern of cohesive groups should be continued.
• More secluded areas, well off the public road with existing screening, may provide opportunities for more innovative design.
• In more westerly parts of the character area where moorland characteristics are more prominent dwellings follow a more dispersed croft like pattern.
• Generally dwellings should be no more than 1½ storey, with single storey more characteristic in some areas. Two storey or large modern villas look out of place and are prominent.
• Vernacular buildings are prone to neglect; traditional stone farmhouses are sensitive to extension and conversion that may alter their character.
• Dwellings should either be stone clad or harled in a muted colour such as browns and greys rather than white. Strongly contrasting colours should be avoided.

Boundary Treatments
• Ornamental hedgerows, ranch style or suburban fencing and concrete capping on walls are out of character in the landscape.
• Traditional materials such as dry stone dykes, and hedges are more desirable.
• In some parts of the area estate stone walls provide a distinctive character to the area.

Trees and Woodland
• Landscape planting with native species helps development to integrate into the landscape.

General
• Landscape planting with native species can provide a more natural setting for built development helping to integrate development into the landscape.
• Development of equestrian facilities and small stables can disrupt the landscape and field pattern. New development of this type should be more closely associated with existing buildings.
Landscape Character Area: Knock Hill and Aberchirder

Landscape Character Type: The Agricultural Heartland; the main influence on the landscape is agriculture. These areas, although different in relief are all distinguished by a patchwork of mixed agricultural and scattered woodland and by the presence of numerous towns and villages.

Overview
This area from Knock Hill in the west to Aberchirder in the east sits at the western boundary of Banff and Buchan and merges into the foothills of the Moray District. Views from within the lower valleys are enclosed by the smoothly undulating landform. This part of the district has a greater physical resemblance to the more distinctive hilly landscape of Moray than the flatter agricultural plains which dominate much of Banff and Buchan. The main village in the area is the 18th century planned settlement Aberchirder which is located on a plateau which slopes down to the Burn of Arkland.

Knock Hill and Aberchirder Location:

Key Landscape Features
Landform Low rolling hills and long ridges create an undulating landform. Knock Hill dominates the western part of the area. The area takes on more of a moorland / rougher character to the west of the area.

Vegetation Shelterbelts and clumps of mature deciduous trees including beech and sycamore frame settlements. Buildings are generally screened by trees. Long avenues of trees line fields and roads, particularly to the east of the area.

Field Pattern Large fields divided by post and wire fencing or hedges of gorse.

Settlement Infrequently scattered farmsteads.
Specific Guidance

Dwellings
- Farmsteads are scattered evenly but infrequently across the area.
- Integration of new buildings is best achieved by locating development close to existing buildings, shelterbelts, hedgerows and trees.
- Houses generally located some way off the main road, although on minor roads some houses front directly onto the road.
- Mix of housing present within the area from single storey cottages to two storey houses, all of which are set within grounds.

Trees and Woodland
- Curving fringes of shelterbelts and clumps of mature deciduous trees, including beech and sycamore, emphasise the distinctive topography of the area.
- Wherever possible, new development can be integrated by planting native trees to replicate copses traditionally planted for shelter.
- Small blocks of coniferous planting are more of a feature to the west of the area.

Other
- Agricultural Buildings are generally of a modest scale, and blue/grey cladding is common
- Some agricultural buildings are ‘cut in’ so they sit lower making them less prominent in the landscape.

Boundary Treatments
- Post and wire fences around field boundaries.
- Where stone dykes and hedging are a feature, this should be continued.
- Coniferous hedges, harled/painted block walls and ranch fencing are generally out of place and intrusive in rural locations.
- Tree avenues / shelter belts effectively bound fields and buildings enhancing landscape character.
- In areas where there are no boundary treatments, this is an appropriate feature to continue. This tends to work best for smaller dwellings.
Landscape Character Area: Northern Rolling Lowlands

Landscape Character Type: The Agricultural Heartland; the main influence on the landscape is agriculture. These areas, although different in relief are all distinguished by a patchwork of mixed agricultural and scattered woodland and by the presence of numerous towns and villages.

Overview
This area covers a swathe of farmland extending into the Deveron valley to the north and to the south to the moorland of the Glens of Foudland. It is a large scale landscape that has a vast feeling, and has features of open views. There is a simple landscape pattern, with large rounded rolling hills, which tend to draw the eye across the landscape to more distant views.

Key Landscape Features
Landform Large rounded hills whose sides rise and fall in waves form smooth sweeping curves.
Vegetation A well wooded area with thick woodland shelterbelts and coniferous plantations follow and emphasise the landform. Occasional scruffy and gappy skyline shelterbelts
Field Pattern Simple pattern of large rectilinear fields form a patchwork of simple tones and textures. Occasional scrubby fields.
Settlement Farmsteads cluster in more sheltered valleys and lower slopes. The occasional sprawling farmstead makes an appearance.
Other Dereliction adds to the remoteness of area.
## Specific Guidance

### General
- The large scale rolling hills are sensitive to development that may disrupt their smooth forms and visual flow.
- Hilltop developments are inappropriate, interfering with the smooth shapes of the landform.
- Thick shelterbelts, avenues and deciduous woodland are distinctive features which require management.
- The neat agricultural landscape is sensitive to changes that may alter its ordered appearance.
- Long uninterrupted views are sensitive to intrusive elements, especially on the skyline, which may disrupt the flow or the scale of landscape features.
- Views into neighbouring areas are a feature

### Dwellings
- Farms are usually enclosed by shelterbelts.
- Piecemeal, small scale development may distract the eye from the large scale and simple landscape pattern.
- Scattered farmsteads punctuate the landscape and enhance the regularity of its pattern. This character can be used to guide siting of additional developments.
- Whitewashed farmhouses with slate roofs stand out as attractive features in contrast to the dominant greens and browns of the agricultural landscape;
- Outbuildings finished in subtle greys allow vernacular buildings to stand out.
- Settlements are generally sited within sheltered valleys, nucleated and simple in form.
- Dwellings are generally sited closer to the road / front onto the road

### Other
- Wind Turbines feature throughout the area.

### Trees and Woodland
- Mixed woodland
- Broadleaf avenues are occasionally a feature
- Blocks of coniferous plantations and shelter belts are features.
- In parts of the area, generally towards the edge of the area, coniferous plantation is more dominant (impact of neighbouring character areas on the area)

### Boundaries
- Post and wire fencing is the most common boundary treatment
- Occasionally hedging is a feature.
- Occasional enclosure of coniferous plantations by beech, which softens the edges

## Mixed woodland shelterbelts

## Undulating farmland with dispersed farmsteads, generally associated with broadleaf trees.

## Trees and Woodland

## Coniferous plantation on hillock.
Landscape Character Area: The Cromar Farmlands

Landscape Character Type: The Agricultural Heartland; the main influence on the landscape is agriculture. These areas, although different in relief are all distinguished by a patchwork of mixed agricultural and scattered woodland and by the presence of numerous towns and villages.

Overview
Principally an agricultural landscape, lying at the foot of the long slopes of Morven. It is an area of low lying hills and broad, undulating valleys. The agricultural fields covering the valley floor have a strong geometric pattern. The farmland and plantations of the lowland area contrast with the open hill slopes. Farming becomes more extensive within the upper valleys. The characteristics of the area are similar to the Howe of Cromar and the specific guidance reflects this.

Cromar Farmlands Location:

Key Landscape Features
Sensitivity This character area is of increased landscape sensitivity due to the characteristics described below. This area is coincident with what was historically identified as an Area of Landscape Significance and abuts the Cairngorms National Park (CNP). The dotted line on the map represents the continuation of the landscape character area into the national park.

Landform Low lying hills and broad, undulating valleys. The gentle undulation of the landform is occasionally interrupted by small knolls of sandy, glacial deposits which form focal points, and are colonised by Scots pine and birch.

Field pattern / Land-use Farming is predominantly pastoral. The bright green of improved pasture wraps around the rough glacial hillocks and knolls, sharply contrasting with the muted colours of heather and grass moorland on the hillsides and the dark coniferous plantations that form shelterbelts and more extensive woodlands. Arable fields are divided by fences, tumbledown stone walls and occasional hedges and shelterbelts. The geometric pattern imposed by fields is accentuated by the often geometric shape of shelterbelts and coniferous plantations.

Vegetation Birch woodland fringes soften the margins of some of the plantations and extend up the lower hill slopes of Morven, clinging to the steep banks of small burns which cut these slopes.

Settlement Farmsteads are dispersed throughout the landscape, and are often defined by clumps of tall conifers and broadleaves, planted around buildings. There are a number of abandoned steadings, particularly prominent in the area at the foot of Morven, which suggest that the area was formerly more populated.
**Specific Guidance**

**General**
- New build development can exert pressure on the pattern of scattered farms and the network of woodland; visibility is high especially from raised edges.
- The character area is sensitive to elements which may disrupt the flow of the landform. New development which avoids open expanses and ridgelines will be more balanced and less intrusive.
- Land use is sensitive to change which would alter the proportion of woodland or weaken the strong field pattern.

**Dwellings**
- Nucleated settlements within the bottom of the basin are characteristic of the landscape; ad hoc development or linear growth will disrupt settlement character and encroach into the open landscape.
- The character area is sensitive to new scattered or suburban style buildings in the countryside.
- Dwellings should generally be located within or close to farm buildings with isolated new dwellings only in exceptional cases.
- The character area has a broad range and style of dwellings.
- Dwellings should reflect the grey colour and stone found in the character area.

**Boundaries**
- Conserved and maintained drystone dykes, hedgerows, shelterbelts or boundary fencing reinforce the robust field pattern.
- Stone dykes are successful boundary treatments for new dwellings.

**Trees and Woodland**
- Shelterbelts and clumps of trees can be used to contain built development, screen structures and enhance the woodland structure.
- Distant views are important to the experience of the area as a sweeping expansive landscape. Planting of trees along roadsides will block views across the basin and should be avoided.

**Agricultural Buildings**
- These should generally be tucked into the landform, grouped with existing farm buildings and be well screened by trees. A mix of broadleaf and conifers would reflect the character area whilst providing some year round screening.
- The low lying valley floor and dark moorland edge means anything with height will appear prominent and therefore careful siting of larger buildings will be necessary.
- Cladding should generally be of muted neutral colours.

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![Image of lack of planting around farm building](image1.jpg)

![Image of extensive woodland plantation](image2.jpg)

![Image of stone dykes](image3.jpg)

![Image of farm centred development](image4.jpg)

![Image of single storey dwelling with backdrop of woodland and planting](image5.jpg)

![Image of fencing uncharacteristic for area](image6.jpg)
Landscape Character Areas: Upland Ridges South of the Deveron

Landscape Character Type: The Agricultural Heartland; the main influence on the landscape is agriculture. These areas, although different in relief are all distinguished by a patchwork of mixed agricultural and scattered woodland and by the presence of numerous towns and villages.

Overview
The two areas are located in west Formartine, either side of the river valleys of the Deveron, the Ythan and their tributaries. The area is characterised by the rounded slopes of hill-ridges. The broad hill-tops of these ridges are open and similar in height throughout the area, divided by numerous yet insignificant streams. Cultivation has been carried out up to the waters edge and establishment of marginal vegetation is not a characteristic.

Upland Ridges South of the Deveron Location:

Key Landscape Features
Landform An upland area with rounded hills which are largely of similar height, but are divided by occasional streams. A well cultivated landscape.
Vegetation Tree cover is sparse but scattered deciduous trees occasionally fringe the skyline.
Field Pattern A well cultivated landscape. Cultivation is carried up to the edge of minor water bodies found throughout the area.
Settlement Scattered and infrequent farmsteads nestle against hill slopes or dips in the valleys. There is no settlement of any size in this area.
Specific Guidance

Dwellings

- The dispersal of dwellings and farmsteads varies throughout the area. Generally dwellings are dispersed along hillsides. Towards the south of the areas, nearer to Oldmeldrum, dwellings are more prevalent.
- Integration of new buildings could be achieved by locating development close to existing buildings, shelterbelts, hedgerows and trees.

Woodland

- Throughout the majority of the area, tree cover is sparse
- Scattered beech and other deciduous species occasionally fringe the skyline or cluster around buildings.
- Occasional small blocks of coniferous plantation.
- New development should be integrated by planting native trees to replicate copses traditionally planted for shelter.
- Coniferous hedges and suburban fencing around plot boundaries can be intrusive in rural locations.

Boundaries

- Post and wire fencing is the predominant boundary treatment.
- Stone dykes and hedges occasionally feature throughout the area
- Suburban boundary treatments and fencing or coniferous hedges can be very intrusive in rural locations.
Landscape Character Area: Wooded Estates Around Old Deer

Landscape Character Type: The Agricultural Heartland; the main influence on the landscape is agriculture. These areas, although different in relief are all distinguished by a patchwork of mixed agricultural and scattered woodland and by the presence of numerous towns and villages.

Overview
The area stretches from Mintlaw in the east to Maud in the west. A distinctive character is created in this area through the concentration of two remaining estates. These estates are spread along gently rolling hills lying on either side of the South Ugie Water. The South Ugie Water is little more than a stream and is visually insignificant. Restricted views are channelled along narrow twisting roads which follow the landform. This is a well-settled area with a concentration of planned villages including Mintlaw, Stuartfield and Fetterangus.

Wooded Estates Around Old Deer Location:

Key Landscape Features
Landform Undulating landform, with more open in the southern part of the area.
Vegetation Dominance of woodland, which is unusual in the district, adds to the enclosed sheltered character and undulating landform. Coniferous and deciduous woodland is generally well mixed and occurs along ridgelines, valley bottoms and hill slopes. There is occasional avenue planting of beech trees. Hedgerows are common (beech and hawthorn).
Field pattern Large scale fields are a feature, particularly to south of area. This is a fairly intensively farmed area.
Settlement A well settled area—with a concentration of planned villages (Stuartfield, Mintlaw, Fetterangus). The old estates of Aden and Pitfour are a key feature in the vicinity of Old Deer.
Specific Guidance

**General**
- Wherever possible, new development can be integrated by planting native trees to replicate copses traditionally planted for shelter.
- Woodland is a key feature of the area, in various forms; plantation, shelter belt, woodland clumps, beech hedgerows. These features should be enhanced, and included where possible as part of new development.
- The setting of estates are sensitive and vulnerable to change and landscape features such as policy woodland, shelterbelts, boundary walls and gatehouses should be retained and maintained.

**Boundaries**
- Hedgerows are a dominant and highly distinctive type of field boundary in this area, (beech is most common but some mixed hawthorn and beech).
- Hedgerows often line roads, particularly in the northern part of the area.
- Most hedges are further emphasised by avenue planting of mature beech trees.
- Coniferous hedges and fencing used for plot boundaries can be very intrusive in rural locations.

**Dwellings**
- Numerous farmsteads, prosperous manses, and farmhouses.
- Pattern of development consists of well spaced farmsteads and dwellings.
- Traditional development is often associated with groups of trees/shelter belts, or beech hedging.
- Occasionally groups of dwellings are a feature, and in these cases, this form of development should continue.
- Integration of new buildings could be achieved by locating development close to existing buildings, shelterbelts, hedgerows and trees.

**Woodland**
- Comparative dominance of woodland, particularly in the northern part of the area.
- Coniferous and deciduous planting well mixed and sensitively laid out, occurring in lines, valley bottoms and hill slopes.

**Other**
- Agricultural Buildings are generally well spaced out, and of a more traditional scale.
Landscape Character Areas: Ythan Strath Farmland

Landscape Character Type: The Agricultural Heartland; the main influence on the landscape is agriculture. These areas, although different in relief are all distinguished by a patchwork of mixed agricultural and scattered woodland and by the presence of numerous towns and villages.

Overview
The Ythan Valley is an island of stony farmland amidst the productive agricultural lowland. The River Ythan runs through the centre, bisecting the area. The area has a small-scale landscape pattern and dry stone dykes together with patches of birch scrub bear a strong resemblance to the Farmed Moorland Edge landscape character type. The less fertile soils found in this area have escaped intensification meaning there is a more traditional field pattern.

A diverse landcover can be found in this area; small fields of pasture alternate with scrubby areas of gorse and broom, the latter often occurring along roadsides. Wet hollows support moss and small coniferous plantations dot the landscape. The fields, bounded by strong stone dykes, are often strewn with rocks which add to the upland feel of the landscape.

Key Landscape Features

Landform Lowland area of undulating landform centred around the shallow strath, where rock exposures are a feature. Open hills and sheltered boggy hollows are interspersed with more intensively farmed pockets. Upland characteristics are a feature, particularly to the north of the area.

Vegetation Patches of birch scrub, and gorse, particularly along roadsides, intermittent with small fields of pasture create a diverse lands cover. Small blocks of coniferous plantations can be found occasionally.

Field Pattern Traditional field pattern, with small fields bounded by strong stone dykes. Fields can be rocky creating an upland feel.

Settlement Small village of Methlick and hamlet of Ythanbank are the only settlements in the area. Bullings and farmsteads are generally well spaced.

Other Haddo House Country Park covers a large area of this area, and has its own wooded character, which should be preserved.
### Specific Guidance

#### General
- Restriction of shelterbelts, woods and built development within valleys and hollows will preserve the exposure of the mounds and ridges.
- Small, nucleated settlements are sensitive to expansion.
- Haddo Estate has specific characteristics associated with estate land, woodland should be conserved.
- Quarrying in the Ythan Strath imposes a pressure within the confined landscape. Quarrying should take place within sheltered and enclosed locations to minimise visual impact.
- Restoration of quarries should respect the character of the area. Creation of water bodies along the strath are a feature.
- Towards the periphery of the area, views to neighbouring landscape character areas are a feature.

#### Trees and Woodland
- Small shelterbelts and copses are a feature of the area.
- Mix of coniferous plantations and broadleaved shelter belts and clumps. Future planting should respect the mix of woodland found in the area.
- Use of pronounced shelterbelts is uncharacteristic in upland areas.
- Estate woodland should be retained around Haddo House.

#### Boundaries
- Roadside are often lined with scrubby gorse/broom.
- Drystone dykes are a feature, maintenance of these will retain the upland characteristics.

### Agricultural Buildings
- Generally of a smaller scale than neighbouring character areas.
- Colour of cladding on new agricultural buildings should blend with other features. Bright blue cladding generally stands out in the landscape.

### Dwellings
- Pattern of development is of scattered buildings.
- Dwellings and farmsteads range from being set back from the road, to fronting onto the road.
- There are some neglected and derelict vernacular buildings, which if maintained would ensure traditional styles of architecture are conserved.
- New building should be clustered around existing development, or a core, to minimise encroachment on the countryside.
- Farmsteads are generally of a smaller scale and are well spaced out.
- Generally dwellings are found on the roadside, or slightly set back from the road.
- Dwellings are often associated with woodland/trees, which often provide screening.