



AN APPRAISAL OF THE POTENTIAL EFFECTS OF A
PROPOSED INVERURIE BYPASS UPON KEITH
HALL DESIGNED LANDSCAPE AND OTHER
CULTURAL HERITAGE FEATURES

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An Appraisal of the Potential Effects of a Proposed Inverurie Bypass upon Keith Hall Designed Landscape and Other Cultural Heritage Features

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Introduction

1.1. Background to the Report

- 1.1.1. The town of Inverurie lies approximately 26km to the north-west of the City of Aberdeen, within the administrative boundaries of Aberdeenshire Council. It is well-connected by both road and rail to Aberdeen, and is a popular commuting settlement that is forecast for significant (primarily residential) expansion, based on the current allocations within the 2012 Local Development Plan (LDP).
- 1.1.2. The existing road network within and around the town is already under significant pressure from current traffic volumes, and is therefore not considered by the Council to be of adequate capacity to meet the predicted levels of use that will accompany development of the allocated sites. The Council has looked at various potential options relating to the development of transport infrastructure, in order to accommodate predicted traffic flow in relation to the future expansion of the town, and also ease traffic volumes on existing routes. The option of a new link road to the east of the town has been considered as one possibility. However, the Council has identified (in early discussions with Historic Scotland in 2010) that this would be likely to have effects on several designated heritage assets – including the Inventory-listed designed landscape of Keith Hall – and that these may, by their nature and extent, have significant effects that could make it unacceptable in terms of national planning policy.
- 1.1.3. SKM Enviros and CgMs Consulting have therefore been appointed by Aberdeenshire Council to undertake an initial appraisal of this potential Inverurie bypass upon the surrounding baseline cultural heritage resource, in order to help determine the nature and extent of any likely landscape and visual effects that could occur. This study will inform the Council's decision-making process with regard to the viability of this option and any potential status in the future 2016 LDP that is currently under preparation.
- 1.1.4. The location and context of the site are shown in Figure 1.

1.2. Study Team

- 1.2.1. Eleanor McCann, a Principal Landscape Architect at SKM Enviros, has been the Project Manager and main author of the report. She has been assisted by Tara Kalpage, a Graduate Landscape Architect and Planner. Richard Conolly of CgMs Consulting (sub-consultants to SKM Enviros) has provided specialist advice on cultural heritage.

1.3. Purpose of the Report

- 1.3.1. At this stage, in order to avoid abortive work, no route design for the link road has been undertaken by the Council – as it was considered that the outcome of this study would be to inform whether or not this option was suitable to be taken forward for more detailed consideration. This study is therefore a high-level one, which looks at a broad corridor of land that the link road could run through, and seeks to:

- establish the likely effects of a potential link road and connecting infrastructure upon the identified heritage assets;
- provide indicative mitigation measures; and
- evaluate the acceptability of a potential link road in terms of national planning policy.

1.4. Contents of Report

- 1.4.1. Section 2 sets out the approach and methodology used by the study team when carrying out this appraisal. Section 3 then looks at relevant planning policy. The current Local Development Plan context of the road itself, including proposals in and around Inverurie that would become part of the study area baseline when implemented, is set out in Section 4. Section 5 provides a baseline description of the existing landscape, visual and cultural resource of the study area. This is followed by an appraisal in Section 6 of the types of effects that could arise from a proposed link road upon the existing landscape, visual and cultural resource, indicative mitigation measures that could help to reduce any adverse effects, and any residual effects that would remain after mitigation and their likely significance. Finally, Section 7 provides a summary of and conclusion to the report, including any recommendations for further work.

2. Approach and Methodology

2.1. Study Context

- 2.1.1. Aberdeenshire Council is currently in the process of preparing its 2016 Local Development Plan (LDP 2016). Based on the recommendations of the 2012 LDP, substantial allocations of residential, mixed-use, business and employment land in and around the town of Inverurie have been made. The Council considers that a number of these would be dependent on the delivery of 1) a link road to the east, and 2) upgrades to the trunk road to the south of the town, or other similar interventions.
- 2.1.2. The proposed route of the link road would run for much of its length through the grounds of Keith Hall, which borders the eastern side of the town and is designated within Historic Scotland's Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes, while the trunk road upgrades would include a new section of road through the policies of Thainstone House to the south-west of the town (which is, although also a designed landscape, not part of the Inventory).
- 2.1.3. The initial link road alignment looked at by the Council, and a slightly altered updated potential route that includes the Crichton junction proposals to the south-west, are both shown on Figure 2.
- 2.1.4. A number of designated or otherwise important heritage assets – including Listed Buildings (LBs), Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs) and parts of the townscape of Inverurie itself, as well as the aforementioned policy landscapes – lie in close proximity to the proposed transport developments. These may be affected either physically, or by way of landscape and visual effects on setting, by the proposals or by the 'do-nothing' comparative baseline scenario. The Council therefore requires that the potential effects on these assets be examined, and mitigation options considered. This is in order to establish whether the resultant effects would be likely to be significant or not, would be ultimately acceptable when considered alongside the likely benefits for sustainable economic growth in terms of principal Scottish planning policies, and should be taken forward for inclusion within the LDP 2016.

2.2. Key Aims

- 2.2.1. The key aims of this appraisal, in line with the Council's Invitation to Tender (ITT) briefing document, are to:
 - establish the range of landscape, visual and cultural heritage effects that may arise from the proposed transport developments upon the specified receptors at a high level, in comparison with a 'do-nothing' baseline scenario;
 - determine the nature of the likely effects from each scenario - whether physical or visual, direct or indirect, and adverse or beneficial;
 - examine the potential magnitude of change upon receptors that the effects from the transport developments could have, in relation to the assigned sensitivity of the receptors to the change arising from the proposals, when compared to the 'do nothing' scenario;

- recommend high-level mitigation measures – e.g. alignment changes, bridge/walling/surfacing treatments, soft landscape recommendations – to address potential adverse effects as far as reasonably practicable (these may be on-site or off-site as appropriate);
- determine whether or not the residual effects, after mitigation, would be likely to result in effects that would be significant or not significant;
- provide an impartial professional opinion on the likely acceptability of the proposed transport developments, following the implementation of mitigation, in terms of national planning policy; and
- make recommendations for any further work as appropriate.

2.3. Guidance

- 2.3.1. The appraisal has been undertaken with reference to best practice guidance on the assessment of landscape, visual and cultural heritage effects, including: *'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment'* (The Landscape Institute and IEMA, Third Edition 2013) (GLVIA 3); *'Design Manual for Roads and Bridges: Volume 11'* (Department for Transport, current online version); and *'Managing Change in the Historic Environment: Setting'* (Historic Scotland, 2010). It has also been informed by SKM Enviros' and CgMs' in-house refinements to such guidance, and their own Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) and Cultural Heritage Assessment methodology developed from many years of experience.
- 2.3.2. It should be noted that GLVIA 3 (Statement of Clarification, 10th June 2013) does not recommend assigning significance to effects for appraisals rather than LVIAAs – i.e. where they are not formally required under the relevant Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) regulations. The reason for this is that, *'should a landscape professional apply LVIA principles and processes in carrying out an appraisal, and then go on to determine that certain effects would be likely to be significant, given the term 'significant' is enshrined in EIA Regulations, such a judgement could trigger the requirement for a formal EIA'*.
- 2.3.3. However, an appraisal such as this one is for a scheme that would – if taken forward to outline and detailed planning stage – fall under Schedule 2 requirements in the regulations¹ for an EIA, which would include an LVIA as a statutory requirement (and also a Cultural Heritage Assessment). Therefore, SKM Enviros has clarified this with the main GLVIA author, and agreed that in such instances it is appropriate to make some consideration of the likely significance of effects of potential proposals at this earlier appraisal stage of the LVIA process.

¹ The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)) (Scotland) Regulations 2011 are the national regulations that would apply to the link road proposal, if taken forward.

2.4. Identified Assets/ Receptors

- 2.4.1. The Council has identified the key cultural heritage receptors that may be affected by the proposed transport developments, and therefore should be the focus of this appraisal, as being:
- the Inventory-listed Keith Hall designed landscape (and landscape and built elements, including designated features such as Listed Buildings within it);
 - the B-listed and scheduled Kinkell church and burial ground and its setting;
 - the scheduled motte-and-bailey castle remains of The Bass and Little Bass and setting; and
 - the designed landscape of Thainstone House (and landscape and built elements and designated features within it).
- 2.4.2. In addition, the current transport situation is already visually affecting the perception of the built heritage core of the town centre adjacent to the B9170, the Square, High Street, Prospect Terrace and Elphinstone Road. If the allocated development sites are taken forward but the proposed transport options are not, this situation would comprise a 'do-nothing' scenario that would also experience effects, on the assumption that the baseline would gradually incorporate these allocated development sites.
- 2.4.3. These landscape/ visual/ cultural assets and receptors are shown on Figure 3, which also shows core paths, Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) and ancient/ semi-natural/ long-established woodlands.

2.5. Methodology

Level of Appraisal

- 2.5.1. As noted above, the appraisal has broadly been carried out in accordance with the principles of the methodology used in carrying out an LVIA and accompanying Cultural Heritage Assessment as part of an EIA. However, at this stage, no route design has been carried out for the link road and the route alignment is purely indicative. Therefore, although the sensitivity to change of the assets/ receptors can be clearly assigned, the magnitude of change arising from the proposals could vary – potentially considerably according to location – according to both horizontal and vertical route alignment.
- 2.5.2. Therefore, the main difference between this appraisal and an LVIA is that, at this initial high-level stage, the magnitude of change cannot be accurately determined but has instead been examined in terms of the *range and types* of potential changes that could occur depending on location, and whether these would be *likely* to result in significant effects or not.

Stages of Assessment

- 2.5.3. The appraisal has followed a three-stage process of desktop study, site assessment, and assessment of effects and mitigation, as follows:

Desktop Study

- 2.5.4. Baseline data has been gathered by SKM Enviros and CgMs for the assets/ receptors specified above, in order to define and characterise their landscape/ townscape and heritage value, and how this relates to their fabric and surroundings/ settings. The following data sources were examined:
- Initial draft Council alignment for link road (as per discussions with Historic Scotland) and updated draft Council alignment for link road (as per ITT briefing document).
 - Alignment of proposed grade-separated junction at Crichtie next to Thainstone;
 - Previous studies undertaken or commissioned by the Council on traffic and other related matters;
 - 2012 LDP information on allocated housing and other development sites within and around the study area that relate to the designed landscapes and other assets;
 - Historic and OS maps;
 - List of Buildings of Special Architectural and Historic Interest, and information supplementary to it;
 - Gardens and Designed Landscapes Inventory;
 - Schedule of Ancient Monuments, and information supplementary to it;
 - Existing landscape character assessments;
 - Ancient Woodland Inventory;
 - SEPA indicative flood information and 2003 Halcrow Flood Study; and
 - Other readily available secondary sources.
- 2.5.5. As part of the baseline study, a number of potential viewpoints were identified by SKM Enviros and CgMs as being appropriate and representative locations to inform visual assessment. These viewpoints were selected to be a) from the identified receptors to help identify changes to existing views, as well as b) taken from parts of the study area that would have views towards the assets in combination with the proposed developments where the two may be seen in tandem, in order to gauge effects on setting.

Site Assessment

- 2.5.6. SKM Enviros and CgMs followed the baseline study up by carrying out a site walkover and accompanying assessment work. The team members from the two organisations visited and walked the study area simultaneously, as the landscape and cultural heritage elements are very much interconnected not separate resources. The site visit involved the identified staff visiting the wider study area and Inverurie itself, as well as all individually identified receptors/ assets, during which an identification of all key landscape and cultural/ built features and elements was made. Site photography was taken to record overall visual character, with photographic panoramas also taken from the identified representative viewpoints. This allowed the landscape character and visual assessment specific to the study area to be drawn together and tied in with the site-specific cultural and built heritage assessment.

Appraisal of Effects and Mitigation Proposals

2.5.7. Following the desktop study and site assessment visit, the likely effects of the proposed transportation developments were examined in relation to the specified assets. The appraisal process aims to:

- Identify the potential range and types of landscape/ visual/ heritage effects of the proposed road development, taking into account possible mitigation measures;
- Assign sensitivity to the identified landscape/ visual/ heritage receptors with regard to changes arising from the proposed development;
- Estimate the likely magnitude of change that could occur as a result of the proposed development upon landscape/ visual/ heritage receptors; and
- Assess the likely significance of the overall effects arising from effects upon the landscape/ visual/ heritage resource.

2.5.8. As previously noted, formal Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) would normally be requested for proposals such as these at outline and detailed planning stage. This appraisal has taken place as a precursor to design development, in order to help inform the viability of the proposals, so the design of the transport developments has not been advanced. The assessment has therefore of necessity been at a high level, aiming to establish the range and type of potential effects and scale of magnitude that could occur. The types of effect assessed comprise:

- Direct effects upon the landscape/ cultural resource, which may include:
 - Physical removal of landscape/ heritage assets or elements;
 - The addition of modern road infrastructure and its associated elements to historic designed landscapes;
 - Effects upon the setting of landscape/ cultural assets (which may result from visual intrusion of the road, street furniture including lights and signs or vehicle movement, traffic volumes or severance of assets from related assets or related areas of the landscape).
- Indirect effects may also occur, such as:
 - Off-site changes to traffic volumes. At this initial appraisal stage, these have been assessed at a very general level.
- The 'do-nothing' scenario has also been considered in relation to the proposals and likely effects upon the baseline resource if they did not go ahead.

2.5.9. Following the above appraisal and identification of effects, suggested mitigation proposals have been put forward. These comprise broad concepts/ guidelines relating to routing, and possibilities for landscape mitigation to lessen those landscape/ visual/ cultural effects that would be most likely to have significant effects on the historic environment.

Assessment Criteria

2.5.10. The aim of this appraisal is to identify, predict and evaluate as far as possible those potential impacts arising from the proposed development on landscape/

visual/ cultural receptors that could result in significant effects remaining after mitigation. In order to provide a level of consistency to the appraisal, the assignment of sensitivity to change, prediction of likely magnitude of change or range of changes, and assessment of potential significance of the residual effects on the baseline resource have been based on pre-defined criteria, as set out below.

- 2.5.11. Predicted effects have been quantified wherever possible; however, the high-level nature of this appraisal means that quantification is indicative and may encompass a range of magnitudes at this early stage.

Interrelationship between Landscape/ Visual/ Cultural Effects

- 2.5.12. Effects upon cultural heritage are particular types of landscape and visual effects, which relate specifically to designed landscapes, Listed Buildings, Scheduled Ancient Monuments and other built/ cultural heritage assets within the landscape resource. The focus of this study is on a landscape that is dominated by culturally important policies and built features, many of which are designated, and its character is therefore largely interlinked with and defined by these. Cultural landscapes, buildings and monuments experience direct and indirect, physical and visual effects upon their components and settings that are also landscape and visual changes. The categories of sensitivity to change and magnitude of change for the cultural resource therefore also relates to the landscape and visual levels set out below.

Determination of Sensitivity to Change

Heritage Asset Sensitivity

- 2.5.13. The sensitivity of heritage assets is based on the degree of protection offered by policy and guidance in relation to their designation. Where assets are not designated, their sensitivity has been determined with reference to the relevant designation criteria provided in Scottish Historic Environment Policy (SHEP).
- 2.5.14. Heritage asset sensitivity is defined as High, Medium, or Low, or bands in between where appropriate, as shown in the table below.

Levels of Sensitivity	Parameters
High	Nationally important designated heritage assets (scheduled monuments, Category A-listed buildings, inventory gardens and designed landscapes, inventory battlefields and some conservation areas) and undesignated assets of similar importance based on relevant designation criteria..
Medium	Regionally and locally important designated heritage assets (Category B and C-listed buildings and conservation areas) and undesignated assets of similar importance.
Low	Common or poorly preserved heritage assets of limited local importance, generally as a result of their potential to yield archaeological data..

Landscape/ Cultural Landscape Sensitivity

2.5.15. The sensitivity of the landscape/ cultural landscape resource is not absolute and varies according to the nature and value of the existing landscape, the nature of the proposed development and the type of change being considered. The determination of the sensitivity of the landscape resource to change (including the cultural aspects of the landscape of the study area) associated with the proposed development is defined as High, Medium or Low, or intermediate parameters between these, and is based on professional interpretation of a combination of parameters as defined in the table below.

Levels of Sensitivity	Parameters
High	Landscape with important components, usually of particularly distinctive character and high quality (often of national or regional value through designation), susceptible to relatively small changes and for which mitigation of adverse effects would be difficult or not possible. Some less distinctive or lower quality landscapes may also fall into this category where characteristics are such that mitigation would be difficult.
Medium	Landscape with characteristics reasonably tolerant of changes or for which mitigation is likely to be possible. These landscapes may be of high quality or of distinctive character but will usually be relatively common and moderately valued (they may be locally designated).
Low	A less distinctive or relatively poor landscape with few features of quality or interest, potentially tolerant of substantial change and with scope for mitigation of adverse changes. These will generally have no landscape designations associated with them.

2.5.16. In some instances a landscape with important components and high quality may be of a lower sensitivity as a result of its potential tolerance to change and opportunities for mitigation, i.e. a variable landform or high levels of tree cover. Conversely a landscape with few features of interest may be of a higher sensitivity because it is vulnerable to a particular change.

Visual Sensitivity

2.5.17. The sensitivity of visual receptors is based on an interpretation of a combination of parameters as follows:

- The location of the viewpoint;
- The context of the view;
- The activity of the receptor; and
- Frequency and duration of the view.

2.5.18. Visual receptor sensitivity is defined as High, Medium, Low or Negligible, or bands in between where appropriate, as shown in the table below.

Levels of Sensitivity	Parameters
High	Residents; users of strategic recreational footpaths, cycle routes or rights of way, whose attention may be focused on the landscape; visitors at important features with physical, cultural or historic attributes; picnic area users.
Medium	People travelling through or past the landscape on local roads, train lines or other transport routes.
Low	People engaged in outdoor sports or recreation (other than appreciation of the landscape); users of commercial buildings or commercially engaged pedestrians, whose attention may be focused on their work or activity rather than the wider landscape; people travelling through the landscape on major roads, e.g. motorways.
Negligible	Viewers in heavily industrialised areas.

Determination of Magnitude of Change

Heritage Change

2.5.19. The table below provides the definitions for magnitude of change upon heritage assets used for the purposes of this assessment. Magnitude of change has been defined with reference to the cultural significance of the asset. SHEP indicates that the cultural significance of a heritage asset may be characterised by reference to one or more of the following groups of characteristics or values:

- **Intrinsic** – those inherent in the asset;
- **Contextual** – those relating to the asset's place in its wider physical environment or in the body of existing knowledge; and
- **Associative** – more subjective assessments of the associations of the asset, including with current or past aesthetic preferences.

Levels of Magnitude	Parameters
Substantial	Total or substantial loss of the cultural significance of a heritage asset. Substantial harm to a heritage asset's setting, such that the cultural significance of the asset would be totally lost or substantially reduced (e.g. the cultural significance of a designated heritage asset would be reduced to such a degree that its designation would be questionable; the significance of an undesignated heritage asset would be reduced to such a degree that its categorisation as a heritage asset would be questionable).
Moderate	Partial loss or alteration of the cultural significance of a heritage asset. Considerable harm to a heritage asset's setting, such that the its cultural significance would be materially affected/considerably devalued, but not totally or substantially lost.

Levels of Magnitude	Parameters
Slight	<p>Slight loss of the cultural significance of a heritage asset. This could include the removal of fabric that forms part of the heritage asset, but that is not integral to its cultural significance (e.g. the demolition of later extensions/additions of little intrinsic value).</p> <p>Adverse change to the heritage asset's setting, but not to the degree that it would materially compromise the cultural significance of the heritage asset.</p>
Negligible	<p>A very slight change to a heritage asset. This could include a change to a part of a heritage asset that does not materially contribute to its cultural significance.</p> <p>Very minor change to a heritage asset's setting such that there is a slight effect not materially affecting the heritage asset's cultural significance.</p>

Landscape Change

- 2.5.20. The magnitude of change arising from the proposed development to the landscape resource is described as Substantial, Moderate, Slight or Negligible (or intermediate bands) based on the interpretation of a combination of largely quantifiable parameters.
- 2.5.21. The table below provides the definitions for magnitude of change upon landscape receptors used for the purposes of this assessment.

Levels of Magnitude	Parameters
Substantial	Total loss or major alteration to key elements/ features/ characteristics of the baseline conditions, such that post-development character/ composition of baseline would be fundamentally changed.
Moderate	Partial loss or alteration to one or more key elements/ features/ characteristics of the baseline conditions, such that post-development character/ composition/ attributes of baseline would be partially changed.
Slight	Minor loss of or alteration to one or more key elements/ features/ characteristics of the baseline conditions. Change arising from the loss/ alteration would be discernible, but underlying character/ composition of the baseline condition would be similar to pre-development circumstances/ patterns.
Negligible	Very minor loss or alteration to one or more key elements/ features/ characteristics of the baseline conditions. Change barely distinguishable, approximating to the 'no change' situation.

Visual Change

- 2.5.22. For change experienced by visual receptors, change to a view or setting, the parameters are as follows:
- Distance of the viewpoint from the development;

- Duration of effect;
- Angle of view in relation to main receptor activity;
- Proportion of the field of view occupied by the development;
- Background to the development; and
- Extent of other built development visible.

2.5.23. These are also assessed within the range of Substantial, Moderate, Slight or Negligible change, or bands in between, as shown in the table below:

Levels of Magnitude	Parameters
Substantial	Where the scheme would cause a significant change to the existing view.
Moderate	Where the scheme would cause a noticeable change to the existing view.
Slight	Where the scheme would cause a barely perceptible change to the existing view.
Negligible	Change barely distinguishable, approximating to the “no change” situation.

Level of Effects and Significance of Effects

2.5.24. The level of any identified heritage, landscape or visual effect is assessed as Major, Moderate, Minor or Negligible/ No Effect. These categories are determined by correlating the sensitivity of the asset/ resource with the predicted magnitude of change, as illustrated by the following matrix shown in the table below.

2.5.25. The matrix is not used as a prescriptive tool, and the methodology and analysis of potential effects at any particular location must make allowance for the exercise of professional judgement.

Landscape/ Visual/ Heritage Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change			
	Substantial	Moderate	Slight	Negligible
High	Major	Major/ moderate	Moderate	Moderate/ minor
Medium	Major/ moderate	Moderate	Moderate/ minor	Minor
Low	Moderate	Moderate/ minor	Minor	Minor/ No effect
Negligible	Moderate/ minor	Minor	Minor/ none	No effect

- 2.5.26. Although this is an initial appraisal and not a formal LVIA, due to the early stage of the potential proposal, it should be borne in mind that where heritage, landscape or visual effects are classified as major or major/ moderate, this would be considered to be significant under The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011.
- 2.5.27. It should be noted that significant effects need not be unacceptable, or necessarily negative, and may be reversible. The consideration of significant effects in heritage/ landscape/ visual terms must also be weighed against other potential positive outcomes of the proposal, such as significant socio-economic benefits.

3. Planning Policy Context

3.1. National Planning Policy

- 3.1.1. A new, overarching Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) is currently at Consultation Draft stage. Although without formal status at the moment, the anticipation is that it is likely to come into force in mid-2014 and would therefore, in its final form, become a material consideration that would inform the 2016 LDP. Previous individual SPPs, including SPP 23: Planning and the Historic Environment, have been revoked.
- 3.1.2. The Consultation Draft states that “the historic environment is a key cultural and economic asset”. It sets out, under Part 115 of the section on Valuing the Historic Environment, the proposed policy principles as being:
- *‘The planning system should promote the care and protection of the designated and non-designated historic environment, including the individual assets, related settings and the wider cultural landscape’;*
 - *‘Change should be sensitively managed to avoid or minimise any adverse impacts on the fabric and setting of the asset, and ensure that its special characteristics are retained’; and*
 - *‘Assets should be protected from demolition or other work that would adversely affect it or its setting’.*
- 3.1.3. It also states in Part 116 that strategic development plans should *‘take account of the capacity of settlements and surrounding areas to accommodate development without damage to their historic significance’*. Parts 118 and 120 relate to the preservation and protection of Listed Buildings and Scheduled Ancient Monuments, including preservation of setting wherever possible. Part 122 relates to the planning authority’s responsibility to protect (and, where appropriate, enhance) gardens and designed landscapes in the Historic Scotland Inventory.
- 3.1.4. Historic Scotland’s ‘Scottish Historic Environment Policy’ (SHEP) is currently under review, but is still in force until replaced. Guidance on approaches to setting is provided in the Historic Scotland Guidance Note ‘Managing Change in the Historic Environment: Setting’.
- 3.1.5. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act (Scotland) 1997 requires that local planning authorities *‘have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses’* and stipulates that *“preserving”, in relation to a building, means preserving it either in its existing state or subject only to such alterations ... as can be carried out without serious detriment to its character’* (Section 59).
- 3.1.6. Sites in the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes are material considerations in the planning process. Under the ‘Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations 2008’, local authorities are required to consult Historic Scotland on development proposals considered to affect an Inventory-listed site, and its views will be a material consideration in the planning authority’s determination of the case.

3.2. Local Planning Policy

3.2.1. In the current 2012 Aberdeenshire Council LDP, the Supplementary Guidance (SG) policies that are relevant to development in relation to landscape conservation and protection of the historic environment are as follows:

- SG Landscape 1: Landscape character

This states that development will be approved, subject to other policies, where:

“1) its scale, location and design are appropriate to the landscape character of the area ...; AND

2) the proposal will not have an adverse impact on:

i) the key natural or historic features of the landscape character: OR

ii) the overall composition or quality of the landscape character, particularly if the landscape is currently largely unspoiled by obtrusive or discordant features; OR

iii) any combination of the above, when considered with other recent developments, resulting in the possibility of an adverse cumulative impact on the local landscape character.”

- SG Landscape 2: Valued views

This states that development will be approved, subject to other policies, where:

“1) the proposal will not, by virtue of its location, scale or design, have an adverse impact on the viewpoint for a ‘valued view’ ...; AND

2) the proposal will not, by virtue of its scale or location, have an adverse impact on the characteristics for which the view itself is valued.”

The three valued views that relate to the potential link road development are: *“2) Designed landscape at Keithhall; 3) Views of Bennachie from ... Horses Road, Keithhall; ... and ... 4) Views of Keithhall and Inverurie from Horses Road, Keithhall.”*

- SG Historic Environment 1: Listed buildings

This sets out the Council’s role in protecting all ‘listed buildings’ contained in the statutory list for Aberdeenshire, and in refusing *“consent for any works ... which would have a detrimental impact on their character, integrity or setting”*. Approvals to new development within their curtilage, subject to other policies, will only be granted if:

“1) they are of the highest quality, and respect the original structure in terms of setting, scale, design and materials; AND

2) the proposed development is essential to securing the best viable use of the listed building without undermining its architectural or historic character, or its setting.”

- SG Historic Environment 3: Historic gardens and designed landscapes
This states that the Council will only approve development that would have an adverse effect on the character, structure or setting of a designated historic garden or designed landscape, subject to other policies, if:
“1) the objectives of designation and the overall integrity and character of the designated area will not be compromised; OR
2) any significant adverse effects on the qualities for which the area has been designated are clearly outweighed by long-term strategic social or economic benefits of over-riding public importance, for which no other alternative site is available.
In either case, mitigation and appropriate measures must be taken to conserve and enhance the essential characteristics, aesthetics, archaeological, historical value and setting of the garden or the designed landscape.”
- SG Historic Environment 4: Archaeological sites and monuments
This states that the Council will only approve development that would have an adverse effect on a scheduled ancient monument or on any other archaeological site, including battlefields, of either national or local importance, or on their setting, subject to other policies, if:
“1) there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature; AND
2) there is no alternative site for the development; AND
3) where there is doubt, the applicant has provided further information, at their expense, on the nature and location of the archaeological feature(s) involved, prior to determination of the planning application.”
- SG Safeguarding 3: Protection and conservation of trees and woodland
This states that the Council will only approve development that would cause the loss of or serious damage to trees or woodlands, which are either covered by an existing or proposed Tree Preservation Order, or are of significant ecological, historical, recreational or shelter value, subject to other policies, if:
“1) it would achieve significant and clearly defined public benefits that outweigh any potential loss; AND

- 2) when required, an evaluation of the biodiversity and amenity value of the woodland and habitat, including current and future benefits of the existing woodland, has been undertaken; AND*
- 3) the minimum damage occurs to existing trees and woodland as a result of the development, and there is no unnecessary fragmentation of existing or potential woodland networks; AND*
- 4) the impact of the removal of any trees and the effect on the character or amenity of the area is mitigated by appropriate compensatory planting to an agreed standard.”*

- 3.2.2. As part of the preparation for the LDP 2016, a review has been undertaken of existing policy contained within the current 2012 LDP, including the supplementary guidance SG Landscape 2: Valued views. The appropriateness of this policy is likely to be a “main issue” for the forthcoming Main Issues Report, with a recommendation that it is replaced by a comprehensive programme of local landscape designation.

4. Development Context

4.1. Initial Road Proposals

- 4.1.1. The aim of a proposed link road is to relieve the existing and predicted flow of traffic through the centre of Inverurie. Currently traffic through the town is already frequently congested, not only at expected peak periods. This problem is anticipated to become exacerbated as more development (including residential, mixed-use, business and other uses) takes place in and around the town in line with the allocations of the 2012 LDP (with future options for further development expansion also having been considered in the LDP).

Outline Route Corridor

- 4.1.2. As shown on Figure 2, the indicative line of the proposed road is to the east of the town. At its northernmost end, it would link with the B9170 – which runs north-eastwards from Inverurie towards Old Meldrum and New Deer – in the vicinity of Souterford and the north lodge of Keith Hall. It would then follow a southwards corridor, which between the B9170 and the B993 would run through the western part of the policy landscape of Keith Hall in the vicinity of the River Ury. After crossing the B993 between the cemetery that includes the Bass and little Bass SAMs and the south lodge of Keith Hall, it would follow the line of an existing minor road. While there are a number of possible options for how the route would then connect to the A96, the one that is favoured at this time is for it to then curve south-westwards near Kinkell Church to cross the River Don just south of its confluence with the Ury, by utilising the existing bridge over the Aberdeen-Inverurie railway. At its southernmost point it would connect with the A96 trunk road, which closely bypasses the western edge of Inverurie. This connection would take place in the vicinity of the policies of Thainstone House, which lies immediately west of the A96, where land parcels to the north are already consented or allocated for housing and land to the south allocated for business/employment use in relation to expansion of the Thainstone Agricultural Centre and Livestock Mart. A new grade-separated junction is proposed to serve these proposed developments to the west of the A96, and this part of the proposed transport options has been taken further by the development team as part of the environmental appraisal that they are currently undertaking with regard to the housing proposals at Crichton north of Thainstone.

Link Road Specification

- 4.1.3. As the link road is only at the conceptual stage and does not yet have a fixed alignment, it may only be described in general terms.
- 4.1.4. It is envisaged that the road will comprise two lanes with a total width of c.7.3m. In addition, hard strips, verges and drainage plus a 1m strip to the fence line on either side of the road, plus a 3m wide cycleway on one side (with short sections where it would occur on both sides to accommodate road crossings), would result in a *minimum* width of c.16m. This minimum width would only be possible in those areas where the vertical road alignment would be at a similar level to existing ground levels and cut or fill would be minimal.

- 4.1.5. Where the road may run through the Ury/ Don floodplains, it would have to be raised on embankment to clear the 1:200 year flood event predicted levels, with an appropriate allowance for climate change predictions. No information is currently available regarding existing topographical data other than 5m contour levels; nor is information available on any proposals for embankments, cut and fill, other earthworks or bridge design (some or all of which will be necessary to varying degrees depending upon actual route alignment).
- 4.1.6. As described in greater detail in Section 6, there are a number of specific areas where the potential link road may – and in some places would have to – fall within the floodplain, and therefore be on embankment. Although the height cannot be determined at this stage, embankments would normally be 1:2 with an additional 1.5m at the foot of the embankment out to the fenceline. In these areas the road would therefore be substantially wider than 16m overall.

Route Alignment within the Floodplain

- 4.1.7. A flood study was undertaken by Halcrow in 2003 on behalf of Aberdeenshire Council, which included an examination of the floodplains of the Rivers Ury and Don and set out anticipated boundaries for 1:200 year flood event areas. The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) has also published an Indicative River and Coastal Flood Map for Scotland, which the Council's Flood Prevention and Coast Protection Engineering Department has provided comments upon. Although the SEPA flood map is in the process of being updated to take into account these comments for the Aberdeenshire area, these revisions are still at a draft stage. Therefore, for the purpose of this appraisal, advice from the Council regarding the extent of the 1:200 flood boundaries within the study area has been to assume a worst-case scenario. Both the Halcrow and indicative SEPA maps have therefore been overlaid and whichever outline shows the greater extent in an area has been considered relevant. The two 1:200 year flood areas are shown in Figure 4.

4.2. Other Development Proposals

- 4.2.1. The 2012 LDP shows existing housing sites (which have planning permission or are currently underway), as well as allocated sites for housing/ mixed-use developments, employment and strategic reserve employment land, business land. It also shows additional 'future option' Phase 2 sites for housing/ mixed development. The 2012 LDP sites are shown in Figure 5.
- 4.2.2. The two main areas for housing, business, employment and mixed-use expansion are at Uryside at the north-east of the town, bounding the B9170 to the north of Keith Hall, and at Crichtie to the south-west of the town, on the western side of the A96 and north of Thainstone. Future options relate to an area immediately north of Uryside, as well as two smaller sites within the northern end of the Keith Hall policies.

Predicted Baseline Development Scenario

- 4.2.3. For the purposes of this appraisal, the existing and allocated Phase 1 sites are considered to be part of the predicted baseline of the study area. Their development will alter the fundamental character of parts of the existing, mainly open farmland, town surroundings. The proposed link road and associated

infrastructure cannot be viewed in isolation with regard to likely effects, as their purpose is none other than to serve and connect these proposed expansions to the town and will only happen in tandem with development expansion.

5. Baseline Landscape, Visual and Cultural Heritage Resource

5.1. Introduction

- 5.1.1. The baseline descriptions provided below with regard to the overall landscape and visual character and its cultural heritage assets are described more fully – in terms of their relationship to the route corridor and the effects of the proposal – in Section 6.
- 5.1.2. Figure 6 shows the Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) of the study area. Figure Group 7 shows a range of photographs taken within the study area that illustrate its baseline resource and the context of both the proposed link road route and the historic centre of Inverurie with regard to the ‘do-nothing’ scenario. Figure 8 shows historical mapping with regard to Keith Hall and the evolution of the designed landscape. Detailed extract maps using aerial photography along the line of the potential link road are shown in Figure Group 9, and are referred to more fully in Section 6 and the appraisal of likely effects. Specific views and likely effects upon them are shown in Figure Group 10.

5.2. Landscape/ Townscape Character of Study Area

Overall Landscape Character

- 5.2.1. The Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) national landscape characterisation was originally carried out for the Aberdeenshire area in the 1990s. The 2012 LDP provides an amalgamated revision of these Landscape Character Assessments, as set out below.
- 5.2.2. The study area to the east and south of Inverurie is located within the Central Wooded Estates Landscape Character Area (LCA 2), and the link road would lie fully within this LCA. Immediately to the north of the town is the Insch Basin Landscape Character Area (LCA 19), and to the north-east is the Formartine Lowlands Landscape Character Area (LCA 13). The very eastern edge of the Keith Hall policies falls within LCA 13. As it is not considered that the proposed link road would have the possibility of significant effects on either LCA 19 or 13, only LCA 2 has been considered further. These LCAs are shown on Figure 6.
- 5.2.3. The LCA is defined as a diverse landscape, 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 (which includes Inverurie).
- 5.2.4. Its key landscape features are, in summary:
- Rolling landform with low hills and wide valleys;
 - Enclosed pockets created by valleys and mature woodland;
 - Occasional open and long vistas;

- Strong woodland structure associated with estate policies;
- Tree clumps often on mounds and hillocks;
- Mix of mature and regenerating woodland;
- Conifer plantations distributed amongst broadleaves resulting in numerous mixed woodlands;
- Mixed farming/ varied field patterns; and
- Estate farmland bounded by stone dykes.

5.2.5. Specific guidance and issues relating to the LCA and development within it includes: protecting open views from and to stately homes/ castles and maintaining their setting; strong woodland structure but large policy woodlands susceptible to neglect and decline; and woods, shelterbelts and drystone dykes enhancing estate settings and boundaries.

5.2.6. At a more local level, in relation to the character of the landscape that the corridor of the potential link road and associated Crichton junction would occupy, particular influences arise from certain site-specific topographical, land cover and built elements. The main site-specific influences include: the Ury and Don river floodplains; Keith Hall and Thainstone policies and Listed Buildings; residential and industrial boundaries and existing road and rail infrastructure along the eastern and southern edges of Inverurie; and the cemeteries at The Bass and Little Bass and Kinkell, including their buildings and monuments. Many of the estate woodlands of both Keith Hall and Thainstone are included in SNH's inventory of woodlands, which categorises those considered to be ancient/ semi-natural/ long-established, and a blanket TPO also covers Thainstone. Part of the core path network in and around Inverurie runs through Keith Hall along the northern (but not southern) driveway, connecting with the B993/ Keithhall Road past the south lodge and Bass, and another section runs along the A96 east of Thainstone. These designations are shown in Figure 3, as previously referred to in Section 2.4.

Overall Visual Character

5.2.7. The study area of the link road corridor, running as it does primarily through or alongside the floodplains of the Rivers Ury and Don, is in the main quite visually open in nature. The key containing elements/ thresholds to views are the tree belts that line and run parallel and perpendicular to the driveway through Keith Hall and the Kinkell Belt to the south, the strong eastern built/ industrial edge of Inverurie and Port Elphinstone, the woodlands around Thainstone and the rising landform that runs from the eastern side of Keith Hall to Kinkell and encloses the river floodplains. More distant views to Bennachie hill group to the west and the low hilly ground south of Oldmeldrum are also occasionally possible beyond these visual thresholds.

5.3. Historic/ Cultural Heritage Character of Study Area

5.3.1. The landscape and visual character of the study area is interlinked with and dominated by the strong historic/ cultural heritage features and influences of the designed landscapes, Listed Buildings and monuments within it, as well as the historic interest of the town centre of Inverurie itself. This section describes the evolution, cultural heritage value and setting of these heritage assets, and their

contribution to the overall area, focussing upon those assets/ receptors identified in Section 2.4.

Keith Hall Designed Landscape

- 5.3.2. The Keith Hall designed landscape, which is Inventory-listed, has developed since the 17th century. The current informal landscape was established in the late 18th/ early 19th century, with substantial additions in the mid-19th century. At its heart is the Category A-listed Keith Hall, to the north of which is the scheduled site of Caskieben, the moated castle that preceded the house. Immediately to the west of Caskieben are the B-listed stables, while to the north-west are the B-listed walled garden and home farm and the C-listed gardener's cottage and farm cottages. There are three lodges (North, East and South), all of which are B-listed. A bridge on the north drive is B-listed, as is the bridge carrying the B993 Keithhall Road over the River Ury. Keithhall and Kinkell Parish Church, which lies in the south-east of the designated area, is B-listed. At its south-western corner the designated area takes in the B-listed Old Inverurie churchyard and the scheduled Bass and Little Bass mottes (see below) and four symbol stones, also scheduled.
- 5.3.3. The designated area is bounded to the north by the B9170 and a minor road, to the east by a minor road, to the south by the B993 and to the west by the River Ury, with small parts of the designated area on the western bank. It takes in a variety of land uses. Working from the house outwards, it may be broken down roughly as follows:
- the gardens and policies around the house;
 - open parkland with scattered trees and clumps of trees;
 - wooded driveways to the north and south;
 - plantations around the edges of the parkland;
 - plantation between the River Don and the B993 (the Kinkell Belt);
 - Inverurie cemetery;
 - housing in the south-eastern corner; and
 - arable farmland and farms.

Topography

- 5.3.4. The topography of the designated landscape is varied. The north-western and western parts are flat or gently sloping down to the River Ury. In the south-west around the Kinkell Belt, the ground drops steeply from the road to the river. The land to the north and east of the house is on a gentle south-west/ west-facing slope, while the ground to the south rises more steeply. This creates something of a bowl open to the west, in which the house sits. This bowl contains the parkland elements of the designed landscape, with the farmland at its periphery.

History and Description

- 5.3.5. The gardens and policies developed from an early formal design, which is illustrated on Roy's mid-18th century map shown in Figure 8. This shows an axial avenue stretching southwards from the house, flanked by what may be lawns immediately to the south of the house and wooded enclosures beyond. To the

north of the house there appears to be an area defined by trees, beyond which is an area enclosed by a wall lined by trees. To the north-east of the house, Roy shows a wooded enclosure with a walled enclosure to its south and a straight avenue leading east from the house. The area to the south of Souterford is depicted as being cultivated.

- 5.3.6. In 1794 Thomas White was contracted to prepare a plan for the remodelling of the landscape on more fashionable informal lines; much of the current designed landscape has its origins in his design. The plan incorporated some elements of the earlier formal landscape, including the eastern avenue and some trees. White was responsible for the sinuous south-western and northern drives, the former being the principal approach to the house. South Lodge, the bridges, home farm and stables were also built as part of this phase of improvements.
- 5.3.7. No plan survives showing White's scheme, so his intentions with regards to the disposition of trees and such is uncertain – a detailed tree survey would go some way to filling in this gap in the data. Gibbs' map of 1858 provides an indication of White's design, as shown in Figure 8. It depicts the area to the south of the house as wooded. The area to the north of Urie Cottage is also shown as wooded, and a belt of trees along the eastern bank of the River Ury links this to woodland to the north. To the north of the house the current disposition of trees is clearly recognisable, as is the Kinkell Belt to the south. The site visit found that these trees were edged to the north by a revetted ditch. Illustrations from the early 19th century demonstrate how quickly the informal parkland became established, (e.g. Skene Keith 1811, 103).
- 5.3.8. The 1850s saw the landscape remodelled to a design by William Ramage. This involved the planting of woodland along the northern drive, the laying out of the garden around the house, and the construction of the North Lodge.
- 5.3.9. The Ordnance Survey map surveyed in 1867 is the first to show tree planting in detail, and many trees and clumps of trees still present can be positively identified on this map. The woodland to the north of Urie Cottage had been felled, leaving only a narrow band of trees lining the south-western drive, and the belt of trees on the bank of the river had been thinned. The presence of a clump of trees to the west of the river on Cruick Haugh suggests that this thinning had been undertaken to allow the prospect from the parkland and driveway west of the house to take in land on the west bank. The plantation shown immediately to the north on Broad Holm may have been related to this. It must be presumed that this remodelling was as part of Ramage's design. The parkland character of the land to the east of the house had been firmly established by this date, as the Ordnance Survey map shows numerous clumps of trees and single trees, typical of ornamental planting of the time. Some of these survive.
- 5.3.10. The only substantial relevant changes to have occurred since this map was produced are that the area of woodland on Broad Holm has been extended north-eastwards to reach the River Ury, and tree planting to the south-west of the stables has divorced them from the western parkland. Of lesser note, the belt of trees lining the western side of the drive has been extended slightly westwards.
- 5.3.11. Keith Hall itself has been sub-divided into flats and the gardens are maintained for the use of its occupants. The gardens and policies have been relatively well

maintained overall. The parkland is used for grazing; however, the trees in the western parkland do not appear to have been well-maintained, with many appearing diseased/ dying and numerous specimens having fallen over. This has resulted in some tree clumps appearing rather sparse, contrasting with the better-preserved fuller clumps and giving the parkland a somewhat neglected air. It remains, however, unmistakably parkland in character. The retaining wall at the Kinkell Road is likewise in a neglected state. In contrast, the estate walls running along public roads are well-maintained.

Cultural Significance

- 5.3.12. The entry for Keith Hall in the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes (compiled in 1987), states that the reasons for its inclusion in the inventory are that it is:

“A good example of the late 18th-century parkland design of Thomas White Senior. The woodland canopy makes an important scenic contribution and the ornamental gardens are of note.”

- 5.3.13. The entry considers the landscape’s importance with reference to the criteria that are now presented in Scottish Historic Environment Policy (SHEP).

- Work of Art: High
The design by Thomas White at Keith Hall is a significant example of his work and, in its present condition, the site has high value as a Work of Art.
- Historical: High
The distinct periods of development of the designed landscape and the association with the Earls of Kintore since 1663 give Keith Hall high Historical value.
- Horticultural, Arboricultural, Silvicultural: Little
The age of the remaining park trees and the early Rhododendrons gives this site a little Horticultural value.
- Architectural: Outstanding
The designed landscape provides the setting for Keith Hall which is listed A, giving it outstanding Architectural value.
- Scenic: Outstanding
The canopy of the woodland around the park contributes to the surrounding scenery and gives Keith Hall outstanding Scenic value.
- Nature Conservation: Some
The age of the woodlands, together with the water margin habitats, give Keith Hall some Nature Conservation value.

- 5.3.14. It should be noted that the criteria used are prescriptive, and the outstanding architectural value simply reflects that the designed landscape provides the setting for the Category A-listed Keith Hall.

- 5.3.15. In terms of cultural significance as defined in SHEP, the landscape has clear intrinsic value as an example of a multi-period designed landscape, with the potential to yield further information regarding the origins of Caskieben, the development of the landscape, and the activities of the occupants of Keith Hall and Caskieben. It has contextual value owing to its relationship with the surrounding landscape. It also has associative value relating to its well-documented relationship with the Earls of Kintore, Thomas White and other architects and the supporting documentary evidence, and its contribution to views from the eastern fringes of Inverurie.

Contribution of Setting to Cultural Significance

- 5.3.16. In overall terms, the Keith Hall designed landscape is quite enclosed by dint of the landform and the numerous areas of woodland within it. As a result, the garden, policies and the eastern parkland in particular have a limited visual relationship with land to the west of the River Ury and the town. The garden has localised filtered views westward across parkland from the area to the south-west of the house, while there are views from higher parts of the eastern parkland of the house with Bennachie in the background. In contrast, much of the western parkland has views to the west punctuated by trees in the foreground. In these views, Inverurie is visible across the river, partially screened by trees located alongside the railway line. It should be noted that these views appear to be a product of the mid-19th century reworking of the western parkland. These views contribute to the heritage significance of Keith Hall designed landscape, specifically its contextual and associative values, and are relevant to an appreciation of the development and design of the landscape and its aesthetics.
- 5.3.17. Views of the Bass and Little Bass from the western parkland are filtered through trees; in winter they are visible but it is assumed that they would be almost imperceptible in summer. This factor, considered alongside the history of planting in the southern part of the parkland, makes it highly unlikely that they were ever 'borrowed' to act as eye catchers.
- 5.3.18. There are clearer views of Inverurie across farmland from the western edges of the woodland. These provide context and a visual connection with the town, but contribute little to the designed landscape's cultural significance.

Sensitivity to Change

- 5.3.19. The inclusion of Keith Hall within the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes means that the designed landscape is of **high** sensitivity to change overall. Within the designed landscape, the A-listed hall and the two sets of Scheduled Ancient Monuments (Caskieben castle and the Bass and Little Bass motte-and-bailey) are of **high** sensitivity to change in heritage terms. The B-listed buildings and features (stables, walled garden, home farm, three lodges, two bridges, church and churchyard), are all of **medium** sensitivity to change in heritage terms. The inhabited hall, home farm and lodges are also of **high** sensitivity to change with regard to effects on views for their residents. The C-listed gardener's cottage and farm cottages are of **medium** sensitivity to change in heritage terms, with their residents being of **high** sensitivity to changes in their views. This sensitivity to change may relate more to physical than visual change in those instances where setting and key views may be of lesser importance than

the integrity of the assets – this has been addressed in the appraisal of effects upon specific assets in Section 6.

Thainstone House and Designed Landscape

5.3.20. Thainstone was built in the 18th century as country house for D. Forbes Mitchell. In 1840 substantial additions were made following a design by Archibald Simpson, who is also thought to have designed the South Lodge at Keith Hall. The house was extended westwards in the 1990s and is now a hotel. It is B-listed, as is its eastern lodge, which was also the work of Simpson. The surrounding policies were presumably laid out when the house was built, and it was remarked in 1811 that Thainstone was “*well wooded*” with a “*good garden*” (Skene Keith, 112). The policies are not designated in the Inventory.

5.3.21. The designed landscape associated with Thainstone comprises:

- a grassed garden to the south of the house;
- informal parkland areas to the north, south and north-west of the house;
- belts of woodland surrounding the parkland;
- a walled garden;
- arable fields at the north-eastern limit;
- Crichtie Plantation in the north; and
- an area of grassland in the south-west.

5.3.22. Located on the top of the hill, within Crichtie Plantation, is Bruce’s Camp, a scheduled Iron Age fort. It is possible that the road will be visible from here, but in the context of existing infrastructure and consented/ allocated areas of housing and mixed development. As a result there is no scope for the road to have a significant effect and the fort is not considered further.

Topography

5.3.23. Thainstone occupies the southern slopes of Hill of Crichtie, with Crichtie Plantation occupying the top of the hill.

History and Description

5.3.24. As noted above, the house was built in the 18th century and extensively modified in 1840, when an imposing single-storey rectangular block, tower and porte-cochère were added by Simpson. The new block included large south-east-facing windows that look out over a terraced lawn to lower ground beyond. In 1992 the hotel was extended westwards, with the new elements respecting Simpson’s original design.

5.3.25. Simpson also added the east lodge and the landscape appears to have been laid out at this time, but no contemporary plan is available. The earliest detailed map that is available dates from 1858 (Gibb). This indicates that the landscape changed little between the mid-19th century and the late 20th century, aside from fields in the north-eastern part of the landscape being cleared of trees between 1858 and 1867 (Ordnance Survey). More minor changes included the addition of South Lodge in the mid-20th century.

- 5.3.26. Major change came in the 1980s, when the A96 was upgraded. This cut through the eastern policies and the driveway, leaving the east lodge marooned on the eastern side of a roundabout. More recently, a business centre has been built in the south-eastern corner of the parkland. The house is now a hotel.
- 5.3.27. The house faces south-east over a terraced lawn that gives way to a pasture field, the southern boundary of which is lined by a belt of trees. The parkland is bounded by trees that effectively screen views from the house and parkland to the north-east and east. The south-facing aspect affords more open views in that direction.
- 5.3.28. The main approach is by way of a driveway from the east. This passes through woodland at its eastern end, and trees heavily filter views to the north along its entire length. The driveway leads to a car park to the east of the house, with the main entrance to the house being through a grand porte-cochère at its eastern end. As originally conceived, East Lodge stood at the gates. The drive passes the house, Mid Lodge and the walled garden, before reaching Home Farm. It continues to join a minor road at South Lodge.

Cultural Significance

- 5.3.29. Thainstone's cultural significance resides primarily in its fabric, and hence intrinsic value, as an example of a late 18th and 19th century gentleman's residence and estate with modest designed landscape incorporating its associated home farm and lodges. It has some contextual value as the wooded policies contribute to the character of the surrounding landscape.

Contribution of Setting to Cultural Significance

- 5.3.30. The house, associated buildings and parkland are largely enclosed by trees and the surrounding fields do not contribute substantially to their cultural significance. Indeed, in the case of the eastern lodge, the surroundings actively detract from its cultural significance. The A96 has divorced the lodge from the rest of the estate, making it difficult to appreciate its function as it no longer announces the presence of a grand house. This is exacerbated further by the presence of a suburban-style 'leylandii' hedge that has been planted in an attempt to shield the lodge from the road.

Sensitivity to Change

- 5.3.31. Although Thainstone is not included within the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes, it is a designed landscape of note and local value within the landscape surrounding Inverurie and is, like Keith Hall, characteristic of the Central Wooded Estates LCA. However, previous effects upon the designed landscape arising from transport and development changes have affected its overall integrity, particularly to the south and east. It is therefore considered to be of **medium** sensitivity to change overall. The B-listed hotel is of **medium-high** sensitivity to change. The already much-compromised setting of the B-listed east lodge makes it of **medium** sensitivity to change from the proposed road developments in heritage terms, with its residents being of **high** sensitivity to change in their views.

Kinkell Church

5.3.32. Kinkell Church is a ruined late-medieval church. It and its burial ground are scheduled, and the building is B-listed. It is a property in the care of the Secretary of State for Scotland. The north, east and west walls of the church survive and the churchyard lies to its south. The church lies in farmland at the edge of the flood plain of the River Don, which lies to the west. To the north is Ardmurdo Farm, behind which the ground rises gently. Across the river is the Inverurie Paper Mill.

Cultural Significance

5.3.33. The church's cultural significance lies primarily in its fabric and its intrinsic value as an example of its kind. In addition, it has an unusual sacrament house, whilst the churchyard contains a reused medieval grave stone of high quality. The churchyard has potential to yield further information regarding the inhabitants of the area from the medieval period onwards. Also contributing to the church's contextual value is the body of documentary evidence relating to it. The church also has some associative value as the burial place of several generations of paper mill owners, and the currently dominant visual presence of the paper mill on the opposite bank of the river. The mill is currently closed, and has recently received a Certificate of Lawfulness for confirmation of lawfulness for Use Classes 4, 5 and 6 (7th February 2012).

Contribution of Setting to Cultural Significance

5.3.34. The surrounding farmland does not contribute substantively to the church's cultural significance, although the generally quiet rural surroundings contribute to its distinctive sense of place. The future of the land occupied by the mill is uncertain, but it may be assumed that it will continue to be occupied by substantial buildings, which would result in visual intrusion and noise.

Sensitivity to Change

5.3.35. The scheduled status of the B-listed church and its churchyard mean that they are of **high** sensitivity to change.

Bass and Little Bass Motte and Bailey Castle

5.3.36. The Bass and Little Bass (henceforth the Bass) are the scheduled remains of a motte-and-bailey castle, comprising two large earthen mounds – the larger, western mound being the motte and the eastern being the bailey. Landscaping in the late 19th century cut a path between the two and reportedly flattened the top of the motte.

5.3.37. The Bass lies within a cemetery, which was established in the late 19th century, and is bounded immediately to the north is the River Ury. Excavations to the south (Carter 1999) have demonstrated that at the time the castle was built the River Don was much closer than it is today, and hence the castle was surrounded by water on three sides providing it with strong natural defences. Across the river to the north is the parkland of Keith Hall, while to the south are trees, beyond which a water treatment works is just visible with the River Don in the background. To the west is the railway line, beyond which a sewage works and Port Elphinstone are visible.

Cultural Significance

- 5.3.38. The Bass has substantial intrinsic value as a well-preserved example of a motte-and-bailey castle that almost certainly has well-preserved associated archaeological deposits. In addition, it has contextual value, because it is the only timber castle along the valley of the River Don with a motte-and-bailey and because it remains a prominent feature in the immediate landscape, which underlines the strength and dominance of the castle. The latter is readily appreciated from the top of the motte, which commands clear views of the surrounding area. It may be considered to have a degree of associative value, relating to its role as the administrative centre for the earldom of Garioch.

Contribution of Setting to Cultural Significance

- 5.3.39. The proximity of the River Ury is relevant to an appreciation of the naturally defensive position occupied by the castle, while the presence of the Pictish symbol stones in the graveyard suggests that the site may have had a long history of occupation prior to the castle. Views over the surrounding area contribute to an understanding of the castle's role in dominating the surrounding landscape and its inhabitants. The numerous modern intrusions preclude these from contributing greatly to any associative value.

Sensitivity to Change

- 5.3.40. The scheduled status of the Bass and Little Bass mean that they are of **high** sensitivity to change.

Inverurie Town Centre

- 5.3.41. Located on the High Street (B9170) of Inverurie are 15 listed buildings, comprising 10 B-listed buildings and five C-listed. Most of these are of 19th century origin. Also present here and in Port Elphinstone are numerous undesignated 19th century buildings. The town centre has no current Conservation Area status.
- 5.3.42. The cultural significance of these buildings is in their intrinsic value as examples of their kind. However, they also have contextual value deriving from their contribution to the Inverurie townscape, closely related to which is the associative value that comes from the aesthetically pleasing effect of the combination of these buildings. Some buildings – in particular the church and war memorial – have strong associative value owing to their importance to the community.
- 5.3.43. As noted above, the interrelationship between the town centre buildings – both designated and undesignated – contributes to their contextual value. Their surroundings, however, also partly detract from their significance. In the Square, which is the focal part of the town centre, unsympathetic street furniture clutters views of the town hall, which was clearly intended to dominate the square. Heavy traffic throughout the day, in particular at peak periods, detracts from and dominates views of the war memorial and its gardens. In general, the large numbers of often slow-moving cars hamper aesthetic appreciation of the buildings in the town centre, whilst also sometimes having necessitated the installation of unsympathetic double glazing and traffic-control measures.

Sensitivity to Change

- 5.3.44. Sensitivity to change with regard to the historic core of the town centre is in relation to the 'do-nothing' scenario that would arise from the proposed link road and junction not being taken forward.
- 5.3.45. The B-listed buildings of the town centre are of **medium** sensitivity, and the C-listed buildings of **medium** sensitivity to change, with specific regard to their fabric and setting in cultural heritage terms. Residents of these buildings, as well as other dwellings in the town centre, are of **high** sensitivity to changes in their views.

6. Appraisal of Potential Effects

6.1. Nature of Likely Effects

6.1.1. The potential link road, connection to the proposed grade-separated junction at Crichtie, and its associated infrastructure, would give rise to a wide selection of potential effects upon the landscape, views within it, and its cultural heritage assets and their settings.

Construction and Operational Effects

6.1.2. As the route of the link road is indicative only, specific effects that would occur cannot be determined with certainty or their magnitude fully evaluated (although the Crichtie junction is at a more detailed stage in terms of its preferred horizontal and vertical alignment). The likely range of effects that could occur is described below.

Nature of Likely Effects arising from the Proposed Link Road and Junction

6.1.3. At this early informal stage in appraising the potential route, construction effects have not been considered, as these (although likely to be extensive in nature) would be restricted to the temporary construction phase. The types of effects set out below therefore relate only to the permanent operational phase of the proposed route.

- Severance/ bisection of areas of local character;
- Addition of new elements and removal of existing features within views;
- Changes to the perceived setting of designed landscapes, Listed Buildings and Scheduled Ancient Monuments;
- Changes to residential amenity of properties;
- Potential lighting at junctions/ crossings;
- Roadside drainage; and
- Introduction of features not characteristic of landscape character/ designed landscape, e.g.:
 - Cuttings or embankments;
 - Road signage, fencing, barriers, bridges etc;
 - Noise and movement resulting from traffic; and
 - Flood storage compensation, if within the floodplain.

6.1.4. In addition, construction of bypasses/ ring-roads often leads to the creation of a de facto boundary to urban development, which is then filled with development. Although unlikely to happen within the Keith Hall policies or south of Kinkell Church because of the flood plain constraints, there are some areas along the route that could be targeted for development and therefore may have further effects upon landscape/ visual/ cultural heritage assets/ receptors.

Nature of Likely Effects arising from the 'Do-nothing' Scenario

6.1.5. Those physical or visual effects that would be likely to arise from the 'do-nothing' scenario upon the town centre are set out below. These would arise from a

situation where the proposed link road would not proceed, but the allocated LDP sites would be constructed.

- Increased traffic volumes;
- Parking pressure;
- Inappropriate double-glazing to undesignated historic buildings and other small-scale physical changes, e.g. sooting;
- Overall perception of character and town centre setting affected by the above, as well as associated noise, changes in air quality and street furniture.

6.2. Appraisal of Potential Effects upon Landscape, Visual and Cultural Heritage Character

Overall Appraisal of Route Corridor

- 6.2.1. The indicative route corridor for the link road and its connection into the grade-separated Crichton junction proposal has been separated into six overlapping areas for the purposes of a more focussed examination of alignment options and associated likely landscape/ visual/ cultural effects. These areas are keyed on an overall plan in Figure 9, and shown individually in Figures 9A to 9F.

Area A: Keith Hall Farmland from B9170 to Paddock North of Keith Hall

Baseline Context

- 6.2.2. The northernmost starting point of the potential link road would be a roundabout connecting with the B9170 in the Souterford area, just east of the bridge crossing over the River Ury and west of the B-listed north lodge to Keith Hall. Both the Council's original and updated potential alignments show the road running in a broadly similar south-south-easterly direction. The route would pass through the open, flat farmed floodplain of the Ury, which meanders along and forms the western edge of the designed landscape. The river also bounds the small industrial park and recycling centre that lies within the triangle of land bordered by the B9170, the Ury and its tributary the Over Burn at the edge of Inverurie. The eastern edge of the fields is contained by the mature woodland along the northern Keith Hall driveway, which is part of a core path that runs through the estate. The route would cut through an east-west belt of mature woodland that links the driveway and the river, then continue southwards on the western outskirts of a square, woodland-enclosed paddock.
- 6.2.3. North of the paddock it would lie outwith the 1:200 floodplain, but west of the paddock it would lie fully within the indicative SEPA area and partly within the Halcrow area. North of the B9170, the land at Uryside is part of a large area of allocated/ built/ proposed housing and mixed-use sites, centred upon a park and school, which will form one of the key expansion areas to the town and will change the baseline character of the landscape immediately north of the proposed link road. Two future housing options (which have no status currently) lie either side of the north lodge and driveway within the designed landscape.

Key Landscape/ Visual/ Cultural Heritage Features

- B9170 road edge along north (low-medium sensitivity);

- Inventory-listed designed landscape (high sensitivity);
- B-listed north lodge (medium sensitivity);
- Views from industrial (low sensitivity) and residential (high sensitivity) edge of town eastwards;
- Open flat floodplain and meandering river (high sensitivity);
- Strong containment by mature estate planting (high sensitivity) along eastern and southern sides; and
- Core path (medium-high sensitivity) along north driveway.

Potential Effects

Although the woodland along the north driveway is mature, it is also open enough to allow views from the north lodge of the road to occur, which would affect its setting. The further west the alignment is pushed (away from the lodge and driveway), the greater the visual effects on receptors at the edge of the town, with effects being more significant for residential rather than industrial properties. In addition, the road would be on a higher embankment if within the 1:200 floodplain, and therefore be visually more intrusive and create greater physical severance within this farmland section of the designed landscape.

Opportunities for Mitigation

- 6.2.4. Woodland planting encloses but does not occur within this open flat farmed area, so screening by planting would only be appropriate if the road were to lie either as far westwards (and therefore more elevated on embankment) or as far eastwards (and therefore closer to existing ground levels) as possible. Avoiding the floodplain and its effects upon road elevation and necessary embankments – which add to severance and the already engineered introduction of a modern main road within a designed landscape – would be preferable. Also, a more westwards alignment would make the alignment of the road further south extremely problematic with regard to the river itself so is not considered a feasible option overall.
- 6.2.5. In comparison to the current relatively central proposed alignment, a more easterly, broadly parallel alignment to the existing driveway that then ran within and along the eastern edge of the paddock could also allow substantial new woodland planting as an extension of the existing. Along with strengthening of the understorey planting in the existing woodland, this could potentially reduce severance of the farmland and adverse effects on the setting of the lodge. Conversely, however, it would take the route closer to the key heritage assets of the core designed landscape and would physically sever the paddock and its surrounding woodland, which have their origins in White's design, from the stables and the rest of the core of the designed landscape. Either option would substantially change the setting to a significant degree – a more western alignment would allow fairly open views of the road with some filtering from woodland; a more eastern route could allow much more screening but in closer proximity to the central core of the Keith Hall landscape.

Area B: Keith Hall Parkland from West of Caskieben and Hall to North of B993

Baseline Context

- 6.2.6. Running south of the paddock and west of the scheduled monument at Caskieben and A-Listed Building of Keith Hall, the original and updated potential Council alignments shown diverge somewhat west of Keith Hall. Both would run through mixed woodland around the river immediately west of Caskieben and then cross through the parkland that characterises the floodplain to the south and west of Keith Hall, west of the southern driveway to Keith Hall. The link road would then cross the B993 between the B-listed south lodge and nearby cottages, east of the B-listed road bridge (this part is discussed in Area C below). Estate woodland forms strongly enclosing boundaries to the open parkland and floodplain to the north and east, with more scattered planting along the western edge allowing some views from the edge of the town. The initial alignment would run across the parkland further west, necessitating two crossing points across the pronounced meanders of the river, whereas the updated alignment lies further east and would avoid crossing the river. Many of the clumps of parkland trees appear in poor condition, with some dead or dying, and any route preference would be to avoid the remaining better-quality specimens. The core path runs immediately east of the southern driveway rather than along it in this area.
- 6.2.7. With both of these alignments, almost the entirety of this section of the route would lie within the indicative 1:200 SEPA area and mostly within the Halcrow area, aside from the very southernmost part over the B993 (dealt with below in Area C).

Key Landscape/ Visual/ Cultural Heritage Features

- Inventory-listed designed landscape (high sensitivity);
- B-listed south lodge (medium sensitivity);
- Proximity of Caskieben SAM and Keith Hall A-Listed Building (both high sensitivity) to east;
- Proximity of Bass SAM (high sensitivity) to south-west;
- Some views from residential (high sensitivity) edge of town eastwards;
- Open flat floodplain and meandering river with historic parkland trees (high sensitivity); and
- Strong containment by mature long-established estate planting (high sensitivity) along eastern and northern sides.

Potential Effects

- 6.2.8. Caskieben SAM is fully enclosed and screened by woodland and its setting would be unaffected. Although Keith Hall is orientated southwards, and intervening woodland would block most if not all oblique views of the proposed road from its western side, there would be views from the approach to the house along the northernmost part of the south drive where trees are more scattered, whereas further south the drive is edged by coniferous plantation. Pushing the route westwards would add two new bridge crossing points in addition to embankments within the floodplain, as well as increasing parkland severance issues. The more easterly current updated alignment, although it would avoid crossing the river, would still create significant severance issues being within the floodplain and therefore on an embankment; both alignments would also necessitate varying degrees of parkland tree removal (although the specifics of this are not able to be

determined currently with regard to which trees and also what condition they are in).

- 6.2.9. A straight road and sharply formed earthworks cutting across the parkland would contrast starkly with the 'natural' sinuous line of White's southern driveway and the associated woodland, detracting substantially from the overall aesthetic effect. Furthermore, traffic on the road would introduce noise and movement to the core parkland, which would clash with the picturesque design principles evident in its design. Should the road run to the east of the river it would cut across parkland laid out by White. Building the road in any kind of proximity to Keith Hall may also adversely affect the desirability of the flats in it, which could affect future maintenance.
- 6.2.10. The presence of an embankment in the floodplain would adversely affect the setting of the Bass, as it would change the degree to which the topography of the floodplain, which determined its siting, might be appreciated. The magnitude of change upon its setting would be determined by the proximity and scale of the embankment but may be substantial enough to be significant.

Opportunities for Mitigation

- 6.2.11. Strips of woodland along the road as screening elements within the parkland would be effective but uncharacteristic of this part of the designed landscape and inappropriate for either of the two possible Council alignments as shown. New planting of clumps of parkland trees would be more in keeping and regenerative of the existing often poor groups, but groups of trees would only filter views of the road at best. However, if the road were to run to the west of the river, some degree of screening might be achieved by reinstating woodland on the river's east bank, which featured in White's original design. The efficacy of the screening would be dependent on the height of the embankment necessitated by the road's passing through the flood plain. Reinstatement of this woodland would result in the core parkland becoming much more enclosed than it is at present and any compensation works required to offset construction in flood plain would be likely to substantially change the character of land to the west of the river. Screening by extending existing woodland planting would only be appropriate if the road were to lie as far eastwards (and therefore closer to existing ground levels, avoiding the floodplain) as possible.
- 6.2.12. Pushing the line of the road along a route broadly parallel to the existing driveway would minimise parkland severance and removal of parkland tree clumps. However, it would also move the route closer to the key cultural heritage assets – Keith Hall in particular – and to avoid views from the driveway the existing more open stretch closer to the house would need additional planting that would absorb the road in visual terms but change the nature of existing views to become much more enclosed, substantially compromising the historic landscape design.
- 6.2.13. The line of a potential road and form of the associated earthworks should be informed by the sinuous lines preferred by White and his contemporaries, in order to lessen the discordance between the road and the picturesque design of the Keith Hall parkland. Street lighting would be entirely inappropriate for this area in

particular. Minimising signage would help to reduce the significant effects of a road in this area slightly.

Area C: Keith Hall Parkland between Bridge over River Ury and South Lodge, and B993 next to Northern End of Kinkell Belt

Baseline Context

- 6.2.14. The two potential initial and updated Council alignments gradually converge in this area. Although the boundary of the designed landscape includes the mixed woodland of the Kinkell Belt to the south of the B993, this belt is physically somewhat disconnected from the main part of the designed landscape and is not a part of the core policies. Although ecological appraisal does not form part of the remit of this study, it should be noted that this belt is a Site of Interest to Natural Science (SINS), a local nature conservation site designation – this is addressed in Section 7 with regard to recommendations for further work. The northernmost part of the link road in Area C would pass between the driveway to the cottages on the north side of the Ury across from the Bass, and the south lodge to Keith Hall. It would cut through the southern part of the parkland, which appears disturbed by a degree of past mineral extraction and is therefore somewhat hummocky, as well as the edge of the mature woodland belt of deciduous trees that lies west of the south lodge and driveway. South of the east-west section of B993 that crosses the river, the route would cut through the Kinkell Belt (a part of which is younger plantation rather than more mixed woodland), and then connect with the north-south part of the B993 as it runs parallel with the east side of the Kinkell Belt. Along this section the existing road is bordered by rising fields to the east, edged by gnarled hedgerows on banking.

Key Landscape/ Visual/ Cultural Heritage Features

- Inventory-listed designed landscape (high sensitivity);
- Narrow corridor of land between B-listed south lodge (medium sensitivity culturally and high sensitivity visually) and cottages to west (high visual sensitivity);
- Proximity of B-listed bridge to west (medium sensitivity)
- More enclosed hummocky ground west of lodge is outwith floodplain;
- Proximity of Bass and Little Bass SAM to west (high sensitivity);
- Mature woodland (high sensitivity) along stretch of B993 between bridge and south lodge provides strong containment typical of the older estate woodlands;
- South of the lodge the outlying, mixed-age plantation part of the designed landscape is considered somewhat less sensitive to change (medium-high sensitivity, excluding any ecological constraints mentioned above); and
- The southern part of the route would follow the existing B993 minor road (medium visual sensitivity for users) that runs south, next to the rising agricultural land with adjacent old hedgerows (medium sensitivity).

Potential Effects

- 6.2.15. Area C is largely above the 1:200 year flood plain in the parkland and, consequently, no major embankments would be necessary. However, some cut and fill would be necessary because of the sloping and hummocky topography.

As a result, the road would bisect the southern parkland, but would be likely to be less visually intrusive in comparison to other parts of the parkland. Although the extent would be dependent upon the final alignment and design of the potential road, trees lining the southern drive adjacent to the B993 will almost certainly be felled. Some of these mature trees may relate to White's original design. In addition, trees (of varying ages) within the Kinkell Belt will be felled and, at the southern edge, the hedgerows on embankments would also be removed and the rising edge of the fields to the east would be cut into.

- 6.2.16. Both Council routes would be visible from the Bass, filtered through trees in the foreground and clumps of trees in the middle distance. There would also be some oblique but clear and very close-up views from the south lodge and nearby cottages. There is the possibility that the new road could potentially reduce the flow of traffic past the south lodge, depending on how the proposed road would interact with the B993, but effects on this area will still be significant overall.
- 6.2.17. The road would be visible from the B-listed bridge over the River Ury. This view does not contribute to the bridge's cultural significance and it is not considered that this would have an adverse effect upon its setting.

Opportunities for Mitigation

- 6.2.18. In this area, there is limited potential to move the route alignment due to physical constraints and nearby receptors; however, minimising any tree removals to the edge of the woodland next to the south drive, as well as trying to avoid larger trees within the Kinkell Belt, should be a priority alongside new planting.
- 6.2.19. As with Area B, linear planting to screen the road would not be appropriate to the current park-like character. Planting of clumps of trees would lessen the prominence of the road, resulting in it generally being seen glimpsed or filtered through trees. An alternative would be to reinstate woodland in the southern part of the park that was felled in the second half of the 19th century. While it would substantially change the character of this area this would, this would be in keeping with White's original design and help to accommodate the road within its surroundings and screen it more fully. At a more detailed level, any replacement or new boundary treatments should respect the estate policy context, e.g. stone walling/ banking, beech or mixed hedgerows, metal estate fencing.
- 6.2.20. Where the link road would follow the alignment of the B993 in the south of this area, it would occupy a wider corridor than the existing minor road. The new link road would therefore necessitate either tree removal in Kinkell Belt on its western edge or hedgerow loss on its eastern edge. Although the old hedgerows are an attractive feature, they are somewhat gappy and over-mature. It would be preferable to incorporate the link road through removal of the embanked hedgerows and reinstate with new ones (retaining a rural rather than engineered edge to the road), rather than remove trees along the eastern edge of the Kinkell Belt. New roadside trees added to the hedgerow could create a stronger landscaped edge to the road, and these measures could help reduce the magnitude of change in this area to an extent that effects may not be of significance locally.

Area D: B993 next to Southern end of Kinkell Belt to Eastern Side of River Don across from Paper Mill

Baseline Context

- 6.2.21. As with Area C above, Keith Hall designed landscape stretches southwards to include the Kinkell Belt woodland (which has ecological value as an LNCS as previously noted). The belt reads as an extension to the main designed landscape rather than a part of the core policies. The proposed link road would, as in Area C, continue southwards along the line of the existing B993 road, parallel with the east side of the Kinkell Belt, and continue along the minor road that leads towards Kinkell Church. The landscape to the east is one of open farmland, which rises gently away from the road and is edged by gappy gnarled hedgerows. At its southern end in this area, the potential link road would deviate away from the line of the minor road to run towards, and through the floodplain of, the River Don. The land is flatter and more open, with views eastwards across the open fields towards the cottages, steadings and small copses/ woodlands in the vicinity of Kinkell Church (see Area E below). On the banks of the Don to the west, the large industrial complex of buildings and chimney stacks of the former Inverurie Paper Mill dominates the otherwise rural views.

Key Landscape/ Visual/ Cultural Heritage Features

- The separate Kinkell Belt part of the designed landscape is considered somewhat less sensitive to change than the core parts of Keith Hall to the north (medium-high sensitivity, excluding any ecological constraints mentioned above);
- The majority of the route in this area would follow the existing B993 and connecting minor road (medium sensitivity users) that run south, next to rising fields with adjacent mature hedgerows (medium sensitivity); and
- The southern part of the route in Area D would cross floodplain fields (medium landscape sensitivity) close to residential dwellings and Kinkell Church (all high visual sensitivity) and the paper mill factory (low sensitivity for users if it stays in some form of industrial use; otherwise none).

Potential Effects

- 6.2.22. The widening of the B993 and connecting minor road to accommodate the new link road could, depending on its exact alignment, cause removal of trees along the edge of the Kinkell Belt. Hedgerows would also be removed and the higher ground of the fields to the east would be cut into. The road would visually be relatively well-absorbed by the adjacent woodland and landform along the existing road alignment, but at the southern end it will enter a much more visually open area. As it would lie within the floodplain, the road would be raised on embankment and therefore visually more prominent. There could also be possible issues with flood compensation storage areas in the vicinity.

Opportunities for Mitigation

- 6.2.23. As with Area C, where the link road would follow the existing minor B993 road, it would result in either tree removal in Kinkell Belt on the road's western edge or hedgerow loss on its eastern edge. Once again, it would be preferable to incorporate the link road through removal and replacement of the hedgerows and

reinstate with new ones plus roadside trees, instead of removing trees along the eastern edge of the Kinkell Belt.

- 6.2.24. Where the road crosses the floodplain (and would then cross the River Don to connect with the existing road bridge over the railway as discussed in Area E below), pulling it as close to the river as possible – and therefore further away from Kinkell Church and the nearby residential dwellings – would help to reduce visual effects, as would the avoidance of street lighting if possible. Extending woodland south of the Kinkell Belt and along the river may also assist, as discussed in Area E below, to reduce the magnitude of effects in this area to an extent that effects may not be significance locally.

Area E: Minor Road to Kinkell Church across Floodplain of River Don to Western Bank

Baseline Context

- 6.2.25. The proposed link road would, as in the southern part of Area D, continue southwards from the line of the existing minor road to Kinkell Church. It would run through the floodplain of the River Don before crossing the river via a new bridge that would connect, on the western bank of the river, with the existing road and bridge across the railway line to the south of the Inverurie Paper Mill complex (this connecting point is a fixed one). The level floodplain contains a few trees further south along the river's edge, but is predominantly extremely open on the east side of the river with few field boundaries. The industrial bulk of the Paper Mill complex dominates views to the western bank, beyond which can be seen the rising ground and woodlands at Thainstone and Crichtie.

Key Landscape/ Visual/ Cultural Heritage Features

- The route would cross open floodplain fields (medium landscape sensitivity); and
- It would be close to residential dwellings and Kinkell Church (all high visual/ setting sensitivity) and the paper mill factory (low sensitivity for users if it stays in some form of industrial use; otherwise none).

Potential Effects

- 6.2.26. The link road would lie within the open floodplain, raised on an embankment and therefore visually prominent, and would result in the loss of some agricultural land. There may also be possible issues with flood compensation storage areas. Views are already dominated by the paper mill complex, and its re-use or redevelopment could potentially substantially alter the character of the area. Any visibility of the new infrastructure across the river would be in the context of the allocated development that they would enable.
- 6.2.27. The link road would be clearly visible from the church, as would traffic using it. However, the church's cultural significance does not draw greatly upon its relationship with its surroundings and whilst these are rural they are dominated by the paper mill across the river. The magnitude of impact would depend greatly on the proximity of the road to the church.

Opportunities for Mitigation

6.2.28. The floodplain in this location is currently characteristically open, flat and un-wooded aside from a few riverside trees, and the new road on embankment would be very visually prominent. Pulling the alignment as close as possible to the west could allow new, much denser woodland riverside planting on either side of the road to help absorb and screen it and its embankments and traffic visually, as well as possibly incorporating some degree of flood compensation storage if required. Although not part of the existing floodplain character, new woodland could tie in visually with the existing Kinkell Belt to the north and the woodland to the west of the A96 and offer substantial benefits, in particular to the residents of the cottages and steadings to the north, visitors to Kinkell Church, and the perceived setting of the Church itself. Although these receptors already experience adverse impacts to their views in the form of the paper mill, these may alter and possibly reduce in extent depending on future uses of that area. The consented/ allocated developments on both sides of the A96 would also be partly visible in predicted baseline views. Strong linear planting along the road corridor would therefore minimise its adverse effects as well as reduce/ filter/ contain views of the industrial buildings and development beyond. It would also help filter the visibility of any street lighting that may be required where the road would approach and connect with the A96, although existing lighting would already be visible in this area.

Area F: A96 and Proposed Crichtie Junction next to Thainstone

Baseline Context

- 6.2.29. The proposed link road would cross the River Don via a new bridge, connecting with the existing road and bridge across the railway line that joins with the Thainstone roundabout. It would, in this area, merge with the proposed grade-separated junction, A96 upgrade, and accompanying link roads and roundabouts that are proposed in order to facilitate residential/ business/ employment land in the paper mill and Thainstone auction mart complex areas, as well as the Crichtie area north of Thainstone House and west of the A96. It should be borne in mind that these developments will entirely alter the existing character of, and views within, Area F.
- 6.2.30. East of the A96 and next to the existing Thainstone roundabout, the B-listed east lodge of Thainstone House is divorced from the main policies. Although views from the house have been heavily screened/ filtered by a mature but inappropriately suburban leylandii hedgerow, its setting has been substantially adversely compromised by the adjacent road to the west, views to the east across scrubby fields of wasteland towards the paper mill buildings, and the presence of the sprawling complex of the auction mart to the south-west.
- 6.2.31. To the west, Thainstone House and surrounding parkland and policy woodlands lie on the southern side of the Hill of Crichtie. The B-listed house faces south-east and is strongly visually enclosed by the long-established woodlands, which are also partly covered by a TPO (currently under review by the Council). More open views across fields towards the A96 and beyond are possible from the northern parts of the policies, with filtered views possible from the driveway. These views north and east will be completely altered by the construction of the allocated development sites and enabling infrastructure, including the Crichtie junction itself. The entrance to Thainstone is already partly compromised by the A96 and Thainstone roundabout.

Key Landscape/ Visual/ Cultural Heritage Features

- The east lodge to Thainstone (medium sensitivity with regard to setting, with its residents being of high visual sensitivity) would have the eastern linkage into the new Crichie junction and development sites passing to the rear, along with upgrading to the A96;
- The route of the western linkage road into the Crichie junction and development sites would cut through the eastern edge of the Thainstone policy woodlands, close to the driveway – the overall non-Inventory landscape is of medium sensitivity, but the TPO'd long-established woodlands are of high sensitivity in landscape terms;
- The Crichie grade-separated junction would involve upgrading of the A96 (whose road users are of low sensitivity but core path users of medium sensitivity – less so than Keith Hall core path users as already experiencing a route dominated by traffic); and
- Roadside tree planting north of Thainstone (medium sensitivity) would be affected by the grade-separated junction, as would adjacent fields and hedges on either side (medium sensitivity landscape to west, low sensitivity to east due to existing industrial influences).

Potential Effects

- 6.2.32. The loss of some policy woodlands at the eastern approach to Thainstone House through the new road linkage to the Crichie development areas would also introduce filtered views of the new linkage and traffic to users of the driveway. The new western and eastern linkages would remove some agricultural land and wasteland, as well as roadside woodland around the new junction. The grade-separated junction and side linkages would introduce additional infrastructure, and more clearly visible traffic, as well as additional lighting and signage to what exists currently. The setting of the east lodge will be disrupted by the new roads. However, this should be considered alongside the fact that this is an area already strongly dominated by views of the existing A96 and associated traffic and other elements. In addition, the Crichie junction, A96 upgrade and eastern and western linkages are all enabling infrastructure that would serve, and would be a direct result of, the allocated development sites. These would result in even more widespread change to landscape character and views in Area F than the road proposals.
- 6.2.33. The road would not be visible from Thainstone House itself and would not fragment its policies any further than is already the case.

Opportunities for Mitigation

- 6.2.34. The greatest opportunities for mitigation will be through the detailed masterplanning of the development sites to the east and west, which will take into account the road proposals. The strengthening of the existing woodlands along the north of the Thainstone policies, along with additional woodland planting within the development site, would make the designed landscape and views out from it more contained than currently; however, it would also substantially reduce views outwards from the driveway to the house of both the new infrastructure and developments and help reduce night-time effects of lighting. Opportunities also exist to create a well-designed roadside boundary to the Thainstone policies through new hedgerows/ estate walling, which would connect with the new

roadside boundaries next to the Crichton developments. Development to the rear of the east lodge has the potential to further adversely affect its setting, so careful design, sympathetic boundary treatments and strong planting should all be key to the masterplan of this development area. New avenue tree and woodland planting along the road corridor and junction would also filter views of the adjacent developments/ link roads and improve the visual experience for users of the road and core path, as would well-designed lighting and signage where necessary. Although the magnitude of change to the overall area from the proposal would be substantial, it should be viewed in the context of the new development sites and the design opportunities for new landscape features that could reduce the possibility of significant effects.

6.3. Potential Route Corridor from Selected Viewpoints

- 6.3.1. The outline nature of the proposals has only permitted very indicative visualisations. These are shown as marker points along the potential centreline of the initial (purple) and updated link road alignment (orange) and Crichton junction extension (red) through the landscape. The route within these views is not fixed in terms of either its vertical or horizontal alignment, and therefore the most appropriate mitigation and resultant efficacy cannot yet be determined (as per the varying options described above for Areas A-F). In addition, these viewpoints have been selected to help inform the overall appraisal and therefore comprise a mixture of public and private locations. In an actual LVA, only public viewpoints would be used. Therefore, an appraisal of the likely magnitude of change and significance of effects upon these individual views has not been considered as it would, at this stage, be potentially misleading.
- 6.3.2. However, these photographs and outline marker lines have been used to help inform the broader appraisal of potential options for the route corridor as described in Section 6.2 above. The short descriptions of the viewpoint baseline characteristics should therefore be read in conjunction with the appraisals of areas A-F above as well as Figure Group 9 (in which the viewpoint locations are also shown) and Figure Group 10. The viewpoint locations run from north to south, in line with Areas A-F.

Viewpoint A: Towards North Entrance to Keith Hall

Baseline View

- 6.3.3. Viewpoint A is located approximately 280m north of Viewpoint B. The view is mainly of expansive ploughed fields in the fore- and mid-grounds, gently sloping to the west towards the River Ury, edged by the strong line of mature mixed woodland lining the north driveway of the Keith Hall estate. More distant views are possible where distant hills to the north are visible to the left, although interrupted by scattered trees.

Route Corridor

- 6.3.4. Due to the limited separation distance between the viewpoint and proposal, the road would be clearly visible from this viewpoint, running across the floodplain. It would be broadly parallel to the north driveway, joining a proposed junction west of the estate entrance.

Viewpoint B: Paddock Edge West of North Drive

Baseline View

- 6.3.5. Viewpoint B is taken from the edge of a section of mature woodland that encloses a square paddock, approximately 510m north-west of Keith Hall and west of its northern driveway. The open view is of ploughed floodplain fields in the foreground, with enclosed grassland and fields on the other side of the River Ury. The eastern edge of Inverurie and more distant hills form the backdrop to the view. These hills create a more varied horizon line to the flat fore- and mid-ground landscape. The floodplain is almost devoid of field boundaries or vegetation of note, with the edges of enclosing policy woodland visible in the far left and right of the view. More distant woodland vegetation is present within Inverurie, with plantations located on hillsides and tops.

Route Corridor

- 6.3.6. Due to the open view and short distance from the proposal, the road would be clearly visible from this viewpoint.

Viewpoint C: Keith Hall South Driveway

Baseline View

- 6.3.7. Viewpoint C is located looking west from the southern driveway to Keith Hall, approximately 50m from the building. The landform is mainly flat, with a slight slope towards the centre of the view towards a bend in the meandering river. Vegetation within the view includes scattered mature specimen trees adjacent to the driveway, and parkland tree clumps and woodland in and along the floodplain and western parts of the Keith Hall estate. The wooded backdrop encloses and limits the view west to the eastern edge of Inverurie and further to distant hills, and this containment would increase when deciduous trees are in leaf.

Route Corridor

- 6.3.8. The proposed road would run through the parkland, broadly parallel to the driveway for the width of the view. As intermediate vegetation is scattered there would be intermittent views of the road from the driveway.

Viewpoint D: Keith Hall Parkland West of South Driveway

Baseline View

- 6.3.9. Viewpoint D is located facing north, west of the Keith Hall southern driveway and south-west of Keith Hall itself. The floodplain landform is relatively flat, with a gentle slope towards the meanders of the River Ury. The fields of pasture are generally bounded by timber post-and-wire fencing, with some patches of scrub and large areas of rushes scattered throughout. The view is enclosed by policy woodland to the north (along the middle ground), beyond which can be seen a low backdrop of hills. Scattered clumps of deciduous and coniferous parkland and driveway trees filter oblique views to Keith Hall, which is partly visible in the right of the view (although it will be much less visible in summer).

Route Corridor

- 6.3.10. The proposed road would run through the parkland before entering the woodland west of Caskieben/ Keith Hall.

Viewpoint E: Cottages and South Lodge

Baseline View

- 6.3.11. Viewpoint E is taken towards the south-eastern boundary of the Keith Hall estate, between cottages located along the River Ury and the woodland that lines the entrance driveway between South Lodge and Keith Hall. The view is taken in a north-easterly direction, looking across the parkland and woodland of the Keith Hall estate in the fore and middle grounds backed by hills beyond. The immediate landscape is relatively flat with gentle undulations, with evidence of possible excavations to the right, and slopes gently towards the River Ury. Scattered clumps of deciduous and coniferous parkland trees are located within the open agricultural fields. Policy woodland within the Keith Hall estate follows the line of the River Ury, forms key elements of the designed landscape, and defines the extents of the property to the south-west. Mixed woodland to the right lines the driveway between the Southern Lodge and Keith Hall and draws the eye to distant hills, whilst woodland within the middle ground filters this backdrop.

Route Corridor

- 6.3.12. The proposed link road will run through the parkland and will be clearly visible in the mid-ground from this view, with little screening from existing tree clumps.

Viewpoint F: South Lodge and Keith Hall Driveway

Baseline View

- 6.3.13. Viewpoint F is located next to the B-listed South Lodge, at the entrance driveway to Keith Hall, adjacent to Keith Hall Road/ the B993. The landform drops to the west, as is apparent by the slope of the road in the foreground that leads to Inverurie Cemetery. The view is largely enclosed by the dense mixed plantation on the opposite side of the road, bounded by post-and-wire fencing, which forms the northern edge to the Kinkell Belt. Mature deciduous trees also line the road, leading the eye obliquely towards the hills in the distance, although this view will be more greatly contained when trees are in leaf.

Route Corridor

- 6.3.14. The proposed road would cut through the dense plantation in the immediate foreground, passing towards the west of South Lodge.

Viewpoint G: Little Bass

Baseline View

- 6.3.15. Viewpoint G is taken from the lower eastern earthen mound of the Bass and Little Bass scheduled monument. This viewpoint is taken facing north-east towards the central woodlands of the Keith Hall estate. The floodplain topography is generally near flat, gently sloping from right to left in the view towards the River Ury in the foreground. Existing mixed woodland, which lies within the Inverurie Cemetery where the Bass and Little Bass are located, as well as trees on the opposite bank

of the river, heavily filter views to the cottages within the centre and right of the view. To the left the parkland fields within the Keith Hall estate are bounded by timber post-and-wire fencing. Shelterbelts further north and woodland along the Keith Hall driveway form a backdrop to the parkland. An access track to the left leads from the cottages north-east into the Keith Hall estate.

Route Corridor

- 6.3.16. Although existing vegetation contains and filters views from this point, the proposal would be visible through the trees, particularly in winter, running through the parkland and across the access track.

Viewpoint H: The Bass

Baseline View

- 6.3.17. Viewpoint H is taken from the Bass and Little Bass scheduled monument, from the western earthen mound.
- 6.3.18. It is an elevated view that looks northwards, capturing the River Ury meandering through the Keith Hall parkland landscape. Glimpses of the eastern edge of Inverurie are possible from this view, but heavily filtered screened by trees. Agricultural fields in the foreground to the east and beyond are located within the grounds of the Keith Hall Inventory-listed designed landscape, and parkland tree clumps and woodland form interest within the relatively flat fore and middle grounds of the Ury floodplain. Beyond this, views to the north-west are to the Bennachie hill range.

Route Corridor

- 6.3.19. Due to its elevated position, the view is relatively open and there is winter visibility through the deciduous parts of the woodland and tree clumps. It is anticipated there would be direct views to the proposed road running across the parkland, in particular to the centre-right of the view, with existing evergreen and deciduous tree clumps filtering views.

Viewpoint I: Kinkell Church

Baseline View

- 6.3.20. Viewpoint I is located at Kinkell Church, which is both listed and scheduled, to the south of the Keith Hall estate, with the view being south-west towards the proposed link road.
- 6.3.21. Across the churchyard wall, the foreground is an expansive open floodplain of large flat agricultural fields next to the River Don. In the right of the view is the former Inverurie Paper Mill which, with its prominent stacks, is the dominant built element in the surrounding landscape. Scattered trees line along the river in the intermediate ground. Beyond the river and the paper mill are woodlands and plantations, including those of Thainstone and on the rounded form of the Hill of Crichtie.

Route Corridor

- 6.3.22. The proposed link road would run across the floodplain between the mill complex and Kinkell Church, east of and broadly parallel with the river, and would be

clearly visible from this point. The Crichton linkages would also be partly visible on the western side of the River Don.

7. Summary and Conclusions

7.1. Summary of Effects and Likely Significance

Keith Hall Designed Landscape

- 7.1.1. The link road, passing as it would through a north-south corridor that would for the greater part of its length run through the western part of the Inventory-listed designed landscape at Keith Hall, would be likely to have a number of major significant adverse effects in relation to that high sensitivity landscape and assets/ receptors along its length. The Kinkell Belt, as it is not considered part of the main policies, is considered separately in the following section below.
- 7.1.2. These effects would vary according to the exact horizontal and vertical alignment, which is relatively flexible except at the point west of South Lodge, and therefore the most effective and appropriate mitigation measures would also vary, as described in Section 6.
- 7.1.3. In the main however, these would arise from:
- The intrusion of a modern engineered two-lane link road, cycleway and associated built elements into an historic landscape currently devoid of anything more than the original narrow access driveways in terms of infrastructure;
 - Division of local areas of particular character within the policies (i.e. parkland, woodland, paddock, farmland, river floodplain), potentially resulting in fragmentation and a resultant lack of cohesion;
 - The loss of mature woodland and parkland trees, which in some areas could only be partly mitigated in a limited way in terms of historic appropriateness;
 - The possibility of embankments (and therefore a wider, more elevated road corridor) and potential associated flood compensation storage affecting landform, trees and views if the road lies within the floodplain;
 - Landscape/ visual/ cultural heritage effects upon high sensitivity features/ assets/ receptors, in particular:
 - Setting of the Bass and Little Bass SAM and views of visitors to it;
 - Setting of the North and, to a greater extent, the South Lodge, and their residents' views;
 - Views of residents approaching Keith Hall by the north and south driveways, and users of the core path along the northern driveway; and
 - Views of residents of the cottages west of the South Lodge.
- 7.1.4. Some positive aspects that could arise from mitigation within the Keith Hall core policies would relate to the possibility of new woodland and parkland tree planting and better management of currently neglected areas, although these could only partially address adverse effects.
- 7.1.5. In overall terms, although there would be significant effects in the western policies of Keith Hall, it should be borne in mind that the core of the designed landscape around Keith Hall, Caskieben, the walled garden and Home Farm

would remain physically and visually unaffected by the link road, as would the entirety of the designed landscape to the east.

Kinkell Belt/ Don Valley

- 7.1.6. Effects upon the landscape/ visual/ cultural heritage resource, although they would occur to varying degrees, would tend to be of lesser magnitude along the Kinkell Belt (as the route would largely follow the existing road). At the southern end, where it would lie close to the river in undesignated farmland and utilise the existing bridge crossing, the landscape setting is already somewhat industrialised by the dominant visual presence of the paper mill complex, which is zoned for re-use/ redevelopment for other industrial use.
- 7.1.7. Opportunities for mitigation through new planting would be likely to be more effective at physically and visually absorbing the road than within the Keith Hall policies. Along with changes to the paper mill complex, these could if well-designed have the possibility to improve upon some aspects of the existing landscape/ visual/ cultural heritage resource, including in relation to views from Kinkell Church and nearby cottages.

Thainstone Policies/ Crichtie

- 7.1.8. Within Thainstone's policies at the south-west, as the proposed junction and connecting access roads would be at the eastern edge of the policies in an area where the estate landscape and B-listed lodge are already adversely affected by the existing trunk road and roundabout and the visual influences of the Thainstone mart and paper mill complex, adverse effects would also be likely to be lesser in magnitude than at Keith Hall.
- 7.1.9. The road proposals in this location are to facilitate extensive allocated development across the existing fields to the north of Thainstone and the more scrubby waste ground east of the lodge. This will, in itself, radically change the nature of the area. The new masterplan also offers some opportunities for improvements through mitigation to setting, boundaries and views with regard to Thainstone, the lodge and A96 road/ core path users, through high-quality site-appropriate design.

Inverurie Town Centre

- 7.1.10. If the link road proposals did not proceed (the 'do-nothing' scenario), there would be likely to be some adverse effects upon the setting of the main historic part of the town centre as a result of increased traffic and possible related changes such as inappropriate double-glazing/ sooting to listed/ historic buildings. In comparison to the potential extent and significance of effects arising from the link road proceeding, these are likely to be relatively minor.
- 7.1.11. A reduction in traffic through the town centre as a result of the construction of the link road would, however, open up greater possibilities for an upgrade to the current streetscape of the town centre and beneficial effects upon setting and views within Inverurie.

7.2. Acceptability in Relation to National and Local Policy

- 7.2.1. Given that there is substantial uncertainty regarding the route and hence its effects, the link road's acceptability in relation to planning policy can only be considered in general terms.
- 7.2.2. With regard to the statutory test provided in Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservations Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997, it would appear possible that Keith Hall designed landscape could potentially accommodate the link road and preserve the setting of Keith Hall and related listed buildings – provided that appropriate mitigation measures were incorporated into the design of the road. However, this is likely to be borderline, given the apparently unavoidable intrusion of the link road into the core parkland that forms the setting of the house, requiring the balancing of the adverse effects on the designed landscape, scheduled monuments and listed buildings with the potential benefits of the link road.
- 7.2.3. Paragraph 122 of the Consultation Draft SPP states that:
- “Planning authorities should protect and, where appropriate, seek to enhance gardens and designed landscapes included in the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes.”*
- 7.2.4. SHEP, which is under review, reinforces this, saying
- “3.77. The effect of proposed development on a garden or designed landscape is a material consideration in the determination of a planning application.*
- 3.78. Scottish Ministers expect planning authorities to have careful regard for the specific qualities, character and integrity of gardens and designed landscapes.*
- 3.81. Informed change should be managed carefully with the aim of ensuring that the significant elements justifying designation are protected or enhanced.”*
- 7.2.5. The measure of acceptability in national policy terms is therefore the degree to which the significant elements justifying designation are preserved. The link road would unavoidably affect the integrity of the designed landscape as it would cross the parkland. However, the designated landscape at Keith Hall is extensive, and the greater part of it would remain unaffected. Mitigation may also reduce the effects greatly, though the degree to which this will be possible is uncertain given that there is no current information regarding engineering design constraints. Acceptability would again therefore be determined in the planning balance.
- 7.2.6. As previously set out in Section 3, the 2012 LDP provides criteria for planning decisions relating to developments having an adverse effect on designated historic gardens and designed landscapes (SG Historic Environment 3), stating that they will only be consented where:

“1) the objectives of designation and the overall integrity and character of the designated area will not be compromised; OR

2) any significant adverse effects on the qualities for which the area has been designated are clearly outweighed by long term strategic social or economic benefits of over-riding public importance, for which no other alternative site is available.”

7.2.7. Given the apparent need for the link road and the lack of viable alternatives, the second criterion may apply, whilst the first might apply to a lesser degree depending on the route selected and the mitigation enacted.

7.2.8. Paragraph 120 of the Consultation Draft SPP states that planning authorities:

“should protect (scheduled monuments) in situ and in an appropriate setting, unless there are exceptional circumstances.”

7.2.9. Provided that the link road could be set back and screened sufficiently, adverse effects on the integrity of the setting of both the Bass and Kinkell Church may be reduced and the link road could be more acceptable in terms of planning policy, particularly if it can be demonstrated that the need for the link road is sufficiently great to merit the circumstances being considered exceptional.

7.2.10. With regard to Thainstone designed landscape and its east lodge, it is considered that the link road would not unacceptably affect their setting given the baseline and predicted baseline (with regard to allocated development) conditions.

7.2.11. Paragraph 116 of the Consultation Draft SPP directs planning authorities (through strategic development plans) to:

“protect and promote the strategically important elements of the historic environment. They should take account of the capacity of settlements and surrounding areas to accommodate development without damage to their historic significance.”

7.2.12. In terms of the surrounding areas of Inverurie, as mentioned previously the link road would affect the integrity of the Keith Hall designed landscape in particular. Within the town itself, the link road would have few direct effects, with these being limited to changes to some views from the north-east business park end – the main effects would relate to its contrast with the do-nothing scenario. This would result in increased flows of traffic through the centre of Inverurie, resulting in the increased degradation of the appearance of the historic core. No traffic modelling or economic impact assessment has been undertaken, but it is probable that the link road would ease traffic flow and create opportunities for a more attractive and pleasant streetscape. This would help protect the economic viability and desirability of the historic buildings in the town centre, thereby increasing investment and safeguarding their future.

7.3. Recommendations for Further Work

- 7.3.1. The very initial nature of the link road proposals has, at this outline stage, limited the certainty of the findings of this appraisal to a large extent due to the number of unknowns, as previously discussed.
- 7.3.2. However, some early further work with regard to the proposals and other additional but related surveys would be of great practical use in terms of refining these initial findings. These would allow a more balanced and accurate picture of the pros and cons of the proposal overall to be reached, before progressing to a further stage of design. It is therefore strongly recommended that the following areas in particular are investigated along and in the vicinity of the potential route corridor:
- Arboricultural survey of parkland trees and woodlands;
 - Ecology survey of flora and fauna and green corridors;
 - Levels survey;
 - Design progression of horizontal and vertical route alignment and associated cuttings/ embankments; and
 - Examination of flood issues including potential compensatory measures where the road would be in the floodplain.
- 7.3.3. The potential effects could then be reappraised against this supplementary information to provide a greater degree of certainty about the likely nature and extent of effects, as well as the most appropriate and effective mitigation measures. Comparative traffic and economic assessments could also be undertaken to assist in weighing up the positive and negative aspects of the proposal against the do-nothing scenario.

7.4. Conclusions

- 7.4.1. This appraisal has, as its remit, focussed specifically upon the likely effects of the proposed link road upon the landscape/ visual/ cultural heritage resource and associated planning policy.
- 7.4.2. There will undoubtedly be significant adverse effects upon this resource, particularly within the western farmland and parkland the Inventory-listed of Keith Hall designed landscape. In overall terms, mitigation proposals along the entire route corridor are likely to become increasingly more effective moving southwards, especially in the context of the extensive allocated development sites that the Crichton junction and side roads would serve.
- 7.4.3. However, the protection of assets as described in Section 3 with regard to the landscape/ visual/ cultural heritage resource cannot be viewed in isolation, and must be balanced against the overall progression of the Local Development Plan and sustainable economic growth for the town. Taking the above recommendations for a next stage of work forward will help to inform the decision as to whether or not the adverse effects of the proposed link road can be mitigated to an acceptable degree, when weighed against the positive benefits of the road proposals to the overall community and economy of Inverurie and its surroundings.