

## Landscape Character Type: Gently Undulating Coastal Farmland

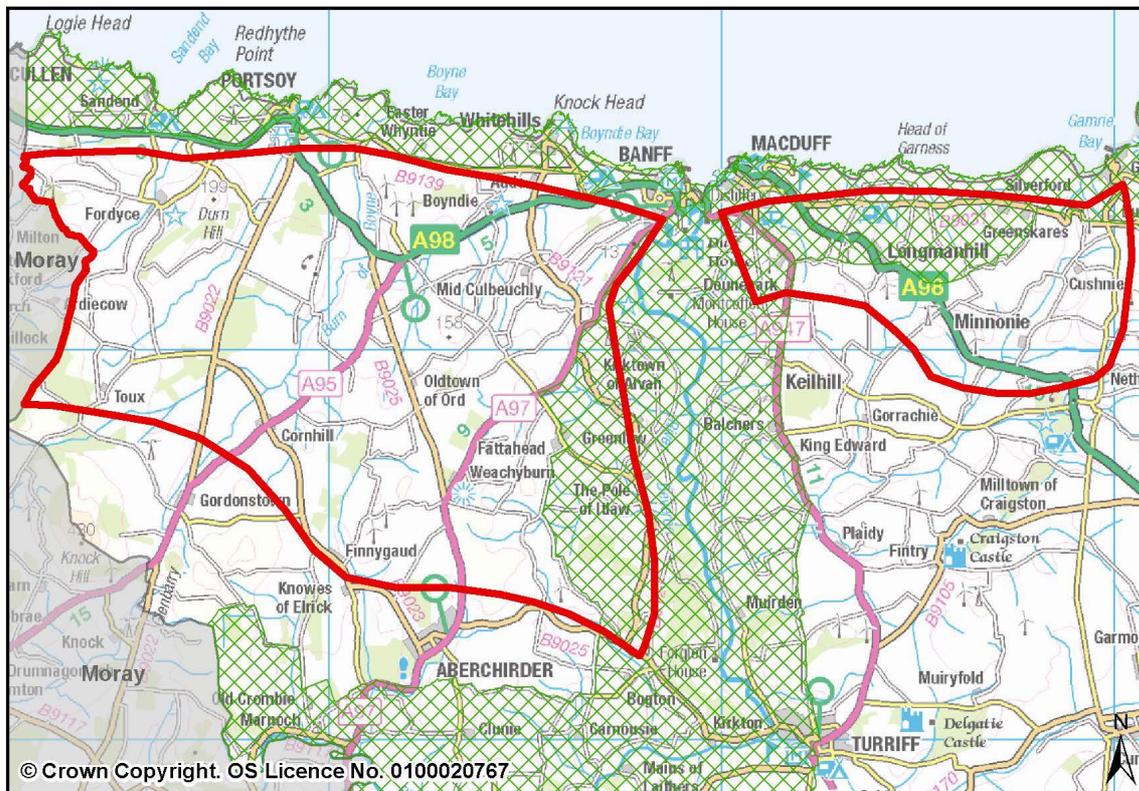
### Overview

The land lying either side of the Deveron Valley is characterised by its expansive windswept low-lying landscape, with a strong sense of openness and proximity to the coast.

This *Gently Undulating Coastal Farmland* Landscape Character Type is slightly undulating with infrequent low, rounded hills. Where the landscape borders Moray to the west it is largely separated by a wooded ridgeline. To the east, the landscape is defined by the distinctive outcrop of Old Red Sandstone forming the higher ridges south of Troup Head. The character landscape gradually transitions into *Undulating Agricultural Heartlands* to the south.



Map 1 *Gently Undulating Coastal Farmland*



## **Key Landscape Characteristics**

**Sensitivity** – The *Gently Undulating Coastal Farmland* Landscape Character Type overlaps with two Special Landscape Area (SLAs). To the north lies the North Aberdeenshire Coast SLA, with the Deveron Valley SLA extending to the south, shown as the hatched areas Map 1. These designations recognise the high scenic value of the coastline's rugged landscape, and the special qualities of the Deveron Valley with its meandering river bounded by rolling wooded hills.

**Landform** – Gently undulating with extensive shallow basins and low rounded ridges with Durn Hill forming a landmark in this low-lying area. Other more rounded and distinct small hills occur close to the coast and Deveron Valley.

**Vegetation** – With an almost complete absence of woodland, broadleaved and coniferous trees only rarely occur in small clumps near farmsteads, or as an occasional shelterbelt or hedge-line.

**Field pattern** – Large fields are enclosed by post and wire fencing or by broken lines of gorse hedging.

**Settlement** – Farms are evenly dispersed across the landscape with some large associated outbuildings. The pattern of housing varies between the east and the west. Occasional villages occur such as Fordyce, Cornhill and Boyndie. There are single and small groups of wind turbines punctuating the landscape.

## Specific Guidance

### General

- The pattern of housing varies between the east and the west of Banff/Macduff. Development in this *Gently Undulating Coastal Farmland* Landscape Character Type should be sited and designed to reflect the localised landscape pattern and characteristics.

### Land Use - Residential

- Typically, development is limited to a few scattered farmsteads dotted along narrow tracks or spaced along roads.
- Where there are occasional groups of terraced houses along the roadside houses should be set slightly back from narrow roads.
- Closer to Banff/Macduff, there are more groupings of houses and a general sense of a more densely populated area.
- Integration of new buildings can be achieved by locating development close to existing buildings, shelterbelts, hedgerows and trees.
- The scale of a house is a key consideration to ensure a good landscape fit.

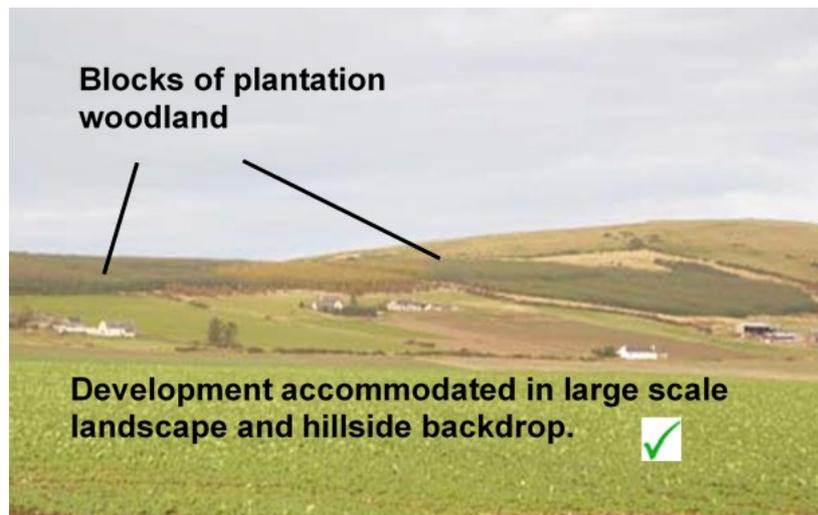


- Buildings integrate well into the landscape when located in dips in the undulating landscape.

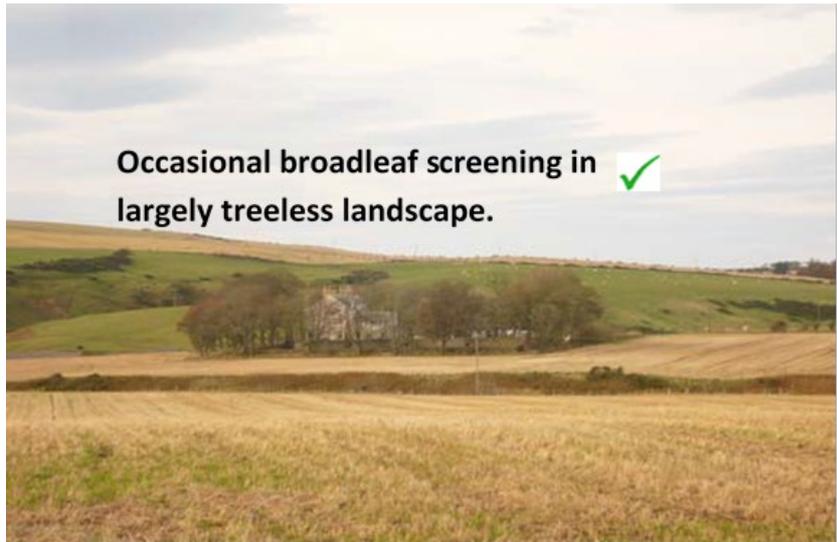


## Trees and Woodland

- Overall, this Landscape Character Type is characterised by an absence of woodland, with few trees. New development proposing excessive planting should be avoided.
- Blocky coniferous planting is however a feature of boggy parts, and more prevalent to the west. Sweeps of coniferous planting on hillsides can be prominent where they do not follow the landform.



- Occasional clumps of broadleaf and coniferous trees around farmsteads, or shelterbelts or hedge lines help screen or provide a backdrop for development. Deciduous trees are a feature around farmsteads and villages.



### Boundary Treatments

- Post and wire fences are the predominant boundary treatment rather than stone dykes or hedging. Occasionally stone dykes are used. In some cases no boundary treatment may be appropriate.
- Coniferous hedges and fencing used for plot boundaries are very intrusive and should be avoided.



- Scattered hedges are also characteristic, and they should be maintained. Occasionally, broken lines of gorse hedging are used to define field boundaries, contributing to the characteristic of faintly defined field boundaries.

Modern development in middle of field with 'ranch' style boundary treatment is out of character



### Land Use - Agricultural

- Farm buildings are more traditional to the west of this landscape.
- Where buildings are cut into the land, these reduce landscape impact.
- Screening of large new agricultural/industrial buildings with embankments may be appropriate and should include sensitive planting.
- Long straight roads are a feature, and due to views from these, opportunities for large scale buildings are reduced.

## Landscape Character Type: Coastal Farmland with Ridges and Valleys

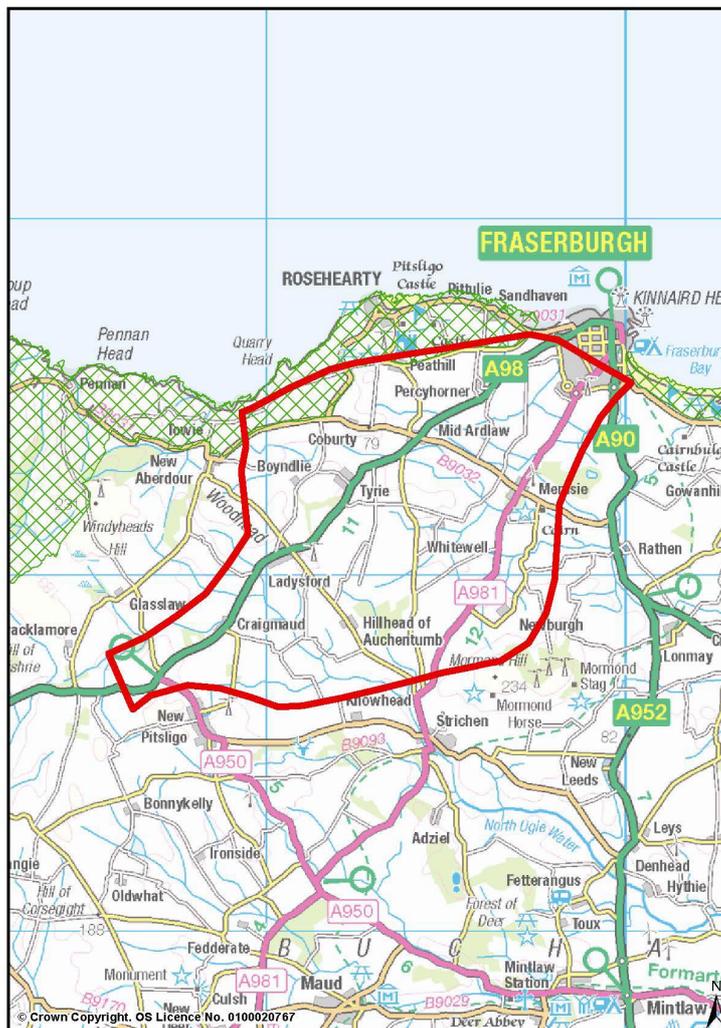
### Overview

From the northeast coast near Fraserburgh down to the village of New Pitsligo this Landscape Character Type forms a transition between the dramatic sculpted sandstone ridges to the west, and the flatter, lower eastern coastal plain.

This character landscape is low lying and undulating, with subtle ridges and broad shallow valleys. There is a strong sense of proximity to the coast.



Map 1 *Coastal Farmland with Ridges and Valleys*



## **Key Landscape Characteristics**

**Sensitivity** – The *Coastal Farmland with Ridges and Valleys* Landscape Character Type has a strong sense of proximity to the highly scenic north coast. The North Aberdeenshire Coast Special Landscape Area (SLA) designation shown as the hatched area on Map 1 recognises the distinctive qualities of this dramatic and rugged north coast.

**Landform** – Ridges and valleys in a landform falling gently seawards, with a more diverse landcover on higher ground of moss and moorland character where agricultural use is restricted due to the poor soil quality.

**Vegetation** – The expanses of moorland, small blocks of coniferous woodland, infrequent broadleaf planting, and cultivated fields of crops and rough pasture combine to a fragmented landscape of varying textures.

**Field Pattern** – Large open fields of more low-lying agricultural land give way to a more diverse land cover on the slightly higher ground inland.

**Settlement** – Widely scattered farmsteads strung along minor roads are often situated on small hillocks within areas of moss. Occasional derelict and obviously abandoned farmsteads. Hamlets of Mid-Ardlaw and Memsie are the only minor settlements in the area.

**Other** – The open nature of the landscape is emphasised by subtle delineation of fences, scrubby gorse boundaries and overgrown stone dykes. Gravel quarries are located in this landscape and masts and other communication infrastructure is a feature on Mormond Hill and occasional higher ridges near the coast.

## Specific Guidance

### Land Use – Residential / Farmsteads

- Farmsteads are typically strung out and scattered along minor roads in the *Coastal Farmland with Ridges and Valleys* Landscape Character Type.



- Farmsteads are often situated on small hillocks within areas of moss and poorly drained land, and typically with 1 ½ storey homes. This pattern should be replicated in new development where it prevails in the landscape.
- Integration of new buildings could be achieved by locating development close to shelterbelts, hedgerows and trees.
- Farmstead buildings are traditionally of stone construction, with some whitewashed, and reflecting these materials in new homes may provide a good landscape fit.
- Subdued paint colours are likely to be appropriate.



## Boundaries

- Subtle delineation of fences is a key characteristic of this landscape.
- Harled walls, coniferous hedging or suburban fencing looks out of place.
- Beech and hawthorn hedgerows and stone dykes provide successful boundary treatments for new development, but on occasion post and wire fencing may better reflect the landscape character.

## Trees and Woodland

- Small groups of trees can help integrate new development with the landscape.
- New development can be successfully integrated within the landscape by planting native trees to replicate copses traditionally planted for shelter.

**1 ½ storey whitewashed farmstead, with subtle boundary treatment and groups of trees**



## Landscape Character Type: [Coastal Agricultural Plain - Aberdeenshire](#)

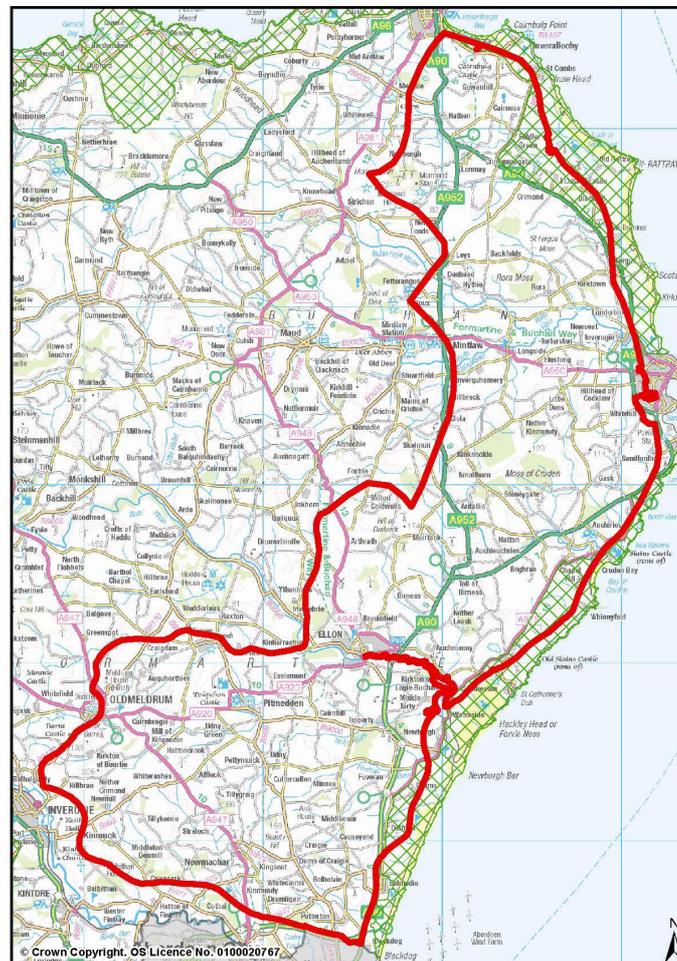
### Overview

This Landscape Character Type is an extensive, low-lying, and often very open sweep of exposed farmland where the influence of the sea is strong. It has a gently undulating landform with relatively large scale and extensive moorlands. The character of this landscape is influenced by development including transmission masts, electricity transmission lines, major roads, and the gas terminal at St Fergus.

The transition from this agricultural hinterland towards the adjacent *Beaches Dunes and Links* and the *Fragmented Rocky Coast* Landscape Character Types is very gradual.



Map 1 Coastal Agricultural Plain – Aberdeenshire



## **Key Landscape Characteristics**

**Sensitivity** – The *Coastal Agricultural Plain – Aberdeenshire* Landscape Character Type is inextricably linked to the coast. Extending almost the full extent of the eastern coast, the Northeast Aberdeenshire Coast Special Landscape Area (SLA) designation indicated in Map1 by the hatched area to the east, recognises the strong sense of place, scenic qualities and uninterrupted views of the North Sea from the coast. There are powerful elemental qualities associated with the weather.

**Landform** – Uniformly low lying gently undulating topography of this Landscape Character Type that was formerly moorland and now a rich agricultural resource. The land gradually rises to the west. Mormond Hill provides a prominent landmark feature, and the White Horse adds visual presence to the hill. Together with the lesser-known White Stag these are the only two hill figures in Scotland. The River Ugie meanders across a large flood plain west of Peterhead, and the River Ythan flows across the central part of the plain.

**Field Pattern** – Large open fields are mostly bounded by post and wire fencing. Dilapidated and overgrown stone walls are more prominent to the north. Occasional stubby beech, thorn and gorse hedges.

**Vegetation** – Predominantly arable farming with occasional but extensive areas of moss and wetland, including St Fergus' Moss, and the more intact and less modified remnant mosses of Rora and Cruden. Coniferous forest borders these moss areas. Broadleaf woodland and trees are scarce, largely restricted to rare shelterbelts, estate policies, occasional small groups around farms, or more substantial plantings on the outskirts of settlements where it can be visually prominent.

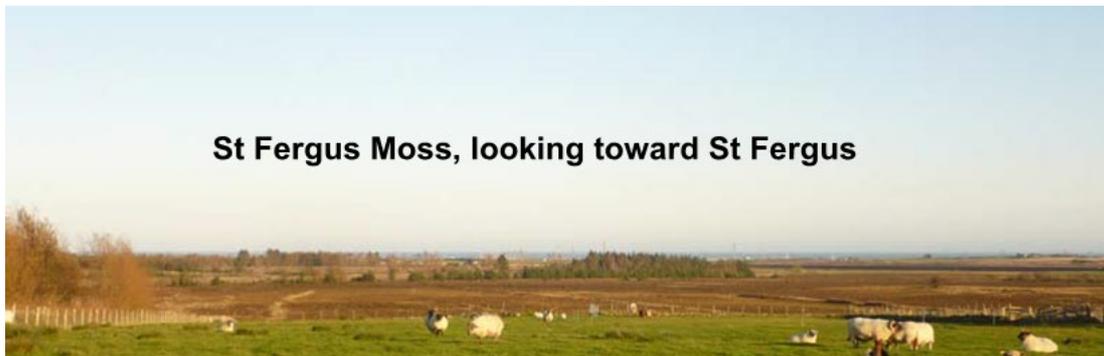
**Settlement** – This is a well settled landscape with regularly dispersed often relatively large farms often sited on subtle rises and ridges, and many newer houses and a number of settlements. There are a number of notable historic features and grand mansions with designed landscapes such as Haddo House.

**Other** – Wind turbines and tall transmission masts and communication structures, together with other tall farm structures such as silos, are highly visible in this open landscape which is also crossed by major roads. There are also a number of small quarries and landfill sites.

## Specific Guidance

### General

- Where the landscape of the *Coastal Agricultural Plain – Aberdeenshire* Landscape Character Type is particularly flat and open, there is extensive visibility making it susceptible to impact from pylons, wind turbines and masts.
- Settings of estates are sensitive to intensive agriculture and loss of features such as woodlands.
- Golf courses are a pressure owing to the flat rolling landform and proximity to Aberdeen.
- Creation of landscaped buffers will help preserve and enhance archaeological remains.
- Where there is reduced intensity of farming this may result in succession of scrub and woodland



## Land Use – Residential

- Dispersed farmsteads across the landscape range from large farms to small holdings.



- Piecemeal development and prominent farm buildings can intrude into views; good siting and design measures, and use of simple forms and shapes, reduces the prominence of such features.
- Integration of new buildings could be achieved by locating development close to existing buildings, shelterbelts, hedgerows and trees.



- The large-scale landscape may accommodate large houses and farms, but the settlement patterns are distinctive and susceptible to extension and loss of identity.



- Houses and cottages along the roadside are common.
- Development should follow the existing pattern, whether it is road-side or off-road.



### **Boundaries**

- Large fields are mostly bounded by post and wire fencing.
- Dilapidated stone walls are more prominent to the north.
- Coniferous hedges and fencing used for plot boundaries can be very intrusive in rural locations.

**Vernacular cottage with dilapidated stone dyke, beech hedging and trees to screen.**



### **Trees and Woodland**

- Coniferous plantations are interspersed on boggy land.
- Broad-leaved trees are restricted to occasional shelterbelts and groups around farmsteads.
- Wherever possible, new development can be integrated by planting native trees to replicate copses traditionally planted for shelter.

**Farmhouse and steading screened by woodland**





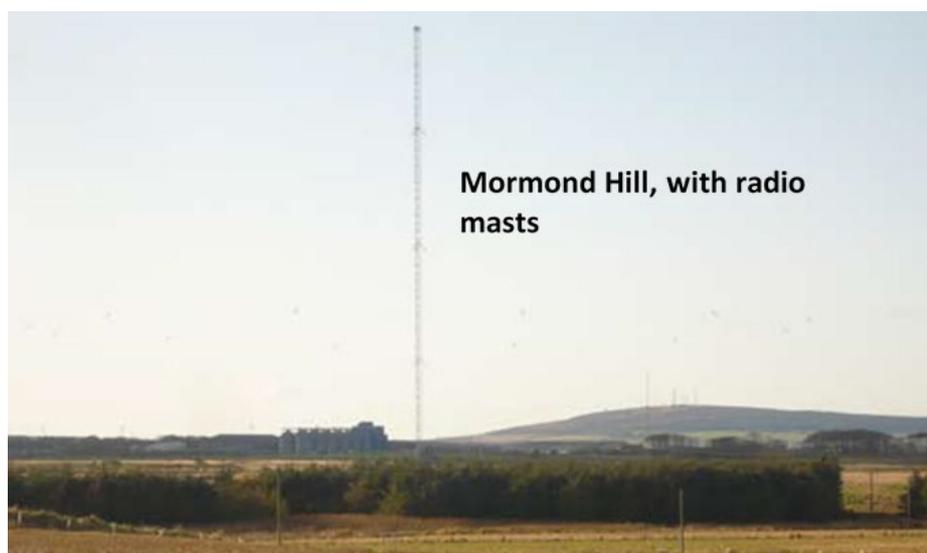
- Woodlands and shelterbelts may be used to screen and contain new built development, whilst improving the woodland structure of the landscape.
- Plantations which reflect the form of adjacent policy woods will extend the visual influence of woodland in the landscape.

### Land Use - Agricultural

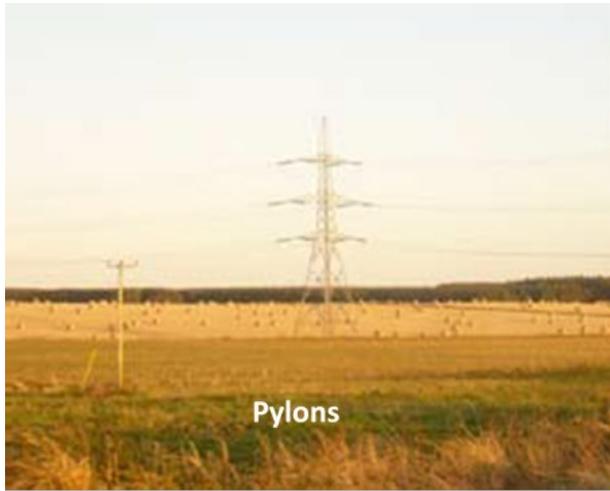
- Agricultural buildings are common but vary in size from large farms to small holdings.
- Careful choice of colour for agricultural buildings ensures a good landscape fit. They are often green in colour which blends well with the landscape.

### Other

- Mormond Hill is a landscape feature to the north.



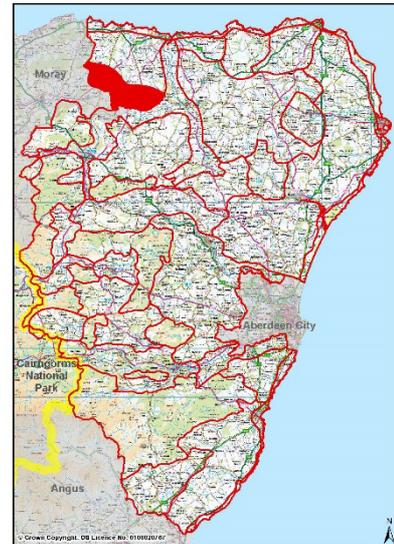
- Small and occasional wind turbines associated with farm buildings and on farmland are a regular feature in the landscape.



## Landscape Character Type: Low Hills and Basins

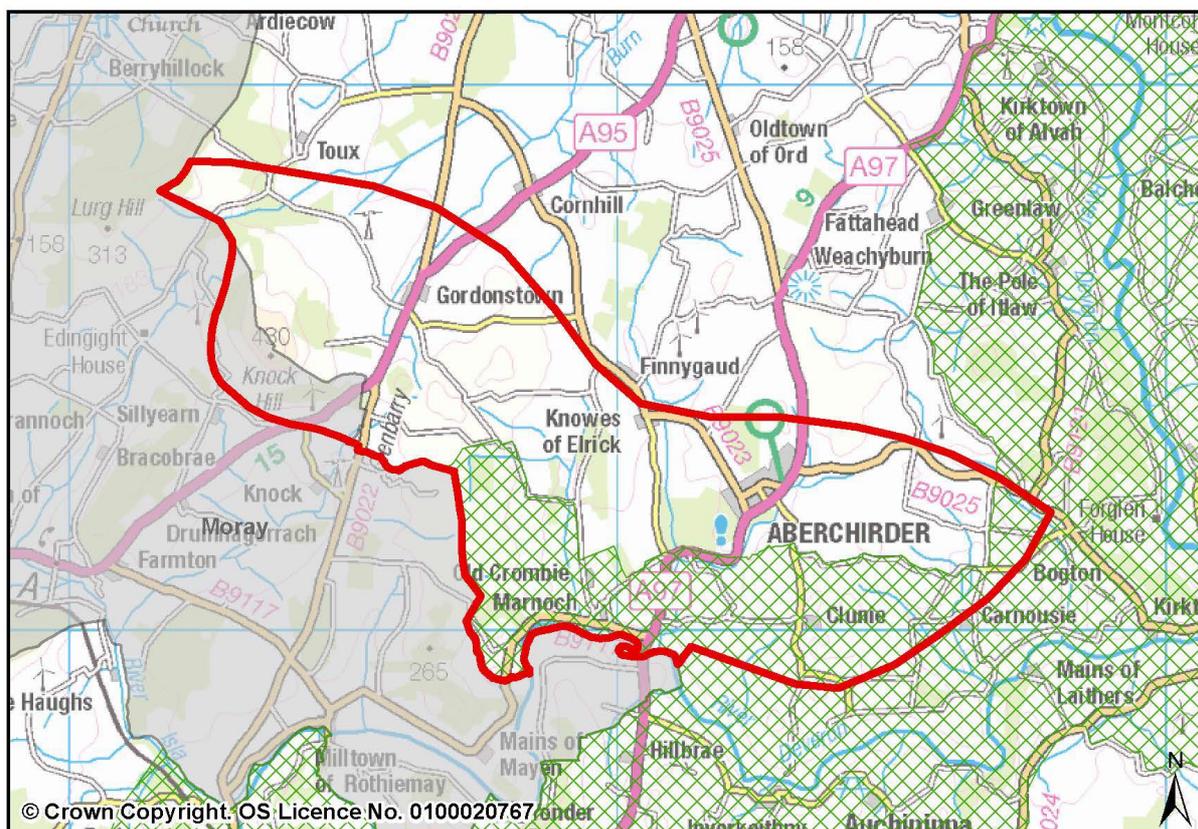
### Overview

The landform extending from the western boundary of Banff and Buchan towards Aberchirder in the east is characterised by its relatively high elevation with related land cover of mosses, coniferous woodland and grazing land. The less intensively farmed land of the character landscape with its diverse vegetation adds to a sense of naturalness. There is also a sense of seclusion with views from within the lower valleys enclosed by the smoothly undulating landform. Knock Hill is a widely visible and dominating feature from the west.



This *Low Hills and Basins* Landscape Character Type merges gradually with the lower, flatter *Gently Undulating Coastal Farmland* Landscape Character Type to the north.

Map1 *Low Hills and Basins*



## **Key Landscape Characteristics**

**Sensitivity** – The *Low Hills and Basins* Landscape Character Type changes in character as it transitions to the lower *Farmed and Wooded River Valleys* Landscape Character Type to the southeast. The Deveron Valley Special Landscape Area designation shown by the hatched area in Map 1 recognises the scenic quality of this valley with its meandering river bounded by rolling wooded hills.

**Landform** – Low rolling hills and long ridges create an undulating landform. The steep sided stand-alone Knock Hill is a key landscape feature. The area takes on more of a moorland/rougher character to the west.

**Vegetation** – Shelterbelts and clumps of mature deciduous trees including beech and sycamore frame settlements. Buildings generally screened by trees and in places long avenues of trees line fields and roads. Extending towards Moray the landscape becomes coarser, with remnant mosses, rough/wet pastures and scrub.

**Field Pattern** – Large fields of predominantly grazing land divided by post and wire fencing, hedges of gorse or low stone walls. Rougher pasture with smaller walled fields, cover hill slopes to the south.

**Settlement** – Dispersed, scattered farmsteads concentrated on slopes, with the planned settlement of Aberchirder set within the rolling hills.

**Other** – Occasional wind turbines towards the south.

## Special Guidance

### Land Use - Residential

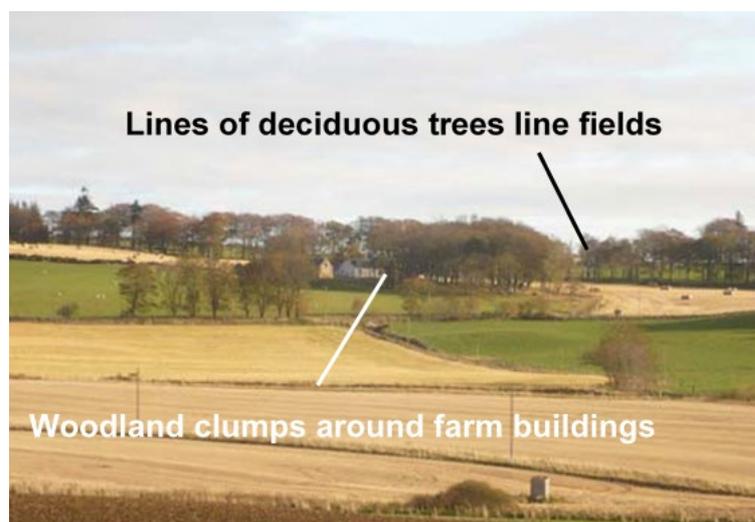
- Integration of new development within the *Low Hills and Basins* Landscape Character Type is best achieved by locating it close to existing buildings, shelterbelts, hedgerows and trees, in response to the landscape character.



- Houses are generally located some way off the main road, although some front directly onto minor roads.
- Housing varies from single storey cottages to two storey houses, all of which are set within grounds.

### Trees and Woodland

- Curving fringes of shelterbelts and clumps of mature deciduous trees, including beech and sycamore, emphasise the distinctive topography of the area.



- New development could be integrated by planting native trees to replicate copses traditionally planted for shelter.
- Small blocks of coniferous planting are more of a feature to the west of the area.



### Boundary Treatments

- Where stone dykes and hedging are a feature, this should be continued.
- Coniferous hedges, harled/painted block walls and ranch fencing are generally out of place and intrusive in rural locations.



- Tree avenues/shelterbelts effectively bound fields and buildings, enhancing landscape character.
- Not including boundary treatment may be appropriate for smaller housing development.

### Land Use - Agricultural

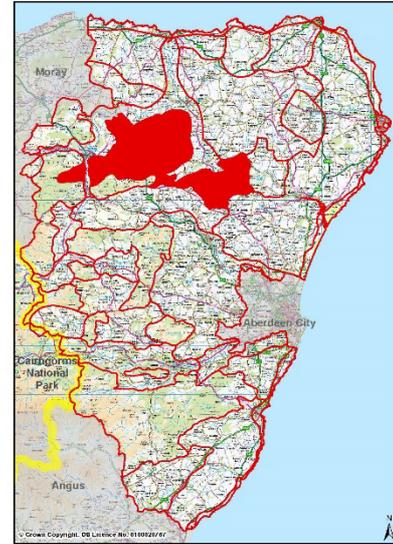
- Agricultural Buildings are generally of a modest scale, and blue/grey cladding is common.
- Some agricultural buildings are 'cut in' so they sit lower making them less prominent in the landscape.

## Landscape Character Type: Farmed Rolling Ridges and Hills

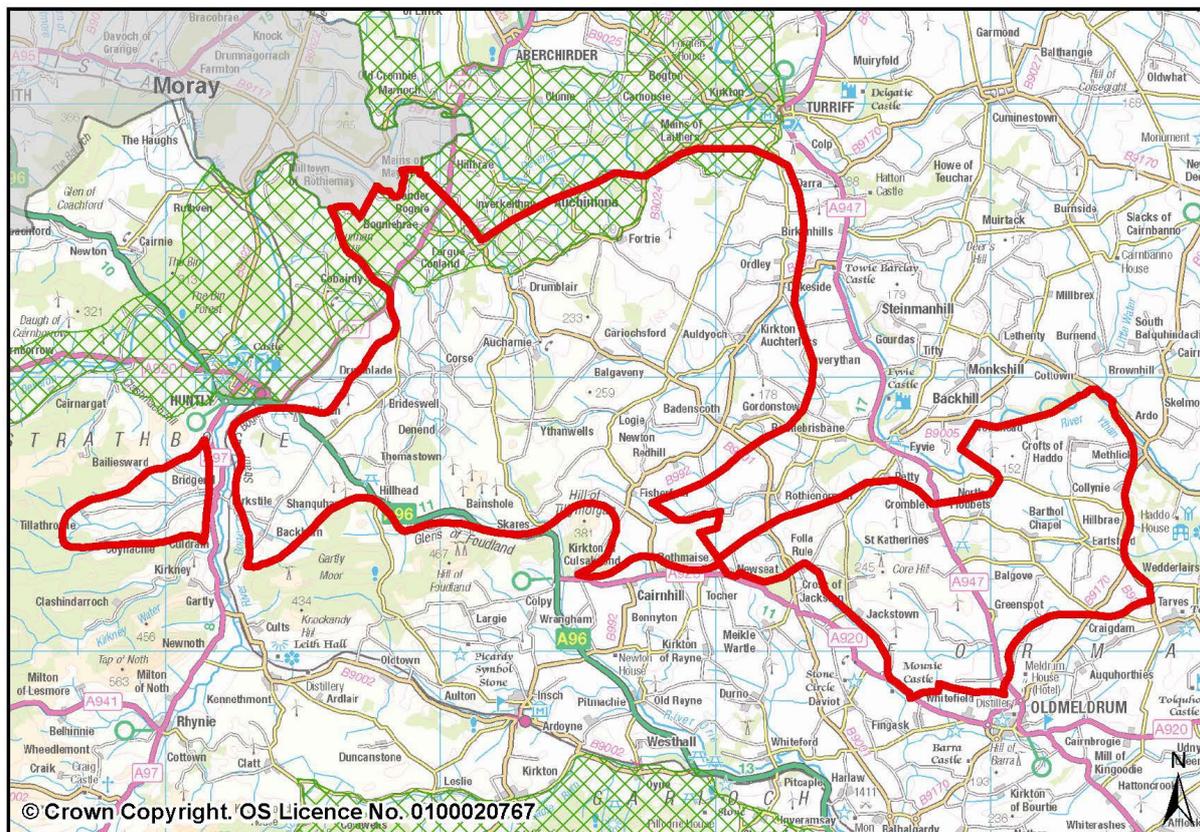
### Overview

The broad swathe of gently rolling farmland to the south of the Deveron Valley has a vast open character. The sense of vast openness associated with this *Farmed Rolling Ridges and Hills* Landscape Character Type is accentuated by the adjacent and extensive *Undulating Agricultural Heartland* lying beyond the Ythan river valley to the east.

The *Farmed Rolling Ridges and Hills* has a simple landscape pattern, with large, rounded rolling hills, which tend to draw the eye across the landscape into the distance. The backdrop of the *Outlying Hills and Ridges* Landscape Character Type further to the southwest adds a moorland backdrop and visual containment of views.



Map 1 *Farmed Rolling Ridges and Hills*



## **Key Landscape Characteristics**

**Sensitivity** – The *Farmed Rolling Ridges and Hills* Landscape Character Type has a role in providing a setting for the Deveron Valley Special Landscape Area (SLA). The SLA designation, shown in Map 1 as the hatched area to the north, recognises the high scenic quality resulting from the Deveron Valley's meandering river, bounded by rolling wooded hills.

**Landform** – Smoothly rounded hills with slopes and broad ridges forming sweeping curves across the terrain.

**Vegetation** – Predominantly arable fields and pastureland, woodland is sparse and more concentrated to the west. Where it does occur, woodland mainly comprises large geometric coniferous forests on hill sides. In more open areas small mixed woodland blocks stand out as simple patterns on the hill slopes, with shelterbelts commonly lining ridge tops, emphasising the rolling landform. Broadleaf woodland occurs on some lower valley sides.

**Field Pattern** – The rolling topography is overlain with a simple pattern of medium to large rectilinear arable fields and pastureland typically enclosed by low fences which add a distinct sense of openness. The land cultivation extends to water course edges.

**Settlement** – There are no settlements of significant size. Scattered farms often with large outbuildings nestle on lower hill slopes or dips in valleys and sheltered by small blocks of woodland. There are numerous historic features including stone circles.

**Other** – Small groups of tall wind turbines are a recurring feature, sited on ridges and higher hills. Transmission lines and a dense network of narrow roads cross this landscape.

## Specific Guidance

### General

- The large-scale rolling hills of the *Farmed Rolling Ridges and Hills* Landscape Character Type are sensitive to development that may disrupt their smooth forms and visual flow.
- Hilltop developments are inappropriate, impeding the smooth shapes of the landform.
- The neat agricultural landscape scene with dispersed farmsteads is sensitive to changes that may alter its ordered appearance.
- Although not a predominate landscape feature, broadleaf woodland is an intrinsic element which emphasises the rolling landscape form, whilst geometric coniferous forests occur on hillsides.



- Long uninterrupted views are sensitive to intrusive elements, especially on the skyline, which may disrupt the flow or the scale of landscape features.
- Views into neighbouring areas are a feature

### Land Use – Residential

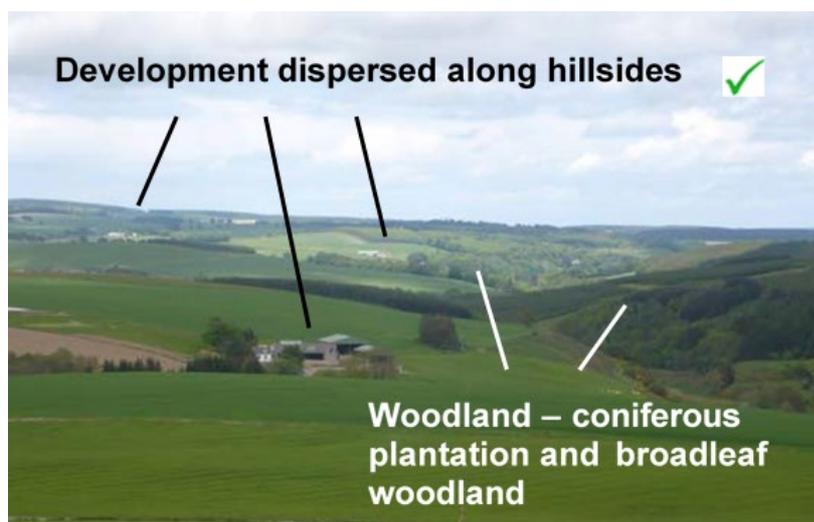
- Scattered farmsteads punctuate the landscape and enhance the regularity of its pattern. Farms are usually enclosed by shelterbelts. This character should guide siting of additional developments.
- Piecemeal, small scale development may distract the eye from the large scale and simple landscape pattern.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

- Integration of new buildings could be achieved by locating development close to existing buildings, shelterbelts, hedgerows and trees.



### Trees and Woodland

- Overall, tree cover is sparse in the predominantly arable field and pastureland of this Landscape Character Type.
- Scattered beech and other deciduous species occasionally fringe the skyline or cluster around buildings.
- There are occasional relatively small blocks of coniferous plantation, although more dominant in some parts.
- New development should be integrated by planting native trees to replicate copses traditionally planted for shelter.



## Boundaries

- Post and wire fencing is the most common boundary treatment.
- Stone dykes and hedges occasionally feature throughout the area.
- Occasional enclosure of coniferous plantations by beech, which softens the edges.
- Suburban boundary treatments and fencing or coniferous hedges can be very intrusive in rural locations.



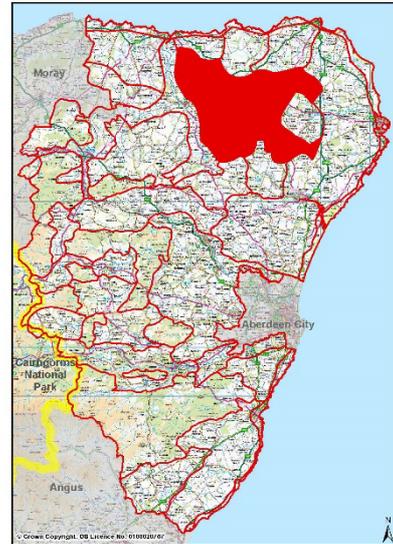
## Landscape Character Type: Undulating Agricultural Heartland

### Overview

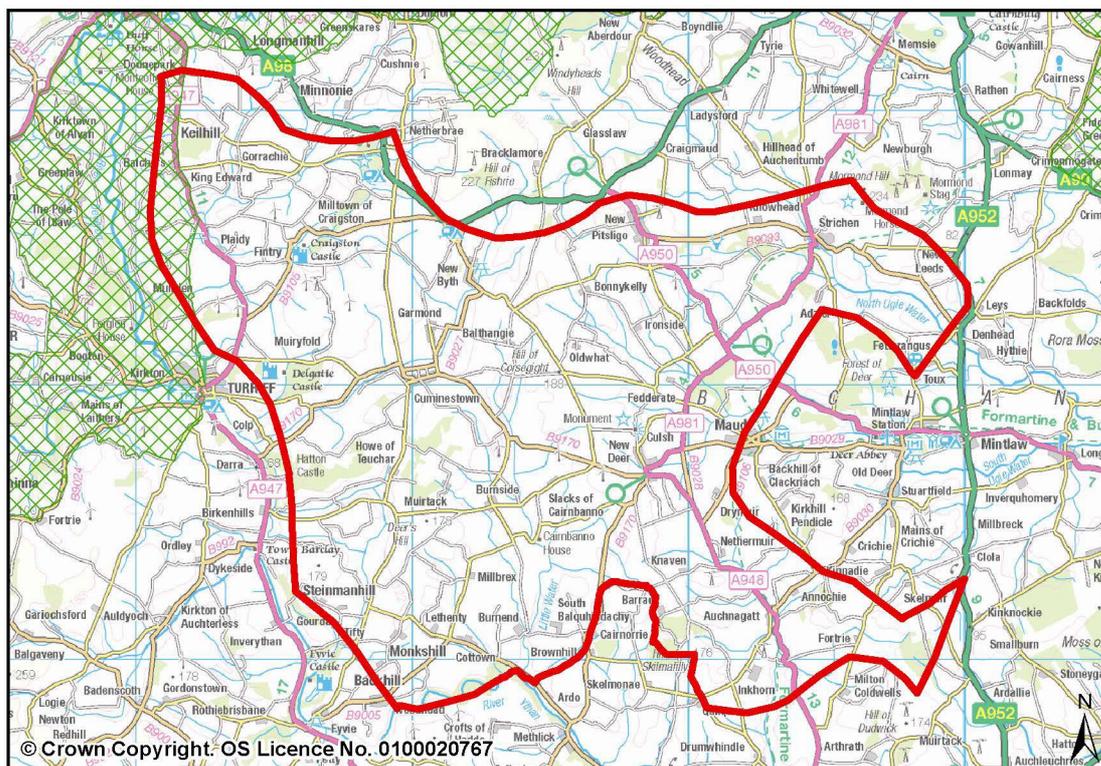
Stretching from Maud in the east, to Turriff in the west, this Landscape Character Type is generally open, expansive and gently rolling landform. However, in places the landform drops and rises more sharply.

Due to the overall limited relief and open character of the *Undulating Agricultural Heartland* Landscape Character Type overall, there are long views to its surroundings. Views are possible to Bennachie, Tap o'Noth, Knock Hill, Mormond Hill and Ben Rinnes.

The character landscape is well settled, dotted throughout with a significant number of larger villages and small settlements such as the 18<sup>th</sup> Century planned fermtouns such as Strichen, New Deer, New Byth and Cuminestown.



Map 1 *Undulating Agricultural Heartland*



## **Key Landscape Characteristics**

**Sensitivity** – The Deveron Valley Special Landscape Area (SLA) designation is indicated in Map 1 by the hatched areas. This designation highlights the scenic quality of the valley adjacent to the *Undulating Agricultural Heartland* Landscape Character Type, with its meandering river bounded by rolling wooded hills.

**Landform** – A gently undulating landform of low hills and ridges, part of a vast rolling plain with variations throughout the area. The landscape can be steeper in places.

**Vegetation** – Scattered broadleaved trees frequently found in shelterbelts along hill ridges, and around farms. There is some variation throughout, and is more heavily wooded to the north, with coniferous plantations and woodland.

**Field Pattern** – Predominantly large fields bound with post and wire fencing. There are also smaller scale fields, with stone dykes and tumbledown dyke features.

**Settlement** – A relatively well settled landscape. There are a number of villages and small settlements, but no large towns.

**Other** – To the north around New Pitsligo, moorland is a feature.

## Specific Guidance

### General

- Integration of new buildings within the *Undulating Agricultural Heartland* Landscape Character Type is best achieved by locating development close to existing buildings, shelterbelts, hedgerows and trees.

### Land Use – Residential

- Farmsteads occur frequently and are regularly spaced along roads (both minor and major roads).



- There is a variation in size between large and small farmsteads and dwellings.
- Traditional development is largely screened, and new development should continue this feature.
- Muted colours have traditionally been used, and bright colours generally appear out of place, although red sandstone, often dark in colour, is a feature to the west of the character landscape.





### Trees and Woodland

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



### Boundaries

- Boundary treatment varies from post and wire to beech and thorn hedges which are common to the south and east. Occasional stone walls and consumption dykes are more characteristic to the north. Boundary treatment for new development should be appropriate to its siting in the landscape and the prevailing character.
- Coniferous hedges and fencing used for plot boundaries can be very intrusive in rural locations.

House with no boundary treatment



House associated with trees and gorse 'hedge'

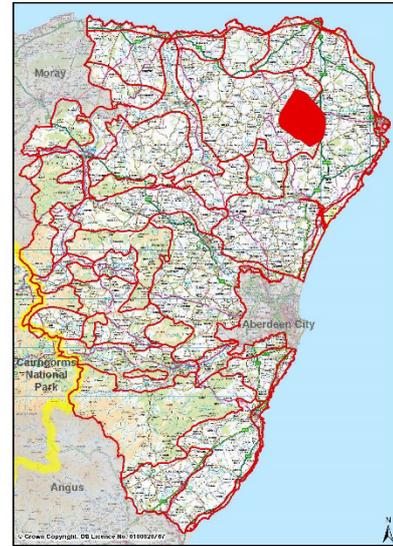


## Landscape Character Type: [Farmland and Wooded Policies](#)

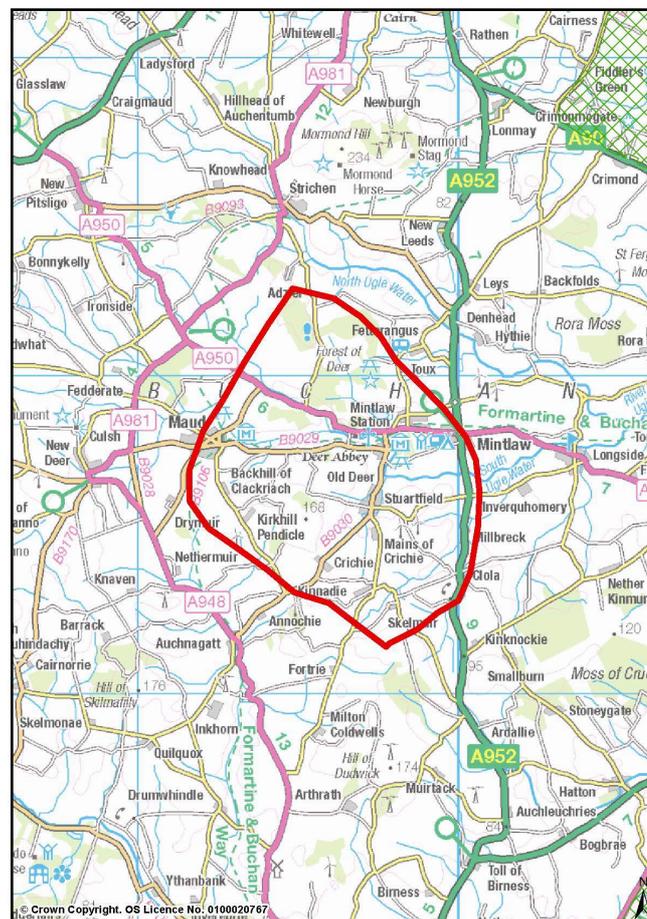
### Overview

From Mintlaw in the east to Maud in the west, the landscape is characterised by its dominance of woodland cover. This is an unusual feature in northeast Aberdeenshire, and adds an enclosed, sheltered character.

The gently rolling landform of this *Farmed and Wooded Policies* Landscape Character Type is richly scenic with its diverse woodland combined with well managed farmland and many historic features. The landscape stands out above the lower lying adjacent *Undulating Agricultural Heartland*, and *Coastal Agricultural Plain* Landscape Character Types which lie either side of the character landscape.



Map 1 *Farmland and Wooded Policies*



## **Key Landscape Characteristics**

**Landform** – With South Ugie Water running through the core of the landscape in a valley enclosed by gently rolling hills, this is an open floodplain landscape. The lower farmed slopes and hill summits are capped by mixed policy planting which accentuate the containment of the valley.

**Vegetation** – Coniferous and broadleaf woodland is generally well mixed and largely follows ridgelines, valley bottoms and hill slopes. More uniform conifer forests also occur, notably Forest of Deer, with some recent more sensitive broadleaf planting around Aden and Pitfour Estates. Hedgerows are common as farmland enclosures (beech and hawthorn).

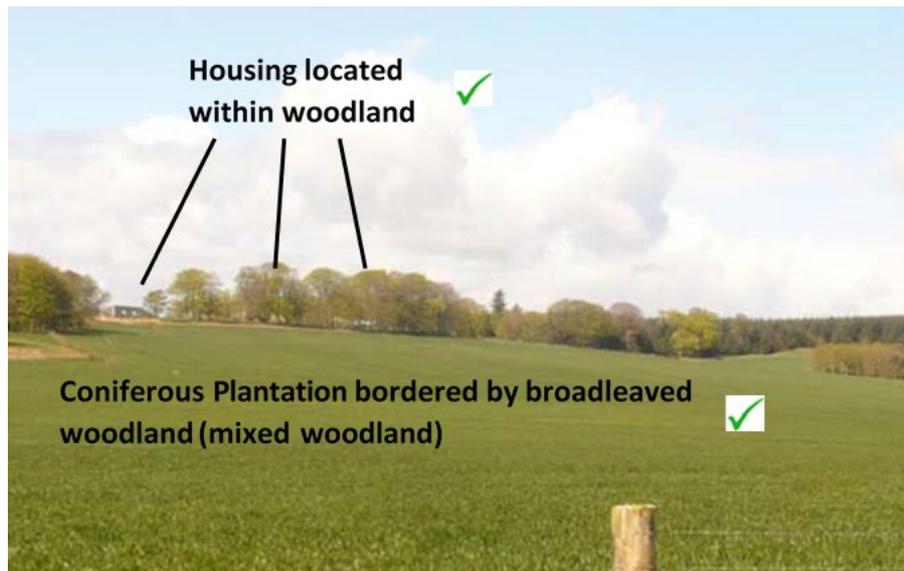
**Field pattern** – Open large-scale fields on the lower slopes are a feature in this fairly intensively farmed area.

**Settlement** – A well settled landscape with a concentration of planned villages such as Stuartfield, Mintlaw and Fetterangus. The old estates of Aden and Pitfour are key features in the vicinity of Old Deer.

## Specific Guidance

### General

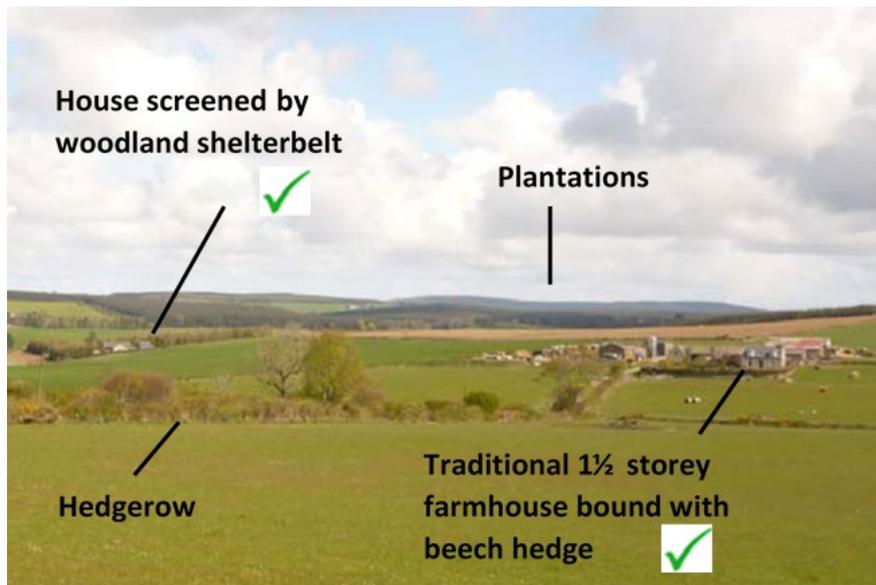
- Woodland is a key feature of the *Farmed and Wooded Policies* Landscape Character Type. The woodland appears in various forms including plantation, shelter belt, woodland clumps, beech hedgerows. These should be enhanced, and included where possible, as part of new development.
- New development can be integrated by planting native trees to replicate copses traditionally planted for shelter.



- Agricultural Buildings are generally well spaced out, and of a more traditional scale.
- The setting of estates is sensitive and vulnerable to change. Landscape features such as policy woodland, shelterbelts, boundary walls and gatehouses should be retained and maintained.

### Land Use - Residential

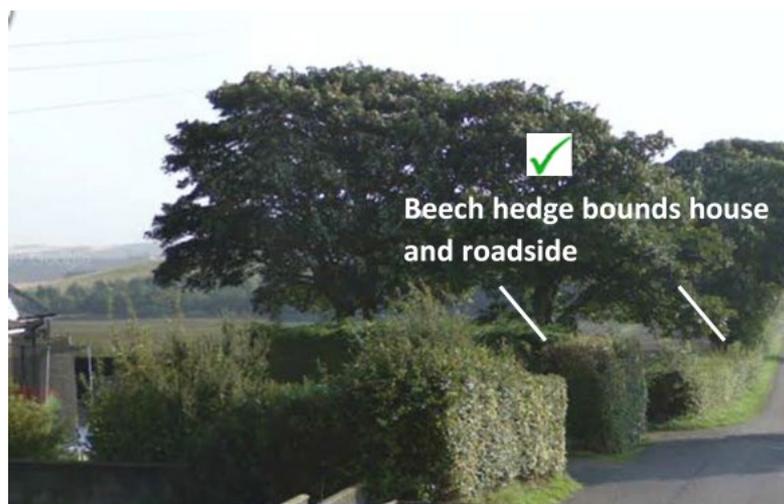
- Numerous farmsteads, prosperous manses, and farmhouses.
- Pattern of development consists of well-spaced farmsteads and cottages/houses.
- Traditional development is often associated with groups of trees, shelterbelts, or beech hedging.



- Occasionally groups of buildings are a feature, and in these cases, this form of development should continue.
- Integration of new homes could be achieved by locating development close to existing buildings, shelterbelts, hedgerows and trees.

### Boundaries

- Hedgerows are a dominant and highly distinctive type of field boundary in this Landscape Character Type. Beech is most common, but some are mixed hawthorn and beech.
- Hedgerows often line roads, particularly in the northern part of the area.



- Most hedges are further emphasised by avenue planting of mature beech trees.
- In rural and more exposed locations however, coniferous hedges and fencing used for plot boundaries can appear intrusive.

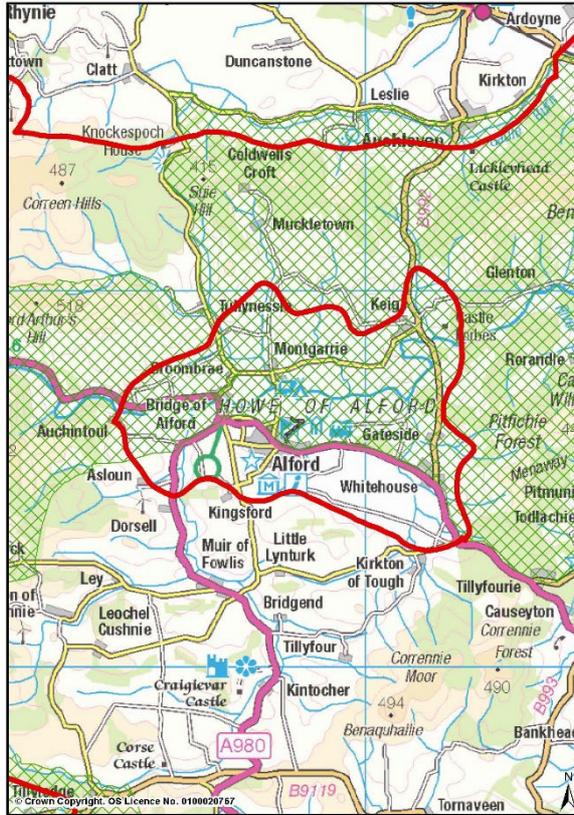
## Woodland

- Comparative dominance of woodland, particularly to the north.
- Coniferous and deciduous planting well mixed and sensitively laid out, occurs in lines, along valley bottoms and hill slopes.

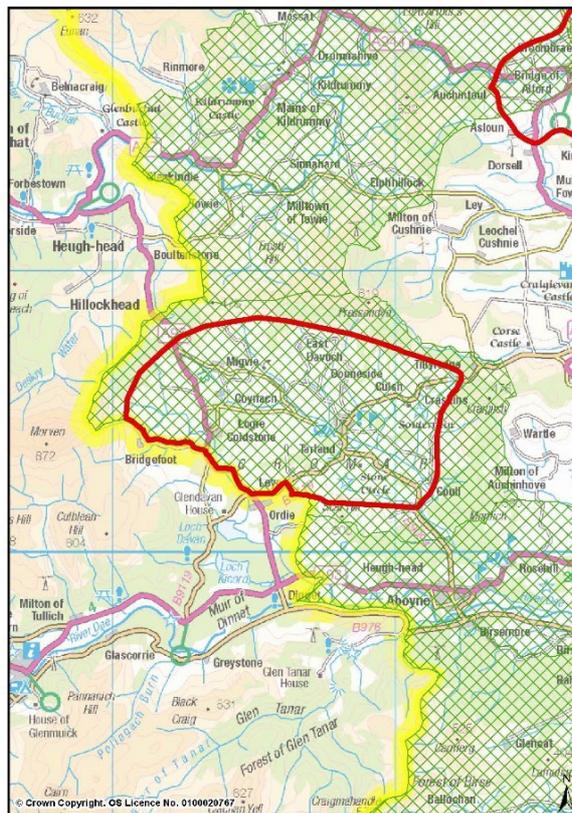




Map 2 Howe of Alford



Map 3 Howe of Cromar



## **Key Landscape Characteristics**

**Sensitivity** – The *Farmed Basin – Aberdeenshire* Landscape Character Type is in close proximity to the Cairngorms National Park and four Aberdeenshire Special Landscape Areas (SLA). Bennachie SLA, Howe of Alford SLA, Upper Don Valley SLA and the Howe of Cromar SLA designations are indicated by the hatched areas on Maps 1-3. These designations recognise the scenic qualities of the wider landscape and its importance to Aberdeenshire's landscape identity.

**Landform** – Simple, flat to gently undulating broad valley floor contained by undulating slopes which rise to the higher surrounding hills and ridges. The land mainly comprises swathes of simple flat or gently undulating farmland, intersected by watercourses or a succession of shallow basins.

**Field pattern / Land use** – Large geometric fields forming a colourful patchwork of arable and pastureland on basin floors, often extending up the containing slopes.

**Vegetation** – Small but widespread clumps of broadleaf and conifer woodlands add diversity to the predominantly farmed basin landscape. Clumps of Scots pine and the backdrop of the higher hills give a distinct highland character. Mixed policy woodlands are a particular feature of parts of the Howe of Alford and Howe of Cromar. The Inch Basin is less wooded.

**Settlement** – Well settled landscape with a number of sizeable settlements and a regular dispersal of farms. There are numerous archaeological features, and the Howe of Alford contains the site of the Battle of Alford.

**Other** – Numerous small to medium scale wind turbines relate to farm steadings in the Inch Basin.

## Specific Guidance

### General

- The *Farmed Basin – Aberdeenshire* Landscape Character Type is highly sensitive to introduced elements which may disrupt the flow of the landform. New development which avoids open expanses and ridgelines will be less intrusive.
- Conical landforms of surrounding hills attract the eye across the basin landscape. These are prominent features on which development of any type will be extremely conspicuous.



- The large open farmland patchwork of the basin floors is sensitive to elevated and/or large-scale structures, these being highly visible and intrusive.
- Landmarks in the landscape such as castles are an important focus for views – new development should avoid competing for prominence or compromising their setting.
- There is a distinct ‘highland fringe’ character in parts, particularly where there is strong inter-visibility with the Cairngorms National Park (CNP). Views across the landscape are an important characteristic to maintain. The Queen’s View offers panoramic views across the Howe of Cromar towards the CNP.



## Land Use – Residential

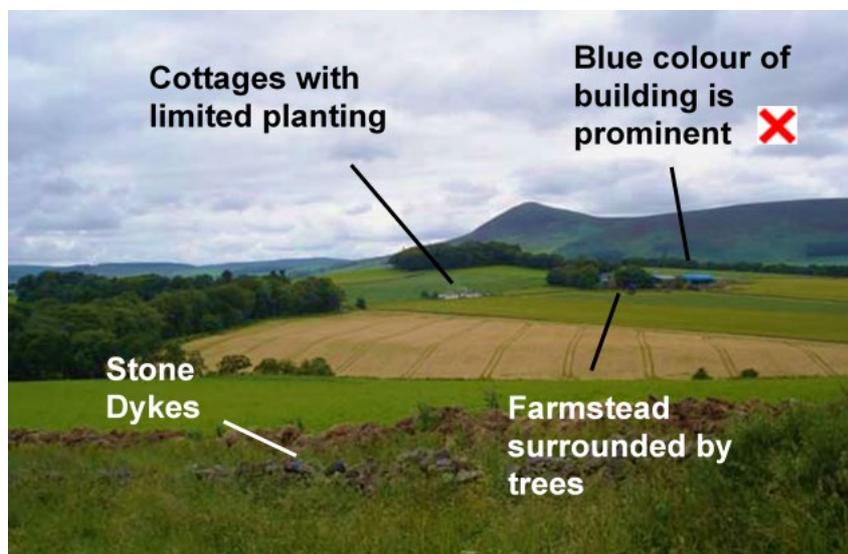
- The landscape pattern of development varies from dispersed farm-centred development to individual cottages/houses along roadsides or small to sizeable settlements. New development should respond to the prevailing pattern of development in the local landscape.
- Scattered dispersed farmsteads and individual cottages with modest feus are common. Cottages/houses are generally set back from the roadside except in villages. But where they front directly onto the road, this orientation should be replicated where appropriate.
- Nucleated settlements within the bottom of the basins is a characteristic feature of the landscape; ad hoc development or linear growth will disrupt settlement character and encroach into the open landscape.



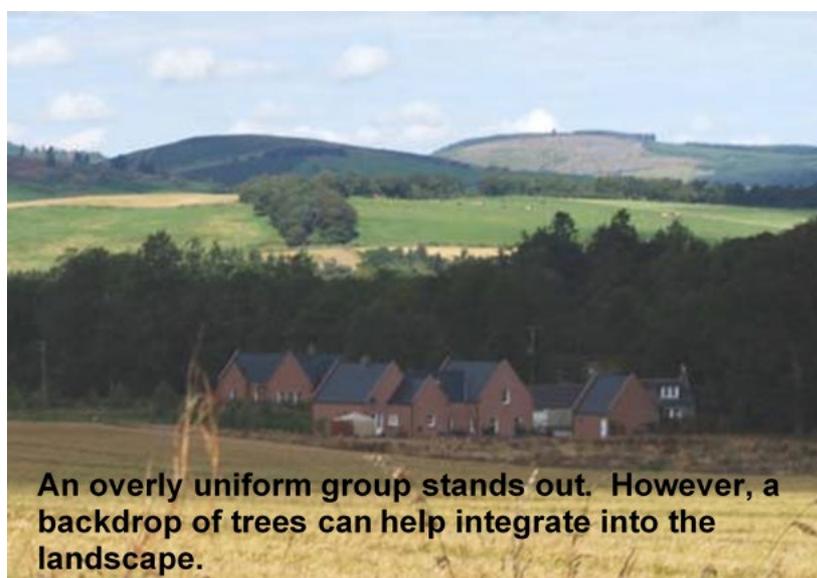
- New development should seek to reflect the size and form of traditional homes in the surrounding area - single and 1½ storey are the most common.
- Large scale houses can appear out of scale and insensitive. Exceptionally, larger houses may fit in the landscape if situated on their own and not grouped, and with a backdrop/framework of woodland.



- Development should be concentrated in groups only where this is a feature. Groups of large bungalows or suburban style buildings set on their own do not relate well to the landscape character.
- A spread of new buildings and styles in the rural landscape risks negative impact on the landscape. Coalescence or loss of village/settlement identity should be avoided. New development should be limited to existing settlements or adhere to traditional nucleated forms.
- Land use is sensitive to change which would alter the proportion of woodland or weaken the strong field pattern with scattered farmsteads.
- New development should reflect the local colour and materials that are characteristic of the traditional form, such as grey colour and stone. Strongly contrasting or prominent colours are likely to appear intrusive.



- Muted natural tones can be appropriate, but a large uniform block of colour would not fit well.



## Trees and Woodland

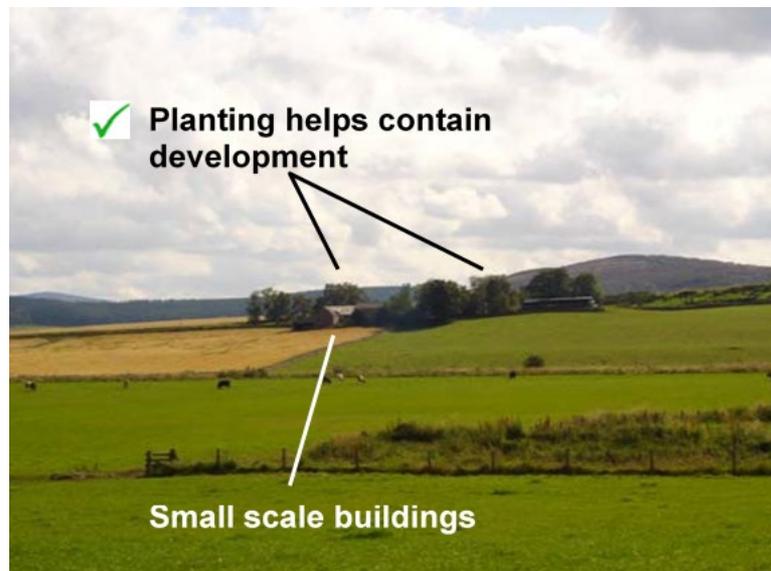
- Clumps or clusters of broadleaf trees around development would provide characteristic shelterbelts.
- Woodland copses are distinctive landscape features that pattern the farmland. Linking these copses through hedgerows and creation of a more pronounced woodland structure will benefit the landscape.
- Planting broadleaf trees around new development provides a more natural setting and helps integrate development within the landscape. Woodland screening of development should where possible be extended to link in with existing woodland.



- Trees may be used to break up the linearity of roads and/or woodland clumps around buildings to make them less prominent in the open landscape.



- Broadleaf shelterbelts and clumps of trees can be used to contain built development, screen structures and enhance the woodland structure.



- Where the landscape is more sweeping and expansive, and more highland fringe character, distant views are important to the landscape experience.
- Planting of trees along roadsides would block views across the basin.



## Boundary Treatments

- Large gardens with ranch or suburban style fencing or concrete walling erodes landscape character. Stone dykes and hedging provide more successful boundary treatments for new development.



- Development should seek to restore or conserve stone dykes and hedgerows as this helps maintain the characteristic structure of the strong geometric field pattern on the basin floors. Replacement by post and wire fencing has weakened this character.
- Mixed planting may help define the settlement edge as well as augment woodland structure.
- Clump planting may help to break up strong linear features.
- Conserved and maintained drystone dykes, hedgerows, shelterbelts or boundary fencing reinforce the robust field pattern.
- New boundaries should reflect existing boundary treatment types where they enhance landscape character.



## Land Use - Agricultural

- New agricultural buildings should generally be located alongside existing farmsteads, and in keeping with the scale of existing buildings.
- Larger buildings can appear intrusive within the open character of the landscape. Careful siting is required as the low-lying valley floor and dark moorland edge means higher buildings will appear prominent.
- Where necessary buildings should be located and engineered to sit as low in the landform as practical, to avoid overly prominent rooflines.
- Buildings should avoid breaking the skyline. Agricultural buildings generally fit well in the landscape if tucked into the landform, grouped with existing farm buildings and/or well screened by trees.



- A mix of broadleaf and conifers would reflect the landscape character whilst providing some year-round screening for agricultural buildings.
- Cladding colour should be considered carefully, using muted neutral colours. Greys and greens generally work well.

## Landscape Character Type: Coastal Farmed Ridges and Hills - Aberdeenshire

### Overview

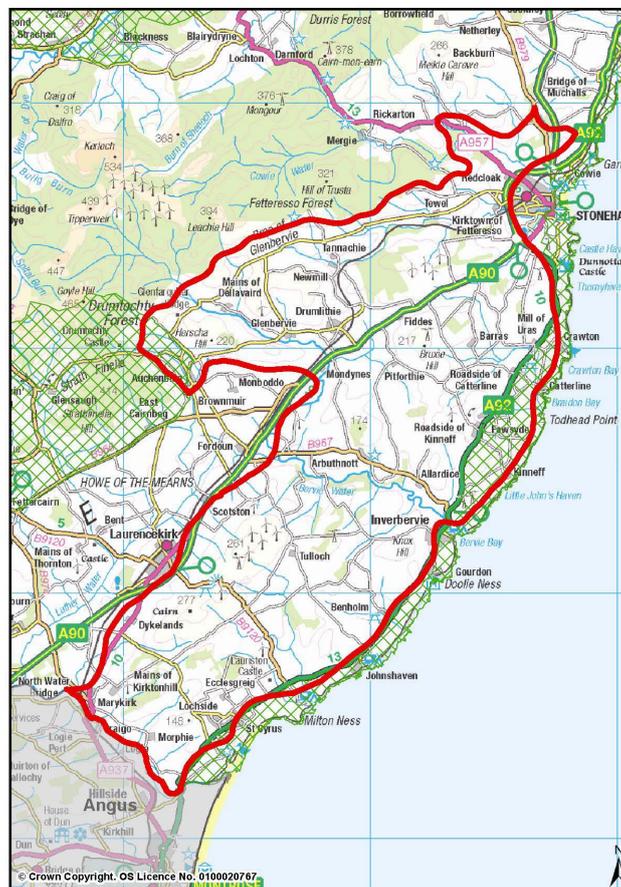
The landscape to the southwest of Stonehaven is characterised by its extensive farmed, sweeping, rolling low hills. This large scale and open landscape falls gently to the coast where it is cut in by a series of narrow gorse-lined ravines.

Large fields of arable land and pasture with red-pink soils present a strong patchwork pattern influenced by different crops and ploughed fields.

The long-rounded Hill of Garvock and farmland around Glenbervie at the edge of the Highland Boundary Fault are integral features of the *Coastal Farmed Ridges and Hills – Aberdeenshire* Landscape Character Type.



Map1 *Coastal Farmed Ridges and Hills – Aberdeenshire*



## **Key Landscape Characteristics**

**Sensitivity** – The *Coastal Farmed Ridges and Hills – Aberdeenshire* Landscape Character Type is inextricably linked with the coast and has sensitivity linked to two Special Landscape Areas in close proximity shown as the hatched areas on Map 1. To the east the strong coastal influence and rugged scenery is recognised by the Southeast Aberdeenshire Coast Special Landscape Area (SLA) designation. To the west of Auchenblae lies the Braes of the Mearns SLA, with its contrasting lowland and highly visible ridge as viewed from the southeast, and commanding views from its summits.

**Landform** – Large scale, open landscape of smoothly rolling ridges and shallow valleys. Narrow ravines cut through the ridges to the coast. Large fields of arable land and pasture with red-pink soils present a rich tapestry of colours. The strong patchwork pattern is influenced by crop patterns and ploughed fields, rather than field boundaries which are not clearly defined largely due to a scarcity of hedges and dykes.

**Vegetation** – Where trees are present, they add structure to the landscape. Although woodland overall is sparse, broadleaf shelterbelts and woodlands are widespread and enhance the patchwork field pattern of the landscape. Coniferous plantations are small and have little influence on the landscape.

**Settlement** – A settled, dispersed landscape with varied architectural styles ranging from traditional cottages made of local red sandstone, modern suburban style development, and large stately homes in a variety of materials. Some individual new homes are more prominent in the landscape. Groups of large wind turbines and masts are sited on ridges and on Garvock Hill. Evidence of built development pressure, particularly around existing settlements on major communication routes. There are widespread archaeological remains.

## Specific Guidance

### General

- The large-scale rolling hills of the *Coastal Farmed Ridges and Hills – Aberdeenshire* Landscape Character Type, with its long uninterrupted views, is sensitive to disruption on account of the smooth rolling flow of the land, particularly on ridges and hilltops.



- The agricultural pattern is sensitive to changes which may alter its ordered appearance.
- Widespread archaeological remains are susceptible to damage.

### Land Use - Residential

- Careful siting of development within the shelter of the rolling landform will minimise landscape impact. Ridgeline development should be avoided.
- Houses/cottages outwith settlements are widely dispersed and new development should be grouped with existing buildings to maintain openness.



- 1½ storey houses fit well into this Landscape Character Type. Two storeys may be acceptable depending on their setting.
- Finishes should be chosen to provide an aesthetic fit within its setting. To the east, whitewash is more common.



- Piecemeal, small scale development can distract the eye from this large scale and simple landscape pattern.
- New, contemporary houses integrate more successfully if associated with existing or augmented shelterbelts and woodland blocks.



### Land Use - Agricultural

- Large agricultural buildings are common in this area. Due to their scale, use of the landform or mature shelterbelts act as a backdrop or screening.
- Use of green or grey/blue corrugated sheeting fits well in this landscape.
- Buildings should be grouped together, not dispersed.



### **Boundaries**

- Restoration and improvement of drystone dykes and hedges will emphasise landscape structure.
- Stone dykes and hedging provide successful boundary treatments for new development.

### **Trees and Woodland**

- New development should avoid the removal of woodland. Woodlands add structure to the landscape but are susceptible to neglect and depletion.
- Woodland shelter can be used to visually link buildings and isolated stands of trees rather than patchy woods.

### **Roads**

- Roads, pylons and linear features that break up curves in the landform can be intrusive and create visual disharmony.



## Landscape Character Type: [Farmed Strath - Aberdeenshire](#)

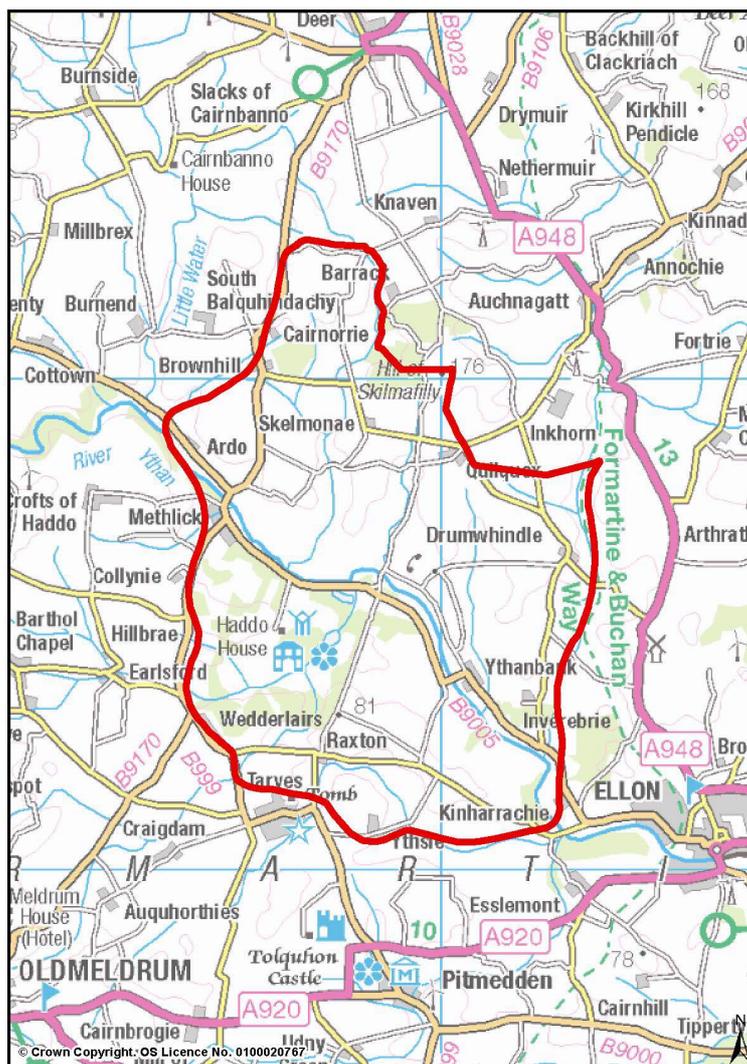
### Overview

This Landscape Character Type is defined by a lowland, undulating landform centred around the shallow strath of the Ythan River. The character landscape itself comprises the Ythan Valley, an island of stony farmland.

This farmed landscape has a small-scale pattern defined by dry stone dykes and patches of birch scrub. This contrasts with the more intensively farmed landscapes in the surrounding landscape.



Map 1 *Farmed Strath – Aberdeenshire:*



## **Key Landscape Characteristics**

**Landform** – Granite rock exposures are a feature of this low lying, undulating landscape. Open hills and sheltered boggy hollows are interspersed across the farmed land.

**Vegetation** – A diverse landcover, with patches of birch scrub, gorse and broom, particularly along roadsides, with intermittent small fields of pasture. Wet hollows support moss and occasional small blocks of coniferous plantations and shelterbelts dot the landscape.

**Field Pattern** – Traditional field pattern, bounded by strong stone dykes, often strewn with rocks, which add an upland feel.

**Settlement** – Sparsely settled, with the village of Methlick and hamlet of Ythanbank being the only settlements in the area. Buildings and farmsteads are generally well spaced.

**Other** – Haddo House Country Park covers a large area of this landscape and has its own wooded character which should be preserved.

## Specific Guidance

### General

- Restricted shelterbelts, woods and built development within valleys and hollows will preserve the exposure of the mounds and ridges of the *Farmed Strath – Aberdeenshire* Landscape Character Type.
- Small, nucleated settlements are sensitive to expansion.
- Towards the periphery, views to neighbouring landscapes are a feature.



### Trees and Woodland

- Small shelterbelts and copses are a feature of the landscape, although use of pronounced shelterbelts is uncharacteristic in upland parts.
- The prevailing mix of coniferous plantations and broadleaved shelterbelts and clumps should be reflected in future planting.
- Haddo Estate has specific characteristics associated with estate land and its woodland should be conserved.

### Land Use - Residential

- The prevailing pattern of development is of scattered buildings.
- Houses and farmsteads vary from being set back from the road, to fronting onto the road.



- Generally houses are found on the roadside, or slightly set back from the road. Traditionally, gable ends face onto the road.
- New buildings should be clustered around existing development, or a core, to minimise encroachment on the countryside.
- Existing houses and farmsteads are often associated with woodland/trees which provide screening.
- Farmsteads are generally of a smaller scale and are well spaced out.



## **Boundaries**

- Roadsides are often lined with scrubby gorse/broom.
- Drystone dykes are a feature and maintenance of these will retain the upland characteristics.

## **Land Use - Agricultural**

- Generally of a smaller scale than neighbouring landscapes.
- Colour of cladding on new agricultural buildings should blend with other features and avoid standing out in the landscape.

## **Quarries**

- Quarrying in the Ythan Strath imposes a pressure within the confined landscape.
- Quarrying should take place within sheltered and enclosed locations to minimise visual impact.
- Restoration of quarries should respect landscape character. Creation of water bodies along the strath are a feature.

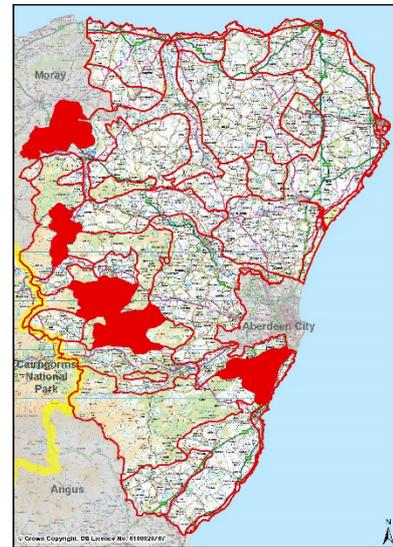


## Landscape Character Type: Farmed Moorland Edge - Aberdeenshire

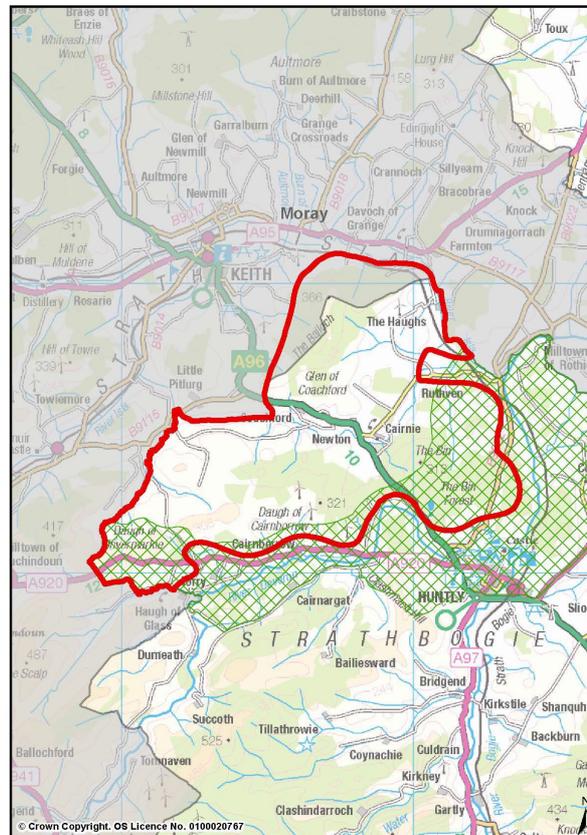
### Overview

This Landscape Character Type provides a transitional buffer between the higher moorland summits and plateaux and the lowland agricultural heartlands, sharing characteristics of both.

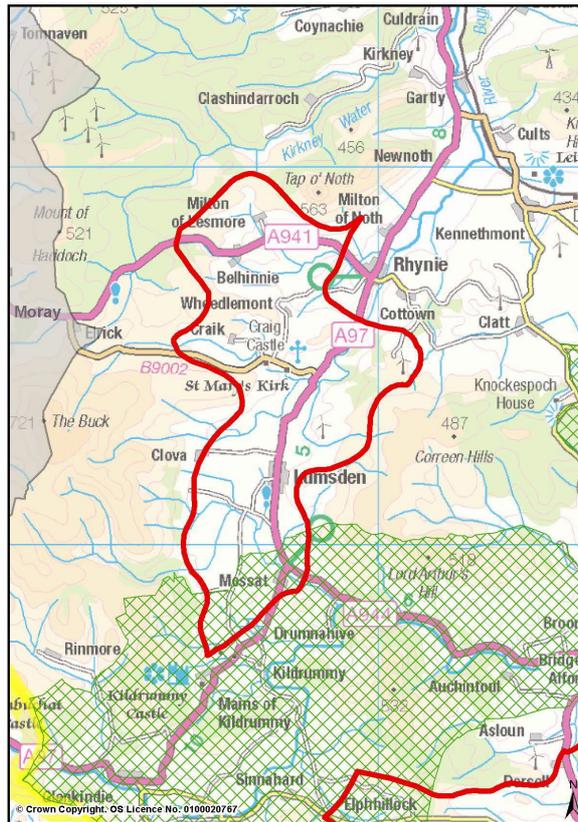
The character landscape has high scenic quality and a rich and diverse character, although it is predominantly agricultural. The dark heather and forest of the uplands contrast markedly with the smooth pastures of the lower lying land. The hills that lie within the surrounding summits such as Tap o'North and The Buck provide a scenic backdrop.



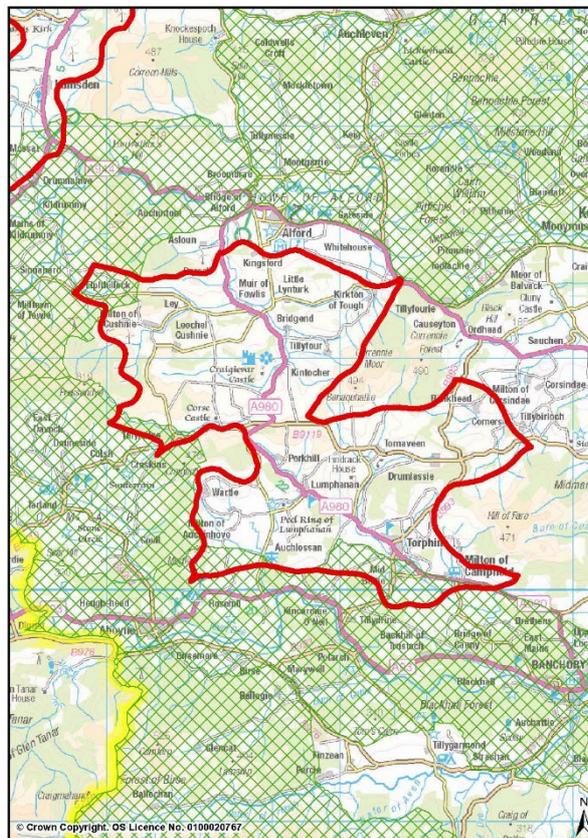
*Farmed Moorland Edge – Aberdeenshire:*  
Map 1 - Northwest of Huntly



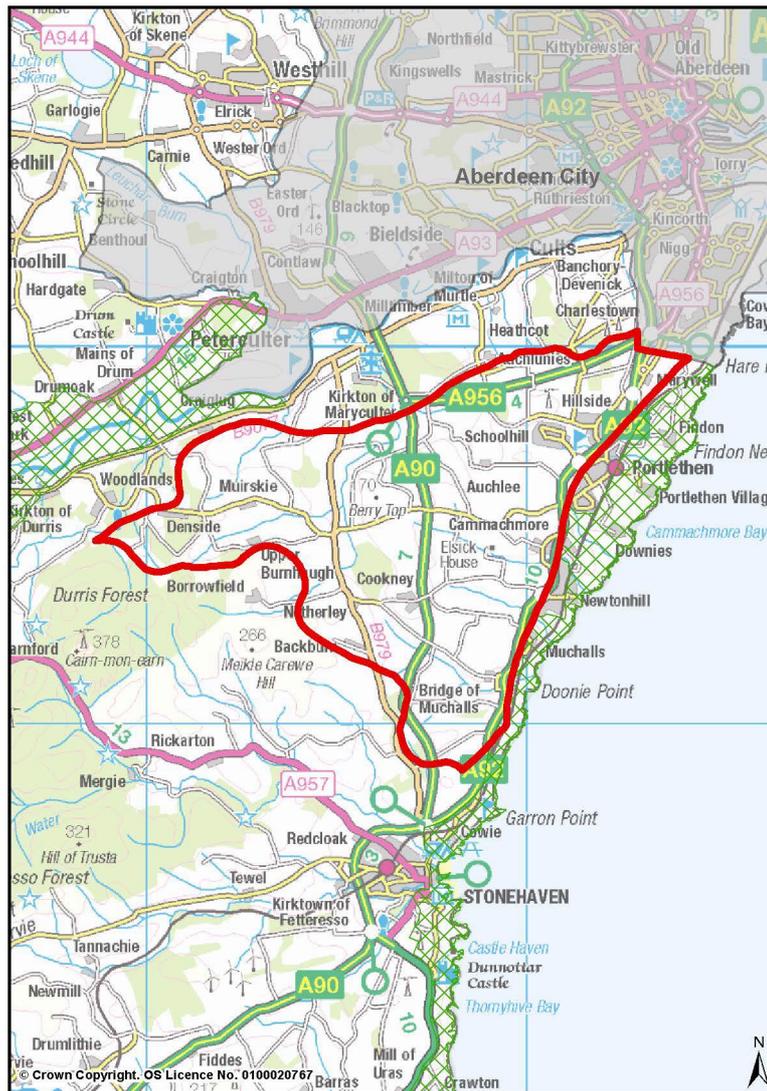
Map 2 – West of Rhynie



Map 3 – South of Alford



Map 4 – west of Portlethen



## **Key Landscape Characteristics**

**Sensitivity** – The *Farmed Moorland Edge - Aberdeenshire* Landscape Character Type has a role in maintaining the scenic backdrop of the surrounding higher moorland of the summits and plateaux. There are four Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) in close proximity shown by the hatched areas in Maps 1 - 4. The Deveron Valley SLA lies to the north of Huntly, Bennachie SLA and Upper Don Valley SLA lie in the central area, with Howe of Cromar SLA further south. These designations emphasise landscape qualities that provide high scenic value, strong landscape identity, sense of place, and an enhanced sense of naturalness and remoteness.

**Landform** – Low rolling hills and valleys with some rocky ridges on higher slopes, where moorland is interspersed with farmland. A tightly undulating relief at the foot of steep slopes, but also narrow flat bottomed valleys. Landform can be more complex and hummocky in parts.

**Vegetation** – Essentially an agricultural landscape, woodland cover comprises broadleaf clumps and shelterbelts. Coniferous woodlands are small, scattered as block plantings within the field pattern.

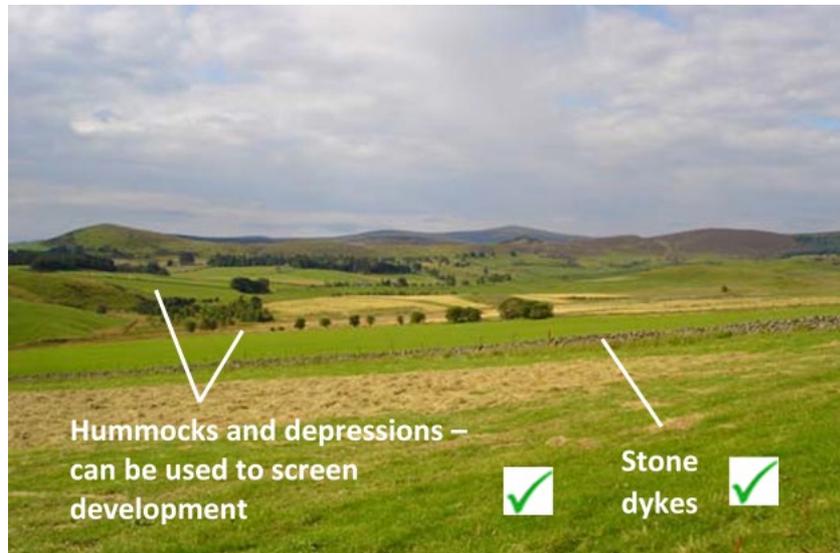
**Land Use / Field Pattern** – Marginal upland farmland, with more intensive farmland on lower, rolling ground, whilst moorland areas are interspersed with farmland on higher slopes. Large fields are mostly absent, being more typically small/medium enclosed fields for livestock, often characterised by an intricate pattern of fields and woods. Fields frequently enclosed by extensive and sometimes derelict drystone dykes.

**Settlement** – Settlement is relatively sparse with traditional vernacular stone buildings widespread. In the marginal upland areas, numerous derelict buildings create a sense of remoteness, whilst the lower areas are more densely settled. Archaeological remains such as prehistoric settlements, field systems, stone circles and carved stones feature frequently.

## Specific Guidance

### General

- The frequently convoluted landform of the small hummocks and depressions of the *Farmed Moorland Edge* Landscape Character Type allow for small scale development to be sensitively located.



- Farming communities are small and contained within the relatively compact landform of parts of this landscape.
- Isolated cottages and farmsteads provide focal points and features of interest but are sensitive to neglect and dereliction, particularly where the landscape character is more marginal upland in character.
- This is often a distinctively small-scale landscape scattered with small agricultural buildings. This makes it susceptible to imposition by large scale structures and substantial built development.



- The landscape is susceptible to neglect and loss of features such as trees, copses and drystone dykes.
- Using cover of broadleaf clumps and shelterbelts this landscape has some resilience to change, and although predominantly an agricultural landscape, there is a diversity of uses.
- Extensive archaeological remains are sensitive to deterioration of their setting.
- Minor roads are characteristic of this Landscape Character Type and improvements which accommodate existing landform and respect the frequently small scale of the landscape will fit better in the landscape.
- Planting with native species can provide a more natural setting for built development helping to integrate the development into the landscape.

### Land Use – Residential

- The pattern of development varies for this Landscape Character Type. Residential buildings are mostly associated with small woodland clumps but where moorland characteristics are more prominent, buildings follow a more dispersed croft like pattern.
- Generally, homes should not be no more than 1½ storey, or single storey if these are more characteristic of the local landscape. Two storey or large buildings look out of place and are prominent.



- Traditional buildings are prone to neglect and derelict buildings can be found throughout this landscape. Traditional stone farmhouses are sensitive to extensions and conversions that are insensitive to character.
- Renovation of derelict properties or establishment of new buildings on sites associated with woodland cover and rock outcrops will help reinforce their role in the landscape and so enhance local character.
- Where there are compact, nucleated settlements these are distinctive and

susceptible to insensitive expansion and uncharacteristic development.

- Development should seek to replicate settlement pattern, shape and character to preserve community identity. Dispersed development or linear sprawl around or along the edge of settlements or nucleated groups disrupts compact settlement shape.



- Woodland edges can help emphasise community identity and contain expansion, but planting should avoid masking landmark buildings that are integral features of the landscape. However, rows of housing along (and not contained by) a woodland edge appears incongruous.



- Individual isolated properties can be appropriate in the right setting, where associated with woodland shelter or within low lying areas and where scattered individual homes is the prevailing pattern.
- Where traditional housing fronts onto the road, continuation of this pattern would enhance existing character.

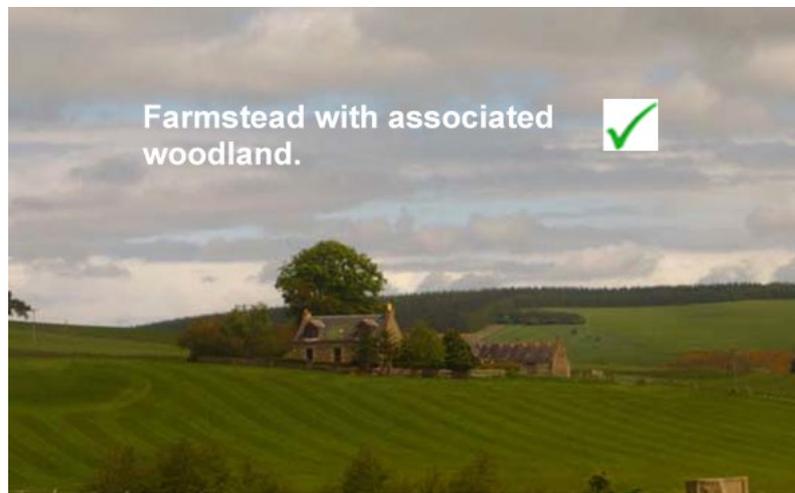
- New development should be partially screened by broadleaf trees with boundaries of stone dykes or hedging.
- Building within natural landscape folds, together a backdrop of woodland, integrates housing within the landscape.



- Choice of materials should enhance landscape character. Typically, stone clad or harled in a muted colour such as browns and greys rather than white provide a good fit. Strongly contrasting colours should be avoided.

### **Trees and Woodland**

- Coniferous woodlands are typically small, scattered as block plantings within the field pattern. Large scale afforestation is inappropriate to the scale of this Landscape Character Type.
- Mixed policy-influenced plantings are more common in some parts.
- Broadleaf shelterbelts and copses will provide localised enclosure and enhance landscape diversity.
- Woodland planting within hollows and straths emphasises landform and provides visual link with upland plantations.
- Deciduous or mixed woodland used to screen development should seek to link with existing woods and so enhance the woodland and landscape structure.

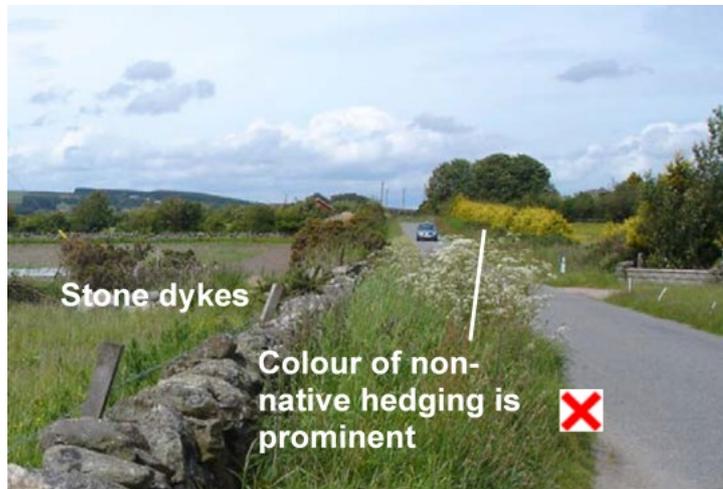


## Boundaries

- Boundary treatment choice for new development should enhance the rural character of this Landscape Character Type. Rustic stone walls combined with beech hedge can work well.



- Drystone dykes add a robust and textural element reinforcing field pattern and rural character, whilst in some parts post and wire fencing is common. Frequently, scrubby gorse bounds fields and roadsides.



- The inclusion of and/or maintenance of drystone dykes will strengthen upland character.
- Where there are policy estate stone walls these provide a distinctive character.
- Where traditional housing fronts onto the road, continuation of this pattern would enhance existing character. Large gardens in front of a house however would detract from this character.



- Ornamental hedgerows, ranch style or suburban fencing and concrete capping on walls are out of character in the landscape.
- Hedges can fit within the landscape if not a dominating or prominent feature.



### **Land Use – Agricultural**

- New agricultural buildings should generally be associated with the original farmstead complexes.
- The landform and shelterbelts should be used to help screen large buildings.
- Larger scale agricultural buildings will require careful siting to avoid being overly intrusive within this relatively small-scale landscape pattern.

### **Other**

- Development of equestrian facilities and small stables can disrupt the landscape and field pattern. New development of this type should be more closely associated with existing buildings.