

## Landscape Character Type: Cliffs and Rocky Coast - Aberdeenshire

### Overview

This Landscape Character Type is defined by its distinctive, numerous inlets and arches created from jagged and fractured rock.

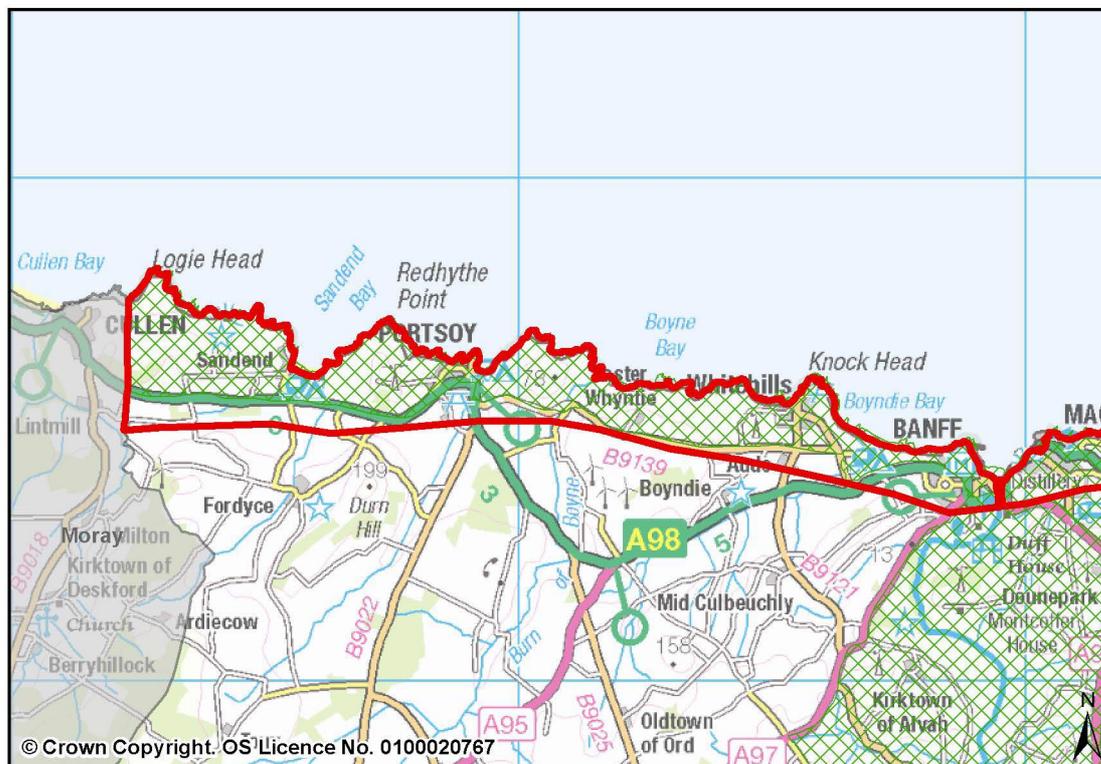
The entire Banff and Buchan coastline is dominated by these rocky cliff-edged headlands, which include some raised beaches and occasional hugging sheltered sandy bays. Troup Head between Macduff and Rosehearty forms a dramatic and high cliff feature.

Despite the narrow nature of this rocky coastline, the overall impression is of an open, large-scale landscape, with wide expanses of sea and sky, and a distinctive wild character.

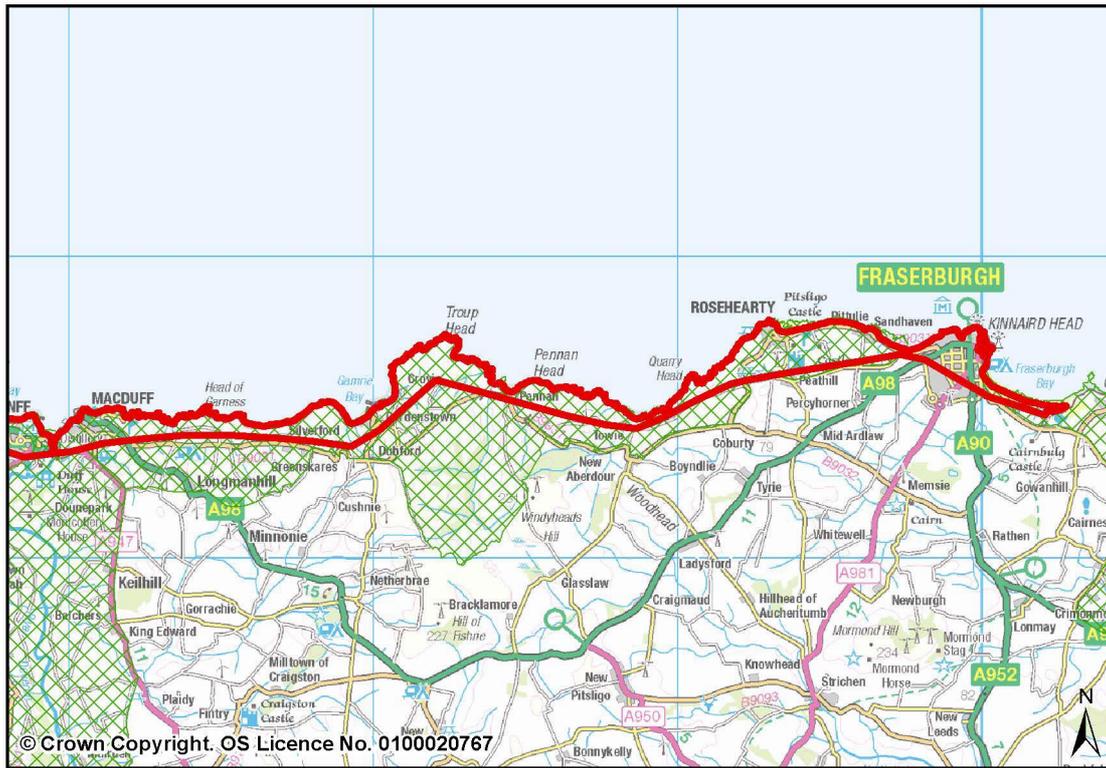


### *Cliffs and Rocky Coast – Aberdeenshire:*

Map 1 Sandend to Banff section



Map 2 Macduff to Fraserburgh section



## **Key Landscape Characteristics**

**Sensitivity** – The distinctive features of the *Cliffs and Rocky Coast – Aberdeenshire* Landscape Character Type are recognised by the North Aberdeenshire Coast Special Landscape Area (SLA) designation. The SLA designation shown by the hatched areas on Maps 1 and 2 emphasises the importance of the scenic qualities of this rugged coastal landscape with its traditional fishing villages, and high nature conservation, geological, and recreational value.

**Landform** – Cliff edged headlands are frequently fissured and bitten into by narrow inlets, and more rarely hugging sheltered sandy bays such as Sandend. The inland extent of this Landscape Character Type is marked by a series of small hills and ridges providing higher ground containing the hinterland of open and gently undulating farmland.

**Vegetation** – Short creeping grasses and occasional wind pruned gorse bushes on cliff faces. Farmland with simple field patterns defined by low gorse hedges commonly extend close to the cliff edge. Trees are limited which adds to the windswept nature of the cliffs. Hawthorn and Rowan naturally colonise near to the sea, where they can take root.

**Settlement** – Frequent settlements along the coastline ranging from the large fishing port of Fraserburgh to small, compact fishing villages such as Pennan nestled at the base of cliffs. These villages contrast with the historic coastal towns of Banff and Macduff straddling the River Deveron.

## Specific Guidance

### General

- Development in exposed and highly sensitive locations of the *Cliffs and Rocky Coast – Aberdeenshire* Landscape Character Type risks disturbing the strong sense of naturalness and wild character.
- This landscape provides a rim of slightly higher ground containing the hinterland of the *Gently Undulating Coastal Farmland* character type which lies to the south.



### Land Use - Residential

- New development should be located sensitively and follow traditional patterns.
- New housing in prominent or exposed sites above small coastal villages which are contained at the base of cliffs would impact on landscape character.



- Where the landscape transitions to the coastal farmed hinterland, adding to existing groups of housing in traditional patterns is a successful way of accommodating new development within the countryside.
- Individual houses occur occasionally inland, but are very dispersed, generally located close to the roadside.
- The orientation of gable ends of new housing should reflect the established pattern.
- Large over embellished houses with sweeping drives and lawns are not in keeping with the landscape and would look out of place.

### **Trees and Woodland**

- Trees and woodland are very limited, adding to the windswept nature of the cliffs.
- Planting around new development should be restricted to small clumps of broadleaf trees.



### **Boundaries**

- Hedgerows and stone dykes should be maintained and reinstated.
- Stone dykes are successful boundary treatments rather than wooden fencing.

### **Land Use - Agricultural**

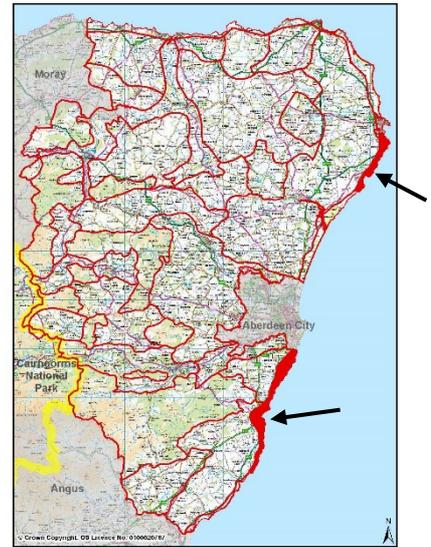
- New buildings should be grouped with existing buildings.
- Depending on the backdrop, grey or greenish colour corrugated sheeting generally provides a good fit.

## Landscape Character Type: Fragmented Rocky Coast

### Overview

Two coastlines characterise this Landscape Character Type. The extent from the rocky headland of Peterhead to south of Cruden Bay, and the coast from Aberdeen to Kinneff, share the distinguishing characteristics of steep rugged slopes, fractured cliffs, narrow inlets and jagged reefs. To the south, the landscape becomes gentler, and raised beach platforms feature towards Kinneff.

From the top of the cliffs there is a gradual transition inland from gently undulating pastureland and often rough grassland, towards coastal farmland areas. Cliff top sea views provide an immense sense of scale. A sense of naturalness is evident, with strong elemental qualities due to exposure from the North Sea. Proximity of Stonehaven, Aberdeen, Peterhead and its power station, and major roads can however lessen the sense of wildness and remoteness.



### *Fragmented Rocky Coast:*

Map 1 Peterhead to south of Cruden Bay



Map 2 Aberdeen to Kinneff



## Key Landscape Characteristics

**Sensitivity** – The Northeast Aberdeenshire Coast, and Southeast Aberdeenshire Coast Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) are shown as the hatched areas on Maps 1 and 2. The SLA designations highlight the wild and rugged qualities of these coastlines and the enhanced landscape sensitivity due to the presence of significant historic features such as the iconic Dunnottar Castle and Slains Castle.

**Landform** – Steep, weathered coastal cliffs with caves, stacks and arches, notably the distinctive Bullers of Buchan to the north. Sea cliffs dominate the Crawton area, whilst softer rocks present a gentler edge to the south, where raised beach platforms are common.

**Vegetation** – Grass and shrub covered slopes on shallower cliffs and bare rock on steep slopes. Trees and woodland are limited.

**Settlement** – Settlements cluster on cliff tops whilst older villages and harbours nestle at the cliff base, accessed by steep roads down to the sea. Extensive new development at the edge of the larger coastal towns.

**Other** – Major road and railway corridor behind the cliffs.



## Specific Guidance: Peterhead to south of Cruden Bay coastline

### General

- The *Fragmented Rocky Coast* Landscape Character Type is vulnerable to impact from development in exposed and highly sensitive locations.
- Development risks disturbing the perception of a remote landscape.
- Ruined castles and mansion houses such as those at Slains, Pitsligo and Dundarg, stud the grassy headlands which transition to the agricultural hinterland. The setting of these should be maintained.



### Land Use - Residential

- New housing should be sensitively located, corresponding to traditional patterns and avoiding prominent locations.
- Adding to existing groups of houses is a successful way of accommodating new development within the countryside as the landscape transitions to coastal farmland. The established pattern of the group should be adhered to.
- Individual houses occur occasionally but are typically very dispersed and generally located close to the roadside. Houses with a modest garden surrounded by stone dykes and a range of outbuildings reflect traditional character.



- Within settlements orientation of the gable end of houses/cottages in relation to the sea should be reflected in new development.
- New development should be of an appropriate scale and design to enhance landscape character and sense of place. This can be achieved successfully through an appropriate contemporary interpretation of the local vernacular.



- Outwith settlements, houses/cottages typically face onto the roadside or to the sea and the established pattern in an area should be adhered to in new development.
- Large over embellished houses with sweeping drives and lawns disproportionate to the landscape look out of place.



## Boundaries

- Stone dykes for new housing are successful boundary treatments, and wooden fencing, or walls prominent in the landscape should be avoided.

- Hedgerows and stone dykes should be maintained and reinstated.



### **Trees and Woodland**

- Trees and woodland are very limited which adds to the windswept nature of the cliffs. Planting around new development should be restricted to small clumps of broadleaf trees.

### **Land Use – Agricultural**

- New agricultural buildings should be grouped with existing buildings.
- Colour choices of materials should harmonise with the landscape backdrop. Grey, greenish or other muted colours for corrugated sheeting are likely to sit well in the landscape.

### **Other**

- There is pressure from wind generation due to high wind speeds.

## Specific Guidance: Aberdeen to Kinneff coastline

### General

- Windswept cliff tops are a key characteristic of the *Fragmented Rocky Coast* Landscape Character Type. These are sensitive to land use and development change.
- Where rocky cliffs give way to softer rocks, a gentler edge to the coast transitions to raised beach platforms along this coastline. These are a distinctive feature sensitive to impact from development.



- Coastal cliffs, stacks and arches, and historic features such as cliff-top castles and churches are particularly sensitive to nearby development which may affect their setting and detract from these views. Open landscapes emphasise their exposure and enhance views.
- Windfarms could be highly visible and may seem at variance with the character of small-clustered settlements. In more open and undeveloped land they may feature prominently but may also bring a dynamic quality befitting the windswept nature of the landscape.
- Historic small fishing villages and stone harbours are vulnerable to loss of character. The design of new development should aim to preserve and not adversely impact their identity and harbour settings.

## Land Use - Residential

- New development on the coast which is clustered in form and limited in extent would reflect traditional patterns and enhance sense of identity, compared to linear development.
- Outwith settlements, single storey cottages situated individually, or larger houses associated with farms may reflect landscape character outwith settlements. However, large scale new build homes 'swamping' small traditional cottages look out of place.



- Large scale new build homes can also appear prominent in the landscape when sited in elevated locations. Woodland backdrop framing new development can result in drawing attention to the development in the landscape rather than integrating it.



- Away from the coast, development should be screened with clumps of trees and where possible add to an existing group of buildings to help integrate

development into the landscape.

- Whitewash and stone finishes should reflect the traditional architectural style.
- Contemporary interpretations of traditional finishes risk being too strong visually in the landscape setting. Woodland clumps may be required to ensure a striking modern building fits well in the landscape.



### Trees and Woodland

- Extensive use of shelterbelts around development can appear out of place and may emphasise built development. Clumped groups of native species is more appropriate.



## Boundaries

- Enhancement and maintenance of drystone dykes will reinforce field patterns and landscape structure.



## Land Use: Agricultural

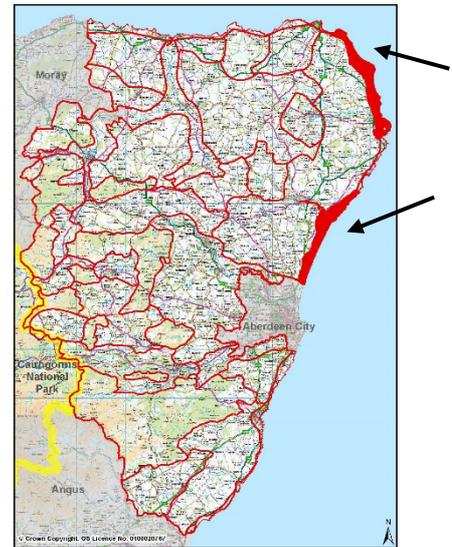
- New agricultural buildings should be associated with existing farm buildings which are usually close to cliff edges.
- With the sea backdrop, careful consideration of colour is needed to fit new buildings within the natural coastal palette, e.g., grey corrugated sheeting rather than stronger contrasting colours.

## Landscape Character Type: Beaches, Dunes and Links - Aberdeenshire

### Overview

The two coastlines from Fraserburgh to Peterhead, and from Collieston to Aberdeen, share the distinguishing characteristics of long, broad sandy beaches backed by extensive dunes.

There is a very wide, gentle, gradual transition between this low-lying Landscape Character Type and the very gently undulating and open *Coastal Agricultural Plain* Landscape Character Type inland, with largely uninterrupted views from the plains out to sea.



### *Beaches, Dunes and Links – Aberdeenshire:*

Map 1 Fraserburgh to Peterhead coast



Map 2 Collieston to Aberdeen coast



## **Key Landscape Characteristics**

**Sensitivity** – The *Beaches Dunes and Links* Landscape Character Type is also designated the Northeast Aberdeenshire Coast Special Landscape Area (SLA), and is in close proximity to the Loch of Strathbeg RSPB reserve. The SLA designation shown as the hatched area on Maps 1 and 2 recognises the strong sense of place associated with this landscape, its scenic qualities, and uninterrupted views of the North Sea. There are strong elemental qualities associated with the weather which, together with the largely deserted dune landscape, create a strong sense of wild remoteness and naturalness. The ecological and recreational value of this landscape is significant.

**Landform** – Huge sweeps of deserted sand backed by rolling dunes. Wind sculpted dunes merge with ever-shifting sands to the east. The comparative solidity of the landward dunes to the west give, a gentler transition between land and sea. A key feature is the shallow reed-rimmed Loch of Strathbeg, the largest dune lake in Britain. Around higher farmland pastures, saltmarsh pools and inlets weave around as the landscape transitions to a coastal agricultural plain.

**Settlement** – This unstable landscape is devoid of settlements with the exception of Fraserburgh and Peterhead. Farms are sited within the coastal pastures behind dunes, with the few settlements associated with inlets also set back from the coast e.g., Newburgh. St Fergus is a prominent feature, and coastal development increases closer to Aberdeen.

**Vegetation** – Limited to the spreading, knitted mats of coastal grassland, moss and marram, this vegetation holds together the shifting sands of the dunes. These are themselves sculpted by the wind, emphasizing the strong sense of movement created by the sand, waves and skies.

**Other** – High nature conservation and geological interest as demonstrated by the significant coverage the SSSI designation has along these coastal stretches.

## Specific Guidance: Fraserburgh to Peterhead coast

### General

- Uninterrupted views across the landscape towards the sea are a key feature of the *Beaches Dunes and Links* Landscape Character Type and development should avoid disrupting these.
- The landscape is unstable and fragile, and almost devoid of settlements. Large scale development should be avoided outwith the main settlements.
- Farm buildings west of Loch of Strathbeg are sited on subtly higher knolls set above salt marsh and sheltered by clumps of broadleaf trees.



- St Fergus Gas Terminal, Peterhead Power Station, and Ron Lighthouse are distinctive, prominent features. The open, flat landscape setting means these are visible throughout the surrounding area.



### Land Use - Residential

- Development in exposed and highly sensitive locations is likely to disturb the perception of a remote landscape.
- Limited access points intrinsically restrict the potential locations for development.

- Pressure from development is greater to the south and east, within commuting distance of Aberdeen. Development should in the main be concentrated within existing settlements.
- Constant local demand for rural housing has the potential to impact on the landscape.
- In the countryside, houses are sparsely distributed. New housing should be sensitively located, corresponding to these traditional patterns.
- In settlements, traditional development has the gable facing the sea.
- New housing in prominent locations is not appropriate.



### **Boundaries**

- Loss of hedgerows/stone dykes is an issue, and these should be retained and maintained where possible.
- Post and wire field boundaries predominate.

### **Other**

- There are characteristically few trees, although with occasional pockets of scrubby woodland.
- There are few agricultural buildings in the area.
- Radio masts are particularly prominent around Blackhills Industrial Estate.



## Specific Guidance – Collieston to Aberdeen Coast

### General

- Uncontrolled pressures on the *Beaches Dunes and Links* Landscape Character Type would result in the erosion of dunes, changes in vegetation structure and new build development altering the wild and exposed character of the coastline.
- The immense sand dunes such as at Forvie are particularly sensitive to landscape impact.



- Open, exposed landscape with long views renders it sensitive to vertical elements which will have a significant visual impact.
- Vertical elements are particularly intrusive in the open landscape; their impact may be reduced by positioning them against a backdrop of landform or vegetation.

### Tourist Facilities

- Screening of car parks and setting them back from the dunes will help to restrict visual impact. Rough surfaces would conform with the surrounding character.
- Designed picnic areas, boardwalks and information boards will help to keep people to paths and restrict access to sensitive areas of the dunes.
- Developing recreational and visitor facilities away from the dunes may concentrate visitors and recreational users in the more structurally and ecologically robust areas such as the rocky shoreline or farmland fringe.

### Woodland and Trees

- Woodland is not on the whole a feature, but where it does exist broadleaf trees predominate.
- Where trees are grouped around buildings, this should be continued, although this is generally only for larger buildings.



### Land Use – Residential

- Built development along the coastline and expansion of settlements which is set back from the coastal edge will help to conserve the dune character.
- Limited use of boundary treatments; the use of landform rather than vegetation to screen new areas of built development is appropriate. However, where stone walls are common as boundary treatments these should be maintained.



- Built development on the edges of existing settlements such as Newburgh and Balmedie will have a visual impact due to the lack of tree cover.
- Houses are sparsely distributed; groupings are not particularly common.

## Landscape Character Type: [Raised Beach Coast - Aberdeenshire](#)

### Overview

The stretch of coast extending southwards from Inverbervie to St Cyrus and the Angus border is strongly characterised by its raised beaches. These widen to create a more gentle and open unison between land and sea, creating a sense of openness and large scale.

The wide coastal fringe is the most distinctive element of this Landscape Character Type. South of St Cyrus the fringe forms an enclosed platform backed by a prominent cliff line, with farmland, saltmarsh and dunes.



Map 1 *Raised Beach Coast – Aberdeenshire*



## **Key Landscape Characteristics**

**Sensitivity** – The distinctive qualities of the *Raised Beach Coast – Aberdeenshire* Landscape Character Type are recognised by the Southeast Aberdeenshire Coast Special Landscape Area (SLA) designation which is shown as the hatched area on Map 1. The SLA designation recognises the atypical, raised beach features which form an important scenic setting for the numerous coastal villages and towns and are an important natural habitat. The designation also recognises the importance of the area for tourism and recreation.

**Landform** – Extensive coastal fringe. Gently sloping agricultural hinterland descends gradually to cliffs or, where cliffs are low, almost to the sea. Raised beaches from 50m to 600m wide, backed by cliffs.

**Vegetation** – Cliff slopes are well vegetated with grasses and scrub. Raised beaches encompass open farmland, marsh and reed bed, with little woodland, as well as a narrow sandy fringe.

**Settlement** – Well settled with villages perched on or set back from the coast, often including extensive new housing development, such as at Inverbervie, Johnshaven and St Cyrus. Farms and caravan sites are exposed on sloping agricultural hinterland.

**Other** – Telecommunication masts are prominent across the agricultural hinterland. Expansive views across the sea are fundamental to the character together with exposure to elements.

## Specific Guidance

### General

- Careful siting of development is required to ensure the open character of the landscape and views are not disrupted.
- The coastal fringe is sensitive to development that may disrupt views along the beach.
- Where there are areas of wetland and marsh these add visual diversity of the area and should be preserved through specific conservation management.



### Tourist Facilities

- Cliff tops are sensitive to the development of tourist accommodation such as caravan sites or new suburban style development.
- Caravan parks and campsites set back from the edge in raised locations preserve the character of the area whilst commanding good sea views.



- Small scale developments, such as picnic sites and individual buildings, should be confined to the base of raised beaches and cliffs to preserve the open aspect and the character of the area.
- Parking and picnic areas are best integrated by using low lying, naturalistic vegetation such as grasses and gorse.
- Development within historic harbour villages should fit within the physical form of the landscape setting as well as be appropriate to the function of the village. For example, Gourdon has an active fishing industry with associated industrial buildings that contribute to local identity and sense of place.



### **Land Use - Residential**

- Coastal edge development that reflects traditional styles of small cottages are characteristic of this landscape.
- The siting of new buildings outwith settlements should reflect the dispersed settlement pattern.

- Small terraces of two or three cottages close to cliff edges or on the coastal fringe are also characteristic. Generally terraces are not grouped with other terraces but may be associated with other buildings.



- Consider finishes that would enhance landscape character, such as whitewash or stone finishes.
- Setting new large-scale development back from the edge will help to preserve the character of this landscape.



## Woodland and Trees

- Planting around new housing should be limited, and where planting is proposed it should be in small clumps.
- Where there are small woodlands and shelterbelts, new development should look to retain these.