

# PROPOSED ABERDEENSHIRE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2020 RESPONSE FORM

As part of the production of the Local Development Plan, a 'Main Issues Report' was published in January 2019. The responses from these consultations have helped to inform the content of the Proposed Local Development Plan ("the Proposed Plan").

The Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan will direct decision-making on land-use planning issues and planning applications in Aberdeenshire for the 10-year period from 2021 to 2031. The Proposed Plan was agreed by Aberdeenshire Council in March 2020 as the settled view of the Council. However, the Proposed Plan will be subjected to an independent examination and is now open for public comment.

**This is your opportunity to tell us if anything should be changed in the Proposed Plan, and why.**

When writing a response to the Proposed Plan it is important to specifically state the modification(s) that you would wish to see to the Plan.

This is the only remaining opportunity to comment on the Proposed Plan. The reasons for any requested changes will be analysed and reported to Scottish Ministers. They will then appoint a person known as a Reporter to conduct a public examination of the Proposed Plan, focusing particularly on any unresolved issues and the changes sought.

Ministers expect representations (or responses) to be concise (no more than 2000 words) and accompanied by limited supporting documents. It is important to ensure that all of the information that you wish to be considered is submitted during this consultation period as there is no further opportunity to provide information, unless specifically asked.

Please email comments to [ldp@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:ldp@aberdeenshire.gov.uk) or send this form to reach us by 31 July 2020\*.

We recommend that you keep a copy of your representation for your own records.

*\*UPDATE 16 June 2020: Consultation period was extended from 17 July 2020 for a further two-week period.*



## ACCESSIBILITY

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Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan  
Woodhill House, Westburn Road, Aberdeen, AB16 5GB

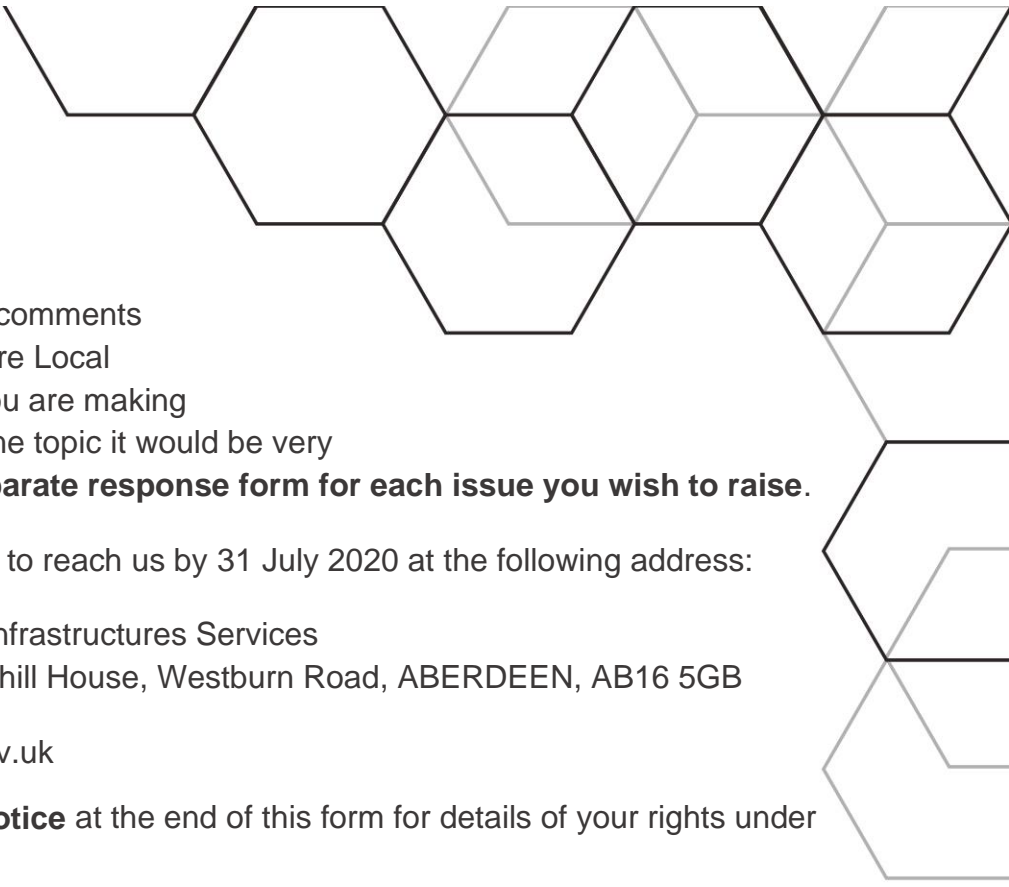
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If you wish to contact one of the area planning offices, please call 01467 534333 and ask for the relevant planning office or email [planning@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:planning@aberdeenshire.gov.uk).



Please use this form to make comments on the Proposed Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2020. If you are making comments about more than one topic it would be very helpful if you could fill in a **separate response form for each issue you wish to raise**.

Please email or send the form to reach us by 31 July 2020 at the following address:

Post: Planning Policy Team, Infrastructures Services  
Aberdeenshire Council, Woodhill House, Westburn Road, ABERDEEN, AB16 5GB

Email: [ldp@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:ldp@aberdeenshire.gov.uk)

Please refer to our **Privacy Notice** at the end of this form for details of your rights under the Data Protection Act.

## YOUR DETAILS

Title:	Mr
First Name:	Craig
Surname:	Fotheringham
Date:	July 2020
Postal Address:	Bancon Homes, [REDACTED]
Postcode:	[REDACTED]
Telephone Number:	[REDACTED]
Email:	[REDACTED]

Are you happy to receive future correspondence only by email? Yes  No

Are you responding on behalf of another person? Yes  No

If yes who are you representing?

Tick the box if you would like to subscribe to the Aberdeenshire LDP eNewsletter:

*An acknowledgement will be sent to this address soon after the close of consultation.*

# YOUR COMMENTS

Please provide us with your comments below. We will summarise comments and in our analysis will consider every point that is made. Once we have done this we will write back to you with Aberdeenshire Council's views on the submissions made. We will publish your name as the author of the comment, but will not make your address public.

**Modification that you wish to see** (please make specific reference to the section of the Proposed Plan you wish to see modified if possible, for example Section 9, paragraph E1.1):

Representation against non-allocation of Site GR057, GR058 and GR059.

Objection to embargo on strategic allocations in the Blackburn to Inverurie Strategic Growth Area.

East Balhalgardy site should be allocated for up to 200 units. Alternatively, should a view be taken that more housing land around the town be allocated to facilitate the delivery of roads infrastructure improvements on a cumulative basis, then the site could accommodate up to 500 units, in accordance with the Transport Assessment and Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments appended to this representation.

**Reason for change:**

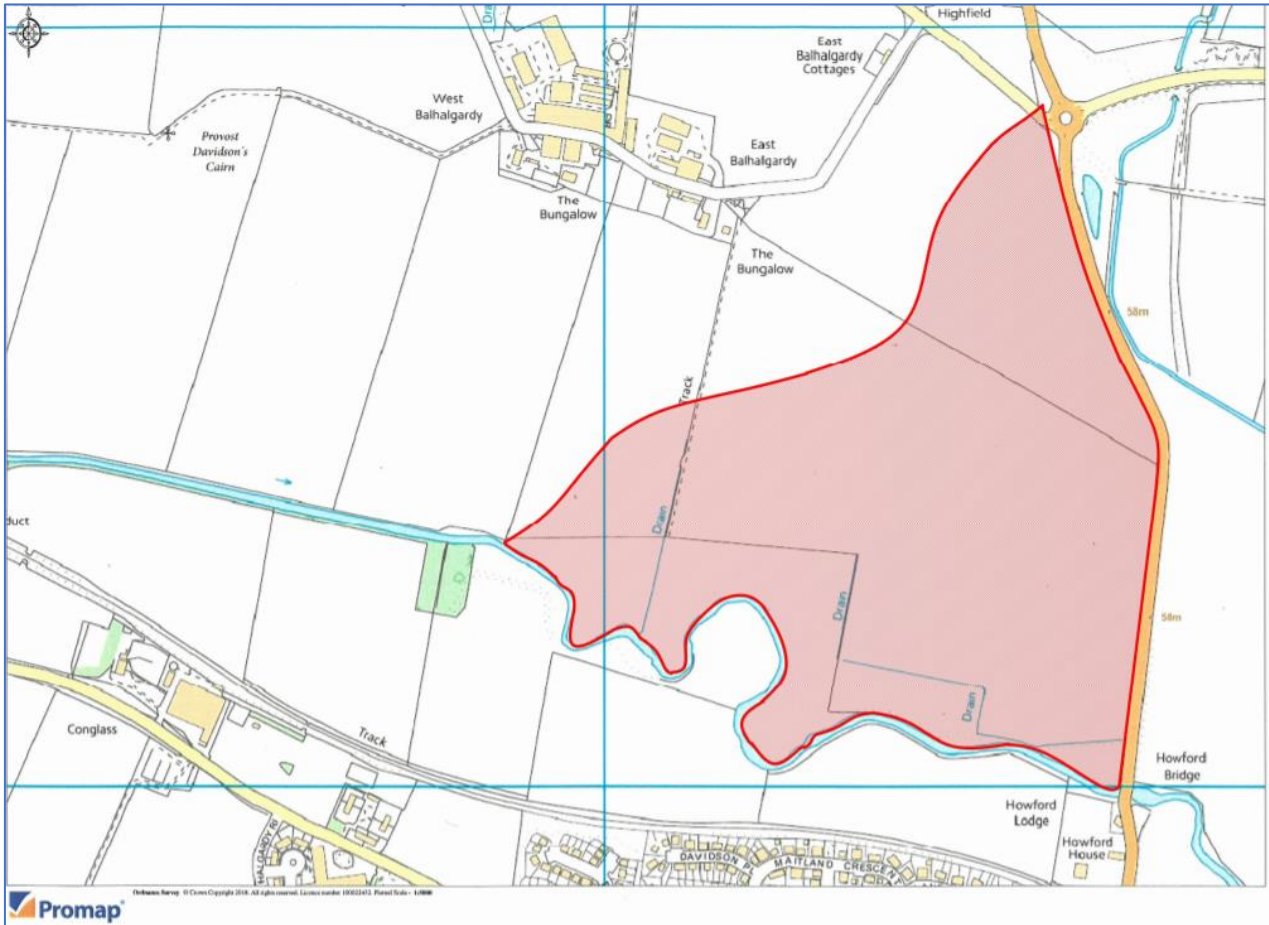
Bancon Homes continue to object to the effective embargo on greenfield housing allocations in the Blackburn to Inverurie Strategic Growth Area, based primarily on the unknown future of a proposed A96 dualling project.

The Structure Plans in 2009 and 2014 identified the strategy for delivering housing across the City & Shire and as part of that identified the requirement for housing in this Strategic Growth Area. Until this Proposed Plan, the 2012 and 2017 LDP's instead avoided making any strategic allocations. The key local exception to this is the proposed expansion of an allocation within Inverurie from 58 units to 180 units. This and other prospective sites in the area were previously identified in the MIR as part of the Council's embargo that "further allocations were not to be made until the preferred route of the A96 dualling was confirmed." Is it the case that new strategic allocations, or selective expansions are now permitted in this corridor?

Through the examination of the above plans, Transport Scotland has been clear that the dualling project is a strategic project, and in no way designed to provide capacity for housing in particular areas. It is the role of LDP's to ensure that housing can be delivered, along with the necessary infrastructure. As in our response to the MIR, Bancon Homes submit that this has not been achieved and that the delivery of the housing land requirement has been frustrated by the approach taken.

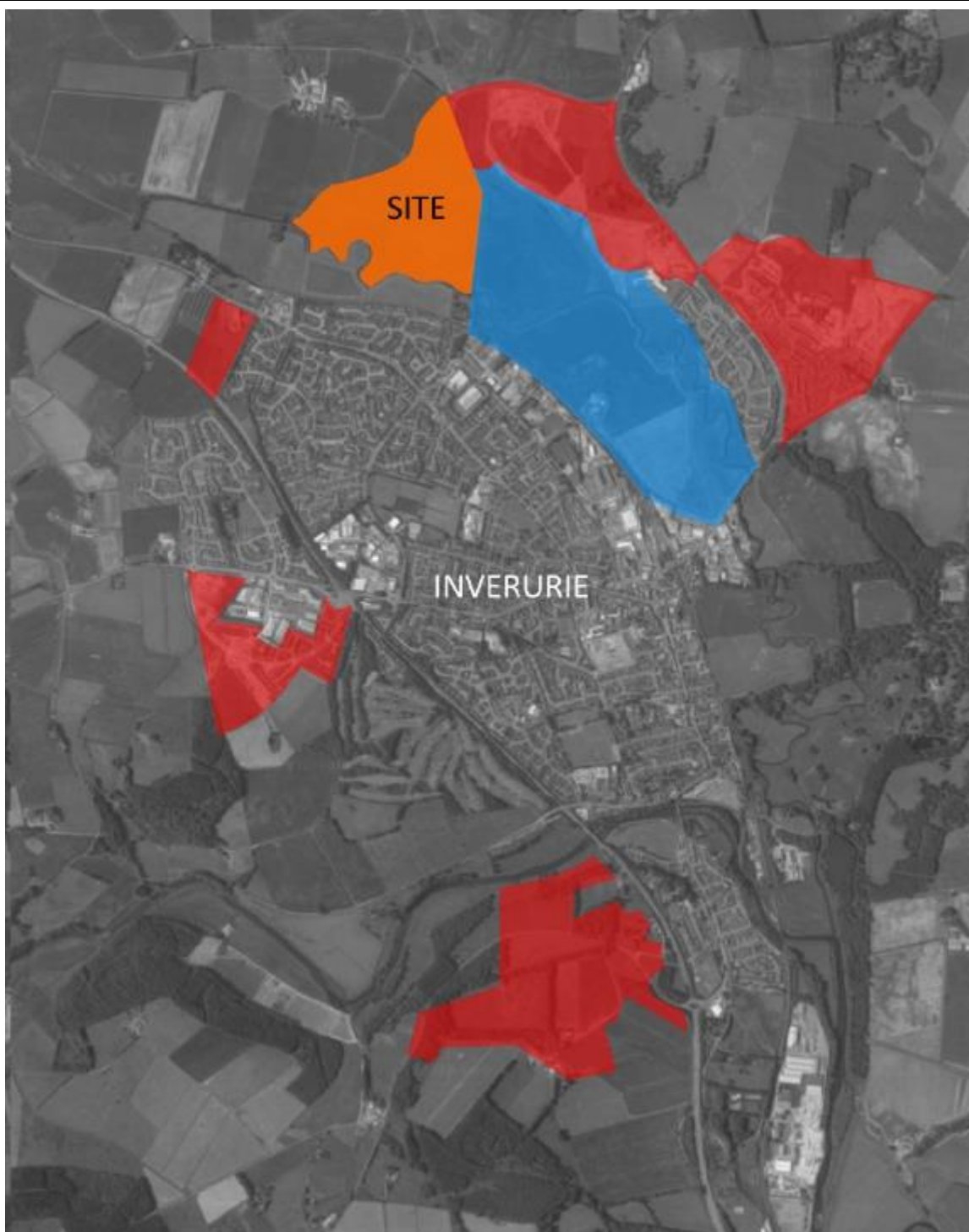
Bancon Homes Ltd have submitted representations that a site which could meet the housing land requirement without reliance on the A96 dualling requirements is East Balhalgardy, which provides a logical extension to the OP3 site allocated in the adopted LDP.

The proposed site is located to the north of Inverurie, immediately adjacent to the recently completed roundabout on the Rothienorman Road (B9001), built to service the adjacent OP3 housing site at Portstown.



The site forms a logical extension to the existing housing allocations to the north and east of Inverurie (see overleaf), with a continuation of the new road network providing excellent accessibility. The site also sits within a short walk of the new Uryside Primary School.

Development of the site will facilitate the extension of the Uryside Park (R2 zoning in the adopted LDP) to the west of the B9001. This will provide excellent pedestrian and cycle connections, as well as a landscape setting for the town.



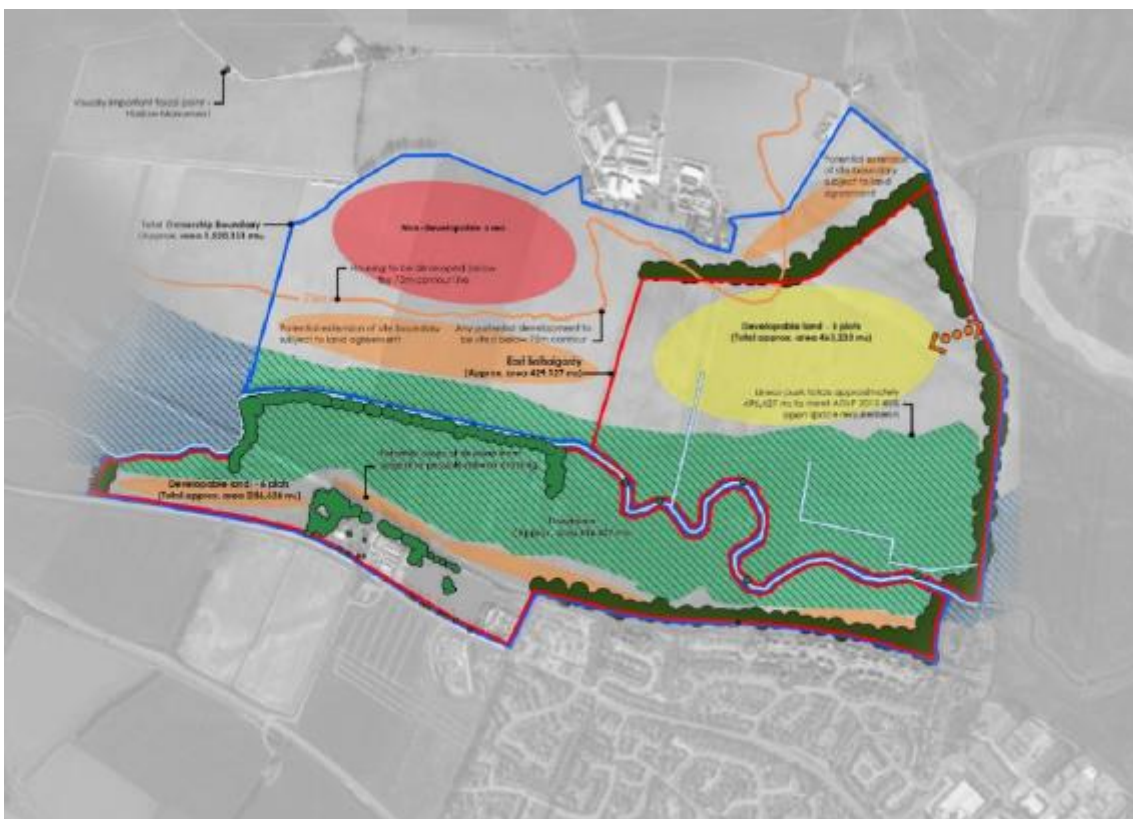
The site sits within the Harlaw Battlefield designation, but was previously allocated for future housing development in the 2012 Local Development Plan. At that stage, Bancon Homes were requested to produce a landscape impact assessment to demonstrate compatibility of the proposed development with the battlefield. This was completed, and accepted as appropriate by the Council's Archaeology Service.

The report was appended to the LDP bid, yet the site is reported to have an unacceptable impact on the battlefield. There is no justification provided for the U-turn in opinion from Aberdeenshire Council on this key matter. There is no apparent evidence for the boundary of the Harlaw Battlefield designation – which is marked on the east by the B9001 road – a road which would not have been in evidence at the time of the battle.

Evidence suggests the battle took place on the hilltop, where the monument was erected in 1911.

The appended Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Appendix 2) considers the surrounding landscape, primarily the potential impact of development in this area on the Harlaw Battlefield, and identifies that with suitable structural landscaping, the site is suitable for development, and that landscape and biodiversity benefits can be provided through development of the site.

The report also demonstrates that the proposed development of the site has no detrimental impact on the Harlaw Monument itself, contrary to reporting in the MIR. It is concerning that a detailed Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, requested by Aberdeenshire Council appears to have been ignored in the assessment of this site and its non-inclusion in either the MIR or the Proposed Plan – despite previous agreement on its conclusions.



None of the routes being considered by Transport Scotland impact on this site directly and therefore cannot be considered a constraint to the delivery of housing. The MIR stated that the site “cannot be considered until a preferred route for dualling the A96 has been selected and the timescale for delivery is known.” This is an unreasonable position to take, given neither of the shortlisted routes (as of early 2019) conflict with these proposals.

Detailed Transportation Assessment work demonstrates that a scale of development is deliverable on a number of sites without unacceptable impacts on the road network, including up to 200 units on the East Balhalgardy site. The development of the site in the short-term, for either the 100 or 200 units identified in MIR bids GR0057 and GR0058, is therefore reasonable. The executive summary of the Transport Assessment is included as Appendix 1.

Furthermore, there is the possibility that when a route is selected (albeit this has been delayed) and that the Inverurie section is delivered prior to 2030, it would be delivered within the currency of this next LDP. As such the LDP should provide for development options in the same LDP.

In terms of housing land allocations, despite the position taken in the Proposed Plan (Appendix 6 Housing Land Allocations) we contend that there remains a housing land shortfall within the Aberdeen Housing Market Area (HMA). A surplus of 80 units is identified in the LDP in response to the SDP Housing Supply Allowance.

However, Homes for Scotland (HfS), analyse the housing land supply within the Aberdeen HMA as being short by c.483 units (a difference of 563 units where sites are considered to be constrained or non-effective). Worryingly, there are a number of sites where the bid or previous allocation has been increased by Aberdeenshire Council (in total 287 units) including some sites where this is seemingly without request, where there is no evidence of housebuilder involvement or the site is not evidently in effective ownership.

802 units within Aberdeenshire Council's analysis of housing land supply are from sites of 50 units or below. It is contended therefore that there is significant risk of a housing land shortfall as measured against the SDP Allowance, and this site would be effective in meeting that shortfall.

In addition, whilst not lying within the same area of Aberdeenshire but nonetheless in the Aberdeen Housing Market Area (AHMA), representations have been made previously by Bancon Homes regarding the continued under-delivery of housing at Chapeltown of Elsick. We do not object to the principle of this allocation, but continue to request that Aberdeenshire Council recognise (1) the significant proportion of the effective land supply within the AHMA that Chapeltown constitutes and (2) the number of completions arising from Chapeltown continues to be well below those envisaged in either the 2012 or 2017 LDP's.

In terms of the first point above, Appendix 6 of the Proposed Plan identifies a total housing land supply for the Aberdeen to Laurencekirk SGA of 6,030 homes. Chapeltown is allocated for a total of 4,045 homes, with only 164 delivered as of Jan 2019 (Housing Land Audit 2019). This leaves 3,881 homes remaining, constituting 64% of the total effective housing land supply for this SGA.

In relation to the second point, the delivery of 164 units since commencement in 2015 equates to a build rate of approx. 40 units per annum. Extrapolating this out, even at a more generous 60-80 units per annum, would leave a completion total of only 1,184 units by 2031. This would leave 2,861 units undelivered during the plan period.

This further throws into focus the risks associated with Aberdeenshire Council's assessment of effective land supply, and that without further allocations, the delivery of homes across the AHMA will be well below that required by current and prospective residents.

Inverurie is a key settlement in Aberdeenshire, and continued development will support the provision of key infrastructure such as the delivery of a new secondary school and necessary improvements to the local road network.



It is therefore submitted that the East Balhalgardy site should be identified in the Local Development Plan for the delivery of 100-200 additional houses in the 2021-2031 plan period, assuming that no substantial roads infrastructure solutions are to be incorporated into the proposals for the town.

However, should an alternative view be taken that more housing land around the town be allocated to facilitate the delivery of roads infrastructure improvements on a cumulative basis, then the site could accommodate up to 500 units, in accordance with the Transport Assessment and Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments appended to this representation and consistent with MIR bid GR059.

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Email: [dataprotection@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:dataprotection@aberdeenshire.gov.uk)

Your information is being collected to use for the following purposes:

- To provide public comment on the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan. The data on the form will be used to inform Scottish Ministers and individual(s) appointed to examine the Proposed Local Development Plan 2020. It will inform the content of the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2021.

### Your information is:

Being collected by Aberdeenshire Council	X
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### The Legal Basis for collecting the information is:

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It is a Statutory Obligation under Section 18 of the Town and Country (Scotland) Act 1997, as amended, for Aberdeenshire Council to prepare and publish a Proposed Local Development plan on which representations must be made to the planning authority within a prescribed period of time. Failure to provide details requested in the 'Your Details' section of this form will result in Aberdeenshire Council being unable to accept your representation.

Your information will be shared with the following recipients or categories of recipient:

Members of the public are being given this final opportunity to comment on the Proposed Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan. The reasons for any changes that the Council receives will be analysed and reported to Scottish Ministers. They will then appoint a person to conduct a public examination of the Proposed Plan, focusing particularly on the unresolved issues raised and the changes sought.

Your name and respondent identification number (provided to you by Aberdeenshire Council on receipt of your

submission) will be published alongside a copy of your completed response on the Proposed Local Development Plan website (contact details and information that is deemed commercially sensitive will not be made available to the public).

In accordance with Regulation 22 of the Town and Country (Development Planning) (Scotland) Regulations 2008 where the appointed person determines that further representations should be made or further information should be provided by any person in connection with the examination of the Proposed Plan the appointed person may by notice request that person to make such further representations or to provide such further information.

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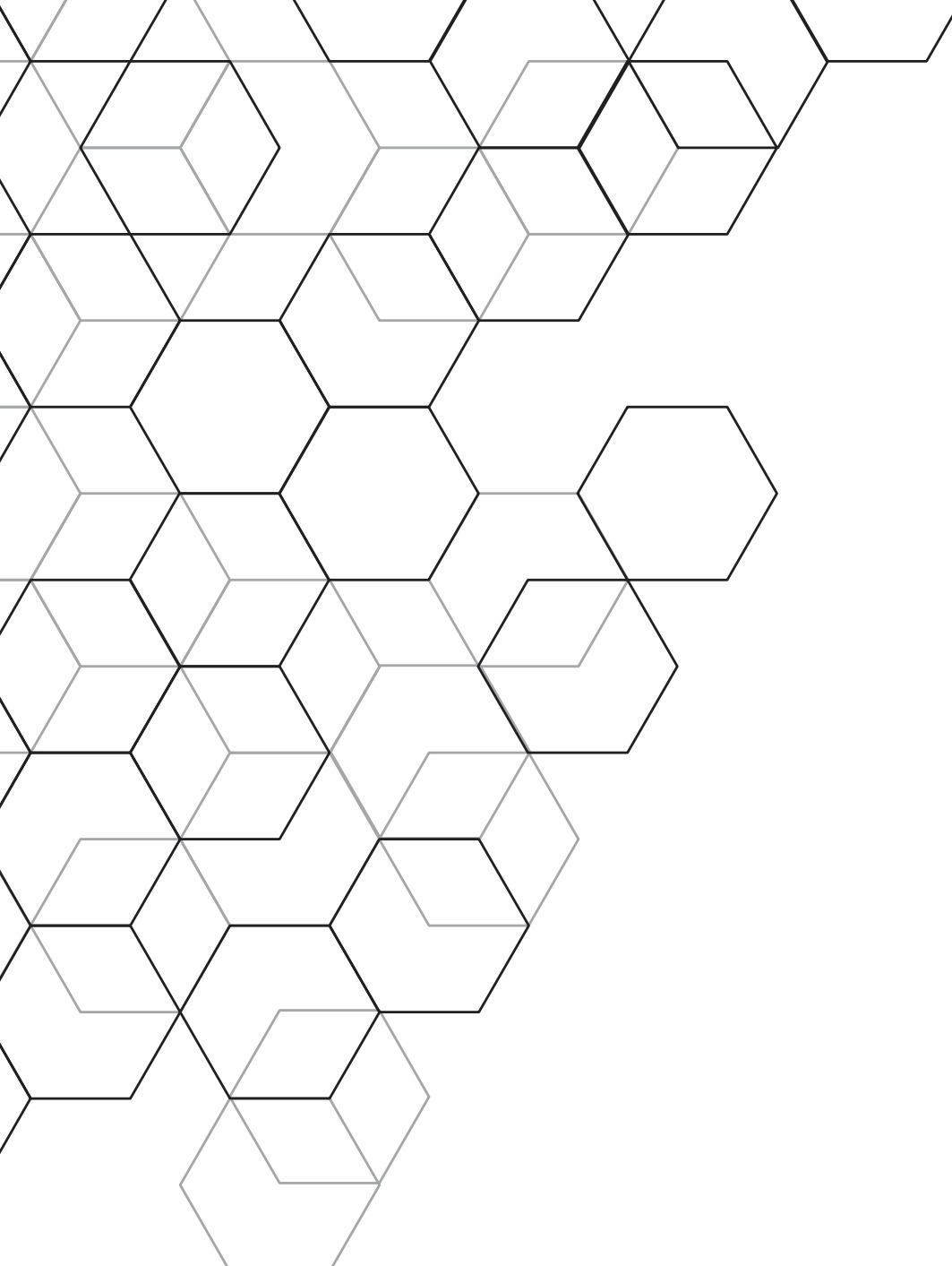
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  - (i) Consent; or
  - (ii) Performance of a Contract;
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# Inverurie Masterplan TA Executive Summary



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Senior Consultant

Checked by: [Redacted] .....  
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Principal Consultant

Approved by: [Redacted] .....  
[Redacted]  
Director

Rev No	Comments	Checked by	Approved by	Date
1	Final	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	01/10/2010

[Redacted]  
[Redacted]

Job No 60159916

Reference Executive Summary

Date Created September 2010

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# Inverurie Masterplan Executive Summary

## Background

The proposed Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan (LDP) 2010 sets out the ground rules for the development of land under the Land Use Planning Act. Its main purpose is to set out statements of the policies that will be used for assessing planning applications. In its proposals it also confirms the principle of development on sites across Aberdeenshire. The Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan will apply from the date the council adopt it which is anticipated to be in the autumn of 2011 and will run until 2023. It will provide firm guidance for the period up to 2016, by which time it will have been reviewed by Aberdeenshire Council.

Bancon currently have an interest in a number of sites within Inverurie associated with residential development proposals and this report has identified the sites which could be brought forward in the timescales set out in the LDP along with the likely housing densities that could be accommodated. Associated infrastructure requirements which support new development have also been examined within this report.

A Comprehensive Transport Assessment (TA) report has considered the various Bancon sites in combination with other housing allocations within Inverurie in order to determine the most suitable location for housing. This has been achieved by a combination of assessing the sustainable travel characteristics of the sites, along with a micro-simulation modelling exercise that has considered a number of testing scenarios. The Transport Assessment (AECOM Ref: 60159916 – Inverurie Masterplan Transport Assessment) is available on request.

## Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan – Proposed Plan 2010

The proposed LDP is split into two phases, the first running from 2007 to 2016 with the second running from 2017 to 2023. Table 5 within the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan – Proposed Plan 2010, indicates that a total of 950 dwellings have been allocated in the first phase with a further 850 dwellings are allocated in the second phase. The plan also indicates the preferred areas for development and this information has been reproduced in Table 1 below.

Table 1 – Reproduced from The Aberdeenshire LDP (Table 5)			
		Inverurie – Blackburn	
		Phase 1 2007 – 2016	Phase 2 2017 – 2023
Inverurie	H1	737	
	M2	150	
	M1	45	
	H2	20	
	F		850

Capabilities on project:  
Transportation

The above allocations are proposed by Aberdeenshire Councils as the preferred sites for development, however alternative locations are available within Inverurie which will have significant benefits. This would be particularly important in the Phase 1 period where major infrastructure improvements would not be feasible in terms of timescales or available funding. Sustainable locations which can integrate into the existing infrastructure will be of paramount importance as they will not be reliant upon private car use, and will subsequently minimise the impact upon the road network until such time as infrastructure improvements can be provided.

### **The Development Proposal**

The Bancon proposals would see four distinct areas developed around Inverurie with the following maximum housing densities:

- |                |   |                       |
|----------------|---|-----------------------|
| 1. Ardtannes   | - | maximum 100 dwellings |
| 2. Balhalgardy | - | maximum 500 dwellings |
| 3. Conglass    | - | maximum 200 dwellings |
| 4. Keithhall   | - | maximum 700 dwellings |

The above sites have been considered in conjunction with other LDP sites and differing levels of development in order to gain an appreciation of which allocations are best suited in terms of the local road network and sustainability. A major new piece of infrastructure has also been considered in the form of a new distributor road to the east of Inverurie. The new distributor road, referred to as the Keithhall Link Road (KLR), will connect from the B9170 Oldmeldrum Road in the north, to the A96(T) Thainstone Roundabout in the south. The new road will allow a bypass route of Inverurie town centre, which will alleviate a heavily trafficked route and provide a long term future for further housing within Inverurie.

### **Accessibility**

There is a good level of existing walking, cycling, and public transport provision located adjacent to the Bancon sites. A combination of Wider Network Core Paths, Existing Proposed Core Paths, and New Proposed Core Paths, are located next to the respective Bancon sites. To facilitate safe and convenient access by walking and cycling, each site would be capable of providing the required infrastructure connections to the core path network. All footway improvements would be designed in accordance with Aberdeenshire Council's Standards for Road Construction Consent and Adoption.

Site specific infrastructure, such as bus lay-bys or layouts which can accommodate bus penetration, would be considered as individual schemes are progressed and the requirements of Aberdeenshire Council and public transport operators are incorporated. Of the sites considered, Keithhall would have a significant benefit in terms of sustainable access as it is located within a convenient 20-minute walk time of Inverurie Train Station.

A Travel Plan leaflet would be produced for the residential sites which contains a development and wider area map and include up to date public transport timetables, with a summary of local services located within the leaflet, as well as local taxi information. The leaflet will introduce the development and contains a section detailing the health / financial benefits of using modes of transport other than the car. The map will detail the location of bus stops, stations, schools and local facilities such as shops, community centres, leisure centres, libraries etc. and will indicate the time it would take to walk / cycle to these locations.

Capabilities on project:  
Transportation

### **People trip Assessment**

In accordance with the National Policy guidance provided in the Scottish Executive publication Transport Assessment and Implementation: A Guide, a people trip assessment approach has been adopted within the Transport Assessment. The trip rates for the residential element have been calculated utilising the agreed trips rates that were within the December 2009 Inverurie Traffic Capacity Study 2, produced by SIAS, Aberdeenshire Council's Transport Consultant.

### **Development Testing Scenarios**

Modelling work has been undertaken by AECOM in respect of the Local Development Plan allocations, including the various sites controlled by Bancon Developments. The LDP is currently split into two phases, the first running from 2007 to 2016 with the second running from 2017 to 2023. 9 development scenarios have been tested overall as indicated below.

Four scenarios were modelled for Phase 1 (up to 2016). Scenarios 1 and 2 provide a direct comparison with and without a Keithhall Link Road (KLR) respectively. Scenarios 1,2,3,4 provide a comparison of allocating development to a number of different sites around Inverurie.

A further 5 scenarios were modelled for Phase 2 (2017 to 2023). Scenarios 5, 6 and 7 provide a comparison of allocating the Phase 2 development levels to a number of different sites around Inverurie with the Keithhall Link Road in place. A further test, Scenario 8, was undertaken to assess the impact of full development of the Crichtie and Thainstone sites without the inclusion of the Keithhall Link Road.

The concept of "major mitigation works" to offset the disbenefits of concentrating development at Crichtie and Thainstone was subsequently investigated in Scenario 9 which tested a single grade separated junction on the A96 Trunk Road replacing Thainstone and Port Elphinstone roundabouts. Scenario 9 resulted in significant queuing through the town. A full breakdown of the development content of the 9 modelled scenarios is shown in Table 2 below.



Capabilities on project:  
Transportation

Table 2 – Development Content Breakdown in Paramics Testing Scenarios												
Test Scenario	Development											
	Uryside & Portstown	Harlaw Road North	Crichtie	Thainstone / Crichtie Employment	Wimpey	Ardiannes	Conglass	Conglass Employment	Balhalgardy	Keithhall	Keithhall Link Road	Emulated Grade Separated Junction
<b>Phase 1</b>												
1	550	150			250	100	100	15ha	200	150	✓	*
2	550	150			250	100	100	15ha	200	150	*	*
3	550	150	200	7.5ha	250		100	7.5ha	200	50	*	*
4	550	150	400	15ha	250		100		50		*	*
<b>Phase 2</b>												
5	1100	150			250	100	100	15ha	500	700	✓	*
6	1100	150	200	7.5ha	250	100	200	7.5ha	500	400	✓	*
7	1100	150	400	7.5ha	250	100	200	7.5ha	300	400	✓	*
8	1100	150	800	15ha	250	100	200		300		*	*
9	1100	150	800	15ha	250	100	200		300		*	✓

## Modelling Results

### Phase 1 Summary

During the AM and PM periods the queue and journey time analysis for the 2016 Reference Case and Scenario 1 (Keithhall Link Road Provision) were generally consistent. Scenarios 2 to 4 were above the results of the reference base and produced similar results to one another for both the AM and PM periods as follows:

- 46% - 89% increase in A96 maximum average queue for the AM period
- 308% - 355% increase in A96 maximum average queue for the PM period
- 34% - 68% increase in High Street maximum average queues for the AM period
- 61% - 74% increase in High Street maximum average queues for the PM period

The results of Phase 1 modelling therefore indicated that there is a worsening of performance in transport terms, without the early provision of the Keithhall Link Road (Scenario 1).

### Phase 2 Summary

The Phase 2 results suggest that the provision of the Keithhall Link Road and associated Thainstone Roundabout improvements will offer a significant benefit to the local and trunk road networks; with the queuing outputs demonstrating that the LDP scenarios 5, 6 and 7 would better the 2023 Reference Case as follows:

Capabilities on project:  
Transportation

- 11% - 30% decrease in A96 maximum average queue for the AM period
- 49% - 52% % decrease in A96 maximum average queue for the PM period
- 42% - 45% decrease in High Street maximum average queues for the AM period
- 17% - 22% decrease in High Street maximum average queues for the PM period

It can be seen that there would be a betterment in average queuing levels on the A96 and High Street during both the AM and PM periods with the LDP allocations in place along with the Keithhall Link Road infrastructure. This once again emphasises the importance of the Keithhall Link Road in supporting the future housing allocations within Inverurie.

The Phase 2 journey time analysis for both the AM and PM periods indicate that Scenarios 5, 6 and 7 will operate with results similar to the 2023 Reference Case, while testing without the provision of the Keithhall Link Road (Scenario 8) shows that most key routes will experience significant increases in journey times. The additional testing undertaken in Scenarios 9 demonstrates that while there is an improvement over Scenario 8, the journey times on key routes fail to offset to the 2023 Reference Case.

The results demonstrate that the Keithhall Link Road would be an essential piece of infrastructure in order to support the future housing requirements of Inverurie.

## **Conclusion**

Allocating Phase 1 development to the Wimpey and Keithhall sites allows early provision of a significant length of a future, full length KLR. Allocation of northern sites (including Conglass and Balhalgardy), which would benefit from a future KLR, could also provide early developer contributions. This will secure a choice of location for the viable supply and adequate variety of land for housing. The range of choice will be secured as the proposals are spread across individual sites which are each able to integrate into Inverurie, providing pedestrian, cycle and public transport connections to the existing facilities and services available.

The traffic modelling work which has been undertaken clearly demonstrates that the provision of the Keithhall Link Road and associated improvements at Thainstone Roundabout are fundamental to ensuring that the local and trunk road networks continue to operate in a satisfactory manner.

In transport terms the Keithhall Link Road will provide distinct benefits in the period 2017 – 2023. Up to 2016 there is little difference between development strategies without the Keithhall Link Road in place. While it is clear that the Keithhall Link Road cannot be provided in the short term, in transport terms it makes good sense to plan and prepare for the Keithhall Link Road as needed future infrastructure as far as possible. Allocating development to the Wimpey and Keithhall sites allows the early provision of a significant length of a future, full length Keithhall Link Road. This infrastructure will provide for the housing demands of Inverurie up to and beyond the design year 2023

**Initial Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment  
Proposed Residential and Employment Development Site at Inverurie –  
Conglass and East Balhalgardy  
Job no. 0835**



For Bancon Developments Ltd  
23<sup>rd</sup> August 2013

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**APPENDIX 1.0:** Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Methodology

**APPENDIX 2.0:** Legislation, Policy and Guidance

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Brindley Associates Ltd, Landscape Architects and Environmental Planners were commissioned by Bancon Developments Ltd to carry out a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment of two adjacent potential development sites on land at Conglass and East Balhalgardy, Inverurie.

The purpose of this LVIA is to inform Bancon Developments Ltd's proposal to promote the sites for two to three storey residential development with associated employment land and a linear riverside park in the future. The LVIA supports Bancon Developments Ltd bid to include the sites within the housing land allocations identified within the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan (ADLP) 2016 and responds to the existing allocations of developable land identified within the current ADLP 2012.

The sites are located in a Strategic Growth Area (SGA), which has been referenced as the Huntly to Laurencekirk SGA within both the Aberdeen City & Shire Structure Plan (2009) and the ADLP 2012. The SGA has also been referenced as the Aberdeen to Huntly SGA within the proposed Aberdeen City & Shire Strategic Development Plan (February 2013). The development and associated assessment therefore acts in accordance with the spatial strategy for the area.

This report describes the key components, features and characteristics that contribute to the visual amenity and the quality and perception of the landscape of the proposed development sites within a 3km study area. It provides an evaluation of the potential implications for development at the proposed sites in terms of direct effects on key landscape components and features together with potential effects upon a representative range of visual receptors in order to inform initial development proposals.

The report also considers the extent to which loss of existing features and the introduction of the proposed development sites and potential landscape and visual mitigation measures, seen in the context of existing settlement edges and buildings, may influence perception of local character within the study area; and the implications for wider landscape character and visual receptors.

### 1.1 The Proposed Development Sites

A development masterplan is in the process of being created for the two sites and this assessment is intended to inform this emerging masterplan. As such, Brindley Associates Ltd has undertaken a landscape site appraisal to evaluate the existing conditions of both sites and have visited the local area to understand how residential development can be incorporated within the existing landscape pattern of Inverurie.

We have undertaken an analysis of constraining features and opportunities to help identify sensitive areas where development would be suitable. As such, development scenarios have been reviewed and key relationships have been identified. Through a desk-top survey and fieldwork, the Harlaw Monument was identified as a locally prominent focal point. The River Urie floodplain provides an opportunity for the proposed development sites to be integrated with the existing settlement of Inverurie through a linear riverside park, which will provide structure to the development sites and a new amenity space for the town.

This initial LVIA will inform a landscape-led design development where potential development areas, spines roads, and areas of open spaces can be successfully accommodated within the two sites.

The assessment estimates the potential sensitivities of the surrounding landscape and visual resource in order to understand the sites' ability to accommodate residential and associated development without unacceptable landscape and visual effects and includes initial landscape mitigation proposals, which illustrate how potential landscape and visual effects can be mitigated by an appropriate landscape structure and development layout.

This assessment is therefore part of an iterative process that is expected to progress in tandem with the developing masterplan and will therefore be re-assessed in due course once the design has progressed.

While the details of the proposed development sites will be agreed with Aberdeenshire Council (AC) as part of a detailed planning application, at this stage this assessment has been based upon 'standard' residential developments of two storey units at approximately 10m to roofline as they are similar to the scale and form of housing found in the area. Subsequently, a ZTV and viewpoint location plan was prepared to identify potential landscape and visual effects, which was submitted to the Infrastructure Services Department at Aberdeenshire Council on 11th July 2013 for comment. Comments raised at a meeting with the client and an AC archaeologist (15th July 2013) have been incorporated within this LVIA and include an additional site description viewpoint.

## **1.2 The Broader Study Area**

The study area for the sites has been taken to be the land lying within a 3km radius from their boundaries. The study area lies wholly within the Aberdeenshire council area. (See Drawing 0835/01)

The study area contains no Conservation Areas; however there are a number of Historic Designations comprising: Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs); Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes (HGDLs); and Battlefields. (See Drawing 00835/02)

The study area is predominantly agricultural, with Inverurie being the only major settlement.

The north, east and west of the study area are distinctly rural and include a number of scattered farm buildings and estate homes. There are several disused quarries and railway lines in the north of the study area.

The A96 is the only major road corridor and it bisects the study area north-west to south-east; however both the B9001 and B9170 run north from Inverurie. The study area contains the Aberdeen to Inverness and Glasgow & Edinburgh to Aberdeen railway lines and a dense network of minor roads and core paths which link the areas of Inverurie.

Within the study area, the landscape generally comprises open and undulating mixed farmland, which generally rises towards the west. The gentle topography of the study area provides an open landscape context for the proposed development sites, with long views from them towards the distant hills of Mither Tap and Millstone Hill. Existing settlement edges are prominent in this landscape as are the network of electricity pylons which cross a landscape structured by a pattern of woodland planting and shelterbelts. The study area includes the River Urie as it flows from Insch to the River Don, south of Inverurie.

The study area contains recent residential development at Osprey Village and Garioch Gate to the east of Inverurie. These developments have increased the prominence of residential land uses in the vicinity of the site; however these developments often appear isolated from Inverurie when seen from within many parts of the study area.

## **1.3 Site Setting and Description**

As discussed, a development masterplan has not yet been finalised for the site and this LVIA is intended to inform the emerging masterplan.

The proposed development sites are currently split into two separate parcels of land: Conglass and East Balhalgardy, both of which are controlled by Bancon Developments Ltd. The development boundaries indicated at this stage may be subject to revision depending upon the potential residual effects identified by this and other assessments.

The Conglass site is located to the immediate north of Inverurie, with intervening parcels of land identified for housing development within the ADLP 2012 as sites M1 and H3. The East Balhalgardy site also lies to the north of Inverurie and is separated from Conglass by the River

Urie. For this site, it is understood that access to the proposed development site would be taken from the B9001 (Rothienorman Road).

### **Conglass**

Conglass comprises two areas of land physically separated by Crawford Road (old A96). The site is further divided by the railway line. The site lies in close proximity to the A96 road corridor and the existing edge of Inverurie within an area of undulating farmland currently comprising pastoral and arable fields. Features of the site include a coniferous shelterbelt, mature boundary trees, mixed woodland, riparian woodland as well as mixed structural woodland. The site lies to the west of the existing settlement edge of Inverurie and is separated from it by land allocated for housing development within the ADLP 2012.

The site is bound on its northern edge by the meandering course of the River Urie, riparian woodland on the river's banks and post & wire agricultural fencing.

To the east, the site is bound by a stone wall and mature mixed structural woodland. The existing railway line provides the south-eastern boundary, whilst the south-western boundary is defined by post & wire fencing and A96 roadside vegetation. Electricity poles and scrub vegetation run adjacent to the railway line along the south-western boundary.

The western edge of Conglass is defined by a remnant stone wall and post & wire fencing on the section south of Crawford Road, whilst there are two mature boundary trees and post & wire fencing bounding the site in the section north of Crawford Road.

The site slopes down from the A96 approximately 97m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) towards the River Urie. As the site is situated on sloping land, the topography allows filtered views of the development from sections of the A96 road corridor to the south; however roadside vegetation along the A96 and the settlement at Inverurie results in the site being hidden from view from long stretches of the A96.

The north-facing slopes level out along Crawford Road, with undulating topography screening much of the A96 (70m AOD). The slopes then gently fall from Crawford Road to the River Urie (60m AOD). Along the floodplain of the River Urie the site is relatively flat. To the east of the Conglass site is a deciduous shelterbelt, which filters views of the housing along Bruntwood Terrace and Craigshannoch. Conglass Farm and Conglass Cottages are located within the site boundary. These properties are enclosed by well-maintained high hedgerows, stone walls, post & wire fencing, and structure planting. Parts of this proposed development site are constrained by flood restrictions.

### **East Balhalgardy**

East Balhalgardy is located to the north of the existing residential development edge of Inverurie but on the opposite bank of the River Urie and encompasses a large section of the land within East Balhalgardy Farm. The site lies to the west of the B9001 in an area of undulating farmland, which comprises a number of pastoral and arable fields. Within the site, there is riparian planting, occasional riparian trees and field margins along drainage channels.

The site is unbound along its northern edge as it indicatively crosses several fields; however post & wire fencing and the minor access road off of the B9001, forms the northern edge of the ownership boundary.

To the east, the site is bound by post & wire fencing and the occasional remnant stone wall along the B9001. The River Urie provides the southern boundary, whilst the western boundary is currently defined by a field margin. The western edge of the ownership boundary comprises a remnant stone wall, whilst a beech shelterbelt lies to the immediate north-west.

The site gently falls from the north-west of the ownership boundary (88m AOD) in a south-easterly direction towards the River Urie (60m AOD). Along the floodplain of the River Urie the site is relatively flat.



West Balhalgardy Farm, East Balhalgardy Farm and East Balhalgardy Cottages are located to the immediate north of the ownership boundary. The properties are relatively unenclosed; however there is garden planting at the farmhouses.

Generally, both sites comprise mixed farmland put mainly to pasture along the River Urie floodplain, with riparian woodland and remnant shelterbelts a feature of the sites. Field boundaries are predominantly post & wire fences; however often these are supplemented with remnant stone walls. Parts of both sites offer long views out towards the surrounding landscape, particularly from their eastern boundaries. The Harlaw Monument, electricity pylons and wind turbines form locally prominent focal points and there are long views west towards the hills of Mither Tap and Millstone Hill.

Due to the nature of the surrounding undulating landform, vegetation and existing settlement, views into the sites are generally limited within the broader study area.

It is considered that the proposed development sites lie within a transitional urban fringe landscape where urban forms integrate with open agricultural land.

#### **Site Boundary Panoramic Photography**

Panoramic photography was undertaken from the site boundaries to inform the assessment. The photographic locations were identified on the ZTV and viewpoint location plan submitted to the Infrastructure Services Department of Aberdeenshire Council on 11th July 2013 for scoping comment. Following consultation and response from their in-house archaeologist a further location was included from Crawford Road.

#### **Site Panoramas (Description Viewpoint A: Drawing 0835/05)**

The photograph was taken from the B9001 near the Howford Bridge on the eastern boundary of both sites and looks broadly westwards.

The photograph shows sloping arable fields falling to the River Urie. The northern outskirts of Inverurie is visible beyond the mixed structure planting associated with Howford Lodge. The peaks and upper slopes of Millstone Hill and Mither Tap are prominent above the riparian woodland, whilst East and West Balhalgardy Farms and their associated garden planting are visible on the horizon to the left of the post & wire fence bound B9001.

#### **Site Panoramas (Description Viewpoint B looking south: Drawing 0835/05)**

The photograph was taken from the verge of Crawford Road beyond the deciduous shelterbelt near the eastern boundary of Conglass and looks broadly south.

The photograph shows sloping arable fields separated from the road by post & wire fencing, beyond which lies the western outskirts of Inverurie and the A96. Conglass Cottages and boundary planting are visible to the right of a series of deciduous shelterbelts, located below the summit of Knockinglews hill. It should be noted that the close arable field has been allocated for housing development within the ADLP 2012 (M1) and that the proposed development site at Conglass is likely to be entirely screened within southerly views from this location.

#### **Site Panoramas (Description Viewpoint B looking north: Drawing 0835/06)**

The photograph was taken from the verge of Crawford Road near Conglass Cottages near the eastern boundary of Conglass and looks broadly north.

The photograph illustrates an open view of pastoral and arable fields sloping towards the River Urie. Structure and garden planting associated with Conglass Cottages, a block of mixed woodland and riparian woodland are visible to the left of Inverurie, which lie below the summit of Lawe Hill. Along the Harlaw battlefield plateau the Harlaw Monument, and the East and West Balhalgardy Farms can be seen; however as the close landscape is allocated for housing development within the ADLP 2012 (H3) it is considered that any development on the lower south-facing slopes at East Balhalgardy is likely to be screened within northerly views from this location.

#### **Site Panoramas (Description Viewpoint C: Drawing 0835/06)**

The photograph was taken from the verge of the A96 near the current western edge of Inverurie on the southern boundary of Conglass and looks broadly north.

The photograph illustrates an open view of pastoral and arable fields sloping towards the River Urie. The western outskirts of Inverurie can be seen to the right of the road-side boundary tree. Coniferous shelterbelts, riparian woodland and garden planting are all visible from this location as can the Harlaw Monument. Due to the proximity of the area allocated for housing development within the ADLP 2012 (M1) it is considered that any development located within the East Balhalgardy site is likely to be substantially screened within views from this location.

#### **Site Panoramas (Description Viewpoint D: Drawing 0835/07)**

The photograph was taken from the verge of the A96 near the layby on the southern boundary of Conglass and looks broadly north.

The photograph illustrates an open view of pastoral and arable fields sloping towards the River Urie. A coniferous shelterbelt filters views of Inverurie to the right of the view. Deciduous shelterbelts, riparian woodland and structure planting and the Harlaw Monument are also visible.

#### **Site Panoramas (Description Viewpoint E looking south: Drawing 0835/07)**

The photograph was taken from the verge of Crawford Road on the western boundary of Conglass and looks broadly south.

The photograph illustrates a restricted view of undulating pastoral and arable fields. The landform screens the A96; however a coniferous shelterbelt, remnant stone wall and boundary post & wire fence and road-side vegetation are all visible. Electricity pylons are visible against the skyline.

#### **Site Panoramas (Description Viewpoint E looking north: Drawing 0835/08)**

The photograph was taken from the verge of Crawford Road on the western boundary of Conglass and looks broadly north.

The photograph illustrates an open view of pastoral and arable fields sloping down from the post & wire bound Crawford Road towards the River Urie. Mature boundary trees can be seen to the left of the view in front of the railway line. Structure and garden planting at Conglass Farm, riparian woodland and the River Urie itself can also be seen from this location. The Harlaw Monument is focally prominent on the Harlaw battlefield plateau, whilst a deciduous shelterbelt and West Balhalgardy Farm are visible above the horizon line.

#### **Site Panoramas (Description Viewpoint F: Drawing 0835/08)**

The photograph was taken from the verge of the minor road leading to the Harlaw Monument near the northern edge of the ownership boundary and looks broadly south.

The photograph illustrates a framed view of undulating pastoral and arable fields with remnant stone wall boundaries beyond which the settlement of Inverurie is clearly visible. Structure planting is visible to the left of the view and a deciduous shelterbelt allows filtered views of the summit of Knockinglews Hill which lies beyond. The current arable land allocated for housing development within the ADLP 2012 (H3 and M1) is visible on the western outskirts of Inverurie.

#### **Site Panoramas (Description Viewpoint G: Drawing 0835/09)**

The photograph was taken from the verge of the minor road leading to the Harlaw Monument along the northern ownership boundary and looks broadly south.

The photograph illustrates an open view of undulating arable fields beyond which the settlement of Inverurie is clearly visible. Inverurie Retail Park can be seen between Inverurie

and the new residential development, which appears isolated in the view. The wooded and undulating landform beyond Inverurie is prominent as is the structure planting associated with Keith Hall HGDL.

**Site Panoramas** (Description Viewpoint H: Drawing 0835/09)

The photograph was taken from the verge of the B9001 on the eastern edge of the ownership boundary and looks broadly south.

The photograph illustrates an open view of undulating arable fields beyond which the settlement of Inverurie is clearly visible. Inverurie Retail Park can be seen to the left of the view past the B9001 which is bound by remnant stone walls and post & wire fencing. The wooded and undulating landform beyond Inverurie is prominent as is the summit of Knockinglews Hill.

## **2.0 LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT**

### **Methodology**

The methodology employed by Brindley Associates Ltd has been prepared with reference to the 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (GLVIA) published by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013). The full methodology utilised is described in Appendix 1.0.

## **2.1 Existing Landscape Context**

### **2.1.1 Overview**

The proposed development sites are located on the northern edges of the existing urban area of Inverurie within a predominantly rural landscape with transitional urban fringe areas where open countryside meets the settlement. The Conglass sites lie wholly within the Agricultural Heartlands: Central Wooded Estates LCA as identified by SNH and consists of approximately fourteen fields, which are predominantly arable. Much of the land on the banks of the River Urie have been put to pasture and grazed by cattle. East Balhalgardy comprises sections of approximately eight fields which lie between the Agricultural Heartlands: Central Wooded Estates LCA and the Agricultural Heartlands: Inch Basin LCA. Similarly to Conglass the fields are predominantly arable; although cattle graze the land close to the River Urie.

Although a portion of the study area contains the settlement of Inverurie much of the study area maintains a strongly rural character.

## **2.2 Estimated Impacts upon Landscape Character**

### **2.2.1 Introduction**

Consideration of the potential for development in this location to effect landscape character has involved:

- An overview of implications for designated landscapes and other sites of local value;
- The evaluation of both direct and indirect impacts on local landscape character in terms of loss or modification to existing landscape elements arising from the construction and subsequent use of the development (typically tree removal, changes to ground cover, land use or existing landform) and the implications for the balance of components that form local landscape character; and
- An evaluation of the implications for the identified local landscape areas.

The extent to which development has the potential to appear intrusive and hence, detrimental to the landscape character is limited by several factors. There is existing residential development within the close vicinity of the site, associated with the expansion of Inverurie; therefore it is not considered that development of the proposed development sites will introduce a new or inappropriate land use into the study area.

Significant effects are expected to be restricted to the immediate vicinity of the site boundaries and a limited number of elevated locations, in particular the A96 road corridor, which lies to the south of the site and the residential settlements along the northern and western edges of Inverurie.

## **2.3 SNH Landscape Character Area (See Drawing 0835/02)**

The South & Central Aberdeenshire Landscape Character Assessment No. 102 (1998) identifies three landscape character type (LCA) within the 3km study area – Agricultural Heartlands: Central Wooded Estates, Agricultural Heartlands: Inch Basin and Agricultural Heartlands: Formantine Lowlands LCA.

As a result of field work and desk-top analysis a number local landscape character areas (LLCA) have been identified within the study area. In addition, the 3km study area contains several Historic designations comprising Battlefields, HGDLs and SAMs.

The bareground ZTV suggests that there will be no significant effects upon the following landscape receptors arising from the development. They are therefore not considered in further detail in this assessment:

- Balquhain Castle SAM;
- East Blairbowie, standing stone SAM;
- Dillyhill, enclosure SAM; and
- St Apolinaris' Chapel and burial ground SAM.

#### **2.4 Agricultural Heartlands: Central Wooded Estates LCA**

The Agricultural Heartlands: Central Wooded Estate LCA is an expansive area of land located east of Bennachie which stretches towards the edge of Aberdeen. It is the largest LCA within the study area and the proposed development sites at Conglass and East Balhalgardy lie within the eastern boundary of the LCA. The key characteristics of the LCA are summarised below:

- Undulating landscape comprising wide valleys and low rising hills, which provide long views over open agricultural land;
- Policy woodland and woodland structure, which brings a sense of enclosure and often restricts longer views;
- Groups of trees on elevated locations such as mounds and hillocks, which are often enclosed by stone walls;
- Mature beech avenues of trees and mixed woodland plantations;
- Consistent field pattern comprising irregular sized fields utilised for both crops and pasture, often bound by post & wire agricultural fencing;
- Numerous historical features; and
- Numerous towns and villages such as Inverurie which are expanding with stone being the prominent material.

The development of the proposed development sites would result in the direct conversion of a small component of the LCA to residential and employment land uses, which would be visible from parts of the LCA to the immediate north, east, south and west of the sites; however these changes should be seen in the context of the existing settlement of Inverurie and the planned housing developments in the land allocated within the ADLP 2012 (M1 and H3).

It is therefore considered that development of the proposed development sites does not introduce any significant effects that are not currently experienced within the LCA.

Furthermore, the location of the sites and reinforcement boundary planting should result in the development being seen in the context of existing residential development.

#### **Sensitivity**

The Agricultural Heartlands: Central Wooded Estates LCA is not considered to be a pristine landscape as it contains existing settlement at Inverurie, which comprises existing residential development, industrial infrastructure and numerous man-made features including disused quarries, telecommunication masts and electricity pylons.

As a result of existing urban development, the LCA is considered to be of low sensitivity to the proposed residential development within the study area.

## 2.5 Agricultural Heartlands: Insch Basin LCA

The Agricultural Heartlands: Insch Basin LCA is an expansive area of relatively flat land located west of Oldmeldrum. A section of the East Balhalgardy site is located within the southern boundary of the LCA. The key characteristics of the LCA are summarised below:

- Relatively flat / gently undulating land;
- Consistent field pattern comprising large regular sized fields utilised for both crops and pasture, often bound with post & wire agricultural fencing;
- Lack of substantial tree cover; although beech avenues of trees, shelterbelts and groups of trees on top of hills exist;
- Numerous historical features; and
- Lack of substantial development with settlement largely restricted to individual stone farmhouses and smaller cottages.

It is therefore considered that the development of Conglass would not result in any significant indirect effects upon the LCA as the development should be seen in the context of the existing settlement of Inverurie. Development therefore will not introduce any effects that are not currently experienced within the LCA.

The development of East Balhalgardy would result in the direct conversion of a small component of LCA to residential land uses, which would be visible from parts of the LCA to the immediate north, east and west of the site; however these changes should be seen in the context of the existing settlement of Inverurie and the planned development at Conglass. It is considered that development therefore will not introduce any significant effects that are not currently experienced within the LCA.

The potential for containment of both developments with siting and reinforcement boundary planting should result in the likely effects of the development being visible in the context of existing residential development.

### Sensitivity

The Agricultural Heartlands: Insch Basin LCA is not considered to be a pristine landscape as it contains the settlements of Oldmeldrum and Insch, which comprises existing residential development, industrial infrastructure and numerous man-made features such as sewage works, telecommunications masts and electricity pylons.

As a result of the existing urban development, the LCA is considered to be of low sensitivity to the proposed residential development within the study area.

## 2.6 Agricultural Heartlands: Formantine Lowlands LCA

The Agricultural Heartlands: Formantine Lowlands LCA is an expansive area of gently undulating land located east of Inverurie. The LCA contains views of the North Sea, which are not typical of the other Agricultural Heartlands LCAs. The key characteristics of the LCA are summarised below:

- Relatively flat / gently undulating plateau land, which offers long views of the countryside and sea;
- Expansive areas of open farmland comprising large regular sized fields utilised for both crops and pasture, often bound with post & wire agricultural fencing;
- Open areas of rough pasture grazed by sheep;
- Lack of substantial tree cover; although policy woodland and shelterbelts are often prominent due to the relatively flat landform;
- Numerous historical features; and
- Range of settlement types comprising large villages such as Oldmeldrum as well as large farmhouses.

It is considered that the developments at Conglass and East Balhalgardy would not result in any significant indirect effects upon the LCA as the developments should be seen in the context of the existing settlement of Inverurie. Development of these sites therefore will not introduce any effects that are currently not experienced within the LCA.

### Sensitivity

The Agricultural Heartlands: Formantine Lowlands LCA is not considered to be a pristine landscape as it contains the settlements of Newmachar and Ellon, which comprises existing residential development, industrial infrastructure as well as numerous man-made elements such as telecommunications masts and electricity pylons.

As a result of the existing urban development, the LCA is considered to be of low sensitivity to the proposed residential development within the study area.

## 2.7 Local Landscape Character Areas (Drawing 0835/02)

The definition of landscape types indicated in the SNH character assessment document provides a great deal of information relating to landscape character, which is relevant at a regional level. However due to the limited size of the study area, the large area of urban land that it contains and the requirement to accurately assess the effects of the proposed development sites at a local level, a further assessment has been undertaken to reflect the detailed character found within the study area. An analysis of existing landscape character and quality has been carried out by a combination of field and desk studies and a further landscape character area of Urban LLCA has been identified. The LLCA covers the urban area of Inverurie, the new residential developments east of Inverurie and the Industrial Estates at the edge of Inverurie. Character illustrative photographs (Drawing 0835/03) highlights the characteristics of these urban areas which have also been mapped (Drawing 0835/02) due to their proximity to the proposed development sites.

### 2.7.1 Urban LLCA

The Urban LLCA is represented in the study area by Inverurie, the new residential developments at Osprey Village and Garioch Gate and the industrial estates on the eastern and western edges of Inverurie. The urban areas comprise mainly residential land use with associated infrastructure and open space provision. The key features of the LLCA are as follows:

- Primarily residential with the majority two storey detached or semi-detached homes;

- Generally of mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century and 21<sup>st</sup> century construction with older properties in settlement cores;
- Older one-two storey post-war detached, semi-detached or terraced properties;
- Settlement infrastructure comprising large supermarkets, retail parks and business centres along with local retail provision and school campuses; and
- Complex visibility patterns with visual containment provided by the presence of buildings, garden and street trees. Woodland areas associated with open spaces, walls and other structures also frame and contain views.

The proposed development sites at Conglass and East Balhalgardy will directly increase the total area of land that will be urban and therefore may increase the prominence of the character area in the study area; although it should be noted that following development of the land allocated for housing in the ADLP 2012 (H3 and M1 the sites will be bound by new and existing urban development, which already forms part of the urban character.

Furthermore, it should be noted that the development sites are located in an area scheduled for urban expansion.

### **Sensitivity**

The Urban LLCA is a typical small settlement landscape with a mix of building types and styles in a range of materials in close proximity, creating a small scale and variable built landscape with occasional large and very large open spaces in the form of the parks and left over space. The modern, suburban developments located on the edge of the settlement have larger plot sizes than the more central urban areas, with a higher number of street and garden trees.

The LLCA is highly modified containing variety of man-made features as well as garden vegetation and amenity landscapes associated with open spaces. These elements combine to enclose and shorten views; although open views of the open countryside can be experienced from elevated positions. This character area is considered to be of low sensitivity to the type of development proposed.

## **2.8 Historic Designations (Drawing 0835/02)**

The 3km study area contains two battlefields, one HGDL and thirteen SAMs. For the purposes of this LVIA, all historic landscape designations included within the assessment are considered to be of high sensitivity. It should be noted that there are no landscape designations within the study area.

### **2.8.1 Battlefields**

#### **Harlaw Battlefield**

Harlaw Battlefield is located immediately north of Inverurie and covers land within both the Agricultural Heartlands: Central Wooded Estates LCA and Agricultural Heartlands: Inch Basin LCA. The East Balhalgardy site lies wholly within the current confines of the Harlaw battlefield boundary and contains a number of current farmhouses and storage buildings. The boundary of the battlefield is currently under review by Aberdeenshire Council. The key features of the battlefield are as follows:

- The likely location of MacDonald's camp;
- The course of Earl of Mar's army from Inverurie and hill slopes north of Inverurie;
- The location of memorial cairns, the Pley Fauld and adjacent land;
- The battlefield plateau, its slopes and views out; and
- The location of Harlaw Monument.



The development of Conglass and East Balhalgardy would result in the direct conversion of a small component of land within the boundary of the battlefield for residential development which would be visible from parts of the battlefield; however these changes should be seen in the context of the existing settlement of Inverurie. It is considered that the proposed development sites therefore will not introduce any significant effects that are currently not experienced within the battlefield.

Furthermore, intervening farm buildings, woodland blocks and shelterbelts will offer screening of the proposed development sites from many areas within the battlefield.

### **Barra Battlefield**

Barra battlefield is located between Inverurie and Oldmeldrum and lies to the north-east of the site. The Barra battlefield boundary contains a number of current farmhouses and storage building as well as sewage works and Lochter Activity Centre. The key features of the battlefield are as follows:

- Barra Hill, including the hillfort;
- The line of Bruce's army march, which has been replaced by the B9170;
- Bruce Field and land west of the B9170 where fighting was likely to have occurred;
- Land in the vicinity of the A920 that likely covers the route of the killing and pursuit; and
- Land east of the battlefield that likely covers escape routes.

It is considered that the development of both sites would not result in any significant indirect effects upon the battlefield as the developments should be seen in the context of the existing settlement of Inverurie. Therefore the proposed development sites will not introduce any effects that are currently not experienced within the battlefield.

Furthermore, intervening farm buildings, woodland blocks and shelterbelts will offer screening of the proposed development sites from many areas within the battlefield.

## **2.8.2 Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes**

### **Keith Hall HGDL**

Keith Hall HGDL is located to the east of Inverurie and lies to the south-east of the sites. The key features of the HGDL are as follows:

- Example of the late 18th century parkland design of Thomas White Senior;
- The association with the Earls of Kintore;
- The landscape provides the setting for the A listed Keith Hall; and
- The age and canopy of the woodland contributes to its surroundings.

It is considered that the development of both sites would not result in any significant indirect effects upon the HGDL as the developments should be seen in the context of the existing settlement of Inverurie. Therefore the proposed development sites will not introduce any effects that are currently not experienced within the HGDL.

Furthermore, the woodland surrounding the park offers substantial enclosure to Keith Hall, Home Farm and their immediate surroundings. In addition, from the edge of the grounds intervening settlement, infrastructure, street and garden planting, woodland blocks and shelterbelts will offer screening of the proposed development sites.

### 2.8.3 Scheduled Ancient Monuments

#### **Mains of Balquhain, stone circle SAM**

Mains of Balquhain, stone circle SAM is located to the north-west of Inverurie and lies to the north-west of the sites. The SAM consists of a stone circle 600m north-east of Mains of Balquhain.

It is considered that the development of both sites would not result in any significant indirect effects upon the SAM as the developments do not introduce any effects that are currently not experienced at the SAM.

Furthermore, intervening road-side vegetation along the A96, farm buildings, woodland blocks and shelterbelts will offer screening of the proposed development sites from the SAM.

#### **Drimmies, symbol stone SAM**

Drimmies, symbol stone SAM is located to the north-west of Inverurie and lies to the west of the sites. The SAM consists of a red granite sculpted stone set in concrete by the entrance to Drimmies Farm.

It is considered that the development of both sites would not result in any significant indirect effects upon the SAM as the developments do not introduce any effects that are currently not experienced at the SAM.

#### **East Aquhorthies, stone circle SAM**

East Aquhorthies, stone circle SAM is located to the west of Inverurie and lies to the south-west of the sites. The SAM consists of eleven erect stones of varying height lying some 300m north-west of East Aquhorthies.

It is considered that the development of both sites would not result in any significant indirect effects upon the SAM as the developments do not introduce any effects that are currently not experienced at the SAM.

Furthermore, intervening woodland blocks and shelterbelts will offer screening of the proposed development sites from the SAM.

#### **Brandsbutt Stone, symbol stone SAM**

Brandsbutt Stone, symbol stone SAM is located within Inverurie to the south of the sites. The SAM consists of a triangular, dark whinstone stone lying some 65m south-west of the former steading of Brandsbutt.

It is considered that the development of both sites would not result in any significant indirect effects upon the SAM as the developments do not introduce any effects that are currently not experienced at the SAM.

Furthermore, intervening settlement will offer substantial screening of the proposed development sites from the SAM.

#### **Conyng Hillock, mound SAM**

Conyng Hillock, mound SAM is located within Inverurie to the south of the sites. The SAM consists of a monument comprising a substantial mound, which is visible as an upstanding monument, which was used as a burial mound in prehistoric times.

It is considered that the development of both sites would not result in any significant indirect effects upon the SAM as the developments do not introduce any effects that are currently not experienced at the SAM.

Furthermore, intervening settlement will offer substantial screening of the proposed development sites from the SAM.

### **Inverurie Cemetery, four symbol stones SAM**

Inverurie Cemetery, four symbol stones SAM is located to the south-east of Inverurie and also lies to the south-east of the sites. The SAM consists of a monument comprising the remains of four Pictish Symbols stones in the existing cemetery, which was once the former burial ground of Inverurie Parish Church.

It is considered that the development of both sites would not result in any significant indirect effects upon the SAM as the developments do not introduce any effects that are currently not experienced at the SAM. The SAM is located within the current extents of the Keith Hall HGDL boundary.

Furthermore, intervening settlement and shelterbelts will offer substantial screening of the proposed development sites from the SAM.

### **The Bass and Little Bass, motte-and-bailey castle SAM**

The Bass and Little Bass, motte-and-bailey castle SAM is located to the south-east of Inverurie and also lies to the south-east of the sites. The SAM consists of a monument comprising a 12<sup>th</sup> century motte-and-bailey castle, which is now recognisable as earthworks. The SAM is located within the current extents of the Keith Hall HGDL boundary.

It is considered that the development of both sites would not result in any significant indirect effects upon the SAM as the developments do not introduce any effects that are currently not experienced at the SAM.

Furthermore, intervening settlement and shelterbelts will offer substantial screening of the proposed development sites from the SAM.

### **Caskieben Moat, moated site and symbol stone SAM**

Caskieben Moat, moated site and symbol stone SAM is located to the east of Inverurie and to the south-east of the sites. The SAM consists of a monument comprising a high-medieval ditched enclosure and a relocated Pictish Symbol stone, which lie within the Keith Hall HGDL policy woodland.

It is considered that the development of both sites would not result in any significant indirect effects upon the SAM as the developments do not introduce any effects that are currently not experienced at the SAM.

Furthermore, the woodland surrounding the park offers substantial enclosure to Keith Hall, Home Farm and their immediate surroundings. It is therefore considered that this policy woodland will offer substantial screening of the proposed development sites.

### **Hillhead of Barra, standing stone SAM**

Hillhead of Barra, standing stone SAM is located to the north-east of Inverurie and also north-east of the sites. The SAM consists of a monument comprising a single Neolithic or Bronze-Age monolith.

It is considered that the development of both sites would not result in any significant indirect effects upon the SAM as the developments do not introduce any effects that are currently not experienced at the SAM.

Furthermore, intervening farm buildings, woodland blocks and shelterbelts will offer screening of the proposed development sites from the SAM.

### **3.0 VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

#### **Methodology**

This visual impact assessment has been prepared with reference to the 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (GLVIA) published by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013)).

The full methodology utilised is described in Appendix 1.0.

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This section appraises the existing landscape conditions at Conglass and East Balhalgardy and identifies their suitability for development for residential land use. As a development scenario is unknown at this stage, likely visual impacts based upon the development of both sites have been identified from five key locations. Following the development of a masterplan, this base analysis will be used to inform a formative LVIA where impacts on the visual amenity of the study area will be assessed from the same locations for consistency.

The assessment determines the degree of anticipated change to visual amenity, considering the nature of the development that would occur as a result of the proposed scheme. The buildings, open spaces, roads and transport corridors within the study area that may experience views of the development are collectively referred to as 'receptors'. Residual effects have been identified for each receptor.

Visual amenity is defined as the pleasantness of the view or outlook of an identified receptor or group of receptors.

#### **3.2 Potential Effects**

Development can change people's experience of landscape depending on existing context, the scale, form, colour and texture of the proposals, the nature of activity associated with the development and the distance from and the angle of view that the receptor has to the development.

The development sites are described in Section 1.1 of this report and in this context the key concern relating to visual impact is the extent to which development would intrude into existing views experienced by existing residents and day-to-day users of the area.

There are a number of ways in which development might impact on the existing landscape and visual amenity. Effects are likely to be either temporary (and relate specifically to the construction stage of works), or permanent (and incurred upon completion of the development), whilst other effects would be reduced over time as landscape mitigation measures mature and integrate the development into the existing landscape. Listed below are some likely key factors:

- The scale and form of the proposals may prove intrusive in the context of the existing landscape elements and overall visual character;
- The construction and final form of the proposals may involve the loss or fragmentation of landscape elements (buildings, open space, woodland and trees);
- The extent to which the proposals may intrude into existing views experienced by residents and day to day users of the area; and
- The extent to which current users of the landscape such as local residents or visitors may be subject to new effects.

#### **3.3 Statutory and Planning Context**

Statutes and national planning policy make provision for the protection and conservation of specific views. Within ALDP 2012, Aberdeenshire Council have indicated that the following valued views: (1) Countryside to east of Inverurie, above Oldmeldrum Road, (2) Designed landscape at Keithhall, (3) Views of Bennachie from the A96 (Tyrebagger and Insch area),

B9170 Oldmeldrum – Inverurie, Cairnwilliam (to Millstone Hill), Horses Road, Keithhall, Belthenie, and New Deer on the Methlick road, and (4) Views of Keithhall and Inverurie from Horses Road, Keithhall are sensitive to the visual impact of proposed development. However, field work and desk-top analysis has determined that existing residential development can be viewed from these locations. Therefore, the proposed development at Conglass and East Balhalgardy will not introduce a new element into the context of the existing views.

### 3.4 Viewpoints (see Drawing 0835/01)

A ZTV and viewpoint location plan was submitted to the Infrastructure Services Department of Aberdeenshire Council on 11th July 2013 for scoping comment. Following consultation and response from their in-house archaeologist, five viewpoints as identified by Brindley Associates Ltd as having the potential to show representative views of the development sites were agreed with Aberdeenshire Council.

The viewpoints are as follows:

**Table 1 – Viewpoint Locations**

N	Location	Grid Reference	Main Receptors
1	Harlaw Monument	375147, 824073	Minor road users, recreational users
2	A96 / Crawford Road junction	374334, 823374	Road users
3	B9170 at edge of Garioch Gate	377758, 823056	Local Residents, road users
4	Harlaw House	374651, 824730	Minor road users, recreational users
5	Edge of Chapel of Garioch	372090, 824080	Local Residents, road users

### 3.5 Visual Mitigation

It is estimated that visual effects resulting from the development of land at the proposed development sites would arise from the creation of new residential and employment area with associated structural and amenity landscape areas, boundary planting, street lighting and retained areas of woodland and shelterbelts. These potential effects can, in some instances, be mitigated by sensitive site design, the use of appropriate materials, colour palettes and by the provision of appropriate structural landscape areas.

### 3.6 Visual Baseline Conditions

With reference to the theoretical visibility of the development the viewpoints have been selected from locations within the study area with potential and representative visibility of the proposed development sites. (See Drawing 0835/01)

Due to the sloping and undulating topography of the sites and its immediate surroundings, views are often permitted into both Conglass and East Balhalgardy from the local vicinity; however particularly along large sections of the A96 the sites are screened by local topography, road-side vegetation, intervening woodland and settlement.

Visibility of both sites to the north and west of the study area are frequently restricted by landform as shown on the bareground ZTV. (See 0835/01). From the broader study area, views are generally fragmented due to the screening effects of vegetation and built form therefore long views are typically restricted to elevated locations such as at the edge of Chapel of Garioch (See Drawing 0835/14).

It is therefore considered that significant visibility of the sites is largely restricted to locations in close vicinity of the sites.

Groups of receptors within the 3km study area were identified during review of the visual envelope and site survey. Key representative groups of receptors include:

- Residents within the settlement of Inverurie as well as the adjacent countryside;
- Travellers along the A96, the B9001 and other minor roads in the study area; and
- Recreational users of footpaths, core paths and public open spaces in the study area.

### 3.7 Estimated Visual Effects

The viewpoints were taken from locations known to have theoretical visibility of the site and have therefore been selected from the parts of the study area with potential visibility of the sites. It should be noted that much of the study area is estimated to have substantially less visibility of the proposed development sites than the bareground ZTV (See Drawing 0835/01) suggests. This is due to the screening provided by the existing settlement in Inverurie, farm houses and buildings across the study area, the gently undulating landform, roadside vegetation and scrub, trees and woodlands.

### 3.8 Viewpoint 1 – Harlaw Monument (Drawing 0835/10)

This viewpoint is located at the foot of the Harlaw Monument approximately 350m to the north-west of the proposed development sites. The viewpoint illustrates the setting of the monument, its context within the battlefield and the typical views experienced by recreational receptors visiting the monument and Harlaw battlefield as well as minor road users who are considered to be of high sensitivity and medium sensitivity to the type of development proposed respectively.

As a prominent focal point within the area, views to and from the Monument are of importance. As such, receptors at this viewpoint experience close views of the existing settlement of Inverurie seen in the context of a gently undulating agricultural and wooded landscape. The existing development is sited below the horizon line which has been extended by the wooded slopes of the surrounding landform and summits such as Hill of Ardtannes. Electricity pylons are visible on the horizon, whilst the railway line and course of the River Urie can be identified due to the riparian woodland along its banks.

From this viewpoint both the proposed development sites will be visible; however a deciduous shelterbelt will filter views of much of East Balhalgardy. In addition, the viewpoint shows that the riparian woodland on the banks of the River Urie will screen the lower slopes of the north-facing slopes at Conglass.

It is considered that receptors at this viewpoint would experience a slight increase in the angle of view containing residential development if the higher north-facing slopes of Conglass were developed. Therefore it is estimated that development at Conglass could lead to significant effects; however any development at East Balhalgardy would be substantially screened.

The following mitigation measures should be implemented within the developing masterplan to minimise the estimated visual effects and integrate the development into the surrounding landscape:

- Break up expanse of housing development on slopes with layers of landscape and planting with the roads following the flow of the contours;
- Appropriate landscape treatment of linear riverside open space comprising groups of trees and structure and woodland planting to link into the existing woodland framework;
- Reinforce coniferous shelterbelt with locally appropriate tree planting to provide visual integration;
- Appropriate structure planting to the western boundary of the Conglass site to screen views from the west; and

- Appropriate structure planting to the northern boundary of the East Balhalgardy site to screen views from the north-west.

### 3.9 Viewpoint 2 – A96 / Crawford Road junction (Drawing 0835/11)

The viewpoint is located on the central reservation at the junction between the A96 and Crawford Road approximately 536m to the west of the proposed development sites. This viewpoint has been chosen to represent typical views experienced by road user receptors along both roads that are considered to be of medium sensitivity to the type of development proposed. Additionally, the viewpoint represents receptors at valued view (3) Views of Bennachie from the A96 (Tyrebagger and Insch area), B9170 Oldmeldrum – Inverurie, Cairnwilliam (to Millstone Hill), Horses Road, Keithhall, Belthenie, and New Deer on the Methlick road.

The viewpoint illustrates close-medium distance views of the new existing residential development, Garioch Gate located to the east of Inverurie. The Garioch Gate settlement is currently seen in the context of a gently undulating agricultural and wooded landscape; although intervening vegetation filters views from this location. The course of the River Urie can be identified due to the riparian woodland along its banks and the existing coniferous shelterbelt at Conglass can be seen beyond the scrubby embankment which restricts part of the view.

From this viewpoint both sections of the Conglass and East Balhalgardy sites would be visible; however the aforementioned embankment will screen views of much of Conglass. In addition, the viewpoint shows that the orientation of the view and the riparian woodland on the banks of the River Urie will screen the lower slopes of the south-facing slopes at East Balhalgardy.

It is therefore considered that receptors at this viewpoint would experience a slight increase in the angle of view containing residential development if the higher south-facing slopes of East Balhalgardy as well as the lower north-facing slopes of Conglass were developed. However, it is estimated that the development of both sites would not lead to significant effects as they would be seen in the context of existing development. With regard to the valued views, it is considered that the proposed development sites will potentially be seen in context with views towards Bennachie from sections of the A96; although it should be noted that Mither Tap is currently often screened from sections of the A96 by houses, embankments and road-side vegetation. It is further considered that Mither Tap would remain the focal point in views from the A96 when seen in context with the proposed development sites.

Although visual effects are unlikely to be significant at this location the following mitigation measures should be implemented within the developing masterplan to integrate the development into the surrounding landscape:

- Break up expanse of housing development on slopes with layers of landscape and planting with the roads following the flow of the contours;
- Appropriate landscape treatment of linear riverside open space comprising groups of trees and structure and woodland planting to link into the existing woodland framework;
- Reinforce coniferous shelterbelt with locally appropriate tree planting to provide visual integration; and
- Appropriate structure planting to the western boundary of the Conglass site to screen views from the west.

### 3.10 Viewpoint 3 – B9170 at edge of Garioch Gate (Drawing 0835/12)

The viewpoint is located in an elevated position on the grass verge of the B9170 at the edge of the new residential development, Garioch Gate. The viewpoint is located approximately 1.8km to the east of the proposed development sites and has been chosen to represent

typical views experienced by residential and road user receptors that are considered to be of high and medium sensitivity to the type of development proposed respectively. Additionally, the viewpoint represents receptors at valued views (1) Countryside to east of Inverurie, above Oldmeldrum Road and (3) Views of Bennachie from the A96 (Tyrebagger and Insch area), B9170 Oldmeldrum – Inverurie, Cairnwilliam (to Millstone Hill), Horses Road, Keithhall, Belthenie, and New Deer on the Methlick road.

The viewpoint illustrates close-medium distance views of the existing settlement of Inverurie seen in the context of a gently undulating agricultural and wooded landscape. The existing development lies below the horizon line which has been broken by a line of electricity pylons and the single wind turbine at Mains of Balquhain. The wooded summit of Knockinglews Hill is visible to the left of Mither Tap, which is the focal point of the view. The course of the River Urie can be identified due to the riparian woodland along its banks, beyond the rooflines of the homes sited on the northern edge of Garioch Gate.

From this viewpoint both the sites at Conglass and East Balhalgardy will be visible; however settlement at Inverurie will screen some views of development along the eastern edge of Conglass and road-side vegetation along the B9170 will filter views of development located on the higher slopes of the south-facing slopes at East Balhalgardy.

It is considered that receptors at this viewpoint would experience a slight increase in the angle of view containing residential development if the site at East Balhalgardy was developed. Therefore it is estimated that development at East Balhalgardy would lead to significant effects; however any development at Conglass would be seen in context with existing development. With regard to the valued views, it is not considered that the proposed development sites would detract from views of the countryside above Oldmeldrum Road as the proposed development sites will be seen in the context of the existing residential edge of Inverurie. In addition, the proposed development sites would not detract from views of Bennachie as again they would be viewed in context with the existing settlement at Inverurie. Mither Tap is also predicted to remain the focal point within the view.

The following mitigation measures should be implemented within the developing masterplan to minimise the estimated visual effects and integrate the development into the surrounding landscape:

- Break up expanse of housing development on slopes with layers of landscape and planting with the roads following the flow of the contours;
- Appropriate landscape treatment of linear riverside open space comprising groups of trees and structure and woodland planting to link into the existing woodland framework;
- Appropriate structure planting to the eastern and southern boundaries of the East Balhalgardy site to screen views from the east; and
- Developing below ridgeline along the 75m contour line to maintain existing views of the Harlaw Monument from the east.

### **3.11 Viewpoint 4 – Harlaw House (Drawing 0835/13)**

This viewpoint is located in an elevated position at the grass verge of a minor road off of the western boundary of Harlaw House approximately 1.2km to the north-west of the proposed development sites. It has been chosen to represent typical views experienced by recreational receptors visiting the area as well as minor road users who are considered to be of high sensitivity and medium sensitivity to the type of development proposed respectively.

The viewpoint illustrates close-medium distance views of the existing settlement of Inverurie seen in the context of a gently undulating agricultural and wooded landscape. The existing development lies below the horizon line which has been extended by the wooded slopes of the surrounding landform and summits such as Hill of Ardtannes. Electricity pylons are visible on the horizon, whilst the Harlaw Monument can be clearly seen towards the left of the view.



From this viewpoint both the sites at Conglass and East Balhalgardy will be visible; however topography and a deciduous shelterbelt along the ownership boundary at West Balhalgardy will screen and filter views of much of East Balhalgardy. In addition, the viewpoint shows that topography and the riparian woodland on the banks of the River Urie will screen the lower slopes of the north-facing slopes at Conglass.

It is considered that receptors at this viewpoint would experience a slight increase in the angle of view containing residential development if the higher north-facing slopes of Conglass were developed. However, it is estimated that the development of both sites would not lead to significant effects as they would be seen in the context of existing development.

Although visual effects are unlikely to be significant at this location the following mitigation measures should be implemented within the developing masterplan to integrate the development into the surrounding landscape:

- Break up expanse of housing development on slope with layers of landscape and planting with the roads following the flow of the contours;
- Appropriate landscape treatment of linear riverside open space comprising groups of trees and structure and woodland planting to link into the existing woodland framework;
- Reinforce coniferous shelterbelt with locally appropriate tree planting to provide visual integration; and
- Appropriate structure planting to the western boundary of the Conglass site to screen views from the west.

### 3.12 Viewpoint 5 – Edge of Chapel of Garioch (Drawing 0835/14)

The viewpoint is located in an elevated position on the central reservation at the edge of Chapel of Garioch approximately 2.9km to the west of the proposed development sites. This viewpoint has been chosen to represent typical views experienced by a limited number of residential receptors who are considered to be of high sensitivity as well as minor road users that are considered to be of medium sensitivity to the type of development proposed.

The viewpoint illustrates medium distance views of the existing new existing residential development, Garioch Gate located to the east of Inverurie. The Garioch Gate settlement is currently seen in the context of a gently undulating agricultural and wooded landscape; although the existing settlement in Inverurie is screened by topography and integrated within the current woodland matrix from views at this location. The line of electricity pylons can be clearly seen against the skyline and close vegetation provides a frame for the proposed development sites.

From this viewpoint sections of East Balhalgardy will be visible; however the Conglass site will be almost completely screened by landform. In addition, the viewpoint shows that close vegetation will screen much of the higher south-facing slopes at East Balhalgardy.

It is considered that receptors at this viewpoint would experience a slight increase in the angle of view containing residential development if the lower south-facing slopes of East Balhalgardy were developed. However, it is estimated that the development of both sites would not lead to significant effects as they would be seen in the context of existing development.

Although visual effects are unlikely to be significant at this location the following mitigation measures should be implemented within the developing masterplan to integrate the development into the surrounding landscape:

- Break up expanse of housing development on slopes with layers of landscape and planting with the roads following the flow of the contours; and

- Appropriate landscape treatment of linear riverside open space comprising groups of trees and structure and woodland planting to link into the existing woodland framework.

#### 4.0 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

The proposal comprises two sites of land to the north of Inverurie. The sites sit within a Strategic Growth Area in a predominantly agricultural landscape. The Conglass site lies wholly within the Agricultural Heartlands: Central Wooded Estates LCA, whilst the current boundary of East Balhalgardy also extends into the adjacent Agricultural Heartlands: Insch Basin LCA as identified by SNH. Therefore direct effects upon the character of both LCAs are estimated; however these effects are considered to relate to the immediate vicinity of the developments. Effects upon broader LCA character are not considered to be significant as the LCAs currently contain existing settlement. Therefore development of the proposed development sites will not introduce a new land use into any of the LCAs.

The proposed development sites are located within an area allocated for housing expansion in the current Aberdeenshire Structure and Local Development Plans and as a result of this, conversion of agricultural land to urban housing is considered to be an accepted consequence of local policy. This assessment therefore seeks to identify potential effects and identify opportunities for landscape and visual integration so that the development can be viewed in context with its rural context and integrated with the existing settlement at Inverurie.

It should be noted that the context contains recent residential development, which currently appears isolated from the core area of Inverurie and it is important that any development at Conglass and East Balhalgardy responds to the local vernacular to integrate within the current settlement and landscape pattern of Inverurie.

The proposed development sites are not considered to present significant landscape and visual effects for receptors in the southern and western sections of the study area. Significant effects are estimated from restricted locations in the north and east of the study area and, in the immediate vicinity of the sites; however this would be expected of any development within any area.

It is also considered that the proposed development sites would not significantly alter any of the four valued views. The development of the sites at Conglass and East Balhalgardy would result in the increase of residential development within views of the countryside; however the proposed development sites will not introduce a new land use into these views and will be seen in the context of the existing settlement at Inverurie.

It is predicted that the proposed development sites will not detract from views towards Bennachie when seen in context with Mither Tap, as Mither Tap will remain the focal point of the view. In addition, it is considered that appropriate landscape treatments will integrate the sites with Inverurie therefore development of the sites will not significantly alter any view towards Keithhall HGDL and Inverurie.

In conclusion, it is considered that through the careful development of a landscape led masterplan based upon mitigation proposals identified through the potential landscape and visual effects identified within this assessment that an aspirational development can be accommodated upon the land at Conglass and East Balhalgardy.

## 5.0 OPPORTUNITIES & CONSTRAINTS / LANDSCAPE MITIGATION PROPOSALS

Based upon the findings of the assessment and fieldwork a number of opportunities and constraints have been identified by Brindley Associates Ltd within Conglass, East Balhalgardy and the wider ownership boundary to inform land agreements and boundary refinements.

A number of indicative landscape mitigation proposals have been suggested to mitigate against potential limited and generally localised residual landscape and visual effects from areas to the north and east of the proposed development sites. It is considered that these mitigation proposals would also integrate the proposed development sites with Inverurie; therefore safeguarding the valued views of (1) Countryside to east of Inverurie, above Oldmeldrum Road, (2) Designed landscape at Keithhall, (3) Views of Bennachie from the A96 (Tyrebagger and Inch area), B9170 Oldmeldrum – Inverurie, Cairnwilliam (to Millstone Hill), Horses Road, Keithhall, Belthenie, and New Deer on the Methlick road, and (4) Views of Keithhall and Inverurie from Horses Road, Keithhall.

Subsequently, the assessment has informed opportunities to reinforce site boundaries and integrate new areas of woodland within the existing woodland matrix of the site and the broader landscape, which will provide screening to the developments. As such, this LVIA has identified areas of trees, structure planting and shelterbelts within the sites which should be retained and reinforced. The following indicative landscape mitigation and enhancement proposals have been identified to inform the site masterplan in discussion with the design team:

### Conglass

Recommended mitigation for Conglass as follows:

- Retention of existing riparian trees and woodland on the southern bank of the River Urie;
- Ensure adequate protection and retention of existing structure and ornamental planting at Conglass Farm and Conglass Cottages by use of appropriate tree protection fencing;
- Retention and reinforcement of southern coniferous shelterbelt as it delineates space and reduces visual impact of development from A96 and Crawford Road;
- Retention of mature boundary trees and reinforcement of western and south-western boundaries with appropriate structure and woodland planting to reduce visual impact of housing;
- Appropriate structure and woodland planting along southern boundary adjacent to existing railway line for safety;
- Appropriate offset of development from the A96 road corridor;
- Maintain development away from SEPA identified floodplain and either retain as agricultural land or use the undevelopable land for a linear riverside park with appropriate landscape treatment of waterside structure shrub and woodland planting in line with ADLP 2012 40% Open Space requirements;
- Break up expanse of housing development on slopes with layers of landscape and planting with the roads following the flow of the contours;
- Appropriate amenity roadside planting along Crawford Road to integrate the development; and
- Provide footpath connection to Crawford Road, linear riverside park, proposed housing development at western outskirts of Inverurie (M1) as well as the existing settlement on the northern outskirts of Inverurie for permeability.

### **East Balhalgardy**

- Maintain open views from western boundary of Harlaw Monument;
- Appropriate structure and woodland planting along northern boundary to integrate the development when viewed from the north;
- Appropriate structural and amenity roadside planting along B9001 to integrate the development when viewed from the east;
- Maintain development away from SEPA identified floodplain and either retain as agricultural land or use the undevelopable land for a linear riverside park with appropriate landscape treatment of waterside structure shrub and woodland planting in line with ADLP 2012 40% Open Space requirements;
- Break up expanse of housing development on slopes with layers of landscape and planting with the roads, including Eastern Relief Road following the flow of the contours; and
- Provide footpath connection to B9001, linear riverside park and existing settlements at East Balhalgardy for permeability.

### **Ownership Boundary (West Balhalgardy site)**

- Maintain development below ridgeline along the 75m contour line due to views from the south towards the Harlaw Monument;
- Break up expanse of any housing development on slopes with layers of landscape and planting with the roads, including Eastern Relief Road following the flow of the contours; and
- Provide footpath connection to East Balhalgardy, linear riverside park and existing settlements at West Balhalgardy for permeability.

## 6.0 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is considered that landscape and visual effects of the proposed development sites at Conglass and East Balhalgardy will be largely contained within the immediate vicinity of the site due to the siting of the sites in relation to the existing residential edge of Inverurie and the subsequent screening effects provided by the town's existing residential and industrial developments and landscaped open spaces.

Throughout the broader study area effects on landscape and visual amenity are not considered to be significant as the sites are either substantially screened from the assessed receptors or are seen as a not significant addition to a broader view of an agricultural landscape containing areas of existing residential development. Potential significant effects, which have been identified, relate to those viewpoints located close to the proposed development sites; however the close receptors identified at these locations are estimated to experience limited effects as any development would not introduce a new element into views or landscape character.

Mitigation planting can be incorporated within the site to provide visual integration and a more robust boundary between the existing urban area and the adjacent agricultural land than that which currently exists. Any proposed new structure planting or boundary treatments will be designed with reference to the existing character of the local vernacular and the broader extents of the Agricultural Heartlands: Central Wooded Estates LCA, in which the sites are located as well as the aims identified within the South and Central Aberdeenshire landscape character assessment. Scottish Natural Heritage Review No. 102.

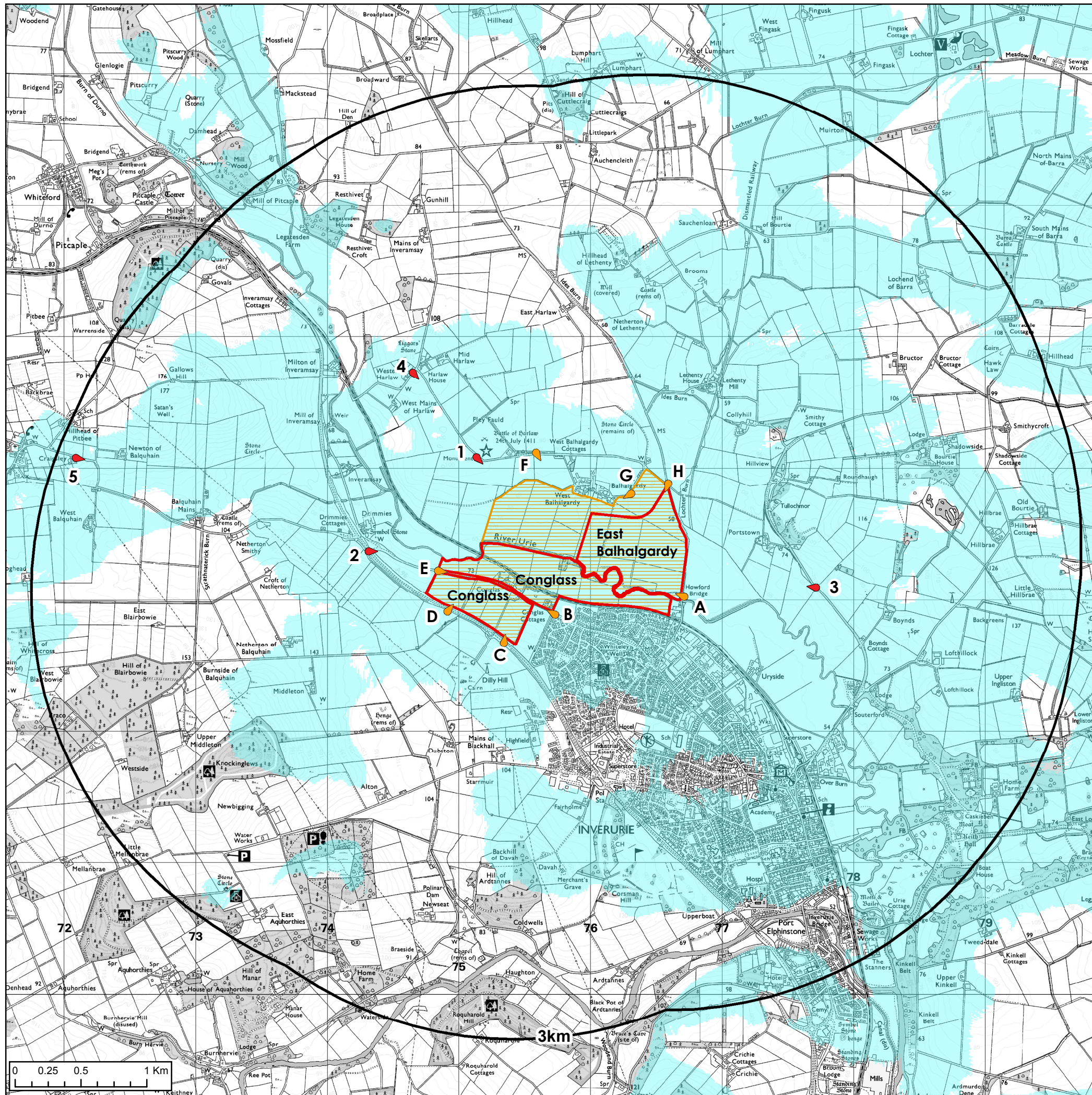
Furthermore, it should be noted that the proposed development sites are located within land identified as a Strategic Growth Area within the existing Aberdeenshire Structure Plan and Local Development Plan.

## 7.0 BIBLIOGRAPHY







1. Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan 2009;
2. Proposed Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan (February 2013);
3. Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2012;
4. South & Central Aberdeenshire Landscape Character Assessment (No. 102) by Environmental Resources Management on behalf of SNH (1998);
5. PAN 44 - Fitting New Housing Development into the Landscape – The Scottish Office (March 1994);
6. PAN 58 – Environmental Impact Assessment – The Scottish Office (September 1999);
7. The Landscape Institute & Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment - Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Third Edition) 2012;
8. Scottish Natural Heritage / Countryside Agency Guidance Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland (2002);
9. Supplementary Guidance Volume G: Settlement Statements Garioch, Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan (2012); and
10. Historic Land-use Assessment, RCAHMS and Historic Scotland, [www.hla.rcahms.gov.uk](http://www.hla.rcahms.gov.uk).

## 8.0 FIGURES





**Legend**

-  Initial Site Boundaries
-  Ownership Boundary
-  3km Study Area (Study area offset from ownership boundary)
-  Assessment Viewpoint Locations
-  Site Description Viewpoint Locations
-  Area from which development is theoretically visible

**Site Description Viewpoint Locations**

- A. B9001 / Howford Bridge (Grid ref. 376689, 823027)
- B. Crawford Road (Old A96) (Grid ref. 375748, 822890)
- C. A96, edge of Inverurie (Grid ref. 375341, 822693)
- D. A96 Layby (Grid ref. 374923, 822932)
- E. Minor road W of Conglass (Grid ref. 374862, 823222)
- F. Minor road W of West Balhalgardy (Grid ref. 375600, 824101)
- G. Minor road near East Balhalgardy (Grid ref. 376289, 823791)
- H. B9001 / Balhalgardy junction (Grid ref. 376585, 823862)

**Assessment Viewpoint Locations**

- 1. Harlaw Monument (Grid ref. 375147, 824073)
- 2. A96 / Crawford Road junction (Grid ref. 374334, 823374)
- 3. B9170 at edge of Garioch Gate (Grid ref. 377758, 823056)
- 4. Harlaw House (Grid ref. 374651, 824730)
- 5. Edge of Chapel of Garioch (Grid ref. 372090, 824080)

**Notes**

- 1. Predicted visibility is defined from an observer eye level of 2m above ground level.
- 2. Created using Ordnance Survey Landform Panorama dataset at 50m grid intervals.
- 3. The analysis does not take into account intervening screening vegetation or buildings.
- 4. Reproduced from Landranger 1:25,000 scale by permission of Ordnance Survey. © Crown Copyright. All rights reserved license no. 100039630.
- 5. Earth's curvature and light refraction has been included in the calculation.
- 6. The software used to create this ZTV does not use mathematically approximate methods.
- 7. Radii shown on the ZTV are taken from the ownership site boundary.

**ZTV Run Data**

Resolution: 10m  
 Type of Calculation: Single Development  
 Counting Method: Sum of each highest point visible  
 Visible Area: Highest points of development assuming a 10m height to building eaves

site: Inverurie - Conglass & East Balhalgardy	client: Bancon Developments Ltd
---	---------------------------------

drawing title: Bareground 10m Height ZTV & Viewpoint Location Plan
--

scale: 1:30,000 at A3	date: 23 / 08 / 13
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drawing number: 0835 / 01
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drawn by: <span style="background-color: black; color: black;">[REDACTED]</span>	checked by: <span style="background-color: black; color: black;">[REDACTED]</span>
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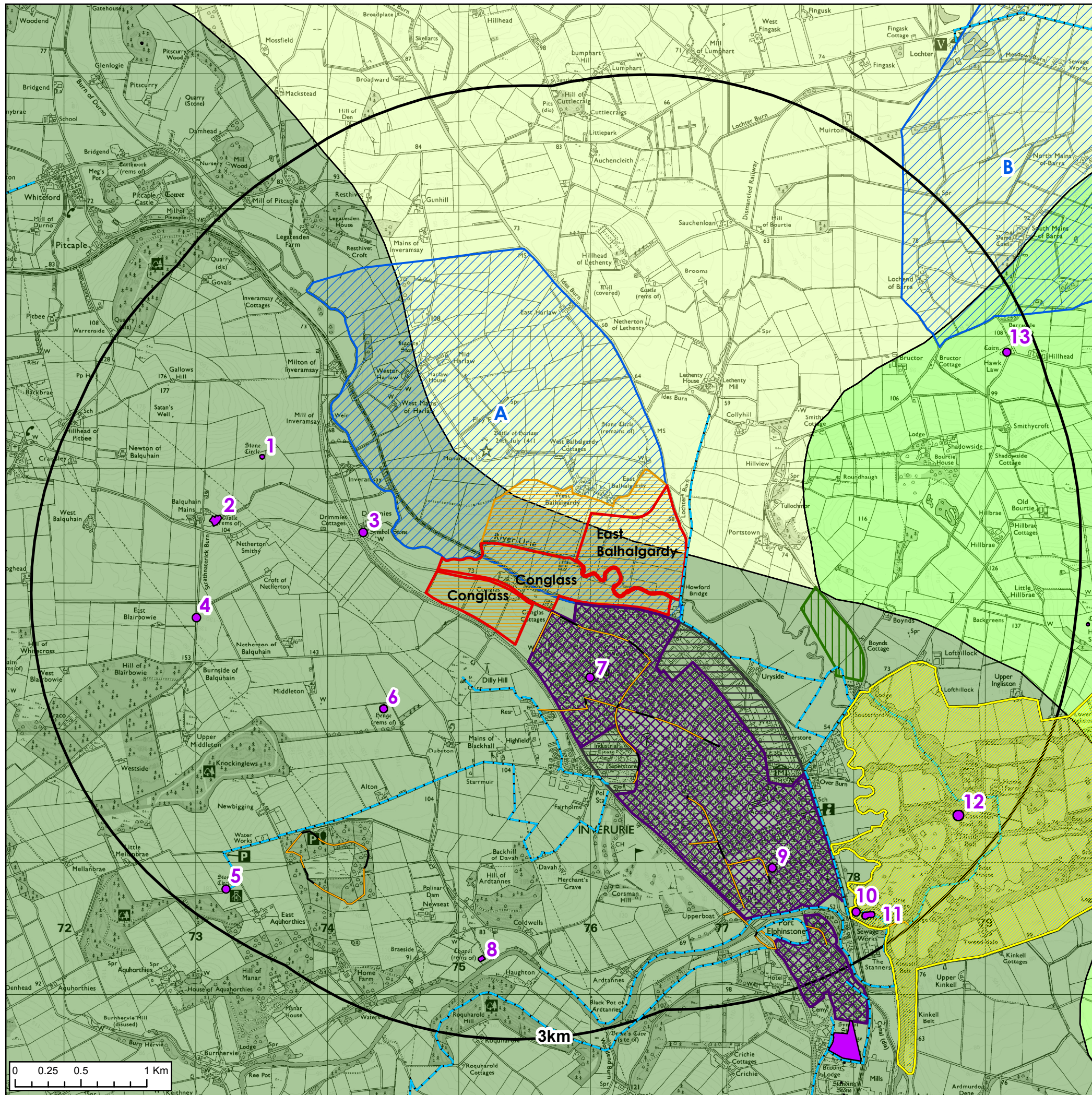


NORTH



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### Legend

- Initial Site Boundaries
- Ownership Boundary
- 3km Study Area (Study area offset from the ownership boundary)

#### Landscape Character Areas (SNH Review 102: South & Central Aberdeenshire, 1998)

- Agricultural Heartlands: Central Wooded Estates
- Agricultural Heartlands: Formantine Lowlands
- Agricultural Heartlands: Inch Basin

#### Local Landscape Character Areas (Not identified within SNH Review 102: South & Central Aberdeenshire LCA)


- New urban residential
- Urban residential
- Urban industrial

#### Historic Designations

- Battlefields: A. Harlaw B. Barra
- Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes: Keith Hall
- Scheduled Ancient Monuments:
  - Mains of Balquhain, stone circle
  - Balquhain Castle
  - Drimmies, symbol stone
  - East Blairbowie, standing stone
  - East Aquhorthies, stone circle
  - Dillyhill, enclosure
  - Brandsbutt Stone, symbol stone
  - St Apolinaris' Chapel and burial Ground
  - Conyng Hillock, mound
  - Inverurie Cemetery, four symbol stones
  - The Bass and Little Bass, motte-and-bailey castle
  - Caskieben Moat, moated site and symbol stone
  - Hillhead of Barra, standing stone

#### Long Distance Routes

- Core Paths
- Wider Network Path

site: Inverurie - Conglass & East Balhalgardy	client: Bancon Developments Ltd
drawing title: SNH Landscape Character Areas & Landscape Designations	
scale: 1:30,000 at A3	date: 23 / 08 / 13
drawing number: 0835 / 02	
drawn by: [redacted]	checked by: [redacted]
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Agricultural Heartlands LCA: Central Wooded Estates  
(SNH Review 102: South & Central Aberdeenshire LCA)



Agricultural Heartlands LCA: Inch Basin  
(SNH Review 102: South & Central Aberdeenshire LCA)



Agricultural Heartlands LCA: Formantine Lowlands  
(SNH Review 102: South & Central Aberdeenshire LCA)



New Urban Residential - Peregrine Drive



Abrupt settlement edge of new residential development



Existing Urban Residential - Gordon Place

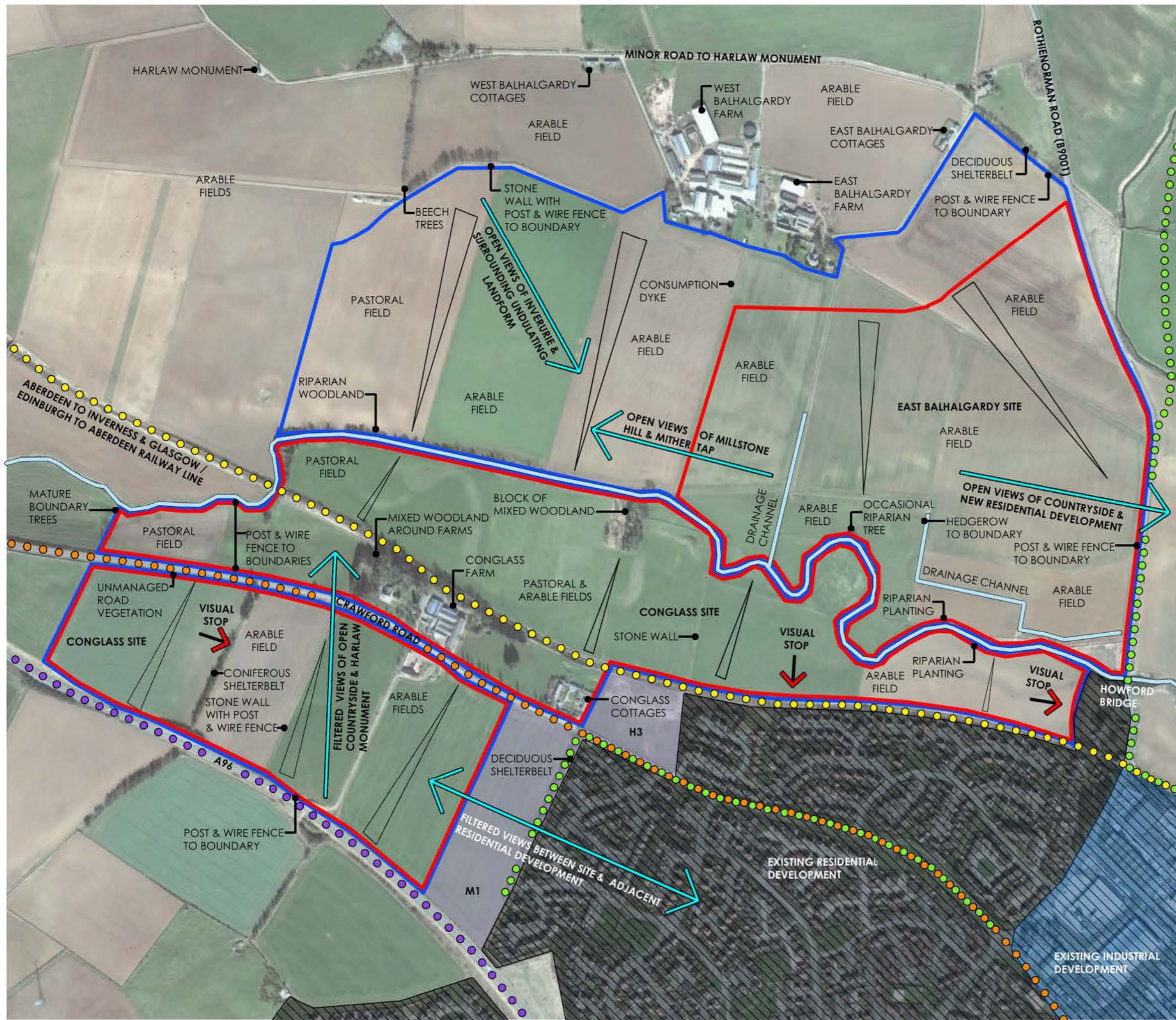


Urban Industrial - Burghmuir Drive
















Harlaw Monument

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drawing title: Landscape Character Area & Illustrative Photographs	
scale: NTS	date: 23 / 08 / 2013
drawing number: 0835 / 03	
drawn by: [redacted]	checked by: [redacted]
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**Legend**

-  Site boundaries
-  Approximate ownership boundaries
-  Panoramic views
-  Restricted views
-  Areas allocated for residential development in ADLP 2012
-  Existing industrial areas
-  Existing residential areas
-  Direction of A96 road corridor
-  Direction of Crawford road corridor (old A96)
-  Direction of railway lines
-  Core path network
-  Water courses
-  Slopes

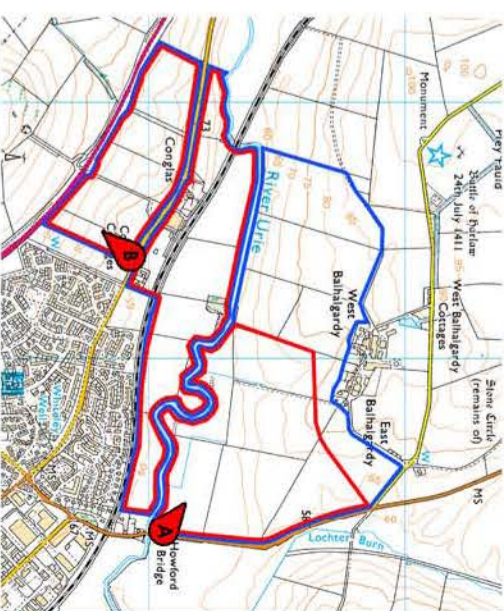


site: Inverurie - Conglass & East Balhalgardy	client: Bancon Developments Ltd
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 <p style="font-size: small;">brindley associates landscape architects &amp; environmental planners</p>	<p style="font-size: x-small;">© Brindley Associates Ltd. design   assessment   ecology</p>



Site Panorama A

- Post & wire fencing boundary
- Mixed structure planting associated with Howford Lodge
- Electricity pylons
- Millstone Hill
- Northern outskirts of Inverurie
- Aberdeen to Inverness and Glasgow / Edinburgh to Aberdeen railway line
- Mither Tap
- River Urie
- Unmanaged riparian verge planting includes occasional trees, rushes & weeds
- Telegraph pole
- Drainage channel
- West Balhalgardy Farm
- East Balhalgardy Farm
- Gently undulating lanform
- Arable field
- Hill of Easterton wind turbines
- B9001



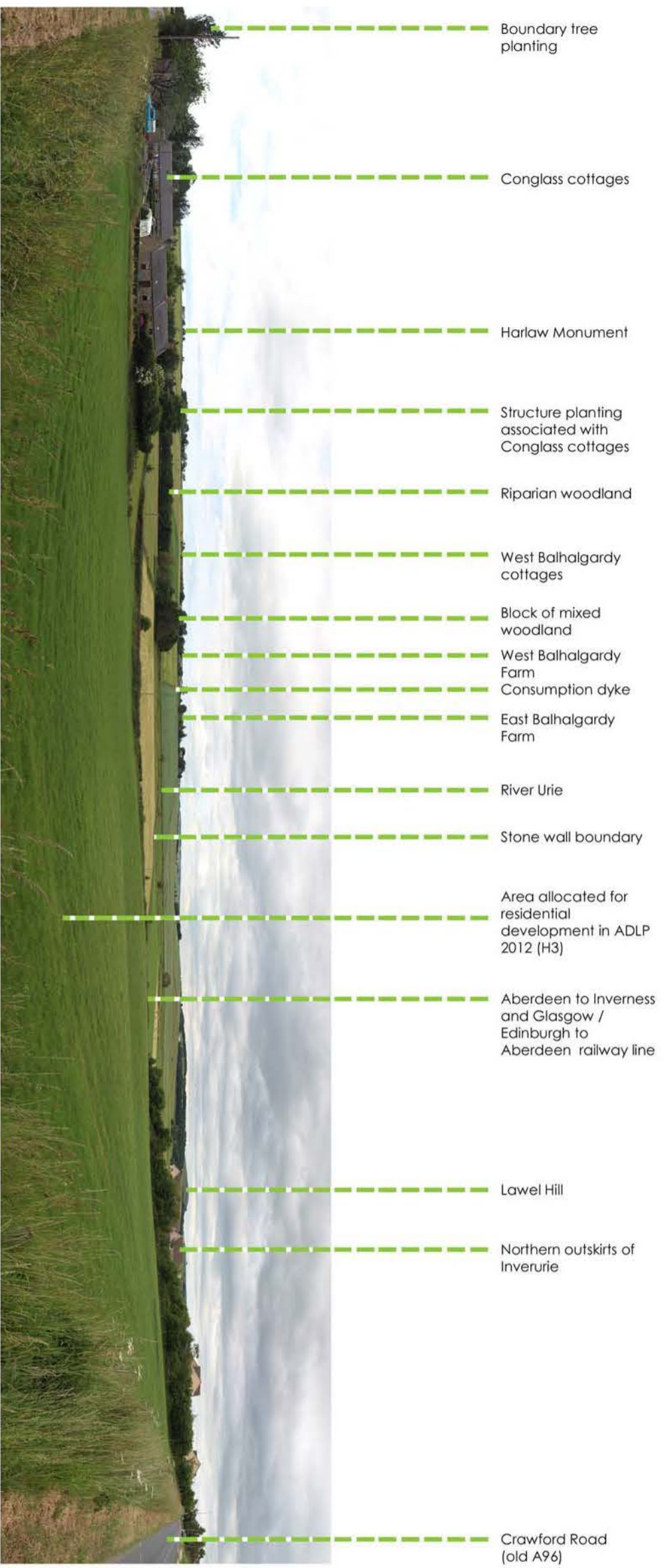
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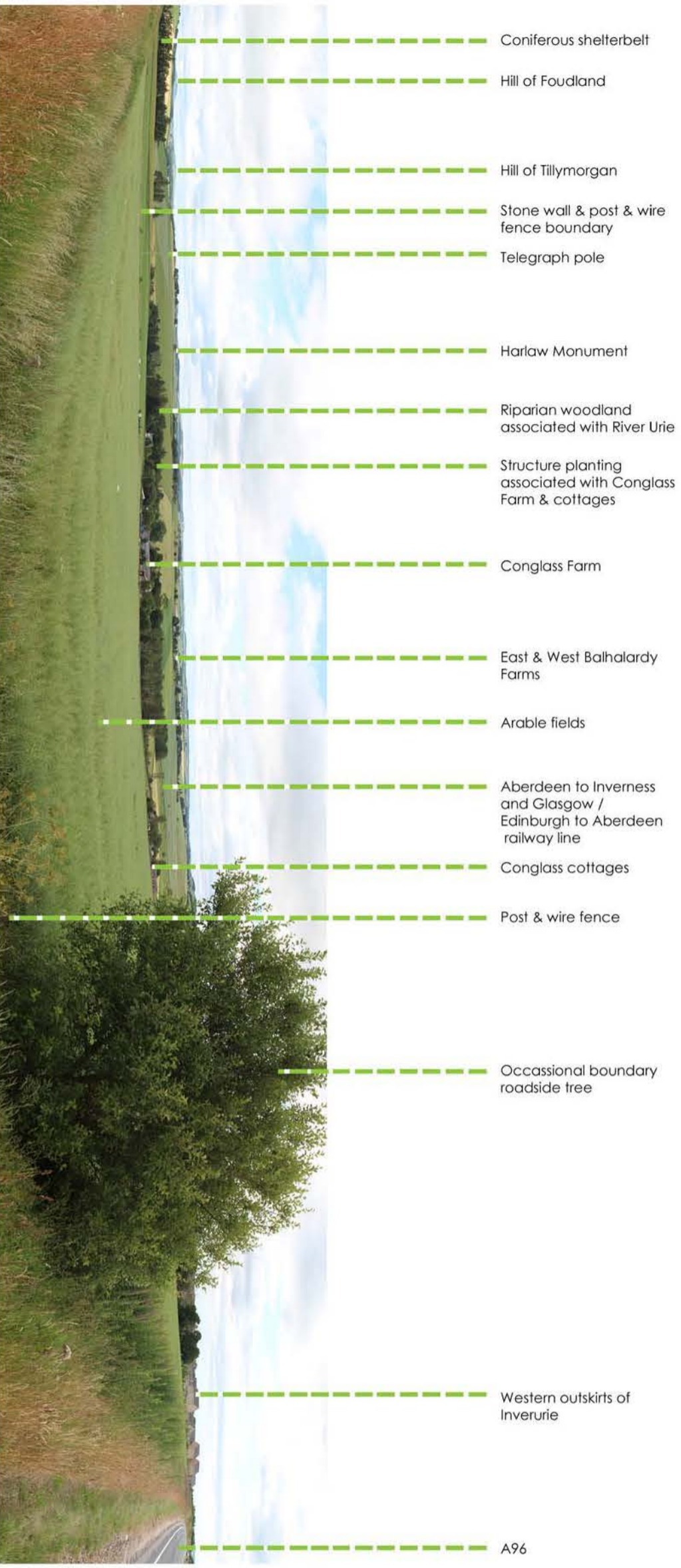
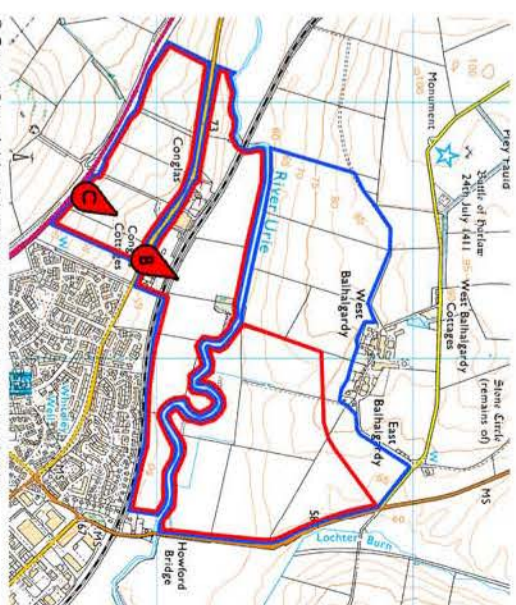
Site Panorama B looking south

- Deciduous shelterbelt to boundary
- Area allocated for residential development in ADLP 2012 (M1)
- Western outskirts of Inverurie
- Telecommunications mast
- Dilly Hill
- Arable field bound with post & wire fencing
- A96 road corridor
- Knockinglews hill
- Deciduous shelterbelt
- Roadside vegetation
- Boundary tree planting
- B9001
- Conglass cottages


site: Inverurie - Conglass & East Balhalgardy drawing title: Site Panoramas (Description Viewpoints A & B looking south) scale: NTS drawing number: 0835 / 05 drawn by: [redacted]	client: Bancon Developments Ltd date: 23 / 08 / 2013 checked by: [redacted]
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Site Panorama B looking north



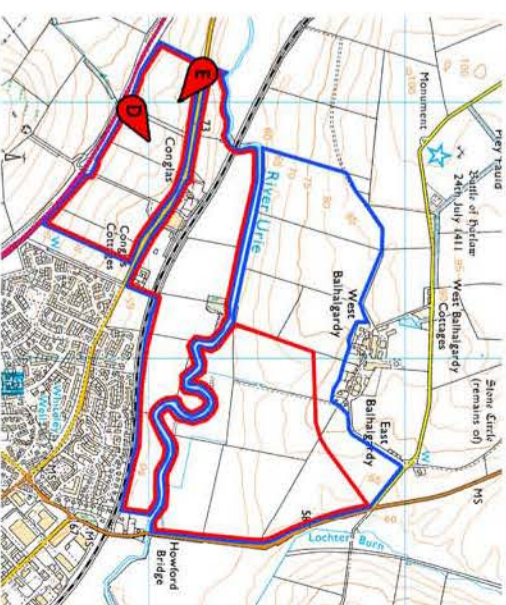
Site Panorama C

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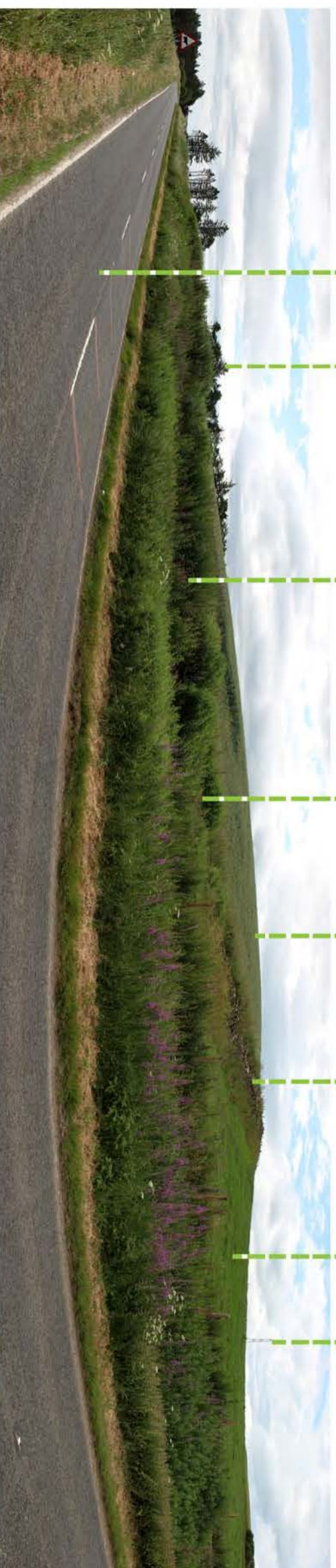


Site Panorama D

- Occasional boundary roadside tree
- Mains of Balquhairn wind turbine
- Drimmies Farm
- Aberdeen to Inverness and Glasgow / Edinburgh to Aberdeen railway line
- Harlaw Monument
- Arable fields
- Deciduous shelterbelt
- Riparian woodland associated with River Urie
- East & West Balhalardy Farms
- Post & wire fence
- Coniferous shelterbelt
- Filtered views of western outskirts of Inverurie
- Roadside vegetation
- A96 layby
- A96



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Site Panorama E looking south

- Crawford Road (old A96)
- Coniferous shelterbelt
- Roadside vegetation
- Post & wire fence boundary
- Gently undulating landform screens views of site & A96
- Stone wall & post & wire fence boundary
- Pastoral field
- Electricity pylon

<p>site: Inverurie - Conglass &amp; East Balhalardy</p> <p>client: Barcon Developments Ltd</p> <p>drawing title: Site Panoramas (Description Viewpoints D &amp; E looking south)</p> <p>scale: NTS</p> <p>drawing number: 0835 / 07</p> <p>drawn by: [redacted]</p>	<p>date: 23 / 08 / 2013</p> <p>checked by: [redacted]</p>
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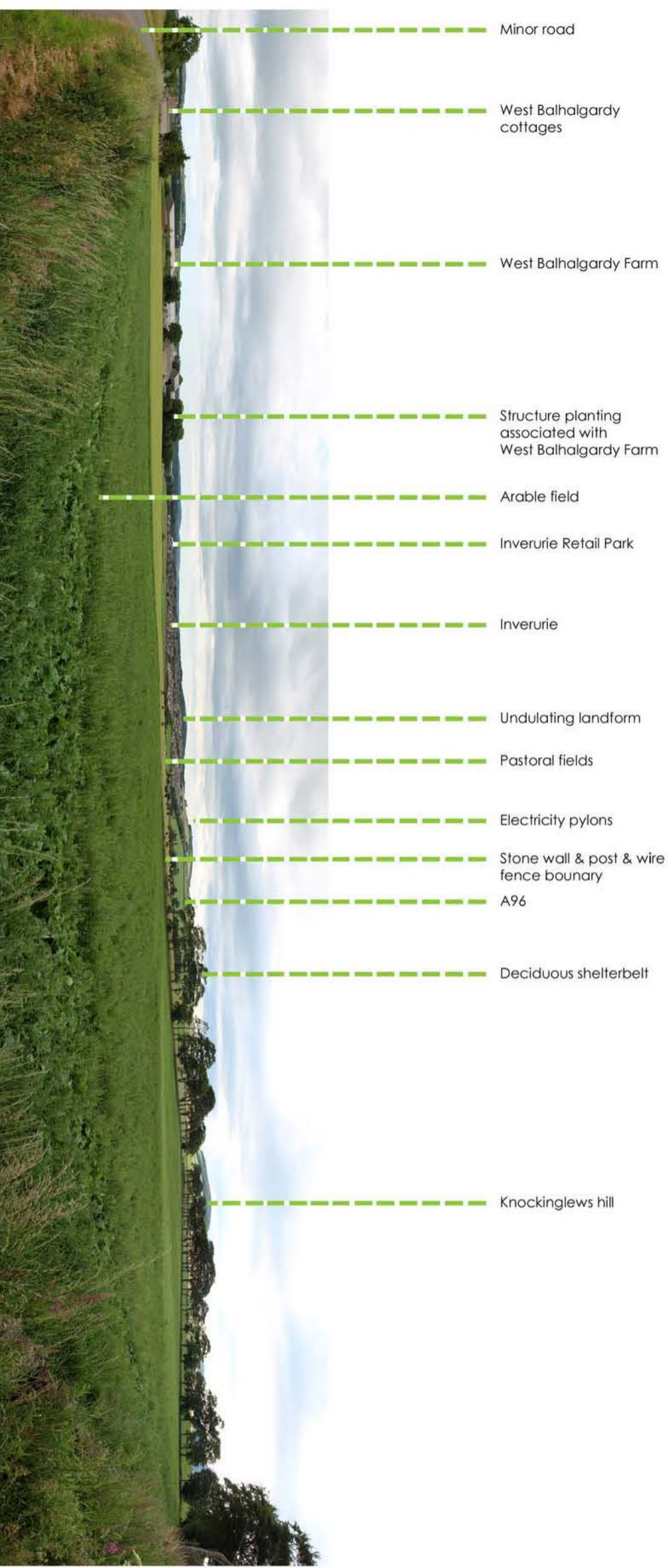
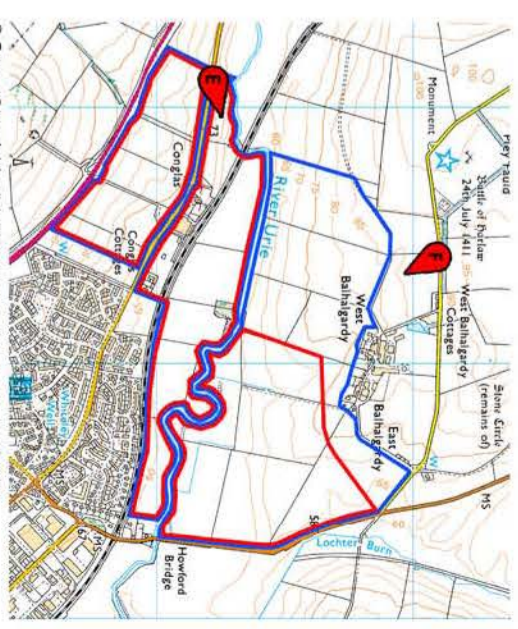
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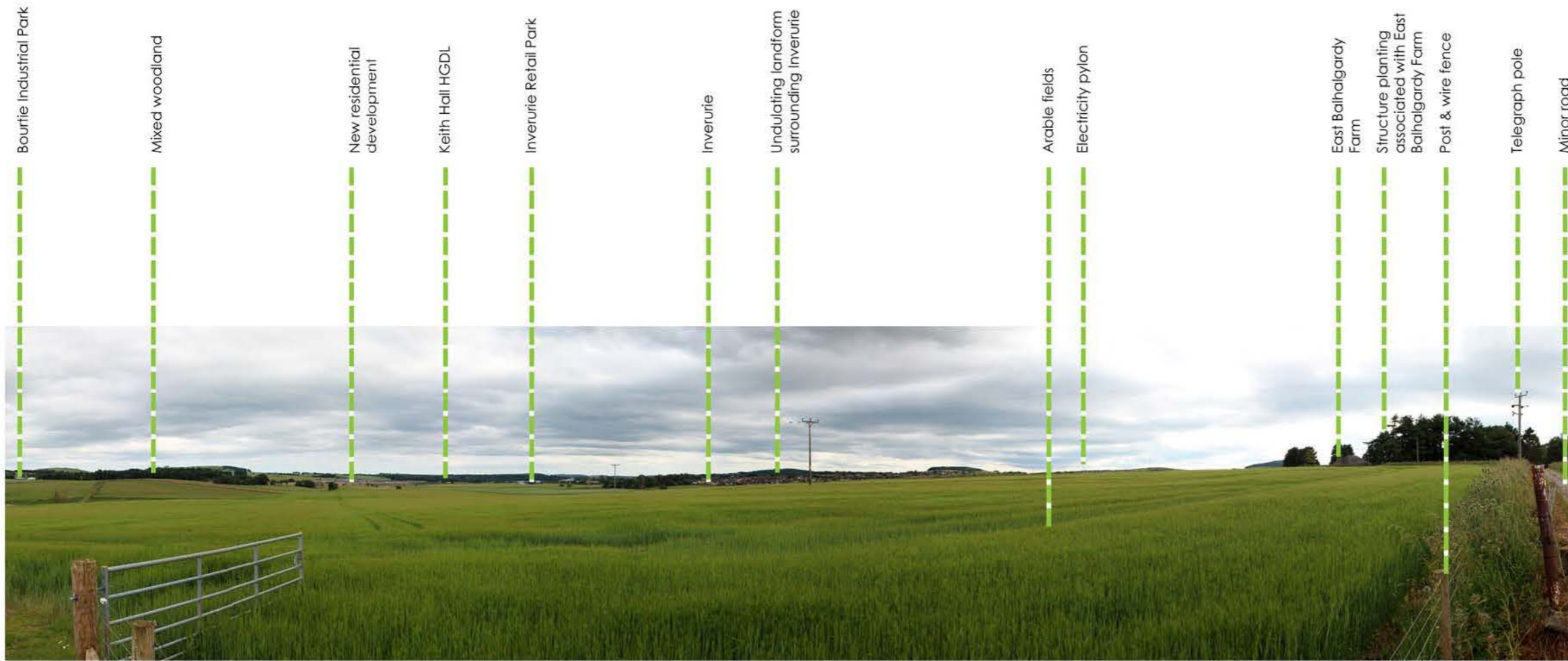
Site Panorama E looking north



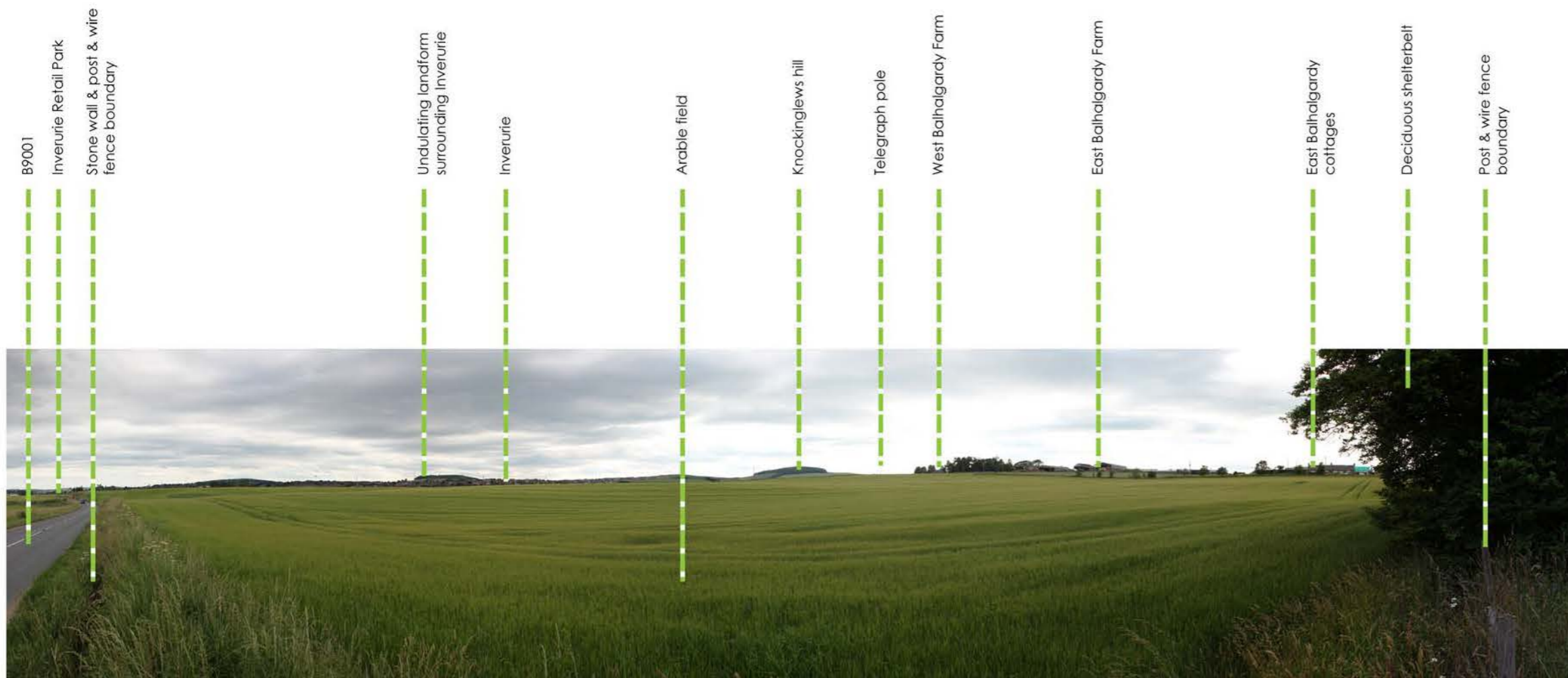
Site Panorama F

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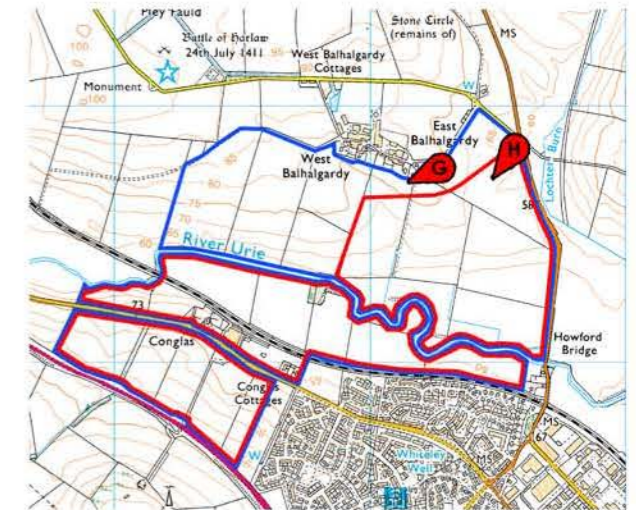




Site Panorama G



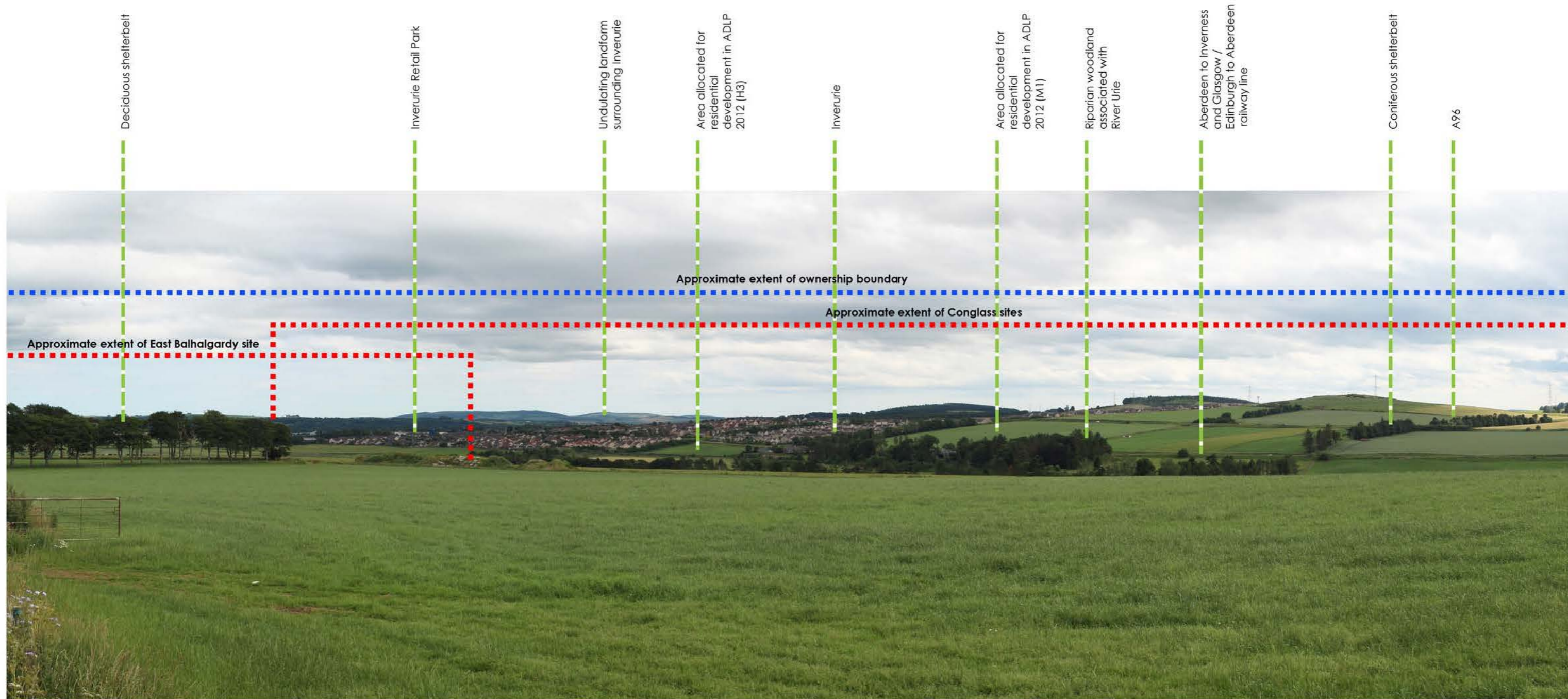
Site Panorama H



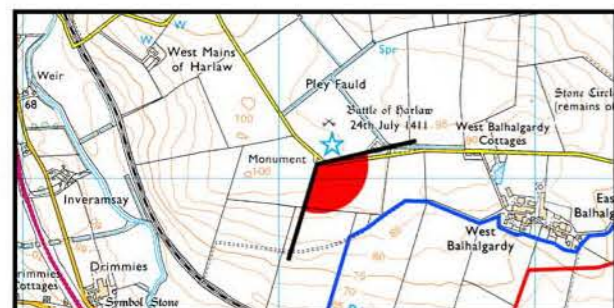
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- B9001
- Inverurie Retail Park
- Stone wall & post & wire fence boundary
- Undulating landform surrounding Inverurie
- Inverurie
- Arable field
- Knockinglews hill
- Telegraph pole
- West Balhalgardy Farm
- East Balhalgardy Farm
- East Balhalgardy cottages
- Deciduous shelterbelt
- Post & wire fence boundary

site: Inverurie - Conglass & East Balhalgardy	client: Bancon Developments Ltd
drawing title: Site Panoramas (Description Viewpoints G & H)	
scale: NTS	date: 23 / 08 / 2013
drawing number: 0835 / 09	
drawn by: [redacted]	checked by: [redacted]
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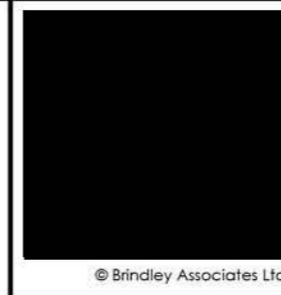


Assessment Viewpoint 1: Harlaw Monument - Panoramic Photograph



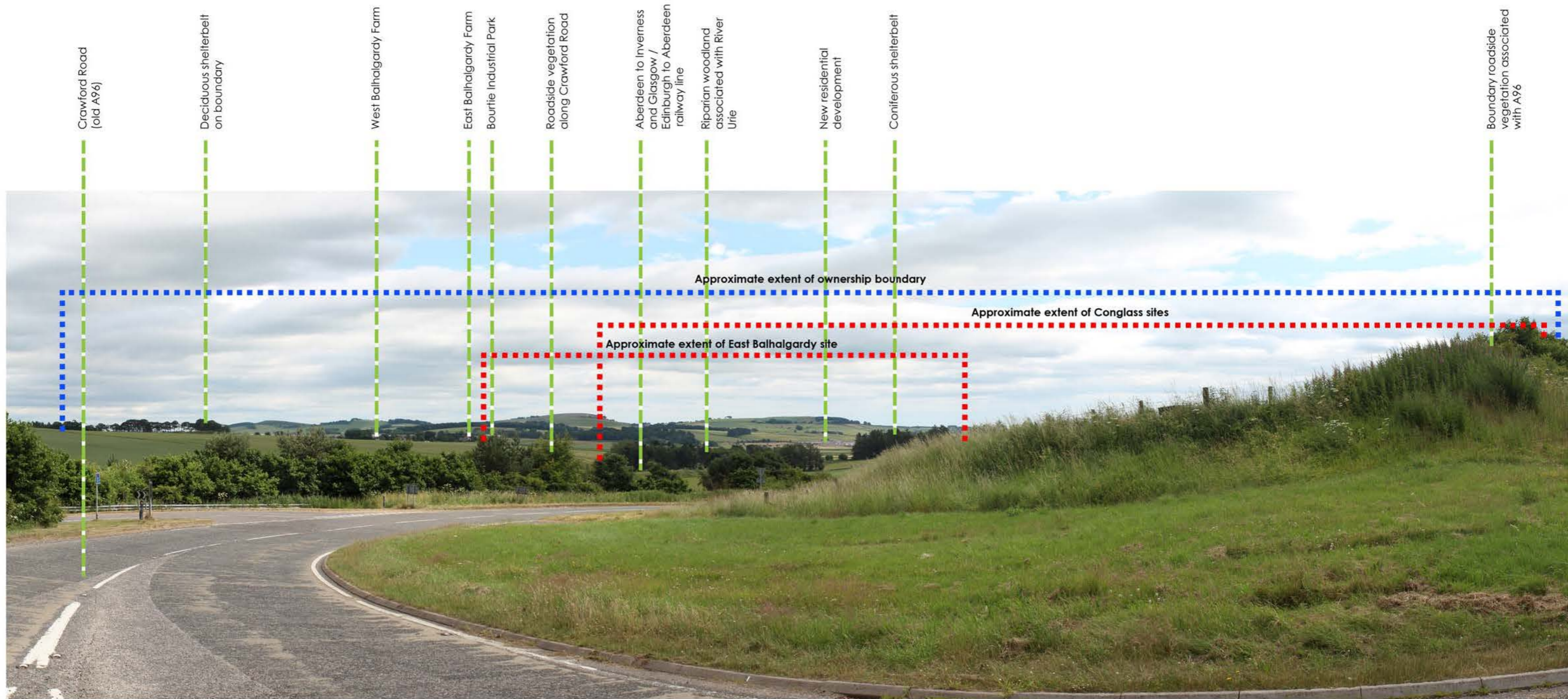
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**Grid Reference:** 375147, 824073  
**Approx. Distance to Development:** 350m  
**Approx. Horizontal Angle of View:** 120 degrees  
**Height of Camera Above Ground:** 1.4-2.1 metres  
**Date of Photography:** 15 / 07 / 13  
**Weather Conditions:** Bright with grey cloud



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site: Inverurie - Conglass & East Balhalgardy	client: Bancon Developments Ltd
drawing title: Assessment Viewpoint Photograph 1 - Harlaw Monument	
scale: NTS	date: 23 / 08 / 2013
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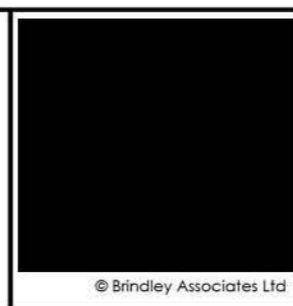


Assessment Viewpoint 2: A96 / Crawford Road junction - Panoramic Photograph

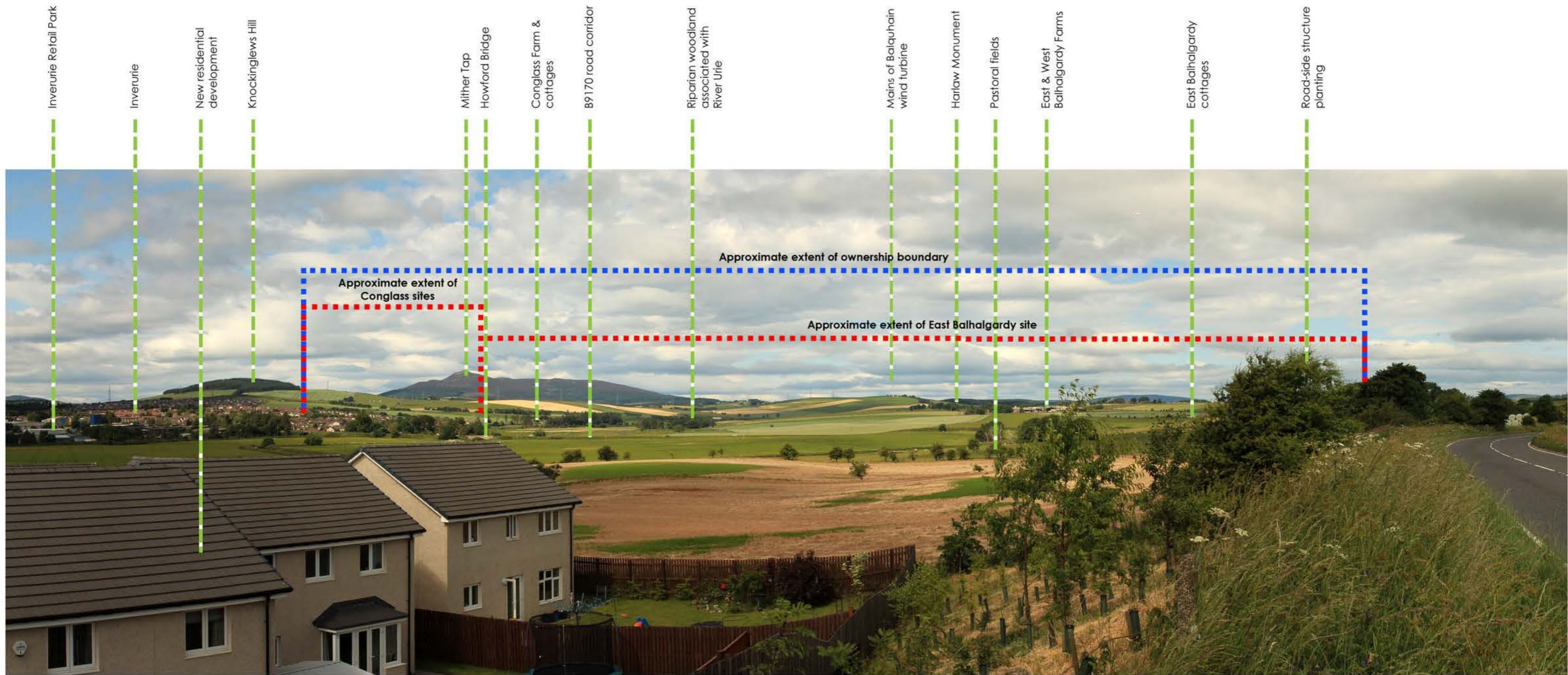


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**Approx. Horizontal Angle of View:** 120 degrees  
**Height of Camera Above Ground:** 1.4-2.1 metres  
**Date of Photography:** 15 / 07 / 13  
**Weather Conditions:** Bright with white cloud



site: Inverurie - Conglass & East Balhalgardy	client: Bancon Developments Ltd
drawing title: Assessment Viewpoint Photograph 2 - A96 / Crawford Road junction	
scale: NTS	date: 23 / 08 / 2013
drawing number: 0835 / 11	
drawn by: [redacted]	checked by: [redacted]

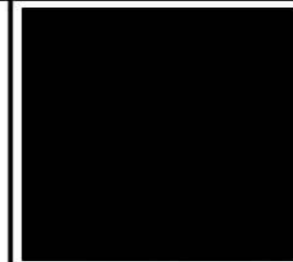


Assessment Viewpoint 3: B9170 at edge of Garioch Gate - Panoramic Photograph



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**Grid Reference:** 377758, 823056  
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**Approx. Horizontal Angle of View:** 120 degrees  
**Height of Camera Above Ground:** 1.4-2.1 metres  
**Date of Photography:** 15 / 07 / 13  
**Weather Conditions:** Bright with white cloud



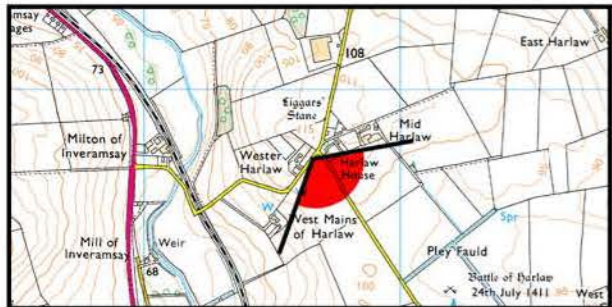
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site: Inverurie - Conglass & East Balhalgardy	client: Bancon Developments Ltd
drawing title: Assessment Viewpoint Photograph 3 - B9170 at edge of Garioch Gate	
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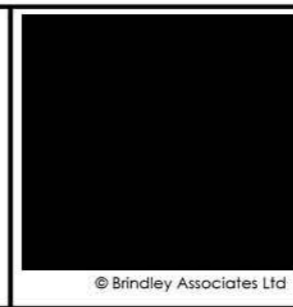


Assessment Viewpoint 4: Harlaw House - Panoramic Photograph

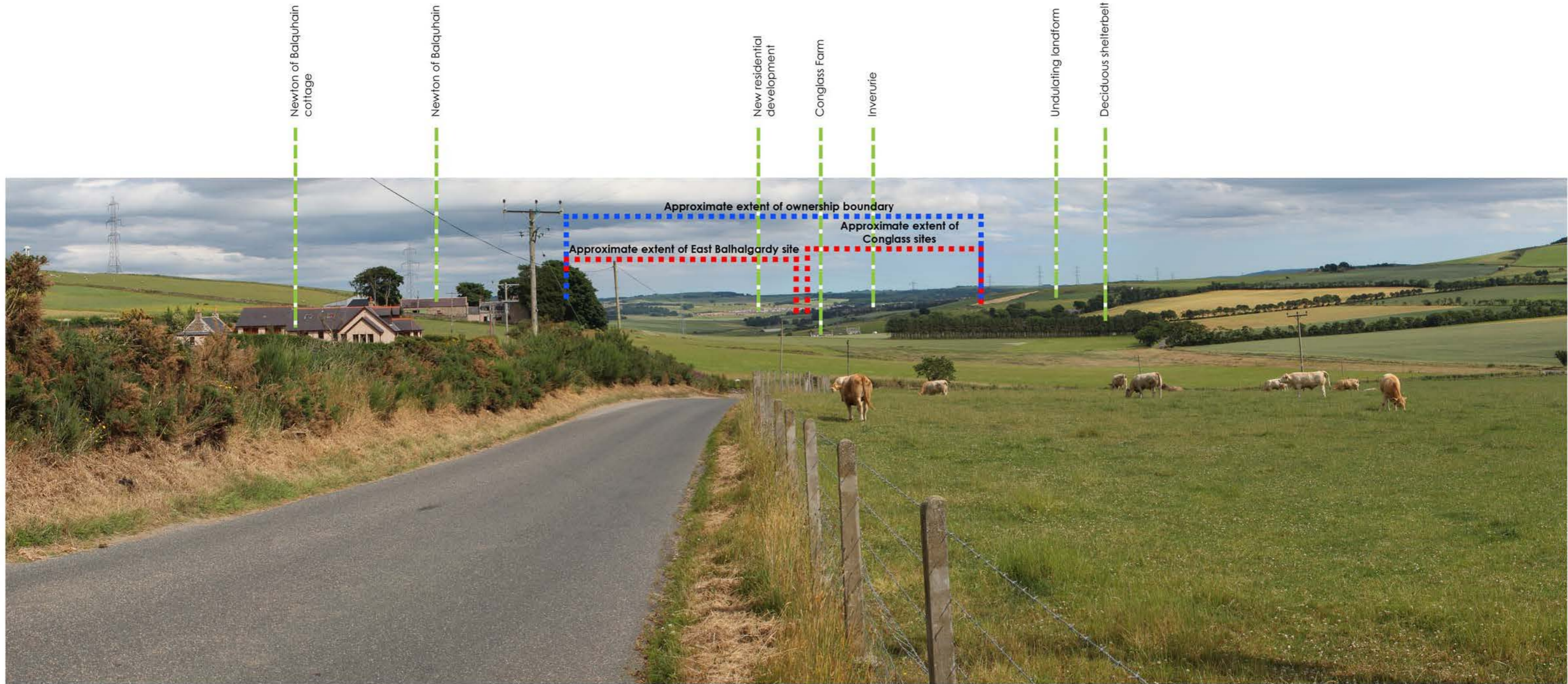


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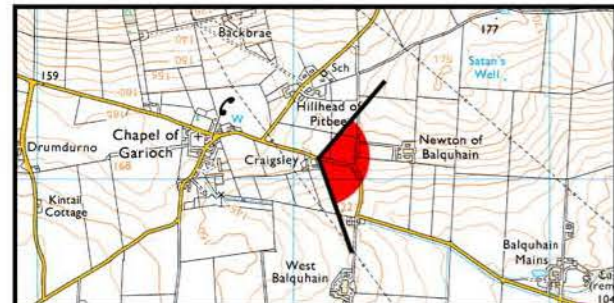
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**Date of Photography:** 15 / 07 / 13  
**Weather Conditions:** Bright with white cloud



site: Inverurie - Conglass & East Balhalgardy	client: Bancon Developments Ltd
drawing title: Assessment Viewpoint Photograph 4 - Harlaw House	
scale: NTS	date: 23 / 08 / 2013
drawing number: 0835 / 13	
drawn by: [redacted]	checked by: [redacted]

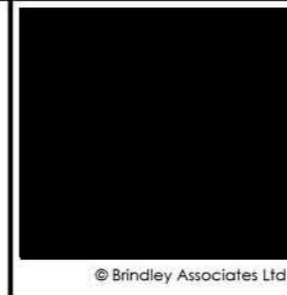


Assessment Viewpoint 5: Edge of Chapel of Garioch - Panoramic Photograph

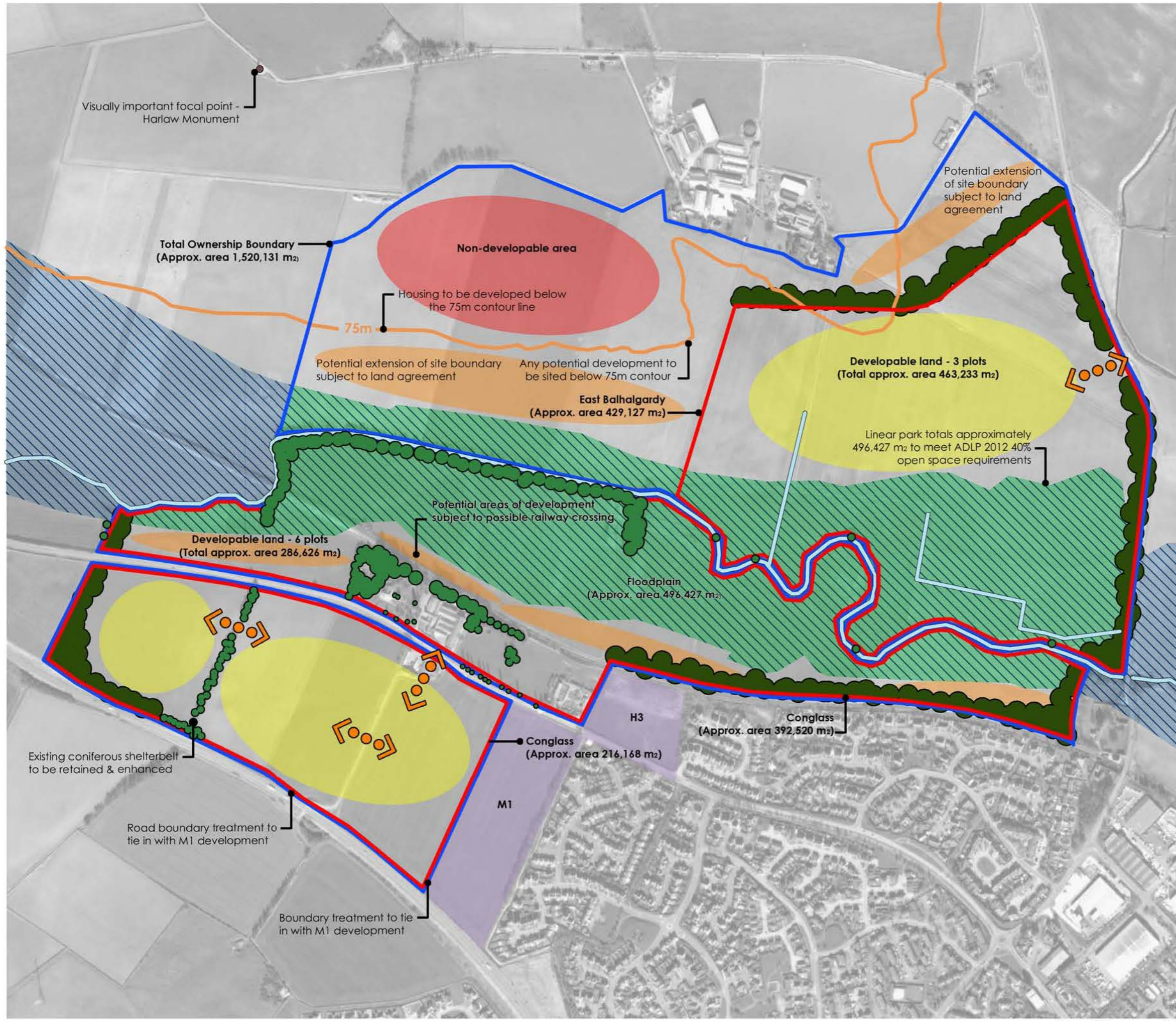


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**Grid Reference:** 372090, 824080  
**Approx. Distance to Development:** 2.9km  
**Approx. Horizontal Angle of View:** 120 degrees  
**Height of Camera Above Ground:** 1.4-2.1 metres  
**Date of Photography:** 15 / 07 / 13  
**Weather Conditions:** Bright with white cloud



site: Inverurie - Conglass & East Balhalgardy	client: Bancon Developments Ltd
drawing title: Assessment Viewpoint Photograph 5 - Edge of Chapel of Garioch	
scale: NTS	date: 23 / 08 / 2013
drawing number: 0835 / 14	
drawn by: [redacted]	checked by: [redacted]



**Legend**

-  Site boundaries
-  Approximate ownership boundaries
-  Areas allocated for residential development in ADLP 2012
-  Approximate extent of floodplain (See SEPA website)
-  Existing water courses
-  Indicative location of 75m contour
-  Existing woodland / trees to be retained
-  Proposed trees
-  Proposed linear riverside park (Relates to extent of floodplain)
-  Potential access
-  Proposed developable land
-  Potential developable land
-  Non-developable land (land highly sensitive to proposed development)

site: Inverurie - Conglass & East Balhalgardy	client: Bancon Developments Ltd
drawing title: Opportunities & Constraints Plan	
scale: NTS	date: 23 / 08 / 2013
drawing number: 0835 / 15	
drawn by: [REDACTED]	checked by: [REDACTED]
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## **APPENDIX 1**

### **1.0 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY**

#### **1.1 Extent of the Study Area**

The study area has been taken to be the land lying within a 3km radius of the centre of the proposed development sites. This selection of a study area does not imply that there will be no effects outwith the study area arising from the proposed development but, based upon initial fieldwork it is considered that there will be no significant effects arising from the development of the Conglass and East Balhalgardy sites outwith the study area. (See Figure 1)

#### **1.2 Consultation**

Consultation has been undertaken with the Infrastructure Services Department of Aberdeenshire Council to confirm the scope and extent of the assessment. The consultation sought to identify the key areas for consideration, as well as determine the approach of the assessment and viewpoints for inclusion.

#### **1.3 Method of Baseline Data Collation**

##### **Desk Study**

A preliminary appraisal of the baseline landscape and visual characteristics of the site, policy relating to the sites and study area, and of the characteristics of the study area was undertaken via an initial desk study.

##### **Technical Information**

Baseline technical information relating to the proposal was supplied by Bancon Developments Ltd. Further information has been extracted from the Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan 2009, the Proposed Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan (February 2013), the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2012 and upon published SNH landscape character information.

##### **Site Visit / Other Assessment**

Site visits to assess the landscape and visual impacts of the developments were made in July 2013 by members of Brindley Associates. Stuart Anderson, a Chartered Landscape Architect, and Scott Cochran, a Graduate Landscape Architect drove and walked over public roads, publicly accessible areas and paths in the study area and visited all viewpoints in order to inform the assessment.

Photography used for the preparation of assessment images was taken using a Canon digital SLR with a fixed focal length lens of 28mm, which is equivalent to the recommended traditional 35mm film SLR using a 50mm lens.

#### **1.4 Scope of the Landscape Assessment**

The assessment has been prepared with reference to the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA) published by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (Third Edition) in 2013. Reference has also been made to Scottish Natural Heritage / Countryside Agency Guidance Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland (2002).

#### **1.5 Method of Assessment**

LVIA relies on an appreciation of the existing landscape, a thorough understanding of the development proposals, evaluation of the magnitude of change estimated to result from the development before and after mitigation, the sensitivity of the existing landscape to change and the potential to mitigate identified landscape and visual effects.

##### **Key Stages and Tasks**

The assessment has involved the following key stages:



- Recording and analysis of the baseline landscape and visual resource in terms of character, quality, value and sensitivity to change of the existing landscape;
- An appreciation of the nature, form and features of the development;
- An assessment of the magnitude of change likely to result from the development both before and after mitigation; and
- Evaluation of the significance of effect of the changes identified based on magnitude of change and sensitivity.

The following specific tasks have been undertaken:

- Desk-based review of the project baseline environmental information;
- A review of the South & Central Aberdeenshire Landscape Character Assessment No. 102 dated 1998;
- Analysis of existing and proposed land use data and policies from the following documents:-
  - Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan 2009;
  - Proposed Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan (February 2013);
- Site appraisal of local landscape zones and the key landscape, ecological and cultural components determining them. Site recording involved a photographic record of the area;
- Drafting and description of local landscape zones including analysis of their sensitivity to change;
- Analysis of change in character and potential resultant effect on quality and value related to impact on specific landscape elements and the potential composite change in identity engendered by the development proposals. The analysis takes into account the proposed landscape and visual mitigation measures; and
- Assessment of the effects of the proposed change on local landscape zones and on the broader landscape types and areas defined in the South & Central Aberdeenshire Landscape Character Assessment No. 102 and by our study.

## **1.6 Landscape Value (Comprising Character, Quality and Value)**

### **Character**

Landscape Character is a product of the interaction of many elements including:

- Bedrock and drift geology;
- Climate;
- Historic land management, both recent and prehistoric;
- Current land management practice;
- Cultural factors including designations, cultural associations and tourism; and
- Biological elements.

These elements combine to create a common 'sense of place' and can be used to categorise the landscape into definable units (character zones). The level of detail and size of unit can be varied to reflect the scale of definition required. It can be applied at national, regional and local levels.

### **Quality**

Quality relates to the intrinsic aesthetic appeal of a character zone or composition of features within the landscape. An evaluation of existing scenic quality has been carried out based on a five point scale:

- Highest Quality - Contributing together to create a landscape composition which is aesthetically pleasing or scenically outstanding; or which is an outstanding example in the area of a particular landscape type or set of features;
- Very Attractive - Contributing together to create a landscape composition which is aesthetically and scenically pleasing; or which is a good example in the area of a reasonably well cared for "pure" landscape or set of features;
- Good Landscape - Contributing together to create a landscape composition which is aesthetically and scenically unremarkable; or an area or set of features which is neutral or of mixed character;
- Ordinary Landscape - Contributing together to create a composition which is aesthetically and scenically poor; or which is an example of an un-stimulating landscape or set of features; or with few or poorly related/ unrelated features; and
- Poor Landscape - Contributing together to create a composition which is aesthetically and scenically very poor; or which is an example of a monotonous, unattractive, or degraded landscape or set of features.

### **Value**

Value is normally addressed by reference to international, national, regional and local designations determined by statutory and planning agencies however it should be noted that the absence of such a designation does not necessarily indicate a lack of landscape quality or value. Contributing factors such as local accessibility and scarcity can mean that areas of nationally unremarkable quality are locally highly valuable as a landscape resource. An assessment of landscape value includes an appraisal of many factors including:

- Landscape quality;
- Scenic quality;
- Rarity;
- Representativeness of the landscape;
- Conservation interests;
- Recreational value; and
- Historical or cultural associations.

It should be noted that although this assessment may be influenced by landscape value it is not necessarily the case that a highly valued landscape is also a highly sensitive one.

ZTV mapping has been utilised to identify landscape receptors in the study area which may experience direct or indirect effects upon landscape character arising from development of the proposed development sites.

### **1.7 Landscape Sensitivity to Change**

The methodology used in this assessment adopts the terminology within current best practice of assessing "Sensitivity to Change" (GLVIA). The assessment of the landscape sensitivity to change is considered specifically in relation to the development of the proposed sites. The extent to which the landscape components and zones would accommodate and tolerate the type of change caused by the development is assessed by consideration of the following factors:

The change proposed:

- The ability of the landscape components which are physically affected to accommodate the change proposed;
- The ability of the wider landscape and its components to accommodate the change proposed; and
- The effects that a maturing landscape strategy will have over time upon integrating the change proposed by identifying estimated effects during:
  - construction of development upon the proposed sites to assess the potential effects of the construction process;
  - in the winter of completion of the development to assess the worst case effects of the completed development in the absence of a maturing landscape framework or screening by deciduous trees; and
  - In the summer of year 15 to assess whether the structural landscape proposals are reducing any identified impacts.

The landscape sensitivity has been evaluated on a relative basis within the study area and is described by a 3-point scale, using the following criteria:

- **High Sensitivity:** A landscape of particularly distinctive character or highly valued characteristics which is susceptible to relatively small changes of the type proposed;
- **Medium Sensitivity:** A landscape of moderately valued characteristics reasonably tolerant of change of the type proposed; and
- **Low Sensitivity:** A relatively unimportant landscape that is potentially tolerant of substantial change of the type proposed.

#### 1.8 Assessment of Magnitude of Proposed Change

The magnitude of change caused by the development proposals both during the construction, post mitigation, has been assessed using a 4-point scale and using the following criteria:

- **High:** Notable change in Landscape Characteristics over an extensive area ranging to a very intensive change over a more limited area;
- **Medium:** Moderate change in localised area;
- **Low:** Virtually imperceptible change in landscape components; and
- **Negligible:** No discernible change in any component.

#### 1.9 Significance of Effects

The prime criteria used to evaluate the impact on landscape character comprise:

- The extent to which existing landscape components and features would be lost or modified by the proposals (such as removal of existing woodland or modification to existing landform);
- The existence of the proposed form of development within the landscape and its current role as a determinant of existing landscape character; and
- The extent to which new or additional development of the type proposed would alter the balance and hence perception of the landscape character of the area containing the development.

Impact can be detrimental where features or key characteristics such as established planting have to be removed. Alternatively it can prove beneficial where poorly maintained landscape features are repaired, replaced and maintained or there is the introduction of a new landscape structure where none currently exists.

The findings are represented using a descriptive scale ranging from major - moderate - minor and adverse through negligible to an ascending scale of minor - moderate - major and beneficial.

Explanation of the impacts ratings is provided below:

**Table A1: Definition of Landscape Impacts**

<b>Landscape Effect</b>	<b>Definition of Effect</b>
Major Beneficial (positive) effect	The proposals constitute a major restructuring of a degraded landscape.
Moderate beneficial (positive) effect	The proposals greatly enhance the existing quality, value, form and pattern of the landscape; or further national objectives to regenerate degraded countryside.
Minor beneficial (positive) effect	The proposals fit well with the scale, landform, quality, value and pattern of the landscape; and they incorporate measures for mitigation to ensure they would blend in well with surrounding landscape.
Negligible effect	The proposals are well designed to complement the scale, landform quality, value and pattern of the landscape  They incorporate measures for mitigation to ensure that the scheme would blend in well with surrounding landscape features and elements.  They avoid conflict with national policies towards protection of the countryside.
Minor adverse (negative) effect	The proposals do not entirely integrate with the landform and scale of the landscape; and  They cannot be substantially mitigated against because of the nature of the proposal itself or the character of the wider landscape.
Moderate adverse (negative) effect	The proposals are out of scale with the landscape, or at odds with the local pattern and landform.  Mitigation would not prevent the scheme from scarring the landscape in the longer term as some features of interest would be partly destroyed or their setting diminished.  They are in conflict with policy for the protection of nationally recognised countryside.
Major adverse (negative) effect	The proposals are at considerable variance with the landform, scale and pattern of the landscape;  They are likely to degrade, diminish or even destroy the integrity of a range of characteristic features and elements or their setting;  They would be substantially damaging to a high quality or highly vulnerable landscape;  They are in serious conflict with policy for the protection of nationally recognised countryside.

### 1.10 Limitations and Assumptions

The assessment has been undertaken with reference to a combination of desk and field survey.

The assessment is based upon development aspirations supplied by Bancon Developments Ltd; assumptions have been made about the appearance of the completed development based upon meetings with the design team and Client.

### 1.11 Method of Visual Assessment

The guidelines suggest that visual impacts are assessed from a clear understanding of the development proposed and any related landscape mitigation measures. It calls for an understanding of the visual form of the existing landscape, its quality and sensitivity to change

taking into account the nature of the development. It further calls for an evaluation of the sensitivity of potential receptors (viewers) and of the magnitude of change likely to result from the implementation and use of the development. To this end the assessment has involved four key stages:

- An assessment of the visibility pattern for the development;
- Identification and field assessment of potential receptors within the visual envelope;
- An understanding of future changes to the baseline visibility patterns of the study area based upon the effects of proposed future developments; and
- Evaluation of the sensitivity of existing views and the magnitude of change that would result from the development of the proposed sites during construction and at completion as mitigation measures mature, as discussed in section 1.6 of this appendix.

### **1.12 Receptors**

Receptors include houses, work places, recreational facilities, sections of road, footpaths and other outdoor sites from which residents, workers, travellers and visitors would be likely to experience a change in existing views as a result of the construction and subsequent use of the development.

Potential receptors were validated and micro sited following site survey. Site survey considerations included the following factors:

- Receptor type;
- Relative height of the receptor to the proposal;
- Existing view (composition and quality);
- Distance of view;
- Percentage and elements of development potentially visible;
- Viewpoint position (view up/view down/level);
- Angle of view;
- Type of view (foreground / middle ground / background) and position of the development in the view; and
- Analysis of potential impacts of the development.

## APPENDIX 2

### LEGISLATION, POLICY AND GUIDANCE

#### Legislative Framework

Planning policies and guidance relating to Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment are issued at national, regional and local levels. The following sources were examined for policies relevant to the development sites at Conglass and East Balhalgardy, Inverurie.

- National Planning Policies and Guidance;
- Aberdeen City & Shire Structure Plan (2009);
- Proposed Aberdeen City & Shire Strategic Development Plan (February 2013);
- Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan (2012); and
- Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) guidance.

#### National Planning Policies and Guidance

Guidance from the Scottish Government is currently provided in the form of National Planning Framework (NPF2), Scottish Planning Policy document, Circulars and Planning Advice Notes (PANs). The purpose of the relevant documents are summarised below:

- Consolidated SPP: describes Scottish national planning policy relating to land use and sets out the objectives of location and design of new development, rural development, landscape designations and green belt policy;
- PAN 44 - Fitting new housing development into the landscape; and
- PAN 58 - Environmental Impact Assessment: relating to the process which identifies the environmental effects of development proposals.

#### Aberdeen City & Shire Structure Plan (2009)

The Aberdeen City & Shire Structure Plan sets out the strategic land use planning framework for Aberdeenshire and the City of Aberdeen over the period 2009 – 2030. As the proposed development sites are located within the Huntly to Laurencekirk Strategic Growth Area, the following targets within the current Plan may be of relevance to the landscape and visual appraisal:

- For at least 75% of all homes built, and employment land developed, to be in the strategic growth areas by 2030;
- For all developments meeting more than local needs to be in strategic growth areas, unless another area can be justified;
- To make sure there is at least 60 hectares of land available to businesses at all times in a range of places within strategic growth areas in Aberdeenshire;
- For at least 20 hectares of the above land available to businesses in the strategic growth areas to be of a standard which will attract high-quality businesses or be suitable for company headquarters;
- To avoid developments on land which is at an unacceptable risk from coastal or river flooding (as defined by the 'Indicative River and Coastal Flood Map for Scotland' or through a detailed flood risk assessment), except in exceptional circumstances;
- To move towards building at least 2,500 new homes a year by 2014 through the development plan;
- To move towards building at least 3,000 new homes a year by 2020 through the development plan;

- To make sure that development improves and does not lead to the loss of, or damage to, built, natural or cultural heritage assets;
- To avoid new development preventing water bodies achieving 'good ecological status' under the Water Framework Directive;
- For local development plans and all masterplans to fully consider the scope for a mix of uses on a site; and
- For major employment and service developments in strategic growth areas to show that they are easy to access by walking, cycling or using public transport.

#### **Proposed Aberdeen City & Shire Strategic Development Plan (February 2013)**

The proposed Aberdeen City & Shire Strategic Development Plan has been developed from and will subsequently supersede the current Aberdeen City & Shire Structure Plan. The Plan sets out the strategic land use planning framework for Aberdeenshire and the City of Aberdeen until 2035. As the proposed development sites are located within the Aberdeen to Huntly Strategic Growth Area, the following targets within the current Plan may be of relevance to the landscape and visual appraisal:

- Over the period to 2035, at least 75% of all homes built, and employment land developed should be in the strategic growth areas;
- For all developments meeting more than local needs to be in strategic growth areas, unless another area can be justified;
- To make sure there is at least 60 hectares of marketable land available to businesses at all times in a range of places within strategic growth areas in Aberdeenshire;
- For at least 20 hectares of the above land available to businesses in the strategic growth areas to be of a standard which will attract high-quality businesses or be suitable for company headquarters;
- To avoid developments on land which is at an unacceptable risk from coastal or river flooding (as defined by the 'Indicative River and Coastal Flood Map for Scotland' or through a detailed flood risk assessment), except in exceptional circumstances;
- To move towards building at least 2,500 homes a year by 2016 through the development plan;
- To move towards building at least 3,000 homes a year by 2020 through the development plan;
- To make sure that development improves and does not lead to the loss of, or damage to, built, natural or cultural heritage assets;
- To avoid new development preventing water bodies achieving 'good ecological status' under the Water Framework Directive;
- For local development plans and all masterplans to fully consider the scope for a mix of uses on a site; and
- For major employment and service developments in strategic growth areas to show that they are easy to access by walking, cycling or using public transport.

#### **Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2012**

Within the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan the following policies may be of relevance to the landscape and visual impact:

- Policy 1 – Business Development: Aberdeenshire Council will support the development of business and sustainable economic growth in all areas by taking account of the economic benefits of the proposed development;
- Policy 3 – Development in the countryside: Aberdeenshire Council will support development in the countryside where it meets the needs of a rural community by contributing to its overall social and economic wellbeing, and by promoting vigorous and prosperous rural settlement;
- Policy 5 – Housing land supply: Aberdeenshire Council will support the development of housing in line with the spatial strategy within the Aberdeen City & Shire Structure Plan;
- Policy 8 – Layout, siting and design of new development: Aberdeenshire Council will support new development on sites allocated within the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2012 plan, where they conform with a previously agreed development framework and/or masterplan (whichever is appropriate) for the site;
- Policy 11 – Natural heritage: Aberdeenshire Council will only accept harm to the environment where there is an overriding public interest;
- Policy 12 - Landscape conservation: Aberdeenshire Council will consider particular opportunities, sensitivities and vulnerabilities of different landscapes, and make sure that the implications of development are managed in an appropriate and sensitive way. To this end, Aberdeenshire Council have prepared supplementary guidance in the form of SG Landscape 2: Valued views. The following valued views are relevant to the proposal: (1) Countryside to east of Inverurie, above Oldmeldrum Road, (2) Designed landscape at Keithhall, (3) Views of Bennachie from the A96 (Tyrebagger and Insch area), B9170 Oldmeldrum – Inverurie, Cairnwilliam (to Millstone Hill), Horses Road, Keithhall, Balthenie, and New Deer on the Methlick road, and (4) Views of Keithhall and Inverurie from Horses Road, Keithhall;
- Policy 13 - Protecting, improving and conserving the historic environment: There will be a presumption against development that would have a negative effect on the quality of historic assets; and
- Policy 14 – Safeguarding of resources and areas of search: Aberdeenshire Council will not support developments that sterilise, degrade or otherwise make unavailable key strategic resources, including the water environment, important mineral deposits, prime agricultural land, open space, trees and woodlands.

#### **Scottish Natural Heritage Guidance**

Established in 1992, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) is charged with the responsibility of advising the Scottish Government and local government on matters relating to natural heritage. SNH has developed policies, guidelines, discussion documents and joint studies that define landscape values, quality, characteristics and interests. It has framed strategies targeted at conservation, enhancement and sustainable development within the Scottish landscape. Information from the South & Central Aberdeenshire Landscape Character Assessment No. 102 (1998) SNH publication has informed this assessment.