

INTEGRATION OF NEW DEVELOPMENTS INTO THE LANDSCAPE

SMALL SETTLEMENTS ASSESSMENT

FINAL REPORT

June 2005

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CHARLESTOWN OF ABERLOUR

The existing settlement has a linear, but strongly structured and planned character, which relates in alignment to the River Spey. More recent development has extended up the slopes away from the river, to a well defined 'edge' created by steep slopes and reinforced by woodland. Even more recently, development has 'leapfrogged' over this well defined edge to the Braes of Allechie, where long, even, north facing slopes of open grass fields rise above the village, separated from the settlement by the steep wooded slopes.

The two adjacent bid sites are located on these upper slopes, and offer fine views across the strath to the north west. The slopes are generally relatively gentle, although they steepen into a discernable ridge at the most south westerly end of the sites. The sites are elevated but generally well contained by woodland, with forest to the north east and on the steeper slopes to the north west, and smaller groups of woodland along the southern edge.

Landscape Opportunities

- Fine views to the north west characterise the sites, which are elevated above the bulk of the existing settlement
- The woodland, which is well established, as well as steeper land, provides good containment and creates a potential future settlement edge, although not as pronounced as the steep slopes which separate the sites from the rest of the settlement
- Although set apart from the existing settlement, the site maintains the linear pattern and is very close to some of the facilities, including the school, which reduces the sense of detachment

Landscape Constraints

- The sites are separated from the bulk of the existing settlement by short but steep slopes, which are largely wooded
- There is some sense of detachment created by this separation, although the sites are orientated in the same direction as the rest of the settlement, which creates a common element
- The land to the very south west of the sites forms a pronounced ridge, which would be better used to reinforce containment of any new development which could then be located within a defineable bowl of land

Conclusions

The site has potential for some development in landscape terms, with housing located on the more gentle and most concave slopes. Planting should be reinforced to maintain containment, and extended over the convex land forms and steeper slopes. The slopes which extend further up the hill (to the south east) of this site become progressively steeper and less appropriate for development, therefore consideration should be given to establishing an outer limit for the settlement edge.

INTEGRATION OF NEW DEVELOPMENT INTO
THE MORAY LANDSCAPE
Charlestown of Aberlour

Scale 1:10 000

Survey

 Steep slopes separate the site from the village

 Enclosing woodland

Proposals

 Landscape opportunity for housing

 Establish planting on this ridge to emphasise containment

 Establish pedestrian access to the school and other facilities



CULLEN

The existing settlement curves around a long bay and extends in a more formal, planned layout southwards away from the coast across increasingly elevated land. The settlement has exploited more gentle and accessible slopes in the more sheltered locations, although some of the upper slopes are slightly more exposed, especially from the north.

The settlement offers fine views across the sea from many roads and buildings, views which are emphasised where the long straight roads of the formal layout extend up from the coast.

The development bid occupies an elevated and somewhat exposed open field to the south east of the existing settlement. It occupies the nose of a ridge system which extends towards the town from higher hills which contain the settlement. The landform is smooth, and becomes steeper as it rises towards a defined summit. The slopes offer extensive views, and are orientated north/ north west.

Landscape Opportunities

- The site has extensive views, and could take advantage of the more western orientated slopes
- Although elevated, the more gentle slopes are foreshortened, therefore buildings would be less visible from a distance in these areas
- Development here could be combined with an opportunity to create a more permanent settlement edge feature

Landscape Constraints

- The site is exposed, particularly to the easterly winds
- The steeper slopes are more visible and the south eastern corner of the site begins to be orientated away from the settlement, breaching the main enclosing ridge
- Development too high up these slopes will encroach upon the scale of the summit, which needs a bit of space to retain its integrity

Conclusions

Developing the more gentle, west facing slopes of the site offers the opportunity to both extend the settlement slightly and create a well defined edge to the settlement along the more exposed ridges. The design of a permanent upper edge of the settlement should include planting to the south and east of the site, even in this exposed location. Planting should include a robust shrub layer, as well as trees.

Planting to the east should extend along the edge of the adjacent playing field, which would unify the settlement edge and provide some shelter from the easterly winds.

INTEGRATION OF NEW DEVELOPMENT INTO
THE MORAY LANDSCAPE

Cullen

Scale 1:10 000

Survey

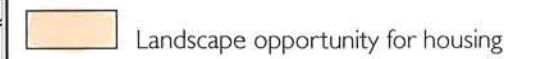


Steep slopes



Summit of distinct hill

Proposals



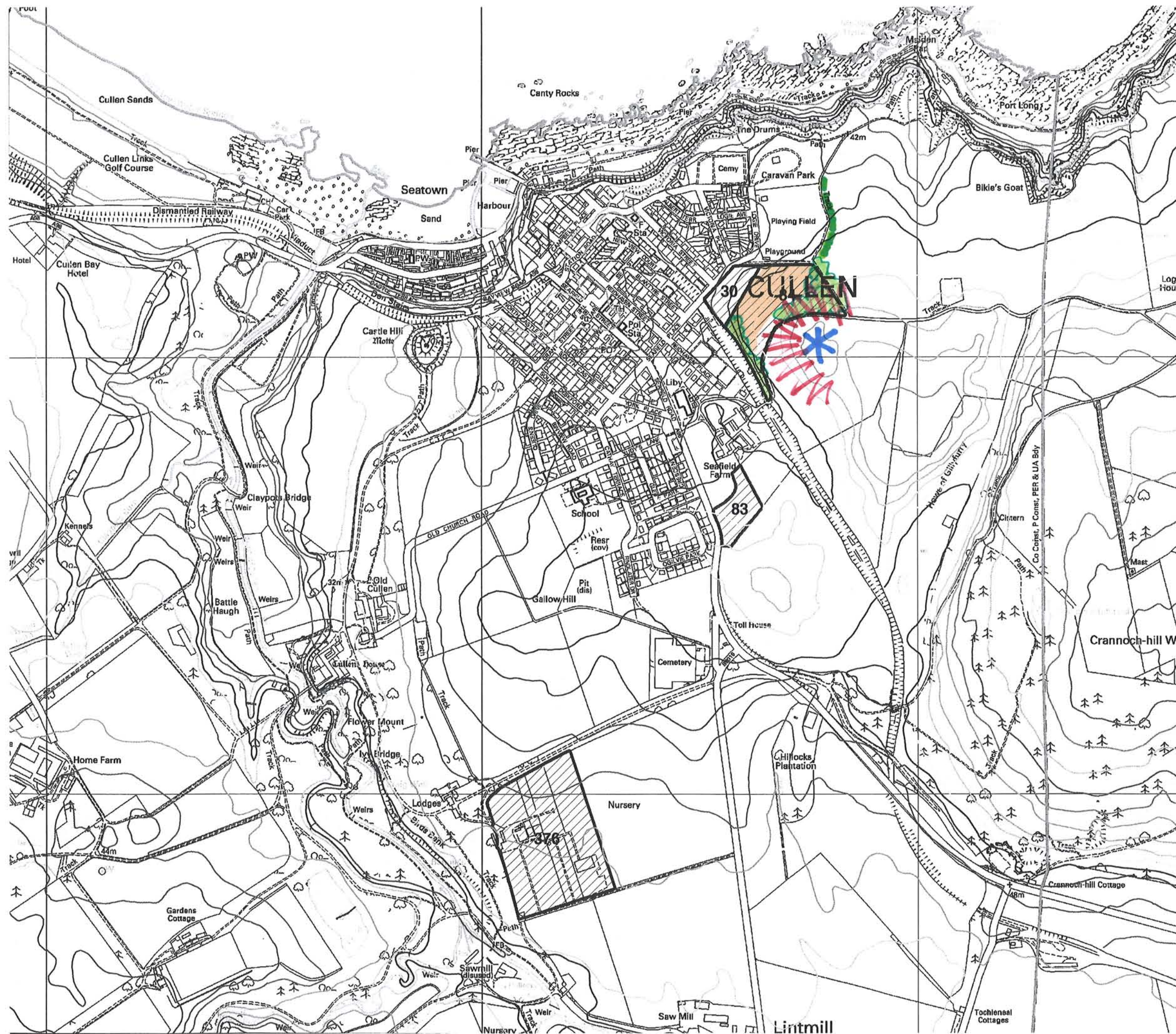
Landscape opportunity for housing



Establish planting to create containment and shelter



Continue planting along eastern side of settlement to unify this boundary



FINDHORN

The existing settlement of Findhorn consists of an older settlement structure, which is relatively tightly knit and located to the north of a well defined spit of sandy land. The less densely structured southern element, which is more recent development, nevertheless reinforces the westerly orientation of the settlement.

This west facing orientation ensures that the settlement overlooks sheltered Findhorn Bay, and is protected from north easterly winds and more dynamic sandy dune formations to the east.

To the immediate east of the village lies a transitional landscape of semi natural character, with dense whin scrub giving way to more scattered shrubs interspersed with sand and gravel banks and eventually dynamic sandy dune systems. This landscape creates a sense of space and openness which contrasts with the built up environment, contributing to the setting and distinct character of the settlement. This is reflected in its well trammled recreational use.

Landscape Opportunities

- Well established coniferous woodland provides a potential setting for development to the south of the site
- One stretch of distinct and possibly relatively stable dunes could provide a well defined settlement edge to the south of the site, within an area already largely surrounded by development

Landscape Constraints

- The area of semi natural landscape provides a very distinctive contrast to the built up character of the settlement and as such contributes to the distinct setting of the town
- The scale of the undeveloped landscape is deceptive, particularly given the presence of the caravan site to the north: further development encroaching around the edges would quickly diminish the sense of openness and space, as well as the semi natural qualities experienced within this landscape
- Development extending further east would reduce the pronounced western orientation of the settlement, extending the settlement onto more exposed landform
- There are no existing distinct landforms or vegetation patterns which could provide settlement edges at the outset, with the exception of tree belts and the stable dune system to the south, although these could be created should development extend eastwards

Conclusions

Most of the area proposed for development is inappropriate in landscape terms. The clear structure of the village and its strong relationship with the western edge of the spit is a defining characteristic of the existing settlement pattern, and this would be compromised by

continuous eastern extension. The landscape of whin and sandy dunes is semi natural in character, reflecting the natural dynamics of the coastal location. This space is currently large enough to experience a sense of openness and relative distance from development which creates a distinctive sense of place which could be easily eroded by incremental development extending over the more stable dune systems.

There is one discreet part of the proposed development bid which lends itself to 'in fill' development, as it is located between existing areas of development, and has an existing setting of mature conifers. The area is bounded to the north by a well defined dune landform, which partially contains the area both physically and visually. Development within this area would not visually affect the scale of the wider space, nor would it encroach significantly upon the integrity of the semi natural character.

INTEGRATION OF NEW DEVELOPMENT INTO
THE MORAY LANDSCAPE

Findhorn

Scale 1:10 000

Survey



Pronounced dune



Woodland

Proposals



Landscape opportunity for housing, largely infill within existing development



FOCHABERS

A settlement largely characterised by its planned and formal layout, which is linear in development related to the outer edge of the grounds of Gordon Castle and along the existing A96. More recent development has extended into a contained and well defined hinterland between the River Spey to the south west and rising wooded slopes to the south east.

There are two bid sites. Site A is located to the south west of the town, and is located across generally level fields close to the school. Site B is located on more elevated land to the east, which is adjacent to recent development.

Both sites have a wooded setting, with well established hedges supplemented by extensive woodland associated with old river terraces of the River Spey or steeper slopes to the south east of the settlement. Site A is relatively close to the River.

Both sites are well contained by woodland and accessible to the main facilities of the town. They are not visible from main public roads. Site A has an internal focus, with no external views, while the more elevated site B has some views to the north west. Both sites also have a good relationship with existing informal recreation facilities.

Landscape Opportunities

- The sites are well contained, with robust edges, and potentially can extend to create new but well defined settlement boundaries
- The scale and pattern of the existing landscape structure lends itself well to development
- The sites, although they are some distance from the core of the old settlement, are close to other facilities, including the school, therefore have some connection with the existing settlement
- There are good opportunities for informal recreation within and close to the sites
- Landscape features, such as the river and extensive woodland offer some local identity for development

Landscape Constraints

No major landscape constraints were identified in relation to these sites.





Conclusions

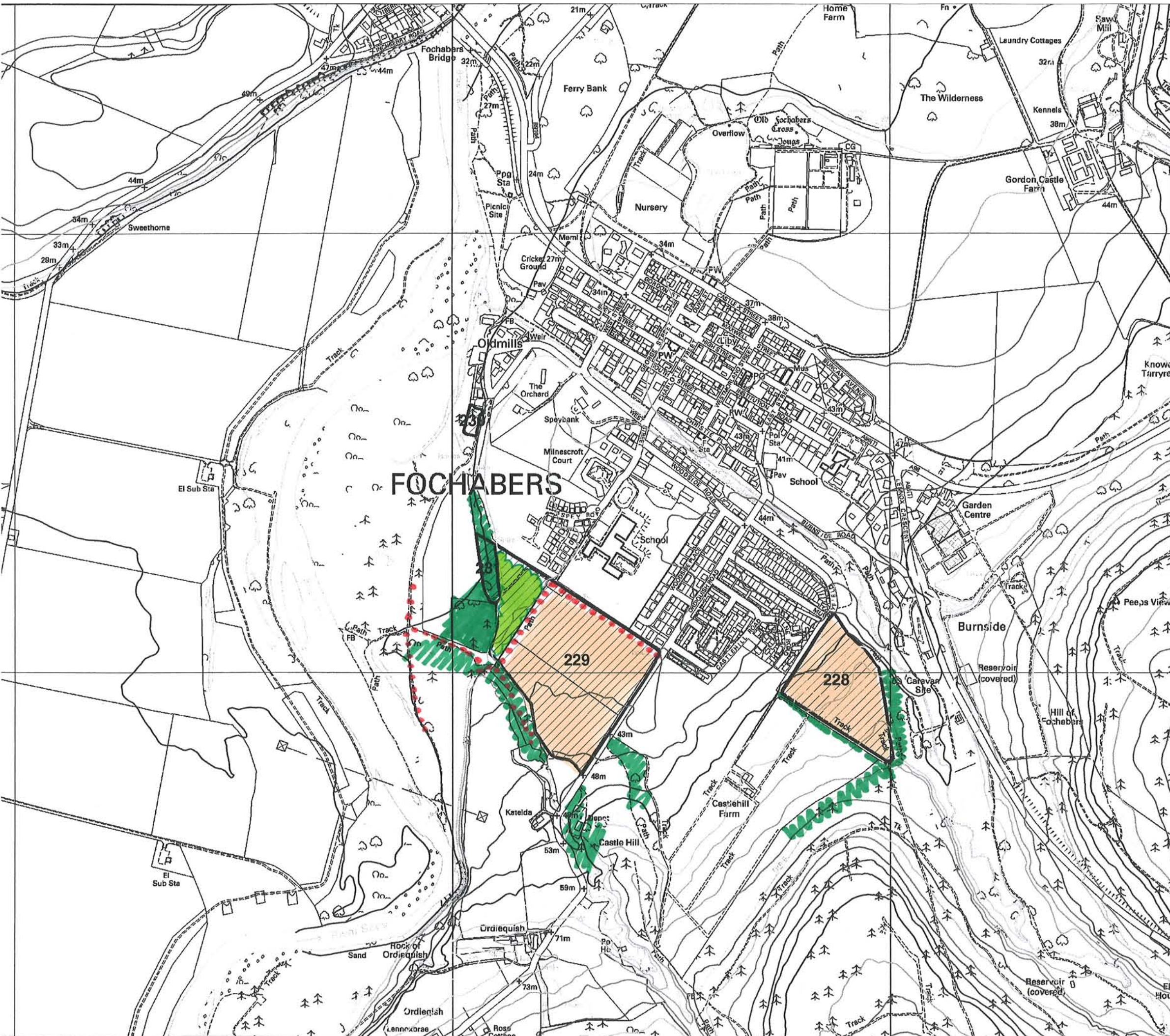
The sites were assessed as being appropriate for settlement expansion in landscape terms, with preference for Site A, which is the closest to the existing settlement, as the first phase of any future expansion. To reinforce the wooded character of the sites, and to maintain the quality of the existing recreation experience, additional woodland should be established on sloping ground and terraces associated with the existing access routes, as shown on the attached map.

INTEGRATION OF NEW DEVELOPMENT INTO THE MORAY LANDSCAPE

Fochabers

Scale 1:10 000

- Survey
-  Woodland and tree belts
 -  Informal access routes
- Proposals
-  Landscape opportunity for housing
 -  Planting to maintain quality of recreational experience



FOGWATT

This large site is located on elevated north and north west facing slopes, and combines dense Scots pine and mixed broadleaved woodland with open glades and scattered individual trees. The area has been grazed and while white whin scrub and heather feature in the wooded areas, this has been removed from the open glades. There is some wetland extending through the site.

The area lies directly north of the Mulbuie Country Park, which includes access around a series of lochs and provision for car parking. The site offers extensive views, and while it is relatively well contained by woodland to the south and west it is highly visible across a distance from the north.

The site is distant and detached from the nearby settlement of Fogwatt, from which it is separated by steep slopes and woodland, as well as occupying an area of very different landscape character (the site is on elevated slopes, Fogwatt is tucked into a narrow valley below). Physical separation and perceptual detachment mean that any major development located on these slopes would be considered a new settlement.

Landscape Opportunities

- Extensive views from elevated slopes provide a fine panorama of northern Moray
- The site is partially contained to the south and west by woodland
- The woodland setting, and series of open glades and single trees combine to create a locally attractive site

Landscape Constraints

- The site is completely detached from any nearby settlement, and would be considered a separate settlement
- The character of the landscape is one of semi naturalness, dominated by rural character and relatively unmanaged, which complements the adjacent country park and reinforces the rural character of the surrounding landscape
- Much of the site is highly visible from the north

Conclusions

The site is not appropriate for settlement expansion in landscape terms. The buildings and infrastructure – such as lighting and standard road design details – associated with such a development would undermine the rural and semi natural qualities of this landscape character. Development would be highly visible from the north and would be unrelated to the existing settlement of Fogwatt. It would fragment the series of glades and natural qualities of the woodland which contribute to local character of the site.

Any development which was located on this area would need to be able to retain the semi natural woodland and sequence of glades and individual trees which contribute to the largely rural character of this landscape. It may be possible to locate a single, focal point house on

the site (to the western end), which required a generous setting and which would value the private location and wooded character of the site. Such a one off development should be designed to maintain the existing tree cover, and pattern of spaces, as well as the semi natural character of the wider setting. Lighting and other infrastructure should be kept low key: a development requirement which is easier to achieve with a single house than with a settlement.

INTEGRATION OF NEW DEVELOPMENT INTO
THE MORAY LANDSCAPE

Fogwatt

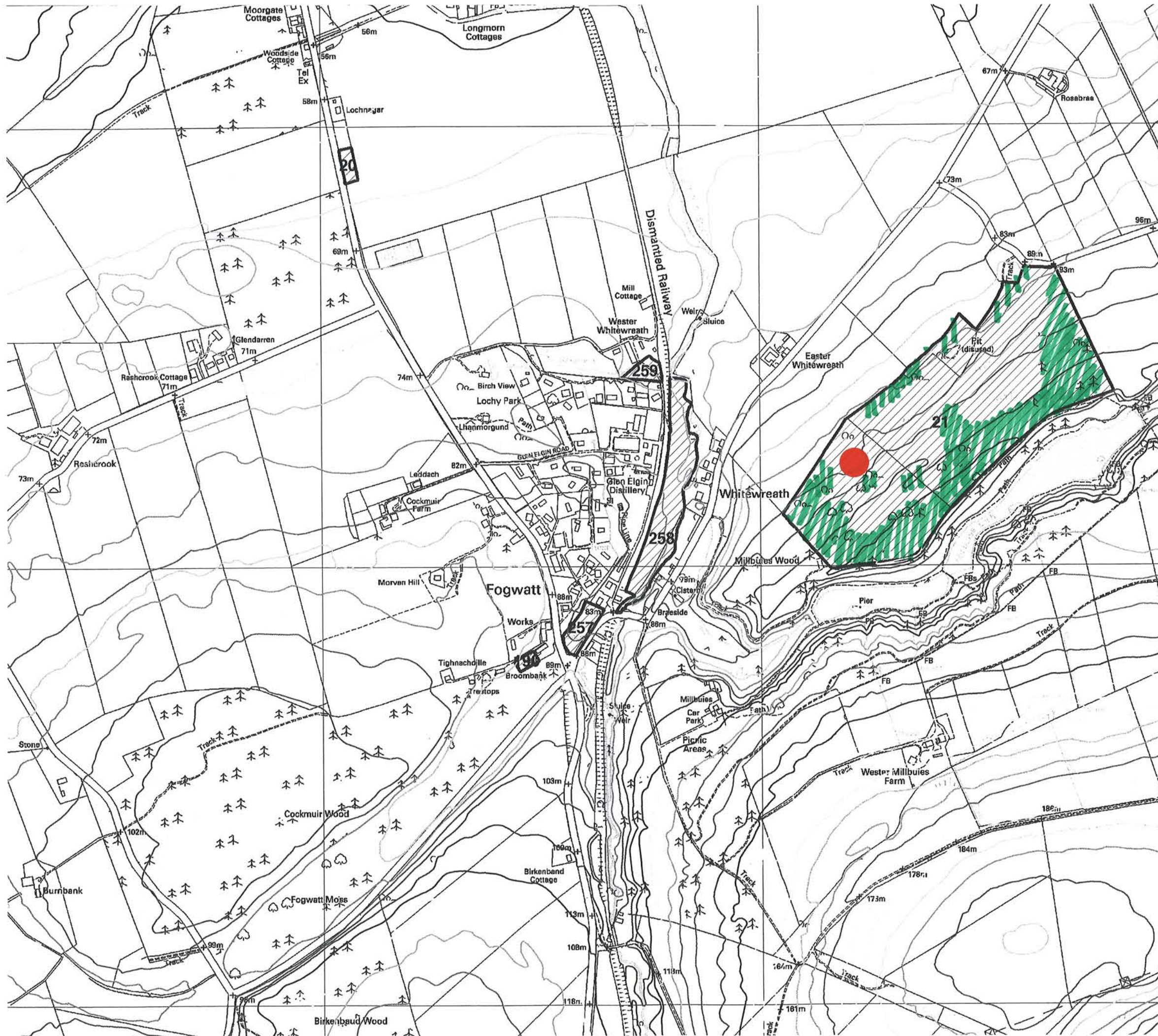
Scale 1:10 000

Survey

 Woodland

Proposals

 Potential location for one single house



LLANBRYDE

The older part of this settlement forms a strongly linear pattern, related to the line of what was once the main road. More recent development extends north east of the town, across slightly elevated land contained by undulating landforms.

The development bid is located on an open field, currently occupied by pigs. The landform is gently rolling, and in places creates areas of relatively intimate enclosure. The site is separated from Llanbryde by the cemetery, open fields and woodland, and there is little visual relationship between the site and the existing settlement. The site is perceptually detached from the existing settlement, a perception which is reinforced by the physical separation created by rising landform, woodland and the cemetery as well as the lack of visual links. However, some physical connection is created by footpath links.

The site is elevated above Llanbryde and relatively visible from a number of surrounding roads. It is not however, visually associated with the existing settlement, and is seen quite separately to the existing village. Noise from the A96 is carried across the site.

Across the wider landscape there is an incremental increase in a dispersed settlement pattern, with small villages but also several clusters of new housing which particularly fragment the integrity of the rural character.

Landscape Opportunities

- Existing woodland could be used to contain and define the site, particularly if this was expanded to also provide visual containment
- There is some – rather tentative – physical link with the existing settlement at the cemetery, but otherwise there is no relationship with the existing settlement

Landscape Constraints

- The site is perceptually and physically detached from the existing settlement
- The site is highly visible and perceived as visually separate from the existing settlement: the site is not seen in conjunction with the existing settlement and will be perceived as a separate settlement from surrounding roads
- Development in this location will contribute to the continued gradual attrition of the rural character of the area, which is being gradually compromised by the incremental development of clusters of housing
- The more undulating landforms, some of which are formed by steeper slopes, would be difficult to develop without considerable earthmoving
- Noise from the A96 does permeate the area, probably due to its elevated location

Conclusions

The site is not appropriate for settlement expansion in landscape terms. The perceptual and physical detachment, as well as the perception of the area as visually distinct from the

existing settlement, combine to reinforce the lack of connection with the existing settlement.
More appropriate locations for expansion exist to the west of the settlement.

INTEGRATION OF NEW DEVELOPMENT INTO
THE MORAY LANDSCAPE

Llanbryde

Scale 1:10 000

Survey

 Woodland

 Informal access routes

 Cemetery

Proposals

No landscape opportunities for development were identified on this site



MUNDOLE

The settlement of Mundole includes a small village of permanent houses to the north, a series of caravan parks for both permanent and temporary caravans associated with the site of an old airfield and a line of houses located along the roadside to the south.

The landscape is dominated by a level plain, with grassland, arable land and the caravan park located across the flat terrain. The fertile, managed arable land contrasts with some areas of more neglected character associated with the disused airfield. The plain is subdivided by woodland, most notably along the riverbanks of the Findhorn, but also associated with the buildings and providing shelter for the caravan site. In addition to the woodland, the area is generally visually contained by river terracing and low hills to the south.

The main settlement is bounded by the River Findhorn to the west, and minor roads to the east and south. It has a wooded setting. The caravan parks are largely hidden from view, tucked away behind well established tree belts. The linear row of houses are located against the edge of a well defined river terrace, overlooking the minor road.

Landscape Opportunities

- Level, visually contained land creates a potentially discreet site
- Belts of mature trees help to define setting and spaces for potential development
- Access to the nearby river Findhorn contributes to sense of identity
- Development could be used to enhance the setting of parts of the existing landscape, particularly around the disused airfield, which appears rather neglected
- Development could also be used to encourage a more coherent and structured landscape setting for the individual built developments which are located across this area
- Tree belts and the river offer clearly defined settlement edges

Landscape Constraints

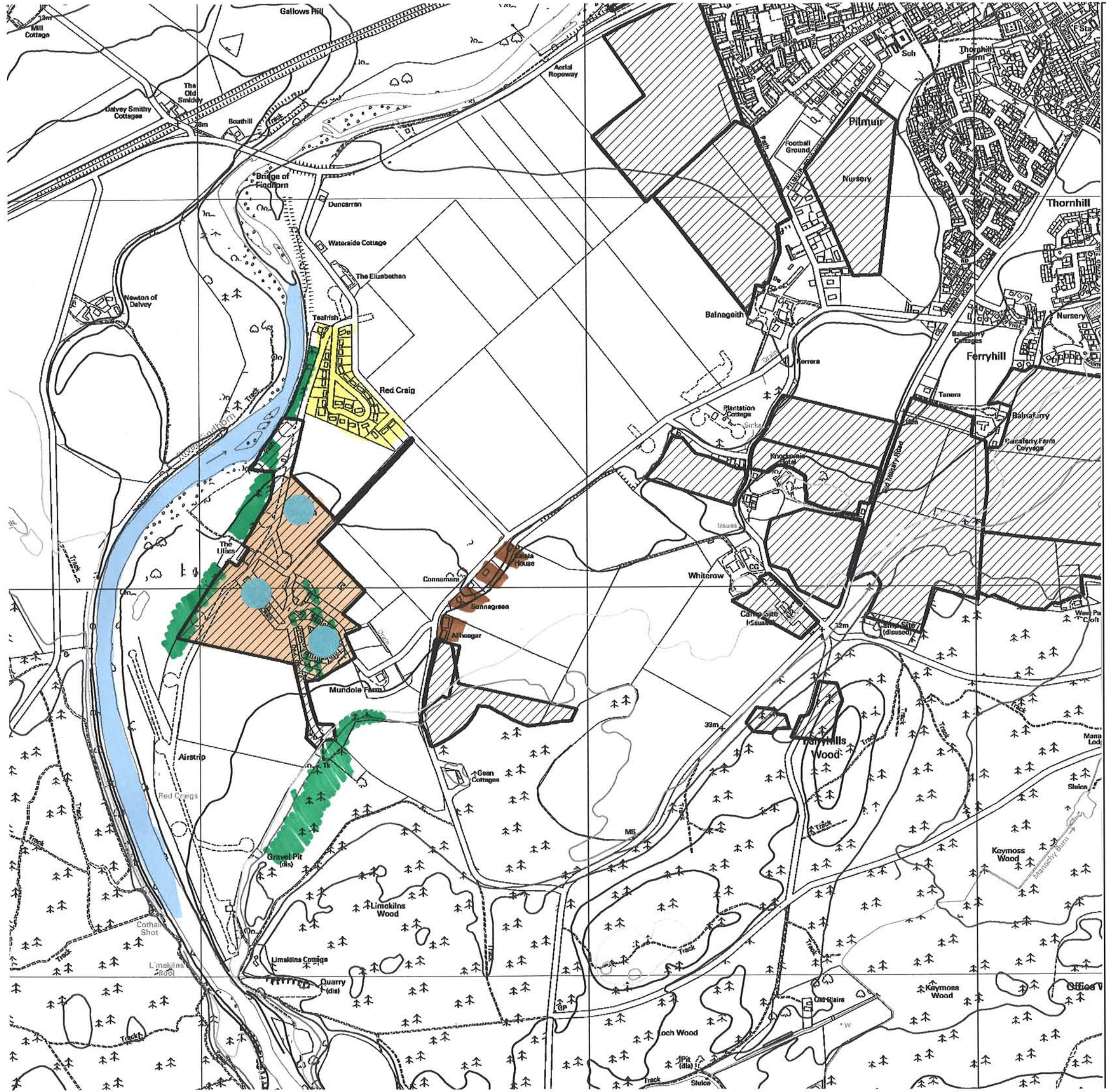
- Views out from the site are limited, and therefore any future development would require to have an internal focus
- Sense of arrival would need to be more clearly defined
- The area has little connection with Forres, being detached from the main settlement by physical distance as well as perception, and would require major master planning to provide a coherent settlement with its own identity as a satellite to Forres

Conclusions

The site offers the opportunity in landscape terms for a development which could be a moderately sized satellite settlement, independent in identity and character from the town of Forres. The advantages include some fine well established tree belts and landform which creates a well defined setting for future development. The nearby location of the River

Findhorn and extensive woodland offer recreational opportunities, while the tranquillity of the area, despite its proximity to the A96, is also an advantage.

Major master planning would be required to ensure that additional development did not further fragment the area, which already consists of several different types of settlement pattern. A clear landscape structure should aim to pull the individual elements together by providing a well wooded setting and introducing common elements such as non vehicular access links.



INTEGRATION OF NEW DEVELOPMENT INTO THE MORAY LANDSCAPE

Mundole

Scale 1:10 000

- Survey
- River Findhorn
 - Woodland
 - Existing clustered settlement
 - Caravan parks
 - Single line of houses
- Proposals
- Landscape opportunity for housing, within new masterplanned landscape structure

ROSEHALL FARM, KEITH

This long, gentle ridge of farmed land is orientated north/ south, with slopes rising up from the A96. It is predominantly of rural character, although it lies adjacent to Cairdshall Quarry and close to a large electricity substation, which lie to the south and west of the site respectively. It overlooks a distinctive river valley to the east, which becomes progressively more steep sided and wooded as it extends north to provide a dramatic sense of arrival at Keith.

The existing nearby developments are located away from main roads, and within areas of undulating landform which provide some sense of containment. The site for the proposed new development is by contrast highly visible and extends across outward orientated slopes. There is very little landscape structure, either created by containing land form or by extensive planting which would form a setting and strong coherent structure for development.

The site is very detached from Keith, both physically and perceptually, and development here (it is understood that both residential and industrial uses are identified in the bid), would effectively create a new settlement and be isolated from the existing town.

Landscape Opportunities

- Outward facing slopes provide fine panoramas over the surrounding countryside
- The location is adjacent to existing development, which already generates noise and traffic, although site survey noted that the existing development was relatively discreetly located within an undulating landscape

Landscape Constraints

- The distance and detachment from Keith implies that this is being proposed as a new settlement
- There is no clear focus for development in this landscape, as the site extends over both outward facing sides of a long ridge
- The slopes are currently undeveloped and create a visual screen for the quarry, substation and associated development from some viewpoints. They also provide a buffer of distance between the A96 and this existing development
- The slopes are highly visible, a characteristic emphasised by the outward orientation of the slopes
- Additional development will extend and reinforce the industrial character which is already associated with the quarry and adjacent sites, although it was noted that this existing development is largely less visible as it is partially located within folding land form
- While a highly visible location may be appropriate for some business use, the nature of a business park and industrial type development often leads to disparate building styles and cluttered development, which is more appropriate for a site which can contain and create a strong setting for development

Conclusions





The site is considered inappropriate for development in landscape terms. It forms part of the wider setting for Keith, which is essentially rural in character, while at a more local level it provides some visual screening for the existing more industrial land uses which occupy the land to the south and south west of the site. The slopes are highly visible, emphasised by their convex, outward facing form, and have very little in the way of existing landscape structure, to create the setting for new development.

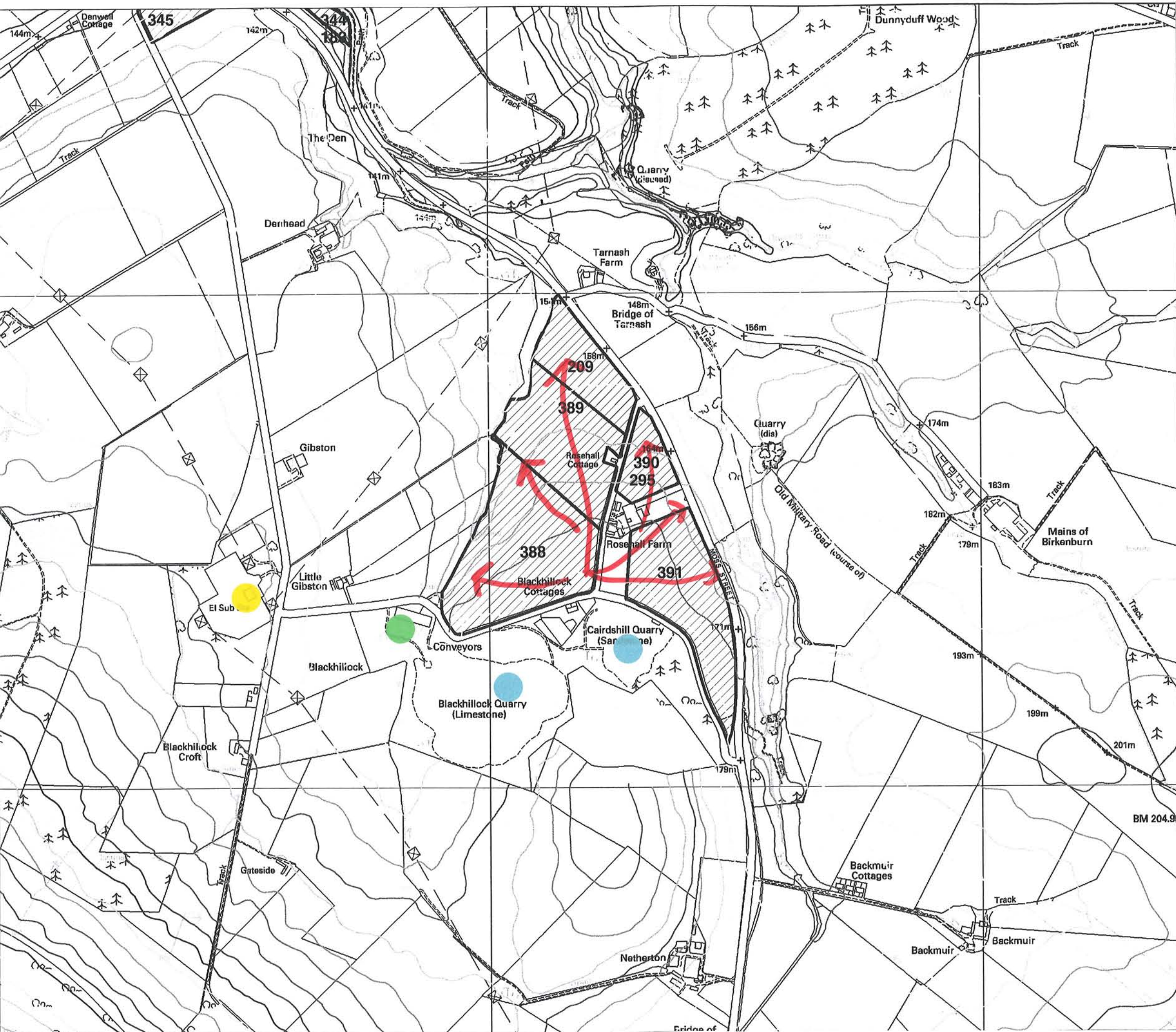
There are more appropriate sites for both residential and industrial development closer to Keith, including sites which have a good relationship with the A96 and which were identified in the sister report for the Integration of New Developments into the Landscape.

INTEGRATION OF NEW DEVELOPMENT INTO THE MORAY LANDSCAPE

Rosehall Farm, Keith

Scale 1:10 000

- Survey
-  Outward facing slopes of long ridge
 -  Quarry
 -  Electricity Sub Station
 -  BEAR Depot
- Proposals
- No landscape opportunities for development were identified on this site



TROVES

This small group of houses, varied in style and scale, is located adjacent to small but distinct knolls of landform within a relatively level plain. The houses are located on slightly elevated land overlooking cultivated farmland. The settlement is hidden from approach roads and main roads by landform and young woodland.

The existing houses are held together by their common relationship with elevated landform and the mutual setting provided by the existing wooded knolls. They are located without any landscape setting between them, therefore the conifer woodland to the west and the broadleaved woodland to the north provide the main setting and backdrop for the existing development.

Landscape Opportunities

- A very few opportunities for development within the bid sites was identified, but these only relate to the occasional open space within the broadleaved woodland to the north. Any development on this site should retain existing tree cover and enhance planting where possible

Landscape Constraints

- The woodland which exists around and adjacent to the existing development is important in providing a setting for the development. Trees which exist should be retained and replacement planting should be planned.

Conclusions

There are only a very few opportunities in landscape terms for settlement expansion identified on the bid sites. The existing areas of woodland are the only landscape feature which provides a setting for the existing development and are required to create a backdrop, edge and sense of place for this small settlement, and this should be retained.

INTEGRATION OF NEW DEVELOPMENT INTO
THE MORAY LANDSCAPE


Troves

Scale 1:10 000

Survey

 Woodland which creates setting for existing development

Proposals

 Potential location for one or two houses discreetly located within woodland if trees can be retained

