

The Potential Effects of Built Development on Landscape Character: Elgin West

	Distinctive Knolls	Level Flood Plain	River Meanders
Landscape Character	<p>Negative/neutral</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development over the distinctive green hills would detract from the relatively high quality setting to the town along this edge Development on more low lying land orientated towards New Elgin and the school would have less of an impact where it was not detached from the settlement or separated by the prominent hills and ridges 	<p>Negative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building in this area would impact upon the openness and sense of expanse across the flood plain. Additional dispersed development could fragment the unity of the plain even further The area is perceptually detached and physically distant from central Elgin, therefore development here would not have a strong relationship with the settlement core The area is a functional flood plain, which creates a dynamic landscape and is likely to limit development 	<p>Negative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> While well designed re development could bring a stronger sense of coherence to this character area, development on land not subject to flooding south of the A96 is likely to further contribute to the sense of fragmentation Some steep slopes constrain development, as extensive and intrusive building platforms would be required Noise from the A96 permeates the area The land adjacent to the River is subject to flooding
Settlement Form	<p>Positive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Settlement form would be consolidated along this rather fragmented edge, and the focus on the Wards would be enhanced if development extended around the low lying land 	<p>Negative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Settlement expansion here would elongate the settlement form south west, away from its focus on the bowl rising up from the River Lossie 	<p>Negative/neutral</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development across or immediately adjacent to the flood plain would counter the pattern of development which generally avoids these low lying locations due to flooding Some redevelopment of existing sites would not affect settlement form
Landscape Setting	<p>Negative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> High quality of the open green slopes and knolls, supplemented by the small mature pine woodlands contribute to the existing setting, as does the relative quiet and integrity of the existing character 	<p>Negative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The level flood plain forms a plinth for the higher ground on which the settlement is located 	<p>Neutral</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The open flood plain and meanders of the river are a feature within the town more generally. However, the quality of their setting at this point could be improved, but through landscape work, not built development
Sense of Arrival	<p>Neutral</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No existing through routes traverse this character area 	<p>Negative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The existing sense of arrival is very robust and alternatives are difficult to find in such an open 	<p>Negative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The existing sense of arrival is very robust, bold and distinctive, as the town appears after travelling

		landscape. The crossing of the Black Burn does offer an alternative, but is some distance from the settlement	through enclosed woodland from the west.
Settlement Edge	<p>Neutral</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The existing settlement edge is well defined, associated with the wetland and a distinct change in gradient There are options for alternative edges, associated with the changes of gradient, and containing ridgelines 	<p>Negative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The existing settlement edge is very robust, emphasised by the river, associated flood defences and the railway and alternatives are difficult to find in such an open landscape 	<p>Neutral</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The existing settlement edge is well defined where it relates to woodland, but along the A96 is more fragmented. Any redevelopment of the hotel site should take this into account
Views and Visual Features	<p>Negative/Neutral</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The higher knolls, ridges and slopes are very visible, but low lying areas are contained by these elevated features. 	<p>Neutral</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The area is not widely visible, although it is visually sensitive in relation to the B9010 which traverses the plain 	<p>Neutral/negative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The area is visually relatively self contained, but contains important views to the skyline of the town on arrival and from Morriston Road, which should be maintained within any development or landscape plans

11.2 Elgin West: Landscape Opportunities and Constraints

11.2.1 Preferred Opportunities for Development

The landscape which extends west from Elgin is one of diversity and relatively high quality, with distinctive landforms and some fine woodland. Landscape opportunities for settlement expansion lie principally within the Distinctive Knolls character area.

There are some landscape opportunities for development within the lower land overlooking the school and adjacent to the Wards. These are areas orientated towards the existing settlement and are well contained by rising slopes. Development should take care to retain the dominance and integrity of the distinctive knolls, perhaps through extensive planting of woodland, particularly if they are no longer farmed in the future. Development should also avoid breaching the ridges and extending west, away from New Elgin. Settlement expansion here would help consolidate the settlement edge, and the setting could be further enhanced with extensive woodland planting along the upper slopes and ridges.

Opportunities for development focus on low lying land and aim to maintain the integrity of the knolls and the physical links between respective open spaces. The area is also the focus for an additional link road, from Edgar road to Wittet Drive, and possibly a southern bypass to Elgin, both of which will further fragment the landscape.

The approach to Elgin from the west along the A96 is clearly important in terms of initial perception of the town. While it has elements of quality, the settlement edge is fragmented by a disparate range of individual buildings and a lack of overall coherent structure.

Generous, well managed open space associated with the flood plain and river meanders should be maintained and enhanced to contribute to the setting of the town. Views to the skyline of the town on arrival should also be maintained.

It is noted however that development areas have been suggested for the land on either side of the road as it emerges from the woodland, part of which is already occupied by a hotel. The proposal would appear to be for commercial or business use, which would imply large scale buildings. While redevelopment of the hotel site with a high quality building or series of buildings would be appropriate, any replacement should be designed to provide coherence to this approach to the town, and through spatial arrangement as well as detailed design should contribute to strengthening the sense of arrival.

Development on the south side of the road is inappropriate. While it might relate well to the hotel site, forming a clear 'gateway' to the town, it would appear isolated and increase the sense of fragmentation, when seen from the Lossie bridge on leaving the town.

The steep slopes of the land rising up from the Lossie at the edge of the town are constrained by the steep gradient, which would require considerable earth moving to create building platforms which are likely to look intrusive and artificial.

A small area of proposed development land on Morriston Road would be appropriate for a one off, low level building in a generous landscape setting, located on the level land. Other nearby areas are inappropriate because their steep slopes would require considerable earthmoving, and the fine views across the town from Morriston Road would be obstructed by development.

There are no opportunities for settlement expansion within the Low Lying Flood Plain. This area is perceived as being very remote and detached from the settlement, an impression which is reinforced by the physical separation of the river and railway, and by the change in landscape character. The area is also likely to be unsuitable for development due to flooding.

11.2.2 Long Term Options

No long term options for settlement expansion were identified within this study area.


INTEGRATION OF NEW DEVELOPMENT INTO THE MORAY LANDSCAPE

Elgin West

OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS


Scale 1:10 000

Landscape Opportunities for Development


 Some opportunity for development is identified across the lowlying land contained by these knolls and ridges. This offers the opportunity to reinforce this edge with development which is well orientated to the settlement and contributes to the consolidation of the settlement form


Development should not extend high up on the ridges, where a roofline might interrupt the crest, and should be restricted to east facing slopes


The area would benefit from advance planting framework which would ensure that ridges and upper slopes were clothed with well established woodland before development.

 Opportunities within this area are limited to the possible replacement of the hotel, either with a prestigious building within a generous wooded setting, or with houses set within a wooded setting, with the primary aim being to provide coherence to the settlement edge and enhance landscape quality

Landscape Constraints on Development

 Development here is constrained by the contribution which these hills make to the setting and identity of the settlement. They will provide robust containment for new development, particularly if planted

 Development here is constrained by the strong sense of detachment from Elgin experienced from these more distant, level fields, which is compounded by the lack of visual links with settlement core, and the physical separation from the settlement by the River Lossie and the railway

 Development here is constrained by the need to create a high quality setting for the town on arrival from the west. Development is likely to further fragment the settlement edge if it extends south of the A96.

Development on steeper slopes would result in considerable earth moving or under building, which would be visually intrusive

Land adjacent to the Lossie is also subject to flooding

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