

12.3 Elgin West: Opportunities and Objectives for Enhancement

12.3.1 Distinctive Knolls

This area contributes to the setting of Elgin due to the distinctiveness of the green knolls and fine Scots pine woodland which characterises the area. However, it is also an area where definition of the town is unclear and where some additional development would consolidate the form of the settlement.

The Wards wetland is a valuable habitat and recreation resource. The transition between this area and the adjacent housing would be improved if a mixed native species hedge was created to define its boundary, particularly to the south, but if possible also to the north. This could be further supplemented by individual forest scale trees which would reinforce the transitional character of a more managed boundary.

Long term management of the existing woodland is desirable, possibly with the assistance of SFGS, and opportunities for extending planting with forest scale trees and policy woodland type planting should be explored along the upper slopes of containing ridges and over the pronounced green knoll which lies immediately adjacent to the Wards.

New woodland habitat could be physically linked to the existing wetland and dry grassland habitat (on the thin soils of the open hill top) to provide a sequence of linked green spaces. The woodland component (which would probably include any grassland habitat) could be managed within a community woodland or woodlands around town initiative. The potential to provide a useful educational resource for the use of the nearby school should also be considered.

Additional enhancement measures include strengthening the definition of the existing access tracks by adding hedgerow trees, and establishing a framework of open woodland for the less dense housing development which was identified as being appropriate for the site to the east of Palmers Cross.

Creating recreation links through this area, to link south and west Elgin, should be researched as part of the core path network for Elgin, and options are identified on the proposals plan.

12.3.2 Level Flood Plain

This area offers opportunities to enhance the management of the riparian zone in particular, through the establishment of extensive flood plain woodland, or the reinforcement of existing riparian woodland, both of which are likely to be supported by SFGS.

This is also an area where there are opportunities to create a more coherent landscape framework for the dispersed settlement pattern and where there are opportunities to enhance habitat value building with the assistance of the RSS.

Measures might include wetland management, including the establishment of farm ponds, planting frameworks around farms and other buildings, and the establishment of individual trees along tracks and minor roadsides.

The area does lend itself to extensive flood plain management, which would require the cooperation of adjoining landowners, but would be supported by additional payments through the RSS.

12.3.3 River Meanders

This area is strategically significant as a key arrival point for the town. The objective for this area should be to enhance the setting of the town and the quality of the landscape as experienced from the A96.

Opportunities for enhancement include removing the poplar trees adjacent to the A96 and managing the flood plain adjacent to the River Lossie to create a more open aspect, which would allow the river to be more visible. Consideration should be given to creating wetland meadows on either side of the road, with some supplementary shrub and tree planting to create an accessible but visually more appealing setting for the river. The use of mown grass edgings to create a purposeful sense of positive management would enhance this setting further.

Recreation use of this area is likely to be limited by the noise from the road and the emphasis on habitat creation reflects the potential lack of disturbance.

Long term management of the existing woodland, particularly adjacent to the river and possibly with the assistance of SFGS would be desirable.

Expansion of the access network, linking the woodland to the town by a separate access route, and linking the area to the south of the town could be explored as part of a wider access initiative considering a core path network for the settlement.

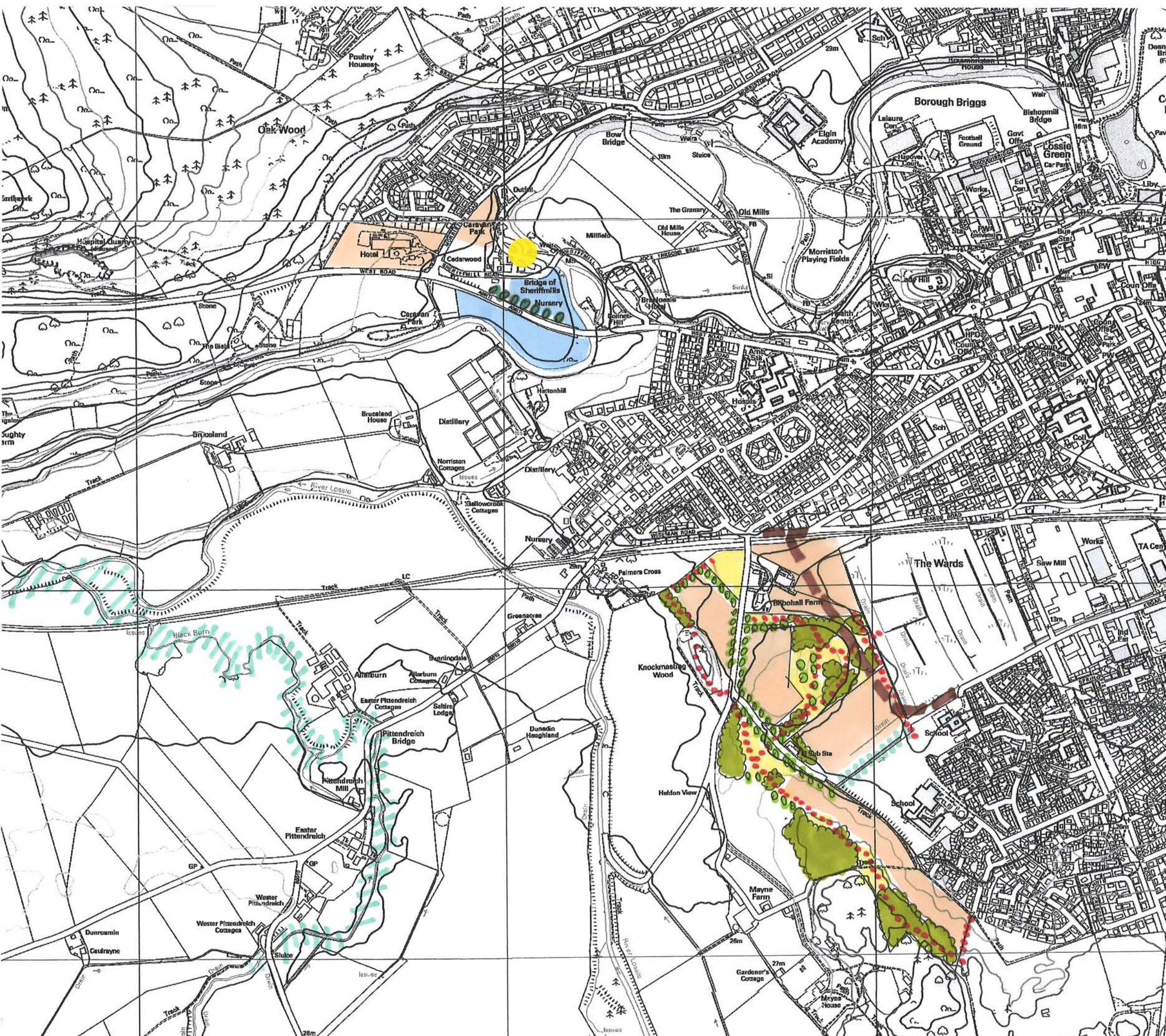
INTEGRATION OF NEW DEVELOPMENT INTO THE MORAY LANDSCAPE

Elgin West

LANDSCAPE ENHANCEMENT PROPOSALS

Scale 1:10 000

-  Suggested locations for development
-  New woodland structure planting
-  Riparian woodland
-  Feature trees
-  Proposed location for Edgar Road to Wittet drive link road
-  New footpaths and other access routes
-  Public open space
-  Remove poplar trees
-  Create managed meadows and public open space
-  Aim to revert River flood plains to open fields as opportunity arises



13 CONCLUSIONS AND LONG TERM STRATEGIC OPTIONS

The purpose of this study was to identify potential opportunities for development which would allow the expansion of Elgin while retaining the existing character of the settlement and important qualities of its landscape setting.

The study has concluded that Elgin is located within a wide, undulating but defineable bowl, with development extending from the low lying railway and the River Lossie up towards ridges which extend around the northern and southern outskirts of the town.

Recent development has breached these ridges, and the town has generally reached its landscape capacity in terms of its existing relationship with the containing landform. The challenge for this study was therefore to identify how the settlement might expand in terms of finding a location for a potential new neighbourhood site. This site would be expected to accommodate extensive new development within a master plan which established a distinct identity and structure.

13.1 Major Landscape and Visual Constraints

While this study has focussed on landscape opportunities and constraints, it also recognised that potential flood risk is likely to be a major constraint in developing the low lying areas of land which lie adjacent to the town, particularly along the River Lossie. The major constraints to development which would respect the existing character and setting of the town were therefore:

- The well defined, wooded ridges to the north of the town, which extend east from Spynie hospital and radiate out from Linksfield and Lesmurdie House and provide containment for the northern edge of the settlement
- The well defined ridge to the south of the town, which extends from Dunkinty House in the west round to Mayne Wood in the east and has provided containment to the southern outskirts of the town, but which has now been extensively breached by new development
- The prominence of distinctive, rounded knolls, most of which are managed as grass fields, but some of which are wooded, which punctuate the landscape to the south west and south east, providing containment to the outer edges of the town
- The level plains to the east, south and south west, most of which are also active flood plains, and which provide a distinct, contrasting character to the more undulating and elevated land with which the town is associated
- The undeveloped open space associated with the River Lossie, which is a characteristic of Elgin

13.2 Major Landscape and Visual Opportunities

A number of sites have been identified which have the potential to expand the settlement and still maintain the landscape character, scenic quality and visual attributes of Elgin and its setting. In all cases some mitigation would be required as part of any future development and these were further developed in the landscape enhancement section. The major opportunities for development are therefore:

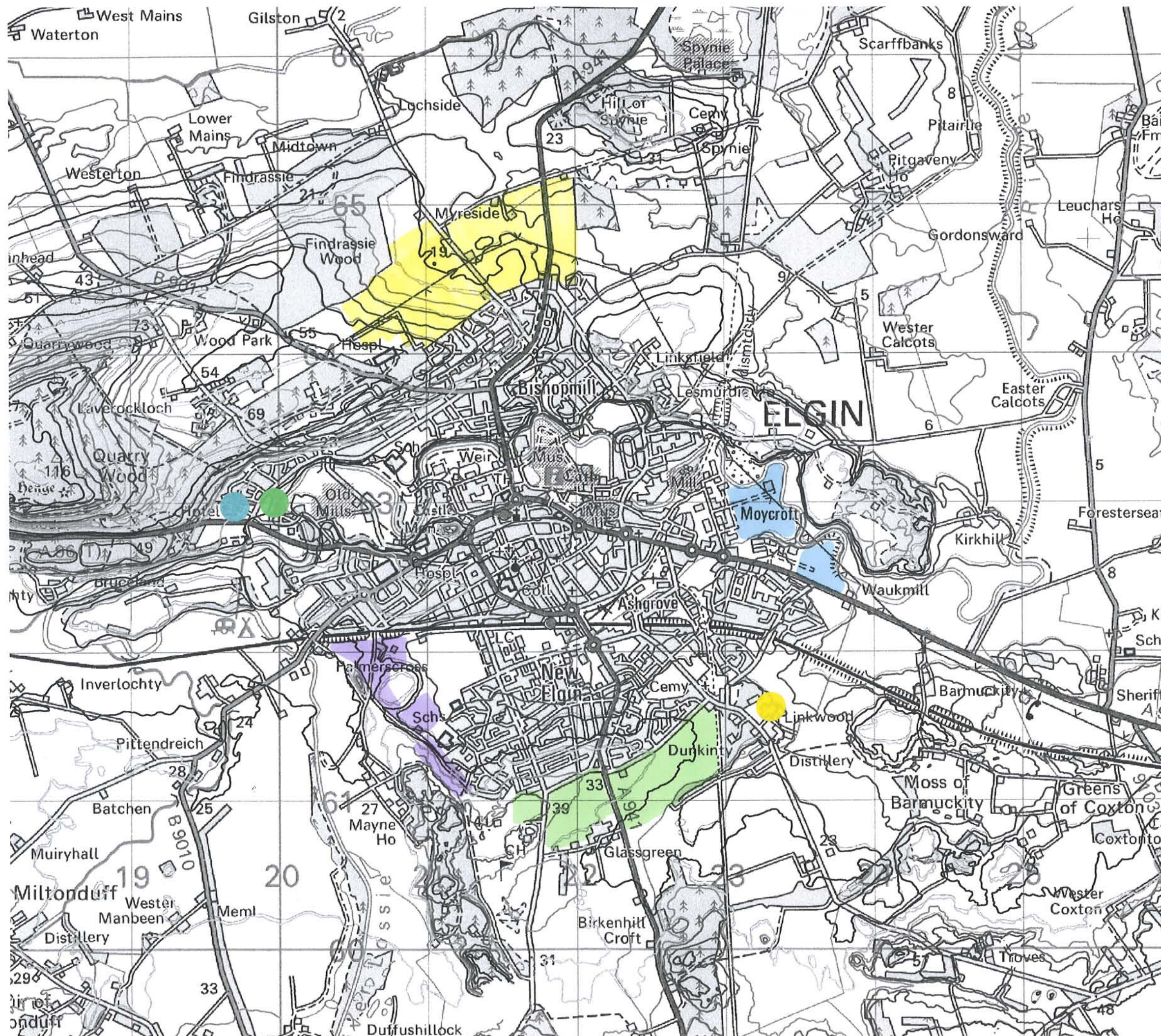
- Expansion for industrial development adjacent to the River Lossie to the west of the settlement, flood risk permitting
- Expansion across the south facing slopes to the south of the settlement
- Expansion within low lying land adjacent to the Wards, Palmers Cross and the school to the south west of the settlement

13.3 Long Term Option for Settlement Expansion

The most appropriate landscape opportunity for the for long term significant expansion of Elgin requires the establishment of a new neighbourhood. This proposal therefore requires to be considered at a more strategic level, alongside the opportunities identified for expansion of other settlements in Moray which are discussed in the sister reports. Collectively, these have not been researched in detail, but are presented as part of the findings for future consideration.

The option for Elgin expands the settlement to the north, with a proposed new neighbourhood located within a shallow bowl of land, enclosed by ridges to the north and west and linked to the main settlement by the A941. The area could be further defined by additional planting to supplement existing woodland at Findrassie and Hill of Spynie.

A master plan would be required to establish a landscape structure including the planning of open space, access routes and structure planting, and serious consideration should be given to undergrounding overhead wires as one of the landscape enhancement measures. Additional measures might include drawing up a design brief to ensure that a sense of identity could be facilitated through some consistency in approach to layout, orientation, materials, proportion, scale and landscape works.



INTEGRATION OF NEW DEVELOPMENT INTO THE MORAY LANDSCAPE

Elgin

CONCLUSIONS AND LONG TERM OPTIONS

Scale 1:25 000

Recommended Locations for Development

- Expansion of industrial site adjacent to the River Lossie
- Possible replacement of farm buildings with one off prestigious development, retaining the steading facade
- Expansion across these south facing slopes
- Expansion across low lying land to the west of the Wards
- Possible replacement of hotel complex
- Potential site for small, low, one off building within generous landscape setting

Long Term Option

- Extend town to the north within the wide shallow bowl enclosed by wooded ridges

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7 April 2005