

The Potential Effects of Built Development on Landscape Character: Forres South East

	Prominent Hills	Level Fields with Knolls
Landscape Character	<p>Negative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These hills are the main enclosing features to the south of the town, defining the extent and setting of the town, as well as being key features in the wider setting and landscape context • Steep slopes would make development difficult to accommodate without considerable earthmoving • Nevertheless there is a recent development which occupies some of the level land within Sanquhar forest this more level land plays a less significant role, but the open space of the fields contributes to the internal diversity of the forest 	<p>Negative/neutral</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Much of this area is perceptually very detached from the settlement, reinforced by the separation created by the hill associated with Sanquhar Wood • Nevertheless it is a discreet area of well contained landscape, which is actually physically relatively accessible to many of the town amenities when travelling on foot through Sanquhar Wood • A large part of this area is proposed for a flood water storage scheme, including land within the character area, and this may restrict development opportunities
Settlement Form	<p>Negative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing settlement form relates strongly to the shelter and enclosure created by these hills. This would be lost if development extended extensively into the hills themselves 	<p>Negative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development in this area would expand the settlement away from its existing compact, linear form: it would effectively open up a new settlement form, where the hills are central to the settlement rather than forming an edge • This is already happening to some extent along St Leonard's Road, although further extensive development here is likely to be restricted by the flood water storage scheme
Landscape Setting	<p>Negative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These hills and their associated woodland are the key elements of the landscape setting for Forres, not only in terms of their physical and visual 	<p>Neutral</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The area does not really contribute to the immediate setting of the town, as it is so distinct from the settlement and very visually and physically contained

	contribution, but also as a well used recreational resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The setting of Dallas Dhu distillery would be affected by development encroaching on the level land to the south
Sense of Arrival	Neutral <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The enclosure provided by the steep slopes of the hills contributes a sense of 'gateway' when arriving at Forres. This would not be diminished by development 	Neutral <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to the town within this area is along minor roads, therefore development would have little impact on the sense of arrival to Forres.
Settlement Edge	Negative <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This area creates a robust and well defined settlement edge due to steep rising slopes and established woodland 	Neutral <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The existing settlement edge generally relates to the well defined containment provided by the prominent hills, although this is fragmented slightly by linear development along the B9010 Other knolls within this landscape could provide alternative edge features although they are not as pronounced as the prominent hills
Views and Visual Features	Negative <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This area is highly prominent, visible from much of the settlement and a focal point within much more extensive views 	Neutral <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Much of this area is not highly visible, except from minor roads. It is relatively self contained.

7.2 Forres South East: Landscape Opportunities and Constraints

7.2.1 Preferred Opportunities for Development

Opportunities to expand the settlement into the prominent hills are limited by their important role as undeveloped enclosing features which form a robust settlement edge and contribute to the distinct identity of Forres. Nevertheless, some of the open fields which lie within Sanquhar Wood offer some opportunity for a small amount of discreet housing. It is important however, that the woodland does not become over developed, and should, for the benefit of the community more widely, be maintained as the significant recreation resource which is its current role. Opportunities for development which would meet this requirement are therefore limited and modest.

Opportunities for immediate settlement expansion within the Level Fields with Knolls landscape character type are constrained by the strong sense of detachment from the existing settlement. Some of this area is also already designated as an area required to be undeveloped to store flood water. The exception is a small area of land adjacent to Chapelton farm, which is elevated above the low lying land and provides the opportunity for detached houses in wooded settings, reflecting the character of this settlement edge.

Expansion across this area would not relate to the existing settlement form, although it would be relatively well contained visually and physically by the knolls and hills which surround it. As a result, the area does offer long term opportunities for settlement expansion which creates a new pattern of development for Forres while still maintaining the quality and character of the wider landscape setting of the town.

7.2.2 Long Term Option

A proposed long term option for settlement expansion alters the focus of new development from the low lying coastal plain, to the more elevated land around the low hills. These low hills are robust enough in scale and presence to become the central focus of a settlement which expands south onto higher ground, away from the coastal plain. This would maintain the settlement's relationship with a woodland context, and also ensure that physical accessibility across the town, particularly on foot, is still easy.

It is noted that this area offers good containment, positive features around which development could be established and good non vehicular links to the rest of the town. However, the main negative impact of development in this area is that the level fields have a strong sense of detachment from the existing settlement, and would only be appropriate for development in landscape terms if a new neighbourhood was created. In addition, development may be restricted by the flood water storage scheme, and advice on the suitability of this area would be required from the flood water alleviation team.

Should it go ahead, the area would require considerable master planning and therefore it is not proposed as a site proposed for immediate development, but as one for consideration as a long term option for settlement expansion.


INTEGRATION OF NEW DEVELOPMENT INTO
THE MORAY LANDSCAPE

Forres South East


OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

Scale 1:10 000


Landscape Opportunities for Development

 Opportunities for development are limited to one of the few of the open spaces which lie within the Sanquhar Wood, and one site which is on an elevated site adjacent to the wood. Development here would be visually well contained and the woodland provides a distinctive setting for houses

Landscape Constraints on Development

 Care should be taken not to overdevelop the woodland, and the proposals reflect the need to maintain a continuous undeveloped link through the wood extending from Sanquhar Lochs to the southern edge of the woodland. This will maintain the integrity of the woodland cover

Other Opportunities

 Development here is constrained by the strong sense of detachment from Forres experienced from these more distant fields. This is in part compounded by physical distance and lack of visual links to the settlement, but it is largely due to the physical separation from the town created by the well wooded hills which offer a well established edge to the existing settlement

However, this area is well contained, has good pedestrian access to the settlement through the woodland, and has a number of features which could contribute to creating a sense of place for a new neighbourhood.

Therefore this area may form the basis for future long term expansion of the settlement if preceded by the establishment of a strong landscape framework which would refocus the town around the Sanquhar Wood and away from the lower lying plain

7.3 Forres South East: Development Site Recommendations

Some development bids located within Sanquhar Wood are considered appropriate in landscape and visual terms, and these are indicated on the map opposite.

Development bids within Sanquhar Wood which were not considered appropriate included sites with established woodland or where the land form is an elevated ridge rather than a more contained space. Development bids were also considered inappropriate on land well used for recreation or adjacent to the watercourses, where increased riparian planting and meadow land would be a more appropriate land use in terms of both water quality, and to maximise the recreation and conservation value of the woodland.

One bid extends over the area likely to be developed as a flood water storage area, and therefore has largely been disregarded in this study. Part of it, however, lies on more elevated land adjacent to the settlement and this area was identified as appropriate for development in landscape terms, following planting to create an advance setting for the development.