

Keith North East

DEVELOPMENT SITE RECOMMENDATIONS

Assessment of Development Bids

- ## Additional Opportunities

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6 KEITH NORTH EAST: MITIGATION MEASURES AND ENHANCEMENT PROPOSALS

6.1 Keith North East: Identifying Positive and Negative Landscape Features

The varied landscape character which extends around the north and east of Keith contains a number of different landscape features, including the wetland in the strath floor, pockets of attractive mature broadleaved woodland and occasional strips of conifers which provide shelter on the elevated slopes. Much of the farmland is relatively featureless.

Much of the settlement outskirts are characterised by features which could benefit from some enhancement, including pylon lines and the electricity substation, industrial style development and prominent large scale buildings

The area is criss crossed by an extensive footpath network, which links the town with much of the surrounding landscape.

There were some opportunities for immediate settlement expansion identified in this area, including some potential expansion for industrial development. There was also an opportunity identified for long term expansion of the settlement, which would require detailed master planning.

6.1.1 Existing Positive Characteristics and Features

- Some fine mature broadleaved woodland which is located largely on steep slopes or associated with watercourses
- Extensive access routes across the farmed land and within some of the woodland links the town to the surrounding countryside, and also offer extensive views

6.1.2 Existing Negative Characteristics and Features

- The prominent electricity substation is located on a low hill
- Electricity pylon lines and other overhead wires are a particular characteristic of the eastern edge of the town
- Large industrial buildings dominate the narrow strath of the River Isla and some of the industrial buildings, including the barrel compound, along the northern edge of the town are particularly intrusive
- The elevated, east facing settlement edges are exposed, as is the cemetery
- The lorry park, council depot and farm off Edinburgh road are particularly cluttered and poorly maintained, contributing to the sense of neglect in the south eastern corner of the town

- Wetland and unmanaged fields, while they may be of some nature conservation value, contribute to the appearance of neglect adjacent to the town
- The conifer shelterbelts appear to be struggling and look out of place in terms of colour and texture in this soft, pale coloured landscape

6.2 Landscape Change

The key pressures for change relate to potential development opportunities and the economics of the agricultural and forestry sectors. New development opportunities include the potential long term expansion of the settlement.

6.2.1 Features and Characteristics in Decline

- Some mature broadleaved trees are likely to have a limited life span

6.2.2 Features and Characteristics in Ascendance

- Wetland and poorly drained land, which dominates the fields to the south east of the town and along the strath floor
- Some very modest regeneration of riparian species in wetland areas
- Dumping, for example in and around the lorry park, which is encouraged by the air of neglect
- Access routes, a positive feature, although many are poorly drained

Landscape Enhancement Opportunities



- Warehouses dominate the strath



- Scope for planting around the warehouses which would reduce the impact of the fence



- Potential for riparian woodland associated with burns



- The sub station dominates the south east part of the settlement



- Rubbish and dumping associated with the farm and industrial site



- The lorry park

6.3 Keith North East: Opportunities and Objectives for Enhancement

6.3.1 Strath

This lowlying area contrasts with the elevated ridges on which Keith is located. Some opportunities for modest new development were identified across higher slopes in the assessment of development bids.

Long term management of the existing woodland is desirable, as much of this is high quality mature broadleaved woodland. Management of existing mature woodland, and support for the community use and management of woodlands is likely to be supported by the SFGS.

Increased planting would also be desirable to enhance the setting of the bonded warehouses along the strath floor. This might be of forest scale trees (even if they do go black), or of beech hedging inside the perimeter fence which would reduce the dominance of the security fence.

Other industrial developments including the sewage works and barrel compound on the northern edge of the town would benefit from visual screening. The most appropriate way to achieve this might be to create a generous swathe of riparian woodland along the whole strath, which would dominate the large scale buildings, and enclose and contain the disparate range of built developments located along the strath. This riparian woodland is likely to be variable in density and could itself be defined by some larger forest trees planted on adjacent drier slopes. In addition, riparian woodland could extend away from the strath floor and follow watercourses which extend up the hillsides.

While riparian woodland is likely to be supported through SFGS, localised planting related to individual buildings, would largely have to be sponsored privately, perhaps led by the Council on their own sites.

Finally, new planting should be considered where it helps to create a setting for new development, particularly if new retail development is to be located off the A96. This planting would form part of any development proposals.

6.3.2 Undulating Ridges

These long ridges extend eastwards away from the town, and are dominated by the pylon lines and the cemetery. Some opportunities for development were identified adjacent to Banff road west of the cemetery.

Opportunities to create more shelter and a clearer setting for the school and the eastern edge of the settlement could be combined with an enhanced setting for the cemetery and modest development proposals. The overhead lines pose a particular problem for the location of both development and tall planting, but the electricity sub station could be screened at least in part by carefully placed new woodland.