

INTEGRATION OF NEW DEVELOPMENT INTO
THE MORAY LANDSCAPE

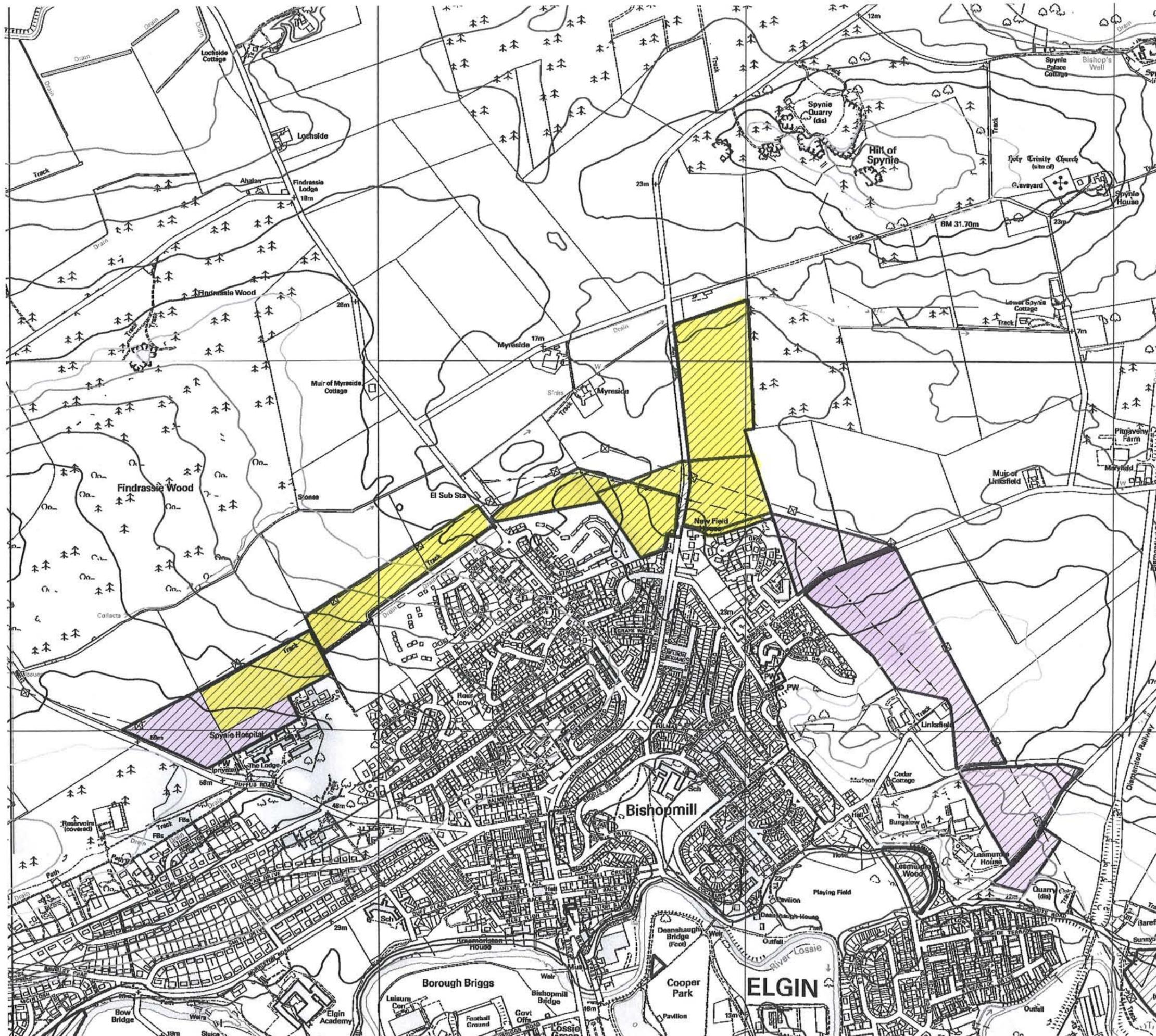
Elgin North

DEVELOPMENT SITE RECOMMENDATIONS

Scale 1:10 000

Assessment of Development Bids

-  Development bids appropriate for development in landscape terms
-  Development bids appropriate for future development in landscape terms once landscape mitigation measures have been established, and a master plan has been produced
-  Development bids not appropriate for development due to significant landscape constraints



6 ELGIN NORTH: MITIGATION MEASURES AND ENHANCEMENT PROPOSALS

6.1 Elgin North: Identifying Positive and Negative Landscape Features

This largely agricultural landscape contains very few existing landscape features, with no hedges and field trees to define the field pattern. Areas of wetland offer variety in texture and colour, but most diversity arises out of seasonal changes created by the cultivation of the land.

The open fields are enclosed by extensive woodland, much of which is coniferous, with some fine stands of Scots pine and mixed broadleaves. This woodland is largely mature and the commercially grown woodland is likely to be felled in due course, although it may be possible to manage this on a continuous cover basis because of the relatively low elevation.

The edge of the town is also well wooded, and the younger trees will become an important feature in time.

The north of Elgin has been identified in the capacity assessment as a potential site for the long term expansion of Elgin. This would result in the creation of a new neighbourhood with its own distinct identity and facilities. The landscape enhancement proposals therefore take into account this potential change in land use.

6.1.1 Existing Positive Characteristics and Features

- the diversity and high quality of woodland across the ridges create a very fine backdrop and setting for the northern edge of town. These are also well used for informal recreation
- occasional feature tree, notably pine, creates visual impact in this largely open landscape
- the small scale rounded landforms which create an immediate setting to the northern edge of the settlement
- the young planting which is associated with the settlement edge, and also provides an informal recreation resource

6.1.2 Existing Negative Characteristics and Features

- the overhead power lines, which clutter a relatively simple landscape and are visually intrusive
- the electricity substation, which is large and visually prominent
- fast, noisy traffic, particularly on the A941
- the lack of features in the landscape, which in places also has a rather neglected character, particularly within the Lowlying Basin character area

6.2 Landscape Change

The key pressures for change relate to agricultural and forestry economics. The presence of the mature and well managed woodland could be a stabilising effect on landscape character and quality.

However, the area has been identified as a potential site for the long term expansion of Elgin, which would result in significant landscape change.

6.2.1 Features and Characteristics in Decline

- The stone walls, which once separated the fields in this area, particularly to the west, have fallen into disrepair
- Mature trees associated with farms are not being replaced
- Much of the extensive woodland is nearing maturity

6.2.2 Features and Characteristics in Ascendance

- Woodland adjacent to the settlement edge, which is relatively young and still becoming established
- Openness, a characteristic of the relatively featureless landscape, is likely to increase as walls disappear and single feature trees are not replaced
- Traffic is likely to increase, with resulting damage to verges along narrow roads, and potential noise from major traffic routes

Landscape Enhancement Opportunities



- New planting on banded landform will make an impact in time



- Small scale rounded landform adjacent to settlement edge softens the impact of development



- Occasional old pine tree – here associated with a watercourse – create a feature in the relatively open landscape



- Walls were once a feature of this landscape, but are now largely redundant



- Watercourse could be the focus for riparian woodland

6.3 Elgin North: Opportunities and Objectives for Enhancement

6.3.1 Sloping Ridge

This area of some scenic quality plays an important role in the setting of Elgin, and is popular for informal access. The area is characterised by its well defined ridgelines, the quality of its fine Scots pine and broadleaved woodland, and the contained, secluded character which contributes to its role as an informal recreation resource. It is relatively quiet and distinct from the noise and busy movement of traffic associated with the low lying basin.

Enhancement opportunities relate to maintaining the rural and wooded diversity of the landscape character, along with associated quiet seclusion. The continued maintenance of the woodlands, in terms of both the pattern of woodland as well as the wide species choice should be encouraged.

The diverse character of the woodland and support long term management of existing woodland, may be assisted by the new SFGS which places an emphasis on management of existing woodland, and offers particular support to continuous management systems.

New planting would be appropriate along the upper ridges, in part to contain any new settlement expansion in the adjacent Low Lying Basin character area. This is an area where policy type planting is appropriate, and in any new planting the emphasis should certainly be on large broadleaves, such as oak, ash and beech with Scots Pine, which is characteristic of the area.

Access for walkers from the town and links to the newer planting adjacent to the settlement edge should be maintained. Links between existing footpaths, and opportunities to extend access routes could be included within any framework for potential settlement expansion to the north.

The objective for this area should be to maintain a high quality, managed landscape which offers the opportunity for good access links both to the established woodland and recent planting. There may be opportunities for additional planting, particularly to create a framework for extensive new development.

6.3.2 Low Lying Basin

This area is adjacent to a key route into the settlement from the north. The main opportunities for enhancement relate to creating a more robust approach to the town along with creating the overall landscape framework for extensive new development. The young planting around the edge of the settlement will create a well defined edge. There are further opportunities to maintain the wetland habitat, expand areas of open water, establish riparian woodland species, provide shelter and definition for the cycle route and access routes, and extend woodland to reinforce the enclosing ridgelines between Findrassie Wood and Spynie Hill.