

#### 4.4 Context: Landscape Character and Strategic Visual Assessment

Forres is located within the 'Coastal Farmland' character area as identified in the Moray and Nairn Landscape Character Assessment<sup>1</sup>, and strategic advice on how best to accommodate urban expansion is included within the Assessment report. An extract is included in Annex Three. The more specific landscape character of the setting of Forres was used to inform the extent of study areas which form the basis of the analysis and presentation of findings in the remainder of this report. The study areas around Forres were identified as:

- Forres North East: This landscape encompasses slightly rising ground which extends up from the coastal plain before rising more steeply over an undulating and complex series of landforms which contain the eastern edge of the settlement
- Forres South East: Low, but often steeply rising, wooded hills reinforce the southern edge of the settlement and give way to extensive, cultivated, level farmland punctuated by distinctive knolls
- Forres West: the settlement extends south from an expansive, low lying flood plain associated with the River Findhorn. The rising land to the south west combines a more complex sequence of ridges, intimate hollows and undulating plateaux

Forres is not highly visible, due to its low lying profile and extensively wooded setting. Views from the town extend northwards across the coastal plain to the sea and Culbin Sands. Key visual characteristics of Forres include:

- The prominence of the low hills and the woodland which contributes to the setting of the town are visible from a wide area, even if the settlement is not
- There are expansive views from high points within the settlement, principally across the level plains to the north
- The visual enclosure of the hills and woodland to the south, which maintain the settlement's orientation to the north

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<sup>1</sup> Moray and Nairn Landscape Assessment, 1998, Turnbull Jeffrey Partnership, Scottish Natural Heritage

INTEGRATION OF NEW DEVELOPMENT INTO THE MORAY LANDSCAPE

**Forres**

**LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AND VISUAL ASSESSMENT**

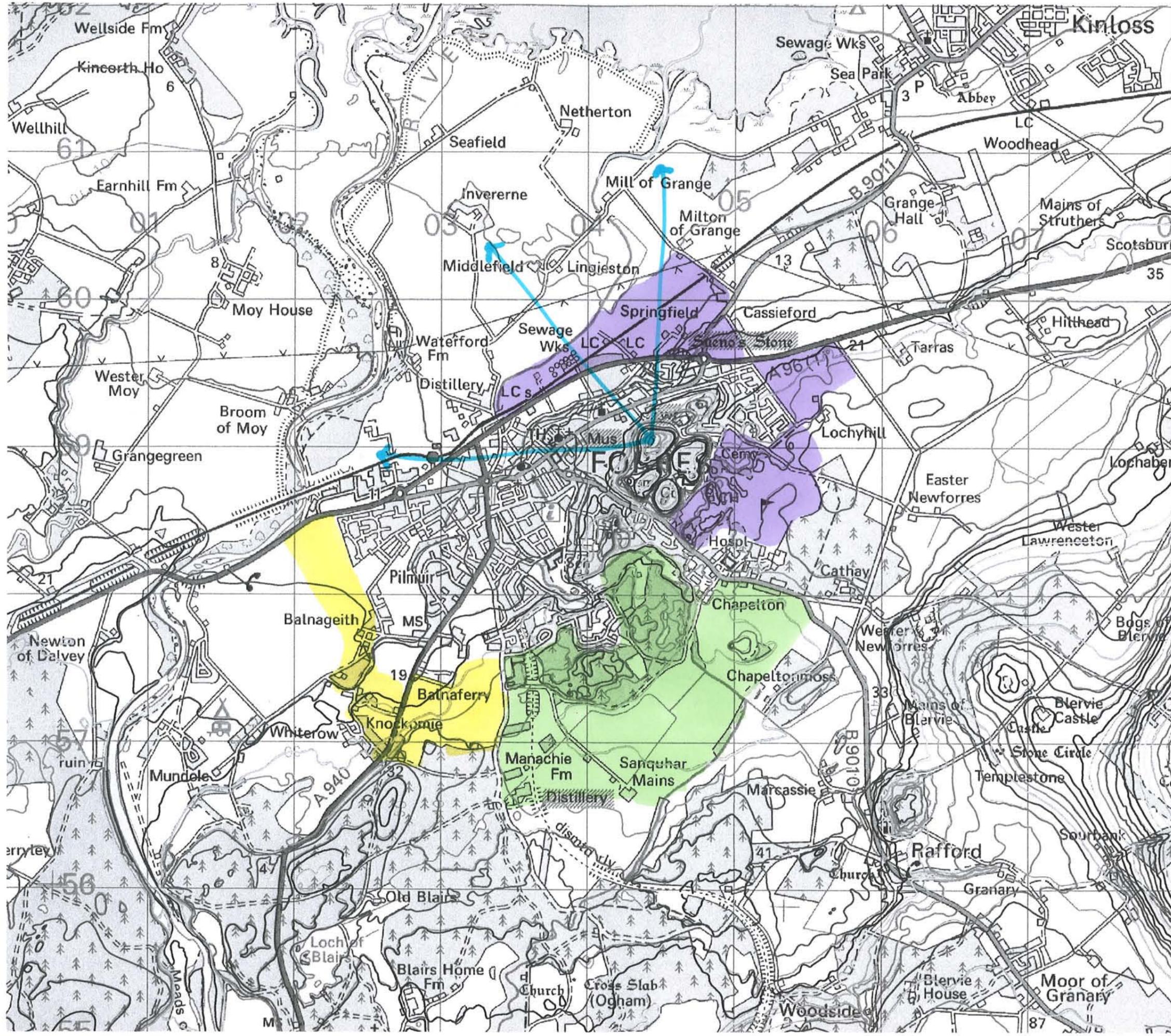
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Study Areas

-  Forres North East: Level coastal plain rising to undulating land form
-  Forres South East: Wooded containing hills and level fields with knolls
-  Forres West: Undulating land form above the level coastal plain

Views

-  Key views across the town from high points within Forres



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## **5 FORRES NORTH EAST: ASSESSING THE DEVELOPMENT BIDS**

### **5.1 Forres North East: Landscape Survey and Site Observations**

This study area has been further subdivided into two landscape character units. Forres North East is dominated by diversity of landform, from level flood plain, to rising slopes and finally more complex knolls and hollows. Key characteristics which influence settlement expansion include:

#### Level Plain

- this low lying flood plain, which rises to form slightly raised land to the east forms a plinth from which the settlement rises on higher ground
- the area is characterised by open cultivated farmland and grassland, with trees largely limited to watercourses and shelter for buildings
- the low elevation of the area allows expansive views to the north from the settlement and surrounding roads
- the area feels perceptually detached from Forres, a which although it is visible, is separated by the A96 trunk road and to a lesser extent, the railway, which are perceived as a physical barrier, limiting easy access from the town
- the noise from the road (which is elevated), and occasional smell from the sewage works also affect the area's character
- part of this area has been subject to flooding in the past, and most of it is relatively lowlying
- the settlement edge is reinforced by the A96, and the embankments associated with the road
- sense of arrival is at its most pronounced when turning off the fast A96 at the roundabout and then travelling into the settlement at a slower pace

#### Rolling Ridges

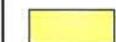
- this area is characterised by a series of rolling ridges, with occasional steep slopes creating a strong sense of containment, alternating with open tops
- pine shelterbelts and occasional more extensive woodland, generally located on higher ground, increase the sense of enclosure
- cultivated arable farmland extends right up to the settlement edge
- the settlement edge, which is dominated by recent development, is contained by rising ground
- occasional large houses and their grounds occupy prominent sites
- the area feels perceptually detached from the centre of Forres, an experience which is reinforced by the lack of visual connection and direct

vehicular access to the town centre, although there is a good network of pedestrian footpaths which link the area to the main settlement

- the prominent and steep sided Cluny Hills provide a very well defined edge and setting to the settlement, as well as being a valuable recreation resource as a component of the park
- the Muiryshade golf course reinforces the edge of the settlement as it begins to orientate south east
- on arrival along the A96 from the east, views of the built environment of the settlement are contained by the knolls and ridges associated with the more complex land forms

INTEGRATION OF NEW DEVELOPMENT INTO  
THE MORAY LANDSCAPE  
**Forres North East**  
SURVEY AND SITE OBSERVATIONS  
Scale 1:10 000

Landscape Character

-  Level Plain
-  Rolling Ridges

Landscape Survey

-  Key ridges provide visual and physical containment
-  Prominent mature woodland
-  Young woodland
-  Watercourses
-  Paths and Tracks
-  Cycle route from Findhorn
-  Large houses with mature policy grounds
-  Golf course
-  Sewage works
-  Railway
-  A96

Landscape Setting

-  Wooded ridges of Cluny Hills create the immediate setting for Forres
-  Sense of arrival emphasised by roundabout

Visual Assessment

-  Views on approach are limited by the knolls and ridges to the east

