

4.4 Context: Landscape Character and Strategic Visual Assessment

Keith is located within the 'Upland Farmland' character area as identified in the Moray and Nairn Landscape Character Assessment¹, and some 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 Keith 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 Keith were identified as:

- Keith North East: This landscape encompasses the strath of the River Isla and the smooth, undulating ridges which sweep round the east of the town providing subtle containment to the settlement
- Keith South West: the steep slopes of prominent river valleys bisect this study area, carving their way through a series of gently domed ridges, characterised by their convex land form

The outskirts of Keith are highly visible from approach roads and surrounding elevated viewpoints. Much of the interior of the town is less widely visible. Key visual characteristics of Keith include:

- the prominence of some of the outer edges of this elevated settlement which can be seen, often in glimpse views, on approach from a distance – often it is just roofs which have breached the brows of the domed ridges
- there are expansive views from high points within the settlement, including long views down the river valleys
- the visual enclosure provided by the continued slight rise to the brows of the ridges to the south maintain the settlement's orientation to the north
- the geometric grid of the street pattern within the town, which allows residents to take advantage of views to surrounding landscape, or internally to streetscapes with key buildings located as focal points

¹ Moray and Nairn Landscape Assessment, Turnbull Jeffrey Partnership, 1998, Scottish Natural Heritage


INTEGRATION OF NEW DEVELOPMENT
INTO THE MORAY LANDSCAPE

Keith

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AND VISUAL ASSESSMENT

Scale 1:25 000


Study Areas

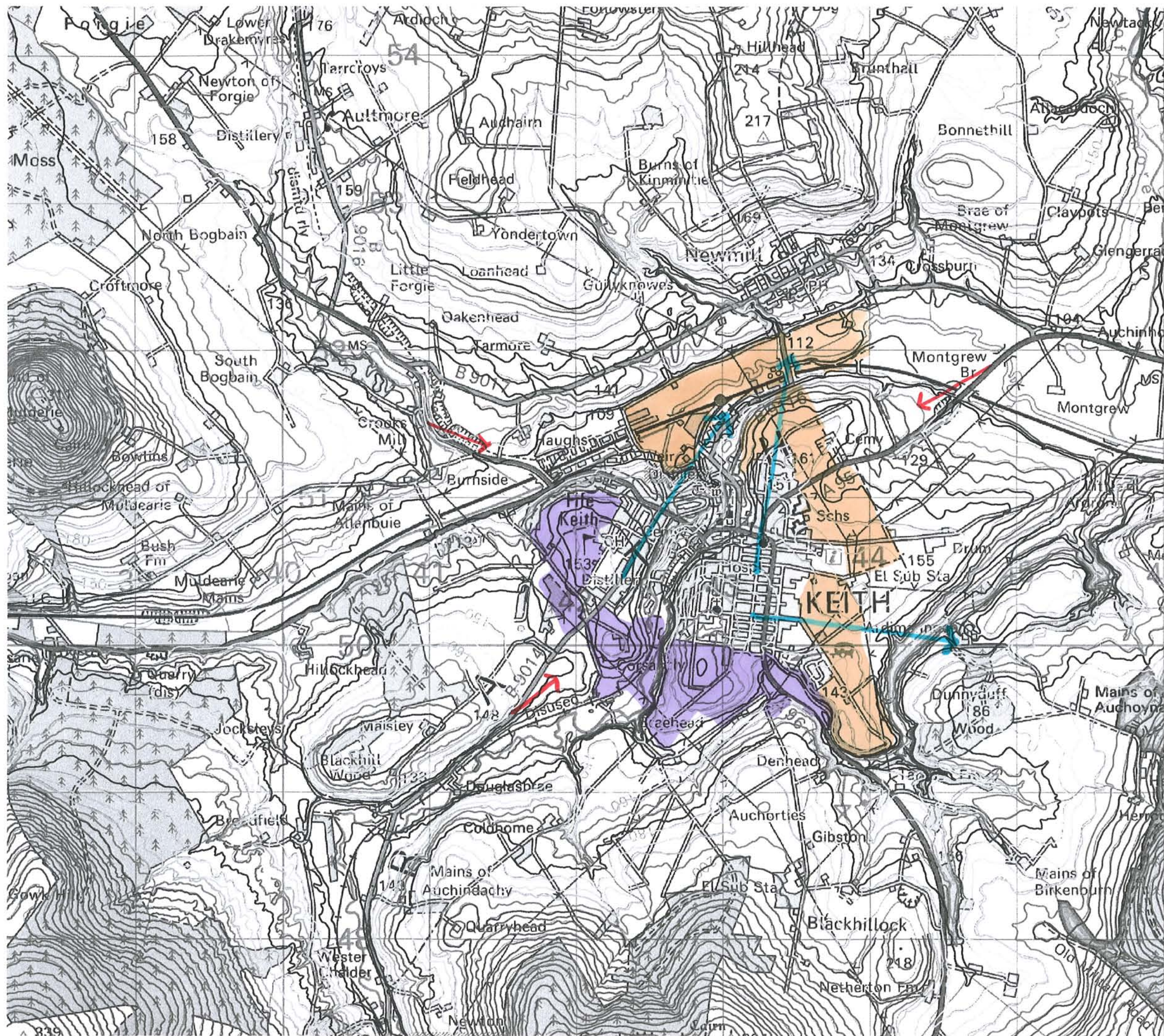
 Keith North East: The strath of the River Isla rises to meet a series of very gentle elevated undulations

 Keith South West: River valleys carve their way between domed ridges

Views

 Numerous views from within the town take advantage of the grid like street pattern

 On arrival, the outer settlement edge is visible from elevated roads, although much of the settlement remains hidden from view



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5 KEITH NORTH EAST: ASSESSING THE DEVELOPMENT BIDS

5.1 Keith North East: Landscape Survey and Site Observations

This study area has been further subdivided into three landscape character units. Keith North East is dominated by the strath of the River Isla and the gentle undulations of the higher ground across which the settlement has extended, some of which enclose relatively low lying land. Key characteristics which influence settlement expansion include:

Strath

- strath associated with the river is contained by slopes to the north and south which enclose a narrow but level floor
- generally open in character, the strath floor is contains extensive wetland with some grassland, which merges with improved grassland across the higher slopes
- trees are limited to the steeper slopes and along the gulleys containing the tributaries of the Isla with the occasional regenerating willow or birch in the strath floor
- the low lying land is a focus for infrastructure, and is occupied by the railway, overhead lines and a series of large bonded warehouses, as well as old mills and the distillery, both of which depend on the presence of water
- the floor of the strath is also an active flood plain
- the change of gradient where the north facing slopes meets the edge of the level land reinforces the northern edge of the settlement
- the approach to the settlement on the A98 from the north west traverses the strath, crossing a bridge and ascending through a tunnel of mature broadleaves before entering the town, creating a very clear sense of arrival

Undulating Ridges

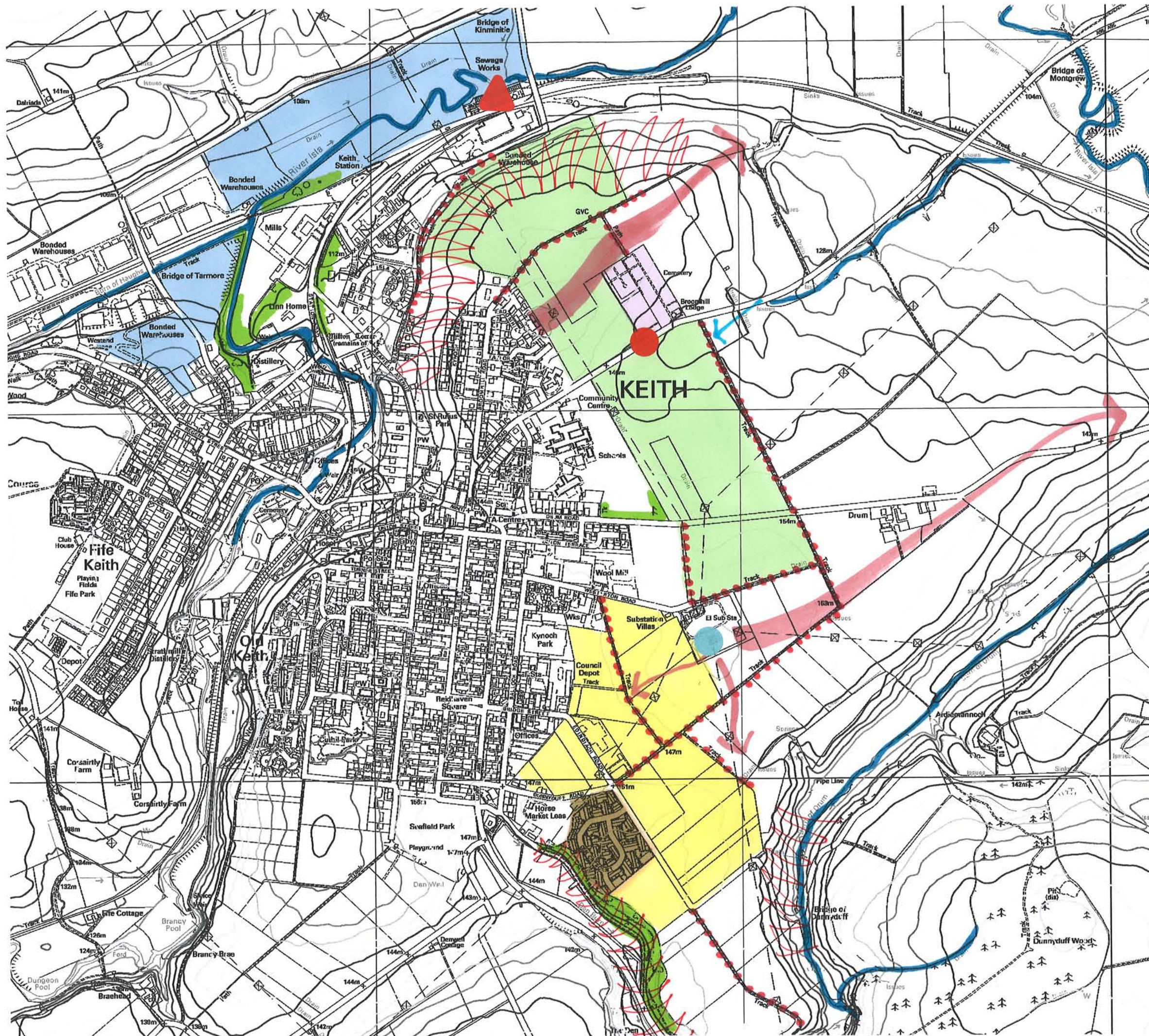
- smooth, very gently undulating landform of long ridges radiate from the settlement to the east
- the area is characterised by open, fenced fields of cultivated farmland and managed grassland
- trees are largely limited to those associated with development, such as around the school or near by football pitch
- most of the slopes are orientated away from the settlement, and have no visual connection with the settlement, resulting in some perception of detachment

- there is a good network of well used tracks and footpaths which cross the farmland
- the east facing settlement edge is generally contained by landform, with the exception of the development along Banff Road, which extends to the highest point on the ridge and has no strong feature to reinforce the sense of edge
- the eastern outskirts of the town are dominated by overhead lines, which extend north from the electricity substation
- the sense of arrival from the east is emphasised by the ascent towards the cemetery on the outskirts of the town at Banff Road

Shallow Elevated Slopes

- smooth, very gentle gradients of this long ridge provide subtle containment to the shallow valley and west facing slopes
- the area is characterised by open, fenced fields of cultivated farmland and grassland, with wetland dominating the lower lying land
- the presence of overhead lines and the prominent, ridge top electricity sub station and slightly rundown character in places detracts from the simplicity of the open farmland
- there is a good network of well used tracks and footpaths which cross the farmland
- the settlement edge is fragmented and ambiguous to the south east, where the more recent development at Den Crescent seems relatively isolated from the rest of the settlement

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



- Landscape Character**
- Strath
 - Undulating Ridges
 - Shallow Elevated Slopes
- Landscape Survey**
- Long gentle ridges
 - Mature woodland
 - Water courses
 - Paths and Tracks
 - Sewage Works
 - Electricity substation
 - Cemetery
 - Outlying development at Den Crescent
- Landscape Setting**
- Sense of arrival emphasised by ascent into settlement
- Visual Assessment**
- Views on approach are limited to the settlement edge which has breached the high point of the ridge