Landscape Character Area: Deeside

Landscape Character Type: Straths and Rivers Valley’s; a diverse character type where rivers are the most crucial influence on landscape character. This type is dominated by a river.

Overview
The River Dee bisects the lower half of the character area and is associated with a rich vein of estates, woodlands and attractive small towns. Lower Deeside is a pastoral area of green fields and shady woods but passing westwards into Mid Deeside the landscape assumes a more highland character with steep wooded sides rising to moorland. Around and to the west of Banchory the area is characterised by thick broadleaf woods associated with estates. Deeside is a landscape of rich colours and shadows, where contained views are drawn to details of woodland, water and architecture and occasional distant glimpses of moorland ridges. A more open agricultural basin is encountered between the River Dee and the Water of Feugh.

Deeside Location:

Key landscape features
Landform Generally narrow valley but expanding into more open land around Strachan. Sparkling, shingly river especially where course runs through limestone outcrop, around Aboyne
Vegetation Richly wooded landscape often providing a strong sense of enclosure. Great diversity of trees and rich under storey forming a landscape of colourful foliage and dappled light; striking colours in autumn.
Field pattern Pockets of open agricultural landscape along Water of Feugh contrast with woodland along the Dee.
Settlement Numerous estates with fine buildings, grand gatehouses, thick stone boundary walls and long avenues lined with billowing beech trees. Well settled area with mix of architectural styles, notably majestic Victorian houses and hotels; large towns and numerous visitor facilities.
Other Major road corridor. Much of the area is coincident with what has historically been identified as an Area of Landscape Significance.
Specific Guidance

General
- The wooded river valley is sensitive to development which may cause the loss of woodland. Development should seek to retain woodland and enhance the richly wooded landscape through planting.
- The setting of castles and estates are vulnerable to change; landscape features such as policy woodland, shelterbelts, parkland, boundary walls and gatehouses are sensitive features and should be retained.
- Pressure from built development may result in loss of settlement shape and character. Dispersed development on the edge of settlements should be avoided and any development proposed should seek to replicate the settlement pattern.
- Periodic open views to the uplands are essential to the experience of this landscape. Extension of tree cover and introduction of screening could close off these views still further. Therefore, while the extension of woodland planting enhances the character of Deeside this should aim to avoid blocking open views.
- To resist over development of the valley and the coalescence of settlements; mixed woodland may be used to limit expansion of the outer edges of settlements; linear ribbon development should be avoided.
- Road improvements within a confined corridor may have a significant impact.

Dwellings
- In some parts of the character area dwellings are generally grouped together and well screened. In other parts dwellings are well spaced but continue to be sheltered by trees and shrubs. When considering new development the grouping and spacing in the surrounding area should be considered and followed.
- There is a varying range of dwellings across the character area however the most common are single or 1½ storey with small front porches. Dwellings should generally be set back from roads within garden space. Overly manicured grounds/gardens or ornate detailing on walls looks out of place.
- There are opportunities within the character area for the conversion of steadings.
- In limited circumstances more adventurous and grand architecture would be appropriate in this landscape given the history of large estates. However, careful siting and design will be paramount.

Trees and Woodland
- New planting should reflect the variety of species present in the character area and where possible new planting (screening, shelterbelts etc.) should aim to link up to existing woodland or plantations.
- Maintenance of policy woodlands, open parkland, boundary walls, gatehouses, and avenues will enhance these landscape features.

Agricultural Buildings
- New agricultural buildings should generally be associated with the original farmstead. Hummocks, landform and shelterbelts should be used to help screen large buildings.

Boundaries
- Stone dykes with shrubs, hedging or picket fencing are successful boundary treatments.
Landscape Character Areas: The Deveron and Bogie Straths

Landscape Character Type: Straths and Rivers Valley’s; a diverse character type where rivers are the most crucial influence on landscape character. This type is dominated by a river.

Overview
This character area follows the courses of the Deveron and Bogie Rivers. The Deveron runs through the western part of the area, and the Bogie through the southern part of the area, before then joining the Deveron in Huntly. Both the Deveron and Bogie valleys exhibit a similar pattern of fields that drop gently towards the rivers or extend across a wide flood plain and a loose network of hedges and shelterbelts, and small woodland clumps. The Deveron has more thickly coniferous wooded slopes north and west of Huntly. The landscape is generally well settled with roads running alongside rivers and houses concentrated along these. The landscape is essentially an agricultural one, but with a moorland backdrop creating a grand sense of scale.

The Deveron and Bogie Straths Location:

Key Landscape Features

Sensitivity An area of increased landscape sensitivity exists to the western part of the area around Glass as shown by the shaded area due to the qualities of the Deveron valley including; mixed woodland, views along the river and the presence of a moorland backdrop. The area is coincident with what was historically identified as an Area of Landscape Significance.

Landform A distinct valley form, constricted valleys associated with schists. There is a wide valley north and south of Huntly

Field Pattern Mosaic of diverse land uses; rough grazing, hay, commercial forestry and deciduous woodland. There is a neat farmland patchwork on the flood plain.

Vegetation Mixture of woodland; conifer covered knolls and broadleaf woodland lining rivers.

Settlement Dense settlement within the valley, associated with road corridors. Within the straths farmhouses are scattered.
### Specific Guidance

#### General
- Linear sprawl will degrade the landscape, clustered settlement patterns are more appropriate.
- Expansion of existing settlements may be restricted by using woodland containment.
- Setting of estates and large houses are susceptible to neglect or changes in landuse.
- Where long views into the area a feature these should be retained.

#### Dwellings
- Farmsteads are well spaced throughout the area.
- Dwellings and farmsteads are generally concentrated along the roads which run alongside the rivers.
- Generally houses are set back from the road.
- There are occasional groups of dwellings, particularly along main routes such as the A920 and the A97.
- Houses and farmsteads are predominantly sited within woodland, or have woodland screening.

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### Woodland
- Small blocks of commercial forestry will fit within the existing farmland pattern.
- Local prominent landscape features such as the stands of Scots pine on mounds may be enhanced through management.
- Broadleaf and mixed woodland is a feature along river valleys, particularly the upper Deveron valley.
- Preservation and management of policy woodlands, and replanting of avenues of trees will benefit the estate and the wider landscape.

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### Boundaries
- Post and wire fence are a common field boundary.
- Preservation of traditional field boundaries, such as drystone dykes and hedgerows will enhance the landscape pattern.

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- Preservation of traditional field boundaries, such as drystone dykes and hedgerows will enhance the landscape pattern.
Landscape Character Area: Deveron and Upper Ythan Valleys

Landscape Character Type: Straths and Rivers Valley’s; a diverse character type where rivers are the most crucial influence on landscape character. This type is dominated by a river.

Overview
The rivers and their adjoining major tributaries meander through predominantly shallow valleys bounded by broad and rolling hills. The valley sides occasionally become steeper as the River Deveron flows north. The river valley slopes are well vegetated and the layout of the mixed deciduous and coniferous trees is responsive to the landform. Fences and hedges of beech and thorn, divide the agricultural land which almost invariably leads up to the river edge.

Deveron and Upper Ythan Valleys Location:

Key Landscape Features

Sensitivity An area of increased landscape sensitivity exists to the north and west of Turriff, as shown by the shaded area, due to the qualities of the River Deveron Valley, including; the deciduous trees; river side trees; beech hedging and views along the river. This area is coincident with what was historically identified as an Area of Landscape Significance.

Landform Shallow valleys bounded by broad rolling hills. Fields drop gently to the rivers or extend across a wide flood plain. Shallow, rocky rivers lined by broadleaf woods amidst well wooded farmland.

Vegetation A loose network of hedges and shelterbelts and small woodland clumps make a key contribution to the landscape character. Fences and hedges of beech and thorn divide the agricultural land.

Settlement Roads run alongside the rivers, and houses and villages are concentrated along these, such as at Fyvie, Turriff, and Bridge of Alvah. Farm buildings evenly scattered across the landscape are enclosed by pronounced woodland stands. Castles and mansion houses such as Delgatie, Fyvie, Forglen and Duff House contribute to the architectural diversity of the area.

Field pattern / land-use Mosaic of diverse land uses; rough sheep grazing, hay fields, cereals, commercial forestry and deciduous woods.
Specific Guidance

General
- The small scale farmland landscape with a diverse range of landuse is vulnerable to large scale developments or elements that may lead to homogenisation of landscape character.
- Development tends to be dotted around the valley sides rather than on the valley floor.
- Preservation and management of policy woodlands and stone dykes and replanting of avenues will benefit both estates and the wider landscape. Development that impacts on these elements should be resisted.

Dwellings located on valley sides, with limited development on valley floor is characteristic

Trees and Woodland
- Riverside trees are an attractive feature of the valleys and should be retained.
- Mixed deciduous and coniferous woodlands are generally responsive to the landform and provide a major contribution to the character of these valleys. Removal of woodland in order to accommodate development should be avoided. However, new development can be integrated with existing tree belts or woodlands by planting native trees to replicate copses traditionally planted for shelter.

Agricultural Buildings
- This character area has a large variety of farm buildings ranging from traditional steadings to larger modern buildings. New buildings are generally grouped together with the original farmstead. Traditionally signature colours have been used to paint doors and rainwater goods, such as rich reds and blues.

Dwellings are generally located on the roadside or close to the road. Farmsteads are often located on hill ridges overlooking the valley bottoms.
- Integration of new buildings could be achieved by locating development close to existing buildings, shelterbelts, hedgerows and trees. Linear sprawl will degrade the landscape; clustered settlement patterns are more appropriate and will acquire greater community identity.
- Traditional proportions and window style present good design. Use of stone and harling will reflect the local character.
- Dwellings should have relatively modest tree planting around them, with small groups of trees being more characteristic. Beech hedges are successful boundary treatments as are stone dykes. Coniferous hedges and fencing used for plot boundaries can be very intrusive in rural locations.

Dwellings located on and close to the road are characteristic

Boundaries
- Fences and hedges of beech and thorn divide agricultural land.
Landscape Character Area: Donside

Landscape Character Type: Straths and Rivers Valley's; a diverse character type where rivers are the most crucial influence on landscape character. This type is dominated by a river.

Overview
Donside extends from the Cairngorms National Park boundary east of Strathdon, to the edge of Howe of Alford. The area follows steep sided gorges, which are lined with dense broadleaf woods associated with estates. Roads along the valley are hidden in woodland. Between the two gorges the landscape expands into a richly contoured steep farmed valley. Its open sides display a regular pattern of smooth fields of pasture where field boundaries are often absent enhancing the smoothness. Woodland forms bold clumps and shelterbelts, often enclosing the farm, augment the regularity of the landscape pattern.

Donside Location:

Key Landscape Features
Sensitivity This character area is of increased landscape sensitivity due to the characteristics described below. This area is coincident with what was historically identified as an Area of Landscape Significance and abuts the Cairngorms National Park (CNP).

Landform Narrow steep sided gorges between upland areas, widening into more gentle straths through sandstone.

Sandstone Strath:
Landform Smooth undulating terrain but distinctly contoured with sinuous, flowing landform.
Field pattern/Land use Peaceful pastoral setting hidden amidst surrounding moors. Well manicured with bold field pattern and prominent belts of woodland. Regular pattern of smooth fields, where field boundaries are often absent.
Vegetation Patches of conifers on middle slopes, conforming with scale of landscape and giving a gradual transition to more densely wooded ridges above. Woodland forms bold clumps and shelterbelts, often enclosing the farm, augment the regularity of the landscape pattern.
Settlement Traditional grey stone farmsteads with woodland shelter evenly spaced adding to regularity and harmonious pattern of landscape.

Schist Glens:
Landform Steeply carved valley, richly wooded with beech and other broadleaves.
Land use Estates located above glen as it rises into moorland plateaux.
Other Rich colours and deep shadows which change with seasons.
Specific Guidance

General
• The managed landscape of the sandstone strath is highly sensitive to any changes.
• The farmed landscape is sensitive to changes affecting the regular pattern of fields, settlement and woodland.

Dwellings
• Regular spacing of farms within shelterbelts is characteristic; new development oblivious to the existing pattern will disrupt the landscape.
• Dwellings should be grouped with existing farm buildings. There are few dwellings set individually within the character area and adding to these would disrupt the existing pattern of regularly spaced dwellings.
• Within the Strath development is generally set in the mid to lower parts of the Strath and set back from the road.
• Within the schist glens new dwellings should reflect the pattern of evenly spaced farms and estate lodges. Farms are generally on the upper to middle reaches of the glen with cottages and lodges located along the roadside.
• Dwellings should generally be single to 1½ storey within shelter belt planting as this is characteristic of the area.

Boundaries
• Maintenance of stone dykes along roads will enhance the area’s character.
• Prominent field boundaries augment the landscape structure; management of these will benefit the landscape character.

Agricultural Buildings
• Within the Straths new agricultural buildings should be well related to existing farm buildings and not be of a scale that dominates the existing farmstead. Farm buildings are successfully screened by small hummocks and shelterbelts.
• Within the schist glen, new agricultural buildings should be well related to existing farm buildings, which are generally located mid way up the glen side and not adjacent to the road.

Trees and Woodland
• Small shelterbelts and plantations reflect existing patterns. Shelter belts augment the field structure.

Roads
• Infrastructure such as roads should follow breaks in landform and minimise visual intrusion.
**Landscape Character Area: Muir of Dinnet**

Landscape Character Type: Straths and Rivers Valley's; a diverse character type where rivers are the most crucial influence on landscape character. This type is dominated by a river.

**Overview**

Only half of the Muir of Dinnet landscape character is in Aberdeenshire, the other half is within the Cairngorm National Park. The area is primarily a wetland area, comprising Lochs Kinord and Davan and the flat wetlands, moorland and heath which surround them. The character area is bounded by the long, gentle slopes of Morven and the south Deeside Hills. The vegetation and pattern of open and of wooded and enclosed spaces contribute to the diversity of the landscape.

**Muir of Dinnet Location:**

**Key Landscape Features**

**Sensitivity** Area of increased landscape sensitivity due to the characteristics described below. The area is coincident with what was historically identified as an Area of Landscape Significance and abuts the Cairngorms National Park (CNP). The dotted line on the map represents the continuation of the Muir of Dinnet landscape character area into the national park.

**Landform** Low lying core with low irregularly shaped hills which punctuate the landscape and create a basin-like landform.

**Vegetation** Woodland extends from the lochs to cover the small hills and lower hill slopes throughout the area. To the east lush green pastures abut the straw coloured reeds and scrub that fringe the lochs and are enclosed by thick hedgerows and woodland. Heather and bracken covers the tops of some of the small hills and areas of open ground within woodlands.

**Settlement** Isolated cottages and farmsteads are dispersed through the area but generally the area is sparsely populated.

**Specific Guidance**

- Development within this character area is very sparse and is limited to a few farmsteads and cottages. New development would disrupt the large expansive open areas.
- New development should therefore either be grouped with existing building or exceptionally be tucked into the folds of the small hills with clumps of trees to help blend with the landscape.
- New development should utilise the landform and trees to minimise impacts on the landscape.
- New agricultural buildings should generally be proportionate to existing buildings, which are small scale and grouped with existing buildings.
- Dykes and hedging are successful boundary treatments for dwellings. Elsewhere post and wire fencing is characteristic.
- Clumps of trees and shelter belts are characteristic of the area and this pattern should be reflected in any planting around new development.
Landscape Character Area: Upper Deeside Estates

Landscape Character Type: Straths and Rivers Valley's; a diverse character type where rivers are the most crucial influence on landscape character. This type is dominated by a river

Overview
This area is characterised by a long, curving strath, contained by relatively low, rounded, flat topped hills receding to mountainous peaks to the north and south. The broad River Dee is a prominent feature within the strath and its course is strongly influenced by small hills and rocky knolls which project out from the valley sides and cause the river to take a convoluted, meandering path. The hill slopes, forming the strath, are occasionally cut by the tributary valleys which are in places deep and gorge-like.

Upper Deeside Location:

Key Landscape Features

Sensitivity This character area is of increased landscape sensitivity due to the characteristics described below. This area is coincident with what was historically identified as an Areas of Landscape Significance and abuts the Cairngorms National Park (CNP). The dotted line on the map represents the continuation of the landscape character area into the national park.

Landform Long, curving strath, contained by relatively low, rounded, flat topped hills receding to mountainous peaks to the north and south. The broad River Dee is a prominent feature within the strath

Vegetation Extensive woodland which covers the majority of the hills and often the flatter floor of the strath gives unity and distinctiveness to the landscape character area. Policy woodlands of Scots pine, larch and spruce are characteristic. The managed woodland with its even age structure contrasts with the gnarled billowing mature native pine and the colours of the deciduous woodland that fringe the Dee and cover the hill slopes.

Field pattern / Land-use To the east of the character area small pastures and occasional arable fields, often enclosed by stone dykes occupy the flatter strath floor. In the central section of the strath, isolated pastures occur within extensive woodlands.

Settlement Relatively sparsely populated, with large country houses and castles being the main buildings, many in the Scottish Baronial style with exotic conifer planting to form parklands.

Other Stone walls, gate houses, and the many bridges over the River Dee are also important features within the landscape.
Specific Guidance

General
- The character area is relatively sparsely populated and new development should be clustered around a core to minimise encroachment into the open countryside.
- The wooded river valley is sensitive to development which may cause the loss of woodland or replacement of the diverse mixed woodland by coniferous forest. Development should seek to retain woodland and enhance the richly wooded landscape through planting.
- The setting of castles and estates are vulnerable to change; landscape features such as policy woodland, shelterbelts, parkland, boundary walls and gatehouses are sensitive features and should be retained.
- Maintenance of policy woodlands, open parkland, boundary walls, gatehouses, and avenues will enhance these landscape features.

Dwellings
- Dwellings should generally be grouped together or closely associated with existing farmsteads.
- Dwellings should generally be set within woodland or with a backdrop of woodland.
- There is a varying range of dwellings across the character area however the most common are 1½ storey.
- Dwellings should generally be set back from roads within their own garden space. Ornate detailing on walls looks out of place.
- Boundaries consisting of stone dykes with shrubs, hedging or picket fencing are successful boundary treatments.

Trees and Woodland
- New planting should reflect the variety of species present in the character area and where possible new planting (screening, shelterbelts etc) should aim to link up to existing woodland or plantations.

Agricultural Buildings
- New agricultural buildings should generally be associated with the original farmstead. Hummocks, the landform and shelterbelts should be used to help screen large buildings.

Boundaries
- Stone dykes, hedging and gorse are common boundary treatments and should be used to define property feus.
- In some areas distinctive estate walls and metal fencing are characteristic and it may be appropriate to continue this theme around new development to visually link development to its setting.
- Distinctive boundary features and gateways commonly signal the entrance to an estate or large country houses, often when the house itself is screened by woodland and not visible.