



Development Bid  
The Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan  
Land for Future Development  
Cassiegills, Ellon



Kirkwood Homes Ltd in association with The Cassiegills Partnership





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## 1. Introduction

Knight Frank LLP, on behalf of Kirkwood Homes Ltd, submit the following development bid in support of the identification of land to the north of Ellon, Aberdeenshire, as potential site for a future mixed-use development comprising residential, employment/business land, a new school along with associated infrastructure, landscaping and community facilities.

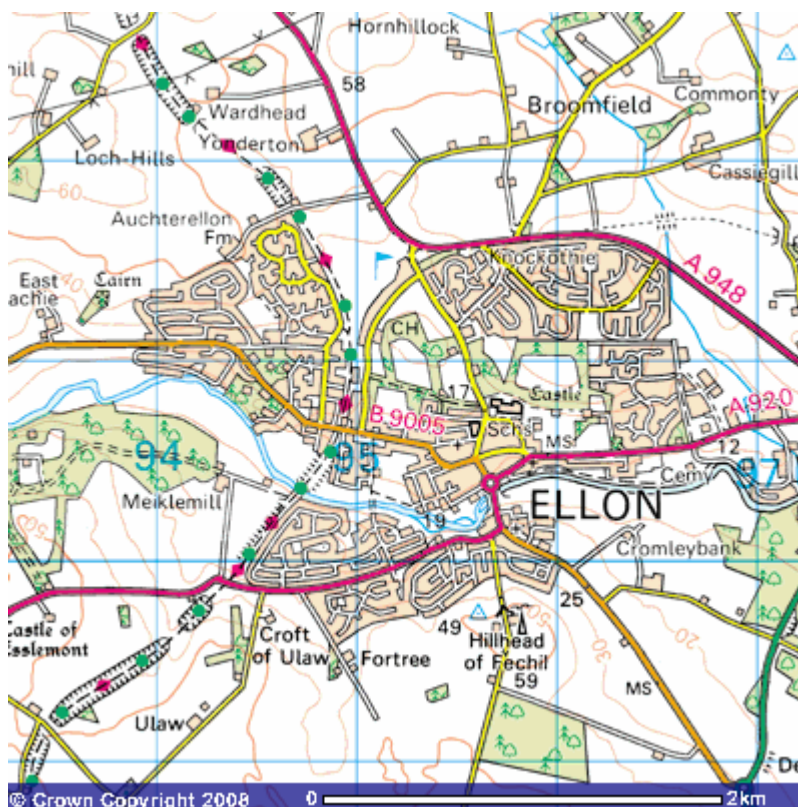
The purpose of this statement is to detail the land-use planning justification for the identification of the land to the north of Ellon as being suitable for mixed-used development within the new Local Development Plan for Aberdeenshire.

## 2. Details of the Site

### 2.1 Location

The town of Ellon is the principal settlement in the Formartine administrative area of Aberdeenshire with a population of around 9,500. The town is located around 12 miles to the north of Aberdeen off the A90 Aberdeen to Peterhead road corridor.

Figure 1: Location Plan





## 2.2 Context

Ellon has a rich historical core centred on the north banks of the River Ythan which includes the Castle and associated designed landscape and the old bridge built in 1793 on the turnpike road between Aberdeen and Peterhead.

Substantial residential housing development has occurred from the 1970s onwards as Ellon underwent rapid expansion whereby numerous housing estates were built to accommodate the influx of oil workers and related businesses at a time when the focus in the area shifted from agriculture to oil related industries.

## 2.3 Infrastructure and Local Services

The close proximity of Ellon to Aberdeen and good road connectivity has resulted in the settlement's rapid expansion in recent decades and its recognition as a principal commuter town for nearby Aberdeen.

Ellon is served by 3 primary schools; Ellon Primary School, Auchterellon Primary School and Meiklemill Primary School. The latest School Roll forecasts show that Ellon Primary School is currently operating at 80% of total capacity (forecast to decline to 75% capacity by 2016), Auchterellon Primary School is currently operating at 89% of total capacity (forecast to decline to 84% by 2016), and Meiklemill Primary School is currently operating at 62% of total capacity (forecast to decline to 44% capacity).

The School Roll forecasts also show that Ellon Academy is currently operating at 100% of total capacity and by 2016 the school roll will decline to 81% of total capacity.

## 3. Planning Policy Context

### 3.1 Current Context

The adopted Aberdeenshire Local Plan (2006) identifies Ellon as the main service centre and employment centre for the south part of Formartine and a well established commuter town for Aberdeen. The main factors affecting Ellon as identified as being:

- a) High demand for new housing;
- b) Opportunities for employment growth;
- c) Enhancement of the role and attractiveness of the area;
- d) Relatively poor range of community facilities;
- e) Educational facilities under extreme pressure;



### 3.2 Housing/Business Land Supply

The Aberdeenshire Local Plan identified nine development opportunities are identified in Ellon. The Housing Land Audit 2008 shows that these have been brought forward as follows:

Site eh1/ch1 – suitable for around 50 houses, development complete.

Site eh2 – suitable for around 18 houses, development complete.

Site eh3 – suitable for around 7 houses, development complete.

Site eh4 – suitable for around 7 houses,

Site eh5 – suitable for around 19 houses,

Site ch2 – suitable for around 25 houses,

Site ch3 – suitable for around 46 houses, under construction.

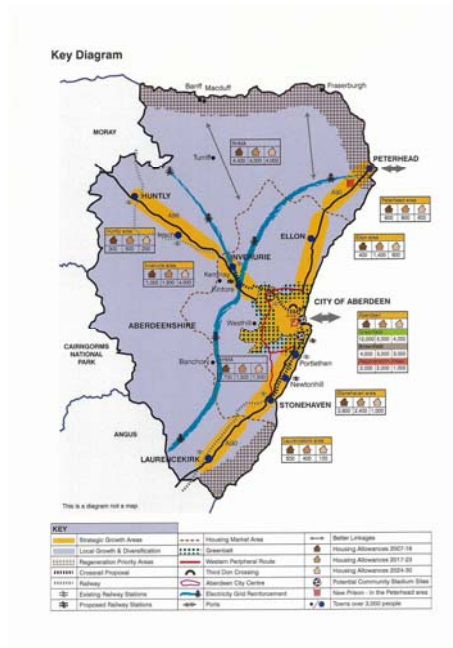
Site A – suitable for around 20 affordable houses, development complete

Site EmpB – suitable for appropriate employment use(s) – development complete.

### 3.3 Emerging Context

The draft Structure Plan advocates a rate of growth in the region that has been experienced in the North East than in recent years. The draft Structure Plan also seeks to focus the majority of new development within Strategic Growth Areas (SGAs) along the region's main transport and economic corridors as illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Extract from the draft Structure Plan for Aberdeen City and Shire

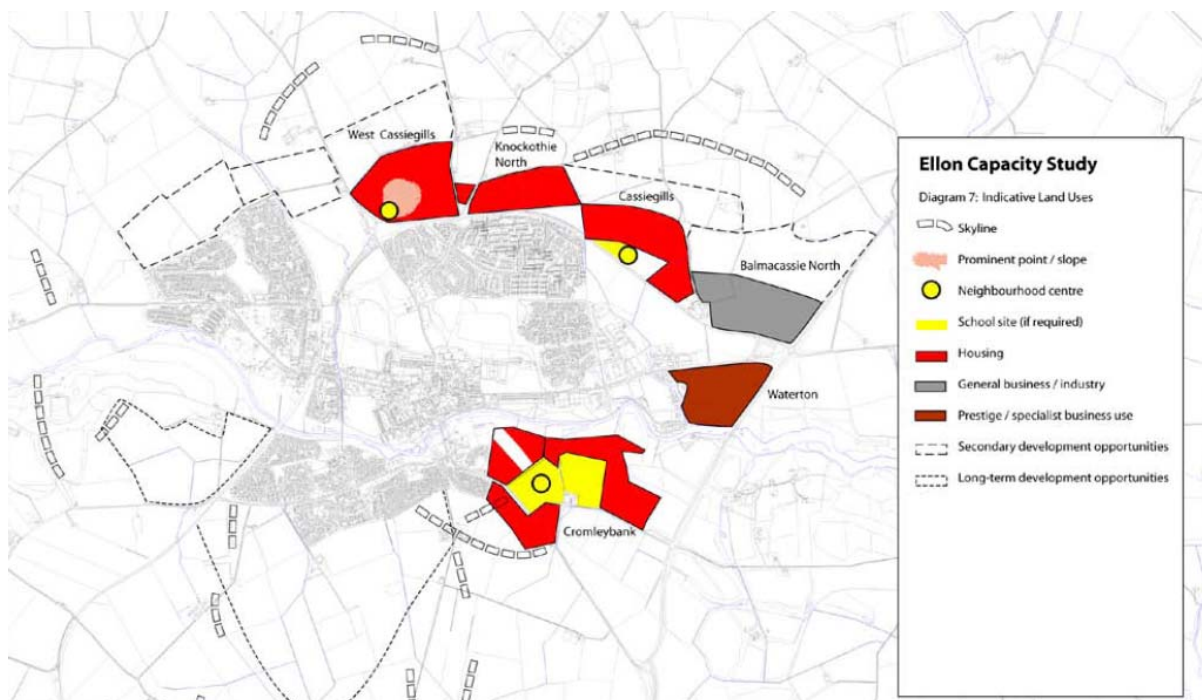


Ellon is located in the Aberdeen to Peterhead corridor which aims to realise the ambitions of ACSEF’s “Energetica” initiative. Schedule 1 of the draft Structure Plan allocates around 400 new houses for the Ellon area between the period 2007-2016, 1,400 new houses for the period 2017-2023, and 500 new houses for the period 2024-2030.

### 3.4 Future Strategy – Land Use Proposition for Expansion of Ellon

The ‘Imagine Ellon’ Capacity Study was produced to consider the land-use implications for expanding the town to establish a long-term framework for growth. The Capacity Study showed that the sites that were the most appropriate for accommodating future growth were those where there would be the least visual impact, located on or near to key transport routes, with the ability to contribute to the open space framework of the town. These areas includes West Cassiegills, Knockothie North and Cassiegills as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Extract from the ‘Imagine Ellon’ Capacity Study



The ACSEF “Energetica” initiative also seeks to encourage an ambitious public-private partnership designed to create the world’s greatest concentration of energy companies, housing and leisure facilities along a 30-mile coastal strip between Peterhead and Aberdeen with new housing being located in and around Ellon.



## 4. Development Proposals

### 4.1 Site Characteristics and Analysis

The production of crops has shaped the landscape within the site area and resulted in geometric field boundaries within a gently undulating landscape shaped by river erosion.

The site consists of predominantly agricultural arable land suitable for crop production. Advances in farming practices resulted in the grubbing up of field boundaries to create large fields; this is evident with the Balmacassie zone. Due to the adverse effects of nitrogen fertilisers within the landscape, farmers were encouraged to introduce uncultivated margins to field boundaries, which is evident within the study area.

### 4.2 Landscape Appraisal and Principles

The site is located on undulating and gently rising ground above the River Ythan valley. Typically, the site consists of gently sloping ground with a south facing aspect, with the exception of land around Laverock Hill which rises to a high spot to 66m OD. Other examples of raised ground occur at West Cassiegills 45m OD and Balmacassie 40m OD. The low areas within the site occur along the length of the A948 road corridor and dismantled railway lines at circa 30m OD. Typically, field boundaries are demarcated by an uncultivated margin and occasionally by low level random rubble stone walls; however this is uncommon due to the lack of local stone.

The 6 different character zones identified in the Landscape Appraisal are:

1. Laverock Hill zone;
2. Yonderton zone;
3. West Cassiegills zone;
4. Knockothie zone;
5. Eastcassiegills zone;
6. Balmacassie zone;

Laverock Hill zone consists of 12 fields with a small hill (Laverock Hill) rising above Auchterellon Farm. The northern extent is bounded by Crosshill plantation and includes overhead electricity cables and Loch-hills small holding. The east boundary is defined by the Formartine and Buchan Way disused railway line to the west and the A948 to the east.

West Cassiegills zone consists of 6 fields on gently sloping south-facing and rising ground. The zone is dissected by a minor road and bounded to the south and west by the A948 and to the east by a minor road and field boundaries to the West Cassiegills cottage.



Knockothie zone consists of a single wedge-shaped field to the south of Lower Broomfield farm complex. The zone includes West Cassiegills cottage and a mature stand of mixed woodland dissected by the A948 road corridor.

East Cassiegills zone consists of 10 fields on gently sloping ground dissected by the disused railway line. The zone includes small pockets of wedge-shaped evergreen woodlands to some field boundaries and an evergreen woodland roundel. Typically, the field perimeters include ditches. The north boundary is defined by the single track road at Cassiegills Farm. The southern boundary is defined by the A948 road corridor and the west boundary by a minor road and evergreen woodland plantation circa 20 years in age. The zone includes the disused railway line which is in a cutting and the road bridge which carried the road over the railway line dated 1895.

Balmacassie zone consists of two fields, one of considerable size which presumably once consisted of four fields. The major field is situated on gently mounding ground. The zone is bounded to the east by the A90 main Aberdeen to Peterhead corridor; to the west by Balmacassie small holding and associated mature tree planting; and to the north by a combination of the evergreen woodland plantation circa 20 years in age; the dismantled railway and a field boundary.

#### 4.3 Masterplan Proposals

The principal aim is to introduce a strong, simple geometric landscape framework which responds to the existing field patterns which are a characteristic landscape feature in order to contain, shelter and screen new development. Following this principal, the masterplan proposals:

- refrain from developing the ridge lines within the study area as can be seen within the Laverock Hill, West Cassiegills, and Balmacassie zones;
- Retention of existing 'green space' corridors and the introduction of new 'green space' wedges;
- Safeguard existing green space corridors within the Yonderton zone in order to safeguard the northern approach into Ellon along the A948 road corridor;
- Introduce new green space within areas of new development as can be seen within Laverock Hill, West Cassiegills, and Balmacassie Zones;
- Introduce green wedges between the proposed development areas, notably West Cassiegills to the south of Lower Broomfield.
- Frame long views within the site area and focus on existing landscape features. This is evident in focusing a view on the Auchterellon Farm complex from West Cassiegills zone;



- Link into existing green spaces within adjacent development, notably Knockothie housing development from the West Cassiegills zone;
- In agreement with adjacent landowner, introduce strategic off-site planting to integrate existing and proposed green space, notably the introduction of woodland on land immediately to the north of recently established community woodland;
- Access into the proposed development area will be off the A948 road corridor;
- Integrate the proposed development within the wider agricultural landscape setting and repair the northern edge to Ellon which has been compromised by new housing development;
- Create a sequence of experiences when travelling along the A948 road corridor through a sequence of (travelling west to east) agricultural field boundaries by means of a woodland shelter belt into residential and open green space; then open space; residential; existing mature mixed woodland block; community facilities; open space; woodland block; open space; tree belt; commercial/business uses with screen planting along the road corridor;
- Typically, introduce new planting in a north/south alignment in order to filter and screen long east/west views of the proposed development;
- Link into existing and proposed core paths and introduce a network of paths within green spaces in order to maximise the potential for pedestrian movement on bicycles or foot within the new development.

New development will be introduced in distinct zones to create a legible settlement expansion. Notably, housing within Laverock Hill, West Cassiegills and East Cassiegills zones.

Centrally located community facilities (secondary school with associated playing fields) within the Knockothie zone to integrate the new development and a Business Commercial District within the Balmacassie zone which complements the existing land use to either side of the A948 road corridor from the main A90 arterial road link.

#### 4.4 Access and Connectivity

The majority of the site lies between 1.5 to 2.0km (20 minutes walk) of the centre of Ellon and has good access to south and north via the A90 and the A948. The A948 which runs along the south site boundary then turns north to bisect the site between West Cassiegills and Yonderton. It is envisaged that new vehicular access nodes will be formed at West Cassiegills and opposite the Knockothie housing development. In the east, the existing Balmacassie interchange will provide access to the proposed business park and the existing park and ride station.



#### 4.5 Landscape and Environment

The principle aim is to introduce a strong simple geometric landscape framework which responds to the existing field patterns which are a characteristic feature in order to contain, shelter and screen new development.

Containment: Through the introduction of woodland belts and blocks to contain new development. This is evident within the landscape proposals for the Laverock Hill, East Cassiegills and Balmacassie zones.

Shelter: Through the introduction of woodland belts and blocks, most notably within the Laverock, West Cassiegills and Balmacassie zones.

Screen: Screen new development from adjacent road corridors, notably the Balmacassie zone and from the A90 and A948 road corridors.

#### 4.6 Architectural and Layout

The topography and underlying geology of the site provides the potential to create a low carbon sustainable community with clear planned growth patterns linked to Ellon.

The landscaping strategy creates the framework for a development well integrated into the existing topography which is sheltered, screened, and protected from the prevailing winds.

Solar energy will be integral both at a passive level, by orientation and detailed building design, and where appropriate by active collection using PV cells or solar hot water systems. Given the rate of development in these technologies, it would be wrong at this stage to estimate the mix of systems to be adopted, however layouts utilising passive solar design principles will provide a strong basis for integration of future active technologies;

The site elevation and exposure also provides a realistic opportunity to develop community wind farms. Preferably these would form the basis of an integrated community based energy strategy.

Wind generation may be considered suitable for at least two locations, Laverock Hill in the west and Balmacassie in the east. At these sites the size and location of the turbines can be arranged to minimise the impact on the skyline from the main southern approach vistas into Ellon.



It is also noted that the development area may have very good potential for the extraction of heat energy from ground or water using heat pump technologies. The site is crossed by small water courses and contains several wells or springs. These may be used, possibly in conjunction with SUDS and grey water treatment systems, as useful heat sources, individually or as part of the community energy strategy.

Extensive new woodland planting provides the opportunity to integrate energy derived from biomass technologies as the final part of the renewable energy mix for the site.

The biomass would be locally sourced from both routine woodland management and bio-fuel plantation areas. Bio-fuels can be derived from willow plantations located within SUDS wetland areas creating a resource and biodiversity from features which have previously been regarded as a necessary inconvenience.

Regardless of the energy sources available, the development will be planned to maximise passive heating and cooling. Properly orientated, well undulated and draught-proof buildings in a sheltered landscape will be the core strategy to minimising energy consumption.

#### 4.7 Use Mix and Phasing

The masterplan for development indicates a large proportion of the overall land use being given over to green “living spaces”. The main housing and business areas will be framed by a green infrastructure comprising woodland, public parks, semi-public spaces (recreational grounds) and private gardens.

The green zones can also include allotments/community farms and fruit orchards, cemeteries, cycle/foot paths and verges. These spaces will be designed and laid out to encourage species diversity and promote wildlife corridors both within the development and reaching out into the wider countryside, extending and complementing the existing landscape features.

The structural landscape elements are disposed to shelter and screen development areas whilst being orientated to maintain the solar access of each. Detail landscape design will also utilise SUDS as a resource. Wetland parks will manage and control waste water whilst providing opportunities to provide environmental diversity and community access for recreation. Existing levels and drainage patterns have been used in the masterplan to define surface water attenuation and treatment areas.

Housing, educational and community elements have good access to the centre of Ellon and other local amenities. The Balmacassie area in the east has direct access



to the A90, is adjacent to the existing park and ride facilities and is close to the existing industrial and business development areas.

Careful detail site layout and consideration of external finishes and lighting will blend and integrate the buildings into the folds of the land minimising visual impact.

#### 4.8 Planning Gain and Community Benefits

Key benefits to the community are likely to include:

- Affordable housing
- Education infrastructure
- Community facilities
- Leisure and recreation facilities
- Potential off-site roads improvements
- Alternative energy supply solutions
- Carbon neutral housing design
- Public transport improvements

#### 4.9 Services

Detailed discussions with service and utilities providers (e.g. Scottish Water) will be held in due course in order to ascertain the precise cost of providing a water connection/drainage/electricity to the site.

### 5. Public Consultation Strategy

Given that these development proposals are to be considered within the context of a long-term, sustainable expansion of the settlement of Ellon, no public consultation has been carried out at this stage. In due course, we would intend to present our development proposals to stakeholders within Ellon such as the community council, residents, local businesses etc.



## 6. Site Assessment (Scoring Sheet)

	Criteria	Cassiegills, Ellon	Score
<b>Sustainable Economic Development</b>	Accessibility of existing centres of employment	The site is less than 400m from the nearest employment centre.	+1
	Provision of business land	Development of the site could help to generate significant new opportunities for new employment.	+1
	Distance to key services	Less than 400m from centre of Ellon town centre.	+1
	Pedestrian/cycle links to key services, employment land and surrounding developments	Opportunities exist to provide pedestrian and cycle links to key services, employment land uses and access to surrounding developments can be provided.	0
<b>Encourage and Support Regeneration</b>	Brownfield development	The development would make no use of brownfield land and/or existing buildings.	-1
	Enhancement of heritage	There would be no detrimental impact on the built and/or cultural heritage arising from the proposed development.	0
	Supporting quality of services including primary schools	The development would help to sustain existing services. Land could also be set-aside within the proposed development area for a new school and associated community facilities	+1
	Resolves issues of contamination.	No remediation of land required (land not known to be contaminated).	0
<b>Maintain and enhance Quality of the Natural Heritage and Built Environment</b>	Quality of agricultural land lost	Class 3.2 land and above.	0
	Degree of loss of biodiversity	There would be no impact on biodiversity of any level of importance e.g. local, national and international.	0



	Setting of historic buildings affected	No impact on Historic Building(s) or Scheduled Ancient Monuments.	0
	Archaeology affected	No archaeology on site.	+1
<b>Landscape</b>	Shelter from cold winds	The site is reasonably well sheltered by the form of the land.	0
	Potential for passive solar gain	South or south-west facing gradual slopes.	+1
	Visual considerations	The site would fit within the landscape.	0
	Designed landscapes affected	The proposed development would have no impact on any designed landscapes.	+1
<b>Technical Issues</b>	Availability of water supply	Some costs to providing water.	0
	Ease of providing drainage	No constraints, low costs.	+1
	Costs of providing access	A new grade-separated junction and/or other major infrastructure.	-1
	Provision of new community services required.	Some work required e.g. a new school (land could be set-aside within the proposed development area).	0
	<b>TOTAL SCORE</b>		<b>+6</b>



## 6. Summary and Conclusions

The site offers an excellent opportunity to grow the existing settlement through a sustainable long-term development programme. This development bid highlights the intention to make a significant investment in the future of Ellon and work positively with all sections of the community to bring forward the a mixed-use development proposal which includes new housing, community uses (including land reserved for a primary school), employment and carbon neutral initiatives.

We believe that the proposed development of the land will:

- Development a sustainable, diverse and vibrant community which is integrated within the existing settlement pattern and landscape setting of Ellon;
- Provide a range of housing options with sites reserved for community and educational uses;
- Provide sustainable employment opportunities close to existing transport infrastructure;
- Develop a low carbon community making fullest practical use of renewable energy technologies available locally;
- Provide opportunities for small-scale community food production areas;
- Reduce impacts of waste water run-off and minimise water use;
- Enhance the landscape character and biodiversity of the area.

# Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2008

## Proposal for a site to be included in the Main Issues Report

Please use this form to provide details of the site that you would wish to have included in the Main Issues Report for consideration as a proposal for the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan.

One of the purposes of this form is to inform a public debate on the merits of the different sites being proposed. All information submitted will therefore be made available to the public to promote a transparent and open process.

Please feel free to provide any further information you feel appropriate to support your submission. Please ensure your proposal is with us by 6 November 2008.

N1

Name of proposer: Knight Frank LLP  
Date: 6 November 2008  
Postal Address: 3 Rubislaw Terrace, Aberdeen AB10 1XE

N2

Name of landowner (if known)  
Postal address of landowner

To comply with the data protection Act 1998 this information will not be made public

### The site and your proposals

S1

Under what name would you like the site to be identified? Cassiegills, Ellon

Have you any information on the internet which promotes your aspirations for the site? If so please provide the URL : N/A

The site name could be descriptive ("Site north of") or an address (Site at Westburn Road , Aberdeen)

S2

Have you provided a map showing the exact boundaries of the site you would like considered?

S3

Yes  No

Please provide the National Grid reference of the site

NJ 954 309

S4

What is the current use of the site? Agricultural land

Has the land been built upon before (Brownfield Land)?

Yes  No

Is there any suspicion that the land is contaminated?

Yes  No

If yes Please provide a statement of the nature and extent of the contamination suspected  
*Statement attached*

S5

What use(s) do you propose for your site? A mixed-use development comprising residential, employment/business land, a new school and playing fields with associated infrastructure, landscaping and community facilities.

If you are proposing a mix of uses on your site please ensure that the area of each is noted on the site plan

S6

Are you proposing to phase your development? Yes  No

If you are proposing phasing your development please provide additional details of what is anticipated to be built, and when. See attached statement.

S7

If you are proposing housing on the site please provide us with details of what you think would be appropriate, both in terms of the number of dwellings, and their form (Flats, detached houses etc). See attached statement.

If you have a design statement or other details about what you would like to see on the site, please include it.

S8

If you are proposing business land please provide us with details of what you would market the land for?

Businesses and offices (Use class 4)

General industrial land (Use Class 5)

Storage and distribution (Use Class 6)

Do you have a specific occupier in mind for the site?

Yes  No

Please make sure the area of land proposed for business use shown on the site plan.

S9 If you are proposing uses other than housing or business please provide us with as much detail as possible on what you propose. See attached statement

Please continue on additional sheets as required.

### The wider area

A1 Please provide a statement on the siting and design of your proposal (how will the development fit in with the wider landscape, or complement the urban design of the area?) see attached statement.

If you have a landscape statement, a design statement or other details about what you would like to see on the site, please include it.

*Statement attached*



A2 If you have prepared any frameworks or masterplans showing a possible layout for the site, please include it with this form.

*Framework attached*



A3 Have you applied principles of sustainable siting and design to your site? Yes   
No

If you have undertaken a site assessment please provide details

*Statement attached*



The Code for Sustainable homes or [WWW.index21.org.uk](http://WWW.index21.org.uk) provides guidance on this issue

### Effect on the community

C1 Has there been any opportunity for local people to influence what you propose through local engagement? Yes   
No   
Not Yet

If you have undertaken any community consultation please provide details of the ways in which engagement was conducted, its effectiveness and the way in which it has influenced your proposals. Please provide details of any engagement you may propose to undertake.

C2 At least 25% of all housing is likely to be required to be affordable. If applicable, are you considering providing more or less than this? More   
25% or Less

C3 What community benefits arise from your proposals? What would the nature of these be, and how would they be delivered?  
 See attached statement.

Community benefits may be material, such as community facilities, or intangible, such as affordable housing or the ability to live locally. Include elements which you anticipate may be required as developer contributions from the development (although specifics will have to be negotiated with the Council on the basis of the development proposed)

C4 How easy is it for people using or living in the development you propose to access services? Are the following facilities within:

	400m	400m-1k	>1km
	Please tick appropriate box		
Local Shops	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community facilities (eg Hall)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sports facilities (eg playing fields)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Employment areas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Residential areas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public Transport networks	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	NA <input type="checkbox"/>
Other (Please specify)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	NA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

If you propose to provide any of these as a component of the development itself then please answer "yes". NA=Not Applicable

**Servicing the site**

C5 Have you undertaken any of the following studies to determine whether your site is capable of being developed, or what might be required by you to make it developable?

Flood Risk Assessment	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NA <input type="checkbox"/>
Traffic Impact Assessment	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NA <input type="checkbox"/>
Drainage Impact Assessment	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NA <input type="checkbox"/>
Habitat / biodiversity Assessment	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NA <input type="checkbox"/>
Other as applicable (eg noise, dust, smell Retail impact etc)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NA <input type="checkbox"/>

Rather than full studies it may be appropriate to undertake initial assessments to identify the scale of any works that might be required, as this will impact on the deliverability of the proposal. This assessment may be no more than an exchange of letters with appropriate agencies. Information on water and sewage capacity is available online at :  
[http://www.scottishwater.co.uk/portal/page/portal/SWE\\_PGP\\_CONNECTIONS/SWE\\_CORP\\_CONNECTIONS/ASSET\\_CAPACITY\\_SE\\_ARCH](http://www.scottishwater.co.uk/portal/page/portal/SWE_PGP_CONNECTIONS/SWE_CORP_CONNECTIONS/ASSET_CAPACITY_SE_ARCH)

C6 What are the access arrangements you propose for the site. Does your site plan clearly show where you propose to access the road network? Yes  No

**Other information**

O1 What other information would you like to be considered in support of your proposal? In order to comply with the Data Protection Act 1998 please do not include any personal information  
see attached statement.

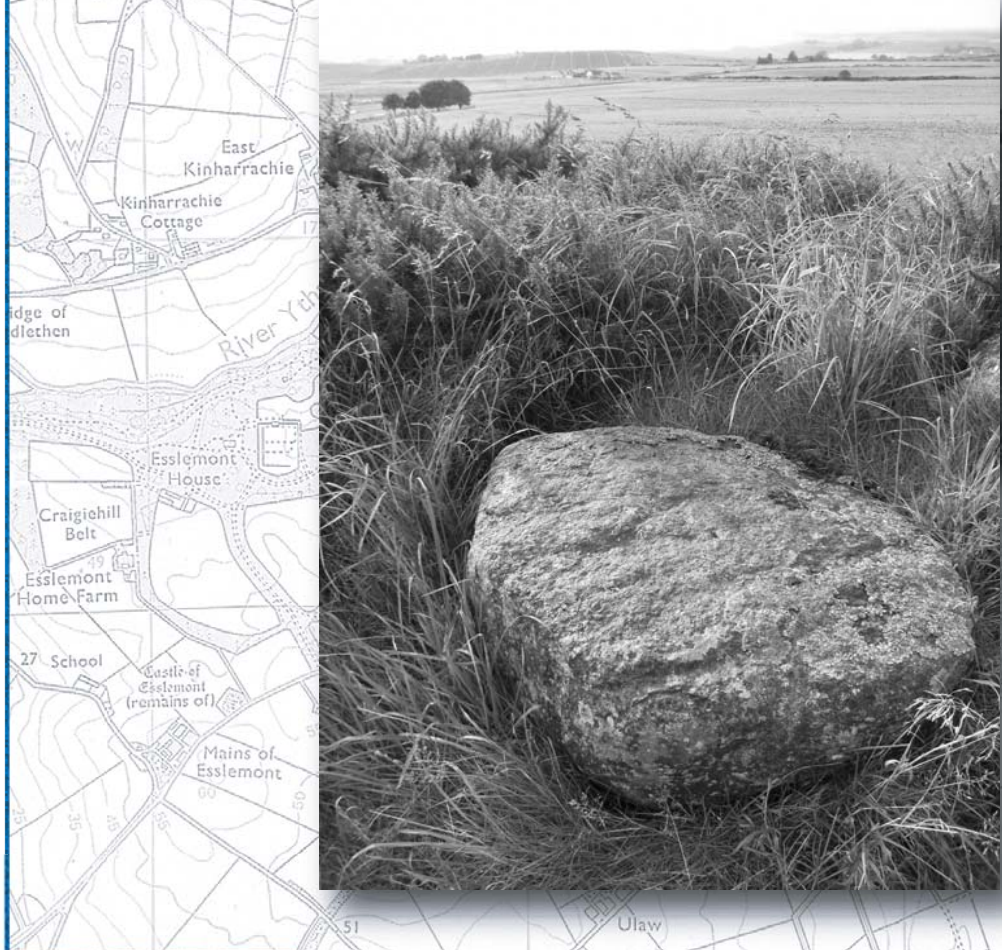
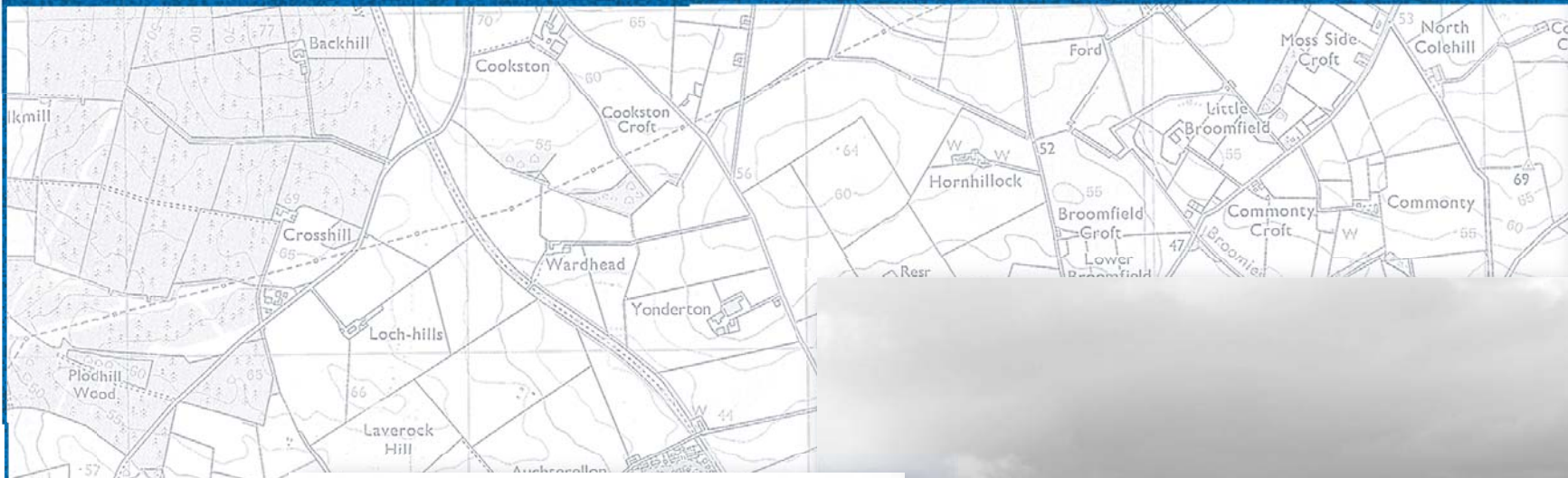
**Please return the completed form to the Policy Planning Team, Planning Policy and Environment Service , Woodhill House, Westburn Road, Aberdeen, AB16 5GB or e-mail to [ldp@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:ldp@aberdeenshire.gov.uk).**

Fair Processing Notice

- The Data Controller for this information is Aberdeenshire Council.
- The data will be used for the following purposes:
  - 1) to inform a public debate on the merits of the different sites being proposed,
  - 2) to evaluate submitted bids
- This data will potentially be disclosed worldwide (via publication on Internet)

By completing and submitting this form, you are consenting to the above processing.

# Cassiegills, Eilon Landscape Appraisal



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# 1.0 Introduction

The town of Ellon is the principle settlement in the Formartine area with a population of circa. 9,500 approximately 12 miles to the north of Aberdeen off the A 90 Aberdeen to Peterhead road corridor. The close proximity of Ellon to Aberdeen and good road connectivity has resulted in the settlements rapid expansion in recent decades and it's recognition as a principle commuter town for nearby Aberdeen.

Ellon has a rich historical core centered on the north banks of the River Ythan which includes the Castle and associated designed landscape and the old bridge built in 1793 on the turnpike road between Aberdeen and Peterhead.

## 2.0 Site Survey

### 2.1 Physical Evolution

#### 2.1.1 Man's Influence on the Physical Environment

The physical landscape of central and south Aberdeenshire has been shaped by human influences through recent prehistoric and historic times. People have hunted, gathered, settled and farmed this area for at least 8,000 years.

#### 2.1.2 Settlement Development

The traditional pattern of settlement development within the Aberdeenshire lowlands is of nucleated towns and villages which established around a central market town, as at Ellon. Historically the settlement established on a ford crossing on the River Ythan. As early as the 4th Century BC there is evidence of a Pictish settlement on the south banks of the Ythan. In the early middle ages, Celtic chiefs the Mormaers, held court at Ellon as later did the feudal Norman lords who established a defensible structure. By the 11th and 12th Century Ellon had established itself as the regional centre due to the surrounding rich agricultural land. A position which it continued to hold until recently.

The towns 19th Century layout and architecture reflects it's status as the principle settlement within the Buchan area.

The arrival of the Formartine and Buchan Railway in 1861 operated by the Great North of Scotland Railway Company which crosses the River Ythan on an impressive viaduct located upstream from the towns centre, brought further wealth to Ellon. Evidence of the towns expansion during this time includes many fine villas constructed in locally won grey granite and buildings including the Station Hotel.

Analysis of the James Topographical and Military Map from 1822 reflects the settlement of Ellon on the north bank of the River Ythan, the bridge crossing and site of Ellon Castle. Within the site area the farms and crofts at Auchterellon, Loch-hills, Knockothie (Knockothie), Cassiegille (Cassiegills) and Balmacassie are indicated. To the west of Ellon within the study area the designed landscape associated with Esslemont House is indicated.

The OS Map from 1900 reveals the marketplace on the main east/ west Castle Road and the construction of the Formartine and Buchan Railway. The designed landscape centered around Ellon Castle is clearly evident, as is the woodland block at Knochothie.

The OS Map from 1912 reflects the construction of the branch line to the Formartine and Buchan main line.

Substantial residential housing development occurred from the 1970's onwards as Ellon underwent rapid expansion whereby numerous housing estates were built to accommodate the influx of oil workers and related businesses at a time when the employment focus in the area shifted from agriculture to oil related industries.

### 2.2 Policy Context

#### 2.2.1 Aberdeenshire Local Plan 2006

Ellon is identified as a main settlement within the Formartine district in the Aberdeenshire Local Plan (ALP). At present there are currently no designations within the site area. Designations to adjacent land includes land designated as Protected Area to McDonald Golf Club and the Community Woodland at Knochothie and the Employment land use expansion area at Ellon Business Estate.



OSM 1921-1930 at [www.nls.uk](http://www.nls.uk)

## 2.2.2 Imagine Ellon: Capacity Study September 2007

The executive summary states that Ellon has been identified as “one of the key settlements recognised in the structure plan, NEST as having potential to contribute to a sustainable future for Aberdeenshire as a whole. . . primarily because of its proximity to Aberdeen, with a major trunk road link and because of the range of services and facilities that exist”. The purpose of the study is to establish a long term framework for Ellon’s expansion and review it’s potential for long term growth. A key assumption of the imagine Ellon study was to consider the implications of increasing Ellon’s existing housing stock by 50% “from about 4,200 to about 6,300”. It is assumed that the population growth as a result of a 50% expansion of Ellon’s housing stock (2,100 dwellings) would be 4,800 persons”. Further the projected required net area of land to accommodate 2,100 dwellings amounts to “75ha, assuming 90% of the houses are constructed at a density of 35 dwellings per hectare (dpha) and 10% at a density of 10” dpha. “Ideally no part of a residential neighbourhood should be further than 400m from a regular bus route, 600m from a Primary school or local shop, or 1,500m from a secondary school or employment node”.

Further the study aims to achieve greater sustainability through the identification of sufficient employment land. Assuming a 50% increase of the established supply of employment land within Ellon, the additional employment land needed would be 20ha.

Up to 15ha would be required for a new site for Ellon Academy, and up to 4ha for the construction of a forth Primary school associated with new development.

Within the Public and Open Space and Recreation chapter it is noted that the Aberdeenshire Local Plan stipulates that the “absolute minimum area of public open space required for an additional 2,100 houses would be 8.4ha (number of houses multiplied by 40m<sup>2</sup>)”. However “due to increases in density and the probable inclusion of SuDS within public open space. . . consideration should be given to providing up to double the minimum amount, or around 17ha. This would be provided as a mixture of civic or town parks, organised sports grounds, community play areas, and other informal amenity spaces as included within the total housing land requirements”. Further “These areas should use the natural potential of the landscape wherever possible and would need to be concentrated around the areas where most development will be proposed, but in a way that integrates the new development into existing open space framework. In order to meet sustainable objectives future open space should be designed, wherever possible, to be low maintenance”. Further “In addition to the public open space requirements . . . community woodlands could play an important role in the overall provision of open space”.

Within the Imagine Ellon study a number of constraints are considered to be absolute, these include:

- Current alignment of the A90;
- Environmentally sensitive land to the east of the A90;
- Sensitive gateways;
- Areas with potential to flood;
- Features which create Ellon’s “sense of place”;
- It’s historic core and setting within the confines of the Ythan valley.

Part B of the Imagine Ellon study identified twelve expansion sites, accompanied by scoring sheets based upon work developed for Index 21, a joint research project between Aberdeenshire Council and Robert Gordon University. The findings from the scoring sheets were categorised into most favoured, favoured and least favoured and illustrated on Diagram 4 within the study.

Of the six sites within the site area four sites are either favoured or most favoured, West Cassiegills and Balmacassie North, knockothie North and Cassiegills. Sites one and two Auchterellon east and west scored least favoured. Imagine Ellon report text states “Sites 1 and 2 offer some prospect of longer term development opportunities, are convenient for primary schooling and established open space and relate well to the existing town”.

Diagram 5 expresses Strategic Open Space which “aims to make the most of the well established open space network and circular walk that exists in the form of the Formartine & Buchan Way, River Ythan corridor and abundance of mature woodland in Ellon”.

Sites for employment use are expressed on Diagram 7 and are to be found in the area adjacent to the A90 in close proximity to the established and proposed commercial developments.

## 2.2.3 SNH Landscape Character Assessment

A formal landscape character assessment of the South and Central Aberdeenshire regional landscape character was commissioned by Scottish Natural Heritage. South and Central Aberdeenshire: landscape character assessment - ERM -1998.

Ellon is covered by two character types, namely the “Agricultural Heartlands” and “Formartine Lowlands” areas. The Agricultural Heartlands landscape character type comprises of “an agricultural one of generally intensive mixed farming on large fertile fields.” P.63. The distinguishing features of the Agricultural Heartlands includes: “their patchwork of mixed agriculture and scattered woodland and by their numerous towns and villages, linked by a network of main roads and lanes”; Ibid. “Crop patterns create a scene of ever-changing colours and textures.” Ibid. “Variations in relief. . . determine landscape character directly, they influence patterns of fields, woods and settlement.” Ibid. Typically these areas “are the most densely populated. . . and the continued development of houses, both in the urban fringe and in the countryside, will continue to present further pressures along with the associated infrastructure of road improvements, industrial estates, schools and shops”. P.64.

The Formartine Lowlands landscape character type differs from the Agricultural heartlands in that long views to the sea are a characteristic feature of the area. The landscape description notes that much of the area was reclaimed from moorland to accommodate crofters, and now provides a rich agricultural resource. In particular the landscape “comprises open geometric fields of mixed farming divided by post and wire fences or derelict dry stone dykes. Woodland is scarce and what occurs, often associated with estate policies is prominent as a result”. P.86. “Most farms are unsheltered by trees. Silos and other tall structures such as pylons are prominent against the horizon. The gently eastward falling relief allows long views across some areas and, when

including the distant horizon of the North Sea, the landscape provides a tremendous sense of space which distracts from the clutter of near views". Ibid. Pressures on the landscape "are moderate and include new farm buildings, and built development. . the landscape is large in scale and may therefore absorb some large development, such as new settlement". P. 87.

The Key characteristics specific to the study area identified in the landscape character assessment include:

- Gently undulating lowland plateau;
- Extensive area of open farmland with large geometric fields with post and wire fencing;
- Drystone dykes are rare owing to absence of rock
- Relatively large, compact settlements;
- Large farms with modern storage buildings and diverse building styles;
- Roads and transmission lines crisscross area, the latter often very visible;
- Open character provides expansive views across landscape.

The key pressures and sensitivities specific to the study area identified in the landscape character assessment include:

- The large scale landscape may accommodate large houses and farms, but the settlement patterns are distinctive and susceptible to extension and loss of identity.

Specific guidance for landscape features within the study area identified in the landscape character assessment aims to 'promote a more coherent landscape structure' through the following measures:

- Small geometric woodland stands appear out of scale in the landscape; larger blocks of woodland would be more appropriate scale in this expansive landscape;
- Clumped tree planting along existing and new roads can help to break up their line, where lineside planting can increase prominence;
- Creation of landscaped buffer zones will help to preserve and enhance archeological remains.

To 'increase the diversity of landscape features' through the following measure:

- Reduced intensity of farming may result in a succession of scrub woodland. . encourage a more coherent approach to habitat creation.

To 'encourage a compact and traditional settlement pattern' through the following measure:

- Woodlands and shelterbelts may be used to screen and contain new built development, whilst improving the woodland structure of the landscape

## 2.3 Strategic Guidance

### 2.3.1 Aberdeenshire Core Paths Plan: Consultative Draft 2008

It is recognised that Ellon has a good provision of riverside paths along the River Ythan and within the former designed landscape to Ellon castle. However the report notes that what is lacking is access out of town into the wider landscape. Currently the only route serving this purpose is the Formartine and Buchan Way

to the west of the settlement. A number of aspirational routes have been identified including a route between Ellon and Ythanbank; the dismantled railway to the north of the town and looking at a route east along the River Ythan to the estuary at Newburgh. Aberdeenshire Core Paths Plan: 1st Informal Consultative Draft (June to September 2008) settlement and Route Information Map 30 – Ellon.

Existing Proposed Core Paths within the study area include:

Path Ref. 7LD.03: Formartine & Buchan Way long distance route linking Ellon to Aberdeen, Maud and Peterhead;

Path Ref. 305.02: A'boot Ellon circular route within McDonald Park developed by the Formartine Partnership;

Path Ref. 305.03: Castlepark Woodland existing path link through Castlepark shelterbelt connecting existing Riverside Path;

Path Ref. 305.04: Balmacassie Community Woodland Path with proposed links through to industrial park A 920 and new housing developments.

### 2.3.1 North East Scotland Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP)

North East Scotland LBAP is the framework for local action by a range of partners to protect and enhance biodiversity. Action is progressed by working to agreed objectives and targets outlined in the Habitat and Species Action Plans. North East Scotland LBAP Partnership has designated 195 local priority species, 80 of which are also UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Species. Action for most species is carried out through the relevant Habitat Action Plans. However, specific Species Action Plans are being implemented for those species where habitat action alone will not fully address the needs of that particular species. Relevant species within the study area include the Red squirrel, Water vole and wych elm tree.

There is a Red squirrel colony within Plod Hill wood. Red squirrels are associated with coniferous woodlands comprising of Scots pine, Larch and Norway spruce and within coniferous woodlands. The LSAP for Red squirrels recommends that "the needs of Red squirrels are considered in all planning applications. . management plans and planting schemes". Red Squirrel Local Species Action Plan.

The LSAP for water voles states "Water vole colonies which are known to exist along the River Ythan and its tributaries". Water vole Local Species Action Plan. The wych elm is widespread within the north east of Scotland upto an altitude of 150 metres and establishes well on fertile soils and it is therefore ideally suited to the site area. It's seeds are an important source of food for notable species including Greenfinch and Red squirrel. The LSAP for wych elm aims to "plant at least 50,000 wych elms by 2005 and involve at least 1,000 people per year in events or other activities involving elms".

### 3.0 Existing Land Use

The production of crops has shaped the landscape within the site area and resulted in geometric field boundaries within a gently undulating landscape formed by river erosion.

The site consists of predominantly agricultural arable land suitable for crop production (**Figure 2**). Advances in farming practices resulted in the grubbing up of field boundaries to create large fields, this is evident within the Balmacassie zone. Due to the adverse effects of nitrogen fertilisers within the landscape farmers were encouraged to introduce uncultivated margins to field boundaries, which is evident within the study area.

### 4.0 Landscape topography and Physical features

The site is located on undulating and gently rising ground above the River Ythan valley. Typically the site consists of gently sloping ground with a south facing aspect, with the exception to land around Laverock Hill which rises to a high spot 66 metres OD. Other examples of raised ground occur at West Cassiegills 45m OD and Balmacassie 40m OD. The low areas within the site occur along the length of the A 948 road corridor and dismantled railway lines at circa. 30m OD. Typically field boundaries are demarcated by an uncultivated margin and occasionally by low level random rubble stone walls, however this is uncommon due to the lack of local stone.

The site includes the following small holding:

- Loch-hills.

and a number of cottages:

- Erindale and Burnhowe Cottages;
- West Cassiegills;
- Greenacres;
- Hornhillock Cottage;
- Balmacassie Cottage;
- Castle View.

The following large farm complexes are adjacent to or nearby the site:

- Auchterellon Farm;
- Yonderton;
- Cassiegills.

The following small holdings are adjacent to or nearby the site:

- Lower Broomfield;
- Balmacassie.

The following cottages are adjacent to or nearby the site:

- Crosshill;
- Wardhead;
- Hornhillock;
- Broomfield Croft;
- Ardgrain Cottage;
- Dar Tagna;
- Knockothie House;

- Greenheads;
- Knaps;
- Knaps Croft.

Land uses adjacent to or nearby the site include:

- Balmacassie Commercial Centre;
- Castle Road Industrial Estate;
- Tesco superstore;
- Ellon Park and Ride facility;
- Crosshill plantation consisting of Christmas trees destined for the wholesale market and small areas of commercial forestry circa. 20 years in age.

A search of the Canmore, The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Scotland database reveals that there are no significant archaeological sites within the site area. Known archaeological sites within the study area include:

- the lost East Cassiegills farmstead indicated on the 1st Edition OS Map series;
- the discovery of an Axehead at Balmacassie and Cassiegills farmsteads;
- Auchterellon farm.

Known archaeological sites immediately adjacent to the site area include:

- A disturbed Cairn 'East Kinharrachie' at Laverock Hill.

A search of Aberdeenshire Councils Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) includes the road bridge to Auchterellon Farm over the former railway line, now the Formartine & Buchan Way.

### 5.0 Site Vegetation

The site area includes small isolated pockets of young evergreen woodland blocks circa. 50 years in age consisting of Sitka spruce, and a notable stand of mixed woodland at Knockothie consisting of Ash, Spruce, Wych elm, Birch, Sycamore and Scots pine circa. 100 years in age.

A notable feature within the study area is the use of woodland blocks placed hard up against crofts and farm buildings to provide much needed shelter against the prevailing wind. This is evident at Lower Broomfield, Broomfield Croft, Greenheads and Balmacassie Farm where these shelterbelts have been established on the north and east elevations of properties.

Field boundaries consist of an uncultivated strip which have in some places been colonised by self seeded Gorse, and not hedgerows or stone dykes.

## 6.0 Analysis

### 6.1 Landscape Character

The site area can be organised into 6 character zones as indicated on **Figure 3**:

- I. Laverock Hill zone;
- II. Yonderton zone;
- III. West Cassiegills zone;
- IV. Knockothie zone;
- V. East Cassiegills zone;
- VI. Balmacassie zone.

Laverock Hill zone consists of 12 fields with a small hill (Laverock Hill) rising above Auchterellon Farm. The northern extent is bounded by Crosshill plantation and includes over head electricity cables and Loch-hills small holding. The east boundary is defined by the disused railway line now the Formatine and Buchan Way.

Yonderton zone consists of two fields bounded by the Formatine and Buchan Way disused railway line to the west and the A 948 to the east.

West Cassiegills zone consists of six fields on gently sloping south facing and rising ground. The zone is dissected by a minor road and bounded to the south and west by the A 948, and to the east by a minor road and field boundaries to West Cassiegills cottage.

Knockothie zone consists of a single wedged shaped field to the south of Lower Broomfield farm complex. The zone includes West Cassiegills cottage and a mature stand of mixed woodland dissected by the A 948 road corridor.

East Cassiegills zone consists of ten fields on gently sloping ground dissected by the disused railway line. The zone includes small pockets of wedged shaped evergreen woodlands to some field boundaries and an evergreen woodland roundel. Typically the field perimeters include ditches. The north boundary by the single track road at Cassiegills Farm. The southern boundary is defined by the A 948 road corridor and the west boundary by a minor road and evergreen woodland plantation circa. 20 years in age. The zone includes the disused railway line which is in a cutting and the road bridge which carried the road over the railway line dated 1895.

Balmacassie zone consists of two fields, one of a considerable size which presumably once consisted of four fields. The major field is situated on gently mounding ground. The zone is bounded to the east by the A 90 main Aberdeen to Peterhead road corridor; to the south by the A 948 road corridor; to the west by Balmacassie small holding and associated mature tree planting; and to the north by a combination of the evergreen woodland plantation circa. 20 years in age, the dismantled railway and a field boundary.

### 6.2 Existing Screening and Viewpoints

As indicated on **Figure 4** generally there is little vegetative screening within the site area and some vegetative screening on adjacent land. Within the site area north/ south views tend to be contained or filtered by topographical and vegetative features. However orientating oneself to look in an east/ west direction is rewarded with long outward views.

Within the study area there are elevated vantage points from which long panoramic views are afforded, these include: Laverock Hill; Mains of Esslemont; Hill of Fechil; Colehill; Hornhillock and Mossneuk.

Within the study area topographic screens include Mains of Esslemont, Hill of Fechil and Knockothie Hill. Of these Knockothie Hill and associated mature tree cover provides comprehensive containment to the settlement of Ellon, in particular when viewed from the south. The recent housing estates at Knockothie are effectively screened from the southern approach roads. However when viewed from the north Knockothie Hill and associated mature tree cover forms a backdrop to the new housing estates, which are highly prominent from the northern A948 approach road.

#### 6.2.1 Vegetation Screen

Include:

- I. Mature mixed woodland block at Plodhill;
- II. Linear Sitka spruce trees between McDonald Golf course and Yonderton;
- III. Hedgerow and deciduous trees at West Cassiegills;
- IV. Mature mixed woodland block at Knockothie;
- V. Young mixed woodland blocks at Knockothie House and Balmacassie;
- VI. Mature woodland belt at Cassiegills Farm.

#### 6.2.2 Topographic Screen

Include:

- VII. Laverock Hill;
- VIII. Hornhillock;
- IX. Cassiegills and Greenheads;
- X. Commonly ridge.

#### 6.2.3 Overlooked by Neighbours

Include:

- XI. Residential developments within Ellon including Auchterellon and Knockothie estates;
- XII. Commercial and business premises at Balmacassie Commercial Park, Castle Road Industrial Estate and Ellon Commercial Park Industrial Estate;
- XIII. Isolated properties include: residential properties at Auchterellon Farm (The Gables and The Cottars); Loch-hills; Wardhead; Yonderton; Golf View; Erindale and Burnhowe; Hornhillock; Greenacres; Hornhillock; Hornhillock Cottage; Ardgrain Cottage; Lower Broomfield; Dar Taghne; West Cassiegills; Broomfield Croft; Commonly Croft; Knockothie House; cassiegills; Greenheads; Knaps; Balmacassie Cottage; Castle View; Balmacassie House; Knaps Croft and Smithy Croft.

## 6.3 Opportunities and Constraints

### 6.3.1 Constraints

Generally exposure to the prevailing wet south westerly and cold north easterly weather systems and the following as indicated on **Figure 5**.

- I. A 948 road corridor (barrier to pedestrian access/ noise/ light pollution);
- II. A 90 road corridor (barrier to pedestrian access/ noise/ light pollution);
- III. OH Electricity pylons at Laverock Hill zone;
- IV. Visually prominent ridges (Laverock Hill; West Cassiegills; Balmacassie zones);
- V. Scottish Water Reservoir at West Cassiegills zone;
- VI. Vehicular access into Laverock Hill zone across Formartine and Buchan Long Distance Path;
- VII. Isolated properties within or immediately adjacent to the site (Loch-hills; Auchterellon Farm; The Gables; The Cottars; Erindale; Burnhowe; Golf View; Greenacres; Hornhillock Cottage; Ardgrain Cottage; Lower Broom field; Dar Taghna; Knockothie House; West Cassiegills; Greenheads; Balmacassie Cottage; Castle View; Knaps Croft);
- VIII. Uninterrupted long east/ west views;
- IX. Potential reopening of dismantled railway line.

### 6.3.2 Opportunities

Generally benefits include: southerly aspect; gently sloping topography and road access and to following as indicated on **Figure 6**.

- X. Pedestrian links to residential Auchterellon and Knockothie housing developments;
- XI. Potential Green bridge crossing A 948;
- XII. Existing green space corridors (Auchterellon and Knockothie housing developments/ Yonderton/ McDonald Golf Club/ Turnishaw Hill);
- XIII. Introduce woodlands and shelterbelts to screen and contain new built development and improve the woodland structure of the landscape, in particular along the A 948 road corridor and to screen long east/ west views;
- XIV. Potential to relocate the Secondary school within central location;
- XV. Pedestrian link to Formartine and Buchan long distance path;
- XVI. Visually prominent Auchterellon Farm complex;
- XVII. Sustainable sources for generating energy (domestic scale wind turbines at Laverock Hill zone and Balmacassie zone);
- XVIII. Integrate SuDS attenuation features within green space;
- XIX. Vehicular access from A 948 into West Cassiegills; East Cassiegills and Balmacassie zones;
- XX. Promote habitats for species recognised within the North East Scotland LBAP including the Red squirrel, water vole and wych elm.

## 7.0 Conceptual Masterplan

### 7.1 Design Principles

Based on the findings of the landscape survey and analysis described within this report, and with reference to the ALP, in particular the recommendations for Ellon, Ellon Capacity Study and Imagine Ellon. Supporting strategic guidance documents, notably the South and Central Aberdeenshire landscape character assessment published by SNH. In addition the following guidance documents were reviewed:

- NPPG 14: Natural Heritage (The Scottish Government 1999);
- Pan 44: Fitting New Housing Development into the Landscape (The Scottish Government 2005);
- North East Scotland Local Biodiversity Action Plan (2000).

The conceptual masterplan is illustrated on **Figure 7**.

#### 7.1.1 Topography

Ensure that the sites topography influences the placing of any development within the site.

#### 7.1.2 Vegetation

Land use within the site will change from one of agricultural farming practices to one of built-up areas including gardens, woodland including boundary and linear features and improved grassland including watercourses.

Through the safeguarding and management of new green space, habitats can be created to support both the displaced indigenous wildlife and designed and managed to promote diverse habitats to support an increased range of species through:

- Introduce woodlands and shelterbelts to shelter, screen and contain new built development, whilst improving the woodland structure of the landscape;
- Retain and manage existing mature mixed woodland and evergreen blocks;
- Introduce evergreen trees along road corridors and hedgerows to reflect the existing species composition and local landscape character;
- Form a continuous network of habitat corridors which connect existing and proposed green spaces;
- Identify opportunities to develop specific habitats in support of species identified within the LBAP, notably the Red squirrel, water vole and Wych Elm.

#### 7.1.3 Landscape Character

Open space, long views, geometric field network on a gently undulating topography are characteristic of the immediate landscape area.

#### 7.1.4 Settlement Development

- Safeguard the northern approach into Ellon from the A948;
- Zone new development and contain in a woodland frame work;
- Respond to and integrate into the masterplan proposals the Ellon Commercial Park industrial estate expansion area;
- Include a generous provision of 'green space' within the masterplan proposals.

#### 7.1.5 Local Building Vernacular

- New housing should reference the local vernacular and reflect locally sourced building materials;
- The use of extensive white rendering should be avoided due to its conspicuous character;
- Dormers and windows to gable ends are characteristic features of historic dwellings within the study area;
- The use of grey roof tiles and timber sash and casement windows are characteristic features of dwellings within the study area;
- Boundaries between plots shall consist of hedgerows comprising of native species. Avoid coniferous hedges and timber fences to plot boundaries.

#### 7.1.6 Integration and Accessibility

- Respond to the existing and proposed core paths;
- Introduce a network of paths which link the new development proposals via the 'green space' corridors;
- Respond to and formalise existing walk routes between the existing Knockothie estate and proposed housing development;
- Promote walk/ cycle routes between proposed new housing and commercial/ business areas through the 'green space' corridors.

#### 7.1.7 Renewable Energy Sources

- Rainwater harvesting;
- Wind technologies;
- Solar collecting technologies;
- Biomass technologies.

## 8.0 Conceptual Design Statement

### 8.1 Landscape Character

Scottish Natural Heritage South and Central Aberdeenshire landscape character assessment describes the Formartine Lowlands landscape character type “*comprises open geometric fields of mixed farming divided by post and wire fences or derelict dry stone dykes*”. Pressures on the landscape “*are moderate and include new farm buildings, and built development. . the landscape is large in scale and may therefore absorb some large development, such as new settlement*”.

The site area accords with these character types and the Key characteristics specific to the study area identified in the landscape character assessment include:

- Gently undulating lowland plateau;
- Extensive area of open farmland with large geometric fields with post and wire fencing;
- Drystone dykes are rare owing to absence of rock;
- Relatively large, compact settlements;
- Large farms with modern storage buildings and diverse building styles;
- Roads and transmission lines crisscross area, the latter often very visible;
- Open character provides expansive views across landscape.

The key pressures and sensitivities specific to the study area identified in the landscape character assessment include:

- The large scale landscape may accommodate large houses and farms, but the settlement patterns are distinctive and susceptible to extension and loss of identity.

### 8.2 Landscape Proposal

**Figures 7 and 8** reveal the concept landscape masterplan proposals which are a characteristic landscape feature in order to contain, shelter and screen new development.

**Containment:** Through the introduction of woodland belts and blocks contain new development. This is evident within the landscape proposals for the Laverock Hill, East Cassiegills and Balmacassie zones.

**Shelter:** Through the introduction of woodland belts and blocks, notably within the Laverock, West Cassiegills and Balmacassie zones.

**Screen:** Screen new development from adjacent road corridors, notably the Balmacassie zone from the A 90 and A 948 road corridors.

### 8.3 Layout

Refrain from developing ridge lines within the study area as can be seen within the Laverock Hill, West Cassiegills and Balmacassie zones.

Retention of existing ‘green space’ corridors and the introduction of new ‘green space’ wedges.

Safeguard existing green space corridors within the Yonderton zone in order to safeguard the northern approach into Ellon along the A 948 road corridor.

Introduce new green space within areas of new development as can be seen within Laverock Hill, West Cassiegills and Balmacassie zones.

Introduce green space wedges between proposed development areas, notably West Cassiegills to the south of Lower Broomfield.

Frame long views within the site area and focus on existing landscape features. This is evident in focusing a view on the Auchterellon Farm complex from West Cassiegills zone.

Link into existing green spaces within adjacent development, notably Knockothie housing development from the West Cassiegills zone.

In agreement with adjacent land owner introduce strategic off site planting to integrate existing and proposed green space, notably the introduction of woodland on land immediately to the north of recently established community woodland.

Access into the proposed development area will be off the A 948 road corridor. Integrate the proposed development within the wider agricultural landscape setting and repair the northern edge to Ellon which has been compromised by new housing development. Create a sequence of experiences when driving along the A 948 road corridor through a sequence of (travelling west to east) agricultural field boundaries through a woodland shelter belt into residential and open green space; then open space; residential; existing mature mixed woodland block; community facility; open space; woodland block; open space; tree belt; commercial/ business development/ screen planting along road corridor.

Typically introduce new planting in a north/ south alignment in order to filter and screen long east/ west views of the proposed development.

Link into existing and proposed core paths and introduce a network of paths within new green spaces in order to maximise the potential for pedestrian movement on bicycles or foot within the new development.

### 8.4 Development Zones

New development will be introduced in distinct zones to create legible settlement expansion. Notably housing within Laverock Hill, West Cassiegills and East Cassiegills zones. Centrally located community facility (Secondary School) and associated Health Care facility within the Knockothie zone to meet the requirement for a new site for Ellon Academy and meet demands from new residential development.

Introduce a new Business Commercial district within the Balmacassie zone in close proximity to the established commercial developments and benefits from the close proximity to the main A 90 arterial road link.