

Fig. 9.1 The North East of Scotland



Fig. 9.2 Aberdeen Commuter Area

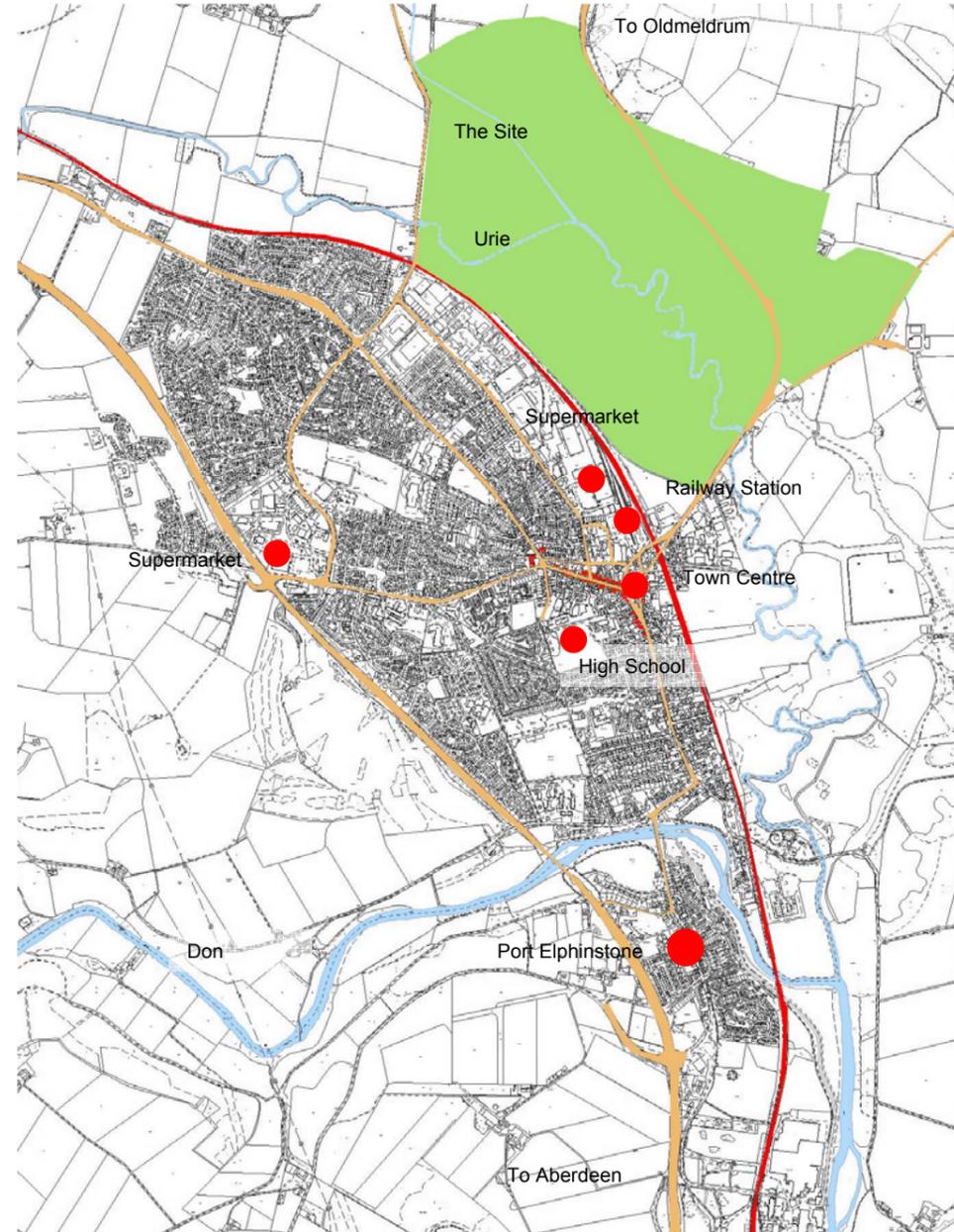


Fig. 9.3 Inverurie

## Location

Situated towards the centre of north east Scotland, Inverurie is sheltered from the worst of the weather coming directly off of the north sea, but its climate is still maritime in character (fig. 9.1). It is affected by cold winds, but benefits from good levels of solar gain which are described later in the report.

Inverurie has grown rapidly due to its proximity to Aberdeen and many of its residents commute to the neighbouring city (fig. 9.2). Uryside grows to the north east of Inverurie on the far bank of the River Urie. It offers the potential of creating a compact town surrounding a new park, where a broad range of facilities are within easy walking distance (fig. 9.3). Such an approach is endorsed by Scottish Planning Policy 3 – Planning for Housing, Planning Advice Note 67 – Housing Quality, Planning Advice Note 44 – Fitting New Housing into the Landscape, Planning Advice Note 65 – Planning and Open Space and perhaps most importantly A Policy Statement for Scotland – Designing Places.

The proposed creation of a commuter rail service to Aberdeen will be an attractive new service. Uryside should have easy pedestrian links to the railway station to promote its use and to ease congestion within the town centre. This intention is supported by Planning Advice Note 75 – Planning for Transport. The town centre is recognised as a valuable and thriving resource, which should be nurtured to maintain its competitiveness. Any additions to it should not be to the detriment of the existing high street and should be well considered.

It is recognised that the north link road has the potential to ease congestion in this area, which will benefit the retail centre and connectivity to Uryside.

## Inverurie

The town benefits from a bustling Centre, which is characterised by many fine buildings and by the square formed in front of the town hall (fig. 10.1). It is hoped that the north link road and the impending alterations to the road network around the station should result in a less congested and more pedestrian friendly town centre.

These opportunities will also improve pedestrian links to both the station (fig. 10.3) and Uryside beyond. A transport interchange is proposed at the station, which should further promote the use of the commuter link to Aberdeen reducing congestion. Local bus links from Uryside to this and other facilities should be encouraged as per Planning Advice Note 75 –Planning for Transport .

The area around the station (fig. 10.2 and 10.3) is somewhat disjointed, with poor pedestrian and disabled access. Although this area is outwith this study it is seen as being an important stepping stone between Uryside and Inverurie. The improvement of linkages in this area, pedestrian access, the creation of a pedestrian and wheelchair accessible bridge at the station and gradual streetscape and urban improvements on both sides of the railway should be supported.

The railway has ensured that Inverurie has turned its back on Uryside (fig. 10.4). Proposals within the park should screen the railway and these activities, whilst it is hoped that the presence of the park will gradually catalyse development along the southern face of the railway. It is hoped that this may promote further linkages across the railway, which should be encouraged. Narrow high points exist along the south side of the park outwith the floodplain which may be capable of future development, albeit their potential uses and quality would have to be complimentary to their fine parkland setting.



Fig. 10.1 Town Centre



Fig. 10.3 The Railway Station



Fig. 10.2 Garden Centre and Railway Overbridge



Fig. 10.4 Industrial Area and the Loco Works

## Connectivity

One of Uryside's key features is its proximity to central Inverurie. This was an important factor in Barratts' successful Planning Appeal in favour of the Site C development. As can be seen from the accompanying illustration the centre of Uryside is only a twenty minute walk from the existing town centre (fig. 11.1).

Pedestrian linkages, their quality, character and security are therefore vital to realising this potential.

The bulk of the riverside park is only a ten minute walk from either end of the town centre (fig. 11,2), but this is initially through what has already been shown to be (page 10) a relatively unfriendly and disjointed environment. This further underlines that the gradual improvement of these areas should be promoted as a priority. Equally it will take a pedestrian some ten minutes to walk from the town centre before they reach the first house in Uryside. This could undoubtedly be a rather daunting experience during the day, particularly during poor weather, and will become more of a barrier during evening, particularly during winter.

It is therefore vital to ensure a pleasant, well lit, secure and self policed pedestrian route along Oldmeldrum Road from Uryside to Inverurie if the site's obvious potential to create compact and walkable town are to be realised. This objective may in turn influence the encouragement of appropriate developments within these areas, which should enliven this route throughout the day and provide a suitable degree of self policing. These ambitions are supported by current Executive guidance in the form of a Policy Statement for Scotland – Designing Places, Planning Advice Note 77 – Designing Safer Places, Planning Advice Note 76 – New Residential Streets and Planning Advice Note 75 – Planning for Transport.

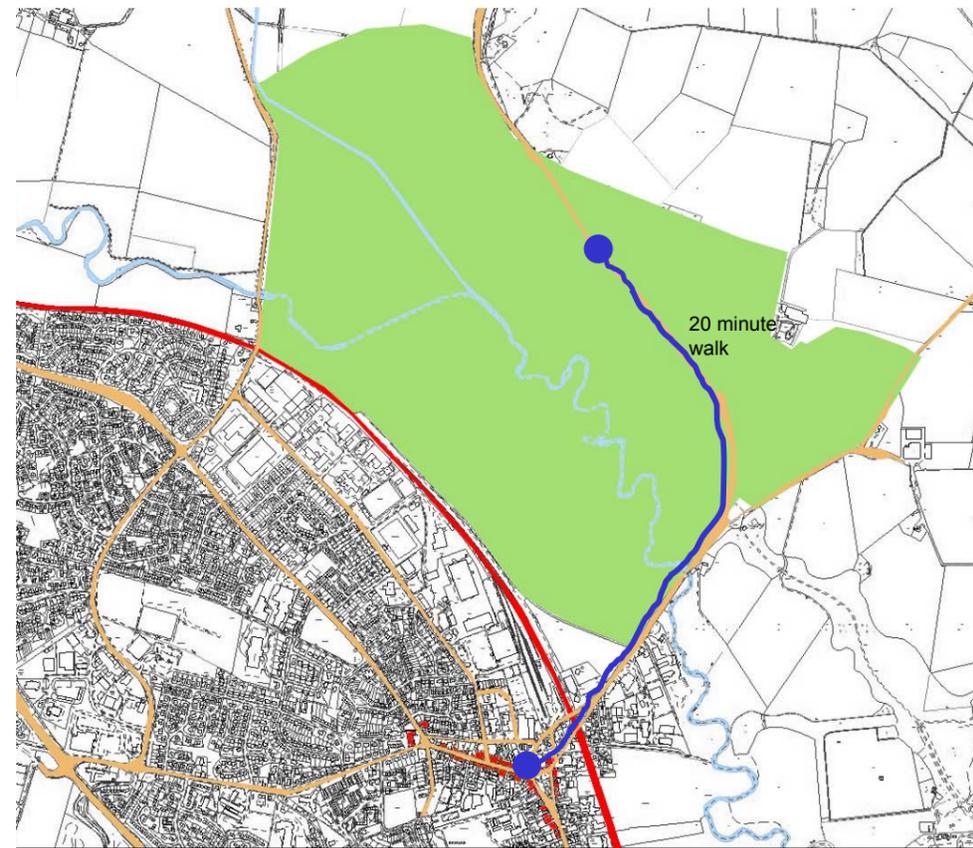


Fig. 11.1 Connectivity from Central Uryside

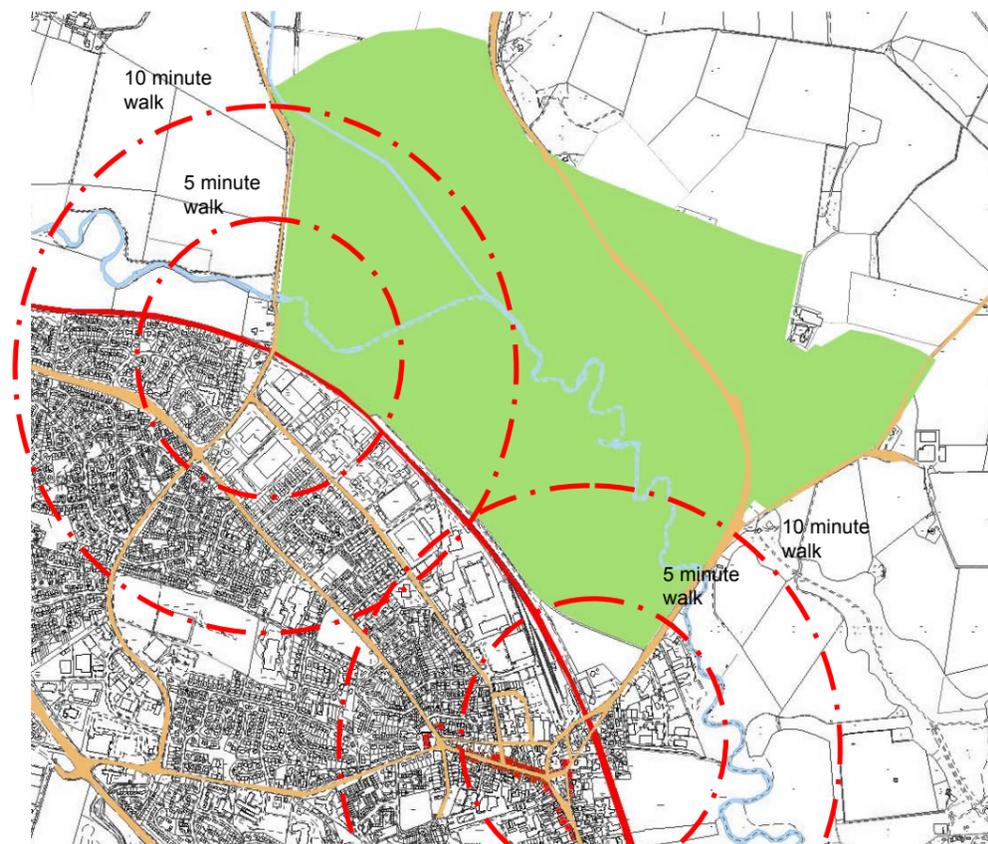


Fig. 11.2 Access to and Across the Park



## Landscape Topography

The framework area is currently farmed and is typical of low lying arable land throughout the north east (fig. 12.1 and 12.2). It slopes gently to the south west and enjoys fine views particularly towards Bennachie. Within the framework area there are few features and tree planting, indeed even the River Urie is relatively hidden due to its deeply channelled banks. Existing trees and structure planting both within and outwith the framework area should be protected, including those around Portstown farm which are the only large trees found within the framework boundary (fig. 12.3). These objectives should be developed in accordance with Planning Advice Note 51 – Planning and Environmental Protection, North East Scotland Together, Aberdeenshire Structure Plan and the Local Plan. The designed landscape around Keith Hall is protected and any development within its vicinity will be carefully vetted in terms of landscape impact.

Views back to Inverurie are also attractive (fig. 12.2). This view also highlights water caught in the former oxbow lakes of the Urie, which are far more visible than the river itself. These features should therefore be retained and their presence enhanced by slightly deepening these depressions and lining at least part of their base to provide semi-permanent bodies of water. The Council's Ecology Officer has endorsed such a proposal. The prominence of Inverurie in this view also highlights the prominence of Uryside when viewed from the town itself and underlines the requirement to create the development within a supporting network of structure landscape.

The valley floor is relatively flat and the sides of the valley are generally even (fig. 12.4). A shallow ravine containing a burn is located to the west of Portstown Farm and should be retained as one of the few features within the site and should be further enhanced.

At the north end of the valley to the west of Portstown Farm the valley side is stop ended by a pair of hillocks, the northern hillock should not be developed and is a natural back drop to the framework area. The depression between the hillocks is a discrete and technically sound location to locate the north link road (fig. 12.4). This is where Malcolm Allan has located his proposals for the north link road and although it is outwith the framework area and the Local Plan boundary its location should be supported.

The framework proposals generally seek to further the concept of "landscape fit" where the development is considered in the context of the existing landscape, the approach is described in further detail in Planning Advice Note 44 – Fitting New Housing into the Landscape and Planning Advice Note 72 – Housing in the Countryside.



Fig. 12.1 The View to the South West



Fig. 12.2 The view to the South East

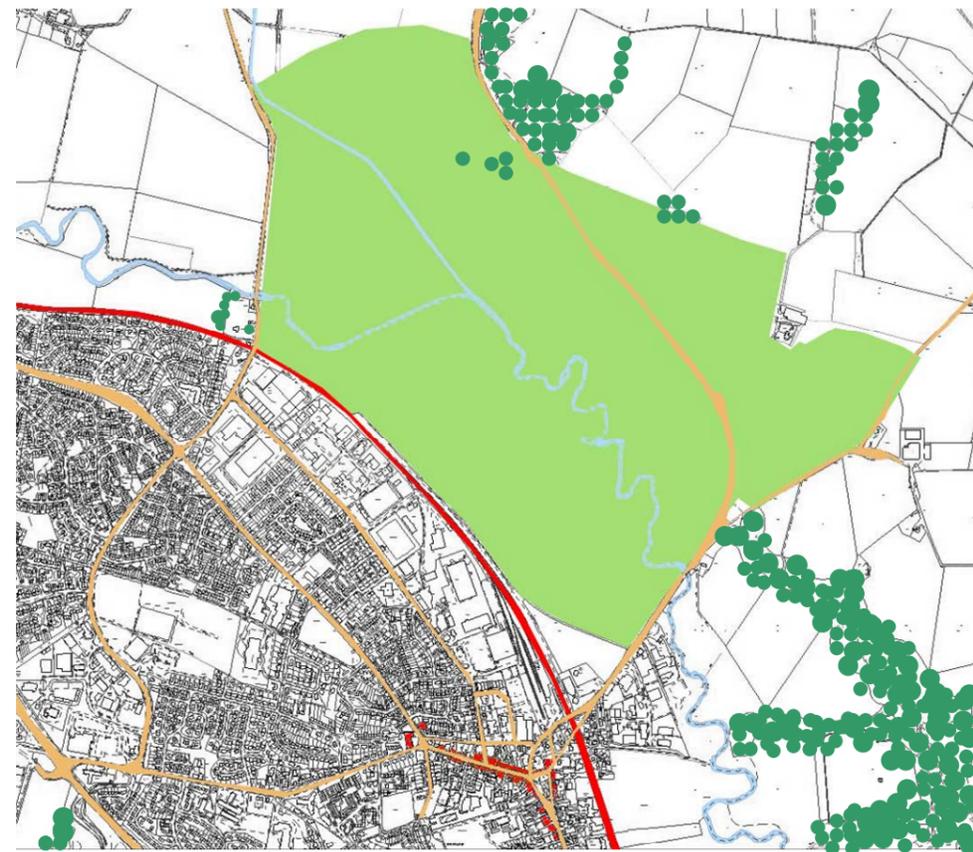


Fig. 12.3 Structure Landscape

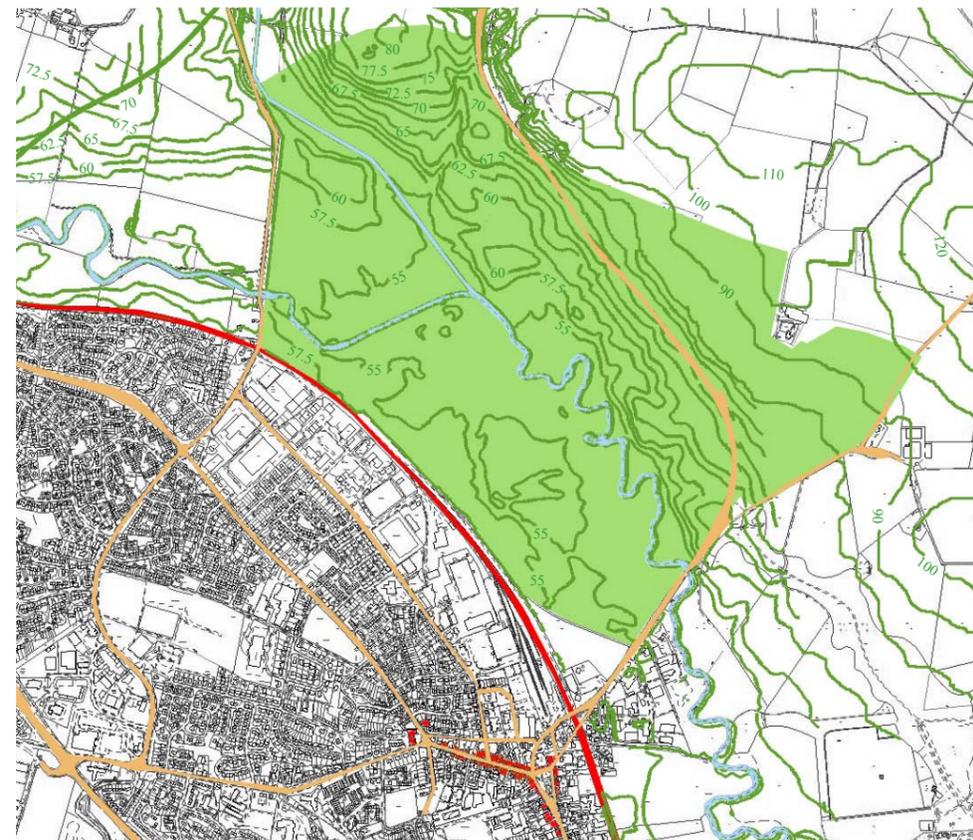


Fig. 12.4 Topography



## Solar Access

The various sections illustrate the gentle south facing slope of the site (figs. 13.1 to 13.3). This should support excellent levels of solar access to individual properties and suggests development which follows contours. That approach should be complimented by carefully located adjoining properties positioned to maximise views and maximise solar access across the depth of the site. This approach is endorsed by Aberdeenshire Council's Index 21 assessment tool, by its earlier guide "Development within Nature" prepared by the former Gordon District Council and the Building Research Establishment's Digest 350 – Climate and Site Development.

Having studied a range of views from Inverurie looking towards the framework area (fig. 13.4 to 13.6) two obvious features which begin to breach the skyline are the rectangular area of woodland to the west of Boynds Farm and Boynds Farm itself. Both features are located on approximately the OSD 95m contour. In order to minimise skylining, development should be to the south of these features and generally below this contour. This will result in a subtle realignment of the Local Plan development boundary. The development should be back dropped by significant areas of structure planting to the north to control its impact on the horizon as per the requirements of the Local Plan.

The area available for development between the one in two hundred year flood level OSD 58m and this upper contour is highlighted pink in each section.

Barratt's have highlighted that the skyline to the north of their phase two development is formed by a double hillcrest separated by a flatter plateau (figs. 13.2 and 13.3). This area may therefore offer a future development opportunity, but one which is currently outwith the scope of this study area and the Local Plan.

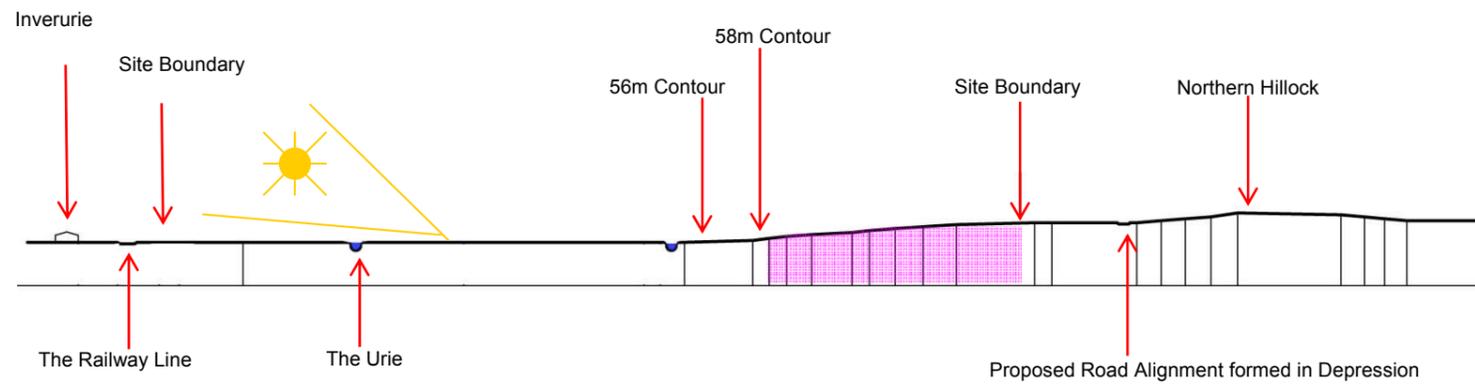


Fig. 13.1 Section 1

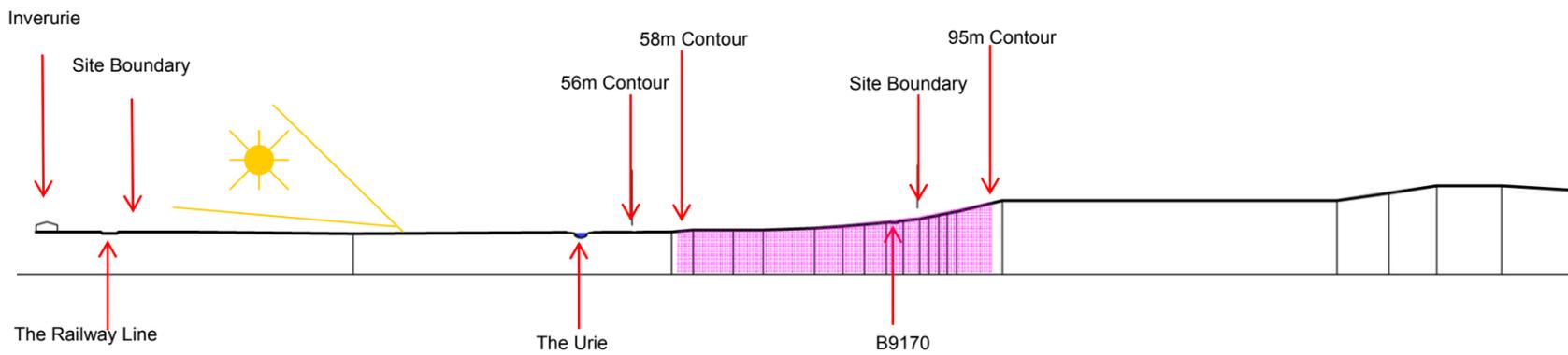


Fig. 13.2 Section 2

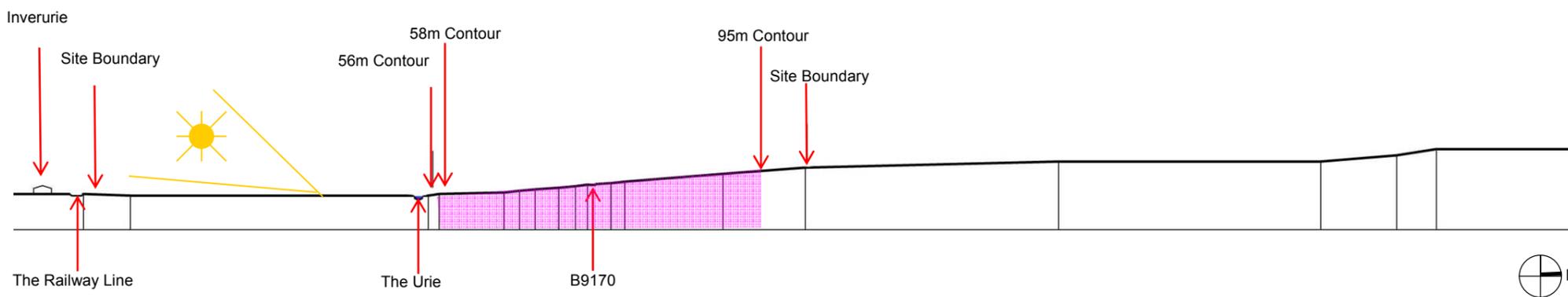


Fig. 13.3 Section 3

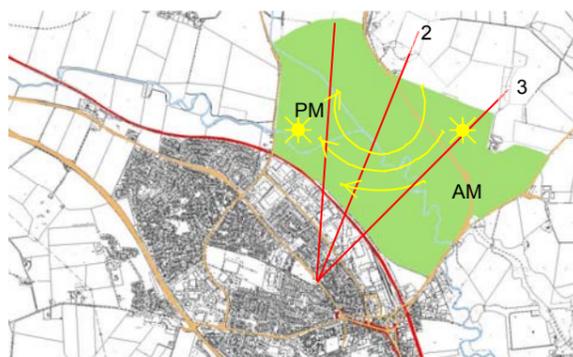


Fig. 13.4 Key Plan



Fig. 13.5 View North East from Rothienorman Road



Fig. 13.6 View North from Oldmeldrum Road

## Consequences of Topography

The valley acts as a conduit for cold north westerly winds (fig. 14.1). Shelter belts should therefore protect the development from winds from that direction and from the north. The area for potential development is relatively elevated and is subject to winds which come from the south over the top of Inverurie. This suggests a degree of planting along the development's southern boundary, but this boundary should be carefully designed to maximise solar access and to permit views from the site (fig. 14.3) towards the parkland and beyond. This approach is endorsed by a range of guidance including those described on page 13 and by the content of the Local Plan.

The valley floor is subject to periodic flooding which covers wide areas of its base, as can be seen in the accompanying photograph (fig. 14.2). This photograph of the 1995 flood indicates that a section of the Oldmeldrum Road is subject to periodic flooding, but that the area earmarked for a retail development, and the adjacent private road are above the flood level. The area preferred by Colony Park for their football facilities is however partially flooded. The Council's Flood Prevention Officer has indicated that technical solutions such as a cut and fill balance to maintain the current flood capacity e.g. by deepening the oxbow lakes could be found to permit the area of the pitches to be raised slightly. The developer of these facilities will be required to examine these factors in greater detail.

Generally development is restricted to the area outwith the one in two hundred year flood (fig. 14.4). The OSD 58m contour is slightly above that level and permits a certain allowance for wave action and to provide a free board. Very specific developments such as Colony Park's Sports Pavilion may be appropriately located below this level, but will require specific investigation and suggests the use of robust materials at ground level and the elevation of more vulnerable accommodation to upper floors. The diagram also shows a raised peninsula adjacent to the Rothienorman Road and a narrow band of land immediately to the north of the Railway line which are both outwith the one in two hundred year flood level and may be capable of well considered high quality development in the future. All Planning Applications will be considered in the context of Scottish Planning Policy 7 – Planning and Flooding and Planning Advice Note 69 – Planning and Building Standards Advice on Flooding.

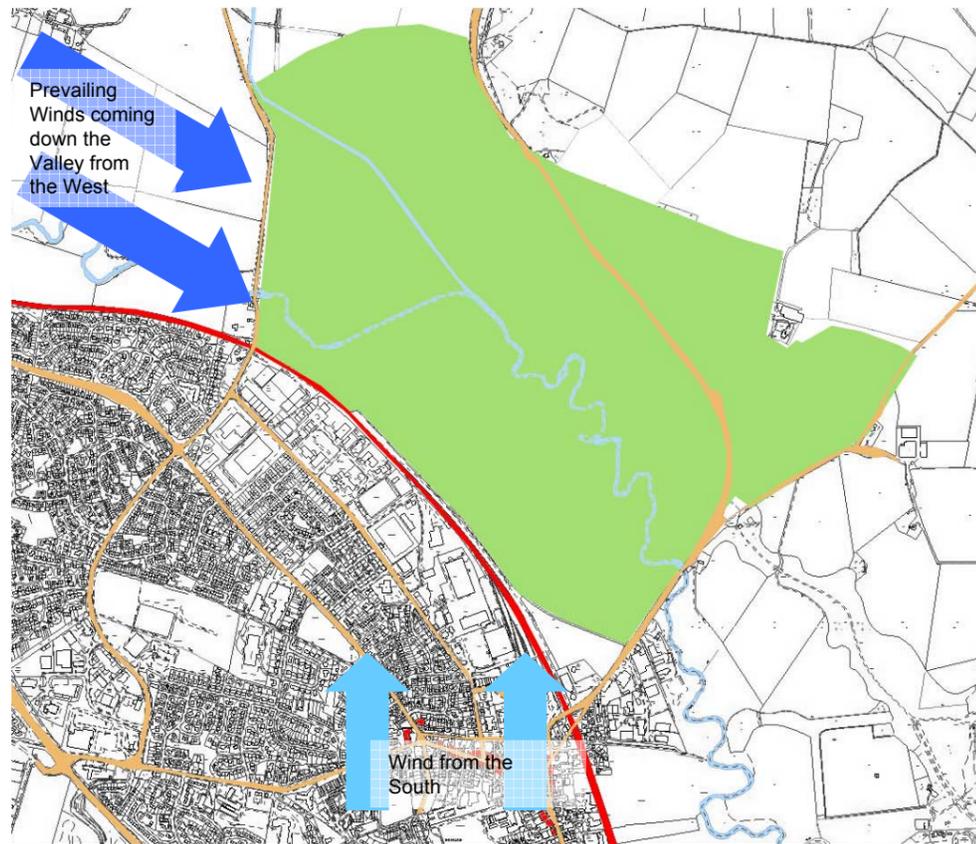


Fig. 14.1 Exposure

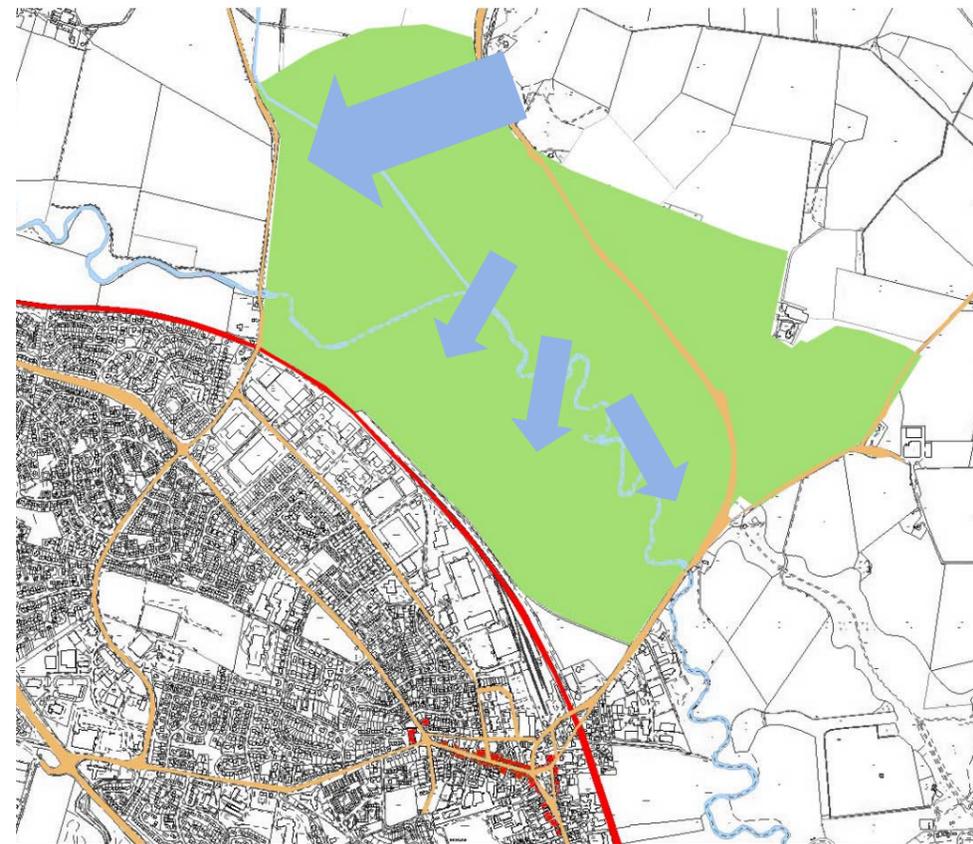


Fig. 14.3 Views



Fig. 14.2 The 1995 Flood

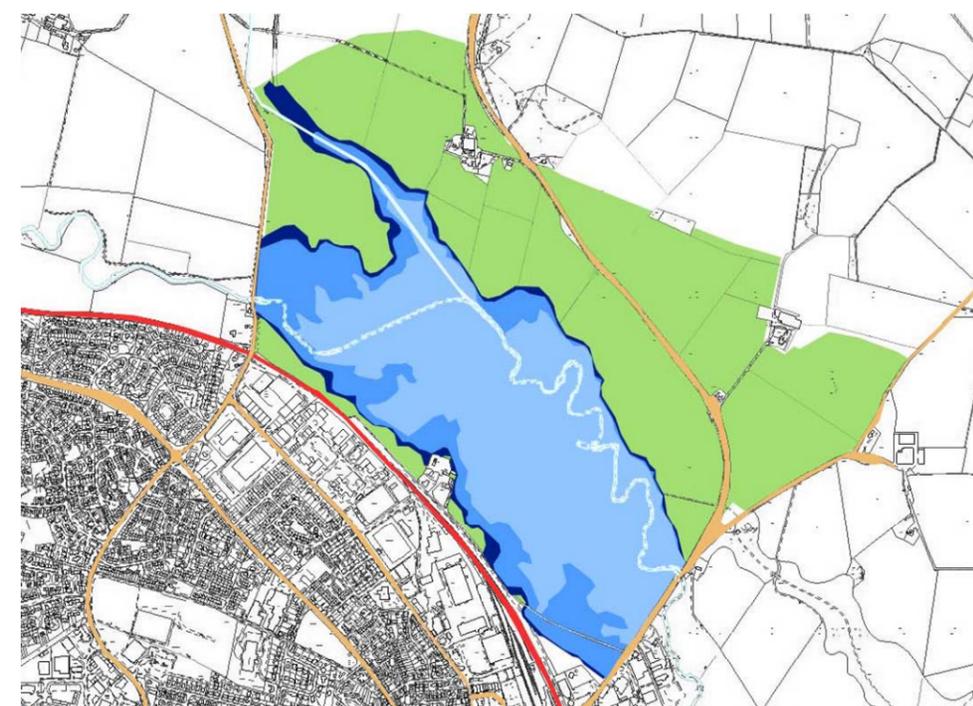


Fig. 14.4 Predictable and Historic Flood Risk

