

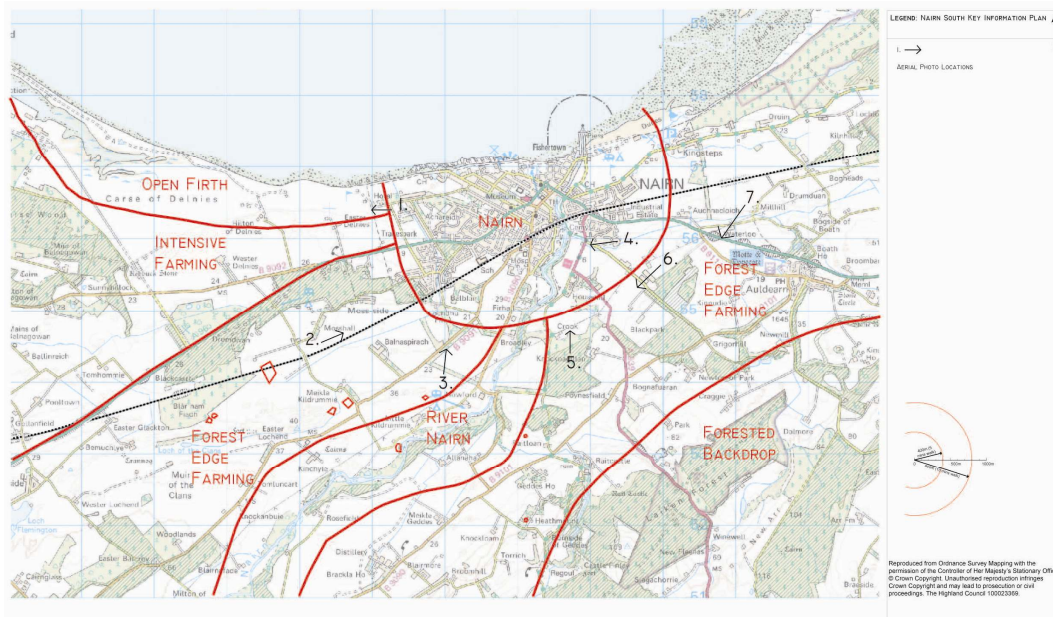
NAIRN SOUTH LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

INTRODUCTION

Future development is proposed around the periphery of Nairn with the possibility of a new road corridor which would relieve the current pressure on the town with the A96 through route. This assessment provides detail of the various landscape character areas surrounding Nairn as these areas were not included in the landscape assessment carried out for the A96 corridor in 2004 (see paragraph below for reference).

This assessment for the landscape surrounding Nairn extends from Carse of Delnies in the west, continuing in an arc south eastwards to Easter Lochend, Raitcastle and north eastwards to Auldearn and Druim.

Figure 1-1 Character Areas



It draws upon work previously carried out for Scottish Natural Heritage – Inverness District Landscape Character Assessment, John Richards, 1999 and Inner Moray Firth Landscape Character Assessment, Sarah Fletcher, 1998 and A96 Corridor Landscape Assessment, October 2004, Entec for The Highland Council.

THE CHARACTER AREAS

Five character areas surround Nairn - Open Firth takes in the coastal landscape from Whiteness, eastwards through the Carse of Delnies to the western edge of Nairn; Intensive Farming to the west of Nairn; Forest Edge Farming to the west and east of Nairn; the River Nairn Corridor and the Forested Backdrop on higher ground to the south east of Nairn.

OPEN FIRTH

Figure 1-2 Open Firth/ Intensive Farming



Description: a flat gently undulating coastal landscape with large expansive areas of sand and shingle beaches. The coastal edge consists of natural landscape patterns and characteristic vegetation is low lying and salt tolerant. Farm settlements at Hilton of Delnies and Easter Delnies border the inland boundary of the character area. A golf links is located at the westerly edge of Nairn.

Significant areas are designated for protection because of scenic, environmental and ecological importance - the coastline at Whiteness Head (to the north of Carse of Delnies) is designated as a RAMSAR site and a Special Protection Area (SPA) and the

whole coastline and marine area is classified as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The western portion of Carse of Delnies and the coastal area westwards including Whiteness Head is classified as an Area of Great Landscape Value.

Wide open views along the coastline and northwards over the sea. Inland, views are available across farmland to the forest edge.

Capacity for change: a sensitive landscape with major environmental designations along the coast; not suited to built development or unrestricted public access along the coastline.

Key issues: sensitivity of coastline; openness of landscape with broad views; absence of built development; a resource for birdwatchers, walkers and cyclists – those who enjoy the outdoors.

INTENSIVE FARMING

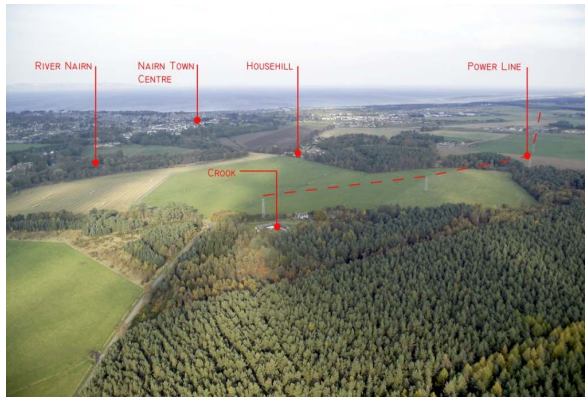
Description: flat to undulating landform composed of large arable fields interspersed with forestry plantations. The simple wide horizontal landscape and lack of structural elements gives it an overriding expansive scale. Large farm holdings are typical of this landscape.

This character area forms a thin band of land to the north of the A96 from Gollanfield to the western edge of Nairn (more expansive areas are found further west). Existing farm settlements include Wester Delnies, Hilton of Delnies and Easter Delnies. There are some tree belts associated with the farmsteads, otherwise tree cover is very sparse, restricted to forestry blocks such as Carse Wood in the west of the area. New housing allocations are within this character area on the western edge of Nairn. Views are open with extensive views to the Moray Firth and along the coast.

Capacity for change: the area to the west of Nairn will undergo some change along the town boundary with the new housing allocations. However, the area is sensitive to increased built development spreading westwards from Nairn along the A96 corridor into the open flat landscape.

Key Issues: flat, openness of landscape, lack of tree cover to conceal any future built development.

FOREST EDGE FARMING



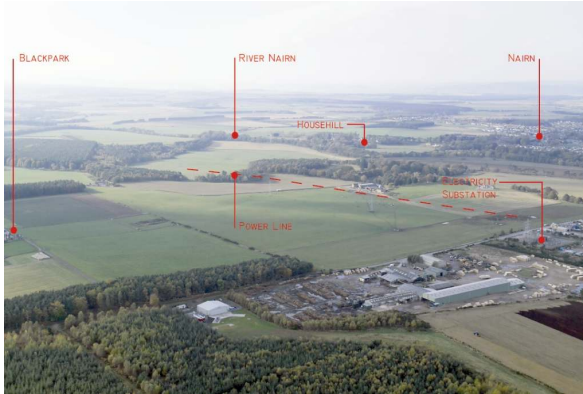
Description: gently undulating land and convex slopes, characterised by a framework of coniferous woodland and rectilinear field patterns. Many fields are bordered by shelterbelts and tree blocks, especially on approach to Nairn on B9091 around Balnaspirach and Balblair. Extent of vegetation cover masks any view of Nairn from this approach with only church spire visible above the trees. This landscape forms a distinct wedge between Inverness and Nairn separating the hills and high ground of Moray with the coastal farmland areas. Typical settlements are farm holdings and around Nairn small settlements include Moss-side and Auldearn.



Kildrummie Kames SSSI is a significant landscape feature classified for its geological value. A series of listed buildings are located in forest areas to the north of Moss-side and the National Trust for Scotland Motte and Dovecote is located in Auldearn together with a battlefield (1645) to the south of the village. Overhead electric pylons traverse the area from west to east to the south of Nairn.



Figure 1-3 (top) Forest Edge Farming (western approach to Nairn)
 Figure 1-4 (centre) South West Nairn
 Figure 1-5 (bottom) South East Nairn



Views are generally restricted due to the existing forestry and field boundary cover.

Capacity for change: the extent of the vegetation cover and the small size of fields would allow area to accommodate change. The vegetation provides containment and a backdrop to development.



Important to retain as much of existing vegetation pattern and reinforce where there are wide gaps.

Key Issues: enclosure provided by substantial vegetation cover and small size of fields; floodplain to west of Nairn around Balnaspirach and on south east of Nairn around Crook and Househill. Sensitivity of River Nairn corridor which bisects the area.

Figures 1.6 (top) South East Nairn with substation
Figure 1-7 (bottom) Waterloo Junction

RIVER NAIRN



Description: river corridor of considerable beauty, bordered by mature broadleaved trees. Rural character is maintained up to boundary of Nairn. The river flows through the town and into the Moray Firth. An important local landscape feature with numerous habitats associated with the riparian landscape.

Capacity for Change: a sensitive, attractive landscape corridor, unsuited to major change in close vicinity to the river.

Figure 1-8 River Nairn

Key Issues: attractive setting of the river; floodplain to south of Nairn; fabric of riverside planting including mature broadleaved trees.

FORESTED BACKDROP

Description: higher forested ground in foothills to south east of Nairn including Hill of Urchany and Lethen Bar. The forested landscape acts as a dark backdrop. The large size of forestry plantations and the angles made by the geometric patterns are often out of scale with the underlying slopes, crating a visually unbalanced landscape. The planting and harvesting cycle can create great visual disruption especially when seen against the bare trunks of the standing timber.

Capacity for Change: not relevant as beyond study boundary. Included in description as an important element of the local landscape character.

NAIRN

Coastal town of approximately 11,000 which developed as a coastal holiday destination from the middle of the nineteenth century with the construction of the railway. Sandy beaches within town area are a major attraction, together with coastal scenery and local golf courses including Nairn Golf Club. Fishertown is a compact, attractive community of vernacular housing close to the waterfront, classified as a conservation area. The urban form of Nairn is generally nucleated with the historic core and commercial centre to the west of the river. Some attractive buildings throughout the town, but commercial centre is in need of reinvigorating.

The A96 bisects the town with large vehicle movements causing disruption and noise. New housing development is mainly concentrated to south west of town with some new allocations in the east and on western boundary close to A96. The River Nairn is a beautiful natural corridor through the town and well wooded to the south.