

North Ayrshire Settlement Edge Landscape Sensitivity Study

Final Report

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Aims of the study

The North Ayrshire Settlement Edge Landscape Sensitivity Study provides a strategic level landscape and visual sensitivity assessment for housing expansion associated with the following settlements/groups of settlements:

- North Coast – West Kilbride, Fairlie, Largs and Skelmorlie
- The Three Towns – Stevenson, Saltcoats and Ardrossan
- The Garnock Valley – Kilbirnie, Beith and Dalry
- Kilwinning
- Irvine.

The study additionally considers sensitivity to housing development within 45 specific settlement edge sites which were selected by the Council and provides some general comment on two Strategic Development Areas lying in the north and south of Irvine. Some outline recommendations are also set out at the end of the report on where a Green Belt designation might be appropriate in terms of protecting and enhancing the character and identity of settlements and their landscape and natural setting.

The findings of the study are intended to inform consideration of potential development capacity surrounding settlements in North Ayrshire. It will also aid consideration as to whether any future Local Development Plan (LDP) should designate areas of Green Belt.

1.2 Policy and guidance background

1.2.1 *National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)*

The study is intended to help the Local Development Plan accord with NPF4, particularly Policy 8 which addresses Green Belts and in the assessment of proposals for new development including the potential allocation of additional sites for residential development.

1.2.2 *The role of landscape sensitivity studies*

NatureScot's 2022 *Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Guidance* notes that landscape sensitivity studies comprise strategic appraisals of the relative sensitivity of landscapes to development types or land use changes. They are an important tool to help guide development to less sensitive locations. The findings on landscape sensitivity set out in this study are strategic and indicative and are not a substitute for detailed Landscape and Visual Impact undertaken for site and project specific development proposals.

1.3 Structure of the report

This report initially sets out the methodology adopted for the study and the baseline information which has informed the assessment. Landscape and visual sensitivity assessments have been produced at the local landscape character classification level for each settlement within the 5 main settlement areas. An appraisal of specific development sites is set out in relation to each individual settlement.

1.4 Limitations

The study aims to support strategic spatial planning for settlement expansion in North Ayrshire. It considers landscape and visual sensitivities only and a range of other factors, such as sustainable transport and flood risk, will also need to be considered in determining the acceptability of specific developments. The assessment identifies constraints and opportunities at a strategic scale and, the landscape and visual effects of specific housing development projects will need to be considered in detail in determining the acceptability of proposals.

2 STUDY METHODOLOGY

The study considers landscape and visual sensitivity in the area lying up to approximately 1km from the 5 settlement groups defined in paragraph 1.1. In addition, 45 specific sites have been appraised in the study.

2.1 Guidance on assessing landscape sensitivity

This study accords with the guidance contained in NatureScot's 2022 *Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Guidance*. The guidance defines landscape sensitivity assessments as strategic appraisals of the relative sensitivity of landscapes to development or land use changes. Landscape sensitivity is described in the guidance as being '*a measure of the ability of a landscape to accommodate change arising from specified development types or land management scenarios without undue negative effects on the landscape and visual baseline and their value*'.

Landscape sensitivity assessment is undertaken on the basis of Assessment Units. While the NatureScot 2019 landscape character classification has principally informed the definition of broad Assessment Units, more detailed sub-division of the Landscape Character Types identified in this classification have been defined by the consultants following field work. The susceptibility of key landscape and visual criteria, and the value associated with each Assessment Unit, is considered in making judgements on sensitivity. Landscape sensitivity assessment considers the principle of a particular type of change rather than a specific development in a defined location.

2.2 Definition of terms

The following definitions of terms apply to this study:

Landscape character assessment is the starting point for landscape sensitivity work. It identifies and explains the combination of elements and features that make landscape distinct from one another by mapping and describing Landscape Character Types that are generic and Landscape Character Areas that are place specific. The description of their distinctive characteristics often includes how the landscape is perceived and experienced by people. Landscape Character Assessment analyses in detail the three main physical landscape components of landform, land cover and settlement and how they combine to form the landscapes we see and experience.

Landscape susceptibility within the context of sensitivity studies, can be defined as '*the degree to which a defined landscape and its associated visual qualities and attributes might respond to the specific development type/development scenario or other change without undue negative effects on landscape character and the visual resource*'. In this study, change relates to residential development and any findings on landscape sensitivity are restricted to this. Landscapes may have different susceptibilities to other forms of development or land use change.

Landscape value is a measure of the relative value attached to different landscapes by society. It includes nationally and locally important designated landscapes and other formally recognised landscape interests as well as other aspects of the landscape which may be valued by a variety of stakeholders for a range of reasons such as recreation, tourism or cultural interest.

Landscape sensitivity is a measure of the ability of a landscape to accommodate change arising from specified development types or landscape management changes. It combines judgements on the susceptibility of the landscape to change and the values attached to the landscape. Sensitivity assessments or studies provide an indication of this in a manner which is robust and repeatable.

2.3 General approach to the study

The approach to the study has been informed by Nature Scot's Guidance on Landscape Sensitivity Assessment (2022) and on consideration of the potential impacts and landscape sensitivities associated with housing development. The study has involved the following key tasks:

- Identification of a broad specification of housing development.
- Definition of the landscape and visual susceptibility criteria to be used in the assessment and the scope of factors to consider in determining the value associated with the landscape.
- Definition of Assessment Units, based on an appraisal of local landscape character, around each settlement.
- Field work to assess the sensitivity of Assessment Units to housing expansion using identified sensitivity criteria.
- Consideration of appropriate siting and design/mitigation measures
- Identification of landscapes important in protecting and enhancing the character, landscape, natural setting and identity of individual settlements.

The field work and assessment has been undertaken by two Chartered Members of the Landscape Institute with extensive experience in landscape sensitivity assessment undertaken for a variety of developments.

2.4 Assumptions made on the nature of development

The study considers residential development only. The height of the development is assumed to range from single storey up to three-storey. Guidance is provided on landscape and visual sensitivity in relation to taller buildings in specific locations. It is assumed that minimum standards would be adhered to in terms of open space provision, sustainable drainage and access.

2.5 Definition of Assessment Units

Assessment Units (AUs) have been defined around each settlement with these usually extending up to 1km from the urban edge. Assessment Units reflect local landscape character. They are informed by NatureScot's 2019 digital landscape character classification but do not always fit consistently within the boundaries of the broader Landscape Character Types defined. The Assessment Units have been given simple descriptive names reflecting their key characteristics. It has been agreed with North Ayrshire Council that golf courses around settlements should be considered in the sensitivity assessment but other open space such as playing fields, playgrounds, designated local nature reserves and cemeteries should be excluded from the study.

2.6 The sensitivity assessment

2.6.1 Landscape and visual sensitivity criteria

The sensitivity assessment considers the susceptibility of key landscape and visual characteristics of different Assessment Units to settlement expansion. The value associated with the Assessment Unit is also considered with susceptibility and value being combined to arrive at a sensitivity rating for each of the Assessment Units considered in the study. Table 1 sets out the landscape and visual criteria and the factors considered in the sensitivity assessment.

Table 1: Landscape and visual sensitivity criteria

Key criteria	Factors influencing sensitivity
Landscape character and role	Consideration of the degree of complexity of the landform. The degree of steepness and/or complexity of terrain which can influence the degree of ground modification required and potential for intrusive building platforms and cut and fill to occur. Identification of landcover features such as woodland and trees and/or more complex and smaller scale intact field pattern which could increase susceptibility. Linked to landform, landcover, the scale of the landscape will influence the degree of visual containment that can be provided with susceptibility increased for larger building units in smaller scale landscapes. The role or function of the landscape including consideration of whether it provides a distinctive setting and/or gateway to the existing settlement and/or whether it plays a role in separating settlements and thus preserving their identity
Built character	Consideration of the type, age, density, form and architectural character of existing settlement and its relationship to landscape character (for example, whether set at the foot of steep slopes or strongly aligned along the coast). The likely physical and perceived distance from the centre of the settlement and from key facilities.
Settlement edges	The association of the existing settlement with the landscape and the robustness of settlement boundaries, whether abutting woodland, steep slopes, the coast or whether less constrained or contained by clear physical features. Identification of any existing physical features which could form robust new settlement boundaries. Identification of key thresholds to existing settlements, which may be formed by landscape features such as woodland, an opening up of a valley or the presence of distinctive built features. The degree of change which could occur if development was sited close to these thresholds and consequent effects on the character and identity of settlements.
Views and visibility	The relative prominence of the area and whether it features in key views and what its scenic role is in those views. The presence of landform and woodland which could fully or partially screen views of potential development.
Landscape value	The presence of designated landscapes and other interests including cultural heritage/nature conservation and recreational use which influence the value attached to the landscape. This

	includes consideration of national and local wildlife and cultural heritage sites including Inventory listed Gardens and Designed Landscapes (GDL) and Local Landscapes of Historic Interest (LLHI) identified by North Ayrshire Council. The candidate Local Landscape Areas identified in 2023 in North Ayrshire and their special landscape qualities are also considered. Perceptual qualities associated with landscape, such as the sense of tranquillity, seclusion or naturalness and the rarity and condition of the landscape are also considered. The sensitivity assessment considers the potential effects of housing development on the value associated with the landscape.
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2.7 Sensitivity ratings

Each sensitivity criterion set out in Table 1 has been scored using a five-point scale of high, high-medium, medium, medium-low and low. An overall landscape and visual sensitivity rating is also set out for each Assessment Unit using the same five-point scale and giving equal weight to each of the eight landscape and visual criteria. The overall sensitivity rating does not represent a median score across all criteria but rather considers the degree of susceptibility of each criterion to a development type and the nature of likely effects on valued landscapes. For example, an Assessment Unit which has been judged in the assessment to have a high susceptibility across three or more criteria would generally be considered to have a high overall sensitivity rating. This is interpreted in the following table:

Table 2: Sensitivity ratings of Assessment Units

Sensitivity rating	Definition
High	Key assessment criteria such as scale, landform, the role of the landscape in providing a distinctive setting or separating settlements, views and the value associated with the landscape are highly vulnerable to development. Development would conflict with most or several of the assessment criteria with widespread and/or severe significant and adverse impacts likely to arise.
High-medium	Assessment criteria are vulnerable to change from the development type. Development would conflict with some of the assessment criteria but small parts of the Assessment Unit may be less susceptible to change and/or mitigation measures could be employed to reduce landscape and visual effects.
Medium	Assessment criteria are generally less vulnerable to change and development could be accommodated across much of the Assessment Unit without widespread or severe change occurring to landscape and visual interests although mitigation may be required to reduce potential effects in some areas.
Medium - low	Relatively few of the assessment criteria are vulnerable to change from the development type. Much of the Assessment Unit is less susceptible to development and is less likely to incur widespread or severe effects on key characteristics.
Low	Assessment criteria are generally not vulnerable to change and development could be accommodated across all of the Assessment Unit without significant adverse effects occurring on landscape and visual interests.

2.8 Format of sensitivity assessments

The assessment for each broad settlement group initially provides an overall description of the existing character and form of the settlement/settlement group and its relationship to landscape. Detailed assessment is also provided of each settlement within a broad group as appropriate. This defines the landscape setting and key views from the settlement and the existing character and pattern of built development before identifying key landscape and visual features associated with each settlement.

The detailed sensitivity assessment against key criteria for each settlement is set out in a tabular format. Guidance is then provided on the siting and design of housing expansion and any mitigation and enhancement measures that could be instigated.

An appraisal is also provided of specific sites identified by North Ayrshire Council around each settlement. This appraisal is made in the context of the findings of the landscape sensitivity assessment.

3 NORTH COAST – WEST KILBRIDE, FAIRLIE, LARGS AND SKELMORLIE

3.1 Character and landscape context overview

The settlements of West Kilbride (including Seamill), Fairlie, Largs and Skelmorlie lie in the north-western part of North Ayrshire. All four settlements are sited close to the Firth of Clyde and are backed by the steep-sided Clyde Muirshiel Hills to the east.

Skelmorlie is a small settlement lying close to the border with Inverclyde and around 4km to the north of Largs. A narrow and largely undeveloped raised beach platform is present along the Firth of Clyde between Skelmorlie and Largs and this is backed by a prominent and largely wooded scarp. The A78 is aligned on this platform, close to the coastal edge, and small walled fields occupy a strip of land lying at the foot of the wooded scarp. The castles of Skelmorlie and Knock are sited in an imposing position at the top of the raised beach scarp between the two settlements. Linear housing development on the northern edge of Largs and the southern edge of Skelmorlie along the raised beach platform extends the influence of built development away from the core of each settlement. West Kilbride lies approximately 8.5km to the south of Largs and to the south-east of the coastal promontory of Portencross. The nationally important Inventory listed Garden and Designed Landscape of Kelburn Castle occupies an extensive area to the south of Largs while farmland is present in the south closer to West Kilbride. The settlement of Fairlie and the nearby Hunterston industrial site lies approximately mid-way between Largs and West Kilbride.

Figure 1 shows the location of Skelmorlie, Largs and West Kilbride and any relevant environmental designations and planning allocations immediately surrounding these settlements.

While each settlement has some similar key characteristics, notably, their coastal position, their strong visual association with the Firth of Clyde and islands, and also their expansion during the 19th century as dormitory settlements following the construction of the railways from Glasgow, there are also subtle differences in their landscape setting and these characteristics are described in more detail in the introduction to the sensitivity assessments undertaken for each settlement in the following text.

3.2 West Kilbride

3.2.1 *Landscape and visual context*

The historic core of West Kilbride lies approximately 1.5km inland from the Firth of Clyde coast. The settlement was originally developed as a weaving village in the 18th century but with substantial expansion occurring after 1878, following the arrival of the railway. Much of this expansion occurred in the Seamill area (which originally comprised a mill and a few cottages) which lies to the south and west of the older core of West Kilbride and which expanded along the coast. The town centre has a tight knit clustered core and is sited on elevated undulating ground east of the A78. Rapid growth occurred during the inter-war period with many bungalows built on hill slopes to the west and north of the town centre. More recent housing has been built on the eastern fringes of the town at the foot of Law Hill.

Key landscape and visual features of West Kilbride include:

- The diverse landscape setting to the town provided by its coastal location on the Firth of Clyde, the attractive pink-sand beach and golf course which are a key recreational resource for residents and visitors and the spectacular views to Arran which are a feature from the coast and parts of the town.
- The prominent steep-sided, gorse-studded Law Hill and Tarbert Hill, and the smaller Dummilling Hill, which form an arc around the north, east and south of the town and are important in providing an undeveloped backdrop, seen in views from the town, and strong containment to the settlement.
- The wooded Glenbryde valley on the southern edge of the town which provides a valuable recreational resource and accommodates cycle and pedestrian routes between residential areas, sports facilities and the town centre.
- The vibrancy of the clustered historic centre of West Kilbride which includes the attractive Arts and Craft style railway station, shops, cafes, artist's studios and the Barony craft centre.
- Cycle/walking routes on the traffic calmed B7048 to Portencross from the town which are popular with residents and which link with coastal routes and the Wildcat Road footpath.

3.2.2 *West Kilbride - Assessment Units*

Six Assessment Units (AUs) have been defined around West Kilbride. These are shown in Figure 2 and are described below:

- Assessment Unit A: Coastal Farmland/Golf Course
This AU comprises gently undulating coastal farmland bounded by the Portencross Road to the north and the Wildcat Lane, a public footpath forming the boundary of a consented housing development site to the east. The AU also includes the West Kilbride Golf Course which is aligned along the Firth of Clyde coast to the south-west and the Ayrshire Coastal Path.
- Assessment Unit B: Open Farmland
An area of gently undulating arable farmland largely lying on the coastal plain to the north-west of the settlement and crossed by the A78. The Portencross Road forms the southern boundary of this AU. The landform rises to the east towards Drummilling Hill and a low but steep scarp edge forms the northern edge of West Kilbride against this AU. Fields are large with an open character although woodland is associated with Carlung House and Yonderfield Farm to the west of the A78.
- Assessment Unit C: Small Fields
An area of small, hedged fields associated with the narrow valley of the Kilbride Burn and strongly contained by the rising slopes of Drummilling and Law Hills. This landscape is severed by the railway line, the B781 road and an overhead transmission line but lies close to the town centre. Fields are largely under

pasture with some horse grazing. Woodlands are associated with Underhill House in the north-east.

- Assessment Unit D: Steep-sided Hills

The prominent hills of Drummilling, Law and Tarbert form an arc to the north, east and south of the town. The upper slopes and summits of the larger hills of Law and Tarbert are covered with rough grassland and gorse. The smaller Drummilling Hill is farmed with a small woodland and the town's cemetery located on its southern slopes and with dense gorse covering the steeper north face. A telecommunications mast is located on Law Hill and a row of small chalets aligns a narrow road on the south-west facing slopes of this hill and is separated from the eastern urban edge of West Kilbride by farmland.

- Assessment Unit E: Lower hill Slopes

This AU comprises the lower slopes of Law Hill and Tarbert Hill. While these lower slopes are more gently graded than the rugged upper slopes of these prominent hills, they are still steep in places. These lower slopes are farmed with fields of arable crops and pasture. A degraded shelterbelt forms the south-eastern boundary of this AU against the Ardrossan Old Road. The upper boundary of this AU is formed by a line of small chalets accessed by a narrow road.

- Assessment Unit F: Rolling Ridges and Coast

Elongated low ridges lying between the foot of Tarbert Hill and the coast. More recent housing development on the southern fringes of Seamill occupies the flatter ground of the coastal platform and is backed by these farmed ridges. The railway line lies to the east and the B7047 road, which provides the southern access to the centre of West Kilbride, is aligned through this area. The busy A78 runs along the coast. A small area of open flat land abuts the coast and lies between linear housing in Seamill to the north and a caravan site to the south.

Photographs of key features within and around West Kilbride are shown in Appendix A. Detailed sensitivity assessment of each AU is set out in the following tables

Table 3: North Coast Area - West Kilbride Sensitivity Assessment

Sensitivity Criteria	AU A - Coastal Farmland/ Golf Course	AU B – Open Farmland	AU C – Small Fields
<i>Landscape character</i>	This area of gently undulating farmland and the golf course are important in retaining a less developed character and a sense of openness along the coast. Development on this AU would significantly diminish the setting to the coast. This little developed coast forms a key attribute and prominent part of the setting to the town. <i>High susceptibility</i>	This area of gently undulating farmland is open to the east of the A78 but is more diverse to the west due to the presence of policy woodlands associated with Carlung House. Although the simple topography and landcover of this landscape reduces susceptibility, this landscape provides a strongly rural setting and northern gateway to West Kilbride. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>	Small fields are crossed by the railway line and overhead transmission lines and these, together with the horse paddocks on some fields, gives a cluttered appearance to the landscape. Trees and woodlands are associated with Underhill House and the landscape is more intact with a strong rural character to the east where it provides an attractive approach to the town, seen in conjunction with the steep northern slopes of Law Hill, from the B781. The character of the eastern part of this AU, and the setting to Law Hill and approach to West Kilbride would be compromised by housing development. The more fragmented and urban influenced western part of this AU is less susceptible. <i>Medium susceptibility</i>
<i>Built character</i>	Consented housing development on farmland between the A78 and the Wildcat Road will fill a gap between existing housing. Housing within Seamill is largely associated with the coastal edge and this muddles the original siting rationale of West Kilbride set back from the coast. Large individual houses are aligned on a coastal terrace above the golf course in the north-west. <i>Medium susceptibility</i>	Extension of housing on the eastern part of this AU would conflict with the present association of West Kilbride with higher ground set above this lower-lying farmland although this area lies relatively close to the town centre. The western part of this AU would relate better to consented housing sited on flatter ground between the A78 and Wildcat Road. <i>Medium susceptibility</i>	This AU lies close to the town centre. Development in the western area would be visually associated with the existing urban area and would replicate the association of existing housing with lower slopes. The eastern part of this AU has less of a clear association with West Kilbride due to the containment provided by woodland at Underhill and the more strongly rural character of the landscape. <i>Medium susceptibility</i>

<i>Settlement edges</i>	Trees aligned on Wildcat Road and a subtle ridge of farmland provide a firm edge to consented new development in the south-west which would be breached by development. <i>High susceptibility</i>	A steep bank, and also woodland close to the A78/A7049 crossroads, provides a distinct northern edge to West Kilbride. This edge would be breached by development in this AU. The openness of much of this farmland increases susceptibility although woodland at Carlung House presents opportunities to visually contain and provide a robust edge to new development in the western part of this AU. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>	The steep slopes of Law Hill would provide strong containment to development occupying lower-lying fields. Tree belts associated with the property of Underhill have potential to provide a robust new settlement edge to the north-east. Susceptibility is increased to the east of this tree belt where the landscape is more open and screened from West Kilbride. <i>Medium susceptibility</i>
<i>Views and visibility</i>	Open views from Portencross Road to the west of the A78 across farmland and the golf course to the sea and Arran are important. There are also views from the Ayrshire Coastal Path. Development in this AU would significantly and adversely affect these special views. <i>High susceptibility</i>	The more open eastern part of this AU is highly visible from the A78 on the main approach to West Kilbride from the north. While policy woodlands associated with Carlung House provide some screening from the A78, these features also provide an attractive setting to views from Portencross Road. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>	This AU is strongly contained by the rising slopes of Drumilling and Law Hills and this reduces susceptibility in that development would not be widely visible. Close views would be possible from the town's railway station, the railway line to Largs and the B781 but development in this area would not interrupt views of key landscape features. <i>Medium susceptibility</i>
<i>Landscape value</i>	The Candidate <i>Portencross to Skelmorlie Coast and the Cumbraes</i> LLA covers much of this AU. Recreational routes to Portencross, the Wildcat Road and along the coast (which include the Ayrshire Coast Path) are present and well-used. Development in this AU would diminish the recreational enjoyment associated with the coast. <i>High value</i>	This AU is not covered by any landscape designations and is not well-used for recreation but it lies adjacent to the Carlung House LLHI which increases value to some degree. <i>Medium value</i>	This AU is not covered by any landscape designations and is not well-used for recreation which reduces the value associated with the landscape. <i>Medium-low value</i>
Sensitivity	High	High-medium	Medium

Sensitivity criteria	AU D – Steep-sided Hills	AU E – Lower Hill Slopes	AU F – Rolling Ridges and Coast
<i>Landscape character</i>	These hills are important in providing a distinctive and strongly natural backdrop to West Kilbride. Development extending onto steep upper slopes would diminish their undeveloped character (and would require significant ground modification to accommodate building platforms). These rugged hills form a key part of the setting to the town; they also provide strong visual containment. <i>High susceptibility</i>	Fields on more gently graded farmed lower slopes would be less susceptible although these areas are limited in extent. Steeper slopes would require significant ground modification which would increase landscape and visual impact. These lower slopes do not form a distinctive feature in the landscape setting to the town. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>	This AU principally comprises the western slopes of Tarbert Hill which form low, softly rolling ridges of farmland backing the coast on the southern edge of West Kilbride. Areas of flatter ground are also present next to the coast and between the A78 and the B7047. The ridges are not as prominent as Tarbert Hill in terms of providing the setting to West Kilbride but the steep-sided western ridge (with mast atop) backs housing aligning the A78 in Seamill. Open ground next to the coast, although influenced by nearby housing and chalet park, is diverse. The more prominent western ridge and open coastal area provides a degree of separation between the town and isolated development along the coast and a southern gateway to West Kilbride. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>
<i>Built character</i>	West Kilbride is located on undulating ground east of the A78 and includes some more recent development located on the lower slopes of these hills. Development on steeper slopes would be contrary to the form of the settlement which is largely associated with lower ground contained by the steep slopes of these hills. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>	West Kilbride is located on undulating ground east of the A78 and includes some more recent development located on the lower slopes of these hills. A line of small chalets is also present on the mid-slopes of Law Hill. Development on more gently graded slopes would continue the association of much of the settlement with sloping ground. <i>Medium susceptibility</i>	Recent housing development in Seamill adopts a linear layout as it occupies the narrow coastal platform and this area feels distant from, and unrelated to, the core of West Kilbride. Housing within West Kilbride is built on similarly rolling ridges lying to the east of the A78 but development in this area would extend the settlement far from its core. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>

<i>Settlement edges</i>	These hills provide strong visual containment to the settlement which would be breached by expansion on steeper upper slopes and summits. <i>High susceptibility</i>	Hedgerows and some trees form a boundary to existing housing on the eastern side of West Kilbride and the steep-sided Law Hill provides strong containment. Any development in this area would require planting to soften and integrate built edges. A distinct threshold exists when approaching West Kilbride on the Old Ardrossan Road from the south-east formed by a 'pinch-point' between Law and Tarbert Hills and reinforced by woodland and landform screening housing. Development in this part of the AU would require creation of a robust settlement edge. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>	The western-most ridge provides a steep scarp which backs housing in Seamills; it also contributes to the robust settlement edge formed by the wooded Glenbryde valley. There are no landscape features currently present that are capable of providing a new robust southern boundary if development occurred widely across this AU. <i>High susceptibility</i>
<i>Views and visibility</i>	The steep upper slopes and summits of these hills form prominent features in views from within West Kilbride and the surrounding area. Footpaths on Tarbert Hill offer spectacular views across the Firth of Clyde. Development would be highly intrusive with ground modification on steep slopes contributing to this. <i>High susceptibility</i>	Although these lower hill slopes are more visually contained than the steep upper slopes and summits of Law and Tarbert Hills, development on this AU would be seen from more elevated residential areas within West Kilbride. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>	Development would be visible on the southern approach to West Kilbride on the A78 and from the Ayrshire Coastal Path with the western ridge (with mast atop) being particularly prominent. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>
<i>Landscape value</i>	This AU is not covered by any landscape designations. Informal paths are present on the summit of Tarbert Hill and this hill is particularly valuable in providing an accessible semi-natural landscape close to the urban area. <i>High-medium value</i>	This AU is not covered by any landscape designations. A footpath is present on the lower slopes of Law Hill (although is blocked in places). <i>Medium value</i>	This AU is not covered by any landscape designations. The open coastal area lying in this AU has some recreational and wildlife value. <i>Medium value</i>
Sensitivity	High	High-medium	High-medium

3.2.3 *West Kilbride - Key landscape and visual sensitivities*

- The steep slopes and summits of Law Hill, Tarbert Hill and Drummilling Hill which are prominent features and important in providing an attractive backdrop to the town.
- Views from Portencross Road across the Firth of Clyde to Arran
- The semi-natural character of the coast and its importance for recreation
- The openness of farmland on the southern and northern sides of the town and the presence of existing robust settlement boundaries which would be breached if housing expanded into these areas.

3.2.4 *West Kilbride – Summary and guidance*

Figure 3 shows the sensitivity of each Assessment Unit. Guidance relating to each Assessment Unit including design, mitigation and enhancement measures is set out below:

Assessment Unit A: Coastal Farmland/Golf Course – High sensitivity

The golf course and adjacent farmland south of Portencross Road is highly sensitive due to its location close to the coast, its higher value (it lies within a candidate LLA and is important for recreation) and because it forms an uncluttered open foreground to treasured views across the Firth of Clyde to Arran. Development on this area would result in significant adverse landscape and visual effects which could not be mitigated. It is recommended that if there is to be further housing development. It should be focused on less sensitive Assessment Units around West Kilbride.

Assessment Unit B: Open Farmland – High-medium sensitivity

The openness and high visibility of the eastern part of this AU and its adverse effect on the moderately firm existing settlement edge increases sensitivity. Existing woodland would provide a degree of screening to any housing development in the western part of this AU. New woodland planting would be necessary to create a new robust settlement boundary to the north and east in advance of any development being constructed. While existing woodlands within the policies of Carlung House could potentially provide a robust containing edge to any new housing, the designation of these grounds as a LLHI would necessitate careful design of development and management of woodlands to minimise effects on its character and value. Rising ground in the east of this AU near Woodside (merging with the lower slopes of Drummilling Hill) is of increased visual susceptibility and should not be developed.

Assessment Unit C: Small Fields – Medium sensitivity

This is the least sensitive AU around West Kilbride. This study considers landscape and visual sensitivities only and technical constraints, including difficulties of access, may preclude development in this area. Existing woodlands associated with the property of Underhill would provide a firm settlement boundary to the north-east and development should not expand beyond these in order to protect the diverse rural character and its importance in providing an attractive approach to West Kilbride. Overhead transmission lines should be undergrounded where possible and any development in this area should be orientated to take advantage of long views towards the Cowal hills.

Assessment Unit D: Steep-sided Hills – High sensitivity

The prominent steeper slopes and summits of this AU are highly sensitive to development. Development on these hills would result in significant adverse effects on the majority of the sensitivity criteria considered in the assessment. Development within this area would result in significant adverse landscape and visual effects which could not be mitigated. It is recommended that housing development should be focused on less sensitive Assessment Units around West Kilbride.

Assessment Unit E: Lower Hill Slopes – High-medium sensitivity

Lower slopes on the western edge of Law Hill and the eastern edge of Tarbert Hill are less visually prominent than the *Steep-sided Hills* AU. While development on some of these slopes would replicate the already elevated nature of some housing areas within the town, ground modification works necessary to accommodate building platforms and access on sloping ground would be likely to increase intrusion and care is therefore needed to site development only on lower-lying and more gently graded ground with woodland planting undertaken on steeper upper slopes to soften the built edge and provide integration with the more semi-natural character of the hills. Consideration should be given to undergrounding an existing power line on the slopes of Law Hill. The presently distinct 'threshold' to West Kilbride experienced from the Old Ardrossan Road would be adversely affected by any development on lower fields on the south-eastern edge of the town. There is however potential for an existing tree belt to be extended and rejuvenated in this area to create a new firm settlement edge.

Assessment Unit F: Rolling Ridges and Coast – High-medium sensitivity

The prominence of this Assessment Unit in views on the approach to West Kilbride from the south, and the role of the rolling ridges in contributing to the containment of the existing settlement edge, are key sensitivities. Development on the western-most of these elevated ridges would be intrusive in views from the A78 although the eastern-most ridge is more hidden from key views. Development on flat fields to the south of existing housing in Seamill would have negative effects in continuing the arbitrary linear extension of the town and would additionally be perceived as being very distant from its core. Development adjacent to the coast would fill a gap between an existing chalet park/restaurant, thereby substantially extending the urban area. It would also adversely affect views to the coast and sea from the A78 and Ayrshire Coast Path. Development on the majority of this area would result in significant adverse landscape and visual effects which could not be mitigated although development of the more visually discrete eastern ridge which lies between the railway line and the B7047 at the foot of Tarbert Hill would have a reduced impact.

3.2.5 *Appraisal of specific sites*

Figure 4 shows the location of the specific sites identified around West Kilbride. The following table provides an appraisal of sensitivity and potential mitigation for each of these sites.

Table 4: North Coast Area - Appraisal of specific sites around West Kilbride

Site reference	AU	Sensitivity	Potential mitigation
WK 1	F	<u>High sensitivity</u> . This is a sensitive coastal location which would result in further linear extension of the Seamill area to the south. This site would be perceived as being distant from the core of West Kilbride. Development on this site would be highly visible on the approach to the settlement on the A78 and from the Ayrshire Coast Path.	Significant landscape and visual effects would be very difficult to mitigate. It is recommended that any development should be directed to less sensitive sites around West Kilbride.
WK 2	F	<u>High-medium sensitivity</u> . This site comprises a less visually prominent part of the <i>Rolling Ridges and Coast</i> AU in views from the approach to West Kilbride on the A78 from the south. It would however breach the presently firm settlement boundary provided by the Glenbryde valley in this area. The more steeply sloping southern part of this site is of greater sensitivity due to increased elevation and the likely intrusion of building platforms.	The higher southern part of this ridge should not be developed with woodland planted on this area instead (and extended onto the southern face of the ridge lying to the west of the B7047) to form a robust new settlement edge. Safe pedestrian and cycle connections to the Glenbryde valley should form part of any proposals.
WK 3	E	<u>High-medium sensitivity</u> . The steeper slopes and summits of the <i>Steep-sided Hills</i> AU are highly sensitive to development while sensitivity reduces for the less visually prominent <i>Lower Hill Slopes</i> AU which this site lies in. This site generally occupies the more gently graded lower slopes of Law Hill although these become steeper and more prominent close to the line of chalet development on this hill.	A new robust settlement boundary (utilising and rejuvenating an existing shelterbelt to the south-east) should form part of any proposals and consideration should be given to undergrounding a section of the overhead transmission line for landscape enhancement purposes. Woodland planting on the upper edge of the development site should be undertaken. Planting of tree species which attain medium to large stature should also be undertaken within the built up area to replicate the character of older housing set on sloping ground on the western edge of West Kilbride which is softened by mature trees in gardens and along roads. Timber close board fencing should be avoided with beech hedges used as garden boundaries in order to minimise impact.

WK 4	C	<u>Medium sensitivity.</u> The western part of this site lies close to the town centre but may be constrained by overhead transmission lines, poor drainage and possibly also the railway. The eastern part of the site is of increased sensitivity because of its strongly rural character, which is reinforced by the containment provided by woodland belts at Underhill. It is recommended that only the western part of the site should be developed with the existing woodlands at Underhill providing a new firm settlement boundary.	Undergrounding of transmission lines should be considered to enhance the site. The policy woodlands of Underhill House provide scope to form a robust edge to any new housing in this area but management and supplementary planting will be necessary to ensure the longevity of these woodlands.
WK 5	A/B	<u>High to High-medium sensitivity.</u> AU A would be highly sensitive to any built development due to its coastal location, the value associated with this landscape and the intrusion that would occur in views from Portencross Road. It is recommended that this area should not be developed. AU B covers the gently undulating farmland lying to the north of Portencross Road and either side of the A78. There are sensitivities associated with this AU including the openness and high visual susceptibility of farmland lying east of the A78 and likely increased intrusion of any housing located on rising ground near Woodside and on the lower slopes of Drummilling Hill. This more elevated area should not be developed. Existing woodland has potential to provide a new settlement boundary in the area to the west of the A78.	Existing woodlands in the Carlung/Yonderfield Farm area west of the A78 (and particularly the thin and even-aged belt of pine) would need supplementary planting and management to create a suitable screen and new settlement edge. Substantial woodland planting would be needed <i>in advance</i> of any new development to form a robust new settlement edge. It is recommended that any new woodland planting in this area should be designed to align with existing woodlands near Carlung House Lodge, extending eastwards on subtle ridges (and incorporating existing mature field trees where possible) to the B782 near Woodside, with more steeply sloping ground being planted.

3.3 Fairlie

3.3.1 *Landscape and visual context*

Fairlie forms a small settlement with a linear form located against the Firth of Clyde. The southern part of Fairlie largely comprises inter-war bungalows located on the narrow coastal platform overlooking Fairlie Sands. The older part of the village lies to the north of the Fairlie Burn, located in a narrow strip between the A78 and the shore but with some 19th century villas located on steeper slopes east of the A78.

The 19th century church and the 16th century castle are located in a secluded position within the wooded Fairlie Glen. The railway runs through the settlement, aligned at the foot of steep slopes east of the newer southern part of the settlement, crossing Fairlie Burn on a bridge before being accommodated in a tunnel beneath the northern part of the village. Modern housing has extended on hill slopes to the east, and also along the bay, where it has replaced industrial sites including the site where the famous Fife Yachts were produced. A recent housing development is located on steep slopes below a wooded scarp on the eastern edge of the settlement.

Key landscape and visual features of Fairlie include:

- The narrow wooded Fairlie and Southannan Glens which cut deeply into the steep slopes of the Clyde Muirshiel Hills. Fairlie Glen accommodates walking routes into the hills.
- Views over Fairlie Bay to Cumbrae and Arran.
- The Kelburn Castle grounds which lie to the north of Fairlie and offer an attractive landscape setting and recreational opportunities for residents.

Photographs of key features within and around Fairlie are shown in Appendix B.

3.3.2 *Fairlie – Assessment Units*

Five AUs have been defined around Fairlie. These are shown in Figure 5 and are described below:

Assessment Unit A: Narrow Fields

Small hedged pastures lying between the railway line and the Kelburn Castle estate on the narrow coastal platform between Fairlie and Largs. The A78 is aligned next to the estate's boundary wall. The Fairlie bowling club and marina presently form the northern edge of Fairlie and the Ayrshire Coastal Path is aligned through this landscape.

Assessment Unit B: Wooded Policies

This landscape lies to the north of Largs and comprises the wooded policies, gardens and parkland of Kelburn Castle which are of national importance. The castle is situated at the foot of the wooded Kelburn Glen which cuts into the eastern scarp of the Clyde Muirshiel Hills. Parkland lying on the lower slopes of the estate is predominantly occupied by a golf course.

Assessment Unit C: Lower Slopes

More gently graded sloping pastures lying east of existing housing on the north side of Fairlie. These slopes are backdropped by a narrow band of woodland on a low scarp lying at the foot of steeper hill slopes.

Assessment Unit D: Steep Slopes

This AU comprises the steep slopes of the Clyde Muirshiel Hills and the narrow wooded Fairlie and Southannan Glens. These slopes are covered with tree belts, often comprising mature beech, and hedged pastures.

Assessment Unit E: Wooded Coastal Platform

Remnant policy woodlands associated with the Southannan Estate which lie at the southern end of Fairlie. This AU is bounded by the elevated railway to the east and the A78 to the west.

Table 5: North Coast Area – Fairlie Sensitivity Assessment

Sensitivity Criteria	AU A – Narrow Fields	AU B – Wooded Policies	AU C – Lower Slopes
<i>Landscape character and role</i>	While these flat hedged pastures (which are sandwiched between the railway and A78) have a fragmented and, in some areas, an under-managed character, they provide an important gap between the settlements of Fairlie and Largs. Development of this AU would result in coalescence of the two settlements diminishing their distinct identities. This landscape also contributes to the visual connection between the Kelburn designed landscape and the sea, a connection which would be disrupted if these open fields were developed. <i>High susceptibility</i>	The policies of Kelburn Castle are centred on the steep wooded scarp and deeply incised glen on the eastern edge of the Clyde Muirshiel Hills but include parkland on gently sloping ground to the west much of which is now used as a golf course. This designed landscape is richly diverse and provides a high-quality setting to the south of Largs. It also plays a role in conserving the distinct identities of Largs and Fairlie. The key qualities of this AU would be significantly and adversely affected if this AU were developed. <i>High susceptibility</i>	These lower slopes are relatively gently graded. They lie on the southern edge of the Kelburn designed landscape and are bounded by a narrow woodland belt associated with a low scarp which marks the change to steeper upper hill slopes. Existing housing lies on the western and southern edges of these fields (the urban boundary to the west is partially screened by a woodland belt). This AU does not form a prominent feature in the setting to the settlement. <i>Medium susceptibility</i>
<i>Built character</i>	Development in this AU would significantly elongate the built form of Fairlie and although it would not conflict with the linear form of the settlement, it would extend it beyond the focus of Fairlie Bay. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>	Development of this AU would significantly elongate the built form of Fairlie and while it would not conflict with the overall linear form of the settlement it would extend development beyond the broad association with Fairlie Bay. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>	Development of this AU would not conflict with the form of the existing settlement due to present housing being located on the western and southern boundaries of these slopes. <i>Low susceptibility</i>
<i>Settlement edges</i>	The boundary wall of Kelburn Castle grounds and mature trees aligning the A78 provide a distinctive approach to Fairlie from the north. A new garden centre consent on a field next to the bowls club will dilute the present distinct	The estate wall and mature trees within the designed landscape provide a robust settlement edge which would be breached by development. <i>High susceptibility</i>	Existing housing and an access road are present to the south and a distinct break in slope marked by woodland could form a robust new boundary to the east. Woodland and mature trees in the adjacent Kelburn designed landscape

	boundary to the settlement reducing susceptibility to some degree. <i>Medium susceptibility</i>		would provide visual containment provided buildings were low in height. <i>Medium-low susceptibility</i>
<i>Views and visibility</i>	These small fields are highly visible from the A78 and from the Ayrshire Coast Path. Although some infrastructure associated with the railway is intrusive, these largely undeveloped fields also contribute to the openness of views to the Firth of Clyde and Cumbrae possible from parts of the Kelburn designed landscape. <i>High susceptibility</i>	Although views of parkland within Kelburn Castle grounds are restricted from vehicles using the A78 due to the presence of a high stone estate wall, mature trees and the densely wooded scarp and glimpses of the castle are seen. Greater visibility of the grounds is possible for walkers using the Ayrshire Coast Path. <i>High susceptibility</i>	The relatively gently graded nature of these fields limits visibility in key views. Mature trees on the edge of existing housing to the west of this AU would provide some partial screening of development. <i>Medium susceptibility</i>
<i>Landscape value</i>	The Candidate <i>Portencross to Skelmorlie Coast and the Cumbraes</i> LLA applies to all of this AU. While this landscape lies outside the Kelburn Castle GDL it forms an open coastal edge and contributes to the 'outstanding views to the Firth of Clyde, Arran and Cumbrae' from the GDL as noted in the citation. The marina and the Ayrshire Coast Path which is aligned through this landscape are valued for recreation and the enjoyment of walkers would be particularly diminished by development of this AU. <i>High-medium value</i>	This AU falls within the nationally important Inventory listed GDL of Kelburn Castle. The Candidate <i>Portencross to Skelmorlie Coast and the Cumbraes</i> LLA also applies to all of this AU. The grounds of Kelburn Castle are highly valued for recreation. Development of this AU would significantly affect the value associated with this landscape. <i>High value</i>	The Candidate <i>Portencross to Skelmorlie Coast and the Cumbraes</i> LLA applies to this AU. These fields are farmed and as such are unlikely to be well-used for recreation. <i>High-medium value</i>
Sensitivity	High	High	Medium-low

Sensitivity Criteria	AU D – Steep Slopes	AU E – Wooded Coastal Platform
<i>Landscape character and role</i>	The steep slopes of the western edge of the Clyde Muirshiel Hills are important in providing a strongly rural backdrop and attractive setting to Fairlie. Development of these slopes would significantly erode this distinctive rural backdrop. <i>High susceptibility</i>	This AU comprises the remnant wooded policies of Southannan House. Recent housing development has been constructed in the former walled garden. The wooded policies of this AU form a distinct feature on the southern approach to Fairlie and would be susceptible to any development which resulted in their removal. Areas of open ground set within this woodland would be less susceptible to some limited housing development. <i>Medium susceptibility</i>
<i>Built character</i>	The settlement of Fairlie adopts a linear form and is strongly associated with the flat coastal platform and lower, generally less steep slopes adjacent to the coast. Development extending up these steep slopes would conflict with this strong association. <i>High susceptibility</i>	Development in this AU would significantly elongate the built form of Fairlie and although it would not conflict with the linear form of the settlement, it would extend it beyond the focus of Fairlie Bay. More visually discrete and small groups of houses would fit with the character of recently developed housing set within the walled garden and wooded grounds of Southannan House. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>
<i>Settlement edges</i>	A distinct break in slope is marked by a mature beech woodland. This abuts recent housing development on the steeper and more prominent slopes above Craig Hill. Any development within this AU would breach the presently strong boundary this tree belt provides to the settlement. <i>High susceptibility</i>	Woodland forms a strong edge to Fairlie, providing visual containment and a distinct threshold to the settlement from the south. Wholesale removal of woodland in this AU would significantly diminish the robustness of this edge. <i>High susceptibility</i>
<i>Views and visibility</i>	These steep scarp slopes are highly visible from more open parts of Fairlie, for example from the promontory to the north of Fairlie Sands, from the A78 and from the sea and Cumbræ. Development on these steep slopes would be highly intrusive with this intrusion exacerbated by necessary ground modification, building platforms and retaining structures. <i>High susceptibility</i>	Wholesale removal of woodland would result in impact on views from the A78 and Ayrshire Coast Path although these effects would be unlikely to be sustained or widespread due to the limited extent of this AU. <i>Medium susceptibility</i>

<i>Landscape value</i>	The Candidate <i>Portencross to Skelmorlie Coast and the Cumbraes</i> LLA applies to all of this AU. <i>High-medium value</i>	Some value is associated with the remaining cultural heritage features of Southannan Estate. <i>Medium-low value</i>
Sensitivity	High	High-medium

3.3.3 *Fairlie - Key landscape and visual sensitivities*

- The steep slopes of the Clyde Muirshiel Hills which provide a prominent backdrop to Fairlie and the focus of the settlement on Fairlie Bay.
- The parkland and woodlands of the designed landscape of Kelburn Castle which form an attractive approach to Fairlie from the north and contribute to the high-quality landscape setting of the village.
- Mature woodland which provides a distinct containing edge to Fairlie in the south and to industrial development in the nearby Hunterston area.

3.3.4 *Fairlie – Summary and guidance*

Figure 6 shows the sensitivity of each Assessment Unit. Guidance relating to each Assessment Unit is set out below:

- Assessment Unit A: Narrow Fields – High sensitivity
While not intrinsically scenic, these narrow fields perform an important role in separating and conserving the identity of Largs and Fairlie and contributing to the openness and connectivity between the Kelburn designed landscape and the Firth of Clyde and its islands. Development on this area would result in significant adverse landscape and visual effects which could not be mitigated. It is recommended that housing development should be focused on less sensitive Assessment Units around Fairlie.
- Assessment Unit B: Wooded Policies – High sensitivity
This landscape is of high sensitivity to housing development due to the special character and national importance of the Kelburn Castle GDL. Development in this AU would incur significant adverse effects on the approach to Fairlie from the north and conflict with the association of the existing settlement with the broad Fairlie Bay. Development on this area would result in significant adverse landscape and visual effects which could not be mitigated. It is recommended that housing development should be focused on less sensitive Assessment Units around Fairlie.
- Assessment Unit C: Lower Slopes – Medium-low sensitivity
These gently graded slopes are bordered by existing housing and further contained by woodland. They are not visually prominent and well-designed housing could be accommodated with relatively few landscape and visual impacts. Existing tree belts and hedgerows which border this area should be managed to ensure their longevity. This should include the distinctive beech shelterwood on the edge of steep slopes to the south of this Assessment Unit.
- Assessment Unit D: Steep Slopes – High sensitivity
The steep western slopes of the Clyde Muirshiel Hills form a prominent feature and important part of the landscape setting to Fairlie. Development in this AU would be contrary to the distinct form of Fairlie which is largely associated with the coastal platform and lower slopes focused on the broad Fairlie Bay. Development on this area would result in significant adverse landscape and visual effects which could not be mitigated. It is recommended that housing

development should be focused on less sensitive Assessment Units around Fairlie.

- Assessment Unit E: Wooded Coastal Platform – High-medium sensitivity
Mature woodland in the AU is of increased sensitivity due to its role in providing a containing edge and distinct threshold to Fairlie in the south. Recent housing within these former policies is well-screened and some additional well sited development could be accommodated provided woodland was retained.

3.3.5 *Appraisal of specific sites*

Figure 7 shows the location of the specific sites identified around Fairlie. The following table provides an appraisal of sensitivity and potential mitigation for each of these sites.

Table 6: North Coast Area – Appraisal of specific sites around Fairlie

Site reference	AU	Sensitivity	Mitigation
F1	A	<u>High sensitivity</u> Development on this site would be conflict with the general association of Fairlie with the broad arc of Fairlie Bay. It would also reduce the landscape buffer between Largs and Fairlie and adversely affect views from the A78, the Ayrshire Coast Path and from parts of the designed landscape of Kelburn Castle.	Significant landscape and visual effects would be very difficult to mitigate. It is recommended that any development should be directed to less sensitive sites around Fairlie.
F2	E	<u>High-medium sensitivity</u> This wooded site is important in providing a distinctive threshold to Fairlie, a degree of separation with the Hunterston industrial site and a robust settlement edge. New housing located in the former walled garden within the wooded grounds of Southannan House on this site is well-screened by mature woodland.	A limited number of housing units could be accommodated on this site provided that existing woodland was retained. Management of the woodland and supplementary planting should be undertaken to ensure its longevity.

3.4 Largs

3.4.1 *Landscape and visual context*

The coastal town of Largs is the largest settlement within the north coast group. It is associated with a broad bay, an alluvial fan of flatter land occurring at the outlets of the rivers of the Gogo Water and Noddessdale Water into the Firth of Clyde. The Clyde Muirshiel Hills form a steep and rugged scarp containing the eastern edge of the town with this interrupted to the north-east by the narrow cut of the Brisbane Glen. The prominent conical Knock hill abuts the town to the north and forms a landmark feature. The island of Great Cumbrae provides shelter to the town from the west.

The town developed as a resort throughout the 19th and 20th centuries as the Clyde Steamer and, later, the railway enabled better transport links. While visitor numbers declined from the 1980s onwards, the town continued to expand with residential development extending to the south and north and with flats and many retirement homes being constructed.

Key landscape and visual features of Largs include:

- The diverse landscape setting to the town provided by its coastal location on the Firth of Clyde, its beaches, esplanade and marina and its close association with the island of Great Cumbrae.
- The liveliness of Largs, particularly during the busy summer months, with the Calmac ferry to Great Cumbrae and other sea vessels contributing to the bustle of the town. The slim tall spire of the Clark Memorial Church in the town centre forms a landmark feature in views from the sea and surrounding hills.
- The steep and rugged scarp of the Clyde Muirshiel Hills, predominately wooded in the south, which provide a prominent backdrop to the town. The Knock, a solitary and distinctively conical hill lying to the north of Largs, is also an important part of the landscape setting to the town.
- Brisbane Glen, although not highly prominent from the town, which provides a valued connection to the high Clyde Muirshiel Hills through an attractive rural landscape. The Gogo Glen is also an important landscape feature with recreational routes providing access into the hills.
- The coast aspect of the town and the importance of beaches, the marina and esplanade as a recreational resource.
- The nationally important wooded policies and parkland of Kelburn Castle (which has its origins in the 15th century) which lie to the south of Largs and which provide a valuable recreational resource and high quality landscape separating the settlements of Largs and Fairlie.

Photographs of key features within and around Largs are shown in Appendix C.

3.4.2 *Largs - Assessment Units*

Five AUs have been defined around Largs. These are shown in Figure 8 and are described below:

- Assessment Unit A – Wooded Policies
This landscape lies to the south of Largs and comprises the wooded policies, gardens and parkland of Kelburn Castle which are of national importance. The castle is situated at the foot of the wooded Kelburn Glen which cuts into the eastern scarp of the Clyde Muirshiel Hills. Parkland lying on the lower slopes of the estate is predominantly occupied by Largs Golf Course.
- Assessment Unit B – Rugged Scarp
This AU comprises the steep scarp slopes of the Clyde Muirshiel Hills and the deep cleft of the Gogo Glen which cuts into these hills. This scarp is craggy in places and forms a prominent feature both from the town and from the Firth of Clyde and Great Cumbrae. There are many footpaths on these hills including those up the Gogo Burn and to Castle Hill, a popular viewpoint. The scarp is densely wooded where it abuts residential development in the southern part of the town but higher and more open in the north.
- Assessment Unit C – Narrow Fields
Small hedged pastures lying between the railway line and the Kelburn Castle estate on the narrow coastal platform between Fairlie and Largs. The A78 is aligned next to the estate's boundary wall. The Largs marina forms the southern edge of Largs west of the railway.
- Assessment Unit D - Pastoral Glen
The long Brisbane Glen which accommodates the Noddesdale Water and extends deep into the core of the Clyde Muirshiel Hills. This secluded glen has a narrow valley floor with small open areas of floodplain lying west of the river. Gently rolling valley sides are covered with hedged pastures and small woodlands. Compact farms and the distinctive Arts and Crafts style Noddesdale House are set on mid slopes. A single-track road provides access up the glen and is well-used by cyclists and walkers. More recent housing extends on the eastern side of the Noddesdale Water into the glen.
- Assessment Unit E – Prominent Hill
The Knock Hill which forms a landmark feature seen from the town and from the Firth of Clyde and Cumbrae. The long southern slopes of this hill backdrop housing located on low-lying ground either side of the Noddesdale Water. These slopes are laid out with a strong pattern of small, hedged pastures. A discernible rounded top occurs on these long slopes at 147m AOD with the gradient slackening slightly before the distinctive steep-sided conical peak of The Knock is reached to the north. A hill fort and trig point is sited on the summit of this hill. Promoted walks to the summit start from Brisbane Glen.
- Assessment Unit F – Raised Beach
A narrow coastal platform backed by a distinctive wooded rocky scarp. Housing development extends some distance from the town on former pastures along

the raised beach platform to the north. Occasional isolated 19th century buildings (including the distinctive castellated Knock Castle) are located on the edge of the raised beach scarp.

Detailed assessment of the landscape and visual sensitivity of each of the above AUs is set out in Table 7 which follows.

Table 7: North Coast Area – Largs Sensitivity Assessment

Sensitivity Criteria	AU A – Wooded Policies	AU B – Rugged Scarp	AU C – Narrow Fields
<i>Landscape character and role</i>	The policies of Kelburn Castle are centred on the steep wooded scarp and deeply incised glen on the eastern edge of the Clyde Muirshiel Hills but include parkland on gently sloping ground to the west much of which is now used as a golf course. This designed landscape is richly diverse and provides a high-quality setting to the south of Largs. It also plays a role in conserving the distinct identities of Largs and Fairlie. The key qualities of this AU would be significantly and adversely affected if this AU were developed. <i>High susceptibility</i>	The craggy and very steep scarp slopes of the western edge of the Clyde Muirshiel Hills are important in providing a strongly semi-natural backdrop and attractive setting to Largs. These qualities would be significantly eroded by development. <i>High susceptibility</i>	While these flat hedged pastures (which are sandwiched between the railway and A78) have a fragmented and, in some areas, an under-managed character, they provide an important gap between the settlements of Fairlie and Largs. Development of this AU would result in coalescence of the two settlements diminishing their distinct identities. This landscape also contributes to the visual connection between the Kelburn designed landscape and the sea, a connection which would be disrupted if these open fields were developed. <i>High susceptibility</i>
<i>Built character</i>	Development of this AU would significantly elongate the built form of Largs and would conflict with its strong association with a broad bay/alluvial fan. It could also reduce the gap between Largs and Fairlie as assessed above. <i>High susceptibility</i>	The settlement of Largs is strongly associated with a flatter alluvial fan which is contained by these steep hill slopes. Development extending up these steep slopes would conflict with this strong association. <i>High susceptibility</i>	The marina lies to the south of Largs and a recreation ground and dense 20 th /21 st century housing is located to the north of the marina. Development of this AU would significantly elongate the built form of Largs and would conflict with its strong association with a broad bay/alluvial fan. <i>High susceptibility</i>
<i>Settlement edges</i>	Rising slopes, the constriction of the wooded scarp backing the golf course and the presence of tree clumps and large individual trees within the designed	The steepness of the scarp has generally inhibited built development. Although some development has taken place on lower slopes and terraces (particularly	A subtle rise in gradient and a small sports pitch marks the southern edge of the town experienced from the A78 and creates a moderately robust settlement

	landscape and golf course provide a robust settlement edge which would be breached by development. <i>High susceptibility</i>	associated with the National Sports Training Centre), this landscape forms a strongly containing edge to the settlement. <i>High susceptibility</i>	edge which would be breached by development. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>
<i>Views and visibility</i>	Although views of parkland within Kelburn Castle grounds are restricted from vehicles using the A78 due to the presence of a high stone estate wall, mature trees and the densely wooded scarp and glimpses of the castle are seen. Greater visibility of the grounds is possible for walkers using the Ayrshire Coast Path. <i>High susceptibility</i>	These steep scarp slopes are highly visible from both the town and from the Firth of Clyde. <i>High susceptibility</i>	These small fields are highly visible from the A78 and from the Ayrshire Coast Path. Although some infrastructure associated with the railway is intrusive, these largely undeveloped fields also contribute to the openness of views of the Firth of Clyde and Cumbrae possible from parts of the Kelburn designed landscape. <i>High susceptibility</i>
<i>Landscape value</i>	Much of this AU falls within the nationally important Inventory listed GDL of Kelburn Castle. The Candidate <i>Portencross to Skelmorlie Coast and the Cumbraes</i> LLA also applies to all of this AU. The grounds of Kelburn Castle are highly valued for recreation. Development of this AU would significantly affect the value associated with this landscape. <i>High value</i>	The Candidate <i>Portencross to Skelmorlie Coast and the Cumbraes</i> LLA applies to all of this AU. This landscape is also valued for recreation with many promoted and informal paths providing access into the hills. <i>High-medium value</i>	The Candidate <i>Portencross to Skelmorlie Coast and the Cumbraes</i> LLA applies to all of this AU. While this landscape lies outside the Kelburn Castle GDL it forms an open coastal edge and contributes to the 'outstanding views to the Firth of Clyde, Arran and Cumbrae' from the GDL as noted in the citation. The marina and the Ayrshire Coast Path which is aligned through this landscape are valued for recreation and the enjoyment of walkers would be particularly diminished by development of this AU. <i>High-medium value</i>
Sensitivity	High	High	High

Sensitivity Criteria	AU D – Pastoral Glen	AU E – Prominent Hill	AU F – Raised Beach
<i>Landscape character and role</i>	A distinctly rural glen with rolling pastures (which largely screen views of Largs) and sparse settlement contributing to a sense of seclusion. Although not highly visible in wider views, this landscape provides a scenic approach to the Clyde Muirshiel uplands from the edge of the town and thereby forms a key asset of its setting. Development of this AU would erode the distinctly rural character of this glen and the perceptual qualities associated with the landscape. <i>High susceptibility</i>	The Knock is an isolated steep-sided hill which forms a distinctive and prominent feature between the coast and Brisbane Glen. Long southern slopes feature a strong enclosure pattern of hedgerows which contrast with the more open rugged scarp of the Clyde Muirshiel Hills. This hill is widely visible and makes a strong contribution to the scenic landscape setting of Largs. Development of this AU would significantly diminish the character of this landmark hill and its role in providing a distinctive setting to the town. <i>High susceptibility</i>	The raised beach coast of Ayrshire is a distinctive landscape feature. Development along this coast would detract from the distinctive wooded scarp and the undeveloped character of the coast. Open stretches of the raised beach coast are important in conserving the identity of settlements. <i>High susceptibility</i>
<i>Built character</i>	More recent housing has extended into the lower glen, largely occupying low-lying ground between the Noddessdale Water and the Brisbane Glen Road. Further linear development in this AU would conflict with the strong association of Largs with a broad bay/alluvial plain. Development located on steeper glen sides would also be contrary to the association of newer housing on lower lying ground where it is generally less prominent. Lower-lying parts of the glen would be less susceptible in this respect. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>	The existing settlement is predominantly located on low-lying ground which is strongly contained by steeper slopes. Development on steeper and more prominent middle and upper slopes would be contrary to this pattern. More gently graded lower slopes which lie close to existing more elevated housing are less susceptible. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>	Housing development has extended northwards along the raised beach platform. This contrasts with the original association of the town with a broad bay/alluvial plain. Much of this existing built development is physically and perceptually distant from the core of the town. Additional development along this coast would exacerbate these negative effects. <i>High susceptibility</i>
<i>Settlement edges</i>	The Noddessdale Water and its tributary and associated riparian vegetation provide a firm settlement boundary	The steeply rising ground forms a robust containing edge to existing residential	The wooded scarp of the raised beach forms a strong edge to coastal settlement to the east. There is no distinct threshold

	marking the change to the increasingly elevated, narrowing and more rolling undeveloped glen where the influence of built development within Largs is minimal. Development on the farmed floodplain west of the Noddesdale Water and particularly on the more steeply sloping and prominent eastern glen sides would breach the present containment offered by wooded valleys and rolling landform. <i>High susceptibility</i>	areas which would be breached by development in this AU. <i>High susceptibility</i>	to Largs in the north due to the linear pattern of existing residential development aligning the coast. There are no features to the north which could form an edge to additional new development to the north although subtle promontories along the coast screen the northern edge of Largs in views from the A78 when travelling south. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>
<i>Views and visibility</i>	This AU is highly visible from the Brisbane Glen Road and in occasional views from elevation parts of Largs. There are also views from the inland Ayrshire Coastal Path route and from The Knock. Development located on the more steeply rolling and elevated eastern glen sides would be particularly intrusive from the glen road while lower-lying areas west of the Noddesdale Water would be screened by housing and woodland. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>	Development on the steep middle and upper slopes of The Knock would be prominent in views from many parts of Largs and also from the Firth of Clyde and Great Cumbrae. Lower slopes would be of reduced susceptibility although less visible ground is limited in area. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>	Development on the raised beach coast would be prominent from the A78 on the approach to Largs. It would also be seen from the Firth of Clyde. <i>High susceptibility</i>
<i>Landscape value</i>	The Candidate <i>Portencross to Skelmorlie Coast and the Cumbraes</i> LLA applies to all of this AU. The Brisbane Glen Road is well-used by cyclists and important in providing a key route into the core of the Clyde Muirshiel Hills. The experience of using this route could be significantly eroded by development. <i>High-medium value</i>	The Candidate <i>Portencross to Skelmorlie Coast and the Cumbraes</i> LLA applies to all of this AU. There are also some recreational routes (some of these based on historic carriage routes to The Knock) where development would diminish the value associated with this landscape. <i>High-medium value</i>	The Candidate <i>Portencross to Skelmorlie Coast and the Cumbraes</i> LLA applies to all of this AU. The raised beaches of Ayrshire are a distinctive landscape feature and this AU between Largs and Skelmorlie additionally features historic houses and castles. Development would erode the value of this coast. <i>High-medium value</i>
Sensitivity	High-medium	High-medium	High

3.4.3 *Largs - Key landscape and visual sensitivities*

- The steep scarp of the Clyde Muirshiel Hills which provide a rugged semi-natural and dramatic backdrop to Largs.
- The parkland and woodlands of the designed landscape of Kelburn Castle which form an attractive approach to Largs from the south and contributes to the high-quality landscape setting of the town.
- The solitary conical hill of The Knock which forms a landmark feature seen from parts of Largs and from the Firth of Clyde.
- The secluded and strongly rural character of Brisbane Glen.
- The distinctive settlement form of Largs which is largely associated with a broad bay and alluvial plain and strongly contained by an arc of steep-sided hills.

3.4.4 *Largs – Summary and guidance*

Figure 9 shows the sensitivity of each Assessment Unit. Guidance relating to each Assessment Unit including design of housing, mitigation and enhancement measures is set out below:

- Assessment Unit A: Wooded Policies – High sensitivity
This landscape is of high sensitivity to housing development due to the special character and national importance of the Kelburn Castle GDL. Development in this AU would be likely to incur significant adverse effects on the approach to Largs from the south and on the predominantly strong association of the existing settlement with a broader bay/alluvial plain. It is recommended that housing development should be focused on less sensitive Assessment Units around Largs.
- Assessment Unit B: Rugged Scarp – High sensitivity
The rugged scarp of the Clyde Muirshiel Hills forms a prominent feature and important part of the high-quality landscape setting to the town. Development in this AU would result in significant adverse effects on character, views and on the strong form of Largs which is largely associated with lower ground, filling an alluvial fan on the immediate hinterland to the coast. It is recommended that housing development should be focused on less sensitive Assessment Units around Largs.
- Assessment Unit C: Narrow Fields – High sensitivity
While not intrinsically scenic, these narrow fields perform an important role in separating and conserving the identity of Largs and Fairlie and contributing to the openness and connectivity between the Kelburn designed landscape and the Firth of Clyde and its islands. Development of the AU would be contrary to the association of Largs with a broad bay/alluvial plain.
- Assessment Unit D: Pastoral Glen – High-medium sensitivity
The long and narrow Brisbane Glen extends deep into the core of the Clyde Muirshiel Hills. Existing development has already encroached into the mouth of

the glen and additional development further up the glen would significantly affect its character and views and would also be contrary to the strong form of Largs. Development in this AU would result in significant adverse landscape and visual effects which could not be mitigated. It is recommended that housing development should be focused on less sensitive Assessment Units around Largs.

- Assessment Unit E: Prominent Hill – High-medium sensitivity
The landmark hill of The Knock, which makes a strong contribution to the high-quality landscape setting of Largs, would be significantly affected by development located on its prominent steep slopes. Lower slopes, although limited in extent, which lie close to existing housing and south of the farm buildings of Netherhall, would be of reduced susceptibility. The strong pattern of hedgerows should be retained, and trees planted along them, to soften buildings and provide filtered screening in long views from the coastal esplanade.
- Assessment Unit F: Raised Beach – High sensitivity
Development along the raised beach would be physically and perceptually distant from the core of Largs. It would also perpetuate the linear development which has already taken place along the coast which is contrary to the form of the original town. Development in this Assessment Unit would result in significant adverse landscape and visual effects which could not be mitigated. It is recommended that housing development should be focused on less sensitive Assessment Units around Largs.

3.4.5 *Appraisal of specific sites in Largs*

Figure 10 shows the location of the specific sites identified around Largs. The sensitivity of these sites is assessed in the following table.

Table 8: North Coast Area – Appraisal of specific sites around Largs

Site reference	AU	Sensitivity	Potential mitigation
L1	D	<u>High-medium sensitivity</u> This field is less prominent and steeply rising than L2 although it still provides a partially firm edge to nearby lower-lying housing on the edge of Largs. Development on steep slopes above the Brisbane Glen Road would be likely to create an overbearing effect on the experience of walkers and cyclists who commonly use this route into the hills. A more dipped landform is present above these slopes which could accommodate very limited development while minimising landscape and visual effects.	Any development on this field should be accompanied by advance woodland planting on the higher field of L2 which could provide a screen. Development should not take place on steep slopes adjacent to the Brisbane Glen Road.
L2	D	<u>High sensitivity</u> This field on the north side of the track to Harplaw farm is steep-sided and rolling. It presently assists in screening recent housing development on the east side of Brisbane Glen Road in views from parts of Brisbane Glen. Development on this area would be elevated and prominent in views from the Brisbane Glen Road. It would adversely affect the strongly rural character of this farmland and would weaken the containment to the urban edge provided by riparian woodland along the Noddesdale Burn.	Significant landscape and visual effects would be very difficult to mitigate. It is recommended that any development should be directed to less sensitive sites around Largs.
L3	D	<u>High sensitivity</u> This site covers gently sloping pastures and lower hill slopes west of the Noddesdale Water. While screening would be provided by roadside vegetation and the rolling landform, development on this site would significantly affect the distinctly rural character of the Brisbane Glen and would be contrary to the predominant association of Largs with a broad bay/alluvial plain. It would also breach the existing strong settlement edge provided by the wooded valley of the Noddesdale and the sense of a threshold	Significant landscape and visual effects would be very difficult to mitigate. It is recommended that any development should be directed to less sensitive sites around Largs.

		between the urban and rural area formed by the bridge near the cemetery on the Brisbane Glen Road.	
L4	D	<u>Medium sensitivity</u> This site comprises low-lying fields on the western side of the Noddesdale Water and lying at the foot of the Knock hill. It is visually discrete being screened by existing housing and riparian woodland. An even-aged spruce plantation forms the upper boundary to this gently sloping site. Development on this site would continue the pattern of development either side of the Noddesdale Water consolidating more recent housing into the entrance to Brisbane Glen but because it lies adjacent to existing residential development (and would not be widely visible) it would minimise effects on the rural character of the glen.	While the existing spruce plantation which forms the upper boundary to the site would not screen development on this site, it would provide a buffer and a firm new settlement edge. This plantation is even-aged and it is recommended that a gradual management process of continuous cover extraction and replanting is undertaken to ensure its longevity. Any development of this site should be accompanied by a commitment to extend and manage riparian woodlands associated with the Noddesdale Water and to strengthen woodland on the northern boundary.
L5	D	<u>High-medium sensitivity</u> Lower slopes of the southerly rounded summit leading to The Knock which provide a robust northern edge to Largs. Development on this area would be less prominent than site L6 but development on the higher north-eastern end of the site would be more intrusive and would clearly protrude above existing residential development along the northern edge of Largs.	The steeper and more elevated field in the north-eastern part of the site should not be developed. Existing hedgerows along the upper and eastern boundary of the lower western fields (lying either side of the farm buildings of Netherhall) should be retained with planting supplemented where gaps occur. The hedge should be allowed to grow to provide a denser higher boundary and individual native trees should be planted to provide higher visual containment of development.
L6	D	<u>High sensitivity</u> This site lies on the mid slopes of the southerly rounded summit leading to The Knock. These hill slopes are steep and provide a robust containing edge and attractive rural backdrop to Largs. While there is some built development on these hill slopes, this is small and clustered and largely fits with the rural character of these hill slopes. Development on this site would conflict with the existing form of Largs where buildings are associated with a lower-lying basin. It would be highly intrusive in views from Largs, the coast and from the Firth of Clyde.	Significant landscape and visual effects would be very difficult to mitigate. It is recommended that any development should be directed to less sensitive sites around Largs.

3.5 Skelmorlie

3.5.1 *Landscape and visual context*

The small settlement of Skelmorlie had its origins as an attractive Firth of Clyde location for the weekend and summer mansions of the Glasgow merchants. The first stone villas in Lower Skelmorlie were built facing west out to sea on the narrow coastal platform between the coast and the foot of the raised beach cliff. The arrival of the railway in nearby Wemyss Bay precipitated the building of more villas above the cliff top in Upper Skelmorlie during the mid to late 19th century with these often set in generous wooded grounds. Many of these villas have now been sub-divided into multiple dwellings and modern detached houses infill larger gardens. More modern late 20th century and early 21st century housing is located around the primary school to the north-east, on sloping ground on the southern edge of the settlement and southwards in a linear fashion along the narrow, raised beach platform.

Key landscape and visual features of Skelmorlie include:

- The splendid 19th century villas located along the coast and in Upper Skelmorlie and the red sandstone boundary walls and mature trees and shrubs in gardens which make a strong contribution to the character of the settlement.
- The mossy steps which provide access for pedestrians between Lower and Upper Skelmorlie up the rocky wooded scarp.
- The care taken to provide colourful planting in containers and seating for the community within the core of the settlement on Skelmorlie Castle Road and the community orchard planting undertaken near the school.
- Spectacular views over the Firth of Clyde, Bute and Cowal from the majority of the houses within the village.
- The densely wooded and deeply incised Kelly Glen which provides a firm edge to the settlement to the north on the North Ayrshire boundary and which accommodates informal footpaths.

Photographs of key features within and around Skelmorlie are shown in Appendix D.

3.5.2 *Assessment Units*

Three AUs have been defined around Skelmorlie. These are shown in Figure 11 and are described below:

- Assessment Unit A: Raised Beach
A narrow coastal platform backed by a distinctive wooded rocky scarp. More recent housing development extends some distance to the south of the historic core of the settlement on former farmland along the raised beach platform. The impressive Skelmorlie Castle is sited on the edge of the wooded scarp approximately 1km to the south of the village. The busy A78 is aligned close to the coastal edge and flat arable fields lie to the east of this road at the foot of the wooded scarp.

- Assessment Unit B: Upper Slopes
These slopes extend to the east of the settlement where they provide a distinctive and prominent backdrop to Upper Skelmorlie. Steeper edges are particularly well-wooded to the south where they abut the minor Skelmorlie Castle Road and some later housing development. These slopes form the rolling outer fringes of the Clyde Muirshiel Hills which are predominantly farmed although the Skelmorlie Golf Course also occupies part of these slopes adjacent to the settlement and a caravan park is located in an isolated position approximately half-way between the village and Skelmorlie Castle.
- Assessment Unit C: Lower Slopes
The lower hill slopes fall steeply from Skelmorlie Castle Road to the top of the wooded raised beach scarp. They extend from the southern edge of more recent housing in Skelmorlie to the wooded policies associated with Skelmorlie Castle. These slopes are farmed and offer an open foreground to spectacular views across the Firth of Clyde from the minor road which is well-used by walkers.

Detailed assessment of the landscape and visual sensitivity of each of the above AUs is set out in Table 9.

Table 9: North Coast Area – Skelmorlie Sensitivity Assessment

Sensitivity Criteria	AU A – Raised Beach	AU B – Upper Slopes	AU C – Lower Slopes
<i>Landscape character and role</i>	The raised beach coast of Ayrshire is a special landscape feature. Development along this coast (and particularly tall buildings) would detract from the distinctive semi-natural wooded scarp and the undeveloped character of the coast. This landscape is also important in conserving the distinct identity of the settlements which align the coast in North Ayrshire. Extensive development on the raised beach platform would erode the generous gap between Largs and Skelmorlie and the setting of historic buildings perched on the top of the scarp. <i>High susceptibility</i>	The outer edge of the Clyde Muirshiel Hills is steep where it abuts existing housing in Skelmorlie. Woodland has colonised the former reservoir (scene of the 1925 reservoir disaster) and this provides diverse habitat for wildlife. Considerable ground modification would be necessary to accommodate building platforms and access which would contribute to impacts on the semi-natural character and backdrop these slopes provide to the settlement. <i>High susceptibility</i>	These slopes rise gradually from the top of the raised beach cliff, becoming steeper towards Skelmorlie Castle Road. They mainly comprise simple open farmed fields but with policy woodlands more evident closer to Skelmorlie Castle in the south. Development on these slopes could adversely affect the setting of Skelmorlie Castle and the character of the adjacent raised beach scarp. <i>High-medium susceptibility.</i>
<i>Built character</i>	While some older properties are located on the raised beach platform, the majority of development along the coast comprises more modern development. Further development to the south in this AU would extend housing even further from the core of Skelmorlie and would be contrary to the more concentrated form of the original settlement. If this pattern of development expansion were replicated to the north of Largs it could diminish the clear identity and degree of separation between the settlements. To the north, the separation	The existing settlement has a strong association with more gently graded lower hill slopes and development on these steeper slopes would conflict with this. <i>High susceptibility</i>	While development in this area would continue the association of Upper Skelmorlie with sloping ground above the coastal cliff, it would be physically and perceptually distant from the core of the settlement. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>

	of Skelmorlie with Wemyss Bay experienced from the A78 has been weakened by new flats built on the former Beach House site. <i>High susceptibility</i>		
<i>Settlement edges</i>	Existing blocks of flats sited on the southern edge of the raised beach platform are highly intrusive on the approach to Skelmorlie from the south. Containment would be provided to the east by the raised beach cliff but there is no obvious landscape feature able to provide a new robust settlement edge to the south. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>	These steep slopes currently form a robust settlement boundary which would be breached by development. <i>High susceptibility</i>	Existing housing on the northern edge of this AU is unscreened and intrusive. A change in the gradient of the slope provides scope for a new robust eastern boundary to be created and woodland could provide robust boundaries and screening in the south (although these comprise the policies of Skelmorlie Castle and development could adversely affect its setting) <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>
<i>Views and visibility</i>	Development in this AU would be visible from the A78 and from the Firth of Clyde. It could also detract from views to Skelmorlie Castle which is dramatically positioned on the top edge of the cliff. <i>High susceptibility</i>	These slopes are principally seen from the broader more gently sloping terrace to the NE of the primary school within the core of the settlement. Steep wooded edges limit views from Skelmorlie Castle Road. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>	This AU is not visible from the A78 on the coast due to the screening provided by the wooded cliff. It would be highly visible from Skelmorlie Castle Road which is used by walkers and development on these slopes could dramatically affect views over the Firth of Clyde. <i>High susceptibility</i>
<i>Landscape value</i>	The Candidate <i>Portencross to Skelmorlie Coast and the Cumbraes</i> LLA applies to all of this AU. The raised beaches of Ayrshire are distinctive features and their value in providing an open and natural coastal edge would be diminished by development. <i>High-medium value</i>	The Candidate <i>Portencross to Skelmorlie Coast and the Cumbraes</i> LLA applies to all of this AU. Local Nature Conservation designations are present and recreational routes are well-used. Development would significantly compromise the value associated with this AU. <i>High value</i>	The Candidate <i>Portencross to Skelmorlie Coast and the Cumbraes</i> LLA applies to all of this AU. Skelmorlie Castle grounds are defined as a LLHI. <i>High-medium value</i>
Sensitivity	High	High	High-medium

3.5.3 Skelmorlie - Key landscape and visual sensitivities

- The setting of Skelmorlie Castle which is dramatically located on the top of the wooded cliff of the raised beach.
- The raised beach which is a key feature and where linear (and often tall) development has already greatly extended the settlement beyond its original form and significantly detracts from the wooded scarp.
- Spectacular views from the elevated Skelmorlie Castle Road which is used by walkers including those walking the Ayrshire Coastal Path.
- The steep and often wooded slopes on the eastern boundary of the settlement which provide a semi-natural backdrop to housing and informal open space for residents and the setting of the deeply incised wooded Kelly Burn.

3.5.4 Skelmorlie – Summary and guidance

Figure 12 shows the sensitivity of each Assessment Unit. Guidance relating to each Assessment Unit is set out below:

- Assessment Unit A: Raised Beach – High sensitivity
Development along the raised beach would be physically and perceptually distant from the core of Skelmorlie. It would also perpetuate the linear development which has already taken place along the coast which is contrary to the form of the original town. Development in this AU would be likely to have significant adverse effects on landscape character and on views and could also detract from the setting of Skelmorlie Castle. These effects could not be mitigated and it is recommended that housing development should be focused on less sensitive Assessment Units around Skelmorlie.
- Assessment Unit B: Upper Slopes – High sensitivity
The steepness of these slopes and the prominent backdrop they provide to Upper Skelmorlie increases sensitivity. Wooded ground around the former reservoir and golf course are additionally valued for informal recreation. Development within this AU would be likely to have significant adverse effects on landscape character and on views. These effects could not be mitigated and it is recommended that housing development should be focused on less sensitive Assessment Units around Skelmorlie.
- Assessment Unit C: Lower Slopes – High-medium sensitivity
The more gently graded ground at the foot of these slopes could potentially accommodate some housing although this would need to be carefully located and designed (for example, reducing the height of buildings) to avoid intruding on views from Skelmorlie Castle Road. Development in this AU should avoid impacting on the setting of Skelmorlie Castle, utilising and supplementing existing woodland to provide a new robust containing edge to settlement.

3.5.5 Skelmorlie – Appraisal of specific sites

Specific sites identified around Skelmorlie are shown in Figure 13 and appraised in the following table.

Table 10: North Coast Area – Appraisal of specific sites around Skelmorlie

Site reference	AU	Sensitivity	Potential mitigation
S1	A	<u>High sensitivity</u> Development in this area would have significant adverse effects on the character of the raised beach and on views on the approach to Skelmorlie. It would also perpetuate linear development which is physically and perceptually distant from the core of the Skelmorlie.	Significant landscape and visual effects would be very difficult to mitigate. It is recommended that any development should be directed to less sensitive sites around Skelmorlie.
S2	C	<u>High-medium sensitivity</u> Sensitively designed housing could potentially be accommodated in this location provided that intrusion on views from Skelmorlie Castle Road was minimised. Development in this area would be physically and perceptually distant from the core of Skelmorlie but existing woodland on the raised beach cliff provides a degree of screening.	Close board fencing around gardens should be avoided to limit intrusion from Skelmorlie Castle Road and to fit with the character of boundaries within the core of Skelmorlie. Beech/hornbeam hedges and large-stature trees should be planted which would provide more appropriate boundaries. Management and rejuvenation of woodland on the raised beach scarp should form a condition of any development in this AU to ensure screening from the coast.
S3	B	<u>High sensitivity</u> Very steep and complex slopes which would involve considerable intrusive cut and fill to accommodate development. These slopes provide a densely wooded backdrop and robust settlement boundary to Upper Skelmorlie. They are also valued also provide opportunities	Significant landscape and visual effects would be very difficult to mitigate. It is recommended that any development should be directed to less sensitive sites around Skelmorlie.

4 THREE TOWNS – ARDROSSAN, SALTCOATS AND STEVENSTON

4.1 Character and landscape context overview

The three settlements of Ardrossan, Saltcoats and Stevenston lie adjacent to each other on the Firth of Clyde. They are backed by gently sloping farmland to the north and the more pronounced small coastal hills of Haupland Muir to the north-west. The coastal flat lands of Ardeer abut Stevenston to the south-east while the narrow, raised beach coast with its distinctive wooded scarp extends between Ardrossan and West Kilbride.

Stevenston is an old settlement which expanded with the establishment of the Nobel explosives factory on the nearby Ardeer estate during the late 19th century. The spire of the High Church provides a focus seen from the coast and other parts of the town. The broad sandy beach of East Shore and an extensive swathe of coastal grassland, which accommodates recreational facilities, a caravan park and golf course, are key features of the town.

Saltcoats developed around a small harbour and salt panning community with significant growth occurring in the late 18th century. The town also served as a bathing resort and a coal port and ship building and rope making industries were located here. Considerable modern development has occurred on the coast close to the historic harbour and on the gently sloping ground north of the tight-knit streets at its core.

Ardrossan is a planned town, largely developed by the Earl of Eglington in the early 19th century. It is laid out in a simple grid pattern. More expensive residential and resort areas were developed along South Beach, a broad sandy bay lying to the east of the rocky promontory which accommodates the harbour and port area. The ruins of the 15th century Ardrossan Castle stand on a small hill above the town. Ardrossan has significantly extended inland on gently sloping ground with dense 20th and 21st century residential estates merging with those north of Saltcoats.

Figure 14 shows the location of Ardrossan, Saltcoats and Stevenston and relevant environmental and planning designations immediately surrounding the towns.

Key landscape and visual features of the Three Towns include:

- The coastal location of the towns and particularly the broad swathe of coastal dune grassland and sandy beach between Saltcoats and Stevenston which is valued for nature conservation and for recreation.
- The harbour of Saltcoats which although significantly modified, offers some sense of the historic origins of the town.
- The 15th century Ardrossan Castle set in a park and perched on a small hill offering extensive views over the Three Towns and across the Firth of Clyde and to Arran.
- The largely intact farmland on higher ground north of the A78 which arcs around the Three Towns. Distinctive hill-top woodlands and the small shapely hills of Haupland Muir lying close to the coast are prominent features in views from the coastal parts of the towns.

4.2 Assessment Units

Five AUs have been defined around the Three Towns. These are shown in Figure 15 and are described below:

- Assessment Unit A: Raised Beach
A narrow coastal platform backed by a distinctive low wooded scarp lying to the north-west of Ardrossan and extending to West Kilbride. The A78 is aligned close to the coast while the railway line lies close to the wooded scarp. Remnant industrial buildings associated with the former petrol refinery in Ardrossan lie close to the ruins of Montforde Castle on the top of the scarp close to the railway. The Ayrshire Coastal Path is aligned against the coast.
- Assessment Unit B: Lower Western Slopes
These slopes extend to the north-east of Ardrossan and Saltcoats. They are bounded by the A78 to the north-east and by the urban edge to the south-west. The narrow valley of the Stanley Burn cuts through these slopes and is associated with a more folded landform. A high voltage transmission line is aligned parallel to the Sorbie Road on these slopes.
- Assessment Unit C: Lower Eastern Slopes
Undulating small, hedged pastures lying between the upper edge of Stevenston and Saltcoats and the A78. The wooded valley of the Stevenston Burn lies in the eastern part of this AU. This area includes the site of the former Kerelaw estate which accommodated Kerelaw School which has since been demolished.
- Assessment Unit D: Upper Slopes
Elevated farmed slopes lying to the north of the A78. These slopes merge with the more pronounced Haupland Muir hills, which comprises the site of the Ardrossan wind farm, to the north-west. The Sorbie wind turbines lie in this area as does Ardeer Golf Course. Distinctive clumps of broadleaved woodland are planted on the tops of small hills in this area.
- Assessment Unit E: Fragmented Farmland
Gently graded farmland with horse paddocks and some disturbed ground lying to the east of Stevenson. This farmland is bounded by the A78 and the B752. The railway line separates farmland from an area of less managed wetter land lying on the fringes of the Ardeer Business and Industry site.

Photographs of key features within and around the Three Towns are shown in Appendix E. Detailed assessment of the landscape and visual sensitivity of each of the above AUs is set out in the following tables.

Figure 11: Three Towns Sensitivity Assessment

Sensitivity Criteria	AU A – Raised Beach	AU B – Lower Western Slopes	AU C – Lower Eastern Slopes
<i>Landscape character and role</i>	The raised beach coasts of Ayrshire are a distinctive landscape feature. Development along this coast would significantly detract from the distinctive wooded scarp and the undeveloped character of the coast. This landscape is also important in conserving the distinct identity of Ardrossan and West Kilbride and presents an undeveloped coastal gateway to the Three Towns from the north-west. <i>High susceptibility</i>	This AU comprises farmed slopes backing the urban edge of Ardrossan and Saltcoats. Fields are generally gently graded with few hedgerows and woodlands although more complex landform is associated with the Stanley Burn. This landscape does not play a key role in providing the setting to the existing settlement and susceptibility is therefore reduced. <i>Medium susceptibility</i>	This AU comprises undulating farmed slopes backing the urban edge of Stevenston and Saltcoats. The landform is gently rolling with a semi-contained basin occurring on lower slopes and with some small hills on the north-eastern boundary close to the A78. Landcover largely comprises small, hedged pastures although the Kerelaw Castle site and the wooded Stevenston Burn have a more diverse character. The valley of the Stevenston Burn/Kerelaw Castle site provide a green corridor link to the core of Stevenston from these hill slopes. Development in the Kerelaw area would adversely affect its more diverse character although farmland would be less susceptible. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>
<i>Built character</i>	Ardrossan is principally associated with the harbour promontory and the broad South Bay. Some housing, including 19th century villas, are located on the narrowing coastal platform to the NW and on rising slopes extending inland. The raised beach cliff is visible in places within	Substantial expansion of the towns of Ardrossan and Saltcoats has occurred inland on rising slopes. Development in this AU would continue this pattern and landscape association. <i>Low susceptibility</i>	While Stevenston has not expanded inland to the extent of Saltcoats and Ardrossan in this area, hill slopes lying to the east of the Stevenston Burn are densely developed. Development in this AU would continue the pattern and form of the existing settlement.

	the town but is largely subsumed by development. While development in this AU would not conflict with the form of the settlement, it would be physically and perceptually distant from the core of Ardrossan. <i>Medium susceptibility</i>		<i>Low susceptibility</i>
<i>Settlement edges</i>	The A78, which is set in a deep cutting, and associated planting forms a firm boundary around the western edge of Ardrossan. While existing newer residential development on this western edge of Ardrossan is unscreened the massing of buildings has been designed to provide a sense of a gateway to the settlement at the roundabout which would be compromised by additional development in this AU. <i>High susceptibility</i>	Existing housing on the north-eastern edge of Ardrossan and Saltcoats is largely unscreened by woodland or landform. The A78 which is largely aligned in cutting and associated roadside planting present in places would form a robust new settlement boundary. <i>Low susceptibility</i>	Existing housing on the northern edge of Stevenston and the eastern edge of Saltcoats is largely unscreened by woodland or landform. The A78, which is largely aligned in cutting and which is aligned by woodland in places, has potential to form a robust new settlement boundary. <i>Medium-low susceptibility</i>
<i>Views and visibility</i>	Development in this AU would be highly visible from the A78, the Ayrshire Coastal Path and from the Firth of Clyde. It would detract from views of the raised beach coast and particularly the prominent and seemingly intact wooded scarp. <i>High susceptibility</i>	This AU is not widely visible from more open parts of the Three Towns, for example from along the coast. Development on these slopes would be seen in conjunction with existing housing which would reduce intrusion although higher ground adjacent to the A78 would be of increased susceptibility. <i>Medium-low susceptibility</i>	This AU is not widely visible from Stevenston and the coast. Development located on the more elevated upper slopes and rounded hills (including Fellie Hill) would be more visible, especially from sections of the A78. Lower slopes and valleys, and particularly the more visually contained bowl-like landform lying close to Stevenston, would be of reduced susceptibility. <i>Medium susceptibility</i>

<i>Landscape value</i>	While there are few formal designations associated with this AU, the raised beach is a distinctive feature of the Ayrshire coast and the value associated with this feature would be eroded by development. <i>Medium value</i>	There are few formal or recognised values associated with this landscape and development would therefore have minimal impact. <i>Low value</i>	Ancient and Semi-Natural Woodland is associated with the Kerelaw area. Kerelaw House and Castle are listed buildings and Scheduled Monuments and the castle is also defined as a LLHI. Informal footpaths on the Kerelaw site and in the glen are well-used. Development would significantly affect the value associated with the Kerelaw part of the AU although the farmland which covers much of this AU is less valued. <i>Medium value</i>
Sensitivity	High	Medium-low	Medium

Sensitivity Criteria	AU D – Upper Slopes	AU E – Fragmented Farmland
<i>Landscape character and role</i>	These farmed slopes have a strongly rural character although the nearby Ardrossan and Sorbie wind farms are prominent features. Distinctive small woodlands sited on hill tops accentuate the rolling nature of the landform. These upper slopes are more visible than AUs B and C. They are important in providing an attractive rural backdrop to the Three Towns which would be compromised by intrusive development seen from the coast and more open parts of the towns. <i>High susceptibility</i>	This landscape principally comprises large, farmed fields with horse paddocks, a quarry and disturbed ground giving a more cluttered character in the east. Busy roads bound this AU and a minor road is also aligned east/west across farmland. The low-lying nature of this landscape and the influence of nearby roads and urban areas reduces susceptibility. This landscape does not play a key role in the setting of the Three Towns. <i>Low susceptibility</i>
<i>Built character</i>	Housing in this AU would be physically and perceptually divorced from the core of the settlements with this separation accentuated by the presence of the busy A78. <i>High susceptibility</i>	This AU lies close to existing housing, retail park and major roads. Development in this area would generally accord with the pattern of more recent housing on lower ground on the fringes of the Ardeer Industrial and Business Site.

		<i>Low susceptibility</i>
<i>Settlement edges</i>	The A78, which comprises a dual carriage largely in cutting with some associated woodland planting, provides a robust settlement edge which would be breached by development. <i>High susceptibility</i>	Main roads and the railway line would provide moderately firm settlement boundaries. Hedgerows and trees align roads on the NW and W boundaries of this AU and there is potential to continue this planting in the NE to create a more robust settlement edge. <i>Medium susceptibility</i>
<i>Views and visibility</i>	Development on the more steeply rising slopes of this AU would be visible from the open parts of the Three Towns, for example from the harbours, coast and sea and from the A78. More recent 20 th /21 st century expansion of the towns generally extends onto gentle slopes to the north-east and is foreshortened in views (so that its full extent is not generally appreciated). Development on the steeper slopes of this AU would be more intrusive. <i>High susceptibility</i>	Screening by trees and shrubs along roadsides and the low-lying nature of this landscape limits views and reduces susceptibility. Development would be seen in transient views from the railway line and A78. <i>Medium susceptibility</i>
<i>Landscape value</i>	There is little value associated with this landscape. Farm tracks and minor roads may be used by walkers and cyclists. <i>Medium-low value</i>	There is little value associated with this landscape. A minor road crossing this farmland forms NCR 73 and the Ayrshire Coastal Path. <i>Medium value</i>
Sensitivity	High	Medium-low

4.3 Three Towns - Key landscape and visual sensitivities

- The minimally developed raised beach which is a key landscape feature to the north-west of Ardrossan and which allows an open coastal outlook. This landscape has an important role in providing clear separation of the Three Towns and West Kilbride.
- The intact higher farmed slopes north of the A78 which are more visible from open coastal areas within the towns and provide an attractive backdrop to the densely built-up urban area.
- The wooded Kerelaw Glen and the adjacent diverse ground cover of the former Kerelaw School site which is of value for its biodiversity and for the recreation opportunities it offers.

4.4 Three Towns – Summary and guidance

Figure 16 shows the sensitivity of each Assessment Unit. Guidance relating to each Assessment Unit is set out below:

- Assessment Unit A: Raised Beach – High sensitivity
Development along the raised beach would breach the present containment provided to the western edge of Ardrossan by the A78. It would also reduce the separation between West Kilbride and Ardrossan. Significant adverse effects on the character and appreciation of the raised beach landscape feature and on views from the A78 and the Ayrshire Coastal Path would occur if development occurred in this area. These effects could not be mitigated and it is recommended that housing development should be focused on less sensitive Assessment Units around the Three Towns.
- Assessment Unit B: Lower Western Slopes – Medium-low sensitivity
The relatively gently graded nature of these slopes (which reduces visibility) and their proximity to largely unscreened existing housing on the edges of Ardrossan and Saltcoats generally reduces susceptibility to development. More complex smaller scale landform is associated with the Stanley Burn near the property of Whitlees and this is of increased susceptibility. There is very little open space for recreation within recently constructed housing close to this AU and it is therefore recommended that the Stanley Burn area forms the focus of a new neighbourhood park as a resource and to enhance the landscape setting of additional development in this area. Sustainable walking and cycling routes should be strengthened to schools and the coast. Higher and more prominent ground adjacent to the A78 in the north-west of this Assessment Unit should not be developed. Additional woodland planting should be undertaken adjacent to the A78 where gaps occur to screen traffic and reduce noise and pollution for existing and future residents.
- Assessment Unit C: Lower Eastern Slopes – Medium sensitivity
The more gently graded ground and bowl-like landform on the lower southern part of this AU could accommodate housing without significant detrimental landscape and visual impact. The higher slopes, which include two small but distinct knolls (Fellie Hill and another unnamed top lying close to the A78) are

more prominent from the coast and the A78 and should not be developed but planted with woodland to strengthen the screening of the A78. The Kerelaw Castle and former school site and Kerelaw Glen have a diverse character and it is recommended that this area should not be developed but should form the basis of a new neighbourhood park managed principally to enhance its nature conservation value and to provide access to green space for existing and future residents.

- Assessment Unit D: Upper Slopes – High sensitivity

This landscape comprises rolling farmed slopes and, in the north-west, the more pronounced small hills associated with Haupland Muir and the coast. These elevated slopes are prominent in views from the open coastal edges of the Three Towns where they provide an attractive backdrop and contrast to the dense residential development that has taken place on the long and more evenly graded slopes below the A78. Development on these upper slopes would be perceptually and physically distant from the core of the settlements. It would also detract from the positive landscape setting they provide and would breach the robust settlement edge provided by the A78. Development in this AU would have significant adverse effects on landscape character and on views which could not be mitigated. It is recommended that housing development should be focused on less sensitive Assessment Units around Skelmorlie.

- Assessment Unit E: Fragmented Farmland – Medium-low sensitivity

This low-lying landscape lies close to the eastern edge of Stevenston. It is bounded by major roads, existing housing and a retail park. While much of the area comprises large open fields, horse paddocks and disturbed ground and isolated caravan park give a cluttered appearance in the east. New housing could be accommodated on this AU with minimal landscape and visual impact although woodland planting should be undertaken in advance of any development along the A78 and A738 to strengthen screening and provide a buffer to noise and pollution for future residents.

4.5 Three Towns – Appraisal of specific sites

Specific sites identified around the Three Towns are shown in Figure 17 and their sensitivity is appraised in the following table.

Table 12: Appraisal of specific areas around the Three Towns

Site reference	AU	Sensitivity	Potential mitigation
TT 1	A	<u>High sensitivity</u> Any development in this area would have significant adverse effects on the character of the raised beach and on views. It would contrast with the association of Ardrossan with a broad bay backed by gently sloping ground and would be physically and perceptually distant from the core of the Skelmorlie. It would reduce the separation between West Kilbride and Ardrossan.	Significant landscape and visual effects would be very difficult to mitigate. It is recommended that any development should be directed to less sensitive sites around the Three Towns.
TT2	B	<u>Medium-low sensitivity</u> This site is visually contained due to its close association with existing residential development and because it comprises generally gently graded lower slopes. It does not play a key role in providing the setting to Ardrossan/Saltcoats although it does feel perceptually and physically remote from the centre of these towns. The majority of this site could accommodate well-designed residential development although the more complex, small-scale landform associated with the valley of the Stanley Burn increases susceptibility and this area should not be built on but should form the basis of a neighbourhood park especially given the absence of quality green space in the locality.	Development should not encroach onto the higher ground abutting the A78 and NW of Whitlees. Additional woodland planting should be undertaken adjacent to the A78 where gaps occur to screen traffic and reduce noise and pollution for existing and future residents. The Stanley Burn area should form the basis of public open space and walking and cycling routes should be created/strengthened to provide sustainable access to schools, town centres and the coast.
TT3	C	<u>Medium sensitivity</u> The more undulating landform of these farmed slopes provides a degree of containment and screening of the busy A78 and it thus has a stronger rural character than TT2. It does however lie close to existing housing and relatively close to the centre of Stevenston. This site would not be	Existing hedgerows along Middlepart and Kerelaw Roads should be retained and supplemented with additional planting, including with trees attaining a large statue, to provide a firm new settlement edge. Additional woodland planting should also be undertaken on ground adjacent to the A78 to improve screening and a reduction in noise and

		widely visible from other parts of the Three Towns, for example from the more open coastal areas, and well-designed housing could be accommodated with minimal landscape and visual impact.	pollution for future residents. Footpath and cycleway links should be provided to the centre of Stevenston and to the High School in Saltcoats and to any neighbourhood park created on the Kerelaw Castle/former school site (TT4). Opportunities for allotments and community orchards should be explored with these being located on more sheltered parts of the site.
TT4	C	<u>High sensitivity</u> The Kerelaw Castle and former school site and the associated valley of the Stevenston Burn have a diverse character with many mature trees, woodlands and a rich ground flora. This site already has some value in terms of its biodiversity interest and as a recreational resource. Any development on this site would not have a wide impact on views but it would have significant adverse effects on landscape character. It is recommended that this area should not be developed but should form the basis of a new neighbourhood park managed principally to enhance its nature conservation value and to provide access to green space for existing and future residents.	This diverse landscape should form a neighbourhood park for nearby communities (and any future residents). The many mature individual trees and woodlands and species rich grassland should be conserved and a landscape management plan should be drawn up with the aim of enhancing biodiversity. Sustainable walking and cycling routes to the centre of Stevenston should be created with access provided from any new housing on the sites of TT3 and TT5.
TT5	C	<u>Medium-low sensitivity</u> A small relatively gently graded farmed field lying close to existing housing in Stevenston. This site is not widely visible but lies close to the diverse wooded valley of the Stevenston Burn which increases susceptibility. Access for construction traffic may impact on the character of site TT4 and the narrow curving Kerelaw Road.	This area lies close to the A78 and while existing field boundaries offer some screening this should be strengthened by planting woodland on a narrow strip of land north of the minor road which wraps around the site. Mature field trees on the fringes of the site, and particularly located close to the Stevenston Burn in the southern part of the site, should be conserved and additional trees planted to ensure longevity and a buffer between any new housing and this diverse valley. Access for construction will need to be carefully considered to minimise effects on the character of Kerelaw Road.

TT6	E	<u>Medium-low sensitivity</u> These gently undulating to flat fields lie close to existing housing and shopping facilities. Some parts of this site comprise disturbed ground which reduces susceptibility in terms of landscape character. Any development on this site may impact on the experience of using NCR78 and the Ayrshire Coastal Path which is aligned on a quiet road.	Sustainable and traffic-free routes to the centre of Stevenston via Ardeer Park should be provided for walkers and cyclists. Woodland planting should be undertaken on the higher ridge of ground next to the A738 to provide a buffer between housing and traffic.
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5 GARNOCK VALLEY SETTLEMENTS – KILBIRNIE, BEITH AND DALRY

5.1 Character and landscape context overview

The settlements of Dalry, Kilbirnie and Beith are located in the Garnock valley, a broad valley contained by the slopes of the Clyde Muirshiel uplands to the north-west and the rolling lowland farmlands of Ayrshire to the south-east. Kilbirnie and Beith lie close to each other, lying either side of the Kilbirnie Loch, one of a series of lochs which fill the floodplain in the northern part of the valley. Dalry is located approximately 3km downstream to the south-west. These settlements are considered separately in this assessment.

Lying close to Glasgow, the rural Garnock valley was a favoured place for the establishment of a number of small estates in the 17th and 18th centuries. Kilbirnie, Dalry and Beith formed service centres for these estates and the rural hinterland. The exploitation of coal and iron reserves in the Garnock valley occurred on an industrial scale from the early 19th century. The Glengarnock Steel Works, which lay between Kilbirnie and Beith, closed in 1985 and this former industrial site now accommodates business and light industrial units and community open space adjacent to Kilbirnie Loch. Coal mining and smelting also occurred near Dalry but was generally on a smaller scale.

Figure 18 shows relevant environmental and designations and planning allocations immediately surrounding Kilbirnie and Beith. Figure 22 shows similar information for Dalry.

5.2 Kilbirnie

5.2.1 *Landscape and visual context*

Kilbirnie lies at the foot of the Clyde Muirshiel uplands and close to the point where the River Garnock reaches the broad floodplain of the Garnock Valley, having tumbled through a deeply incised narrow valley down the steep eastern slopes of these uplands. Kilbirnie was at one time Scotland's major manufacturer of fishing nets and thread and the River Garnock powered a number of mills prior to the establishment of iron works and coal pits in the early 19th century. The extensive Glengarnock Steel Works was located on the flat valley floor south-east of Kilbirnie close to the railway line. The settlement of Glengarnock was established in 1840 to serve the steel works. The steel works were closed in 1985 and remediation of the industrial area, including areas of contamination around Kilbirnie Loch, has been undertaken. The former steel works site now accommodates a light industrial/business park and the Loch Shore Park around Kilbirnie Loch.

Key landscape and visual features of Kilbirnie include:

- Kilbirnie Loch which lies close to the town and forms the focus of an extensive park which is important for recreation and where a sense of seclusion and naturalness can be experienced close to urban areas.
- The remnant wooded policies of the three mansion houses built in the late 19th century on the western slopes above the town for the mill-owning Knox family.

These woodlands provide an attractive framework for new development in this area.

- The steeply rising farmed slopes of the Clyde Muirshiel Hills which provide a scenic backdrop to the town.

5.2.2 *Assessment Units*

Six AUs have been defined around Kilbirnie. These are shown in Figure 19 and are described below:

- Assessment Unit A: Loch Fringes
Loch Shore Park is focussed on the south-eastern fringes of Kilbirnie Loch but includes recreational routes extending along the north-western and south-eastern shores of the loch. The park has been created on disturbed ground left after the Glengarnock steel works closure. The shores of the loch feature emerging wetland and scrub and some wet woodland. An area of disturbed ground and spoil between the town and the western shore of the loch is colonised by scrub and developing woodland. The park lies very close to Kilbirnie but is not inter-visible with the town.
- Assessment Unit B: Valley Floor
Valley floor pastures lying to the south-west of Kilbirnie within the broad floodplain of the River Garnock and lying close to the Kilbirnie Garden City housing development built in 1916 for workers at the steel works. Large actively farmed fields are partially enclosed by low hedges and occasional scrubby trees. A disused railway line embankment, multiple wood pole transmission lines and small substation influences character in this area.
- Assessment Unit C: Remnant Policies
The remnant wooded policies are located on sloping ground on the western edge of Kilbirnie and either side of the A760 Largs Road. To the south of the A760, this Assessment Unit comprises the town's golf course, which occupies the former policies of Old Place of Kilbirnie, a now ruinous 15th century castle. The remnant wooded policies and parkland of Place (a 19th century mansion house which was demolished in 1991) lie to the north of the A760. Allotments and an area of diverse wet woodland (Place Woodland) lie at the foot of steeper ground below the golf course and close to housing.
- Assessment Unit D: Lower Farmed Slopes
These lower slopes lie to the north of the A760 and are contained between woodland belts associated with the former grounds of the 19th century mansion houses of Place to the west and Moorpark to the east. A LDP housing allocation site lies between Moorpark and this Assessment Unit but is not yet built. These slopes are largely under pasture with some horse grazing evident.
- Assessment Unit E: Steeper Upper Slopes
These hill slopes are rolling and gradually rise to merge with the more open moorland covered sides of the Clyde Muirshiel Hills which form a distinctive backdrop to Kilbirnie. This area is farmed and although some spoil heaps

associated with former mining can be seen, these are small, widely dispersed and largely vegetated and the Assessment Unit has a distinctly rural character.

- Assessment Unit F: Rolling Farmland

This Assessment Unit lies to the north of the A760 on the north-eastern edge of Kilbirnie. Farmland has an open character and well-managed pastures accentuate the rolling landform. The farm of Barrhill is locally prominent, sited on a small, rounded knoll. Remnant policy woodland, an estate wall and parkland plantings form the western edge to Kilbirnie in this area.

Photographs of key features within and around Kilbirnie are shown in Appendix F. Detailed assessment of the landscape and visual sensitivity of each of the above AUs is set out in Table 13.

Table 13: Garnock Valley Settlements – Kilbirnie Sensitivity Assessment

Sensitivity Criteria	AU A – Loch Fringes	AU B – Valley Floor	AU C – Remnant Policies
<i>Landscape character and role</i>	This landscape has recovered from a legacy of industrial exploitation and pollution to a surprising extent. Kilbirnie Loch and its shores, although obviously modified in places, has a semi-natural and secluded character. This AU provides an attractive landscape setting to the town, although there is limited inter-visibility between the two. Development in this area would detract from the loch and its diverse vegetated surrounds and the rich resource it provides for Kilbirnie and nearby Glengarnock. The scenic landscape connection between the loch and the Clyde Muirshiel hills (experienced in views from and around the loch) would additionally be interrupted by development. <i>High susceptibility</i>	Large flat fields have a simple character although wood pole transmission lines and an electricity sub-station introduce an element of clutter in the north-western part of this AU. The embankment of a former railway line is aligned through this AU. Susceptibility is reduced due to the absence of any notable landscape features. <i>Medium-low susceptibility</i>	This area of sloping ground lies on the western edge of Kilbirnie. The strong framework of woodlands and tree belts associated with the policies of the Old Place and Place estates is a key characteristic. The woodlands associated with the Place form an important landscape feature marking the threshold to Kilbirnie when travelling from the west on the Largs Road. This area also features an area of parkland. The south-western part of this AU around Place Farm comprises the former designed landscape of Old Place. This AU provides an attractive setting of wooded slopes above the town which would be compromised if development entailed extensive felling of woodland. Lower slopes and the interior of the Place designed landscape are less prominent and of reduced susceptibility although an area of wet woodland (Place Woodland) at the foot of lower slopes close to housing is diverse. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>
<i>Built character</i>	This AU lies relatively close to Kilbirnie but it feels perceptually distant due to the lack of inter-visibility with the town. Development on this AU would conflict	Development on this AU would continue the pattern of the Garden Suburb and a later semi-isolated development of bungalows which are also located on the	Development on the lower golf course slopes would relate to adjacent residential development which is similarly located on rising western slopes. Steeper upper

	with the original form of the town which is principally focussed on the River Garnock and western hill slopes. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>	flat valley floor. It would however extend Kilbirnie some way to the south such that housing would be distant from the town centre and key facilities such as schools at Moorpark (although this AU lies relatively close to the railway station at Glengarnock). There is scope to create new sustainable walking and cycling routes to key facilities from this AU. <i>Medium susceptibility</i>	slopes of the golf course are of increased susceptibility as these would conflict with the principal association of the town with the Garnock valley and lower more gently graded western slopes. The Place designed landscape is of increased susceptibility due to the isolation of this area from the town, which is accentuated by the wooded surrounds. Linear development of large, detached properties on the minor road at Fernbank diminishes this isolation to some degree however and reduces susceptibility to development. <i>Medium susceptibility</i>
<i>Settlement edges</i>	The rounded ridge which has been formed on the western side of the loch from spoil provides a firm edge to Kilbirnie. Woodland provides a filtered screen to light industrial development in the Glengarnock area to the south-west. Development in this AU would breach existing robust boundaries to urban development. <i>High susceptibility</i>	A line of sycamore to existing housing provides a semi-firm edge. There are few ready landform and/or vegetation features able to form a robust new edge to settlement in this open valley floor. Advance planting of woodland could be undertaken south-eastwards of the distinct knoll of East Mains Farm although in the shorter term new development in this area would breach the existing filtered screening provided by tree lines. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>	The woodlands of The Place form a robust edge to Kilbirnie experienced from the Largs Road. The steeper upper slopes of the golf course and to a lesser degree the woodlands associated with Place Farm/Kilbirnie Castle also provide strong containment to the settlement. Lower parts of the golf course, which are strongly influenced by adjacent residential development, are of reduced susceptibility. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>
<i>Views and visibility</i>	Any development sited in this AU would be highly visible from well-used recreational routes and from Kilbirnie Loch (which is used for water-based activities). It would also be prominent in views from the A760 on the north-eastern approach to the town particularly if sited on the ridge on the western edge of the loch.	Development in this AU would be highly visible from the B780 but would be seen in conjunction with existing residential development which is only partially screened by existing tree lines. Screen planting could provide longer term screening. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>	Woodlands around Place are prominent in views from the Largs Road, although the 'interior' of this landscape is screened from wider view. The golf course is principally seen from nearby housing although development (particularly sited on higher slopes) would be seen from the Largs Road.

	<i>High susceptibility</i>		<i>High-medium susceptibility</i>
<i>Landscape value</i>	A local nature conservation designation applies to this AU. The Loch Shore Park, with recent investment of quality recreational facilities, additionally increases the value of this AU. The enjoyment of recreational facilities and the perception of naturalness would be diminished by development. <i>High value</i>	There is little value associated with the managed farmland of this AU. <i>Low value</i>	The cultural heritage value of wooded policies and parkland of Place LLHI and the remnant features of the designed landscape of Old Place increase the value attached to this landscape particularly on higher slopes where these features are most present. The golf course, allotments and community managed Place Woodland has recreational value. <i>High-medium value</i>
Sensitivity	High	Medium	High-medium

Sensitivity Criteria	AU D – Lower Open Slopes	AU E – Steeper Upper Slopes	AU F – Rolling Farmland
<i>Landscape character and role</i>	Gently sloping pastures lie between Place and the former policies of Moorpark. This AU forms a bowl-like landform which is contained by more steeply graded slopes to the north-west. Some of these pastures are rush infested and under-managed, Horse paddocks, a high voltage transmission line and nearby residential development (including a line of large, detached houses isolated from the town) influence character and reduce susceptibility to development. <i>Medium susceptibility</i>	Although these farmed slopes are marred by mining spoil in some areas and some pastures are rush-infested and obviously less managed, the landscape has a distinctly rural character due to the connection with the Clyde Muirshiel hills and the steepness of the sloping ground which precludes views of the urban edge of Kilbirnie. This AU forms a backdrop of rising hill slopes to Kilbirnie, which although not as prominent as the steeper open upper slopes and tops of the Clyde Muirshiel hills, still forms a rural hinterland and setting to the settlement. More steeply sloping ground within this AU	This open rolling farmland has a well-managed appearance influenced by lush, grazed pastures and intact hedgerows. Remnant parkland in the Dipple Burn valley add to the diversity of this landscape. The 'twin' knolls seen from the A760 on approaching Kilbirnie from the north-east (Barrhill Farm sits atop one of these knolls) are important in providing containment of the urban edge and also contribute to the attractive landscape setting to the town seen from this route. Development of this AU would have significant adverse effects on the character of this landscape and the

		would additionally be of increased susceptibility as intrusive ground modification may be necessary to accommodate development. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>	setting it provides to Kilbirnie when seen from the north-east. <i>High susceptibility</i>
<i>Built character</i>	Large houses aligning the minor road on the north-eastern edge of Place are prominent. Development in this AU would lie between these and a LDP housing allocation. It would also fit with the pattern of housing on lower slopes west of the town. These factors reduce susceptibility to new development. <i>Low susceptibility</i>	The town of Kilbirnie is not widely visible as it is generally tucked down on lower slopes and additionally screened by woodland. A 20 th century housing estate extends higher up slopes between the Moorpark area and the River Garnock and is more visible from parts of this AU. Development of this AU would generally be contrary to the association of much of the town with lower western slopes. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>	Existing housing within Kilbirnie is generally located on lower gently graded western hill slopes and the flatter floor of the Garnock valley to the south. Development of the more prominent rolling knolls and ridges of this AU would be contrary to this clear association. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>
<i>Settlement edges</i>	A strong framework of tree belts provides a robust edge to housing west of Moorpark. Similar containment would be provided by the Place woodlands. The north-western boundary of this AU is more open although a slight rim of more steeply sloping ground could form the basis for a new robust settlement edge to be created. <i>Medium susceptibility</i>	Steeper slopes and woodland (particularly in the Moorpark area) contributes to a semi-firm settlement edge along the existing urban area. There are few woodlands and landform features able to provide the basis for a new robust settlement edge on these generally open farmed slopes. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>	Stone walls and mature trees (these comprising part of the former grounds of Redheugh House) line the minor road to Ladyland and form a firm screening edge to Kilbirnie which is reinforced by the lower-lying landform occupied by existing housing near the Garnock valley. Development in this AU would breach the existing strong containment to the urban edge although the 'twin' knolls could provide some containment to the valley of the Dipple Burn. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>
<i>Views and visibility</i>	This AU would be visible from the A760 but would be seen in close association with existing (and allocated) residential development. <i>Medium susceptibility</i>	This AU is visible from rare open parts of the town and from the minor roads which provide access to routes into the Clyde Muirshiel hills. There are also seen in longer views from the east.	This farmland is prominent in views from the A760 on the approach to Kilbirnie from the north-east and from the minor road to Ladyland. Development sited on

		<i>High-medium susceptibility</i>	pronounced rounded hills could be intrusive from the Kilbirnie Loch area. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>
<i>Landscape value</i>	There is little value associated with this AU. <i>Low value</i>	There is some value attached to the north-western part of this AU as minor roads provide recreational routes into the Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park (for example walking routes to Glen Garnock). <i>Medium value</i>	There is some value attached to this AU as the grounds of Redheugh are defined as a LLHI (albeit recent housing development within the grounds may have affected its value since listed). The minor road to Ladyland provides a route into the Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park. <i>Medium value</i>
Sensitivity	Medium	High-medium	High-medium

5.2.3 *Kilbirnie - Key landscape and visual sensitivities*

- The character and setting of Kilbirnie Loch which comprises a valuable landscape and recreational resource for the town.
- The remnant woodlands associated with the three grand houses (Redheugh, Moorpark and Place) on lower western slopes which are important in providing an attractive setting and framework for development.
- The steeper farmed hill slopes which arc around the western half of Kilbirnie and provide a distinctly rural (although not always highly scenic) setting to the town.

5.2.4 *Kilbirnie – Summary and guidance*

Figure 20 shows the sensitivity of each Assessment Unit. Guidance relating to each Assessment Unit is set out below:

- Assessment Unit A: Loch Fringes – High sensitivity
This landscape provides an attractive landscape setting and a valuable recreational resource for Kilbirnie. Development in this AU would have significant adverse effects on landscape character and on views which could not be mitigated. It is recommended that housing development should be focused on less sensitive Assessment Units around Kilbirnie.
- Assessment Unit B: Valley Floor – Medium sensitivity
This landscape comprises the flat valley floor of the Garnock lying to the south-west of the town and the lower western valley sides. Any development in this AU would continue the pattern of existing residential development on the valley floor but it would extend the settlement considerably to the south such that housing would be distant from the town centre and key facilities such as schools. There are however opportunities to create a new riverside park accommodating walkways/cycle routes to the railway station and school at Glengarnock and sustainable links (potentially utilising a former railway solum aligned through this middle of this AU) to key facilities in the core of Kilbirnie. Development would breach an existing semi-firm settlement boundary on the edge of existing housing and a new robust settlement edge would need to be created. It is recommended that this comprises woodland planting along the field boundary immediately north of the distinct knoll of East Mains south-east to the active railway line. Increased flood risk may be a constraint to development on the valley floor. Steeper valley sides abutting the Dalry Road should not be developed as ground modification to accommodate building platforms and access would be intrusive on the southern threshold to Kilbirnie. Sensitivity is reduced where higher slopes are more gently graded adjacent to existing housing within the Garden City development and close to the community open space of Place Woodland.
- Assessment Unit C: Remnant Policies – High-medium sensitivity
The woodlands associated with the Place lying to the north of the Largs Road are important in providing a screening edge to Kilbirnie and an attractive approach to the town from the A760. Some discrete high quality residential

development could be accommodated in more contained parts of this former estate (avoiding the more sensitive areas of parkland lying either side of the main drive) provided cross-funding for woodland and parkland management works occurred to secure the longevity of these landscape features. The lower slopes of the golf course lying to the south of the Largs Road lie close to existing residential development and are generally less visible. These lower slopes could potentially accommodate some residential development provided that key groups of mature trees were retained and managed. The steeper upper slopes are more visible and are important in the containment and setting they provide to Kilbirnie and also because of the cultural heritage value of Old Place and its former designed landscape. Woodland planting (which could include enhancement of existing woodland clumps) should be undertaken on steeper slopes to strengthen the containment provided to any new residential development in the golf course.

- Assessment Unit D: Lower Slopes – Medium sensitivity
The bowl-shaped landform of this AU and the strong framework of mature woodlands of Place and Moorpark would provide containment to additional residential development in this AU. Sensitivity is reduced due to existing intrusive large detached modern housing sited along the minor road on the north-eastern wooded boundary of Place and the existing LDP housing allocation. Woodland should be established on a ridge of steeper land lying close to the north-west boundary of this AU to create a robust edge to any new housing.
- Assessment Unit E: Steeper Upper Slopes – High-medium sensitivity
This AU has a distinctly rural character due to the limited influence of the urban area which is generally located on less visible gently graded lower slopes and additionally screened in places by woodland. Development sited on these steeper slopes would be contrary to the form of much of Kilbirnie which is associated with lower slopes and the flat floor of the Garnock valley. Although these farmed slopes do not provide as prominent a backdrop to Kilbirnie as the more open upper slopes and ridges of the Clyde Muirshiel uplands, they do have a function in providing a moderately attractive landscape setting to the town with the north-western part of this AU particularly important because of its connection to the Clyde Muirshiel and the Garnock Glen.
- Assessment Unit F: Rolling Farmland – High-medium sensitivity
This area of well-managed farmland has an open character and is prominent in views on the approach to Kilbirnie from the A760. Development in this area would have a significant adverse effect on the character of this landscape and on the form of Kilbirnie and the existing robust settlement edge in this area.

5.2.5 *Kilbirnie – Appraisal of specific sites*

Individual development sites around Kilbirnie are shown in Figure 21 and appraised in Table 14.

Table 14: Garnock Valley Settlements – Appraisal of specific sites around Kilbirnie

Site reference	AU	Sensitivity	Potential mitigation
K1	D	<u>Medium sensitivity</u> This site would be contained by existing mature woodland belts and housing on three sides. Any development in this area would relate well to the existing urban area due to gently graded nature of sloping ground and the proximity of existing housing. This site lies close to key facilities with Kilbirnie.	Development could be accommodated on lower slopes and woodland should be planted on steeper slopes around the bowl-like landform to create a robust new settlement edge. New woodland planting should be of a similar depth and use similarly large stature trees to replicate the strong framework and setting to new housing provided by existing policy woodlands on western slopes. Management of existing woodlands in Moorpark and Place should be form part of any proposals.
K2	F	<u>High-medium sensitivity</u> While low-lying and therefore not as prominent as other parts of AU F, any development on this area would breach to some extent the present containment provided by landform and trees to the north-eastern edge of Kilbirnie (and seen in elevated views from the A760). Parkland trees are an additional constraint within the Dipple Burn valley.	Development should be kept low (ie comprise single and one and half storey buildings). Existing remnant parkland trees should be retained and managed with supplementary planting of large stature trees undertaken within any residential development to soften the built form and complement the well-integrated character of the urban area in this location.
K3	A	<u>High sensitivity</u> While this area comprises a previous spoil area, newly planted native woodland and developing semi-natural vegetation present pose significant landscape constraints to development. Any development on this area would also be visually prominent from the A760 and from Kilbirnie Loch and would diminish the sense of seclusion and naturalness that can be experienced from AU A.	Significant landscape and visual effects would be very difficult to mitigate. It is recommended that any development should be directed to less sensitive sites around Kilbirnie.
K4	B	<u>Medium sensitivity</u> Although visible on the approach to Kilbirnie from the south-west, any potential housing development on this area would	Buildings should be set back from the road and garden boundaries visible on this approach to Kilbirnie should comprise walls or hedges. New roadside planting should

		fit with the form of Kilbirnie which is associated with the Garnock valley floor. This area is distant from the older core of Kilbirnie and schools but close to the railway station	provide an enhanced approach to the town. The southern edge of development should not extend beyond the knoll occupied by East Mains farm with a generous woodland belt planted to create a robust new settlement edge from here to the railway embankment. Sustainable walking and cycling routes should be provided between this site and key facilities within the town and the Loch Shore Park.
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5.3 Beith

5.3.1 *Landscape and visual context*

Beith lies on the long west-facing sides of the broad floodplain accommodating Kilbirnie Loch. The town formed an important trading post between Glasgow, Ayrshire and south-west Scotland. The Cross forms the historic core of Beith and features the ruins of Auld Kirk and some interesting 18th century buildings. A number of valued historic buildings are also located along nearby Eglinton Street. Beith's greatest period of prosperity occurred in the mid-18th century when flax spinning, thread making and weaving were important industries in the town. During the late 19th century, Beith became well-known for the manufacture of high-quality furniture although the factories closed by the 1980s. The steel works at nearby Glengarnock were also a major employer until their closure in 1985. An extensive whisky bonded warehouse development is located on the south-eastern shores of Kilbirnie Loch adjacent to the town and an MOD defence munitions site is located to the south of Beith, close to the road to Barrmill.

Key landscape and visual features of Beith include:

- Long views from the west-facing slopes of the town which focus on the Clyde Muirshiel Hills.
- The remnant mature wooded policies of Old Spier's School, Geilsland House and Grangehill which provide the landscape setting to Beith to the east.
- The historic core of the town which features many fine 18th century buildings, and the 19th century Trinity Church whose tall tower is seen widely across the Garnock valley.

5.3.2 *Assessment Units*

Six Assessment Units have been defined around Beith. These are shown in Figure 19 and are described below:

- Assessment Unit G: Eastern Loch Fringes
Steep slopes containing the eastern edge of Kilbirnie Loch and extending to a slightly raised rim of ground on the boundary of Assessment Unit H. These slopes are covered with small, hedged fields with mature broadleaved trees clustered around the buildings at Ardloch and Belleview. The Glasgow to Irvine railway is aligned close to the shores of Kilbirnie and a narrow track provides informal access to the loch from Kerse Bridge.
- Assessment Unit H: Mid Slopes
This Assessment Unit covers the long, gently graded and slightly dished west-facing slopes below the town. These slopes comprise a mix of pasture, scrub and wetter unmanaged ground associated with the Main Burn. Some areas of brownfield land are present close to an existing industrial estate and the whisky warehouses.

- Assessment Unit I: Open Farmland
Flat to gently undulating farmland where few trees and a weak field enclosure pattern give an open character. This landscape is highly visible from the B777 and A737 which cross this area.
- Assessment Unit J: Shallow Valley and Woodland
The wooded policies of former small estates lie on the eastern edge of Beith. These include the grounds of the former large houses of Geilsland, Grangehill and Crummock and Speir's School. New mixed woodland has been planted in this area. The shallow farmed valley of the Powgree Burn lies east of the belts of mixed policy woodland. This landscape has an open character and formerly accommodated Loch Brand before it was drained to provide farmland.
- Assessment Unit K: Wooded Policies and Farmed Slopes
The grand Woodside House and its associated designed landscapes form the focus of this Assessment Unit. The house dates from 1515 but with remodelling occurring in subsequent centuries. Mature woodlands and an arboretum surround the house. Steep farmed slopes rise from the estate to the A737.
- Assessment Unit L: Valley Sides
This Assessment Unit comprises the south-eastern undulating valley sides of the Garnock valley. They lie close to Glengarnock between Beith and Kilbirnie. The Glasgow to Irvine railway line is aligned at the foot of these slopes, lying close to the River Garnock. Some wet and semi-disturbed ground occurs on lower slopes.

Photographs of Beith are included in Appendix G. Detailed assessment of the landscape and visual sensitivity of each of the above AUs is set out in Table 15.

Table 15: Garnock Valley Settlements – Beith Sensitivity Assessment

Sensitivity Criteria	AU G – Eastern Loch Fringes	AU H – Mid Slopes	AU I – Open Farmland
<i>Landscape character and role</i>	Steep slopes contain the eastern edge of Kilbirnie Loch and extend to a rim of higher ground east of the properties of Ardloch and Belleview. These slopes are an important part of the setting of Kilbirnie Loch, providing visual containment and contributing to the sense of seclusion experienced by people using the loch and its shores for recreation. Steep slopes would require intrusive ground modification and development would significantly affect the character and setting of Kilbirnie Loch. The more gently sloping higher ground to the east would be less susceptible to development. <i>High susceptibility</i>	These long, gently graded and slightly dished west-facing slopes below the town are covered with a mix of pasture, scrub and wetter unmanaged ground associated with the Main Burn. Some areas of brownfield land are present close to an existing industrial estate and the whisky warehouses and the landscape has a more fragmented character to the south. These factors reduce susceptibility to development. <i>Medium-low susceptibility</i>	Flat to gently undulating farmland where few trees and a weak field enclosure pattern give an open quality. This landscape has a simple character with limited diversity in respect of landform and vegetation pattern and this reduces susceptibility to development. <i>Medium-low susceptibility</i>
<i>Built character</i>	This landscape is distant from Beith and housing sited on steep slopes would conflict with the strong association of this settlement with more gently graded upper hill slopes. <i>High susceptibility</i>	These mid slopes lie close to the existing urban area. They are also influenced by nearby industrial/business development and the whisky warehouses. Housing development in this AU would fit with the form and character of Beith which is strongly associated with long western slopes falling from the ridge which is generally marked by the A737. <i>Low susceptibility</i>	This landscape is distant from the core of Beith with the sense of detachment accentuated by the presence of the busy B777 which abuts the present urban edge. Development within this AU would not accord with the strong association of Beith with long gently graded west-facing slopes. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>
<i>Settlement edges</i>	This AU is isolated from the urban area. There are few landscape features able to form the basis of new robust boundaries to development.	The southern part of this AU is less susceptible as any housing development would infill spaces between existing industrial/business development and the	The B777 and A737 presently form the boundary to the existing urban area. The boundary provided by this road is not reinforced by landform or substantial

	<i>High susceptibility</i>	western edge of the town. Susceptibility is increased in the northern area due to the more open nature of the landscape and the absence of strong landform or woodland features which could provide a firm western boundary to new development. <i>Medium susceptibility</i>	vegetation and there is little visual containment of existing residential and industrial development. There are few landform or woodland features able to provide a new robust edge to any housing development sited within this open landscape. <i>Medium susceptibility</i>
<i>Views and visibility</i>	This landscape is important in views from the A760 near Kilbirnie and from Kilbirnie Loch and from some loch shore recreation routes. Development located on these steep slopes would be very intrusive. <i>High susceptibility</i>	Views of the southern part of this AU are screened by large industrial sheds and warehouses to the west and south-west. There would be some elevated views from existing housing in Beith. There are close views of the northern part of the AU from the minor road to Kerse Bridge. This area would also be seen from nearby existing residential areas in Beith and also in long views from the A760 near Kilbirnie. <i>Medium susceptibility</i>	This landscape is highly visible from the B777 and A737 which cross this area. The openness of this landscape increases susceptibility in terms of the intrusion likely to be associated with housing development. <i>High susceptibility</i>
<i>Landscape value</i>	There is a track aligned at the foot of steep slopes along Kilbirnie Loch which provides access for people using the loch for water sports. The loch shore has some nature conservation interest. <i>Medium value</i>	This landscape has little value associated with it. <i>Low value</i>	This landscape has little value associated with it. <i>Low value</i>
Sensitivity	High	Medium-low	High-medium

Sensitivity Criteria	AU J – Shallow Valley and Woodland	AU K – Wooded Policies and Farmland	AU L – Valley Sides
<i>Landscape character and role</i>	The wooded policies of Geilsland, Grangehill and Crummock and Speir's School form a distinctive landscape feature on the eastern edge of Beith. New mixed woodland has also been recently planted in this area. The shallow farmed valley of the Powgree Burn lies east of the belts of mixed policy woodland. Susceptibility is increased due to the diversity of this landscape. <i>High susceptibility</i>	The grand Woodside House and its associated designed landscape forms the focus of this AU. Mature woodlands and an arboretum surround the house. Steep open farmed slopes rise from the estate to the A737. The diversity of designed landscape features and the steepness of open farmed slopes increase susceptibility. <i>High susceptibility</i>	This Assessment Unit comprises the south-eastern valley sides of the Garnock valley. The Glasgow to Irvine railway line is aligned at the foot of these slopes as is the River Garnock. There is a history of mining and quarrying in this area and some disturbed land is evident. The Powgree Burn falls through a narrow wooded valley to the Garnock on the northern edge of this AU close to Longbar. Landform is steeper and more complex in this northern area and this increases susceptibility. Disturbed land which generally occurs on lower valley sides would be less susceptible. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>
<i>Built character</i>	The wooded part of this AU lies on the top of a low ridge above the town. Existing residential areas are located nearby also on the ridge although much of the town is strongly associated with gently graded west-facing slopes below this ridge. The Powgree Burn tips down to the east of this ridge and feels particularly divorced from Beith (due to the screening by woodland but also because of the different orientation of the terrain). <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>	Lower slopes accommodating the designed landscape of Woodside are divorced from Beith. Upper slopes are farmed and open and abut existing residential development. They also comprise steeper and more complex ground towards Roebank Glen which increases susceptibility in relation to the strong association of Beith with more gently graded west-facing slopes. <i>High susceptibility</i>	These slopes lie between Beith and Kilbirnie and are distant from the core of both settlements. The north-eastern end of this AU abuts the small settlement of Longbar near Glengarnock. Development along the B777 comprises a mix of industrial estates and residential development with a notable gap occurring at Crawfield. Development on these slopes would not accord with the form and character of Beith or Kilbirnie. It would accentuate the more arbitrary fragmented form of Glengarnock and Longbar. <i>High susceptibility</i>
<i>Settlement edges</i>	The busy A737 forms a physical and perceptual barrier to the eastern edge of	Existing residential areas on the northern edge of Beith are largely unscreened and	Steeper slopes at the northern end of this AU form an edge to Longbar which is

	Beith. This settlement edge is strengthened in places by tree rows close to existing housing. Mature woodlands and tree belts at Geisland and Grangehill could provide a containing edge to any new housing development located immediately east of the A737. Susceptibility is increased in relation to the Powgree valley which is more open with few features able to provide a new robust settlement edge. <i>Medium susceptibility</i>	intrusive in views from the A737 on the approach to the town. Susceptibility is increased on the more open steep farmed slopes lying immediately below the A737 as development would exacerbate adverse effects. Policy woodlands would provide strong containment to any housing development located closer to Woodside House on lower slopes provided they were retained. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>	located on flatter ground north of the B777. The railway line and River Garnock forms a physical barrier and containing edge (due to line side vegetation) to the west. Hedgerows and occasional trees could form the basis for new settlement boundaries although supplementary planting would be needed. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>
<i>Views and visibility</i>	The western part of this AU is seen in close views from the A737 and from nearby residential areas in Beith. Views of the more open Powgree valley are principally from minor roads and recreational routes.	Woodlands screen the interior landscape of Woodside although form prominent features seen from the west across the valley. Farmland on upper slopes is more open and is particularly seen from the A737 on the approach to Beith. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>	This landscape is not widely visible. Woodland and landform screens views from the railway. There are views from the floodplain of the Garnock and from the Dalry Road. <i>Medium susceptibility</i>
<i>Landscape value</i>	This landscape has some valued features including some remnant designed landscape features. There is recreational use of Spiers Old School Ground. <i>High-medium value</i>	Woodside comprises a category A listed building. Its designed landscape is of historic value and is defined a LLHI. A Local Nature Conservation designation applies to these wooded policies and the Roebank Glen. <i>High-medium value</i>	This landscape has little value associated with it. <i>Low value</i>
Sensitivity	High-medium	High-medium	High-medium

5.3.3 *Beith - Key landscape and visual sensitivities*

- The mature and new woodlands which provide part of the landscape setting to Beith and a valued recreational resource for the local community.
- The strong settlement edge provided by the busy A737 and extensive woodlands close to this road.
- The openness of farmland lying to the south of Beith and the role this plays in separating the settlements of Beith and Glengarnock.

5.3.4 *Beith – Summary and guidance*

Figure 20 shows the sensitivity of each Assessment Unit. Guidance relating to each Assessment Unit is set out below:

- Assessment Unit G: Eastern Loch Fringes – High sensitivity
The steep slopes of this Assessment Unit are an important part of the setting of Kilbirnie Loch, providing visual containment and contributing to the sense of seclusion experienced by people using the loch and its shores for recreation. This landscape is also distant from Beith and any development located on the steeper slopes of this landscape would be contrary to the strong association of the town with more gently graded west-facing slopes. Development in this AU would have significant adverse effects on landscape character and on views which could not be mitigated. It is recommended that housing development should be focused on less sensitive Assessment Units around Beith.
- Assessment Unit H: Mid Slopes – Medium-low sensitivity
These long, gently graded west-facing slopes lie close to the existing urban area. They comprise a mix of pasture, scrub, wetter unmanaged ground and some disturbed areas and the southern part is particularly influenced by nearby industrial/business development. Housing development in this AU would fit with the form and character of Beith. While any development within the southern part of this AU would be well screened, woodland planting should be undertaken in the more open northern part to provide containment for any new housing. In addition, it is recommended that individual and small groups of trees with an eventually large stature should be planted throughout housing development to replicate the softening effect of mature street, garden and park/churchyard trees seen in long views to Beith west of Kilbirnie Loch.
- Assessment Unit I: Open Farmland – High-medium sensitivity
While the simple character and limited diversity of this landscape reduces susceptibility, it is highly visible from the B777 and A737 which bound it. Development on this area would conflict with the form and character of Beith which is strongly associated with long, gently graded west-facing slopes.
- Assessment Unit J: Shallow Valley and Woodland – High-medium sensitivity
The shallow farmed Powgree valley has no relationship with Beith due to its strongly rural character, its distance from the town and the screening effect of woodlands located on the ridge on the eastern edge of the town. Any development of this valley would be conflict with the form and character of

Beith. While the margin of more wooded ground immediately east of the A737 has a reduced susceptibility in relation to the containment that could be provided by existing pine shelterbelts and other woodland, it would also be contrary to the form and character of Beith which is strongly associated with a ridge and long west-facing slopes. It would also breach the present boundary formed to Beith by the busy A737.

- Assessment Unit K: Wooded Policies and Farmland – High-medium sensitivity
The diversity of designed landscape features, the value associated with those features and the listed Woodside House and the steepness of open farmed slopes increase sensitivity to development in this Assessment Unit. Lower slopes are divorced from Beith while the steeper upper slopes are prominent on the approach to the town when travelling south-west on the A737.
- Assessment Unit L: Valley Sides – High-medium sensitivity
These valley sides lie between Beith and Kilbirnie and are distant from the cores of both these settlements but lie relatively close to Garnock Community Campus. The northern edge of this Assessment Unit abuts the small settlement of Longbar although the landform is complex in this area with small steeply rolling hills and valleys and this increases susceptibility to any development.

5.3.5 *Beith – Appraisal of specific sites*

Individual development sites around Kilbirnie and Beith are shown in Figure 21 and are appraised in Table 16.

Table 16: Garnock Valley Settlements – Appraisal of specific sites around Beith

Site reference	AU	Sensitivity	Potential mitigation
B1	H	<u>Medium-low</u> Any housing development on this site would continue the association of Beith with long west-facing slopes of this site; it would also relate to an allocated housing site to the east. These slopes have an open character in this area however and some advance planting should be necessary to successfully accommodate development while minimising landscape and visual effects.	Planting of trees of large stature within any residential development should be undertaken to replicate the filtered screening and softening effect of vegetation evident in long views to Beith across Kilbirnie Loch from the A760. Existing hedgerows and field boundary trees are sparse in this area and a new well-designed framework of woodland should be planted to provide a containing edge to any new housing.
B2	J	<u>High-medium</u> While existing pine shelterbelts and other woodland could provide visual containment of buildings, any development on this site would be contrary to the form and character of Beith which is strongly associated with long west-facing slopes. It would also breach the present boundary formed to Beith by the very busy A737.	Significant landscape and visual effects would be very difficult to mitigate. It is recommended that any development should be directed to less sensitive sites around Beith.
B3	J	<u>High-medium</u> This site is similar to B2 assessed above. Existing woodland could provide robust boundaries and containment of development, but the strong settlement boundary provided by the A737 would be breached and any housing in this area would be contrary to the form and character of Beith which is strongly associated with a ridge and long west-facing slopes.	Significant landscape and visual effects would be very difficult to mitigate. It is recommended that any development should be directed to less sensitive sites around Beith.
B4	I	<u>High-medium</u> The openness of this area of farmland increases susceptibility. Any development on this area would be highly visible from the A737 and there would be no strong landform or woodland features which could form a ready new	Significant landscape and visual effects would be very difficult to mitigate. It is recommended that any development should be directed to less sensitive sites around Beith.

		settlement edge/screening. It would also be contrary to the association of Beith with long west-facing slopes.	
B5	H	<u>Medium-low</u> This site is visually discrete and any housing on this area would fit with the form and character of Beith which is associated with long west-facing slopes.	Woodland planting would be necessary to screen and provide a buffer between any housing on this site, the whisky warehouses and nearby industrial/business development. Steeper slopes in the south-eastern part of this site should not be developed but planted with woodland. There are opportunities to create a low-key semi-natural neighbourhood park between B5 and B1 focussed on the Bath Burn. Beith is not well-endowed with easily accessible open space and parks (unlike Dalry for example) and while the woodlands lying to the east of the A737 provide opportunities for recreation, these are some distance from residential areas on the western fringes of Beith and crossing this busy road also constrains access.

5.4 Dalry

5.4.1 *Landscape and visual context*

Dalry developed as a staging post on route between Ayrshire and Glasgow and remained an important transport hub when the railway was aligned close to the town in the late 1830s. The town originally formed an agricultural centre within the Garnock valley and weaving was a key source of employment before the mining of limestone, coal and ironstone took place close to the town during the 19th century. The nearby Blair Ironworks was located on the eastern edge of the town.

Dalry is largely located on a subtle rise set above the River Garnock which winds around the eastern edge of the town. The parish church of St Margarets forms the focus of the cluster of 18th and 19th century buildings around The Cross, the historic core of Dalry. Later residential development has extended onto lower hill slopes to the west and on the eastern sides of the Garnock valley close to the railway station. The steep slopes of the Clyde Muirshiel hills form a distinctive backdrop to Dalry to the south-west. The tributaries of the Caaf Water and the Rye Water, which have their sources in these hills, lie on the southern and north-western edges of Dalry. These water courses are aligned through dramatic narrow wooded gorges close to the town before they merge with the River Garnock. The broad flat floor of the Garnock is occupied by open pastures to the south. A chemical production works at Drakemyre on the northern edge of Dalry was first established in the late 1950s. The plant has expanded since that time to occupy much of the flat floor of the Garnock valley in this area.

Figure 22 shows relevant environmental designations and planning allocations immediately surrounding Dalry.

Key landscape and visual attributes of Dalry include:

- The attractive approach to the town on the B714 from the south where the fine spire of St Michael's kirk forms a landmark feature seen above the core of the settlement. Buildings are sited on a slight rise and appear neatly nestled amongst trees above the open floodplain pastures of the River Garnock in this southerly aspect.
- The dramatic rocky and densely wooded gorge of Lynn Glen to the south-west of Dalry, the more difficult to access Hindog Glen to the north-west and establishing woodland around Broadlie House which form part of the attractive landscape setting of the town to the west.
- The large public park which slopes down to the Rye Water and the recently constructed walking and cycling route across floodplain pastures between the railway station and the town to the south.
- The compact historic core of Dalry which is designated as a Conservation Area and which includes The Cross market place and St Michael's Kirk as its focus.
- The steeply rolling farmland which culminates in the high Clyde Muirshiel Hills which form a scenic landscape backdrop to the west of the town.

5.4.2 Assessment Units

Five AUs have been defined around Dalry. These are shown in Figure 23 and are described below:

- Assessment Unit A: Valley Floor
The floodplain of the River Garnock lying either side of the River Garnock to the south of Dalry. Well-managed pastures, some of these comprising fenced horse paddocks, occupy flatter ground. Some semi-natural scrub and wetland occurs on the eastern fringes of this area close to the railway station and on the lower eastern sides of the valley.
- Assessment Unit B: Fragmented Valley Floor
The meandering River Garnock weaves around the south-eastern edge of Dalry and smaller areas of flat valley floor are severed by the railway and roads in this area. A small area of flatter pasture also lies west of the B714 and is backed by the steeper farmed slopes of AU E.
- Assessment Unit C: Eastern Valley Side
The eastern side of the River Garnock forms low undulating slopes, principally occupied by farmland but with some disturbed ground associated with the former Blair Ironworks between the railway and the A737 bypass. A satellite mid-20th century residential area lies on these slopes immediately east of the railway station. This area also includes the distinctive small, wooded holm of Pitcon which sits within the broad floodplain of the Garnock on the northern edge of the extensive Drakemyre chemical works.
- Assessment Unit D: Wooded Slopes
Extensive establishing mixed woodlands are associated with the Broadlie Estate and these cover the gently rising ground lying to the north-west of Dalry. These woodlands merge with the densely wooded Hindog Glen which cuts a deeply incised gorge as it meets the steeper slopes of the Clyde Muirshiel Hills. Some flatter areas of more open ground lie at the foot of these slopes and include the former Broadlie Brick Works near the town's cemetery.
- Assessment Unit E: Rolling Farmed Slopes
These steeply rising hill slopes are cut by the narrow and deeply incised Lynn Glen lying to the south-west of the town. They are covered with well-managed hedged pastures, occasional small woodlands and compact dispersed farmsteads.

Photographs of key features around Dalry are included in Appendix H. Detailed assessment of the landscape and visual sensitivity of each of the above AUs is set out in Table 17 which follows.

Table 17: Garnock Valley Settlements – Sensitivity Assessment of Dalry

Sensitivity Criteria	AU A –Valley Floor	AU B – Fragmented Valley Floor	AU C – Eastern Valley Side
<i>Landscape character and role</i>	The floodplain pastures and wetland scrub, lying east of the B714 and immediately south of the Dalry form an uncluttered rural foreground to views of the town from the south. A smaller area of floodplain pasture occurs to the north of the railway station. The southern pastures make a strong contribution to the scenic landscape setting of the town to the south and west. Development on this area would be highly visible and would significantly diminish this landscape setting. While the small pocket of floodplain pastures north of the railway station is less visible, the secluded and intimately scaled character of this woodland-framed area, and its contribution to the attractive riverside setting of Dalry, increases susceptibility. <i>High susceptibility</i>	These parts of the valley floor are severed and strongly influenced by nearby residential development, roads and railway and would be of reduced susceptibility to development in terms of their character and landscape role. <i>Medium-low susceptibility</i>	Low undulating valley sides between the railway and A737 comprise a mix of farmland and some disturbed land. Disturbed ground and more gently sloping farmland would be less susceptible to housing development although the steep-sided holm of Pitcon and knoll of Carsehead are locally distinctive features and would be of increased susceptibility. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>
<i>Built character</i>	In views from the south, the impression of Dalry is of a tightly clustered settlement clearly associated with a slightly rise above the Garnock. Development on the flat floodplain pastures lying between the	These smaller and more fragmented areas of valley floor are less susceptible to development as the historic core of Dalry is not readily appreciated from these areas and they are additionally more	The satellite residential area on the Blair Road appears divorced from the core of Dalry although is close to the railway station and a sustainable walking and cycling route to the town. An existing

	B714 and the rising valley sides west of the railway line would be contrary to this original settlement form. <i>High susceptibility</i>	strongly influenced by existing housing on multiple boundaries. <i>Medium-low susceptibility</i>	housing allocation applies to the southern part of this AU and susceptibility is therefore reduced in terms of future built character. The distinctive features of Carsehead and Pitcon feature single 'hill-top' properties and would be of increased susceptibility to widespread development which could mask their form. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>
Settlement edges	The tree-lined River Garnock and a tributary provides a firm southern edge to Dalry which would be breached by development. The openness of the southern pastures and absence of strong landscape features able to provide a new robust settlement edge increases susceptibility although the A731 and B714 have some potential to provide future boundaries to development which could be strengthened by woodland planting. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>	The smaller areas of valley floor farmland lying to the east of the town are generally contained by railway embankments, mature trees and woodland which reduces susceptibility. <i>Low susceptibility</i>	The wooded Pitcon holm and the knoll of Carsehead form a firm edge to the north-east of Dalry (the former particularly important in providing some partial screening of the Drakemyre chemical works). The A737 by-pass provides a robust edge to the east with the route being in cutting with associated planting. <i>Medium susceptibility</i>
Views and visibility	These open floodplain pastures form the foreground of attractive views to Dalry from the south. Development on this area would significantly diminish the scenic quality of these views. <i>High susceptibility</i>	This AU comprises visually discrete pockets of flat farmland, which are partially screened by existing buildings and embankments. Although some areas lie close to key approach roads, any development would be seen in close conjunction with the urban area and would not impact on notably scenic views. <i>Medium-low susceptibility</i>	This AU is not generally widely visible although the wooded holm of Pitcon is seen from the Garnock valley and in views from the Kilbirnie road to the north-east of Dalry. Development would be seen in association with existing housing which would reduce intrusion although the more prominence Pitcon holm and Carsehead hills are of increased susceptibility. <i>Medium susceptibility</i>

<i>Landscape value</i>	The walking/cycling route across valley floor pastures between the station and other parts of the town is a valued recreational asset. The more diverse semi-natural wetland scrub and species-rich pasture close to the River Garnock is also of value. Development across much of this AU would significantly affect the recreational experience and perceived naturalness of floodplain pastures. <i>High-medium value</i>	These small areas of severed valley floor are of limited landscape value. <i>Low value</i>	There is some cultural heritage value associated with Pitcon House and its grounds. This AU is unlikely to be well-used for recreation. Some nature conservation interest is likely to be associated with developing scrub and riparian woodland in the area south of Carsehead Bridge. <i>Medium value</i>
Sensitivity	High	Medium-low	High-medium

Sensitivity Criteria	AU D – Wooded slopes	AU E – Rolling Farmed Slopes
<i>Landscape character and role</i>	The gently graded wooded slopes associated with the Broadlie Estate lie on the western edge of the town. Although the woodland on the estate is relatively young it is diverse in its composition. Some small areas of more open flatter and wetter ground (some of this disturbed) are present between the wooded slopes and the north-western edge of Dalry. The semi-natural woodlands within the lower Hindog Glen contribute to the attractive rural character and secluded feel of this landscape. Widespread housing development within this area would diminish this character and the setting it provides to Dalry. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>	This AU comprises relatively steep farmed slopes lying to the west of Dalry. The farmland comprises well-managed pastures enclosed by low hedgerows and with occasional small woodlands. The dramatic wooded Lynn Glen cuts through these slopes to the south-west of Dalry. Development of steeper slopes may involve intrusive cut and fill. It would diminish the rural backdrop these western hill slopes provide to Dalry (principally seen in views from open areas to the south of the town). Development located close to Lynn Glen would affect its landscape setting and the sense of naturalness and seclusion experienced by visitors to this well-known landscape feature. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>
<i>Built character</i>	These wooded slopes lie relatively close to the historic core of the town. Flatter and more open areas on the north-eastern edges of Dalry, including the former Broadlie brick works site, would relate well to existing urban areas which are located on similar terrain. The more densely wooded slopes would be of	The core of Dalry is strongly associated with lower slopes set above the River Garnock. The town has expanded westwards and eastwards onto higher hill slopes although this expansion has not resulted in widespread intrusion as it generally occupies more gently graded ground. Development on the steeper upper

	increased susceptibility due to the reduced influence of the urban area. <i>Medium susceptibility</i>	hill slopes of this AU would continue this pattern of expansion although it would conflict with the association of much of the town with generally less steeply graded terrain. <i>Medium susceptibility</i>
<i>Settlement edges</i>	The combination of sloping ground and woodland cover generally provides a robust settlement edge. Dispersed small scale housing could be located within woodland and still retain the firm edge provided to the denser urban core although susceptibility would increase if widespread felling occurred to accommodate substantial development. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>	More recent housing development has occurred on western hill slopes. The majority of this housing sits at the transition between more gently graded hill slopes and the steeper slopes of this AU. Thick scrub and tree planting forms a moderately firm edge to housing south of the A780 although other modern housing developments are unscreened. Development in this AU would breach the containment provided by these steeper slopes to the western edge of Dalry. These farmed slopes are open with little woodland able to form robust new settlement edges. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>
<i>Views and visibility</i>	Small pockets of flat wetter ground lying at the foot of these slopes are screened by existing buildings within the urban area. Woodland has the ability to provide screening depending on the extent of retention proposed. Widespread felling may open up views from limited parts of Dalry and the surrounding area (no significant vantage points have been identified). Views from recreational routes and roads could also be affected. <i>Medium susceptibility.</i>	Housing development on these steeper slopes would be visible from occasional elevated parts of the town and from the B780. The well-used recreational routes associated with the Lynn Glen increases susceptibility to development located so visible from promoted paths along the glen. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>
<i>Landscape value</i>	This AU has some recreational value, including the promoted Doggartland circular walk. Cultural heritage and local wildlife designations apply to the Hindog Glen and younger woodland also has biodiversity value. Widespread felling of woodland to accommodate development and the development itself would erode the value associated with this landscape. <i>High-medium value</i>	While the value associated with farmland is relatively low, the Lynn Glen is a key focus for walkers and is of national nature conservation interest. <i>Medium value</i>
Sensitivity	High-medium	High-medium

5.4.3 *Dalry - Key landscape and visual sensitivities*

- The open valley floor pastures which contribute to the attractive setting of Dalry in views from the south.
- The strong association of historic Dalry with a low knoll set above the floodplain of the River Garnock.
- Lynn Glen, a key recreational asset for the town and the surrounding steep farmed and wooded slopes to the west which provide a distinctly rural backdrop to Dalry.

5.4.4 *Dalry – Summary and guidance*

Figure 24 shows the sensitivity of each Assessment Unit. Guidance relating to each Assessment Unit is set out below:

- Assessment Unit A: Valley Floor – High sensitivity
These floodplain grasslands form a simple, undeveloped foreground to attractive views of Dalry from the south. Semi-natural scrub and wetland and a hidden pocket of riverside pasture (lying west and north of the railway station respectively) increases value in terms of biodiversity. This AU is additionally important in providing the setting to a well-used recreational route between the station and other parts of the town. Development of this valley floor would result in significant adverse effects on landscape character, on views and on the built form of Dalry and its landscape setting. It is recommended that housing development should be focused on less sensitive Assessment Units around Dalry.
- Assessment Unit B: Fragmented Valley Floor – Medium-low sensitivity
These parts of the valley floor are fragmented in character due to the severance of roads and railway and play less of an important role in the landscape setting of Dalry than AU A. While lying adjacent to the B714 on the north-eastern and southern approaches to the town, these areas are also close to existing residential areas and are partially screened by buildings, railway embankments and rising landform thus reducing susceptibility. Landscape accommodation works should focus on providing well-designed roadside plantings which would enhance the approaches to Dalry. Large stature trees such as oak, beech and maple should be used rather than short-lived smaller tree species. Garden boundaries visible from the B714 should not comprise close board fencing but rather beech/mixed hedges or stone walls.
- Assessment Unit C: Eastern Valley Sides – High-medium sensitivity
These low undulating valley sides east of the River Garnock lie close to the railway station. The satellite residential area on the Blair Road appears divorced from the core of the town although sustainable walking and cycling routes provide an attractive access route. An existing residential allocation applies to part of this area between the A737 by-pass and the railway to the south of existing housing on Blair Road and this will consolidate existing settlement if constructed. The remaining parts of this Assessment Unit comprise more complex disturbed ground, farmed hill slopes and the distinctive small knoll of

Carsehead and the wooded holm of Pitcon. The steep-sided Pitcon and Carsehead landforms, which play some role in providing visual containment of the Drakemyre works, would be sensitive to development. Disturbed ground and nearby farmland lying to the south of Carsehead Bridge would be less sensitive although clumps of more mature woodland and scrub and riparian woodlands in this area should be retained. This area is not readily visible and additionally lies close to existing housing. Steeper farmed slopes close to the A737 bypass should not be developed but planted with woodland to provide a buffer and reinforce the settlement edge.

- Assessment Unit D: Wooded Slopes – High-medium sensitivity

The wooded slopes associated with the Broadlie Estate lie on the western edge of the town. The combination of sloping ground and woodland cover provides a robust edge to Dalry. Although woodland planting is young, it is diverse in composition and has biodiversity value. The semi-natural woodlands within the Hindog Glen additionally contribute to the value associated with this landscape. Some small pockets of flat and more open ground lie at the foot of these slopes and these are visually less sensitive due to the screening provided by existing buildings on the edge of the town. Housing development could be accommodated in these small areas of flatter and less wooded ground with no significant landscape and visual impacts arising. The more densely wooded slopes in the vicinity of Broadlie House (where slopes are more gently graded) could accommodate some small-scale dispersed housing provided that clearance of woodland (and particularly broadleaved woodland) was minimised.

- Assessment Unit E: Rolling Farmed Slopes – High-medium sensitivity.

This area comprises relatively steep farmed slopes lying to the west of Dalry. These slopes are prominent in views from rare open elevated parts of the town and from the B714 and B780 where they form an attractive rural backdrop. Although more recent housing development has taken place on steeper western slopes above the town between the B780 and the minor road providing access to Broadlie House, further development in this AU could impact on the character of the Lynn Glen, adversely affecting the enjoyment of this valued recreational resource. It would also breach the containment provided by steeper slopes to the western edge of Dalry. Some very limited development could be more sensitively accommodated on lower, less prominent ground set well away from the Lynn Glen although a strong framework of woodland would need to be planted in advance to provide visual containment and a firm settlement edge.

5.4.5 *Dalry – Appraisal of specific sites*

Specific sites around Dalry are shown in Figure 25 and appraised in Table 18.

Table 18: Garnock Valley Settlements – Appraisal of specific sites around Dalry

Site reference	AU	Sensitivity	Potential mitigation
D1	D	<u>High sensitivity</u> This area comprises relatively steep farmed slopes lying to the west of Dalry. Although some more recent housing development has taken place on steeper western slopes above the town between the B781 and the minor road providing access to Broadlie House, this specific area would lie close to Lynn Glen and any development in this location could adversely affect the sense of seclusion and naturalness experienced from promoted walking routes near this important recreational resource. Potential development on this site could also breach the containment provided by steeper slopes to the western edge of the settlement.	Significant landscape and visual effects would be very difficult to mitigate. It is recommended that any development should be directed to less sensitive sites around Dalry.
D2	A	<u>High sensitivity</u> Although lying relatively close to key facilities within the town and the railway station, any development on this site would conflict with the form of the historic core of the settlement appreciated in key views from the south which is associated with a small hill set above the floodplain (and softened by many mature trees). The scenic contrast between smooth flat pastures and the town would be diminished. Increased flood risk may additionally inhibit development in this area.	Significant landscape and visual effects would be very difficult to mitigate. It is recommended that any development should be directed to less sensitive sites around Dalry.
D3	B	<u>Medium sensitivity</u> This area is less prominent in key views from the B714/A737 across the floodplain grassland of the Garnock Valley than D2. Any development on this site would appear slightly dislocated from the more clustered core of the town but would lie relatively close to schools and sustainable walking	This area is hemmed-in by busy roads and it is therefore recommended that safe crossings are created to provide sustainable walking and cycling access to the town centre, railway station and to Lynn Glen. Woodland should be planted on steeper slopes to the south-west to reinforce the containment provided by landform.

		routes to the railway station. The steeply rising slopes of Assessment Unit D have potential to provide a robust edge to any new residential development in this area.	
D4	B	<u>Medium sensitivity</u> A discrete site, which although visible from the approach to Dalry from the north-east on the old A737, would be visually associated with existing residential development lying west of the railway embankment which would reduce sensitivity.	Management and supplementary planting should be undertaken of the existing tree belt which partially screens the Drakemyre industrial works. Buildings should be set back from the road and garden boundaries visible on this approach to Dalry should comprise walls or hedges and avoid close board timber fencing. Scots pine and other mature trees on the edge of the public road should be retained where healthy and supplementary planting undertaken of tree species with a similarly large stature.
D5	D	<u>Medium sensitivity</u> This area is tucked away on lower-lying ground at the foot of wooded slopes and is well-screened by an existing building supplies facility, housing and woodland. It lies close to key facilities within the town. Poor drainage may be a constraint to any development on this site.	The visually discrete nature of this area would not require any specific mitigation measures to reduce landscape and visual effects.

6 KILWINNING

6.1 Character and landscape context overview

Kilwinning is an ancient town. Its abbey, which dates from 1187, comprises one of Scotland's finest ecclesiastical buildings. The abbey lies in the historic core of the town close to the pedestrianised Main Street. Kilwinning originally developed close to the River Garnock and textile mills were a feature along its banks. The town was also associated with coal mining and iron founding (the Eglinton Iron Works lay to the south-west of the town). Kilwinning was incorporated into the Irvine New Town in the 1960s and new housing areas were developed on farmland.

Figure 26 shows the relevant environmental designations and planning allocations immediately surrounding Kilwinning.

Key landscape and visual features of Kilwinning include:

- The relatively low-lying form of Kilwinning which is strongly associated with the River Garnock and contained by relatively low rolling farmland to the east and west.
- The abbey and associated buildings which lie in a small park in the historic core of the town.
- The River Garnock which is located in a deeply incised wooded glen in places but is more open to the south where it edges Almswall Park.
- The extensive Eglinton Country Park which lies to the south-east of the town and features numerous recreational routes and facilities such as community allotments.

6.2 Assessment Units

Six AUs have been defined around Kilwinning. These are shown in Figure 27 and are described below:

- Assessment Unit A: Incised Valley
The deeply incised valley of the River Garnock forms a key landscape feature on the north-eastern edge of Kilwinning. Steep slopes are open and grazed. Riparian woodlands align the river in places and are most extensive against the flatter floodplain pastures within the broad curve of the river north of Wood Farm.
- Assessment Unit B: Open Rolling Farmland
Rolling farmland forms a rising backdrop to areas of newer housing on the western and north-eastern edges of Kilwinning. Occasional pronounced small hills and ridgeline woodlands and tree rows are a feature of this Assessment Unit.

- Assessment Unit C: Semi-Contained Farmland
These areas of relatively low-lying farmland lie close to existing housing on the north-western and north-eastern edges of Kilwinning. Woodlands and rising ground provide a degree of containment to these areas.
- Assessment Unit D: Wooded Farmland
This gently undulating to flat landscape lies to the north of Eglinton Country Park. It has a diverse landcover of woodland, wetland and pasture and features many footpaths linking areas of housing to the country park.
- Assessment Unit E: Wooded Policies
A diverse landscape comprising the former policies of Eglinton Castle which lie north of Irvine and south-east of Kilwinning. This landscape has some remnant cultural heritage features and is designated as a Country Park. Extensive woodlands, grasslands and parkland characterise this area.
- Assessment Unit F: Fragmented Fringes
This assessment unit comprises areas of unmanaged pasture and scrub lying to the south of Kilwinning and bounded by the A78 and a railway line to the north and west. A narrow band of woodland aligns the railway line to the north and separates this area from recreation grounds on the southern fringes of Kilwinning.

Photographs of key features within and around Kilwinning are included in Appendix I.

Table 19: Garnock Valley Settlements – Kilwinning Sensitivity Assessment

Sensitivity Criteria	AU A – Incised Valley	AU B – Open Rolling Farmland	AU C – Semi-contained Farmland
<i>Landscape character and role</i>	The deeply incised valley of the River Garnock forms a key landscape feature on the north-eastern edge of Kilwinning. Steep valley sides would necessitate significant visually intrusive ground modelling to accommodate housing development. The continuity of the Garnock valley and the setting it provides to the town would be significantly affected if housing were developed on steep valley sides. <i>High susceptibility</i>	This rolling farmland is generally well-managed and has a strongly rural character. Occasional pronounced small hills and ridgeline woodlands and tree rows are present in places although this landscape has a predominantly open character. This landscape plays a role in providing a low backdrop of rolling farmland and a containing edge to Kilwinning which would be compromised by development. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>	These landscapes lie close to the urban edge of Kilwinning. They comprise managed pasture with a rural character but are strongly influenced by nearby housing. This AU is relatively low-lying and semi-contained by woodlands and the urban edge and this, together with the influence of nearby housing, reduces susceptibility. <i>Medium susceptibility</i>
<i>Built character</i>	The Garnock valley cuts a generally broad swathe through Kilwinning. While housing tightly abuts the valley in places, it is associated with less steeply incised parts of the river in the core of the town. Development in this AU would be contrary to the existing urban form which avoids steeply incised parts of the river. <i>High susceptibility</i>	Kilwinning is largely associated with lower lying ground, originally focussed on the River Garnock valley but considerably expanded to the west of the railway line. Development of these more elevated slopes would be contrary to the form and character of the existing settlement. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>	Some of these areas are relatively distant from the core of Kilwinning and key facilities. This AU does however lie close to existing housing and would occupy similar areas of lower lying ground. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>
<i>Settlement edges</i>	The existing settlement edge west of this AU formed by a recent housing development perched in an open location high above the river is intrusive. The density of housing, its proximity to the sensitive steep valley sides of this AU and the negative effects of timber boundary fencing and lack of any screening contribute to this intrusion. Development	Some woodland belts provide a strong containing edge against residential areas in the Whitehirst Park area to the west. The deeply incised River Garnock valley forms a distinct boundary to the urban areas in the north-east. The more elevated rolling farmland of this AU is also important in providing a containing edge	Existing woodland and more steeply rising landform have potential to contain any new development and form the basis for the creation of a robust settlement edge with additional planting. <i>Medium-low susceptibility</i>

	in this AU would diminish the distinctive boundary provided by the river and its steep sides to this part of Kilwinning, which while not capable of visually containing development, nonetheless forms a distinctive landscape feature. <i>High susceptibility</i>	to Kilwinning which would be breached by development. <i>High susceptibility</i>	
<i>Views and visibility</i>	Although not widely visible, there are views of this AU from the NCR 7 (which crosses the river on a high viaduct). Views are also possible over the valley from the minor road to the east. This deeply incised section of the Garnock forms a focus in these views which would be significantly affected by development. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>	This landscape is principally seen from rare more open parts of Kilwinning and from the minor road past Whithurst Farm. Castle Hill at the southern end of the AU is also visible from the A78. There are few footpaths in this area. <i>Medium susceptibility</i>	These areas are not highly visible due to their low-lying nature and their proximity to existing housing which provides a degree of screening. <i>Medium-low susceptibility</i>
<i>Landscape value</i>	The river valley forms a recreational resource in its lower reaches within the core of the town. While informal footpaths are present in this AU access is not presently promoted. NCR 7 is aligned on the viaduct of a former railway over the Garnock. The river corridor has limited riparian planting and heavily grazed valley sides but will have biodiversity value which would be eroded by development. <i>Medium value</i>	There is little value associated with this AU. <i>Low value</i>	There is generally limited value associated with this AU although the wooded policies of Smithstone House are defined as a LLHI. <i>Medium-low value</i>
Sensitivity	High	High-medium	Medium-low

Sensitivity Criteria	AU D – Undulating Wooded Farmland	AU E – Wooded Policies	AU F – Fragmented Fringes
<i>Landscape character and role</i>	This landscape has a distinctly secluded and rural character due to the extensive woodlands which screen the urban edges of Kilwinning. Landcover is diverse with a mix of wet woodland, scrub, pastures (some unmanaged) and broadleaved woodlands often located on higher ground. The woodlands in particular are an important feature of the landscape setting to Kilwinning, The strongly rural character of this AU would be diminished by widespread development. <i>High susceptibility</i>	A diverse landscape of extensive woodlands, parkland and grassland lying close to the Lugton Water. Cultural heritage features including the remains of Eglinton Castle add interest to this landscape. This landscape is an important part of the setting to Kilwinning and more locally to the north of Irvine. This landscape plays a role in the separation of the settlements of Irvine and Kilwinning. Widespread development of this AU would erode the distinct identity of the two settlements and significantly affect the diverse character of the landscape. <i>High susceptibility</i>	This AU lies on the southern fringes of Kilwinning comprising unmanaged flat former pastures bounded by the railway to the north and west and the A78 to the south. It is a fragmented landscape with no notable landform or vegetation features. While the urban area is largely screened by trees, this AU is heavily influenced by views of traffic on the A78 and noise. These factors reduce susceptibility to development. <i>Medium-low susceptibility.</i>
<i>Built character</i>	Although this AU lies close to existing residential areas, there is generally a strong sense of detachment from Kilwinning heightened by the rolling landform and extensive woodland cover. Susceptibility is reduced where more open fields lie adjacent to the A737 and nearby housing is more visible. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>	These former estate lands have some visitor facilities in the west and a small area of new housing is also associated with the stables block. Kilwinning lies to the west and is closely associated with the Garnock valley. Irvine is located to the south. Widespread development of this AU would merge the separate identities of Kilwinning and Irvine. More discrete new housing development could however be accommodated with minimal effects on the character of existing settlements. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>	This landscape is important in separating the settlements of Kilwinning and Stevenson. It also feels divorced from the town with this perceived detachment reinforced by the strong boundary provided by trees and the railway. Development would be isolated with little relationship to Kilwinning. <i>High susceptibility</i>
<i>Settlement edges</i>	Woodland provides a robust containing edge to Kilwinning which would be breached by housing development on all but the more open western parts of this	This well-wooded landscape provides a robust containing edge to the urban edges of Kilwinning to the west and Irvine to the south. Large scale development within	The tree-lined railway forms the southern edge Kilwinning and is backed by open playing fields. Development would breach this existing strong containing edge.

	AU which lie close to the existing urban edge and the A737. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>	this AU (which involved widespread removal of woodland) would breach this strong buffer. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>	<i>High susceptibility</i>
<i>Views and visibility</i>	Views into this area are often limited by woodland. There are some views of more open ground on the western edge of this AU from the A737. There are also views from minor roads and from the many footpaths within the AU. Views from the more well-visited core of the Eglinton Country Park are largely screened by woodland. <i>Medium susceptibility</i>	Woodland provides screening from the surrounding area including from key routes such as the A78. This landscape (and particularly the western part of the Country Park) is well-used for recreation which increases visual susceptibility. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>	This area is visible from the A78 although it would be seen at speed. Development on this area could contribute to the perceived merging of settlements appreciated from the road. The Ayrshire Coastal Path is aligned through this landscape. While views from the path are not scenic or tranquil development could diminish the experience of walkers to some degree. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>
<i>Landscape value</i>	Part of this AU is designated as the Eglinton Country Park. A local nature reserve is present at Corsehillmuir Wood. There are a number of promoted walking and cycling routes in this landscape. Widespread development would be likely to significantly diminish the value associated with this landscape. <i>High-medium value</i>	This landscape lies within the Eglinton Country Park and the Eglinton Castle GDL. The western part of the Park is particularly well-used for recreation. There are valued cultural heritage features and woodlands, wetlands and grassland within the Park have biodiversity value. Sourlie Wood local nature reserve lies on the eastern edge of this AU. Widespread development would be likely to significantly diminish the value associated with this landscape. <i>High-medium value</i>	The Ayrshire Coastal Path is the only feature of value in this landscape. There may be some adverse effects on the experience of walkers although this is likely to be limited due to this section of the route being less scenic. <i>Medium value</i>
Sensitivity	High-medium	High-medium	High-medium

6.3 Kilwinning - Key landscape and visual sensitivities

- The strong edge provided to Kilwinning by woodland lying to the east (within the wider area of the Eglinton Country Park)
- The setting of the River Garnock and its often deeply incised valley.
- More elevated rolling farmland which provides a low backdrop to the west and north-east of the town.

6.4 Kilwinning – Summary and guidance

Figure 28 shows the sensitivity of each Assessment Unit. Guidance relating to each Assessment Unit is set out below:

- Assessment Unit A: Incised Valley – High sensitivity
The deeply incised valley of the River Garnock forms a key landscape feature on the north-eastern edge of Kilwinning. Steep valley sides would necessitate significant visually intrusive ground modelling to accommodate housing development. The continuity of the Garnock valley and the setting it provides to the town increases sensitivity to housing development in this Assessment Unit. Development of this valley would result in significant adverse effects on landscape character, on views and on the built form of Kilwinning and its landscape setting. It is recommended that housing development should be focused on less sensitive Assessment Units around Kilwinning.
- Assessment Unit B: Open Rolling Farmland – High-medium sensitivity
This area of rolling elevated farmland, although not visually prominent from the town, plays a role in providing a low rural backdrop and a containing edge to Kilwinning. A sense of seclusion can be felt within the western part of this AU in particular due to the screening effects of the rolling ridge and the consequent limited visibility of Kilwinning. Any development on this Assessment Area would be contrary to the form and character of Kilwinning which is largely associated with lower-lying ground set either side of the Garnock valley.
- Assessment Unit C: Semi-contained Farmland – Medium-low sensitivity
Two areas of semi-contained farmland occur to the north-east and north-west of Kilwinning. These landscapes lie close to the urban edge of Kilwinning and they comprise managed pastures which are strongly influenced by nearby housing. This AU is relatively low-lying and existing woodlands would provide robust new boundaries to development provided some supplementary planting was provided to plug gaps. Care should be taken to minimise any effects on the character and value associated with the Smithston House LLHI.
- Assessment Unit D: Wooded Farmland – High-medium sensitivity
The secluded and diverse rural character of this landscape increases sensitivity to development. The extensive woodlands covering this Assessment Unit are an important part of the landscape setting to Kilwinning and they provide a robust containing edge to the existing housing. Sensitivity is reduced where more open ground lying on the western edges of this Assessment Unit is influenced by the

A737 and nearby residential areas. There is scope for a limited amount of well-designed housing to be located in these areas provided woodlands remained intact and were managed to ensure their longevity.

- Assessment Unit E: Wooded Policies – High-medium sensitivity
The recreational, nature conservation and cultural heritage value associated with Eglinton Country Park increases sensitivity and this landscape is also important in providing strong separation of Kilwinning and Irvine. While some small areas of well-designed new housing could be sited in visually discrete parts of this landscape or could be associated with existing built development to reduce intrusion, this would erode the character of this landscape and its associated value. It would also be contrary to the form and character of the settlements of Kilwinning and Irvine. It is recommended that housing development should be focused on less sensitive Assessment Units around Kilwinning.
- Assessment Unit F: Fragmented Farmland
While this landscape does not have a distinctive and positive character, its importance in providing separation of the settlements of Kilwinning and Stevenson increases susceptibility. This area additionally feels divorced from Kilwinning with this perceived detachment reinforced by the strong boundary provided by woodland and the railway. It is recommended that housing development should be focused on less sensitive Assessment Units around Kilwinning.

6.5 Kilwinning – Appraisal of specific sites

Specific sites around Kilwinning are shown in Figure 29 and are appraised in Table 20.

Table 20: Appraisal of specific sites around Kilwinning

Site reference	AU	Sensitivity	Potential mitigation
KW1	C	<u>Medium-low sensitivity</u> The more gently graded lower slopes of this site would be less susceptible to potential housing development. These lower slopes lie close to existing housing and would be less visible than the steeper slopes which should not be developed.	Woodland should be planted on steeper western slopes to create a robust edge to any new development.
KW2	C	<u>Medium sensitivity</u> This is a visually discrete site located adjacent to existing housing. Woodlands at Smithstone House provide robust containment to the north. Existing hedgerows also provide some screening from the minor road. Development on this site would be fairly distant from the core of Kilwinning and there are no existing sustainable walking and cycling routes providing links to key facilities such as the station and schools.	Retain existing hedgerows and plant native trees alongside them. Scope for creating sustainable travel routes are likely to be limited.
KW3	C/A	<u>High-medium sensitivity</u> The steep slopes of the deeply incised River Garnock would be highly susceptible to development. The more gently graded basin north of Melvin House and newly constructed housing has a reduced susceptibility although the setting of Wood Farm and the river are sensitive and this site also lies on the approach to Kilwinning from the north.	Any development on this site should be located on gently dished fields lying between Melvin House and Wood Farm. Housing should be set well back from the River Garnock, the steep valley sides and the diverse riparian woodlands present in this area. It should also be set back from the A737 with the density of housing reduced at this frontage seen on the approach to Kilwinning. Trees of large stature (such as beech, oak and maple) and beech/hornbeam hedge should be planted along the road frontage.
KW4	C	<u>Medium sensitivity</u>	Existing woodlands in this area should be retained and a management plan agreed to ensure their longevity.

		This site comprises a shallow basin which is contained in the main by mature woodland. This site lies close to existing housing and a new cemetery. Any development on this site should be located on the lower and more visually contained fields and should not rise up the slopes to the east and north. A small triangular area of open ground west of Corsehillmuir Wood Nature Reserve and a smaller woodland should not be developed but should instead be planted with native trees to provide a buffer to this nature reserve.	Hedgerows should be retained on the northern edge of this area and supplementary planting of native trees should be undertaken to enhance screening.
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7 IRVINE

7.1 Character and landscape context overview

Irvine originally developed at the confluence of the Rivers Irvine and Garnock which provided one of the few sheltered anchorages on the lower Firth of Clyde. The medieval town was a Royal Burgh from 1372. The 16th century was a period of great prosperity for Irvine due to trade with Ireland and further afield. The port's prosperity continued into the early 19th century and ship building was undertaken at Fullerton. The port was in decline by the late 19th century as other upper Clyde ports became more important. Irvine was selected as one of Scotland's New Towns in 1966. The Rivergate Centre which spans the River Irvine formed a key focus of the development of the New Town. A new road network and housing areas extended to the east and industries were located mainly to the south in the Shewalton area and also close to the A78 which is aligned through the centre of the town.

Figure 30 shows relevant environmental designations and planning allocations immediately surrounding Irvine.

Key landscape and visual features of Irvine include:

- The High Street, Townhead and Eglinton Street and the Harbourside at Fullerton in the town's historic core which feature many interesting buildings.
- Extensive open space against the coast including the well-used Irvine Beach Park located on dune grassland abutting the wide sandy beach and several golf courses further to the south. The openness of the coast allows expansive views over the Firth of Clyde to Arran and Ailsa Craig and part of this coastal grassland is nationally important for nature conservation.
- Open and expansive saltmarsh, wetland and grassland associated with the Garnock estuary which lies close to the town centre and which is nationally important for nature conservation.
- The strong containment provided to housing and other built development by generous woodland belts around and within Irvine and the abundance of recreational routes and green space. The wooded valley of the River Irvine contributes to the well-integrated character of the planned New Town. Mature trees dotted throughout the settlement give a very wooded appearance particularly in elevated views.
- The well-managed farmland which abuts the eastern edge of Irvine and remnant policy, grassland and parkland associated with Eglinton Country Park which lies to the north between Irvine and Kilwinning.

7.2 Assessment Units

Six AUs have been defined around Irvine. These are shown in Figure 31 and are described below:

- Assessment Unit A: Coastal Dune Grassland
Extensive undulating coastal grassland lies adjacent to the long sandy beach of Irvine Bay stretching southwards from the mouth of the Garnock to Barassie. The Beach Park lies in the north while a number of golf courses lie either side of the railway line to Ayr which bisects this Assessment Area and to the south of Assessment Unit B. The Ayrshire Coastal Path is aligned through this Assessment Unit.
- Assessment Unit B: Fragmented Coastal Grassland
This landscape lies to the south of more managed coastal grassland and is characterised by semi-redundant small holdings and two isolated housing developments associated with former MOD use of this area. Gorse and willow scrub patterns the rough grassland around built development.
- Assessment Unit C: Coastal Plain with Industry
This flat to very gently undulating plain lies to the south of Irvine and close to the South Ayrshire boundary. It abuts the edge of the Shewalton industrial area and comprises farmland, remnant moss and wetlands and belts of mixed woodland. Much of this area is covered by local wildlife reserve designations and is managed by the Scottish Wildlife Trust. The area is bounded by busy roads which provide access to industrial development.
- Assessment Unit D: Undulating Farmland
This swathe of farmland wraps around the eastern edge of Irvine. The landform varies from gently undulating to flat south of Perceton and close to the Annick Water with more rolling landform and some distinct knolls present in the Dreghorn area and to the north-east of Irvine. Farmland mostly comprises well-managed pastures enclosed by hedgerows and with field boundary trees and policy influenced woodlands present in some areas.
- Assessment Unit E: Wooded Policies
A diverse landscape comprising the former policies of Eglinton Castle which lie north of Irvine and south-east of Kilwinning. This landscape has some remnant cultural heritage features and is designated as a Country Park. Extensive woodlands, grasslands and parkland characterise this area.
- Assessment Unit F: Estuarine Grassland
The broad estuary of the River Garnock has a distinctive open character comprising diverse mudflats, marsh and grassland. While the river and estuarine flats have a natural character this landscape is more modified in parts due to the presence of features such as a redundant racecourse, a recycling facility, derelict structures associated with the Nobel explosives site and the railway line which crosses the area. Golf courses lie either side of the railway line and the Ayrshire Coastal Path is aligned through this landscape.

Photographs of key features within and around Irvine are included in Appendix J.

Table 21: Irvine Sensitivity Assessment

Sensitivity Criteria	AU A – Coastal Dune Grassland	AU B – Fragmented Coastal Grassland	AU C – Coastal Plain with Industry
<i>Landscape character and role</i>	The long sandy beach, and the extensive undulating coastal dune grassland which backs it, is an important part of Irvine's landscape setting. The parts of this AU which lie closer to the coast and which are less influenced by urban development are of increased susceptibility due to the sense of naturalness and seclusion that can be experienced. <i>High susceptibility</i>	Flat to very gently undulating rough grassland bordering the coast but severed by the railway. Isolated housing development is prominent due to the openness of this landscape. Disturbed ground is colonised by broom and gorse and the landscape has an unmanaged and fragmented appearance. These factors reduce susceptibility to development. <i>Medium-low susceptibility</i>	This is a fragmented landscape which is strongly influenced by nearby large-scale industrial buildings and other built infrastructure including wind turbines and a solar farm. Large open fields and pockets of moss, water bodies and wetland are interspersed with mixed woodland belts. Woodlands provide some screening of nearby industry and a sense of seclusion can be experienced within some of the more contained areas of wetland despite the proximity of very large infrastructure. Susceptibility is increased where the landscape is more diverse (wetlands and woodlands) and secluded but decreases where farmland in the north-east is simpler, more open and influenced by nearby industry. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>
<i>Built character</i>	Historic Irvine is largely associated with the mouth of the River Garnock. Later development as part of the New Town expansion has extended settlement inland to the west. While some industrial development lies on former coastal grassland south-east of the harbour housing is generally not associated with the exposed and sandy coastal edge.	This AU is isolated from the core of Irvine and from key facilities. It lies closer to Barassie and Troon in South Ayrshire. Industrial development in nearby Shewalton influences views from this AU and there are filtered views of the urban edge of Barassie. Additional housing development on this area could improve	This landscape is physically and perceptually divorced from the core of Irvine due in part to the dominance of nearby industrial development. The small village of Drybridge, which is strongly associated with the River Irvine, lies nearby and has a distinct character, retaining a village feel. A more recent housing development abuts the village to

	Areas lying further inland and which are more influenced by urban development would be of reduced susceptibility. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>	the arbitrary appearance of existing housing if well-designed. <i>Medium susceptibility</i>	the north-west. Extensive development in this AU would diminish the character of Drybridge and would have little relationship to the core of Irvine. <i>High susceptibility</i>
<i>Settlement edges</i>	The A78 and A737 and woodland planting associated with these roads form robust screening boundaries to industrial development and some residential areas which lie on the urban edge. This containment could be breached by development on this AU especially areas closer to the coast which is more open and less influenced by the urban edge. Susceptibility is reduced in the north-east where woodland and the existing urban edge could provide strong edges to any new development. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>	The nearby urban edge of Barassie is semi-contained by woodland. This is an open landscape with no landform features and little woodland able to provide a ready containing edge although the prominence of existing housing reduces susceptibility. <i>Medium susceptibility</i>	Drybridge village lies adjacent to open farmland with little in the way of screening vegetation although more recent housing lying to the north-west of the village is well-screened by woodland and stone walls. Existing woodlands on much of this AU provide scope to create new robust boundaries to housing development. <i>Medium susceptibility</i>
<i>Views and visibility</i>	This landscape is visible from the railway, the public road which winds through the northern part of this AU and from the Ayrshire Coastal Path. It is also visible from the well-used golf courses which occupy much of this area. Development on this AU could interrupt long seaward views to Arran and Ailsa Craig which are a feature of this coast although more inland areas would be less susceptible in terms of views over the Firth of Clyde. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>	This AU is seen in close views from the A759 but less so from the A78 due to screening by woodland. While views from the coast would be limited by the dune landform, there may be some visibility from the railway. The presence of existing housing and relative proximity of the urban area of Barassie reduces susceptibility. <i>Medium-low susceptibility</i>	The open farmland lying in the south-east of this AU is highly visible from surrounding roads. Pockets of wetland and water bodies are less visible due to screening by woodland and by nearby infrastructure. The visual dominance of nearby industry generally reduces susceptibility. <i>Medium susceptibility</i>
<i>Landscape value</i>	The Beach Park, Ayrshire Coastal Path and golf courses are well-used recreational resources. A SSSI covers the	There is little value associated with this AU. <i>Low value</i>	Local nature conservation designated sites cover much of this AU and include Shewalton Woodlands and Shewalton

	southern part of the coastal grassland west of the railway line. Gailes Marsh local Nature Reserve also covers an area of woodland and wetland inland and is surrounded by an active golf course. Widespread development of this AU, and particularly development closer to the coast, would significantly diminish the value associated with this landscape. <i>High-medium value</i>		Sandpits reserves managed by Scottish Wildlife Trust. These sites are also promoted for recreational use. Farmland is less valued. <i>High-medium value</i>
Sensitivity	High-medium	Medium-low	High-medium

Sensitivity Criteria	AU D – Undulating Farmland	AU E – Wooded Policies	AU F – Estuarine Grassland
<i>Landscape character and role</i>	This swathe of generally well-managed farmland wraps around the eastern edge of Irvine. The landform varies from gently undulating to flat south of Perceton and close to the Annick Water with more rolling landform and some distinct knolls present in the Dreghorn area and to the north-east of Irvine. Intact hedgerows, field boundary trees, woodlands and some policy features (planted roundals and parkland) contribute to the diverse and strongly rural character of this landscape. This distinctive character would be significantly eroded by widespread development in this AU. <i>High susceptibility</i>	A diverse landscape of extensive woodlands, parkland and grassland lying close to the Lugton Water. Cultural heritage features including the remains of Eglinton Castle add interest to this landscape. This landscape is an important part of the setting to Kilwinning and more locally to the north of Irvine. This landscape plays a role in the separation of the settlements of Irvine and Kilwinning. Widespread development of this AU would erode the distinct identity of the two settlements and significantly affect the diverse character of the landscape. <i>High susceptibility</i>	This AU has a distinctive character influenced by the openness of the River Garnock and its associated wetlands and marsh. The river and estuarine flats have a natural character although a perception of fragmentation and modification also occurs in parts of this AU due to the presence of a redundant racecourse, the railway line, a tip/recycling area, derelict structures associated with the Nobel explosives site and a solar farm. The natural character of the Garnock and its associated wetlands would be significantly affected by development in the western part of this AU. The more modified eastern area would be less susceptible to development. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>

<i>Built character</i>	This rural landscape is sparsely settled with a settlement pattern characterised by isolated farm cottages, estate buildings, farms and occasional small villages. The influence of nearby Irvine is not strongly felt due to woodland associated with the Annick Water valley and planted around most housing areas. An exception to this is recent housing on the north-eastern edge of Perceton which occupies an elevated site and is visually exposed. Development would diminish the clear distinction between this well-managed strongly rural area and the urban area. <i>High susceptibility</i>	These former estate lands have some visitor facilities in the west and a small area of new housing is also associated with the stables block. Kilwinning lies to the west and is closely associated with the Garnock valley. Irvine is located to the south. Widespread development of this AU would merge the separate identities of Kilwinning and Irvine and would conflict with the largely unsettled character of this AU. More discrete new housing development associated with existing built development could however be accommodated with minimal effects on the character of existing settlements. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>	Although some isolated residential development is located south-west of Ravenspark Golf Course, this AU is not settled with Irvine largely being associated with the A737 and away from the wetter ground of the Garnock estuary. The area to the east of the railway line would be of reduced susceptibility because of its association with existing residential development and closer proximity to the urban area. Development west of the railway line would be contrary to the existing form of Irvine and additionally physically and perceptually distant from the core of the town. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>
<i>Settlement edges</i>	Robust edges to Irvine are provided by a framework of woodlands associated with the Annick Water and planted against older New Town housing areas. Development in much of this AU would breach the existing strong containment of the urban area. More rolling landform and existing small woodlands provide some scope to create new robust settlement boundaries in some parts of this AU. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>	This well-wooded landscape provides a robust containing edge to the urban edges of Kilwinning to the west and Irvine to the south. Large scale development within this AU (which involved widespread removal of woodland) would breach this strong buffer. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>	This is an open flat landscape with few woodlands able to provide a new robust settlement boundary. Susceptibility is increased in the more open coastal flats west of the railway line. Existing residential development lying to the SW of Ravenspark Golf Course is isolated and intrusive. Woodlands on the Ravenspark Golf Course could provide a degree of screening to any new housing. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>
<i>Views and visibility</i>	Views of this AU are principally from the network of minor roads in the area and from footpaths along the Annick Water and disused railway line routes. There is an important view of the eastern part of this area from the monument on the summit of a small hill at Dreghorn and	Woodland provides screening from the surrounding area including from key routes such as the A78. This landscape (and particularly the western part of the Country Park) is well-used for recreation which increases visual susceptibility. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>	The openness of much of this area increases susceptibility in terms of the potential visual effects of housing development. There are views of this area from the A78, the railway and the Ayrshire Coastal Path and also from Irvine harbour. Eastern areas which are more visually

	development in this view would be significantly intrusive due to the openness of the landscape and would diminish the attractive rural setting this landscape provides to Irvine. Susceptibility is reduced in some areas due to the less prominent nature of low-lying landform and the localised influence of newer less well-screened housing development. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>		contained by woodlands and existing buildings are less susceptible to development. <i>High-medium susceptibility</i>
<i>Landscape value</i>	An extensive Local Nature Conservation Site is associated with the Annick valley and covers part of this AU. Small woodlands dispersed more widely across the AU are also covered by a similar designation. Hedgerows and trees have biodiversity value and there is some recreational use associated with footpaths along the Annick Water and the minor roads which are used by cyclists. The policies of Perceton House and Bournetreehill defined as LLHs lie close to the western boundary of this AU while Annick Lodge GDL lies within the NW part of this AU. <i>High-medium value</i>	This landscape lies within the Eglinton Country Park and the western part lies within the Eglinton Castle Inventory listed GDL. The western part of the Park is particularly well-used for recreation. There are valued cultural heritage features and woodlands, wetlands and grassland within the Park have biodiversity value. Sourlie Wood local nature reserve lies on the eastern edge of this AU. <i>High-medium value</i>	National and local nature conservation designations are associated with the Garnock estuary. There is also some recreational use with two golf courses located either side of the railway line. The Ayrshire Coastal Path is aligned through this AU. <i>High-medium value</i>
Sensitivity	High-medium	High-medium	High-medium

7.3 Irvine - Key landscape and visual sensitivities

- The generous open spaces and woodlands around and within the town with many of these planned as part of the New Town development and which are a key part of the identity of Irvine.
- The strongly rural setting to the town provided by well-managed farmland to the east and the woodlands, grasslands and parkland within the Eglinton Country Park to the north.
- The extensive open semi-natural grasslands which provide the immediate hinterland to the coast and an important part of the landscape and natural setting of Irvine.

7.4 Irvine – Summary and guidance

Figure 32 shows the sensitivity of each Assessment Unit. Guidance relating to each Assessment Unit is set out below:

- Assessment Unit A: Coastal Dune Grassland – High-medium sensitivity
The extensive coastal grasslands which back Irvine Bay are an important part of the setting to the town. They provide a rich recreational resource and an area close to the coast is also nationally important for nature conservation. A sense of seclusion and naturalness can be experienced close to the coast although the urban area exerts a greater influence inland to the north-east. Much of this AU is of high sensitivity to new housing development which would be contrary to the form of the town and visually prominent in this open coastal landscape. There may be scope to locate housing however in a more visually discrete area in the north-east of this AU (presently occupied by the Glasgow Golf Course) which is bounded by urban development on three sides. Some additional woodland planting would be beneficial in this area to strengthen screening in places.
- Assessment Unit B: Fragmented Coastal Grassland -Medium-low sensitivity
The presence of existing isolated housing on this area of open coastal grassland reduces sensitivity. Additional housing development could be accommodated provided this was designed to ameliorate the appearance of existing development. Colonising willow and pine scrub should form the basis for additional woodland planting designed to provide greater integration of built development with the landscape. Sustainable walking and cycling routes should be provided to nearby Barassie.
- Assessment Unit C: Coastal Plain with Industry – High-medium sensitivity
The nature conservation interest of much of this AU, together with its perceptual and physical distance from the core of Irvine, increases sensitivity to development. Sensitivity is reduced close to Drybridge where a small housing development, related to the existing pattern and character of settlement, could be accommodated provided that new woodland planting was undertaken to provide a containing edge to the south-west.

- Assessment Unit D: Undulating Farmland – High-medium
The farmland which abuts the eastern and north-eastern edges of Irvine generally has a well-managed, diverse and strongly rural character. The urban edges of Irvine have minimal influence due to the strong screening provided by woodlands and particularly those associated with the Annick valley. These factors increase the sensitivity of this landscape. Development within this AU would have significant effects on landscape character, on views and on the form and character of Irvine. It is recommended that housing development should be focused on less sensitive Assessment Units around Irvine.
- Assessment Unit E: Wooded Policies – High-medium sensitivity
The recreational, nature conservation and cultural heritage value associated with Eglinton Country Park increases sensitivity and this landscape is also important in providing strong separation of Kilwinning and Irvine. While some small areas of well-designed new housing could be sited in visually discrete parts of this landscape or could be associated with existing built development to reduce intrusion, this would erode the character of this landscape and its associated value. It would also be contrary to the form and character of the settlements of Kilwinning and Irvine. It is recommended that housing development should be focused on less sensitive Assessment Units around Irvine.
- Assessment Unit F: Estuarine Grassland – High-medium sensitivity
The openness and nature conservation value of the Garnock estuary increases sensitivity of the western part of this Assessment Unit. The area lying east of the railway line has a more fragmented and obviously modified character and additionally lies closer to the urban area. There may be scope to accommodate housing development west of the A737 (presently occupied by the Ravenspark Golf Course) where existing woodland and trees could provide some containment. An existing isolated and poorly integrated area of housing north-west of Towns Moor could also be ameliorated by additional well-designed new housing and associated new woodland planted to provide a screening buffer between the railway line and the recycling area.

7.5 Irvine – Strategic Development Areas

Two Strategic Development Areas identified in LDP2 lie on the southern and northern edges of Irvine. While these areas have not been considered in detail in the sensitivity assessment due to this allocation, the Council requested some general commentary on their suitability to accommodate development in the context of this study. Both areas were visited during our field work undertaken for the study.

7.5.1 Strategic Development Area – i3 Irvine

An expansive long-vacant Business and Industry allocation site lies between the River Irvine and the A71. This site has some biodiversity interest especially where wet woodland is present near the river. It lies close to existing industry but also to the residential areas of Dreghorn and key facilities such as schools to the north. Ample recreational opportunities are provided along the River Irvine and the site is well-screened by woodland and the existing urban edge. This site would be of lower

sensitivity to housing development should its allocation be reconsidered in the future LDP.

7.5.2 Strategic Development Area – Montgomerie Park, Irvine (eastern area)

This area is bounded by the A78 dual carriageway to the west and existing housing on the edge of Irvine to the south. The area is split by the B7080 with development consented under the Simplified Planning Zone in the western area. The eastern area forms Specific Site IR1 which is considered in Table 22. This area lies within Eglinton Country Park but within its less frequented periphery and close to main roads and the urban edge of Irvine. It does not lie within the Eglinton House Inventory listed Garden and Designed Landscape (GDL). The area is well screened by mature woodland and it does not play a key role in providing a buffer between Kilwinning and Irvine due to the extensive wooded policies of Eglinton lying to the west. The Sourlie Wood Nature Reserve borders the area to the north-east and a dense area of scrub woodland on the northern boundary of the area is also of interest for nature conservation. Our appraisal of this area as Specific Site IR1 concludes that some housing development could be accommodated on the lower southern part of the site which lies relatively close to other residential areas and key facilities. Denser areas of scrub woodland located on rising ground in the north and in the eastern corner of this area close to the A736 should be retained and managed.

7.6 Irvine – Appraisal of specific sites

Specific sites around Irvine are shown in Figure 33 and appraised in Table 22.

Table 22: Appraisal of specific sites around Irvine

Site reference	AU	Sensitivity	Potential mitigation
IR1	E	<u>High-medium sensitivity</u> This site is bounded by busy roads to the south although to the north and east it abuts extensive woodland, including Sourlie Wood Nature Reserve which lies to the north-east. This site lies within the Eglinton Country Park but outwith the Eglinton Castle GDL. The landcover of the site is diverse comprising unmanaged grassland with extensive areas of scrub woodland. This site has some biodiversity value which would be diminished especially if widespread development occurred. The site does not appear to be well used for recreation and it lies within the less frequented periphery of the Eglinton Country Park. While this site lies relatively close to existing residential areas the presence of busy roads between the site and key facilities in Irvine gives a sense of detachment.	More concentrated areas of scrub woodland and areas of species rich grassland lying on the northern and eastern parts of this site close to the A736 should be retained and managed. Any housing should be located on lower more open ground which lies closer to the urban edge of Irvine. Additional buffer planting should be provided against busy roads to screen and reduce noise. Safe crossings of these roads should also be provided for walkers and cyclists with through routes to key facilities within the core of Irvine.
IR2	D	<u>High-medium sensitivity</u> This site lies close to a recent housing development at Elder Crescent (see photographs in Appendix J). This recent housing area is insensitively located and designed and contrasts with the design approach characteristic of the Irvine New Town because of its elevation, lack of woodland screening and consequent prominence. While any development on this lower-lying site could be designed to mitigate the intrusive effect of this recent housing (by including more woodland planting to screen existing exposed edges for example) it would be located some considerable distance from the core of Irvine and would extend	Significant landscape and visual effects would be very difficult to mitigate. It is recommended that any development should be directed to less sensitive sites around Irvine.

		development into a strongly rural landscape. It may also diminish the setting of the nearby Annick Lodge GDL.	
IR3	D	<u>High sensitivity</u> This site lies close to the Annick Water. It comprises well-managed low-lying farmland and forms an important part of the high-quality rural setting to Irvine to the east. The Annick Water and associated riparian woodland provides a robust edge to Irvine which would be breached by development on this site. Development on this area would be highly visible from the well-frequented monument viewpoint on a small hill at Dreghorn. Part of this site is also covered by a Local Nature Conservation Site which increases the value associated with this landscape.	Significant landscape and visual effects would be very difficult to mitigate. It is recommended that any development should be directed to less sensitive sites around Irvine.
IR4	D	<u>Medium-low sensitivity</u> The small, clustered settlement of Springside is clearly separated from Irvine. This site is relatively low-lying and is screened by existing housing and the wooded embankments of a disused railway on three sides. Housing in this area would have a strong relationship to the existing settlement and could be readily assimilated with minimal adverse landscape and visual effects.	No particular mitigation measures are proposed due to the visually discrete nature of this site and its close association with Springside.
IR5	D	<u>High sensitivity</u> This site forms the steep slopes of a locally prominent hill in the Dreghorn area. The hill has a monument, small woodland encircled by a footpath and a seating area at its summit and is a popular viewpoint giving wide-reaching views across Irvine and the Firth of Clyde. Existing housing is located at the foot of this hill to the west and south. The steep slopes would necessitate considerable ground modification to accommodate building platforms and there would be significant intrusion on the setting of this hill and on views from its summit and circular path. In addition, this hill forms a	Significant landscape and visual effects would be very difficult to mitigate. It is recommended that any development should be directed to less sensitive sites around Irvine.

		strong containing edge to existing urban development which would be breached by development.	
IR6	B	<u>Medium-low sensitivity</u> Although this site is divorced from Irvine, development could relate to, and improve the appearance of, existing isolated housing already located in this area of coastal grassland.	Areas of willow and pine scrub should be retained and should be used to form the basis for more substantial areas of woodland planting designed to contain and help integrate an expanded area of housing. Housing on this area would lie closer to Barassie than Irvine and sustainable off-road walking and cycling routes should be established to provide access to key facilities to this closer settlement. Links should also be provided to the footbridge over the railway which gives access to the beach.

8 RECOMMENDATIONS ON POTENTIAL GREEN BELT DESIGNATION

8.1 Introduction

The assessment set out in this report has considered the sensitivity of landscapes surrounding twelve key settlements within North Ayrshire to potential housing development. This assessment has allowed us to identify particularly vulnerable areas where settlement expansion would be likely to have significant effects on landscape character, on views and on the character and identity of settlements. Green belt designation around settlements may be an effective tool in limiting urban expansion and we have therefore initially considered NPF4 Policy on green belts, and the policy outcomes associated with such a designation, prior to making recommendations for the appropriateness of its use in North Ayrshire.

8.2 NPF4 Policy on Green Belts

NPF4 Policy 8 sets out the policy intention of green belts as *'To encourage, promote and facilitate compact urban growth and use the land around our towns and cities sustainably'*. The following policy outcomes associated with green belt designation are listed:

- *'Development is directed to the right locations, urban density increased and unsustainable growth is prevented.'*
- *'Character, landscape, natural setting and identity of settlements is protected and enhanced.'*
- *'Nature networks are supported and land is managed to help tackle climate change'.*

NPF4 states that Local Development Plans should consider using green belts to support their spatial strategy as a settlement management tool to restrict development around towns and cities. Green belts may be zoned around settlements where there is a significant danger of unsustainable growth in car-based commuting or suburbanisation of the countryside.

8.3 The scope of our recommendations

We have focused on the second policy outcome listed in NPF4 Policy 8....*'Character, landscape, natural setting and identity of settlements is protected and enhanced'*....as this relates to our skills as landscape architects and enables us to draw on the settlement edge landscape sensitivity assessment we have undertaken.

Although we have considered the perceptual and physical distance of landscapes lying on the edges of settlements from the urban core and from key facilities in our study, this assessment is general in nature and more in-depth analysis is needed of what constitutes sustainable and unsustainable growth. Similarly, although our sensitivity assessment considers aspects such as landscape diversity and biodiversity value, the third policy outcome listed in NPF4 Policy 8 regarding nature networks and climate change requires more specialist input to fully gauge the suitability of a green belt designation.

It is therefore acknowledged that further analysis will be required to fully consider the appropriateness of green belt designation around the settlements of North Ayrshire to align with NPF4.

8.4 Recommendations

We consider that the following areas may merit being designated as green belt in terms of protecting and enhancing the character and identity of settlements and their landscape and natural setting:

- The ***coastal fringe between the settlements of Skelmorlie, Largs and Fairlie and West Kilbride and Ardrossan***. The sensitivity assessment found this landscape (the *Raised Beach* and *Narrow Fields* AUs) to be of high sensitivity to settlement expansion due to the distinctive character of the coastal edge, its high visibility and importance in separating the coastal settlements, allowing preservation of their individual identities.
- The ***steep upland edge of the Clyde Muirshiel Hills which provides an important landscape setting to Largs, Fairlie and Skelmorlie and the focal hill of The Knock which lies to the north of Largs***. These landscapes were found to be of higher sensitivity to settlement expansion in the study. Steep and often rugged slopes are prominent and contribute to the high-quality landscape setting of these settlements.
- The ***wooded policies of Kelburn Castle which lie between Largs and Fairlie***. This landscape has a degree of protection associated with its designation as a nationally important Garden and Designed Landscape. Green belt designation could strengthen its protection and conserve its role in separating Largs and Fairlie and providing a high-quality landscape and natural setting to both settlements.
- ***The distinctive hills which arc around West Kilbride and the diverse coast and its immediate hinterland*** which are key attributes of the setting of this settlement. These landscapes were found to be of higher sensitivity to settlement expansion in our study.
- The ***wooded policies of the Eglinton Country Park between Irvine and Kilwinning***. While this landscape has a degree of protection associated with its designation as a country park and listing as a nationally important Garden and Designed Landscape, green belt designation could strengthen its protection and conserve its role in providing separation of Kilwinning and Irvine and an attractive landscape and natural setting to both settlements.
- The ***well-managed farmland which wraps around the eastern and north-eastern edge of Irvine*** (defined as the *Undulating Farmland* AU in the sensitivity assessment). This area was found to be of higher sensitivity to settlement expansion because of its strongly rural character and the robust boundary that is provided by the wooded Annick valley to the urban edge of Irvine.
- The ***immediate hinterland to the coast south of Irvine to the boundary with South Ayrshire*** protecting the important landscape and natural setting provided to Irvine by extensive coastal grassland.
- The ***wooded policy-influenced landscapes which wrap around the northern and eastern edge of Beith*** and which were concluded to be of higher sensitivity in the study due in part to their diverse character and the high-

quality setting they provide to the town but also in recognition of the distinctive form and character of Beith which lies on south-west facing slopes orientated away from this landscape.

- The ***floodplain pastures of the Garnock which lie to the south of Dalry and the steeper hill slopes which abut the south-western part of this settlement*** which provide an attractive landscape setting to the town.
- ***Steeper hill slopes lying to the west of Kilbirnie and Kilbirnie Loch and its fringes.*** While the loch is not readily intervisible with Kilbirnie and Beith, it is important in providing a green refuge and a valuable asset in terms of the character and natural setting of both settlements.

Appendix A: Photographs of West Kilbride



Much of the town is located in a shallow undulating basin and contained by steep-sided hills



The coastal setting and views to Arran are a key attribute of West Kilbride



Small hedged pastures lying on the northern edge of the town below Law Hill



The once separate settlement of Seamill extends along the coast to the south and merges with West Kilbride



Law Hill seen from Tarbert Hill – a line of chalets lies at the foot of steeper gorse-covered slopes



Well managed and generally open farmland abuts the northern edge of the town.

Appendix B: Photographs of Fairlie



Much of the settlement is closely associated with Fairlie Bay, although some newer housing is located on higher and more prominent slopes.



Distinctive beech dominated shelterbelts on steep slopes above newer housing provide a containing edge and backdrop to the settlement



The northern entrance to Fairlie is enhanced by mature trees and stone boundary walls



Lower, more visually discrete fields lying on the northern edge of Fairlie

Appendix C: Photographs of Largs



Kelburn Castle former parkland now occupied by a golf course – this nationally valued landscape forms an important part of Largs's attractive setting



The southern part of Largs sits close to shore at the foot of a steep wooded scarp.



The narrow fields lying on the coastal edge between the railway line and the A78



Linear development extends north along the raised beach platform far from the core of Largs



The wooded Noddessdale Burn provides a distinct threshold to the strongly rural Brisbane Glen



The steep rugged slopes of the Clyde Muirshiel Hills contain Largs and present an attractive semi-natural backdrop to the town

Appendix D: Photographs of Skelmorlie



Community led landscape projects in the centre of Skelmorlie



The steep rugged edge of the Clyde Muirshiel Hills backdrop and contain the settlement



Skelmorlie Castle perched atop the wooded scarp of the raised beach



Tall residential buildings on the raised beach platform on the southern edge of Skelmorlie are intrusive and detract from the wooded cliff.



Open and expansive views across farmland to the Firth of Clyde from the Skelmorlie Castle Road



Narrow shady stone steps provide pedestrian access up the rocky raised beach cliff between lower and upper Skelmorlie

Appendix E: Photographs of the Three Towns



Ardrossan extends from the coast onto gentle slopes and is backed by more rolling small hills.



The raised beach coast between Ardrossan and West Kilbride



More intrusive modern housing extending onto elevated ground near the A78



Gently undulating farmland behind Stevenson (AU C)



Stevenston occupies lower ground and development on the gently graded slopes of AU C would appear foreshortened and be minimally intrusive



Low-lying fields east of Stevenston lie close to the town centre and are contained by existing tree belts

Appendix F: Photographs of Kilbirnie



Kilbirnie Loch provides a valuable recreational resource and a tranquil green refuge close to the town.



Shallow farmed slopes and the strong framework of woodlands in the Moorpark area on the north-western edge of Kilbirnie



The approach to Kilbirnie on the A760 from the north-east



Remnant parkland within Place, one of the wooded estates lying on the lower slopes which arc around the western edge of Kilbirnie.

Appendix G: Photographs of Beith



Beith seen across Kilbirnie Loch – the town occupies west-facing slopes set above the loch



The shallow basin and gently sloping ground on the western edge of Beith – development in this area would fit with the form of the existing settlement



Extensive woodlands east of the A737 and individual trees within Beith provide a verdant landscape setting



Spier's Old School Grounds comprise one of the wooded estates lying to the east and north of Beith

Appendix H: Photographs of Dalry



The attractive view of the historic core of Dalry from the south with the foreground of valley floor pastures forming AU A



Extensive woodlands in the Broadlie area (seen in the middle ground) and the backdrop of the Clyde Muirshiel Hills



The path between the railway station and the town aligned through floodplain pastures and wetland scrub



The A737 forms a robust edge to settlement to the east.



Rolling farmland with a strong rural character borders the south-western edge of Dalry



View east towards the station and industrial and housing development on wooded valley sides (AUC)

Appendix I: Photographs of Kilwinning



Lower lying gently sloping fields on the western edge of Kilwinning are backed by a higher ridge of rolling farmland



Intrusive new housing set above the deeply incised Garnock valley



The extensive wooded policies of Eglinton Country Park provide a valuable recreational resource and attractive landscape setting to the town



Low lying fields on the north-eastern edge of Kilwinning are contained in places by woodland and rising landform

Appendix J: Photographs of Irvine



The coast and extensive dune grassland is a key feature of Irvine's landscape setting.



Unmanaged grassland and scrub within the allocated Strategic Development Area near the River Irvine valley



The River Irvine valley near Drybridge and the rolling farmland which extends east of Irvine



Well-managed farmland and the strongly contained settlement edge formed by the wooded Annick Water valley seen from the Dreghorn monument



Recent housing contrasts with older New Town housing in being more prominently sited and unscreened by generous woodland planting.



Golf courses, saltmarsh and scrub and some piecemeal built development lies between the town and the estuary of the River Garnock