

Stonehaven Bay Coastal Flood Protection Study

Landscape Impact Scoping Report

Final Report

September 2018

www.jbaconsulting.com

JBA Project Manager

Nicci Buckley BSc MSc CSci MCIWEM C.WEM
 Unit 2.1 Quantum Court
 Research Avenue South
 Heriot Watt Research Park
 Riccarton
 Edinburgh
 EH14 4AP

Revision History

Revision Ref/Date	Amendments	Issued to
P01 / 4 June 2018	Draft Report	G McCallum L Watson S McFarland
P02 / 26 September 2018	Final Report	G McCallum L Watson S McFarland

Contract

This report describes work commissioned by Gavin Penman on behalf of Aberdeenshire Council by a letter dated 27 February 2018 and Purchase Order number 1002287. Dougall Baillie’s representative for the contract was Scott Macphail and Aberdeenshire Council’s representative for the contract was Graeme McCallum. Matthew Thirsk and Peter Harrison of JBA Consulting carried out this work.

Prepared by Matthew Thirsk, BA (Hons)

Assistant Landscape Architect – Landscape
 Architecture & Urban Design

Reviewed by Peter Harrison, BA (Hons), Grad Dip, CMLI, MAPM

Technical Director – Landscape Architecture & Urban
 Design

Purpose

This document has been prepared as a Final Report for Aberdeenshire Council. JBA Consulting accepts no responsibility or liability for any use that is made of this document other than by the Client for the purposes for which it was originally commissioned and prepared.

JBA Consulting has no liability regarding the use of this report except to Aberdeenshire Council.

Acknowledgements

JBA thank SEPA and Aberdeenshire Council for the supply of data.

Copyright

© Jeremy Benn Associates Limited 2018.

Carbon Footprint

A printed copy of the main text in this document will result in a carbon footprint of 58g if 100% post-consumer recycled paper is used and 73g if primary-source paper is used. These figures assume the report is printed in black and white on A4 paper and in duplex.

JBA is aiming to reduce its per capita carbon emissions.

Executive summary

JBA Consulting was commissioned to undertake a Landscape Impact Scoping Report as part of the Stonehaven Bay Coastal Flood Protection Study. The overall objective of the project is to deliver a flood protection study to consider options to reduce coastal flood risk.

This Landscape Impact Scoping Report reviews existing national and local policy, landscape character assessment, landscape designations and historical and cultural landscape designations considered applicable to the location of the proposed interventions as well as to the wider area.

Contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Scope of Appraisal	1
1.2	Site Location	1
2	Planning Policy	1
2.1	National Planning Policy	1
2.1.1	National Planning Framework for Scotland 3 (NPF3)	1
2.1.2	Scottish Planning Policy (SPP)	1
2.2	Local Planning Policy	2
2.2.1	Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2017	2
2.2.2	Supplementary Guidance	3
3	Landscape baseline and assessment of effects	4
3.1	Landscape character: baseline	4
3.1.1	National – Landscape Character Assessment	4
3.1.2	Aberdeenshire Council Local Landscape Designations Review (2016)	4
3.1.3	Special Landscape Areas (SLAs)	5
3.2	Zones of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)	6
3.3	Selection of viewpoints	6
3.4	Site and Settlement Character – Baseline	6
3.4.1	Landscape Character Assessment of Effects	7
3.4.2	Heritage Designations	7
3.4.3	Landscape designations	7
3.5	Visual baseline and assessment of effects	7
3.5.1	Visual Qualities of the Proposal Site	7
3.5.2	Recreational routes and Core Paths	7
3.5.3	Road and rail routes	7
4	Conclusions	8

List of Figures – Appendix A

Figure 1 – Landscape Designations

Figure 2 – Local Designations and Recreational Routes

1 Introduction

1.1 Scope of Appraisal

JBA Consulting Ltd is instructed by Aberdeenshire Council to prepare this Landscape Impact Scoping Report relating to the range of potential interventions proposed within the Stonehaven Bay Coastal Flood Protection Study.

Stonehaven is identified as a Potentially Vulnerable Area (PVA) being at risk from pluvial, fluvial and coastal sources.

The Landscape Impact Scoping Report considers the policies and designations that apply to Stonehaven.

1.2 Site Location

The study encompasses the coastal town of Stonehaven and village of Cowie, which are located within Stonehaven Bay approximately 20km south of Aberdeen. The National Grid Reference for Stonehaven is OS X (Eastings) 387439, OS Y (Northings) 784854.

The study extents are shown on the accompanying Figures 1 and 2.

2 Planning Policy

This section provides an overview of policy relevant to the application site. National policy sets the wider context of landscape, whilst local policy provides a framework that informs the sensitivity of key elements, highlights issues specific to the site and how these may be considered in relation to the overall planning balance.

The planning authority is Aberdeenshire Council.

2.1 National Planning Policy

2.1.1 National Planning Framework for Scotland 3 (NPF3)

NPF3 was published in June 2014 and sets the spatial strategy for Scotland's development for the following 20 to 30 years. It includes the Scottish Government's policy commitments on sustainable economic growth and is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. NPF3 includes reference to the importance of green infrastructure and landscape and cultural heritage, including the Central Scotland Green Network (CSGN). Planning authorities must also take NPF3 into account in the preparation of Local Development Plans.

2.1.2 Scottish Planning Policy (SPP)

SPP is the statement of Scottish Government's policy on nationally important land use planning matters. It sets the core principles, key objectives and intended outcomes of the planning system.

Several *Subject Policies* are listed within the document including *A Successful, Sustainable Place* and *A Natural, Resilient Place* which each have several sub-headings of relevance to this report:

A Successful, Sustainable Place - Promoting Town Centres states *NPF3 reflects the importance of town centres as a key element of the economic and social fabric of Scotland. Much of Scotland's population lives and works in towns, within city regions, in our rural areas and on our coasts and islands. Town centres are at the heart of their communities and can be hubs for a range of activities. It is important that planning supports the role of town centres to thrive and meet the needs of their residents, businesses and visitors for the 21st century.*

A Successful, Sustainable Place - Promoting Rural Development states that with regards to Coastal Planning *The planning system should support an integrated approach to coastal planning to ensure that development plans and regional marine plans are complementary. Terrestrial planning by planning authorities overlaps with marine planning in the intertidal zone. On the terrestrial side, mainland planning authorities should work closely with neighbouring authorities, taking account of the needs of port authorities and aquaculture, where appropriate. On the marine side, planning authorities will need to ensure integration with policies and activities arising from the National Marine Plan, Marine Planning Partnerships, Regional Marine Plans, and Integrated Coastal Zone Management, as well as aquaculture.*

A Natural, Resilient Place - Valuing the Natural Environment states that the planning system should *facilitate positive change while maintaining and enhancing distinctive landscape character [and] promote protection and improvement of the water environment, including rivers, lochs, estuaries, wetlands, coastal waters and groundwater, in a sustainable and co-ordinated way.*

A Natural, Resilient Place – Managing Flood Risk and Drainage gives context on how *NPF3 supports a catchment-scale approach to sustainable flood risk management. The spatial strategy aims to build the resilience of our cities and towns, encourage sustainable land management in our rural areas, and to address the long-term vulnerability of parts of our coasts and islands. Flooding can impact on people and businesses. Climate change will increase the risk of flooding in some parts of the country. Planning can play an important part in reducing the vulnerability of existing and future development to flooding.*

2.2 Local Planning Policy

Preparation of a Local Development Plan (LDP) is a requirement of the Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006. The LDP sets out detailed policies and proposals for the area which, together with supplementary planning guidance, will inform decisions on future development when the council assesses planning applications. The Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 requires that decisions on planning applications should be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The development plan for Aberdeenshire is part of a suite of documents including the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan and statutory supplementary guidance.

2.2.1 Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2017

The Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan was adopted in April 2017. It sets out the policies to guide development in Aberdeenshire from 2017 to 2022. It includes a series of maps that form part of the plan.

The plan will direct decision-making on all land-use planning issues and planning applications in Aberdeenshire. The Plan's overall strategic vision is to develop a strong and resilient economy, maintain a high quality of life and an exceptional environment through sustainable development that takes into account the important issues of climate change and reducing carbon.

The following policies of the Aberdeenshire LDP have relevance to landscape and visual issues.

Policy R1 Special rural areas relates to how development opportunities will be significantly restricted in coastal zones to reflect the special nature of these areas:

We will approve proposals for coastal protection works if an assessment of the implications of the works shows that they work with natural processes and there will be no significant adverse impact on coastal processes or habitats, and that the development will not result in increased coastal erosion or flooding elsewhere on the coastline. The full range of management options should be

considered over the lifetime of the development and against appropriate climate change projections.

Policy E1 Natural Heritage advises that new development will not be allowed where it may have an adverse effect on a nature conservation site designated for its biodiversity or geodiversity importance, except where the following circumstances apply:

For nationally designated sites a thorough assessment must demonstrate that the objectives of designation and the overall integrity of the site will not be compromised, or that any significant adverse effects on the qualities for which the site has been designated are clearly outweighed by social, environmental or economic benefits of national importance. In all cases, any impacts must be suitably mitigated.

For other recognised nature conservation sites (such as Local Nature Conservation Sites, nature reserves, designated wetlands, woodland in the Scottish Natural Heritage Ancient Woodland Inventory and the Native Woodland Survey of Scotland the proposal's public benefits must clearly outweigh the nature conservation value of the site. In all cases, impacts must be suitably mitigated and, for any proposals involving the removal of woodland, the Scottish Government Control of Woodland Removal Policy will apply.

Policy E2 Landscape states:

We will refuse development that causes unacceptable effects through its scale, location or design on key natural landscape elements, historic features or the composition or quality of the landscape character. These impacts can be either alone or cumulatively with other recent developments. Development should not otherwise significantly erode the characteristics of landscapes as defined in the Landscape Character Assessments produced by Scottish Natural Heritage or have been identified as Special Landscape Areas of local importance.

Policy C4 Flooding states:

We will not approve development that may contribute to flooding issues elsewhere.

2.2.2 Supplementary Guidance

The Aberdeenshire LDP references 9 elements of Supplementary Guidance (SG), with the following of relevance to this report:

- 4 The Coastal Zone
- 5a Local Nature Conservation Sites – Index
- 5b Local Nature Conservation Sites – Coastal Sites
- 9a Special Landscape Areas

SG 4 presents a map of Coastal Zones that is referenced in Policy R1. The zone runs in from Newtonhill in the north and stops just before Cowie Park on the north of Stonehaven Bay. It doesn't include the majority of Stonehaven Bay and re-commences at Downie Point at the southern end of the bay continuing further south to Inverbervie. Despite the continuity break at Stonehaven Bay, the Coastal Zone is classed as *Kincardine & Mearns*.

SG 5a and 5b provide information on the Coastal Sites designated as Local Nature Conservation Sites, of which there are two in Stonehaven Bay; *71 Muchalls to Stonehaven Bay* runs into the north of the bay and *37 Downie Point to Todhead Coast* continues on to the south of Stonehaven.

SG 9a is explored in more detail in Section 3.1.3 (below).

3 Landscape baseline and assessment of effects

This section provides a description of the baseline conditions for key landscape receptors, along with an assessment of the potential effects of the proposed development.

The landscape character of the area under consideration can be assessed at a variety of different scales, from national to site-based. Desk-based and site-based studies considering these differing scales are outlined below. A number of existing published studies relate to the area under consideration and provide a basis for the assessment of the landscape character and impacts.

3.1 Landscape character: baseline

3.1.1 National – Landscape Character Assessment

Scottish National Heritage (SNH) coordinated a national programme of regional landscape character assessment studies from 1994-1998 which classified Scotland into 28 Landscape Character Types (LCT) and 372 Landscape Character Areas (LCA). These reports were generally based on local authority districts, many of which were completed prior to local government reorganisation in 1996. The assessments were compiled independently by different consultants, contractors and SNH staff to broadly similar briefs.

Environmental Resources Management was responsible for the production of the South and Central Aberdeenshire Landscape Character Assessment 102 (SCALCA), which was produced in 1997.

The report was intended to provide the landscape context for SNH staff responding to planning and land use related casework as well as of use to Aberdeenshire Council in the production of its local and structure plans.

The site lies within LCT **ABS1, Coastal Strip**, a narrow band along the whole of the coast between Whinnyfold in the north and Montrose in the south, although this can be sub-divided into 3 smaller areas defined by their different shorelines and lithology. The site is located within LCA *Kincardine Cliffs*, a 30km section of coastline from Aberdeen in the north to Inverbervie in the south. The key characteristics of Kincardine Cliffs that are particularly relevant to the study area are:

- *Major communications corridor behind the cliffs notably the A90 and east coast railway.*
- *Expansive views out to sea provide vast sense of scale.*
- *Weather is fundamental to character; coast is often windswept or lashed by rain and spray; resulting sense of exposure is great.*

Under Pressures and Sensitivities, it notes *the open and exposed character of the landscape on cliffs is sensitive to changes in land use and scale of development.*

3.1.2 Aberdeenshire Council Local Landscape Designations Review (2016)

This landscape characterisation study was undertaken by Land Use Consultants (LUC) and published in March 2016 and provides a consistent classification for the whole of the unitary authority area. The overall purpose of the project was:

- *to identify Aberdeenshire landscapes which have particular value and merit special attention as designated local landscapes in the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan;*
- *to inform an Aberdeenshire wide 'all-landscapes' approach and future landscape objectives;*
- *to inform the preparation of the forthcoming Local Development Plan 2016, specifically the development of robust and meaningful landscape policy and associated supplementary guidance.*

The review builds on the SNH study described in Section 3.1.1, utilising the same Landscape Character Types (LCT) but now referring to Landscape Units (LU) rather than Landscape Character Areas. There are 37 individual Landscape Units identified within the review.

The site lies within **LCT Coastal Strip** and **LU 34 Kincardine Cliffs** and is the same geographical extent as defined in Section 3.1.1.

The review evaluates each LU by 12 criteria including built heritage assets, wildness, scenic qualities and naturalness and natural heritage assets. A pre-determined question is then answered by one of three pre-determined responses that rank the outcome as High / Medium / Low.

Kincardine Cliffs is a high-scoring Landscape Unit and is ranked as high. An analysis of the Landscape Unit is classed as Consistency, Relationships and Search areas identified and summarised as:

- Consistency - A distinctive stretch of coastline with a strong sense of place, centred on Stonehaven;
- Relationships - Has a relationship with the sea and sky, but is otherwise self-contained;
- Search areas identified - Included in a search area which captures the south east Aberdeenshire coast, and extends inland south of Stonehaven where adjacent farmland forms a backdrop to the coast.

Ten Special Landscape Areas (SLA), consisting of a combination of the high and medium scoring Landscape Units, have been created and are now defined within Supplementary Guidance documents that are part of the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan.

3.1.3 Special Landscape Areas (SLAs)

There are three separate Supplementary Guidance (SG) documents that cover the ten Special Landscape Areas. The purpose of the Supplementary Guidance is to support Policy E2 "Landscape" of the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan (2017).

A Statement of Importance for each of the SLAs is provided within the SG which is broken in to four sections - Location and Boundaries, Designation Statement, Forces for Change and Management Recommendations

The site sits within *South East Aberdeenshire Coast Special Landscape Area* and is detailed in *SG 9a Special Landscape Areas*.

Location and Boundaries

- *Covers the coast from south of Aberdeen City to the mouth of the North Esk in the south,*
- *This narrow but continuous strip has been defined to include areas with strong coastal influence, the landward extent of which is generally restricted due to the high cliffs that separate the hinterland from the sea,*

- *Designation of this area recognises the importance of its rugged scenery of weathered coastal cliffs and atypical raised beach features, which form an important setting to the numerous coastal villages and towns as well as an important natural habitat.*

Designation Statement

- *The South East Aberdeenshire coast is unified by its general south east facing orientation onto the North Sea.*
- *The SLA contains many settlements, the largest of which is Stonehaven, framed by cliffs and featuring a working harbour, and strong cultural elements,*
- *This area is visible from the A90 and A92 coastal routes, National Cycle Network Route 1, east coast railway and coastal footpaths, and sea views are fundamental to its character,*
- *Coastal routes include the A92, A90, east coast railway, footpaths and National Cycle Network (Route 1), all offering expansive views out to sea.*

Forces for Change

- *Impact of proposals which effect the integrity of natural and historic features within the SLA, particularly development seeking to take advantage of sand dunes and beaches.*

Management Recommendations

- *Development which may impact on the headlands, beaches and landmarks in the area should be carefully considered in order to ensure that the panoramic views within are not negatively impacted,*
- *Development should conserve the coastal characteristics associated with towns in this area,*
- *Assess the potential impact on the sea views from significant roads, paths and visitor sites, particularly seeking to ensure that the ragged and wild nature of the coastal cliff tops and open vista of St Cyrus Bay are maintained.*

3.2 Zones of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)

ZTV's are used to examine issues of visibility and inter-visibility in a landscape. No ZTV has been undertaken for this project, although one may be considered at a later stage once a final design solution has been selected.

Examination of a ZTV informs initial judgement as to which landscape and visual receptors should be either scoped out or subject to further assessment.

It should be noted that the ZTVs display only theoretical visibility. The screened ZTV accounts for the effects of screening through built form and woodland.

3.3 Selection of viewpoints

Viewpoints are used as part of an assessment of impacts. Since any change in the landscape is yet to be determined no viewpoints have been selected as part of this document. Potential viewpoints will be selected through desk and field-based research once the final design solution has been selected.

3.4 Site and Settlement Character – Baseline Site Character

Site character will be assessed once the design solution has been selected.

Heritage Designations

A large section of Stonehaven is within a conservation area and there are many listed buildings found within the boundary of the conservation area as well as several more outside of the boundary. There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments or World Heritage Sites within the study area.

Ecological Designations

The southern end of Garron Point Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is just within the northern extent of the study area. A SSSI is a national conservation designation. There are two Local Nature Conservation Sites that are within the study extents. These are locally designated sites and are referenced in *Policy E1 Natural Heritage* of the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2017.

3.4.1 Landscape Character Assessment of Effects

The extent of the proposed interventions are within a Special Landscape Area designation.

3.4.2 Heritage Designations

A full cultural heritage assessment, including assessment of significance, is not provided within this Landscape Impact Scoping Report. A separate cultural heritage assessment is being produced by FAS Heritage.

3.4.3 Landscape designations

The extent of the proposed interventions are within a Special Landscape Area designation. There are no National Scenic Areas, Gardens and Designed Landscapes, Historic Marine Protected Areas, within the study area.

3.5 Visual baseline and assessment of effects

The visual baseline and assessment of effects will be considered as part of a Landscape Visual Assessment (LVA) once a final design solution has been selected.

3.5.1 Visual Qualities of the Proposal Site

The proposed development site is currently within Stonehaven Bay, Stonehaven, Aberdeenshire and the visual qualities will be considered as part of an LVA once a final design solution has been selected.

3.5.2 Recreational routes and Core Paths

Core Paths and National Cycle Network (Route 1) may offer expansive views out to sea and will be considered as part of an LVA once a final design solution has been selected.

3.5.3 Road and rail routes

Coastal routes include the A92, A90, east coast railway and local roads will be considered as part of an LVA once a final design solution has been selected.

4 Conclusions

Following review of landscape policies and designations above, the following locally specific designations and issues will be considered further within the appraisal and the future assessment of landscape and visual effects:

- Consideration of the Special Landscape Area designation;
- Consideration of Core paths and National Cycle Network route;
- The consideration of other designated sites which will inform the overall landscape character, quality and value, include; listed buildings, Conservation Area, SSSI and Local Nature Conservation Sites;
- Consideration of the policies in the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2017 as provided in section 2.2.1.

Appendices

A Figures

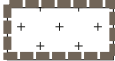


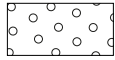
Key

 Flood Study Extents


Landscape Designations


Scottish Natural Heritage Landscape Character Assessment:

 Landscape Character Type - ABS1 Coastal Strip
Landscape Character Area - Kincardine Cliffs


 Landscape Character Type - ABS2 Agricultural Heartlands
Landscape Character Area - Garvock & Glenberrie

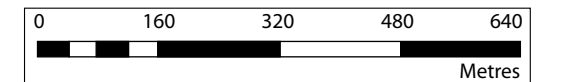
Aberdeenshire Council Local Landscape Designations Review:

 Landscape Character Type - Coastal Strip
Landscape Unit - 34 Kincardine Cliffs

 Landscape Character Type - Agricultural Heartlands
Landscape Unit - 35 Garvock & Glenberrie

Special Landscape Area:

 South East Aberdeenshire Coast



Stonehaven Bay Coastal Flood Protection Study

Project 2018s0343

LVA

Figure 1:

Landscape Designations

Reproduced from Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of the controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown Copyright and database rights 2018 Ordnance Survey 0100031673

JBA Consulting
Salts Mill, Victoria Road
Saltaire, Shipley
BD18 3LF
(01274) 714269
www.jbaconsulting.com





Key

Flood Study Extents

Heritage Designations

Listed Buildings

Scheduled Monument

Stonehaven Conservation Area

Ecological Designations

SSSI

Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2017

Policy E1 Natural Heritage:

Local Nature Conservation Site

Policy R1 Special rural areas:

The Coastal Zone

Recreational Routes

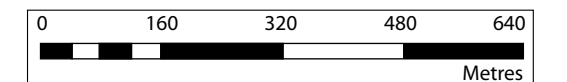
The Aberdeenshire Core Paths Plan

Existing Core Paths

On Road Links

National Cycle Network

Route 1 - Coast and Castles North (Edinburgh to Aberdeen)



Stonehaven Bay Coastal Flood Protection Study

Project 2018s0343

LVA

Figure 2:

Local Designations and Recreational Routes

Reproduced from Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of the controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown Copyright and database rights 2018 Ordnance Survey 0100031673

JBA Consulting
Salts Mill, Victoria Road
Saltair, Shipleigh
BD18 3LF
(01274) 714269
www.jbaconsulting.com



JBA
consulting

Offices at

Coleshill
Doncaster
Dublin
Edinburgh
Exeter
Glasgow
Haywards Heath
Isle of Man
Limerick
Newcastle upon Tyne
Newport
Peterborough
Saltaire
Skipton
Tadcaster
Thirsk
Wallingford
Warrington

Registered Office
South Barn
Broughton Hall
SKIPTON
North Yorkshire
BD23 3AE
United Kingdom

+44(0)1756 799919
info@jbaconsulting.com
www.jbaconsulting.com
Follow us:  

Jeremy Benn Associates Limited

Registered in England 3246693

JBA Group Ltd is certified to:
ISO 9001:2015
ISO 14001:2015
OHSAS 18001:2007

