BEAULY BESS

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL APPRAISAL

TGP Landscape Architects Ltd
Suite 1.1, The Exchange
142 St. Vincent Street
Glasgow
G2 5LA

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1 Introduction

The proposed Beauly BESS (the 'Proposed Development') is located at Dunballoch Farm, Beauly, IV4 7AY, 900m to the south of Beauly, Inverness. This Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) of the Proposed Development has been prepared by TGP Landscape Architects Ltd, a firm of independent consultants on behalf of Field Beauly Ltd (the Applicant). The LVA report has been prepared with the aim of identifying the predicted landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Development, a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) of up to 100 MW with associated infrastructure, access and ancillary works, including landscaping and biodiversity enhancement.

The LVA is augmented by supporting text and graphics within the appendices. This includes the following figures within **Appendix D**:

- Figure 1a – Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) and Viewpoints;
- Figure 1b – Zone of Theoretical Visibility including Building and Vegetation Screening;
- Figure 2 – Landscape Character;
- Figure 3 – Landscape Designations, Ancient Woodland and Visual Receptors;
- Figure 4 – Residential Receptors; and
- Figure 5a and 5b – Landscape Plan (drg nos. TGP 2210 L01 and TGP 2210 L02).

1.1 Scope of the LVA

The LVA seeks to identify the potential landscape and visual effects that would occur as a result of the Proposed Development and is organised in the following sections:

- Guidance and Methodology – outlines the general methodology, with reference to established guidance (full version in **Appendix A**);
- Planning Policy Context;
- Baseline Description – including the fabric, character and quality of the local landscape which could be affected by the Proposed Development, as well as a description of the main visual receptors within the Study Area;
- Proposed Development and Mitigation – describes the aspects of the Proposed Development which have the potential to result in landscape or visual effects, and the measures incorporated into the project design to mitigate these potential effects;
- ZTV and Viewpoint Analysis – analysis of the geographic extents of visibility and the potential magnitude of change at a selection of viewpoints;
- Construction Stage Effects – assesses the effects of the Proposed Development during the temporary construction stage;
- Landscape Effects – assesses the effects arising from the Proposed Development on the landscape fabric, landscape character and quality of the landscape designations within the Study Area;
- Visual Effects – assesses the effects arising from the Proposed Development on the visual amenity of the receptors within the Study Area;
- Cumulative Effects – considers the combined effects of the Proposed Development in combination with other notable electrical infrastructure; and

- Conclusions – a summary of the LVA results.

1.2 Study Area

A 4km radius Study Area has been adopted from the Proposed Development for the assessment of landscape and visual effects. This has been informed by analysis of ZTV maps and an early appraisal of potential effects for a Proposed Development of this scale. It is considered that any notable landscape or visual effects would be confined well-within this geographical area.

2 Guidance and Methodology

2.1 Guidance

The methodology presented here is based on the following best practice guidance:

- *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Edition (GLVIA3),* Institute of Environmental Management and Appraisal and the Landscape Institute, 2013;
- *Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland,* Prepared on behalf of the Countryside Agency and NatureScot, Land Use Consultants, 2002;
- *Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Guidance,* NatureScot, 2022;
- *Visualisation Standards for Wind Energy Developments,* Highland Council, 2016; and
- *Visual Representation of Development Proposals, Technical Guidance Note 06/2019;* Landscape Institute, 2019.

In addition, reference has been made to other published guidance and the appraisal work has drawn on the following relevant baseline information:

- *National Landscape Character Assessment (web-based interactive map),* NatureScot, 2019;
- Ordnance Survey Land ranger (1:50 000) and Explorer (1:25 000) maps;
- Field surveys; and
- Aerial photography.

2.2 Methodology

The LVA aims to identify and evaluate the potential landscape and visual effects arising from the Proposed Development. Wherever possible, identified effects are quantified, albeit the nature of landscape and visual appraisal requires interpretation by professional judgement. In order to provide a level of consistency to the appraisal, the prediction of magnitude and appraisal of the residual landscape and visual effects have been based on pre-defined criteria.

GLVIA3 states that: “Professional judgement is a very important part of the LVIA.” (para 2.23) “In all cases there is a need for the judgements that are made to be reasonable and based on clear and transparent methods so that the reasoning applied at different stages can be traced and examined by others” (para 2.24).

Landscape and Visual Appraisals are distinct, though linked procedures. The appraisal of the landscape effects takes cognisance of the potential changes in the physical components of the landscape and

associated changes in its character and how it is experienced, which may in turn affect the perceived value ascribed to the landscape.

Visual effects relate to changes in the composition of existing views as a result of changes to the landscape, to people's responses to the changes and to the overall effects with respect to visual amenity.

Level of Effect

The level of any identified landscape or visual effect has been assessed in terms of being Major, Moderate, Minor or Negligible. Intermediate correlations are also possible and depend upon professional judgement, e.g. Major/Moderate. These categories are based on the juxtaposition of visual or landscape sensitivity with the predicted magnitude of change, as set out in Table 1.

Table 1: Landscape & Visual Effects Matrix

Receptor Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change				
		Substantial	Moderate	Slight	Negligible
	High	Major	Major/Moderate	Moderate	Minor
	Medium	Major/Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/Minor	Minor/Negligible
	Low	Moderate	Moderate/Minor	Minor	Negligible

This juxtaposition is not used as a prescriptive tool, rather it allows for the exercise of professional judgement. Thus, in some instances a particular parameter may be considered as having a determining effect on the analysis. Where the landscape or visual effect has been classified as Major or Major/Moderate this is considered to be notable. Where Moderate effects are predicted, professional judgement is applied to ensure that the potential for notable effects arising has been thoroughly considered. The complete appraisal methodology is set out in **Appendix A**.

3 Assumptions

The following assumptions have been made in respect to the LVA:

- The Site – refers to the land located within the red line boundary (as shown in Figures 1 – 5). All distances listed within this LVA are in measured in relation to this area.
- The Proposed Development – comprises the Substation Compound, Battery Containers and ancillary infrastructure including noise attenuation barrier and security fencing, CCTV, access / parking, and landscaping. The main components likely to contribute to landscape and visual impacts are described in greater detail in Section 6.
- For the purposes of the LVA, the Proposed Development is regarded as being permanent. The construction stage would be temporary, approximately 24 months in duration.
- The landscape proposals within the Site (comprising new planting) form an integral component of the Proposed Development. The proposals are illustrated in Figure 5a and 5b – Landscape Plan (drg nos. TGP 2210 L01 and TGP 2210 L02).

- Viewpoint locations included in the assessment are from publicly accessible locations.
- Visual effects are assessed on the basis of good visibility. Visual effects can be expected to vary e.g. poor visibility at times of low cloud, rainfall and dusk. At these times a reduction in visual clarity, colour and contrast would be experienced. Reduced visibility would limit the extent of view, particularly from mid to long distance views. Consequently, the assessment of effects is based on the worst-case scenario, where the Proposed Development would be most visible.

4 Consultation

Consultation in relation to the Proposed Development has been undertaken with The Highland Council (THC) in the form of an EIA Screening Request. In addition, public exhibitions and consultation events were held to inform local residents of the Proposed Development and obtain feedback and a formal pre-application advice process was completed with THC. Proposed viewpoint locations were shared with THC (email dated 11/09/2024). The viewpoint locations are listed in Table 2 below, alongside the rationale for their selection.

Table 2: Viewpoint Locations

Viewpoint	Rationale
1. View west from the A862	Representative of close proximity views from local road to the east of the Site, experienced by road users.
2. View south from the A862	View from local road / cycle route to the north, experienced by road users and recreational users.
2. View east from Core Path IN03.04 along the River Beauly	Representative of close proximity views from promoted walking route to the west, experienced by recreational walkers.
4. View southeast from path at Altyre	Elevated view from hillside to the northwest, experienced by local walkers on the footpath (which is not a sign-posted / promoted trail).
5. View southeast from Ruilick	Elevated view from hillside to the northwest, experienced by local residents.

5 Planning Policy Context

The following section identifies the planning policy and other planning guidance material specifically relevant to the LVA. This includes consideration of the following:

- *National Planning Framework 4*, Scottish Government, 2023;
- *Highland-wide Local Development Plan,* Highland Council, 2012;
- *Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan 2,* Highland Council, 2024;
- *Sustainable Design Guide,* Highland Council, 2013.

5.1 National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)

NPF4 recognises the distinctive landscapes across the regions of Scotland and respective areas of high landscape quality. Its overarching policies seek to protect the integrity of key landscapes and landscape features from significant adverse effects. There is also general support for proposals to enhance, expand and improve woodland and tree cover.

Policy 11 focuses specifically on Energy, and sets out high-level support for all forms of renewable, low-carbon and zero emissions technologies. This includes both energy generation and energy storage developments, such as battery storage. NPF4 acknowledges that significant landscape and visual impacts are to be expected for some forms of renewable energy. Where these impacts are localised and/or appropriate design mitigation has been applied, they will generally be considered to be acceptable.

5.2 Highland-wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP)

The HwLDP sets out THC's vision statement and spatial strategy for the area alongside the policies against which the Proposed Development will be assessed. Policy 67: Renewable Energy Development is of relevance to the Proposed Development and states that THC will support renewable energy proposals where they are located, sited and designed such that they will not be significantly detrimental to a range of factors, including the natural environment and visual amenity.

Key landscape policies comprise Policy 61: Landscape, which highlights the importance of scale, form, pattern, materials, and cumulative effects in relation to landscape character, and Policy 57: Natural, Built and Cultural Heritage, which seeks to safeguard sites / features of local to international value. Other landscape-related policies comprise:

- Policy 28: Sustainable Design;
- Policy 29: Design Quality and Place-Making
- Policy 36: Development in the Wider Countryside;
- Policy 51: Trees and Development;
- Policy 52: Principle of Development in Woodland;
- Policy 74: Green Networks
- Policy 77: Public Access; and
- Policy 78: Long Distance Routes.

5.3 Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan 2 (IMFLDP2)

The IMFLDP2 sits alongside the HwLDP and Supplementary Guidance. The IMFLDP2 sets out guidance for development at a more localised level within the Moray Firth area. Key landscape-related policy comprises:

- Policy 2: Nature Protection, Restoration and Enhancement, seeks to safeguard habitat and biodiversity;
- Policy 5: Green Networks, aims to protect and enhance existing green networks;

- Policy 8: Placemaking, requires all proposals to go through a design-led approach and take account of feedback obtained via public consultation;
- Policy 9: Delivering Development and Infrastructure, states that the Council will assess development proposals with regards to their impact on the infrastructure network and community facilities.

In addition, the INMLDP2 sets out development allocations within main settlements. The Proposed Development Site is located well outside any settlement boundary. The 'Placemaking Priorities' for Beauly illustrate that there are no intentions to extend the settlement boundary in a southerly direction (beyond the existing railway line) towards the Site. Accordingly, all allocated sites are located at the northern side of the settlement (further away from the Site).

5.4 Sustainable Design Guide

The Sustainable Design Guide incorporates additional information in relation to sustainable design, with the aim of conserving and enhancing the character of the Highland area, using resources efficiently, minimising potential environmental impact of development, and enhancing the viability of Highland communities.

As part of this process, tree felling and removal of habitats such as woodlands, hedgerows and meadows should be avoided. New planting should be based on native species with the aim of enhancing biodiversity. Works should take cognisance of bird nesting seasons, and bat roosts. The layout, scale, and proportion of development proposals should respond to local landscape character.

6 Baseline Description

6.1 Local Landscape Context

Figure 1 illustrates the geographic location of the Proposed Development, which is located on the eastern side of the River Beauly, 900m south of Beauly.

The landscape across the Study Area comprises riparian farmland, broken up by tracts of woodland and forestry, in combination with the meandering course of the River Beauly. The river flows in a northeasterly direction, where it gradually widens towards the Beauly Firth. The surrounding landscape along the edge of the river corridor rises gradually upwards to the northwest and southeast. In the northwestern part of the Study Area, the terrain rises towards the summits of Creag na Manachainn (338m AOD) and Torr Breac (360m AOD). To the southeast, the landform rises towards Phoineas Hill (180m AOD) and Cnoc an Uird (248m AOD). The Site is located at a low-lying position on the floor of the river valley, at an elevation of 5-10m AOD.

The landscape is rural in character, albeit incorporates scattered settlement linked by an established road and rail network. These elements are predominantly focused along the lower-lying parts of the Study Area. Beauly represents the largest settlement in the locality, which is accessed via the A862 and the Far North Line. In addition, Kiltarlity is located 2.4km to the south of the Site, and Kirkhill is located 2.7km to the east. Other residential settlement comprises smaller-scale villages and dispersed

hamlets, which are found on the floor of the River Beauly valley and across the rising slopes that define its edge.

In addition to the above, the local landscape incorporates existing elements of electricity infrastructure. These include the Beauly Substation in Wester Balblair (1.3km to the west of the Site), and associated overhead lines that extend outwards from the substation to the north, east and west (extending across the Site). In addition, Kilmorack Power Station and Dam extends across the River Beauly, 2.8km to the west of the Site. Other notable developments in the locality include the operational Balblair Quarry, which is located adjacent to the substation, 900m to the west of the Site

At a local level, the Site comprises pastoral grassland, extending across a single field that is demarcated by post-and-wire fencing. Its immediate environs are strongly influenced by the surrounding woodland and tree cover, which wrap around the eastern, southern and western edges of the Site. This includes established tree cover within Long Wood and Crioche Wood. As noted above, existing overhead power lines extend east-west across the Site, through the centre of the field, and form a corridor in the surrounding tree cover / woodland to the east and west.

6.2 Landscape Character

Figure 2 illustrates the Landscape Character Types (LCTs) within the Study Area as defined within NatureScot's National Landscape Character Assessment (2019), which represents the most up-to-date assessment of landscape character across the Study Area. The southern part of the Site, where the main developable area would be located, is within the Enclosed Farmland LCT. The northern part of the Site, where sections of the access track would be located, is within the Farmed River Plains LCT. The key characteristics and sensitivities of these LCTS are as follows:

<u>Key Characteristics of the Enclosed Farmland LCT</u>

- *'Broad undulating glens interspersed with low, rounded ridges sloping to lower plains.*
- *Mixed agricultural land-use balanced with a high proportion of trees, woodlands, small scale forests and hedgerows.*
- *Tree cover provides varying degrees of enclosure for fields and buildings as well as a diverse mix of landscape patterns, colours and textures.*
- *Large areas of intensive agriculture with medium-sized geometric fields divided by rows of mature deciduous trees and woodland, with some stone dykes.*
- *Contrasting small scale, intimate croft lands, small rectangular fields, simple arrangement of buildings, narrow lanes, gullies and small scrubby woodlands.*
- *Diverse range of settlement with many small farms and crofts, several villages and estates.*
- *Large estate houses set in woodlands and parklands with avenues of trees, prominent in the intensive agricultural land.*
- *Network of major and minor roads following geometric field boundaries.*
- *Wide distribution and range of historic sites dating from prehistoric cairns and settlements to more recent sporting estates.*
- *Landform and tree cover limit long distance views, creating intrigue and screen many settlements from roads.*

- *Restricted views and increased sense of enclosure in crofting areas, due to the density and close proximity of vertical landscape elements.'*

The sensitivity of the Enclosed Farmland LCT at the Site, specific to the Proposed Development and its locality, is assessed within **Appendix B** as being Medium.

Key Characteristics of the Farmed River Plains LCT

- *'Broad expanse of mainly flat, connected river valley flood plains, with central meandering rivers.*
- *Contrast of the flat, open plain and the adjacent surrounding concave slopes rising to steep hill and mountain edges to the north, west and south.*
- *Meandering and mainly natural course of rivers and associated wetlands and salt marshes at lower reaches.*
- *Woodland and tree cover of roadside and field-side trees lines, shelterbelts and small plantations interspersed with large scale fields.*
- *Relatively sparse settlement, mainly of estate farms and cottages which avoid wetter areas, with occasional and relatively contained larger settlements on low plains as well as elevated sandy gravel deposits.*
- *Important prehistoric ceremonial monuments consisting of standing stones and henges.'*

The sensitivity of the Farmed River Plains LCT at the Site, specific to the Proposed Development and its locality, is assessed within **Appendix B** as being Medium.

Adjacent Character Types

The surrounding area to the northwest of the Site encompasses parts of the Open Farmed Slopes LCT, Farmed and Forested Slopes - Ross & Cromarty LCT, Rugged Massif – Inverness LCT, and Forest Edge Farming LCT at distances of 1.4km, 2.6km, 3.0km and 3.1km respectively.

Towards the west, the Farmed Strath – Inverness LCT is located at a distance of 2.6km from the Site. To the southeast, the Study Area extends across parts of the Rocky Moorland Plateau – Inverness LCT and Rolling Farmland and Woodland LCT, at distances of 2.1km and 3.3km from the Site respectively.

The key characteristics of these LCTs are listed in **Appendix C**.

6.3 Landscape Designations

Landscape planning designations and policies are considered in the determination of the sensitivity of landscape and visual receptors as they provide an indication of value ascribed to the landscape or visual resource. With reference to **Figure 3**, the Site is not located within a landscape designation. Beaufort Castle Garden and Designed Landscape (GDL) is located 600m to the south of the Site at the closest point. There are no other landscape designations within the Study Area.

6.4 Visual Baseline and Receptors

The following section describes the visual receptors within the 4km Study Area.

Local Residents

Beauly represents the main settlement within the Study Area, located 900m to the north of the Site.

Other settlements within the Study Area includes Wester Balblair (located 1.0km to the west of the Site), as well as the low-density spread of dwellings at Broallan / Ruisaurie / Ruilick (located 2.4km to the west / northwest of the Site).

With reference to **Figure 1b**, the settlements of Balchraggan (1.1km to the southeast), Kirkhill (2.6km to the east), Kiltarlity / Camault Muir (2.7km to the southwest), and Culburnie (3.9km to the south west) are located entirely outside the ZTV. Accordingly, there would be no views of the Proposed Development from these settlements, and they are not considered further.

Other residents within the Study Area are limited to dispersed dwellings and farmsteads outside these settlements. With reference to **Figure 4**, those located within 1km of the Site comprise:

- R1: Elmdudh, 60m to the north;
- R2: Dunballoch Farm, 120m to the north;
- R3: Dunballock Cottages, 170m to the north;
- R4: Ballindoun Lodge, 340m to the southeast;
- R5: Meikle Phoineas, 450m to the east;
- R6: Failte, Abainmhor, Fearnlea, The Haven, Cruivend House, 500m to the west;
- R7: Phioineas Lodge and Duffs Lodge, 640m to the south;
- R8: Cedar Lodge, 650m to the northwest;
- R9: Corff House, 690m to the west;
- R10: Ferrybrae and Ferry Brae Croft, 850m to the northeast;
- R11: Woodlands House and Liatrie, 860m to the east;
- R12: Roseview and The Toll, 900m to the northwest;
- R13: Wester Phoineas, 910m to the south;
- R14: Ballindoun House and Ballindoun Farm, 920m to the south;
- R15: Teawig Farm and Cottages, 950m to the northwest
- R16: Ferry House, 1.0km to the northeast;
- R17: Groam of Annat, 1.0km to the west.

<u>Recreational Receptors</u>

With reference to **Figure 3**, recreational routes and outdoor destinations / attractions within the Study Area are listed below:

- Local Cycle Route, extending along the side of the A862, on the northern edge of the Site at the closest point (500m to the north of the proposed infrastructure).
- The Core Path network, including Core Path IN03.04 (Lovat Bridge to Black Bridge), which extends along the bank of the River Beauly 90m to the southwest of the Site, forming a link to the fishing lodge on the riverbank (120m to the southwest of the Site). Accordingly, this route is used by recreational walkers, and anglers on the River Beauly. Other parts of the network in closest proximity to the Site comprise Core Path IN20.05 (East Lodge to West Lodge) 660m to the south, and Core Path IN03.03 (War Memorial to Black Bridge) 760m to the west. All other Core Paths are located at distances of >1km from the Site.
- Lovat Bridge Caravan Park, 680m to the northwest.

In addition to the above, the consented Beaufort Highland Lodges, comprising visitor accommodation,

amenity buildings, parking and landscaping, would be located within the area of woodland to the southeast of the Site (planning ref: 24/02925/S42). Due to its proximity, and consented status, this is included within the assessment as a recreational receptor.

Beaufort Castle (located 1.9km to the southwest) and Moniac Castle (2.7km to the east) are privately owned and are not open to members of the public. Accordingly, they are not considered further in relation to recreational receptors.

Road and Rail Receptors

Potential vehicular receptors within the Study Area are limited to road users on the following roads:

- A862, extending along the northern edge of the Site, and around the eastern side (approximately 120m to the east of the proposed infrastructure at the closest point). This forms part of the NC500 route;
- B9164, extends off the A862, within 50m to the northeast of the Site at the closest point;
- A833, located 280m to the south at the closest point; and
- A831, located 840m to the northwest at the closest point.

Potential rail users within the Study Area comprise those on the Far North Line, 900m to the north of the Site at the closest point.

7 Proposed Development and Mitigation

This section describes the aspects of the Proposed Development with the potential to cause landscape and visual effects within in the Study Area.

7.1 Proposed Development Description

The location of the Proposed Development is illustrated on **Figure 1**. The Proposed Development would involve localised areas of ground clearance to facilitate construction within the Site, and the introduction of the following key elements:

- Re-grading earthworks and creation of 1m high bund;
- Substation Compound, including substation building, grid transformers, and associated grid connection;
- Battery Containers (2.86m max height including concrete platform, excluding light);
- Medium Voltage (MV) Skid Plan (3.6m max height)
- Perimeter fence, 2.4m palisade fence with wire top (3.0m max height);
- Acoustic fencing on southern and eastern site boundaries (4.0 m max height);
- CCTV cameras and security lighting;
- Access track (5m width);
- SUDS, including attenuation basin; and
- Landscape planting and mitigation features.

The LVA takes cognisance of each of these elements and makes reference to them within the appraisal where relevant.

7.2 Landscape Design and Mitigation

Site Location

The Site selection process has sought to identify an appropriate location for the Proposed Development. The Site location has been chosen to avoid any notable ridgelines / visually prominent hills, or designated landscapes that are recognised for their scenic value. Instead, the Site is located on a relatively low-lying, undesignated plateau.

In addition, the Site benefits from existing visual containment due to the near-continuous spread of established tree cover that extends around the Site in the neighbouring landscape to the east, south and west along the River Beauly. This limits the potential spread and extent of visibility in these directions, as well as the potential influence upon surrounding landscape character. The Site also currently incorporates existing infrastructure in the form of overhead power lines, which extend east-west through the centre of the Site. The proposed infrastructure would be located to the south of the existing pylons. The potential influence upon surrounding landscape character and visual amenity of receptors to the north of the Site would also therefore be tempered, based on the presence of the intervening pylons.

Site Design

In terms of design, the proposals seek to incorporate a comprehensive mitigation strategy to effectively integrate the Proposed Development into the surrounding landscape. This involves consideration of the scale and spread of the proposed infrastructure, and the most appropriate methods of lessening its potential influence on landscape and visual amenity. To this end, the Proposed Development has been designed to achieve the following landscape objectives:

- Land clearance and occupation would be limited to necessary areas only to minimise the geographic spread of the infrastructure and limit the potential impact on the local landscape fabric.
- The tallest element of proposed built form comprises the Substation Compound. This would be located in closest proximity to the existing established tree cover that extends across the landscape to the east of the Site. This would limit its potential visibility from adjoining publicly accessible areas, in particular to the north, and ensure it is typically back-clothed by tree cover wherever localised views occur.
- In terms of colour and materials, the perimeter fence would be painted with a recessive colour (green or similar approved) to soften the appearance of the Proposed Development.
- Proposed landscape works would incorporate the creation of native woodland edge, hedgerow and tree planting around peripheral parts of the Site. With reference to **Figures 5a** and **5b**, this would extend along the northern and western sides of the main compound, as well as wider parts of the agricultural landscape within the Site where it would reinforce the existing field pattern. Together, these measures would further restrict views of the Proposed Development and represent the addition of beneficial elements to the local landscape.
- The planting approach would be based on native broadleaved species to provide visual containment of the Proposed Development, whilst also reflecting the mix of species that can be found naturally within the surrounding locality. This includes Birch, Rowan, Hawthorn and Willow (see **Figure 5a** and **5b** for full details of proposed species). Accordingly, the planting

proposals would be in accordance with local landscape character and would contribute towards biodiversity enhancement.

- In addition, species-rich wildflower meadow would be introduced around peripheral parts of the Site to further soften the appearance of the Proposed Development and provide enhancement to local biodiversity. This would be sown at the fist available season and would establish rapidly thereafter.

8 ZTV and Viewpoint Analysis

The potential landscape and visual effects arising from the Proposed Development have been analysed in two ways:

- Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) map analysis, to provide a general overview of the geographical extent of visibility of the Proposed Development within the Study Area; and
- Analysis of the potential effects at key viewpoints.

8.1 Zone of Theoretical Visibility Analysis

Theoretical visibility mapping of the Proposed Development is illustrated in **Figures 1a – 1b**. The ZTV illustrates the maximum overall visibility of the proposed buildings.

The ZTV in **Figure 1a** has been prepared on the basis of 'bare ground' and does not take into account the potential screening effects of surrounding buildings or vegetation. The ZTV in **Figure 1b** incorporates the screening influence of surrounding buildings and vegetation. This is based on 2m Digital Surface modelling (aerial photography derived).

With reference to **Figure 1a**, the geographical extent of potential visibility would be most prevalent across the western part of the Study Area, where there are fragmented areas of ZTV coverage across the landscape to the north, west and south. Towards the east, potential views are more restricted and primarily contained within 500-600m of the Site.

With reference to **Figure 1b**, potential visibility will be considerably restricted by the screening influence of surrounding vegetation, which includes established woodland to the east, south and southwest of the Site, and riparian tree cover along the River Beauly to the west / northwest. Accordingly, the main focus of views would more accurately be limited to the Site and surrounding area within approximately 600m to the northwest. There would also be more distant views from the elevated slopes further to the northwest, focused across parts of Ruilick and the surrounding hillsides. Potential views from all other areas would be extremely limited.

8.2 Viewpoint Analysis

Viewpoint analysis has been carried out on a selection of key viewpoint locations to assess the likely level of effects arising as a result of the Proposed Development. With reference to the geographical extent of visibility illustrated within the ZTV, a total of five viewpoints have been selected as being representative of the main views from publicly accessible locations within the Study Area (see **Figure 1**).

Viewpoint 1: View west from the A862

This viewpoint is located to the east of the Site, 248m from the main compound. It is located within the Enclosed Farmland LCT and representative of views experienced by road users from a very localised section of the A862. This accounts for a 50m section of the A862; views would be fully screened by foreground tree cover along adjoining sections to either side of this viewpoint.

At this location the existing views to the west are framed by woodland extending along the roadside to the northwest and southwest of the viewpoint, resulting in a narrow field of view across the landscape to the west. Within these views, the landform to the west drops down steeply from the roadside, resulting in an elevated view across the adjoining agricultural landscape. The nearby fields are under pastoral land use, and are enclosed by established tree cover.

The distant landscape gradually rises, forming a series of rolling hills that are predominantly wooded. A pair of overhead lines, extending parallel to one another, represent the key elements of built form within the view. These extend east-west through the landscape, forming a corridor through the gap in the nearby tree cover. The associated pylons are located just outside the illustrated field of view, and represent prominent, large-scale features within the local landscape. This combination of elements creates a local landscape that exhibits traditional farming character, with modern infrastructure elements.

Predicted View

The Proposed Development would be located on the lower lying farmland to the east, beyond the intervening tree cover. Accordingly, views would be limited to the outer-most northern edge of the compound, comprising the perimeter fence and CCTV column. These elements would account for a very narrow field of view and would be back-clothed by the farmland beyond. As such the Proposed Development would represent a very discreet addition to the existing view experienced through the gap in the intervening woodland. The existing overhead lines would continue to represent the most prominent elements of built form within the view due to their height.

The proposed planting would form an extension to the existing tree cover around the Site. This would provide further visual containment and screening of the proposed infrastructure. As the proposed planting within the Site establishes, the Proposed Development would be fully screened from view.

Effects on Visual Amenity

The A862 forms part of the NC500 route, and accordingly is used by recreational visitors. The sensitivity of road users at this location is therefore assessed as being High/Medium. The magnitude of change would be Negligible based on the very restricted extent of the Site that would be visible through this gap in roadside tree cover. Given the transient nature of road users, the duration of view would also be extremely short. The resultant level of effect would be Minor/Negligible, not notable.

As the proposed planting within the Site establishes, views of the Proposed Development would soften further. After approximately ten years post-completion (hereafter referred to as ‘Year 10’), there would be no views and no effect.

Landscape Effects

This viewpoint is located within the Enclosed Farmland LCT, which is assessed as being of Medium sensitivity to the Proposed Development. The Proposed Development would contrast with the agricultural characteristics of the landscape to the west. However, it would be predominantly screened, and located beyond existing large-scale infrastructure elements (overhead lines) that currently exert an influence upon the locality. Accordingly, the Proposed Development would exert very limited influence on local landscape character at this location. The magnitude of change would be Negligible, and the level of effect would be Minor/Negligible, not notable.

The establishment of proposed planting within the Site would reflect the existing pattern of tree cover within the locality, and would represent the introduction of landscape elements of value. By Year 10, the Proposed Development would be fully screened and there would be no effect on landscape character.

Viewpoint 2: View south from the A862

This viewpoint is located 507m to the north of the main compound, within the Farmed River Plains LCT. It is representative of views experienced by road users and recreational users of the cycle route that extends parallel to the road. The existing views to the south incorporate flat, open, pastoral farmland that is enclosed by established woodland. The distant landscape rises above the tops of the tree canopy in places, where it forms an undulating horizon. Built form within the view comprises overhead power lines to the south, as well as telecoms lines, and agricultural barns to the southeast.

Predicted View

The Proposed Development would be located in the far end of the field, beyond the intervening pylons. The proposed infrastructure would be back-clothed by the woodland to the south, forming a low-lying addition to the landscape, well below the skyline. The existing overhead lines in the foreground would continue to represent the most prominent elements of built form within the view due to their height and proximity to the viewpoint.

Proposed planting along the northern edge of the compound and along the roadside at the northern end of the Site would soften the appearance of the Proposed Development over time. Lower-lying infrastructure would become increasingly screened from view.

Effects on Visual Amenity

The sensitivity of recreational users of the cycle route is assessed as being High. The sensitivity of road users at this location (which includes recreational users of the NC500 route) is assessed as being High/Medium. The magnitude of change would be Moderate based on the open nature of the view, balanced by the back-clothing by tree cover and presence of existing infrastructure within the intervening landscape. The resultant level of effect would be Major/Moderate for cyclists and Moderate for road users (notable). In both cases, the view would be experienced transiently, and account for a very short duration of the overall route, oblique to the direction of travel.

As the proposed planting within the Site establishes, the Proposed Development would be increasingly

screened. By Year 10, the magnitude of change would reduce to Negligible, and the level of effect would be Negligible for cyclists and road users (not notable).

Landscape Effects

This viewpoint is located within the Farmed River Plains LCT, which is assessed as being of Medium sensitivity to the Proposed Development. The Proposed Development would represent the introduction of additional built form to the local agricultural landscape. However, the effects on landscape character would be tempered by the low-level nature of the Proposed Development and the presence of existing large-scale infrastructure in the foreground. On balance, the magnitude of change would be Moderate and the level of effect would be Moderate. This is assessed as notable in this instance based on proximity to the Proposed Development.

The establishment of proposed planting within the Site would reflect the existing tree cover within the surrounding area, and augment the existing field pattern. Accordingly, this would represent the addition of beneficial elements to the local landscape. By Year 10, the establishment of tree cover would soften the appearance of the Proposed Development, reducing its visual influence upon local landscape character. The magnitude of change would reduce to Negligible, and the level of effect would be Minor/Negligible, not notable.

Viewpoint 3: View east from Core Path IN03.04 along the River Beauly

This viewpoint is located on the Core Path that extends along the western side of the River Beauly, 565m to the west of the main compound, within the Farmed River Plains LCT. It is representative of views experienced by local walkers and anglers.

The existing views to the east are characterised by the open water of the River Beauly. The views are foreshortened by established riparian tree cover along the opposite, eastern bank of the river, which forms a near-continuous band of vegetation. There is a small, localised gap in this tree cover where the existing overhead lines extend across the river. Through this gap, there are narrow, framed views of pastoral farmland beyond, which is enclosed by further woodland in the background. The pylons in the foreground represent large-scale infrastructure elements that contrast with the otherwise natural characteristics of the landscape.

Predicted View

Potential views of the Proposed Development would be restricted by the intervening broadleaved tree cover extending along the eastern riverbank. There would be no views and no effect during summer months. During winter months, views would remain very restricted. In filtered views, the Proposed Development would represent a discreet, low-lying addition, beyond intervening trees. As the proposed planting within the Site establishes, potential filtered views during winter months would be increasingly screened.

Effects on Visual Amenity

The sensitivity of recreational walkers and anglers is assessed as being High. Based on winter views, the magnitude of change would be Slight/Negligible at most. The level of effect would be Minor, not

notable. By Year 10, there would be no discernible views of the Proposed Development and no effect.

Landscape Effects

This viewpoint is located within the Farmed River Plains LCT, which is assessed as being of Medium sensitivity to the Proposed Development. The Proposed Development would exert no influence on landscape character during summer months due to intervening tree cover. During winter months, the Proposed Development would continue to represent a very discreet addition to the landscape on the far side of the river, beyond intervening tree cover and pylons. The magnitude of change would be Negligible and the level of effect would be Minor/Negligible, not notable. By Year 10, there would be no discernible effect.

Viewpoint 4: View southeast from path at Altyre

This viewpoint is located on the footpath that runs parallel to the road at Altyre, 2,163m to the northwest of the main compound (within the Open Farmed Slopes LCT). The footpath offers a means of pedestrian access parallel to the local road. It is not a promoted / sign-posted trail. Accordingly, it is representative of views experienced by local walkers. The existing view is characterised by rolling farmland that drops down towards the River Beauly to the southeast before rising again in the distance. The farmland is demarcated by wide swathes of woodland, forestry and tree cover that restrict views of the river and merge to form a dark-green mass across the landscape.

Built form is evident at gaps in more open areas and localised gaps in the tree cover. This includes the residential properties at Wester Balblair in the foreground, as well as isolated dwellings scattered amongst tree cover in the distance. In addition, the landscape is traversed by overhead lines in the foreground, and across lower-lying parts of the River Beauly valley beyond.

Predicted View

Potential views of the Proposed Development would be restricted by intervening woodland and tree cover, particularly during summer months. The proposed infrastructure would represent a discreet, low-lying addition to the distant landscape, located beyond intervening infrastructure (pylons). As the proposed planting within the Site steadily establishes, potential views of the proposed infrastructure would be subject to additional screening over time.

Effects on Visual Amenity

The sensitivity of walkers at this viewpoint is assessed as being High. Due to the partly-screened, and distant nature of views of the Proposed Development beyond intervening pylons, the magnitude of change would be Negligible. The level of effect would be Negligible, not notable. By Year 10, there would be no discernible views of the Proposed Development and no effect.

Landscape Effects

This viewpoint is located within the Open Farmed Slopes LCT, which is assessed as being of Medium/High sensitivity to the Proposed Development. The Proposed Development would represent a very discreet addition to the geographically separate, low-lying river valley to the southeast, beyond

intervening tree cover and pylons. The magnitude of change upon local landscape character would be Negligible and the level of effect would be Negligible, not notable. By Year 10, there would be no discernible effect.

Viewpoint 5: View southeast from Ruilick

This viewpoint is located at an open, elevated vantage point within the dispersed hamlet of Ruilick, 3,187m to the northwest of the main compound (within the Farmed and Forested Slopes - Ross & Cromarty LCT). It is representative of views experienced by local residents. The existing view is characterised by rolling farmland that drops down towards the River Beauly valley to the southeast before rising again in the distance. As described at Viewpoint 4, the landscape towards the southeast incorporates expansive areas of dark-green woodland, forestry and tree cover, which screen many other elements from view. However, there are views of nearby dwellings within Ruilick in the foreground, as well as more distant views of overhead lines in the lower-lying landscape beyond.

Predicted View

The Proposed Development would be experienced in the distance, in the context of surrounding woodland and existing overhead power lines. The proposed infrastructure would represent a discreet, low-lying addition to the distant landscape beyond intervening pylons. As the proposed planting within the Site establishes over time, potential views of the proposed infrastructure would be subject to steadily increasing amounts of screening.

Effects on Visual Amenity

The sensitivity of residents at this viewpoint is assessed as being High. The magnitude of change would be Negligible, based on the distance of view in combination with intervening infrastructure. The level of effect would be Minor, not notable. By Year 10, the Proposed Development would be subject to screening by the established planting along the edge of the compound. The magnitude of change would remain Negligible, albeit the level of effect would reduce to Negligible, not notable.

Landscape Effects

This viewpoint is located within the Farmed and Forested Slopes - Ross & Cromarty LCT, which is assessed as being of Medium/High sensitivity to the Proposed Development. The Proposed Development would represent a very discreet addition to the geographically separate, low-lying river valley to the southeast, in the context of surrounding tree cover and existing pylons. The magnitude of change upon local landscape character would be Negligible and the level of effect would be Minor/Negligible, not notable. By Year 10, the establishment of planting around the compound would further restrict the visual influence of the Proposed Development on local landscape character. The magnitude of change would remain Negligible, but the level of effect would reduce to Negligible, not notable.

9 Construction Stage Effects

Whilst it is the operational stage of the Proposed Development that would give rise to prolonged landscape and visual effects, temporary effects at the construction stage would also occur based on the following operations:

- Erection of temporary perimeter fencing;
- Installation of temporary construction compound (including storage and welfare facilities);
- Creation of temporary laydown areas;
- Site clearance and excavation works for foundations;
- Increased vehicular movement within the Site;
- Gradual introduction of proposed buildings and infrastructure; and
- Reinstatement works, including the removal of the temporary accommodation and temporary construction access track.

The works detailed above would give rise to some landscape and visual effects. The detailed construction programme is not known at this stage, although is anticipated to be approximately 24 months in duration. The associated effects would be temporary and would mainly arise through the gradual introduction of proposed buildings / infrastructure within the Site. The effects arising from other operations, including the vehicle movement, construction of the fencing and excavation works would be localised, and whilst potentially visible, would not appear prominently in views from the surrounding areas. As such, the construction phase effects would be limited in extent and duration.

9.1 Construction Stage Landscape Effects

During the construction stage, areas of the existing pastoral farmland within the Site would be removed. There would be localised areas of excavation required for the parking and access, foundations of the buildings and cable routes, resulting in a change to the current landscape fabric within the Site. There would also be a short term, temporary increase in vehicle movements to and from the Site. However, there would be no loss of existing tree cover or any other landscape features of value. Furthermore, the construction activities would be focused within a low-lying area, contained by established woodland and riparian tree cover to the south, east and west. The existing overhead line that extends through the Site would pass the construction compound and main developable area to the north.

In terms of landscape fabric; the existing pasture within the Site is considered to be of Low sensitivity to the Proposed Development due to its relative commonality, its ability to regenerate in a short period of time, and the absence of features of landscape value. The magnitude of change on would be Moderate, resulting in a Moderate/Minor effect.

In terms of landscape character; the main construction activities would be focused within the Enclosed Farmland LCT (where the construction compound and main developable area would be located). The construction stage effects would be limited to a very localised part of this LCT, and result in the disturbance of the existing ground cover, introduction of temporary fencing / laydown areas,

temporary access track, and an increase in human activity and vehicular movements within the Site. This would contrast with the agricultural land use within the adjoining fields, albeit within a low-lying area that is visually contained on three sides (south, east and west) by established woodland / tree cover. As a result, the effects (including indirect effects) would be very localised, and experienced in the context of the existing overhead line that extends through the Site. The magnitude of change on local landscape character during the construction stage would be Moderate and the level of effect would be Moderate. With reference to the localised nature of effects and temporary nature of the construction phase, this is assessed as being not notable in this instance. There would be no discernible influence on the characteristics of the wider area, or the LCT as a whole.

In addition, the construction activities would also exert a direct effect upon localised parts of the Farmed River Plains LCT. The effects would be associated with excavation and construction activities in relation to localised parts of the access track. This would account for an extremely small area within this LCT. As above, the construction activities would be low-lying and visually contained by surrounding tree cover, tempering the potential influence on existing landscape characteristics. Accordingly, the magnitude of change on the Farmed River Plains LCT would be Slight at most, and the level of effect would be Moderate/Minor, not notable.

9.2 Construction Phase Effects on Visual Amenity

The visual effects of the activities during the construction phase would be temporary, intermittent and predominantly limited to localised areas in the vicinity of the Site. This is due to the low-lying location of the Site, in combination with the containing effect of surrounding woodland / tree cover, as well as the low-lying nature of activities associated with site clearance / excavation.

The most open views would be limited to localised parts of the A862 to the north of the Site, which would be experienced transiently by road users. These receptors would experience relatively close proximity views of the construction activities in the context of surrounding farmland, woodland and tree cover, as well as the existing overhead line extending through the Site (in the foreground of the construction compound and main developable area). These views would be of short duration, oblique to the direction of travel.

Views of the construction activities from wider parts of the surrounding area would be limited to elevated vantage points, including higher ground to the northwest in the vicinity of Ruilick. The views experienced by local residents in this area would be at distance, and account for a limited angle of view. The low-lying construction activities would represent a discreet element in the background landscape, beyond intervening overhead lines, in the context of surrounding tree cover.

Along with the site clearance / excavation activities, temporary access track, material storage and an increase in traffic movement at the Site, the visual effects would occur primarily from the gradual appearance of the proposed infrastructure (considered below under ‘Operational Effects’). The influence of construction activities on existing views would be reduced through good site management.

On balance, the visual magnitude of change experienced by road users on a localised section of the A862 to the north of the Site would be Moderate during the construction phase, resulting in a Moderate level of effect. This is considered notable in this instance based on the proximity of view, albeit as noted above, these views would be temporary and limited to a very localised section of the overall route. The views of construction operations experienced by other receptors would be more restricted. The magnitude of change experienced by residents on the hillside around Ruilick would be Slight/Negligible at most. The resultant level of effect would be Minor, not notable.

10 Operational Landscape Effects

This section examines the effects arising as a result of the Proposed Development with reference to landscape fabric within the Site, landscape character and landscape designations.

10.1 Effects on Landscape Fabric

The landscape within the Site comprises pastoral grassland, which is void of any notable features of landscape value, and accordingly is assessed as being of Low sensitivity to the Proposed Development.

The Proposed Development would result in the loss of a small area of this farmland, and its replacement with the proposed elements of infrastructure (as listed in Section 7.1), which would be enclosed within a fenced compound. The temporary access track (installed for construction purposes) would be reinstated to agriculture. The Proposed Development would also incorporate new areas of native woodland edge planting, species-rich wildflower meadow and SUDS elements (as described in Section 7.2). These elements would represent the addition of beneficial landscape features to the locality that would exert increasing influence over time as they become more established.

On balance, the magnitude of change upon the local landscape fabric within the Site would be Moderate, giving rise to a Moderate/Minor level of effect.

10.2 Effects on Landscape Character

The effect of the Proposed Development on landscape character largely depends on the key characteristics of the receiving environment; the degree to which the development may be considered to be consistent with or at odds with it; and how the proposal would be perceived within its setting.

<u>Enclosed Farmland LCT</u>

The Proposed Development would be located (predominantly) within the Enclosed Farmland LCT. With reference to sensitivity analysis within **Appendix B**, the local landscape character at the Site is assessed as being of Medium sensitivity to the Proposed Development. The effects on landscape character would be direct (predominantly affecting the Site itself) and indirect (affecting the visual and perceptual characteristics of the surrounding area).

In terms of direct effects, existing ground cover in the locality of the Site comprises pastoral grassland, surrounding by established woodland and riparian tree cover to the south, east and west. This reflects the characteristic *"agricultural land-use balanced with a high proportion of trees, woodlands, small*

scale forests and hedgerows". There would be no notable loss of valued natural features to facilitate introduction of the proposed buildings or associated infrastructure. The proposed Site access would make use of the existing farm track to the north, negating the requirement for lengthy new tracks. With reference to **Figure 5a**, the Proposed Development would incorporate new areas of native woodland edge and tree planting, which would link with existing tree cover in the surrounding area. This would augment the characteristic *"tree cover* [that] *provides varying degrees of enclosure for fields and buildings"* throughout the LCT. As the new areas of planting steadily establish, the influence on the landscape would gradually increase, representing beneficial change to the locality.

In terms of indirect effects, the ZTV illustrated in **Figure 1b** demonstrates that potential views of the Proposed Development would be restricted to extremely localised parts of the LCT due to the containing influence of the surrounding landform and tree cover. These views would be predominantly limited to the Site and its immediate surroundings. Surrounding woodland and riparian tree cover would contain potential visibility across the wider LCT (see Viewpoint1). This reflects the *"landform and tree cover* [that] *limit long distance views, creating intrigue and screen many settlements from roads."* As such, the Proposed Development would exert extremely limited influence on the existing *"mixed agricultural land-use"* or the pattern of *"medium-sized geometric fields"*. There would be no effect on the *"range of historic sites"* found throughout wider parts of the LCT and the Proposed Development would be spatially separate from the *"small farms and crofts, several villages and estates"*.

In summary, the main effects would be focused within the Site, and immediately adjoining woodland edge within 20-30m. Within this localised area the magnitude of change would be Substantial/Moderate and the level of effect would be Major/Moderate, notable. At greater distances, the effects would diminish abruptly due to intervening tree cover and woodland. Accordingly, across parts of the LCT at distances beyond 30m, the magnitude of change would be Negligible. The level of effect would be Minor/Negligible at most, not notable. Across the vast majority of the Enclosed Farmland LCT there would be no views of the Proposed Development and no effect.

By Year 10, views of the proposed infrastructure would become more contained by the established planting around the main compound. Accordingly, the main effects would be focused within the confines of the main compound.

<u>Farmed River Plains LCT</u>

The Proposed Development would be located partly within the Farmed River Plains LCT. With reference to sensitivity analysis within **Appendix B**, the local landscape character at the Site is assessed as being of Medium sensitivity to the Proposed Development. The effects on landscape character would be direct (predominantly affecting the Site itself) and indirect (affecting the visual and perceptual characteristics of the surrounding area).

In terms of direct effects, these would be limited to sections of the access track, which would replace localised, linear parts of the existing agricultural ground-cover within the LCT. With reference to **Figure 5b**, the Proposed Development would also incorporate new areas of native tree planting along

the existing field boundaries to the north / northwest of the main compound. This would reinforce the existing field pattern, and also link with existing tree cover in the surrounding area. This would contribute towards the existing *"woodland and tree cover of roadside and field-side trees lines, shelterbelts and small plantations interspersed with large scale fields"* characteristic of the LCT. Accordingly, this would represent a beneficial addition to the local landscape.

In terms of indirect effects, the ZTV illustrated in **Figure 1b** demonstrates that potential views of the Proposed Development would be restricted to extremely localised parts of the LCT, reflecting the *"mainly flat"* landform combined with the containing influence of surrounding tree cover. Views would be limited to the Site and surrounding area towards the northwest. Within the views from these areas, the Proposed Development would represent a low-lying addition to the landscape, beyond foreground pylons (see Viewpoint 2). The infrastructure would be back-clothed by trees. There would be very limited visual influence on the *"meandering and mainly natural course of rivers*" due to intervening tree cover (see Viewpoint 3). The Proposed Development would be spatially separate from the *"relatively sparse settlement"* located throughout the wider surrounding areas.

In summary, the main effects would be focused within the Site, initially extending approximately 200-300m to northwest (approximately 600-700m from the main compound). Within this localised area the magnitude of change would be Substantial/Moderate and the level of effect would be Major/Moderate, notable. At greater distances to the northwest the effects would gradually diminish, and the Proposed Development would increasingly represent a more distant element in the context of intervening tree cover and large-scale pylons. Accordingly, at distances beyond approximately 200-300m from the Site, the magnitude of change would be Slight/Negligible and the level of effect would be Minor, not notable. Across the vast majority of the Farmed River Plains LCT there would be no views of the Proposed Development and no effect.

By Year 10, views of the proposed infrastructure would become more contained by the established planting around the main compound, and along the field boundaries that demarcate the outer edges of the Site on its north / northwestern side. As a result, the main effects would be curtailed by the established planting and focused within the Site. The Proposed Development would exert very limited influence on wider parts of the LCT, and the indirect effects on the surrounding landscape would not be notable (see Viewpoint 1 – at Year 10).

<u>Other LCTs</u>

The potential effects on other LCTs within the Study Area would be restricted by the increasing separation distance, in combination with the presence of intervening tree cover / woodland.

With reference to **Figure 1b**, there would be views from more elevated areas within the Open Farmed Slopes LCT. From these areas the Proposed Development would represent a very discreet addition to the geographically separate, low-lying river valley to the southeast, in the context of surrounding tree cover and existing pylons (see Viewpoints 4 and 5). The magnitude of change upon landscape character would be Negligible and the level of effect would be Minor/Negligible at most, not notable. By Year 10, the establishment of planting around the compound would further restrict the visual

influence of the Proposed Development on the Open Farmed Slopes LCT. The magnitude of change would remain Negligible, but the level of effect would reduce to Negligible, not notable.

The visual influence of the Proposed Development on all other LCTs would be tempered by increased distance and the restricted nature of potential visibility. ZTV coverage is restricted to very localised geographic areas, where the Proposed Development would be barely discernible.

10.3 Effects on Landscape Designations

The Proposed Development would not be located within a landscape designation, hence there will be no direct effects. Potential effects on designations will instead be limited to indirect effects, based on views of the Proposed Development.

Beaufort Castle GDL

Beaufort Castle GDL is located 600m to the south of the Site at this closest point. With reference to **Figure 1b**, this GDL is entirely outside the ZTV. There would be no views and no effect.

11 Operational Visual Effects

This section examines the visual effects based on changes to the existing view as experienced by people within the surrounding landscape (as described in Section 6.4). This process draws on the results of the ZTV and viewpoint analysis.

11.1 Visual effects experienced by Local Residents

The Appraisal below considers the effects experienced by local residents in settlements, followed by those in isolated residential dwellings / steadings in closest proximity to the Site. In all cases, sensitivity is deemed to be High.

Beauly

Beauly is located 900m to the north of the Site. With reference to **Figure 4**, ZTV coverage is almost entirely absent across the settlement, and limited to an extremely localised area on the southern edge of the settlement at Airds Road. Potential views of the Proposed Development from this area would be screened by vegetation along the intervening rail line, in combination with riparian tree cover along the River Beauly. As such, there would be no discernible effect.

Wester Balblair

Wester Balblair is located 1.0km to the west of the Site. Similar to Beauly, ZTV coverage is extremely restricted. Potential views would be limited to the wider curtilage of properties at the northern end of Braeview road. These views would be subject to screening by garden vegetation and riparian tree cover along the River Beauly. As such, there would be no discernible effect.

Broallan / Ruisaurie / Ruilick

This settlement comprises a low-density spread of dispersed dwellings, located 2.4km to the west / northwest of the Site. The settlement is located on the southeasterly-facing slopes that define the

western edge of the River Beauly valley. As such, many of these properties are aligned to deliver open views across the river-valley landscape to the east / southeast. As illustrated in Viewpoints 4 and 5, these views encompass areas of farmland, demarcated by wide swathes of woodland, forestry and tree cover, as well as localised built form that includes large-scale pylons.

Within the clearest views, the Proposed Development would be experienced in the distance, beyond intervening overhead lines, in the context of surrounding woodland. The proposed infrastructure would represent a discreet, low-lying element in the background landscape. The magnitude of change would be Negligible, and the level of effect would be Minor at most, not notable.

Views of the Proposed Development would soften further over time in accordance with the establishment of tree planting within the Site. By Year 10 the level of effect would reduce to Negligible at most, not notable. From lower-lying properties there would be no discernible effect.

Dispersed Residential Dwellings / Steadings

With reference to **Figure 4**, ZTV coverage is extremely limited across isolated residential dwellings in closest proximity to the Site. Accordingly, potential views of the Proposed Development would be limited to a small number of dwellings located to the west / northwest of the Site (at R6, R8, and R15). The effects on views from these properties are assessed below.

For residents at R6: Failte, Abainmhor, Fearnlea, The Haven, Cruivend House (located 500m to the west), ZTV coverage is restricted to extremely localised parts of the curtilage. Within views from these areas, the Proposed Development would be barely discernible beyond intervening riparian tree cover along the River Beauly. There would be no views from the dwellings.

R8: Cedar Lodge (650m to the northwest) is located on the cusp of the ZTV. Potential views from the curtilage would be screened by intervening tree cover along the A862 and nearby fields. The Proposed Development would be barely discernible.

For residents at R15: Teawig Farm and Cottages (located 950m to the northwest), ZTV coverage is extremely fragmented and limited to very localised areas that coincide with existing agricultural barns to the southeast of the properties. Accordingly, there would be no views of the Proposed Development from the properties or adjoining garden areas.

With reference to **Figure 4**, there would be no views and no effect from any other residential dwelling within 1km of the Site. This comprises properties R1-R5, R7, R9-R14 and R16-R17.

11.2 Visual effects experienced by Recreational Receptors

The Appraisal of effects experienced by recreational receptors is described below, listed in order of increasing distance from the Proposed Development. Recreational receptors are considered to be of High sensitivity unless stated otherwise.

Local Cycle Route

A signposted section of local cycle route extends approximately 1km in length along the side of the A862, between Lovat Bridge and the junction with the B9164. The route extends along the northern

edge of the Site, approximately 500m to the north of the proposed infrastructure at the closest point. With reference to **Figure 1b**, potential views of the Proposed Development would be limited to a 600m section.

For cyclists travelling west, views would initially be screened by intervening woodland and agricultural barns. The first views would be experienced from a 150m section on approach to Dunballoch. From this localised part of the route there would be oblique views of the proposed infrastructure at the far end of the field to the south. The infrastructure would represent a low-lying element, back-clothed by woodland, beyond large-scale pylons in the intervening landscape (see Viewpoint 2). As the cyclist travels further, the Proposed Development would be located behind the direction of travel.

For cyclists travelling east, the first views would be experienced upon passing the entrance to Lovat Bridge Caravan Park. The Proposed Development would be part screened by intervening tree cover to the southeast, and would represent a very minor element in the background landscape. As the cyclist travels further east, views of the proposed infrastructure would open up. From a 300m section near Dunballoch there would be oblique views of the Proposed Development to the south. The infrastructure would be experienced beyond pylons in the foreground, and would be back-clothed by woodland. Thereafter, the Proposed Development would be fully screened.

In summary, key views of the Proposed Development would be restricted to localised sections of the cycle route, 150 – 300m in length. Based on the most open views, the magnitude of change would be Moderate and the level of effect would be Major/Moderate, notable. As the proposed planting establishes around the compound and along the field boundaries to the north (along the interface with the A862), the Proposed Development would be increasingly screened. By Year 10, the magnitude of change would be Negligible, and the level of effect would be Negligible, not notable. From the majority of the route there would be no discernible views of the Proposed Development.

Core Path network

The Core Path network within the Study Area extends along sections of the River Beauly and through areas of woodland, as well as forming walking routes centred around local settlements. With reference to **Figure 1b**, ZTV coverage is very limited across the network and constrained to localised sections of footpaths within the River Beauly valley closest to the Site.

Core Path IN03.04 (Lovat Bridge to Black Bridge) extends along the western banks of the River Beauly, 90m to the southwest of the Site at the closest point. In addition to walkers, this route is also representative of potential views experienced by anglers on the localised section of the River Beauly in closest proximity to the Site (forming a link to the fishing lodge on the riverbank 120m southwest of the Site). ZTV coverage across this route is very fragmented. With reference to Viewpoint 3, potential views of the Proposed Development would be very restricted due to established riparian tree cover along the river. As such, views would primarily be limited to very filtered views during winter months. In filtered views, the proposed infrastructure would represent a discreet, low-lying addition, beyond intervening trees. Based on winter views from the path and fishing lodge, the magnitude of change would be Slight/Negligible at most. The level of effect would be Minor, not

notable. As the proposed planting within the Site establishes, potential filtered views during winter months would be increasingly screened. By Year 10, there would be no discernible views of the Proposed Development.

Core Path IN03.03 (War Memorial to Black Bridge) is located 760m to the west of the Site. ZTV coverage is restricted to a 130m section of the route near Balblair Quarry. From this localised section, views would be extremely limited due to intervening tree cover and pylons. The Proposed Development would be barely discernible.

Potential views of the Proposed Development from all other Core Paths within the Study Area would be restricted by intervening vegetation and / or landform. There would be no views of the Proposed Development and no effect.

Lovat Bridge Caravan Park

Lovat Bridge Caravan Park is located 680m to the northwest of the Proposed Development at the closest point. With reference to **Figure 1b**, ZTV coverage is very limited across the Caravan Park. Within the most open views, the Proposed Development would remain subject to partial screening by intervening vegetation along the A862 and within nearby fields. The proposed infrastructure would represent a discreet addition to the background landscape, beyond large-scale pylons, and back-clothed by distant woodland. On balance, the magnitude of change would be Slight/Negligible at most, resulting in a Minor level of effect (not notable). Across the majority of Lovat Bridge Caravan Park there would be no views and no effect. By Year 10, the level of effect would reduce to Negligible.

Beaufort Highland Lodges

The Beaufort Highland Lodges are a consented development, located within existing woodland to the south of the Site. Potential future views of the Proposed Development would be limited to the northern edge of the attraction (closest to the Site). These views would be subject to screening by the existing stone wall that demarcates the intervening field boundary, in combination with established tree cover extending along the southern side of the wall. Accordingly, views would be predominantly limited to winter months, during periods of leaf fall, and would remain partly filtered by intervening tree branches. On balance, based on winter views, the magnitude of change would be Slight and the level of effect would be Moderate. This is assessed as not notable due to the very localised and seasonal nature of these views. By Year 10, potential views would be tempered by the establishment of further tree planting along the southern edge of the Site. The magnitude of change would reduce to Slight/Negligible and the level of effect would reduce to Moderate/Minor, not notable.

11.3 Visual effects experienced by Road and Rail Receptors

The sensitivity of road users and rail passengers is considered to be Medium in all cases unless otherwise stated.

A862

The A862 extends along the northern edge of the Site, and around the eastern side (approximately 120m to the east of the proposed infrastructure at the closest point). The route forms part of the

NC500 route as used by recreational visitors. Accordingly, the sensitivity of road users on this route is considered to be High/Medium.

With reference to **Figure 1b**, potential views of the Proposed Development would be primarily limited to a 600m section to the north of the Site.

For road users travelling northwest, the first views would be experienced from a 150m section on approach to Dunballoch. From this section there would be oblique views of the proposed infrastructure at the far end of the field to the south. The infrastructure would represent a low-lying element, back-clothed by woodland, beyond large-scale pylons in the intervening landscape (see Viewpoint 2). As the road user travels further, the Proposed Development would be located behind the direction of travel.

For road users travelling southeast, the first views would be experienced upon passing the entrance to Lovat Bridge Caravan Park. The Proposed Development would be part screened by intervening tree cover to the southeast, and would represent a very minor element in the background landscape. As the road user travels further, views of the proposed infrastructure would open up. From a 300m section near Dunballoch there would be oblique views of the Proposed Development to the south. The infrastructure would be experienced beyond pylons in the foreground, and would be back-clothed by woodland. The Proposed Development would then be fully screened by woodland. As the road bends around the eastern side of the Site, there would be glimpsed views through a short gap in the roadside vegetation. This gap, approximately 50m in length, is aligned with the route of the overhead line that extends across the road. From this very localised gap in tree cover, views of the Proposed Development would be limited to the outer-most northern edge of the compound, comprising the perimeter fence and CCTV column (see Viewpoint 1). These elements would account for a very narrow field of view within the lower lying farmland to the west. Thereafter the Proposed Development would be fully screened.

In summary, key views of the Proposed Development would be restricted to localised sections of the A862, 150 – 300m in length to the north of the Site. Based on the most open views, the magnitude of change would be Moderate and the level of effect would be Moderate. This is assessed as notable in this instance based on the open nature of the view. However, given the transient nature of these views, they would be experienced for a very short duration. As the proposed planting establishes around the compound and along the field boundaries to the north (along the interface with the A862), the Proposed Development would be increasingly screened. By Year 10, the magnitude of change would be Negligible, and the level of effect would be Negligible, not notable. From the vast majority of the B862 there would be no views of the Proposed Development.

<u>B9164</u>

The B9164 extends off the A862, linking Dunballoch and Kirkhill. At its closest point, it is located within 50m to the northeast of the Site. Despite its close proximity, potential views of the Proposed Development would be fully screened by intervening woodland, which is extensive along this route, and the existing agricultural barns at the southern end where it adjoins the A862. As such, there would

be no views of the Proposed Development and no effect.

A833 and A831

The A833 (located 280m to the south of the Proposed Development) and A831 (located 840m to the northwest) are entirely outside the ZTV. Road users would experience no views of the Proposed Development and no effect.

Far North Line

The Far North Line is located 900m to the north of the Site at the closest point. With reference to **Figure 1b**, ZTV coverage is limited to a 50-60m section on the southern edge of Beauly. From this very localised section of the route, views of the Proposed Development would be heavily filtered by intervening riparian tree cover along the River Beauly. The proposed infrastructure would be barely discernible. There would be no views from the vast majority of the route.

12 Cumulative Effects

This section examines the potential cumulative effects of the Proposed Development in combination with other similar elements of electrical infrastructure within the Study Area. As informed by review of The Highland Council planning portal, undertaken 15th Nov 2024, the assessment includes consideration of the following developments:

- Existing overhead power lines (OHL), including two 132kV OHL extending east-west through the Site;
- Existing Wester Balblair Substation, located 1.4km to the west of the Site;
- Existing Kilmorack Hydro-Electric Power Station, located 2.8km to the west;
- Proposed Balblair Quary BESS (ref: 24/01548/FUL) located 1.1km to the west;
- Proposed Kilmorack Substation (ref: 24/02831/FUL) located 2.7km to the west; and
- Proposed Kilmorack BESS (ref: 23/03113/FUL) located 2.9km to the west.

In addition to the above, there are additional proposal at scoping stage. The proposed 400kV Fanellan Substation is located 3.7km to the southwest (planning ref: 24/02655/SCOP). A separate proposal for a 400kV OHL would extend from this substation in an easterly direction towards Peterhead (ref: 24/03064/SCOP). As part of this proposal, the existing OHL network would be rationalised, and the proposed 400kV alignment would replace one of the two existing 132kV OHLs that extend east-west across the Site.

The cumulative effects in association with existing developments are considered certain, and those with consented developments are considered very likely. The potential cumulative effect in combination with other planning proposals are inherently less certain (particularly those at scoping-stage), based on the final outcomes of such applications.

Landscape and visual receptors described in Sections 10 and 11 above as undergoing / experiencing a Negligible or Slight/Negligible magnitude of change (or less), are excluded from consideration in the cumulative assessment on the basis that the Proposed Development would exert such a limited effect in its own right that it would not meaningfully contribute to potential cumulative effects. As such, it

would not tip the balance from a minor cumulative effect to a notable cumulative effect.

12.1 Cumulative Landscape Effects

Cumulative Effects on the Enclosed Farmland LCT

With reference to the preceding landscape character assessment in Section 10.2, the main effects of the Proposed Development would be focused within the Site, and immediately adjoining woodland edge within 20-30m to the east, south and west.

In addition to the Proposed Development, the existing Wester Balblair Substation and 132kV OHLs are located within the Enclosed Farmland LCT, and exert direct effects upon local landscape character in their own right. The effects associated with Wester Balblair Substation are tempered by surrounding tree cover / woodland to the east, south and southwest. Accordingly, the key effects are focused towards the north/northwest, across the adjoining Open Farmed Slopes LCT (away from the Proposed Development). Conversely, the existing 132kV OHLs extending through the Site exert a direct influence upon local landscape character. The effects associated with the Proposed Development would coalesce with the effects exerted by the existing pylons, albeit this would be limited to a very localised part of the LCT due to surrounding tree cover.

In addition to the above, the proposed Balblair Quarry BESS and the scoping-stage Fanellan Substation would be located within the Enclosed Farmland LCT. The associated scoping-stage 400kV OHL would also be located partly within the LCT.

The proposed Balblair Quarry BESS would be located within the footprint of the existing quarry, which is visually contained by established woodland. Accordingly, this would exert extremely limited influence on existing landscape character.

The scoping-stage Fanellan Substation would be spatially separated from the Proposed Development by distance, and intervening woodland. As such, there would be no coalescence of effects with the Proposed Development. Instead the existing characteristics would re-exert themselves across the intervening landscape. The cumulative influence of the associated 400kV OHL would be tempered by the rationalisation of the existing transmission network. Whilst the new 400kV alignment would extend east-west across the Site and exert direct effects upon local landscape character, these effects would be offset by the removal of one of the existing 132kV OHLs. Accordingly, the incremental cumulative influence of the 400kV OHL would be relatively limited.

There are no other cumulative developments located within the Enclosed Farmland LCT, and potential indirect effects would be limited by intervening tree cover.

In summary, the Proposed Development would contribute to cumulative effects in combination with the existing Wester Balblair Substation and 132kV OHLs, as well as the proposed Balblair Quarry BESS, and the scoping-stage Fanellan Substation and 400kV OHL. The net result would be to slightly increase the presence of electricity infrastructure in close proximity to the existing 132kV OHLs / scoping stage 400kV OHL. Given the height of the pylons, the 132kV OHLs / scoping stage 400kV OHL would represent the more prominent elements with the local landscape. The influence of other cumulative

developments would be focused across geographically separate parts of the surrounding landscape. The extensive tree cover and woodland, which represents a key characteristic of this LCT, would restrict cumulative effects across intervening areas. On balance, the characteristics of the wider Enclosed Farmland LCT would remain predominantly unchanged. The cumulative magnitude of change across the LCT would be Slight, and the level of effect would be Moderate/Minor, not notable. The Proposed Development would exert extremely limited and localised incremental cumulative influence.

Cumulative Effects on the Farmed River Plains LCT

With reference to the preceding landscape character assessment in Section 10.2, the main effects of the Proposed Development would be focused within the Site, and adjoining area within approximately 200-300m to northwest (approximately 600-700m from the main compound).

In addition to the Proposed Development, the existing 132kV OHLs are located partly within the Farmed River Plains LCT (approximately 1km length section of each OHL). These exert direct effects upon local landscape character in their own right in the vicinity of the Site and adjoining parts of the LCT to the west. The effects associated with the Proposed Development would coalesce with the effects exerted by the existing pylons, albeit this would be limited to a very localised part of the LCT due to surrounding tree cover.

In addition, the scoping-stage 400kV OHL would be located partly within the Farmed River Plains LCT. As described above, the cumulative influence of the 400kV OHL would be tempered by the rationalisation of the existing transmission network. Whilst the new 400kV alignment would extend east-west across the Site and adjoining parts of the River Beauly valley, the effects upon local landscape character would be offset by the removal of one of the existing 132kV OHLs. Accordingly, the incremental cumulative influence of the 400kV OHL would be relatively limited.

There are no other cumulative developments located within the Farmed River Plains LCT, and potential indirect effects would be limited by intervening tree cover.

In summary, the Proposed Development would contribute to cumulative effects in combination with the existing 132kV OHLs, as well as the proposed scoping-stage 400kV OHL. The net result would be to slightly increase the presence of electricity infrastructure in close proximity to the existing 132kV OHLs / scoping-stage 400kV OHL. Given the height of the pylons, the 132kV OHLs / scoping stage 400kV OHL would represent the more prominent elements with the local landscape. The extensive tree cover and woodland, which represents a key characteristic of the Farmed River Plains LCT, would restrict cumulative effects across wider areas. As such, the characteristics of the wider LCT would remain predominantly unchanged. The cumulative magnitude of change across the LCT would be Slight/Negligible, and the level of effect would be Minor, not notable. The Proposed Development would exert extremely limited and localised incremental cumulative influence.

12.2 Cumulate Visual Effects

Cumulative Effects Experienced by Recreational Users of the Local Cycle Route

Cyclists on the local cycle route to the north of the Site currently experience clear views of the existing 132kV OHL in the landscape to the south, from the 700m section between Lovat Bridge and the junction with the B9164. With reference to the main assessment in Section 11.2, the Proposed Development would be visible from parts of this section (limited to 150-300m in length). Within these views, the Proposed Development would be located behind the two 132kV OHLs, and represent a low-lying addition beyond the large-scale pylons in the foreground.

Cyclists would also experience views of the scoping-stage 400kV OHL from the same section of route. The cumulative influence of the 400kV OHL would be tempered by the rationalisation of the existing transmission network, incorporating the removal of one of the existing 132kV OHLs. As such, within this scenario, there would be no increase in the overall number of OHL within the view. The Proposed Development would continue to represent a more discreet, low-lying element in the background behind the intervening pylons.

There are / would be no views of other cumulative developments from this local cycle route due to intervening tree cover.

On balance, the cumulative magnitude of change would be Moderate and the level of effect would be Major/Moderate, notable. The existing 132kV OHLs / scoping stage 400kV OHL would represent the more prominent elements within views experienced by cyclists on this route. The Proposed Development would contribute towards cumulative effects, albeit across more localised sections.

As described in the main assessment, the Proposed Development would be increasingly screened over time as the proposed planting within the Site gradually establishes (around the compound and along the field boundaries to the north). As such, its cumulative influence would steadily diminish. The establishment of proposed planting along the outer edges of the Site would also aid screening of the two existing 132kV OHLs / scoping stage 400kV OHL pylons from parts of the route.

Cumulative Effects Experienced by Recreational Visitors at Beaufort Highland Lodges

Future visitors to the consented Beaufort Highland Lodges would experience views of the two existing 132kV OHLs from the northern part of the attraction, subject to filtering by intervening tree cover and the stone wall that demarcates the intervening field boundary. The Proposed Development would be located in the foreground of the OHLs, within the same field of view. The proposed infrastructure would screen the lower parts of the pylons beyond.

Visitors would also experience views of the scoping-stage 400kV OHL. However, the cumulative influence of the 400kV OHL would be tempered by the removal of one of the existing 132kV OHLs. There are / would be no discernible views of any other cumulative developments due to surrounding tree cover.

On balance, the cumulative magnitude of change would be Slight and the level of effect would be Moderate. This is based on the combined presence of the Proposed Development and the pylons

associated with the existing 132kV OHLs / scoping stage 400kV OHL, within the same angle of view. The effects are assessed as not notable due to the filtered nature of views beyond intervening vegetation and stone wall. As described in the main assessment, the Proposed Development would be increasingly screened over time as the proposed planting along the southern edge of the Site gradually establishes. This would also screen views of the existing 132kV OHLs / scoping stage 400kV OHL.

Cumulative Effects Experienced by Road Users on the A862

Road users on the A862 currently experience clear views of the two existing 132kV OHLs from the 5.6km section between Lovat Bridge and Inchmore, subject to intermittent screening by roadside vegetation and intervening tree cover.

As described in the main assessment in Section 11.3, key views of the Proposed Development from the A862 would be restricted to a far more localised stretch of the road, 150 – 300m in length, to the north of the Site. This section of the road extends alongside the local cycle route assessed above. As described above, the Proposed Development would be experienced behind the 132kV OHLs from this section of the route, and represent a low-lying addition beyond the large-scale pylons in the foreground.

Road users would also experience views of the scoping-stage 400kV OHL from sections of the road between Lovat Bridge and Inchmore. However, as described above, the cumulative influence of the 400kV OHL would be tempered by the removal of one of the existing 132kV OHLs. There are / would be no clear views of other cumulative developments from this route due to intervening tree cover.

On balance, the cumulative magnitude of change would be Moderate and the level of effect would be Moderate. The effects, which are considered notable in this instance, would be primarily attributed to the existing 132kV OHLs / scoping stage 400kV OHL due to the vertical scale of the pylons, their proximity to the road in places (including two distinct areas where they extend directly over the carriageway), and the length of the route from which they are / would be visible. Conversely, whilst the Proposed Development would contribute towards cumulative effects, its influence would be limited to very localised sections and experienced for extremely short duration.

As described in the main assessment, the Proposed Development would be increasingly screened over time as the proposed planting within the Site gradually establishes (around the compound and along the field boundaries to the north). As such, its cumulative influence would steadily diminish. The establishment of proposed planting along the outer edges of the Site would also aid screening of the existing 132kV OHLs / scoping stage 400kV OHL pylons from parts of the route between Lovat Bridge and the B9164.

13 Conclusions

In summary, the Proposed Development would be located in an area of low-lying riparian farmland, which incorporates extensive areas of woodland and tree cover. The Proposed Development would result in the introduction of a substation compound, battery storage and associated infrastructure to

the Site, as well as landscape planting and ecological enhancement measures. This includes new areas of native woodland edge, mixed-species hedgerow and species-rich meadow. The planting is focused around the main compound and also extends along the wider field boundaries within the Site, re-enforcing the existing field pattern.

In terms of landscape effects, the containment by woodland and tree cover to the east, south and west of the Site means that the main effects would be very localised. Notable effect would be primarily focused across the Site, and adjoining areas within 20-30m to the east, south and west, and approximately 200-300m to northwest (approximately 600-700m from the main compound). This accounts for an extremely localised part of the host Enclosed Farmland LCT and Farmed River Plains LCT. There would be no notable effects on wider parts of these LCTs, or neighbouring LCTs. There would be no effects on any landscape designation.

Visual effects would also be extremely restricted based on the Site location, which is spatially remote from residential settlement, and which exhibits strong visual enclosure based on the surrounding woodland and tree cover to the east, south and west. Accordingly, there would be no notable effects on the views experienced by local residents. Instead, notable visual effects would be limited to recreational cyclists on the local cycle route between Lovat Bridge and the B9164, and road users on localised parts of the A862 which follows the same route to the north of the Site. In each case, this accounts for very a localised section approximately 150-300m in length (dependant on the direction of travel). These effects would steadily reduce over time in accordance with the establishment of proposed planting measures within the Site, and would not be notable by Year 10. There would be no notable effects on views from wider parts of these routes, or upon views from any other recreational resource or key transport route.

In terms of cumulative effects, the Proposed Development would augment the presence of the existing and proposed electricity infrastructure within the Study Area. In particular, this includes the two existing 132kV OHLs / scoping-stage 400kV OHL which are / would extend through the Site. The cumulative influence of the Proposed Development on the landscape and visual resource would be restricted by the extent of surrounding woodland and tree cover to the east, south and west of the Site. As such, cumulative effects in association with the 132kV OHLs / scoping-stage 400kV OHL would be very localised. Furthermore, these cumulative developments are mutually exclusive, hence should the 400kV OHL go ahead, this would result in the removal of one of the existing 132kV OHLs. On this basis, the incremental cumulative influence of the 400kV OHL would be relatively limited. In the clearest views (from the landscape to the north/northwest of the Site), the Proposed Development would be experienced as a low-lying element behind the intervening large-scale pylons associated with the existing 132kV OHLs / scoping-stage 400kV OHL.

In conclusion, it is assessed that the Proposed Development could be accommodated at the Site with limited and extremely localised effects on landscape character and visual amenity.

References

Publications

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Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan 2, Highland Council, 2024.

Sustainable Design Guide, Highland Council, 2013.

Appendix A: LVA methodology

Landscape Effects

The starting point for the assessment of landscape effects was a desk-based review of published landscape assessments.

The sensitivity of the landscape to change resulting from a Proposed Development is not absolute and varies according to the existing landscape, the nature of the Proposed Development and the type of change being proposed. Good practice guidance differentiates between baseline sensitivity of the landscape and the sensitivity of a landscape to a specific development proposal. Accordingly, the concept of 'sensitivity to change' to new development, as described within the baseline published landscape character assessments, is distinct from the consideration of landscape sensitivity to the specific development proposal.

The baseline for consideration of landscape effects is the established landscape character. The landscape effects of a Proposed Development are considered against the key characteristics of the receiving landscape. The degree to which the Proposed Development may change 'the distinct and recognisable pattern that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse' (Countryside Agency and NatureScot, 2002), enables a judgement to be made as to the significance of the effect in landscape character terms. This involves consideration of where the Proposed Development may give rise to a different landscape character type or sub-type.

In general terms, a distinctive landscape of acknowledged value (e.g. covered by a designation) and in good condition is likely to be more sensitive to change than a landscape in poor condition and with no designations or acknowledged value. General guidance on the evaluation of sensitivity is provided below; however, the actual sensitivity would depend on the attributes of the landscape receiving the proposals and the nature of those proposals.

In order to reach an understanding of the effects of development upon the landscape it is necessary to consider different aspects of the landscape as follows:

- Landscape Fabric / Elements: The individual features of the landscape, such as hills, valleys, woods, hedges, tree cover, vegetation, buildings and roads for example which can usually be described and quantified;
- Landscape Quality: The state of repair or condition of elements of a particular landscape, its integrity and intactness and the extent to which its distinctive character is apparent;
- Landscape Value: The importance attached to a landscape, often used as a basis for designation or recognition which expresses national or regional consensus, because of its special qualities/attributes including aesthetic or perceptual aspects such as scenic beauty, tranquillity or wildness, cultural associations or nature conservation interest; and
- Landscape Key Characteristics: The particularly notable elements or combinations of elements which makes a particular contribution to defining or describing the character of an area, which may include experiential characteristics such as wildness and tranquillity.

The sensitivity of the landscape to a particular development considers the susceptibility of the landscape and its value. The overall sensitivity is described as high, medium or low. This is assessed by taking into account the existing landscape quality, landscape value, and landscape capacity or susceptibility to change, which often vary depending on the type of development proposed and the particular site location, such that sensitivity needs to be considered on a case-by-case basis. This should not be confused with 'inherent sensitivity' where areas of the landscape may be referred to as inherently of 'high' or 'low sensitivity.

For example, a National Park may be described as inherently of high sensitivity on account of its designation, but it may prove to be less sensitive to particular development and/or the design of that development.

Alternatively, an undesignated landscape may be of high sensitivity to a particular development and/or the design of that development regardless of the lack of local or national designation. The main factors to consider are discussed as follows:

Landscape susceptibility according to GLVIA3 means "the ability of the landscape to accommodate the Proposed Development without undue consequences for maintenance of the baseline situation and/or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies". Judgements on landscape susceptibility include references to both the physical and aesthetic characteristics and the potential scope for mitigation that would be in character with the landscape.

The judgements regarding susceptibility and value of the landscape character are identified within the sensitivity table included within **Appendix B**. These relationships can be complex and value alone does not automatically or by definition have high susceptibility to all types of change. Examples and on the evaluation of landscape sensitivity are provided below:

Table A.1: Landscape sensitivity criteria

High Sensitivity	Landscape character, characteristics and elements which would generally be of lower landscape capacity or scope for landscape change, and of notable landscape value and quality. These are landscapes that may be considered to be of particular importance to conserve and which may be particularly sensitive to change if inappropriately dealt with.
Medium Sensitivity	Landscape character, characteristics and elements where there would be a moderate landscape capacity or some scope for landscape change. Often include landscapes of moderate landscape value and quality which may be locally designated.
Low Sensitivity	Landscape Character, characteristics and elements where there would be higher landscape capacity or scope for landscape change to accommodate the proposed type of development. Usually applies to landscapes with of lesser landscape susceptibility or higher landscape capacity for the Proposed Development.

The level of landscape effects is not absolute and can only be defined in relation to each development and its location. It is for each assessment to determine the assessment criteria and thresholds using well informed and reasoned judgements.

The magnitude of landscape change arising from the Proposed Development at any particular location is described as substantial, moderate, slight or negligible based on the interpretation of a combination of largely quantifiable parameters, as follows:

- degree of loss or alteration to key landscape features/elements or characteristics;
- distance from the development;
- duration of effect;
- landscape backdrop to the development; and
- landscape context of other built development, particularly vertical elements.

In order to differentiate between different levels of magnitude the following definitions are provided:

Table A.2: Landscape magnitude of change definitions

Substantial	Total loss or extensive alteration to key landscape elements/features/ characteristics of the baseline, or introduction of uncharacteristic elements which would give rise to a fresh characterising effect.
Moderate	Partial loss or alteration to one or more key landscape elements/features/ characteristics of the baseline and/or introduction of elements that may be prominent, but not necessarily substantially uncharacteristic with the attributes of the receiving landscape (which could co-characterise parts of the landscape).
Slight	Minor loss or alteration to one or more key landscape elements/features/ characteristics of the baseline and/or introduction of elements that may not be uncharacteristic with the surrounding landscape or may not lead to a characterising or co-characterising effect.
Negligible	Very minor loss or alteration to one or more key landscape elements/features/ characteristics of the baseline and/or the introduction of elements that are not uncharacteristic of the surrounding landscape. Change would be barely distinguishable approximating to no change.

Having established where the observation of varying levels of change to the landscape baseline may occur, the geographical extent of the change can be identified and a judgement made as to the level of effect in landscape character terms at varying scales.

The importance of the effect on the landscape resource may be determined by correlating the magnitude of the landscape change (substantial, moderate, slight or negligible) with the sensitivity of the landscape resource (high, medium or low). The following table sets out the main correlations between magnitude and sensitivity.

Table A.3: Landscape effects matrix

Landscape sensitivity	Magnitude of Change				
		Substantial	Moderate	Slight	Negligible
	High	Major	Major/Moderate	Moderate	Minor
	Medium	Major/Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/Minor	Minor/Negligible
	Low	Moderate	Moderate/Minor	Minor	Negligible

Visual Effects

The sensitivity of potential visual receptors will vary depending on the location and context of the viewpoint, the activity of the receptor and importance of the view. Visual receptor sensitivity is defined as high, medium, or low in accordance with the criteria in Table A.4.

Table A.4: Visual sensitivity criteria

High Sensitivity	Residents within the curtilage of their homes; users of outdoor recreational facilities including footpaths, cycle ways and recreational road users; people experiencing views from important landscape features of physical, cultural or historic interest, beauty spots and picnic areas.
Medium Sensitivity	Road users and travelers on trains experiencing views from transport routes. People engaged in outdoor sport other than appreciation of the landscape, e.g. nature conservation, golf and water-based recreation.
Low Sensitivity	Workers, users of facilities and commercial buildings (indoors) experiencing views from buildings.

The magnitude of visual change arising from the Proposed Development at any particular location is described as substantial, moderate, slight or negligible based on the interpretation of a combination of largely quantifiable parameters, as follows:

- distance of the viewpoint/receptor from the development;
- duration of effect;
- extent of the development in the view;
- angle of view in relation to main receptor activity;
- proportion of the field of view occupied by the development;
- background to the development; and
- extent of other built development visible, particularly vertical elements.

It is assumed that the change would be seen in clear visibility and the assessment is carried out on that basis. Where appropriate, comment may be made on lighting and weather conditions. In order to differentiate between levels of magnitude the following definitions are provided in Table A.5:

Table A.5: Visual magnitude of change definitions

Substantial	Where the proposals would have a defining influence on the view. Change very prominent leading to substantial obstruction or complete change in character and composition of the baseline existing view.
Moderate	Where the proposals would be clearly noticeable and an important new element in the view. It may involve partial obstruction of existing view or partial change in character and composition of the baseline existing view
Slight	The proposals would be partially visible or visible at sufficient distance to be perceptible and result in limited or minor changes to the view. The character and composition, although altered will be similar to the baseline existing situation
Negligible	Change would be barely perceptible. The composition and character of the view would be substantially unaltered, approximating to little or no change.

The threshold for different levels of visual effects relies to a great extent on professional judgement. Criteria and local circumstances require close study and careful judgement.

Beneficial effects upon receptors may result from a change to a view by the removal of eyesores or through the addition of well-designed elements which add to the sense of place in a beneficial manner.

The following Table A.6 sets out the main correlations between magnitude and sensitivity.

Table A.6: Visual effects matrix

	Magnitude of Change				
Visual sensitivity		Substantial	Moderate	Slight	Negligible
	High	Major	Major/Moderate	Moderate	Minor
	Medium	Major/Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/Minor	Minor/Negligible
	Low	Moderate	Moderate/Minor	Minor	Negligible

Level of Effect

As per the matrices in Table A.3 and Table A.6; the level of any identified landscape or visual effect has been assessed in terms of major, moderate, minor, negligible or none. Intermediate correlations are also possible and depend upon professional judgement, e.g. Major/moderate. These categories are based on the juxtaposition of viewer or landscape sensitivity with the predicted magnitude of change. This matrix should not be used as a prescriptive tool but must allow for the exercise of professional judgement. Effects which area judged to be Major/moderate or Major are considered to be notable. Where Moderate effects are predicted, professional judgement is applied to ensure that the potential for notable effects arising has been thoroughly considered.

Type of Effect

Landscape and visual effects are described with reference to type (direct, indirect, secondary or cumulative), timeframe (short, medium, long term, permanent, and temporary) and whether they are beneficial or adverse (beneficial or adverse). The various types of effect are described as follows:

Temporary / Residual Effects

If a proposal would result in an alteration to an environment whose attributes can be quickly recovered, then judgements concerning the significance of effects should be tempered in that light. Commercial development applications typically include permanent, long-term elements as well as minor alternations to landform resulting in residual landscape and visual effects.

Direct/Indirect

Direct and indirect landscape and visual effects are defined in Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA3). Direct effects may be defined "*result directly from the development itself"* (para 3.22). An indirect (or secondary) effect is one that results "*from consequential change resulting from the development*" (para 3.22) and is often produced away from the site of the Proposed Development or as a result of a complex pathway or secondary association. The direct or physical landscape effects of the Proposed Development would generally be limited to an area around the development itself. Any indirect landscape effects are concerned with the view of the changes from outside the local landscape.

Beneficial/Adverse

Landscape and visual effects can be beneficial or adverse and in some instances may be considered neutral. Beneficial effects upon landscape receptors may result from changes to the landscape involving beneficial enhancement measures or through the addition of well-designed elements, which add to the landscape experience or sense of place in a complementary manner.

The landscape impacts of the Proposed Development have been considered against the landscape baseline, taking account of the landscape characteristics. Taking a precautionary approach, changes to rural landscapes involving construction of man-made objects of a large scale are generally considered to be adverse, as they are not usually actively promoted as part of a district wide landscape strategy and therefore in the assessment of landscape effects they are assumed to be adverse, unless specified otherwise in the text.

It is important to recognise that for the same development, some may consider the visual effects for a development of this nature as adverse or beneficial. This depends to some extent on the viewer's predisposition towards landscape change but also the principle of commercial building features in the landscape. Taking a precautionary approach in making an assessment of the 'worst case scenario', the assessment considers that all effects on views which would result from the construction and operation of the Proposed Development to be adverse, unless specified otherwise in the text. It is noted, however, that not all people would consider the effects to be adverse.

Visualisation Methodology

Zone of Theoretical Visibility Maps

Computer generated Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) Maps have been prepared to assist in viewpoint selection and to indicate the potential influence of the Proposed Development in the wider landscape.

With reference to **Figure 1a**, the ZTV has been prepared at 1:30,000 scale to indicate the extent of potential visibility on the basis of bare ground, and does not include the screening effects of intervening established tree cover.

Figure 1b illustrates the ZTV incorporating the screening influence of surrounding buildings and vegetation. This is calculated based on GetMapping 2m Digital Surface Model (Aerial Photography Derived).

The Visibility Map indicates areas from which it might be possible to secure views of part, or parts, of the Proposed Development (based on its maximum height / elevation). However, use of the Visibility Maps needs to be qualified on the following basis:

- There are a number of areas within the Visibility Maps from which there is potential to view parts of the proposal, but which comprise open moorland, or other land where the general public do not appear to exercise regular access;
- The Visibility Maps do not account for the likely orientation of a viewer – for example when travelling in a vehicle.

In addition, the accuracy of the Visibility Maps has to be considered. In particular, the ZTV presented in **Figure 1a** is generated from Ordnance Survey (OS) Landform Panorama digital data based on a gridded terrain model with 5m cell sizes. The resolution of this model cannot accurately represent small-scale terrain features, which can therefore give rise to inaccuracy in the predicted visibility. This can lead to underestimation of visibility – e.g. a raised area of ground permitting views over an intervening obstruction, or can lead to overestimation of visibility – such as where a roadside embankment obscures a view.

Appendix B: Landscape Character Sensitivity

The sensitivity of the Enclosed Farmland LCT and Farmed River Plains LCT are assessed in detail below. Landscape sensitivity is not absolute and can only be defined in relation to each development and its location taking account of susceptibility as described in the methodology. To understand the sensitivity of a particular landscape and its location it is good practice to consider a range of criteria as set out in the table below.

The table below highlights the inherent sensitivities of this landscape to the development proposed, with reference to characteristics as described within NatureScot's 2019 *National Landscape Character Assessment* where relevant. Extracts from this document are included in italics.

Table B.1: Sensitivity of the Enclosed Farmland LCT

Factors affecting the sensitivity	Lower Sensitivity	Higher Sensitivity	Characteristics of local landscape at the Site	Sensitivity Rating
Physical				
Scale	Large scale featureless landscapes	Small to medium scale landscapes with some scaling features	The LCT is described as a *'Broad undulating glen'*. However, the extent of tree cover / woodland in the vicinity of the Site reduces the sense of scale.	High/Medium
Openness	Enclosed and sheltered landscapes	Open and exposed landscapes	As above, the Site locality is influenced by extensive tree cover and woodland, which results in containment particularly to the east, south and west.	Low
Landform	Smooth regular flowing, flat or uniform landscapes	Dramatic, rugged and complex landscapes	The landscape within the Site is relatively flat, albeit there are *'low, rounded ridges sloping to lower plains'* in the wider surrounding area.	Medium/Low
Land cover	Extensive areas of simple regular land cover (including farming and forestry)	Complex, intimate or mosaic cover	The local area comprises agriculture, with tree cover and woodland that results in varied heights, colours and textures.	High/Medium
Complexity and patterns	Simple and sweeping lines, linear features and patterns	Complex or irregular patterns	As described above, the locality is agricultural. However, the landscape pattern is made more complex by the parcels of tree cover and woodland, and meandering course of the River Beauly.	High/Medium
Built Environment	Contemporary masts, pylons, industrial elements, buildings infrastructure, settlements	Established, traditional or historic built character	The Site is located in an area of agriculture that is predominantly traditional character. However, the area is also influenced by existing overhead lines and associated pylons that extend through the Site.	Medium
Overall physical sensitivity				Medium

Factors affecting the sensitivity	Lower Sensitivity	Higher Sensitivity	Characteristics of local landscape at the Site	Sensitivity Rating
Perceptual				
Wildness / Sense of Remoteness	Busy evidence of human activity	Remote, peaceful or sense and tranquillity, solitude and emptiness	The agricultural landscape is rural, with a sense of tranquility, albeit this is tempered by the nearby A862, caravan park, and visual presence of overhead lines that are a reminder of human activity.	Medium
Perception of Change	Dynamic or modern landscapes	Ancient landscapes, designed landscapes or with obvious historical continuity	As above, infrastructure in the Site locality incorporates contemporary elements in the form of overhead power lines that are suggestive of a modern landscape. This is balanced by the historical continuity of agriculture.	Medium
Overall Perceptual Sensitivity				Medium
Visual				
Landscapes that form settings, skylines, backdrops, focal points	Generally low lying landscapes without distinctive landform or horizon	Areas with strong features, focal points that define the setting or skyline	The Site is located on low-lying ground within the River Beauly valley. It is back-clothed by trees in all views and does not contribute towards the skyline.	Low
Views intervisibility	Visually contained and have limited inward or outward views	Extensive views within or of the area with distant horizons.	'*Landform and tree cover limit long distance views*'. However, there are views across the landscape from adjoining areas of higher ground.	Medium/Low
Overall Visual Sensitivity				Low
Value				
Rarity	Commonplace	Rare	The Site is located within an area of working agriculture, with nearby woodland, which is considered to be moderately commonplace.	Medium/Low

Factors affecting the sensitivity	Lower Sensitivity	Higher Sensitivity	Characteristics of local landscape at the Site	Sensitivity Rating
Designated scenic quality	No specific designation	National or regional designation	Beaufort Castle GDL is located 600m to the south of the Site at the closest point. There are no other landscape designations within the Study Area.	Medium
Cultural associations	No specific cultural associations	Strong cultural association	The LCT incorporates a '*wide distribution and range of historic sites dating from prehistoric cairns and settlements to more recent sporting estates.'* No notable associations within the Site.	Medium
Amenity and recreation	Limited amenity function	Well used for amenity/recreation, especially for National trails or other long distance routes	There is a network of Core Paths, including routes along the bank of the River Beauly. There are no national-level routes.	Medium
Overall Value				Medium
Overall Sensitivity of the Enclosed Farmland LCT				**Medium**

Table B.2: Sensitivity of the Farmed River Plain LCT

Factors affecting the sensitivity	Lower Sensitivity	Higher Sensitivity	Characteristics of local landscape at the Site	Sensitivity Rating
Physical				
Scale	Large scale featureless landscapes	Small to medium scale landscapes with some scaling features	The LCT is described as a *'Broad expanse'*. However, the extent of tree cover / woodland in the vicinity of the Site reduces the sense of scale.	High/Medium
Openness	Enclosed and sheltered landscapes	Open and exposed landscapes	As above, the Site locality is influenced by extensive tree cover and woodland, which results in containment particularly to the east, south and west.	Low
Landform	Smooth regular flowing, flat or uniform landscapes	Dramatic, rugged and complex landscapes	The landscape comprises *'mainly flat, connected river valley flood plains*.'	Low
Land cover	Extensive areas of simple regular land cover (including farming and forestry)	Complex, intimate or mosaic cover	The local area comprises agriculture, with tree cover and woodland that results in varied heights, colours and textures.	High/Medium
Complexity and patterns	Simple and sweeping lines, linear features and patterns	Complex or irregular patterns	As described above, the locality is agricultural. However, the landscape pattern is made more complex by the parcels of tree cover and woodland, and the *'meandering and mainly natural course of rivers and associated wetlands'.*	High/Medium
Built Environment	Contemporary masts, pylons, industrial elements, buildings infrastructure, settlements	Established, traditional or historic built character	The Site is located in an area of agriculture that is predominantly traditional character. However, the area is also influenced by existing overhead lines and associated pylons that extend through the Site.	Medium
Overall physical sensitivity				Medium

Factors affecting the sensitivity	Lower Sensitivity	Higher Sensitivity	Characteristics of local landscape at the Site	Sensitivity Rating
Perceptual				
Wildness / Sense of Remoteness	Busy evidence of human activity	Remote, peaceful or sense and tranquillity, solitude and emptiness	The agricultural landscape is rural, with a sense of tranquility, albeit this is tempered by the nearby A862, caravan park, and visual presence of overhead lines that are a reminder of human activity.	Medium
Perception of Change	Dynamic or modern landscapes	Ancient landscapes, designed landscapes or with obvious historical continuity	As above, infrastructure in the Site locality incorporates contemporary elements in the form of overhead power lines that are suggestive of a modern landscape. This is balanced by the historical continuity of agriculture.	Medium
Overall Perceptual Sensitivity				Medium
Visual				
Landscapes that form settings, skylines, backdrops, focal points	Generally low lying landscapes without distinctive landform or horizon	Areas with strong features, focal points that define the setting or skyline	The Site is located on low-lying ground within the River Beauly valley. It is back-clothed by trees in all views and does not contribute towards the skyline.	Low
Views intervisibility	Visually contained and have limited inward or outward views	Extensive views within or of the area with distant horizons.	Views are restricted by the presence of '*woodland and tree cover of roadside and field-side trees lines, shelterbelts and small plantations interspersed with large scale fields.'* However, there are views across the landscape from adjoining areas of higher ground.	Medium/Low
Overall Visual Sensitivity				Low

Factors affecting the sensitivity	Lower Sensitivity	Higher Sensitivity	Characteristics of local landscape at the Site	Sensitivity Rating
Value				
Rarity	Commonplace	Rare	The Site is located within an area of working agriculture, with nearby woodland, which is considered to be moderately commonplace.	Medium/Low
Designated scenic quality	No specific designation	National or regional designation	No landscape designations within the Study Area.	Low
Cultural associations	No specific cultural associations	Strong cultural association	The LCT incorporates *'important prehistoric ceremonial monuments consisting of standing stones and henges'*. No notable associations within the Site.	Medium
Amenity and recreation	Limited amenity function	Well used for amenity/recreation, especially for National trails or other long distance routes	There is a network of Core Paths, as well as a short section of local cycle route that links with the Lovat Bridge Caravan Park. There are no national-level routes.	Medium
Overall Value				Medium
Overall Sensitivity of the Farmed River Plain LCT				**Medium**

Appendix C: LCT Descriptions

The following text describes the key characteristics of neighbouring LCTs within the Study Area, with reference to NatureScot's 2019 *National Landscape Character Assessment*.

Open Farmed Slopes LCT

- *'Open, convex, generally north-east facing farmed slopes.*
- *Smooth slopes of arable and pasture fields forming a regular pattern, lined with occasional small trees, fences or gorse hedges.*
- *Mix of crofting, small holdings and large farms giving rise to a patchwork of rectangular fields of different sizes.*
- *Areas of distinctive crofting patterns with generally smaller fields and regularly scattered croft buildings.*
- *Areas of distinctive, large, regular fields of large farms, with occasional small patches of birch woodland and conifer plantations and lines of trees descending the slopes.*
- *Scattered settlement patterns and network of minor roads running along contour lines, with few groupings in villages or towns.*
- *Ever present views which are open, expansive and outward looking.'*

Farmed and Forested Slopes - Ross & Cromarty LCT

- *'Complex pattern of farmland, tree cover, forests and woodland on sloped, often terraced land rising from firths or river plains to mid-elevations and often backed by large scale forest plantations where there are adjacent hills.*
- *Overall impression of a well-treed landscape, but within which farming is the dominant land use.*
- *Generally higher proportion of trees, woodland and forest plantations in upper slopes, forming a well-connected network within which fields are located.*
- *Terraces of open land, interspersed with forest plantations and woodlands on mid slopes.*
- *Gradual change to more open landscapes at lower levels.*
- *Wide range and distribution of archaeological sites indicating a long history of human settlement.*
- *Occasional large settlements in a predominantly rural landscape.*
- *Views from more open, terraced areas across lowlands or firth to hills or out to sea.'*

Rugged Massif – Inverness LCT

- *'Parallel ranges of massive mountains of irregular landform divided by deep glaciated valleys.*
- *Mainly broad, sometimes rounded rugged summits connected by long ridges and relatively few individual mountain peaks, particularly in the east.*
- *Steep terrain with many mountain-side burns and occasional lochans in corries and depressions.*
- *Landcover of rock outcrops, glacial debris, deer-grazed heather and rough grassland create a smooth surface with mottled texture, with alpine habitats on high land to the west.*
- *Almost uniform texture and cover from lower to upper levels in the east makes the size of the hills difficult to perceive.*

- *Tracts of Caledonian pinewoods and occasional small patches of open birch woodland add colour, texture and seasonal diversity.*
- *Largely uninhabited, few signs of human activity or human artefacts in the interior, and sparse archaeological evidence.*
- *Hill ranges combine to create a fairly even undulating skyline and a sense of enclosure when viewed from straths.*
- *Views from the hill tops at the edges of the massif offer expansive views of the adjacent straths and surrounding landscape character types.*
- *A sense of remoteness and wildness which is particularly strong within the interior.'*

Forest Edge Farming LCT

- *'Gentle to moderately steep convex slopes, occasional minor straths and glens with sinuous burns and rivers, and occasional high level, flatter undulating moorlands.*
- *Rocky, steeper slopes occur in the southern part of the type.*
- *Mix of agriculture and farming, varying from an equal balance to marginally more agriculture.*
- *A patchwork of semi-improved and improved pasture, arable fields, conifer forestry blocks, woodlands, shelterbelts, trees and hedges.*
- *The topography and geometric pattern of enclosure are emphasised by walls, hedges and hedgerow trees.*
- *Variable field sizes, many are large and open and dominate the landscape; others are smaller and create diverse patterns and textures.*
- *The contrasting upland character of higher ground emphasised by stone walls, rough grassland and less tree cover.*
- *The scale of woodlands is in keeping with the geometry of fields and narrow roads.*
- *Conifer forests vary in size, the larger ones superimposed on the field pattern.*
- *The edge of forestry blocks creates enclosed spaces around fields and buildings, and forms a dark background to enclosed features.*
- *Tree cover creates enclosed or intermittent distant views and helps to screen structures such as pylons and masts,*
- *Far reaching views to the south and east from high ground or open areas, often framed and enhanced by foreground trees.'*

Farmed Strath – Inverness LCT

- *'Linear to sinuous channels cut through uplands, with a central meandering river located in a flat or gently undulating strath floor, edged by the steep, rocky, side slopes.*
- *Pronounced and dynamic river meanders of Strathglass, emphasised by riparian trees, oxbow lakes and curved wetland features.*
- *Small scale broadleaf woodlands and small blocks of conifer forest within Strathnairn/Stratherrick strath floor which do not override openness of the strath.*
- *A few small settlements located on the strath floor or sides and infrequent small farms, crofts, estate buildings or groups of houses.*
- *Roads which generally relate well to landform, with a limited number of river crossing points.*
- *Many archaeological sites in Strathnairn dating from a range of periods.*

- *Contrast between the open, inhabited and agricultural landscape of the straths, the side slopes cloaked in alternating broadleaf woodlands, conifer forests and heather moorland, and the setting of adjacent rugged, remote uplands.*
- *Diversity of colour and texture added by river meanders, wetlands, damp pastures and thin bands of woodland.*
- *An overall sense of linear enclosure, which directs distant views along the strath and allows uninterrupted views of the flanking hill slopes.'*

Rocky Moorland Plateau – Inverness LCT

- *'Open, gently rolling moorland plateaux with distinct edges descending to adjoining straths and glens or rising to merge with Rugged Massif.*
- *Plateau with a patchy texture of small rocky outcrop hills, bogs and lochans in no clear hierarchy or discernible pattern.*
- *Hilltops and upper slopes dominated by rocky heather moorland, except in the north east where extensive, contrasting conifer forests dominate.*
- *Regenerating trees and scrub in glens with rivers s and sheltered lower hillsides.*
- *Strong contrast in landcover and settlement between the plateau and adjoining straths and glens.*
- *Sparsely inhabited and little evidence of active landuse.*
- *A few historic sites indicating past settlement and land use.*
- *Orientation is difficult due to the lack of hierarchy, pattern and foci in the landform and landcover.*
- *Within the plateau distance and scale are generally difficult to perceive due to the lack of elements of known size.*
- *Distinct edges isolate the plateau from adjacent areas and give the sense of a vast, remote, upland moor.*
- *At the plateau edges, expansive views over inhabited straths and glens create surprise.*
- *Eastern areas have a semi-exposed character with occasional views of distant hills framed by the distinct edges of conifer forests.*
- *Perception of remoteness on the open plateau, from the rugged patchy texture and absence of obvious human artefacts.'*

Rolling Farmland and Woodland LCT

- *'Varied landform of rolling, north-facing hill slopes and plateaux.*
- *Gently sloping, simple coastal edge with the firths, falling to well-defined raised beaches in places.*
- *Diverse mix of landcover and fairly even balance of open agricultural land and woodlands.*
- *Varying patterns of openness and enclosure created by woodlands and hedgerows mixed with open fields and dense conifer forests with dark linear edges.*
- *Diversity added by open broadleaf woodlands along stream gorges, river banks, small woodlands, trees, hedgerows and designed landscapes.*
- *Settled landscape, mostly of small farms and isolated houses, interconnected by a network of major and minor roads.*
- *Other scattered settlements of old buildings in traditional layout, associated with road junctions and bridging points.*
- *Clusters of farm buildings and open fields are generally set against a wooded backdrop.*

- *Minor roads follow the geometric edges of field enclosures and conifer forests.*
- *Large number of relic prehistoric settlements and burial cairns indicating a continuing focal point of settlement.*
- *Sense of history and tradition around estates, due to stone walls, beech hedging, parkland and wooded policies.*
- *Limited visibility in wooded areas, focusing attention upon foreground detail.*
- *Distant views northwards over the firths in open areas on the upper slopes.*
- *An active, busy landscape, particularly in the vicinity of adjoining urban areas and major transport routes.'*

Appendix D: Landscape Figures