VOLUME 1: CHAPTER 7: LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL

Figures (Volume 2 of this EIA Report)

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There are no Appendices included with this Chapter.

7. LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL

7.1 Executive Summary

Introduction

7.1.1 A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) has been undertaken for the Proposed Development within a study area of 3.5 km. The LVIA has been undertaken by Chartered Landscape Architects at ASH design + assessment Ltd (ASH), a registered practice with the Landscape Institute, in accordance with best practice guidance, the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition (GLVIA3).

7.1.2 The LVIA considers the two separate subjects of landscape and visual amenity as follows:

- The landscape assessment has considered the potential effects of the Proposed Development on landscape character, designated and protected landscapes.
- The visual assessment has considered the potential effects of the Proposed Development on the visual amenity of those present within the landscape, including established views from residential receptors and routes.

7.1.3 The LVIA also gives consideration to cumulative effects occurring as a result of the addition of the Proposed Development to other proposed electrical infrastructure developments within the study area. This includes the consented Cloiche Wind Farm[1] and the proposed Dell 2 Wind Farm[2].

7.1.4 Mitigation measures are proposed to help minimise the landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Development and are considered within the assessment of operational effects, assumed to be after 10 years.

Summary of Effects

Landscape Effects

7.1.5 The landscape assessment has established that there would be a short term significant effect during construction within a localised area of LCT 221 (Rolling Uplands) confined to the area within Coire Iain Oig where construction works would lead to some disruption to remote qualities within the corrie. Whilst there would be some effects in other areas, these are not predicted to be significant, due to the presence of other existing infrastructure including wind turbines on the upland plateau and existing transmission infrastructure within the Spey Glen, and the indirect nature of the effects, which would be less likely to change existing characteristics within this context.

7.1.6 During operation, after reinstatement has established, all effects on landscape character would reduce to levels which would be not significant, because the Proposed Development is not predicted to be sufficiently prominent within the setting to lead to an overriding change to any landscape characteristics.

7.1.7 No significant effects are predicted to the Special Landscape Qualities (SLQs) or landscape character within the Cairngorms National Park (CNP) and no other designated or protected landscapes would be affected.

Visual Effects

7.1.8 The visual assessment has identified that there would be a short term significant visual effect for recreational receptors accessing a Meall na h-Aisre, a Corbett summit within the study area. This route follows Coire Iain Oig via various options but all would result in the construction works for the Proposed Development being a

[1] Received consent from the Scottish Government in November 2023.

[2] It should be noted that in August 2019, an application to build and operate Dell Wind Farm was consented following an appeal to the Scottish Ministers. However, the wind farm has been re-designed at the same location to increase capacity and energy capture with fewer wind turbines. The application for Dell 2 Wind Farm was submitted to the Scottish Government Energy Consents Unit on behalf of the Scottish Ministers on 11th March 2024 and awaits decision. It is this proposed re-designed Dell 2 Wind Farm that this EIA Report refers to throughout, rather than the previously consented design.

prominent feature within the view. However, this effect is predicted to reduce and become not significant during operation, as the lattice tower structures would be less prominent against the backdrop of hills in the longer term.

7.1.9 Visual effects for all other building-based and recreational receptors within the study area would be not significant during both construction and operation, largely because the Proposed Development would be seen either distantly with limited perceptibility, or within a context where other infrastructure is already more prominent.

Cumulative Landscape and Visual Effects

7.1.10 The cumulative landscape and visual assessment carried out for the Proposed Development has established that there would be no significant cumulative landscape or visual effects resulting from the Proposed Development, when considered in addition to other proposed developments.

7.2 Introduction

7.2.1 This Chapter presents the findings of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) for the Proposed Development. The purpose of the LVIA is to identify and describe potential significant effects which may occur as a result of the Proposed Development to views obtained by those living, working and visiting in the area, and to the wider landscape resource, and, the residual predicted significance of effects after mitigation.

7.2.2 The LVIA has been undertaken by Chartered Landscape Architects at ASH design + assessment Ltd (ASH), a registered practice with the Landscape Institute. The assessment has been undertaken in accordance with best practice guidance, the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition (GLVIA3). A table presenting relevant qualifications and experience of key staff involved in the preparation of this Chapter is included in **Appendix 5.1: EIA Team**, contained within Volume 4 of this EIA Report.

7.3 Scope of Assessment

Study Area

7.3.1 The study area comprises the area where any potentially significant effects resulting from the Proposed Development would be likely to occur and has been established through consideration of the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) (see paragraphs 7.3.3 to 7.3.6, below), and professional judgement.

7.3.2 Part of the Proposed Development, through the existing and proposed wind turbines, would comprise a buried cable. Given the setting of this part of the development, within the wind farm area, and the limited long-term landscape and visual effects likely to result from a buried cable, significant effects are very unlikely. These elements of the Proposed Development have therefore been scoped out of the LVIA. The study area has therefore been limited to a buffer from the overhead line (OHL) elements of the Proposed Development. At scoping stage, it was originally proposed to consider a 3 km study area from the Proposed OHL towers. However, following a request by the local community council to accommodate Carn Dubh within the assessment, this has been increased to 3.5 km.

Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)

7.3.3 As an aid to establishing the scope for the LVIA, a ZTV has been produced for the Proposed Development and is presented in **Figure 7.1 - Zone of Theoretical Visibility**. The ZTV is a computer-generated diagram which uses a terrain model to indicate areas from which the Proposed Development would be theoretically visible. The ZTV for the Proposed Development has been generated using ESRI ArcGIS software based on a terrain modelled using Ordnance Survey (OS) Terrain 5 Digital Terrain Model (T5 DTM) data.

7.3.4 ZTVs have been run using the designed heights for each tower, as identified in the Indicative Tower Schedule (see **Appendix 3.1**).

7.3.5 The ZTVs have been prepared based on a viewer height of 2 m above ground level in line with the NatureScot, 2017 Guidance, with earth curvature and light refraction set to 0.075.

7.3.6 Whilst the ZTV is a useful tool for the identification of potential effects, it is not indicative of an effect in itself. The ZTV does not take into account the potential screening effects of woodland and other localised features such as buildings, trees or local land form which are not captured by the OS T5 data. Nor does it give indication of the way in which a development may relate to its broader landscape context and the receding scale and visibility of features with distance. However, consideration of these aspects is taken into account during the assessment including through professional judgement.

Visualisations

7.3.7 Five visualisations have been produced to support the LVIA, in accordance with NatureScot and THC visualisation standards.**Error! Bookmark not defined.** These show the predicted appearance of the Proposed Development during operation. Visualisations have been produced from the following locations:

- Visualisation Location 1: Garva Bridge (OS Grid Reference: NN 52175 94752) (see **Volume 3a, VL1a-d** and **Volume 3b, VL1a-e**). Representative of views from the minor road (General Wade's Military Road, and nearby public car park);
- Visualisation Location 2: Meall na h-Aisre (OS Grid Reference: NH 51524 00047) (see **Volume 3a, VL2a-d and Volume 3b, VL2a-e**). Representative of views across the upland plateau and from a visited Corbett summit;
- Visualisation Location 3: General Wade's Military Road near Garvamore (OS Grid Reference: NN 53096 93981) (see **Volume 3a, VL3a-d** and **Volumes 3b, VL3a-e**). Representative of views from the minor road (General Wade's Military Road) and the glen floor within the CNP;
- Visualisation Location 4: Carn Dubh (OS Grid Reference: NN 51328 92497) (see **Volume 3a, VL4a-d and Volume 3b, VL4a-e**). Located, on a visited mountain recreational route and representative of elevated views from the edge of the CNP; and
- Visualisation Location 5: Mountain Route to Geal Charn (wireline only) (OS Grid Reference: NN 53600 96262) (see **Volume 3a, VL5a-c and Volume 3b, VL5a-b**).

7.3.8 The visualisations have been produced to support the LVIA work and are intended to show the appearance of the Proposed Development within the landscape setting. Visualisation Locations have not been assessed as viewpoints. The visual assessment is a receptor based assessment (giving consideration to all potential visual receptors) rather than a viewpoint based assessment.

7.4 Consultation

7.4.1 The scope of the assessment has been determined through a combination of professional judgement, reference to the relevant guidance documents and consultation with stakeholders through a formal EIA scoping process and pre-application advice.

7.4.2 The Scoping Opinion was issued by The Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit (ECU) in March 2024[3] (see **Appendix 4.4**).

Table 7.1 provides a summary of the key responses from consultees which are relevant to the subject areas of landscape and visual amenity and provides comment as to how these have been addressed.

[3] Scottish Government (March 2024) Scoping Response

Table 7.1: Scoping Reponses

Organisation & Date	Summary of Consultation Response	EIA/Design Response to Consultee
The Highland Council (THC) 29/02/2024	The Proposed Development is within proximity to Wild Land Area (WLA) 20 Monadhliath and WLA 19 Braeroy-Glenshirra-Creag Meagaidh. THC note the intention to scope out WLA 19 from the EIA. Whilst NPF4 does not require a Wild Land Assessment to be carried out if a proposal sits outwith a Wild Land Area, it is recommended that regard still be given to Wild Land considerations.	A WLA Assessment has been scoped out of the LVIA (see paragraph 7.6.12) but wildness as a characteristic of the landscape has been considered within the assessment of Landscape Character Types, and Wildness as a Special Landscape Quality has been considered in assessment of the Cairngorms National Park, as recommended by NatureScot (see Section 7.8.5).
	Advise review of the Loch Ness Landscape Sensitivity Appraisal with particular reference to the Uplands Glens and Moors and Rolling Uplands landscape character types. It is noted that planning guidance has not yet been developed for the relevant areas.	The has been reviewed and given consideration in the assessment in terms of landscape sensitivity.
	Note that no viewpoints have been included within the supporting information provided. The LVIA should provide Zone of Theoretical Visibility analysis and identify key viewpoints to represent the most sensitive surrounding visual receptors.	Three proposed locations for visualisations were included within the Scoping Report including a ZTV. This was increased to five locations in response to the Scoping response from Laggan Community Council, as discussed below. The visual assessment is receptor-based and considers all potential receptors within the study area rather than a small number of viewpoints, which provides a more detailed and robust assessment. The visualisations are illustrative of the types of view that would be obtained and are considered fully representative of visual receptors using the study area.
	Photomontages should follow the Council's Guidance for Wind Farm Visualisations.	Photomontages in accordance with THC guidance are included in **Volume 3b** of the EIA Report.
	Photography should reflect the worst case scenario when trees are not in leaf.	The photography used is in accordance with this request.
	Should any additional planting be proposed, visualisations should represent the development at the point of completion, and with 10 years of landscape planting growth.	No additional planting is proposed so visualisations have only been included for one time period.
	Assessments should cover impacts of all elements of the development, including grid connection, security fencing, any tree felling and any lighting.	All elements have been considered in the assessment. No permanent lighting is proposed.
	The purpose of the selected and agreed viewpoints should be clearly identified and stated in the supporting information.	This is described in paragraph 7.3.7.

Organisation & Date	Summary of Consultation Response	EIA/Design Response to Consultee
	When considering the impact on recreational routes all core paths, the national cycle network and, long distance trails are assessed. It should be noted that these routes are used by a range of receptors.	All these routes have been considered the assessment in Section 7.9.
	A Wild Land Assessment will be required to assess the effects of the proposal, on its own and cumulatively, on the special qualities of WLA 19 and 20 in accordance with NatureScot guidance. In order to assess these impacts visualisations from key viewpoints are expected to include the Cairngorms National Park (CNP), local road network and surrounding recreational routes.	The Proposed Development is not located within either WLA 19 or WLA 20 (see **Figure 7.2 - Designated and Protected Landscapes**). As a Wild Land Assessment was not requested by NatureScot or ECU, and the potential for significant effects is very unlikely due to the influence of existing infrastructure, this has been scoped out. This is discussed in further detail in paragraph 7.6.12. Visualisation locations included are reflective of a range of locations including the CNP, minor road and recreational routes (see paragraph 7.3.7).
	A landscaping, management and maintenance scheme for the site is required and as this will have wider habitat and biodiversity interest.	No planting is proposed as part of the Proposed Development and therefore there is no requirement for maintenance and management of planting. Reinstatement of vegetation and habitats is discussed in **Appendix 3 3 - Outline Site Restoration Plan.**
NatureScot 21/11/2023	The LVIA should include assessment of the likely effects of the Proposed Development on the SLQs of the Cairngorms National Park (CNP). This should focus on the SLQs that are most likely to be affected and inform any opportunities for mitigation of effects.	The LVIA includes assessment of effects on the SLQs of the CNP in Section 7.8.
	Given the proximity to Wild Land Area 19 we would suggest that Wildness is likely to be one of the SLQs requiring consideration	This was considered in the SLQ assessment (see paragraph 7.8.5).
	Happy to comment on the list of SLQs proposed for inclusion, and suggest that the requirement for any additional viewpoint locations is considered once the relevant SLQs have been identified.	Due to timing, further consultation was not undertaken, but the inclusion of SLQs and visualisation locations opted to err on the side of caution. Two visualisations have been included from points within the CNP representative of low lying and elevated views.
	Happy to provide further advice on the need or otherwise for a more detailed assessment of impacts. To help with this the applicants may wish to provide some sample wirelines from key viewpoints.	Full assessment of SLQs, rather than a review has been included in the LVIA chapter. Due to timing issues, it was decided not to request further advice or provide wirelines for further consultation.
	The cumulative impact assessment should consider not just landscape and visual	Cumulative effects to CNP SLQs are considered in paragraph 7.10.7.

Organisation & Date	Summary of Consultation Response	EIA/Design Response to Consultee
	effects but any cumulative impacts on the SLQs of the CNP.	
Cairngorm National Park (CNP) 06/11/2023	Note relevance of policy A4 of the Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan in relation to Special Landscape Qualities of development outwith the CNP and inclusion of assessment of relevant SLQs in line with current draft National Park/NatureScot guidance (Assessing the Effects on Special Landscape Qualities – AESLQ).	Assessment of SLQs is included in Section 7.9 and has been considered in relation to the current draft guidance (version 11). Policy A4 of the current Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan 2022 – 27 is discussed in **Chapter 6: Planning Policy and Energy Policy Context** and the Planning Statement.
Laggan Community Council 03/12/2023	Requests for additional visualisations from high points along the road from Sherrabeg to Melgarve, points on the ascent to Geal Charn, and Carn Dubh summit.	Visualisations are included from two points on the road from Sherrabeg (Visualisation Location (VL) 1 and VL 3. This was considered suitably representative of views from this route as the Proposed Development would be less visible from others points on the route. An additional photomontage was included from Carn Dubh (VL4) and additional wireline view from the path to Geal Charn (VL5), included in **Volume 3a** (to NatureScot standards) and **Volume 3b** (to THC standards).

7.5 Methodology

Assessment Guidance

7.5.1 The LVIA has been prepared with reference to the *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*, Third Edition (GLVIA3)[4] and *Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland*[5]. For assessment of effects on the Cairngorm National Park, the following guidance has also been considered which comprises the most up-to-date version:

- *Guidance for Assessing the Effects on Special Landscape Qualities (Working Draft 11)* (Scottish Natural Heritage[6] (SNH) and Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA), 2018)[7]

Professional Judgement

7.5.2 GLVIA3 places a strong emphasis on the importance of professional judgement in identifying and defining the significance of landscape and visual effects. As part of this assessment, professional judgement has been used in combination with structured methods and criteria to evaluate landscape value and landscape and visual sensitivity, magnitude and significance of effect. The assessment has been undertaken and verified by two Landscape Professionals (Chartered Landscape Architects) to provide a robust and consistent approach.

[4] Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment. (2013). *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition*

[5] Scottish Natural Heritage, The Countryside Agency. (2002). *Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland*.

[6] In 2020, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) rebranded as NatureScot. However when referencing publications produced by the organisation before this date, SNH has continued to be referred to as this was the name under which the document was published at that time.

[7] Scottish Natural Heritage and Cairngorms National Park Authority (2018) *Guidance for Assessing the Effects on Special Landscape Qualities (Working Draft 11)*

Key Stages of the Assessment

7.5.3 GLVIA3 advises that landscape and visual effects should be assessed from a clear understanding of the development proposed and any mitigation measures which are being adopted.

7.5.4 The GLVIA3 methodology for landscape assessment involves an appreciation of the existing landscape resource, the susceptibility of its key components to accept the change proposed, and an understanding of the potential effects which could occur and how these could affect these key components.

7.5.5 Familiarity with the site and the extent, nature and expectation of existing views by visual receptors is a key factor in establishing the visual sensitivity in terms of the development proposed. The guidelines require evaluation of magnitude of change to views experienced by sensitive receptors, comprising individuals living, working, travelling and carrying out other activities within the landscape, and the subsequent evaluation of the significance of effects.

7.5.6 The potential to mitigate adverse effects should also be considered for both landscape and visual assessment.

7.5.7 There are five key stages to the assessment:

- Establishment of the baseline;
- Appreciation of the development proposed;
- Identification of key landscape and visual receptors;
- Identification of potential effects; and
- Assessment of significance of effect.

Establishment of the Baseline

7.5.8 Establishment of the baseline conditions has been undertaken through a combination of desk study and site appraisal. The desk review has involved review the following general documents and sources:

- The *Highland-wide Local Development Plan* (HwLDP) (THC, 2012[8]) and *West Highlands and Islands Local Development Plan* (WestPlan) (THC, 2019[9]) and *Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan* (IMFLDP) (THC 2015)[10].
- The Scoping Opinion and other consultation responses for the Proposed Development (see **Table 7.1** and **Appendix 4.4**);
- Online mapping and aerial photography resources from Ordnance Survey, Google, Bing and National Library of Scotland; and
- The ZTV for the Proposed Development (see **Figure 7.1**).

7.5.9 In addition, the following specific baseline activities were undertaken for the two differing assessments of landscape and visual effects:

7.5.10 Site survey to further inform the baseline was also undertaken in February 2024.

[8] The Highland Council (2012) *Highland-wide Local Development Plan.* Available at: https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/178/local_and_statutory_development_plans/199/highland-wide_local_development_plan [accessed January 2024]
[9] The Highland Council (2019) *West Highlands and Islands Local Development Plan.* Available at: https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/178/local_and_statutory_development_plans/582/west_highland_and_islands_local_development_plan
[10] The Highland Council (2015) Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan. Available at: https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/178/development_plans/202/inner_moray_firth_local_development_plan

Landscape Assessment Baseline Tasks

7.5.11 The desk review for the landscape assessment has included review of the following additional documents and resources:

- Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas (Horner + Maclennan and Wood, 2011)[11];
- NatureScot Landscape Character Types (LCTs) and Descriptions[12] (SNH, 2019 [online]);
- Cairngorm National Park Landscape Assessment[13] (Cairngorm National Park Authority, 2009); and
- The Highland Council's Loch Ness Sensitivity Study (LNSS) [14]

Identification of Baseline Landscape Value

7.5.12 The value of the landscape is an important consideration in informing later judgement of the significance of effects. Landscape value concerns the perceived importance of the landscape when considered as a whole, and within the context of the study area and is established through consideration of the following factors:

- Presence of landscape designations, other inventory or registered landscapes / landscape features or identified planning constraints;
- The scenic quality of the landscape;
- Perceptual aspects, such as wildness or tranquillity;
- Conservation interests such as cultural heritage features or associations, or if the landscape supports notable habitats or species;
- Recreational value; and
- Rarity, either in the national or local context, or if it is considered to be a particularly important example of a specific landscape type.

7.5.13 It should be noted that absence of a designation does not necessarily mean that a landscape or component is not highly valued, as factors such as accessibility and local scarcity can render areas of nationally unremarkable quality highly valuable as a local resource.

7.5.14 Criteria for the allocation of perceived landscape value are outlined in **Table 7.2** below:

Table 7.2: Landscape Value Criteria

Landscape Value	Criteria
High	• The landscape is closely associated with features of international or national importance which are rare within the wider context; • The landscape is of high scenic quality and forms a key part of an important designated landscape or planning constraint; and/or • The landscape is an example of a scarce resource within the local context and is of considerable local importance for its, scenic quality, recreational opportunities or cultural heritage associations.

[11] Horner + Maclennan and Wood, M (2011) Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas, The Highland Council.
[12] NatureScot: (2019): Scottish Landscape Character Types Map and Descriptions [ONLINE] https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/landscape/landscape-character-assessment/scottish-landscape-character-types-map-and-descriptions [accessed August 2023].
[13] British Geological Society and Grant, Alison (2009): Cairngorms National Park Landscape Character Assessment.
[14] The Highland Council (2016) Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance

Medium	• The landscape is associated with features of national or regional importance which are relatively common within the wider context; • The landscape forms part of a designated landscape or is associated with other features of importance but is not rare or distinctive within the local context; and/or • The landscape is one of a number within the local context appreciated for its scenic quality, recreational opportunities or cultural heritage associations.
Low	• The landscape characteristics are common within the local and regional context and the landscape is not associated with any particular features or attributes considered to be important; and/or • The landscape is of poor scenic quality and is not appreciated for any recreational or cultural associations.

Visual Assessment Baseline Tasks

7.5.15 A combination of desk and field survey was used to establish the range and distribution of potential visual receptors within the study area. Visual receptors can be defined as individuals occupying and using the study area with the potential to obtain views of the Proposed Development. Potential visual receptors included in the assessment have included those experiencing views from locations such as buildings, recognised routes and popular viewpoints used by the public.

7.5.16 The following additional resources were used to enhance understanding of the use of the study area by potential visual receptors:

- The Highland Council (THC) Core Paths Interactive Map[15] [online];
- Scottish Hill Tracks (Scottish Rights of Way and Access Society (Scotways), 2011)[16]; and
- Other web based and published sources providing information on local resources and activities within the study area (see the list of references in **Section 7.14**).

7.5.17 Site visits were undertaken to verify the visual receptors identified through desk study, identify any further potential receptors and collate information on baseline visual amenity, including information on the types and activities of visual receptors likely to be present, and the nature of the existing views which are obtained. Site recording involved the completion of standardised recording forms and annotation of 1:25,000 and 1:50,000 Ordnance Survey plans, supported by a photographic record of views from key receptor locations.

Appreciation of the Development Proposed

7.5.18 Appreciation of the Proposed Development involves the accumulation of a thorough knowledge of the proposal, its nature, scale and location within the baseline landscape, and any peripheral or ancillary features proposed. Analysis of the proposed activities and changes which would take place leads to an understanding of the potential effects that may occur to the landscape and visual resource.

7.5.19 This stage has included review of all available desk-based information relating to the Proposed Development in terms of its long-term physical appearance and requirements for construction and access.

Identification of Key Landscape and Visual Receptors

7.5.20 The identification of key landscape and visual receptors with the potential to be affected by the Proposed Development is the first step in the analysis of the potential for significant effects to occur. Landscape and visual receptors can be described as follows:

[15] The Highland Council, Core Paths Interactive Map [ONLINE]: https://highland.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=2fd3fc9c72d545f7bcf1b43bf5c8445f [accessed January 2022].
[16] The Scottish Rights of Way and Access Society (Scotways) (2011): Scottish Hill Tracks (Fifth Edition) Scottish Mountaineering Trust.

- **Landscape receptors** comprise key characteristics or individual features which contribute to the value of the landscape and have the potential to be affected by the Proposed Development. Landscape receptors are identified through analysis of baseline characteristics when considered in relation to the impacts which might result from a development of the type proposed.
- **Visual receptors** comprise individuals experiencing views from locations such as buildings, recognised routes and popular viewpoints used by the public. Potential visual receptors are identified through analysis of desk resources, mapping and field survey, as described under 'Establishment of the Baseline' above. A review of the ZTV in the context of site survey is used to identify the potential for visual receptors to be affected by the Proposed Development.

Identification of Potential Effects

7.5.21 The second step in the assessment process involves the identification of potential effects which may occur as a result of the interaction of the Proposed Development with the identified landscape and visual receptors.

7.5.22 The assessment takes into account direct effects upon existing views, landscape elements, features and key characteristics and, also, indirect effects which may occur secondarily to changes affecting another landscape component or area. The identification of potential effects is a two-fold process, giving consideration as to how these effects may arise from aspects of the Proposed Development and how they may be accommodated by the existing baseline features.

7.5.23 Where it is established that potential effects could be limited by mitigation measures, these are also given consideration.

7.5.24 Potential effects are evaluated through the allocation of criteria for sensitivity and magnitude.

Landscape and Visual Sensitivity

7.5.25 Sensitivity concerns the nature of the baseline landscape or visual receptor, and the ability to accommodate development of the type proposed without compromising the key characteristics and / or composition.

7.5.26 There are two aspects which contribute to the evaluation of landscape and visual sensitivity: value and susceptibility to change. The consideration of these two separate aspects in the differing assessments for landscape and visual amenity are outlined below:

- Landscape
  - Value: The baseline value of the landscape and the contributory value of individual landscape receptors to the landscape as a whole; and
  - Susceptibility: The ability of landscape receptors to accommodate development of the type proposed without changing the intrinsic qualities of the landscape as a whole.
- Visual Amenity
  - Value: The baseline value of a particular view to the visual receptor, including the perceived; and
  - Susceptibility: The susceptibility of the viewer to changes to the view, giving consideration to the particular activity they may be involved in and also the composition of the baseline view and importance of the proposed area of change as a part of the view.

7.5.27 Sensitivity levels attributed in the THC LNSS[14] have also been considered when reaching a judgement, although it is noted that these relate to sensitivity to wind turbine development rather than OHL development.

7.5.28 Criteria for the evaluation of sensitivity to change are presented in **Table 7.3**.

Table 7.3: Landscape and Visual Sensitivity Criteria

Sensitivity Rating	Landscape Sensitivity	Visual Sensitivity
High	A highly valued landscape of particularly distinctive character susceptible to relatively small changes of the type proposed.	Visual receptors obtaining views from: • dwellings and publicly accessible buildings where the changed aspect is an important element in the view and there are no detracting features present; and • recreational routes and locations where the changed aspect is an important element in the view and there are no detracting features present.
Medium	A reasonably valued landscape with a composition and characteristics tolerant of some degree of change of the type proposed.	Visual receptors obtaining views from: • dwellings and publicly accessible buildings where the changed aspect is a less important element in the view and / or where some detracting features are present; • recreational routes and locations where the changed aspect is a less important element in the view and / or where some detracting features are present; • roads and transport routes where the changed aspect is an important element in the view and there are no detracting features present; and • workplaces where the changed aspect is an important element of the view and there are no detracting features present.
Low	A relatively unimportant landscape which is potentially tolerant of a large degree of change of the type proposed.	Visual receptors obtaining views from: • dwellings and publicly accessible buildings where the changed aspect is an unimportant element in the view and / or numerous detracting features are present; • recreational routes and locations where the changed aspect is an unimportant element in the view and / or where numerous detracting features are present; • roads and transport routes where the changed aspect is a less important element in the view and / or where some detracting features are present; and • workplaces where the changed aspect is a less important element in the view and / or where some detracting features are present.

Landscape and Visual Magnitude

7.5.29 Magnitude of change concerns the extent to which the existing landscape character or view would be altered by the Proposed Development. Elements specific to the evaluation of magnitude of change for the differing assessments of landscape and visual amenity are detailed below:

- Landscape
    - The degree to which features or characteristics may be removed, altered or added within the landscape;
    - The geographical extent of proposed changes;
    - Whether changes would be direct or indirect; and
    - The potential duration and reversibility of proposed changes (taking into consideration proposed mitigation measures where relevant).
- Visual Amenity
    - The scale or extent of proposed changes within the view;
    - The location of proposed changes within the view, relevant to other existing features;
    - The extent to which this may alter the composition or focus of the view; and
    - The duration and reversibility of proposed changes (taking into consideration proposed mitigation measures where relevant).

7.5.1 Criteria for the evaluation of magnitude of change are presented in **Table 7.4**. In recognition of the differing changes that would occur over time, two ratings for magnitude of change have been included: during the construction of the Proposed Development, and approximately 10 years post construction once landscape / habitat reinstatement and any other mitigation has had time to establish. The operational magnitude considers a baseline situation where the turbines of the consented Cloiche and proposed Dell 2 Wind Farms would be in situ, as the OHL would be dependent on these other developments.

Table 7.4: Landscape and Visual Magnitude of Change Criteria

Magnitude Rating	Landscape	Visual
High	Notable change in landscape characteristics over an extensive area ranging to a very intensive change over a more limited area.	Where the Proposed Development would result in a very noticeable change in the existing view.
Medium	Perceptible change in landscape characteristics over an extensive area ranging to notable change in a localised area.	Where the Proposed Development would result in a noticeable change in the existing view.
Low	Virtually imperceptible change in landscape characteristics over an extensive area or perceptible change in a localised area.	Where the Proposed Development would result in a perceptible change in the existing view.
Negligible	No discernible change in any landscape characteristics or components.	Where the Proposed Development would result in a barely perceptible change in the existing view.

Assessment of Significance of Effects

7.5.2 Evaluation of the predicted significance of effect has been carried out through the analysis of the anticipated magnitude of change in relation to the landscape or visual sensitivity, taking into account any proposed mitigation measures, and is established using professional judgement.

7.5.3 In recognition of the potential for effects to vary over time, the assessment has been undertaken at two different stages: during the construction phase and during operation, once landscape / habitat reinstatement measures and any mitigation measures have been allowed to establish. This is assumed to be approximately 10 years after the completion of construction and reinstatement works. The operational effects consider a baseline

situation where the turbines of the consented Cloiche Wind Farm and the proposed Dell 2 Wind Farm would be in situ and operational, as the OHL would be dependent on these other developments.

7.5.4 The significance of effect for landscape and visual elements is considered as follows:

- Landscape Effects
    - The assessment takes into account identified effects upon existing landscape receptors and assesses the extent to which these would be lost or modified in the context of their importance in determining the existing baseline character.
- Visual Effects
    - The assessment takes into account likely changes to the visual composition, including the extent to which new features would distract or screen existing elements in the view or disrupt the scale, structure or focus of the existing view.

7.5.5 The assessment takes into consideration the potential for effects to be adverse, where changes such as the addition of new distracting features, or the removal of existing positive features, are anticipated to negatively affect the landscape or view; or beneficial, where changes, such as the removal of existing distracting features or the addition of mitigation measures are anticipated to positively influence the landscape or view.

7.5.6 Criteria used for the assessment of effects are presented in **Table 7.5**. For the purposes of the LVIA, effects with a rating of Moderate or greater are considered to be significant in terms of the EIA Regulations.

Table 7.5: Landscape and Visual Significance of Effect Criteria

Effect Significance	Landscape Effects	Visual Effects
Major Adverse	The Proposed Development is at considerable variance with the landform, scale and pattern of the landscape and would be a dominant feature, resulting in considerable reduction in scenic quality and large-scale change to the intrinsic landscape character of the area.	The Proposed Development would become a prominent and very detracting feature and would result in a very noticeable deterioration to an existing highly valued and well composed view.
Moderate Adverse	The Proposed Development is out of scale with the landscape, or inconsistent with the local pattern and landform and may be locally dominant and/or result in a noticeable reduction in scenic quality and a degree of change to the intrinsic landscape character of the area.	The Proposed Development would introduce some detracting features to an existing highly valued view or would be more prominent within a pleasing or less well composed view, resulting in a noticeable deterioration of the quality of view.
Minor Adverse	The Proposed Development does not quite fit with the scale, landform or local pattern of the landscape and may be locally intrusive but would result in an inappreciable reduction in scenic quality or change to the intrinsic landscape character of the area.	The Proposed Development would form a perceptible but not detracting feature within a pleasing or valued view or would be a prominent feature within a poorly composed view of limited value, resulting in a small deterioration to the existing view.
Negligible	The Proposed Development sits well within the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape and would not result in any discernible reduction in scenic quality or change to the intrinsic landscape character of the area.	The Proposed Development would form a barely perceptible feature within the existing view and would not result in any discernible deterioration or improvement to the view.

Minor Beneficial	The Proposed Development would add / remove landscape features or alter the composition of landscape components which would result in a small or localised improvement to the landscape characteristics and scenic quality of the landscape.	The Proposed Development would form a fairly attractive feature and / or remove a fairly detracting feature from an existing less well composed view, resulting in a small improvement to the attractiveness, composition and value of the existing view.
Moderate Beneficial	The Proposed Development would add / remove landscape features or alter the composition of landscape components which would result in a noticeable improvement to the landscape characteristics and scenic quality of the landscape.	The Proposed Development would become a new attractive feature within or result in the removal or partial removal of an existing detracting feature from, a poorly composed or less well composed view leading to a noticeable improvement to the attractiveness, composition and value of the existing view.
Major Beneficial	The Proposed Development would add / remove landscape features or alter the composition of landscape components which would result in a very noticeable improvement to the landscape characteristics and scenic quality of the landscape.	The Proposed Development would form a prominent new attractive feature within or result in the removal of an existing very detracting feature from, a poorly composed view leading to a very noticeable improvement to the attractiveness, composition and value of the existing view.

Assumptions and Limitations

7.5.7 The LVIA is subject to the following limitations and assumptions:

- The prominence of the Proposed Development in the landscape and views will vary according to the prevailing weather conditions. The LVIA has been carried out, as is best practice, by assuming the 'worst case' scenario i.e., on a clear, bright day in winter, when neither foreground deciduous foliage nor haze can interfere with the clarity of the view obtained.
- The assessment of operational effects assumes a situation where the turbines of the consented Cloiche Wind Farm and the proposed Dell 2 Wind Farm would be in-situ and operational, because the Proposed Development would be dependent on these other developments.
- The assessment of operational effects assumes that areas disturbed during the construction of the proposed development, but not required for operation (temporary tracks, laydown and working areas, excavations for tower foundations etc.) would be successfully reinstated to reflect, as far as possible, similar vegetation types and appearance to that present prior to construction. It is noted that these vegetation types may not necessarily comprise identical habitat types and value to those previously present. Habitat change is discussed separately in **Chapter 8: Ecology**.
- ZTVs are used to inform the landscape, visual and cumulative assessments. The limitations and technical specifications for production of ZTVs are included in paragraphs 7.3.4 to 7.3.7.
- The field assessment of visual effects has been undertaken from public roads, footpaths or open spaces. For residential receptors, assumptions have been made about the types of rooms in buildings and about the types and importance of views from these rooms. For there to be a visual effect, there is

the need for a viewer and therefore only buildings that are in use have been considered in the visual assessment.

- The assessment of effects on visual receptors occupying buildings such as residences and public buildings includes consideration of potential for views from exterior areas associated with the building including gardens where appropriate. These effects are referenced where relevant.
- The assessment reflects the baseline situation at the time of final site work (February 2024) and therefore does not take account of any changes to the landscape fabric which have taken place after this date.

7.6 Baseline Conditions: Landscape

Overview

7.6.1 The Proposed Development would be located within the Monadhliath Mountains, close to the western edge of the Cairngorms National Park. This is a large scale landscape characterised by a range of broad, rounded upland hills, mountains and plateaux, with steep slopes forming stark and more secluded glens. Within the context of the study area, this can be broadly separated into two areas.

7.6.2 To the north, the landscape is characterised by a broad and expansive upland plateau of sweeping moorland, featuring open, loosely defined, scooped valleys and rounded hills with no clear landform focal points or summits. A more distant backdrop of mountains is seen from higher ground within the wider setting to the south, east and west. This upland plateau is currently characterised by Glendoe Hydro Infrastructure and the turbines and tracks of Stronelairg Wind Farm and this would be expanded over a wider area with the construction of the consented Cloiche Wind Farm and the proposed Dell 2 Wind Farm.

7.6.3 To the south, a ridgeline of small, steep rounded hills, defined by narrow, steep-sided glens, separates the upland plateau from the wide valley of the upper River Spey. This valley is characterised by rough grassland and small squared coniferous forest plantations with a wide, sinuous river flowing through the base fed by smaller streams which rush down the narrow side glens. Existing electricity transmission infrastructure is present within the valley, comprising the existing Melgarve substation and the Beauly – Denny 400 kV OHL which is routed along the length of the valley. Various tracks and a narrow road are also present leading through the valley and into the adjacent hills. Despite the presence of these features, there is a sense of remoteness within the valley with few buildings present and a long journey up a single-track road to reach it. This sense increases when moving further to the west and south-west as the roads and tracks deteriorate in structure and the more remote mountainous landscape becomes more influential.

Protected and Designated Landscapes

7.6.4 Landscapes can be ascribed an international, national, regional or local designation that recognises the importance of the landscape for its scenic interest or attractiveness. Areas of landscape may also be protected by planning policy at either a national or regional level.

7.6.5 The Proposed Development does not fall within any designated or otherwise protected landscapes. However, parts of the study area fall within the following areas:

National Context:

- The Cairngorms National Park (CNP); and
- Braeroy – Glen Shirra – Creag Meagaidh Wild Land Area (WLA 19).

Regional Context:

- Ben Alder, Laggan and Glen Banchor Special Landscape Area (SLA)

Cairngorms National Park

7.6.6 National Park is a national, statutory designation allocated to landscapes of substantially high quality in which the primary objective is the conservation and enhancement of natural and cultural heritage. The boundary of the Cairngorms National Park (CNP) is located around 2.2 km to the south-east of the Proposed Development.

7.6.7 Within the study area, the CNP covers a small area across the floor of Gley Spey, and follows the ridgeline of the adjacent mountains Carn Dubh (to the south) and Geal Charn (to the east), stretching south-westwards away from these peaks.

7.6.8 Special Landscape Qualities (SLQs) of the CNP are outlined in the document, 'The Special Landscape Qualities of the Cairngorms National Park' (SNH / CNPA, 2010)[17]. SLQs are defined as being, *"…the characteristics that, individually or combined, give rise to an area's outstanding scenery".* CNP SLQs are listed in Table 7.6 below:

[17] NatureScot and The Cairngorms National Park Authority (2010) The Special Landscape Qualities of the Cairngorm National Park.

Table 7.6: Special Landscape Qualities of the Cairngorm National Park[17]

General Qualities: • Magnificent mountains towering over moorland, forest and strath; • Vastness of space, scale and height; • Strong juxtaposition of contrasting landscapes; • A landscape of layers, from inhabited strath to remote, uninhabited upland; • 'The harmony of complicated curves'; and • Landscapes both cultural and natural. The Mountains and Plateaux: • The unifying presence of the central mountains; • An imposing massif of strong dramatic character; • The unique plateaux of vast scale, distinctive landforms and exposed, boulderstrewn high ground; • The surrounding hills; • The drama of deep corries; • Exceptional glacial landforms; and • Snowscapes. Moorlands: • Extensive moorland, linking the farmland, woodland and the high tops; and • A patchwork of muirburn. Glens and Straths: • Steep glens and high passes; • Broad, farmed straths; • Renowned rivers; and • Beautiful lochs.	Trees, Woods and Forests: • Dark and venerable pine forest; • Light and airy birch woods; • Parkland and policy woodlands; and • Long association with forestry. Wildlife and Nature: • Dominance of natural landforms; • Extensive tracts of natural vegetation; • Association with iconic animals; • Wild land; and • Wildness. Visual and Sensory Qualities: • Layers of receding ridge lines; • Grand panoramas and framed views; • A landscape of many colours; • Dark skies; • Attractive and contrasting textures; and • The dominance of natural sounds. Culture and History: • Distinctive planned towns; • Vernacular stone buildings; • Dramatic, historical routes; • The wistfulness of abandoned settlements; • Focal cultural landmarks of castles, distilleries and bridges; and • The Royal connection. Recreation: • A landscape of opportunities; and • Spirituality.

WLA 19 (Braeroy – Glen Shirra – Creag Meagaidh)

7.6.9 Wild Land Areas (WLA) have been defined by NatureScot as those areas comprising the greatest and most extensive areas of wild characteristics within Scotland. Although not a designation, these areas are given protection within the planning system through NPF4.

7.6.10 The presence of wildness is based on the presence and strength of four perceptual attributes identified in NatureScot Policy Statement Wildness in Scotland's Countryside (SNH, 2002) as follows:

- A sense of sanctuary or solitude;
- Risk or, for some visitors, a sense of awe or anxiety, depending on the individual's emotional response to the setting;
- Perceptions that the landscape has arresting or inspiring qualities; and
- Fulfilment from the physical challenge required to penetrate into these places.

7.6.11 Because these responses are very much dependant on an individual's perceptions, five physical attributes are identified as considered likely to lead to these perceptual responses being present. These are:

- A high degree of perceived naturalness in the setting, especially in its vegetation cover and wildlife, and in the natural processes affecting the land;
- The lack of any modern artefacts or structures;
- Little evidence of contemporary human uses of the land;
- Landform which is rugged, or otherwise physically challenging; and
- Remoteness and/or inaccessibility.

7.6.12 A very small portion of the WLA falls within the LVIA study area, with the ZTV (see **Figure 7.1 - Zone of Theoretical Visibility**) indicating that potential intervisibility with the WLA would be limited to a few facing slopes and summits which enclose the south side of the Spey Glen. As illustrated by baseline photography for VL4 (see **Volume 3a**, **Figure 4a**), these areas are already noticeably influenced by modern infrastructure development including the Melgarve Substation and Beauly – Denny OHL, both of which lie closer to the WLA than the Proposed Development, and the Stronelairg Wind Farm which is noticeable on the northern skyline from more elevated areas, and would be further extended by the consented Cloiche Wind Farm. In addition, other contemporary land use within the Spey Glen including forestry and improved agricultural land also affects these areas. These features collectively lead to a much less pronounced sense of wildness in the areas which would be affected by the Proposed Development and therefore the potential for any significant effects to wild land qualities of WLA14 is considered very unlikely. A Wild Land Assessment has therefore been scoped out of this LVIA. This approach is supported by the Scoping Response from NatureScot and Scoping Opinion from ECU which do not request a WLA assessment.

Ben Alder, Laggan and Glen Banchor SLA

7.6.13 SLA is a non-statutory designation applied by THC through the development planning process to landscapes identified as being of regional or local importance. The Special Qualities of Highland SLAs are identified in the publication, Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas (Horner + Maclennan and Wood, 2011)[18].

7.6.14 Only a very small part of the edge of the SLA falls within the study area, entirely within the area which is also part of the CNP. The SLA has therefore been scoped out of individual assessment within the LVIA as this area is considered to be adequately covered by the assessment of the CNP.

Landscape Character

7.6.15 NatureScot has undertaken detailed review and classification of various landscape areas and types of Scotland (SNH, 2019 [online][12]). Three individual Landscape Character Types (LCTs) are identified within the 3.5 km study area for the Proposed Development as follows (see **Figure 7.2**):

- LCT 126: Upland Glen – Cairngorms;
- LCT 221: Rolling Uplands – Inverness; and
- LCT 231: Upland Glen – Inverness.

7.6.16 The area within the CNP is also covered by the separate Cairngorm National Park Landscape Character Assessment which identifies Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) with a greater level of detail. However, as the CNP is relatively peripheral to the Proposed Development, the LVIA has concentrated on the NatureScot LCTs as the basis for the landscape assessment, which are considered to provide a good, accurate representation of landscape character across the study area.

7.6.17 The LCTs are described in further detail in **Table 7.7** to **Table 7.9** below, along with the key characteristics which have been identified by NatureScot. Characteristics of specific note and relevance within the study area have also been identified.

[18] Horner + Maclennan and Wood, Mike (2011) Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas.

Table 7.7: LCT 126 – Upland Glen – Cairngorms

LCT 126 overlooking Spey Glen

Description	Within the study area, this LCT covers the area of the Spey Glen and surrounding slopes which fall within the CNP. It is characterised by wide, flat glens contained by steep and often craggy side-slopes with typical features of glaciated landform and deposition. Landcover comprises heather moorland on the higher slopes, with occasional birch woodland on steeper areas. Pastoral fields occupy the valley floor with occasional riparian woodland and scattered conifer plantations which reinforce a sense of enclosure. There are very few settled areas within this LCT and a feeling of remote seclusion is often had within some of the narrower glens. Within the study area, settlement is limited to a few clusters of cottages, and large estate properties set around the valley floor. Tracks and communication routes are common throughout the LCT and within the study area, the existing Beauly – Denny 400 kV OHL forms a notable feature. The variety of landform, trees and open ground gives changing experience when moving through the glen. Views are typically channelled but with frequent views to the hills and mountains beyond, which emphasises a contrast between the valleys and uplands. Within the study area, the LCT is notable as providing an arrival point to the CNP for recreational travellers.
Identified Key Characteristics	• Strong evidence of glacial processes, including steepened sides and level floors, shattered rock faces on higher slopes, hummocks of resistant rock on some glen floors and terraces of glacial deposits at the edges of glen floors. • Often form arrival points into the Cairngorms National Park. • Size varies from large open passes to narrower, more secluded glens. • Enclosed predominantly by steep slopes. • Frequently differing land-use on one side of the glen to the other - linked to aspect. • Improved, grazed fields on glen floors and floodplains. • Mostly settled, some only sparsely, but often extensive evidence of past settlement, including prehistoric hut circles and associated field systems, pre-improvement townships, and seasonal shielings. • Some landmark historic buildings. • Access varies from narrow roads, estate and forestry tracks to main routes, but most have some form of road running through them.

	• Varied experience when passing through glens from open and expansive to sheltered and secluded. • Views to adjacent uplands; from which parts of the glens are visible and provide contrast.
Landscape Value	Within the study area this LCT falls entirely within the CNP. A small portion also falls within the Ben Alder, Laggan, and Glen Banchor SLA, and Braeroy – Glenshirra – Creag Meagaidh WLA. Given its situation within the CNP and its role as an arrival point to the CNP, landscape value is considered to be High.

Table 7.8: LCT 231: Upland Glen – Inverness

LCZ 231 looking west from Garva Bridge

Description	This LCT covers the area of the Spey Glen upstream of the CNP boundary within the study area. It is characterised by a wide, gently undulating U-shaped glen, flanked on either side by low, occasional craggy hills. The River Spey meanders across the floor of the glen and subdivides frequently around glacial mounds and wooded islands. The surrounding hillsides have smooth, gentle slopes, broken in places by steep, rocky sections. Vegetation cover comprises a mix of unimproved pasture and grassy moorland, interspersed with small geometric shaped coniferous plantations. The LCT is unsettled but is influenced by other infrastructure, including the existing Beauly – Denny 400 kV OHL which runs through the valley, and the Melgarve substation which is a small but concentrated area of development. A narrow single track road follows the floor of the valley and tracks are present providing access to the electricity infrastructure, wider estate and forestry. Nevertheless there is a sense of remoteness and distance from more settled areas which increases when travelling further west.
Identified Key Characteristics	• Broad U-shaped glen. • River Spey headwaters meandering across glen floor. • Fragmented vegetation pattern with occasional remnant Caledonian pine forming a visual focus in some locations. • Angular conifer forests on lower side slopes. • Winding narrow, single-track old military road up the centre of the glen ending in a rough mountain pass. • Unsettled, with only derelict farmsteads and shielings. • Sense of remoteness.

Landscape Value	Within the study area this LCT does not fall within any designated or protected landscapes, although beyond the edge of the study area it fringes the edge of WLA 19. It is also valued to some degree for its remote qualities and recreational opportunities although it generally experienced transitionally by recreational users rather than a destination. It also has some value a setting to the CNP to the east and as an arrival point to the CNP boundary. Landscape value is considered to be Medium.

Table 7.9: LCT 221: Rolling Uplands – Inverness

LCT 221 from Meall na h-Aisre looking north-west

Description	This LCT is located to the north and south of the Spey Glen within the study area and is composed of an extensive area of large-scale, smooth, rounded hills of similar height forming broad, undulating upland plateaux with few clearly defined summits which form a backdrop to surrounding lower lying straths and glens. The hills have a generally consistent texture of smooth, deer-grazed moorland, occasionally broken by scree, rocky outcrops, patterns of muirburn or hagging. Small areas of woodland are occasionally present on sides of straths and occasional watercourses and small conifer patches are sometimes found around the edge of the LCT, contrasting with the surrounding moorland. There is little settlement within this LCT and none within the study area. However, hill tracks may be present, crossing the moorland and a few powerlines and wind farms create focus within the landscape. Wind turbines form a notable feature within the northern part of the study area where the Stronelairg Wind Farm and associated tracks are present. This influence will increase with the construction of the Cloiche and Dell 2 Wind Farms. This LCT is broadly accommodated within the LNSS as Landscape Character Areas LN3 and LN6.
Identified Key Characteristics	• A series of large scale, smooth, rounded hills with summits of similar height forming broad, undulating upland plateaux containing occasional steep-sided straths. • Open heather moorland dominates, the uniform colour and texture accentuating the landform. • Straths floors contain inbye pastures, trees and small patches of woodland. • Conifer forests limited to the lower edges of uplands and strath sides. • Settlement limited to a few isolated farms in remote straths. • A few mainly single-track roads, integrated within the landform. • Uninhabited interior, largely inaccessible to vehicles.

	• Archaeological evidence of settlement and farming from prehistoric times to the 19th century. • Striking colour and textural contrast between strath floors and moorland vegetation above. • Expansive views from the hill tops and plateaux create a strong sense of openness and exposure. • Scale and distance difficult to judge. • Few signs of active management in the interiors, creating a strong perception of remoteness, although this is affected by a number of large wind farm developments.
Landscape Value	The southern part of the LCT within the study area is within WLA19, although it is not strongly representative of wild land, being influenced by the existing infrastructure features within the Spey Glen. Elsewhere, the LCT has some value for recreational opportunities and as a context to parts of the CNP, but is generally common and less notable within the surrounding area, particularly where influenced by wind turbines. Overall, Landscape value is Low – Medium .

7.7 Baseline Conditions: Visual Amenity

Interpretation of the ZTV

7.7.1 The ZTV (see **Figure 7.1**) indicates that the visual envelope for the Proposed Development would be generally contained by the surrounding topography to an area within approximately 2 - 3 km of the proposed OHL. Slightly wider potential visibility is indicated across the upland plateau in the north of the study area, covering southern parts of the Stronelairg Wind Farm, and stretching up to the summits of Gairbeinn and Carn na Gourach. More extensive theoretical visibility is also indicated across the enclosing slopes and valley floor of the Spey Valley in the south of the study area, encompassing properties at Garvamore and Garvabeg and up to the summit of Carn Dubh. However, actual visibility across the valley floor is likely to be partially reduced by areas of woodland and forest.

Visual Receptors

7.7.2 Visual receptors are limited within the study area and comprise residents or others present in and around two small groups of buildings and those using routes (including transport and recreational routes) and recreational viewing areas through the study area. All visual receptor locations are identified on **Figure 7.4**.

Building-based Receptors

7.7.3 Building-based receptors within the study area are very limited. There are two small groups of buildings where views of the Proposed Development, or construction of the Proposed Development could be obtained:

- Garvabeg; and
- Garvamore.

7.7.4 The existing Melgarve Substation also comprises a group of buildings within the study area but has been scoped out, because it is only infrequently occupied and workers at the substation are considered to be of very low sensitivity to the Proposed Development.

<u>Receptor Group B1 - Garvabeg</u>

7.7.5 This receptor group is comprised of residents and visitors at a small group of approximately three 1.5 storey cottages, set on an alluvial terrace on north side of the Spey Glen. Views from these properties are partially orientated north/south, slightly elevated across glen floor to Garvamore and partially east/west more extensively down the glen. An existing steel lattice tower is situated close to the northeast and in rear views.

Receptor Group B2 – Garvamore

7.7.6 This receptor group includes residents and visitors at a farm property including a two storey farmhouse set in an open situation on glen floor, and various associated outbuildings including historic inn building. Main views from the farmhouse are east along the glen. Rear views to the west towards surrounding hills are more enclosed by trees and other buildings.

Route-based Receptors

7.7.7 Potential route-based visual receptors include those using public roads and recreational users of paths, tracks and other established walking routes. Views from the following routes have been identified within the study area for inclusion within the assessment.

Public Roads

- Route R1: U2104 Laggan – Garvamore – Melgarve Public Road (General Wade's Military Road) – Travellers on narrow, surfaced, single track road along upper Spey Glen. Beyond Garva Bridge it is mainly used by recreational users and forms part of Scottish Hill Tracks 236 (Laggan to Whitebridge via the Corrieyairack Pass) and 237 (Laggan to Roybridge). Views from this road are typically open along and across the Spey Glen to surrounding hills but intermittently contained by small coniferous plantations adjacent to the road. The Beauly – Denny OHL towers are prominent following the glen and Melgarve Substation is noticeable in passing.

Recreational Routes

- Route R2: Monadhliath Trail – Recreational users of long distance recreational route promoted by the South Loch Ness Access Group between Whitebridge and Fort Augustus, following the operational access through Stronelarig Wind Farm. Views are expansive across the plateaux towards surrounding hills, with wind turbines forming close and prominent features throughout. This route is also used by maintenance traffic for Stronelairg Wind Farm and Glendoe Hydro Scheme and would form a major construction route for the Cloiche Wind Farm.
- Route R3: Mountain Route up Geal Charn – Hill walkers ascending / descending to the west of the study area from Garva Bridge. The commonly used route follows the Fèith Talagain and ascends the southwest shoulder of the hill. Views are elevated, increasing with height, principally to the west and south-west up the Spey Glen.
- Route R4: Mountain Route up Carn Liath via Carn Dubh – Hill walkers ascending / descending a lesser used route from Garvamore to the summit of Carn Liath, a Munro summit located to the south-east of the study area, via its long north-easterly whaleback ridge. Views within the study area are elevated to the north across the Spey Glen and Melgarve Substation towards the Monadhliath or south across Loch Laggan. Existing turbines of the Stronelairg Wind Farm form a feature on the northerly skyline and would be increased in number by the addition of the consented Cloiche Wind Farm and proposed Dell 2 Wind Farm.
- Route R5: Mountain Route up Meall na h-Aisre – Hill walkers ascending / descending a Corbet summit from Garva Bridge. Whilst walkers traditionally take the WalkHighlands[19] described route up the Allt Coire Iain Oig, more recent reports suggest the new track following the Stronelairg UGC is now preferred. Both routes have therefore been considered. Views are elevated, typically to the south across the Spey Glen towards Carn Dubh but more expansive in all directions from the summit.

Recreational Viewing Receptors

7.7.8 Potential recreational viewing receptors include those using public viewpoints and local recreational stops. One visual receptor location has been included in this category: Receptor Location RV1: Garva Bridge, comprising a

[19] WalkHighlands route 'Meall na h-Aisre from Garva Bridge' - https://www.walkhighlands.co.uk/cairngorms/meall-na-h-aisre.shtml (Accessed January 2024)

car park area and historic bridge situated on the General Wade's Military Road. Views are from low vantage, up the glen and to the surrounding hills to north and south. Localised landform limits the extent of views.

7.8 Assessment of Likely Significant Effects: Landscape

7.8.1 This section of the LVIA provides an assessment of the effects that the Proposed Development would have on the landscape character at two phases: during construction and during operation, in accordance with the effects criteria outlined in Section 7.5. Effects on landscape character then feed into an appraisal of the predicted effects of the Proposed Development on the SLQs of the CNP.

7.8.2 Assessment of potential effects on each LCT (see **Figure 7.2**) are presented in **Table 7.10** to **Table 7.12**.

Table 7.10: LCT 126 – Upland Glen – Cairngorms

Landscape Receptors	The principal aspects of this landscape which could be affected by the Proposed Development comprise: • Arrival point to the Cairngorms National Park; • Varying experienced of expansiveness and enclosure when travelling through the glen; and • Views towards adjacent uplands which provide a contrast.
Landscape Sensitivity	This is a valued landscape, as part of the CNP. Its rural qualities are susceptible to change of the type proposed. The presence of other, similar infrastructure provides some precedent for further features of a similar type, although there is potential for this to become a more defining feature within the relatively simple landscape composition. Sensitivity is considered to be Medium – High.
Potential Effects	Potential effects to landscape receptors may include: • The Proposed Development could create a visual distraction from the sense of arrival to the CNP; • The Proposed Development could contribute to an increased sense of enclosure by infrastructure, or form a new exterior feature which distracts from existing experiences of enclosure and/or exposure; • The Proposed Development could form a new feature within the adjacent uplands and diminish the sense of contrast between the developed and undeveloped landscapes.
Nature and Magnitude of Effect	There would be no direct change to this LCT as a result of the proposed OHL, although access traffic would pass through it, using the existing access track to Melgarve Substation. Potential indirect change would relate to the appearance of the Proposed Development during construction and operation within the upland landscape to the north and north-west. The ZTV suggests that there would be relatively widespread intervisibility with towers across the floor of the glen but these would be relatively distant with a maximum of 12 falling within 3.5 km of the CNP boundary and no towers at a distance closer than 2.2 km. Due to the transparent qualities of steel lattice towers, perceptibility of multiple towers would be likely to be limited. Towers would mostly be seen beyond the closer and larger towers of the Beauly – Denny OHL. Limited intervisibility is indicated with more elevated areas surrounding the glen slope, and would be limited to the more distant appearance of towers within the expansive wider landscape from elevation. Construction works would be slightly more noticeable in the landscape context but features would still appear small and distant. The magnitude of change would be Low during construction and operation.

Significance of Effect	The Proposed Development would form a perceptible feature during construction within the upland context to the LCT. This would draw some sense of activity further from the glen floor and increase a sense of physical connection to surrounding uplands but this connection is already present to some degree due to the appearance of the existing track. The contrast between upland and lowland areas would continue to be present through the distinctly different terrain and land cover. The Proposed Development would be seen to the rear of and within the context of the existing Beauly – Denny OHL which already creates a precedent for development of this type within the LCT. Whilst there would be an increase in this type of development, the distance from the LCT and limited perceptibility of the towers within the context is not predicted to lead to a noticeable change in landscape characteristics. The Proposed Development would be entirely outwith the LCT and would not be experienced when looking eastwards down the glen into the CNP. It is therefore not predicted to lead to any detrimental effect on the sense of arrival to the CNP as the qualities of landscape when moving into the LCT from the west would not be changed. Construction traffic using the existing access track is likely to appear unexceptional within the LCT. The effect is predicted to be **Minor Adverse** (not significant) during both construction and during operation.

Table 7.11: LCT 359: LCT 231: Upland Glen – Inverness

Landscape Receptors	The principal aspects of this landscape which could be affected by the Proposed Development comprise: • Unsettled qualities, with only derelict farmsteads and shielings; • Sense of remoteness.
Landscape Sensitivity	This is a moderately valued landscape due to its rural qualities and recreational popularity. However, the presence of existing infrastructure including the Melgarve Substation and Beauly – Denny OHL provide precedent for the type of development proposed, although there is potential for further development of the type to increase the dominance of this type of infrastructure and erode the remote characteristics. Sensitivity is considered to be Medium.
Potential Effects	Potential effects to landscape receptors may include: • Construction and permanent features of the Proposed Development may create an increased focus of infrastructure in the landscape and reduce the impression of an unsettled landscape and sense of remoteness.
Nature and Magnitude of Effect	There would be a small direct change within this LCT, comprising two towers and a sealing end compound which would be located within its northern edge. Construction activities would also take place within the LCT including traffic using the existing access track to Melgarve Substation. During construction this would lead to some increased activity within the LCT which would be noticeable within the local context but generally focussed within a small part of the LCT and associated with other existing infrastructure features such as tracks, Beauly – Denny OHL and Melgarve Substation. During operation, the Proposed Development would form a perceptible new infrastructural feature within the LCT and within the wider context with generally fewer than 10 towers being seen and mostly only the tops of 1 – 3 towers being intervisible with the valley floor. These would typically be seen within a context of the existing Beauly – Denny OHL and Melgarve Substation and would usually appear less prominently than these existing developments. The magnitude of change would be Low – Medium during construction and Low during operation.

Significance of Effect	During construction, an increase in activities within this LCT would reduce the sense of remoteness in a localised area. However, local terrain and small forest plantation would reduce the extent of the LCT within which these activities would be evident and the majority of the LCT would continue to maintain a sense of remoteness from habitation. During operation, without the activities associated with construction, there would be a localised influence from the new OHL and sealing end compound. This would generally be seen within a context of the existing Beauly – Denny OHL and Melgarve Substation. Although this would increase the sense of infrastructure within this part of the landscape, the new features would be set within a location close to these existing features, alongside an existing access track, and would affect areas within which this type of development is already a feature. This is not predicted to significantly change the characteristics of the LCT to an extent whereby electrical infrastructure would over-dominate the other key characteristics and is considered unlikely to noticeably reduce the sense of remoteness within the LCT. The effect would be **Minor - Moderate Adverse** (not significant) during construction, and **Minor Adverse** (not significant) during operation.

Table 7.12: LCT 221: Rolling Uplands – Inverness

Landscape Receptors	The principal aspects of this landscape which could be affected by the Proposed Development comprise: • Uniformity of landform and land cover; • Uninhabited interior with few signs of active management giving sense of remoteness (although wind turbines are present); • Expansive views giving sense of openness and exposure; • Scale and distance difficult to judge.
Landscape Sensitivity	This is a less valued landscape. The presence of existing wind turbines and hydro infrastructure which would be further reinforced by the addition of the consented Cloiche wind turbines reduces the sensitivity to further development of a similar type although there is some susceptibility to change in terms of spreading infrastructure into new areas less affected by the existing development. Sensitivity is considered to be Low - Medium.
Potential Effects	Potential effects to landscape receptors may include: • The Proposed Development towers may introduce new vertical features which interrupt the uniformity of the landscape and create scale indicators, potentially reducing the sense of scale and distance, and openness and exposure; • Construction activities or permanent features of the Proposed Development may increase the sense of a managed or peopled landscape and reduce qualities of remoteness; • The Proposed Development, as a new, linear feature may form a feature within expansive views and break up the open, exposed qualities of the landscape;
Nature and Magnitude of Effect	The Proposed Development would directly affect this LCT, passing up a valley (Coire Iain Oig) between the transitory hills which form the transition between this and LCT359 for around 4.3 km and crossing the upland plateau for a further 2.5 km to a cable sealing end compound. The ZTV indicates that there would be relatively widespread visibility of the Proposed Development across the open plateau, comprising typically up to 10 towers with up to 12 being perceived from higher ground and fewer from slightly lower lying hollows, but this would be within a context where wind turbines are already present in the wider landscape. Intervisibility of towers would be more contained within Ciore Iain Oig and between hills but with greater number of towers likely to be perceived from the higher slopes containing the valley, particularly to the east where the Proposed Development would form a feature across on the opposite slopes. This area is not influenced by the wind turbines on the plateau but has some association with infrastructure in the Spey Glen below. Construction

	works would be likely to form a greater focus due to the additional movements and activities, temporary tracks and excavated areas. Magnitude of change would be Medium during construction within the Coire Iain Oig area where the works would appear more focussed, and Low – Medium on the upland plateau where the construction works would be smaller within a wider setting. During operation, the magnitude would be Low – Medium within Coire Iain Oig and low on the upland plateau.
Significance of Effect	The Proposed Development would affect two relatively distinct parts of the LCT: the upland plateau; and a steep contained corrie, Coire Iain Oig. The upland plateau is already influenced by existing wind turbines within close proximity, and would be further influenced by consented turbines which are directly related to the Proposed Development. The Proposed Development would extend and draw out the area directly affected by infrastructure which may further reduce qualities of remoteness within the local context. It may also lead to some reduced sense of scale in the local context where the undeveloped area surrounding the wind turbines would be segmented by the new, linear development. However, given the influence of the existing wind turbines, this is not predicted to noticeably change the wider character of the landscape, particularly when taking into account the further wind turbines which are proposed. Once construction and reinstatement is complete, the area would continue to maintain similar qualities of remoteness, due to its elevated and exposed qualities and the surrounding rugged, unmanaged terrain. The effects of the Proposed Development would be more focussed within Coire Iain Oig and would have a greater influence and form a greater distraction. The sense of remoteness through this area is tempered by the presence of an existing track and infrastructure, forestry and other features which can be seen within the Spey Glen below, although this diminishes with greater height. During construction, the works would have a more focussed influence on the landscape character, but during operation would appear less out of place and less prominent due to the existing track which already creates the precedent of a linear feature through the corrie, and the enclosing terrain which would typically provide a backdrop to the transparent tower structures. A *localised* **Moderate Adverse** (significant) effect is predicted within Coire Iain Oig during the construction of the Proposed Development. However, the effect on the wider plateau where wind turbines have greater influence is predicted to be **Minor – Moderate** (not significant). During operation, the effect would reduce to **Minor – Moderate** (not significant) within Coire Iain Oig and **Minor Adverse** (not significant) on the upper plateau.

Summary of Effects on Landscape Character

7.8.3 A summary of the effects on LCTs during construction and operation is provided in **Table 7.12**. Significant effects are those identified as being Moderate or greater.

Table 7.13: Summary of Landscape Effects

LCT	Level of Effect (Construction)						Level of Effect (Operation)					
	Major	Moderate - Major	Moderate	Minor - Moderate	Minor	Negligible	Major	Moderate - Major	Moderate	Minor - Moderate	Minor	Negligible
LCT 126 – Upland Glen – Cairngorms					•						•	
LCT 231: Upland Glen – Inverness				•							•	
LCT 221: Rolling Uplands – Inverness			**L**	•						L	•	

L indicates that the effect would be localised to a small part of the LCT within the study area.

Assessment of Effects on the Cairngorms National Park

7.8.4 Within the study area, the CNP is reflected by LCT 126: Upland Glen Cairngorms. The assessment of effects on landscape character (see **Table 7.10**) has concluded that the effect on the character of this LCT would be Minor Adverse during construction and operation. As this assessment takes into consideration the additional value and sensitivity applied to the landscape in relation to the CNP designation this effect is therefore also considered representative of the effect on the landscape character of the CNP.

Special Landscape Qualities

7.8.5 Giving consideration to the location, appearance and potential effects of Proposed Development and the key characteristics of LCT 126, six SLQs have been identified as relevant:

- Strong juxtaposition of contrasting landscapes;
- Landscapes both cultural and natural;
- Steep glens and high passes;
- The dominance of natural landforms;
- Wildness; and
- Grand panoramas and framed views.

7.8.6 These SLQs can be classified into three common themes which are relevant to the potential effects of the Proposed Development, as follows:

- Contrasts between the glen and surrounding upland landscapes;
- The natural and undeveloped qualities of the landscape; and
- Visual effects and aesthetics.

Contrasts between the glen and surrounding upland landscapes

7.8.7 This relates to the SLQs:

- Strong juxtaposition of contrasting landscapes;
- Landscapes both cultural and natural; and
- Steep glens and high passes

7.8.8 The Proposed Development would form a feature connecting the glen landscape with the upland plateau. This has the potential to reduce the sense of contrast between the more developed glen and less developed upland by bringing human intervention into the upland landscape. However, it would be located outwith the boundary of the CNP and would follow an existing track which is already present and can be seen from some areas. From the CNP, towers rising up Coire Iain Oig to the plateau would be distant and, whilst there would be a more perceptible construction corridor during construction, these would be difficult to perceive in the longer term, particularly as they would usually be seen to the rear of the existing much closer and larger Beauly – Denny towers. The distinction between the glen landscapes within the CNP and surrounding uplands would still be clearly present and the effect would not be significant on these SLQs.

The natural and undeveloped qualities of the landscape

7.8.9 This relates to the SLQs:

- The dominance of natural landforms; and
- Wildness.

7.8.10 Within the study area the hills surrounding the Spey Glen are notable in their natural form and have qualities of remoteness, being far from more developed and peopled landscapes. However, qualities of wildness are limited due to the existing infrastructure and forest plantations which are present, including the Beauly – Denny OHL, Melgarve Substation and properties at Garvamore and Garvabeg. More elevated areas are also typically influenced by turbines of the Stronelairg Wind Farm and would be further influenced by the turbines of the consented Cloiche Wind Farm. The Proposed Development would add a new feature within the context to these landscapes, but would always be seen in relation to other infrastructure and would also be seen in relation to an existing track following a similar alignment. Whilst it may extend the sense of development into some new areas, these areas are all outwith the CNP, and when considering the existing context of infrastructure, this is not predicted to reduce the sense of wildness or dominance of natural landforms for any areas within the CNP. There would therefore be no significant effect on these SLQs.

Visual effects and aesthetics

7.8.11 This relates to the SLQ: Grand Panoramas and Framed Views.

7.8.12 “Grand panoramas” are obtained from elevated positions on the edge of the CNP within the study area whilst “framed views” are obtained from the lower lying glen. The Proposed Development would form a new feature in these views, looking outwith the CNP. Whilst this may have a small effect on the backdrop of some of these views, for example, looking westwards from the Spey Glen, at the distances involved, the visual effects are not predicted to be significant (see **Section 7.9** below). Due to the location of the Proposed Development, there would be few locations where it would be seen looking towards or into the CNP and therefore this SLQ would not be significantly affected.

Conclusions

7.8.13 No significant effects are predicted to any of the CNP SLQs. Whilst there would be some effects relating to the relationship of the glen and the upland landscape, and within some views, these would be small, and not significant. All effects would be indirect, occurring to landscapes outwith the CNP and there would be no effects

when considering the relationship of the CNP landscapes within the study area to the wider national park. The effect on those parts of the CNP falling within the study area is predicted to be **Minor Adverse** (not significant) during construction and operation with the effect on the wider CNP as a whole being **Negligible**.

7.9 Assessment of Likely Significant Effects: Visual Amenity

7.9.1 This Section of the LVIA discusses the findings of the detailed visual assessment undertaken for the Proposed Development. It evaluates and describes the likely changes to existing views from buildings, routes and other popular destinations during the construction and operational phases of the proposed development and the extent to which these changes would affect the visual amenity of residents, visitors and other users of the landscape in accordance with the effects criteria outlined in **Section 7.4**.

Building-based Receptors

7.9.2 Two building-based receptor groups were included in the assessment as described in **Section 7.7** and shown on **Figure 7.4**. Visual effects for receptors at these locations are described as follows:

Receptor Group B1 - Garvabeg

7.9.3 During construction there may be some limited views of the Proposed Development on the high hillside and skyline to the north-east but this would be distant, at over 3.5 km with operational towers likely to be of limited perceptibility at this distance. Closer towers would be likely to be concealed by intervening forest plantation areas. This would be a small change away from the main focus of the view where existing very close towers of the Beauly – Denny OHL are already prominent. During construction, traffic would also pass to the rear of the property. This is an already established track and, although likely to be more frequent, traffic would be generally similar in appearance to existing traffic which already uses the route. As all features would be to the rear, this would be likely to have little influence on the value of the visual amenity experienced by residents or visitors.

7.9.4 Sensitivity for these receptors is Low because the area affected is to the rear of the main aspect of the view where existing towers of Beauly – Denny are close and prominent. Magnitude of change would be Low during construction and Negligible during operation. The visual effect would therefore be **Minor Adverse** during construction and **Negligible** during operation.

Receptor Group B2 – Garvamore

7.9.5 During construction there would be some perceptibility of traffic using the existing access track on the north side of the Spey Glen in side views and from outside areas but this is an already established track and, although more frequent, traffic would be likely to be similar in appearance to existing traffic using the route. Views of tower construction and permanent towers would be more limited due to the existing coniferous trees on the west side of the property. There may be some limited, glimpsed views of towers high on the hill to the north-north-west, but these would be of limited perceptibility.

7.9.6 Sensitivity for these receptors is Low because the main focus of the view is away from the Proposed Development and trees limit views in the direction of the Proposed Development. The magnitude of change would be Negligible during construction and operation and the visual effect is therefore also predicted to be **Negligible** during both construction and operation.

Route-based Receptors

7.9.7 Five routes were identified for inclusion in the assessment, where potential views of the Proposed Development may be obtained by visual receptors, as described in **Section 7.7** (see **Figure 7.3**). Visual effects for receptors using these routes are described as follows:

Route R1 – U2104 Laggan – Garvamore – Melgarve Public Road (General Wade's Military Road)

7.9.8 Views from this route would be variable. When approaching from the east, prior to Garva Bridge there would be more distant views towards the Proposed Development from open stretches of the road with construction of towers likely to be perceptible rising up the glen-side as well as views of construction traffic approaching the site. These views would be perceptible in the context and may form some degree of distraction but would be generally distant within a relatively wide view. Views would be intermittently screened by forest plantation from some short sections of the route. During operation, the transparent nature of the tower structure and generally distant appearance of the towers, beyond the much larger and closer Beauly – Denny towers would lead to these being of limited perceptibility from this section of the route and unlikely to form a noticeably detracting feature within the view (see Visualisation Location VL3 (**Volume 3a Figures VL3a-d** and **Volume 3b Figures VL3a-e**)).

7.9.9 West of Garva Bridge, although the Proposed Development would be closer to the road, the local landform adjacent to the road would limit visibility of the closest towers. There would be some views of construction and taller features but this would be less likely to be detracting, given the context where the existing Beauly – Denny towers would be closer and more prominent, and the towers would feature more within side views and less within the main views along the valley (see Visualisation Location VL1 (**Volume 3a Figures VL1a-d** and **Volume 3b Figures VL1a-e**)).

7.9.10 Sensitivity for users of this route is considered to be Medium, given the value attached to views by recreational users, balanced by the presence of existing infrastructure which already forms a detraction within the views which would be affected. Magnitude of change would be Low during construction, and Low during operation. The resultant significance of effect is predicted to be **Minor – Moderate Adverse** (not significant) during construction, and **Minor Adverse** (not significant) during operation.

Route R2: Monadhliath Trail

7.9.11 This track would also be used by some construction traffic accessing the Proposed Development. There would be some views from this route of construction and permanent towers in the southerly context, somewhat limited by intervening topography. These views would be seen within the context of existing turbines, tracks and on-site substation of Stronelairg Wind Farm and, during operation, the additional turbines of Cloiche Wind Farm. The track is already used for wind farm traffic and additional construction traffic, although potentially more frequent, would appear visually similar. All these features would be set at closer proximity within the foreground and the Proposed Development would be seen through them within the middle distance at distances over 2.7 km. This is likely to be of limited perceptibility within the context during both construction and operation, and likely to be generally unremarkable within the view, given the likely visual expectations of those taking recreation through an operational wind farm.

7.9.12 Sensitivity would be Low for visual receptors using this route, due to the route being through an operational wind farm. Magnitude of change would be Negligible during construction and operation. The visual effect is predicted to be **Negligible** during construction and during operation.

Route R3: Mountain Route up Geal Charn

7.9.13 The Proposed Development would feature within westerly views from approximately 1.5 km of this route as it becomes more elevated following the Fèith Talagain (see VL5 Wireline (**Volume 3a Figures VL5a-c** and **Volume 3b Figures VL5a-b**)). Views would be relatively distant, mostly at more than 2 km. Works would be more noticeable during construction, but permanent towers would be less perceptible during operation as the transparent towers would be typically seen backclothed by the hill to the rear. Views from lower and closer parts of the route would be typically hidden by intervening areas of coniferous forest with only occasional views potentially being obtained of individual towers or tower tops, although users may briefly encounter construction traffic when crossing the existing track alongside the Beauly – Denny OHL.

7.9.14 Sensitivity for users of this route is Medium because the area affected forms a more important part of the view. Magnitude of change would be Low during construction and during operation. The visual effect is predicted to be **Minor Adverse** (not significant) during both construction and operation.

Route R4: Mountain Route up Càrn Liath via Carn Dubh

7.9.15 From the summit areas of Carn Dubh, there would be elevated views of the Proposed Development across the Spey Glen from the glen floor up Coire Iain Oig. Towers would be seen at distances of over 3.5 km, and almost entirely backclothed by the hill resulting in limited perceptibility due to their transparent structure. The sealing end compound in the Spey Glen would be slightly more noticeable due its larger footprint but would be a small feature, seen within the context of the existing Melgarve Substation, within a very wide and expansive view. Construction works would be more perceptible forming a more defined line up the hill but would still appear small and distant within the wide context of the view.

7.9.16 Sensitivity is Medium because the area of change forms some degree of focus within the view, but only a small part of a very expansive view. Magnitude of change would be Low during construction and Negligible during operation. The resultant visual effect is predicted to be **Minor Adverse** (not significant) during construction, and **Negligible** during operation.

Route R5: Mountain Route up Meall na h-Aisre

7.9.17 The optional route up Meall na h-Aisre following the constructed Stronelairg UGC track would be shared by construction traffic for the Proposed Development. From this route, views of works to construct towers would be prominent, often at close proximity, including the construction and use of temporary spur tracks. However, the more open view across the corrie would not be affected and elevated views to the south towards the Spey Valley would be less noticeably affected. Views of the Proposed Development from the traditionally recognised route would be slightly more distant, viewed across the corrie, and seen within the context of the existing constructed track, although tower construction would continue to be noticeable from the route. The operational towers would be slightly less prominent as there would be less distraction without the additional features and activities of construction, and towers would be seen partially backclothed by the hills behind, with views south down the corrie towards the glen being relatively unaffected. However, they would still be clearly perceptible features throughout the route. From the summit (see VL2 (**Volume 3a Figures VL2a-d** and **Volume 3b Figures VL3a-e**)) the towers stretching across the plateau would be seen within the westerly view although landform would hide the towers up Coire Iain Oig. This would affect a small part of a view where wind turbines are already a feature to the north and north-west, and would become more noticeable in the westerly view with the construction of Cloiche Wind Farm. However, it would draw the appearance of infrastructure closer to the viewer and slightly increase this influence in the westerly view.

7.9.18 Sensitivity for receptors using this route is considered to be Medium - High, given the proximity and focus of views throughout Coire Iain Oig. The magnitude of change would be Medium during construction and Low – Medium during operation. The significance of effect is predicted to be **Moderate Adverse** (significant) during construction, and **Minor – Moderate Adverse** (not significant) during operation.

Recreational Viewing Receptors

7.9.19 One additional location has been considered in the assessment which forms a popular viewing location for members of the public as follows:

Receptor Location RV1: Garva Bridge

7.9.20 Views of the Proposed Development from Garva Bridge would be somewhat concealed by local landform and intervening forest plantation and would be limited to the higher parts of a few towers. Towers would be perceptible, but seen to the rear of the larger and closer Beauly – Denny towers and would be backclothed by the hills to the rear (see VL1 (**Volume 3a Figures VL3a-d** and **Volume 3b Figures VL3a-e**)). As a result they

would be unlikely to form a noticeably new detracting feature within he view. Activities during construction may draw slightly more attention to the towers in the view. Construction traffic accessing the site along the existing track to Melgarve Substation may also be perceptible but would appear similar to exiting traffic which uses the route and likely unremarkable as a feature in the view.

7.9.21 Sensitivity for viewers at this location is considered to be Low, given the influence of the existing Beauly – Denny towers within the view. Magnitude of change would be Low during construction and Negligible during operation. As such, the visual effect on these receptors is predicted to be **Minor Adverse** (not significant) during construction, and **Negligible** during operation.

Summary of Visual Effects

7.9.22 A summary of the effects on building-based, route-based and static recreational visual receptors during construction and operation is provided in **Table 7.14**. Significant effects are those identified as being Moderate or greater.

Table 7.14: Summary of Visual Effects

Visual Receptor Type	Level of Effect (Construction)						Level of Effect (Operation)					
	Major	Moderate - Major	Moderate	Minor - Moderate	Minor	Negligible	Major	Moderate - Major	Moderate	Minor - Moderate	Minor	Negligible
Building-based Receptors	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	2
Route-based Receptors	-	-	**1**	1	2	1	-	-	-	1	2	2
Recreational Viewing Locations	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Totals	-	-	1	1	4	2	-	-	-	1	2	5
Notes: All effects are adverse.												

7.10 Cumulative Effects

7.10.1 The assessment has considered the potential for cumulative effects to occur as a result of the Proposed Development during construction and operation. This has considered the potential for the Proposed Development to lead to increased effects within the study area when considered in addition to any other proposed electrical infrastructure developments which are not included in the baseline for the standard assessment.

7.10.2 The following proposed developments have been identified with the potential to affect the landscape character or visual amenity of the study area and are shown on **Figure 5.1**:

- Cloiche Wind Farm (consented);
- Dell 2 Wind Farm (scoping);
- UGC sections of the Proposed Development.

7.10.3 As the Cloiche and Dell 2 Wind Farms have already been considered within the baseline for the standard assessment of operational effects, and long-term effects of UGC are unlikely to be perceptible, the cumulative

assessment has focussed on construction period effects only. There is a reasonable likelihood that the construction of any of these developments would occur simultaneously with the Proposed Development, as they are all to some extent associated. The potential for the Cloiche and Dell 2 Wind Farms to be constructed simultaneously is less certain but is assumed to be the case for this assessment in order to accommodate a worst case scenario.

7.10.4 A combined ZTV showing theoretical visibility of the two wind farm developments alongside the Proposed Development is included as **Figure 7.5**. Whilst this indicates operational visibility of the three developments, it also gives a reasonable impression of likely shared visibility during construction.

7.10.5 Cumulative effects are assessed from a baseline where the Proposed Development forms an addition to the other cumulative developments.

Cumulative Landscape Effects

Landscape Character

7.10.6 Construction works associated with the baseline developments would lead to an intensive area of activities and physical features within an area of the upland plateau to the north, east and west of the northernmost sealing end compound and tower of the Proposed Development (OHL). The combination of construction of the two wind farms, associated onsite substations and the UGC connections which are ancillary to the Proposed Development would lead to the landscape being strongly defined by this type of works and, on its own, this would be likely to significantly affect the landscape character. The construction of the Proposed Development, when added to this activity would increase the area directly affected by construction activities within LCT 221: Rolling Uplands – inverness. This would lead to a slightly increased effect on the landscape character of this LCT. However, given the influence of the other activities on the landscape, which are likely to strongly influence the area which would also be directly affected by the Proposed Development, this is unlikely to be significant.

Cairngorms National Park

7.10.7 There would be very limited intervisibility of the baseline cumulative developments with the CNP. From the Spey Glen around Garvamore, a couple of tips of Cloiche turbines and potentially associated cranes would be likely to be barely perceptible. As a linear development, the Proposed Development may theoretically lead the eye towards these turbines but given the very limited perceptibility of the turbines and distant nature of the proposed development (see VL3 (**Volume 3a Figures VL3a-d** and **Volume 3b Figures VL3a-e**) this is unlikely to lead to any notable cumulative effect. From elevated areas on the CNP boundary, there would be more intervisibility with the Cloiche and Dell 2 Wind Farms but the Proposed Development would be more distant from these areas and the cumulative effect would therefore be unlikely to be any greater. As only the very edge of the CNP falls within the study area, and these effects relate to parts of the landscape which are exterior to the CNP, there would be little effect on appreciation of the landscapes within the CNP. Taking this into account, no significant cumulative effects are predicted to any of the CNP SLQs.

7.10.8 Predicted cumulative landscape effects are detailed in **Table 7.15**. Effects of Moderate or greater are significant.

Table 7.15: Cumulative Landscape Effects

LCT / Designated or Protected Landscape	Cumulative Effects (assessed during construction only)
LCT 126: Upland Glen – Cairngorms	Negligible
LCT 231: Upland Glen – Inverness	Negligible
LCT 221: Rolling Uplands – Inverness	Minor Adverse (not significant)
Cairngorms National Park	Negligible

Cumulative Visual Effects

7.10.9 No cumulative effects are predicted for either of the building-based receptor locations as there would be no view of any of the cumulative baseline developments from Receptor Group B1 (Garvabeg) and a Negligible effect is predicted for the Proposed Development for Receptor Group B2 (Garvamore).

7.10.10 There would also be no cumulative effect for Recreational Viewing Receptor RV1 (Garva Bridge) as there would be no view of any of the cumulative developments.

7.10.11 There is some potential for cumulative effect from all five of the routes:

- Route R1 – U2104 Laggan – Garvamore – Melgarve Public Road (General Wade's Military Road);
- Route R2 – Monadhliath Trail;
- Route R3 – Mountain Route up Geal Charn;
- Route R4 – Mountain Route up Càrn Liath via Carn Dubh; and
- Route R5 – Mountain Route up Meall na h-Aisre

7.10.12 There would be some limited, glimpsed views of turbine tips or cranes from around 1.5 km at the eastern end of Route R1, likely to be barely perceptible. Route R3 would have a similar limited and glimpsed view of turbine tips only from a very short section. The Proposed Development may visually lead to these turbines which could theoretically draw additional attention to them but given their limited perceptibility this is unlikely to comprise any noticeable cumulative effect for either route.

7.10.13 Route R2 would be surrounded by construction activities for both wind farm developments, would be crossed by the UGC works and would be used as a major access route for the construction of Cloiche Wind Farm. Although construction of the Proposed Development would also be perceptible from this route, given the context of other development, this is unlikely to result in any additional visual effect.

7.10.14 From Route R4 there would be some more expansive visibility of turbine construction on the northerly hills. Construction of the Proposed Development would draw the appearance of construction closer in these views, more into the foreground than the backdrop. This would lead to some increase in the level of effect but the Proposed Development would still appear relatively distant and small within the elevated view and the cumulative effect is not predicted to be significant.

7.10.15 There would be limited visibility of the cumulative baseline developments from the majority of Route R5, mainly limited to summit areas of the hill where all the baseline developments would be seen on the plateau to north and west. The Proposed Development would draw construction works somewhat closer to the viewer seen from these areas but given the extent of works which would already be taking place, would be unlikely to increase the level of effect.

7.10.16 Predicted cumulative visual effects for relevant receptors. are detailed in Table 7.16.

7.10.17. Effects of Moderate or greater are significant.

Table 7.16: Cumulative Visual Effects

LCT / Designated or Protected Landscape	Cumulative Effects (assessed during construction only)
Route R1 – U2104 Laggan – Garvamore – Melgarve Public Road	Negligible
Route R2 – Monadhliath Trail	Negligible
Route R3 – Mountain Route up Geal Charn	Negligible
Route R4 – Mountain Route up Càrn Liath via Carn Dubh	Minor Adverse (not significant)
Route R5 – Mountain Route up Meall na h-Aisre	Minor Adverse (not significant)

7.11 Mitigation

7.11.1 Mitigation measures are proposed for the Proposed Development in order to minimise landscape and visual effects, as well as to improve the visual appearance and assimilation of the Proposed Development into the landscape setting. Given the generally upland and open setting of the Proposed Development and lack of longer term significant effect, no planting is proposed for the Proposed Development, other than where relating to the existing mitigation planting for the Melgarve Substation, discussed in paragraph 7.11.6 below. Mitigation would therefore comprise the sensitive reinstatement of vegetation around permanent features, including the reinstatement of temporary tracks, and the careful implementation of earthworks to minimise the evidence of prior construction and access in the landscape and reduce the visible appearance of lower structures associated with sealing end compounds.

Earthworks

7.11.2 The smooth tie-in of proposed earthworks associated with the Proposed Development would help to reduce the long term footprint of the Proposed Development and assimilate tower foundations and sealing end platforms into the surrounding landscape context. It is proposed that wherever possible, slopes would be carefully graded to marry smoothly into the adjacent landform and avoid abrupt changes in slope. As far as possible, gradients would be suitable for the replacement of excavated peat or soils.

7.11.3 Where further material is available, subtle earthwork mounding is proposed around the lower sealing end compound, to help conceal lower structures and fencing within the wider landscape. This would help to ensure that the proposed OHL would appear as a more simple feature within the landscape of the Spey Glen, without the additional complexity of the small compound which would draw the eye. Earth works would be designed with a steeper slope on the inside, close to the fencing but graduating smoothly into the surrounding landscape to avoid the appearance of a distinct mound which would be out of character within the open moorland.

Restoration of Existing Vegetation Types

7.11.4 Natural regeneration would be the preferred method for the restoration of vegetated areas disturbed during the construction works. This would require the careful stripping, separation, storage and handling of turves and soil / peat prior to construction works commencing, and careful restoration in the correct horizons once works have completed. Further detail of methods for the soil handling are provided in the draft project Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) (see **Appendix 3.6**), Outline Site Restoration Plan (see **Appendix 3.3**) and Peat Management Plan (see **Appendix 10.2**).

7.11.5 If it was considered necessary to augment natural regeneration with seeding, a suitable seed mix would be developed with the project ecologist, reflecting the existing native species and habitat types.

Existing Melgarve Substation Planting

7.11.6 There is some potential for the works to install the UGC into the existing Melgarve Substation to affect areas previously planted as mitigation. The access into the substation should avoid areas of existing planting as far as possible and where these are unavoidably affected, replacement planting should be implemented that accommodates a minimum operational wayleave for the Proposed Development.

7.12 Residual Effects

7.12.1 The assessment of operational effects takes into account the mitigation measures outlined above and therefore the operational effects can be considered representative of residual effects.

7.13 Summary and Conclusions

Landscape Effects

7.13.1 The landscape assessment has established that there would be a short term significant effect during construction within a localised area of LCT 221 (Rolling Uplands) confined to the area within Coire Iain Oig where construction works would lead to a focussed presence of activities which would lead to some disruption remote qualities within the corrie. Whilst there would be some effects in other areas, these are not predicted to be significant, due to the presence of other existing infrastructure including wind turbines on the upland plateau and existing transmission infrastructure within the Spey Glen, and the indirect nature of the effects, which would be less likely to change existing characteristics within this context.

7.13.2 During operation, after reinstatement has established, all effects on landscape character would reduce to levels which would be not significant, because the Proposed Development is not predicted to be sufficiently prominent within the setting to lead to an overriding change to any landscape characteristics.

7.13.3 No significant effects are predicted to the SLQs or landscape character within the CNP and no other designated or protected landscapes would be affected.

Visual Effects

7.13.4 The visual assessment has identified that there would be a short term significant visual effect for recreational receptors accessing a Meall na h-Aisre, a Corbett summit within the study area. This route follows Coire Iain Oig via various options but all would result in the construction works for the Proposed Development being a prominent feature within the view, either close within the more constrained view towards the enclosing hill-slope, or at slightly more distance within the more open view across the Corrie. However, this effect is predicted to reduce and become not significant during operation, as the lattice tower structures would be less prominent against the backdrop of hills in the longer term.

7.13.5 Visual effects for all other building-based and recreational receptors within the study area would be not significant during both construction and operation, largely because the Proposed Development would be seen either distantly with limited perceptibility, or within a context where other infrastructure is already more prominent.

Cumulative Landscape and Visual Effects

7.13.6 The cumulative landscape and visual assessment carried out for the Proposed Development has established that there would be no significant cumulative landscape or visual effects resulting from the Proposed Development, when considered in addition to other proposed developments.

Conclusions

7.13.7 The LVIA has concluded that there would be temporary significant landscape and visual effects arising from the Proposed Development during its construction, affecting the landscape area within Coire Iain Oig a recreational visual receptors accessing the mountain of Meall na h-Aisre via this corrie. However, with successful restoration of construction areas, the operational effects of the Proposed Development are not predicted to be significant. There would be no significant effects on the Cairngorms National Park.

7.14 References

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