

CHAPTER 7 – LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL

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7 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL

7.1 Introduction

- 7.1.1 This Chapter reports the outcome of the assessment of likely significant effects arising from the Proposed Development on Landscape and Visual Amenity. This process of assessment and reporting is referred to as a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA).
- 7.1.2 Landscape and visual assessments are separate although linked processes, describing closely related but distinct sets of effects.
- 7.1.3 The landscape assessment considers the effects of change and development on the landscape as a resource. The character of the landscape derives from a combination of physical factors, natural processes, and human intervention. Landscape effects are a combination of the physical changes to the fabric of the landscape arising from the Proposed Development and perceptual changes – the way these physical changes alter how the landscape is perceived. The landscape assessment considers effects on significant individual elements of the landscape where appropriate, as well as effects on characteristic combinations or patterns of elements and how these are seen to affect its character and quality.
- 7.1.4 Visual amenity assessment is concerned with the general visual amenity of people who may be affected by the Proposed Development and their perception and responses to changes in these views. Visual effects arise from changes in the composition and character of views available in the area affected. The assessment considers the likely change that would be experienced, including the effects both on specific views and on general amenity – the pleasantness of the view or outlook – that the people affected enjoy. For the purposes of the assessment, whilst it is the people living, working, passing through or enjoying recreational activities in the area who actually see the views and enjoy the visual amenity, it is the places or routes they may occupy that are mapped and described as the visual receptors.
- 7.1.5 This Chapter (and its associated Figures and Appendices) is not intended to be read as a standalone assessment, and reference should be made to the introductory chapters of this EIA Report (**Chapters 1-6**). Of particular note is **Chapter 3: Project Description** which details the project elements considered within this Chapter. Additional information which supports this Chapter is presented in the following documents and appendices:
- Volume 3: Figures
 - Figure 7.1: Zone of Theoretical Visibility – 10 km Study Area – Bare Earth;
 - Figure 7.2: Zone of Theoretical Visibility – 10 km Study Area – Screening;
 - Figure 7.3a: Zone of Theoretical Visibility - The Highland Council, Caledonian Canal Crossing – Bare Earth;
 - Figure 7.3b: Zone of Theoretical Visibility - The Highland Council, Caledonian Canal Crossing – Screening;
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 - Figure 7.4: Landscape Character Types and Key Landscape Features;
 - Figure 7.5: Landscape Character Type Photos;
 - Figure 7.6: Visual Amenity Receptors and Viewpoint Locations; and
 - Figure 7.7: Visual Context.
 - Volume 4: Visualisations – as listed under the contents page
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7.2 Scope of Assessment and Methodology

Scope of the Assessment

- 7.2.1 The scope of this 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. Further information can be found in **Chapter 6: Scope and Consultation**.
- 7.2.2 This Chapter reports the assessment of likely significant effects on the landscape and on visual amenity arising from the Proposed Development, during construction and operation. The assessment takes into consideration the requirement to form, and maintain, an Operational Corridor (OC) along the Proposed OHL Alignment. It describes the assessment methodology, the baseline conditions at the Proposed OHL Alignment and in the area that may be affected, and the mitigation that has been built into the design.
- 7.2.3 The assessment analyses the landscape and considers its sensitivity. The assessment defines the extent to which the Proposed Development is likely to be visible and identifies the range and type of people (or places they may occupy) likely to be affected, which are illustrated by a representative sample of views.
- 7.2.4 The visual assessment includes consideration of residential receptors including individual properties where these are isolated and groups of properties where development is clustered. It should be noted that a significant effect on an isolated residential receptor is an effect on their private visual amenity, whereas a significant effect on a settlement as a whole may involve a degree of effect on the public good.
- 7.2.5 The assessment reports on the residual effects of the Proposed Development, taking into account committed mitigation. The assessment considers the Proposed Development as described in **Chapter 3: Project Description**.
- 7.2.6 This assessment has been carried out in accordance with the '*Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*', 3rd Edition 2013 (GLVIA3)¹, including notes and clarifications (Aug 2024)². Photography has been undertaken and visualisations created in accordance with NatureScot guidance, Landscape Institute guidance³, and the Highland Council guidance for windfarms⁴. Note that reference to GLVIA3 within this Chapter or any of its associated Figures or Appendices should be taken as also including the notes and clarifications published by the Landscape Institute in August 2024.
- 7.2.7 An assessment of the Kellas Alternative Alignment has been undertaken only on those landscape and visual receptors that would potentially be affected and can be found in **Appendix 7.3: Landscape Character Types Sensitivity and Effects** and **Appendix 7.4.1 to 7.4.3**.

¹ Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013). *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*, 3rd Edition.

² Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note LITGN-2024-01 (August 2024) [online], available at: https://www.landscapeinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/LITGN-2024-01-GLVIA3-NC_Aug-2024.pdf

³ Landscape Institute (2019). *Visual Representation of development proposals*, Technical Guidance Note 06/19 [online], available at: https://www.landscapeinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/LI_TGN-06-19_Visual_Representation-1.pdf

⁴ The Highland Council. *Visualisation Standards for Wind Energy Developments* (July 2016) [online], available at: https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/12880/visualisation_standards_for_wind_energy_developments

Legislation, Policy and Guidance

7.2.8 Baseline reporting in the LVIA chapter includes the identification of relevant landscape planning policy at a national and regional level. Reference was made to the following documentation:

- National Planning Policy Framework 4 2023⁵;
- Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended)⁶;
- The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017⁷.
- Highland-wide Local Development Plan 2012⁸;
- Moray Local Development Plan 2020⁹;
- Aberdeenshire Council, Local Development Plan 2023¹⁰;
- Highland Council's Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas¹¹;
- Moray Local Landscape Designation¹²;
- Aberdeenshire Special Landscape Areas, 2017¹³; and
- Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes¹⁴.

Consultation

7.2.9 Full details of the consultation process and responses are included in **Chapter 6: Scope and Consultation** and associated appendices, with specific responses relating to landscape and visual amenity summarised in **Table 7.1** below.

Table 7.1: Consultation responses summary

Organisation	Type of Consultation	Summary of Response	How response has been considered
The Highland Council (THC)	E-mail Response received 28 Feb 2024	THC were content with the viewpoint locations, however they had concerns that A roads were not well represented and requested that viewpoints were added on the A831 between Kirkhill and Meikle Phoinneas and on the A82 in the vicinity of Loch Dochfour.	Two viewpoint (VP) locations on the A82 and two options for the A862 (close to the A831 but more appropriate for a viewpoint) were proposed. One additional VP on the A82 and one on the A862 (instead of the A831) were subsequently agreed with THC (see response on 10 Mar 2024 below, VP 54 & 55).
THC	E-mail Response received 10 Mar 2024	THC agreed the A82 location and preference for Option 2 on the A862 as that could show the Proposed Development looking both up and down the line i.e. two sets of images	Two additional viewpoints agreed (VP 54 and VP 55). VP 54 A862 to show visualisations in two directions. No further action was required.

⁵ Scottish Government (2023) National Planning Framework 4 [online], available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-planning-framework-4/>

⁶ UK Government (1997). Town and County Planning Scotland) Act 1997, available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1997/8/contents>

⁷ UK Government (2017). The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2017/101/contents>

⁸ Highland-wide Local Development Plan April 2012 [online], available at: https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/178/development_plans/199/highland-wide_local_development_plan

⁹ Moray Development Plan 2020 [online], available at: http://www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_133431.html

¹⁰ Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023 [online], available at: <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/planning/plans-and-policies/ldp-2023>

¹¹ Highland Council's Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas, June 2011 [online], available at: https://www.highland.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/2937/assessment_of_highland_special_landscape_areas.pdf

¹² Moray Council (2018) Moray Local Landscape Designation, 2018. Available at: http://www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_121575.html

¹³ Aberdeenshire Special Landscape Areas, April 2017 [online], available at: <https://online.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/ldpmedia/LDP2021/Appendix13AberdeenshireSpecialLandscapeAreas.pdf>

¹⁴ Historic Environment Scotland [online], available at: <https://www.historicenvironment.scot/advice-and-support/listing-scheduling-and-designations/gardens-and-designed-landscapes>

Organisation	Type of Consultation	Summary of Response	How response has been considered
		from the one location.	
THC	E-mail Response received 12 May 2024	THC confirmed visualisation methodology of providing both 65.5 degree and 90 degree panoramas, as well as individual 75 mm visuals to align with THC guidance.	No further action was required.
THC	Pre-app meeting 17 July 2024 Relevant Landscape and Visual notes summarised	THC stated that mitigation measures should include avoidance or reduction of adverse landscape, visual and setting impacts on the A862, A82 and Great Glen Way tourist routes, and Culloden Battlefield. THC confirmed the route option behind Saddle Hill was preferred.	Visual impacts on Culloden Battlefield, the A862, A82 and Great Glen Way were considered during the routing and alignment selection process. The Proposed OHL Alignment passes behind Saddle Hill and is largely backclothed by landform being sited on the mid slopes of hills to the south, which reduces visual prominence from the visual receptors. Impacts on the setting of Culloden Battlefield are addressed in Chapter 11: Cultural Heritage .
		THC requested that mitigation and visualisations should take account of the age and height of existing commercial plantations and their expected restocking timelines.	Years 7 and 15 visualisations have been produced where forestry replanting was a key element of the view.
		THC requested flythrough visualisations and photomontages, with particular attention paid to the Caledonian Canal crossing.	A 3D flythrough has produced by the Applicant and is available to view from the Applicant's project website ¹⁵ .
		Concerns over the close proximity of towers to the A862 roadside. Concerns about the visibility of the corridor which would be opened up in the woodland / forestry on the Aird.	Screenshots from the 3D model were provided to THC and a Proposed OHL Alignment was agreed.
		THC requested restructure of wooded areas to make the artificial corridor through it less apparent.	Forest edge fringe planting ¹⁶ through key areas of forestry has been proposed to reduce the impact of the OC, including on The Aird (refer to Appendix 7.6 Forestry Landscape Mitigation Principles).
		THC requested avoidance of positioning any towers, particularly angle towers, close to the A82.	Alignment optioneering considered impacts on the A82.
		THC requested further Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) modelling (both with and without the mapping of intervening managed woodland) for Sections 5 and 6 of the alignment selection stage.	An additional ZTV for Section 5 (west of the Caledonian Canal) and Section 6 (east of the Caledonian Canal) was produced using bare earth and with existing vegetation.

¹⁵ Beauly to Blackhillock to New Deer to Peterhead 400kV OHL 3D Model [online], available at: <https://www.3dwtech.co.uk/dashboard/ssen/beauly-to-peterhead/portal-update/> (Accessed: 10 September 2025)

¹⁶ Forest edge fringe planting refers to deciduous planting within the OC proposed in order to soften the appearance of the coniferous forest edge.

Organisation	Type of Consultation	Summary of Response	How response has been considered
		THC requested mitigation by design of adverse effects on the distinctive character of LCT 229 Enclosed Farmland and Beaufort Castle Garden and Designed Landscape, to the fullest extent achievable.	Landscape impacts were considered through the alignment option process. Gardens and Designed Landscapes (GDLs) on the Historic Environment Scotland inventory are addressed in Chapter 11: Cultural Heritage .
		Concerns about the visibility of the corridor on the Aird.	As above, mitigation fringe planting through key areas of forestry has been proposed to reduce the impact of the OC, including on the Aird.
		All of the options would require highly prominent crossing towers in close proximity to the canal.	Further consultation with THC was undertaken using the 3D model and the most suitable alignment and tower locations were agreed in relation to the canal.
		Concerns were expressed about the placement of towers in the vicinity of the A9 corridor.	Impacts on the A9 were considered during the route and alignment selection process.
		The presence of the microwave communications tower was also noted as a potential source of additional cumulative effects.	Relevant schemes have been included in the cumulative assessment. The existing communications tower was not listed as a cumulative development as it was already in existence, so formed part of the baseline environment.
THC	Scoping Opinion received on 22 Aug 2024 Relevant Landscape and Visual responses summarised	Request for monochrome photomontages.	The Proposed Development is shown in monochrome in the photowires for each Viewpoint within Volume 4: Visualisations . As this is not a windfarm development, further visualisations in monochrome were not considered proportionate or beneficial.
		THC requested visualisations in years 1 and 10 from the completion of construction.	Visualisations have been produced for year of opening, year 7 and year 15 where forestry replanting was a key element of the view. These visualisation scenarios were agreed with THC.
		THC requested that landscaping proposals associated with the proposal should be scoped into the LVIA.	Forest edge fringe planting through key areas of forestry has been proposed and is shown in Appendix 7.6: Forestry Landscape Mitigation Principles .
		THC requested that assessments should cover impacts of all elements of the development.	The Proposed Development as described in Chapter 3: Project Description has been assessed in the LVIA.
		Separate volumes of visualisations should be prepared to both Highland Council Standards and NatureScot guidance.	Two sets of visualisations to the two separate standards have been provided in Volume 4: Visualisations .

Organisation	Type of Consultation	Summary of Response	How response has been considered
		THC requested that the finalised list of Viewpoints (VP) and wireframes for the assessment of effects must be agreed in advance of preparation of any visuals with THC and NatureScot.	THC and NatureScot were consulted on this matter. Viewpoints and visualisations were updated and agreed. A meeting to review the Applicants 3D model 'walkthrough' was also held to review impacts of towers from some key areas of concern (e.g. adjacent to the Caledonian Canal).
		THC recommend that the photographer had in their mind whether the VP was representative or specific and also who the receptors were when taking the photos.	The photographer was aware of the requirements. Each viewpoint had a 360-degree set of images taken to avoid any potential confusion with orientation.
		Care should also be taken when undertaking the baseline photography in appropriate weather conditions, and during months of the year when visibility is not excessively obscured by intervening vegetation / deciduous trees being in full leaf.	Photography has been undertaken during Winter months and in suitable weather conditions. Micrositing on the ground by the photographer was undertaken for health and safety purposes and to obtain the least obstructed view.
		THC stated that the location of viewpoints should be informed by site survey, mapping and predicted ZTVs.	The location of viewpoints was informed by site survey, mapping and ZTVs. The methodology is detailed in Appendix 7.1: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Methodology .
		THC requested that the purpose of the selected and agreed viewpoints shall be clearly identified and stated. Remember that Visual Effects are defined by GLVIA3 not just as effects on views, but as 'Effects on specific views and on the general amenity experienced by people'.	The receptors and purpose of each viewpoint is provided in Appendix 7.2: Visualisation Methodology . The LVIA considers effects on visual amenity and visual receptors, not just on viewpoints.
		THC requested that the LVIA Chapter of the EIAR should clearly set out the methodology.	A detailed methodology is included in Appendix 7.1: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Methodology .
		THC requested a clear matrix approach supported by descriptive text setting out how you have reached your conclusion of effect.	A Matrix approach was used and is detailed in Appendix 7.1: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Methodology . Effects on landscape and visual receptors, as well as on each individual viewpoints, have been included as separate appendices to provide more detailed narrative on sensitivity, impacts and effects for each. Sequential views have been considered in the text narrative only. Assessments are provided in Appendix 7.3: Landscape Character Types Sensitivity and Effects; and Appendix 7.4.1 to 7.4.3

Organisation	Type of Consultation	Summary of Response	How response has been considered
		THC requested that all Core Paths, rights of way, National Cycle Network, and long-distance trails are assessed.	Key recreational routes were considered, along with designated landscapes. The detailed assessment is provided in Appendix 7.4.1 to 7.4.3 .
		Will also need to provide a Landscape Plan and Landscape Maintenance Plan	Areas for additional planting within the OC were identified and are shown in Appendix 7.6: Forestry Landscape Mitigation Principles . A Landscape Maintenance Plan will be produced alongside a detailed planting plan, during the detail design stage.
THC	E-mail Response received 04 Nov 2024	THC was content with additional Viewpoint 58 Belladrum and the visualisation presentation methodology following receipt on 26.09.24 of an example sheet layout. THC was content with the proposed change of design year from year 10 to year 15 but requested an interim year for viewpoint visualisations to enable officers, elected members and members of the public to have as full an understanding of the application as possible. An interim year visual would help understand the developing effectiveness of any screening over time.	One additional viewpoint at Belladrum was added (VP 58) and agreed. Production of year 7 visualisations where forestry replanting is a key element of the view was agreed. Year 7 visualisations were included across all Local Authority areas, so that the methodology is applied across the full Proposed Development and not only within THC. Visualisations are provided in Volume 4: Visualisations .
Moray Council (MC)	Pre-App meeting 25 July 2024 Relevant Landscape and Visual notes summarised	Concerns raised regarding the landscape and visual impacts on the River Spey, areas around Keith, Brown Muir, the Findhorn Valley & the Wooded Estates Special Landscape Area (SLA) and The Spey Valley SLA , as zoned in the Moray Local Development Plan (MLDP) 2020 ¹⁷ .	Impacts on landscape character, including the two SLAs, are detailed in Appendix 7.3: Landscape Character Types, Sensitivity and Effects . Impacts on visual receptors around Keith, Brown Muir, and through the SLAs are detailed in Appendix 7.4.1 to 7.4.3 . Impacts through The Spey Valley SLA in particular were a key consideration during the alignment options process.
		MC requested consideration of alternative measures to overhead lines through sensitive landscape such as SLAs	Alternative measures avoiding sensitive landscapes have been considered by the Applicant (see Chapter 4: The Routing Process and Alternatives for full details).
		MC requested demonstration that all impacts set out in National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) ¹⁸ Policy 11 (e) and MLDP Policy DP9 (a) and any impacts on the landscape (be it designated as an SLA or not) have been addressed	Impacts relating to the landscape and on visual amenity have been considered through the route and alignment selection process and development of forestry landscaping proposals.

¹⁷ Moray Council 2020. Moray Local development Plan 2020 adopted 27 July 2020. Available at: http://www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_133431.html

¹⁸ Scottish Government 2023. National Planning Framework 4 adopted 13 February 2023. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-planning-framework-4/>

Organisation	Type of Consultation	Summary of Response	How response has been considered
		through project design and mitigation. MC requested minimisation of tree loss as far as possible and for any compensatory planting to be on-site where possible.	Avoidance of woodland and forestry was considered through the route and alignment selection process. Compensation for habitats lost is covered in Chapter 8: Ecology . Compensatory planting will be within the OC if specific mitigation opportunities exist.
MC	Scoping Opinion Response received 22 Aug 2024	<i>"The proposed transmission line passes through the safeguarding areas aircraft operations for RAF Lossiemouth. We would expect that the Ministry of Defence are consulted on any section 37 application but should there be a need for permanent lighting atop any pylons or other structures, then we would expect a night-time visual assessment to be undertaken."</i>	The Ministry of Defence was consulted regarding the Proposed Development. In their response of 25.07.24 they did not raise lighting as a requirement in relation to safeguarding zones. Permanent lighting is not required and therefore a night-time visual assessment has not been undertaken.
MC	E-mail Response received 21 Aug 2024	MC requested consideration of an additional 15 viewpoint locations.	The appropriateness of suggested viewpoint locations was reviewed and a response provided on 12.09.24. An additional six viewpoints were proposed, in addition to moving viewpoint 23 to the Dallas to Knockando minor road.
MC	E-mail Response received 19 Sep 2024	MC requested the additional Orbliston viewpoint was scoped in but content for the additional A96 viewpoint to the south of Keith to be scoped out.	The inclusion of the additional six viewpoints (VP 59 to VP 64) was agreed. The additional viewpoint at Orbliston (VP 65) was also agreed. The A96 viewpoint being scoped out was agreed. No further action required.
Aberdeenshire Council (AC)	E-mail Response 12 Mar 2024	AC requested two additional viewpoints at The Bin, and within The Deveron Valley SLA . AC expressed concerns about the dual visual effects of towers / wires and intrusive permanent access tracks aligned on steep slopes, and that access tracks be illustrated on visualisations.	Inclusions of two additional viewpoints (VP 56 & VP 57) were agreed. Access tracks are shown on the visualisations in Volume 4: Visualisations
AC	Scoping Opinion 08 Aug 2024 Relevant Landscape and Visual responses summarised	AC were content with the proposed methodology and the 5 km / 10 km study areas respectively set for landscape and visual amenity effects.	No further action required.
		AC noted that no representative viewpoints for visualisations and assessment are defined in the Scoping Report but welcome the opportunity to be consulted on these at a later date.	Viewpoint consultation undertaken and agreed prior to scoping opinion response (see above on 12.03.24). No further action required.
		AC requested that landscape mitigation and enhancement measures should form a key part of the proposals, including off-site woodland and hedgerow planting and management to	Off-site mitigation measures, where the Applicant neither owns the 3rd party land nor holds long-term legal covenants, cannot be

Organisation	Type of Consultation	Summary of Response	How response has been considered
		assist with screening of views, enhanced and accelerated forest restructuring and improve design of margins.	relied on in terms of mitigating impacts for EIA purposes. Hedgerow planting is being considered in some key locations, as outlined in Appendix 7.6: Forestry Landscape Mitigation Principles
		AC requested that wider landscape and biodiversity enhancement measures in accordance with the requirements of NPF4 should be considered.	Landscape planting principles are outlined in Appendix 7.6: Forestry Landscape Mitigation Principles , in Chapter 12: Forestry . Consideration of biodiversity mitigation is outlined in Chapter 8: Ecology . This Chapter includes habitat loss and mitigation where necessary. The BNG off-setting strategy seeks opportunities for enhancement, where appropriate.
		AC requested that the LVIA should consider compensatory planting where removal of woodland is proposed.	Landscape mitigation proposals have been provided in sensitive areas including forest edge mitigation planting and consideration of hedgerows. Compensatory planting requirements are considered within Chapter 12: Forestry .
NatureScot	E-mail Response received 07 Mar 2024	NatureScot did not identify any changes to the proposed viewpoint locations, methodology or to scoping out Wild Land areas. Raised concerns over location of access tracks.	No Viewpoint additions required. Access track impacts have been considered during design development by the Applicant and through the alignment selection process. Access tracks also included for consideration in the assessment.
Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA)	E-mail Response received 12 Mar 2024	CNPA did not provide any comments regarding viewpoints locations. CNPA confirmed they did not require further consultation on methodology.	No further action required.
Speyside Community Council	Scoping Opinion 01 Sep 2024	Speyside Community Council questioned if compensatory planting will be proposed.	Compensatory planting requirements are considered within Chapter 12: Forestry .
	Relevant Landscape and Visual responses summarised	Speyside Community Council commented that the Proposed Development will add another industrial element into the landscape, and it is difficult to see how any mitigation measures will make it more acceptable.	Noted. Impacts on the landscape have been considered through the route and alignment selection process.
		Speyside Community Council disagrees that a separate Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA) should be scoped out.	As outlined in the Scoping Report (refer to Appendix 6.1: Scoping Report), effects on residential receptors are anticipated to be captured sufficiently and holistically within the LVIA to identify significant adverse effects

Organisation	Type of Consultation	Summary of Response	How response has been considered
			(taking in to account perceptual qualities as well as visual changes on receptors) and therefore a separate RVAA is scoped out of this assessment.

Study Area

- 7.2.10 The extent of the study area for the assessment is shown on **Figure 7.1: Zone of Theoretical Visibility 10 km Study Area - Bare Earth** and **Figure 7.6: Visual Amenity Receptors and Viewpoint Locations**.
- 7.2.11 The study area for this assessment is based on a combination of professional judgement and an analysis of the visibility mapping and character area extent. The establishment of the study area for landscape and visual effects should, in accordance with GLVIA3, ensure a proportional approach to consideration of potentially significant effects. Perceptibility studies¹⁹ have shown that steel lattice tower overhead lines (OHL) can be noticeably visible from up to 10 km away. The study area has therefore been set at a 10 km radius from the Proposed Development. This study area has been agreed with the relevant local authorities during the scoping process.
- 7.2.12 The study area comprises the extent of landscape likely to be significantly affected either directly or indirectly, and the extent of the area from which the Proposed Development, and its associated OC and construction activity, would potentially be visible, defined as the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV). Visibility has been informed through the use of digital visibility mapping (the ZTV), and will extend to 10 km from each indicative tower position.
- 7.2.13 The study area includes the site itself and the full extent of the wider landscape around it which the development potentially influences in a significant manner. For this assessment, it is considered that effects on landscape would be more local and that the introduction of a new OHL is unlikely to alter the perception of a landscape beyond approximately 5 km, except in the case of landscapes with highly sensitive characteristics and intervisibility. The assessment has focussed on potentially significant effects on the local landscape and those landscapes with highly sensitive characteristics and intervisibility within the study area, and therefore the landscape study area is a 10 km radius from the Proposed Development.

Determining Baseline

- 7.2.14 The initial stage of the process is the identification of the existing landscape and visual conditions within the agreed study area. Establishment of the baseline conditions within the study area has been undertaken through a combination of:
- desk study; and
 - field survey.
- 7.2.15 Baseline studies for assessing landscape effects require a mix of desk study and field survey to identify and record the character of the landscape and the elements, features, and aesthetic and perceptual factors which contribute to it.
- 7.2.16 The baseline studies for the visual effects have established the area in which the Proposed Development may be visible, the different groups of people who may experience views of the Proposed Development, the viewpoints where they would be affected and the nature of the views at those points.

Desk Study

- 7.2.17 The first stage of the assessment process was to collect data through a desktop study of the study area. This research identified information such as landscape related planning designations, landscape character typology,

¹⁹ Mark Turnbull Landscape Architects 2015. Perceptibility of Overhead Steel Lattice Transmission Towers, Collected Papers.

other infrastructure in the area, and views from key locations such as transport and recreational routes and settlements.

- 7.2.18 Geographical information systems (GIS) and Google Earth have been used to explore the potential visibility of the Proposed Development. The ZTV also informs the identification of landscape and visual receptors that are likely to be pertinent to the assessment. The technical methodology for the production of the ZTV can be found in **Paragraphs 7.2.24 to 7.2.34** below.

Information and data

- 7.2.19 The desk study has involved review of the following documents and sources:

- Landscape Institute Technical Guidance on assessing landscape value²⁰;
- NatureScot Landscape Character Assessment in Scotland, 2019²¹;
- NatureScot Landscape Character Types (LCTs) and Descriptions²²;
- NatureScot Landscape Character Assessment: Aberdeenshire - Landscape Evolution and Influences²³;
- The Highland Council's Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas²⁴;
- Moray Local Landscape Designation²⁵;
- Moray Local Development Plan 2020²⁶;
- Aberdeenshire Special Landscape Areas, 2017²⁷;
- Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended)²⁸;
- The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017²⁹.
- Highland-wide Local Development Plan 2012³⁰;
- Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023³¹;
- Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan (THC, 2015³²);
- The Special Qualities of the National Scenic Areas (NSAs)³³;
- NatureScot Map of Relative Wildness and Attribute Mapping datasets³⁴;

²⁰ Landscape Institute (2021). Technical Guidance Note TGN 02-21 Assessing landscape value outside national designations. Available at: <https://www.landscapeinstitute.org/publication/tgn-02-21-assessing-landscape-value-outside-national-designations/>

²¹ NatureScot Landscape Character Assessment in Scotland, 2019 [online], available at:

<https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/landscape/landscape-character-assessment/landscape-character-assessment-scotland>

²² NatureScot: (2019): Scottish Landscape Character Types Map and Descriptions. [online] Available at: <https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/landscape/landscape-character-assessment/scottish-landscape-character-types-map-and-descriptions>

²³ NatureScot. Landscape Character Assessment: Aberdeenshire - Landscape Evolution and Influences, 2019. [online] Available at:

<https://www.nature.scot/doc/landscape-character-assessment-aberdeenshire-landscape-evolution-and-influences>

²⁴ The Highland Council's Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas, June 2011. [online] Available at:

https://www.highland.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/2937/assessment_of_highland_special_landscape_areas.pdf

²⁵ Moray Council Moray Local Landscape Designation, 2018 [online], available at: http://www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_121575.html

²⁶ Moray Development Plan 2020 [online], available at: http://www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_133431.html

²⁷ Aberdeenshire Special Landscape Areas, April 2017 [online], available at:

<https://online.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/ldpmedia/LDP2021/Appendix13AberdeenshireSpecialLandscapeAreas.pdf>

²⁸ UK Government (1997). Town and County Planning (Scotland) Act 1997. Online at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1997/8/contents>

²⁹ UK Government (2017). The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017. Online at:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2017/101/contents>

³⁰ Highland-wide Local Proposed Development Plan April 2012 [online], available at:

https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/178/Proposed_Development_plans/199/highland-wide_local_Proposed_Development_plan

³¹ Aberdeenshire Local Proposed Development Plan 2023 [online], available at: <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/planning/plans-and-policies/ldp-2023>

³² The Highland Council (2015) Inner Moray Firth Local Proposed Development Plan [ONLINE]. Available at:

https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/15008/adopted_inner_moray_firth_local_development_plan

³³ Scottish Natural Heritage (2010): The Special Qualities of the National Scenic Areas. SNH Commissioned Report No. 374. Available at:

<https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/2017-07/Publication%202010%20-%20SNH%20Commissioned%20Report%20374%20-%20The%20Special%20Qualities%20of%20the%20National%20Scenic%20Areas.pdf>

³⁴ NatureScot, Natural Spaces. <https://opendata.nature.scot/>

- Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes³⁵;
- the Scoping Opinion and other consultation responses for the Proposed Development (refer to **Chapter 6: Scope and Consultation**);
- online mapping and aerial photography resources from Ordnance Survey, Google, Bing and National Library of Scotland;
- work undertaken at previous stages of the design process, including the previous landscape and visual studies undertaken as part of the corridor, route, and alignment selection stages. Further detail is provided in **Chapter 4: The Routeing Process and Alternatives**;
- consultation feedback from the corridor, routeing, and alignment selection stages;
- ZTVs produced for the Proposed Development (see **Figures 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3**); and
- data and photographic records and notes obtained from site visits undertaken in 2023, 2024 and 2025.

Field Surveys

- 7.2.20 The baseline conditions and assessment of landscape and visual receptors was also informed by field surveys, which were carried out between April 2023 and June 2024, to gain a better understanding of the study area and potential for significant landscape and visual effects associated with the Proposed Development.
- 7.2.21 Field survey work was undertaken both when trees were in leaf and during winter so as to assess the site of the Proposed Development during the worst-case period. Surveys were restricted to publicly accessible roads and footpaths, with the exception of photography at Belladrum (Viewpoint 58). This viewpoint was specifically requested by THC to reflect visitors to the annual Tartan Heart Festival which takes place in July or August, but land access agreement to the festival site area was required.
- 7.2.22 See **paragraphs 7.2.53 to 7.2.54** below for site photography.

Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)

- 7.2.23 The study area for the landscape assessment is informed by the visibility study area and covers the full extent of the wider landscape around it which may be influenced in a significant manner by the Proposed Development. The ZTVs were used to identify potential viewpoints from a range of distances, directions and elevations to give a representative sample of likely views of the Proposed Development, and to illustrate this assessment.
- 7.2.24 Digital ZTVs were produced in accordance with NatureScot Guidance - Visual Representation of Wind Farms Guidance, version 2.2, 2017³⁶.
- 7.2.25 Digital ZTVs were created using the tool 'Visibility' in ArcGIS Pro. The analysis aimed to determine visibility within 10 km of the Proposed Development, using both detailed Digital Surface Model³⁷ (DSM) data and Digital Terrain Model³⁸ (DTM) data and addressing specific landscape features.
- 7.2.26 To create the ZTV, 1 m and 2 m Photogrammetric DSM data was utilised as well as 5 m DTM data via the OS Terrain 5 database.
- 7.2.27 The DSM data had an initial cell size of 1 m, providing a high-resolution representation of the terrain and built structures. To reduce the size of the data and speed up processing time, this data was then resampled to 2 m. There were some blank cells in the data in certain areas of very low elevation. These were fixed using the Raster Calculator (Spatial Analysis) tool in ArcGIS Pro using the next expression, which resampled from nearby cells and

³⁵ Historic Environment Scotland [online]

<https://www.historicenvironment.scot/advice-and-support/listing-scheduling-and-designations/gardens-and-designed-landscapes/>

³⁶ NatureScot "Visual Representation of Windfarms Guidance. Version 2.2 February 2017 [online], available at:

<https://www.nature.scot/doc/visual-representation-wind-farms-guidance>

³⁷ DSM data is a geospatial dataset that represents the surface of the Earth, including all natural and man-made features, such as buildings, trees, and infrastructure.

³⁸ DTM data is a geospatial dataset that represents the surface of the Earth that does not include natural and man-made features. In other words, it filters out non-ground points such as trees, vegetation, roads and houses and reflects topography at ground level, i.e. it is a bare-earth elevation model.

filled these data gaps with appropriate values coming from the DTM, and repeating the process until all the blank cells were filled.

- 7.2.28 DTM data covered the full 10 km study area. To maintain proportionality, availability of data, and workable file sizes, the DSM data covered a 2 km offset on both sides of the Proposed Development and a 5 km offset in the more sensitive areas of Beaully and Keith. The areas around Beaully and Keith were extended to better understand:
- the potential visual impacts on the well populated residential areas of the Beaully and Keith areas where there would be a greater number of potentially impacted sensitive visual receptors, particularly so around Keith where receptors are strongly impacted by existing infrastructure in the area; and
 - the potential landscape impacts on key sensitive and well populated local landscapes intersected by the Proposed Development within **LCTs 222 Rocky Moorland Plateau – Inverness, 228 Rolling Farmland and Woodland, 229 Enclosed Farmland and 342 Farmed River Plains** in the Beaully area, and **LCTs 288 Upland Farmland and 27 Farmed Moorland Edge – Aberdeenshire**.
- 7.2.29 Specific elements in the study area that would act as visual barriers were removed from the DSM by creating buffers around infrastructure as follows:
- existing overhead cables: a 15 m buffer was generated around these and used to clip the DSM, replacing it with DTM data for better accuracy; and
 - tower heights: a 3 m buffer was generated around these before carrying out the process as above.
- 7.2.30 Using the prepared DSM / DTM, the ZTV was generated with a 2 m cell size (viewing height), ensuring high detail. The observer height was set at 2 m above ground level to compensate for potential inaccuracies in digital terrain data and to ensure that the 'worst case' is represented, as per NatureScot guidance³⁹. The tower heights were set above the underlying DTM rather than the DSM data to avoid potential inaccuracies in existing ground level heights. The process was then carried out, accounting for earth curvature and reflectivity, as necessary.
- 7.2.31 After the ZTV raster had been generated, a layer created from the most recent data on the Scottish National Woodland Inventory and OS Mastermap data of the buildings was used to clip the raster. This ensured a more accurate result to avoid theoretical visibility from the tops of tree canopies and buildings being considered in the final result.
- 7.2.32 The individual proposed towers and their design heights (14.65 m to 96.57 m) were used to generate the theoretical visibility along the Proposed OHL Alignment. For the ZTV shown on **Figure 7.1: Zone of Theoretical Visibility 10 km Study Area - Bare Earth**, the Proposed Development was overlain on a DTM and 'lines of sight' generated to show where these points may be seen from and thus the places from which the Proposed Development may be visible. This is a 'bare ground' ZTV, making no allowance for screening from buildings or vegetation. In many places, particularly more distant from the Proposed Development, existing buildings and walls, tall hedges and blocks of woodland would partially or wholly screen the view. This ZTV can therefore be considered a 'worst-case' picture of the extent to which the Proposed Development may be visible.
- 7.2.33 The ZTV shown on **Figure 7.2: Zone of Theoretical Visibility 10 km Study Area - Screening** was produced using digital surface model (DSM) data only.
- 7.2.34 Final ZTVs can be found on the following figures, which accompany this Chapter:
- Figure 7.1: Zone of Theoretical Visibility 10 km Study Area - Bare Earth**: to inform potential worst-case visibility throughout the 10 km study area;
 - Figure 7.2: Zone of Theoretical Visibility 10 km Study Area - Screening**: to inform potential visibility including natural and built screening features;

³⁹ NatureScot Visual Representation of Wind Farms v2.2, Feb 2017 [online], available at: <https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/2019-09/Guidance%20-%20Visual%20representation%20of%20wind%20farms%20-%20Feb%202017.pdf>

- **Figure 7.3a: Zone of Theoretical Visibility The Highland Council, Caledonian Canal Crossing - Bare Earth:** to inform specific worst-case visibility of taller than average towers (CB1-1 & CB1-2) close to the Caledonian Canal;
- **Figure 7.3b: Zone of Theoretical Visibility The Highland Council, Caledonian Canal Crossing – Screening:** to inform specific visibility of taller than average towers (CB1-1 & CB1-2) close to the Caledonian Canal including natural and built screening features; and
- **Figure 7.3c: Comparative Zone of Theoretical Visibility Kellas Alternative Alignment – Bare Earth⁴⁰:** can be used to compare against Figure 7.1: Zone of Theoretical Visibility 10km Study Area - Bare Earth to show the difference in visibility between the Proposed OHL Alignment (Figure 7.1) and the Kellas Alternative Alignment (Figure 7.3c: Comparative Zone of Theoretical Visibility Kellas Alternative Alignment - Bare Earth).

Identifying Landscape and Visual Receptors

7.2.35 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.

Landscape Receptors

7.2.36 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.

7.2.37 The landscape character baseline has been informed by the NatureScot Scottish Landscape Character Assessment (2019) which recognises LCTs across the study area. Due to the scale of the Proposed Development, it was considered proportionate to use the NatureScot LCTs that fall within the study area from which to assess potential landscape effects. Key components of the landscape within the LCTs have been identified and effects reported.

7.2.38 All LCTs within the study area were considered in terms of their sensitivity to a significant effect from the type of development proposed, through a combination of desk studies and field surveys.

7.2.39 Effects on designated landscapes within the study area have also been considered, including the regional landscape designations of SLAs.

7.2.40 Those LCTs or designated landscapes not considered likely to be subject to a significant effect have been scoped out of further assessment (see **Table 7.6**).

Visual Receptors

7.2.41 Visual receptors comprise individuals experiencing views from locations such as residential buildings, recognised transport, recreational and tourist routes, local amenities, and popular viewpoints used by the public.

7.2.42 The baseline study identifies the people within the study area whose views and visual amenity are potentially affected by the Proposed Development. These people are referred to as visual receptors and include people living or working in the area, people passing through on road, rail or other forms of transport, people visiting promoted landscapes, attractions or viewpoints, and people engaged in recreation of different types.

7.2.43 In order to manage the visual assessment proportionally and focus on potentially significant effects, visual receptors were grouped, both by receptor type (i.e. residential, recreational / amenity and transport receptors) and then further sub-categorised into receptor groups with similar existing amenity and likely similar magnitude of change.

⁴⁰ Kellas Alternative Alignment ZTV can be used as a comparative study between the Proposed OHL Alignment and the Kellas Alternative Alignment.

- 7.2.44 To be proportionate a judgement, using GLVIA3 (Section 6.34) as a guide, has been made as to the receptors to be assessed in terms of their sensitivity to the type and scale of development proposed. Those with lower sensitivity include:
- people using external recreational or amenity facilities;
 - workers in external spaces where the focus of their view and purpose for being in the area will not be associated with the immediate landscape; and
 - receptors not within designations and at a distance where significant effects would be unlikely would have a lower sensitivity to a change in view.
- 7.2.45 The degree to which receptors are grouped is generally inversely proportional to their distance from the Proposed Development as well as topography / potential extent of visibility identified. Nearer the Proposed Development, where more potential for significant effects is anticipated, groupings are made at a finer grain with smaller groups, except where topography suggests limited visibility. Further from the Proposed Development, where fewer significant effects are anticipated, the groupings are made at a coarser grain, with larger groups, except where topography suggests visibility may be greater.
- 7.2.46 Group references have been applied according to the type of receptor and the local planning authority (LPA) they lie within, for example:
- “THC-R-1” is a residential receptor in THC;
 - “MOR-REC-1” is a recreational receptor in MC; and
 - “AB-T-1” is a transport receptor in AC.
- 7.2.47 Receptor groups can be found on **Figure 7.6: Visual Amenity Receptors and Viewpoint Locations**.

Viewpoints

- 7.2.48 To help illustrate the effects of the Proposed Development on identified visual receptors, a series of representative and specific viewpoints have been identified across the study area. The viewpoints provide a balance of views from different directions and distances, representing a range of receptors as well as to pick out key viewpoints. The representative and specific viewpoints are intended to illustrate the type of view experienced from individual or groups of receptors, and to assist in the assessment process and to support the decision-making process by the Scottish Ministers; they are not intended as an exact reflection of the view from any particular receptor.
- 7.2.49 NatureScot, THC, MC and AC were consulted on the selected viewpoint locations, with refinements to the viewpoints made to reflect responses to consultation. Details of consultation are provided above in **Table 7.1**. An initial 53 viewpoints were identified following desk studies and field surveys. Subsequent to consultation and the scoping responses, a further twelve viewpoints were added to give a total of 65 viewpoints. The agreed viewpoints are shown on **Figure 7.6: Visual Amenity Receptors and Viewpoint Locations** and are listed in **Table 7.5.1 of Appendix 7.2: Visualisation Methodology**. It should be noted that this assessment does not consider the effects from individual viewpoints themselves but from the visual receptors and wider visual amenity which the viewpoints illustrate.

Visualisations

- 7.2.50 For each of the 65 viewpoints, a visualisation has been prepared in accordance with the following guidance:
- NatureScot: ‘Visual Representation of Wind Farms Guidance’, Version 2.2 - February 2017;
 - THC: ‘Visualisation Standards for Wind Energy Developments’ - July 2016; and
 - Landscape Institute: ‘*Visual Representation of Development Proposals*’ Technical Guidance Note 06/19 - 17 September 2019.
- 7.2.51 A separate methodology has been produced for visualisations, which is provided in **Appendix 7.2: Visualisation Methodology**.

- 7.2.52 The visualisations show the predicted appearance of the Proposed Development during construction and operation and are provided in **Volume 4, Visualisation 7.1 to 7.65 and Visualisation THC 1 to 22**.
- 7.2.53 Winter site photography (considered to be worst case and when deciduous vegetation is not in leaf) specifically for visualisations was completed in March and December of 2024 and January and February 2025, while summer photography (considered to be when deciduous vegetation is in leaf) was undertaken in July 2025.
- 7.2.54 Summer photography was undertaken only where it was felt visual clarity was not necessarily optimum at the time of winter photography due to background 'haze' in the view. In these instances, the summer photography has been used in addition to the winter photography, such that a small number of viewpoints have both winter and summer visualisations to ensure maximum clarity. Given the extent of coniferous vegetation in the views, however, the summer scenario is generally very similar to the winter scenario.

Forestry and the Operational Corridor

- 7.2.55 Forestry proposals and the wayleave (or OC) are key considerations within the LVIA, potentially impacting both the effect on the landscape and on visual amenity.
- 7.2.56 In general, an OC of 90 m through plantation woodland (which may be reduced to 70 m through broadleaf woodland subject to site specific checks) has been applied, within which trees are to be permanently removed to ensure safe operation of the Proposed OHL Alignment.
- 7.2.57 Management felling has been recommended to landowners to manage the risk of windthrow from the removal of trees to form the OC as detailed in **Chapter 12: Forestry**. This does not form part of the Proposed Development; however, it has been considered in **Chapter 12: Forestry** in terms of the present forest composition and yield, at the time of writing, that may be affected. The additional felling recommendation introduced by the Proposed Development would only be to potentially bring felling activity forward and as such can be considered to be a temporary (albeit long-term) effect, with replanting likely to be required as a condition of any statutory felling license granted.
- 7.2.58 For the purpose of this EIA Report it has been assumed that management felling⁴¹ would take place and that areas of management felling would be replanted back to the OC following installation of the proposed OHL (see **Chapter 12: Forestry** for further details). For the purposes of this assessment and for the viewpoint visualisations, this replanting is assumed to:
- have re-established to approximately 3-5 m height by year 7 and to the same height of adjacent forestry where it is of commercial coniferous forestry by year 15 of operation;
 - deciduous shrub species to have re-established to an approximate height of 2-3 m after 7 years and 3-5 m after 15 years; and
 - deciduous tree species to have re-established to an approximate height of 4-5 m after 7 years and 6-8 m after 15 years.
- 7.2.59 Where forestry is a key component at a viewpoint, the visualisations show operational year of opening, year 7, and year 15 scenarios. All other viewpoints show year of opening only.

Methodology for the Assessment of Impacts

- 7.2.60 This section provides an overview of the LVIA methodology. Further details are provided in **Appendix 7.1: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Methodology**.
- 7.2.61 Following determination of the baseline environment, the assessment involved the following key stages:

⁴¹ Management felling is defined as areas of felling beyond the OC to the nearest 'windfirm' edge (known as the 'green edge'), where the trees have developed next to open ground, in order to reduce the risk of windthrow.

- assigning value, susceptibility and sensitivity: determining the sensitivity of the identified landscape and visual receptors to change is arrived at by professional judgement based on consideration of receptor value and its susceptibility to the type of change resulting from the development;
- identification of potential impacts: identification of potential impacts which may occur as a result of the interaction of the development with the identified landscape and visual receptors;
- assessment of significance of effect: professional judgement is used to combine sensitivity and magnitude of change / impact to gauge the level of effect and determine whether it is significant or not; and
- judging the overall significance: a final judgement about whether or not each effect is likely to be significant in relation to the EIA regulations.

7.2.62 This assessment has been carried out in accordance with the following:

- Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, '*Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*', 3rd Edition (2013) (GLVIA3)⁴²;
- Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 06/19 '*Visual Representation of development proposals*' (2019). Photography has been undertaken and visualisations created in accordance with Landscape Institute guidance⁴³ (which is consistent with NatureScot guidance);
- The Highland Council, '*Visualisation Standards for Wind Energy Developments*', 2016⁴⁴; and
- NatureScot, '*Visual Representation of Wind Farms - Guidance*', 2017, Scottish Natural Heritage.

7.2.63 The following references were used to inform the landscape and visual assessment:

- Landscape Institute Technical Guidance on assessing landscape value⁴⁵;
- NatureScot '*Landscape Character Assessment in Scotland*', 2019⁴⁶;
- NatureScot '*Local Landscape Areas*', 2017⁴⁷; and
- NatureScot '*Landscape Character Assessment: Aberdeenshire - Landscape Evolution and Influences*'⁴⁸.

Determining Sensitivity and Magnitude

7.2.64 The sensitivity of landscape and visual receptors is determined by considering both the susceptibility of the receptor to the change proposed, and values related to the receptor. Professional judgement is always used in determining the sensitivity of a receptor, as well as magnitude of change and level of effect.

Landscape Sensitivity

7.2.65 Landscape susceptibility considers the ability of the landscape character type in question to accommodate the specific change proposed without undue consequences to its baseline character, how it is perceived, and / or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies.

7.2.66 The value of a landscape may be indicated by its designation or recognition through national or local consensus, and its quality including cultural associations, scenic or aesthetic qualities, such as National Parks, although the absence of a landscape designation does not preclude an area being considered important. The European

⁴² Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013). '*Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*', 3rd Edition (2013). Available at: <https://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2022-05/E1%20-%20GLVIA%203rd%20Edition.pdf>

⁴³ Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 06/19 '*Visual Representation of development proposals*', (2019). Available at: <https://www.landscapeinstitute.org/visualisation/>

⁴⁴ The Highland Council, '*Visualisation Standards for Wind Energy Developments*' (July 2016). Available at: https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/12880/visualisation_standards_for_wind_energy_developments

⁴⁵ Landscape Institute (2021). Technical Guidance Note TGN 02-21 Assessing landscape value outside national designations. Available at: <https://www.landscapeinstitute.org/publication/tgn-02-21-assessing-landscape-value-outside-national-designations/>

⁴⁶ NatureScot Landscape Character Assessment in Scotland, 2019 [online], available at: <https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/landscape/landscape-character-assessment/landscape-character-assessment-scotland>

⁴⁷ NatureScot Local Landscape Areas, 2017 [online], available at: <https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/protected-areas-and-species/protected-areas/local-designations/local-landscape-areas>

⁴⁸ NatureScot. Landscape Character Assessment: Aberdeenshire - Landscape Evolution and Influences, 2019 [online], available at: <https://www.nature.scot/doc/landscape-character-assessment-aberdeenshire-landscape-evolution-and-influences>

Landscape Convention, to which the UK is a signatory, promotes a people-centred approach and the need to take account of all landscapes, not just those that might be considered special. Local value may be indicated by local cultural or natural heritage records, works of art or levels of use.

- 7.2.67 Susceptibility and value are then combined using professional judgment to determine receptor sensitivity.

Visual Sensitivity

- 7.2.68 The susceptibility of a visual receptor relates to the type of receptor and their purpose for being there. For example, residents at home or people enjoying outdoor activities where the nature of the view is a significant factor in their enjoyment would normally be highly susceptible to change, whereas people using indoor facilities where the nature of the surroundings is irrelevant to their activity would be of low or negligible susceptibility.
- 7.2.69 Value attributed to visual amenity relates to the level of recognition of the view, from highly celebrated nationally known views to views of no particular recognition.
- 7.2.70 As with landscape, susceptibility and value are combined using professional judgment to form a conclusion about the visual sensitivity of a given receptor.
- 7.2.71 Landscapes and visual receptors considered highly susceptible to the proposed change are normally considered to be of high sensitivity, unless there are particularly strong reasons associated with the landscape value, or value of the view that lead to a reduction in sensitivity. Similarly, receptors considered of low or medium susceptibility are usually in the same category of sensitivity, unless there are reasons associated with the value that lead to an increase in sensitivity.

Magnitude of Change / Impact

- 7.2.72 The magnitude of landscape and visual change (also referred to as the magnitude of impact) depends upon a combination of factors including the size, scale and nature of change in relation to the context; the geographical extent of the area influenced; and its duration and reversibility.

Level of Effect and Significance

- 7.2.73 Professional judgement is used to combine sensitivity and magnitude of change / impact to gauge the level of effect and determine whether it is significant or not. The level of effect (and thus significance) would vary depending on the circumstances, the type and scale of development proposed, the baseline context and other factors.
- 7.2.74 Due to the type and scale of development proposed, this assessment uses interim descriptors such as negligible to minor, minor to moderate or moderate to major, where the assessor considers that the impact falls between the levels used in **Table 5.1 of Chapter 5: EIA Process and Methodology**. This is to better inform the intricacies and differences between the impacts and effects from a range of landscape and visual receptors, which is deemed more appropriate for a development of this type and scale.
- 7.2.75 The significance matrix in **Appendix 7.1: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Methodology** (provided in **Table 7.2** below for ease of reference) is used as a guide, but professional judgement is used both in allocating magnitude and sensitivity ratings, and in the conclusions on significance derived from these. The gradations of magnitude of change / impact, and level of effect shown, are described on a four-point scale with interim levels in between: major; moderate; minor; and negligible. These levels are indicative and represent arbitrary divisions of a continuum. Professional judgement is always used to determine the overall level.
- 7.2.76 **Table 1.8 of Appendix 7.1: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Methodology** gives a descriptor against each level of effects from which to help guide the determination of significance of effect.

Table 7.2: Level of effect based on the relationship between magnitude and sensitivity

		Sensitivity of Landscape or Visual Receptor				
		High	Medium to High	Medium	Low to Medium	Low
Magnitude of Change / Impact	High	Major (significant)	Major (significant)	Moderate to Major (significant)	Moderate *	Minor to Moderate
	Medium to High	Major (significant)	Moderate to Major (significant)	Moderate *	Moderate *	Minor to Moderate
	Medium	Moderate to Major (significant)	Moderate *	Moderate *	Minor to Moderate	Minor
	Low to Medium	Moderate *	Moderate *	Minor to Moderate	Minor	Minor
	Low	Minor to Moderate	Minor to Moderate	Minor	Minor	Negligible to Minor
	Negligible to Low	Minor to Moderate	Minor	Negligible to Minor	Negligible to Minor	Negligible
	Negligible	Minor	Negligible to Minor	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible
* NOTE: Moderate levels of effect may / may not be significant and are subject to the assessor's professional opinion. Whilst most effects of Moderate or greater will be considered significant, if, in the assessor's professional opinion they are not, this decision shall be clearly explained.						

7.2.77 As set out in GLVIA3 (paras 5.37 & 6.29), a professional decision is also made about whether effects should be categorised as positive or negative (here described respectively as beneficial and adverse). It is also possible for effects to be neutral in their consequences – changing the view or the landscape character but neither improving nor worsening the situation. Effects assessed as moderate or greater are considered to be significant in planning terms.

Assessment of Cumulative Effects

7.2.78 The LVIA considers 'in-combination' landscape and visual effects: the additional changes caused by the Proposed Development in combination with other similar or related developments in planning (i.e. schemes not currently built or in construction).

7.2.79 Cumulative effect interactions, where the cumulation of different types of environmental impact on specific receptors increases the overall impact on that receptor (for example, a residential receptor subject to both visual and noise effects) are considered in **Chapter 16: Cumulative Effects**.

7.2.80 The underlying approach to the assessment of cumulative effects is the same as for the assessment of effects of the Proposed Development alone. Further details, including the criteria used for selection of schemes included in the cumulative assessment, are provided in **Chapter 5: EIA Process and Methodology**.

7.2.81 The cumulative visual assessment will consider schemes within 10 km of the Proposed Development and on those receptors found to be subject of an effect from the Proposed Development of minor or above.

Limitations and Assumptions

7.2.82 This LVIA has been carried out by assuming a 'worst case' scenario of greatest visibility i.e. on a clear, bright winter's day with no screening from deciduous foliage.

7.2.83 The assessment of visual effects on residential receptors has been undertaken from publicly accessible locations. Assumptions have therefore been made on the main outlooks and importance of views from these properties or groups of properties, based on what can be seen of them from the adjacent public highway.

- 7.2.84 Whilst ZTVs have used DSM data that includes natural and built form as potential screening, this only represents potential visibility of the Proposed Development to inform the assessment. Site work and professional judgment have been used in combination with the ZTVs to form a final judgement.
- 7.2.85 Following consultation, additional scenarios during the operational phase have been considered, namely for year 7 (summer) and year 15 (summer). Effects at year 15 (summer) are only included where there is a significant proportion of forestry management felling or forest edge fringe planting in the view. Forestry removed for management felling purposes would be replanted back to the edge of the OC and would therefore, after 15 years, provide additional screening. However, given the small change in growth between year of opening (year 1)⁴⁹ and year 7, no change in magnitude is anticipated, so year 7 has not been included within the assessment. However, the year 7 scenario has been included within the visualisations to illustrate incremental change between year of opening and year 15.
- 7.2.86 Removal of approximately 16.9 km of the existing Beauly to Knocknagael 132kV OHL (within THC) and approximately 1 km of underground cable from Beauly to Knocknagael substations and realignment of 2.6 km of the existing Beauly to Blackhillock 275 kV OHL (within THC) south of Ferness, and removal of the redundant section of the existing 275 kV OHL south of Ferness, following its realignment, are all considered to be within the same construction sequence as required for the 400 kV OHL construction. They are therefore considered to be in place for the 'operational' assessment scenarios.
- 7.2.87 To the south of Kellas in Moray an alternative alignment is proposed (Towers CB9C-10A to CB10-8) as illustrated on page 12 of **Figure 3.1: Site Layout**. See **Chapter 1: Introduction and Background, Paragraph 1.1.4** for further information on the need for this alternative.
- 7.2.88 A vertical limit of deviation (as described within **Chapter 3: Project Description**) of a potential 9 m tower height increase has been displayed on the representative and specific viewpoint visualisations and the potential height increase has been considered within the LVIA.
- 7.2.89 The horizontal limit of deviation (as described within **Chapter 3: Project Description**) has been considered within the LVIA. Prior to any change being made to the Proposed Development within the limit of deviation, a change control process would be undertaken to ensure that there is no unacceptable increase in adverse impacts as a result of the change.

7.3 Baseline Conditions

Baseline Landscape Conditions

- 7.3.1 The following section broadly describes the context of the Proposed Development within the landscape of the study area, running west to east from Beauly to Peterhead.

Landscape Context Overview

- 7.3.2 The Proposed Development, running west to east from Beauly to Peterhead, passes through three local planning authorities (LPAs), namely, THC at the western end, MC through the central section, and AC to the east.
- 7.3.3 Within THC, the landscape to the north of the Proposed Development is generally characterised by rolling, well wooded farmland, which contrasts with the more open uplands and moorland to the south. The landscape includes quite steep sided glens and watercourses associated with the River Beauly to the west, the River Ness valley, the River Nairn, and the River Findhorn to the east, with numerous burns throughout, generally flowing northwards towards the Beauly Firth. The area broadly between Nairn to the west and Elgin to the east, is influenced by the rising foothills of the Cairngorm Mountains to the south, and is typically a larger scale landscape with widely spaced rounded hills and upland plateaus. Landcover here is predominantly extensive coniferous forestry and heather moorland while more intimate farmed landscapes are typically found on the

⁴⁹ Year 1 is otherwise referred to throughout the LVIA and on the visualisations as year of opening (winter or summer).

margins, and close to burns and roads. Larger settlements are concentrated to the north on the flatter coastal lands, with small villages located around smaller watercourses and valleys and scattered farmsteads throughout the farmed landscape. The higher, more exposed uplands further south are less well settled. Vertical elements of existing OHLs are generally located on lower ground to the north, while concentrations of wind turbines are located on the higher grounds of the uplands.

- 7.3.4 To the east of Nairn and Ferness the Proposed Development crosses into MC. It continues to skirt the foothills of upland moorland to the south, alongside more settled farmland to the north. To the east of Elgin is the broad, farmed, settled and well wooded valley of the River Spey as it runs northeast from the Cairngorms National Park boundary to dissect the uplands and moorlands of southern Moray. Beyond the River Spey to the east, a large-scale landscape of upland farmland can be found, typified by broad shallow valleys, rectilinear fields in the central farmland interspersed by smaller fields and pasture. The undulating landscape enables views south from higher ground towards the Cairngorms and higher moorland edges further south. Vertical elements associated with existing OHLs are more concentrated on lower ground to the north or the foothills of upland areas, with windfarms located further south on higher ground. There are also distinctive concentrations of energy infrastructure within this central section, particularly around Keith.
- 7.3.5 Continuing east into AC, the River Deveron is a distinctive feature with a diverse range of valleys contained by rolling hills. The River Deveron itself is typically open with little marginal wetland vegetation. Quiet roads and paths give some areas a sense of seclusion and there is a sense of time depth through the presence of castles, mansions, and historic built features. Moving east from the River Deveron valley is a broader landscape that steadily becomes less dramatic away from the Cairngorms foothills. The landscape is predominantly farmed, less wooded and contrasting, with large fields, but still allows for some wider, more extensive views through the landscape. The landscape at the eastern end of the study area is characterised by an extensive coastal agricultural plain with exposed farmland influenced by the sea. Existing large scale industrial and commercial structures and electricity transmission infrastructure, as well as busy arterial routes of the A90 and A953 are openly appreciated through the very gently undulating landscape. Farming is predominantly arable with large fields, dispersed farmsteads, and a number of settlements. Existing OHLs are highly visible in proximity to Peterhead Power Station. The landscape is well settled with a number of small settlements and regularly dispersed farmsteads throughout.

Kellas Alternative Alignment: landscape context

- 7.3.6 The Kellas Alternative Alignment is located near Glenlatterach Reservoir, and offset from the Proposed Development by approximately 1.5 km, on lower ground. It extends in a northeastern direction across the lower northern slopes of Mill Buie and Mill Our, to the south of the River Lossie, for a length of approximately 8 km.
- 7.3.7 There is no change to the landscape baseline description above in relation to the Kellas Alternative Alignment.

Designated and Protected Landscapes

- 7.3.8 Landscape designations and protected areas within the study area are shown on **Figure 7.4: Landscape Character Types and Key Landscape Features**.

National Parks

- 7.3.9 The Cairngorms National Park lies on the edge of the 10 km study area and would not be subject to significant effects. It has therefore been scoped out.

Wild Land Areas

- 7.3.10 The Central Highlands Wild Land area lies approximately 6 km from the Proposed Development but is not anticipated to be subject to a significant effect due to intervening topography and vegetation. This Wild Land area has therefore been scoped out as a designation.

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes (GDLs)

- 7.3.11 The Inventory of GDLs is maintained by Historic Environment Scotland, so GDLs are considered cultural heritage assets and are appraised as such. Those that are also popular tourist attractions or particularly distinctive local landscapes are considered in their present-day context in this Chapter, but are not assessed in terms of their designation.

Special Landscape Areas

- 7.3.12 Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) are non-statutory regional landscape designations identified by a local planning authority to protect and enhance local landscape qualities and promote their enjoyment. There are four SLAs scoped into this assessment, and these are summarised below:

Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava Moors SLA (THC)

- 7.3.13 The **Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava Moors SLA** lies approximately 1 km to the south of the Proposed Development, and extends eastwards to parallel it for approximately 30 km. The SLA covers is characterised by gently rolling moorland with rounded slopes and vast expanses of blanket bog, covered in heather, and sparse woodland. Buildings are limited and typically of estate architectural style. The open horizon is dominated by moorland, with a simple skyline occasionally interrupted by small hills, lochans, and lodges. There are expansive views that reach to the distant mountain ranges, with a patchwork of colour and texture across the land. Fragments of native pine and birch woodland contrast against river valleys, such as the River Findhorn, which provides intimate and enclosed spaces. The road network is limited, and an absence of settlements contributes to the remote, tranquil atmosphere. Lochindorb, with its ruined castle, features as the main body of water, providing a scenic contrast to the surrounding moorland.

Findhorn Valley and the Wooded Estates SLA (MC)

- 7.3.14 Located approximately 0.5 km to the north of the Proposed Development lies the **Findhorn Valley and the Wooded Estates SLA**. The SLA extends northwards and covers a landscape characterised by the River Findhorn and its key tributary, the Divie. The river flows through a dramatic valley of wooded cliffs, rocky slabs and deep pools. Pastures are tucked above the river in the upper valley, and broader floodplains lie downstream, including the Meads of St Johns, historically used for jousting. The Darnaway estate, located to the north, features long-established woodlands of beech, oak, and pine that surround the Category A listed Darnaway Castle. The Altyre estate, with rare tree species including Douglas Fir, is also a key feature, creating a distinctive approach to Moray. Historic buildings, including lodges, cottages, and stone bridges, dot the landscape. The area is rich in walking tracks, offering intimate views of woodlands, farmland, and distant hills.

The Spey Valley SLA (MC)

- 7.3.15 The Proposed Development crosses through **The Spey Valley SLA** for approximately 4.5 km, between the B9015 east of Orbliston, to the west of the A96 at Slorach's Wood and Ordiequish Hill. The SLA incorporates the broad floodplain of the River Spey between the Cairngorms National Park in the south and the Moray Firth to the north. In proximity to the Proposed Development, large farms are located on slightly elevated ground above the floodplain. The long-distance Speyside Way footpath is located on the eastern side of the river valley and extends northwards from Boat o' Brig to Fochabers. The valley is contained to the east by the steep slopes of Ordiequish Hill, which is extensively forested by coniferous woodland known as the Wood of Ordiequish. Grassy verges and tracks frequently line the riverbanks and offer recreational opportunities such as fishing.

Deveron Valley SLA (AC)

- 7.3.16 The Proposed Development crosses through the **Deveron Valley SLA** for approximately 8 km, between Brownhill Plantation in the west (to the north of The Bin) and the A97 in the east. The SLA incorporates much of The Bin Forest as well as Huntly to the south of the Proposed Development, Cobairdy Wood, the Burn of Cobairdy, and Inverkeithny to the north. Much of the River Deveron is contained by steep slopes which creates a sense of seclusion, although the section through which the Proposed Development passes contains a broader flood plain

and gentler landform. Landcover varies between policy woodlands, field and avenue trees, and native woodlands on lower slopes and the flat valley floor, which creates a diverse character. Woodland cover is greatest to the south of the Proposed Development and includes the extensively forested areas of the Wood of Kinnoir and the Bin Forest.

Kellas Alternative Alignment: designated landscapes

- 7.3.17 The Kellas Alternative Alignment is not located within or likely to impact any designated or protected landscapes. There is no change to the designated or protected landscape baseline description above in relation to the Kellas Alternative Alignment.

Landscape Character

- 7.3.18 Due to the scale of the Proposed Development, it was considered proportionate to assess its potential effects on landscape character at the scale identified in the NatureScot Landscape Character Assessment (2019). This outlines the landscape character of the landscapes across Scotland at a national scale, through identification of Landscape Character Types (LCTs).
- 7.3.19 Following the desk study and site appraisals, a total of 25 LCTs were identified across the study area with the potential for a significant effect as a result of direct or indirect impacts from the Proposed Development.
- 7.3.20 The locations of the landscape receptors (LCTs) considered within this assessment are shown in **Figure 7.4: Landscape Character Types and Key Landscape Features**.
- 7.3.21 Annotated photographs of landscape features and the typical characteristics within each LCT can be found in **Figure 7.5: Landscape Character Type Photos**.

Relationship of Proposed Development to the LCTs

- 7.3.22 The Proposed Development directly crosses through 23 LCTs, with an additional 2 LCTs likely to have intervisibility due to proximity, summarised as follows, and described from west to east:
- 7.3.23 At the western end, the Proposed Development is located within the THC area, within **LCT 229 Enclosed Farmland** on the southeastern slopes of Torr Mor at Fanellan. **LCT 227 Farmed Strath – Inverness** is located immediately west, with **LCT 220 Rugged Massif - Inverness** occupying a large area beyond that and to the north. **LCT 346 Open Farmed Slopes** is also located to the northwest of the Proposed Development and **LCT 345 Farmed and Forested Slopes – Ross & Cromarty** immediately west, with LCTs 227 (the independent portion west of Fanellan), 220, and 346 having intervisibility between them and the Proposed Development (indirect impacts only at this location). The Proposed Development travels northwest across the River Beauly and crossing through **LCT 342 Farmed River Plains** to the north of Easter Moniac before turning south into **LCT 228 Rolling Farmland and Woodland**. The Proposed Development crosses through LCT 228 very briefly, before rising through forestry on the western slopes of The Aird, to the south of Newtonhill within **LCT 222 Rocky Moorland Plateau - Inverness**.
- 7.3.24 Across the forested upland of The Aird, the Proposed Development then travels down the eastern slopes of Craig Leach and into the valley of the River Ness, in the northern extents of **LCT 225 Broad Steep-Sided Glen**, where it crosses the A82, River Ness and the Caledonian Canal. The Proposed Development rises out of the valley onto the slopes of Drummoissie Muir to the east of Essich within **LCT 228 Rolling Farmland and Woodland** initially and then along the edge of **LCT 223 Flat Moorland Plateau with Woodland** on the farmed plateau of the Drummoissie Muir to the south of Inverness for approximately 6 km.
- 7.3.25 The Proposed Development continues in the same direction and crosses the River Nairn, within an independent section of **LCT 227 Farmed Strath – Inverness**, for approximately 2 km before crossing the forested western slopes of Meall Mor within **LCT 221 Rolling Uplands - Inverness**, continuing for approximately 4 km. The Proposed Development continues to travel northeast before descending across the lower elevations of Creag an Daimh and Carn Mor, within **LCT 291 Open Rolling Upland**. The Proposed Development turns more eastwards

across Newlands of Fleenas Wood within **LCT 290 Upland Moorland and Forestry**, continuing southeast for approximately 8 km until it descends from Dulsie Wood across the lower elevations of the River Findhorn valley, within **LCT 286 Narrow Wooded Valley – Moray & Nairn**, for approximately 3 km.

- 7.3.26 The Proposed Development turns northeast and re-enters an independent portion of **LCT 291 Open Rolling Upland** for approximately 7 km eastwards, crossing the lower northern elevations of Cairn Duhie, Knock of Braemoray and Cairn Eney, before re-entering **LCT 290 Upland Moorland and Forestry** for approximately 26 km. It travels from Cairn Eney and the southern slopes of Mill Buie, across the Moss of Bednawinny, the western slopes of Cairn Uish, and across Mill Our. The Proposed Development then crosses the steep eastern slopes of Hart Hill and briefly enters the Glen Burn before emerging out of the valley along the northern slopes of Brown Muir. Here, it enters **LCT 285 Rolling Farmland and Forests – Moray & Nairn**, crossing in a northeastern direction for approximately 4 km, ending at Badentinan Wood, to the west of Altonside.
- 7.3.27 The Proposed Development then turns southeast and enters **LCT 284 Coastal Farmlands** for approximately 4 km, heading across agricultural fields to the north of Orbliston, and across the River Spey valley. It then ascends Ordiequish Hill within **LCT 293 Low Forested Hills**, crossing the A96, and turning southeast for approximately 5 km. The Proposed Development then crosses into **LCT 288 Upland Farmland** across wooded farmland to the north of Keith, dropping down through Strathisla and across the River Isla for approximately 11 km.
- 7.3.28 The Proposed Development then climbs the southern slopes of Meikle Balloch within **LCT 27 Farmed Moorland Edge - Aberdeenshire** and continues eastwards for approximately 9 km, to the northeast of The Bin Forest. Here it enters **LCT 32 Farmed and Wooded River Valleys** for approximately 5 km, crossing the River Deveron and to the north of Kinnoir Wood, before crossing into **LCT 19 Farmed Rolling Ridges and Hills** for approximately 17 km. Within **LCT 19**, the Proposed Development crosses the lower elevations of the Hill of Denmoss before heading northeast to climb the Hill of Carlinraig towards Turriff. The Proposed Development re-enters **LCT 32 Farmed and Wooded River Valley** (which wraps around **LCT 19**), descending into the Burn of Turriff to the north of Darra, heading northeast for approximately 3 km. It then continues eastwards into **LCT 20 Undulating Agricultural Heartlands** for approximately 19 km passing south of Cuminestown and north of New Deer before turning south past New Deer and entering the forested **LCT 21 Farmland and Wooded Policies** south of Maud.
- 7.3.29 The Proposed Development crosses eastwards through **LCT 21** for approximately 9 km, south of Stuartfield and Mintlaw, and through woodland at West Bruntbrae and the A952 to the south of Clola. Here it enters the final character area of **LCT 17 Coastal Agricultural Plain** where it crosses the Burn of Ludquharn before terminating at Netherton, to the south of Longside and west of Peterhead.
- 7.3.30 A summary of the character of each of these 25 LCTs is provided in more detail below, also described from west to east.

LCT 220 Rugged Massif - Inverness

- 7.3.31 **LCT 220 Rugged Massif - Inverness** is located approximately 2.5 km to the west of the Proposed Development and is characterised by large mountains and steep terrain, divided by glaciated valleys. The landscape is carpeted by deer-grazed heather, rough grassland and rock outcrops with tracts of Caledonian pinewoods. The landscape is predominantly uninhabited, with limited evidence of human activity. Expansive views of straths and the adjacent landscape character types are available from elevations associated with the massif. There are no landscape designations within **LCT 220** (within the 10 km study area), however, expansive views towards the Proposed Development (located in **LCT 229**), are afforded. Furthermore, the landscape itself is valued for its remote, upland character of high scenic quality. The LCT is indirectly influenced by **LCT 229** through inter-visibility afforded from its upper elevations, where some views are directed towards the River Beaully valley. The Sensitivity of **LCT 220** is **Medium to High**.

LCT 345 Farmed and Forested Slopes – Ross & Cromarty

- 7.3.32 **LCT 345 Farmed and Forested Slopes – Ross & Cromarty** is located 1.8 km north of the Proposed Development. **LCT 345** is characterised as a well-treed, rural landscape with a mix of farmland, woodlands, and

forest plantations on sloped, often terraced, land transitioning to open lowlands. It contains archaeological sites and occasional large settlements, with Fairburn GDL located approximately 9 km northwest of the Proposed Development. Far distance views into adjacent landscape character areas to the south, including **LCT 229**, are afforded from open areas and terraces, and the proximity of the Beaully Firth estuary to the northeast offers high levels of scenic quality, particularly from the village of North Kessock. The LCT is indirectly influenced by **LCT 229** through inter-visibility, with views directed across the valley of the River Beaully. The Sensitivity of **LCT 345** is **Medium**.

LCT 346 Open Farmland Slopes

- 7.3.33 **LCT 346 Open Farmland Slopes** is located 1 km to 10 km north of the Proposed Development and is predominately characterised by farmland with woodland cover. Residential areas are located at lower elevations, where the landscape becomes more open. A small area of the LCT is located to the west of Beaully, around 1 km northwest of the Proposed Development. Detracting features include existing OHLs and telephone lines. There are no landscape designations within **LCT 346** (within the 10 km study area) although the proximity of the inner Moray Firth offers high levels of scenic quality and expansive views. The LCT is indirectly influenced by **LCT 229** through inter-visibility from upper elevations, with views directed across The Aird and the valley of the River Beaully. The Sensitivity of **LCT 346** is **Medium**.

LCT 229 Enclosed Farmland

- 7.3.34 Part of the Proposed Development is located within **LCT 229 Enclosed Farmland**, which is characterised by broad, undulating glens with low ridges and plains, with numerous rivers and burns, notably the River Beaully. The Proposed Development crosses the LCT for approximately 5.5 km, through an agricultural landscape with extensive tree cover which limits long-distance views and creates a sense of enclosure in crofting areas. The landscape contains detracting features particularly towards the northern boundary of the LCT, including existing OHLs, the A862, telephone lines and Beaully Substation. However, these features are largely imperceptible beyond the immediate vicinity due to the wooded, enclosed and intimate nature of the surrounding landscape. There are no landscape designations in the LCT, although there are numerous heritage assets of interest including Beaufort Castle GDL and a church and cemetery near Black Bridge. Although the landscape contains detracting features, including existing OHLs, roads, telephone lines and a substation, these features are largely imperceptible beyond the immediate vicinity and the scenic landscape would have a relatively low capacity to accommodate the type of development proposed. The Sensitivity of **LCT 229** is **Medium to High**.

LCT 342 Farmed River Plains

- 7.3.35 **LCT 342 Farmed River Plains** is characterised by a broad, flat valley with meandering rivers, wetlands and salt marshes. To the east of the River Beaully the landscape is characterised by open agricultural fields, notably between Wester Balblair and Drumchardine, which contrast against the surrounding forested upper elevations. The broad plain centred around Muir of Ord is a distinguishing feature, with the well-treed landscape predominantly used for agricultural purposes. Detracting features include major roads and existing OHL, although these features are generally well contained due to the low-lying nature of the landscape. There are no landscape designations within **LCT 342** although there are some cultural heritage assets, and the landscape is experienced from tourist routes. The landscape, characterised by open farmland with limited woodland cover, would have a relatively low capacity to accommodate the type of development proposed. Part of the Proposed Development site is located within **LCT 342**. The Sensitivity of **LCT 342** is **Medium to High**.

LCT 228 Rolling Farmland and Woodland

- 7.3.36 **LCT 228 Rolling Farmland and Woodland** incorporates part of the Aird around the Moniac Burn, as well as east of the River Ness at Scaniport, Cullaird, and Knocknagael. It is characterised by a varied landform of rolling hills and plateaus with extensive coniferous forests contrasting with open farmland. Tree cover is characterised by large, uniform groups of coniferous woodland, with open broadleaf woodland at lower elevations. Linear and vertical man-made structures feature across the landscape including main roads and a concentration of existing

OHLs near the coast. There are no landscape designations within **LCT 228** although the landscape has value for recreation and tourists, particularly to the Battlefield of Culloden. There are many detracting features across the landscape that interfere with its rural character, including numerous existing OHLs. The landscape is largely enclosed due to a combination of steep terrain and large areas of forestry associated with The Aird and Drummoissie Muir and would be moderately capable of accommodating the type of development proposed. Part of the Proposed Development site is located within **LCT 228**. The Sensitivity of **LCT 228** is **Medium to High**.

LCT 225 Broad Steep-Sided Glen

- 7.3.37 **LCT 225 Broad Steep-Sided Glen** covers the very eastern portion of the Aird and is characterised by a broad, steep-sided valley known as The Great Glen in which Loch Ness occupies its floor. Loch Ness drains north-east into the River Ness which flows in the same direction towards Inverness and the Beaully Firth. To the northeast of the loch, within the valley of the River Ness, the landscape is characterised by open agricultural farmland and small woodlands. Detracting features include tourist provisions such as signage, telephone boxes, litter bins, street lighting and parking areas and although they are small-scale, they ultimately conflict with the rural character of the landscape. However, at a larger scale the landscape appears unspoilt with a strong sense of place and incorporates part of the **Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA**. The area is unspoilt with a strong sense of place and would be highly susceptible to the type of development proposed. Part of the Proposed Development site is located within **LCT 225**. The sensitivity of **LCT 225** is therefore **High**.

LCT 222 Rocky Moorland Plateau - Inverness

- 7.3.38 **LCT 222 Rocky Moorland Plateau - Inverness** encompasses the majority of the Aird and is identified by a rugged, open moorland with rocky outcrops, bogs, and glens that are covered with substantial coniferous woodland. The hilltops and upper slopes are carpeted with heather and the glens are characterised by regenerating pine, birch and gorse woodlands. Active land use is limited to grazing and the landscape is sparsely populated. The perceptual qualities of the landscape are primarily open and exposed. There is an absence of detracting features across the landscape which contributes to a sense of tranquillity and a degree of remoteness. Although there are no landscape designations within **LCT 222** there are numerous ecology and heritage designated features, and the landscape offers high recreational and scenic value. Although the landscape is occasionally enclosed by commercial forestry and topography, which would help integrate a development of this type into the landscape, it would have a relatively low capacity to accommodate the type of development proposed. Part of the Proposed Development site is located within **LCT 222**. The sensitivity of **LCT 222** is **Medium to High**.

LCT 223 Flat Moorland Plateau with Woodland

- 7.3.39 Covering Drummoissie Muir, **LCT 223 Flat Moorland Plateau with Woodland** is characterised by a vast, gently undulating plateau with heather moorland, coniferous forests, panoramic views, and a remote, uniform landscape where orientation is difficult. The landscape is of large scale and largely uninhabited. Landcover includes open moorland, bog and extensive coniferous woodland. Detracting features include existing OHLs and poles that are highly visible across the landscape. There are numerous designations within **LCT 223** including the landscape designation of **Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA**, located 4 km south of the Proposed Development. The landscape of open plateau with moorland, forests, sparse settlements, historic features, and expansive views has a relatively low capacity to accommodate the type of development proposed. Part of the Proposed Development site is located within **LCT 223**. The sensitivity of **LCT 223** is **Medium to High**.

LCT 227 Farmed Strath - Inverness

- 7.3.40 To the northeast of Daviot and covering a narrow area of the Scottish Highlands known the Strathnairn, **LCT 227 Farmed Strath - Inverness** is characterised by sinuous river channels cutting through uplands, with the River Nairn occupying the flat or gently undulating strath floor, framed by rocky side slopes. Watercourses, vegetation, and scattered settlements create a distinct sense of linear enclosure that contrasts with the upper elevations of Meall Mor to the east. There are visible detracting features present across the landscape including several existing

OHLs that align with the valley floor or cross the valley and impinge into the skyline. Although there are no landscape designations within **LCT 227**, there are several heritage and cultural designations that reflect a landscape that is rich in history. Due to the strong enclosure of the landscape with pronounced river meanders, small-scale woodlands and sparse settlements, the landscape has a relatively low capacity to accommodate the type of development proposed. Part of the Proposed Development site is located within **LCT 227**. The sensitivity of **LCT 227** is **Medium to High**.

LCT 221 Rolling Uplands - Inverness

- 7.3.41 Covering Meall Mor and Bhuidhe Mhor and extensive uplands further south, **LCT 221 Rolling Uplands - Inverness** is characterised by smooth, rounded hills forming a broad plateau. The landscape is defined by open heather moorland, with steep-sided straths of pastures, trees, and scattered farms. The presence of roads and development is limited, and expansive views create a strong sense of remoteness and exposure. Detracting features include existing OHLs and several windfarm developments that are highly visible within the open landscape. **LCT 221** features designated areas including **Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava Moors SLA** on its eastern boundary. The landscape is largely elevated and open, making it highly susceptible to the type of development proposed. Part of the Proposed Development site crosses the northern tip of **LCT 221**. The sensitivity of **LCT 221** is **Medium to High**.

LCT 291 Open Rolling Upland

- 7.3.42 **LCT 291 Open Rolling Upland** covers a large geographical area, and is situated in both THC and MC areas. Within the THC area, the Proposed Development extends from the A939, to the south of Ferness, to the lower northern slopes of Cairn Duhie, to the west of Dorback Burn. Within the MC the Proposed Development continues northeast from the northern slopes of Cairn Duhie across the northern slopes of Cairn Eney before entering the next LCT at Bantrach, to the west of the River Divie. **LCT 291** is characterised by elevated, rolling moorland that transitions from gentle gradients in the west to hillier terrain in the east, dominated by open heather moorland, occasional farmed valleys, limited modern development, and expansive views that enhance its sense of remoteness. There are few detracting features within **LCT 291**, however the intervisibility of adjacent character area **LCT 290**, to the northeast, allows for views of Logie Wind Farm. Landscape designations include **Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava Moors SLA** located to the south of the Proposed Development. The open relatively unspoilt nature of the LCT means it has a low capacity to accommodate the type of development proposed. The sensitivity of **LCT 291** is **Medium to High**.

LCT 285 Rolling Farmland and Forests – Moray & Nairn

- 7.3.43 **LCT 285 Rolling Farmland and Forests – Moray & Nairn** is situated within both THC and MC areas, again separated by **LCT 286**. Within the THC section, the Proposed Development largely runs parallel to the south of **LCT 285** but crosses into a very small part of it for approximately 1 km, to the south of Achneim Wood. Within MC, the Proposed Development crosses through the LCT for approximately 4.5 km from the northeast of Brown Muir, through Badentinan Wood to Altonside. **LCT 285** incorporates a diverse, rolling landscape with undulating hills, meandering rivers, woodland, farmland, historic buildings, and winding rural roads, with long-distance views and seasonal interest from gorse and broom. Detracting features include major roads between the coast and uplands, and existing OHLs. There are four SLAs within **LCT 285** including **The Spey Valley, Pluscarden Valley, Quarrelwood, and Findhorn Valley and the Wooded Estates**. The narrow valley with surrounding hills and large proportion of forestry and woodland means the landscape could partially accommodate the type of development proposed. The sensitivity of **LCT 285** is **Medium to High**.

LCT 290 Upland Moorland and Forestry

- 7.3.44 **LCT 290 Upland Moorland and Forestry** is located within both THC and MC areas and the two areas are separated by the River Findhorn, within **LCT 286**. Within the THC area, the Proposed Development crosses the small section of **LCT 286** between Clunas and west of Ardclach. The landscape here is part of the broader upland area that blends with the characteristics of adjacent LCTs. Within the much larger MC section, the Proposed

Development crosses **LCT 290** between Dallasbraughty and Tomcork (east of the A940) in the west, right through to the A941 at Coleburn and Brown Muir. The landscape here contrasts with the adjacent LCTs and allows for elevated views across the Moray basin towards the coast. Both parts of **LCT 290** are characterised by open rounded hills and upland plateau, dominated by geometric coniferous forests, heather moorland, and large-scale forestry operations. Settlement is limited which has resulted in remote wild areas, and gaps in tree cover allow for expansive views of the surrounding landscape. The LCT incorporates large areas of coniferous forestry, including Clunas Wood, Newlands of Fleenas Wood, Dulsie Wood within THC area, and extensive woodland across Moss of Bednawinny, Mill Buie, and Hart Hill. Detracting features include existing OHLs and windfarm developments, particularly within Moray. Landscape designations include two SLAs: **The Spey Valley**, and the **Findhorn Valley and Wooded Estates**, both within the MC area. The Kellas Alternative Alignment is located entirely within **LCT 290**. The forested landscape has the capacity to accommodate development to a certain degree, but the more open unspoilt areas are more susceptible. The sensitivity of **LCT 290** is **Medium to High**.

LCT 286 Narrow Wooded Valley – Moray & Nairn

- 7.3.45 **LCT 286 Narrow Wooded Valley – Moray & Nairn** encompasses the River Findhorn, and is a dynamic river landscape with narrow gorges, fast-flowing water, diverse woodlands, historic estates, ancient trees, and secluded winding roads crossing the river via historic stone bridges. The River Findhorn is a characteristic feature which cuts through the landscape. The Proposed Development crosses this narrow LCT between Levrattich (west of Ardclach) and Achnabechan, to the south of Ferness. Detracting features include an OHL and the A939 which runs north to south through the landscape. Landscape designations include the **Findhorn and the Woodland Estates SLA** which is located across the majority of the LCT. The narrow valley with surrounding hills and large proportion of forestry and woodland means the landscape could partially accommodate the type of development proposed. The sensitivity of **LCT 286** is **Medium to High**.

LCT 287 Broad Farmed Valley

- 7.3.46 **LCT 287 Broad Farmed Valley** is located approximately 0.5 km to the south of the Proposed Development at its nearest point and is characterised by the meandering River Spey that flows through a wide, flat valley floor, flanked by steep, forested hills with interlocking spurs. Native woodlands, gravel banks, and wetlands line its course; traditional farms, rural estates, and historic settlements are interspersed with woodland, connected by winding roads that follow the valley's contours, creating a strong cultural identity and dynamic, transient views. The LCT is indirectly influenced by **LCT 284** to its north, through inter-visibility across the river valley. Detracting features include visible windfarms, one of which is located on the Hill of Towie and is perceptible from broad sections of the valley. Landscape designations include **The Spey Valley SLA**. The broad valley with open fields and well wooded river corridor allows for a variety of views with surrounding hills dominating in the background and the landscape is likely to be highly susceptible to the type of development proposed, which could appear prominently on the skyline and within the setting of the attractive river corridor. The sensitivity of **LCT 287** is **Medium to High**.

LCT 284 Coastal Farmlands – Moray & Nairn

- 7.3.47 To the east of Altonside, **LCT 284 Coastal Farmlands – Moray & Nairn** is characterised by open coastal plain with undulating landforms, a variety of arable and pasture fields, coniferous plantations, and native woodlands, interspersed with stone-built farms and villages, winding rural roads, and long-distance views to the moorland hills and sea. The landscape is influenced by rivers that meander across the coastal plain, including the River Spey. Detracting features include existing OHLs and wind turbines that form dominant structures. The Proposed Development crosses the LCT at its southern extent, between Altonside and Ordiquish, where there are two existing OHLs crossing the River Spey. This section is also located within **The Spey Valley SLA**. Much of the landscape features grain silos, modern farm buildings, aircraft buildings and towers, out-of-town business parks, industrial buildings, traditional and modern distilleries, and existing OHLs. The openness and broad views occasionally afforded with intermittent blocks of woodland and well wooded river corridor means that the wider

landscape is likely to be moderately susceptible to the type of development proposed, which could appear prominently on the skyline. The sensitivity of **LCT 284** is **Medium**.

LCT 293 Low Forested Hills

- 7.3.48 **LCT 293 Low Forested Hills**, to the east of Ordiquish, is characterised by a wooded ridge separating coastal farmland from upland farmland, with steep northern slopes, gentler southern slopes, pastoral fields, scattered farmsteads, and expansive, remote-feeling views. The landscape is also characterised by large-scale, coniferous forestry including the Wood of Ordiequish, that extends from Ordiequish Hill. The landscape is perceived as rural but contains detracting features including two existing OHLs that cross through the Wood of Ordiequish (and their associated corridor of forestry clearance), as well as the A96 and wind turbines and masts around Forgie Hill. Designations include **The Spey Valley SLA** located at the western extent of the LCT. The Proposed Development crosses the LCT between Ordiquish and Forgie Hill. Due to extensive woodland and forestry coverage and lack of vantage points from which to experience the landscape, it is relatively capable of accommodating the type of development proposed. The sensitivity of **LCT 293** is **Medium to High**.

LCT 288 Upland Farmland

- 7.3.49 **LCT 288 Upland Farmland** is characterised by an open valley landscape that is dominated by large-scale farmland, with conifer-covered low hills as a backdrop, scattered farmsteads, rural roads, and expansive views to the Cairngorms and Buchan plain. The landform is influenced by the River Isla set within a broad valley in which the town of Keith is located. The Proposed Development crosses **LCT 288** from the west of Auchinderran at Forgie Hill to the southeast of Keith at the A96 at Coachford, across a distance of approximately 12 km. Existing OHLs are a prominent visual feature within the LCT and are focussed at Blackhillock Substation. These existing OHLs feature as prominent structures within views, particularly to the east and south of Keith, and south around Blackhillock Substation. There are no landscape designations within **LCT 288**, although there are a number of natural and cultural heritage features, including Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Keith Conservation Area. The landscape is moderately capable of accommodating the type of development proposed due to the number of existing detracting, built features including numerous OHLs. The sensitivity of **LCT 288** is **Low to Medium**.

LCT 27 Farmed Moorland Edge - Aberdeenshire

- 7.3.50 Extending eastwards from Meikle Balloch and Coachford, **LCT 27 Farmed Moorland Edge - Aberdeenshire** straddles both MC and AC areas. The Proposed Development crosses **LCT 27** for approximately 8 km, almost predominantly within the AC area, between Coachford and the B9022 on the northeastern extent of The Bin Forest. **LCT 27** is characterised by low rolling hills and valleys, with heather-clad and forested backdrops, a mix of moorland and farmland, scattered broadleaf trees and shelterbelts, featuring historic stone farm buildings, prehistoric monuments, and a strong sense of history and timelessness. Detracting features include the A96, an OHL, and wind turbines situated within farmland. Landscape designations include the **Deveron Valley SLA** located at the eastern extent of the LCT around The Bin Forest. Meikle Balloch Hill forms an important, attractive landmark in the area and the landscape would have limited capacity to accommodate the type of development proposed. The sensitivity of **LCT 27** is **Medium to High**.

LCT 32 Farmed and Wooded River Valleys

- 7.3.51 **LCT 32 Farmed and Wooded River Valleys** wraps around LCT 19, with the Proposed Development crossing **LCT 19** and both sections of **LCT 32**. **LCT 32** is characterised by broad and narrow river valleys with rolling hills, farmland, and mixed woodlands, featuring historic estates, castles, and market towns, where quiet rural roads contrast with the A947 corridor. The landscape is defined by the broad valley of the River Deveron, framed by rolling hills to the east, where the Wood of Kinnoir provides a forested backdrop. Detracting features are limited to a small number of windfarm developments and there is a degree of windfarm intervisibility from adjacent LCT's. The Proposed Development crosses the western portion of **LCT 32** between the B9022 and the A97 at Cobairdy for approximately 5.5 km and crosses the very narrow eastern portion of **LCT 32** for approximately 3 km between Gask and Silverwells to the west of the A947, and east of the A947 between Little Colp and Quarryhill on

Idoch Water. Designated areas include the **Deveron Valley SLA** that covers the majority of **LCT 32**, as well as several cultural and historical designations. The landscape of high scenic value is widely appreciated and includes several castles and estates and is likely to be highly susceptible to the type of development proposed. The sensitivity of **LCT 32** is **Medium to High**.

LCT 19 Farmed Rolling Ridges and Hills

- 7.3.52 **LCT 19 Farmed Rolling Ridges and Hills** is a landscape of softly rounded hills and ridges with sweeping curves, narrow valleys, and geometric forests, featuring agricultural fields, pasture, shelterbelts, and broadleaf woodlands. Scattered farms sit on lower slopes and several stone circles add historic character. The landscape is open, allowing long views to the southern hills, beyond the Hill of Denmoss. Detracting features are limited to small groups of wind turbines on ridges and upper elevations as well as existing OHLs located predominantly to the south. The **Deveron Valley SLA** is located at the northern part of the LCT. The Proposed Development crosses the width of **LCT 19** for approximately 17 km between the A97 at Cobairdy to Gask and Silverwells to the west of the A947. Detracting features include OHLs, visible windfarms and a major road and the landscape is moderately susceptible to the type of development proposed, which could appear prominently on the skyline. The sensitivity of **LCT 19** is **Medium**.

LCT 20 Undulating Agricultural Heartland

- 7.3.53 **LCT 20 Undulating Agricultural Heartland** is characterised by a gently rolling landscape of low hills, ridges, and broad valleys with large fields, sparse woodland, and shelterbelts. The landscape is well settled with small villages, historic fermtouns, castles, and farms. Views are open and expansive, and are directed towards landmark hills, including Hill of Culsh and the Culsh monument above New Deer. The Proposed Development crosses through **LCT 20** for approximately 18 km. Detracting features include a 400 kV OHL to the south and occasional wind turbines. There are no landscape designations within **LCT 20** although there are several historical and cultural designations, including long-distance walking route The Formartine and Buchan Way, located within the eastern part of the LCT. The skyline is non distinctive and cultivated landscapes, such as this, indicate reduced susceptibility. This results in a moderate ability to accommodate the type of development proposed. The sensitivity of **LCT 20** is **Medium**.

LCT 21 Farmland and Wooded Policies

- 7.3.54 **LCT 21 Farmland and Wooded Policies** is a rolling, richly scenic landscape with diverse woodland, farmland, and estate remnants. The South Ugie Water valley is enclosed by soft hills, with an open floodplain and lower farmed slopes. Distinct roundel and crescent woodlands sit atop hills, while policy plantings trace ridges and valleys. The LCT is well settled, with villages, farmsteads, and historic features offering contained views and a timeless character. The Formartine and Buchan Way long-distance walking route crosses the LCT to the north. Detracting features include the 400 kV OHL to the south, and occasional masts, and there are no landscape designations within **LCT 21**. The Proposed Development crosses through the entire width of the LCT for approximately 10 km, between the B9106 to the south of Maud, to the A952 south of Clola in the east. The landscape has a moderate ability to accommodate the type of development proposed. The sensitivity of **LCT 21** is **Medium**.

LCT 17 Coastal Agricultural Plain

- 7.3.55 **LCT 17 Coastal Agricultural Plain** is a low-lying, gently undulating landscape with ridges and valleys, dominated by arable farming, moss, and wetland. Mormond Hill is a prominent landmark featuring White Horse and White Stag figures. The fields are large and geometric in shape with extensive coniferous forests and limited broadleaf woodland. The landscape is well settled with dispersed farms, settlements, and designed landscapes, as well as communication structures and visible existing OHLs. Coastal dunes and sea provide a strong coastal context with consistent views. The Proposed Development intersects **LCT 17** for a distance of approximately 7 km, from the A952 south of Clola and terminating in the centre of the LCT at Netherton. There are no landscape designations within **LCT 17** although there are a number of cultural and heritage designations including Sites of Special Scientific Interest and long-distance trails. The presence of an existing 275 kV OHL and wind turbines means the

ability for the landscape to accommodate the type of development proposed is relatively high, although it would be prominent through the relatively flat open landscape, where it would likely be seen prominently in the skyline. The sensitivity of **LCT 17** is **Low to Medium**.

Kellas Alternative Alignment: landscape character

- 7.3.56 The Kellas Alternative Alignment is located entirely within **LCT 290: Upland Moorland and Forestry**. There is no change to the landscape character type baseline descriptions above in relation to the Kellas Alternative Alignment.
- 7.3.57 The Kellas Alternative Alignment is located within one of the same LCTs as the Preferred Alignment, namely **LCT 290 Upland Moorland and Forestry**, but falls closer to the northern boundary with **LCT 285 Rolling Farmland and Forests – Moray & Nairn**, which it abuts. The Kellas Alternative Alignment is situated to the north of Cairn Uish and passes the mid to lower slopes of Mill Buie, The Drum and Mill Our.
- 7.3.58 There is no change to the baseline description or sensitivity of **LCT 290** or **285** in relation to the Kellas Alternative Alignment.

Baseline Visual Amenity

- 7.3.59 The extent of visibility of the Proposed Development, and thus the area from which there may be visual effects, can be seen in the ZTVs, shown in **Figures 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3a, 7.3b, 7.3c**.
- 7.3.60 For the purpose of this assessment, whilst it is the people living, working, passing through, or enjoying recreational activities in the area who see the view and enjoy the visual amenity, it is the places they may occupy that are mapped and described as the 'receptors' of the views.
- 7.3.61 The locations of the visual receptors considered within this assessment are shown in **Figure 7.6: Visual Amenity Receptors and Viewpoint Locations** and **Figure 7.7: Visual Context**.
- 7.3.62 The following section broadly describes the visual context of the Proposed Development within the study area.

Visual Context Overview

- 7.3.63 The following section outlines the baseline visual amenity for receptors within the study area, discussed geographically in sections from west to east. Receptor references and their representative or specific viewpoints and their locations can be found on **Figure 7.6: Visual Amenity Receptors and Viewpoint Locations** and **Figure 7.7: Visual Context**. Viewpoint (VP) references are written in brackets after the respective receptor reference to help give the reader an indication of the type of view that may be experienced from the receptor. The detailed baseline descriptions of visual receptors considered within this assessment can be found in **Appendix 7.4.1 to 7.4.3**.

Fanellan to The Aird (within THC)

- 7.3.64 Receptors through the River Beaully valley, between Fanellan and the B9164 (around Inchmore), are set within an undulating landscape of mixed deciduous and coniferous woodland. Woodland and varied topography creates views which are contained and with a sense of enclosure, particularly for receptors along the River Beaully such as at Kilmorack (**THC-R-3** [viewpoint (VP) 1]), Groam of Annat (**THC-R-5**), Cruives (and rental properties such as Cruives Lodge and North Lodge) (**THC-R-1a, THC-R-1b & THC-R-5**), users of the riverside walks Core Path IN03.01 [VP 4], Core Paths IN03.03 & IN03.04 (**THC-REC-5** [VP 1] & **THC-REC-6** [VP 2]), local roads (**THC-T-2** [VPs 2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11 & 12]), and visitors to Old Kilmorack Cemetery on the A831 (**THC-T-1** [VP 1]) and disused church near Black Bridge [VP 1]. More open, oblique views south are afforded across open arable fields for receptors north of Lovat Bridge at Beaully (**THC-R-3** [VP 1], **THC-R-4b, THC-R-11** [VP 4]), with Torr Mor and hills associated with The Aird and Boblainy Forest visible in the background.
- 7.3.65 Receptors on the southern mid-slopes of Torr Mor and within Kiltarlity (**THC-R-2** [VP 2]), Glaichbea and Camault Muir to the north of Boblainy Forest (**THC-R-8** [VP 6]), and in-between the River Beaully and the A833, are more

elevated and are afforded far-distance views, although the extent of mixed woodland and vegetated field boundaries alongside Bruiach Burn as well as areas of coniferous forestry, all strongly interrupt and filter views north and northwest. Receptors between Boblainy Forest and The Aird, including residents within Belladrum (THC-R-9), visitors to the Belladrum Tartan Heart Festival and users of Core Paths IN20.03, IN20.04 & IN20.02 (THC-REC-3 [VP 58]), are generally well contained by mixed woodland and large areas of forestry, which interrupt and heavily filter views north, creating a good sense of enclosure.

- 7.3.66 Residents located on higher ground to the north of the River Beauly between Drumindorsair and Rheindown (THC-R-7 [VP 3]), and at Ardnagrask, Muir of Ord, Windhill, Milton, and Newton (THC-R-12 [VP 5], THC-R-14 [VP 5], THC-R-15 [VP 5], THC-R-21 [VP 10]), are afforded attractive, elevated, panoramic mid to far-distant views south and east towards distant hills associated with The Aird and Boblainy Forest, while on lower ground to the north of the River Beauly, between Torgormack and Ruilick (THC-R-4a & THC-R-4b [VP 3]), views are often well screened by surrounding trees or local rises in topography. Receptors west of Torr Mor, such as at Crask of Aigas, are visually contained by Ruttle Wood and rising landform, preventing any far-distance views east.
- 7.3.67 Receptors within Balchraggan (THC-R-16 [VP 7]) and on the mid slopes of Creag na Nighinn (THC-R-13 [VPs 8 & 54]) as well as receptors at Knockbain [VP 9] and Rebeg on the mid-slopes of Tor Clunes and Mam a' Chatha (THC-R-19 [VP 9]), are afforded relatively elevated, open views north and northeast, although views from receptors at Knockbain and Rebeg are heavily filtered by vegetation across the rural farmed floodplains. Receptors at Easter Moniack [VP 8], including Lower Achnagairn and Wester Moniack (THC-R-18 [VP 8]), afford more open views north where not heavily contained by woodland and properties in West Croft (THC-R-17 [VP 54]) are slightly elevated above the A862 (THC-REC-2) and afford an open outlook from the rear. Traffic on the A862 [VP 54] is visible in the mid-distance from Balchraggan.
- 7.3.68 Many receptors in Kirkhill (THC-R-20) are well screened by surrounding built form and vegetation, but some, such as those on Mansefield Park, are afforded far-distance views south, to more distant hills. Receptors within Drumchardine, Inchmore, Holme, Craggach and Lentrathill (THC-R-23a [VP 11], THC-R-23b), on either side of the A862, have views south limited by intervening built form, localised topography, roadside and garden vegetation, as well as the steeply rising foothills of The Aird.
- 7.3.69 Views for users of Core Path IN21.07 (THC-REC-7 [VP 8]) and the A862 (THC-REC-2 [VPs 2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11 & 12]) are broadly contained by hills to the south and west and often limited to near or mid-distance views by large areas of woodland and forestry, including Reelig Glen. Existing OHLs are apparent across the landscape, some impinging into the skyline, particularly in views from lower elevations. Moniack Castle is well contained by deciduous woodland, particularly in summer, but retains some far-distance views to the northwest.
- 7.3.70 Residents to the south of Newtonhill, at Ardmachdonie, and to the south of Altnacardich (THC-R-22 [VP 12]) on the rising slopes of the Aird, are afforded elevated panoramic views north across wooded and farmed plains towards the Beauly Firth. Residents within Newtonhill, and Altnacardich (THC-R-24 [VP 12]) and users of Core Path IN23.02 (THC-REC-9) afford views south framed by woodland, roadside trees or garden vegetation and limited by the rising hills of The Aird. Views are either intimate and enclosed or elevated and far-distant, but all with a sense of remoteness.
- 7.3.71 Users of The Great Glen Way trail (THC-REC-24), and users of minor roads over The Aird (THC-T-3) experience far-reaching views from the edge of The Aird, particularly south of Blackfold, although views across the top of the Aird itself and further east and south around Altourie are often limited by undulations in topography or vegetation cover.
- 7.3.72 Residential properties to the west of Boblainy Forest, Eskdale, and Crask of Aigas have no visibility towards the Proposed Development due to intervening landform and vegetation.

The Aird to Knocknagael (within THC)

- 7.3.73 Users of the A82 between Inverness and Lochend (THC-T-4 [VPs 13 & 55]) and residents between Dochgarroch Locks and Inverness (THC-R-25 [VPs 13 & 55]) experience attractive views through the wooded river valley with

hills associated with The Aird to the west and rising landform to the east, which contain views largely to within the river valley landscape. Receptors south of Dochgarroch (**THC-R-26** [VP 55]) that are more elevated to the west of the A82 have far-distance views across Loch Dochfour to Dochfour Wood, although mid-distant views are typically filtered or interrupted by vegetation. The A82 [VP 55] is well contained by roadside trees and vegetation, apart from a section between Lagnalean and Loch Ness Country House Hotel on the outskirts of Inverness. Numerous existing OHLs cross the A82 from west to east.

- 7.3.74 Users of the Great Glen Canoe Trail & Caledonian Canal Towpaths (**THC-REC-11** [VP 14]) experience predominantly contained, rural and tranquil views due to woodland cover along both sides of the Caledonian Canal. Occasionally views open out where gaps in canal-side vegetation allows, and a greater concentration of activity and built form is present around Dochgarroch Locks (**THC-REC-1** [VP 14]).
- 7.3.75 Receptors immediately to the east of Loch Ness and the River Ness at Scaniport, Cullaird, and Laggan (**THC-R-27a & THC-27b**), and to the west of the River Ness at Lagnalean & Dalreoch (Lower Dunain) (**THC-R-28**), are located across flat, agricultural river plains contained by surrounding hills, with extensive woodland and roadside and field boundary vegetation also limiting views. Recreational and transport users in this area, including users of the Caledonia Way, Core Paths IN19.67, IN12.07 & IN12.02 (**THC-REC-12**) and the B862 General Wade's Military Road (**THC-T-5**) between Inverness and Aldourie to the east of the River Ness and Loch Dochfour, also experience views through a well wooded and undulating landscape although their transient views allow for occasional far-distance views to the rising landform of Drumashie Moor / Drummossie Muir. Residents between the River Ness (Cullaird) and Milton of Leys (**THC-R-30**) on the lower to mid slopes of Drummossie Muir are also well contained by woodland to the south, as are properties at Knocknagael.
- 7.3.76 Views vary for residents within and to the east of Essich (**THC-R-29**) between open, elevated distant views north to the Beaully Firth, to intermittent and more enclosed views where they are interrupted by tree belts and plantations, but all feel remote and tranquil in nature. Further north, views from Inverness are limited to residents on the southern edge of the city [VP 15], such as Oldtown of Leys, Drumdevan and Slackbuie (**THC-R-31** [VP 15]) and Milton of Leys (**THC-R-34**) where there are mid-distant views to surrounding hills and forestry to the south associated with Drummossie Muir, albeit interrupted by intervening vegetation and built form.
- 7.3.77 Users of Core Paths IN11.02, IN19.40 & IN19.39 to the south of Inverness (**THC-REC-15**) experience predominantly enclosed views due to extensive forestry associated with Drummossie Muir (particularly Daviot Wood and Dundavie woodland), which also encloses views for users of the A9 (**THC-T-7**) and Daviot Steading (formerly Clava Mains) wedding venue (**THC-REC-14**), along with the forestry across Meall Mor to the east. Sections of the A9 are more elevated, and where gaps in roadside vegetation and forestry allow, more open views are afforded.
- 7.3.78 Residential properties west and south of Lochend, Dores, Drumashie Moor, and Drummossie Muir have no visibility towards the Proposed Development due to intervening topography and vegetation.

Knocknagael to Castleton (within THC)

- 7.3.79 Users of National Cycle Network (NCN) Route 7 (**THC-REC-17**) between Clava Cairns / Clava Lodge to Loch Moy experience varied views but ones which are predominantly directed through lower lying valleys between steep-sided hills such as Beinn a Bheurlaich and Beinn Bhreac to the south and the lower slopes of Meall Mor to the northeast. Users of the Highland Main Line Railway (**THC-T-10**) experience predominantly enclosed views from Moy and Smithton.
- 7.3.80 Residential receptors off the B851, south of Castleton (**THC-R-37**) are well contained by forestry, woodland and the hill form of Meall Mor, whilst a few receptors to the north have a more open aspect, notably Daviot Lodge and Daviot Steading (Mains of Daviot) which look across open fields. The rounded and forest covered hill form of Meall Mor is a feature in many views, with the highly noticeable existing 275 kV OHL crossing its lower northern slopes. Residential receptors through Nairnside (**THC-R-38**) afford well contained views limited to the near or mid-distance by forestry, woodland, garden and roadside vegetation.

- 7.3.81 Visitors to Culloden battlefield open space and visitor centre (**THC-REC-25** [VP 16]) experience panoramic open views particularly to the north, but also south across Drummossie Muir towards rising landform associated with Meall Mor, Bhuidhe Mnor, Beinn Bhuidhe Bheag and Saddle Hill, with the Assich Forest further east. Users of the Highland Tourist Route on the A939 (**THC-REC-16** [VPs 17 & 18]) experience a combination of attractive open and enclosed views of the surrounding landscape due to varied topography and woodland. The attention of recreational receptors is often directed towards the distant Cairngorms [VP 19] which backcloth distant views to the south.
- 7.3.82 The more dramatic upland topography to the south of the Assich Forest and on the foothills of the Cairngorms is sparsely populated, with few receptors.

Castleton to Ferness (within THC)

- 7.3.83 Distant views for receptors between Castleton and Ferness are frequently restricted due to the topography and extent of forestry and woodlands in the area, which include the Assich Forest, Dallaschyle Wood, Cawdor Wood, Achneim Wood, Clunas Wood, Newlands of Fleenas Wood, and Dulsie Wood, all skirting around the lower slopes of a rugged upland landscape on the foothills of the Cairngorms. Receptors with restricted views include those at Newton of Petty and Blackcastle along the A96 (**THC-R-42**), receptors scattered through the rolling farmlands and forest landscape near Cawdor (**THC-R-44**); receptors at Urchany (**THC-R-49** [VP 18]) and between Mains of Clunas and Newlands of Fleenas Wood, to the west of Redburn (**THC-R-50**); and at Bruachmary, Balmore and Newlands of Knockaneorn, to the southeast of Clunas (**THC-R-51**). Residents within Croy, Clephanton, Cawdor, Culchanny and Piperhill (**THC-R-45** [VP 17]) and on the edge of the river Nairn floodplain, are also restricted to near to mid-distant views by intervening large areas of woodland and forestry.
- 7.3.84 Views are more open for receptors in larger clearings on the southern edge of the Assich Forest and Cawdor Wood, and where rising, undulating landform leading to Creag an Daimh and Carn Maol forms the background of views. The existing 275 kV OHL is often a prominent feature within the skyline of views. Some far-distant views are also afforded for receptors within and to the south of Nairn (**THC-R-46** [VP 17] & **THC-R-47** [VP 17]).
- 7.3.85 Towards Ferness, the extensive woodland and forestry associated with the River Findhorn, Darnaway Forest, Newlands of Fleenas Wood, and Dulsie Wood all restrict far-distance views to near to mid-distance. Views for visitors to the Ardclach Church graveyard and disused church (**THC-REC-26**), for example, are low lying, near-distant and focussed on the immediate surroundings, which are well contained on all sides by mature woodland vegetation on the banks of the River Findhorn. Views for visitors to Ardclach Bell Tower are more elevated and mid-distant. Views for users of the A939 and B9007 (**THC-T-9**) are contained through the river valley and extensive forestry around Ferness, but further south the A939 traverses the lower to mid slopes of Cairn Duhie, where panoramic views open out onto the surrounding picturesque landscape.
- 7.3.86 Some residential receptors within and southwest of Ferness (**THC-R-56a** & **THC-R-56b**) such as at Tomnarroch Farm and properties at Drumore, are afforded some mid-distant views along the Tomnarroch Burn, with the 275 kV OHL openly visible for near to mid-distant receptors. Receptors at Achnabechan are situated in open farmland but views north are interrupted by farm buildings.
- 7.3.87 North of the River Findhorn valley, visibility is also limited by vegetation and topography. There are few receptors south of the River Findhorn and Burnside, south of Ferness, due to the increasingly dramatic upland landscape.

Ferness to Dallas (within Moray)

- 7.3.88 Topography, farm buildings and extensive areas of forestry across Hill of Relugas, Hill of Glaschyle, Romach Hill, and Hill of Mulundy, interrupt far-distance views of the surrounding landscape for many receptors around the A940 and within the River Findhorn valley, with receptors experiencing enclosed, more intimate views (**MOR-R-1**, **MOR-R-3**, **MOR-R-4a** [VP 20], **MOR-R-4b** [VP 20], **MOR-R-5** [VP 22], **MOR-R-6**, **MOR-T-1** [VP 20]), although some receptors further south, such as around Tomdow, experience more open, far-distance views across moorland with a greater sense of remoteness (**MOR-R-1**, **MOR-R-2a**, **MOR-R-2b**).

- 7.3.89 Users of the Dava Way long distance trail (**MOR-REC-1** [VPs 21 & 59]) to the north of Glenerie and Hill of Glaschyle, experience largely contained views within a well-wooded landscape. Further south at Cairn Erny and Knock of Braemoray [VP 59] however, users of the Dava Way and Scotland Heritage Trail 'Via Regia' (**MOR-REC-5** [VPs 19 & 21]) experience expansive, open and elevated views across the open rolling upland landscape within **LCT 291**. Receptors at Dallas (**MOR-R-14**) also have views contained to near to mid-distance due to the extensive coniferous forestry on surrounding, enclosing hills, with a more pastoral landscape within the lower-lying river Lossie valley.
- 7.3.90 Windfarms are detracting features on higher ground to the south, along with an OHL across lower-lying ground to the north, in near to mid-distant views.

Dallas to Coleburn (within MC)

- 7.3.91 Residential receptors located in proximity to the River Lossie (**MOR-R-16** [VP 24]) experience open and mid-distance views along and across the valley floor towards Mill Buie and Cairn Uish to the south, or Hill of the Wangie to the north (**MOR-R-18**). For many receptors an existing 275 kV OHL is a prominent feature across the valley and in the skyline, as it crosses the lower slopes of Cairn Uish. Residential receptors on the slopes of Hart Hill (including Hanging folds, Coneloch, and Gedloch, to the west of Gedloch Quarry) experience views of the wooded slopes of Hart Hill to the south and southeast, with more panoramic, far-distance views north and northeast towards distant hills (**MOR-R-20**). Other residents experience views enclosed by Millbuies Wood, although some far-distance views towards Brown Muir and woodland across Hart Hill are afforded where there are slightly more open views south, including for some residents around Fogwatt (**MOR-R-22**). Receptors located within the Glen of Rothes valley, including Netherglen, Coleburn and Coleburn distillery [VP 27], experience varying degrees of enclosure due to the rising topography of the valley sides and varying areas of woodland and vegetation (**MOR-R-23** [VP 27], **MOR-REC-3** [VP 27]). Views from receptors to the north, (such as residential receptors around Longmorn, Clackmarras, and the southern edge of Elgin (**MOR-R-19a** [VP 26], **MOR-R-19b**, **MOR-R-21** [VP 26]), and recreational receptors along NCN 1 and Core Paths including CP-EG01 around and south of Elgin (**MOR-REC-6**, **MOR-REC-7**)), are generally contained to near or mid-distance, with only occasional far-distance views south afforded.
- 7.3.92 Users and visitors of Glenlatterach Reservoir and Kellas Trout Fishery have views generally contained by surrounding vegetation or hillforms, whilst users of the B9010 and minor road C13E from Dallas to Upper Knockando [VP 23], also experience a variety of views, but they are frequently enclosed by the surrounding topography and vegetation, with glimpses to distant hills. Users of Scotland Heritage Trail 'Mannoch Road' [VP 25] cross through a varied landscape, from an enclosed pastoral landscape further north, to open and exposed moorland further south (**MOR-REC-9** [VP 25]).

Coleburn to Wood of Ordiequish (within MC)

- 7.3.93 Views from receptors to the north – including residential receptors northeast of Clackmarras, east of Elgin (**MOR-R-21**), and at Lhanbryde (**MOR-R-37a**, **MOR-R-37b** [VP 60]), as well as recreational receptors along NCN 1 (**MOR-REC-8** [VP 60]) and along Core Paths around Lhanbryde (**MOR-REC-11**) – are generally contained to near or mid-distant views south by vegetation and built form across a lower-lying landscape, with only occasional mid to far-distance views south and east afforded.
- 7.3.94 Residential receptors around Brown Muir (**MOR-R-27**, **MOR-R-28** [VP 61]) experience a variety of views, with those further north on rising slopes afforded more open, mid to long-distance views to the south, albeit often channelled by surrounding woodland or local landform. Residential receptors closer to the Burn of the Elms (**MOR-R-26**, **MOR-R-29**) and Brown Muir experience more intimate, enclosed valley views, surrounded by vegetation along the burn, or by surrounding areas of coniferous woodland and rising landform.
- 7.3.95 Users of the A941 (**MOR-T-4** [VP 27]) have views generally contained to near to mid-distance by topography of Brown Muir and Hart Hill, and by vegetation through Glen of Rothes. Extensive areas of forestry on surrounding

hills also creates a sense of enclosure through the landscape, although there are glimpsed, transient views to more distant hills.

- 7.3.96 Residential and recreational receptors around Altonside [VP 61], Cranloch [VP 61] and Blackburn are set within rolling farmland with large areas of coniferous forestry in the surrounding landscape, including Blackburn Wood and Trochelhill Wood to the east; and Badentinan Wood and Teindland Wood to the west and south. Views are consequently contained to near to mid-distant by the vegetation and surrounding hills (**MOR-R-30** [VP 61], **MOR-R-31** [VP 61], **MOR-REC-12** [VP 65]).
- 7.3.97 Residential receptors located in the valley floor, such as those at Orbliston (**MOR-R-32b** [VP 65]), Dipple (**MOR-R-32a** [VP 28]), Westerton, Cairnend, Trochelhill Country House, and Millhlll, as well as visitors to the Earth Pillars (riverside) and Dipple Cemetery (**MOR-REC-16**), are set within low-lying farmland alongside the River Spey. Views across the River Spey valley are near and mid-distant across the floodplain, enclosed by mid-distant hills, including Ordiequish Hill and Wood of Ordiequish to the east, Teindland Wood to the west, and Blackburn Wood, Trochelhill, and Balnacoul Wood to the north. Views are therefore frequently enclosed, contained, and rural, with some longer-distance views along the river corridor to the north and south, or between blocks of woodland to the west.
- 7.3.98 Further south of Orbliston [VP 65], the valley floor narrows, to further enclose views for receptors on low-lying ground in and around Inchberry (**MOR-R-33b**, **MOR-R-33a** [VP 62]) and Orton (**MOR-R-34**, **MOR-R-35**), with views backdropped by Hill of Cairnty, Thief's Hill and Wood of Ordiequish. The river crossing at Orton (including users of the B9015 (**MOR-T-5**) and Aberdeen to Inverness railway (**MOR-T-6**)) marks the limit of any visibility north towards Orbliston and Dipple.
- 7.3.99 North of Dipple, the valley floor widens, but blocks of woodland and built form serve to contain most views to near to mid-distance for receptors around Fochabers (**MOR-R-41a**, **MOR-R-41b** [VP 30]) and Mosstodloch (**MOR-R-36a**, **MOR-R-36b**, **MOR-REC-13**), including visitors to Gordon Castle (**MOR-REC-18** [VP 30]) and users of the numerous surrounding Core Paths (CP-FB21, CP-FB22, CP-FB23, CP-SW03, Fochabers (**MOR-REC-17** [VP 30]), with only occasional mid to far-distance views south and east afforded across the picturesque River Spey valley.
- 7.3.100 Receptors on rising slopes to the east of Inchberry and Orton, and east through Wood of Ordiequish and Wood of Cairnty (**MOR-R-42**, **MOR-R-43**, **MOR-R-44**) – including users of the Speyside Way long distance trail (**MOR-REC-15** [VP 28]) and visitors to the Earth Pillars viewpoint (**MOR-REC-16** [VP 29]) – look across the valley towards mid-distant hills on the opposite side of the valley or afford far-distance views along the river corridor. However, most views are framed, or enclosed, by surrounding woodland to limit far-distance views.
- 7.3.101 Existing OHLs are prominent features in near to mid-distant views across farmland, and across the valley floor and rising up Ordiequish Hill.

Wood of Ordiequish to Hill of Greenwood (A96) (within MC)

- 7.3.102 There are few receptors within the large blocks of woodland surrounding Keith, including Wood of Ordiequish, Whiteash Hill Wood, across Aultmore, and Balloch Wood, except for users of paths and trails through the woodlands, and users of the A96 (**MOR-T-7** [VP 31]). Views are typically enclosed and limited to near-distance views by the surrounding forestry ([VPs 31 & 60]). Beyond the woodland (which typically covers higher ground of local hills), the topography drops into the River Isla valley.
- 7.3.103 Receptors on the surrounding hillslopes of Whiteash Hill (**MOR-R-45**), Gallows Hill (**MOR-R-46**), Millstone Hill (**MOR-R-52**, **MOR-R-58**), Garra Hill (**MOR-R-53**), Black Hill (**MOR-R-62**), Hill of Mulderie (**MOR-R-49**, **MOR-R-50**), Meikle Balloch Hill (**MOR-R-59**, **MOR-R-60**, **MOR-R-60** [VP 64]), Cairds Hill (**MOR-R-56**), and Hill of Towie (**MOR-R-50**), predominantly experience open, mid to far-distance views across undulating, relatively open farmland to the forest-covered hills. Receptors include users of local roads and residents, including at Auchinderran, Aulthash, Pathside, Saughwells, Upper Drakemyres & Lower Drakemyres (**MOR-R-46**), Meikle

Ardone (**MOR-R-60** [VP 63]), Herrockside & Wester Herricks (**MOR-R-61**), west of Blackhillock (**MOR-R-56** [VP 33]), Hillockhead of Muldearie, and at Newmill (**MOR-R-54** [VP 32]).

- 7.3.104 Receptors within Keith (**MOR-R-55** [VP 33]), including residents and users of Core Paths KT07, CP-KT09 & CP-KT10 (**MOR-REC-21**) have views generally contained by surrounding built form, but receptors on the edges of the settlement, including from Newmill (**MOR-R-54**, **MOR-REC-22** [VP 32]) and users of the A95 (**MOR-T-9** [VP 63]), afford more open views of farmland in the foreground with sporadic areas of woodland in the background, together with Meikle Balloch Hill (**MOR-REC-23** [VP 64]) to the south-east and Knock Hill and Lurg Hill further east.
- 7.3.105 Views for receptors southwest of Keith are more contained by the narrower valley of the River Isla, but those on higher slopes are still afforded mid to far-distance views along the river valley (**MOR-R-51a**, **MOR-R-51b**).
- 7.3.106 Existing OHLs are prominent and often dominating features, particularly across the valley floor in near-distant views, or where skylined across hills. There is a 'wirescaping' effect around the town of Keith due to the concentration of OHLs.

Hill of Greenwood (A96) to the A97 (within AC)

- 7.3.107 Receptors between the A96 at Coachford and the A97 (including residential receptors at Coachford (**AB-R-1a**), Cairnie (**AB-R-16**), Haughs (**AB-R-2**, **AB-R-14** [VP 35]), Newton (**AB-R-1a**), Ruthven (**AB-R-14**), Ardonald (**AB-R-15** [VP 34]), and Hillend (**AB-R-28a**), and users of the A96 (**AB-T-1** [VP 34]) in proximity to Coachford), are set within mixed, wooded farmland on the lower to mid slopes of surrounding hills. Surrounding hills are Meikle Balloch Hill, Cairn Hill, The Bin, Ordiquhill, Hill of Mungo, Whit Hill, and Fourman Hill to the north of the A96, and Hill of Shenwall, Black Hill, Hill of Milleath, Dunbennan Hill, and Clashmach Hill to the south. Views from hill slopes are sometimes broad and elevated, but typically enclosed or restricted by intervening farm buildings, curtilage vegetation and the extensive forestry across the landscape, including The Balloch, Tarryblake Wood, Brownhill Plantation, Cobairdy Wood, Kinnoir Wood, The Bin Forest, and Cumrie Plantation. Views from all receptors potentially contain detracting elements including telegraph pole lines, wind turbines on Ord Hill and Cairn Hill, an existing nearby OHL and traffic on the A96.
- 7.3.108 Users of footpaths within The Bin Forest (**AB-REC-1** [VP 56]) and Kinnoir Wood (**AB-REC-4** [VP 38]) experience contained views as a result of the surrounding coniferous forestry, such that the wider landscape to the north is only experienced from more open sections, such as at the top of The Bin.
- 7.3.109 To the east of The Bin, receptors (**AB-R-4a**, **AB-R-4b** [VP 38], **AB-R-17** [VPs 36 & 57], **AB-R-28b**) have views across the **Deveron Valley SLA** which are typically limited to the mid-distance by intervening topography and larger areas of woodland and forestry associated with Kinnor Wood, Crow Wood, Longmoor Wood, Wood of Avochie, and Cobairdy Wood. Users of the A96 (**AB-T-1** [VP 39]), A97 (**AB-T-4** [VP 38]), B9022 (**AB-T-3** [VP 36]), and Aberdeen to Inverness railway line (**AB-T-13**), experience scenic views through the River Deveron valley, although views are broadly contained by low hills, undulating topography, and forestry to create a varied visual experience for transport users.
- 7.3.110 Residential receptors south of Crow Wood and Kinnoir Wood, and on the northern edge of Huntly (**AB-R-29** [VP 39]) have views north well contained by woodland associated with The Bin Forest and Kinnoir Wood, with only narrow far-distance views afforded through the River Deveron valley to the north.

A97 to A947 / Turriff (within AC)

- 7.3.111 Residential receptors between Cruchie and Frendraught on the lower to mid slopes of Cruchie Wood and Gallows Hill are afforded a mix of enclosed and broad open views north and south, but limited to the middle ground by intervening topography and smaller areas of forestry associated with the Burn of Cobairdy and Gallows Hill to the South, and Newmill of Pitfancy and Bogcoup to the north (**AB-R-5**). Residents further east between the Hill of Frendraught, Drumblair and the A947 at Darra include receptors around Hillhead of Frendraught, Placemill Farm, Drumblair, Haremoor, Reidswell, South Feith Hill, Floors Farm, Braefoot,

Craigietoche, Silverwells, Gask and Darra (**AB-R-6** [VP 41] & **AB-R-7** [VP 41]). They are afforded long, broad and open views across arable fields with a background to the north of rolling, undulating landform and occasional woodland, including at Feith Hill, Hill of Carlinraig, Balquholly Wood, Hospital Wood, and Birkenhills. To the south, the Hill of Denmoss and Lenshaw can be seen in the distance, while vegetation following local burns, including the Burn of Frendraught, Den of Woodhead, and Burn of Gask, limit local views.

- 7.3.112 Residential receptors around 1 – 2 km further north of the Proposed Development (**AB-R-17** [VPs 36 & 57]) include those within the small settlements of Conland, Forge, Fortrie, Southend and Gask, and are afforded more elevated views either side of local valleys on the lower to mid-slopes of local hills (including Mill of Forge, Hill of Haggs, Hill of Carlinraig and Hill of Cleftbog). Views south, however, are often screened or interrupted by the intervening hills and areas of forestry and mixed woodland belts to the south, such as north of Bogcoup, Drumblair Wood and around Feith Hill. Views for visitors to Glendronach Distillery at Forge (**AB-REC-13** [VP 57]) are low lying and broadly contained within a local, relatively well-wooded valley.
- 7.3.113 Residential receptors around 2 – 5 km further north (**AB-R-31**) include receptors within Bogniebrae, Inverkeithny, Laithers, and on the western periphery of Turriff. Views are typically limited to near to the mid-distance by intervening topography and areas of forestry including across Bogcoup, Boghead Hill, South Balnoon, Feith Hill Woodlands, Drach Law and Hill of Ardmiddle. Views south from Inverkeithny are screened by the rising hills of Boghead and Logg.
- 7.3.114 More distant receptors to the north (beyond 5 km, **AB-R-39** [VP 40]) have occasional far-distant views south from areas of more elevated and open ground, but most receptors would have far-distant views south screened by intervening vegetation, topography or built form.
- 7.3.115 Further south (around 1 – 2 km south of the Proposed Development) are receptors between Lurge by the B9001 and the A947 to the south of Turriff (**AB-R-18** [VPs 41 & 57]). Located on lower landform around the Hill of Denmoss and the Hill of Lenshie in the west and the Hill of Carlinraig and Birkenhill to the east, views north are intermittently limited by landform and occasional blocks of coniferous plantation and vegetation along the Burn of Gask.
- 7.3.116 Residential receptors further south (beyond 2 km from the Proposed Development) between Huntly and the A947 (**AB-R-45** [VP 39]) include receptors within Battlehill, Ythanwells, Logie Newton, Auchterless (**AB-R-30** [VPs 39 & 42], Dykeside, Inverthan, and Fyvie. Receptors are set within an open, gently rolling farmed landscape interspersed with occasional small areas of coniferous forestry. Views are generally broad but near to mid-distant, with only occasional distant and open views from areas of higher ground. Wind turbines and existing OHLs near Logie Newton are clearly visible. Views north from Fyvie, Rothienorman, Colpy, and south of Huntly and the A96 do not extend towards the Proposed Development due to topography and vegetation.

Turriff to New Deer (within AC)

- 7.3.117 Residents within the town of Turriff (**AB-R-19** [VP 43]) mostly afford views within an urban environment, and only those on the southern periphery (such as along the A947, St Congans Circle, St Congans Den and Collyburn View and unnamed road south of Collyburn View) are afforded views south towards broad rolling hills and rising topography. Users of the Turriff sports centre, football club, cricket ground (**AB-REC-14**), and walks and Core Paths to the south of Turriff (**AB-REC-6**) are on lower-lying ground with views generally enclosed by surrounding vegetation. Visitors to Foreglen GDL (**AB-REC-5** [VP 40]) are also largely contained to near to mid-distant views only, due to surrounding vegetation and local landform. Some far-distance views south are afforded from the more open sections of the B9025.
- 7.3.118 Residential receptors north of Turriff (**AB-R-33**, **AB-R-40** [VPs 46 & 50]) are located on lower-lying coastal farmlands, with many views directed north towards the Moray Firth. The gently rolling, farmed coastal landscape does allow some mid to far-distance views south from areas of higher elevation, but views are typically broad and expansive rather than channelled between ridges or woodland blocks.

- 7.3.119 Residential receptors and users of NCN 1 (**AB-REC-7** [VPs 43, 45 & 49]) around Idoch Water to the east of the A947 are located in an attractive, enclosed, more intimate rural landscape, with views contained to near to mid-distant views and despite proximity to Turriff, there is limited awareness of the town.
- 7.3.120 Residential receptors between Turriff and Cuminestown (**AB-R-20** [VP 45]), and visitors to Delgatie Castle (**AB-REC-15**), are located on higher ground above the Idoch Water, so relatively open, mid-distant views south are afforded, across the local valley of Idoch Water. However, blocks of coniferous plantation and pockets of woodland across the landscape break up and interrupt views, particularly around Wood of Delgaty. Views south from the low-lying village of Cuminestown itself are mostly limited by intervening rising landform, surrounding buildings, curtilage and roadside vegetation. Residential receptors along Thornhill Road (**AB-R-47**) that leads south out of Cuminestown are afforded slightly more elevated, but oblique views south.
- 7.3.121 Residential receptors further south of Turriff and Cuminestown, between Birkenhills (**AB-R-32**) and Inverythan (**AB-R-30**) to the west and the B9170 running south out of New Deer to the east (**AB-R-47** [VPs 44, 45 & 49]), are scattered across the gently rolling, well settled, agricultural landscape, with typically near to mid-distant views north. Limited woodland cover allows clear views of existing OHLs and wind turbines in the local landscape, and occasional far-distance views north.
- 7.3.122 Users of the A947 (**AB-T-7**) and residents between Turriff and Fyvie (**AB-R-44**) experience attractive and relatively contained views through the local valleys of the Burn of Turriff and River Ythan, broadly contained by rolling landform either side of the road and intermittent blocks of woodland including the Wood of Darra, Crow Wood, Wood of Broadford, Braes of Slack o'Causeway and woodland associated with Hatton Castle (**AB-REC-16**) and Fyvie Castle (**AB-REC-17**). Visitors to the two castles also experience a sense of enclosure due to the near-distant woodland.
- 7.3.123 A section of National Cycle Network (NCN) Route 1 (**AB-REC-7** [VPs 43, 45 & 49]) travels south past Foreglen and into Turriff then runs west-east across the study area, from Turriff to Maud and turns south and joins the Formartine and Buchan Way Great Trail (**AB-REC-7**) until Auchnagatt [VP 49]. Users experience both open and enclosed sequential views of the surrounding landscape along this section of the route, with more open views from local roads between Turriff and Maud (**AB-T-8**) and a more intimate stretch to the south of Maud where the Formartine and Buchan Way is more vegetated.

New Deer to Nether Kinmundy (within AC)

- 7.3.124 Many residential receptors within New Deer (**AB-R-24** [VPs 47 & 48]) look out onto adjacent open farmland within a gently undulating landform of low hills and ridges. Broad, shallow valleys with sparse woodland cover allow for open, mid to far distant views for receptors on the edge of the village, including receptors along High Street, Fordyce Road, the B9170, the A981 Fordyce Terrace [VP 48], Pine Road and the A948 with views north and east. Views are similar for users of Core Paths to the east and north of New Deer (**AB-REC-9** [VPs 47 & 48]), and visitors and users of New Deer football club, bowling club, and showground (**AB-REC-19**).
- 7.3.125 Visitors to the Culsh Monument, viewpoint, cemetery and Core Path 211.02P to the north of New Deer (**AB-REC-8** [VP 47]) experience panoramic views focussed to the north and east, across a pleasant, well-settled agricultural landscape. Users of the A981 (**AB-T-9** [VP 48]) between New Deer and the junction with the A950 to the north also cross through the gently undulating farmland. Residential receptors between New Deer and Maud (**AB-R-8**) have distant views available, although often interrupted by intervening farm buildings and curtilage vegetation, and look across the pleasant, though not particularly distinctive landscape.
- 7.3.126 Some receptors on the periphery of Maud (**AB-R-22**, **AB-R-47** [VP 49]), on the B9029, B9106 (**AB-T-10**) and on Den View and Bank Road have views into the adjacent landscape to the southwest and south across open, gently rolling arable fields with limited woodland. Users of NCN 1 (**AB-REC-7**) pass Maud, joining the Formartine and Buchan Way Great Trail (**MOR-REC-10**) until Auchnagatt with views contained by vegetation along the trail, while users of the B9106 experience more open views south of Maud.

- 7.3.127 Residents to the south of Stuartfield (**AB-R-26**, **AB-R-34** [VP 50]) and between Drymuir and Crichtie **AB-R-10** are settled within broad shallow valleys that allow for broad, distant views from the mid to higher slopes of local hills. However, many residential receptors have views interrupted or obstructed by curtilage vegetation, intervening farm buildings and field boundary. A few receptors in Millbreck (**AB-R-26**) have a slightly more open and elevated view south, while Mains of Crichtie and Crichtie House to the south of Stuartfield are screened by woodland. Woodland associated with Crichtie Wood and Mains of Crichtie screen most views south from Stuartfield, including for users of the minor road network (**AB-T-5** [VPs 41, 42, 44 & 57]). An existing OHL openly visible to the south vegetation.
- 7.3.128 Users of the A952 (**AB-T-12**) between Mintlaw, and Ardallie in the south, experience open views through the gently rolling agricultural plains, whilst residential receptors south of Stuartfield up to the Hill of Ludquharn (**AB-R-11** [VP 51]), to the west of Nether Kinmundy [VP 53] and users of local roads **AB-T-8** [VPs 45, 49, 50, 51 & 52], are partially contained by forestry.
- 7.3.129 Users of Core Path 208.01 in Longside (**AB-REC-12** [VP 52]) and visitors to Longside cemetery (**AB-REC-20** [VP 52]) afford fairly open and panoramic views south across the gently undulating landscape, although the presence of the town of Peterhead, Longside airfield, and existing OHLs bring a suburban feel. Views for receptors in Longside (**AB-R-36** [VP 52]) itself are mostly limited to close range, except those on the southern and western periphery, where more open, far-distance views south are afforded.
- 7.3.130 Residential receptors around Peterhead, Inverugie, and Boddam (**AB-R-42**, **AB-R-37**, **AB-R-43**), are influenced by the urban edge of Peterhead, with views west largely limited by urban infrastructure, small blocks of vegetation, and the flatter, coastal landscape limiting far-distant views.
- 7.3.131 Residential receptors across the extensive agricultural landscape to the south (**AB-R-32**, **AB-R-37**, **AB-R-38**, **AB-R-43**, **AB-R-44**), have mid to far-distance views across a landscape with few woodland blocks and gently rolling landforms. Even so, views are frequently contained to mid-distant views by localised vegetation along watercourses, curtilage or field boundary vegetation, or surrounding farm buildings or houses. Existing OHLs are distinctive features across the landscape.

Kellas Alternative Alignment

- 7.3.132 The Kellas Alternative Alignment is located within the Dallas to Coleburn (within MC) section. There is no change to the visual baseline description above in relation to the Kellas Alternative Alignment, although being sited on slightly lower ground on the lower slopes of hills, its wider visibility is slightly lessened. Conversely, the Kellas Alternative Alignment is in closer proximity to residential and transport receptors to the north. The visual baseline of the following receptors is relevant to the Kellas Alternative Alignment: **MOR-R-14**, **MOR-R-15**, **MOR-R-16**, **MOR-R-17**, **MOR-R-18**, **MOR-R-19a**, **MOR-R-19b**, **MOR-R-20**, **MOR-R-21**, **MOR-REC-4**, **MOR-REC-9**, **MOR-REC-24**, **MOR-REC-25**, **MOR-T-3** and the relevant viewpoints are VP 23 Dallas to Knockando road, VP 24 B9010, Kellas and VP 25 Mannocho Road Heritage Path.

Future Baseline

- 7.3.133 The baseline landscape and visual resource of the study area is predicted to undergo some continued minor development (new properties / housing extensions, or similar), in combination with ongoing changes to forestry / tree cover.
- 7.3.134 Forestry activities, including felling and restocking commercial plantations, creates significant change locally, some of which is reflected in the existing baseline where clearance, windblow and restocking is evident. **Chapter 12: Forestry** considers the likely significant effects of the Proposed Development on forest and woodland areas and provides detailed descriptions of the existing baseline, including species, condition and current management; and future management where available.
- 7.3.135 Transmission infrastructure and energy development within the study area have the potential to create notable changes to the future landscape and visual baseline resource. Sections of the Proposed Development are located

on higher ground or in proximity to the coast and high wind levels, which would lend itself to potential new renewable energy developments, whilst sections on lower ground or farmland would have potential for battery storage areas or substations to connect renewable energy projects to the grid.

- 7.3.136 Substations with grid connection capacity may attract energy storage developments and as such, applications for battery or other storage developments in the area would not be unexpected, particularly given the modification of planning policy in recent years.
- 7.3.137 With respect to proposed developments within the study area that have been identified as forming part of the future baseline, a full list and description of developments can be found in **Chapter 5: EIA Process and Methodology**. They include new substations, windfarms, overhead lines, energy storage facilities (BESS), and quarries, and cumulatively would potentially alter both local and wider landscape character and the visual amenity for residents and tourists. The potential effects of these developments (with reference to the scale of their spread and vertical height), are considered further within the assessment of cumulative effects.
- 7.3.138 If the Proposed Development does not occur, there is therefore potential that the land would remain in agricultural use or be developed for various renewable energy projects or for commercial forestry purposes.

Identification of Sensitive Landscape and Visual Receptors

- 7.3.139 The baseline landscape and visual context and receptors within the study area have been described above. Those receptors considered to have the potential for significant effects during the construction and / or operational phases of the Proposed Development, and which will be taken forward to the assessment, are listed below.

Designated and Protected Landscapes

- 7.3.140 Landscape designations and protected areas within the study area are shown on **Figure 7.4: Landscape Character Types and Key Landscape Features**. Within the study area, four SLAs are identified for inclusion within this assessment, as follows:
- **Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava Moors SLA** (within THC). The Proposed Development is likely to indirectly impact key characteristics of the SLA. The proximity of the Proposed Development may impinge on key views from this SLA, reducing the sense of remoteness and isolation which are key characteristics of SLA Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava Moors.
 - **Findhorn Valley and the Wooded Estates SLA** (within MC). The Proposed Development is likely to indirectly impact key characteristics of the SLA. The Proposed Development is situated in the uplands adjacent to, but not within the SLA, and may intrude on views from rare open areas within woodland and potentially affect the setting of the river, designed landscapes and valued buildings within SLA Findhorn Valley and the Wooded Estates.
 - **The Spey Valley SLA** (within MC). The Proposed Development is likely to directly impact the key characteristics of the SLA, which include the broad and open floodplain of the River Spey south of Fochabers. The Proposed Development will cross the River Spey valley, potentially adversely affecting the characteristics, qualities and associated views of SLA **The Spey Valley**.
 - **Deveron Valley SLA** (within AC). The Proposed Development is likely to directly impact the key characteristics of the SLA and result in adverse impacts upon the nature of the key views across the river valley. It may also directly affect the integrity of natural and historic features within the **Deveron Valley SLA**.
- 7.3.141 **Table 7.3** below summarises the four SLAs and their sensitivity to change (a combination of receptor susceptibility and value). The full sensitivity assessment of the four SLAs can be found in **Appendix 7.3: Landscape Character Types Sensitivity and Effects** and the methodology for determining sensitivity can be found in **Appendix 7.1: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Methodology**.

Table 7.3: Special landscape areas sensitivity

SLA Name	Local Authority Area	Relationship to Proposed Development	Susceptibility	Value	Overall Sensitivity
Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava Moors	THC	Approximately 0.6 km to the south of the Proposed Development. Potential impacts would be indirect only.	Medium-High	High	High
Findhorn Valley and the Wooded Estates	THC & MC	Approximately 0.35 km to the north of the Proposed Development. Potential impacts would be indirect only.	Medium	High	Medium-High
The Spey Valley	MC	Proposed Development intersects this SLA for approximately 5 km. Potential impacts would be direct.	Medium-High	High	Medium-High
Deveron Valley	AC	Proposed Development intersects this SLA for approximately 8 km. Potential impacts would be direct.	Medium-High	High	Medium-High

Landscape Receptors

7.3.142 A total of 25 LCTs were identified across the study area with the potential for significant effects as a result of direct or indirect impacts from the Proposed Development. The locations of these landscape receptors (LCTs) are shown in **Figure 7.4: Landscape Character Types and Key Landscape Features**.

7.3.143 Of the 25 LCTs considered, only two – **LCT 220 Rugged Massif - Inverness** and **LCT 346 Open Farmland Slopes** – are indirectly impacted, as the Proposed Development does not pass directly through them. In addition, an independent portion of **LCT 227 Farmed Strath – Inverness** located to the west of Fanellan, is also not directly impacted. Impacts would therefore relate to intervisibility and largely impact views or perceptual qualities (such as a sense of remoteness). The three LCTs that would have potential indirect impacts due to intervisibility are:

- LCT 220 Rugged Massif- Inverness (within THC);
- LCT 345 Farmed and Forested Slopes - Ross & Cromarty (within THC); and
- LCT 346 Open Farmland Slopes (within THC).

7.3.144 The remaining 22 LCTs would therefore have direct impacts due to construction and / or operation of the Proposed Development across part of the LCT. The key characteristics of each of the 22 LCTs that have the potential to be directly impacted are described below, running west to east from Beauly to Peterhead:

- **LCT 229 Enclosed Farmland** (within THC). The Proposed Development would be likely to impact on tree cover, sense of enclosure and the River Beauly valley.
- **LCT 342 Farmed River Plains** (within THC). The Proposed Development would be likely to impact the open characteristic of farmland within the river plains.
- **LCT 228 Rolling Farmland and Woodland** (within THC). The Proposed Development would be likely to impact the wider, large-scale open landscape, as well as more locally on the eastern and western slopes of The Aird. The Proposed Development may interrupt key views of The Aird and the River Ness valley from expansive vistas over the firths.
- **LCT 225 Broad Steep-Sided Glen** (within THC). The Proposed Development would cross the River Ness and the Caledonian Canal and would be likely to impact the simple linear and enclosed visual composition of bands of land, water and sky. The addition of large-scale vertical infrastructure may disrupt the natural visual flow of this linear, enclosed landscape that is characterised by a strong focus along the glen.

- **LCT 222 Rocky Moorland Plateau - Inverness** (within THC). The Proposed Development would be likely to impact the perception of hills associated with The Aird, including Mam Mor, Cnoc an Moine and Craig Leach. It would also be likely to disrupt the enclosed nature of the hills due to the potential felling of forestry to accommodate the Proposed Development and introduction of new, detracting built features within the northeast extents of the LCT.
- **LCT 223 Flat Moorland Plateau with Woodland** (within THC). The Proposed Development would be likely to impact on the perceived remoteness, openness and visual amenity of Drum Mossie Muir, and the vegetation cover of plantation woodland and heather moorland, within the northeastern extents of the LCT. It is anticipated to contrast against this exposed landscape.
- **LCT 227 Farmed Strath - Inverness** (within THC). The Proposed Development would be likely to impact on the sense of linear enclosure and perception, setting and visual amenity of the scenic river valley within Strathnairn, which is characterised by wooded slopes and open farmland. Direct views towards the Proposed Development through the strath would be likely.
- **LCT 221 Rolling Uplands - Inverness** (within THC). The Proposed Development would be likely to impact the physical and perceived qualities of land cover, remoteness, tranquillity and visual amenity within the northernmost extents of this remote, expansive landscape of rounded hills and open heather moorland, particularly southeast of Saddle Hill. The removal of plantation woodland on Meall Mor and either side of the local valley of the Allt Carn a' Ghranndaich watercourse may be required.
- **LCT 291 Open Rolling Upland** (within THC and MC). The Proposed Development would be likely to impact on the perceptual and visual qualities within the open, remote and relatively tranquil and unspoilt landscape of rolling heather moorland and grassland including the immediate hills of Saddle Hill, Beinn Bhuidhe Bheag, Creag an Daimh and Carn Maol within THC, and of Cairn Duhie and Cairn Eney, on either side of the A940, within Moray.
- **LCT 285 Rolling Farmland and Forests – Moray & Nairn** (within THC and MC). The Proposed Development would be likely to impact on the cover of plantation woodland and its wild character, disrupting the perception of remoteness, rugged terrain, and naturalness within the landscape of rivers, hills, and farmland near Coleburn.
- **LCT 290 Upland Moorland and Forestry** (within THC and MC). The Proposed Development would be likely to impact the cover of plantation woodland and farmland mosaic, and the visual amenity and perceptual qualities within this remote upland landscape of high scenic value, currently dominated by heather moorland and large-scale forestry, with a strong sense of wildness.
- **LCT 286 Narrow Wooded Valley – Moray & Nairn** (within THC and MC). The Proposed Development would intersect the River Findhorn and would be likely to impact the sense of enclosure and seclusion provided by the intricate landform, woodland cover and lack of detracting features. The landscape is in good condition with few detracting features resulting in a feeling of remoteness and tranquillity when not in proximity to local roads.
- **LCT 287 Broad Farmed Valley** (within MC). The Proposed Development would be likely to impact a small section of the LCT only, along the northern boundary of the landscape, within the River Spey valley. This area is known for its unique river valley landscape, winding river, forested hills, and rich cultural identity and the Proposed Development would be likely to introduce indirect impacts on perceived tranquillity, rural setting, and visual amenity.
- **LCT 284 Coastal Farmlands – Moray & Nairn** (within MC). The Proposed Development would be likely to impact on expansive, open views and the perception, setting and scenic value of the local landscape in proximity to Orbliston and the River Spey valley. The landscape is generally in a good condition, although heavily farmed, and feels slightly more developed than the more elevated landscapes to the south.
- **LCT 293 Low Forested Hills** (within MC). The Proposed Development would be likely to impact the perception, visual amenity and landcover of Ordiequish Hill and the wooded ridge that separates coastal and

upland farmland, with its steep slopes, sparse settlements and expansive views from the highly valued tourist routes of the Speyside Way and A96.

- **LCT 288 Upland Farmland** (within MC). The Proposed Development would be likely to impact the physical and perceptual qualities of this broad shallow valley landscape, with its simple vegetation, scattered woodlands and coniferous covered hills as a backdrop. It would potentially disrupt the extensive views across open farmland and views to surrounding forested hills such as Meikle Balloch Hill and Knock Hill, and impacting on the setting of the broad valley of the River Isla to the east of Keith.
- **LCT 27 Farmed Moorland Edge - Aberdeenshire** (within MC and AC). The Proposed Development would be likely to impact on woodland cover and the relative remoteness and tranquillity afforded within Balloch Wood and on the hill summits to the east of Keith. The distinctive form of Meikle Balloch Hill is likely to be impacted in terms of its perception and visual amenity.
- **LCT 32 Farmed and Wooded River Valleys** (within AC). The Proposed Development would be likely to impact on the setting, visual amenity and tranquillity of the River Deveron valley landscape, with its broad floodplains, wooded slopes, historic estates, and occasional seclusion.
- **LCT 19 Farmed Rolling Ridges and Hills** (within AC). The Proposed development would be likely to impact on woodland cover, perceived tranquillity, visual amenity, and the open, rural characteristics of this agricultural landscape, defined by narrow valleys, gently rolling hills, and expansive views.
- **LCT 20 Undulating Agricultural Heartland** (within AC). The Proposed Development would be likely to impact the setting and perceptual qualities of the landscape to the south of Cuminestown and to the east of the prominent landmark of the Culsh Monument. Local visual amenity and perceived tranquillity are likely to be affected as a result of the Proposed Development seen on or above intervening landform against the skyline within broad views.
- **LCT 21 Farmland and Wooded Policies** (within AC). The Proposed Development would be likely to impact the characteristic openness and sense of rural tranquillity across the wider farmland of the landscape, which includes diverse woodlands, rolling hills, and mixed farmland. The landscape is fairly enclosed but the southern extent of the LCT is more open with far-distance views afforded across the agricultural landscape.
- **LCT 17 Coastal Agricultural Plain** (within AC). The Proposed Development would be likely to impact on visual amenity, perceptual qualities and openness of the low-lying landscape which is characterised by large geometric fields, extensive coniferous forestry and a strong coastal character.

7.3.145 **Table 7.4** below summarises the LCTs and their sensitivity to change (a combination of receptor susceptibility and value). The full LCT sensitivity assessment can be found in **Appendix 7.3: Landscape Character Types Sensitivity and Effects** and the methodology for determining sensitivity can be found in **Appendix 7.1: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Methodology**.

Table 7.4: Landscape character types (LCTs) sensitivity

Name	Local Authority	Relationship to Proposed Development	Indirect or Directly affected	Susceptibility	Value	Sensitivity
LCT 220 - Rugged Massif - Inverness	THC	LCT lies 2.7-10 km west of the Proposed Development	Indirect	Medium-High	Medium-High	Medium-High
LCT 345 - Farmed and Forested Slopes - Ross & Cromarty	THC	LCT lies 2-10 km north of the Proposed Development	Indirect	Medium	Medium-High	Medium
LCT 346 - Open Farmed Slopes	THC	LCT lies 1-10 km north of the Proposed Development	Indirect	Medium	Medium	Medium

Name	Local Authority	Relationship to Proposed Development	Indirect or Directly affected	Susceptibility	Value	Sensitivity
LCT 229 – Enclosed Farmland	THC	LCT is intersected by the Proposed Development for 5.4 km	Direct	Medium-High	Medium	Medium-High
LCT 342 – Farmed River Plains	THC	LCT is intersected by the Proposed Development for 4.1 km	Direct	Medium-High	Medium	Medium-High
LCT 228 – Rolling Farmland and Woodland	THC	LCT is intersected by the Proposed Development for 5 km	Direct	Medium	High	Medium-High
LCT 225 – Broad Steep-Sided Glen	THC	LCT is intersected by the Proposed Development for 1.5 km	Direct	High	High	High
LCT 222 – Rocky Moorland Plateau – Inverness	THC	LCT is intersected by the Proposed Development for 4.8 km	Direct	Medium-High	Medium-High	Medium-High
LCT 223 – Flat Moorland Plateau with Woodland	THC	LCT is intersected by the Proposed Development for 6.1 km	Direct	Medium-High	Medium-High	Medium-High
LCT 227 – Farmed Strath – Inverness	THC	LCT is intersected by the Proposed Development for 3.8 km	Direct	Medium-High	Medium	Medium-High
LCT 221 – Rolling Uplands – Inverness	THC	LCT is intersected by the Proposed Development for 2.6 km	Direct	Medium-High	Medium-High	Medium-High
LCT 291 – Open Rolling Upland	THC & MC	LCT is intersected by the Proposed Development for 9.2 km in the THC area and for 5 km in the MC area.	Direct	Medium-High	High	Medium-High
LCT 285 – Rolling Farmland and Forests - Moray & Nairn	THC & MC	LCT is intersected by the Proposed Development for 1 km in the THC area and 4.5 km in the MC area.	Direct	Medium-High	High	Medium-High
LCT 290 – Upland Moorland and Forestry	THC & MC	LCT is intersected by the Proposed Development for 7.3 km in the THC area and 27.2 km in the MC.	Direct	Medium-High	Medium-High	Medium-High
LCT 286 – Narrow Wooded Valley – Moray & Nairn	THC & MC	LCT is intersected by the Proposed Development for 2.6 km	Direct	Medium-High	High	Medium-High
LCT 287 – Broad Farmed Valley	MC	The north of the LCT is within 0.4 km of the Proposed Development, which would be perceived over a length of approximately 3.5 km	Indirect	Medium-High	Medium-High	Medium-High

Name	Local Authority	Relationship to Proposed Development	Indirect or Directly affected	Susceptibility	Value	Sensitivity
LCT 284 – Coastal Farmlands – Moray & Nairn	MC	LCT is intersected by the Proposed Development for 4.3 km	Direct	Medium	Medium-High	Medium
LCT 293 – Low Forested Hills	MC	LCT is intersected by the Proposed Development for 5.6 km	Direct	Medium	Medium-High	Medium-High
LCT 288 – Upland Farmland	MC	LCT is intersected by the Proposed Development for 11.9 km	Direct	Low-Medium	Low-Medium	Low-Medium
LCT 27 – Farmed Moorland Edge – Aberdeenshire	MC & AC	LCT is intersected by the Proposed Development for 0.7 km within the MC area and 8.4 km within the AC area	Direct	Medium-High	Medium-High	Medium-High
LCT 32 – Farmed and Wooded River Valleys	AC	LCT is intersected by the Proposed Development in two places. First for 5.6 km, in the west and then for 3.2 km to the east.	Direct	Medium-High	Medium-High	Medium-High
LCT 19 – Farmed Rolling Ridges and Hills	AC	LCT is intersected by the Proposed Development for 17.6 km	Direct	Medium	Medium	Medium
LCT 20 – Undulating Agricultural Heartland	AC	LCT is intersected by the Proposed Development for approximately 19 km.	Direct	Medium	Medium	Medium
LCT 21 – Farmland and Wooded Policies	AC	LCT is intersected by the Proposed Development for 9.7 km	Direct	Medium	Medium	Medium
LCT 17 - Coastal Agricultural Plain – Aberdeenshire	AC	LCT is intersected by the Proposed Development for approximately 6.6 km.	Direct	Low-Medium	Low-Medium	Low-Medium

Visual Receptors

- 7.3.146 Potential sensitive receptors are to be found throughout the study area although in some areas the presence of mature woodland vegetation and forestry plantation as well as varied topography would help to limit views of the Proposed Development.
- 7.3.147 Visual receptors include predominantly residential receptors. These receptors include those in isolated / more remote residential properties and farmsteads, residents within and on the outskirts of larger settlements and towns, and residents within smaller villages and hamlets. For the purposes of the assessment, residential receptors are considered as groups and clusters of properties when appropriate, with names based mainly on the naming of places on the Ordnance Survey Landranger map. Where alternative spellings may be found, the less common spelling is included in brackets.
- 7.3.148 Recreational and Amenity receptors include users of public amenity facilities where the view forms an important feature of the experience (such as churches, cemeteries or wedding venues). They also include those visiting or experiencing views from locations such as recognised paths and trails including long distance paths, heritage

paths, National Cycle Routes and Core Paths; visitors to key hills or forestry; users of outdoor sports facilities, or watercourses / waterbodies; visitors to tourist destinations (such as castles, gardens and distilleries) where the view forms an important feature of the experience; and visitors to viewing points identified on OS maps.

- 7.3.149 These residential and recreational receptors are connected through the landscape by a network of transport routes, predominantly roads, from major 'A' roads to minor roads and access tracks, as well as by railways. The transport network may be used by tourists as well as people travelling to and from work and places of business.
- 7.3.150 The locations of the above visual receptors and their representative and specific viewpoints (where appropriate) are found on **Figure 7.6: Visual Amenity Receptors and Viewpoint Locations** and **Figure 7.7: Visual Context**.
- 7.3.151 Visual receptors with the potential for significant effects and their sensitivity to change (a combination of receptor susceptibility and value) are summarised in **Table 7.5** below. The full sensitivity assessment of visual receptors can be found in **Appendix 7.4.1 to 7.4.3**. The methodology for determining sensitivity can be found in **Appendix 7.1: Landscape and Visual impact Assessment Methodology**.

Table 7.5: Summary of key sensitive visual receptors

Receptor Type	Receptors
Residential Receptors within large settlements	Residents within and on the edge of: Beauly, Kiltarlity, Kirkhill, Inverness, Nairn, Forres, Elgin, Lhanbryde, Mosstodloch, Fochabers, Keith, Huntly, Aberchirder, Turriff, New Deer, Maud and Mintlaw
Residential Receptors within smaller settlements, villages and hamlets	Residents within and on the edge of: Easter Moniack, Reelig, Inchmore, Daviot, Ferness, Dallas, Kellas, Longmoor, Fogwatt, Inchberry, Aultmore, Newmill, Cairnie, Milltown of Rothiemay, Forgue, Cuminestown, New Byth, Auchnagatt, Stuartfield, Old Deer, Hatton, Aultmore and Longside
Recreational and Amenity Receptors	- users of Core Paths; - visitors to Beaufort Castle; - visitors to the Tartan Heart festival, Belladrum; - users of the North Coast 500; - users of the Great Glen Way Great Trail; - users of King's Golf Club, Inverness; - users of the Caledonian Canal; - users of Dochgarroch Locks, Caledonian Canal; - users of the Great Glen Canoe Trail, River Ness; - visitors to Dochfour Garden and Designed Landscape; - users of National Cycle Route 7; - visitors to Culloden Battlefield; - users of the Highland Main Line Railway; - users of National Cycle Route 1; - users of Achagour Fishery; - users of Inverness Airport; - visitors to Cawdor Castle Garden and Designed Landscape; - users of the Highland Tourist Route; - users of the Dava Way Great Trail; - users of the Via Regia Scottish Heritage Trail; - visitors to Dallas Castle; - users of Glenlatterach Reservoir; - visitors to Coleburn Distillery;

Receptor Type	Receptors
	• users of Mannocho Road Scottish Heritage Trail; • users of Aberdeen to Inverness railway; • users of the North East 250; • users of the River Spey; • users of the Speyside Way Scottish Great Trail; • visitors to Ordiequish Earth Pillars, Dipple Cemetery, and Earth Pillars viewpoint; • visitors to Gordon Castle; • users of Buckie Fishwives Path Scottish Heritage Trail; • users of footpaths within The Bin Forest; • users of the River Deveron; • users of footpaths within and around Kinnoir Wood; • visitors to Hatton Castle Garden and Designed Landscape; • visitors to Culsh Monument, New Deer; • users of Formartine and Buchan Way Long Distance Path; • users of Forestry and Land Scotland open access land; • users of the Malt Whisky Trail; • users of Daviot Steading wedding venue; • visitors to Ardclach Church and grounds and Ardclach Bell Tower; • users of Mill of Kellas Trout Fishery; • visitors to Glendronach Distillery; • users of Turriff Sports Centre, football club, cricket pitch, and Turriff Golf Course; • visitors to Delgatie Castle & Delgatie Castle Fishery; • visitors to Hatton Castle Garden and Designed Landscape; • visitors to Fyvie Castle & Fyvie Castle GDL; • users of Grampian Air Rifle Club Range and Waulkmill Fishery; • users of New Deer Football Club, New Dee Bowling Club, and New Deer Showground; and • visitors to Longside Cemetery.
Transport Receptors	Users of the: • A831, A833, A862, A82, A8082, A9, A939, A940, A95, A941, A96, A97, A947, A981, A950, A948 and A952; • Highland Main railway line; • Aberdeen to Inverness railway line; • Far North railway line; and • minor roads in the area around the Proposed Development

Issues Scoped out of the LVIA

7.3.152 **Table 7.6** below sets out the items and issues considered very unlikely to be subject to significant effects from the Proposed Development and have therefore not been considered further within the assessment.

Table 7.6: Items scoped out of the assessment

Element	Justification / Details
Local Landscape Character Areas	A proportional approach has been taken. Due to the scale of the Proposed Development, the existing NatureScot LCTs have been used to identify potential

Element	Justification / Details
	significant landscape effects and sub division of these areas has not been undertaken.
Landscape and visual impacts outside the study area	The Proposed Development will not directly impact LCT's beyond the study area and is very unlikely to result in a significant visual effect.
Landscape character - LCT's not intersected by the Proposed Development and unlikely to be subject to a significant effect	Indirect impacts were considered on all LCTs within the study area that are not intersected by the Proposed Development. Those LCTs unlikely to be subject to a significant indirect effect, due to a lack of intervisibility, intervening landform and vegetation and appreciable distance, have been scoped out of the assessment. The following LCTs that fully or partially into the study area are considered unlikely to be subject to a significant effect (listed broadly from west to east through the study area): LCTs Urban 125, 132, 224, 226, 341, 284, 8, 9, 16, 17, 25, 28, 31, 34, 292, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 18, 25, 28 and LCT 23.
Night-time Effects	Construction working hours are currently anticipated to be between approximately 07:00 to 19:00 during British Summer Time (BST) and 07:00 to 18:00 during Greenwich Mean Time (GMT), seven days a week (refer to Chapter 3: Project Description, Paragraph 3.11.4). It is therefore anticipated there would be limited night-time lighting required during construction and therefore it has been scoped out of the assessment. Permanent lighting is not required; therefore a night-time assessment has been scoped out.
Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA)	Effects on residential receptors are anticipated to be captured sufficiently and holistically within the LVIA to identify significant adverse effects (taking in to account perceptual qualities as well as visual changes on receptors) and therefore a separate RVAA is scoped out of this assessment.
Visual Receptors	Sensitive visual receptors with no view are scoped out. Visual receptors of low sensitivity and at a distance unlikely to be subject to a significant effect are scoped out. Sensitive receptors of low sensitivity include, but is not exclusive to, amenity resource where the focus of the view is not the landscape, recreational resource within urban areas, commercial and business premises.
Landscape and visual effects - Year 15 winter	Year 15 reflects the growth of management felling planting and forest edge fringe planting when deciduous planting is in leaf. It therefore represents the optimum scenario to demonstrate change due to embedded mitigation planting. Year 15 Winter has therefore not been included as it would not demonstrate the optimum effectiveness of embedded mitigation planting.
National Parks	The Cairngorms National Park lies on the edge of the 10 km study area and would not be subject to significant effects and has therefore been scoped out.
Wild Land	While the Central Highlands Wild Land area lies within the study area, it is approximately 6 km from the Proposed Development and would not be subject to a significant effect. The Wild Land Designated area as a designation is scoped out, but consideration of users of the Wild Land Area are included under the visual assessment.
Special Landscape Areas (SLA)	A proportional approach has been taken when assessing designated landscapes. Those SLAs not intersected by the Proposed Development and unlikely to be subject to a significant indirect effect, due to a lack of intervisibility, intervening

Element	Justification / Details
	landform and vegetation and appreciable distance, have been scoped out of the assessment. The following SLAs have been scoped out of the assessment: • Loch Ness and Duntelchaig; • Sutors of Cromarty, Rosemarkie; and Fort George; • Pluscarden Valley; • Quarrel wood; • Spynie; • Lossiemouth to Portgordon Coast; • Lower Spey and Gordon Castle Policies; • Portgordon to Cullen Coast; • Deveron Valley (MC); and • North East Aberdeenshire Coast.
Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs)	There are no TPOs impacted by the Proposed Development and they are therefore not discussed further. It is noted that there are Veteran trees on-site and further information is provided within Chapter 12: Forestry.
Ancient woodland	Areas of ancient woodland have been used to inform the LCT sensitivity but in and of themselves are not a landscape receptor and have therefore not been assessed.
Designed Garden and Landscapes (GDL)	GDLs on the Historic Environment Scotland inventory are addressed in Chapter 11: Cultural Heritage.
Conservation Areas	Conservation Areas on the Historic Environment Scotland inventory are addressed in Chapter 11: Cultural Heritage.

7.4 Assessment of Likely Significance of Effects

Embedded Mitigation

- 7.4.1 Embedded Mitigation is mitigation through design, whereby an intent to minimise landscape and visual effects has been instrumental in the development of the alignment design and planting design for the Proposed Development.
- 7.4.2 Mitigation through the use of best practice construction and reinstatement methods during the construction phase could also enhance the local landscape character or visual amenity but is not specifically required to reduce adverse landscape or visual effects. For example, measures identified for the treatment of tracks to be retained in the longer term through the more sensitive landscapes, including SLAs, would not alter the assessment findings but would locally be of benefit. Further details of typical construction activities are detailed in **Chapter 3: Project Description** and include:
- Use of existing public roads and existing farm / forestry tracks wherever possible.
 - Reinstatement of permanent access tracks to a width suitable for 4x4 vehicles.
 - Potential impacts from compounds will be minimised and controlled via the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP). An Outline CEMP is provided in **Appendix 3.3: Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP)**.
 - Any temporary towers would be dismantled after use and surrounding area reinstated.

- Typical tower foundations to be located beneath the ground with a layer of soil covering it of sufficient depth for habitats to reinstate. The permanent footprint above ground is typically 1 m x 1 m (with a maximum dimension of 1.5 m x 1.5 m).
- All construction sites will be reinstated, and include the removal of all temporary lattice tower diversions, temporary access tracks, all work sites around the tower locations and the re-vegetation of all construction compounds etc. Reinstatement principles are detailed in the Applicant's General Environmental Management Plans, as provided in in **Appendix 3.5: General Environmental Management Plans (GEMPs)**.

7.4.3 The embedded mitigation measures detailed below are also considered within the Assessment.

OHL Alignment selection process

- 7.4.4 Given the height and visual prominence of an OHL, the key method for mitigation of landscape and visual effects is through determination of the most suitable alignment across the landscape. As discussed in **Chapter 4: The Routeing Process and Alternatives**, a corridor, routing and alignment process was carried out by SSE Transmission between 2021 and 2024. The selection process weighing up various factors including the risk of adverse landscape and visual effects at each stage was a driving force in the selection process. Following desktop study and fieldwork, landscape and visual effects were a key consideration of the iterative design process to help inform the corridor, routing, and alignment options for the Proposed Development.
- 7.4.5 As discussed in **Chapter 4: The Routeing Process and Alternatives**, the following principles were taken into account (where practicable) during the different stages, in accordance with the steps outlined in the Holford Rules⁵⁰:
- avoid if possible major areas of highest landscape value (including those covered by national and international designations and other sensitive landscapes);
 - avoid by deviation, smaller areas of high amenity value;
 - try to avoid sharp changes of direction and reduce the number of larger angle towers required;
 - avoid skylining the route in key views and where necessary, cross ridges obliquely where a dip in the ridge provides an opportunity;
 - target the route towards open valleys and woods where the scale of poles or towers will be reduced and views broken by trees (avoid slicing through landscape types and try to keep to edges and landscape transitions);
 - consider the appearance of other lines in the landscape to avoid a dominating or confusing wirescape effect; arrange wherever practicable that parallel or closely related routes are planned with tower types, spans and conductors forming a coherent appearance; and
 - approach urban areas through industrial zones and consider the use of undergrounding in residential and valued recreational areas.
- 7.4.6 The design process has also taken landscape and visual impacts into account with regards to the siting of diamond or duck under crossings, due to their increased likelihood of significant effects as a result of a 'cluster' of towers and wires, and micro-siting of towers.
- 7.4.7 Following the comprehensive design process between the design team (including the Applicant's Engineering, Civil Engineers, and Environmental disciplines) the preferred alignment was developed, as shown in **Figure 3.1: Site Layout** and the LVIA has been undertaken based on this alignment.

Commercial Forestry Fringe Planting

- 7.4.8 Consultation with the Applicant's forestry team has also taken place to inform the feasibility of, and opportunities for, mitigation planting proposals within the OC through forestry areas.

⁵⁰ The Holford Rules: Guidelines for the routeing of new high voltage overhead transmission lines with NGC 1992 and shetl 2003 notes

7.4.9 Deciduous forest edge planting has been proposed within the OC at the following locations:

- The Aird;
- Ordiequish Hill;
- Meall Mor;
- the A9 at Drummosie; and
- Altonside.

7.4.10 Deciduous planting is intended to soften the appearance and artificial linear edge of particularly visually prominent sections of felling. These areas are within areas of commercial coniferous forestry where there is a 90 m OC. The planting would contribute to mitigation of adverse effects by:

- having a naturalistic edge and avoiding artificial straight edges through the landscape that draw the eye; and
- soften the appearance through staggering the height of planting to the forest edge i.e. smaller shrubs, medium sized shrubs, medium sized trees then larger trees up to the edge of the first row of conifers.

7.4.11 The principles of this mitigation planting and an example layout has been provided in **Appendix 7.6: Forestry Landscape Mitigation Principles**.

Reinstatement Measures for Tracks in SLAs

7.4.12 Where permanent access tracks are required for maintenance purposes within SLAs, the following measures would be considered:

- Narrow the track after completion of construction works, by the placement of excavated soils or turves along the verges to a width suitable for land rover or ATV vehicle. Where cut and fill tracks are proposed, any additional materials may be used to provide strategic mounding alongside the track, to help limit its wider visual appearance; and
- Where possible surface the tracks using locally sourced stone, with a colour and tone to match existing locally exposed bedrock or stone.

7.4.13 These measures would help ensure that any permanent access tracks within the SLAs would not appear substantially more robust in character than existing similar tracks within these, or other nearby, parts of the landscape. Consideration of NatureScot's good practice guidance for track construction⁵¹ will be given.

Identification of Potential Impacts

7.4.14 The section below summarises the likely landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Development, incorporating the embedded mitigation described and committed to above. The assessment uses professional judgement to combine the sensitivity and magnitude of change / impact to gauge the level of effect, and determine if the effect is considered to be significant, as described in **Appendix 7.1: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Methodology**. For ease of reference, the matrix used for determining the significance of effect is also found in **Table 7.2** above.

7.4.15 The construction and operation of the Proposed Development may affect the landscape and visual amenity of receptors in the study area in a number of ways, as summarised below.

During the Construction Phase

7.4.16 People notice movement and active change more than they notice fixed objects. Partly because of this, the overall effects on the landscape and visual receptors during the construction phase would be greater than once the Proposed Development is complete. The changing nature of the Proposed Development as it is being built and the presence of machinery, often with hazard lights, and the general noise and activity associated with

⁵¹ Scottish Natural Heritage (undated) Track Construction and Landscape Impacts [online]. Available at: <https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/2019-06/Planning%20and%20development%20-%20Track%20development%20presentation.pdf> and <https://www.nature.scot/doc/planning-and-development-presentation-good-practice-track-construction>

construction works, are likely to attract attention and add disturbance to areas that are currently tranquil. Whilst the noise and movement would be particularly apparent with respect to the potential helicopter operations associated with conductor stringing, they would be limited to essential use only and would be temporary in nature. The construction phase also affects a slightly larger area than the operational phase due to the requirement for temporary works such as pulling points and temporary access tracks.

- 7.4.17 These effects, however, would be temporary in nature with a total construction period of approximately four years although periods of intense activity in any one area would be considerably shorter than this.
- 7.4.18 During the construction period there may be landscape and visual impacts from a number of activities associated with the Proposed Development, including:
- the construction of temporary or permanent access tracks and upgrade of existing access during enabling works;
 - the movement of construction vehicles and large machinery, with flashing lights and reversing beepers, and tall temporary structures such as cranes for tower construction;
 - views to conductor stringing equipment, including potential use of helicopters, which may be used during the conductor stringing phase;
 - formation of tower foundations, crane pads, piling stone pads, telehandler stone pads, including small areas of topsoil stripping and fencing around each tower location of 80 x 80 m or 100 x 100 m (details are provided in **Figure 3.9a and 3.9b: Tower Working Area Arrangement**);
 - realignment of approximately 2.6 km section of the existing 275 kV OHL south of Ferness and removal of the redundant section following its realignment;
 - removal of approximately 16.9 km of the existing 132 kV OHL and approximately 1 km of underground cable from Beauly to Knocknagael substations;
 - the presence of laydown areas, temporary spoil heaps, and the provision of small sub yards, offices and welfare facilities will be required at convenient positions along the Proposed OHL alignment;
 - presence of people working at the construction area and driving to / from their temporary accommodation to their temporary place of work to construct the Proposed Development; and
 - forestry clearance to accommodate an OC of 90 m through plantation woodland (which may be reduced to 70 m through broadleaf woodland subject to site specific checks), within which trees are to be permanently removed. Additional forestry removal has also been included for new access track formation with a corridor of 20 m. The requirements and undertaking of felling are documented in **Chapter 12: Forestry**.
- 7.4.19 In addition to the above, some indirect impacts would be likely as a result of forestry clearance back to a windfirm edge. This has been recommended to landowners to manage the risk of windthrow from the removal of trees to form the OC as detailed in **Chapter 12: Forestry**. This would remove trees within commercial forestry blocks beyond the OC for health and safety purposes, but would then be replanted back to the OC. These replanted trees would likely be installed as tree whips, and protected with tree spirals / guards, creating some additional visual intrusion across sections of the landscape. This management felling does not form part of the Proposed Development, however it has been considered in **Chapter 12: Forestry** in terms of the forestry blocks that may be affected. This LVIA has also assumed that management felling would take place and that areas of management felling would be replanted back to the OC following installation of the Proposed OHL (see **Chapter 12: Forestry** for further details).
- 7.4.20 The construction phase assessment considers the temporary effects of the above construction activities. The long-term effects of the introduction of the Proposed Development are considered as operational permanent impacts, although it is acknowledged that they occur progressively during the construction period.

During the Operational Phase

- 7.4.21 The Proposed Development may give rise to permanent impacts on the landscape during operation for a number of reasons, including:
- the introduction of steel lattice towers of an average height of 57 m through the landscape (design heights of 48 m to 72 m and one special tower of 96.57 m at the Caledonian Canal);
 - the impact of the bulkier angle towers in highly visible locations for landscape and visual receptors;
 - the impact of wirescaping where the Proposed Development runs parallel or in close proximity to existing OHLs;
 - the permanent loss of landscape features such as woodland planting and plantation woodland to accommodate the OC;
 - permanent modifications to existing transmission OHL where the Proposed OHL crosses them: diamond crossings would result in a cluster of steel lattice towers at six crossing locations;
 - removal of approximately 16.9 km of the existing 132 kV OHL and removal of approximately 800 m of underground cable (UGC) from Beauly to Knocknagael substations;
 - permanent changes to the existing OHL and UGC infrastructure would remove some visible sections of infrastructure from the landscape and slightly alter visibility of others;
 - Realignment of approximately 2.6 km section of the existing 275 kV OHL south of Ferness and removal of the redundant section following its realignment;
 - ad-hoc tower removal at existing transmission OHL crossings locations;
- 7.4.22 There are likely to be limited or no effects arising from the operation of the Proposed Development, except occasional vehicle lights or activity for maintenance of the Proposed OHL, including periodic land clearance to maintain an open OC.

Assessment of Effects on Designated Landscapes

- 7.4.23 This section summarises the assessment of the likely effects of the Proposed Development on designated landscapes during the construction and operational phases. The SLAs are shown on **Figure 7.4: Landscape Character Types and Key Landscape Features**. The detailed assessment of effects on designated landscapes is set out in **Appendix 7.3: Landscape Character Types Sensitivity and Effects**.

Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava Moors SLA

- 7.4.24 The **Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava Moors SLA** lies approximately 0.7 km to the south of the Proposed Development and is characterised by open uplands with expansive views. The limited roads and settlements contribute to a sense of remoteness. Its sensitivity is considered to be **High**.

Assessment: construction phase (temporary effects)

- 7.4.25 Construction activity would be perceptible in the mid-distance to the north, from the northern extent of the SLA, from the summits of Bhuidhe Mhor, Beinn Bhuidhe Bheag and Carn a Choire Odhair. This intervisibility would result in construction activity slightly impacting the sense of remoteness across a small portion of the view. This would result in a Low magnitude of change, resulting in an indirect, temporary, **Minor to Moderate Adverse (non-significant)** effect on a very localised portion of the SLA during the construction phase.

Assessment: operational phase (permanent effects)

- 7.4.26 The Proposed Development would be visible from local summits and higher ground within the north-western portion of the SLA as it passes between Saddle Hill and Beinn Bhudhe Bheag and on the lower slopes of Carn a Choire Odhair, although it would be largely backclothed by Saddle Hill, forestry and landscape to the north of the SLA. Impacts on the SLA would be associated with its perception and the value of broad, expansive views from local hill summits. However, the existing 275 kV OHL is likely to already be perceived and the change in

perception would be negligible and through a small portion of the much larger SLA. The majority of key characteristic features of the SLA would remain intact. There would be a Low magnitude of change on the local (north-western) portion, resulting in a permanent **Minor to Moderate Adverse (non-significant)** effect at year of opening (winter).

7.4.27 There would be no change in the impact during summer months from the open upland moorland landscape due to the lack of deciduous vegetation. The magnitude would therefore remain Low, resulting in a permanent **Minor to Moderate Adverse (non-significant)** effect at year of opening (summer) on the localised (north-western) portion of the SLA.

7.4.28 Overall, the special qualities of the SLA and its reasons for designation would not be significantly impacted.

Findhorn Valley and the Wooded Estates SLA

7.4.29 The **Findhorn Valley and the Wooded Estates SLA** is located approximately 0.35 km to the north of the Proposed Development and is characterised by the river corridor and historic estates. The area is rich in walking tracks, offering intimate views of woodlands, farmland, and distant hills, although some detracting features (including a 275 kV OHL) are present. Its sensitivity is considered to be **Medium to High**.

Assessment: construction phase (temporary effects)

7.4.30 Construction activity would be briefly perceptible in the mid-distance to the south as the Proposed Development crosses the A940 and crosses the lower slopes of Cairn Eney. This would result in a Negligible to Low magnitude of change on the southern and eastern portions of the SLA, resulting in an indirect, temporary **Minor Adverse (non-significant)** effect on a large but localised portion of the SLA during the construction phase.

Assessment: operational phase (permanent effects)

7.4.31 Seen in conjunction with the existing 275 kV OHL, taller towers would be seen crossing the A940 and potentially above Glenerner Wood on the lower slopes of Cairn Eney, and from the Dava Way looking along the Divie valley where it may be seen above riverside vegetation. Perception of the Proposed Development is likely to be very limited within brief glimpsed views on the southern extents of the SLA and is not anticipated to change the character or perception of the historic, well-wooded and visually contained landscape. The magnitude of change would be Negligible, resulting in an indirect, permanent **Negligible to Minor Adverse (non-significant)** effect on a large but localised portion of the SLA at year of opening (winter).

7.4.32 There would only be a slight change in summer months due to intervening deciduous vegetation providing slightly more screening within views towards the Proposed Development, but the magnitude would remain Negligible, resulting in an indirect, permanent **Negligible to Minor Adverse (non-significant)** effect on a large but localised portion of the SLA at year of opening (summer).

7.4.33 Overall, the special qualities of the SLA and its reasons for designation would not be significantly impacted.

The Spey Valley SLA

7.4.34 The Proposed Development crosses through **The Spey Valley SLA** for approximately 4.5 km, and incorporates the broad floodplain of the River Spey. In proximity to the Proposed Development, the valley is contained to the east by the steep slopes of Ordiequish Hill, which is extensively forested. Its sensitivity is considered to be **Medium to High**.

Assessment: construction phase (temporary effects)

7.4.35 Construction activity would be temporary but openly visible from local roads and the River Spey through the broad river valley to the north of Inchberry. Substantial felling through Ordiequish Wood would be highly prominent in views within the SLA looking east towards Ordiequish Hill, together with the introduction of taller vertical features on the upland landscape east of the river. Significant visibility of construction activity, however, would be limited to a small portion (approximately 3 km to the north and south of the Proposed Development)

within the much larger SLA, which stretches approximately 30 km in length. This would result in a High magnitude of change locally, resulting in a temporary **Major Adverse (significant)** effect on a localised portion of the SLA during the construction phase locally.

Assessment: operational phase (permanent effects)

- 7.4.36 There will be an accumulated wirescaping effect as a result of three OHLs passing through the Spey valley and impacts on visual amenity on highly valued recreational routes through the landscape from the introduction of an additional detracting and highly prominent built feature. Large areas of felling through the Wood of Ordiequish within and beyond the OC would result in a prominent change to vegetation cover to the east of the River Spey. The landscape between the B9103 and Wood of Ordiequish is both transiently and statically experienced by visitors and users of important tourist routes and long-distance paths, as well as visitors to the Dipple Cemetery, Earth Pillars and to the public viewpoint on Ordiequish Hill. While there are existing detracting features through the SLA, the addition of another OHL with substantially taller towers will further deteriorate visual amenity, perceptual qualities and the setting of the River Spey locally, although the earth pillars, cemetery, and viewpoint are not physically impacted. The magnitude of change would be Medium to High, resulting in a permanent **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** effect on a localised portion of the SLA at year of opening (winter).
- 7.4.37 Vegetation within the SLA is predominantly coniferous forestry. As such, the Proposed Development would result in only limited perceptual change during the summer months. The magnitude of change would remain Medium to High, resulting in a permanent **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** effect on a localised portion of the SLA at year of opening (summer).
- 7.4.38 Management felling planting of commercial forestry back to the edge of the OC and forest edge fringe planting within the OC is likely to have established by year 15 of operation. This planting would partially screen the lower to mid portions of towers on Ordiequish Hill and soften the appearance of the linear corridor of cleared forestry within views from the Spey valley, but the Proposed Development would remain highly prominent through The Spey Valley SLA. The magnitude of change would reduce to Medium, resulting in a permanent **Moderate Adverse (significant)** effect on a localised portion of the SLA at year 15 (summer).
- 7.4.39 Despite the significant adverse effects on a localised portion of the SLA, overall, it is considered that the Proposed Development would not result in The Spey Valley SLA's reasons for designation being significantly impacted.

The Deveron Valley SLA

- 7.4.40 The Proposed Development crosses through the Deveron Valley SLA for approximately 8 km. Much of the River Deveron is contained by steep slopes which creates a sense of seclusion, although the section through which the Proposed Development passes contains a broader flood plain and more gentle landform. Its sensitivity is considered to be **Medium to High**.

Assessment: construction phase (temporary effects)

- 7.4.41 Construction activity would be temporary but openly visible from the B9022, River Deveron and briefly from the A97 between Huntley and Rothiemay. An area of felling to accommodate the OC and additional felling back to a windfirm edge within Longmoor Wood to the east of the Hill of Kinnoir would be noticeable but relatively contained by existing retained woodland. Further felling would be noticeable just beyond the boundary of the SLA adjacent to the A97. Significant visibility of construction activity, however, would be limited to a small portion (approximately 2.5 km to the north and south of the Proposed Development) within the much larger SLA, which stretches to approximately 45 km in length. Construction activity would result in a Medium magnitude of change on a localised portion, resulting in a temporary **Moderate Adverse (significant)** effect on a localised portion of the SLA during the construction phase.

Assessment: operational phase (permanent effects)

- 7.4.42 The Proposed Development would be seen as a new, detracting built feature through the landscape although surrounding undulating landform and large areas of forestry broadly contain its presence, and changes to land cover are minimal. At the point the Proposed Development crosses the River Deveron, the setting of the river is not highly sensitive due to the presence of the B9022 and Aberdeen to Inverness railway line and being flanked by open arable fields with minimal riverside vegetation. This would result in a Medium magnitude of change on a localised portion, resulting in a permanent **Moderate Adverse (significant)** effect on a localised portion of the SLA at year of opening (winter).
- 7.4.43 There would only be a minor change in terms of perception of the Proposed Development in summer months due to extent of coniferous forestry in the area, and small amount of deciduous vegetation through the SLA, mostly associated with surrounding field boundaries or alongside local roads. This would result in a Medium magnitude of change, resulting in a permanent **Moderate Adverse (significant)** effect on a localised portion of the SLA at year of opening (summer).
- 7.4.44 Management felling planting of commercial forestry back to the edge of the OC would likely have become established by year 15 of operation within Brownhill Plantation, Cumrie Plantation and Longmoor Wood. The replanted forestry would partially screen the lower to mid portions of some individual towers but impacts to visual amenity and perceptual qualities would remain. There would be a Medium magnitude of change, resulting in a permanent **Moderate Adverse (significant)** effect on a localised portion of the SLA at year 15 (summer).
- 7.4.45 Despite the significant adverse effects on a localised portion of the SLA, overall, it is considered that the Proposed Development would not result in the special qualities of the Deveron Valley SLA being significantly impacted.

Assessment of Effects on Landscape Character

- 7.4.46 This section summarises the assessment of the likely effects of the Proposed Development on the identified landscape character types during the construction and operational phases. The detailed assessment of effects on designated landscapes is set out in **Appendix 7.3: Landscape Character Types Sensitivity and Effects**. The summary below therefore places an emphasis on receptors experiencing a likely effect of Moderate Adverse or above, and which are consequently likely to be considered as significant.
- 7.4.47 There are 25 different LCTs considered, four of which cover two separate LPAs. These four LCTs (**LCT 27, LCT 285, LCT 290, and LCT 291**), are therefore considered in their separate sections as well as part of the whole.
- 7.4.48 Of the 25 LCTs considered, only three – **LCT 220 Rugged Massif – Inverness, LCT 345 Farmed and Forested Slopes – Ross & Cromarty**; and **LCT 346 Open Farmland Slopes** – are indirectly impacted, as the Proposed Development does not pass directly through them. In addition, an independent portion of **LCT 227 Farmed Strath – Inverness** located to the west of Fanellan, is also not directly impacted. These LCTs may, however, potentially experience impacts due to intervisibility, with the Proposed Development being discernible in views from the LCTs. However, due to the small portion of views affected, invisibility would be limited and considered to be **non-significant** for **LCT 220 Rugged Massif - Inverness, LCT 345 Farmed and Forested Slopes – Ross & Cromarty**; and **LCT 346 Open Farmland Slopes**. There would also be no significant impacts on the independent portion of **LCT 227 Farmed Strath – Inverness** located to the west of Fanellan.
- 7.4.49 The scale and height of the Proposed Development would result in it being visible across the LCTs through which it passes. The degree to which it impacts the characteristics of each LCT, however, would vary.
- 7.4.50 For **LCT 229 Enclosed Farmland** and **LCT 290 Upland Moorland and Forestry** (MC section), the Proposed Development passes through a large portion of the character type. This would result in potentially **significant effects** on both these LCTs, both on the LCTs as a whole, and locally within proximity to the Proposed Development, during the construction phase.
- 7.4.51 At construction, effects are generally greater, primarily due to the height, movement and activity of the construction works, particularly in relation to tower construction through use of cranes and potentially

helicopters. The completion of the construction works would remove this uncharacteristic height and movement in the skyline, resulting in slightly lower impacts during operation for the wider LCT characteristics of **LCT 229**, reducing to **non-significant** effects at operation year of opening (winter and summer), but remaining significant at all phases locally.

- 7.4.52 The re-planting of management felling areas back to the edge of the OC, as well as forest edge fringe planting within the OC would help to limit adverse effects on local landscape character but effects locally, as well as on **LCT 290** (MC section) as a whole, are anticipated to remain significant at all phases of operation.
- 7.4.53 For **LCT 290 Upland Moorland and Forestry** (THC section), effects would not be so readily noticeable, with **non-significant** effects identified on the LCT, both locally and as a whole (THC section only). When considered in conjunction with the Moray section, effects were identified as remaining **Moderate Adverse (significant)** on the LCT as a whole, during all phases.
- 7.4.54 A further 15 LCTs are predicted to be impacted within a localised portion of the LCT only, whereby significant effects are anticipated in proximity to the Proposed Development, but the geographical area of the LCT in relation to the Proposed Development is such that significant wider impacts on the LCT are unlikely. The LCTs impacted locally only are **LCT 342, LCT 228, LCT 225, LCT 222, LCT 223, LCT 227, LCT 221, LCT 291** (both THC & MC sections), **LCT 286, LCT 284, LCT 293, LCT 288, LCT 27** (both MC and AC sections), **LCT 32**, and **LCT 20**.
- 7.4.55 Effects are generally slightly greater at construction, primarily due to the height, movement and activity of the construction works, particularly use of cranes and potentially helicopters. The completion of the construction works would remove this uncharacteristic height and movement in the skyline, resulting in slightly lower impacts at year of opening (winter) for **LCT 291** (THC section only) and **LCT 288**, reducing to **non-significant** effects locally.
- 7.4.56 The management felling planting of surrounding felled coniferous woodland and establishing forest edge fringe planting within the OC would help to mitigate adverse effects on local landscape character and significant localised effects are anticipated to decrease to **non-significant** at year 15 for the following six LCTs: **LCT 221, LCT 223, LCT 227, LCT 228, LCT 286, and LCT 284**.
- 7.4.57 Significant localised effects would therefore remain at all phases of operation for: **LCT 342, LCT 225, LCT 222, LCT 291** (MC section), **LCT 293, LCT 27** (both MC and AC sections), **LCT 32**, and **LCT 20**.
- 7.4.58 A further eight intersected LCTs were not considered to be significantly impacted at either the construction or operational phase. The LCTs with non-significant effects were **LCT 220, LCT 345, LCT 346, LCT 285** (both THC and Moray sections) **LCT 287, LCT 19, LCT 21 and LCT 17**.
- 7.4.59 Only one LCT has therefore been identified as permanently impacting the key characteristics of the LCT as a whole, namely **LCT 290 Upland Moorland and Forestry (MC Section only)**. All other LCTs were identified as impacting localised portions only.
- 7.4.60 The predicted effects of the Proposed Development on the above LCTs are summarised in **Table 7.7** below for construction operational effects, running west to east from Beaully to Peterhead.

Table 7.7: Summary of significant effects during construction on landscape character types

Landscape Receptor	Sensitivity	Description of Effect - Construction	Magnitude	Significance of Effect
Significant effects – Overall and Localised portions of the LCT				
LCT 229 Enclosed Farmland Local effects: River Beaully valley between Fanellan and Easter Moniac	Medium to High	Construction, including the installation of towers and cable stringing via cranes, the removal approximately 4 km of existing 132 kV OHL from Beaully to Knocknagael substations, temporary introduction of access tracks and felling would be seen against the existing retained 275 kV OHL but would be highly noticeable between Fanellan and Easter Moniac. Felling between Fanellan and the A862, including beyond the OC to a windfirm edge, would be particularly intrusive through the River Beaully corridor and result in a noticeable change to land cover. There would be local impacts on visual amenity, tranquillity and perception of the enclosed farmland in the River Beaully valley between Fanellan and Easter Moniac	High	Major Adverse (significant)
LCT 229 Enclosed Farmland Overall effect on LCT		Construction activity would be perceptible through the LCT and result in both direct and indirect impacts on visual amenity, tranquillity and perception of the enclosed farmland due to intervisibility from adjacent landscapes of LCTs 222, 342 and 346. Impacts are not anticipated to be as pronounced on the wider landscape, with key characteristics of the wooded and enclosed landscape being largely unaffected. However, the introduction of construction through a well-used and valued section of the landscape would impact perceived tranquillity and visual amenity across a large section of the northern extents of the LCT.	Medium	Moderate Adverse (significant)
LCT 290 Upland Moorland and Foresty (MC section) Local effects: Glen of Rothes, Brown Muir, Coleburn	Medium to High	Construction activity, including felling to accommodate the OC and beyond the OC would be noticeable, with construction activity progressively noticeable and prominent with proximity. Users of footpaths around Glenlatterach Reservoir would perceive activity to the south of the reservoir and users of the A941 at Coleburn would see construction in close proximity crossing the Glen of Rothes valley with associated felling on Hart Hill and Brown Muir on either side. The construction activity would be out of character with the landscape and introduce detrimental built features into the remote upland landscape of high scenic value. Construction through the Glen of Rothes valley would be particularly intrusive.	High	Major Adverse (significant)
LCT 290 Upland Moorland and Foresty (MC section) Overall effect on LCT		The landscape is not widely perceived from publicly accessible locations and construction activity would be reasonably well contained. Construction activity, including the formation of access tracks, would therefore mostly be imperceptible through the remote upland landscape, but would be distantly perceived by recreational receptors in the wider landscape. There are a number of highly valued routes that pass through the landscape where construction would be prominent both in proximity and in the distance, and appear largely out of character across the remote upland landscape of high scenic value.	Medium	Moderate Adverse (significant)
Significant effects – Localised portions of the LCT only				
LCT 342 Farmed River Plains	Medium to High	Construction activity will be perceptible within the LCT between Wester Balblair and Drumchardine and within adjacent LCTs 228 & 229 resulting in both direct and indirect impacts. The installation of	High	Major Adverse (significant)

Landscape Receptor	Sensitivity	Description of Effect - Construction	Magnitude	Significance of Effect
Local effects: Around Easter Moniack		towers via cranes; the removal of approx. 3 km of the existing 132 kV OHL from Beauly to Knocknagael; formation of access tracks through open fields; and localised small areas of felling within and beyond the OC, would all be highly prominent through the low-lying river plains and on the lower to upper slopes of The Aird. Together with the removal of the existing Beauly to Knocknagael 132 kV OHL, construction works would be highly intrusive on visual amenity and the perceptual qualities through the River Beauly corridor and within open fields around Easter Moniack, Inchmore and through the A862 corridor both from within the LCT itself and from adjoining landscapes.		
LCT 228 Rolling Farmland and Woodland Local effects: Eastern and western slopes of The Aird	Medium to High	Direct impacts for approximately 1.5 km occur where felling takes place within the LCT to the southwest of Easter Moniack on the lower slopes of Mam a Chatha within Reelig Wood on the western slopes of The Aird. Between The Aird and Clava Mains / the A9, works associated with the installation of towers and cable stringing via cranes, formation of access tracks and removal of two sections of the existing 132 kV OHL from Beauly to Knocknagael substations (4.7 km and 4.4 km) would be highly noticeable locally. The temporary introduction of accommodation works, including felling and access tracks would be highly noticeable.	Medium to High	Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)
LCT 225 Broad Steep-Sided Glen Local effects: River Ness valley between The Aird and the River Ness	High	Construction activity would be perceived through alluvial, wooded plains at the very northern extent of the LCT where it intersects for approximately 1.5 km. The progressive installation of towers and cable stringing via cranes would be highly visible crossing the A82 but only transiently perceived locally. There would also likely be localised impacts on visual amenity within a highly scenic landscape through the River Ness valley and in proximity to the Caledonian Canal with the movement and additional height of construction also impacting local tranquillity for recreational users.	Medium to High	Major Adverse (significant)
LCT 222 Rocky Moorland Plateau Local effects: The Aird	Medium to High	Direct impacts as a result of construction activity and substantial areas of felling over approximately 4.8 km of The Aird would be prominent in the northern extent of the LCT only. There would be a local impact on the perceptual qualities, visual amenity and land cover over The Aird, noticeable, albeit intermittently, from highly valued public routes.	Medium to High	Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)
LCT 223 Flat Moorland Plateau with Woodland Local effects: Drummossie Muir	Medium to High	Construction activity, felling to accommodate the OC and further felling beyond the OC to a windfirm edge would be noticeable through Drummossie Muir to the west of the A9, and somewhat out of character, resulting in some impact on its perceived remoteness, openness and visual amenity.	Medium	Moderate Adverse (significant)
LCT 227 Farmed Strath Local effects: Strathnairn	Medium to High	Construction activity, relatively small areas of felling to accommodate the OC and further felling beyond the OC and temporary access tracks would be prominent through the River Nairn valley and northern lower slopes of Meall Mor. The movement and additional height of construction would be	Medium to High	Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)

Landscape Receptor	Sensitivity	Description of Effect - Construction	Magnitude	Significance of Effect
		out of character with the contained, relatively tranquil feeling strath, introducing impacts on the perception, setting and visual amenity of the river valley.		
LCT 221 Rolling Uplands Local effects: Open moorland southeast of Saddle Hill	Medium to High	Construction activity, including felling to accommodate the OC and beyond the OC would be noticeable across the slopes of Meall Mor and Beinn Bhuidhe Mhor, and would be noticeable to the east of the Aberdeen to Inverness railway line.	Medium	Moderate Adverse (significant)
LCT 291 Open Rolling Upland (THC section) Local effects: on the open moorland between Saddle Hill and Clunas Reservoir	Medium to High	Saddle Hill and Assich Forest limit wider visibility and there are limited recreational opportunities through the landscape, resulting in construction being kept fairly discreet. However, the additional height, movement and introduction of taller, detracting, built features would be out of character through the open, remote and tranquil landscape between Saddle Hill and Clunas Reservoir.	Medium	Moderate Adverse (significant)
LCT 291 Open Rolling Upland (MC section) Local effects: Open moorland between the Dorback Burn and the River Divie	Medium to High	Although construction would be seen in parallel with the existing 275 kV OHL on the lower slopes of Cairn Duhie and Cairn Eney, it would result in a high degree of visibility through this section of the landscape, including from the northern slopes and summit of the distinctive landform of Knock of Braemoray to the south. There would be a locally heightened perception of construction activity and a local change to the setting of the watercourses of the Dorback Burn, The Dava Way and within the valley of River Divie.	Medium	Moderate Adverse (significant)
LCT 286 Narrow Wooded Valley (THC section) Local effects: Findhorn valley and Ardclach landscape	Medium to High	Construction activity, including substantial areas of felling within and beyond the OC would be highly noticeable through the River Findhorn valley, and in proximity to Ardclach. Felling on either side of the River Findhorn, B9007 and A939 would noticeably change local vegetation cover and result in an increased prominence of the new detracting built features through the highly valued river valley, impacting its local perception, quality and condition.	Medium to High	Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)
LCT 284 Coastal Farmlands – Moray & Nairn Local effects: The River Spey valley	Medium	Construction activity, including the installation of towers and cable stringing via cranes, and two diamond crossings, would be out of character and highly noticeable, for people using the Speyside Way, local roads and visitors to the Earth Pillars, Dipple cemetery and Earth Pillars viewpoint. Clearance on Ordiquish Hill would also be highly prominent. The additional height and movement of construction would be out of character within the landscape of high scenic value, impacting the setting, visual amenity and sense of tranquillity across the River Spey valley.	Medium to High	Moderate Adverse (significant)
LCT 293 Low Forested Hills Local effects:	Medium to High	Construction activity and substantial felling within and beyond the OC through the Wood of Ordiequish and The Spey Valley SLA , would be highly prominent locally from the Spey valley to the west and the Speyside Way and local road passing over Ordiequish Hill. It would result in a local	Medium to High	Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)

Landscape Receptor	Sensitivity	Description of Effect - Construction	Magnitude	Significance of Effect
Ordiequish Hill and through the Wood of Ordiequish		change to visual amenity and perceptual qualities, and noticeable change to land cover within a highly scenic, designated landscape.		
LCT 288 Upland Farmland Local effects: Setting of the River Isla	Low to Medium	Construction activity would be highly prominent and detracting through a large proportion of the LCT within the open farmland between the Wood of Ordiequish and Meikle Balloch Hill. The setting, visual amenity, and perceptual qualities of the broad valley of the River Isla to the east of Keith would be particularly impacted, with construction being prominently seen on either side of the river from local Core Paths, the A96, and Buckie Fishwives heritage path. Construction activity would also impact the local visual amenity and views to surrounding forested hills such as Meikle Balloch Hill and Knock Hill.	Medium to High	Moderate Adverse (significant)
LCT 27 Farmed and Wooded River Valleys (MC & AC sections) Local effects: Perception of Meikle Balloch Hill	Medium to High	Construction activity including installation of towers and cable stringing via cranes or helicopters, and access track formations through open fields and loss of blocks of woodland, would all be noticeable from Core Paths on the lower slopes of the hill, from the landscape around Keith to the west and from the A96 to the south, resulting in an impact on the perception and important views of the distinctive hill form of Meikle Balloch Hill.	Low to Medium	Moderate Adverse (significant)
LCT 32 Farmed and Wooded River Valleys Local effects: River Deveron valley and A947 / Burn of Turriff corridor	Medium to High	Construction activity, access track formation and localised felling would be prominent in two discreet sections of the LCT resulting in locally noticeable impacts. Construction would be seen prominently and would detract from the experience of the local landscape through both the River Deveron corridor and either side of the A947 to the south of Turriff, resulting in local impacts on visual amenity and tranquillity.	Medium	Moderate Adverse (significant)
LCT 20 Undulating Agricultural Heartland Local effects: South of Cuminestown and around Culsh Monument	Medium	Construction activity would be seen over Howe of Teuchar / Waggle Hill and through a local valley against the skyline, and around Culsh Monument to the north of New Deer. Construction would impact and disturb the setting of the immediate landscape where views and tranquillity on the outskirts of New Deer are important characteristics for visitors.	Medium	Moderate Adverse (significant)

7.4.61 At operation, the number of significant effects is considered to reduce due to removal of the movement and activity associated with the construction works. The summary of operational phase significant landscape effects is set out in **Table 7.8** below, running west to east from Beauly to Peterhead.

Table 7.8: Summary of significant landscape effects during operation

Landscape Receptor	Sensitivity	Description of effect - operation	Magnitude Year of Opening (winter)	Significance Year of Opening (winter)	Magnitude Year of Opening (summer)	Significance Year of Opening (summer)	Magnitude Year 15 (summer)	Significance Year 15 (summer)
Significant effects – Wider and Localised portions of the LCT								
LCT 290 Upland Moorland and Foresty: MC section Local effects: Glen of Rothes and on Brown Muir, Coleburn (LCT 290 in Moray)	Medium to High	There would be a local impact through Glen of Rothes where the Proposed Development traverses Hart Hill, then crosses the A941 before climbing the lower slopes of Brown Muir with a linear tract of felling highly, but briefly, noticeable from Coleburn and the A941. On the northern slopes of Brown Muir, the development would align parallel to the existing OHL to the east.	Medium to High	Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)	Medium to High	Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)	Medium to High	Moderate Adverse (significant)
LCT 290 Upland Moorland and Foresty: MC section Overall effect on LCT		Given the height of the proposed towers through an open upland landscape and open visibility throughout the highly valued LCT, the perception and experience of the landscape from which the Proposed Development would be viewed would be further degraded by the introduction of additional vertical infrastructure through a large proportion of relatively unspoilt, although commercially worked landscape.	Medium	Moderate Adverse (significant)	Medium	Moderate Adverse (significant)	Medium	Moderate Adverse (significant)
Significant effects – Localised portions of the LCT only								
LCT 229 Enclosed Farmland Local effects: River Beaully valley between	Medium to High	The introduction of vertical infrastructure is anticipated to adversely impact the land cover, rural quality and visual amenity of the landscape. The impact of the Proposed Development would be more pronounced in instances	Medium to High	Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)	Medium to High	Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)	N/A	N/A

Landscape Receptor	Sensitivity	Description of effect - operation	Magnitude Year of Opening (winter)	Significance Year of Opening (winter)	Magnitude Year of Opening (summer)	Significance Year of Opening (summer)	Magnitude Year 15 (summer)	Significance Year 15 (summer)
Fanellan and Easter Moniak		where the OHL traverses open fields, interrupting the visual experience of the landscape, and at the local level in proximity to the River Beaully corridor.						
LCT 342 Farmed River Plains Local effects: Around Easter Moniak	Medium to High	At a local level, particularly within open fields surrounding Easter Moniak and the A862, the Proposed Development is anticipated to reduce both the perceptual qualities associated with remoteness and the rural quality of the landscape as a result of the introduction of prominent vertical features in the skyline of views within the landscape with angle towers are likely to be particularly prominent.	Medium to High	Moderate to Major Adverse	Medium to High	Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)	Medium to High	Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)
LCT 228 Rolling Farmland and Woodland Local effects: Eastern and western slopes of The Aird	Medium to High	At a local level, and particularly to the east of The Aird where the Proposed Development traverses open fields through the River Ness valley and on rising landform to the north of Essich, the introduction of a new taller OHL, including more prominent angle towers east and west of River Ness and north of Essich, is anticipated to reduce the rural character of the local landscape.	Medium	Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)	Medium	Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)	Low to Medium	Moderate Adverse (non-significant)
LCT 225 Broad Steep-Sided Glen Local effects: River Ness valley	High	The introduction of a new, detracting, built feature through a highly valued and scenic landscape is anticipated to adversely impact the setting and visual amenity through the River Ness valley. Although the Proposed	Medium to High	Major Adverse (significant)	Medium-High	Major Adverse (significant)	Medium	Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)

Landscape Receptor	Sensitivity	Description of effect - operation	Magnitude Year of Opening (winter)	Significance Year of Opening (winter)	Magnitude Year of Opening (summer)	Significance Year of Opening (summer)	Magnitude Year 15 (summer)	Significance Year 15 (summer)
between The Aird and the River Ness		Development is anticipated to be partially contained by intervening topography and forestry cover it will remain highly visible above intervening tree lines and prominent on the lower slopes of The Aird to the west of the A82 and would contrast against the intrinsic qualities of this highly valued landscape. It would introduce appreciable man-made elements into an undeveloped and extensively forested landscape.						
LCT 222 Rocky Moorland Plateau Local effects: The Aird	Medium to High	The combined loss of large areas of forestry on higher landform of The Aird and introduction of new vertical infrastructure within an undeveloped landscape is anticipated to reduce the remote character and its perception from the landscape to the east and west.	Medium-High	Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)	Medium-High	Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)	Medium	Moderate Adverse (significant)
LCT 223 Flat Moorland Plateau with Woodland Local effects: Drummossie Muir	Medium to High	The development would be briefly perceived from the A9, B861 and from core paths within the LCT and be seen running parallel to the existing OHL to the east of Knocknagael Substation. The introduction of new taller towers in the landscape would not be entirely incongruous due to its proximity to the existing OHL but would result in new localised impacts on the remoteness and rural quality of the local landscape.	Medium	Moderate Adverse (significant)	Medium	Moderate Adverse (significant)	Low to Medium	Moderate Adverse (non-significant)
LCT 227 Farmed Strath	Medium to High	The effects of the development would be more pronounced through open fields and moorland	Medium	Moderate Adverse (significant)	Medium	Moderate Adverse (significant)	Low to Medium	Moderate Adverse

Landscape Receptor	Sensitivity	Description of effect - operation	Magnitude Year of Opening (winter)	Significance Year of Opening (winter)	Magnitude Year of Opening (summer)	Significance Year of Opening (summer)	Magnitude Year 15 (summer)	Significance Year 15 (summer)
Local effects: Strathnairn		with limited screening. Loss of vegetation to accommodate the OC, and beyond, may be perceptible from the elevated sides of the strath and from the adjacent LCT 221 . At a local level the removal of native broadleaf woodland, coniferous forestry and the introduction of appreciable man-made features would be a noticeable impact on land cover, although seen in the context of an existing OHL.						(non-significant)
LCT 221 Rolling Uplands Local effects: Open moorland southeast of Saddle Hill	Medium to High	The development would be backclothed by Beinn a Bhuchanaich and Beinn Bhuidhe Mhor when viewed from the north, including distant views from Culloden Battlefield within LCT 227 . This would very slightly degrade the perception of the open upland landscape from the landscape to the north. At the local level the introduction of new taller towers on the slopes of Meall Mor and Beinn Bhuidhe Mhor would result in degradation of the remote upland landscape and its perception from the landscape to the north.	Medium	Moderate Adverse (significant)	Medium	Moderate Adverse (significant)	Low to Medium	Moderate Adverse (significant)
LCT 291 Open Rolling Upland: MC section Local effects: Open moorland	Medium to High	Given the height of the proposed towers through the highly valued open upland landscape, the perception of the landscape character through which the Proposed Development would be experienced at a local level would be degraded further by the	Medium	Moderate Adverse (significant)	Medium	Moderate Adverse (significant)	N/A	N/A

Landscape Receptor	Sensitivity	Description of effect - operation	Magnitude Year of Opening (winter)	Significance Year of Opening (winter)	Magnitude Year of Opening (summer)	Significance Year of Opening (summer)	Magnitude Year 15 (summer)	Significance Year 15 (summer)
between Ferness and the River Divie		introduction of additional infrastructure.						
LCT 286 Narrow Wooded Valley: THC and MC sections Local effects: Findhorn valley and Ardclach landscape	Medium to High	Where the development can be experienced, it would be perceived within the context of the existing OHL. At a local level the loss of woodland and introduction of taller towers through an attractive valley landscape is anticipated to reduce the perceptual and land cover characteristics of the landscape.	Medium	Moderate Adverse (significant)	Medium	Moderate Adverse (significant)	Low to Medium	Moderate Adverse (non-significant)
LCT 284 Coastal Farmlands – Local effects: Orbliston and the River Spey valley	Medium	This area of the landscape between the B9103 and Wood of Ordiequish is both transiently and statically experienced by visitors and users of important tourist routes and long-distance paths as well as visitors to Dipple Cemetery and the Earth Pillars public viewpoint on Ordiequish Hill immediately east of the river. While there are existing detracting features through the landscape including local roads and the existing OHLs, the addition of another OHL with substantially taller towers would further deteriorate the perception and experience of the local landscape.	Medium	Moderate Adverse (significant)	Medium	Moderate Adverse (significant)	Low to Medium	Minor to Moderate Adverse (non-significant)
LCT 293 Low Forested Hills Local effects: Ordiequish Hill and	Medium to High	The cleared corridor for the Proposed OHL on the elevated land of Ordiequish Hill would be highly noticeable. The felled corridor would also be visible from the A96 to the east, and land beyond the	Medium to High	Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)	Medium-High	Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)	Medium	Moderate Adverse (significant)

Landscape Receptor	Sensitivity	Description of effect - operation	Magnitude Year of Opening (winter)	Significance Year of Opening (winter)	Magnitude Year of Opening (summer)	Significance Year of Opening (summer)	Magnitude Year 15 (summer)	Significance Year 15 (summer)
through the Wood of Ordiequish		A96 where open arable farmland is more prevalent. At a local level, despite the presence of existing OHLs, the development would result in a deterioration of the setting of the River Spey, The Spey Valley SLA and adjacent forested hill form through the Wood of Ordiequish.						
LCT 27 Farmed and Wooded River Valleys (MC & AC sections) Local effects: Perception of Meikle Balloch Hill	Medium to High	Towers associated with the Proposed Development would be clearly visible from Core Paths around the lower slopes of Meikle Balloch Hill, together with a long corridor of felling to accommodate the OC. While the undulating landform surrounding the Proposed Development would be anticipated to largely contain its broader perception, within areas of open and undeveloped land, the impact of the introduction of new detracting vertical built features would be more pronounced. The distinctive form of Meikle Balloch Hill would be impacted in terms of its perception and visual amenity by the introduction of tall towers on its lower southern slopes.	Low to Medium	Moderate Adverse (significant)	Low-Medium	Moderate Adverse (significant)	N/A	N/A
LCT 32 Farmed and Wooded River Valleys Local effects: River Deveron valley	Medium to High	The Proposed Development would be a prominent feature crossing the Deveron Valley SLA at the river crossing and when viewed from the B9022, the Aberdeen to Inverness railway and local roads as it passes to the north of The Bin Forest and Kinnoir Wood. The Proposed	Medium	Moderate Adverse (significant)	Medium	Moderate Adverse (significant)	Medium	Moderate Adverse (significant)

Landscape Receptor	Sensitivity	Description of effect - operation	Magnitude Year of Opening (winter)	Significance Year of Opening (winter)	Magnitude Year of Opening (summer)	Significance Year of Opening (summer)	Magnitude Year 15 (summer)	Significance Year 15 (summer)
		Development would appear as a new vertical feature on the skyline of the broad valley.						
LCT 20 Undulating Agricultural Heartland Local effects: South of Cuminstown and around Culsh Monument	Medium	Through the LCT, the Proposed Development would be predominantly perceived as a new feature in the skyline, intersecting large arable fields with minimal tree loss. It would not be perceived in conjunction with any existing OHL's from key recreational routes of the A981, NCN 1, the Formartine and Buchan Way and from Culsh Monument, resulting in localised impacts on the setting and perception of the open agricultural landscape in proximity to these.	Medium	Moderate Adverse (significant)	Medium	Moderate Adverse (significant)	N/A	N/A

Visual Assessment

- 7.4.62 This section summarises the assessment of key visual receptors and the likely significant effects of the Proposed Development during the construction and operational phases, in accordance with the significance of effects criteria outlined in **Appendix 7.1: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Methodology**.
- 7.4.63 The detailed assessment of effects on the visual amenity of residential, recreational, amenity and transport receptors is presented in **Appendix 7.4.1 to 7.4.3**. Visualisations of the Proposed Development to accompany the assessment are shown in **Volume 4: Visualisations**. This section therefore places an emphasis on effects identified to be significant in planning terms, which are Moderate Adverse (significant) or above. (Note that not all effects of Moderate Adverse are considered significant, but only those considered significant are discussed below. The full assessment of effects is provided in **Appendix 7.4.1 to 7.4.3** including justification where a Moderate Adverse effect is considered to be non-significant).
- 7.4.64 A description of potential visual effects has been outlined below, discussed geographically from west to east through the study area. An outline baseline description can be found in **Section 7.3: Baseline Conditions** above. The locations of the Visual Receptors and Viewpoints are shown on **Figure 7.6: Visual Amenity Receptors and Viewpoint Locations**, and **Figure 7.7: Visual Context** and viewpoints are listed in **Table 1.1 of Appendix 7.2 Visualisation Methodology**.
- 7.4.65 Refer to **Section 7.3 Baseline Conditions** for the Representative and Specific viewpoints associated with individual receptors or receptor groups, which have been produced to help illustrate the visual effects.
- 7.4.66 As noted above in **Paragraph 7.4.16**, people notice movement and active change more than they notice fixed objects, and as such, construction phase effects are typically the same or greater than once the development is complete. Methodology for constructing the Proposed Development is similar throughout the study area, including areas of felling, use of cranes and helicopters ('higher-level' activity works which are more visible in views due to their height) and lower-level or ground-level works such as tower foundation works and access tracks, which are generally only noticeable at short distances from nearby receptors. The summary of construction effects below therefore only includes detail where substantially increased or different effects are anticipated during the construction period.
- 7.4.67 The clearance of vegetation to accommodate the OC (of 90 m through coniferous forestry, and 70 m through broadleaved woodland), as well as for access tracks, is considered to be permanent. In locations where fringe planting would occur, clearance of vegetation is considered to be temporary, as regrowth of fringe planting would occur over time. As noted previously, management felling of coniferous forestry outside the OC has been recommended to landowners for safety purposes. Although this activity does not form part of the Proposed Development, it is considered as occurring (as an indirect impact), with management felled areas replanted back to the OC. Such felling would be considered as temporary and indirect in nature, but the revegetation of these areas would take time to re-establish and reinstate the landscape and visual baseline. Where there are large areas of forestry felled in the view, consideration of the regrowth of vegetation within these areas is considered as part of the main assessment of the operational phase at year of opening and year 15. Visualisations are also provided where appropriate in year 7 to visually illustrate incremental growth. The summary below therefore only considers vegetation regrowth where there are substantial areas of forestry in the view.

Fanellan to The Aird (within THC)

- 7.4.68 The more dramatic landscape within the Highlands area creates more quickly altering views and vistas, from elevated, open panoramas to more intimate, enclosed, secluded pockets. Distance from the Proposed Development here has less of an influence on visibility than topography. The western extent of the Proposed Development at Fanellan, whilst on elevated ground on Torr Mor, results in receptors to the west and north at Crask of Aigas, Torgormack, and the western section of Kilmorack, having limited or no views towards the Proposed Development during construction and operational phases (**THC-R-4a**) and effects that are **non-significant**.

- 7.4.69 Those on higher ground to the north of Beauly between Drumindorsair and Rheindown (**THC-R-7**), Teandalloch, Ardnagrask, Aultvaich (**THC-R-12**), and Muir of Ord (**THC-R-15**), have some open, panoramic views, with the Proposed Development visible across a small portion of the view only as it crosses The Aird on higher ground. Receptors in closer proximity between Kilmorack and Ruilick (**THC-R-4b**) also have some panoramic open views towards The Aird, but many views are screened by vegetation. Receptors on lower ground to the north at Windhill (**THC-R-14**) and Newton (**THC-R-21**), also have far-distant views screened by intervening vegetation and built form. For all these receptors, the Proposed Development would not be a readily perceptible feature for most receptors. Where it is visible, it would be backclothed against the surrounding wooded landscape, although where it crosses The Aird, some towers would become skylined, and tree removal would create a noticeable track through the forested hillside in distant views with potential management felling beyond the OC creating additional noticeable gaps in forestry and indirect impacts. Replanting of forestry to the OC, and fringe planting within the OC would soften the appearance of the 'track' across the hillside over time. Whilst introducing additional man-made features into the landscape, the Proposed Development would not substantially detract from otherwise attractive views and effects would be **non-significant**.
- 7.4.70 For receptors in closer proximity, there is potential for the Proposed Development to be visible between vegetation, built form, and hills. From Beauly, the Proposed Development would be visible across a moderate portion of the view across open fields for those receptors on the edge of the village only or on the adjacent paths (**THC-R-11**, Core Path IN03.01 'Riverside Loop, Beauly' **THC-REC-4**). It would be seen in combination with the adjacent existing 275 kV OHL, increasing the overall presence of OHL infrastructure into the landscape in the mid-distance, and for many receptors it would be interrupted by intervening vegetation or built form. It is therefore anticipated to result in **non-significant** effects for receptors on the edge of Beauly.
- 7.4.71 For receptors in closest proximity at Fanellan (including Fanellan Cottages, Upper Fanellan Cottages and Fanellan Croft) (**THC-R-1b**), the Proposed Development would appear on two sides of them, with one larger angle tower introduced immediately southeast, and even with existing extensive curtilage vegetation for some, it would be skylined and clearly prominent in portions of the view. There would be similar views for receptors to the south at Fanellan, around Beaufort Castle, and east of Hughton (**THC-R-1a**), with clear views of towers due to proximity, albeit somewhat interrupted by intervening vegetation. The magnitude of change during construction and year of opening (winter) would be Medium, but Low to Medium in year of opening (summer) for those with more screening (**THC-R-1a**). As these receptors are of High sensitivity, this would result in effects of **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** during construction and operation year of opening (winter) and **Moderate Adverse (non-significant)** in operation year of opening (summer), due to summer foliage and the degree of perceived change. The magnitude of change during construction and operation year of opening (winter) would be High for those closest (**THC-R-1b**) and Medium to High in operation year of opening (summer). This would result in effects of **Major Adverse (significant)** during all phases.
- 7.4.72 There would be clear views available for users of Core Paths IN03.03 'War Memorial to Black Bridge by Balblair Wood' & IN03.04 'Lovat Bridge to Black Bridge' to the south of Lovat Bridge and the A862 (**THC-REC-5**), and for a cluster of residential receptors between the A831 and River Beauly (**THC-R-5**), with some proposed towers visible in their entirety across open arable fields to the south, immediately beyond the existing OHL. Removal of the Beauly to Knocknagael 132 kV OHL would ensure that only two OHLs remain within the view. As the Proposed Development would be located slightly further away from receptors to the north than the 132 kV OHL, and with towers being located in parallel with the remaining 275 kV OHL, these two measures would help contain the overall spread and prominence of the Proposed Development in views. Even so, it would result in a magnitude of Medium to High for residents (**THC-R-5**), at construction and operation year of opening (winter), reducing slightly at operation year of opening (summer) to Medium. Properties at Groam of Annat, including rental properties such as Groam Farmhouse and River Beauly Lodge (**THC-R-5**) would afford near distant, oblique and direct views and the magnitude of change for these receptors would not reduce within any phase. For the residential receptors of High sensitivity, this would result in **Major Adverse (significant)** effects during construction and operation year of opening (winter), reducing to **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** in operation year of opening (summer), although receptors at Groam Poultry Farm would remain as **Major Adverse (significant)** throughout all phases.

For the footpath users of Core Paths IN03.03 'War Memorial to Black Bridge by Balblair Wood' & IN03.04 'Lovat Bridge to Black Bridge' (**THC-REC-5**), the magnitude of change would be High during construction, reducing to Medium to High at operation year of opening (winter) and to Medium at operation year of opening and year 15 (summer). For these recreational receptors of Medium to High sensitivity (**THC-REC-5**), this would result in **Major Adverse (significant)** effects during construction, reducing to **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** at operation year of opening (winter) and to **Moderate Adverse (significant)** at operation years 1 and 15 (summer).

- 7.4.73 The Proposed Development would also be clearly visible in transient views for users of Core Paths IN20.11 'Home Farm to Hughton by Lonbuie' & IN20.05 'East Lodge to West Lodge, Beaufort Castle' around Fanellan (**THC-REC-6**), and users of local roads between Culburnie & Easter Moniack (**THC-T-2**). Some proposed towers would be visible in their entirety in glimpsed views through vegetation, and whilst the removal of the Beauly to Knocknagael 132 kV OHL would ensure only two OHLs remain within the view, the Proposed Development would be larger and more prominent. The magnitude of change would be Medium for recreational and transport receptors during construction and operation year of opening (winter), reducing slightly for footpath users at operation year of opening (summer). For recreational receptors of Medium to High sensitivity (**THC-REC-6**) this would result in **Moderate Adverse (significant)** effects during construction and operation year of opening (winter), reducing to **non-significant** in operation year of opening (summer) due to the extent of deciduous vegetation helping to contain views. For transport receptors of Medium sensitivity (**THC-T-2**) effects would be **Moderate Adverse (significant)** during all phases.
- 7.4.74 From properties further south at Crerag and Culburnie (**THC-R-2**), within Kiltarlity, Glaichbea and Camault (**THC-R-8**), and within Tomnacross, Ardendrain, and Foxhole (**THC-R-10**), the Proposed Development would be seen in the mid to far-distance to the north and northwest within views heavily filtered or interrupted by intervening vegetation and local landform. From residential properties around Belladrum (**THC-R-9**) and recreational visitors to the Tartan Hearts festival and users of Core Paths IN20.03 'Belladrum Kennels to Belladrum by Black Wood', IN20.04 Belladrum Kennels to 'Belladrum by Phoinneas Hill' & IN20.02 'Belladrum Kennels to Belladrum Farm' (**THC-REC-3**), views are also heavily filtered or interrupted by intervening trees, even in winter, and where visible, the Proposed Development would generally be backdropped by more distant hills and vegetation. This filtering of views results in effects during construction and operational phases that are assessed as being **non-significant**.
- 7.4.75 For residential receptors around Easter Moniack (**THC-R-18**) and along the A862 (**THC-R-13, THC-REC-2**), the Proposed Development would be prominently seen across open fields in combination with the existing 275 kV OHL and (prior to its removal) the 132 kV OHL, resulting in a degree of wirescaping across the enclosed valley. The Proposed Development would be a substantially detracting feature in the foreground of views and would be openly visible in the near-distance for receptors closest to the A862 and at Easter Moniack, with management felling, the cleared OC and towers also likely to be visible over western slopes of The Aird. The removal of one line of existing towers to the north of the A862 for the 132 kV OHL removal would not reduce the impact of the Proposed Development due to the proximity of the Proposed OHL to these receptors. The magnitude of change for residential receptors during all phases would be High. As these receptors are of High sensitivity, this would result in **Major Adverse (significant)** effects during both construction and operational phases. The magnitude of change for users of the North Coast 500 route along the A862 (**THC-REC-2**) would be Medium during all phases, resulting in **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** effects.
- 7.4.76 For users of Core Path IN21.07 'West Lodge to Lower Achnagairn' at Easter Moniack (**THC-REC-7**), the Proposed Development would also be prominently visible, particularly where it crosses the Core Path. The change in view would not be a substantial change in character given the presence of the A862, existing OHL and some screening from vegetation, even in winter, but it would contribute to a localised wirescaping effect that would be particularly prominent for a short stretch. The magnitude of change would be Medium to High at construction, reducing to Medium at operation year of opening (winter and summer). As these receptors are of Medium to High sensitivity, this would result in **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** effects during construction, and **Moderate Adverse (significant)** effects during operation year of opening (winter and summer).

- 7.4.77 The Proposed Development would also appear prominently for residential receptors around Balchraggan and Cabrich (**THC-R-16**) and in near-distant, slightly elevated views from West Croft (**THC-R-17**), immediately beyond the A862. The removal of one line of existing towers to the north of the A862 for the 132 kV OHL removal would slightly offset the impact of the introduction of new taller towers into the landscape, whilst management felling planting back to the edge of the OC, and forest edge fringe planting within the OC, would soften the appearance of the Proposed Development through forestry for some receptors. The magnitude of change would be Medium to High during construction, reducing to Medium in operation year of opening (winter) for **THC-R-16** and operation year of opening (summer) for **THC-R-17** due to the extent of deciduous planting within views. As these receptors are of High sensitivity, this would result in **Major Adverse (significant)** effects during construction, reducing to **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** effects during operation year of opening (winter and summer) for **THC-R-16**, and **Major Adverse (significant)** effects during construction and operation year of opening (winter), reducing to **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** effects during operation year of opening (summer) for **THC-R-17**.
- 7.4.78 From receptors at Knockbain and Rebeg (**THC-R-19**), the level of vegetation screening helps to reduce the magnitude of change on views and effects would be **non-significant** due to intervening vegetation, even in winter.
- 7.4.79 Users of Core Path IN23.02 'Newtonhill to Blackfold' (**THC-REC-9**) would have brief but open near to mid-distant views of the Proposed Development across The Aird where the path crosses beneath the Proposed Development south of Altnacardich. Residential receptors in this location to the south of Altnacardich, and further west on the lower slopes of The Aird (from Ardmachdonie to southwest of Newtonhill) (**THC-R-22**) would view towers in their entirety and in the skyline above rising landform and surrounding forestry due to proximity. The magnitude of change would be High for residential receptors (**THC-R-22**) during construction and at operation year of opening (winter and summer), reducing slightly to Medium to High at operation year 15 (summer). As these residential receptors are of High sensitivity, this would result in **Major Adverse (significant)** effects during both construction and operation. For users of Core Path IN23.02 (**THC-REC-9**), the effect would also be **Major Adverse (significant)** during construction but reducing to **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** during operation year of opening (winter and summer) and reducing further to **Moderate Adverse (significant)** at operation year 15 (summer) as a result of replanting within transient views.
- 7.4.80 Receptors slightly more distant would have some additional screening to create a narrower view but would still view the Proposed Development clearly on the skyline. The Proposed OHL would be seen by residents within Newtonhill, and Altnacardich (**THC-R-24**) and within Drumchardine, Inchmore, Holme, and Craggach (**THC-R-23a**), as well as users of Core Path IN21.04 'Drumchardine Craggach loop' (**THC-REC-8**) crossing fields in the mid-distance to the west, and rising up onto the slopes of An Leacainn, Mam Mor and Cnoc na Moine to the south. It would be a noticeable detracting feature in the skyline above the tree line for many receptors and would result in a new OC through blocks of existing forestry. Management felling planting back to the edge of the OC would re-establish over time, but visibility of towers would remain in the long-term, along with large gaps in tree canopy up The Aird. For the residential receptors within Newtonhill, and Altnacardich (**THC-R-24**) and within Drumchardine, Inchmore, Holme, and Craggach (**THC-R-23a**), the magnitude of change would be Medium at construction but reducing slightly to Low to Medium by operation year of opening (winter and summer) for residents within Drumchardine, Inchmore, Holme, and Craggach (**THC-R-23a**) and by operation year 15 (summer) for residential receptors within Newtonhill, and Altnacardich (**THC-R-24**) as a result of management felling planting back to the edge of the OC. As these residential receptors are of High sensitivity, this would result in **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** effects during construction for residents within Drumchardine, Inchmore, Holme, and Craggach (**THC-R-23a**), reducing to **Moderate Adverse (significant)** at operation year of opening (winter and summer). For receptors within Newtonhill and Altnacardich (**THC-R-24**), effects would be **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** during construction and operation year of opening (winter and summer) but reducing to **non-significant** by operation year 15 (summer) for receptors within Newtonhill and Altnacardich (**THC-R-24**). For users of Core Path IN21.04 (**THC-REC-8**) views are transient, and the effects are considered **non-significant** during all phases.

- 7.4.81 The Proposed Development would be clearly discernible across views experienced by users of The Great Glen Way (**THC-REC-24**) from both the south (for around 2 km) and particularly from the north (for around 4 km), with the proportion of the view and prominence of towers increasing with proximity to the Proposed Development. The magnitude of change would be High for up to 6 km of the route at all phases apart from year 15 of operation, when it would reduce slightly to Medium to High due to establishment of management felling replanting back to the edge of the OC. As these receptors are of High sensitivity this would result in **Major Adverse (significant)** effects during both construction and operational phases, although the management felling replanting back to the edge of the OC would slightly soften some views by year 15 (summer) of the operational phase.
- 7.4.82 For users of minor roads over The Aird (**THC-T-3**) the Proposed Development would be clearly visible where it passes over the minor road connecting to the A82, where towers would be in close proximity. Gaps in forestry, and more open ground around dwellings enable clear, short-distance views towards the Proposed Development, although the presence of coniferous (evergreen) trees would enable screening of lower portions of the towers even in winter. The magnitude of change would be Medium during all phases. As these receptors are of Medium sensitivity, this would result in **Moderate Adverse (significant)** effects during construction and operational phases.
- 7.4.83 Receptors slightly more distant to the south, such as at South Clunes, as well as to the north at Lentrán, Lentránhill, and Englishton Muir (**THC-R-23b**), would not experience any significant adverse effects, with most experiencing no changes at all to their view at either construction or operation. There would also be no visibility from receptors on the lower southern slopes of The Aird from Balliemore, Blackfold, and beyond, with the topography of The Aird itself screening views. Effects are assessed as **non-significant**.

The Aird to Knocknagael (within THC)

- 7.4.84 Users of the A82 (**THC-T-4**) would be aware of the Proposed Development where it crosses it north of Dochgarroch. The Proposed Development would be noticeable as it crosses down off The Aird to the west together with a brief, transient appreciation of a felled area within forestry on The Aird, potentially resulting in a slight 'notch' in the skyline. Transient views of the Proposed Development are more noticeable whilst travelling south from the north due to more open ground. The magnitude of change would be Medium during all phases. As these receptors are of Medium sensitivity, this would result in **Moderate Adverse (significant)** effects during both construction stage and operational phases.
- 7.4.85 The Proposed Development would be visible within a wide portion of views for residents between Dochgarroch Locks and Inverness (**THC-R-25**) as it crosses the river valley and onto hill sides to the east and west. New towers would be viewed in the skyline, openly visible in their entirety, or above trees. Together with the existing OHL this would further deteriorate views through the river valley and create areas of wirescaping. The magnitude of change would be Medium during all phases. As these receptors are of High sensitivity, this would result in a **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** effect during both construction stage and operational phases.
- 7.4.86 The Proposed Development would be a highly noticeable feature in the foreground of views for detached properties at Lagnalean & Dalreoch (Lower Dunain) (**THC-R-28**), resulting in a slight 'boxing in' on two sides of properties at Dalreoch. A small amount of clearance across the northern extent of Drumashie Plantation to accommodate a new OC would also result in slightly increased visibility. However, removal of the existing Beauly to Knocknagael 132 kV OHL immediately adjacent to properties at Dalreoch would slightly reduce the extent of their 'boxing in' from the Proposed Development. Even so, the magnitude of change would be High during all phases due to the proximity of receptors and some of them becoming 'boxed in'. As these receptors are of High sensitivity, this would result in **Major Adverse (significant)** effects during construction and operational phases.
- 7.4.87 The Proposed Development would be a perceptible feature in the mid-distance to the northeast for residents around Dochgarroch (**THC-R-26**) and Scaniport (**THC-R-27a & THC-R-27b**), where it would appear within both open and interrupted views as it rises gently to the east of the B862. Towers are likely to be partially backclothed by blocks of woodland and hills, but the tops of the nearest towers would be visible in the skyline. It is likely to be **non-significant** for receptors here due to screening by intervening vegetation and landform.

- 7.4.88 For users of the Great Glen Canoe Trail & Caledonian Canal Towpaths (**THC-REC-11**), the Proposed Development would be visible over a distance of approximately 2.5 km, with towers impinging on the skyline of close views. No towers would be visible in their entirety from Dochgarroch Locks (**THC-REC-1**, a particularly busy section of the canal) but they would be seen above intervening tree lines. The removal of existing towers from the Beauly to Knocknagael 132 kV OHL within the view would slightly offset the impact of wirescaping, whilst deciduous vegetation in summer would further reduce visibility. The magnitude would be High during construction for users nearest to the Proposed Development, reducing to Medium to High during operation year of opening (winter) and Medium during operation year of opening (summer) due to intervening deciduous vegetation. As these receptors are of High sensitivity, this would result in a **Major Adverse (significant)** effect during construction and operation year of opening (winter), reducing slightly to **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** during operation year of opening and year 15 (summer).
- 7.4.89 The Proposed Development would cross the B862 General Wade's Military Road (**THC-T-5**) and the Caledonia Way (**THC-REC-12**) just after it rejoins the B862 at Scaniport. From the Caledonia Way and B862 General Wade's Military Road, views of the Proposed Development as it crosses the lower elevations of Drum Mossie Muir, through the northern end of Drumashie Plantation and on to higher ground at Essich to the east, would be prominent where occasional panoramic views of the landscape are available. However, views are mostly well contained by woodland and as a result, the Proposed Development would only appear briefly and intermittently. The magnitude of change would be Medium for users of the less well-screened Caledonia Way (**THC-REC-12**) during construction and operation year of opening (winter), reducing slightly to Low to Medium during operation year of opening (summer). On these recreational receptors of Medium to High sensitivity, this would result in **Moderate Adverse (significant)** effects during construction and operation year of opening (winter) but would reduce slightly to **non-significant** during operation year of opening (summer). The effects for users of the B862 General Wade's Military Road (**THC-T-6**) would be **non-significant** during all phases.
- 7.4.90 For residents of individual, relatively isolated properties in Essich (**THC-R-29**), the Proposed Development would be apparent across a potentially wide portion of views. Landform and vegetation would interrupt views to reduce extent, but proposed towers would appear noticeably within the skyline and be far more prominent than the existing 132 kV and 275 kV OHLs. The magnitude of change would be High during construction and operation year of opening (winter), reducing slightly to Medium to High during operation year of opening (summer) and year 15 (summer). As these receptors are of High sensitivity, this would result in **Major Adverse (significant)** effects during construction and operational phases.
- 7.4.91 The Proposed Development would be a perceptible feature in near to mid-distance views for residents between the B862 east of the River Ness (Cullaird) and west of the A9 at Milton of Leys (**THC-R-30**). It would be visible across a wide portion of views as it crosses The Aird, as well as east of the River Ness valley on the mid-slopes of Drum Mossie Muir. Landform and vegetation would interrupt views to the Proposed Development and help limit visibility, however, towers are likely to appear within the skyline beyond the existing OHL to the south and west. It would appear for a long stretch in parallel with the existing 275 kV OHL travelling eastwards across Drum Mossie Muir, reducing the impact of two separate OHLs in views, whilst removal of existing towers would slightly offset the impact of new, more distant, but taller towers for receptors with views towards Knocknagael Substation. These receptors, however, would also view a new diamond crossing and an angle tower in the skyline above intervening vegetation. Many properties have views fronting downslope towards the north, such that the Proposed Development would not intrude on key far-distant views. Effects are considered to be **non-significant** as a result, despite proximity of some receptors. Receptors further north, and more distant including those on the southern edge of Inverness (**THC-R-31**) and Milton Of Leys (**THC-R-34**), as well as those more distant to the south around Balnafaich, Inverarnie, Mains of Faillie, and Scatraig (**THC-R-32**), would also not experience a substantial change in view due to intervening vegetation, topography or built form. Effects are therefore assessed as **non-significant**.
- 7.4.92 Users of the A9 (**THC-T-7**) would view the Proposed Development in combination with the existing 275 kV OHL, resulting in a slight wirescaping effect where they cross the road corridor. Construction activity is likely to appear

in the skyline of views and would therefore result in a Medium magnitude of change and **Moderate Adverse (significant)** effect. Towers would appear in the skyline of near to mid-distant, transient views, which would not substantially detract from the experience of those travelling quickly through the otherwise attractive landscape and would therefore result in **non-significant** effects during all phases of operation.

- 7.4.93 Users of Core Paths IN11.02 'Daviot Wood circuits', IN19.40 'Castleton to Daviot Wood by Bogbain Moor' & IN19.39 'General Wades Military Road to Daviot Wood', Daviot Woods to the south of Inverness (**THC-REC-15**) would experience intermittent and near-distance views of the Proposed Development as it crosses Drummoissie Muir, where it may be visible above the tree line. Whilst the Proposed Development would be seen in conjunction with the existing 275 kV OHL, with which it would run parallel, it would introduce an additional taller, man-made feature into a remote environment and detract from the natural and wild qualities of the landscape. The magnitude of change would be Medium during all phases. As these receptors are of Medium to High sensitivity, this would result in **Moderate Adverse (significant)** effects during construction and operational phases.
- 7.4.94 Users of Daviot Steading (formerly Clava Mains) wedding venue (**THC-REC-14**) are likely to afford near-distant, views north and west towards the Proposed Development, which would be clearly seen above intervening field boundary vegetation, particularly from exterior spaces. The Proposed Development would be seen in conjunction with the existing 275 kV OHL which would create a degree of wirescaping in the skyline and reduce the sense of remoteness and scenic quality. The magnitude of change would be Medium to High during construction and operation year of opening (winter), reducing to Medium in operation year of opening (summer) and year 15 (summer). As these receptors are of Medium to High sensitivity, this would result in **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** effects at construction and operation year of opening (winter), reducing slightly to **Moderate Adverse (significant)** during operation year of opening (summer) and year 15 (summer) due to deciduous vegetation in the area and establishment of some limited management felling replanting back to the OC.

Knocknagael to Castleton (within THC)

- 7.4.95 For residents to the south of Castleton (**THC-R-37**), the Proposed Development would be seen in the near to mid-distance through open fields and on the lower slopes of Meall Mor. It would be seen in combination with the existing 275 kV OHL, creating a wirescaping effect. Towers would impinge into the skyline of open and filtered, attractive lower-lying valley views. Daviot Lodge and Daviot Steading in particular would be able to see towers in their entirety in the near-distance, with the Proposed Development running across the view. Residential receptors further to the north and south would have views slightly more screened by vegetation, but receptors lying immediately south of the existing 275 kV OHL (including Craigard and North Birches) would become partially 'boxed in', with OHL infrastructure on two sides. The magnitude of change would be Medium to High during all phases. As these receptors are of High sensitivity, this would result in effects of **Major Adverse (significant)** during both construction and operational phases.
- 7.4.96 Residential receptors at Leanach, Newlands of Culloden, and along the B851 (**THC-R-40**) would view the Proposed Development across a wide portion of the view on the mid-slopes of hills, but it would only occasionally impinge into the distant skyline beyond the existing 275 kV OHL. The majority of the Proposed Development would be backclothed by hills, with lower portions of towers screened by Saddle Hill, but the Proposed Development would parallel the existing 275 kV OHL, increasing infrastructure presence across distant remote hills. The magnitude of change would be Low to Medium during all phases. As these receptors are of High sensitivity, this would result in **Moderate Adverse** effects, but due to the perceived degree of change, seen beyond the existing 275 kV OHL, the effects are assessed as **non-significant**.
- 7.4.97 Residential receptors slightly more distant, to the south at Craggie, Craggiemore, Daviot, and Auchnahillin (**THC-R-33**); and to the north at Bogbain, Upper Muckovie, Lower Muckovie, and Easter Bogbain (**THC-R-35**); at Inshes Wood, Cradlehall, Westhill, Resaurie, Smithton, Culloden, and Balloch (**THC-R-36**); at Nairnside (**THC-R-38**); at Castletown (Castleton), Easter Daltullich, and Ballaggan (**THC-R-39**); and at Viewhill, and Braehill (**THC-R-41**), all have views of the Proposed Development screened by intervening vegetation, built form or topography. The

Proposed Development would be seen largely in parallel with the existing 275 kV OHL and backclothed by hills and vegetation. Occasional towers may impinge into the skyline in views, but the Proposed Development would be visible across a small portion only of mid to far-distant views, resulting in effects that are assessed as **non-significant** during both construction and operational phases.

- 7.4.98 For visitors to Culloden battlefield (**THC-REC-25**) the Proposed Development would be noticeable over a length of approximately 4 km, located on slightly higher ground beyond the existing 275 kV OHL. Although towers located beyond the summit of Saddle Hill are likely to be substantially screened and backclothed by rising hills behind, a number of towers are likely to be skylined further east before the Proposed Development drops onto lower slopes behind Assich Forest. Even so, the Proposed Development would only be seen in the far-distance to the south, across a small portion of panoramic views. Effects are therefore assessed as **Moderate Adverse** in all phases of construction and operation but **non-significant**.
- 7.4.99 For users of the Highland Tourist Route on the A939 (**THC-REC-16**) the Proposed Development would be largely absent from the majority of views, with only a distant and intermittent appreciation likely between Inverness and Redburn, where the Proposed Development is on higher ground to the south. However, where views of the Proposed Development are available, notably in proximity to Ferness, it would be viewed in conjunction with the existing 275 kV OHL located parallel to the Proposed Development as it crosses the A939. The Proposed Development would here become a dominant feature within the skyline of brief views from the road. The magnitude of change would be Medium during all phases for this short section, but No Change for the majority of the route. As the receptor is of High sensitivity, this would result in a localised **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** effect during both construction and operational phases, but a **Neutral** effect from the majority of the route.
- 7.4.100 For users of NCN Route 7 (**THC-REC-17**), the Proposed Development would be intermittently visible over a length of approximately 7 km, crossing the cycle route in proximity to the existing 275 kV OHL and introducing additional vertical infrastructure into a rural landscape. The magnitude of change would be Medium during all phases for this section of the route and No Change for the remainder. As these receptors are of High sensitivity, this would result in **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** effects during both construction and operational phases for the localised section (up to 7 km) but a **Neutral** effect for the remainder of the route.
- 7.4.101 Users of the Highland Main Line Railway (**THC-T-10**) would experience brief, transient views of the Proposed Development over a distance of approximately 1.5 km. It would be intermittently visible to the west where it extends across the lower elevations of the River Nairn valley and seen in conjunction with the existing 275 kV OHL. Western views would be partially screened by surrounding topography as well as vegetation associated with the River Nairn, whilst views to the northeast are contained by the elevated topography of Meall Mor and associated extensive vegetation cover. Transient views would result in **non-significant** effects for users of the railway.

Castleton to Ferness (within THC)

- 7.4.102 Receptors are concentrated to the north of the Proposed Development through this section, with the much more remote upland landscape to the south restricting settlement. The Proposed Development parallels the existing 275 kV OHL across slightly lower ground on the edge of the uplands, and on the edge of forested hills associated with the Assich Forest. The two lines diverge through the gentler wooded landscape on the approach to Ferness.
- 7.4.103 Residents in close proximity to the Proposed Development with more open views to the south and southwest of Cawdor (**THC-R-44**), within Urchany (**THC-R-49**) and between Mains of Clunas and Newlands of Fleenas Wood, to the west of Redburn (**THC-R-50**) would see the Proposed Development prominently in the near to mid-distance to the south. The Proposed Development would be seen in combination with the existing 275 kV OHL across a moderate portion of the view and within the skyline on rising landform. There would be a concentration of infrastructure across the hills to the south, and one angle tower would be particularly noticeable for receptors at Rehiran and Ruallan. The Proposed Development would add additional detracting man-made features within

attractive, rural views. For residential receptors of High sensitivity south and southwest of Cawdor (THC-R-44), the magnitude of change would be Medium to High during all phases, resulting in **Major Adverse (significant)** effects during construction and operational phases. For residential receptors High sensitivity within Urchany (THC-R-49) the magnitude of change would be Medium during all phases, resulting in **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** effects during both construction and operational phases. For residential receptors of Medium to High sensitivity between Mains of Clunas and Newlands of Fleenas Wood (THC-R-50), the magnitude of change would be Medium to High during construction and operation year of opening (winter and summer), but reducing slightly to Medium by operation year 15 (summer), except for receptors at Newland of Clunas, for whom the magnitude of change would remain Medium to High during all phases. This would result in effects of **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** effects during construction and operation phases (year of opening winter and summer) but reducing slightly to **Moderate Adverse (significant)** effects during operation year 15 (summer), except for receptors at Newland of Clunas who remain **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)**.

- 7.4.104 Residential receptors further to the south at Bruachmary, Balmore, Newlands of Knockaneorn (THC-R-51) are more screened by coniferous forestry, including Clunas Wood, Loch of Boath Wood, and Newlands of Fleenas Wood. For these receptors of High sensitivity, the magnitude of change would be Medium and **Moderate Adverse (significant)** during construction but reducing at operation year of opening (winter and summer) to **non-significant** due to removal of cranes and activity associated with construction.
- 7.4.105 The Proposed Development would also be a noticeable feature in the near to mid-distance for residential receptors in Ferness (THC-R-56a). It would appear within oblique views in the mid-distance but would be more apparent in near-distance view for receptors at Tomnarroch Farm, Drumore and Achnabechan. New towers would be seen in the skyline, above and between intervening tree lines and in combination with the existing 275 kV OHL. The magnitude of change would be Medium to High during construction and operation year of opening (winter) and Medium during operation year of opening (summer) and year 15 (summer). As these receptors are of High sensitivity, this would result in **Major Adverse (significant)** effects during construction and operation year of opening (winter) but would reduce in operation year of opening (summer) and by year 15 (summer) to **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** as a result of management felling planting back to the edge of the OC.
- 7.4.106 The Proposed Development would also be a substantial, prominent feature in near-distant views for receptors at Factors Cottage to the southwest of Ferness (THC-R-56b). The height, scale, and proximity of the Proposed Development is in large part due to loss of extensive areas of management felling and would result in a magnitude of change of High at all phases apart from operation year 15 (summer) when it would reduce to Medium. As these receptors are of High sensitivity, this would result in **Major Adverse (significant)** effects during construction, operation year of opening (winter and summer) but reducing to **Moderate Adverse (significant)** by operation year 15 (summer) as a result of management felling planting back to the edge of the OC.
- 7.4.107 Residential receptors to the north of Achagour Fishery (THC-R-53) and the north of the River Findhorn around Ardclach (THC-R-55), as well as users of Achagour Fishery (THC-REC-22) and visitors to Ardclach Church, grounds and Bell Tower (THC-REC-26) have views contained to the mid-ground by surrounding forestry, although an existing adjacent 275 kV OHL is highly prominent in the foreground of views. Felling of managed commercial forestry beyond the OC and temporary access tracks would be noticeable, and whilst replanting back to the OC would restore some of this screening, the Proposed Development would be clearly noticeable in the near-distance above intervening forestry. The angle towers just to the southwest of the fisheries would also be clearly noticeable, particularly from the nearest receptors, and an angle tower in proximity to receptors at Levratich would be seen in fields to the south across a wide portion of the view, resulting in a slight wirescaping effect. Given the presence of the adjacent 275 kV OHL in close proximity, the introduction of additional towers to the south would intensify the concentration of infrastructure in the view, even with some towers being in parallel. The magnitude of change would be Medium to High for residential receptors to the north of Achagour Fishery (THC-R-53) and the north of the River Findhorn around Ardclach (THC-R-55), as well as for users of Achagour Fishery (THC-REC-22) at both construction stage and operation year of opening (winter), but reducing slightly for

THC-R-53 to Medium in year of opening (summer). For residential receptors of High sensitivity this would result in **Major Adverse (significant)** effects during construction and operational phases for **THC-R-55**, reducing slightly to **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** effects for residential receptors to the north of Achagour Fishery (**THC-R-53**) by operation year of opening (summer). For users of Achagour Fishery (**THC-REC-22**) of Medium to High sensitivity, this would result in **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** effects during both construction and operational phases. For visitors to Ardclach Church, grounds and Bell Tower (**THC-REC-26**), the magnitude would be Medium during all phases. On these recreational receptors of Medium to High sensitivity, this would result in **Moderate Adverse (significant)** effects during both construction and operational phases.

- 7.4.108 Residential receptors further north at Newton of Petty, Tornagrain, Drumine, Brackley, Gollanfield, and Blackcastle (**THC-R-42**); Cantraywood, Easter Galcantray (**THC-R-43**); Croy, Clephanton, Cawdor, Culchanny, Piperhill (**THC-R-45**); South Nairn (**THC-R-46**); Nairn (**THC-R-47**); Little Urchany, Regoul, Torrich, and Newlands of Inchnacoirach (**THC-R-48**); Properties on Lethen Road, Braeside (**THC-R-54a**); Littlemill, Redburn (**THC-R-54b**); and properties off the B9007, The Mount, and Ferness (north) (**THC-R-57**); as well as residential receptors further to the south at Dulsie, Milltown, and the Glenferness Estate (**THC-R-52**) would all experience varying degrees of screening by extensive forestry associated with the Assich Forest and between the Assich Forest and Ferness, including Achneim Wood, Clunas Wood, Knockaneorn Wood, Newlands of Fleenas Wood, and Dulsie Wood, resulting in effects that are assessed as **non-significant**.
- 7.4.109 As with residential receptors within these wider areas, users of recreational trails and transport routes have views generally well screened by forestry, limiting visibility of the Proposed Development for users of NCN Route 1 'Inverness to Nairn' (**THC-REC-18**); visitors to / within Cawdor Castle Garden and Designed Landscape (**THC-REC-20**); users of Heritage Trail within the **Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava Moors SLA** (**THC-REC-21**); and users of Long Distance Paths and Heritage Trails 'Dava Way', 'Old Military Road', and 'Via Regia' (**THC-REC-23**), as well as users of minor roads between Castletown and Ardclach, including the B851 (**THC-T-8**), and users of the A939 and B9007 (**THC-T-9**). Effects here are assessed as **non-significant**.

Ferness to Dallas (within MC)

- 7.4.110 Receptors through this section are also concentrated to the north of the Proposed Development, with the more remote upland landscape to the south continuing to restrict settlement. The Proposed Development initially parallels the existing 275 kV OHL around the edge of the uplands before diverging around Hill of Glaschyle.
- 7.4.111 The few properties to the south of the Proposed Development in this section are concentrated near Berryburn and Rochuln (**MOR-R-8**); to the west of the A940 (**MOR-R-2a**); and further south on the northwestern lower slopes of the Hill of Aitnoh (west of the A940) (**MOR-R-2b**). The Proposed Development would be a clearly noticeable feature within views north as it crosses open moorland and would be seen in combination with the existing 275 kV OHL. This would concentrate infrastructure into the same alignment, although it would intensify the urbanising effect of additional infrastructure, further deteriorating attractive, upland views. For receptors at Berryburn and Rochuln (**MOR-R-8**), the magnitude of change would be Medium during construction, reducing to Low to Medium at operation year of opening (winter and summer). As these receptors are of High sensitivity, this would result in a **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** effect during construction, reducing to **Moderate Adverse (significant)** effect during operation year of opening (winter and summer). For receptors to the west of the A940 (**MOR-R-2a**), the magnitude of change would be Low to Medium during all stages. On receptors of High sensitivity, this would result in a **Moderate Adverse (significant)** effect during construction, but reducing to **Moderate Adverse** and **non-significant** during operation year of opening (winter and summer) as views would be generally oblique, occupy a relatively small portion of the view, be seen in conjunction with the existing 275 kV OHL and would be slightly less intrusive than the construction activity. The receptors further south on the northwestern lower slopes of the Hill of Aitnoh (west of the A940) (**MOR-R-2b**) would have views screened by intervening topography such that the Proposed Development would be a barely perceptible element in the distant landscape and effects are assessed as being **non-significant** during all phases.

- 7.4.112 Residential receptors in closest proximity to the Proposed Development along the A940 (**MOR-R-1**) would see the Proposed Development as a prominent feature within the near to mid-distance of views, particularly from receptors at Tomdow and Culfearn. It would, however, be located in parallel with the existing 275 kV OHL which would contain the spread of infrastructure in the view. Whilst some views would be interrupted by intervening buildings, topography and vegetation, the Proposed Development would appear prominently in the skyline across the landscape. The introduction of additional OHL infrastructure within an attractive, undulating, upland landscape would intensify effects and further deteriorate views for receptors, despite the existing presence of the 275 kV OHL and the A940. The magnitude of change would be Medium to High during all phases. As these receptors are of High sensitivity, this would result in a **Major Adverse (significant)** effect during construction and operational phases.
- 7.4.113 For users of the A940 (**MOR-T-1**), the transient and sequential results would, for the majority of the route, result in **non-significant** effects. However, along a short section of the road, of up to 1 km, the Proposed Development would pass in proximity to, and directly across it, becoming particularly prominent for users travelling north from Tomdow. The close-proximity views across the open, rural countryside would result in a magnitude of change of Medium at all phases. On receptors of Medium sensitivity, this would result in **Moderate Adverse (significant)** effects at both construction and operational phases.
- 7.4.114 For residential receptors in closest proximity to the Proposed Development nearer Dallas, including those at Bantrach, Dallasbraughty, Tomcork, and Johnstripe (**MOR-R-7**), and Soccach, Torwinny, Glen Lossie, Coldwells and Tapp (**MOR-R-10**), the Proposed Development would become a prominent feature within views, with angle towers at Bantrach / Burn of Aulthaunachan, and at Johnstripe, being prominent for receptors here. Properties at Burn of Aulthaunachan, Dallasbraughty, and at Johnstripe would all become 'boxed in' by the Proposed Development, with properties 'sandwiched' between the existing 275 kV OHL and the Proposed Development. Views south from receptors at Torwinny and Coldwells would be more open due to the extent of tree clearance to accommodate the OC and management felling through the Moss of Bednawinny plantation, opening up visibility to the full extent of some of the towers. Receptors at Tapp would have some screening or filtering of views due to intervening garden vegetation and forestry, but the Proposed Development would remain clearly visible. Views would be significantly affected. The magnitude of change would be High during all phases. As these receptors are of High sensitivity, this would result in a **Major Adverse (significant)** effect during construction and operational phases, although impacts would reduce slightly by operation year 15 (summer) for some receptors at Soccach, Torwinny, Glen Lossie, Coldwells and Tapp (**MOR-R-10**), due to maturing of management felling planting back to the edge of the OC across Moss of Bednawinny. Even so, effects would remain **Major Adverse (significant)**.
- 7.4.115 For receptors at Beachans (**MOR-R-5**), the Proposed Development would become a prominent feature within views, albeit oblique, but it would appear in the skyline. Far-distance views would also be experienced by receptors on the lower slopes of Hill of Feakirk, notably at Lurg, where limited intervening woodland allows for more open views of the valley. One angle tower adjacent to the River Divie would also be visible, adding heavier infrastructure into views. The magnitude of change would be Medium during all phases. As these receptors are of High sensitivity, this would result in **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** effects during construction and operational phases.
- 7.4.116 Further east near Dallas, receptors around Aultahurn, Aultahuish, Ballachraggan, Auchness, and Leonach (**MOR-R-11**), the Proposed Development would be seen in the background of open views to the south and east, glimpsed intermittently across a small to moderate portion of the view. It would be visible as it crosses open moorland and recently felled woodland on the northern slopes of the Cairn of Ballindean and Cairn na Cailliche and across the western slopes of Cairn Uish. The Proposed Development would be partially screened by topography, coniferous planting and more localised garden and roadside vegetation. In views east, proposed towers would be seen against a backdrop of wind turbines associated with the Kellas Windfarm. The introduction of proposed infrastructure within a predominantly attractive, undulating upland landscape would deteriorate views for receptors. The magnitude of change would be Medium during all phases. As these receptors are of

High sensitivity, this would result in **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** effects during both construction and operational phases.

- 7.4.117 For residential receptors slightly more distant, including those within and adjacent to Glenerie on the A940 (**MOR-R-3**); within and surrounding Dunphail and Relugas (**MOR-R-4a**); within and surrounding Relugas and to the South of Logie (**MOR-R-4b**); to the north of the Hill of Glaschyle and Hill of Tomechale (**MOR-R-6**); to the west of Romach Hill (**MOR-R-9**); between Meikle Hill and Mill Buie – River Lossie Valley (**MOR-R-12**); on the mid and lower slopes of Mill Buie (**MOR-R-13**); and within Dallas (**MOR-R-14**), the Proposed Development would be visible as it crosses the lower slopes of Cairn Eney, and between the Hill of Glaschyle and the Hill of Tomechale. The tops of proposed towers would be perceptible beyond Glenerner Wood to the south, but would be largely screened by topography at Sneishin Hill, Hill of Glaschyle, and Mill Buie for most receptors, including from Dallas. Any visibility would be across a very small portion of the view and would not alter the baseline characteristics of the view. Effects are therefore assessed as **non-significant**.
- 7.4.118 Users of the Dava Way (**MOR-REC-1**) and 'Via Regia' Heritage Trail (**MOR-REC-5**) would experience changing sequential views of the Proposed Development, with it becoming more visible with proximity. Travelling south out of Bantrach Wood, users would afford a near-distant view of the Proposed Development as it parallels behind the existing 275 kV OHL. At this location an angle tower to the east of the woodland would be prominent. Users of the Via Regia route walking north to the east of the Knock of Braemoray would experience more continuous far-distance views of the Proposed Development to the north, with views west intervened by topography at Cairn Eney. Users of the Dava Way would have views opening to the west, with towers seen prominently in the skyline on the northern slopes of Cairn Eney. Visibility from the south is limited by landform and vegetation and is less likely beyond the Hill of Feakirk, with visibility reducing further south. The Proposed Development would deteriorate views and reduce the sense of remoteness from the northern area of Dava Moor, albeit backdropped by Glenerner and Bantrach Wood. The presence of angle towers, notably to the east of Bantrach Wood and to the east of the Hill of Glaschyle, would further detract from the rural and scenic quality of the landscape. The magnitude of change would be Medium where in proximity to the Proposed Development during all phases for both receptors. However, the Dava Way is considered slightly more sensitive. For users of the Dava Way (**MOR-REC-1**) with High sensitivity, this would result in effects of **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** compared to users of the Via Regia Heritage Trail (**MOR-REC-5**) with Medium to High sensitivity, resulting in effects of **Moderate Adverse (significant)** during both construction and operational phases.

Dallas to Coleburn (within MC)

- 7.4.119 Receptors through this section remain concentrated to the north of the Proposed Development, with the upland landscape to the south continuing to restrict settlement. The Proposed Development skirts around the mid slopes of Cairn Uish so no residential receptors are located immediately adjacent to it through this section.
- 7.4.120 Although no residential receptors with visibility are located south of the Proposed Development through this section, there are users of Core Paths CP-KT02, CP-KT03 and CP-KT27 (**MOR-REC-10**) some 5 – 6 km to the south. Given distance and topography, there would be very limited visibility of the Proposed Development, and any effects are assessed as **non-significant**.
- 7.4.121 For residential receptors to the north, along the River Lossie valley and B9010, between Hill of Mulundy and Hill of the Wangie at Edinvale (**MOR-R-15**); between the Hill of the Wangie and Meikle Hill / Mill Buie (**MOR-R-16**); and between Buinach Hill and The Drum / Mill Our (**MOR-R-17**), the Proposed Development would be perceptible within far-distance views, but only the tops of proposed towers would be noticeable, and generally across a small portion of the view only. As a result, effects are assessed as **non-significant**.
- 7.4.122 Similarly for visitors to Mill of Kellas Trout Fishery (**MOR-REC-4**) at Kellas within the River Lossie valley, and visitors to Dallas Castle (**MOR-REC-25**) just north of Dallas, views would be contained by topography and vegetation, resulting in effects assessed as **non-significant**.

- 7.4.123 For residential receptors at Netherglen and Coleburn within the Glen of Rothes valley (**MOR-R-23**), the Proposed Development would be a prominent feature within near-distant views as it crosses the valley between Hart Hill and Brown Muir. Views would generally be oblique, and to the west would be partially screened by vegetation around Hart Hill, although removal of trees for the OC and management felling would slightly open up views towards tops of towers. The Proposed Development would also be a prominent feature within views east for receptors with a more open outlook, including those around Coleburn Distillery, as it skirts around Brown Muir, with a number of towers skylined in views. The Proposed Development would also be seen in conjunction with the existing 275 kV OHL, increasing the extent and amount of infrastructure seen, albeit in a small to moderate portion of views. The magnitude of change would be Medium during all phases. As these receptors are of High sensitivity, this would result in **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** effects during construction and operational phases (year of opening and year 15). Given the forestry around Hart Hill, the establishment of replanted management felling areas back to the edge of the OC across Hart Hill would not provide much additional screening, even by year 15 (summer) and effects would therefore remain the same.
- 7.4.124 Visitors to Coleburn Distillery (**MOR-REC-3**) would be focussed on the distillery itself, and with some enclosure by vegetation and topography, the resulting effects are assessed as **non-significant**.
- 7.4.125 Visitors to Glenlatterach Reservoir (**MOR-REC-24**) just south of Kellas, however, would be located directly adjacent to the Proposed Development. It would feature within near-distant views to the south, traversing the lower slopes and local summit of Mill Our to the east and mid slopes of Mill Buie to the west, and seen to the fore of Rothes Windfarm on Cairn Uish to the south. The Proposed Development would appear in the skyline of the open landscape through the upland moorland surrounding the reservoir and, in combination with the existing wind turbines to the south, further detract from the open character of views. Intervening landform and vegetation would partially screen views to the lower to mid portions of towers, but upper portions of the closet towers would remain prominent, including two angle towers. The magnitude of change would be Medium to High during construction, reducing to Medium at year of opening (winter and summer). As these receptors are of Medium to High sensitivity, this would result in **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** effects during construction and **Moderate Adverse (significant)** effects during operation.
- 7.4.126 With a little distance north, receptors would not generally have views of the Proposed Development due to screening by intervening hills, forestry and vegetation. This includes residential receptors within and surrounding Auchtertyre, to the west of Hillhead Wood (**MOR-R-18**); to the south and west of Elgin (**MOR-R-19a, 19b**); to the north of Hart Hill, Brown Muir and south of Elgin (**MOR-R-20, MOR-R-21**); and within and adjacent to Fogwatt and the A941 (**MOR-R-22**); as well as users of Core Paths on the southern edge of Elgin (**MOR-REC-7**); and users of Core Path CP-EG01 (Miltoduff, west of Elgin) (**MOR-REC-6**). Where views are visible, the Proposed Development would be seen across a small portion of the view and therefore the overall sense of naturalness within views is not anticipated to be significantly altered. As a result, effects are assessed as **non-significant**.

Coleburn to Wood of Ordiequish (within MC)

- 7.4.127 Extensive woodland, as well as the hill forms of Brown Muir to the south, and the River Spey valley and Ordiequish Hill to the east, provides some degree of screening for more distant receptors.
- 7.4.128 Between Coleburn (A941) and the B9103 at Badentinan and Altonside, the Proposed Development largely parallels the existing 275 kV OHL. Receptors immediately adjacent would therefore see the Proposed Development as the most prominent feature within views, particularly for residential receptors on the lower slopes of Brown Muir (**MOR-R-28**), and at Altonside (**MOR-R-31**). Felling of woodland through Badentinan Wood to create the OC, for management felling, and for access tracks, would also increase visibility for nearby receptors of ground-level construction activity and lower portions of towers of both the Proposed Development and those of the existing 275 kV OHL. There would also be increased visibility east towards the existing 132 kV OHL, existing 275 kV OHL, and two proposed diamond crossings, creating a sense of wirescaping in views. The magnitude of change would be High during all phases, although for residential receptors at Altonside (**MOR-R-31**), there would be a reduction by operation year 15 (summer) to Medium at apart from year 15 (summer) due to

the replanting of management felling planting areas back to the edge of the OC. As these receptors are of High sensitivity, this would result in **Major Adverse (significant)** effects during construction and operational phases, reducing for some receptors around Altonside (**MOR-R-31**), to a **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** effect as the replanting of management felled areas would provide some additional lower-level screening, reducing the magnitude.

- 7.4.129 As the Proposed Development crosses the mid slope of Brown Muir parallel to the existing 275 kV OHL it would also be a noticeable feature in views south, and skylined in parts, for residential receptors on the southern banks of the Burn of Elms (**MOR-R-29**). Whilst receptors at Angus Farmhouse, Stonehouse, and Bog O'Fearn have views south partially screened by localised landform, as well as vegetation, detracting elements in the view (namely the existing 275 kV OHL) are already present, and the introduction of taller towers within an otherwise attractive rural landscape would further deteriorate near to mid-distant views. The magnitude of change would be Medium during all phases. As these receptors are of High sensitivity, this would result in **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** effects during both construction and operational phases.
- 7.4.130 The gentle landscape and woodland blocks further north beyond the Burn of the Elms creates good screening south towards the Proposed Development. It would therefore not be readily perceptible in views for residential receptors to the north of Hart Hill, Brown Muir and to the south of Elgin (**MOR-R-21**) and along the Burn of the Elms (**MOR-R-26**), resulting in effects that are assessed as **non-significant**.
- 7.4.131 For the small group of receptors to the south of the Proposed Development, higher up Brown Muir and to the southwest of Badentinan Wood (**MOR-R-27**), much of the Proposed Development would be screened from Burnside, Teinland Mains, Teinland Wells and Burnside due to the coniferous woodland in the foreground and mid-distance together with slightly sloping topography. Only the tops of proposed towers would be visible, resulting effects assessed as **non-significant**.
- 7.4.132 For receptors within the River Spey valley, the Proposed Development would be particularly intrusive. For residential receptors in Orbliston (**MOR-R-32b**), including those at Burnside of Dipple, Westerton, and Easterton Cottage, the Proposed Development would interrupt the skyline and detract from the rural, open character of the landscape. For receptors to the west in Orbliston, within a slightly more enclosed landscape (due to curtilage vegetation to block views of existing OHLs), the Proposed Development would be slightly more screened, but towers would still be visible between vegetation and on the skyline of views across the front of properties. A number of receptors within the valley, including those at Burnside of Dipple, and properties in Orbliston (including Orbliston Farm Cottages) would become partially 'boxed in' by the Proposed Development, with the existing 132 kV OHL immediately south. Receptors to the northwest, including Blackburn Croft, Shalom, and Pinewood, would have visibility of an angle tower to the south, and two diamond crossings to the southwest of views. Many receptors would also have clear visibility of the Proposed Development crossing up Ordiequish Hill to the east. The presence of an increased amount of OHL infrastructure in close proximity would create a strong wirescaping effect in views. The magnitude of change would therefore be High during all phases. As these receptors are of High sensitivity, this would result in **Major Adverse (significant)** effects during both construction and operational phases (year of opening and year 15).
- 7.4.133 Residential receptors at Dipple, Cairnend, Trochelhill Country House, and Millhlll (**MOR-R-32a**) would also have clear visibility of the Proposed Development across the valley and across Ordiequish Hill. The Proposed Development would be a highly noticeable feature within views, interrupting the skyline and detracting from the rural, open character of the landscape. This would be particularly noticeable for residents on slightly higher ground to the west (including Cairnend, Trochelhill Country House, and Millhlll), as the Proposed Development would cross to the front of properties across their principal view, impinging into the skyline and replacing the skyline of more distant hills. Receptors within the valley, including those at Dipple, would also view the Proposed Development clearly across the skyline, although at slightly greater distance. Clearance of forestry across Ordiequish Hill for the OC and management felling would leave visible tracks of removed woodland through the Wood of Ordiequish, emphasising the artificial corridor through the woodland. Replanted areas of felling would reinstate the forest canopy back to the edge of the OC on the hill, along with the fringe planting which would

help soften the straight 'track' through the forestry in the long-term within the view, but the Proposed Development would remain highly prominent. The magnitude of change would be Medium to High during all phases. As these receptors are of High sensitivity, this would result in **Major Adverse (significant)** effects during construction and operational phases.

- 7.4.134 Residential receptors slightly further north around Blackburn and Cranloch (including Clatternbriggs, Cranloch, Bellvue, and Roslyn) (**MOR-R-30**), are surrounded to the north and west by woodland, focussing views south and east across the River Spey. Residential receptors to the west of Fochabers along the B9015 and further west at Easter Bauds and Wester Bauds (**MOR-R-36b**), also have a degree of screening from intermittent woodland blocks, and with most properties orientated east-west, views south from here are oblique. Users of Core Path CP-EG52 (**MOR-REC-12**) within this area also have some sequential views afforded between surrounding vegetation. Whilst existing retained coniferous woodland at Blackburn Wood and Badentinan Wood would help screen much of the Proposed Development from Blackburn and Cranloch, it would become a visible feature within views due to its height. The tops of towers would impinge into the skyline of views, and when seen with the existing OHLs and proposed diamond crossings, a degree of wirescaping in some views would be created. The magnitude of change would be Medium for residential receptors (**MOR-R-30**) during both construction and operational phases; Medium for residential receptors (**MOR-R-36b**) reducing to Low to Medium at year of opening (winter and summer); and Medium to High for recreational receptors (**MOR-REC-12**) during construction, reducing to Medium at operation year of opening (winter) onwards. On residential receptors of High sensitivity, this would result in **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** effects during both construction and operational phases for **MOR-R-30**; and **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** effects during construction reducing to **Moderate Adverse (significant)** effects during operational phases for **MOR-R-36b**. For recreational receptors of Medium to High sensitivity, this would result in **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** effects during construction, reducing to **Moderate Adverse (significant)** at operation (year of opening and year 15).
- 7.4.135 The gentler landscape and woodland blocks further north around and beyond the A96 create good screening south towards the Proposed Development. It would therefore not be readily perceptible in views for residential receptors within and on the outskirts of Lhanbryde (**MOR-R-37a**); to the east of Lhanbryde (**MOR-R-37b**); to the north of Lhanbryde at Calcots and Lochill (**MOR-R-39**); and within and west of Mosstodloch (**MOR-R-36a**). Equally, it would not be readily visible for users of NCN 1 between Elgin and Kingston (**MOR-REC-8**) or users of Core Paths CP-FB10 & CP-FB11 to the north of Mosstodoch (**MOR-REC-13**). Effects are therefore assessed as **non-significant**.
- 7.4.136 Residential receptors slightly further south of Orbliston and Dipple in the River Spey valley, within and to the north of Inchberry (**MOR-R-33a**, **MOR-R-33b**), and at Haugh of Orton (between Inchberry and Orton (**MOR-R-34**)) are partially screened by surrounding woodland and curtilage vegetation. The Proposed Development would be noticeable on the skyline across a moderate portion of the view and would be particularly prominent within eastern views as it extends across open fields at Orbliston before crossing the River Spey and Ordiequish Hill, forming the background of views. The removal of woodland to accommodate the OC and management felling across Ordiequish Hill would also be noticeable. Replanting of felling areas and forest edge fringe planting would reinstate the forest canopy to a degree and soften views to the lower portions of towers in the long-term. The Proposed Development would be visible beyond the existing 275 kV and 132 kV OHLs, creating a degree of wirescaping. The magnitude of change for those with more open views (**MOR-R-33a**) would be Medium to High during construction, reducing slightly to Medium at operation year of opening (winter and summer) and year 15 (summer). The magnitude of change for receptors with slightly more open views (**MOR-R-33b**) would be Medium during construction and operation year of opening (winter), reducing slightly to Low to Medium during operation year of opening (summer) and year 15 (summer). For residential receptors at Haugh of Orton (**MOR-R-34**), the magnitude would be Low to Medium during construction and operation year of opening (winter), reducing slightly to Low during operation year of opening (summer) and year 15 (summer). As these receptors are of High sensitivity, this would result in **Major Adverse (significant)** effects for **MOR-R-33a** during construction, reducing to **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** effects during operational phases (year of opening and year 15); **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** effects for **MOR-R-33b** during construction and operation year of

opening (winter), reducing slightly to **Moderate Adverse** but **non-significant** during year 15 (summer); and **non-significant** for residential receptors at Haugh of Orton (**MOR-R-34**).

- 7.4.137 Receptors at Orton (**MOR-R-35**) would have limited or no views of the Proposed Development due to the River Spey valley narrowing through wooded hills, which increasingly screens views north. Effects are therefore assessed as **non-significant**.
- 7.4.138 To the east of the River Spey, on the elevated location of Ordiequish Hill, receptors at Castle Hill, Ordiequish and Aultderg (**MOR-R-42**), and at Upper Ordiequish (**MOR-R-43**) would have clear visibility of the Proposed Development as it cuts across the River Spey valley and up Ordiequish Hill. Tree clearance to accommodate the OC and management felling, would increase the visibility of towers, particularly for receptors at Upper Ordiequish, whilst all receptors are likely to see a concentration of infrastructure around Altonside, including diamond crossings. The introduction of additional infrastructure across the valley and hillside would substantially deteriorate views for receptors within a landscape designated for its scenic landscape value and create a degree of wirescaping in views. The magnitude of change would be High during all phases. As these receptors are of High sensitivity, this would result in **Major Adverse (significant)** effects during construction and operational phases (year of opening and year 15). However, the management felling planting areas back to the edge of the OC across Ordiequish Hill would provide screening of lower portions of towers, as well as some upper portions if tree planting is sufficient to re-enclose views, thicken the screening and fringe planting would naturalise and soften the forestry planting edges. The magnitude would reduce to Medium for receptors at Castle Hill, Ordiequish and Aultderg (**MOR-R-42**) resulting in effects of **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** at year 15 (summer).
- 7.4.139 The Speyside Way (**MOR-REC-15**) follows the course of the River Spey but along the top of Ordiequish Hill, travelling north beyond Fochabers, and south beyond Boat o'Brig and Orton. A slight detour on the top of Ordiequish Hill leads to the designated viewpoint above the Ordiequish Earth Pillars (**MOR-REC-16**). The Proposed Development would be a clearly visible and prominent feature for users of the Speyside Way where the trail crosses beneath it. For visitors to the Ordiequish Earth Pillars viewpoint, visibility to towers would open slightly due to tree felling around the River Spey, and the Proposed Development would be seen crossing the river in combination with existing OHLs, creating a sense of wirescaping. However, surrounding trails, and much of the Speyside Way, is visually well contained by forestry, with other narrow unspoilt views across the River Spey valley afforded at intervals. The magnitude of change would be Medium for visitors to the Earth Pillars viewpoint, and Medium to High for visitors to the Earth Pillars (riverside), Dipple cemetery, and users of the Speyside Way due to the section of open farmland through which it passes beneath the Proposed Development. As these receptors are of High sensitivity, this would result in **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** effects on visitors to the viewpoint, and **Major Adverse (significant)** effects for visitors to the cemetery, earth pillars (riverside), and users of the localised section of the Speyside Way during construction and operational phases (year of opening and year 15).
- 7.4.140 Slightly further north, residential receptors within and around Fochabers (**MOR-R-41b**) and at Culfoldie (**MOR-R-44**), would view the Proposed Development as a prominent feature across the mid-distance of the view as it crosses the open fields around Orbliston and crosses up Ordiequish Hill. Towers across Ordiequish Hill would all be skylined, although the lower half of the Proposed Development would be largely screened by woodland, built form, or localised topography. The Proposed Development would be seen in combination with the existing OHLs in the mid-distance of views, creating a degree of wirescaping over a moderate portion of the view. The magnitude of change would be Medium to High at construction, reducing slightly to Medium during operational phases. As these receptors are of High sensitivity, this would result in **Major Adverse (significant)** effects during construction and **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** effects at operational phases (year of opening and year 15).
- 7.4.141 Receptors to the north of Fochabers (**MOR-R-41a**) and to the east of the B9104 (**MOR-R-40**) have views predominantly enclosed by coniferous and deciduous woodland, including along adjacent watercourses (such as Cross Burn), and by the woodland and topography of Thief's Hill, Whiteash Hill, and Ordiequish Hill. The magnitude of change at construction would be Low to Medium for receptors to the north of Fochabers (**MOR-R-**

41a), reducing to Low at operation, and Negligible to Low or Negligible for receptors to the east of the B9104 (**MOR-R-40**), resulting in effects that are assessed as **non-significant** for all these receptors at all phases. Equally, the Proposed Development would not be readily noticeable for users of Core Paths CP-FB21, CP-FB22, CP-FB23 & CP-SW03 around Fochabers (**MOR-REC-17**), or visitors to Gordon Castle & Walled Garden and GDL (**MOR-REC-18**), resulting in effects that are assessed as **non-significant**.

Wood of Ordiequish to Hill of Greenwood (within MC)

- 7.4.142 Rising landform around Newmill allows for far-distant views across the River Isla valley towards Meikle Balloch Hill, although the town of Keith is located on lower ground alongside the river, and as such its views are a little more contained by surrounding hills. Numerous existing OHLs and substations are present in the landscape, with a degree of wirescaping already present.
- 7.4.143 On the approach to Newmill, and within Newmill, receptors are afforded longer-distance views across the valley, albeit somewhat channelled by surrounding hills. For residential receptors within and west of Auchinderran (**MOR-R-46**), Milltown of Tarrycroys (**MOR-R-47**), and around and within Newmill (**MOR-R-53**, **MOR-R-54**), the Proposed Development would be a prominent feature in near to mid-distant elevated views. It would be particularly visible on the mid to upper slopes of Forgie Hill through open farmland and would interrupt the skyline. Views would no longer be backclothed by the Hill of Towie to the southwest, and Meikle Balloch Hill to the southeast, with the Proposed Development being clearly visible across a moderate to large portion of the view. Receptors at Ardioch would experience particularly extensive portions of views interrupted. Management felling of commercial forestry and native broadleaf woodland beyond the OC and for temporary access tracks would also be clearly noticeable in the foreground of the view for residential receptors at Milltown of Tarrycroys (**MOR-R-47**) and open up views immediately to the foreground and to the east. The magnitude of change would be High during all phases. As these are receptors of High sensitivity, this would result in **Major Adverse (significant)** effects during construction and operational phases (year of opening and year 15). However, the magnitude of change would reduce slightly for Milltown of Tarrycroys (**MOR-R-47**) during operation year of opening (summer) to Medium to High, and to Medium by operation year 15 (summer) due to the extent of deciduous vegetation and replanting of commercial forestry back to the OC, which would see an increase in screening over time. This would result in effects of **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** by operation year 15 (summer).
- 7.4.144 Slightly further east of the Proposed Development, within open farmland sloping down to the River Isla, receptors to the west of the B9016 (**MOR-R-45**), and within and surrounding Aultmore (**MOR-R-58**), the Proposed Development, including angle towers, would be a prominent feature in the mid-distance of views, crossing a moderate portion of the view on the skyline. For residential receptors along the northern slopes of Hill of Brae, these skylined elements would become the tallest structures within the view. Views of the Proposed Development would, however, be intermittent as a result of intervening areas of woodland, with views through Wood of Ordiequish less noticeable due to intervening topography and vegetation. Receptors along the eastern slopes of the Hill of Brae, and particularly those orientated towards Strathisla such as Auchinhove and Brae of Montgrew Cottages, would also have clear views of the diamond crossing where the Proposed Development crosses the existing 132 kV OHL just to the south of the A95, railway line and River Isla. The increase in infrastructure would result in a wirescaping effect, further deteriorating attractive, rural views. The magnitude of change would be Medium to High during all phases for receptors to the west of the B9016 (**MOR-R-45**), and Medium for receptors within and surrounding Aultmore (**MOR-R-58**). As these receptors are of High sensitivity, this would result in **Major Adverse (significant)** effects during both construction and operational phases (year of opening and year 15) for receptors to the west of the B9016 (**MOR-R-45**), and **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** effects for receptors within and surrounding Aultmore (**MOR-R-58**).
- 7.4.145 Further east, residential receptors at Millstone Hill (**MOR-R-52**), to the northeast of Keith (across Strathisla, Gallows Hill and the southern slopes of Killbady) (**MOR-R-59**), and around Knock Hill, Long Hill, Black Hill, and Sillyearn Hill (**MOR-R-62**), would have views towards the Proposed Development almost entirely screened from

view by local topography and vegetation. The tops of some towers would be perceptible in some views, but across a very small portion of the view, resulting in effects assessed as **non-significant**.

- 7.4.146 Further west of Newmill, around the A96 (**MOR-R-48**) the Proposed Development would be most prominent in mid-distant views for receptors at Craigiebank, Forgie and Aultmore due to their more elevated position. Receptors at Oakenhead and Tarmore to the southeast would also experience a wide portion of the view of the Proposed Development as it crosses from Millstone towards Meikle Balloch Hill. For receptors to the east of the A96, including those at Forgieside and Newton of Forgie, the Proposed Development would be seen in conjunction with the existing 132 kV OHL, whilst those to the west of the A96, including North Bogbain and South Bogbain, would view the Proposed Development in conjunction with both the existing 275 kV OHL and the 132 kV OHL. The introduction of additional man-made vertical structures would detract from the rural character of views. The magnitude of change would be Medium during all phases. As these receptors are of High sensitivity, this would result in **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** effects during both construction and operational phases (year of opening and year 15).
- 7.4.147 Residential receptors on the rising slopes of Meikle Balloch Hill and Hill of Greenwood in close proximity to the Proposed Development include receptors at Keith (**MOR-R-55**), within Meikle Ardene, Drum and Ardiemanoch (**MOR-R-60**), and to the west of Meikle Balloch Hill (**MOR-R-61**). The Proposed Development would be seen prominently in the near-distance, on the approach to Hill of Greenwood, near Coachford, intensifying the visual concentration of infrastructure on rising ground in combination with surrounding existing OHLs. The Proposed Development would be located to the back of properties across Meikle Balloch Hill (including Herrockside and Wester Herricks) as well as behind Mains of Birkenburn and Backmuir, but would be located on rising ground in close proximity. The magnitude of change would be High during construction for receptors at Meikle Ardene, Drum and Ardiemanoch (**MOR-R-60**), and a magnitude of Medium to High for all phases for receptors to the west of Meikle Balloch Hill (**MOR-R-61**) and at Keith (**MOR-R-55**). As these receptors are of High sensitivity, this would result in **Major Adverse (significant)** effects during construction and operational phases for all receptors - at Meikle Ardene, Drum and Ardiemanoch (**MOR-R-60**) to the west of Meikle Balloch Hill (**MOR-R-61**); and at Keith (**MOR-R-55**), with no opportunity for reducing impacts through vegetation screening.
- 7.4.148 Views of the Proposed Development would be slightly less noticeable than the above receptors, who would be in closer proximity to the Proposed Development, for residential receptors at Blackhillock (**MOR-R-56**), users of Core Paths KT07, CP-KT09 & CP-KT10 in and west of Keith (**MOR-REC-21**), and users of the majority of the Scottish Heritage Trail 'Buckie Fishwives Path' (**MOR-REC-22**) due to intervening built form, topography and trees on the edge of town. However, a substantial degree of wirescaping would be created where the Proposed Development is in proximity to existing OHLs to the east of Keith and through the River Isla valley. The magnitude of change would be Medium during all phases for residential receptors at Blackhillock (**MOR-R-56**). As these are of High sensitivity, this would result in **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** effects during both construction and operational phases for residential receptors at Blackhillock (**MOR-R-56**). For users of Core Paths KT07, CP-KT09 & CP-KT10 in and west of Keith (**MOR-REC-21**), the magnitude of change would be Medium to High during construction, reducing to Medium at operation (year of opening and year 15). As these users are of Medium sensitivity, this would result in **Moderate Adverse (significant)** effects during both construction and operational phases (year of opening and year 15). For users of the 'Buckie Fishwives Path' (**MOR-REC-22**), the magnitude of change would be Medium during all phases, resulting in **Moderate Adverse (significant)** effects. For these users, however, the magnitude of change decreases with distance north, such that after approx. 2.5 km north of Newmill, effects reduce to **non-significant**, and would be **Neutral**, after a further 4 km north.
- 7.4.149 Residential receptors to the south of Blackhillock on the eastern slopes of Cairds Hill (**MOR-R-57**) would view the Proposed Development in the mid-distance across relatively open undulating farmland between Cairds Hill to the west, and Meikle Balloch Hill and Hill of Greenwood to the east. The Proposed Development would protrude into the skyline and angle towers would also be visible. The Proposed Development running up Hill of Greenwood would be seen in combination with the existing OHLs in the foreground of views, intensifying infrastructure across a small to moderate portion of the view. The magnitude of change would be Low to

Medium during all phases. As these receptors are of High sensitivity, this would result in **Moderate Adverse (significant)** effects during construction and operational phases.

- 7.4.150 For residential receptors more distant, to the west of Keith (**MOR-R-49**), and for recreational receptors more distant to the south of Keith (**MOR-REC-19**), much of the Proposed Development would be screened from view by intervening topography and vegetation. Where visible, it would impinge into the skyline across a generally small portion of the view but would add additional visible infrastructure into the wider landscape. Even so, the degree of perceived change results in effects assessed as **non-significant**.
- 7.4.151 Receptors further west and south, including residential receptors to the southwest of Keith (**MOR-R-50**), on the southeastern slopes of Ten Rood Hill and northern slopes of Hill of Bellyhack (**MOR-R-51a**), and within and west of Edintore (**MOR-R-51b**) would have very limited visibility of the Proposed Development such that the effects are assessed as **non-significant**.
- 7.4.152 Similarly, to the east of Meikle Balloch Hill, and north of the Proposed Development, intervening topography and vegetation would screen or interrupt views of the Proposed Development, with typically only the tops of towers visible across a small to moderate portion of the view for the residential receptors west of Knock Hill (**MOR-R-62**), northeast of Little Balloch Hill (**MOR-R-63**), within Milltown of Rothiemay (**MOR-R-64**), to the east of B9022 near Knock (**MOR-R-65**), to the east, north and northwest of Milltown of Rothiemay (**MOR-R-66**, **MOR-R-67**), and between Drumnagorrach and Moss-side (**MOR-R-68**). Effects are therefore assessed as **non-significant**.
- 7.4.153 Users of the footpaths across Meikle Balloch Hill (**MOR-REC-23**), would have clear views of the Proposed Development due to felling to accommodate the OC. This would be clearly visible for users of Core Path KT-03 on the lower western slopes of Meikle Balloch Hill, whilst those on Core Path KT-27 would have views across towards Keith and Newmill, including of angle towers and diamond crossing, adding to the wirescaping and general clutter of vertical infrastructure in the view. Users of Core Path KT-03 and KT-02 to the north of Meikle Balloch Hill and Little Balloch would also afford glimpsed, distant views west towards the Proposed Development along the River Isla valley. For around 1.5 km of Core Path KT-03 and KT-27 magnitude of change would be Medium to High during construction, reducing slightly to Medium at operational phases. As these receptors are of Medium to High sensitivity, this would result in **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** effects during construction and **Moderate Adverse (significant)** during operational phases for those sections of path in proximity and passing beneath the Proposed Development. Views however would be transient, and for much of the remainder of the Core Paths, the Proposed Development would not be readily noticeable, and effects would be **non-significant**.
- 7.4.154 Users of the A96 (**MOR-T-7**), would including tourists passing through **The Spey Valley SLA** (and likely to be used whilst following the Malt Whiskey trail) would experience clear views of the Proposed Development where it crosses the road between the Wood of Ordiequish and Keith. The magnitude of change would be Medium to High for up to 12 km of the highway between Fochabers and Keith during all phases and decreasing with distance in sequential, transient, quickly changing views. Users of local roads in this area, between Whiteash Hill Wood and The Balloch / Blackhillock (**MOR-T-8**) would also experience transient views of the Proposed Development, albeit more screened and intermittent, but at lower speeds, resulting in a magnitude of change also of Medium to High during all phases. On transport receptors of Medium sensitivity, this would result in effects of **Moderate Adverse (significant)** during both construction and operational phases.
- 7.4.155 Users of the A95 (**MOR-T-9**), including tourists, approach Keith from the west with intermittent mid-distant views north, east and south afforded between vegetation and rolling hills. Between Keith and Knock Hill the A95 crosses the Aberdeen to Inverness railway and River Isla and travels to the north of Meikle Balloch Hill and Little Balloch. Views through this approx. 3.5 km section between Keith and Meikle Balloch Hill would view the Proposed Development more prominently, with a magnitude of change anticipated to be Medium during all phases. As these receptors are of Medium sensitivity, this would result in **Moderate Adverse (significant)** effects during construction and operational phases. Views however would be transient, and for the remainder of views from the A95, the Proposed Development would not be readily noticeable, and effects would be **non-significant**.

Hill of Greenwood to the A97 (within AC)

- 7.4.156 Within the Aberdeenshire area (AC), residential receptors are scattered throughout the landscape at relatively regular intervals and are predominantly associated with farmsteads. Distance within this section has a greater bearing on visibility, with visibility and the degree of perceivable change typically reducing with distance.
- 7.4.157 Around Coachford, the Proposed Development would be particularly prominent for residential receptors in closest proximity to it, including those at Loanhead, Cairnwhelp, West Riggens, Riggens and Banks (**AB-R-1a**); between Garromuir Wood and Whitehill / Brownhill Plantation (west of the B9022) (**AB-R-1b**); north of Riggins, including those at Glenhead, North Riggins, Whitehill and Auchananachie (**AB-R-2**); and residential receptors between Coachford and Newton, to the south (**AB-R-3**). These receptors would see towers in the skyline over a wide proportion of their rural and generally attractive views. Some of the proposed towers would be visible in their entirety, and seen with existing OHLs, wind turbines and telecommunications masts on surrounding hills, increasing the amount of infrastructure in views and creating a degree of wirescaping. This would result in a Medium magnitude of change for receptors **AB-R-1b**, **AB-R-2** and **AB-R-3**, and Medium to High magnitude of change for receptors in **AB-R-1a**. As these receptors are all of High sensitivity, this would result in a **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** effects for receptors **AB-R-1b**, **AB-R-2** and **AB-R-3**, and **Major Adverse (significant)** effect for receptors in **AB-R-1a**, at both construction and operation. Residential receptors immediately to the south of the Proposed Development between Coachford and Newton (**AB-R-3**) (with the exception of receptors at Botary Mains), and between Garromuir Wood and Whitehill / Brownhill Plantation (with the exception of receptors at Binhall) (**AB-R-1b**) would have summer foliage of curtilage vegetation and roadside planting providing a degree of additional screening in summer, with receptors between Coachford and Newton (**AB-R-3**) also lower-lying. As a result, the magnitude would reduce for these receptors to Low to Medium and a **Moderate Adverse** but **non-significant** effect at operation year of opening (summer).
- 7.4.158 The Proposed Development would also be clearly visible for users of the River Deveron (**AB-REC-3**) within both transient and static views over a length of approximately 3.5 km of the river corridor. Where the Proposed Development crosses the River Deveron, it would be particularly noticeable, and out of scale with the landscape. Whilst lower portions would be backclothed, a moderate portion would be skylined in views, with a greater amount skylined in transient views as users move closer to the crossing point. Whilst bankside vegetation provides some disruption of views from the southern section of the river, most views remain open, such that the Proposed Development would change the character of the river corridor locally. The magnitude of change locally would therefore be Medium to High. As these receptors are of Medium to High sensitivity, this would result in **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** effects during construction and operational phases.
- 7.4.159 Further south of the A96 between Coachford and the A97, the forested hills of Meikle Balloch Hill, The Bin, Hill of Mungo, Hill of Greenfold, White Hill, and Fourman Hill, would all serve to screen the Proposed Development from surrounding receptors to the south and provide a backcloth to any towers visible, limiting skylining. Where the Proposed Development crosses Ord Hill and Cairn Hill, however, it would be particularly prominent and skylined for residential receptors around Ardonald (south of the A96) (**AB-R-15**), resulting in a magnitude of change of Medium, reducing to Low-Medium in summer due to summer foliage. On receptors of High sensitivity this would result in **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** effects during construction and operational year of opening (winter) reducing to **Moderate Adverse (significant)** in operational year of opening (summer). However, residential receptors at Cairnie (east and west of the A96) (**AB-R-16**); along the B9115, Hillend to Huntly (**AB-R-28a**), Ordiquhill (**AB-R-28b**) and at Huntly (**AB-R-29**), as well as recreational users of Core Paths north of Huntly and visitors to Huntly Castle, Huntly Golf Club and Huntly Castle Caravan Park (**AB-REC-2**), would all be partially screened by hills and vegetation, or see the Proposed Development backclothed by hills and vegetation, resulting in effects assessed as **non-significant**.
- 7.4.160 Residential receptors further north are located on more elevated ground, with longer-distance views available. The Proposed Development would be clearly perceptible within the background of mid to far-distant views south for receptors on the mid to lower slopes of Meikle Balloch Hill, Brown Hill and Whitehill (**AB-R-14**). The Proposed Development would be backdropped by forestry and landform while those receptors closer and on lower

landform, such as in Ruthven, would see towers both on the skyline and backdropped by Brownhill Plantation and The Bin. Some towers may also be seen in conjunction with wind turbines on Ord Hill and Cairn Hill. The magnitude of change would be Low to Medium during all phases on these receptors of High sensitivity, resulting in a **Moderate Adverse (significant)** effect during construction, but reducing to **non-significant** during the operational phases. This is due to the Proposed Development being backdropped by more distant hills and vegetation, partially screened by intervening vegetation, seen in combination with existing wind turbines, and viewed at distance.

- 7.4.161 Users of the A96 itself (**AB-T-1**) would be aware of the Proposed Development to the north as it crosses the lower, undulating slopes of Meikle Balloch within transient views. Receptors would view towers both in the skyline and backclothed by landform and forestry, and in combination with wind turbines on Ord Hill and Cairn Hill and existing OHLs, a wirescaping effect in some views would be apparent particularly when travelling north towards Keith. However, views would be relatively fast and transient, resulting in effects that are assessed as **non-significant**.
- 7.4.162 Users of footpaths within The Bin Forest (**AB-REC-1**) and within Kinnoir Wood (**AB-REC-4**), would have glimpsed, heavily filtered views for the most part between gaps in forestry, such that the Proposed Development would be largely imperceptible, or noticed briefly within transient contained views, resulting in effects that are assessed as **non-significant**.
- 7.4.163 For residential receptors between the River Deveron and Hill of Comisty (**AB-R-4a**) the Proposed Development would be a prominent feature in the near to mid-distance of attractive views through undulating, wooded farmland. Proposed towers would be openly visible in their entirety against the skyline and felling associated with Longmoor Wood and Cruchie Wood would be noticeable for nearby receptors, resulting in increased visibility of towers within the **Deveron Valley SLA**. One angle tower would appear in close proximity for receptors adjacent to Longmoor Wood while receptors east of Burn of Peatfold and Hallhill would be subject to a substantial change in the foreground of their views. Receptors to the east of the A97, in particular Nether Comisty Cottages, are afforded more elevated views so the Proposed Development would be seen in combination with the existing 400 kV OHL and over a relatively wide portion of the view. Towers associated with a diamond crossing would create a cluster of vertical infrastructure within views east from receptors around Nethererton Comisty and Nether Comisty Cottages. The magnitude of change would be Medium to High during all phases. As these receptors are of High sensitivity, this would result in **Major Adverse (significant)** effects during construction and operational phases.
- 7.4.164 Residential receptors slightly further south between Kinnoir Wood and Newton Auchaber (**AB-R-4b**) would have some screening afforded by intervening woodland, including Kinnoir Wood, Lodge wood and small copses across the landscape, such that the magnitude of change is Low to Medium during all phases. As these receptors are of High sensitivity, this would result in **Moderate Adverse (significant)** effects during construction. Whilst this effect would remain during the operational phases, due to the perceived degree of change and receptors seeing the Proposed Development in combination with the existing 400 kV OHL (including a diamond crossing) but over a relatively small portion of the view, the effects are considered to reduce to **Moderate Adverse but non-significant** during the operational phases.
- 7.4.165 The Proposed Development would only be visible through the valley of the River Deveron between The Bin Forest and the Aberdeen to Inverness railway line for users of the B9022 (**AB-T-3**), but it would appear prominently on either side of the road. Users of the A97 (**AB-T-4**) would also be aware of the Proposed Development on either side of the road between Kinnoir Wood to the south and the lower slopes of Fourman Hill to the north. Views would be intermittent and transient, with sequential visibility over a length of approximately 8 km. The Proposed Development would be seen prominently in combination with the existing 440 kV OHL, creating a brief wirescaping effect as it crosses the A97. For users of local roads between Coachford and Cobairdy (**AB-T-2**), the Proposed Development would be intermittently visible in transient views only, through gaps in vegetation, and where landform allows, being occasionally prominent and skylined. This would

result in a Medium magnitude of impact during all phases for these transport receptors of Medium sensitivity and **Moderate Adverse (significant)** effects during both construction and operational phases.

- 7.4.166 For users of the Aberdeen to Inverness railway line (**AB-T-13**), the Proposed Development would only be visible between Whitehill Plantation to the north and Kinnoir Wood to the south. It would be clearly visible in oblique views on either side of the railway line where it crosses it, but views would be transient and brief. The effects are therefore considered **non-significant**.

A97 to A947 / Turriff (within AC)

- 7.4.167 For residential receptors between the A97 at Cobairdy and Cruchie, to Frendraught (**AB-R-5**) and between the Hill of Frendraught, Drumblair and the A947 at Darra (**AB-R-6**), the Proposed Development would be a highly prominent feature in the foreground of attractive views through undulating, wooded farmland. Proposed towers would be openly visible in their entirety in the near-distance against the skyline and felling associated with Cruchie Wood would be particularly noticeable from Buglehole. The Proposed Development would also result in a new OC through Drumblair Wood, woodland on the Hill of Denmoss, woodland around the disused quarry, Balquholly, and the woodland around the Burn of Gask. Tree clearance would result in increased visibility of towers for nearby receptors particularly for Hare Moss, Reidswell, Croft of Feith Hill and Darra and angle towers would be particularly prominent for nearby properties of Reidswell, Croft of Feith Hill, North Pirglassie, Uppermill, Silverwells and Upper Oldmill. The Proposed Development would be seen in conjunction with the existing 400 kV OHL to the north, resulting in a wirescaping effect in the skyline of views on all sides for all receptors apart from Colyne and Colyne Cottages. The magnitude of change would be High during all phases. As these receptors are of High sensitivity, this would result in **Major Adverse (significant)** effects during construction and operational phases. Even with management felling planting back to the edge of the OC by year 15, effects would remain **Major Adverse (significant)**.
- 7.4.168 At slightly greater distance to the north, residents between Avochie and Gask / A97 (**AB-R-46**, **AB-R-17**), would view the Proposed Development to the south, where it would appear in the mid to far-distance for receptors whose views are not interrupted by intervening landform, woodland or curtilage vegetation. It would appear across a wide portion of the view for some receptors across the undulating farmland, with some proposed towers being backclothed by rolling hills and woodland whilst others would impinge into the skyline. For receptors slightly closer to the Proposed Development (**AB-R-46**) it would appear above intervening forestry, burnside vegetation, curtilage vegetation, or intervening farm buildings and some towers would be seen in their entirety. The magnitude of change would be Medium for **AB-R-46** and Low to Medium for **AB-R-17** during all phases. As these receptors are all of High sensitivity this would result in **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** effects for **AB-R-46** and **Moderate Adverse** effects for **AB-R-17** during both construction and operational phases. Due to the perceived degree of change within interrupted views for receptors of **AB-R-17** however, the effects are considered **non-significant**.
- 7.4.169 Visitors to Glendronach Distillery (**AB-REC-13**) are likely to only afford intermittent or obstructed views to the Proposed Development in the mid-distance to the south due to the extent of vegetation surrounding the distillery. Effects are therefore assessed as **non-significant**.
- 7.4.170 Residential receptors between Bogniabrae and Turriff (**AB-R-31**) and between the A97 at Marnoch and Aberchirder to the A947 between Turriff and Castleton (**AB-R-39**), as well as visitors to Foreglen Garden and Designed Landscape (**AB-REC-5**) would barely perceive the Proposed Development in the mid to far-distance to the south, with effects assessed as **non-significant**.
- 7.4.171 Residential receptors in close proximity to the south of the Proposed Development between the Burn of Frendraught and the A947 at Darra (**AB-R-7**) would perceive the Proposed Development as a noticeable feature within near to mid-distance views against the skyline. Some proposed towers would be openly visible in their entirety, although most would be backclothed by surrounding vegetation and hills. The Proposed Development would sometimes be seen in conjunction with surrounding wind turbines, but it would add additional infrastructure into a wide portion of the view for many receptors. The magnitude of change is Medium to High

during all phases. As these receptors are of High sensitivity, this would result in a **Major Adverse (significant)** effect during both construction and operational phases.

- 7.4.172 Residential receptors slightly more distant to the south, such as those between Largue by the B9001 and the A947 to the south of Turriff (**AB-R-18**) and between Battlehill, Huntly and the A947, Birkinhills (**AB-R-30**) would still experience the Proposed Development in views, where it would appear in the mid to far-distance for receptors with more open views north, and where topography allows, but many receptors would barely perceive the Proposed Development due to intervening vegetation, landform and farm buildings. It would occasionally be visible in the skyline above intervening landform for some. The magnitude of change at construction on receptors at Birkinhills (**AB-R-30**) would be Low to Medium, resulting in a **Moderate Adverse (significant)** effect on these receptors of High sensitivity. The magnitude of change would reduce to Low at operational phases with effects assessed as **non-significant**. Receptors between Largue and Turriff (**AB-R-18**) are assessed as experiencing effects that are **non-significant** during both construction and operational phases.
- 7.4.173 Beyond approximately 4 km south, residential receptors such as between Cottown (south of Huntly) and Fyvie (**AB-R-45**) would barely perceive the Proposed Development in the mid to far-distance, and any visibility would be distant and across a small portion of the view only. Effects are therefore assessed as **non-significant**.

Turriff to New Deer and Old Deer (within AC)

- 7.4.174 The Proposed Development would not be visible for the majority of residential receptors within Turriff (**AB-R-19**) but would be perceptible in the mid-distance from those few receptors on the southern periphery, intermittently between intervening buildings, landform and blocks of woodland. Similarly for users of Core Path 314.03 'Haughs & Deveron Riverside Circular' (**AB-REC-6**), Turriff Sports Centre, football club, cricket pitch and Golf Course (**AB-REC-14**) on the southern edge of Turriff, whose views would be largely screened by intervening vegetation. Where visible, the Proposed Development would be largely backclothed and cover a small portion of the view only. Effects for residents in Turriff and users of paths and sports facilities on the southern edge of Turriff are therefore assessed as **non-significant**.
- 7.4.175 Residential receptors between the A947 at Mill of Colp (south of Turriff) and the B9030 at Crichtie (**AB-R-8**) would view the Proposed Development as a prominent feature within the near to mid-distance, although many views would be backdropped by surrounding woodland or hills. The Proposed Development would result in clearance for the OC within woodland surrounding West Bruntbae and within Bulwark Moss, resulting in slightly increased visibility of towers for receptors around Barry, Bulwark Croft, West Brunbae, East Bruntbrae, and Little Kirkhill. More prominent, larger angle towers occur at regular intervals, particularly for residents at Little Colp, Mill of Colp, west of Newton of Greenness, south of Castlehill, North Mains of Culsh, Bog of Artamford, East Gowkhill, to the north and south of Wright's Croft and Kirkhill Pendicle. Some proposed towers would be openly visible in their entirety in the foreground and against the skyline across a moderate to large portion of view, resulting in magnitude of change of Medium to High during all phases. As these receptors are of High sensitivity, this would result in **Major Adverse (significant)** effects during construction and operational phases.
- 7.4.176 For residential receptors slightly further north between Turriff and the B9030 at Stuartfield, proposed towers are likely to be visible in their entirety in the mid-distance against the skyline (**AB-R-47**) although many views are obstructed in some way. The Proposed Development would be seen against the background of Wood of Hatton, Boghead, Howe of Teuchar / Waggle Hill and Northburnhill across a moderate to large portion of the view, with more prominent, larger angle towers at regular intervals more clearly noticeable in the mid-distance. The magnitude of change would be Medium during all phases. As these receptors are of High sensitivity, this would result in **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** effects during construction and operational phases.
- 7.4.177 Residential receptors between Turriff and Cuminstown, and Cuminstown (**AB-R-20**), and between Cuminstown and Maud (**AB-R-21**), would see the Proposed Development as a perceptible feature within the mid-distance to the south, although generally only for a small number of receptors scattered through the landscape. Receptors in Bucklay, for example, would have less visibility of the Proposed Development due to surrounding woodland screening or interrupting views. In some locations the Proposed Development would be

seen against a backdrop of landform and belts of woodland and vegetation, but in some views, it would impinge into the skyline, albeit at distance, and generally across a small portion of the view. Receptors on the southern edges of Cuminstown, particularly on Thornhill Road, and on rising ground to the west (such as receptors at Castle of Auchry, Lambtech and Upper Lambtech) would view the Proposed Development from higher ground across open farmland across a small to moderate portion of the view, albeit with some degree of intervening curtilage or tree lines. Although effects on **AB-R-21** and **AB-R-20** east of Wood of Dalgety have been assessed as **Moderate Adverse** during construction and operational phases, due to the perceived degree of change this is considered **non-significant**.

- 7.4.178 Views of the Proposed Development from NCN 1 (**AB-REC-7**) would be limited by intervening rolling topography and field boundary vegetation, but likely to be intermittently noticeable within sequential views south from the route between Turriff and Maud over a length of approximately 20 km and intermittently noticeable within more direct views for 5 km to 6 km on the Formartine and Buchan Way (**AB-REC-10**). The Proposed Development would be noticeable through the rolling open farmland, where it is likely to occasionally impinge in the skyline due to undulations in landform. The magnitude of impact would be Medium during all phases for **AB-REC-7** and **AB-REC-10** Maud to Auchnagatt. As these receptors are of High sensitivity, this would result in **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** effects during construction and operational phases.
- 7.4.179 For residential receptors between the B9105 (north of Turriff) and Stuartfield (**AB-R-33**); and at Castleton, Craigston, New Byth, New Pitsligo, Crudie, and Strichen (**AB-R-40**), effects were assessed as **non-significant**. Effects were also assessed as **non-significant** for visitors to Delgatie Castle and Delgatie Castle Fishery (**AB-REC-15**) and users of Grampian Air Rifle Club Range and Waulkmill Fishery (**AB-REC-18**) due to appreciable distance and localised enclosure by vegetation limiting extent of the Proposed Development visible in mid to far-distance views.
- 7.4.180 To the south, residential receptors slightly more distant between the B9170 / Wood of Colp east of Darra, and the B9106 south of Maud (**AB-R-9**) would view the Proposed Development in the mid-distance on the skyline above existing vegetation or farm buildings, as well as ground-level construction activity and towers in their entirety where receptors are afforded more open views. Some proposed towers would be seen against a backdrop of gently undulating landform or vegetation, whilst others would impinge in the skyline. The majority of views are obstructed in some way, by curtilage vegetation or farm buildings and there are many single storey properties limited to ground floor views only. More prominent, larger angle towers occur at regular intervals and would be particularly visible for residents south of Cuminstown, such as at Cromarty, Northburnhill, Mains of Greens; and residents west of Drymuir, such as Mains of Drum. Some towers would be seen in conjunction with wind turbines to the east of New Deer. The magnitude of impact would be Medium during all phases. As these receptors are of High sensitivity, this would result in **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** effects during construction and operational phases.
- 7.4.181 Whilst the Proposed Development would remain visible for some distance, the effects for residential receptors between the A947 and New Deer (**AB-R-23**); between the A947 and B9030 at Auchnagatt (**AB-R-32**); and between Fyvie and Drumwhindle (southeast of New Deer) (**AB-R-44**), were assessed as **non-significant**. Effects for recreational and Transport receptors in this area were also considered to be **non-significant**, including visitors to Hatton Castle Garden and Designed Landscape (**AB-REC-16**), and Visitors to Fyvie Castle & GDL (**AB-REC-17**).
- 7.4.182 Users of the A947 (**AB-T-7**) would be aware of the Proposed Development on either side of the road between Turriff to the north and the southern extents of Hatton Castle GDL. There would be potential intermittent, sequential visibility over a length of approximately 3 km through the rolling, wooded landscape. Construction works would be particularly prominent and distracting, locally, resulting in a magnitude of impact of Medium during this phase. On receptors of medium sensitivity, this would result in a **Moderate Adverse (significant)** effect during construction. At operation, the removal of construction plant, machinery, and associated activity and disruption through the farmed, local valley of the Burn of Turriff, would reduce the magnitude of change to Low to Medium, resulting in a **non-significant** effect throughout the operational phase. Effects were also assessed as

non-significant for users of local roads between Cruchie and Cuminestown (**AB-T-5**) during both construction and operational phases.

New Deer and Old Deer to Nether Kinmundy (within AC)

- 7.4.183 The Proposed Development would be perceptible within the mid-distance to the north and east for residential receptors in New Deer (**AB-R-24**) on High Street / Main Street and for those to the east on the A981 and A948. Receptors at the western end of the village (including the southern end of Main Street, The Crescent, Fordyce Road, Church Crescent, The Brae, Glandstone Terrace, and Kirkbrae Terrace), would have less – or no – visibility due to intervening buildings, topography, roadside, and curtilage vegetation. Proposed towers would impinge into the skyline for some receptors over a small portion of the view, with proposed towers further east backclothed by vegetation and hills over a moderate portion of the view. This would result in a magnitude of change of Low to Medium for those receptors to the north and east. As these are High sensitivity receptors, this would result in **Moderate Adverse** effects during construction and operational phases. However, due to the Proposed Development being partially screened, largely backclothed by vegetation, and viewed often obliquely and at a little distance, the perceived degree of change has been considered **non-significant**.
- 7.4.184 The Proposed Development would be prominently visible and impinge in the skyline within a wide portion of mid-distant views for users of Core Paths 211.01 'New Deer: Kirk Walk & Culsh Circular' and 211.01P 'New Deer: Kirk Walk & Culsh Circular extension - Proposed Link' to the north of New Deer (**AB-REC-9**), and visitors to Culsh Monument and viewpoint, New Deer Cemetery, and users of Core Path 211.02P 'New Deer: Culsh Monument Link - Proposed Link' (**AB-REC-8**). One angle tower in proximity to the B9028 would be particularly prominent. The magnitude of change would be Medium during all phases. On receptors of High sensitivity (**AB-REC-8**), this would result in **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** effects during construction and operational phases due to proximity and visibility of the Proposed Development across stretches of open ground. On receptors of Medium to High sensitivity (**AB-REC-9**), this would result in **Moderate Adverse (significant)** effects during construction and operational phases.
- 7.4.185 For users of New Deer Football Club, New Deer Bowling Club and New Deer Showground (**AB-REC-19**), visibility is somewhat contained by surrounding vegetation and effects are assessed as **non-significant**.
- 7.4.186 Users of the A981 (**AB-T-9**) would be openly aware of the Proposed Development on either side of the road, mostly along a 1.5 km section between the B9029/ B9028 junction to the south, to Shevado Cottage / Pundlercroft in the north (south of woodland associated with Bruckley Castle ruins). There would also be further potential intermittent, sequential views between New Deer to the south and the junction with the A950 to the north (a total of approx. 4 km). Whilst views would be transient and sequential, with the Proposed Development appearing prominently and across the skyline when in closer proximity, its prominence would reduce with distance. For the closest 1.5 km section of road, the magnitude of change would be Medium during all phases. On receptors of Medium sensitivity (**AB-T-9**), this would result in **Moderate Adverse (significant)** effects during construction and operational phases. For users of the more distant sections of the road, the presence of woodland, hedgerow, and trees would partially interrupt the transient, sequential views, resulting in effects that were assessed as **non-significant** during all phases.
- 7.4.187 Residential receptors in closest proximity to the Proposed Development (0 – 500 m), including those to the south between Drymuir (east of the B9106) up to Crichtie (west of the B9030) (**AB-R-10**); those between the east of the B9030 at Crichtie / Hill of Ludquharn, to the west of Nether Kinmundy (**AB-R-11**), and those in Nether Kinmundy (**AB-R-12**), would have open views of the Proposed Development against a background of low rolling hills and intermittent woodland. Proposed towers would impinge on the skyline and would be seen in combination with the existing 400 kV OHL, resulting in a degree of wirescaping. Views would include prominent angle towers, notably for receptors at Turfhill of Auchtylair to the south of Stuartfield, and for receptors at North Auchtylair who would become entirely 'boxed in' by OHLs. Receptors at South Braeside of Ludquharn would also become 'boxed in' between the Proposed Development and the existing 400 kV OHL, with an angle tower clearly prominent to the west. 'Boxing in' would also be experienced by receptors around Newton of Kiddshill

and Meikle Kirkhill, which also have wind turbines in the view just north of Newton of Kiddshill; and receptors around Upper Smithy Croft who would become 'boxed in' on three sides. Many receptors would view the Proposed Development against the background of surrounding hills, but much would be skylined and prominent, with receptors becoming permanently 'boxed in'. The magnitude of change would be High during all phases. As these receptors are of High Sensitivity, this would result in **Major Adverse (significant)** effects during construction and operational phases.

- 7.4.188 Users of local roads in this area between Cuminstown and Nether Kinmundy (**AB-T-8**), as well as users of the B9106 (**AB-T-10**) and the B9030 (**AB-T-11**), would all experience varied views towards the Proposed Development, with it becoming visible intermittently as vegetation and topography allow, with some sequential views increasing visibility of the Proposed Development with proximity. The magnitude of change would be Medium during all phases where in closer proximity to the Proposed Development (for approximately 3.5 km between Maud and the A948 for **AB-T-10** and 5 km between Annochie and Stuartfield for **AB-T-11**). As these receptors are of Medium Sensitivity, this would result in **Moderate Adverse (significant)** effects during construction and operational phases.
- 7.4.189 For receptors between the B9030 at Crichton and the Burn of Faichfield at Toddlehill (**AB-R-13**), between New Deer and Nether Kinmundy (**AB-R-25**), and between Longside and Nether Kinmundy (**AB-R-27**), the Proposed Development would be a prominent feature within mid-distance views, and would impinge into the skyline except where curtilage vegetation or farm buildings interrupt views. The Proposed Development would run mostly parallel to the existing 400 kV OHL up to the Hill of Ludquharn from the west. Taller towers would be noticeable and result in a 'wirescapes' effect, particularly where the alignment changes direction and multiple lines of towers could be seen together. The Proposed Development would be seen across a wide proportion of the view, albeit it frequently interrupted by vegetation or farm buildings. The magnitude of change would be Medium during all phases for **AB-R-13** and **AB-R-25**. As these receptors are of High Sensitivity, this would result in **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** effects during construction and operational phases. The magnitude of change would be Low to Medium for **AB-R-27**, resulting in an effect of Moderate Adverse that is considered to be **non-significant** due to the perceived degree of change and distance of view.
- 7.4.190 Residential receptors in Maud (**AB-R-22**) and between Maud and Millbreck / A952 (**AB-R-26**), would see the Proposed Development as a perceptible feature within the mid-distance to the south, although generally only for a small number of receptors scattered through the landscape, and for receptors on the periphery of Maud, on the B9029, B9106, in Den View and on Bank Road. In some locations the Proposed Development would be seen against a backdrop of landform and vegetation, including the Hill of Culsh and the Culsh monument to the north of New Deer, but in some views, it would become skylined, albeit at a little distance, and generally across a small portion of the view due to interrupting features. The magnitude of change would be Low to Medium for receptors on the western and southern periphery of Maud during all phases. As these are High sensitivity receptors, this would result in **Moderate Adverse (significant)** effects during construction and year of opening (winter). However, for receptors on the western and southern periphery of Maud, effects are identified as reducing to **Moderate Adverse** but **non-significant** during year of opening (summer) due to deciduous foliage in summer offering additional screening in summer months, particularly in the fore to mid-ground of views.
- 7.4.191 For users of Core Path 208.01 'Longside: Harvest Hill' (**AB-REC-12**), users of NCN 1 and Core Path NCN Route 1D 'Montcroff Croft to Maud' (**AB-REC-7**), and visitors to Longside Cemetery (**AB-REC-20**) in Longside to the north, the Proposed Development would be visible within a wide portion of mid-distant views to the south. It would be a prominent feature, with many towers being skylined within panoramic views, and seen in combination with existing OHLs behind it and wind turbines already in view. For users of NCN 1, the Proposed Development would be intermittently visible for 5 to 6 km as it follows the Formartine and Buchan Way south of Maud. The magnitude of change would be Medium during all phases. On the recreational receptors of Medium and Medium to High sensitivity (**AB-REC-20** & **AB-REC-12**), this would result in **Moderate Adverse (significant)** effects during construction and operational phases. On recreational and amenity receptors of High sensitivity

(users of NCN 1, Core Path NCN Route 1D 'Montcroffer Croft to Maud' (**AB-REC-7**)) this would result in **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** effects during construction and operational phases.

- 7.4.192 Further north still, most receptors in Stuartfield (**AB-R-34**); Old Deer and Mintlaw (**AB-R-35**); Longside, Rora, Torterston, and east of Stuartfield (**AB-R-36**); and between Strichen to Peterhead (**AB-R-41**), would not see the Proposed Development. Where views of the Proposed Development are discernible, it would be across a small portion of the view, at distance, and generally interrupted by intervening features, such that effects were assessed as **non-significant**.
- 7.4.193 Residential receptors further east and south, including those on the western edge of Peterhead (**AB-R-42**) between the A952 at Ardallie to Inverugie (northwest of Peterhead) (**AB-R-37**); between Auchnagatt to the west of the A952 (**AB-R-38**); between Blindburn (east of the A948) to Stirling (Boddam) (**AB-R-43**); and between Fyvie to Drumwhindle (**44**), would have views of the Proposed Development increasingly limited by distance, but all assessed as having effects that were considered to be **non-significant**.
- 7.4.194 Users of the A952 (**AB-T-12**); would be openly aware of the Proposed Development on either side of the road, mostly over a length of approx. 9 km between Mintlaw to the north, and Ardallie to the south. It would be seen in close proximity to the existing 400 kV OHL as it runs parallel to the east and west. The prominence of the Proposed Development would increase sequentially with proximity, becoming particularly noticeable across a short section of approximately 1.5 km between Clola to the north and Wester Pettymarcus to the south. Whilst the transient views of users of the A952 would, for the majority of its length, result in **non-significant** effects on the transport receptor, for the short section in closest proximity where the Proposed OHL crosses the A952, users would experience a Medium magnitude of change at all phases. On receptors of Medium sensitivity, this would result in **Moderate Adverse (significant)** effects during construction and operational phases for users of the section between Clola and Wester Pettymarcus (approx. 1.5 km).

Kellas Alternative Alignment

- 7.4.195 Effects specifically in relation to the Kellas Alternative Alignment have been summarised below. Only those receptors impacted by the Kellas Alternative Alignment have been reported, all of which are located within the Moray area.

Designated Landscapes

- 7.4.196 There would be no changes to the assessment as a result of the Kellas Alternative Alignment on any designated landscape identified.

Landscape Character

- 7.4.197 **Table 7.9:** Kellas Alternative Alignment significant landscape effects below summarises the effects on the LCTs that would be potentially impacted by the Kellas Alternative Alignment. Comparison with the Proposed OHL Alignment is also shown.

Table 7.9: Kellas Alternative Alignment significant landscape effects

Landscape Receptor	Sensitivity	Proposed OHL Alignment		Kellas Alternative Alignment	
		Significance of Effect - Construction	Significance of Effect - Operation	Significance of Effect - Construction	Significance of Effect - Operation
LCT 285 Rolling Farmland and Forests – Moray & Nairn (MC section) – Local effects only	Medium to High	Moderate Adverse non-significant , between Coleburn and the B9103)	Moderate Adverse (non-significant , between Coleburn and the B9103)	Moderate Adverse (increase to significant)	Moderate Adverse (increase to significant)

Landscape Receptor	Sensitivity	Proposed OHL Alignment		Kellas Alternative Alignment	
		Significance of Effect - Construction	Significance of Effect - Operation	Significance of Effect - Construction	Significance of Effect - Operation
LCT 285 Rolling Farmland and Forests – Moray & Nairn (MC section) – Overall effect on LCT	Medium to High	Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse (no change)	Minor Adverse (no change)
LCT 290 Upland Moorland and Foresty (MC section) – local effects:	Medium to High	Major Adverse (significant, Glen of Rothes and on Brown Muir, Coleburn)	Moderate to Major Adverse (significant, Glen of Rothes and on Brown Muir, Coleburn)	Major Adverse (no change)	Moderate to Major Adverse (no change)
LCT 290 Upland Moorland and Foresty (MC section) – Overall effect on LCT	Medium to High	Moderate Adverse (significant)	Moderate Adverse (significant)	Moderate Adverse (no change)	Moderate Adverse (no change)

7.4.198 Despite the Kellas Alternative Alignment being located on slightly lower ground, it would be slightly more noticeable from within LCT 285, from a localised portion adjacent, due to proximity. It would therefore be likely to change the effect from **Moderate Adverse (non-significant) to significant** locally, at both construction and operation. Within LCT 290, both alignments are situated on open upland moorland and introducing a highly prominent new vertical feature through the open landscape. Although the Kellas Alternative Alignment would be marginally less intrusive due to its location on slightly lower ground, both alignments are considered to result in a **Major Adverse (significant)** effect on the LCT during construction, and a **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** effect on the LCT at operation.

Visual

- 7.4.199 The Kellas Alternative Alignment would be situated closer to visual receptors to the north and would result in slightly increased impact on residents at Dallas (**MOR-R-14**) to the north of Hart Hill (**MOR-R-20**) and to the north of Hart Hill, Brown Muir and to the south of Elgin (**MOR-R-21**) and would increase the impact on visitors to Glenlatterach Reservoir and users of informal paths (**MOR-REC-25**).
- 7.4.200 The Kellas Alternative Alignment would result in a considerable increase in impact for residential receptors between the Hill of the Wangie and Meikle Hill / Mill Buie (**MOR-R-16**) and in the valley between Buinach Hill and The Drum / Mill Ourt (**MOR-R-17**). Effects here increase from **non-significant** with the Proposed OHL Alignment, to **significant** with the Kellas Alternative Alignment due to its proximity, resulting in an increase in the perceived degree of change in views.
- 7.4.201 Similarly for visitors to Dallas Castle (ruin) (**MOR-REC-25**), and users of the B9010 (**MOR-T-3**), effects would change from **non-significant** with the Proposed OHL Alignment, to **significant** with the Kellas Alternative Alignment due to its increased prominence and proximity within the view. For users of Scotland Heritage Path 'Mannoch Road' (**MOR-REC-9**) effects would slightly decrease due to the Kellas Alternative Alignment being on slightly lower ground and better screened from the path.
- 7.4.202 **Table 7.10:** Kellas Alternative Alignment significant visual effects below summarises the effects on the visual receptors that would be potentially impacted by the Kellas Alternative Alignment. The difference in effect from the Proposed OHL Alignment is also shown.

Table 7.10: Kellas Alternative Alignment significant visual effects

Visual Receptor	Sensitivity	Proposed OHL Alignment			Kellas Alternative Alignment		
		Significance of Effect - Construction	Significance of Effect - Operation Year of Opening	Significance of Effect - Operation Year 15	Significance of Effect During Construction	Significance of Effect - Operation Year of Opening	Significance of Effect - Operation Year 15
MOR-R-14	High	Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse	Minor to Moderate Adverse (increase but non-significant)	Minor to Moderate Adverse (increase but non-significant)	Minor to Moderate Adverse (increase but non-significant)
MOR-R-15	High	Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse (no change)	Minor Adverse (no change)	Minor Adverse (no change)
MOR-R-16	High	Minor to Moderate Adverse	Minor to Moderate Adverse	Minor to Moderate Adverse	Major Adverse (increase to significant)	Major Adverse (increase to significant)	Major Adverse (increase to significant)
MOR-R-17	High	Moderate Adverse (non-significant)	Moderate Adverse (non-significant)	Moderate Adverse (non-significant)	Major Adverse (increase to significant)	Major Adverse (increase to significant)	Major Adverse (increase to significant)
MOR-R-18	High	Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse (no change)	Minor Adverse (no change)	Minor Adverse (no change)
MOR-R-19a	High	Minor Adverse	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral (decrease)	Neutral (no change)	Neutral (no change)
MOR-R-19b	High	Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse (no change)	Minor Adverse (no change)	Minor Adverse (no change)
MOR-R-20	High	Minor to Moderate Adverse	Minor to Moderate Adverse	Minor to Moderate Adverse	Moderate Adverse (increase but non-significant)	Moderate Adverse (increase but non-significant)	Moderate Adverse (increase but non-significant)
MOR-R-21	High	Minor to Moderate Adverse	Minor to Moderate Adverse	Minor Adverse	Minor to Moderate Adverse (no change)	Minor to Moderate Adverse (no change)	Minor to Moderate Adverse (increase but non-significant)
MOR-REC-4 Users of Mill of Kellas Trout fishery	Medium to High	Negligible to Minor Adverse	Negligible to Minor Adverse	Negligible Adverse	Moderate Adverse (increase but non-significant)	Moderate Adverse (increase but non-significant)	Minor to Moderate Adverse (increase)
MOR-REC-9 Scotland Heritage Path 'Mannoch Road'	Medium to High	Moderate to Major Adverse	Moderate to Major Adverse	Moderate to Major Adverse	Moderate to Major Adverse (no change)	Moderate Adverse (decrease but remains significant)	Moderate Adverse (decrease but remains significant)
MOR-REC-24 Glenlatterach Reservoir and users of informal paths	Medium to High	Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)	Moderate Adverse (significant)	Moderate Adverse (significant)	Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)	Moderate to Major Adverse (increase)	Moderate to Major Adverse (increase)

Visual Receptor	Sensitivity	Proposed OHL Alignment			Kellas Alternative Alignment		
		Significance of Effect - Construction	Significance of Effect - Operation Year of Opening	Significance of Effect - Operation Year 15	Significance of Effect During Construction	Significance of Effect - Operation Year of Opening	Significance of Effect - Operation Year 15
MOR-REC-25 Visitors to Dallas Castle (ruin)	Medium to High	Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse	Moderate Adverse (increase to significant)	Moderate Adverse (increase to significant)	Moderate Adverse (increase to significant)
MOR-T-3 Users of the B9010	Medium	Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse	Moderate Adverse (increase to significant)	Moderate Adverse (increase to significant)	Moderate Adverse (increase to significant)

7.5 Additional Mitigation

7.5.1 The following section provides details of additional mitigation measures for the Proposed Development, which may help to offset or reduce specific landscape or visual effects. These measures do not form part of the embedded design as their implementation would be dependent on external factors, including landowner agreements, as well as further feasibility work. LV1 and LV2 are dependent on feasibility studies and agreements with landowners. The Applicant commits to taking these measures forward subject to necessary approvals and agreements being reached. The additional mitigation measures are shown in **Table 7.11** below, and their potential effectiveness is considered in the Residual Effects section.

Table 7.11: Additional mitigation measures

Reference	Description	Description
LV1	Extension of the Fringe Planting	Opportunities should be sought to widen the fringe planting by a further 30 m (15 m either side of the Proposed OHL Alignment) at the following locations: - the eastern slopes of The Aird, where viewed from key tourist routes of the A82 and Caledonian Canal; and - Ordiequish Hill, viewed from within The Spey Valley SLA and Speyside Way. The widening of the fringe planting would create additional space in which to plant deciduous species on the forest edge. Whilst the embedded mitigation planting within the 90 m OC would soften the appearance of the artificially straight edge through forestry, at the landscape scale, and at distance, this would have a more gentle, smaller impact when compared to the greater variation in edge planning heights and species possible through an additional 30 m corridor. This additional area would require agreement with landowners as part of the management felling replanting.
LV2	Extension of Roadside Planting	Opportunities should be sought to extend roadside planting to mitigate sequential views to the Proposed Development from key tourist routes. Potential locations identified where this could be of benefit are as follows: - alongside the A862 at two locations – Long Wood and south of Achnagairn; - alongside the B862; - alongside National Cycle Route 7; - alongside the B9007; - alongside the A939; - alongside the C13E; - alongside the A941; - alongside the B9103; - alongside the A96; - alongside unnamed road to the west of Longmoor Wood; - alongside the A97; - alongside the A947; and - alongside the A981. Planting has been proposed only within the 90 m OC and is intended to slightly offset the impact of sequential views from key tourist routes and soften the appearance of the Proposed Development from the road. This would be achieved with planting appropriate to the location and is anticipated to be a mix of hedgerow, shrubs and scrub and scattered trees, dependant on roadside

Reference	Description	Description
		verge space available and appropriateness of existing connected vegetation. The principles and example layout has been provided within Appendix 7.6: Forestry Landscape Mitigation Principles.

Kellas Alternative Alignment

- 7.5.2 No additional mitigation for the Kellas Alternative Alignment is proposed.

7.6 Residual Effects

- 7.6.1 The additional mitigation measures presented in **Table 7.11** are reliant on third party approvals and dependent on feasibility studies and agreements with landowners. Although the Applicant commits to taking these measures forward, the mitigations cannot be relied upon in terms of the concluding residual effects of this assessment. The following sections set out how the implementation of the proposed mitigation measures would change the conclusions of the assessment assuming that all approvals, agreements and consents were in place.

Construction Phase

- 7.6.2 Implementation of the additional mitigation measures identified above would not result in any changes during the construction phase, as they are focused on potentially reducing permanent operational effects. As a result, the residual effects of all designated landscapes, landscape character types, and visual amenity, would remain the same as the pre-mitigation effects.

Operational Phase

- 7.6.3 The residual effects during the operational phase of the Proposed Development would also be the same as that stated in the main assessment (see **Section 7.4 Assessment of Likely Significance of Effects**), as no mitigation to reduce or remove the impacts is identified. The implementation of the recommendations outlined in **Section 7.5 Additional Mitigation** above may lead to further small improvements in landscape and visual effects if applied, as discussed below.

Designated Landscapes

- 7.6.4 Implementation of LV1 Extension of the fringe planting through the River Spey valley has the potential to impact on **The Spey Valley SLA**. Potential effects are outlined in **Table 7.12** below.

Table 7.12: Residual effects on designated landscapes – operational phase

Receptor	Sensitivity	Pre-mitigation impact and effect		Mitigation measures	Residual impact and effect	
		Magnitude of Impact	Significance of Effect		Magnitude of Impact	Significance of Effect
The Spey Valley SLA (localised portion)	Medium to High	Year of Opening (Winter): Medium to High	Year of Opening (Winter): Major adverse (significant)	LV1 - Extension of the fringe planting across Ordiequish Hill	Year of Opening (Winter): Medium to High (no change)	Year of Opening (Winter): Major adverse (significant, no change)
		Year of Opening (Summer): Medium to High	Year of Opening (Summer): Major adverse (significant)		Year of Opening (Summer): Medium to High (no change)	Year of Opening (Summer): Major adverse (significant, no change)
		Year 15 (Summer): Medium	Year 15 (Summer): Moderate to Major adverse (significant)		Year 15 (Summer): Medium	Year 15 (Summer): Moderate to Major adverse (significant, no change)

Receptor	Sensitivity	Pre-mitigation impact and effect		Mitigation measures	Residual impact and effect	
		Magnitude of Impact	Significance of Effect		Magnitude of Impact	Significance of Effect
					(no change)	

- 7.6.5 Whilst the additional mitigation would contribute to a slight lessening of magnitude on the localised portion of **The Spey Valley SLA**, it would not be enough to offset the changes caused as a result of the Proposed Development. The magnitude and significance of effect remain unaltered.

Landscape Character

- 7.6.6 Implementation of LV1 'Extension of the fringe planting' has the potential to impact on a number of LCTs.
- 7.6.7 **LCT 222 Rocky Moorland Plateau - Inverness** would be directly impacted by additional mitigation proposal LV1 'Extension of the fringe planting' across The Aird. **LCT 228 Rolling Farmland and Woodland** and **LCT 225 Broad Steep-Sided Glen** would also be directly impacted by additional mitigation proposal LV1, but only a very small portion of each of these LCTs is located on The Aird, on its lower slopes.
- 7.6.8 The additional mitigation proposals, however, would not result in any change to the magnitude or significance of effect at operation year of opening or year 15 on **LCT 222 Rocky Moorland Plateau – Inverness, LCT 228 Rolling Farmland and Woodland, or LCT 225 Broad Steep-Sided Glen**. Whilst extension of the fringe planting across The Aird would create a more naturalistic edge, the overall forested and planted landscape character would not be significantly altered. There would therefore be no discernible change to the character of the local landscape and no change to the significance of effect from the pre-mitigation effects.
- 7.6.9 **LCT 293 Low Forested Hills** would be directly impacted by additional mitigation proposal LV1 'Extension of the fringe planting' across Ordiequish Hill. Whilst extension of the fringe planting across Ordiequish Hill would create a more naturalistic edge, the overall forested and planted landscape character would not be significantly altered. There would therefore be no discernible change to the character of the local landscape and no change to the significance of effect from the pre-mitigation effects.
- 7.6.10 The additional mitigation would contribute to a slight lessening of magnitude on all the LCTs, but it would not be enough to offset the changes caused to local character as a result of the Proposed Development. The magnitude and significance of effect remain unaltered.

Visual Amenity

LV1 Extension of the OC: The Aird

- 7.6.11 Additional mitigation measure LV1 in relation to The Aird considers views of the fringe planting from the eastern slopes of The Aird, where viewed from key tourist routes of the A82 and Caledonian Canal, as outlined in **Appendix 7.6: Forestry Landscape Mitigation Principles**.
- 7.6.12 Additional mitigation measure LV1 has the potential to impact on the visual amenity of a number of receptor groups where there are views looking down the alignment and who would have visibility of the width of the corridor). In relation to the eastern slopes of The Aird, this is likely to be restricted to residential receptors along the A82 and to the west of the River Ness (**THC-R-25**), around Lagnalean, Dalreoch, Cullaird, Laggan, and Scaniport (north) (**THC-R-28**); and to recreational receptors along The Great Glen Way (**THC-REC-24**), the Great Glen Canoe Trail & Caledonian Canal Towpaths (**THC-REC-11**), the Caledonia Way and surrounding Core Paths IN19.67 'Torbreck Road to Cullaird', IN12.07 'Cullaird to Drumashie Plantation' & IN12.02 'Kindrummond to Cullaird' (**THC-REC-12**), Dochgarroch Locks, and adjacent section of the Caledonian Canal (**THC-REC-1**). These recreational receptors would experience transient visibility of the fringe planting within the OC only, as would users of minor unnamed roads over The Aird (**THC-T-3**) and users of the A82 (**THC-T-5**).
- 7.6.13 Additional mitigation proposals LV1 relating to The Aird are unlikely to result in any reduction in effects, due to the height and number of towers impinging into the skyline, and / or the proximity of other towers outwith the

forestry across The Aird. Whilst the additional mitigation proposals would not mitigate those effects, they would help to soften some lower-level views of the artificially straight corridor through the landscape. This would draw the eye less forcibly, particularly for a group of residential receptors – comprising of around 5 properties adjacent to the A82 – and for road users of the A82 as it crosses beneath the Proposed Development.

LV1 Extension of the OC: Ordiequish Hill

- 7.6.14 Additional mitigation measure LV1 in relation to Ordiequish Hill considers views of the fringe planting from within **The Spey Valley SLA** and Speyside Way, as outlined in **Appendix 7.6: Forestry Landscape Mitigation Principles**.
- 7.6.15 Receptors within **The Spey Valley SLA** and along the Speyside Way would have varying degrees of visibility of the fringe planting within the OC. Speyside Way users (**MOR-REC-15**), as well as visitors to the Ordiequish Earth Pillars (riverside), Dipple cemetery, and Earth Pillars viewpoint (**MOR-REC-16**), would generally have views screened or framed by vegetation, and visibility of fringe planting would likely be restricted to the OC itself, where the Speyside Way crosses it. Effects for these receptors would be transient and localised.
- 7.6.16 For receptors within **The Spey Valley SLA**, the topography of the surrounding landscape is not as dramatic as around The Aird, limiting longer-distance views towards the OC. However, receptors with potential visibility of the fringe planting within the OC (i.e. those receptors with visibility down the OC, rather than across it) is likely limited to residential receptors at Orbliston (**MOR-R-32b**), Dipple (**MOR-R-32a**), Clatternbriggs, Cranloch, Bellvue and Blackburn (**MOR-R-30**), and Upper Ordiequish (**MOR-R-43**), as well as users of Core Path CP-EG52 at Orbliston (**MOR-REC-12**). Users of local roads between the A941 and River Spey including the B9103 and B9015 (on the North East 250 tourist route) (**MOR-T-5**), and users of the Aberdeen to Inverness railway line (**MOR-T-6**), would all experience localised and highly transient views, such that the effectiveness of LV1 would be limited.
- 7.6.17 The additional mitigation proposals LV1 relating to Ordiequish Hill are unlikely to result in any reduction in effects, due to the height and number of towers impinging into the skyline, and more particularly, due to the presence of much closer towers and existing OHL across the valley. The additional mitigation proposals would not mitigate the effects of the existing OHLs or the Proposed Development within the valley, but they would further soften some lower-level views of an artificially straight corridor through the landscape and draw the eye less forcibly.

LV2 Roadside Planting

- 7.6.18 Roadside planting aims to slightly reduce the prominence of lower portions of proposed towers for road users on the immediate approach to the Proposed Development. Planting has been proposed only within the 90 m OC and is intended to slightly offset the impact of sequential views from key tourist routes and soften the appearance of the Proposed Development from the road. As a result, this additional mitigation measure would only have the potential to impact road users on those routes where the planting is proposed.
- 7.6.19 The principles of additional mitigation measure LV2 'Roadside Planting' is outlined in **Appendix 7.6: Forestry Landscape Mitigation Principles**. The planting would slightly soften the abrupt change from woodland or hedgerow on to the OC by adding some additional low-level planting at the following locations:
- alongside the A862 at Beaulay;
 - alongside the A862 at Easter Moniac;
 - alongside the B862 at Scaniport / The Caledonia Way (NCR Route 78) Long Distance Path;
 - alongside National Cycle Route 7 at Mains of Daltulich / Meall Mor;
 - alongside the B9007 at Ferness;
 - alongside the A939 at Ferness;
 - alongside the B9103 at Altonside;
 - alongside the A96 at Gallows Hill, Keith;
 - alongside the B9016 at Auchinderran;
 - alongside the A947 at Darra; and

- alongside the A981 at New Deer.

7.6.20 This approach, whilst undoubtedly softening the approach to the corridor and retaining views towards the road corridor rather than the Proposed Development, would not offset the introduction of the Proposed Development, and as such, would not be sufficient to reduce the overall magnitude of change on road users in these locations.

7.6.21 Whilst this planting would not be sufficient to reduce the magnitude of change for receptors, it would provide additional low-level screening and slightly deflect the transient views of highway users such that awareness of the towers and their adverse perception is slightly reduced.

7.6.22 Implementation of additional mitigation measure LV2 'Extension of Roadside Planting' would therefore not be likely to result in any change in effect significance on road users, as the proposals are too small scale and localised to offset the introduction of the Proposed Development itself. As a result, the residual effects would remain the same as the pre-mitigation effects.

Kellas Alternative Alignment Residual Effects

7.6.23 The Kellas Alternative Alignment would not be impacted by any of the additional mitigation measures proposed and therefore the residual effects in relation to the Kellas Alternative Alignment would be the same as the pre-mitigation effects.

7.7 Assessment of Cumulative Effects

7.7.1 The following cumulative assessment has been undertaken in line with the methodology in **Chapter 5: EIA Process and Methodology, Section 5.5 Cumulative Effects**.

In-combination effects

7.7.2 These are the combined effect of the Proposed Development together with other reasonably foreseeable future developments. In-combination effects are considered in two parts:

- **Stage 1:** The Proposed Development is considered in combination with other associated SEN Transmission Developments
- **Stage 2:** The Proposed Development is considered in combination with other unrelated developments

7.7.3 The cumulative effects in relation to Landscape and Visual receptors are discussed below.

7.7.4 Refer to **Appendix 7.1 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Methodology Table 1.7** for magnitude of change descriptors (referred to as level of cumulative change here) and **Table 1.8** for the level of effect in relation to magnitude of change and sensitivity.

In-combination Effects: Stage 1 – Associated SEN Transmission Developments

7.7.5 The associated SEN Transmission developments considered within this cumulative effects section include three proposed substations – one at either end of the Proposed Development, and one along the alignment. The visibility of substations is generally lower than for OHLs due to their lower height and ability for screening of buildings to occur. However, it is the concentration of OHLs into the substation that draws the eye.

7.7.6 The following developments within Stage 1 have been considered:

- The Highland Council
 - Fanellan substation (refer to Visualisation 7.2 VP02 Crerag)
- Aberdeenshire Council
 - Greens substation
 - Netherton Hub (two converter stations, a switching station, 400 kV substation and a 132 kV substation. Refer to **Visualisation 7.52 VP52 Longside**)

- 7.7.7 The proposed transmission developments at Netherton, Greens, and Fanellan all have bunding and planting proposed for visual mitigation purposes and therefore much of their infrastructure would be screened over time, thereby reducing the extent of cumulative effects. However, to remain consistent with Stage 2 where mitigation planting is not known, a worst-case scenario has been taken here and year of opening (winter) only considered. Bunding would contribute to screening in year of opening (winter), but tree and vegetation mitigation planting would not have matured by that stage. Over time therefore, any mitigation planting would reduce effects further over time.
- 7.7.8 **Table 7.13** below summarises the likely cumulative effects as a result of the cumulative associated SSEN Transmission developments, based on a worst-case scenario of simultaneous construction or operation (at winter year of opening). The information in the table presents the residual effects of the Proposed Development and then the change of level of significance, i.e. no change, increase or new effect resulting from the substation alone, and the resultant level of significance; both for the construction and operational (winter year 1) phases.
- 7.7.9 Refer to **Appendix 7.7 Cumulative Landscape and Visual Effects** for a full assessment of cumulative landscape and visual effects on Stage 1 projects. Refer to **Visualisation 7.2 L&V Viewpoint 2: Creraig (Crerag)**, and **Visualisation 7.52 L&V Viewpoint 52: Longside** for cumulative visuals.
- 7.7.10 Note that only Proposed Development effects identified as Minor adverse or above are considered in relation to cumulative effects. Effects of Negligible Adverse or Neutral are not considered likely to be subject to significant cumulative effects and are therefore excluded.

Table 7.13: Summary of Likely Cumulative Landscape and Visual Effects in Combination with Associated SSEN Transmission Developments

Cumulative Stage 1 Development / Reference	Construction Residual Effect from the Proposed Development	Likely Cumulative Effects during Construction	Operation (Winter Year of Opening) Residual Effect from the Proposed Development	Likely Cumulative Effects during Operation (Winter Year of Opening)
01 Fanellan substation 25/00826/FUL Within THC	<u>Landscape Receptors</u> LCT 227 Local: portion around Strathnairn: Moderate to Major Adverse (significant) Entire LCT: Minor Adverse (non-significant)	<u>Landscape Receptors</u> LCT 227 Local: portion around Strathnairn: no change - Moderate to Major Adverse (significant) Local: new effect relating to the substation alone around Fanellan of Moderate to Major Adverse (significant) . Entire LCT: no change - Minor Adverse (non-significant)	<u>Landscape Receptors</u> LCT 227 Local: portion around Strathnairn: Moderate Adverse (significant) Entire LCT: Negligible to Minor Adverse (non-significant)	<u>Landscape Receptors</u> LCT 227 Local: portion around Strathnairn: no change - Moderate Adverse (significant) Local: new effect relating to the substation alone around Fanellan of Moderate Adverse (significant) . Entire LCT: no change - Negligible to Minor Adverse (non-significant)
	LCT 229 Local: portion in the River Beaully valley between Fanellan and Easter Moniack: Major Adverse (significant) Entire LCT: Moderate (significant)	LCT 229 Local: portion in the River Beaully valley between Fanellan and Easter Moniack: No change - Major Adverse (significant) Entire LCT: Increase to Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)	LCT 229 Local: portion in the River Beaully valley between Fanellan and Easter Moniack: Moderate to Major Adverse (significant) Entire LCT: Minor to Moderate (non-significant)	LCT 229 Local: portion in the River Beaully valley between Fanellan and Easter Moniack: increase to Major Adverse (significant) Entire LCT: No change - Minor to Moderate Adverse (non-significant)

Cumulative Stage 1 Development / Reference	Construction Residual Effect from the Proposed Development	Likely Cumulative Effects during Construction	Operation (Winter Year of Opening) Residual Effect from the Proposed Development	Likely Cumulative Effects during Operation (Winter Year of Opening)
	<u>Visual Receptors</u> THC-R-1a (VP1): Moderate to Major Adverse (significant) THC-R-1b: Major Adverse (significant) THC-R-2 (VP2): Minor to Moderate Adverse (non-significant) THC-REC-6 (VP2): Moderate Adverse (significant)	<u>Visual Receptors</u> THC-R-1a (VP1): increase to Major Adverse (significant) THC-R-1b: no change THC-R-2 (VP2): increase to Moderate Adverse (and becoming significant) THC-REC-6 (VP2): increase to Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)	<u>Visual Receptors</u> THC-R-1a (VP1): Moderate to Major Adverse (significant) THC-R-1b: Major Adverse (significant) THC-R-2 (VP2): Minor to Moderate Adverse (non-significant) THC-REC-6 (VP2): Moderate Adverse (significant)	<u>Visual Receptors</u> THC-R-1a (VP1): increase to Major Adverse (significant) THC-R-1b: no change THC-R-2 (VP2): increase to Moderate Adverse (and becoming significant) THC-REC-6 (VP2): increase to Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)
02 Greens 400 kV substation Within Aberdeenshire Council	<u>Landscape Receptors</u> LCT 20 Local: portion to the south of Cuminstown: Moderate Adverse (significant) Entire LCT: Minor Adverse (non-significant)	<u>Landscape Receptors</u> LCT 20 Local: portion to the south of Cuminstown relating to the substation only: increase to Moderate to Major Adverse (remaining significant) Entire LCT: remaining non-significant	<u>Landscape Receptors</u> LCT 20 Local: portion to the south of Cuminstown: Moderate Adverse (significant) Entire LCT: Minor Adverse (non-significant)	<u>Landscape Receptors</u> LCT 20 Local: portion to the south of Cuminstown relating to the substation only: increase to Moderate to Major Adverse (remaining significant) Entire LCT: remaining non-significant
	<u>Visual Receptors</u> AB-R-8 (VP 45): Major Adverse (significant) AB-R-9: Moderate to Major Adverse (significant) AB-R-47: Moderate to Major Adverse (significant) AB-R-23: Minor to Moderate Adverse (non-significant) AB-T-8: Moderate Adverse (significant)	<u>Visual Receptors</u> AB-R-8 (VP 45): no change AB-R-9: increase to Major Adverse (significant) AB-R-47: increase to Major Adverse (significant) AB-R-23: increase to Moderate Adverse (and becoming significant). AB-T-8: no change	<u>Visual Receptors</u> AB-R-8 (VP 45): Major Adverse (significant) AB-R-9: Moderate to Major Adverse (significant) AB-R-47: Moderate to Major Adverse (significant) AB-R-23: Minor to Moderate Adverse (non-significant) AB-T-8: Moderate Adverse (significant)	<u>Visual Receptors</u> AB-R-8 (VP 45): no change AB-R-9: increase to Major Adverse (significant) AB-R-47: increase to Major Adverse (significant) AB-R-23: increase to Moderate Adverse (and becoming significant). AB-T-8: no change
03 Netherton Hub Within Aberdeenshire Council	<u>Landscape Receptors</u> LCT 17 Local: Minor to Moderate Adverse (significant) Entire LCT: Negligible Adverse (non-significant)	<u>Landscape Receptors</u> LCT 17 Local: new local portion around Netherton relating to the substation alone – increase to Moderate Adverse (and becoming significant) Entire LCT: no change – Negligible Adverse (remaining non-significant)	<u>Landscape Receptors</u> LCT 17 Local: Minor to Moderate Adverse (significant) Entire LCT: Negligible Adverse (non-significant)	<u>Landscape Receptors</u> LCT 17 Local: new local portion around Netherton relating to the substation alone – increase to Moderate Adverse (and becoming significant) Entire LCT: no change – Negligible Adverse (non-significant)

Cumulative Stage 1 Development / Reference	Construction Residual Effect from the Proposed Development	Likely Cumulative Effects during Construction	Operation (Winter Year of Opening) Residual Effect from the Proposed Development	Likely Cumulative Effects during Operation (Winter Year of Opening)
	<u>Visual Receptors</u> AB-R-12: Major Adverse (significant) AB-R-13 (VP 52 & VP 53): Moderate to Major Adverse (significant) AB-R-27 (VP 52): Moderate Adverse (non-significant) AB-R-36: Minor to Moderate Adverse (non-significant) AB-REC-12 (VP 52): Moderate Adverse (significant) AB-T-8 (VP 53): Moderate Adverse (significant)	<u>Visual Receptors</u> AB-R-12: no change AB-R-13 (VP 52 & VP 53): increase to Major Adverse (significant) AB-R-27 (VP 52): increase to Major Adverse (and becoming significant) AB-R-36: increase to Moderate Adverse (and becoming significant) AB-REC-12 (VP 52): no change AB-T-8 (VP 53): increase to Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)	<u>Visual Receptors</u> AB-R-12: Major Adverse (significant) AB-R-13 (VP 52 & VP 53): Moderate to Major Adverse (significant) AB-R-27 (VP 52): Moderate Adverse (non-significant) AB-R-36: Minor to Moderate Adverse (non-significant) AB-REC-12 (VP 52): Moderate Adverse (significant) AB-T-8 (VP 53): Moderate Adverse (significant)	<u>Visual Receptors</u> AB-R-12: no change AB-R-13 (VP 52 & VP 53): increase to Major Adverse (significant) AB-R-27 (VP 52): increase to Major Adverse (and becoming significant) AB-R-36: increase to Moderate Adverse (and becoming significant) AB-REC-12 (VP 52): no change AB-T-8 (VP 53): increase to Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)

In-combination Effects: Stage 2 – Other Developments

- 7.7.11 A number of the cumulative developments identified are not considered likely to result in a cumulative effect, particularly during operation. This is particularly so where an existing feature is being replaced with something very similar, or for underground cables, where there would be largely no above ground infrastructure at operation.
- 7.7.12 **Table 7.14** below lists the potential cumulative developments scoped out of this assessment. Further details on the cumulative developments (including application references) are provided in **Appendix 5.1: Cumulative Developments**.

Table 7.14: Summary of Cumulative Stage 2 Developments Scoped out of this assessment

ID	Cumulative Development / Receptor	Distance from Proposed Development (km)	Reason for Scoping Out
The Highland Council			
H03	Beauly to Denny Overhead Line Diversion	0.0	There would be little overall change in landscape character or visual amenity as a result of the diversion works (either the temporary diversion or permanent realignment of approx. 4 towers) as the OHL is already in existence in this location. No cumulative effect was therefore considered likely and has been scoped out of the assessment.
H05	Western Isles HVDC UGC	0.2	<u>Operational Effects</u> The OC of the HVDC cable route would be revegetated, albeit without trees, but with a rural, natural character reflective of the LCTs and local visual amenity. No cumulative effect at operation was therefore considered likely and it was scoped out of the assessment.
H07	Kilmorack Substation	0.7	<u>Operational Effects</u> As the works at Kilmorack substation are replacing the existing 132 kV facility, the combined effect of the Kilmorack substation with the

ID	Cumulative Development / Receptor	Distance from Proposed Development (km)	Reason for Scoping Out
			Proposed Development would not be noticeably different to the effects of the Proposed Development on its own. Cumulative effects at operation have therefore been scoped out of the cumulative operational assessment.
H08	Beaully Substation	0.0	<u>Operational Effects</u> As the works at Beaully Substation are improvements to the existing facility, the combined effect of the Beaully Substation with the Proposed Development would not be noticeably different to the effects of the Proposed Development on its own. As a result, this development has been scoped out of the operational assessment.
H10	Aigas Substation	1.7	As there would be no anticipated visibility in this area of the Proposed Development, then cumulative effects are not anticipated. Even for receptors to the north or northeast, there is no ready visibility of the existing Aigas Substation. As a result, it has been scoped out of the operational assessment.
H13	Inverness College Campus	4.7	This cumulative development is to the north of the Proposed Development within the urban area of Inverness. Due to intervening built form, topography and vegetation, there is not considered likely to be intervisibility between the two developments. As a result, this cumulative development has been scoped out of the assessment.
H14	Carn Na Saobhaidh Wind Farm	5.7	The cumulative development is located south of the Proposed Development on the Monadhliath Mountains. The scoping report information suggests that the actual wind turbines would be located some distance beyond the 10 km study area, with only the access track within the study area. As such, there would be no intervisibility between the ground-level access track and the Purposed Development. As a result, cumulative effects are scoped out of the assessment.
H17	Tom Nan Clach Wind Farm Extension	9.0	This cumulative development is located south of the Proposed Development on Carn an t-Sean-liathanaich primarily outside the periphery of the 10 km study area. It was included on the list of cumulative developments as ancillary works (such as access tracks) would be located within the 10 km study area. However, only the wind turbines themselves would be likely to result in any cumulative effect, and as those are outwith the 10 km study area, the potential for cumulative effects is not likely. It has therefore been scoped out of the cumulative assessment.
Moray Council			
M16	Dykeside Farm Quarry	4.3	<u>Operational Effects</u> With the physical separation and scale of the Dkyeside Farm Quarry development and on flat land with screening potential around it, it would be unlikely to be readily viewed in conjunction with the Proposed Development. Operational effects have therefore been scoped out of the cumulative assessment.
<u>Aberdeenshire Council</u>			
A01	Greens Underground	0.0	<u>Operational Effects</u> The OC of the UGC would be revegetated, albeit without trees, but with a rural, natural character reflective of the LCTs and local visual amenity. It

ID	Cumulative Development / Receptor	Distance from Proposed Development (km)	Reason for Scoping Out
	Cable Connection		would therefore not be readily perceptible in the local landscape or from surrounding visual receptors such that no cumulative effect was considered likely. Operational effects were therefore scoped out of the assessment.
A02	Netherton Hub 400 kV OHL Connection to New Deer and Peterhead – Tie-in	0.0	As this is at pre-application stage, the limited information available on this development has not enabled a cumulative assessment to be undertaken. It was therefore scoped out of the cumulative assessment.
A03	Netherton Hub 400 kV OHL Connection to New Deer and Peterhead – Rebuild	0.0	As this is at pre-application stage, the limited information available on this development has not enabled a cumulative assessment to be undertaken. It was therefore scoped out of the cumulative assessment.
A04	Stromar Offshore Wind Farm Onshore Works	0.0	This cumulative development is currently at scoping stage and would be expected to include onshore export cables to connect to offshore export cables at landfall, and a new onshore substation / converter station between Rosehearty and Fraserburgh, (landfall location) to New Deer. The exact location of the substations and the cable routes are currently unknown, and whilst it would be assumed that UGC would be unlikely to have any significant cumulative effect at operation, OHL and substations would be considered likely to have the potential to result in a cumulative effect. However, only a broad area of landscape was indicated at Scoping and therefore the potential for intervisibility or disruption on local landscape character, could not be ascertained. It was therefore scoped out of the cumulative assessment
A07	Spittal - Peterhead UGC	0.0	<u>Operational Effects</u> The OC of the UGC route would be revegetated, albeit without trees, but with a rural, natural character reflective of the LCTs and visual amenity. It would therefore not be readily perceptible in the local landscape or from surrounding visual receptors at operation. No cumulative operational effect was therefore considered likely and it was scoped out of the assessment.
A08	EGL3 UGC	0.0	<u>Operational Effects</u> The OC of the UGC route would be revegetated, albeit without trees, but with a rural, natural character reflective of the LCTs and local visual amenity. No cumulative effect at operation was therefore considered likely and it was scoped out of the assessment.
A11	Buchan Offshore Wind Farm Onshore Works	1.8	This cumulative development is currently at scoping stage, and would include onshore aspects including the landfall, onshore cable route corridor, onshore substation and onshore cable circuits. The windfarm site would be located 75 km northeast of Fraserburgh, landfall to be located at Rattray Bay. The exact location of the substation and the cable circuits are not currently available. Some level of cumulative effect would be anticipated, particularly in relation to the substation, but as locations are currently unknown, the potential for intervisibility or disruption on

ID	Cumulative Development / Receptor	Distance from Proposed Development (km)	Reason for Scoping Out
			local landscape character, could not be ascertained. It was therefore scoped out of the cumulative assessment.
A16	Salamander Offshore Wind Farm	7.1	The Salamander Offshore Wind Farm development is located approximately 7 km from the Proposed Development and no intervisibility is anticipated between this cumulative site and the Proposed Development. No significant cumulative effects are therefore considered likely due to the physical and visual separation of the Proposed Development.

- 7.7.13 **Table 7.15** below summarises the likely cumulative effects as a result of the Proposed Development in combination with other surrounding developments that have been scoped into the landscape and visual assessment, based on a worst-case scenario of simultaneous construction or operation. As the detail of many of the cumulative schemes (including any mitigation) is not always known, a worst-case scenario has been taken here and year of opening (winter) only considered.
- 7.7.14 The information in the table below presents the likely level of cumulative change above the residual effect of the Proposed Development alone (refer to **Table 1.7** in **Appendix 7.1: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Methodology** for magnitude of change descriptors) and then any likely change of significance on potentially affected landscape and visual receptors i.e. non-significant to significant in EIA terms, both for the construction and operation year of opening (winter) phases.
- 7.7.15 The full assessment of cumulative landscape and visual effects on Stage 2 projects can be found in **Appendix 7.7: Cumulative Landscape and Visual Effects**.
- 7.7.16 Further details on the cumulative developments (including application references) are provided in **Appendix 5.1: Cumulative Developments**. Locations of cumulative developments can be found on **Figure 5.1: Cumulative Developments**.

Table 7.15: Summary of Likely Cumulative Landscape and Visual Effects In Combination with Stage 2 developments

ID	Cumulative Development / Application Ref	Distance from Proposed Development (km)	Level of cumulative change during Construction	Landscape and Visual receptors likely to change from non-significant to significant during Construction	Level of cumulative change during Operation (Year of Opening: Winter)	Landscape and Visual receptors likely to change from non-significant to significant during Operation (Year of Opening: Winter)
The Highland Council						
H01	Knocknagael battery energy storage system (BESS)	0.0 km (adjacent)	<u>Landscape</u> Low <u>Visual</u> Medium	<u>Landscape</u> No change <u>Visual</u> THC-R-30 (VP 6)	<u>Landscape</u> Low <u>Visual</u> Low	<u>Landscape</u> No change <u>Visual</u> No change
H02	Beauly BESS	0.0 km (adjacent)	<u>Landscape</u> Low <u>Visual</u> Low to Medium	<u>Landscape</u> No change <u>Visual</u> THC-R-11 (VP 4)	<u>Landscape</u> Negligible <u>Visual</u> Low	<u>Landscape</u> No change <u>Visual</u> No change
H04	Spittal to Loch Buidhe to Beauly 400 kV Project (SSEN Transmission)	0.0 km (adjacent)	<u>Landscape</u> Low to Medium <u>Visual</u> Medium	<u>Landscape</u> No change (remains significant for LCT 229 and LCT 227 locally) <u>Visual</u> THC-R-10	<u>Landscape</u> Low to Medium <u>Visual</u> Low to Medium	<u>Landscape</u> No change (remains significant for LCT 229 and LCT 227 locally) <u>Visual</u> THC-R-10
H05	Western Isles HVDC UGC (SSEN Transmission)	0.2 km	<u>Landscape</u> Low <u>Visual</u> Low	<u>Landscape</u> No change <u>Visual</u> THC-R-4b THC-R-11 (VP 4)	Scoped out as per Table 7.11.	
H06	Beauly BESS	0.0 km (adjacent)	<u>Landscape</u> Negligible <u>Visual</u> Negligible to Low	<u>Landscape</u> No change <u>Visual</u> No change	<u>Landscape</u> Negligible <u>Visual</u> Negligible	<u>Landscape</u> No change <u>Visual</u> No change
H07	Kilmorack Substation (SSEN Transmission)	0.7 km	<u>Landscape</u> Low to Medium <u>Visual</u> Negligible	<u>Landscape</u> No change <u>Visual</u> No change	Scoped out as per Table 7.11.	
H08	Beauly Substation (SSEN Transmission)	0.0 km (adjacent)	<u>Landscape</u> Negligible	<u>Landscape</u> No change	Scoped out as per Table 7.11.	

ID	Cumulative Development / Application Ref	Distance from Proposed Development (km)	Level of cumulative change during Construction	Landscape and Visual receptors likely to change from non-significant to significant during Construction	Level of cumulative change during Operation (Year of Opening: Winter)	Landscape and Visual receptors likely to change from non-significant to significant during Operation (Year of Opening: Winter)
			<u>Visual</u> Negligible to Low	<u>Visual</u> THC-R-4b		
H09	Cairn Duhie Wind Farm Redesign	0 km (adjacent)	<u>Landscape</u> LCT 286 – Low (locally) LCT 291 (MC) – Medium (locally) SLA – Medium (locally) <u>Visual</u> Medium	<u>Landscape</u> LCT 286 – No change LCT 291 (MC) – No change SLA - Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava Moors (local portion) <u>Visual</u> THC-R-57 MOR-R-3 MOR-R-4A (VP 20) MOR-R-4B	<u>Landscape</u> LCT 286 – Low (locally) LCT 291 (MC) – Medium (locally) SLA - Medium <u>Visual</u> Medium	<u>Landscape</u> LCT 286 – No change LCT 291 (MC) – No change SLA - Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava Moors (local portion) <u>Visual</u> THC-R-57 MOR-R-3 MOR-R-4A (VP 20)
H11	Balmore Wind Farm	2.2 km	<u>Landscape</u> LCT 290 (THC) - Medium (local portion only) <u>Visual</u> Medium	<u>Landscape</u> LCT 290 (local portion only) <u>Visual</u> No change	<u>Landscape</u> LCT 290 (THC) - Low to Medium <u>Visual</u> Low to Medium	<u>Landscape</u> LCT 290 (local portion only) <u>Visual</u> THC-R-51
H12	Ballach Wind Farm	4.7 km	<u>Landscape</u> Negligible <u>Visual</u> Negligible to Low	<u>Landscape</u> No change <u>Visual</u> THC-R-11 (VP 4) THC-R-19 (VP 9)	<u>Landscape</u> Negligible <u>Visual</u> Negligible	<u>Landscape</u> No change <u>Visual</u> No change
H15	Ourack Wind Farm	6.7 km	<u>Landscape</u> On LCT 291 (MC) – Medium (new local portion only) On SLA - Medium to High (local portion) <u>Visual</u> Medium	<u>Landscape</u> LCT 291 (new local portion only) SLA - Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava Moors SLA (local portion) <u>Visual</u> MOR-R-3 MOR-R-4a (VP 20)	<u>Landscape</u> LCT 291 – Medium (new local portion only) SLA - Medium to High (local portion) <u>Visual</u> Medium	<u>Landscape</u> LCT 291 (new local portion only) SLA - Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava Moors SLA (local portion) <u>Visual</u> MOR-R-3 MOR-R-4a (VP 20)

ID	Cumulative Development / Application Ref	Distance from Proposed Development (km)	Level of cumulative change during Construction	Landscape and Visual receptors likely to change from non-significant to significant during Construction	Level of cumulative change during Operation (Year of Opening: Winter)	Landscape and Visual receptors likely to change from non-significant to significant during Operation (Year of Opening: Winter)
H16	Lynemore Wind Farm	7.3 km	<u>Landscape</u> LCT 221 - Low to Medium (new local portion only) <u>Visual</u> Low to Medium	<u>Landscape</u> LCT 221 (new local portion only) <u>Visual</u> THC-R-40 (VP 16) THC-REC-25 (VP 16)	<u>Landscape</u> LCT 221 - Low (new local portion only) <u>Visual</u> Low to Medium	<u>Landscape</u> LCT 221 (new local portion only) <u>Visual</u> THC-R-40 (VP 16) THC-REC-25 (VP 16)
H18	Fairburn Wind Farm Extension	9.0 km	<u>Landscape</u> Negligible <u>Visual</u> Negligible to Low	<u>Landscape</u> No change <u>Visual</u> THC-R-19 (VP 9)	<u>Landscape</u> Negligible <u>Visual</u> Negligible	<u>Landscape</u> No change <u>Visual</u> No change
Moray Council						
M01	Kellas Drum Windfarm	0.0 km (adjacent)	<u>Landscape</u> On LCT 290 – Medium On LCT 285 – Low to Medium On SLA - None <u>Visual</u> Medium to High	<u>Landscape</u> LCT 290 – No change LCT 285 (new local portion only) SLA – No change <u>Visual</u> MOR-R-17 (VP 24) MOR-REC-9 (VP 25) (south of Elgin section)	<u>Landscape</u> On LCT 290 – Medium On LCT 285 – Low to Medium SLA – None <u>Visual</u> Medium to High	<u>Landscape</u> LCT 290 – No change LCT 285 (new local portion only) SLA – No change <u>Visual</u> MOR-R-17 (VP 24) MOR-REC-9 (VP 25) (south of Elgin section)
M02	Berry Burn Wind Farm	0.0 km (adjacent)	<u>Landscape</u> On LCT 290 - Low to Medium On LCT 291 - Low to Medium <u>Visual</u> Negligible to Low	<u>Landscape</u> LCT 290 – No change LCT 291 – No change <u>Visual</u> No change	<u>Landscape</u> On LCT 290 - Low to Medium On LCT 291 - Low to Medium <u>Visual</u> Negligible to Low	<u>Landscape</u> LCT 290 – No change LCT 291 – No change <u>Visual</u> No change
M03	Gibston Farm BESS	1.5 km (adjacent)	<u>Landscape</u> Negligible to Low Impact on LCT 288 in combination with other cumulative developments around Keith: High	<u>Landscape</u> No Change Significance of LCT 288 (overall LCT) would have potential to change as a result of M03 in combination with other	<u>Landscape</u> Negligible In combination with other cumulative developments: High	<u>Landscape</u> No Change Significance would have potential to change for LCT 288 (overall LCT) as a result of M03 in combination with other

ID	Cumulative Development / Application Ref	Distance from Proposed Development (km)	Level of cumulative change during Construction	Landscape and Visual receptors likely to change from non-significant to significant during Construction	Level of cumulative change during Operation (Year of Opening: Winter)	Landscape and Visual receptors likely to change from non-significant to significant during Operation (Year of Opening: Winter)
			<u>Visual</u> Low	cumulative developments around Keith. <u>Visual</u> No change	<u>Visual</u> Low	cumulative developments around Keith <u>Visual</u> No change
M04	Rosarie Quarry	4.9 km	<u>Landscape</u> Negligible to Low Impact on LCT 288 in combination with other cumulative developments around Keith: High <u>Visual</u> Negligible to Low	<u>Landscape</u> No Change Significance of LCT 288 (overall LCT) would have the potential to change as a result of M04 in combination with other cumulative developments around Keith. <u>Visual</u> MOR-R-50	<u>Landscape</u> Negligible In combination with other cumulative developments: High <u>Visual</u> Negligible	<u>Landscape</u> No Change Significance of LCT 288 (overall LCT) would have the potential to change as a result of M04 in combination with other cumulative developments around Keith. <u>Visual</u> No change
M05	Teindland Wind Farm	0.0 km (adjacent)	<u>Landscape</u> LCT 285 (MC) – Medium to High LCT 290 - Medium SLA – High <u>Visual</u> Medium to High	<u>Landscape</u> LCT 285 – local portion LCT 290 – No change SLA The Spey Valley - No change (remains significant locally) <u>Visual</u> MOR-R-21 (VP 26) MOR-R-26 MOR-R-34 (VP 62) MOR-R-35	<u>Landscape</u> LCT 285 (MC) – Medium to High LCT 290 - Medium SLA – High <u>Visual</u> Medium to High	<u>Landscape</u> LCT 285 – local portion LCT 290 – No change SLA The Spey Valley – No change (remains significant locally) <u>Visual</u> MOR-R-21 (VP 26) MOR-R-26 MOR-R-34 (VP 62) MOR-R-35
M06	Blackmuir Quarry	1.2 km	<u>Landscape</u> Low Impact on LCT 288 in combination with other cumulative developments around Keith: High	<u>Landscape</u> No Change Significance would have potential to change for LCT 288 (overall LCT) as a result of M06 in combination with other cumulative developments around Keith.	<u>Landscape</u> Low Impact on LCT 288 in combination with other cumulative developments around Keith: High	<u>Landscape</u> No Change Significance of LCT 288 (overall LCT) would have potential to change as a result of M06 in combination with other cumulative developments around Keith

ID	Cumulative Development / Application Ref	Distance from Proposed Development (km)	Level of cumulative change during Construction	Landscape and Visual receptors likely to change from non-significant to significant during Construction	Level of cumulative change during Operation (Year of Opening: Winter)	Landscape and Visual receptors likely to change from non-significant to significant during Operation (Year of Opening: Winter)
			<u>Visual</u> Low	<u>Visual</u> No change	<u>Visual</u> Low	<u>Visual</u> No change
M07	Blackhills Wind Farm	0.43 km	<u>Landscape</u> Medium <u>Visual</u> Medium to High	<u>Landscape</u> LCT 285 (local portion) <u>Visual</u> MOR-R-24 (VP 27) MOR-R-26 MOR-R-27	<u>Landscape</u> Low <u>Visual</u> Medium to High	<u>Landscape</u> LCT 285 (local portion) <u>Visual</u> MOR-R-24 (VP 27) MOR-R-26 MOR-R-27
M08	Corshellach Energy Storage	0.0 km (adjacent)	<u>Landscape</u> Low <u>Visual</u> Low	<u>Landscape</u> No change <u>Visual</u> No change	<u>Landscape</u> Low <u>Visual</u> Low	<u>Landscape</u> No change <u>Visual</u> No change
M09	Drum Farm Energy Storage	0.3 km	<u>Landscape</u> Low Impact on LCT 288 in combination with other cumulative developments around Keith: High <u>Visual</u> Low	<u>Landscape</u> No change Significance would have potential to change for LCT 288 (overall LCT) as a result of M09 in combination with other cumulative developments around Keith. <u>Visual</u> No change	<u>Landscape</u> Negligible In combination with other cumulative developments: High <u>Visual</u> Low	<u>Landscape</u> No change Significance would have potential to change for LCT 288 (local portion and overall LCT) as a result of M09 in combination with other cumulative developments around Keith. <u>Visual</u> No change
M10	Cairdshill Quarry	1.2 km	<u>Landscape</u> Low to Medium Impact on LCT 288 in combination with other cumulative developments around Keith: High	<u>Landscape</u> No change Significance would have potential to change for LCT 288 (overall LCT) as a result of M09 in combination with other cumulative developments around Keith.	<u>Landscape</u> Low Impact on LCT 288 in combination with other cumulative developments around Keith: High	<u>Landscape</u> No change Significance would have potential to change for LCT 288 (local portion and overall LCT) as a result of M10 in combination with other cumulative developments around Keith.

ID	Cumulative Development / Application Ref	Distance from Proposed Development (km)	Level of cumulative change during Construction	Landscape and Visual receptors likely to change from non-significant to significant during Construction	Level of cumulative change during Operation (Year of Opening: Winter)	Landscape and Visual receptors likely to change from non-significant to significant during Operation (Year of Opening: Winter)
			<u>Visual</u> Low	<u>Visual</u> No change	<u>Visual</u> Low	<u>Visual</u> No change
M11	Keith Battery Storage	0.5 km	<u>Landscape</u> Negligible to Low Impact on LCT 288 in combination with other cumulative developments around Keith: High <u>Visual</u> Low	<u>Landscape</u> No change Significance would have potential to change for LCT 288 (overall LCT) as a result of M11 in combination with other cumulative developments around Keith. <u>Visual</u> No change	<u>Landscape</u> Negligible to Low Impact on LCT 288 in combination with other cumulative developments around Keith: High <u>Visual</u> Low	<u>Landscape</u> No change Significance would have potential to change for LCT 288 (local and overall) as a result of M11 in combination with other cumulative developments around Keith. <u>Visual</u> No change
M12	Blackhillock Battery Storage	0.8 km	<u>Landscape</u> Medium Impact on LCT 288 in combination with other cumulative developments around Keith: High <u>Visual</u> Medium	<u>Landscape</u> No change Significance likely to change on LCT 288 (overall LCT) as a result of M12 in combination with other cumulative developments around Keith. <u>Visual</u> No change	<u>Landscape</u> Low In combination with other cumulative developments: High <u>Visual</u> Low to Medium	<u>Landscape</u> No change Significance likely to change on LCT 288 (local and overall) as a result of M12 in combination with other cumulative developments around Keith. <u>Visual</u> No change
M13	Elchies (Rothes III) Wind Farm Grid Connection works (SSEN Transmission)	2.7 km	<u>Landscape</u> Medium Impact on LCT 288 in combination with other cumulative developments around Keith: High <u>Visual</u> Low to Medium	<u>Landscape</u> No Change Significance likely to change on LCT 288 (overall LCT) as a result of M13 in combination with other cumulative developments around Keith. <u>Visual</u> MOR-R-50	<u>Landscape</u> Low In combination with other cumulative developments: High <u>Visual</u> Negligible to Low	<u>Landscape</u> No Change Significance likely to change on LCT 288 (local and overall) as a result of M13 in combination with other cumulative developments around Keith. <u>Visual</u> MOR-R-50

ID	Cumulative Development / Application Ref	Distance from Proposed Development (km)	Level of cumulative change during Construction	Landscape and Visual receptors likely to change from non-significant to significant during Construction	Level of cumulative change during Operation (Year of Opening: Winter)	Landscape and Visual receptors likely to change from non-significant to significant during Operation (Year of Opening: Winter)
M14	Marchfield Quarry	2.2 km	<u>Landscape</u> Negligible <u>Visual</u> Negligible to Low	<u>Landscape</u> No change <u>Visual</u> No change	<u>Landscape</u> Negligible <u>Visual</u> Negligible to Low	<u>Landscape</u> No change <u>Visual</u> No change
M15	Cairds Hill Wind Farm	2.3 km	<u>Landscape</u> Low Impact on LCT 288 in combination with other cumulative developments around Keith: High <u>Visual</u> Medium	<u>Landscape</u> No change Significance likely to change on LCT 288 (overall LCT) as a result of M15 in combination with other cumulative developments around Keith. <u>Visual</u> MOR-R-50 (VP 33) MOR-R-51	<u>Landscape</u> Negligible to Low Impact on LCT 288 in combination with other cumulative developments around Keith: High <u>Visual</u> Low to Medium	<u>Landscape</u> No change Significance likely to change on LCT 288 (overall LCT) as a result of M15 in combination with other cumulative developments around Keith. <u>Visual</u> MOR-R-50 (VP 33) MOR-R-51
M16	Dykeside Farm Quarry	4.3 km	<u>Landscape</u> Negligible <u>Visual</u> Low	<u>Landscape</u> No change <u>Visual</u> MOR-R-18 MOR-R-19b (VP 26) MOR-R-21	Scoped out as per Table 7.11 .	
M17	Aultmore Wind Farm Redesign	5.3 km	<u>Landscape</u> LCT 293 (locally) – Medium to High LCT 293 (overall) – Medium LCT 288 – Low to Medium Impact on LCT 288 in combination with other cumulative developments around Keith: High	<u>Landscape</u> LCT 293 (locally) – No change LCT 293 (overall) LCT 288 – No change Significance likely to change on LCT 288 (overall LCT) as a result of M17 in combination with other cumulative developments around Keith.	<u>Landscape</u> LCT 293 (locally) – Medium to High LCT 293 (overall) – Medium LCT 288 – Low to Medium Impact on LCT 288 in combination with other cumulative developments around Keith: High	<u>Landscape</u> LCT 293 (locally) – No change LCT 293 (overall) LCT 288 – No change Significance likely to change on LCT 288 (overall LCT) as a result of M17 in combination with other cumulative developments around Keith.

ID	Cumulative Development / Application Ref	Distance from Proposed Development (km)	Level of cumulative change during Construction	Landscape and Visual receptors likely to change from non-significant to significant during Construction	Level of cumulative change during Operation (Year of Opening: Winter)	Landscape and Visual receptors likely to change from non-significant to significant during Operation (Year of Opening: Winter)
			<u>Visual</u> Varying from Low to High	<u>Visual</u> MOR-R-49 MOR-R-59 (VP 63)	<u>Visual</u> Varying from Low to High	<u>Visual</u> MOR-R-49 MOR-R-59 (VP 63)
Aberdeenshire Council						
A05	Muir Mhòr Onshore Works	Cable varies, 0.0 km + substation is approx. 3.5 km	<u>Landscape</u> Low <u>Visual</u> Varying from Negligible to High	<u>Landscape</u> LCT 17 (local portion) <u>Visual</u> AB-R-27 (VP 52 & 53)	<u>Landscape</u> Negligible <u>Visual</u> Varying from Negligible to High	<u>Landscape</u> No change <u>Visual</u> None
A06	Caledonia Offshore Wind Farm Onshore Works	0.0 km (adjacent)	<u>Landscape</u> LCT 20 - Low to Medium LCT 32 - Negligible <u>Visual</u> High	<u>Landscape</u> LCT 20 - No change LCT 32 - No change <u>Visual</u> AB-R-21 AB-R-23 AB-R-32 AB-R-33	<u>Landscape</u> LCT 20 - Low LCT 32 - Negligible <u>Visual</u> High	<u>Landscape</u> LCT 20 - No change LCT 32 - No change <u>Visual</u> AB-R-23 AB-R-32
A09	New Deer 2 BESS APP/2025/0776	0.0 km (adjacent)	<u>Landscape</u> Low <u>Visual</u> Low to Medium	<u>Landscape</u> No change <u>Visual</u> No change	<u>Landscape</u> Low <u>Visual</u> Low	<u>Landscape</u> No change <u>Visual</u> No change
A10	Abbotshaugh Energy Storage	1.2 km	<u>Landscape</u> Low <u>Visual</u> Low to Medium	<u>Landscape</u> No change <u>Visual</u> No change	<u>Landscape</u> Low <u>Visual</u> Low	<u>Landscape</u> No change <u>Visual</u> No change
A12	Greenvolt Onshore Works	Cable varies, 0.0 km +, substation is approx. 3.8 km	<u>Landscape</u> LCT 21 – Medium LCT 20 – Low <u>Visual</u> High	<u>Landscape</u> LCT 21 (local portion only) LCT 20 – No change <u>Visual</u> AB-REC-10	<u>Landscape</u> LCT 21 – Negligible LCT 20 – Low <u>Visual</u> Low	<u>Landscape</u> LCT 21 – No change LCT 20 – No change <u>Visual</u> None
A13	Whitestones Solar Project	4.2 km	<u>Landscape</u> Low	<u>Landscape</u> No change	<u>Landscape</u> Low	<u>Landscape</u> No change

ID	Cumulative Development / Application Ref	Distance from Proposed Development (km)	Level of cumulative change during Construction	Landscape and Visual receptors likely to change from non-significant to significant during Construction	Level of cumulative change during Operation (Year of Opening: Winter)	Landscape and Visual receptors likely to change from non-significant to significant during Operation (Year of Opening: Winter)
			<u>Visual</u> Medium to High	<u>Visual</u> AB-R-33 (VP 46)	<u>Visual</u> Low	<u>Visual</u> None
A14	Hill of Stoneyfield Wind Farm	5.0 km	<u>Landscape</u> Low to Medium <u>Visual</u> Low to Medium	<u>Landscape</u> LCT 19 (local level only) <u>Visual</u> AB-R-17 AB-R-18	<u>Landscape</u> Low <u>Visual</u> Low	<u>Landscape</u> LCT 19 (local level only) <u>Visual</u> AB-R-4b AB-R-17 AB-R-18 AB-R-30

Kellas Alternative Alignment - Cumulative Effects

- 7.7.17 The Kellas Alternative Alignment would result in the same cumulative effects as described above.

Summary of Cumulative Effects

- 7.7.18 Cumulative landscape and visual effects are likely throughout the 10 km Study Area, with significant cumulative effects anticipated primarily for those receptors in close proximity to both the Proposed Development and the cumulative development, except where there is the potential for a concentration of cumulative developments around Keith, on LCT 288.

Designated Landscapes

- 7.7.19 The Proposed Development cumulatively with the three other associated SSEN Transmission Developments (Fanellan substation, Greens substation, and Netherton Hub) would not result in any change to the assessment of designated landscapes.
- 7.7.20 The Proposed Development, however, could result in a potential change from **non-significant** to **significant** effects on the **Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava Moors SLA** during construction and operation, when considered cumulatively with the other unrelated developments of Cairn Duhie Wind Farm Redesign (H09) and Ourack Wind Farm (H15).

Landscape Character

- 7.7.21 The Proposed Development would result in cumulative landscape effects with Fanellan substation on localised portions only of **LCT 227** and **LCT 229** during both construction and operation, all of which would **remain significant**.
- 7.7.22 The Proposed Development would result in cumulative landscape effects with Greens substation and Netherton Hub on two LCTs. Cumulative effects with Greens substation include intensification of effects on a localised portion of **LCT 20** at construction and operation (**remaining significant**) and **remaining non-significant** for the overall LCT at both construction and operation. Cumulative effects with Netherton Hub include intensification of effects on a new localised portion of **LCT 17**, increasing from **non-significant** to **significant** for this new localised portion at both construction and operation.
- 7.7.23 Cumulative effects with other unrelated developments would result in a change from **non-significant** to **significant** during construction on a local portion only of seven LCTs (**LCTs: 290, 291, 221, 285, 21, 19 & 17**) and on the overall character of **LCT 293**. During operation, there would be a change from **non-significant** to **significant** on a local portion only of five LCTs (**LCTs: 290, 291, 221, 285 & 19**) and on the overall character of one: **LCT 293**.
- 7.7.24 Whilst many individual developments around Keith would not result in cumulative effects individually with the Proposed Development, when considering all developments together, there would be a likely change from **non-significant** to **significant** cumulative effect on the overall landscape of **LCT 288** during construction and on both the local level and overall landscape of **LCT 288** during operation.
- 7.7.25 Therefore, **permanent significant** cumulative effects would be likely on the localised portions of 6 LCTs (**17, 290, 291, 221, 285 & 19**), and potentially on the overall characteristics of one: **LCT 285**.

Visual Amenity

- 7.7.26 The Proposed Development when considered cumulatively with Fanellan substation, Greens substation and Netherton Hub would result in increased cumulative visual effects on five residential receptor groups, one recreational receptor group and one transport receptor group, during both construction and operation. The cumulative effect on two of these groups would result in a likely change from **non-significant** to **significant** effects.

- 7.7.27 Cumulative effects with other developments would result in an anticipated change from **non-significant** to **significant** visual effects for 29 residential receptor groups and three recreational receptor groups during construction, reducing slightly to 23 residential receptor groups and two recreational receptor groups during operation. Effects are likely to decrease slightly at operation as a result of the removal of uncharacteristic cumulative construction works within the view.

7.8 Summary and Conclusions

Designated Landscapes

- 7.8.1 The assessment of designated landscapes has identified that there would be significant effects (Moderate Adverse or above) on two of the SLAs – **The Spey Valley SLA**, and the **Deveron Valley SLA**, but on a localised portion of each only. These are the two SLAs through which the Proposed Development passes directly.
- 7.8.2 Effects would be non-significant for the **Findhorn Valley and the Wooded Estates SLA** and **Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava Moors SLA** during all stages.

Landscape Character

- 7.8.3 The Proposed Development crosses directly through 22 different LCT areas, as well as passing adjacent (but not through) three more.
- 7.8.4 For the three LCTs adjacent, only a small portion of views would be affected, with views towards the Proposed Development being limited. Effects were therefore considered to be non-significant for **LCT 220 Rugged Massif**, **LCT 345 Farmed and Forested Slopes - Ross & Cromarty**, and **LCT 346 Open Farmland Slopes**.
- 7.8.5 Of the 22 LCTs through which the Proposed Development crosses, two would be significantly impacted during the construction phase, with significant effects (Moderate Adverse or above) both on the LCT as a whole, and within a local section of the LCT (the area within closest proximity to the Proposed Development). These two LCTs are (in order west to east):
- LCT 229 Enclosed Farmland; and
 - LCT 290 Upland Moorland and Forestry (MC section).
- 7.8.6 The completion of the construction works would remove the uncharacteristic height and movement, resulting in slightly lower impacts during operation for the wider LCT characteristics of **LCT 229**, reducing effects on the LCT as a whole to **non-significant** at operation year of opening (winter and summer).
- 7.8.7 Effects locally on both these LCTs would remain significant at all phases of operation.
- 7.8.8 Of the 22 LCTs through which the Proposed Development directly crosses, a further 15 LCTs were predicted to be significantly impacted at construction within a small, local portion of the LCT only. These 15 LCTs are:
- LCT 342 Farmed River Plains
 - LCT 228 Rolling Farmland and Woodland;
 - LCT 225 Broad Steep-Sided Glen;
 - LCT 222 Rocky Moorland Plateau - Inverness;
 - LCT 223 Flat Moorland Plateau with Woodland;
 - LCT 227 Farmed Strath – Inverness;
 - LCT 221 Rolling Uplands - Inverness;
 - LCT 291 Open Rolling Upland (THC section and MC section);
 - LCT 286 Narrow Wooded Valley – Moray & Nairn;
 - LCT 284 Coastal Farmlands – Moray & Nairn;
 - LCT 293 Low Forested Hills;

- LCT 288 Upland Farmland;
- LCT 27 (both MC and AC sections);
- LCT 32 Farmed and Wooded River Valleys; and
- LCT 20 Undulating Agricultural Heartland.

- 7.8.9 The removal of uncharacteristic construction activity (particularly the height, movement and activity associated with the use of cranes and potentially helicopters) would help to mitigate adverse effects on local landscape character and significant localised effects are anticipated to decrease to **non-significant** at year of opening (winter and summer) on **LCT 291** (THC section only) and **LCT 288**.
- 7.8.10 The management felling planting of surrounding felled coniferous woodland would help to mitigate adverse effects on local landscape character and significant localised effects are anticipated to decrease to **non-significant** at year 15 for: **LCT 221, LCT 223, LCT 227, LCT 228, LCT 286, and LCT 284**.
- 7.8.11 Significant localised effects would remain at all phases of operation for: **LCT 342, LCT 225, LCT 222, LCT 291** (MC section), **LCT 293, LCT 27** (both MC and AC sections), **LCT 32** and **LCT 20**.
- 7.8.12 A further eight intersected LCTs were not considered to be significantly impacted at either the construction or operational phase. The LCTs with non-significant effects were: **LCT 220, LCT 345, LCT 346, LCT 285** (both THC and Moray sections) **LCT 287, LCT 19, LCT 21** and **LCT 17**.

Visual Receptors

- 7.8.13 The visual amenity assessment has identified potentially significant effects on a range of visual receptors during both construction and operational phases throughout the study area. The full assessment of effects on visual amenity can be found in **Appendix 7.4.1 to 7.4.3**. No beneficial effects have been reported. For the viewpoints associated with individual receptors or receptor groups, refer to **Section 7.3 Baseline Conditions**.
- 7.8.14 A summary of effects on visual receptors is outlined below in **Table 7.16** to give a general overview of the balance and grade of effects through the LVIA study area.
- 7.8.15 The numbers shown within **Table 7.16** refer to the number of receptor groups in each effect rating category, and the numbers are not reflective of the number of residential receptors or individual visual receptors that would be affected.
- 7.8.16 Note that to avoid double counting of effects on receptors (where separate effects have been reported either within the same residential receptor groups or along differing lengths of the same linear recreational or transport receptor), the worst-case effect rating has been reported in the summary table. This applies to the following receptors: **THC-R-5, THC-R-9, THC-R-15, THC-R-50, AB-R-1b, AB-R-6, AB-R-10, AB-R-16, AB-R-20, AB-R-24, AB-R-29, AB-R-34, THC-REC-2, THC-REC-11, THC-REC-16, THC-REC-17, THC-REC-18, THC-REC-21, THC-REC-24, MOR-REC-5, MOR-REC-9, MOR-REC-15, MOR-REC-16, MOR-REC-19, MOR-REC-22, MOR-REC-23, AB-REC-10, MOR-T-1, MOR-T-2, MOR-T-3, MOR-T-4, MOR-T-7, MOR-T-9, AB-T-1, AB-T-3, AB-T-4, AB-T-6, AB-T-7, AB-T-10, AB-T-11** and **AB-T-12**.
- 7.8.17 Where year 15 (summer) has not been assessed in **Appendix 7.4.1 to 7.4.3** due to there being no anticipated change in view from operation year of opening, the effect rating for each receptor counted in the summary table below is the same as that reported at operation year of opening (summer).

Table 7.16: Summary of visual effects

Visual Receptor Type / Assessment Phase	Significance of effect – Number of receptor Groups								
	Neutral	Negligible	Negligible to Minor	Minor	Minor to Moderate	Moderate: non-significant	Moderate: significant	Moderate to Major	Major
Residential Receptor Groups – THC									
Total receptor groups assessed = 63									
Construction	0	0	3	12	18	8	1	6	15
Operation Year of Opening (winter)	4	0	2	9	20	7	1	6	14
Operation Year of Opening (summer)	5	0	3	14	17	4	1	8	11
Operation Year 15 (summer)	5	0	3	14	17	5	1	8	10
Residential Receptor Groups – MC									
Total receptor groups assessed = 76									
Construction	0	0	0	18	16	9	2	12	19
Operation Year of Opening (winter)	2	0	0	18	15	9	3	12	17
Operation Year of Opening (summer)	4	0	0	23	10	7	4	11	17
Operation Year 15 (summer)	4	0	0	23	10	8	3	14	14
Residential Receptor Groups – AC									
Total receptor groups assessed = 50									
Construction	1	0	0	10	9	8	4	9	9
Operation Year of Opening (winter)	3	0	0	9	11	8	1	9	9
Operation Year of Opening (summer)	5	0	0	8	10	9	1	8	9
Operation Year 15 (summer)	5	0	0	8	10	9	1	8	9
Recreational Receptors – THC									
Total receptors = 26									
Construction	0	2	2	4	1	3	4	6	4
Operation Year of Opening (winter)	1	2	3	2	2	2	5	7	2

Visual Receptor Type / Assessment Phase	Significance of effect – Number of receptor Groups								
	Neutral	Negligible	Negligible to Minor	Minor	Minor to Moderate	Moderate: non-significant	Moderate: significant	Moderate to Major	Major
Operation Year of Opening (summer)	3	2	2	1	4	2	5	6	1
Operation Year 15 (summer)	3	2	2	1	4	2	6	5	1
Recreational Receptors – Moray (MC) Total receptors = 25									
Construction	0	0	6	5	1	3	3	6	1
Operation Year of Opening (winter)	2	1	4	4	2	2	6	3	1
Operation Year of Opening (summer)	2	2	4	3	2	2	6	3	1
Operation Year 15 (summer)	2	2	4	3	2	2	6	3	1
Recreational Receptors – Aberdeenshire (AC) Total receptors = 20									
Construction	0	2	5	4	2	0	3	4	0
Operation Year of Opening (winter)	1	2	4	4	2	0	3	4	0
Operation Year of Opening (summer)	2	2	6	1	2	0	3	4	0
Operation Year 15 (summer)	2	2	6	1	2	0	3	4	0
Transport Receptors – THC Total receptors = 10									
Construction	0	0	0	4	1	0	5	0	0
Operation Year of Opening (winter)	0	0	0	5	1	0	4	0	0
Operation Year of Opening (summer)	0	0	0	6	0	0	4	0	0
Operation Year 15 (summer)	0	0	1	5	0	0	4	0	0
Transport Receptors – MC Total receptors = 9									

Visual Receptor Type / Assessment Phase	Significance of effect – Number of receptor Groups								
	Neutral	Negligible	Negligible to Minor	Minor	Minor to Moderate	Moderate: non-significant	Moderate: significant	Moderate to Major	Major
Construction	0	0	0	1	1	0	7	0	0
Operation Year of Opening (winter)	0	0	0	1	1	0	7	0	0
Operation Year of Opening (summer)	0	0	0	2	0	0	7	0	0
Operation Year 15 (summer)	0	0	0	2	0	0	7	0	0
Transport Receptors – AC									
Total receptors = 13									
Construction	0	0	0	0	3	0	10	0	0
Operation Year of Opening (winter)	0	0	0	0	4	0	9	0	0
Operation Year of Opening (summer)	0	0	0	0	4	0	9	0	0
Operation Year 15 (summer)	0	0	0	0	4	0	9	0	0

7.8.18 As residential receptors are generally of the highest sensitivity, and given the number across the study area, it would be expected for a number of them to be significantly impacted, but there would also potentially be significantly impacted recreational / amenity and transport receptors. Those identified above as being significantly impacted are summarised below:

Residential

- A total of **77** identified groups of residential receptors would potentially be significantly impacted during construction, of which **43** receptor groups are assessed as **Major Adverse** (from a total of **189** receptor groups). These 43 groups are:
 - THC-R-1 B; THC-R-5; THC-R-13; THC-R-16; THC-R-17; THC-R-18; THC-R-22; THC-R-28; THC-R-29; THC-R-37; THC-R-44; THC-R-53; THC-R-55; THC-R-56a; THC-R-56b;
 - MOR-R-1; MOR-R-7; MOR-R-10; MOR-R-28; MOR-R-31; MOR-R-32 A; MOR-R-32 B; MOR-R-33 A; MOR-R-42; MOR-R-43; MOR-R-44; MOR-R-45; MOR-R-46; MOR-R-47; MOR-R-53; MOR-R-54; MOR-R-55; MOR-R-60; MOR-R-61; and
 - AB-R-1a; AB-R-4a; AB-R-5; AB-R-6; AB-R-7; AB-R-8; AB-R-10; AB-R-11; AB-R-12.
- A total of **72** identified groups of residential receptors would potentially be significantly impacted during operation year of opening (winter), of which **40** receptor groups are assessed as **Major Adverse** (from a total of **189** receptor groups). These 40 groups are:
 - THC-R-1 B; THC-R-5; THC-R-13; THC-R-17; THC-R-18; THC-R-22; THC-R-28; THC-R-29; THC-R-37; THC-R-44; THC-R-53; THC-R-55; THC-R-56a; THC-R-56b;
 - MOR-R-1; MOR-R-7; MOR-R-10; MOR-R-28; MOR-R-31; MOR-R-32 A; MOR-R-32 B; MOR-R-42; MOR-R-43; MOR-R-45; MOR-R-46; MOR-R-47; MOR-R-53; MOR-R-54; MOR-R-55; MOR-R-60; MOR-R-61; and
 - AB-R-1a; AB-R-4a; AB-R-5; AB-R-6; AB-R-7; AB-R-8; AB-R-10; AB-R-11; AB-R-12.
- A total of **70** identified groups of residential receptors would potentially be significantly impacted during operation year of opening (summer), of which **37** receptor groups are assessed as **Major Adverse** (from a total of **189** receptor groups). These are:
 - THC-R-1 B; THC-R-5; THC-R-13; THC-R-18; THC-R-22; THC-R-28; THC-R-29; THC-R-37; THC-R-44; THC-R-55; THC-R-56b;
 - MOR-R-1; MOR-R-7; MOR-R-10; MOR-R-28; MOR-R-31; MOR-R-32 A; MOR-R-32 B; MOR-R-42; MOR-R-43; MOR-R-45; MOR-R-46; MOR-R-47; MOR-R-53; MOR-R-54; MOR-R-55; MOR-R-60; MOR-R-61; and
 - AB-R-1a; AB-R-4a; AB-R-5; AB-R-6; AB-R-7; AB-R-8; AB-R-10; AB-R-11; AB-R-12.
- A total of **68** identified groups of residential receptors would potentially be significantly impacted during operation year 15 (summer), of which **33** receptor groups are assessed as **Major Adverse** (from a total of **189** receptor groups). These are:
 - THC-R-1 B; THC-R-5; THC-R-13; THC-R-18; THC-R-22; THC-R-28; THC-R-29; THC-R-37; THC-R-44; THC-R-55;
 - MOR-R-1; MOR-R-7; MOR-R-10; MOR-R-28; MOR-R-32 A; MOR-R-32 B; MOR-R-43; MOR-R-45; MOR-R-46; MOR-R-53; MOR-R-54; MOR-R-55; MOR-R-60; MOR-R-61; and
 - AB-R-1a; AB-R-4a; AB-R-5; AB-R-6; AB-R-7; AB-R-8; AB-R-10; AB-R-11; AB-R-12.

7.8.19 It can therefore be seen that the construction stage would create a number of significantly impacted residential receptors, primarily due to the height of cranes and helicopters and uncharacteristic movement and activity associated with tower construction, access track construction and tree felling. Operation year of opening (winter) would also have the potential to create the same number of significantly impacted receptors as the height and scale of the Proposed Development cannot be readily screened or mitigated. The magnitude and subsequent

significance of effects would potentially decrease slightly during summer months due to deciduous trees providing some additional screening or filtering of views. Replanting back to the OC (as an indirect impact) would contribute to additional screening and slight reduction in effects.

Recreational / Amenity

- A total of **31** identified groups of recreational / amenity would potentially be significantly impacted during construction, of which **five** receptors are assessed as **Major Adverse** (from a total of **71** receptors).
- A total of **31** identified groups of recreational / amenity receptors would potentially be significantly impacted during operation year of opening (winter), of which **three** receptors are assessed as **Major Adverse** (from a total of **71** receptors).
- A total of **29** identified groups of recreational / amenity receptors would potentially be significantly impacted during operation year of opening (summer), of which **two** receptor groups are assessed as **Major Adverse** (from a total of **71** receptors).
- A total of **29** identified groups of recreational / amenity receptors would potentially be significantly impacted during operation year 15 (summer), of which **two** receptor groups are assessed as **Major Adverse** (from a total of **71** receptors).

7.8.20 Recreational and Amenity receptors have similar or slightly lower sensitivity than residential receptors, and with views being typically transient (such as along a Core Path) or temporary (such as visitors to a cemetery). For many recreational receptors, significant effects would only occur along a small portion of the route, with many sections of Core Paths or Long-Distance paths experiencing no change.

7.8.21 The Recreational and Amenity receptors specifically impacted are as follows:

- users of the North Coast 500 tourist route (**THC-REC-2**);
- users of Core Paths IN03.03 'War Memorial to Black Bridge by Balblair Wood' & IN03.04 'Lovat Bridge to Black Bridge' (**THC-REC-5**);
- users of Core Paths IN20.11 'Home Farm to Hughton by Lonbuie' & IN20.05 'East Lodge to West Lodge, Beaufort Castle', within Beaufort Castle Garden and Designed Landscape (GDL) (**THC-REC-6**);
- users of Core Path IN21.07 'West Lodge to Lower Achnagairn', Easter Moniac (**THC-REC-7**);
- users of Core Path IN23.02 'Newtonhill to Blackfold' (**THC-REC-9**);
- users of the Great Glen Canoe Trail & Caledonian Canal Towpaths (Core Path IN19.10) (**THC-REC-11**);
- users of the Caledonia Way and Core Paths IN19.67 'Torbreck Road to Cullaird', IN12.07 'Cullaird to Drumashie Plantation' & IN12.02 'Kindrummond to Cullaird' (**THC-REC-12**);
- users of Daviot Steading (formerly Clava Mairns) wedding venue (**THC-REC-14**);
- users Core Paths IN11.02 'Daviot Wood circuits', IN19.40 'Castleton to Daviot Wood by Bogbain Moor' & IN19.39 'General Wades Military Road to Daviot Wood', Daviot Woods, Daviot Woods (**THC-REC-15**);
- users of the Highland Tourist Route, A939 (**THC-REC-16**);
- users of National Cycle Route 7 (**THC-REC-17**);
- users of Achagour Fishery (**THC-REC-22**);
- users of Long-Distance Paths: The Great Glen Way (**THC-REC-24**);
- visitors to Ardclach Church and grounds and Ardclach Bell Tower (**THC-REC-26**);
- users of Scottish Great Trail (and Scottish Heritage Trail) 'Dava Way' and Core Path DA04 (**MOR-REC-1**);
- visitors to Coleburn Distillery (**MOR-REC-3**);
- users of Scotland Heritage Trail 'Via Regia' (**MOR-REC-5**);
- users of Scotland Heritage Trail 'Mannoch Road' (**MOR-REC-9**);
- users of Core Path EG52 (**MOR-REC-12**);

- users of the River Spey and Scottish Great Trail 'Speyside Way', including the Speyside Viewpoint on Ben Aigan (**MOR-REC-15**);
- visitors to Ordiequish Earth Pillars, Dipple Cemetery, Earth Pillars Viewpoint and users of the trail (**MOR-REC-16**);
- users of Core Paths around Keith (KT07, KT08, KT10, KT12, KT13) and users of Islavale Football Club (**MOR-REC-21**);
- users of Scottish Heritage Trail 'Buckie Fishwives Path' (**MOR-REC-22**);
- users of Meikle Balloch footpaths including Core Paths CP-KT02, CP-KT03 and CP-KT04 (**MOR REC 23**);
- visitors to Glenlatterach Reservoir (**MOR-REC-24**);
- visitors to Dallas Castle (**MOR-REC-25**, Kellas Alternative Alignment only);
- users of the River Deveron at Coniecleugh & Avochie, within the **Deveron Valley SLA (AB-REC-3)**;
- users of NCN 1 and Core Path NCN Route 1D 'Montcroffer Croft to Maud' (**AB-REC-7**);
- visitors to Culsh Monument and viewpoint, New Deer Cemetery and users of Core Path 211.02P 'New Deer: Culsh Monument Link - Proposed Link' (**AB-REC-8**);
- users of Core Paths 211.01 'New Deer: Kirk Walk & Culsh Circular' and 211.01P 'New Deer: Kirk Walk & Culsh Circular extension - Proposed Link' to the north of New Deer (**AB-REC-9**);
- users of Formartine and Buchan Way (Long Distance Path, Core Path 7LD.03FM.10 'The Formartine & Buchan Way Blackhill Wood to Auchnagatt') and Core Path 209.01 'Maud: Clackriach Path' (**AB-REC-10**);
- users of Core Path 208.01 'Long Harvest Hill', Longside (**AB-REC-12**); and
- visitors to Longside Cemetery (**AB-REC-20**).

Transport

- A total of **22** identified groups or individual transport receptors would potentially be significantly impacted during construction, all of which are assessed as **Moderate Adverse** (from a total of **32** receptors).
- A total of **20** identified groups of transport receptors would potentially be significantly impacted during operation year of opening (winter), of all of which are assessed as **Moderate Adverse** (from a total of **32** receptor groups).
- A total of **20** identified groups of transport receptors would potentially be significantly impacted during operation year of opening (summer), all of which are assessed as **Moderate Adverse** (from a total of **32** receptors).
- A total of **20** identified groups of transport receptors would potentially be significantly impacted during operation year 15 (summer), all of which are assessed as **Moderate Adverse** (from a total of **32** receptors).

7.8.22 Transport receptors have a slightly lower sensitivity than residential receptors, and with views being transient and changing, often at quite high speed, the magnitude of change is lessened. For most of the transport receptors, these significant effects would only occur along a small portion of the route. As a result, there were no Major Adverse or Moderate to Major Adverse effects identified.

7.8.23 The transport receptors significantly impacted are as follows:

- users of minor roads between Culburnie & Easter Moniack to south of River Beauly (**THC-T-2**);
- users of minor unnamed roads over The Aird (**THC-T-3**);
- users of the A82 (**THC-T-4**);
- users of Essich Road & the B861 south of Inverness (**THC-T-6**);
- users of the A9 (**THC-T-7**);
- users of the A940 (**MOR-T-1**);
- users of minor road C13E from Dallas to Upper Knockando (**MOR-T-2**);

- users of the A941 (**MOR-T-4**);
- users of local roads between the A941 and River Spey, including users of the B9015, on the North East 250 route (**MOR-T-5**);
- users of the A96, passes through **The Spey Valley SLA (MOR-T-7)**;
- users of local roads between Whiteash Hill Wood and The Balloch/ Blackhillock (**MOR-T-8**);
- users of the A95 (**MOR-T-9**);
- local roads between Coachford and Cobairdy, partially within the **Deveron Valley SLA (AB-T-2)**;
- users of the B9022, within the **Deveron Valley SLA (AB-T-3)**;
- users of the A97, within the **Deveron Valley SLA (AB-T-4)**;
- users of the A97, within the **Deveron Valley SLA (AB-T-6)**;
- users of the A947 (**AB-T-7**);
- local roads between Cuminestown and Nether Kinmundy (**AB-T-8**);
- users of the A981 (**AB-T-9**);
- users of the B9106 (**AB-T-10**);
- users of the B9030 (**AB-T-11**); and
- users of the A952 (**AB-T-12**).

Potential further mitigation (subject to feasibility, agreements or consent)

- 7.8.24 Additional mitigation measures LV1 and LV2 would help to slightly soften views towards the Proposed Development but would not result in changes to the significance of effects identified. Residual effects would remain the same as the pre-mitigation effects.

Kellas Alternative Alignment

Designated Landscapes

- 7.8.25 There would be no changes to the assessment of significant effects as a result of the Kellas Alternative Alignment on any Designated Landscape identified.

Landscape Character

- 7.8.26 The Kellas Alternative Alignment would be slightly more noticeable from within the localised portion of **LCT 285** immediately adjacent, despite it being located on slightly lower ground. Effects would therefore be considered to increase slightly to become **significant** on the localised portion only.
- 7.8.27 Within **LCT 290** (MC Section), both alignments are situated on open upland moorland and would introduce a highly prominent new vertical feature through the open landscape. Despite the Kellas Alternative Alignment being located on slightly lower ground, both alignments are considered to result in the same significant effects during the construction stage and at operation, both locally and on the LCT as a whole.

Visual Receptors

- 7.8.28 The Kellas Alternative Alignment would be situated closer to visual receptors to the north and would result in slightly increased impact on residents at Dallas (**MOR-R-14**) to the north of Hart Hill (**MOR-R-20**) and to the north of Brown Muir and the south of Elgin (**MOR-R-21**) and would increase the impact on visitors to Glenlatterach Reservoir and users of informal paths (**MOR-REC-25**).
- 7.8.29 The Kellas Alternative Alignment would result in a considerable increase in impact for residential receptors between the Hill of the Wangie and Meikle Hill / Mill Buie (**MOR-R-16**) and in the valley between Buinach Hill and The Drum / Mill Ourt (**MOR-R-17**). Effects here increase from **non-significant** with the Proposed OHL Alignment,

to **significant** with the Kellas Alternative Alignment due to its proximity, resulting in an increase in the perceived degree of change in views.

- 7.8.30 Similarly for visitors to Dallas Castle (ruin) (**MOR-REC-25**), and users of the B9010 (**MOR-T-3**), effects would change from **non-significant** with the Proposed OHL Alignment, to **significant** with the Kellas Alternative Alignment due to its increased prominence and proximity within the view. For users of Scotland Heritage Path 'Mannoch Road' (**MOR-REC-9**) effects would slightly decrease due to the Kellas Alternative Alignment being on slightly lower ground and better screened from the path.

Cumulative Effects

- 7.8.31 The Kellas Alternative Alignment would result in the same cumulative effects as described for the Proposed Development within Section 7.7.

Conclusions

- 7.8.32 This LVIA has established that the introduction of the Proposed Development would result in significant adverse effects on a large number of both landscape and visual receptors. Given the height and scale of infrastructure and the length over which it is located, this would not be unexpected. Extensive work has been undertaken during the previous project stages to ensure the Proposed Development avoided the most sensitive landscapes (such as National Parks) and larger centres of population, as well as considering topography and vegetation to provide a 'backcloth' wherever possible. Even so, predominantly localised significant adverse landscape and visual effects would be likely at both construction and operation year of opening (winter and summer) and year 15 (summer).
- 7.8.33 Significant effects would remain for **The Spey Valley SLA** and the **Deveron Valley SLA**, but on localised portions only. Two LCTs have been identified as likely to experience impacts both locally and on the LCT as a whole at construction, but reducing to only one LCT at operation, whilst a further 15 LCTs would be impacted within localised sections only at construction, reducing to 8 by operation year 15.
- 7.8.34 A total of 68 groups of residential receptors were identified as potentially experiencing a significant effect by operation year 15, along with 29 groups of recreational receptors, and 20 groups of transport receptors.
- 7.8.35 Mitigation has primarily been embedded through the design process, to determine the most suitable alignment across the landscape, as discussed in **Chapter 4: The Routeing Process and Alternatives**. Possible mitigation measures, as discussed within **Section 7.5**, would be employed, but given the scale of the Proposed Development the measures identified would not be sufficient to result in any likely change in effect. Overall, in the longer term, the landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Development described above would be likely to remain significant.