Scottish & Southern Electricity Networks
TRANSMISSION

Beauly to Blackhillock to New Deer to Peterhead 400 kV Project

Environmental Impact Assessment Report

Volume 5 | Appendices

Appendix 7.1 – Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Methodology

APPENDIX 7.1 – Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Methodology

Appendix Figures

There are no Figures as part of this Appendix.

Appendices Annexes

There are no Annexes to this Appendix.

1 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Methodology

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 This Appendix provides details of the landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA) methodology.

1.1.2 The methodology for the LVIA has been produced in accordance with best practice and following the Landscape Institute (LI) and Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) guidelines. It has been undertaken and overseen by suitably qualified landscape architects, including a chartered member of the Landscape Institute (CMLI) (refer to **Chapter 5**, **Table 5.3: Technical Competence of EIA Team**).

1.1.3 The assessment considers two distinct but closely related areas: landscape character and visual amenity.

1.1.4 The tables below set out the decision-making framework for assessing landscape and visual sensitivity and magnitude and how these are considered together to reach an assessment of significance. In all cases these tables are guidelines, not hard and fast rules, and professional judgement is always used to determine the outcome.

1.1.5 There are a number of stages involved in the assessment process, summarised as follows:

- identification of the Study Area (refer to Section 7.2 of **Chapter 7: Landscape and Visual**);
- establishment of the Baseline (refer to Section 7.2 of **Chapter 7: Landscape and Visual**);
- identification of Landscape and Visual receptors (refer to Section 7.2 of **Chapter 7: Landscape and Visual**);
- assigning Value, Susceptibility and Sensitivity (Section 1.3 below);
- identification of Potential Effects (Section 1.4 below);
- assessment of Significance of Effect (Section 1.5 below); and
- judging the overall significance (Section 0 below).

Professional Judgement

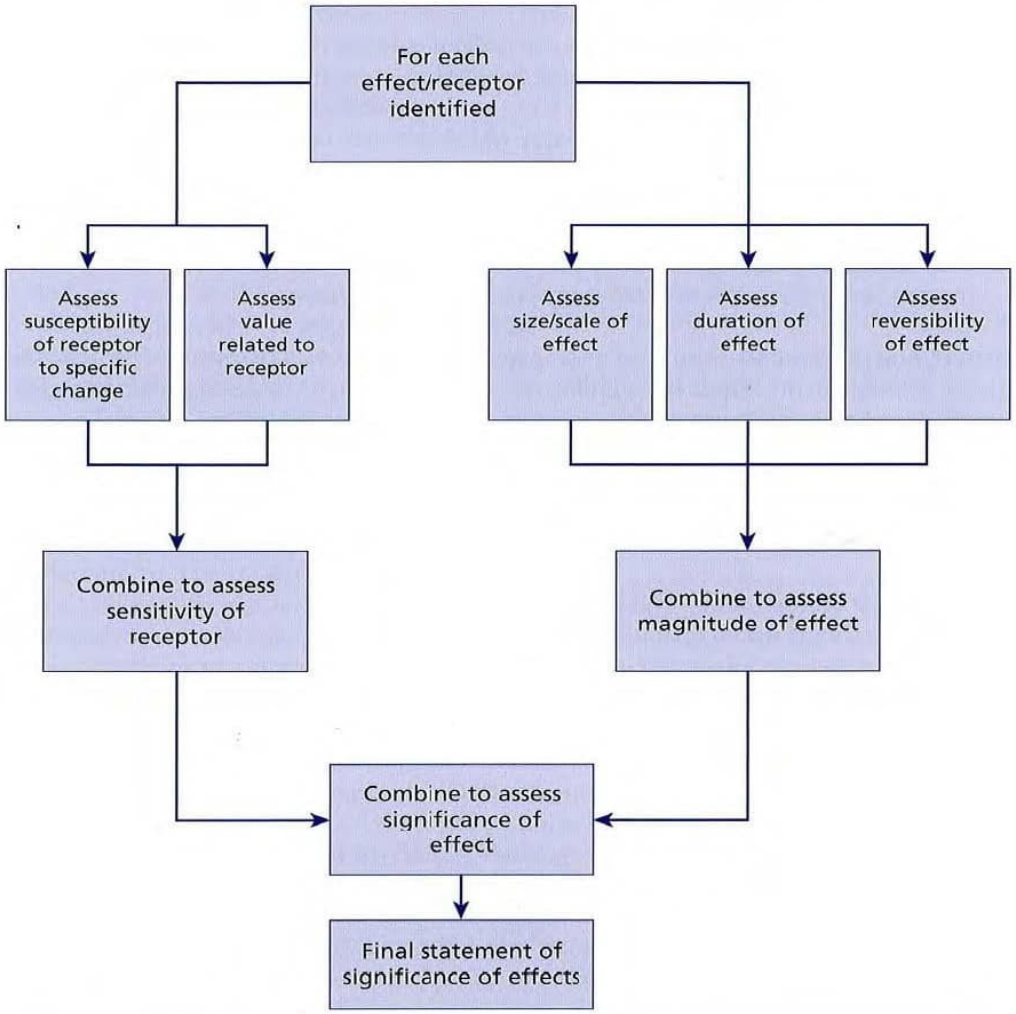
1.1.6 The Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition (GLVIA3)[1] places a strong emphasis on the importance of professional judgement in identifying and defining the significance of landscape and visual effects. As part of this assessment, professional judgement has been used in combination with structured methods and criteria to evaluate landscape value and landscape and visual sensitivity, magnitude and significance of effect. Conclusions about the sensitivity of receptors, the magnitude of impacts and the significance of effects are based on professional judgement.

1.2 Assessment Guidance and Approach

1.2.1 The assessment approach and process to determine effect significance is summarised in the flow diagram below in **Plate 1**, taken from GLVIA3. The report also refers to the NatureScot Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Guidance[2] and the Landscape Institutes Technical Guidance Note TGN 02/21[3]. Note that reference to GLVIA3 within this Appendix should also be taken as including the notes and clarifications published by the Landscape Institute in August 2024[4] (LITGN-2024-01).

[1] Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013). '*Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*', 3rd Edition.
[2] NatureScot, (April 2022). *Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Guidance*, available at: https://www.nature.scot/doc/landscape-sensitivity-assessment-guidance-methodology.
3 Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 02/21 Assessing landscape value outside national designations, available at: https://landscapewpstorage01.blob.core.windows.net/www-landscapeinstitute-org/2021/05/tgn-02-21-assessing-landscape-value-outside-national-designations.pdf
[4] Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note LITGN-2024-01 (August 2024) Notes and Clarifications on aspects of the 3rd Edition Guidelines on Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA3) LITGN-2024-01. available at: https://www.landscapeinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/LITGN-2024-01-GLVIA3-NC_Aug-2024.pdf

Plate 1: Assessment approach and process to determine the significance of effects



Source: GLVIA 3rd Edition (page 39) - Section 3 Principles and overview of processes, Figure 3.5.

1.3 Assigning Value, Susceptibility and Sensitivity

Overview

1.3.1 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 Proposed Development. These factors are considered further below.

Landscape Susceptibility, Value and Sensitivity

Landscape Susceptibility

1.3.2 The susceptibility of a landscape receptor relates to its ability to accommodate the Proposed Development without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation and / or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies (refer to GLVIA3 pages 88-89 & 158).

1.3.3 Some landscape receptors are better able to accommodate development than others due to certain characteristics that are indicative of capacity to accommodate change. Indicators (or characteristics) of landscape susceptibility to the Proposed Development are based on the following criteria (adapted from NatureScot's Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Guidance page 22):

- **scale:** the scale of the landscape considers the degree of topographical relief, openness and enclosure and the presence of smaller scale features. In general, larger scale landscapes with minimal vegetation cover (e.g.

those that are broad, simple, uniform, expansive, large scale field patterns) are typically likely to be more susceptible to OHL developments than small scale landscapes (e.g. intimate, enclosed, wooded) due to the exposed nature of the landscape and lack of opportunity to 'backcloth' the Proposed Development with landform and vegetation.

- **landform:** consideration of landform relates to the degree of complexity of the landform, including identification of any distinct topographical features, helps determine the ability of the landscape to accommodate the Proposed Development footprint. Simpler, homogenous, gently graded, more uniform landforms would generally be more susceptible to OHL developments while more dramatic, steeper, rugged, complex and distinctive landform such as drumlins, incised river valleys / gorges, cliffs or rock outcrops, would be less susceptible due to the greater capacity to accommodate the type of development.
- **land-cover:** land-cover influence relates to the degree of complexity of the landscape and diversity of land-cover, including field enclosure pattern, presence of woodlands, watercourses, moorland, or lochs but also distinctive land-cover features. More diverse and intricate land-cover patterns (such as the presence of ancient and mature or long-established vegetation including mature trees, woodland and protected hedgerows in complex pattern and landcover types) would be more susceptible to development in general, whilst broader, extensive, simpler land-cover pattern or landcover types, would be less susceptible. Effects include loss of the feature and diminishment of integrity if removed, or where the Proposed Development has a detractive effect if located nearby.
- **texture:** this relates to the pattern of vegetation cover or built form and its relative complexity, including presence of linear tree belts, geometric conifer planation, tree lines on water courses, and hedgerow with hedgerow trees. Landscapes with more uniform, simple, smooth textures would be less susceptible to development in general, whilst complex, irregular, rougher textures or patterns would be more susceptible.
- **detracting features:** features that detract from the key qualities or characteristics of the landscape. This could include man-made developments such as major roads, electricity infrastructure, industrial development, or unsympathetic housing, retail or commercial developments, as well as uncharacteristic vegetation or land use such as improved pasture in areas characterised by moorland.
- **built environment:** consideration of the built environment looks at the relationship with other development. Generally, contemporary landscapes where there are more modern forms of development that already have a characterising influence (such as industry, windfarms, mineral extraction or electrical infrastructure) result in a lower susceptibility to the Proposed Development than areas characterised by recognised cultural features, or smaller scale, historic development and settlement boundaries, and settlement landmarks (such as historic villages with dense settlement patterns and associated buildings such as church towers).
- **perceptual / experiential aspects:** perceptual or experiential aspects relate to tranquillity, naturalness and wildness, and are generally influenced by the degree of modification by human intervention and how development could affect perceptions of naturalness, remoteness, sense of space, and openness. In general, landscapes which are more modified and developed are busier, more chaotic, and noisier than undeveloped ones, with perceptions of 'wildness' less tangible, and are therefore likely to be less susceptible. Landscapes that are acknowledged to be particularly scenic, with a distinct sense of wildness or timelessness (where the number and distinctiveness of archaeological or historic features, and scarcity of modern built features, can give a strong sense of history or 'timelessness') would be more susceptible.
- **visual amenity:** visual amenity relates to the extent of relative visibility and key views to and from the landscape. The degree of openness or enclosure influences visibility, as topography / landform and woodland can provide screening of views, whilst elevated, extensive views which are sustained can increase visibility. More densely settled and open landscapes would also generally be of increased susceptibility, although the presence of key visitor attractions and routes (including areas popular for recreation) can increase susceptibility in more sparsely settled landscapes. Prominent and distinctive skylines and horizons with important landmark natural or built features, particularly those that are identified in landscape character assessments, are generally considered to be more susceptible to the development than broad, simple skylines which lack landmark features or contain other infrastructure features.

1.3.4 The landscape receptor susceptibility ratings are generally in accordance with **Table 1**, below.

Table 1.1: Susceptibility of the landscape receptor to change

Susceptibility to proposed change	
High	Key characteristics and qualities of the landscape are highly sensitive to change from the development type. Low or no ability to accommodate the specific proposed change; undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation (receptor value) and / or achievement of relevant planning policies / strategies.
Medium	Some of the key landscape characteristics or qualities of the landscape are sensitive to change from the development type. Some ability to accommodate the specific proposed change;

Susceptibility to proposed change	
	some undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation (receptor value) and / or achievement of relevant planning policies / strategies.
Low	Key characteristics and qualities of the landscape are unlikely to be adversely affected by the introduction of the development type. High ability to accommodate the specific proposed change; little or no undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation (receptor value) and / or achievement of relevant planning policies / strategies.

Source: adapted from GLVIA 3rd Edition and NatureScot Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Guidance

Landscape Value

1.3.5 The value of a landscape receptor is a reflection of the value that society attaches to that landscape. Typical indicators of value are based on the following range of factors (adapted from GLVIA 3rd Edition, pages 80 - 85; TGN 02/21; and NatureScot Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Guidance, pages 20-21 including Figure 5):

- **landscape designations / recognition**: a receptor that lies within the boundary of a recognised landscape or landscape-related planning designation is likely to be of increased value, depending on the proportion of the receptor that is affected and the level of importance of the designation which may be international (such as world heritage sites), national (e.g. national scenic areas, national parks), regional (e.g. special landscape areas, listed buildings (Category A), inventory gardens & designed landscapes, battlefields) or local (e.g. local landscape areas, listed buildings (Category B and C), conservation areas, country parks, regional parks). Other recognised landscape values include Wild Land areas and dark sky reserves (as identified in NatureScots *Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Guidance*, Figure 5, page 21). Whilst cultural heritage designations are used to inform the value of a landscape, they are assessed within **Chapter 11: Cultural Heritage**. The absence of designation does not however preclude value, as an undesignated landscape receptor may still be valued as a resource at a variety of levels.
- **landscape features and quality**: the quality of a landscape receptor is a reflection of its attributes, such as scenic quality, sense of place, rarity and representativeness, and the extent to which its valued attributes have remained intact. A landscape with consistent, intact, well-defined and distinctive attributes is considered to be of higher quality and, in turn, higher value, than a landscape where the introduction of elements has detracted from its character.
- **landscape experience**: the experiential qualities that can be evoked by a landscape receptor can add to its value. These responses relate to a number of factors including cultural associations that may exist in art, literature or history; the recreational value of the landscape, or the iconic status of the landscape in its own right; and its contribution of other values such as nature conservation or archaeology.

1.3.6 The landscape receptor value ratings are generally in accordance with **Table 1.2,** below.

Table 1.2: Landscape receptor value

Value	Recognition	Quality	Features
High	• typically a landscape or feature of international or national recognition, such as: national scenic areas, national parks, world heritage sites (where designated for landscape reasons), designed landscapes on the Historic Environment Scotland (HES) register, wild land areas and dark sky reserves	• a high quality, attractive landscape, typically with a strong sense of place with landscape / features worthy of conservation. • an exceptional / distinctive landscape with no or few detracting features. • often a more wild, remote or tranquil landscape.	• typically a landscape or feature with many cultural associations (existing in art, literature, TV / film, or history). • high recreational value / use e.g. Core Paths, long-distance routes, national cycle network, promoted scenic routes (e.g. North Coast 500), Munros. • significant tourism e.g. established visitor attractions, OS marked / promoted or valued viewpoints, visitor 'hotspots'.
Medium	• regional recognition or undesignated, but locally valued landscape / features,	• ordinary to good quality landscape, typically containing distinguishing features worthy of conservation. Evidence of	• a landscape or feature with a number of cultural associations recognised at a more local level

Value	Recognition	Quality	Features
	such as: local landscape areas, regional scenic areas, special landscape areas, locally listed designed landscapes and regional parks, conservation areas and listed buildings (Cat B & C).	some degradation and / or some detracting elements. • a reasonably attractive landscape / feature that is typical and fairly commonplace, containing some areas more tranquil and natural. • some potential for substitution.	in art, literature, TV / film, or history. • a landscape / feature with good recreational value / use e.g. local path network, rights of way, regional / local cycle network, notable hills and glens. • notable tourism, including visitor attractions, touring routes / trails (e.g. Whisky Trail).
Low	• typically an undesignated landscape / feature with some / limited value locally.	• an ordinary landscape / feature that is typically commonplace and unremarkable with limited variety or distinctiveness. • some landscape features worthy of conservation but evidence of degradation with detracting features. • limited tranquility; a typically busy landscape with numerous artificial influences. • high potential for substitution.	• some cultural associations. • some recognised recreational value / use – some designated paths or trails, typically local path network only. Quieter rural roads providing recreational routes for cycling and car-based leisure trips. • some tourism value – some visitor attractions, rural routes.

Source: adapted from GLVIA 3rd Edition; TGN 02/21; and NatureScot Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Guidance

Landscape Sensitivity

1.3.7 Susceptibility and value can be combined in different ways although it is generally accepted that a combination of high susceptibility and high value is likely to result in the highest sensitivity, whereas a low susceptibility and low value is likely to result in the lowest level of sensitivity. As noted in GLVIA3 (pages 88-90), there can be complex relationships between the value attributed to a landscape and its susceptibility to change, which can be particularly important when considering change in or close to designated landscapes.

1.3.8 Landscapes 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 that lead to a reduction in sensitivity.

1.3.9 Similarly, receptors considered of low or medium susceptibility are usually in the same category of sensitivity, unless there are reasons associated with the landscape value that lead to an increase in sensitivity.

1.3.10 **Table 1.3** below summarises typical characteristics of the different levels of sensitivity. It should be noted that the levels are indicative, and the levels shown are arbitrary divisions of a continuum. Due to the type and scale of the development proposed interim descriptors have been used and where areas lie between two defined levels of sensitivity, intermediate levels such as 'medium to high' or 'low to medium' may be applied. Professional judgement is always used to determine the overall level.

Table 1.3: Landscape sensitivity

Level of sensitivity	Typical characteristics
High Key characteristics and qualities of the landscape are highly sensitive to change from the development type. The Proposed Development would	• areas of landscape character that are highly valued for their scenic quality (including most statutorily designated landscapes); • elements / features that could be described as unique or are nationally scarce; • mature vegetation with provenance such as ancient woodland or mature parkland trees;

Level of sensitivity	Typical characteristics
significantly conflict with several of the assessment criteria with severe adverse impacts likely to arise.	• mature landscape features which are characteristic of and contribute to a sense of place and illustrates time-depth in a landscape and if replaceable, could not be replaced other than in the long term; • no or limited scope for substitution or positive enhancement; and • key characteristics and qualities of the landscape are highly sensitive to change from the development type. The Proposed Development would significantly conflict with several of the assessment criteria with severe adverse impacts likely to arise.
Medium to high Some of the key landscape characteristics or qualities of the landscape are highly sensitive to change from the development type. There is some ability to accommodate the Proposed Development in some situations but noticeable changes to the landscape are likely to arise; the development type does not relate to aspects of landscape character.	• areas that have a positive landscape character and may be highly valued for scenic quality but may also include some small, perceptible areas of alteration / degradation / or erosion of features; • perceptual / aesthetic aspects has some vulnerability to unsympathetic development; and / or features / elements that are locally commonplace; unusual locally but in moderate condition; or mature vegetation that is in moderate condition or readily replicated; • some scope for substitution or positive enhancement; and • some but not all of the key landscape characteristics or qualities of the landscape are highly sensitive to change from development type. There is some ability to accommodate development in some situations but is likely to conflict with the assessment criteria and result in adverse impacts.
Medium Some of the key landscape characteristics or qualities of the landscape are sensitive to change from the development type. There is some ability to accommodate the Proposed Development in some situations without widespread or severe changes to the landscape; the development type relates to some aspects of landscape character.	• areas that have a positive landscape character but include some areas of alteration / degradation / or erosion of features; • perceptual / aesthetic aspects that have some vulnerability to unsympathetic development; and / or features / elements that are locally commonplace; unusual locally but in moderate / poor condition; or mature vegetation that is in moderate / poor condition or readily replicated; • some scope for substitution or positive enhancement; and • some of the key landscape characteristics or qualities of the landscape are sensitive to change from development type. There is some ability to accommodate development in some situations without widespread or severe changes to the landscape; the development type relates to some aspects of landscape character.
Low to medium Key characteristics and qualities of the landscape are unlikely to be adversely affected by the introduction of the development type. There is some ability to accommodate the Proposed Development in some situations but may still result in noticeable changes to the landscape; the development type may relate to one or some aspects of landscape character.	• slightly damaged or modified landscapes with some characteristic features of value; • capable of absorbing moderate to major change; • landscape elements / features that might be considered to detract from landscape character such as obtrusive man-made artefacts are noticeable (e.g. power lines, large scale developments, etc.); • scope for substitution or positive enhancement; and • key characteristics and qualities of the landscape are unlikely to be adversely affected by the introduction of the development type but may be sensitive to change. The development type relates to the assessment criteria and change may be partially or wholely accommodated without widespread significant adverse impacts on the landscape.
Low Key characteristics and qualities of the landscape are unlikely to be adversely affected by the	• damaged or substantially modified landscapes with few characteristic features of value; • capable of absorbing major change;

Level of sensitivity	Typical characteristics
introduction of the development type. The development type relates well to the assessment criteria and change may be accommodated without widespread significant adverse impacts on the landscape.	• landscape elements / features that might be considered to detract from landscape character such as obtrusive man-made artefacts are prominent (e.g. power lines, large scale developments, etc.); • scope for substitution or positive enhancement; and • key characteristics and qualities of the landscape are unlikely to be adversely affected by the introduction of the development type. The development type relates well to the assessment criteria and change may be accommodated without widespread significant adverse impacts on the landscape.

Source: adapted from GLVIA 3rd Edition and NatureScot Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Guidance (pages 24 – 26)

Visual Susceptibility, Value and Sensitivity

Visual Susceptibility

1.3.11 The susceptibility of a visual receptor to the Proposed Development relates to the type of receptor and their purpose for being there, which influences their ability to accommodate the Proposed Development without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline visual situation.

1.3.12 Visual susceptibility criteria are outlined in **Table 1.4** below.

Table 1.4: Susceptibility of the visual receptor to change

Susceptibility Rating	Type of visual receptor
High	• residents at home, who can have static views (including from upstairs windows) and where the pleasantness of the view can be an important factor; • walkers on long distance trails and mountain access routes, whose focus is on the lanscape; • users of footpaths where the attractive nature of the countryside is a significant factor in the enjoyment of the walk; • cyclists on national and local cycle routes; • road users on recognised tourist routes; and • visitors to landscape and heritage resources and other attractions where views of the surroundings are an important contributor to appreciation, experience and / or enjoyment.
Medium	• general road users, at moderate speeds, where enjoyment of the surroundings may be a factor; • passengers on railway lines where the trains run at low or moderate speeds to give views of the countryside; • users of public open space and footpaths where the nature of the surroundings is a minor factor in the enjoyment of the activity; and • visitors to landscape and heritage resources and other attractions where views of the surroundings are a minor contributor to appreciation, experience and / or enjoyment.
Low	• people at their place of work or shopping whose focus is not on the surrounding landscape; • users of high speed roads and passengers in trains running at high speed; • people engaged in recreational activities where the view of the surroundings is secondary to the enjoyment of the activity (such as playing or spectating at outdoor sports facilities); and • users of public open space and footpaths where the nature of the surroundings is irrelevant to the enjoyment of the activity.

Source: adapted from GLVIA 3rd Edition (pages 113 & 114)

Values associated with Views

1.3.13 Certain views are highly valued for either their cultural or historical associations, which can increase the sensitivity of the viewer. However, whilst a valued view may serve to increase the overall visual receptor sensitivity, a low value would not necessarily reduce sensitivity.

1.3.14 Typical indicators of value are outlined in **Table 1.5** below:

Table 1.5: Values associated with views (which may raise the receptor sensitivity)

Rating	Recognition	Indicators of value
High	• recognised views from nationally or internationally important landscape or landscape-related resources, scheduled monument; and • may be identified in planning policies or statutory documents.	• high value / celebrated view, referred to in national or international guide books, maps, tourist guides etc; and • literary and art references, TV / film / social media references; presence of interpretive facilities (e.g. visitor centre).
Medium	• recognised views from local or regionally important landscape or heritage resource, such as local landscape areas or conservation areas; and • may be identified in local planning policies or supplementary planning documents.	• moderately valued view, referred to in local or regional guide books, tourist maps etc; and • some local literary and art references; local / regional TV; presence of some interpretive facilities (e.g. visitor centres or sign boards).
Low	• views of no recognised importance; and • not identified in any planning policies or supplementary planning documents.	• ordinary view, not referred to in guide books or tourist maps; and • no literary or art references, no TV / film / social media references; no interpretive facilities.

Source: adapted from GLVIA 3rd Edition (pages 113 & 114)

Visual Sensitivity

1.3.15 As with landscape, susceptibility and value can be combined in different ways to form a judgement about the sensitivity of a given receptor. It is generally accepted that a combination of high susceptibility and high value is likely to result in the highest sensitivity, whereas a low susceptibility and low value is likely to result in the lowest level of sensitivity.

1.3.16 However, whilst a valued view may serve to increase the overall sensitivity of the visual receptor, a low value would not necessarily reduce sensitivity. 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 value of the view that lead to a reduction in sensitivity.

1.3.17 Similarly, receptors considered of low or medium susceptibility are usually in the same category of sensitivity, unless there are reasons associated with the value of the view that lead to an increase in sensitivity.

1.3.18 **Table 1.6,** below, summarises typical characteristics of the different levels of sensitivity. It should be noted that the levels are indicative, and the levels shown are arbitrary divisions of a continuum.

Table 1.6: Visual sensitivity criteria

Level of sensitivity	Typical characteristics
High	• a view or overall visual amenity which is an important reason for receptors being there (and therefore most views or overall visual amenity for highly susceptible receptors); • a well balanced view containing attractive features and notable for its scenic quality; and

Level of sensitivity	Typical characteristics
	• a view which is experienced by many people and / or recognised for its scenic qualities.
Medium to high	• a view or overall visual amenity which is a relatively important reason for receptors being there (and therefore most views or overall visual amenity for receptors of medium to high susceptibility); and • an otherwise attractive view that includes few discordant features or overall visual amenity recognised for its scenic qualities.
Medium	• a view or overall visual amenity which plays a relatively small part in the reason why a receptor would be there (and therefore most views or overall visual amenity for receptors of medium susceptibility); and • an otherwise attractive view that includes noticeable discordant features or overall visual amenity where there are noticeable visual detractors.
Low to medium	• a view or overall visual amenity which plays a relatively small part or is unlikely to be part of the receptor's experience or reasons for being there (and therefore most views or overall visual amenity for receptors of low to medium susceptibility); and • A relatively unattractive view or overall visual amenity where there are highly noticeable visual detractors.
Low	• a view or overall visual amenity which is unlikely to be part of the receptor's experience or reasons for being there (and therefore most views or overall visual amenity for receptors of low susceptibility); and • an unattractive view or overall visual amenity where there are many visual detractors.

Source: adapted from GLVIA 3rd Edition (pages 113 & 114)

1.4 Identification of Potential Effects

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

1.4.2 Landscape effects can be defined as the changes in the character and quality of the landscape as a result of a development, through (adapted from GLVIA3, pages 86, 89, and 126):

- the impact on the landscape fabric (changes the Proposed Development may cause to specific features and elements that make up the landscape);
- the impact on the overall patterns of elements and on the perceptual and aesthetic aspects that give rise to landscape character and regional and local distinctiveness; and
- the impact on valued landscapes such as public open space, designated landscapes or otherwise valued landscapes including wild land.

1.4.3 Visual effects relate to changes in available views of the landscape and the effect of those changes on people, including (adapted from GLVIA3, pages 86, 98 (**Paragraph 6.1**), and 115):

- the immediate impact of the Proposed Development on the content and character of views (e.g. through intrusion or obstruction and / or the change or loss of existing elements in a specific view); and
- the broader impact considering the overall change in visual amenity enjoyed by receptors in the area.

Assessing Magnitude of Change / Impact

1.4.4 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. GLVIA3 (pages 86 & 112) advises that it is helpful to consider (but not be restricted to) the following:

- change in and/or partial or complete loss of elements, features or aesthetic or perceptual aspects that contribute to the character and distinctiveness of the landscape;
- addition of new elements or features that will influence the character and distinctiveness of the landscape;

- combined effects of these changes on overall character;
- nature of the view (full, partial or glimpsed);
- proportion of the Proposed Development visible (full, most, part or none);
- distance of the viewpoint from the Proposed Development and whether it would be the focus of the view or only a small element;
- whether the view is stationary, transient or sequential;
- the nature of the changes to the view; and
- the seasonal effects of vegetation, which varies the degree of screening and filtering of views available.

1.4.5 Criteria used to assess the magnitude of landscape and visual change in this assessment are given in **Table 1.7** below (adapted from GLVIA pages 37, 38, 90, 91, & 115).

1.4.6 Effects on landscape and visual receptors are assessed in terms of its size or scale, the geographical extent of the area influenced, and its duration and reversibility (from GLVIA page 38, Paragraph 3.2). The level of magnitude is categorised on a scale of No Change to High and is used to distinguish the amount of predicted change on landscape and visual amenity as a result of the Proposed Development. Due to the type and scale of the development proposed, interim descriptors have also been used and described in the table below. It should be noted that the levels are indicative, and the levels shown are arbitrary divisions of a continuum. Professional judgement is always used to determine the overall level.

Table 1.7: Magnitude of landscape and visual change / impact

Level of Magnitude	Size, Scale and Nature	Geographical Extent	Duration and Reversibility
High	• obstructs a significant portion of the view; • forms a prominent or discordant element in the view; • considerable change to key features or many existing elements of the landscape; • introduces elements considered totally uncharacteristic to the existing landscape; and • a very noticeable or prominent change to the character of the landscape.	Ranging from notable change over extensive area to intensive change over a more limited area.	Long term; permanent or largely non-reversible.
Medium to high	• occupies a moderate portion of the view; • forms a very noticeable or discordant element in the view; • noticeable or very noticeable change to existing landscape elements and / or landscape character; • noticeably changes the surroundings of a receptor, such that its baseline is altered; and • readily noticeable.	Ranging from notable change in a moderate area to moderate, noticeable changes in a localised area.	Medium to long term; semi-permanent and partially or largely non-reversible.
Medium	• occupies a noticeable or moderate portion of the view; • forms a noticeable or discordant element in the view; • noticeable change to existing landscape elements and / or landscape character; • discernibly changes the surroundings of a receptor, such that its baseline is altered; and • readily noticeable.	Moderate changes in a localised area.	Medium term; semi-permanent or partially reversible.

Level of Magnitude	Size, Scale and Nature	Geographical Extent	Duration and Reversibility
Low to medium	• occupies a small to moderate, or noticeable portion of the view; • small or noticeable change to existing landscape elements and / or landscape character; • Detectable changes that slightly alter a small to moderate part of the baseline of a receptor; and • noticeable.	Minor to moderate changes in a localised area.	Short to medium term; temporary or partially reversible.
Low	• occupies a small portion of the view. • small change to existing landscape elements and / or landscape character. • slight, but detectable changes that slightly alter a small part of the baseline of a receptor. • perceptible but not readily noticeable.	Minor changes in a localised area.	Short term; temporary or largely reversible.
Negligible to low	• occupies a small portion of the view; • limited to small change in existing landscape elements and / or landscape character; • not readily distinguishable, or slight change from baseline conditions; and • perceptible but not readily noticeable.	Very minor changes in a localised area.	Short term; temporary or reversible.
Negligible	• occupies a very small portion of the view. • limited or no change in existing landscape elements and / or landscape character. • barely distinguishable change from baseline conditions. • Not readily noticeable.	Barely discernible change.	Short term; temporary or reversible.
No Change	• no discernible change to existing landscape elements. • no discernible change in view.	No change discernible.	N / A

Source: adapted from GLVIA 3rd Edition

1.5 Assessment of Significance of Effect

1.5.1 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.

1.5.2 When assessing effects on the landscape at the scale of the NatureScot LCTs, the below criteria from GLVIA3 (**Paragraph 5.56**) have been considered:

- major loss or irreversible negative effects, over an extensive area, on elements and / or aesthetic and perceptual aspects that are key to the character of nationally valued landscapes are likely to be of the greatest significance;
- significant effects are likely to include loss of mature or diverse landscape elements, features, characteristics, aesthetic or perceptual qualities; effects on rare, distinctive, particularly representative landscape character; or loss of lower-value elements, features, characteristics, aesthetic or perceptual qualities;
- less significant effects are likely to include loss of new, uniform, homogeneous elements, features, characteristics, or qualities; effects on areas in poorer condition or of degraded character; or effects on lower-value landscapes;

- reversible negative effects of short duration, over a restricted area, on elements and / or aesthetic and perceptual aspects that contribute to but are not key characteristics of the character of landscapes of community value are likely to be of the least significance; and
- where assessments of significance place landscape effects between these extremes, judgements must be made about whether or not they are significant, with full explanations of why these conclusions have been reached.

1.5.3 When assessing effects on visual receptors, the below criteria from GLVIA3 (**Paragraph 6.44**) have been considered:

- effects on people who are particularly sensitive to changes in views and visual amenity are more likely to be significant;
- effects on people at recognised and important viewpoints or from recognised scenic routes are more likely to be significant; and
- large-scale changes which introduce new, non-characteristic or discordant or intrusive elements into the view are more likely to be significant than small changes or changes involving features already present within the view.

1.5.4 As detailed in **Chapter 5: EIA Process and Methodology**, sensitivity and magnitude are combined to determine level of effect. 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.

1.5.5 To better represent this continuum, the matrix in

1.5.6 **Table 1.8** below shows how sensitivity and magnitude are combined for this assessment.

1.5.7 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.

1.5.8 **Table 1.8** below is therefore used to inform this assessment.

1.5.9 Effects can be either beneficial or adverse and, as stated in **Chapter 5: EIA Process and Methodology**, effects assessed as moderate or greater are considered to be significant.

1.5.10 As set out in GLVIA3 (**Paragraphs 5.37 & 6.29**), a professional decision is 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.

Table 1.8: Level of effects 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 would be considered significant, if, in the assessor's professional opinion they are not, this decision shall be clearly explained.

1.5.11 **Table 1.9,** below, gives descriptors for the levels of landscape and visual significance of effect used in **Table 1.8** above. The gradations of the significance of effect are indicative, and the levels shown are arbitrary divisions of a continuum. Professional judgement is always used to determine the overall level. (The descriptors below are adapted from GLVIA3 pages 91, 92, 115 & 116).

Table 1.9: Level of landscape and visual significance of effect descriptors

Significance of Effect Level	Landscape effect	Visual effect
Major	Considerable change over an extensive area of a highly sensitive landscape, fundamentally affecting the key characteristics and the overall impression of its character.	The Proposed Development would be a prominent feature or a noticeably discordant or enhancing feature substantially affecting overall visual amenity or would result in a clearly noticeable change to a highly sensitive and well composed existing view. A clearly noticeable or substantial improvement or deterioration of the existing view.

Significance of Effect Level	Landscape effect	Visual effect
Moderate to Major	Noticeable or highly noticeable change to a highly sensitive landscape or more intensive change to a landscape of medium sensitivity, affecting some key characteristics and the overall impression of its character.	The Proposed Development would be a noticeable or highly noticeable feature or a discordant or enhancing feature affecting overall visual amenity or would result in a noticeable or highly noticeable change to a highly sensitive and well composed existing view or would be prominent within a less well composed and less sensitive view. A noticeable improvement or deterioration of the existing view.
Moderate	Small or noticeable change to a highly sensitive landscape or more intensive / noticeable change to a landscape of medium or low sensitivity, affecting some key characteristics and the overall impression of its character.	The Proposed Development would be a noticeable feature or a somewhat discordant or enhancing feature affecting overall visual amenity or would result in a noticeable change to a highly sensitive and well composed existing view or would be prominent within a less well composed and less sensitive view. A noticeable improvement or deterioration of the existing view.
Minor to Moderate	Small or noticeable change to a limited area of landscape of high or medium sensitivity or a more widespread area of a less sensitive landscape, affecting some characteristics and slightly affecting the overall impression of its character.	The Proposed Development would be a visible and perceptible feature or a discordant or enhancing feature affecting overall visual amenity or would result in a small to medium change to a highly sensitive and well composed existing view or would be noticeable within a less well composed and less sensitive view. A small to medium improvement or deterioration of the existing view.
Minor	Small change to a limited area of landscape of high or medium sensitivity or a more widespread area of a less sensitive landscape, affecting few characteristics without altering the overall impression of its character.	The Proposed Development would be a visible but not particularly noticeable feature or a slightly discordant or enhancing feature affecting overall visual amenity or would result in a small change to a highly sensitive and well composed existing view or would be noticeable within a less well composed and less sensitive view. A small improvement or deterioration of the existing view.
Negligible to Minor	A discernible but small	A discernible but small

Significance of Effect Level	Landscape effect	Visual effect
	improvement or deterioration to the existing landscape character. May be more noticeable at a local level but not affect the character of the wider landscape.	improvement or deterioration in the existing view that does not change the overall characteristic of the view.
Negligible	Barely discernible improvement or deterioration to the existing landscape character.	Barely discernible improvement or deterioration in the existing view.

Source: adapted from GLVIA 3rd Edition (pages 91, 92, 115 & 116)

Judging the overall significance

1.5.12 A final judgement has been made about whether or not each effect is likely to be significant. There is not a standard approach to judging overall significance since circumstances vary with the location and landscape or visual context. However, effects assessed as moderate to major or greater are considered significant in EIA terms, whilst effects of moderate may / may not be considered to be significant and are subject to the assessor's professional opinion.

2 Cumulative Effects

2.1 Overview

2.1.1 The LVIA considers 'in-combination' landscape and visual effects. Cumulative landscape and visual effects are the additional changes caused by the Proposed Development in combination with other similar or related developments, or the combined effect of a set of developments taken together.

2.1.2 "Intra-project" cumulative effects – where the cumulation of different types of environmental impact on specific receptors increases the overall impact on that receptor (e.g. a residential receptor subject to both visual and noise effects) are considered in **Chapter 16: Cumulative Assessment**.

2.1.3 The underlying approach to the assessment of cumulative effects is the same as for the assessment of effects of the Proposed Development alone, as set out above. In particular, the assessment is informed by guidance on cumulative effects set out in Chapter 7 of GLVIA3. The list of cumulative developments included are identified in **Chapter 5: EIA Process and Methodology**, **Section 5.5: Cumulative Effects** and **Appendix 5.1: Cumulative Developments**, and included schemes at Scoping (in according with LITGN-2024-01). As stated in **Chapter 5: EIA Process and Methodology**, the list of cumulative developments was agreed with the three relevant Local Authorities.

2.1.4 The receptors considered for cumulative effects are those found to be subject to major, moderate, or minor effects from the Proposed Development. Minor effects, whilst not significant, are considered on the basis that multiple minor effects may interact to result in a significant effect.

2.1.5 Receptors subject to a negligible effect from the Proposed Development are not considered, as, almost by definition, any significant effect could only be caused by the cumulative development(s).

2.2 Study Area

2.2.1 The Study Area for the cumulative assessment is the same as for the 'stand-alone' assessments, namely 10 km radius from the Proposed Development (refer to **Chapter 7: Landscape and Visual, Section 7.2**).

2.3 Effect Significance

Sensitivity

2.3.1 The methodology for the assessment of sensitivity is as set out in **Section 1.3**, above.

Magnitude

2.3.2 The cumulative magnitude of change is determined by considering together the change caused by the Proposed Development (already assessed) and the likely change caused by the cumulative developments. The latter is an appraisal following the approach set out in **Section 1.4**, above, based on the information about the cumulative development(s) available at the time of the assessment. Criteria considered include:

- the distance and direction to each visible or potentially visible cumulative development;
- the number of visible or potentially visible cumulative developments;
- the distance between cumulative developments and the Proposed Development;
- the height of features at each cumulative development;
- the horizontal extent of the view occupied by cumulative developments;
- the vertical scale comparison of cumulative developments; and
- duration of the change of cumulative developments.

Effect Significance

2.3.3 The level of effect and significance is determined by professional judgement in accordance with **Section 1.5**, above. The matrix in **Table 1.8** and the descriptors of the levels of landscape and visual effects in **Table 1.9**, above, apply to the cumulative assessment. **Table 1.10** below sets out some additional descriptors for cumulative effects.

Table 1.10: Level of cumulative landscape and visual effect – additional descriptors

Level of Effect	Cumulative Landscape effect	Cumulative Visual effect
Major	The types of development under consideration become a characterising feature of the landscape, where they weren't previously.	The developments seen together would be very prominent or be noticeably discordant or enhancing features, where one or the other(s) alone would not be.
Moderate	No additional descriptors	The developments seen together would be clearly noticeable or be somewhat discordant or enhancing features, where one or the other(s) alone would not be.
Minor	No additional descriptors	The developments seen together would be visible but not particularly noticeable or be slightly discordant or enhancing features, where one or the other(s) alone would be negligible.
Negligible	No additional descriptors	No additional descriptors