

Volume 5: Appendix 9.1 – Landscape Assessment

VOLUME 5, APPENDIX 9.1: LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT

VOLUME 5, APPENDIX 9.1: LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT	1
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	2
1. INTRODUCTION	3
2. LCT TABLES	4
2.1 Introduction	4
2.2 Section A	5
2.3 Section B	12
2.4 Section C	21
2.5 Section D	27
2.6 Section E	30
2.7 Section F	38
3. LANDSCAPE DESIGNATION TABLES	50

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AOD: Above Ordnance Datum

LCT: Landscape Character Type

LLA: Local Landscape Area

LVIA: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

OC: Operational Corridor

OHL: Overhead Line

SLA: Special Landscape Area

ZTV: Zone of Theoretical Visibility

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1.1 This appendix presents the detailed assessment of effects on landscape character types (LCTs) and landscape designations within the LVIA study area, as a result of the construction and operation of the Kintore to Tealing 400 kV Overhead Line (OHL) ('the Proposed Development'). It should be read in conjunction with **Volume 2, Chapter 9: Landscape and Visual Amenity** and **Volume 1, Chapter 3: Project Description** of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) for full details of the Proposed Development. This appendix should also be read in conjunction with **Volume 5, Appendix 9.6: Outline Landscape Mitigation Design Guide**.
- 1.1.2 This appendix is supported by the following figures (**Volume 3**):
- **Figure 9.1: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Study Area.**
 - **Figure 9.2a: Landscape Character Types Overview.**
 - **Figures 9.2b.1 to 9.2b.6: Landscape Character Types.**
 - **Figures 9.2c.1 to 9.2c.6: Landscape Character Types with Overhead Line Tower Height Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV).**
 - **Figures 9.4a.1 to 9.4a.6: Designated Landscapes.**
 - **Figures 9.4b.1 to 9.4b.6: Designated Landscapes with Overhead Line Tower Height Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV).**
- 1.1.3 This appendix is also supported by the visualisations in **Volume 4a to b**.

2. LCT TABLES

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 LCTs are mapped on **Volume 3, Figure 9.2a: Landscape Character Types Overview** and **Figures 9.2b.1 to 9.2b.6: Landscape Character Types**, and shown with a ZTV overlain in **Volume 3, Figures 9.2c.1 to 9.2c.6: Landscape Character Types with Overhead Line Tower Height Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)**.

2.1.2 The 5 km LVIA study area includes 16 separate LCTs. Some LCTs occur in more than one location, and therefore the different units of these LCTs are assessed separately. For each LCT unit, a table is presented which sets out:

- **Baseline description** including location, extent of the Proposed Development, key characteristics and existing infrastructure;
- **Sensitivity** of the LCT unit, taking account of its susceptibility and value as described in **Volume 5, Appendix 9.5: LVIA and Visualisations Methodology**;
- **Magnitude of change** arising from both construction and operational phases, taking account of the scale, geographical extent, duration and reversibility of the impact, as described in **Volume 5, Appendix 9.5: LVIA and Visualisations Methodology**; and
- **Significance of the residual effect** on the LCT unit, at both construction and operation, derived from the sensitivity of the LCT unit and the predicted magnitude of change, and taking account of mitigation.

2.1.3 The assessment of effects on LCTs includes consideration of effects arising during both the construction phase and the operational phase of the Proposed Development. Construction effects would be temporary and short-term (5 year construction period) and are expected to arise from activities such as site clearance, construction of access tracks, construction compounds and tower foundations. Upon completion of construction, and where possible, disturbed landscape features such as ground cover and vegetation would be returned to its original condition. As such, construction effects are considered to be partially reversible. Operational effects would be experienced over the lifetime of the Proposed Development and would primarily relate to the introduction or realignment of towers, conductors and permanent access tracks in the landscape. As such, operational effects are considered to be long-term and partially reversible.

2.1.4 The Tables in this Section present the assessment of effects on the following LCT units:

- | | |
|--|--|
| • Table 9.1.1: Dipslope Farmland (Tealing Unit) | • Table 9.1.10: Broad Valley Lowlands - Aberdeenshire |
| • Table 9.1.2: Lowland Hill Ranges | • Table 9.1.11: Coastal Farmed Ridges and Hills – Aberdeenshire |
| • Table 9.1.3: Low Moorland Hills | • Table 9.1.12: Summits and Plateaux – Aberdeenshire |
| • Table 9.1.4: Broad Valley Lowlands - Tayside (Forfar Unit) | • Table 9.1.13: Farmed Moorland Edge - Aberdeenshire |
| • Table 9.1.5: Broad Valley Lowlands – Tayside (Brechin Unit) | • Table 9.1.14: Broad Wooded and Farmed Valley |
| • Table 9.1.6: Foothills - Tayside | • Table 9.1.15: Broad Wooded Valley with Estates |
| • Table 9.1.7: Summits And Plateaux – Tayside | • Table 9.1.16: River Valley - Aberdeen |
| • Table 9.1.8: Dipslope Farmland (Brechin Unit) | • Table 9.1.17: Wooded Estates – Aberdeenshire (Echt Unit) |
| • Table 9.1.9: Mid Upland Glens | • Table 9.1.18: Wooded Estates – Aberdeenshire (Kintore Unit) |

• **Table 9.1.19: Undulating Open Farmland**

• **Table 9.1.20: Outlying Hills and Ridges**

2.2 Section A

- 2.2.1 Physical and perceptual effects arising from construction activities and the operational phase of the Proposed Development would occur on the landscape character of LCT 387: Dipslope Farmland (Tealing Unit) and LCT 382: Lowland Hill Ranges. Perceptual effects would occur on the landscape character of LCT 386: Low Moorland Hills.
- 2.2.2 During construction, **Significant** effects on landscape character would occur within 1 km from the Proposed Development (although lesser effects may be experienced across part of this area), around Tealing, Balkello and Myreton of Claverhouse within LCT 387 and between North Balluderon and Jericho within LCT 382. This would be due to both physical changes to landscape features (eg, disturbance to ground cover, felling of coniferous woodland and broadleaved trees and construction of steel lattice towers and access tracks) and perceptual changes (eg, views of partially constructed steel lattice towers). LCT 386: Low Moorland Hills would also experience **Significant** perceptual effects during construction around Douglstown, Kirkton, north of Mains of Kinnettles and Carse Hill. Beyond 1 km of the construction works, effects on landscape character would reduce and would be **Not Significant** due to the decreased perceptibility of construction activity.
- 2.2.3 During operation, **Significant** effects on landscape character would occur within 1 km from the Proposed Development (although lesser effects may be experienced across part of this area within the area) between Kirkton of Tealing, Myreton of Claverhouse, Balkemback, Prieston and Balluderon, within LCT 387 and between the slopes of Craigowl Hill and Hayston Hill within LCT 382. This would be due to physical changes to landscape features (eg, introduction of large scale vertical infrastructure into the landscape, and loss of coniferous woodland and broadleaved trees). Perceptual effects would also contribute to **Significant** effects in these LCTs, as well as within LCT 386: Low Moorland Hills, due to the perceived large scale of the Proposed Development in relation to the medium scale of the underlying landscape. Beyond 1 km of the Proposed Development, effects on landscape character would reduce and would be **Not Significant** due to the decreased perceptibility of the Proposed Development.

Table 9.1.1: Dipslope Farmland (Tealing Unit)

LCT 387: Dipslope Farmland (Tealing Unit)
Baseline description There are two units of LCT 387: Dipslope Farmland located within the study area. This assessment considers the southern LCT unit at Tealing. The second LCT unit further north near Brechin is assessed in Table 9.1.8: Dipslope Farmland (Brechin Unit). Section A of the Proposed Development passes through the Tealing unit. The unit extends across the northern fringes of the Firth of Tay eastwards to the Angus coast, meeting the settlements of Arbroath and Montrose. The Tealing unit contains the southern extent of the Proposed Development at North Balluderon and South Balluderon. Key characteristics of the LCT include: • <i>“Extensive area of lowland farmland running parallel to the coastline, generally sloping from Sidlaws and Forfar Hills in northwest to near sea level in the southeast;</i> • <i>Dominated by productive agricultural land, it has an open, medium-scale character which is predominantly productive arable land use with simple geometric field patterns;</i> • <i>Low woodland cover, except on large estates which have pine shelter belts and hedgerows, and along river corridors. Where located on the slopes it reinforces the change in gradient;</i> • <i>Variety of historic sites from different eras ranging from prehistoric, Roman to Medieval, including castles, a number of historic estates and designed gardens which create a rich diverse character and strong local cultural identity;</i> • <i>Dispersed settlement pattern, including some suburban development which extends outwith the historic settlement confines;</i>

LCT 387: Dipslope Farmland (Tealing Unit)

- *Infrequent single and small clusters of a range of domestic and medium scale commercial turbines along the elevated slopes, prominent due to their elevation and the lack of significant woodland cover; and*
- *Variety of views from within the landscape, but typically, given the broad fall of slope to the east, there is a strong visual relationship with views along the coast and wide panoramas out to open sea. Intervisibility across the Tay firth to the Fife coast is pronounced around Dundee and reduces in clarity with distance and prominence further north”.¹*

The existing Tealing Substation is located within the LCT unit, at the southernmost extent of the study area. A number of operational high voltage OHLs extend across this LCT unit to connect to the substation including, but not limited to, the Kintore to Tealing 275 kV, Tealing to Arbroath North 132 kV and Tealing to Lunanhead East 132 kV OHLs. The unit also contains a number of farm scale wind turbines and a section of the A90 transport corridor.

Representative viewpoints within this LCT Unit:

- VP1: Myreton of Claverhouse, Southwest of Tealing (refer to **Volume 4a, Figure 9.05a-d: VP1: Myreton of Claverhouse, Southwest of Tealing**).
- VP2: North of Balnuith (refer to **Volume 4a, Figure 9.06a-h: VP2: North of Balnuith**).

Sensitivity

The LCT is medium in scale with a simple landscape pattern of geometric arable fields predominating which indicates a lower susceptibility to the Proposed Development. Contemporary human influence in the Tealing LCT unit is apparent given the presence of farms and settlements, the existing substation, OHLs and wind turbines around Tealing as well as the A90 transport corridor which also indicates lower susceptibility locally. On balance, the susceptibility of the landscape is judged to be **Low**.

The northern fringes of the Tealing LCT unit are included within the Sidlaw LLA (refer to **Volume 3, Figure 9.2b.1: Landscape Character Types, p. 1**). The LCT contains a number of country parks and estate woodlands which offer recreational amenity. The value of the LCT is judged to be **Medium**.

Taking into account the judgements of susceptibility and value, the sensitivity of the LCT unit is judged to be **Medium**.

Magnitude of Change During Construction

The southern end of the Proposed Development, between Tower S201 and Tower S206, would be located within the Tealing LCT unit and as such this unit would experience physical landscape change arising from the construction of the Proposed Development. Physical impacts arising during construction would include the construction of the steel lattice towers which would result in the removal of some landscape features including the loss of a small belt of coniferous woodland (both as infrastructure and management felling) east of North Balluderon, and disturbance to arable fields between south of Balkemback and the east of North Balluderon. Physical impacts would also include the introduction of temporary and permanent access tracks and construction activity including the movement of construction vehicles and plant. The main OHL components constructed during this phase would remain present throughout the operational phase.

Construction activities would also result in perceptual landscape effects on the Tealing LCT unit, primarily resulting from views towards partially constructed steel lattice towers.

Magnitude of Change During Operation

Physical effects would arise during the operational phase from the introduction of Towers S201 to S206 within the Tealing LCT unit. The ZTV (refer to **Volume 3, Figure 9.2c.1: Landscape Character Types with Overhead Line Tower Height Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV), p. 1**) indicates widespread visibility across the LCT unit within the study area, though some localised broadleaved and coniferous woodlands and scattered buildings would reduce actual visibility.

The steel lattice towers and conductors of the Proposed Development would cross the LCT on a broadly north-south alignment. The introduction of the Proposed Development would physically affect a narrow corridor of the “*productive agricultural land*” which is characteristic of the LCT. Felling within the Operational Corridor (OC) (infrastructure felling) of a small area of a tree belt east of North Balluderon during construction would have some longer term effects during operation. The Proposed Development would introduce a large-scale OHL into a medium-scale landscape and would be perceived as a larger-scale development in comparison to existing OHLs within the LCT. Due to the low-lying and open nature of the LCT it is considered unlikely that the Proposed Development would diminish the perceived scale of the landscape.

¹ NatureScot, 2019. *National Landscape Character Assessment. Landscape Character Type 387: Dipslope Farmland*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/LCA/LCT%20387%20-%20Dipslope%20Farmland%20-%20final%20pdf.pdf>.

LCT 387: Dipslope Farmland (Tealing Unit)

Despite the open nature of the Tealing LCT unit, the effect of construction activity on landscape character is unlikely to be perceptible beyond 1 km from the Proposed Development. As the distance from the construction activity increases, the perceptibility of it would decrease.

The scale of change is judged to be **Large**, resulting from physical changes relating to construction activity across a **Small** geographical extent, broadly defined as the area between Kirkton of Tealing, Balkello and Myreton of Claverhouse. The scale of change would decrease with distance due to a reduction in perceptibility of construction activity at greater distances. Physical and perceptual changes to the landscape during construction would be temporary.

The magnitude of change during construction would be **Medium** for the LCT unit locally, within 1 km of the Proposed Development. The magnitude of change would reduce to **Low** for parts of the host LCT beyond 1 km.

The Proposed Development would also influence the “*variety of views from within the landscape*” as additional vertical features would be seen from some locations. The presence of existing infrastructure within the LCT, including the existing OHLs and Tealing Substation, exert an existing influence on this characteristic of the LCT and have altered the landscape character to some extent.

Landscape mitigation and restoration proposals are presented in **Volume 5, Appendix 9.6: Outline Landscape Mitigation Design Guide**.

The scale of change is judged to be locally **Large**, resulting from physical changes relating to the alteration of landcover and landscape features as well as the introduction of further large-scale vertical features within the LCT. The geographical extent is judged to be **Small** and extends to the area between Kirkton of Tealing, Balkello and Myreton of Claverhouse.

The magnitude of change during operation would be **High** for the LCT locally, within 1 km of the Proposed Development. The magnitude of change would reduce beyond this distance.

Significance of Effect during Construction

Taking account of the **Medium** sensitivity, the **Medium** magnitude of change within 1 km, and the temporary nature of construction activity, the landscape effects for this LCT are judged to be **Moderate (Significant)** locally within the LCT (within no more than 1 km of the Proposed Development, although lesser effects may be experienced across part of this area) and **Minor (Not Significant)** for remaining parts of the LCT unit.

Significance of Effect during Operation

Taking account of the **Medium** sensitivity, and the locally **High** magnitude of change, the landscape effects for the LCT are judged to be **Major (Significant)** along the route, and **Moderate (Significant)** at up to 1 km from the Proposed Development between Kirkton of Tealing, Myreton of Claverhouse, Balkemback, Prieston and Balluderon, although lesser effects may be experienced across part of this area. Effects would reduce to **Not Significant** beyond these locations.

Table 9.1.2: Lowland Hill Ranges
LCT 382: Lowland Hill Ranges
Baseline description

The LCT 382: Lowland Hill Ranges is located within the study area, and Section A of the Proposed Development passes through this LCT unit. The LCT runs from the eastern fringes of the city of Perth northeastwards towards the eastern extents of the Sidlaw Hills. The southern part of the Proposed Development crosses the LCT between Balluderon and Jericho.

Key characteristics of the LCT include:

- “*The Sidlaw and Ochil Hills comprise hard volcanic rocks which appear as relatively uniform ridgelines orientated southwest to northeast, contributing to the much wider strategic grain of landscape character defined by the Highland Boundary Fault geology;*
- *Recognisable shapes, peaks and slopes, and ridge profiles, the presence of which is emphasised by their location set within low lying agricultural landscape to the north and south;*
- *Short burns and rivers flowing from dramatic, short steep glens;*
- *Several large glens through the hills;*
- *Often distinctive and conspicuous scarp and dipslopes;*
- *Generally open medium scale landscapes of almost conical summits dominated by grass moorland and upland pasture;*
- *Sweeping patchwork of regular but not geometric patterns on the dipslopes;*

LCT 382: Lowland Hill Ranges

- Some areas of extensive forestry;
- Occasional vertical features such as navigational and telecom masts, follies, and wind turbines which appear prominent in these elevated locations;
- Popular use for informal recreation by nearby large centres of population;
- A sense of relative tranquillity;
- Importance as a backdrop to many settlements in the surrounding low lying agricultural landscapes; and
- Views within, across and up to this character type.”²

A number of operational high voltage OHLs extend across this LCT including the Kintore to Tealing 275 kV, the Tealing to Lunanhead East 132 kV and Alyth to Tealing 275 kV OHLs. The LCT unit also contains a number of telecom masts, including at the summit of Craigowl Hill, as well as a number of single wind turbines and wind farms to the west of the Proposed Development with tip heights ranging from 66 m to 81 m. A section of the A90 transport corridor and the A928 public road passes through this LCT within the study area.

Representative viewpoints within this LCT Unit:

- VP3: Cairns, Balkello Hill (refer to **Volume 4 a, Figure 9.07a-c: VP3: Cairns, Balkello Hill**).
- VP4: A928 near Lumley Den (refer to **Volume 4 a, Figure 9.08a-e: VP4: A928 near Lumley Den**).
- VP5: Milton of Ogilvie (refer to **Volume 4 a, Figure 9.09a-f: VP5: Milton of Ogilvie**).

Sensitivity

The LCT is generally medium in scale and contains the “*Recognisable shapes, peaks and slopes, and ridge profiles*” of the Sidlaw Hills which form a distinctive landform profile within the surrounding lowland landscape, indicating higher susceptibility. Pockets of smaller scale and more intricate landscapes are found where the hills subside into areas of lower lying arable fields enclosed by stone dykes and occasional pockets of broadleaf woodland, also indicating higher susceptibility. Contemporary human influence in the LCT however is apparent given the presence of the existing OHLs, telecom masts and wind turbines as well as the A928 and A90 which indicates lower susceptibility. On balance, the overall susceptibility of the landscape is judged to be **Medium**.

Part of the LCT is located within the Sidlaw LLA. The Sidlaw Hills also offer recreational amenity, such as at Balkello Wood and the popular hill summit of Balkello Hill with its promoted viewpoint. The overall value of the LCT is judged to be **Medium**.

Taking into account the judgements of susceptibility and value, the sensitivity of the LCT unit is judged to be **Medium**.

Magnitude of Change During Construction

Part of the southern section of the Proposed Development, between Tower S171 and Tower S200, would be located within the Lowland Hill Ranges LCT and as such this unit would experience physical landscape change arising from the construction of the Proposed Development. Physical impacts arising during construction would include the removal of field boundaries and occasional broadleaf trees (infrastructure felling), between Arniefoul and Jericho. There would also be the loss of some shrub heathland cover on the slopes of the Sidlaw Hills around Ironside Hill and Finlarg Hill as well as disturbance to arable fields between Jericho and North Balluderon. Physical impacts would also include the introduction of temporary and

Magnitude of Change During Operation

Physical effects would arise during the operational phase from the introduction of Towers S171 to S200 between North Balluderon and Jericho within the LCT unit. The ZTV (refer to **Volume 3, Figure 9.2c.1: Landscape Character Types with Overhead Line Tower Height Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV), p. 1**) indicates widespread visibility across the LCT. Landform would screen the Proposed Development from some localised areas including near Balkello Hill and Craigowl Hill as well as east of Hayston Hill, where routeing follows lower ground. Pockets and belts of broadleaved woodland and scattered buildings would also reduce actual visibility in some parts of the LCT.

² NatureScot, 2019. *National Landscape Character Assessment. Landscape Character Type 382: Lowland Hill Ranges*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/LCA/LCT%20382%20-%20Lowland%20Hill%20Ranges%20-%20final%20pdf.pdf>.

LCT 382: Lowland Hill Ranges

permanent access tracks, including on hill slopes around Ironside Hill, and the movement of construction vehicles and plant. The main OHL components constructed during this phase would remain present throughout the operational phase.

Construction activities would also result in perceptual landscape impacts on the Lowland Hill Ranges LCT, primarily resulting from views towards partially constructed steel lattice towers. Where the Proposed Development crosses elevated landform and hill slopes within the Sidlaw Hill and further north around Finlarg and Hayston Hill, construction activity would be most perceptible across parts of the skyline, particularly where these hills form the backdrop to the lower lying areas of the LCT around Milton of Ogilvie, Charleston and Glamis. As the distance from the construction activity increases, the perceptibility of it would decrease.

The scale of change is judged to be **Large**, resulting from physical changes relating to construction activity across a medium geographical extent, focussed within distances of 1 km from the Proposed Development over an area between North Balluderon and Jericho within this LCT. The scale of change would decrease with distance due to a reduction in perceptibility of construction activity at greater distances. Physical and perceptual changes to the landscape during construction would be temporary.

The magnitude of change during construction would be **High** for the LCT locally, reducing to **Medium** for parts of the LCT beyond 1 km within the study area.

The steel lattice towers and conductors of the Proposed Development would cross the LCT on a broadly north-south alignment. The introduction of the Proposed Development would physically affect the *“recognisable shapes, peaks and slopes, and ridge profiles”* which are key characteristics of the LCT.

Infrastructure felling of some mature broadleaves that line field boundaries between Arniefoul and Jericho during construction would have some longer term effects during operation. The Proposed Development would introduce a large-scale OHL into a medium-scale landscape and would be perceived as a larger-scale development in comparison to existing OHLs within the LCT.

The Proposed Development would also diminish the perceived scale of the elevated landform that it crosses within this LCT, as the height and size of the towers would appear out of scale with the small and low-lying nature of the Sidlaw Hills. This would be particularly perceptible where the Proposed Development would be seen as a prominent vertical feature across the skyline formed by these hills that have *“Importance as a backdrop to many settlements in the surrounding low-lying agricultural landscapes”*.

Permanent access tracks across the elevated slopes of Ironside Hill and Finlarg Hill would also be visible, particularly across Ironside Hill where the permanent access tracks would run and contrast against the contours of the hill side, resulting in the track being more visibly prominent.

The presence of existing infrastructure within the LCT, including the existing OHLs, telecom masts and wind farms, exert an existing influence on the character of this LCT. As such, the Proposed Development would be located within a landscape that has already been somewhat altered by vertical infrastructure and would intensify this influence. The Proposed Development would be seen as larger than the existing OHLs, and where close together at Ironside Hill, the Proposed Development would be on higher ground, emphasising the difference. For the most part, routeing ensures the OHLs are separated by topography.

Landscape mitigation and restoration proposals are presented in **Volume 5, Appendix 9.6: Outline Landscape Mitigation Design Guide**.

The scale of change is judged to be **Large**, resulting from physical changes relating to the alteration of landcover and landscape features as well as the introduction of further large-scale vertical features within the LCT. The geographical extent is judged to be **Medium**, on the southern slopes of Craigowl Hill and Ironside Hill, and on the west side of Finlarg Hill and Hayston Hill. Where the Proposed Development crosses higher land at Ironside Hill, the influence of the Proposed Development is likely to extend across a wider area of the LCT. Further north, on lower ground around Upper Hayston and Jericho, the extent would be more localised.

The magnitude of change during operation would be **High** for a narrow section of the LCT unit and **Medium** up to 1 km either side of the Proposed Development. The magnitude of change would reduce beyond this distance.

Significance of Effect during Construction

Taking account of the **Medium** sensitivity, the **High** magnitude of change within 1 km, and the temporary nature of construction activity, the landscape effects for this LCT are judged to be **Moderate (Significant)** locally within the LCT (within approximately 1 km of the Proposed

Significance of Effect during Operation

Taking account of the **Medium** sensitivity, and the **High** magnitude of change locally, the landscape effects for this LCT are judged to be **Major (Significant)** along the route, particularly at Ironside Hill, and **Moderate**

LCT 382: Lowland Hill Ranges

Development, although lesser effects may be experienced across part of this area) and **Minor (Not Significant)** for remaining parts of the LCT unit.

(Significant) at up to 1 km from the Proposed Development although lesser effects may be experienced across part of this area. Effects would reduce to **Minor (Not Significant)** beyond this distance.

Table 9.1.3: Low Moorland Hills
LCT 386: Low Moorland Hills
Baseline description

LCT 386: Low Moorland Hills is comprised of a single unit that is largely outside the study area, but extends into the eastern study area in both Section A at Douglstown, and in Section B further north at Carse Hill. Outside the study area, the LCT unit extends across the Forfar Hills to the south and east of Forfar, reaching the Montreathmont Forest and Moor to the northeast. The Proposed Development does not enter either area, so they are assessed together here.

Key characteristics of the LCT include:

- *“Eastern outliers of the Sidlaws orientated northeastwards, as a series of locally pronounced hill tops along a relatively low ridgeline;*
- *Combination of low, rounded hills and craggy, ridged upland, the prominence of which is reinforced by the distinctive summit crags and low elevation of agricultural context;*
- *Moorland character evident in areas of heather and gorse on the upper slopes and summit which contrasts with the enclosed farmland on lower slopes;*
- *Some areas of extensive woodland in particular on Montreathmont Moor, which blankets the lower elevation hill and creates a simple dark horizon in views;*
- *Rich historic heritage including the dramatic Iron Age hill forts sited on the craggy summits of the Hill of Finavon and Turin Hill and an abundance of in situ Pictish sculpture stones;*
- *Settlement on the Low Moorland Hills is limited to a dispersed pattern of farmsteads on the open part of Montreathmont Moor, many with modern agricultural buildings. More recent settlement appears on the transition into neighbouring lower landscapes;*
- *Telecom masts sit as point features on several of the hills, taking advantage of the elevation in a settled landscape. Infrequent single small commercial and domestic scale turbines are sited on the flanks of hills;*
- *Situated within a widely settled landscape these series of hills have become important backdrops to settlements and landmark features, in particular where coupled with stone monument such as Balmashanner Hill at Forfar; and*
- *Views from the elevated summits are wide and panoramic across the neighbouring straths and up to the mountains to the north.”³*

A number of operational high voltage OHLs extend across this LCT including the Kintore to Tealing 275 kV OHL and the Tealing to Lunanhead East 132 kV. The LCT unit also contains a number of telecom masts, including on hill summits within the southwestern extent of the LCT within the study area. A section of the A90 passes through the southern part of the LCT that is within the study area.

Representative viewpoints within this LCT Unit:

- VP8: Balmashanner Hill (refer to **Volume 4 a, Figure 9.12a-d VP8: Balmashanner Hill**) is at the edge of this LCT, looking into LCT 384: Broad Valley Lowlands – Tayside (Forfar Unit).
- VP14: Angus Hill Layby, B9134 (refer to **Volume 4 a, Figure 9.18a-f: VP14: Angus Hill Layby, B9134**) is at the edge of this LCT, looking into LCT 384: Broad Valley Lowlands – Tayside (Brechin Unit).

Sensitivity

³ NatureScot, 2019. *National Landscape Character Assessment. Landscape Character Type 386: Low Moorland Hills*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/LCA/LCT%20386%20-%20Low%20Moorland%20Hills%20-%20final%20pdf.pdf>.

LCT 386: Low Moorland Hills

The LCT is medium in scale and comprises “*low, rounded hills and craggy, ridged upland*” and “*distinctive summit crags*” which provide “*important backdrops to settlements and landmark features*” indicating higher susceptibility. The LCT also has intervisibility with the wider landscapes as views from hills summits are “*wide and panoramic across the neighbouring straths and up to the mountains to the north*”. Areas of the LCT characterised by more simple moorland cover or blankets of extensive woodland and forestry on Montreathmont Moor that creates “*a simple dark horizon*” indicates lower susceptibility. Contemporary human influence exerted by existing OHLs, telecom masts and wind turbines as well as the A90 also indicates lower susceptibility locally. On balance, the overall susceptibility of the landscape is judged to be **Medium**.

The northern fringes of the LCT are located within the River South Esk LLA. The LCT contains a number of nature reserves, woodlands and tourist spots, particularly around Murton, which offer recreational amenity. The overall value of the LCT is judged to be **Medium**.

Taking into account the judgements of susceptibility and value, the sensitivity of the LCT unit is judged to be **Medium**.

Magnitude of Change During Construction	Magnitude of Change During Operation
Construction activity within this LCT would be limited to construction traffic travelling along a very short extent of farm track in the southwestern edge of the LCT, northeast of Douglastown. All other construction activity would occur outside the LCT and as such would result in perceptual landscape impacts on the LCT unit, primarily resulting from views towards partially constructed steel lattice towers. The works are unlikely to be perceptible from more than 2 km from the Proposed Development, limited to the area around Douglastown, Kirkton and the slopes north of Mains of Kinnettles where clear open views towards the Proposed Development are available. In the northern part of the LCT, construction activity would be perceptible from the northern slopes of Carse Hill. As the distance from the construction activity increases across the LCT, the perceptibility of it would decrease. Scattered pockets of broadleaved woodland and commercial forestry would filter or screen construction activity from parts of the LCT, including around Kirkton, Mains of Kinnettles and Carse Hill. The scale of change is judged to be Medium across a small geographical extent, broadly focussed in the southwestern and northern extents of the LCT around Douglastown, Kirkton, north of Mains of Kinnettles and Carse Hill. The scale of change would decrease with distance due to a reduction in perceptibility of construction activity at greater distances. Perceptual changes to the landscape during construction would be temporary. The magnitude of change during construction would be Medium for the LCT locally, around Douglastown, Kirkton, north of Mains of Kinnettles and Carse Hill, reducing to Low for the remaining parts of LCT within the study area where construction activity would be less perceptible.	The Proposed Development would be located entirely outside of this LCT, and therefore any effects would be limited to perceptual effects experienced through views of the Proposed Development from within the LCT. The ZTV (refer to Volume 3, Figure 9.2c.1: Landscape Character Types with Overhead Line Tower Height Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV), p. 1) indicates widespread visibility across the parts of the LCT within the study area. Some localised broadleaved woodlands, commercial forestry and scattered buildings, would locally reduce actual visibility, particularly around Douglastown, Kirkton, Mains of Kinnettles and Carse Hill. Where the Proposed Development is visible from the LCT, the steel lattice towers and conductors would perceptually alter the “<i>wide and panoramic</i>” views across the “<i>neighbouring straths and up to the mountains to the north</i>” when seen in the west and northwest from elevated areas. The Proposed Development would be a visible feature in these external views from the western extents of the LCT, generally seen at distances of between 1 km and 5 km, with the exception of the lower-lying Douglastown area which is within 1 km. The presence of existing infrastructure within the LCT, including the existing OHLs, telecom masts and wind turbines, exert an existing influence on this LCT. As such, the Proposed Development would be located within a landscape that has already been altered by vertical infrastructure. The nearby presence of the Proposed Development would intensify this influence in the Douglastown area where two OHLs would be around 1.4 km apart, with the existing OHL on higher ground. Elsewhere, the Proposed Development would be more distant and unlikely to exert a strong influence on character and is more distant from existing OHLs. Landscape mitigation and restoration proposals are presented in Volume 5, Appendix 9.6: Outline Landscape Mitigation Design Guide. The scale of change is judged to be locally Medium, resulting from the perceptual influence of the large-scale towers that would be visible from the area around Douglastown on the west side of Brighton Hill. The geographical extent is judged to be Small as the perceptual influence would only occur around Douglastown and Kirkton on the west side of Brighton Hill. The magnitude of landscape change during operation would be locally Medium for this part of the LCT and small or negligible in the remaining parts of the LCT.

LCT 386: Low Moorland Hills
Significance of Effect during Construction

Taking account of the **Medium** sensitivity, the **Medium** magnitude of change locally, and the temporary nature of construction activity, the landscape effects for this LCT are judged to be **Moderate (Significant)** around Douglastown, Kirkton, north of Mains of Kinnettles and Carse Hill, and **Minor (Not Significant)** for the remaining parts of the LCT.

Significance of Effect during Operation

Taking account of the **Medium** sensitivity, and the **Medium** magnitude of change locally, the landscape effects for the LCT are judged to be **Moderate (Significant)** around Douglastown, Kirkton, and the west side of Brighton Hill, reducing to **Minor (Not Significant)** beyond this area.

2.3 Section B

- 2.3.1 Physical and perceptual effects arising from construction activities and the operational phase of the Proposed Development would occur on the landscape character of LCT 384: Broad Valley Lowlands – Tayside (Forfar Unit and Brechin Unit). Perceptual effects would occur on the landscape character of LCT 379: Foothills – Tayside and LCT 376: Summits and Plateaux – Tayside.
- 2.3.2 During construction, **Significant** effects on landscape character would occur within 1 km from the Proposed Development (although lesser effects may be experienced across part of this area), over an area between Jericho and west of Tannadice within the Forfar Unit of LCT 384 and over an area between Finavon and Inveriscandye (near Stracathro) in the Brechin Unit of LCT 384. This would be due to physical changes to landscape features (eg, disturbance to ground cover, including arable fields, and felling of areas of broadleaved woodland) as well as the construction of steel lattice towers and access tracks, and perceptual changes (eg, views of partially constructed steel lattice towers). Beyond 1 km from construction works, and effects on LCT 379: Foothills – Tayside and LCT 376: Summits and Plateaux – Tayside would be **Not Significant** due to the decreased perceptibility of construction activity.
- 2.3.3 During operation, **Significant** effects on landscape character would occur within 1 km from the Proposed Development, over an area between Douglastown and Tannadice within the Forfar Unit of LCT 384 and over an area between Tannadice and the River North Esk in the Brechin Unit of LCT 384. This would be due to physical changes to landscape features (eg, introduction of large scale vertical infrastructure into the landscape, which would alter the floor of Strathmore, and loss of areas of broadleaved woodland) and perceptual effects (eg, the perceived large scale of the Proposed Development in relation to the medium scale of the underlying landscape). Significant perceptual effects would occur between Noranside and Fern in LCT 379: Foothills – Tayside. Beyond 1 km of the Proposed Development, including all of LCT 376: Summits and Plateaux – Tayside, effects on landscape character would reduce and would be **Not Significant** due to the decreased perceptibility of the Proposed Development.

Table 9.1.4: Broad Valley Lowlands - Tayside (Forfar Unit)
LCT 384: Broad Valley Lowlands – Tayside (Forfar Unit)
Baseline description

For the purposes of this assessment, LCT 384: Broad Valley Lowlands – Tayside has been separated into two sub-units due to the geographical size of the LCT. This assessment considers the southern part of the LCT, broadly running from Forfar to Finavon which, for the purposes of this assessment, is named the 'Forfar Unit'. The northern part of the LCT, broadly running between Finavon and Brechin, named the 'Brechin Unit', is assessed in **Table 9.1.5: Broad Valley Lowlands – Tayside (Brechin Unit)**.

A part of Section B of the Proposed Development between Jericho and west of Tannadice passes through the Forfar unit.

Key characteristics of the LCT include:

- *"Broad straths formed by glacial erosion, loosely enclosed by the foothills and massif to the north, and lower local hill ridges to the south;*
- *Overriding southwest to northeast orientation;*

LCT 384: Broad Valley Lowlands – Tayside (Forfar Unit)

- *Undersized, misfit rivers which typically from adjacent low elevations do not read as dominant landscape features;*
- *Complex local topography caused by glacial deposition, including outwash terraces, eskers and dry valleys;*
- *Distinctive red soils and red building stone, contribute to a colourful mosaic of large fields particularly in the earlier months when crops are immature;*
- *Influence of large estates, particularly in terms of mature woodland and policies defined field boundaries and enclosed estate houses;*
- *Dominance of arable and root crops, in large fields typically enclosed by post and wire fencing, which contribute to the overriding horizontal landform and large to medium scale. Some specialist crops such as fruit orchards and bulb fields are adding diversification, with expansion of highly visible poly-tunnels an increasingly common feature;*
- *Tree and hedge loss weakening landscape character increasing openness of landscape, and increasingly ineffective in mitigating the dust bowls in dry months;*
- *Significant network of roads running through landscape, with main trunk roads including the A9 and A90 roads running along the straths linking a number of large towns;*
- *Well-settled landscape with strong hierarchy of settlement types from large towns to small villages, located within a well-populated agricultural landscape;*
- *Rich historic landscapes with features including standing stones, hillforts, Roman camps and medieval castles and tower houses;*
- *Tall vertical structures are prominent in this landscape and adjacent elevated hills including views to pylon lines both within and on the adjacent foothills, and a small numbers of clusters and small wind farms. Single large commercial turbines are located infrequently along the strath itself; and*
- *Wide, panoramic views across the breadth of the strath, running along and up to the enclosing hills. In particular there are unrivalled views from Strathmore up to the foothills and uplands of the Grampian Mountains to the north.”⁴*

In the southernmost extents of the study area the Kintore to Tealing 275 kV OHL passes north and west of Forfar town. The Forfar LCT unit also contains a long section of the A90 dual carriageway.

Representative viewpoints within this LCT Unit:

- VP6: Douglstown (refer to **Volume 4a, Figure 9.10a-i: VP6: Douglstown**).
- VP7: Mains of Glamis (refer to **Volume 4a, Figure 9.11a-f: VP7: Mains of Glamis**).
- VP9: Padanaram (refer to **Volume 4a, Figure 9.13a-f: VP9: Padanaram**).
- VP10: B957, near Kirriemuir (refer to **Volume 4a, Figure 9.14a-d: VP10: B957, near Kirriemuir**).
- VP11: A90 near base of Carse Hill (refer to **Volume 4a, Figure 9.15a-f: VP11: A90 near base of Carse Hill**).
- VP12: B957, near Cairnhill (refer to **Volume 4a, Figure 9.16a-f: VP12: B957, near Cairnhill**).

Sensitivity

The LCT is medium in scale with a simple landscape pattern of geometric arable fields and with occasional patches of broadleaved woodland which indicates a **Medium** susceptibility. Contemporary human influence in the Forfar LCT unit is apparent given the presence of the existing OHL as well as the A90 and extensive roads and settlement which also indicates lower susceptibility locally. Within the study area, there are some “*large estates which have mature woodland and policies defined field boundaries*” which create more of a sense of intimacy and enclosure in some places, which indicates a higher susceptibility. The LCT also has a “*a strong visual relationship with views along the hills and wide panoramas out to mountains*” which also indicates a higher susceptibility. On balance, the overall susceptibility of the landscape is judged to be **Medium**.

The LCT contains parts of the River South Esk LLA and smaller parts of the southern fringes of the Angus Glens LLA. The LCT contains a number of country parks and estate woodlands which offer recreational amenity. The overall value of the LCT is judged to be **Medium**.

Taking into account the judgements of susceptibility and value, the sensitivity of the LCT unit is considered to be **Medium**.

LCT 384: Broad Valley Lowlands – Tayside (Forfar Unit)
Magnitude of Change During Construction

The Proposed Development, between Towers S136 and S170, would be located within the Forfar LCT unit and as such this unit would experience physical landscape change arising from the construction of the Proposed Development. Physical impacts arising during construction would include the construction of the steel lattice towers which would result in the removal of some landscape features including, but not limited to, the loss of a small area of broadleaved woodland near Mossie of Ballinshoe (infrastructure felling) and disturbance to arable fields between Jericho and Finavon. Physical impacts would also include the introduction of temporary and permanent access tracks and construction activity including the movement of construction vehicles and plant. The main OHL components constructed during this phase would remain present throughout the operational phase.

Construction activities would also result in perceptual landscape impacts on the Forfar LCT unit, primarily resulting from views towards partially constructed steel lattice towers. Despite the open nature of the Forfar LCT unit, construction activity would be most visible within 1 km of the Proposed Development. As the distance from the construction activity increases, the perceptibility of it would decrease.

The scale of change is judged to be **Large**, resulting from physical changes relating to construction activity across a medium geographical extent, focussed within distances of 1 km from the Proposed Development over an area between Jericho and west of Tannadice within the LCT unit. The scale of change would decrease with distance due to a reduction in perceptibility of construction activity at greater distances. Physical and perceptual changes to the landscape during construction would be temporary.

The magnitude of change during construction would be **Medium** for the LCT unit locally, reducing to **Low** for parts of the LCT beyond 1 km.

Significance of Effect during Construction

Taking account of the **Medium** sensitivity, the **Medium** magnitude of change within 1 km, and the temporary nature of construction activity, the landscape effects for this LCT are judged to be **Moderate**

Magnitude of Change During Operation

Physical effects would arise during the operational phase from the introduction of Towers S136 (near Tannadice) to S170 (near Douglstown) within the Forfar LCT unit. The ZTV (refer to **Volume 3, Figures 9.2c.1 to 9.2c.2: Landscape Character Types with Overhead Line Tower Height Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV), p. 1-2**) indicates widespread visibility across the LCT. The generally low-lying ground is likely to bear this out, though some areas of broadleaved woodland and coniferous forest and settlements would locally reduce actual visibility.

The steel lattice towers and conductors of the Proposed Development would cross the LCT on a broadly north-south alignment. The introduction of the Proposed Development would physically affect the “*broad straths*” and “*complex local topography*” which are characteristic of the LCT. The longer-term effect of woodland loss during construction would contribute to “*tree and hedge loss weakening landscape character increasing openness of landscape*” during operation. The Proposed Development would also influence the “*wide, panoramic views across the breadth of the strath*” as it would introduce further vertical features within the landscape.

The Proposed Development would introduce a large-scale OHL in a medium-scale landscape. They would be perceived as a larger-scale development than existing OHLs where the two would be around 1-2 km apart. Due to the low lying and open nature of the LCT, it is considered unlikely that the Proposed Development would diminish the perceived scale of the landscape.

The presence of existing infrastructure and settlements within the LCT exerts an existing influence on this LCT. As such, existing views of operational steel towers and energy infrastructure are available from the LCT and have altered the landscape character to some extent. The Proposed Development would introduce OHL into areas where this is not a feature, particularly around the River South Esk where the towers may conflict with small scale complex topography.

Landscape mitigation and restoration proposals are presented in **Volume 5, Appendix 9.6: Outline Landscape Mitigation Design Guide**.

The scale of change is judged to be **Large** resulting from physical changes relating to the alteration of landcover and landscape features as well as the introduction of further large-scale vertical features within the LCT. The geographical extent is judged to be **Medium**, focussed within distances of up to 1 km from the Proposed Development over most of the area between Douglstown and Tannadice. Locally, the geographical extent would be reduced by woodlands, such as at Forestmuir for example, and by topography at the River South Esk.

The magnitude of landscape change during operation would be **High** for a narrow strip of this LCT unit and **Medium** up to 1 km either side of the Proposed Development. The magnitude of change would reduce beyond this distance.

Significance of Effect during Operation

Taking account of the **Medium** sensitivity, and the **High** magnitude of change locally, the landscape effects for this LCT are judged to be **Major (Significant)** along the route, particularly at the River

LCT 384: Broad Valley Lowlands – Tayside (Forfar Unit)

(Significant) locally within the LCT (within approximately 1 km of the Proposed Development, although lesser effects may be experienced across part of this area) and **Minor (Not Significant)** for the remaining parts of the LCT unit.

South Esk, and **Moderate (Significant)** at up to 1 km from the Proposed Development, although lesser effects may be experienced across part of this area. Effects would reduce to **Minor (Not Significant)** beyond this distance.

Table 9.1.5: Broad Valley Lowlands – Tayside (Brechin Unit)

LCT 384: Broad Valley Lowlands – Tayside (Brechin Unit)
Baseline description

This assessment considers the northern part of LCT 384: Broad Valley Lowlands – Tayside which, for the purposes of this assessment is named the ‘Brechin Unit’ and broadly runs between Finavon and Brechin.

A part of Section B and Section C of the Proposed Development between Tannadice and the River North Esk passes through the Brechin unit.

Key characteristics of the LCT include:

- *“Broad straths formed by glacial erosion, loosely enclosed by the foothills and massif to the north, and lower local hill ridges to the south;*
- *Overriding southwest to northeast orientation;*
- *Undersized, misfit rivers which typically from adjacent low elevations do not read as dominant landscape features;*
- *Complex local topography caused by glacial deposition, including outwash terraces, eskers and dry valleys;*
- *Distinctive red soils and red building stone, contribute to a colourful mosaic of large fields particularly in the earlier months when crops are immature;*
- *Influence of large estates, particularly in terms of mature woodland and policies defined field boundaries and enclosed estate houses;*
- *Dominance of arable and root crops, in large fields typically enclosed by post and wire fencing, which contribute to the overriding horizontal landform and large to medium scale. Some specialist crops such as fruit orchards and bulb fields are adding diversification, with expansion of highly visible poly-tunnels an increasingly common feature;*
- *Tree and hedge loss weakening landscape character increasing openness of landscape, and increasingly ineffective in mitigating the dust bowls in dry months;*
- *Significant network of roads running through landscape, with main trunk roads including the A9 and A90 roads running along the straths linking a number of large towns;*
- *Well-settled landscape with strong hierarchy of settlement types from large towns to small villages, located within a well-populated agricultural landscape;*
- *Rich historic landscapes with features including standing stones, hillforts, Roman camps and medieval castles and tower houses;*
- *Tall vertical structures are prominent in this landscape and adjacent elevated hills including views to pylon lines both within and on the adjacent foothills, and a small numbers of clusters and small wind farms. Single large commercial turbines are located infrequently along the strath itself; and*
- *Wide, panoramic views across the breadth of the strath, running along and up to the enclosing hills. In particular there are unrivalled views from Strathmore up to the foothills and uplands of the Grampian Mountains to the north.”⁴*

In the north of this LCT Unit the Kintore to Tealing 275 kV OHL passes around the west and north sides of Brechin. The Brechin LCT unit also contains a section of the A90 dual carriageway and is generally a settled and farmed landscape.

⁴ NatureScot, 2019. *National Landscape Character Assessment. Landscape Character Type 384: Broad Valley Lowlands – Tayside*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/LCA/LCT%20384%20-%20Broad%20Valley%20Lowlands%20-%20Tayside%20-%20final%20pdf.pdf>.

LCT 384: Broad Valley Lowlands – Tayside (Brechin Unit)
Representative viewpoints within this LCT Unit:

- VP13: Tannadice (refer to **Volume 4a, Figure 9.17a-i: VP13: Tannadice**).
- VP15: Minor Road, east of Careston (refer to **Volume 4a, Figure 9.19a-i: VP15: Minor Road, east of Careston**).
- VP17: Western edge of Little Brechin (refer to **Volume 4a, Figure 9.21a-f: VP17: Western edge of Little Brechin**).
- VP19: Inchbare (refer to **Volume 4a, Figure 9.23a-f: VP19: Inchbare**).
- VP20: Inveriscandye Road, southeastern edge of Edzell (refer to **Volume 4a, Figure 9.24a-d: VP20: Inveriscandye Road, southeastern edge of Edzell**).

Sensitivity

The LCT is medium in scale with a simple landscape pattern of geometric arable fields and with patches of broadleaved woodland which indicates a **Medium** susceptibility. Contemporary human influence particularly in the Brechin LCT unit is apparent given the presence of the existing OHL as well as the A90 dual carriageway which also indicates lower susceptibility locally. Within the study area, there are some *“large estates which have mature woodland and policies defined field boundaries”* which create more of a sense of intimacy and enclosure in some places, which indicates a higher susceptibility. The LCT also has a *“a strong visual relationship with views along the hills and wide panoramas out to mountains”* which also indicates a higher susceptibility. On balance, the overall susceptibility of the landscape is judged to be **Medium**.

The LCT includes parts of two designated landscapes: The Angus Glens LLA in the northwest and River South Esk LLA towards the south (refer to **Volume 3, Figures 9.2b.1 to 9.2b.2: Landscape Character Types, pp. 1-2** and **Volume 3 Figures 9.4a.2 to 9.4a.3: Designated Landscapes, pp. 2-3**). The LCT contains a number of country parks and estate woodlands which offer recreational amenity. The overall value of the LCT is judged to be **Medium**.

Taking into account the judgements of susceptibility and value, the sensitivity of the LCT unit is judged to be **Medium**.

Magnitude of Change During Construction

The Proposed Development, between Towers S83 to S135, would be located within the Brechin LCT unit and as such this unit would experience physical landscape change arising from the construction of the Proposed Development. Physical impacts arising during construction would include the construction of the steel lattice towers which would result in the removal of some landscape features including, but not limited to, the loss of mixed and broadleaved woodland at Duns Wood, Lochty Wood and Belliehill Wood (infrastructure felling), as well as disturbance to arable fields between north of Tannadice and Little Brechin. Physical impacts would also include the introduction of temporary and permanent access tracks and construction activity including the movement of construction vehicles and plant. The main OHL components constructed during this phase would remain present throughout the operational phase.

Construction activities would also result in perceptual landscape impacts on the Brechin LCT unit, primarily resulting from views towards partially constructed steel lattice towers. Despite the largely open nature of the Brechin LCT unit, construction activity would be most visible within 1 km of the Proposed Development. As the distance from the construction activity increases, the perceptibility of it would decrease.

The scale of change is judged to be **Large**, resulting from physical changes relating to construction activity across a medium geographical extent, focussed within distances of 1 km from the Proposed Development over an area between Finavon and Inveriscandye (near Stracathro) within the LCT unit.

Magnitude of Change During Operation

Physical effects would arise during the operational phase from the introduction of Towers S83 (near Edzell) to S135 (near Tannadice). The ZTV (refer to **Volume 3, Figures 9.2c.2 to 9.2c.3: Landscape Character Types with Overhead Line Tower Height Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV), p. 2-3**) indicates widespread visibility across the LCT. Although slightly more varied in terrain than further south, generally actual visibility would be open, though locally restricted by woodlands and settlements.

The steel lattice towers and conductors of the Proposed Development would cross the LCT on a broadly northeast-southwest alignment. The introduction of the Proposed Development would physically affect the *“broad straths”* and *“complex local topography”* which are characteristic of the LCT. The longer-term effect of woodland loss during construction would contribute to *“tree and hedge loss weakening landscape character increasing openness of landscape”* during operation. Infrastructure felling would have longer term effects on Duns Wood, Lochty Wood and Belliehill Wood.

The Proposed Development would introduce a large-scale OHL in a medium-scale landscape. It would be perceived as larger in scale than existing OHLs, where the two would be seen together around Little Brechin. Routeing has sought to avoid the highest ground in this area, such as the locally prominent ridgeline at Careston.

LCT 384: Broad Valley Lowlands – Tayside (Brechtin Unit)

The scale of change would decrease with distance due to a reduction in perceptibility of construction activity at greater distances. Physical and perceptual changes to the landscape during construction would be temporary.

The magnitude of change during construction would be **Medium** for the LCT unit locally, reducing to **Low** for parts of the LCT beyond 1 km.

The presence of existing infrastructure within the LCT, including the existing high voltage OHL to the southeast, exert an influence on this LCT. As such, existing views of operational steel towers and energy infrastructure are available from some areas in the LCT and have locally altered the landscape character to some extent. The Proposed Development would introduce OHL into areas where this is not a feature, for example in the less settled area north of the Noran Water.

Landscape mitigation and restoration proposals are presented in **Volume 5, Appendix 9.6: Outline Landscape Mitigation Design Guide**.

The scale of change is judged to be **Large**, resulting from physical changes relating to the alteration of landcover and landscape features as well as introduction of further large-scale vertical features within the LCT. The geographical extent is judged to be **Medium**, focussed within distances of up to 1 km from the Proposed Development over most of the area between Tannadice and the River North Esk. Locally, the geographical extent would be reduced by woodlands, as at Dunsmuir for example, and north of Inchbare.

The magnitude of landscape change during operation would be **High** for a narrow strip of this LCT unit and **Medium** up to 1 km from the Proposed Development. The magnitude of change would reduce to **Small** beyond this distance.

Significance of Effect during Construction

Taking account of the **Medium** sensitivity, and the **Medium** magnitude of change within 1 km, and the temporary nature of construction activity, the landscape effects for this LCT are judged to be **Moderate (Significant)** locally within the LCT (within approximately 1 km of the Proposed Development, although lesser effects may be experienced across part of this area) and **Minor (Not Significant)** for the remaining parts of the LCT unit.

Significance of Effect during Operation

Taking account of the **Medium** sensitivity, and the **High** magnitude of change locally, the landscape effects for this LCT are judged to be **Major (Significant)** along the route, and **Moderate (Significant)** at up to 1 km from the Proposed Development, although lesser effects may be experienced across part of this area. Effects would reduce to **Minor (Not Significant)** beyond this distance.

Table 9.1.6: Foothills - Tayside

LCT 379: Foothills - Tayside

Baseline description

Within the study area, the LCT is found across two separate, but closely linked areas, to the north of Section B and Section C of the Proposed Development. This assessment considers both areas together as a single unit, given their closeness to each other and similar distance from the Proposed Development. The Proposed Development does not pass through either area but is approximately 500 m to the south at its closest point, near the settlement of Fern. This LCT covers a narrow area of steeply sloping arable farmland and foothills at the base of the Highland Boundary Fault, forming the north edge of Strathmore. The LCT unit extends from the River South Esk in the southwest, to Edzell in the northeast.

Key characteristics of the LCT include:

- *“Narrow series of foothills at the base of the Highland Boundary Fault;*
- *Small to medium scale landscapes;*
- *Hills are defined by and act as a transition, between the much more extensive and large scale summits and plateau which extend into the Cairngorm massif to the north, and the relatively abrupt change in elevation to low valley to the south;*

LCT 379: Foothills - Tayside

- Steep whale-backed hills and southwest to northeast valleys;
- Winding, gorge-like main river valleys flowing off the highlands along major fault lines;
- Predominantly agricultural land use of fertile grasslands and arable fields on flatter areas;
- Limited woodland cover, with broadleaf woodland on steeper slopes of the valleys and dens which cut through the hills and a small number of conifer forests on the hills themselves;
- Gateway to the Angus Glens with a rich historic heritage;
- Limited modern settlement comprising scattered farmsteads and hamlets, and some large houses;
- Building materials reflecting geological transition, with both grey schists and granites, and lowland red sandstone;
- Complex, sometimes disorientating landscape with glimpses of highland and lowland areas;
- Varied views, from the expansive lowland views across Strathmore to the panoramic views north to the highland massif, and as a series of overlapping horizons viewed east and west along the foothills; and
- Very important backdrop and setting to low lying settled landscapes to the south⁵.

Existing infrastructure within this LCT is relatively limited and it is a generally less settled landscape than Strathmore to the south. A high voltage 275 kV (Fetteresso to Alyth) OHL travels in a northeasterly alignment through the LCT from the River South Esk and then passing north of the main ridge within the LCT unit. Otherwise, there are only two wind turbines at East Memus, and a network of minor roads.

Representative viewpoints within this LCT Unit:

- VP16: Balhall Crescent (refer to **Volume 4 a, Figure 9.20a-h: VP16: Balhall Crescent**)
- VP18: White Caterthun (refer to **Volume 4 a, Figure 9.22a-d: VP18: White Caterthun**)

Sensitivity

The landscape is small to medium in scale, indicating a medium susceptibility. Described as a narrow series of foothills, the landscape within the study area includes gently sloping, rounded hills contrasting with winding, gorge-like main river valleys, marking the transition towards the Highland Boundary Fault and expansive uplands to the west, contrasting with the broad straths and lowlands to the east. The complex landform is considered to increase susceptibility. Woodland cover is limited, with only *“a small number of coniferous forests are found on the foothills”*, with open views permitted east across the low-lying, flat landscape of Strathmore and the location of the Proposed Development, indicating a higher susceptibility to change. The undeveloped nature of the landscape, with settlements limited to *“a scatter of farmsteads and a few hamlets”*, connected by a network of minor roads, also indicates a higher susceptibility. An existing 275 kV OHL passes through the LCT and *“this line of pylons is a substantial feature in the landscape”*. The susceptibility of the landscape is judged to be **Medium**.

The LCT includes part of the Angus Glens LLA (refer to **Volume 3, Figures 9.2b.2 to 9.2b.3: Landscape Character Types, pp. 2-3** and **Volume 3, Figures 9.4a.2 to 9.4a.3: Designated Landscapes, pp. 2-3**). There is a strong degree of recreational enjoyment as well as historic value, particularly at the Brown and White Caterthun Iron Age Forts, as well as for those at picnic sites, and those travelling along walking routes and roads, taking in dramatic and complex landscapes on the approach to the wider Angus Glens LLA. The overall value of the LCT is judged to be **High**.

Taking into account the judgements of susceptibility and value, the sensitivity of the LCT unit is judged to be **High**.

Magnitude of Change During Construction

Magnitude of Change During Operation

⁵ NatureScot, 2019. *National Landscape Character Assessment. Landscape Character Type 379: Foothills - Tayside*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/LCA/LCT%20379%20-%20Foothills%20-%20Tayside%20-%20final%20pdf.pdf>.

LCT 379: Foothills - Tayside

Construction activities would result in perceptual impacts for the Foothills – Tayside LCT, specifically those southern areas, where the 5 km study area covers. From elevated areas along the foothills, open 180° panoramic views east and southeast over the lower-lying land of Strathmore are permitted. Construction impacts, including the erection of steel lattice towers and crane activity, would be seen as long-distance features, typically over a distance of 500 m, and back clothed by the landscape as the strath extends eastwards, and where uplands to the west and southwest form the horizon in views.

Given the distance to which these construction impacts would be perceived, and where the small blocks of coniferous woodland and the complex landform impede views, the scale of change is judged to be **Small**. The geographical extent is judged to be **Small**, broadly defined within the area between Memus and Balrownie where the Proposed Development passes within 500 m of the LCT unit. As the distance from the construction activity increases, the perceptibility of it would decrease. Perceptual changes to the landscape during construction would be temporary.

The magnitude of change during construction would be **Low** for the LCT units within 500 m, reducing to **Barely Perceptible** for parts of the LCT beyond 500 m.

The Proposed Development passes to the southeast of this LCT, crossing the adjacent lower landscape in a broadly south-southwest to northeast alignment. Perceptual operational effects would arise from views experienced from the foothills that cover the LCT unit. Steel lattice towers and conductors would be viewed in 180° panoramic views from various locations, including the Edzell to Fern minor road, and from higher ground at the White Caterthun and other summits. Views are generally open from the LCT looking across Strathmore.

From the lower ground, the Proposed Development would be seen at a distance of between 500 m to 2 km and would have a limited influence on landscape character. Localised woodland cover and mature hedgerows does curtail views in some instances. From the north side of the ridge there would be very few views of the Proposed Development.

From higher ground, up to 3 km from the OHL, the Proposed Development would form an inconsequential feature within the landscape. Furthermore, the Proposed Development would be backclothed by the flat landscape associated with the strath and upland areas further east and southeastwards which form the horizon.

The Proposed Development would be located close to existing infrastructure around Noranside, although would be on lower ground and likely less prominent than the existing OHL.

The scale of change is judged to be locally **Medium**, within a very small part of the LCT unit at Noranside and Fern where the Proposed Development would be close to the LCT transition. The geographical extent would be **Small**. Over other parts of the LCT where the Proposed Development would be visible, the scale of change would be no more than **Small**.

The magnitude of landscape change during operation would be locally **Medium** at Noranside and Fern, and **Low** or **Barely Perceptible** for remaining parts of the LCT.

Significance of Effect during Construction

Taking account of the **High** sensitivity, the **Low** magnitude of change within 500 m, and the temporary nature of construction activity, the landscape effects for this LCT are judged to be **Minor (Not Significant)** within approximately 500 m of the Proposed Development, although lesser effects may be experienced across part of this area. Effects would reduce to **Negligible (Not Significant)** for remaining parts of the LCT.

Significance of Effect during Operation

Taking account of the **High** sensitivity, and the locally **Medium** magnitude of change, the landscape effects for the small area of this LCT between Noranside and Fern are judged to be locally **Moderate (Significant)**. Effects on other parts of this LCT are judged to be **Minor (Not Significant)** for other south-facing slopes, reducing to **Negligible (Not Significant)** elsewhere.

Table 9.1.7: Summits And Plateaux – Tayside

LCT 376: Summits And Plateaux – Tayside

Baseline description

LCT 376 covers an extensive upland area in the north of Angus, which extends into a very small part of the Study Area north of Section B of the Proposed Development. This LCT includes upland ridges that lie above the Foothills (LCT 379) to the south. This LCT is located approximately 4 km northwest of the Proposed Development at the closet point.

Key characteristics of the LCT include:

LCT 376: Summits And Plateaux – Tayside

- “Areas of upland incised by and separating the principal Tayside glens;
- Areas of the Mounth Highlands in the east comprising the southern extents of a more extensive area of upland with spurs extending southwards; the hills are more rounded than those to the west and rock outcrops are fewer;
- Large scale vegetation patterns closely reflecting altitude and exposure and including heather, grassland, blanket bog and arctic alpine plant communities; variations reflecting the underlying geology;
- Most of the area managed as open moorland, with characteristic muirburn patterns;
- Little or no settlement, with minor tracks used for sporting, forestry and some recreation access, as well as newer more visible tracks for access to wind farms, pylon construction and forestry;
- A few patches of semi-natural broadleaf woodland on slopes up to about 600 metres;
- Remote and wild character;
- Important scenic and dramatic backdrop to lower glens and straths;
- Panoramic views both into and out of adjacent mountainous areas, such as the Cairngorm Massif, and lower lying areas like Strathmore.”⁶

Within the study area, the small sections of this LCT comprise open upland ridges and forestry, with no overt human development other than tracks.

No representative viewpoints are located in this LCT.

Sensitivity

The LCT is medium-large in scale, indicating medium susceptibility. However, the topography is strong, distinctive and complex, being made up of intricate spurs incised by rivers and burns, indicating greater susceptibility. Despite being intensely managed as a driven grouse moor, the landscape pattern is complex being formed by heather moorland and extensive areas of Class 1 blanket bog, also indicating greater susceptibility. Besides estate tracks and the pattern of muirburn, there is an absence of modern development and the LCT unit has a strong wild character, indicating greater susceptibility. The skyline formed by the LCT is highly visible across lower lying Strathmore and exerts a large influence on the landscape character of the wider area. Similarly, the unit has a high intervisibility with Strathmore and the sensitive landscape of the River South Esk LLA, indicating greater susceptibility. On balance, the overall susceptibility of the landscape is judged to be **High**.

The LCT is fully encompassed within the Angus Glens LLA (refer to **Volume 3, Figures 9.2b.2 to 9.2b.3: Landscape Character Types, pp. 2-3** and **Volume 3, Figures 9.4a.2 to 9.4a.3: Designated Landscapes, pp. 2-3**). The LCT is a popular hillwalking landscape for its scenic qualities and extensive views, and the estate tracks are used recreationally to access hill summits and for mountain biking. The overall value of the LCT is judged to be **High**.

Taking into account the judgements of susceptibility and value, the sensitivity of the LCT unit is judged to be **High**.

Magnitude of Change During Construction

From within the southern extents of the LCT, construction activities would be perceptible in the far distance. Although, as the distance between the LCT and the Proposed Development is relatively long (approximately 4 km), construction activity would not be particularly noticeable and would not be perceivable at all throughout the rest of the unit.

Magnitude of Change During Operation

Views seen from atop these summits are an integral part of the perceptual experience of this LCT. The Proposed Development would be seen in the far distance in 180° views from the summits of the southern spurs of the unit. It would be seen in the same views as the existing high voltage OHL (Fetteresso to Alyth 275 kV) beyond the immediate ridge of the foothills.

While the Proposed Development would be introduced to a separate landscape with existing infrastructure and settlement, two key characteristics of this LCT could be affected: “*remote and*

⁶ NatureScot, 2019. *National Landscape Character Assessment. Landscape Character Type 376: Summits And Plateaux – Tayside*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/LCA/LCT%20376%20-%20Summits%20and%20Plateaux%20-%20Tayside%20-%20final%20pdf.pdf>.

LCT 376: Summits And Plateaux – Tayside

The scale of change would be **Small** and the geographical extent would be **Small**, broadly encompassing the hills of the southern extents of the LCT unit from St Arnold's Seat in the west to Berry Cairn in the east. Perceptual changes to the landscape during construction would be temporary.

The magnitude of change during construction would be **Low** for the southern extents of the LCT, reducing to **Barely Perceptible** for the rest of the LCT (outside the study area).

*wild character" and "panoramic views both into and out of ... lower lying areas like Strathmore."*⁷ This is because the Proposed Development would introduce further manmade elements into the panoramic views experienced from within the LCT, potentially impacting the LCT's sense of remoteness and wildness. The Proposed Development would be at least 4 km distant and in places would be screened by the complex landform. The Proposed Development would not be perceptible throughout the majority of the LCT.

The scale of change would be **Small** and the geographical extent would be **Small**, broadly encompassing the hills of the southern extents of the LCT unit from St Arnold's Seat in the west to Berry Cairn in the east.

The magnitude of change during construction would be **Low** for the southern extents of the LCT, reducing to **Barely Perceptible** for the rest of the LCT (outside the study area).

Significance of Effect during Construction

Taking account of the **High** sensitivity, the **Low** magnitude of change within the southern extents, and the temporary nature of construction activity, the landscape effects for this LCT unit are judged to be **Minor (Not Significant)** within the southern extents of the LCT, reducing to **Negligible (Not Significant)** for the rest of the LCT.

Significance of Effect during Operation

Taking account of the **High** sensitivity and the **Low** magnitude of change within the southern extents of the LCT, the landscape effects for this LCT are judged to be **Minor (Not Significant)** within the southern extents of the LCT, reducing to **Negligible (Not Significant)** for the rest of the LCT.

2.4 Section C

- 2.4.1 Physical and perceptual effects arising from construction activities and the operational phase of the Proposed Development would occur on the landscape character of LCT 22: Broad Valley Lowlands - Aberdeenshire. Perceptual effects would occur on the landscape character of LCT 371: Mid Upland Glens and LCT 387: Dipslope Farmland (Brechin Unit).
- 2.4.2 During construction, **Significant** effects on landscape character would occur within 1 km from the Proposed Development (although lesser effects may be experienced across part of this area), over an area between Inveriscandye and Burnhead of Monboddoo. This would be due to physical changes to landscape features (eg, disturbance to ground cover, including arable fields and felling of areas of broadleaved woodland and commercial forestry), as well as the construction of steel lattice towers and access tracks. Significant perceptual effects as a result of visibility of partially constructed steel lattice towers would also occur within LCT 22. Beyond 1 km of the construction works, and from LCT 371: Mid Upland Glens and LCT 387: Dipslope Farmland (Brechin Unit) effects on landscape character would be **Not Significant** due to the decreased perceptibility of construction activity.
- 2.4.3 During operation, **Significant** effects on landscape character of LCT 22 would occur within 1 km from the Proposed Development (although lesser effects may be experienced across part of this area), particularly over an area between the River North Esk and Auchenblae. This is due to physical changes to landscape features (eg, the introduction of large scale vertical structures into the landscape, and loss of areas of broadleaved woodland and commercial forestry). Perceptual effects would also contribute to **Significant** effects in LCT 22 due to the increased influence of vertical infrastructure. However, perceptual effects arising from the Proposed Development would be Not Significant for LCT 371: Mid Upland Glens and LCT 387: Dipslope Farmland (Brechin Unit).

⁷ NatureScot, 2019. *National Landscape Character Assessment. Landscape Character Type 376: Summits And Plateaux – Tayside*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/LCA/LCT%20376%20-%20Summits%20and%20Plateaux%20-%20Tayside%20-%20final%20pdf.pdf>.

Table 9.1.8: Dipslope Farmland (Brechin Unit)

LCT 387: Dipslope Farmland (Brechin Unit)	
Baseline description	
This assessment considers the northern unit of this LCT between Brechin and Marykirk. A small part of the study area south of Section C falls under this unit, covering low hills south of the River North Esk. The Proposed Development does not pass through this unit but is approximately 2 km to the northwest at its closest point, south of Edzell Wood. The Brechin unit extends beyond the study area across the northern fringes of the Firth of Tay eastwards towards Angus coast at Montrose. Key characteristics of the LCT include: • <i>“Extensive area of lowland farmland running parallel to the coastline, generally sloping from Sidlaws and Forfar Hills in northwest to near sea level in the southeast;</i> • <i>Dominated by productive agricultural land, it has an open, medium-scale character which is predominantly productive arable land use with simple geometric field patterns;</i> • <i>Low woodland cover, except on large estates which have pine shelter belts and hedgerows, and along river corridors. Where located on the slopes it reinforces the change in gradient;</i> • <i>Variety of historic sites from different eras ranging from prehistoric, Roman to Medieval, including castles, a number of historic estates and designed gardens which create a rich diverse character and strong local cultural identity;</i> • <i>Dispersed settlement pattern, including some suburban development which extends out while the historic settlement confines;</i> • <i>Infrequent single and small clusters of a range of domestic and medium scale commercial turbines along the elevated slopes, prominent due to their elevation and the lack of significant woodland cover; and</i> • <i>Variety of views from within the landscape, but typically, given the broad fall of slope to the east, there is a strong visual relationship with views along the coast and wide panoramas out to open sea. Intervisibility across the Tay firth to the Fife coast is pronounced around Dundee and reduces in clarity with distance and prominence further north”.</i>¹ Operational high voltage OHLs extend across this LCT unit including the Kintore to Tealing 275 kV which follows its northern boundary, the Fiddes to Brechin 132 kV and the Brechin to Bridge of Dun North 132 kV. There are no representative viewpoints within this LCT.	
Sensitivity	
The LCT is medium in scale with a simple landscape pattern of geometric arable fields which indicates a lower susceptibility. Contemporary human influence in the LCT unit is apparent given the presence of the existing OHLs wind turbines and commercial forestry, which also indicates lower susceptibility locally. Outside of the study area, the LCT also has a <i>“a strong visual relationship with views along the coast and wide panoramas out to open sea”</i> which indicates a higher susceptibility. On balance, the overall susceptibility of the landscape is judged to be Medium. Outside the study area, a small part of the southeastern extent of the LCT is located within the Angus Coast LLA. The LCT also offers recreational amenity in the form of core paths and sites of recreational interest, including the House of Dun National Trust site. The overall value of the LCT is judged to be Medium. Taking into account the judgements of susceptibility and value, the sensitivity of the LCT unit is judged to be Medium.	
Magnitude of Change During Construction	Magnitude of Change During Operation
Construction activities would result in perceptual landscape impacts on the Brechin LCT unit, primarily resulting from views towards partially constructed steel lattice towers. Construction activity would be visible at distances of approximately 2 km, and at this distance would not form a prominent feature in views from the LCT. There are also screening effects due to the estate woodlands scattered throughout the LCT. As the distance from the construction activity increases, the perceptibility of it would decrease. Perceptual changes to the landscape during construction would be temporary.	The Proposed Development would influence the <i>“variety of views from within the landscape”</i> as additional vertical features would be seen in outward views to the north. The Proposed Development would be seen beyond the 275 kV OHL which is closer to the LCT and exerts some existing influence on this characteristic. The Proposed Development would also be beyond the A90 and woodland around the River North Esk. As such, the additional influence on landscape character is likely to be limited.

LCT 387: Dipslope Farmland (Breachin Unit)	
The scale of change is judged to be Small over a small geographical extent, focussed within the northwestern part of the LCT between Trinity and Logie Pert. The magnitude of change during construction would be Low for the Brechin LCT unit in the areas between Trinity and Logie Pert, reducing to Barely Perceptible for other parts of the LCT unit.	The scale of change is judged to be Small, resulting from perceptual changes relating to the large-scale vertical features seen in outward views. The geographical extent is judged to be Small and would be focussed within the northwestern part of the Hill of Stracathro between Trinity and Logie Pert. The magnitude of change during operation would be Low for the Brechin LCT unit in the areas between Trinity and Logie Pert, reducing to Barely Perceptible for other parts of the LCT unit.
Significance of Effect during Construction	Significance of Effect during Operation
Taking account of the Medium sensitivity, the Low magnitude of change in the areas between Trinity and Logie Pert, and the temporary nature of construction activity, the landscape effects for this LCT are judged to be Minor (Not Significant) between Trinity and Logie Pert, reducing to Negligible (Not Significant) for the remaining parts of the LCT.	Taking account of the Medium sensitivity, and the Low magnitude of change in the areas between Trinity and Logie Pert, the landscape effects for this LCT are judged to be locally Minor (Not Significant) between Trinity and Logie Pert, reducing to Negligible (Not Significant) for the remaining parts of the LCT.

Table 9.1.9: Mid Upland Glens

LCT 371: Mid Upland Glens
Baseline description
LCT 371: Mid Upland Glens is ascribed to the middle reaches of glens that descend from hills and mountains into lower lying, broad straths. This LCT is comprised of twelve units, most of which are well outside the study area. One unit is partially situated within Section C of the Study Area, approximately 2.5 km northwest of the Proposed Development. Key characteristics of the LCT include: • <i>“Middle sections of the principal glens, where there is a notable increase in the width of the glen floor, however the steep concave valley sides still dominate and define the glen;</i> • <i>Predominantly uninhabited glens of medium to small scale, with sparse scatter of isolated farms, lodges and cottage;</i> • <i>Important lines of communication into and through the highlands, with access by tracks or dead-end minor roads. Other infrastructure including prominent pylon lines also take advantage of the accessibility in the confining glens;</i> • <i>Predominantly unenclosed rough grazing, bracken, heather moorland on valley slopes with a concentration of agricultural activity on narrow but distinct valley floor of enclosed improved pasture and pockets of arable, contrasting in colour and texture with the contained steep glen sides;</i> • <i>Typically the rivers meander through the flatter gradients of the glen floors, the intricacy of the meander loops dictated by the narrowness of the valley sides;</i> • <i>Viewed from above, the river alignment draws the eye along and down the valley;</i> • <i>Rapids, gorges and waterfalls where bands or harder rocks occur;</i> • <i>Glacial and post glacial features including morainic deposition emphasising the natural and intricate small scale character of many of the glen features;</i> • <i>Wind clipped native birch and oak woodland in small copses on steeper poorer ground and along river sides. Larger blocks of conifer forest on both valley sides and floor;</i> • <i>Scatter of small scale farmsteads and small villages located on dry site break of slopes to avoid flooding and maximise shelter and solar gain;</i> • <i>Proliferation of forts and castles constructed in local stone, add local points of interest and reinforce distinctiveness of glens;</i> • <i>Several major mansion-houses associated with extensive designed landscapes;</i>

LCT 371: Mid Upland Glens

- Views channelled along the valley corridor;
- *Relatively remote due to lack of settlement and winding minor roads.*⁸

The high voltage OHL Fetteresso to Alyth 275 kV passes through the southern extents of the LCT unit.

There are no representative viewpoints within this LCT unit.

Sensitivity

The LCT is relatively small in scale, indicating greater susceptibility. However, its winding, valley topography is visually enclosed and offers opportunities for screening. As do the occasional blocks of conifer plantations. Much of the upper slopes of the LCT is extensively managed as driven grouse moor and the regular, uniform landscape pattern created by this practice is present throughout, indicating reduced susceptibility. Although, a thin band of riparian woodland follows the meandering West Water, *“creating an attractive organic pattern, emphasising the route”*.⁹ The improved grassland fields of the lower elevations are small in scale with an irregular field pattern, indicating medium susceptibility. The LCT unit is close to visible signs of human activity and existing contemporary structures include the high voltage OHL Fetteresso to Alyth 275 kV. On balance, the overall susceptibility of the landscape is judged to be **Medium**.

The LCT unit is located within the Angus Glens LLA and is designated for the scenic qualities of the glaciated landform, the meandering river, and native riparian woodland. The glen is also an important access to outdoor recreation further into the hills and at the edge of the Cairngorms National Park. The overall value of the LCT is judged to be **High**.

Taking into account the judgements of susceptibility and value, the sensitivity of the LCT unit is judged to be **Medium**.

Magnitude of Change During Construction

If perceived at all, construction activity would be perceived from a distance of approximately 2.5 km at the closest point where the Glen meets the lower lying, broad valley of Strathmore. From this area, construction activity would be glimpsed in the far distance in views to the southeast, but the intervening undulating landform would provide screening. From within much of the LCT unit, construction would not be perceptible as the valley descends from northwest to southeast, whereas the Proposed Development would run from southwest to northeast, and so the landform would screen much of the construction activity. The ZTV indicates theoretical visibility from atop of the higher elevations of the valley sides and upper slopes of the surrounding hills; although this theoretical visibility covers a relatively small area and from these areas construction activity would only be glimpsed in the far distance and much of it would be screened by the intervening slopes.

The scale of change would be **Small** and the geographical extent would be **Medium**, encompassing the eastern slopes of Glen Lethnot and the lower lying ground within the southeastern extents of the LCT, southeast of Tillydovie. Perceptual changes to the landscape during construction would be temporary.

Magnitude of Change During Operation

The Proposed Development would be located at least 2.5 km from this LCT, and any impacts would be due to views of the OHL. The ZTV indicates limited visibility from the lower part of the glen, which is likely to be further reduced by the extent of woodland in this and the neighbouring LCT. Any views of the OHL would be seen in the context of the more open, settled landscape to the south, and would be introduced into landscape with existing manmade elements. One key characteristic of the LCT which would be affected by the Proposed Development would be the *“relatively remote”* character *“due to lack of settlement and winding minor roads.”*¹⁰ The Proposed Development would only be seen in glimpsed views from within the Glen and its valley sides.

The scale of change would be **Small** and the geographical extent would be **Small**, encompassing the eastern slopes west of Hill of Edzell, and the lower lying ground within the southeastern extents of the LCT, southeast of Tillydovie.

The magnitude of change during construction would be **Low** for the eastern extents of the LCT, reducing to **Barely Perceptible** for the rest of the unit (outside the study area).

⁸ NatureScot, 2019. *National Landscape Character Assessment. Landscape Character Type 371: Mid Upland Glens*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/LCA/LCT%20371%20-%20Mid%20Upland%20Glen%20-%20Final%20pdf.pdf>.

⁹ Angus Council, 2024. *Local Landscape Areas in Angus*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.angus.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-12/Local%20Landscape%20Areas%20in%20Angus%20FINAL%20REPORT%202024.pdf>.

¹⁰ NatureScot, 2019. *National Landscape Character Assessment. Landscape Character Type 371: Mid Upland Glens*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/LCA/LCT%20371%20-%20Mid%20Upland%20Glen%20-%20Final%20pdf.pdf>.

LCT 371: Mid Upland Glens	
The magnitude of change during construction would be Low for the eastern extents of the LCT, reducing to Barely Perceptible for the rest of the unit.	
Significance of Effect during Construction	Significance of Effect during Operation
Taking account of the Medium sensitivity, the Low magnitude of change within the eastern extents, and the temporary nature of construction activity, the landscape effects for this LCT unit are judged to be Minor (Not Significant) within the eastern extents of the unit, reducing to Negligible (Not Significant) for the rest of the LCT.	Taking account of the Medium sensitivity and the Low magnitude of change within the eastern extents, the landscape effects for this LCT unit are judged to be Minor (Not Significant) within the eastern extents of the unit, reducing to Negligible (Not Significant) for the rest of the LCT.

Table 9.1.10: Broad Valley Lowlands - Aberdeenshire

LCT 22: Broad Valley Lowlands - Aberdeenshire
Baseline description
There is one occurrence of LCT 22: Broad Valley Lowlands – Aberdeenshire located within the study area. The northern part of Section C and southern part of Section D of the Proposed Development passes through the LCT unit, which extends across the wide and gently undulating landscape of the Howe of the Mearns. The Proposed Development passes through the length of the LCT unit, which extends across much of the study area. It takes in broad areas of farmland between Edzell, Fettercairn, Laurencekirk and Auchenblae. Key characteristics of the LCT include: • <i>‘A broad and generally gently undulating strath with some flatter basins;</i> • <i>Steep scarp of the Mounth uplands rising steeply to the northwest and low rounded ridge of Garvock Hill provides a lesser degree of containment along the southeastern boundary;</i> • <i>Predominantly intensive agriculture with distinctive patchwork of large open fields divided by ditches and fences interspersed with small conifer woodlands;</i> • <i>More folded terrain at the foot of The Mounth uplands, with a number of small rounded hills and small incised valleys, supporting diverse policy woodlands and well-managed farmland;</i> • <i>Mature beech woodlands and avenues with stone walls associated with estates at the base of slopes;</i> • <i>Pockets of rowan and birch woodland along watercourses stand out within this expansive plain;</i> • <i>Small traditional villages and numerous farms, constructed of warm red stone, dotted throughout the countryside;</i> • <i>Landscape forms a major communications corridor accommodating the A90, the East Coast railway and transmission line; and</i> • <i>Striking contrast of open, expansive strath and adjacent uplands.’¹¹</i> Existing infrastructure within this LCT is relatively limited but includes a section of the A90 and East Coast Railway, which skirts along the southeastern edge of the unit. The area is settled and farmed, and there are small wind turbines as well as disused airfields in the southwest of the area near Edzell and in the north near Fordoun. Two high voltage OHLs, the Kintore to Tealing 275 kV OHL and the Fiddes to Brechin 132 kV OHL, pass through the southeast corner of the LCT unit near North Water Bridge and run on to the hills to the south (LCT 24 Coastal Farmed Ridges and Hills). Representative viewpoints within this LCT Unit: • VP22: B9120, western edge of Laurencekirk (refer to Volume 4b, Figure 9.26a-d: VP22: B9120, western edge of Laurencekirk)

¹¹ NatureScot, 2019. *National Landscape Character Assessment. Landscape Character Type 22: Broad Valley Lowlands - Aberdeenshire*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/LCA/LCT%20022%20-%20Broad%20Valley%20Lowlands%20-%20Aberdeenshire%20-%20Final%20pdf.pdf>.

LCT 22: Broad Valley Lowlands - Aberdeenshire

- VP23: Minor road, west of Mains of Balnakettle (refer to **Volume 4b, Figure 9.27a-d: VP23: Minor road, west of Mains of Balnakettle**)
- VP24: Minor road, northwest of Fordoun (refer to **Volume 4b, Figure 9.28a-f: VP24: Minor road, northwest of Fordoun**)

Sensitivity

The LCT is medium in scale, with a simple geometric pattern of medium to large-scale arable fields and smaller-scale forestry blocks, which indicates a lower susceptibility. Contemporary human influence generally comprises the A90 and East Coast Railway (which broadly parallel the eastern boundary of the area), the larger town of Laurencekirk in the east, disused airfields which appear to have been converted to new industrial uses, two high voltage OHL lines which briefly pass through the southeast corner of the LCT unit, and smaller-scale individual wind turbines which are dispersed throughout the area which, combined with the general settled and intensively farmed character, indicate a lower susceptibility. Larger blocks of woodland are primarily located in the south, associated with estates and policy woodlands, and offer a sense of enclosure in the otherwise open and broad landscape. The LCT also has a strong visual relation with the Mounth plateaux and mountains in the northwest which contrast with the lower-lying and large-scale landscape within the LCT unit, indicating higher susceptibility. On balance, the susceptibility of the landscape is judged to be **Medium**.

The northern fringes of this LCT are included within the Braes of the Mearns SLA (refer to **Volume 3, Figures 9.2b.3 to 9.2b.4: Landscape Character Types, pp. 3-4** and **Volume 3, Figures 9.4a.3 to 9.4a.4: Designated Landscapes, pp. 3-4**). There are limited recreational amenities within the LCT unit. The overall value of the LCT is judged to be **Medium**.

Taking into account the judgements of susceptibility and value, the sensitivity of the LCT unit is judged to be **Medium**.

Magnitude of Change During Construction

The Proposed Development, between Towers S28 to S82, would be located within the centre of the LCT unit, and thus construction would give rise to physical landscape change. Physical impacts would include the erection of steel lattice towers and the removal of some landscape features, including the loss of small sections of commercial forestry blocks southeast of Edzell (infrastructure felling) and at Lady Jane's Plantation (infrastructure and management felling), and disturbance to arable fields south of the Mains of Thornton and northwest of Fordoun. Physical impacts would also include the introduction of temporary and permanent access tracks and construction activity, including the movement of construction vehicles and plants. The main OHL components constructed during this phase would remain present throughout the operational phase.

Construction activities would also result in perceptual landscape impacts on the LCT unit, primarily resulting from views towards partially constructed steel lattice towers. Despite the generally open and broad nature of the LCT unit, construction activity would be most perceptible within 1 km of the Proposed Development, although this distance would reduce in the south of the unit where frequent forestry blocks create a more enclosed landscape. As the distance from the construction activity increases, the perceptibility of it would decrease.

The scale of change is judged to be **Large**, resulting from physical changes relating to construction activity across a small geographical extent, focussed within distances of 1 km from the Proposed Development within the area between Inveriscandye and Burnhead of Monboddoo within the LCT unit. The scale of change would decrease with distance due to a reduction in perceptibility of construction activity at greater distances. Physical and perceptual changes to the landscape during construction would be temporary. The magnitude of change during construction would be **Medium** for the LCT unit locally, reducing to **Low** for parts of the LCT beyond 1 km.

Magnitude of Change During Operation

Physical effects would arise during the operational phase from the introduction of Towers S28 (near Monboddoo) to S82 (near Northgate) within the LCT unit. The ZTV (refer to **Volume 3, Figures 9.2c.3 to 9.2c.4: Landscape Character Types with Overhead Line Tower Height Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV), pp. 3-4**) indicates widespread visibility across the LCT, though some broadleaved and coniferous woodlands would reduce actual visibility.

The steel lattice towers and conductors of the Proposed Development would cross the LCT on a broadly southwest to northeast alignment. The introduction of the Proposed Development would physically affect the '*intensive agriculture with distinctive patchwork of large open fields*' which is characteristic of the LCT. Felling during construction would also result in longer term effects on the landscape character of the LCT during operation.

The Proposed Development would introduce a large-scale OHL in a medium-scale landscape which is largely unaffected by development of this type. Due to the low-lying and open nature of the LCT it is considered unlikely that the Proposed Development would diminish the perceived scale of the landscape.

The Proposed Development would influence the '*contrast of open, expansive strath and adjacent uplands*' as additional vertical features would be seen in the lower-lying strath landscape. The Proposed Development would be seen roughly parallel to the upland landforms in the northwest, but routeing has maintained a clear separation between the OHL and the braes to the north.

Landscape mitigation and restoration proposals are presented in **Volume 5, Appendix 9.6: Outline Landscape Mitigation Design Guide**.

The scale of change is judged to be locally **Large**, resulting from physical changes relating to the alteration of landcover and landscape features as well as the introduction of further large-scale vertical features within the LCT. The geographical extent is judged to be **Medium**, focussed within

LCT 22: Broad Valley Lowlands - Aberdeenshire	
	distances of no more than 1 km from the Proposed Development over an area between the River North Esk and Auchenblae. The magnitude of landscape change during operation would be High for a narrow strip of this LCT unit and Medium up to 1 km of the Proposed Development. The magnitude of change would reduce beyond this distance.
Significance of Effect during Construction	Significance of Effect during Operation
Taking account of the Medium sensitivity, the Medium magnitude of change within 1 km, and the temporary nature of construction activity, the landscape effects for this LCT are judged to be Moderate (Significant) locally within the LCT (within approximately 1 km of the Proposed Development, although lesser effects may be experienced across part of this area) and Minor (Not Significant) for the remaining parts of the LCT unit.	Taking account of the Medium sensitivity, and the High magnitude of change locally, the landscape effects for this LCT are judged to be Major (Significant) along the route, and Moderate (Significant) at up to 1 km from the Proposed Development, although lesser effects may be experienced across part of this area. Effects would reduce to Minor (Not Significant) beyond this distance.

2.5 Section D

- 2.5.1 Physical and perceptual effects arising from construction activities and the operational phase of the Proposed Development would occur on the landscape character of LCT 24 - Coastal Farmed Ridges and Hills - Aberdeenshire.
- 2.5.2 During construction, **Significant** effects on landscape character would occur within 1 km from the Proposed Development (although lesser effects may be experienced across part of this area), over an area between Burnhead of Monboddo and Elf Hill. This would be due to physical changes to landscape features (eg, disturbance to ground cover, including arable fields and felling of areas of woodland, including riparian woodland along the Bervie Water) as well as the construction of steel lattice towers and access tracks. **Significant** perceptual effects as a result of visibility of partially constructed steel lattice towers would also occur within LCT 24 within 1 km of the construction works (although lesser effects may be experienced across part of this area). Beyond 1 km of the construction works, effects on landscape character would reduce and would be **Not Significant** due to the decreased perceptibility of construction activity.
- 2.5.3 During operation, **Significant** effects on landscape character would occur no more than 1 km from the Proposed Development (although lesser effects may be experienced across part of this area), particularly over an area between Burnhead of Monboddo and Elf Hill. This would be due to physical changes to landscape features including the introduction of large scale vertical infrastructure into the landscape, and loss of areas of woodland including riparian woodland along the Bervie Water. Perceptual effects would also contribute to **Significant** effects in LCT 24, due to the effects on views to the west across the Howe of the Mearns. Beyond 1 km of the Proposed Development (although lesser effects may be experienced across part of this area), effects on landscape character would reduce and would be **Not Significant** due to the decreased perceptibility of the Proposed Development.

Table 9.1.11: Coastal Farmed Ridges and Hills – Aberdeenshire

LCT 24: Coastal Farmed Ridges and Hills – Aberdeenshire
Baseline description
Section D of the Proposed Development passes through the northwestern part of the Coastal Farmed Ridges and Hills – Aberdeenshire LCT. The LCT unit extends across a large area of rolling arable and pastoral ridgelines that are dissected by narrow valleys, notably the Bervie Water valley around Glenbervie. It extends from Auchenblae in the west, to southeast of Laurencekirk, and towards the northwestern peripheries of Stonehaven in the north. The character area is generally aligned with the coast but slightly inland.

LCT 24: Coastal Farmed Ridges and Hills – Aberdeenshire

Key characteristics of the LCT include:

- *'A large scale and open landscape of smoothly rolling ridges and shallow valleys;*
- *Narrow ravines cutting through the ridges towards the coast;*
- *Large fields of arable land and pasture with red-pink soils present a rich tapestry of colours with the strong patchwork pattern influenced by different crops and ploughed fields;*
- *Few hedges or dykes;*
- *Sparse woodland with coniferous shelterbelts planted on some ridges. Broadleaf woodlands, although small, commonly emphasise the landform, tracing water courses or planted on knolls;*
- *Scattered settlement pattern with varied architectural styles including some large stately homes, farms and traditional cottages, often built of local red sandstone;*
- *Comprehensive network of minor roads, as well as the main A90 which provides glimpses of the sea;*
- *A concentration of Bronze Age burial cairns often focussed on hilltops with views to the sea;*
- *Telecommunication masts located on the highest hills;*
- *Frequent single and small groups of large wind turbines;*
- *Strong coastal influence particularly where more open slopes fall gently to the top of cliffs or raised beach allowing views of the sea; and*
- *Sea views to the east and views westwards across the Howe of the Mearns'.¹²*

Existing infrastructure within this LCT comprises the A90 and East Coast Railway line which cut through the northern half of the unit and along the eastern edge of the study area, along with clusters of wind turbines. These are concentrated along the Hill of Garvock ridgeline, and across the hilltops immediately north and west of Drumlithie. Three high voltage OHLs travel in a northeast to southwest direction, with one located in the northwest and two running in parallel along the southern edge of the study area.

Representative viewpoints within this LCT Unit:

- VP21: Hill of Garvock (refer to **Volume 4b, Figure 9.25a-d: VP21: Hill of Garvock**)
- VP25: Footpath off Hill View Road, Auchenblae (refer to **Volume 4b, Figure 9.29a-f: VP25: Footpath off Hill View Road, Auchenblae**)
- VP26: Glenbervie Road, west of Glenbervie (refer to **Volume 4b, Figure 9.30a-i: VP26: Glenbervie Road, west of Glenbervie**)
- VP27: Minor road near Jacksbank (refer to **Volume 4b, Figure 9.31a-i: VP27: Minor road near Jacksbank**)
- VP28: Nether Wyndings (refer to **Volume 4b, Figure 9.32a-c: VP28: Nether Wyndings**)

Sensitivity

The LCT is large in scale with a simple landscape pattern of geometric arable fields with weak field boundaries, indicating a lower susceptibility to linear energy infrastructure development. Contemporary human influence is apparent with a well-settled character across the unit and a consistent presence of farmsteads, as well as the A90 transport corridor, multiple wind farms along ridgelines and scattered individual turbines on farmsteads, and three high voltage OHLs. Although overall a *'large scale and open landscape'*, within the study area there are some areas of forested landforms and watercourses which create a sense of localised enclosure, including at Carmont Hill, Knock Hill and Herscha Hill. There are steeper slopes and small scale valleys indicating higher susceptibility. The LCT also has *'views westwards across the Howe of the Mearns'* which indicates higher susceptibility. On balance, the overall susceptibility of the landscape is judged to be **Medium**.

¹² NatureScot, 2019. *National Landscape Character Assessment. Character Type 24: Coastal Farmed Ridges and Hills – Aberdeenshire*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/LCA/LCT%20024%20-%20Coastal%20Farmed%20Ridges%20and%20Hills%20-%20Aberdeenshire%20-%20Final%20pdf.pdf>.

LCT 24: Coastal Farmed Ridges and Hills – Aberdeenshire

A very small part of the western extent of the LCT is within the Braes of the Mearns SLA, and outside the study area along the coast, the LCT takes in parts of the South East Aberdeenshire Coast SLA. The LCT contains a number of estate woodlands, and some areas of visitor interest which offer recreational amenity. The overall value of the LCT is judged to be **Medium**.

Taking into account the judgements of susceptibility and value, the sensitivity of the LCT unit is judged to be **Medium**.

Magnitude of Change During Construction	Magnitude of Change During Operation
The Proposed Development, between Towers S4 to S27, would pass through the northwestern edge of the LCT unit and as such would experience physical landscape changes from the construction of the Proposed Development. Physical impacts would include the construction of the steel lattice towers which would result in removal of some landscape features, including the loss of some hedgerow trees along field boundaries and disturbance to arable fields throughout the northwestern area, and small pockets of broadleaved woodland (infrastructure felling). Physical impacts would also include the introduction of temporary and permanent access tracks and construction activity, including the movement of construction vehicles and plant. The main OHL components constructed during this phase would remain present throughout the operational phase. Construction activities would also result in perceptual landscape impacts on the LCT unit, primarily resulting from views towards partially constructed steel lattice towers. Construction activity would be most visible within 1 km of the Proposed Development, however would also be perceptible beyond this distance on higher ground along the northwestern fringes of the LCT unit. As the distance from the construction activity increases, the perceptibility of it would decrease, particularly around Carmont Hill and the Bervie Water along the southeastern edge of the study area where settlement and intervening landform and vegetation would further screen construction activity. The scale of change is judged to be Large, resulting from physical changes relating to construction activity across a medium geographical extent, focussed within distances of 1 km from the Proposed Development within the area between Burnhead of Monboddo and Elf Hill. The scale of change would decrease with distance due to a reduction in perceptibility of construction activity at greater distances. Physical and perceptual changes to the landscape during construction would be temporary. The magnitude of change during construction would be Medium for the LCT unit locally, reducing to Low for parts of the LCT beyond 1 km.	Physical effects would arise during the operational phase from the introduction of Towers S4 (near Elf Hill) to S27 (near Knockbank Farm) within the northwestern part of the LCT unit. The ZTV (refer to Volume 3, Figure 9.2c.4: Landscape Character Types with Overhead Line Tower Height Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV), p. 4) indicates widespread visibility across the LCT within the study area. The Proposed Development is routed across undulating ground, and on higher land would be widely visible, though it would be more screened when in valleys. The steel lattice towers and conductors of the Proposed Development would cross the northwestern part of the LCT on a broadly north-south alignment, although routeing is complex in places in response to topography. The introduction of the Proposed Development would physically affect the '<i>large fields of arable land and pasture</i>' which is characteristic of the LCT. Felling and vegetation loss during construction would also result in longer term effects on the landscape character of the LCT during operation. The Proposed Development would introduce permanent access tracks across the undulating landform and hill slopes around Knockbank Farm, Droop Hill and Elf Hill, which would form new linear features along these slopes. Landscape mitigation and restoration proposals are presented in Volume 5, Appendix 9.6: Outline Landscape Mitigation Design Guide. The Proposed Development would introduce a large-scale OHL into a landscape of variable scale. The steel lattice towers would be seen alongside existing high voltage OHLs and wind turbines, which would enable a comparison of relative scale. Considering the nature of the LCT, the Proposed Development would locally diminish the perceived scale of the landscape. The Proposed Development would also influence the '<i>views westwards across the Howe of the Mearns</i>' from the eastern and southern edges of the study area as additional vertical features would be seen in westerly views across the Howe, towards the rising braes. North of Droop Hill, the Proposed Development would run alongside the existing Alyth to Kintore 275 kV OHL, resulting in additional effects on this part of the landscape. The scale of change is judged to be locally Large, resulting from physical changes relating to the alteration of landcover and loss of some landscape features, as well as the introduction of additional large-scale vertical features within the LCT. The geographical extent is judged to be Medium, focussed within distances of no more than 1 km from the Proposed Development, although this varies with topography, over an area between Burnhead of Monboddo and Elf Hill. The magnitude of landscape change during operation would be locally High for a narrow strip of this the LCT, particularly around the Bervie Water valley, and Medium at up to 1 km from the Proposed Development. The magnitude of change would reduce beyond this distance.

LCT 24: Coastal Farmed Ridges and Hills – Aberdeenshire

Significance of Effect during Construction	Significance of Effect during Operation
Taking account of the Medium sensitivity, the Medium magnitude of change within 1 km, and the temporary nature of construction activity, the landscape effects for this LCT are judged to be Moderate (Significant) locally within the LCT (within approximately 1 km of the Proposed Development, although lesser effects may be experienced across part of this area) and Minor (Not Significant) for the remaining parts of the LCT unit.	Taking account of the Medium sensitivity, and the locally High magnitude of change, the landscape effects for this LCT are judged to be Major (Significant) at the crossing of the Bervie Water and the slopes to the north and south, as well as along the OHL north of Droop Hill. Effects would be Moderate (Significant) at up to 1 km from the Proposed Development, although lesser effects may be experienced across part of this area. Effects would reduce to Minor (Not Significant) beyond this distance.

2.6 Section E

- 2.6.1 Physical and perceptual effects arising from construction activities and the operational phase of the Proposed Development would occur on the landscape character of LCT 29: Summits and Plateaux – Aberdeenshire and LCT 31: Broad Wooded and Farmed Valley. Perceptual effects would occur on the landscape character of LCT 27: Farmed Moorland Edge – Aberdeenshire.
- 2.6.2 During construction, **Significant** effects on landscape character would occur within 1 km from the Proposed Development (although lesser effects may be experienced across part of this area), over an area that extends across Fetteresso Forest and Durriss Forest within LCT 29 and an area between Calladrum and Loch of Park within LCT 31. This would be due to physical changes to landscape features (eg, disturbance to ground cover, including open moorland, felling of commercial forestry and broadleaved and riparian woodland). Physical changes also include the construction of steel lattice towers and access tracks. **Significant** perceptual effects as a result of visibility of partially constructed steel lattice towers would also occur within these LCTs. Beyond 1 km of the construction works, including within LCT 27: Farmed Moorland Edge – Aberdeenshire, effects on landscape character would reduce and would be **Not Significant** due to the decreased perceptibility of construction activity.
- 2.6.3 During operation, **Significant effects** on landscape character would generally be focused within 1 km of the Proposed Development (although lesser effects may be experienced across part of this area), over an area that extends across Fetteresso Forest and Durriss Forest within LCT 29 and between Calladrum and Loch of Park within LCT 31. This is due to physical changes to landscape features including the introduction of large scale vertical infrastructure into the landscape. Perceptual effects would also contribute to **Significant** effects in these LCTs, particularly due to the Proposed Development's influence on the views towards the distinctive uplands of the Mounth, that form part of the Highland Boundary Fault. Beyond 1 km of the Proposed Development in these LCTs, and from within LCT 27: Farmed Moorland Edge – Aberdeenshire, effects on landscape character would be **Not Significant** due to the decreased perceptibility of the Proposed Development.

Table 9.1.12: Summits and Plateaux – Aberdeenshire

LCT 29: Summits and Plateaux – Aberdeenshire
Baseline description
This LCT is found within Section D and Section E of the study area. The study area covers a small area of the LCT southwest of Auchenblae in Section D at Strathfinella Hill and the LCT extends along the western edge of the study area. The Proposed Development passes through the LCT from Elf Hill, near the proposed Hurlie substation, passing through the Fetteresso Forest and travelling northwards to the northern extents of Durriss Forest at the southern edge of the Dee Valley. Key characteristics of the LCT include:

LCT 29: Summits and Plateaux – Aberdeenshire

- *“An expansive upland plateau with a smooth rolling landform and rounded hill summits. Landform is more complex along the Highland Boundary Fault;*
- *Foreground to the Cairngorm massif and Cairngorms National Park;*
- *Backdrop in views from the north from Lower Deeside and the fringes of Aberdeen city;*
- *Extensive central and western ridges covered with expansive heather and grass moorland;*
- *Regionally prominent hills;*
- *Coniferous forested lower hills, particularly extensive in the northeast. Wind farm development also present in this area;*
- *A patchwork of green pasture extends high into narrow valleys on the fringes of these uplands;*
- *Unexpected pockets of farmland and isolated farms and estate buildings associated lower ground in part of the core of these uplands;*
- *Derelict grey stone cottages are occasional features amidst open moorland;*
- *Numerous old routeways popular with walkers and these, and the B974 Cairn o’Mount road, offer commanding views to the Howe of Mearns and the coast, and to Deeside;*
- *Wild character experienced in the less modified central and western parts of this landscape; and*
- *Dramatic juxtaposition of the steep scarp slopes of these rugged uplands with the expansive low-lying farmed and settled Howe of the Mearns.”*¹³

The existing Fetteresso Substation is located within the Fetteresso Forest and the operational Kintore to Fetteresso 275 kV/400 kV OHL travels northwards from the substation. The Fetteresso to Alyth 275 kV passes around Strathfinella Hill in the southern extents of the LCT and also links to Fetteresso Substation. The operational Meikle Carewe Wind Farm is within the study area, and there are other wind farm developments within the wider LCT. There are also a number of communications masts across some hill summits within the LCT. Human influence is most evident in the extensive commercial forestry that occupies much of this LCT.

Representative viewpoints within this LCT Unit:

- VP29: Slug Road (A957) west of Roadside Cottage (refer to **Volume 4b, Figure 9.33a-f: VP29: Slug Road (A957) west of Roadside Cottage**).

Sensitivity

The LCT is of generally large scale, with an *“expansive upland plateau”* in western and central areas comprising *“smooth rolling landform and rounded hill summits”*, indicating lower susceptibility. Much of the plateau is heavily forested with working commercial plantations. The landscape is more settled along the Cowie Water valley, where the A957 Slug Road runs through a smaller scale enclosed landscape. Settlement and other built influences indicate lower susceptibility. More complex landforms associated with the Highland Boundary Fault along the southern edge of the LCT, contrasts with and provides a backdrop to the surrounding lowlands to the east and south and indicates higher susceptibility. On balance, the overall susceptibility of the landscape is judged to be **Medium**.

A small extent of the northern fringes of the LCT are located within the Dee Valley SLA, and the southern extents are located within the Braes of the Mearns SLA. The Highland Boundary Fault, a recognised and prominent transitional landscape feature, is located along the southern edge of the LCT, and although less pronounced within the study area, it is still a notable and contrasting feature within the surrounding lowland landscape. There are also a number of informal recreational routes within the LCT including within Fetteresso Forest. The overall value of the LCT is judged to be **Medium**.

Taking into account the judgements of susceptibility and value, the sensitivity of the LCT unit is judged to be **Medium**.

Magnitude of Change During Construction
Magnitude of Change During Operation

¹³ NatureScot, 2019. *National Landscape Character Assessment. Landscape Character Type 29: Summits and Plateaux*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/LCA/LCT%20029%20-%20Summits%20and%20Plateaux%20-%20Aberdeenshire%20-%20Final%20pdf.pdf>

LCT 29: Summits and Plateaux – Aberdeenshire

The Proposed Development, between Towers N70 to S3, would be located within the LCT area, and as such the landscape would experience physical changes arising from construction of the Proposed Development. Physical impacts arising during construction would include the construction of steel lattice towers which would result in the removal of some landscape features, albeit much of this would be commercial forestry. Infrastructure and management felling of commercial forestry required to facilitate the construction of the Proposed Development would take place within Fetteresso Forest and Durris Forest. Further information on forestry felling is provided in **Volume 2, Chapter 8: Forestry**. There would be a disturbance to the open moorland areas at Craignell Hill. Physical impacts would also include the introduction of temporary and permanent access tracks and construction activity including the movement of construction vehicles and plant.

Construction activities would also result in perceptual landscape impact in wider parts of the northeastern area of the LCT. However, given the relative enclosure of this landscape due to the presence of commercial forestry throughout the landscape, and the dramatic undulating landform, construction activity would be most perceptible within 500 m to 1 km of the Proposed Development. The degree of visibility of construction activity within Fetteresso Forest and Durris Forest would vary over the construction period due to rotational forestry felling and restocking regimes that would influence the degree of screening. However, it is considered that remaining forestry across these areas would continue to provide a degree of screening. Additionally, as the distance from the construction activity increases, the perceptibility of it would decrease.

The scale of change is judged to be **Large**, resulting from physical changes relating to construction activity across a small geographical extent, focussed within distances of 1 km from the Proposed Development over an area between Elf Hill and the northern edge of Durris Forest. The scale of change would decrease with distance due to a reduction in perceptibility of construction activity at greater distances, due to the forested nature of the northeastern part of the LCT. Physical and perceptual changes to the landscape during construction would be temporary.

The magnitude of change during construction would be **Medium** for the LCT unit locally, reducing to **Low** for parts of the LCT beyond 1 km.

Physical effects would arise during the operational phase from the introduction of Towers N70 (near Meikle Tulloch) to S3 (near Elf Hill) within Fetteresso and Durris Forests. The ZTV (refer to **Volume 3, Figures 9.2c.4 to 9.2c.5: Landscape Character Types with Overhead Line Tower Height Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV), p. 4-5**) indicates widespread visibility across this area of the LCT, as well as across Strathfinella Hill further south. Durris and Fetteresso Forests would reduce actual visibility across the LCT.

The steel lattice towers and conductors of the Proposed Development would cross the LCT on a broadly north-south alignment. The introduction of the Proposed Development would physically affect the “*coniferous forested lower hills*” characteristic of the LCT. The Proposed Development would pass through large areas of the Fetteresso and Durris Forests which would involve the removal of commercial forestry throughout the OC (refer to **Volume 2, Chapter 8: Forestry**), resulting in some longer term effects during operation, although noting that periodic clear-felling is a feature of these working forests. The densely forested aspect of this landscape, alongside the complex geographical form and regionally prominent hills to the northeast of the LCT area, would result in the towers being partially or fully screened, or backclothed when viewed in the landscape. However, in places they would be viewed on the skyline, the degree of visibility of the Proposed Development within and around Fetteresso Forest and Durris Forest would vary over time due to rotational forestry felling and restocking regimes that would influence the degree of screening. It is considered that the remaining forestry across these areas would continue to provide a degree of screening or backclothing.

Many of the permanent access tracks associated with the Proposed Development in this LCT would follow existing forest tracks. Any alterations or changes in appearance to them due to track upgrades would also be largely screened by the commercial forest cover surrounding them.

The Proposed Development would also influence the “*dramatic juxtaposition of the steep scarp slopes of these rugged uplands with the expansive low-lying farmed and settled Howe of the Mearns*” where the towers south of the proposed Hurlie substation are perceived from lower lying parts of the LCT and surrounding LCTs. These towers would be seen alongside the existing Alyth to Kintore 275 kV OHL. Through most of the LCT, the Proposed Development would be directly alongside the existing Kintore to Fetteresso 275 kV/400 kV OHL. It would therefore intensify an existing effect rather than introducing new effects on this landscape. The Proposed Development would pass through the smaller scale Cowie Water valley where it would contrast more strongly with the landscape.

Landscape mitigation and restoration proposals are presented in **Volume 5, Appendix 9.6: Outline Landscape Mitigation Design Guide**.

The scale of change is judged to be locally **Large**, particularly around the Cowie Water valley, resulting from physical changes relating to the alteration of landcover and landscape features as well as introduction of further large-scale vertical features within the LCT. The geographical extent is judged to be **Medium**, along a strip between Elf Hill and the northern edge of Durris Forest, given the elevated nature of the LCT and the wider influence the Proposed Development would have as it crosses this

LCT 29: Summits and Plateaux – Aberdeenshire	
	upland plateau. Commercial forestry would screen or backcloth views of the Proposed Development in many locations. The magnitude of landscape change during operation would be High at the Cowie Water valley and at the southern scarp of the LCT, and Medium along the rest of the Proposed Development, within no more than 1 km and often much less in forested areas. The magnitude of change would reduce beyond this distance.
Significance of Effect during Construction	Significance of Effect during Operation
Taking account of the Medium sensitivity, the Medium magnitude of change within 1 km, and the temporary nature of construction activity, the landscape effects for this LCT are judged to be Moderate (Significant) locally within the LCT (within approximately 1 km of the Proposed Development, although lesser effects may be experienced across part of this area) and Minor (Not Significant) for the remaining parts of the LCT unit.	Taking account of the Medium sensitivity, and the locally High magnitude of change, landscape effects at the Cowie Valley and the southern scarp are judged to be Major (Significant) due to the conflict with the underlying landform. In other areas the landscape effects are judged to be Moderate (significant) due to the influence of the existing OHL and commercial forestry. This effect would be limited to no more than 1 km from the Proposed Development, although lesser effects may be experienced across part of this area. Effects would reduce to Minor (Not Significant) beyond this distance.

Table 9.1.13: Farmed Moorland Edge - Aberdeenshire

LCT 27: Farmed Moorland Edge – Aberdeenshire
Baseline description
There is one occurrence of LCT 27: Farmed Moorland Edge – Aberdeenshire located within the study area. Section E of the Proposed Development passes within approximately 1 km of the western boundary of the LCT. The western extents of this LCT unit, a landscape of undulating arable fields and numerous forestry plantations, lies within the eastern half of the study area, south of the Dee Valley. Key characteristics of the LCT which are relevant to the study area include: • <i>‘Low rolling hills and valleys with some rocky ridges on higher slopes;</i> • <i>Dark heather-clad and forested hills often form the backdrop to these upland fringe areas;</i> • <i>Areas of moorland are interspersed with farmland on higher slopes;</i> • <i>Marginal upland farming, sheep grazing and patches of gorse scrub, birch and willow occurs at the transition with the uplands;</i> • <i>More intensive farmland is present on softly rolling ground;</i> • <i>Areas of waterlogged ground and small bogs in places, particularly at the transition with moorland or in wetter valley bottoms;</i> • <i>Scrubby patches of birch, willow and Scots pine occur in more marginal areas;</i> • <i>Clumps of broadleaf trees and shelterbelts pattern farmed lower slopes;</i> • <i>Mixed policy-influenced plantings more common in some areas;</i> • <i>Farm buildings of grey/brown stone are often marked by clumps of trees; and</i>

LCT 27: Farmed Moorland Edge – Aberdeenshire

- *Strong sense of history and culture, giving the landscape a timeless character.*¹⁴

Existing infrastructure within the LCT includes the high voltage Kintore to Tealing 275 kV OHL which travels north-south along the study area boundary. Otherwise, the area comprises settled upland fringe with large areas of forestry plantation.

There are no representative viewpoints within this LCT.

Sensitivity

The area of the LCT unit within the study area comprises a mixture of regular and irregular fields that are generally medium in size, interspersed with areas of conifer forest plantations and broadleaved woodlands, indicating higher susceptibility. Contemporary human influence is limited, with only dispersed farmsteads and a minor road network present across the part of the LCT which falls within the study area, indicating higher susceptibility. The extensive presence of forestry plantations, woodlands and rolling hills within the area offer a sense of enclosure, with limited opportunities for longer distance outward views. On balance, the overall susceptibility of the landscape is judged to be **Medium**.

The LCT is not located within any designated landscapes. There are limited recreational amenities within the LCT unit. The overall value of the LCT is judged to be **Low**.

Taking into account the judgements of susceptibility and value, the sensitivity of the LCT unit is judged to be **Medium**.

Magnitude of Change During Construction

The Proposed Development, between Towers N64 and N76, would be located approximately 1 km west of this Farmed Moorland Edge LCT unit, and as such this unit would only experience perceptual landscape change arising from the construction of the Proposed Development.

Construction activities would result in perceptual landscape impacts on the LCT unit, primarily resulting from views towards partially constructed steel lattice towers. Due to the generally enclosed nature of the western part of the LCT unit, construction activity would only be perceptible in isolated areas of higher elevation where gaps in forestry and presence of open fields coincide, such as west of Denside where longer distance views across descending topography to the west and north unfold. Elsewhere within the LCT unit, perceptibility of the Proposed Development would decrease due to intervening topography and forestry.

The scale of change is judged to be **Small**, resulting from perceptual changes relating to construction activity across a small geographical extent, broadly defined as the area west and south of Denside Wood within the LCT unit. The scale of change would decrease with distance due to a reduction in perceptibility of construction activity at greater distances. Physical and perceptual changes to the landscape during construction would be temporary.

The magnitude of change during construction would be **Low** for the area west and south of Denside Wood, reducing to **Barely Perceptible** for remaining parts of the LCT.

Magnitude of Change During Operation

No physical effects would arise during the operational phase from the introduction of Towers N64 (near Kirkton of Durriss) to N76 (within Durriss Forest), which would be located at least 1 km west of the western fringes of the LCT unit. The ZTV (refer to **Volume 3, Figures 9.2c.4 to 9.2c.5: Landscape Character Types with Overhead Line Tower Height Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV), pp. 4-5**) indicates visibility across the western part of the LCT, with eastern parts screened by topography. The frequent woodland and coniferous woodland would reduce actual visibility.

The Proposed Development would result in perceptual landscape effects on the LCT unit, resulting from the introduction of steel lattice towers into occasional longer distance views of adjacent LCT units. The numerous areas of mature forestry and undulating topography within the study area at the western edges of this LCT unit create a relatively enclosed landscape, with limited opportunities for longer-distance outward views. Where longer-distance views are available, such as west of Denside within 3 km of the Proposed Development, north-facing slopes are afforded more open northwesterly views over the Dee valley. The Proposed Development would be seen in the adjacent LCT units to the north as it crosses the lower-lying strath, occasionally screened by woodland along the River Dee and frequently backclothed by forestry and rising landform north of the watercourse. Seen at a distance and in the context of existing forestry and settlement scattered across the broad valley, the proposed steel lattice towers would appear as relatively small-scale features within the wider landscape. The Proposed Development would generally be seen in the context of the existing Fetteresso to Kintore 275 kV OHL.

¹⁴ NatureScot, 2019. National Landscape Character Assessment. Landscape Character Type 27: Farmed Moorland Edge – Aberdeenshire. [Online] Available at: <https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/LCA/LCT%20027%20-%20Farmed%20Moorland%20Edge%20-%20Aberdeenshire%20-%20Final%20pdf.pdf>.

LCT 27: Farmed Moorland Edge – Aberdeenshire

	Landscape mitigation and restoration proposals are presented in Volume 5, Appendix 9.6: Outline Landscape Mitigation Design Guide. The scale of change is judged to be Small, resulting from perceptual changes relating to the alteration of longer-distance views through the introduction of further large-scale vertical features within adjacent LCTs. The geographical extent is judged to be Small as the Proposed Development would be most perceptible within limited areas in the western extents of the LCT. The magnitude of landscape change during operation would be Low for the western edge of the LCT, reducing to Barely Perceptible for remaining parts of the LCT.
Significance of Effect during Construction	Significance of Effect during Operation
Taking account of the Medium sensitivity, the Low magnitude of change locally, and the temporary nature of construction activity, the landscape effects for this LCT are judged to be Minor (Not Significant) for the area west and south of Denside Wood, reducing to Negligible (Not Significant) for remaining parts of the LCT unit.	Taking account of the Medium sensitivity, and the Low magnitude of change, the landscape effects for this LCT are judged to be Minor (Not Significant) locally, and Negligible (Not Significant) for most of the LCT unit.

Table 9.1.14: Broad Wooded and Farmed Valley

LCT 31: Broad Wooded and Farmed Valley
Baseline description
There is one occurrence of LCT 31: Broad Wooded and Farmed Valley within the study area. Section E and Section F of the Proposed Development pass through the LCT unit, which extends east-west along the broad strath of the River Dee. The northern part of Section E passes west of Kirkton of Durris through the western area of the LCT unit, through an area of rolling woodland and farmland which descends to the north towards the River Dee. Section F of the Proposed Development extends across the across the more gently undulating farmland and woodland north of the River Dee. Key characteristics of the LCT include: • <i>'A large-scale valley landform in which the valley sides form a series of rolling terraces patterned with bands of birch and pine, interspersed with walled pastures;</i> • <i>Pastoral areas of green fields and shady woods. Greater proportion of open farmland occurs further east and along some tributaries in contrast with the more densely wooded valley in LCTs further west;</i> • <i>Sparkling shallow river that meanders across the valley floor, its course divided by several wooded islets;</i> • <i>Frequent settlement in a series of separate villages and groups of houses. Also estates with fine buildings, grand gatehouses, and stone boundary walls;</i> • <i>Main road corridor with a sequence of settlements spaced along the valley, mostly on the northern side, interspersed with steadings and frequent groups of houses;</i> • <i>Views along the strath and out to the higher ground beyond give a sense of scale;</i> • <i>A well-settled, prosperous, often traditional character;</i> • <i>A focus for a range of recreational activities; and</i>

LCT 31: Broad Wooded and Farmed Valley

- *Long views contrast with sudden enclosures by woodland.*¹⁵

Existing infrastructure within this LCT includes two existing high voltage OHLs (Kintore to Tealing 275 kV and Kintore to Fetteresso 275 kV/400 kV), which pass north-south through the unit. The A93 crosses east-west along the centre of the valley, forming the spine of the local road network, serving the settled landscape. The main settlements are the small villages of Crathes, Kirkton of Durris, Woodlands and Drumoak, along with more dispersed properties in the wider landscape.

Representative viewpoints within this LCT Unit:

- VP30: Durris Bridge (refer to **Volume 4b, Figure 9.34a-f: VP30: Durris Bridge**)
- VP31: Couper's Road (refer to **Volume 4b, Figure 9.35a-e: VP31: Couper's Road**)

Sensitivity

The LCT is medium to large in scale, comprising a wide strath associated with the River Dee and a mix of arable and pastoral fields and frequent woodlands along the valley floor and sides, indicating medium susceptibility. Contemporary human influence comprises the A93, A957 and minor road network, frequent settlement along the travel corridors, and two high voltage OHLs in the west and centre of the unit, indicating lower susceptibility. Frequent woodland along the higher grounds along the southern and northern edges of the LCT unit offer a sense of increased enclosure, apart from occasional longer distance views, while the lower-lying and broad fields along the watercourse are more open. On balance, the overall susceptibility of the landscape is judged to be **Medium**.

A broad east-west swathe of the LCT unit is encompassed within the Dee Valley SLA (refer to **Volume 3, Figure 9.2b.5: Landscape Character Types, p. 5** and **Volume 3, Figures 9.4a.4 to 9.4a.5: Designated Landscapes, pp. 4-5**). The Dee Valley and the River Dee itself offers much recreational amenity with a *"focus for a range of recreational activities"* including NCN Route 195, the Deeside Way Long Distance Path, as well as fishing activity along the river. The overall value of the LCT is judged to be **High**.

Taking into account the judgements of susceptibility and value, the sensitivity of the LCT unit is judged to be **High**.

Magnitude of Change During Construction

The Proposed Development, between Towers N53 to N69, would pass directly through the western edge of the LCT unit and as such this unit would experience physical landscape change arising from the construction of the Proposed Development. Physical impacts arising during construction would include the construction of the steel lattice towers which would result in the removal of some landscape features, including the loss of small areas of broadleaved woodland in the northwest of the unit near Lochside (infrastructure felling), small areas of riparian woodland along the River Dee (infrastructure felling), and eastern fringes of the Free Church Wood in the southwest of the unit (infrastructure and management felling). There would also be disturbance to arable fields and hedgerows west of Kirkton of Durris and near Netherpark Quarry. Physical impacts would also include the introduction of temporary and permanent access tracks and construction activity, including the movement of construction vehicles and plant. The main OHL components constructed during this phase would remain present throughout the operational phase.

Construction activities would also result in perceptual landscape impacts on the LCT unit, primarily resulting from views towards partially constructed steel lattice towers. Although frequent areas of woodland across the valley bottom and rising valley sides would provide a visually enclosed experience

Magnitude of Change During Operation

Physical effects would arise during the operational phase from the introduction of Towers N53 (west of Drumoak) to N69 (at the edge of Durris Forest). The ZTV (refer to **Volume 3, Figure 9.2c.5: Landscape Character Types with Overhead Line Tower Height Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV), p. 5**) indicates visibility across the LCT within the study area though frequent areas of broadleaved and coniferous woodland would reduce actual visibility.

The steel lattice towers and conductors of the Proposed Development would cross the LCT on a broadly south to north alignment, descending the shallow slopes south of the River Dee and crossing the lower-lying valley floor before ascending again further north. The introduction of the Proposed Development would affect the *'views along the strath and out to higher ground'* which *'give a sense of scale'* and are characteristic of the LCT, with steel latticed towers appearing to break the skyline in some linear and framed views along the valley.

Felling during construction at the River Dee near Kirkton of Durris, and along the eastern edge of Free Church Wood to the south, would result in longer term effects on the landscape character of the LCT during operation.

¹⁵ NatureScot, 2019. *National Landscape Character Assessment. Landscape Character Type 31: Broad Wooded and Farmed Valley*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/LCA/LCT%20031%20-%20Broad%20Wooded%20and%20Farmed%20Valley%20-%20Final%20pdf.pdf>

LCT 31: Broad Wooded and Farmed Valley

in areas, longer-distance views towards construction activity would be afforded from along open fields and transport routes on the valley sides. Construction activity would be most perceptible within 1 km of the Proposed Development, although this distance would reduce where areas of woodland near Durris and along the lower valley slopes create a more enclosed landscape. As the distance from the construction activity increases, the perceptibility of it would decrease.

The scale of change is judged to be **Large**, resulting from physical changes relating to construction activity across a medium geographical extent, broadly defined as the area between the northern edge of Durris Forest and Collonach Plantation, within 1 km of the Proposed Development. The scale of change would decrease with distance due to a reduction in perceptibility of construction activity at greater distances. Physical and perceptual changes to the landscape during construction would be temporary.

The magnitude of change during construction would be **Medium** for the LCT unit locally, reducing to **Low** for parts of the LCT beyond 1 km.

Landscape mitigation and restoration proposals are presented in **Volume 5, Appendix 9.6: Outline Landscape Mitigation Design Guide**.

The Proposed Development would introduce a large-scale OHL in a medium-large scale landscape and would be perceived as a larger-scale development than the existing OHL that it would run alongside. Due to the broad nature of the strath and the scattered open areas along the valley floor and lower slopes, it is considered that the Proposed Development would affect the perceived scale of the slopes framing the valley. Proposed steel lattice towers would appear along the skyline and would be seen to extend across the strath. In linear views along the valley, they would be visible against a backdrop of darker uplands in the distance to the north and west. This is moderated with the areas of visual enclosure resulting from the extensive areas of woodland on the valley slopes and occasionally along the valley floor, from which views of the Proposed Development would frequently appear screened and filtered.

The Proposed Development would be constructed parallel to the existing Kintore to Fetteresso 275 kV/400 kV, which itself would be diverted over a 1 km section near Kirkton of Durris. In the south of the valley, the Proposed Development would intensify an existing effect rather than introduce a new feature. North of the river, the Proposed Development would diverge from the existing OHL, extending the influence of infrastructure into the Loch of Park area.

The Proposed Development would influence the *'views along the strath and out to higher grounds'* as additional vertical features would be seen crossing the lower-lying strath landscape and the shallow valley sides. The Proposed Development would likely also affect some of the *'long views [which] contrast with sudden enclosures by woodland'* as the steel lattice towers would be seen to cross between and through these two types of visual experiences within the LCT unit, blurring the perceptual boundaries.

The scale of change is judged to be **Large** along the length of the Proposed Development, resulting from physical changes relating to the alteration of landcover and landscape features as well as the introduction of further large-scale vertical features within the LCT, particularly at Kirkton of Durris. The geographical extent is judged to be **Small**, focussed within the Burn of Sheeoch valley to the south, although the influence would broaden around the River Dee towards Loch of Park. This influence on character would extend no more than 1 km and would often be much less due to woodland screening.

The magnitude of landscape change during operation would be locally **High** west of Kirkton of Durris and across the River Dee, and **Medium** for the LCT unit within no more than 1 km of the Proposed Development. The magnitude of change would reduce beyond this distance.

Significance of Effect during Construction

Taking account of the **High** sensitivity, the **Medium** magnitude of change within 1 km, and the temporary nature of construction activity, the landscape effects for this LCT are judged to be **Moderate (Significant)** locally within the LCT (within approximately 1 km of the Proposed Development, although

Significance of Effect during Operation

Taking account of the **High** sensitivity, and the locally **High** magnitude of change effects for this LCT are judged to be **Major (Significant)** to the west of Kirkton of Durris and across the River Dee, extending along the Proposed Development to north and south. Effects would reduce to **Moderate (Significant)** more widely, within 1 km of the Proposed Development, although lesser effects may be

LCT 31: Broad Wooded and Farmed Valley

lesser effects may be experienced across part of this area) and **Minor (Not Significant)** for the remaining parts of the LCT unit.

experienced across part of this area. Effects would reduce to **Minor (Not Significant)** beyond this distance.

2.7 Section F

- 2.7.1 Physical and perceptual effects arising from construction activities and the operational phase of the Proposed Development would occur on the landscape character of LCT 26: Wooded Estates – Aberdeenshire (Echt Unit and Kintore Unit). Perceptual effects would occur on the landscape character of LCT 6: Undulating Open Farmland, LCT 28: Outlying Hills and Ridges and LCT 33: Broad Wooded Valley with Estates.
- 2.7.2 During construction, **Significant** effects on landscape character would occur no more than 1 km from the Proposed Development (although lesser effects may be experienced across part of this area) over an area between Coldstream Plantation and the A944 in the Echt Unit of LCT 26, and over an area between the A944 and Kintore in the Kintore Unit. This is due to the physical changes to landscape features such as disturbance to ground cover, as well as felling of small pockets of broadleaf woodland, coniferous forest and mixed woodland. Physical changes also include the construction of steel lattice towers and access tracks. **Significant** perceptual effects as a result of the visibility of partially constructed steel lattice towers would also occur within these LCT units. Beyond 1 km of the construction works (although lesser effects may be experienced across part of this area) effects on landscape character would reduce and would be **Not Significant** due to the decreased perceptibility of construction activity. Perceptual effects of construction activity from LCT 4, LCT 6, LCT 28 and LCT 33 would be **Not Significant**.
- 2.7.3 During operation, **Significant** effects on landscape character would occur no more than 1 km from the Proposed Development (although lesser effects may be experienced across part of this area) particularly over an area between Coldstream Plantation and the A944 in the Echt Unit of LCT 26, and over an area between the A944 and Kintore in the Kintore Unit. This would be due to physical changes to landscape features including the introduction of large scale vertical infrastructure across the rolling landform of LCT 26, and the loss of areas of broadleaf, coniferous and mixed woodland across the units. Perceptual effects would also contribute to **Significant** effects in these LCT 26, due to the perceived large scale of the Proposed Development in relation to the medium scale of the underlying landscape the rolling nature of the landform. Beyond 1 km (although lesser effects may be experienced across part of this area), effects on landscape character of LCT 26 would reduce and would be **Not Significant** due to decreased perceptibility of the Proposed Development. Perceptual effects of the Proposed Development from LCT 4, LCT 6, LCT 28 and LCT 33 would be **Not Significant**.

Table 9.1.15: Broad Wooded Valley with Estates

LCT 33: Broad Wooded Valley with Estates

Baseline description

A small portion in the east of LCT 33: Broad Wooded Valleys with Estates is located within the study area. No part of the Proposed Development itself passes through the LCT, which is approximately 1.5 km to the west, further up the Dee Valley. The LCT includes the wooded valley around Banchory, and extends westwards out of the study area, along the valleys of the River Dee and Water of Feugh.

Key characteristics of this LCT include:

- *“A large-scale valley landform in which the valley sides generally consist of undulating slopes and hills and the valley floors are flat;*
- *Richly wooded landscape often providing a strong sense of enclosure, particularly on lower slopes;*
- *Sparkling shingly rivers follow the valley floors: wide, with occasional islands in the Dee, tributaries meander in narrower glens;*

LCT 33: Broad Wooded Valley with Estates

- *Range of settlements from a small town and villages, mostly on the north banks of the rivers, to groups of houses, estates, steadings and individual dwellings;*
- *Frequent estates with fine buildings, grand gateways and stone boundary walls;*
- *Main road corridor;*
- *Grand castles hotels and houses given an impression of a well-settled, prosperous and traditional character;*
- *Views along the strath and out to the surrounding uplands giving a sense of scale;*
- *Great diversity of trees and rich understorey form a landscape of colourful foliage and dappled light; striking colours in autumn;*
- *Westwards the landscape assumes a more Highland character; and*
- *Focus for a range of recreational activities.”¹⁶*

The LCT is crossed by the A93 road corridor which leads to Banchory just outside the west edge of the study area. Commercial forestry characterises the valley slopes in this area. There are no representative viewpoints within this LCT.

Sensitivity

The LCT is medium in scale with small pockets of open arable farmland providing a sense of space within a well wooded undulating landscape, providing a sense of enclosure, indicating a higher susceptibility. There is some human influence in the LCT, including the A93 main road and scattered properties, which indicates higher susceptibility. Historic castles and associated designed and wooded landscapes are present, which indicates a higher susceptibility. The River Dee flows through the centre of the LCT within the valley, indicating higher susceptibility. On balance the overall susceptibility of the landscape is judged to be **High**.

The LCT is located within the Dee Valley SLA designated landscape (refer to **Volume 3, Figure 9.2b.5: Landscape Character Types, p. 5**, and **Volume 3, Figures 9.4a.4 to 9.4a.5: Designated Landscapes, pp. 4-5**). The LCT includes recreational features including open access land within woodland, for example at Miller Wood. The overall value of the LCT is judged to be **High**.

Taking into account judgements of susceptibility and value, the sensitivity of the LCT is judged to be **High**.

Magnitude of Change During Construction

No section of the Proposed Development would be located within the LCT and as such this LCT would not experience physical landscape change arising from the construction of the Proposed Development.

Construction activities would result in some perceptual landscape impacts on the LCT, although due to intervening features such as forestry and woodland, and distance from the Proposed Development in wider parts of the LCT, perceptibility of it would likely be limited to the erection of a small number of steel lattice towers.

The scale of change is judged to be **Low** over a small geographical extent, broadly defined as the areas around Milton of Crathes and Balbridie. The scale of change would decrease with distance. Perceptual changes to the landscape during construction would be temporary.

Magnitude of Change During Operation

No physical effects would arise during the operational phase from the introduction of the Proposed Development.

The steel lattice towers and conductors of the Proposed Development would cross the landscape on a broadly north-south alignment approximately 1.5 km east of the LCT. The '*richly wooded landscape often providing a sense of enclosure on lower slopes*' and '*undulating slopes and hills*' restrict views and reduce intervisibility with the Proposed Development from the LCT. There would be some views of the Proposed Development, though it would be seen in the context of the existing Kintore to Fetteresso 275 kV/400 kV, which it would run alongside.

Landscape mitigation and restoration proposals are presented in **Volume 5, Appendix 9.6: Outline Landscape Mitigation Design Guide**.

¹⁶ NatureScot, 2019. *National Landscape Character Assessment. Landscape Character Type 33: Broad Wooded Valley with Estates*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/LCA/LCT%20033%20-%20Broad%20Wooded%20Valley%20with%20Estates%20-%20Final%20pdf.pdf>

LCT 33: Broad Wooded Valley with Estates	
The magnitude of change during construction would be Low for areas around Milton of Crathes and Balbridie, reducing to Barely Perceptible for remaining parts of the LCT.	The scale of change is judged to be Small , and there are no physical changes to the LCT. The geographical extent is judged to be Small , broadly confined to the areas around Milton of Crathes and Balbridie. The magnitude of change during operation would be locally Low around Milton of Crathes and Balbridie and Barely Perceptible elsewhere in LCT unit.
Significance of Effect during Construction	Significance of Effect during Operation
Taking account of the High sensitivity, the Low magnitude of change locally, and the temporary nature of construction activity, landscape effects for this LCT are judged to be Minor (Not Significant) for the areas around Milton of Crathes and Balbridie, reducing to Negligible (Not Significant) for the remaining parts of the LCT.	Taking account of the High sensitivity, and the Low magnitude of change, the landscape effects for this LCT are judged to be locally Minor (Not Significant) , reducing to Negligible (Not Significant) west of Balbridie.

Table 9.1.16: River Valley - Aberdeen

LCT 4: River Valley - Aberdeen
Baseline description
A small portion in the west of LCT 4: River Valley - Aberdeen is located within the study area. No part of the Proposed Development itself passes through the LCT, which is approximately 3.5 km to the west, further along the Dee Valley. The LCT forms the northern side of the Dee Valley between Drumoak Church and the outskirts of Aberdeen outside the study area to the east. Key characteristics of this LCT include: • <i>“The dramatic river valleys of the Dee and Don are a major landscape feature of the city and instrumental to its development.</i> • <i>Fast flowing rivers channelled within an increasingly constricted valley floor close to the city.</i> • <i>Semi-natural habitats of riparian woodland and marginal vegetation pattern the generally open floodplains associated with the Dee and Upper Don.</i> • <i>Diverse and often extensive wooded policies, shelterbelts and clumps of trees cover valley sides.</i> • <i>Farming is the dominant land use in the upper Don, while the lower Don and Dee feature more recreational uses and open space.</i> • <i>A nucleated settlement pattern is associated with the lower slopes of the Dee valley while a denser urban edge borders the western banks of the lower Don.</i> • <i>The upper Don is generally less settled and more rural in character.</i> • <i>A strong historic character of estate parklands and buildings with striking historic bridges across rivers.</i> • <i>Roads are aligned within or close to these valleys and some provide key approaches to the city.</i> • <i>Views are contained by the valley landform.</i> • <i>Well-used recreational routes are aligned close to the Dee and lower Don.</i>

LCT 4: River Valley - Aberdeen

- *A sense of tranquillity can be experienced in these often strongly contained valleys.*¹⁷

The LCT is crossed by the A93 road corridor which connects to Aberdeen outside the study area to the east, and the A90. The LCT contains the fringes of the settlements of Peterculter, Bieldside and Cults, each located outside the study area to the east.

There are no representative viewpoints within this LCT.

Sensitivity

The LCT is medium in scale with arable farmland prominent across the LCT, interspersed with pockets and belts of deciduous and riparian woodland. This pattern of landcover, together with the undulating valley landform, provides a sense of containment and enclosure, indicating a higher susceptibility. There is some human influence in the LCT, including the A93 and A90 which pass through this LCT, as well as pockets of smaller settlement and the fringes of bigger and denser surroundings settlements, which indicates higher susceptibility. The River Dee bounds the southern edge of the LCT also indicating higher susceptibility. On balance the overall susceptibility of the landscape is judged to be **High**.

The LCT is not located within any nationally or locally designated landscapes however includes recreational features including the Deeside Way and a number of golf courses. The overall value of the LCT is judged to be **Medium**.

Taking into account judgements of susceptibility and value, the sensitivity of the LCT is judged to be **High**.

Magnitude of Change During Construction

No section of the Proposed Development would be located within the LCT and as such this LCT would not experience physical landscape change arising from the construction of the Proposed Development.

Construction activities would result in some perceptual landscape impacts on the LCT, although due to intervening features such as forestry and woodland, and distance from the Proposed Development, perceptibility of it would likely be limited to the erection of a small number of steel lattice towers.

The scale of change is judged to be **Low** over a small geographical extent broadly defined as the areas around Cairnton and Coalford. The scale of change would decrease with distance. Perceptual changes to the landscape during construction would be temporary.

The magnitude of change during construction would be **Low** for areas around Cairnton and Coalford, reducing to **Barely Perceptible** for remaining parts of the LCT.

Magnitude of Change During Operation

No physical effects would arise during the operational phase from the introduction of the Proposed Development.

The steel lattice towers and conductors of the Proposed Development would cross the landscape on a broadly north-south alignment, approximately 3.5 km west of the LCT. The '*often strongly contained*' nature of the Dee Valley and views that are '*contained by the valley landform*' restrict views and reduce intervisibility with the Proposed Development from the LCT. There would be some views of the Proposed Development, including from the localised high point south of Coalford, though it would be seen in the context of the existing Kintore to Tealing 275 kV OHL which passes through the western extent of the LCT and would be seen at a much closer proximity than the Proposed Development.

Landscape mitigation and restoration proposals are presented in **Volume 5, Appendix 9.6: Outline Landscape Mitigation Design Guide**.

The scale of change is judged to be **Small**, and there are no physical changes to the LCT. The geographical extent is judged to be **Small**, broadly confined to the areas around Cairnton and Coalford.

The magnitude of change during operation would be locally **Low** around Cairnton and Coalford and **Barely Perceptible** elsewhere in the LCT.

Significance of Effect during Construction

Significance of Effect during Operation

¹⁷ NatureScot, 2019. *National Landscape Character Assessment. Landscape Character Type 4: River Valley – Aberdeen*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/LCA/LCT%20004%20-%20River%20Valley%20-%20Aberdeen%20-%20Final%20pdf.pdf>

LCT 4: River Valley - Aberdeen

Taking account of the **High** sensitivity, the **Low** magnitude of change locally, and the temporary nature of construction activity, landscape effects for this LCT are judged to be **Minor (Not Significant)** for the areas around Cairnton and Coalford, reducing to **Negligible (Not Significant)** for the remaining parts of the LCT.

Taking account of the **High** sensitivity, and the **Low** magnitude of change, the landscape effects for this LCT are judged to be locally **Minor (Not Significant)**, reducing to **Negligible (Not Significant)** east of Cairnton and Coalford.

Table 9.1.17: Wooded Estates – Aberdeenshire (Echt Unit)
LCT 26: Wooded Estates – Aberdeenshire (Echt Unit)
Baseline description

For the purposes of this assessment, LCT 26: Wooded Estates – Aberdeenshire has been separated into two sub-units due to the geographical size of the LCT. This assessment considers the southern part of the LCT which lies to the south of the A944, and for the purposes of this assessment is named the ‘Echt Unit’. The Echt Unit includes the wooded farmland and estates stretching from Drum Castle Garden and Designed Landscape (GDL) in the south, to Dunecht House GDL and Barmekin Hill in the north.

The northern part of the LCT, which extends from the A944 to Kintore, named the ‘Kintore Unit’, is assessed in **Table 9.1.18: Wooded Estates – Aberdeenshire (Kintore Unit)**.

Key characteristics of this LCT include:

- *“Rolling landform of low gently rounded hills and broad valleys;*
- *Occasional low-lying basins are filled with mosses of lochs;*
- *Strong woodland structure associated with numerous estate policies;*
- *Mixed farmland with varying size and pattern of fields, these enclosed by a mix of fences, low stone walls and, in places, thick mixed shelterbelts and field trees;*
- *Occasional mosses are ringed by birch and Scots pine;*
- *Numerous and varied archaeological features occur in this landscape and include henges, carved stone balls, recumbent stone circles and Pictish monuments;*
- *Well settled with a large number of towns and villages. More recent settlement expansion and housing development is particularly evidence closer to Aberdeen;*
- *Significant network of roads radiating out from Aberdeen; and*
- *Long views across open farmland contrast with sudden enclosure by woodland as one passes through this landscape. The prominent Grampian Outlying Hills and Ridges often form a focus in these views”.*¹⁸

Drum Castle GDL is characterised by policy woodlands, formal lawns and a walled garden within the immediate surrounds of the castle. Larger geometric blocks of broadleaved woodland and coniferous forest occupy the wider GDL and largely contain the castle, creating a sense of enclosure.

Dunecht House GDL is characterised by a patchwork of policy woodland (largely broadleaved) with a network of connecting paths and distinctive avenues of broadleaved trees. The extent of woodland creates a sense of enclosure within the western extent of the GDL. The eastern extent of the GDL contains Loch of Skene, which is also largely contained by coniferous and broadleaved woodland.

A number of operational high voltage OHLs extend across this LCT unit including the Kintore to Fetteresso 275 kV OHL running north to south, the Kintore to Tealing 275 kV at the eastern edge of the study area, and the Craigiebuckler to Tarland 132 kV OHL which runs east-west across the study area. The Echt LCT unit is crossed by the B9119 and B9125 and a network of minor roads.

¹⁸ NatureScot, 2019. *National Landscape Character Assessment. Landscape Character Type 26: Wooded Estates – Aberdeenshire*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/LCA/LCT%20026%20-%20Wooded%20Estates%20-%20Aberdeenshire%20-%20Final%20pdf.pdf>

LCT 26: Wooded Estates – Aberdeenshire (Echt Unit)
Representative viewpoints within this LCT Unit:

- VP32: Drum Castle (refer to **Volume 4b, Figure 9.36a-d: VP32: Drum Castle**)
- VP35: Footpath north of Echt (refer to **Volume 4b, Figure 9.39a-f: VP35: Footpath north of Echt**)
- VP36: Barmekin Hill (refer to **Volume 4b, Figure 9.40a-f: VP36: Barmekin Hill**)
- VP37: Dunecht near the Primary School (refer to **Volume 4b, Figure 9.41a-i: VP37: Dunecht near the Primary School**)

Sensitivity

The LCT is medium in scale with a contrasting pattern of open arable farmland and areas of greater intimacy within wooded undulating landform which indicates a higher susceptibility. Some contemporary human influences in the Echt LCT unit are present, including the small settlement of Echt and OHLs, and infrastructure associated with Craigenlow Quarry which indicates locally lower susceptibility. On balance the overall susceptibility of the landscape is judged to be **Medium**.

The southern fringes of the Echt Unit extend into the Dee Valley SLA (refer to **Volume 3, Figure 9.2b.5: Landscape Character Types, p.5** and **Figure 9.4a.5: Designated Landscapes, p.5**). The LCT unit includes recreational features including Drum Castle and Dunecht House GDLs, and the viewpoint at Barmekin Hill. The overall value of the LCT is judged to be **Medium**.

Taking into account judgements of susceptibility and value, the sensitivity of the LCT unit is judged to be **Medium**.

Magnitude of Change During Construction

A section of the Proposed Development, between Towers N18 to N52, would be located within the Echt LCT unit and as such this unit would experience physical landscape change arising from the construction of the Proposed Development. Physical impacts arising during construction would include the construction of the steel lattice towers which would result in the removal of some landscape features, including small pockets of broadleaf woodland at Loch of Park (infrastructure felling), as well as blocks of coniferous and mixed woodland, including at Coldstream Plantation, to the southeast of Echt (infrastructure felling), and to the southwest of Quartains Moss (infrastructure and management felling). Physical impacts would also include the introduction of temporary and permanent access tracks and construction activity, including the movement of construction vehicles and plant.

Construction activities would also result in perceptual landscape impacts on the Echt LCT unit, primarily resulting from views towards partially constructed steel lattice towers. In places, the open nature of the landscape would allow construction activity to be perceptible within 1 km of the Proposed Development. Elsewhere, woodland blocks and intervening landform restricts the impacts of perceptual impacts. As the distance from the construction activity increases, the perceptibility of it would decrease.

The scale of change is judged to be **Large**, resulting from physical changes relating to construction activity across a medium geographical extent, focussed within distances of 1 km from the Proposed Development over an area between Forest of Drum and Craigenlow Quarry. The scale of change would decrease with distances. Physical and perceptual changes to the landscape during construction would be temporary.

The magnitude of change during construction would be **Medium** for the LCT unit locally, reducing to **Low** for parts of the LCT beyond 1 km.

Magnitude of Change During Operation

Physical effects would arise during the operational phase from the introduction of Towers N18 (near the A944) to N52 (near Coldstream Plantation north of Drumoak). The ZTV (refer to **Volume 3, Figure 9.2c.5: Landscape Character Types with Overhead Line Tower Height Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV), p. 5**) indicates widespread visibility across the LCT unit, with areas where topography reduces visibility limited to the landscape west of Barmekin Hill. Large woodland blocks, including coniferous plantation, would further reduce actual visibility.

The steel lattice towers and conductors of the Proposed Development would cross the LCT on a broadly north-south alignment. The introduction of the Proposed Development would physically affect the "*rolling landform*" which is characteristic of the LCT. Woodland felling during construction, including at Loch of Park, Coldstream Plantation, southwest of Quartains Moss and southeast of Echt, would also result in longer-term effects on physical and perceptual effects on the landscape character of the LCT during operation.

Landscape mitigation and restoration proposals are presented in **Volume 5, Appendix 9.6: Outline Landscape Mitigation Design Guide**.

The Proposed Development would introduce a large OHL in a medium-scale landscape. It would be perceived as a larger-scale development than existing OHLs within the LCT unit, particularly the Craigiebuckler to Tarland 132 kV OHL which the Proposed Development would cross via a 'diamond' arrangement of towers, just south of Echt. Due to the rolling nature of the LCT unit, it is considered likely that the Proposed Development would locally diminish the perceived scale of the landscape where it crosses higher ground. This would be exacerbated where angle towers would be prominently sited, for example to the north of Echt.

LCT 26: Wooded Estates – Aberdeenshire (Echt Unit)	
	The Proposed Development would also influence the "<i>long views across open farmland</i>" as additional vertical features would be seen in the landscape and would be widely visible on higher ground. The Proposed Development would be seen at varying distances from existing infrastructure within the LCT, and in places would intensify or extend this existing influence on landscape character. The scale of change is judged to be Large, resulting from physical changes relating to the alteration of landcover and landscape features as well as introduction of further large-scale vertical features within the LCT. The geographical extent is judged to be Medium, focussed within distances of no more than 1 km from the Proposed Development over an area between Forest of Drum and the A944. The magnitude of landscape change during operation would be High for the LCT along the route and around areas where it passes over higher ground, and Medium more widely within 1 km of the Proposed Development. The magnitude of change would reduce beyond this distance.
Significance of Effect during Construction	Significance of Effect during Operation
Taking account of the Medium sensitivity, the Medium magnitude of change within 1 km, and the temporary nature of construction activity, the landscape effects for this LCT are judged to be Moderate (Significant) locally within the LCT (within approximately 1 km of the Proposed Development, although lesser effects may be experienced across part of this area) and Minor (Not Significant) for the remaining parts of the LCT unit.	Taking account of the Medium sensitivity, and the locally High magnitude of change, landscape effects are judged to be Major (Significant) along the route of the Proposed Development, particularly at the diamond crossing and on the slopes of Barmekin Hill due to multiple angle towers. Effects would be Moderate (Significant) more generally within no more than 1 km of the Proposed Development, and often were screened by topography. Effects would be Minor (Not Significant) beyond this distance.

Table 9.1.18: Wooded Estates – Aberdeenshire (Kintore Unit)

LCT 26: Wooded Estates – Aberdeenshire (Kintore Unit)
Baseline description
This assessment considers the northern part of LCT 26: Wooded Estates – Aberdeenshire, which for the purposes of this assessment is named the 'Kintore Unit', extends from the A944 to Kintore and contains the far northern extent of the Proposed Development that runs through this area. The southern part of the LCT to the south of the A944, named the 'Echt Unit', is assessed in Table 9.1.17: Wooded Estates – Aberdeenshire (Echt Unit). Key characteristics of this LCT include: • <i>"Rolling landform of low gently rounded hills and broad valleys;</i> • <i>Occasional low-lying basins are filled with mosses of lochs;</i> • <i>Strong woodland structure associated with numerous estate policies;</i> • <i>Mixed farmland with varying size and pattern of fields, these enclosed by a mix of fences, low stone walls and, in places, thick mixed shelterbelts and field trees;</i> • <i>Occasional mosses are ringed by birch and Scots pine;</i> • <i>Numerous and varied archaeological features occur in this landscape and include henges, carved stone balls, recumbent stone circles and Pictish monuments;</i> • <i>Well settled with a large number of towns and villages. More recent settlement expansion and housing development is particularly evidence closer to Aberdeen;</i>

LCT 26: Wooded Estates – Aberdeenshire (Kintore Unit)

- *Significant network of roads radiating out from Aberdeen; and*
- *Long views across open farmland contrast with sudden enclosure by woodland as one passes through this landscape. The prominent Grampian Outlying Hills and Ridges often form a focus in these views”.*¹⁸

The existing Kintore Substation is located within the Kintore LCT unit at the northernmost extent of the study area. A number of operational high voltage OHLs extending across this LCT unit connect to the substation, including the Kintore to Tealing 275 kV OHL and the Kintore to Fetteresso 275 kV/400 kV OHL which both run southward from the substation. The Kintore LCT unit also contains a number of individual wind turbines and is crossed by the A944 road corridor and the B977 road connecting Kintore to Dunecht.

Representative viewpoints within this LCT Unit:

- VP37: Dunecht near the Primary School (refer to **Volume 4b, Figure 9.41a-i: VP37: Dunecht near the Primary School**).
- VP38: North Leylodge (refer to **Volume 4b, Figure 9.42a-c: VP38: North Leylodge**).

Sensitivity

The LCT is medium in scale with a varied pattern of open arable farmland and woodland blocks which indicates a lower susceptibility. Contemporary human influences in the Kintore LCT unit is characteristic, including the settlements of Dunecht, Kintore, Kemnay and Inverurie, as well as intensive farmland. In addition, the existing substation and OHLs indicate locally lower susceptibility. There are pockets of greater intimacy influenced by steeper landform, supporting pasture within a small-scale field pattern and often bounded by woodland, indicating higher susceptibility. The susceptibility of the landscape is judged to be **Medium**.

In the northwestern part of the study area, the LCT includes part of the Bennachie SLA (refer to **Volume 3, Figure 9.2b.6: Landscape Character Types** and **Figure 9.4a.6: Designated Landscapes, p. 6**). The LCT unit includes recreational features including Castle Fraser. The overall value of the LCT is judged to be **Medium**.

Taking into account judgements of susceptibility and value, the sensitivity of the LCT unit is judged to be **Medium**.

Magnitude of Change During Construction

The northern end of the Proposed Development, between Towers N1 and N18, would be located within the Kintore LCT unit and as such this unit would experience physical landscape change arising from the construction of the Proposed Development. Physical impacts arising during construction would include the construction of the steel lattice towers which would result in the removal of some landscape features, including blocks of coniferous and mixed woodland, including at Corskie Wood (infrastructure and management felling) and near Hillhead (infrastructure felling). Physical impacts would also include the introduction of temporary and permanent access tracks and construction activity including the movement of construction vehicles and plant.

Construction activities would also result in perceptual landscape impacts on the Kintore LCT unit, primarily resulting from views towards partially constructed steel lattice towers. In places, the open nature of the landscape would allow construction activity to be perceptible within 1 km of the Proposed Development. Elsewhere, woodland blocks and intervening landform restricts the impacts of perceptual impacts. As the distance from the construction activity increases, the perceptibility of it would decrease.

The scale of change is judged to be **Large**, resulting from physical changes relating to construction activity across a small geographical extent, focussed within distances of 1 km from the Proposed

Magnitude of Change During Operation

Physical effects would arise during the operational phase from the introduction of Towers N1 (at Kintore substation) to N18 (near the A944) within this northern LCT unit. The ZTV (refer to **Volume 3, Figures 9.2c.5 to 9.2c.6: Landscape Character Types with Overhead Line Tower Height Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV), pp. 5-6**) indicates widespread visibility across the LCT unit, with areas where topography reduces visibility to the west and northwest around Castle Fraser and Kemnay. Large woodland blocks, including coniferous plantation would further reduce actual visibility.

The steel lattice towers and conductors of the Proposed Development would cross the LCT on a broadly north-northeast to south-southwest alignment. The introduction of the Proposed Development would physically affect the “rolling landform” which is characteristic of the LCT. Woodland felling during construction, including at Corskie Wood and Hillhead, would also result in longer-term effects on the landscape character of the LCT during operation. Permanent access tracks across the slopes of Drum Hill would be visible, particularly as the tracks would run and contrast, against the contours of the hillside, resulting in the track being more visibly prominent.

Landscape mitigation and restoration proposals are presented in **Volume 5, Appendix 9.6: Outline Landscape Mitigation Design Guide**.

The Proposed Development would introduce a large OHL in a medium-scale landscape. It would be perceived as larger in scale than the existing Fetteresso to Kintore 275 kV OHL, which it would run

LCT 26: Wooded Estates – Aberdeenshire (Kintore Unit)

Development over an area between the A944 and Kintore. The scale of change would decrease with distance. Physical and perceptual changes to the landscape during construction would be temporary. The magnitude of change during construction would be **Medium** for the LCT unit locally, reducing to **Low** for parts of the LCT beyond 1 km.

broadly parallel to. Due to the rolling nature of the landscape in the LCT unit, it is considered likely that the Proposed Development would locally diminish the perceived scale of the landscape, particularly where it crosses higher ground as at Drum Hill.

The Proposed Development would also influence the *"long views across open farmland"* as additional vertical features would be seen in the landscape. The presence of existing infrastructure around Kintore Substation exerts an existing influence on this part of the LCT. As such, existing views of operational steel towers and energy infrastructure have altered the landscape character to some extent. The Proposed Development would intensify these effects around the substation, where an existing OHL would be diverted, and a short section of another OHL would be replaced with underground cables.

The scale of change is judged to be locally **Large**, resulting from physical changes relating to the alteration of landcover and landscape features as well as the introduction of further large-scale vertical features within the LCT. The geographical extent is judged to be **Small**, focussed within distances of 1 km from the Proposed Development, and often much less than this eg around Kintore Substation and within lower lying areas over the length of the route between the A944 and Kintore.

The magnitude of landscape change during operation would be **High** along the route and on higher ground, and **Medium** more generally up to 500 m to 1 km from the Proposed Development. The magnitude of change would reduce beyond this distance.

Significance of Effect during Construction

Taking account of the **Medium** sensitivity the **Medium** magnitude of change within 1 km, and the temporary nature of construction activity, the landscape effects for this LCT are judged to be **Moderate (Significant)** locally within the LCT (within approximately 1 km of the Proposed Development, although lesser effects may be experienced across part of this area) and **Minor (Not Significant)** for the remaining parts of the LCT unit.

Significance of Effect during Operation

Taking account of the **Medium** sensitivity, and the locally **High** magnitude of change, the landscape effects for this LCT are judged to be **Major (Significant)** where it crosses higher ground and **Moderate (Significant)** within 500 m to 1 km from the Proposed Development, although lesser effects may be experienced across part of this area. Effects would reduce to **Minor (Not Significant)** beyond this distance.

Table 9.1.19: Undulating Open Farmland

LCT 6: Undulating Open Farmland

Baseline description

One area of LCT 6: Undulating Open Farmland is located within the study area. This unit lies north of Drum Castle and extends east out of the study area towards Peterculter. It lies to the east of Section F of the Proposed Development.

Key characteristics of the LCT include:

- *"A gently undulating landform with some shallow basins contained by low-lying ridges;*
- *Predominantly improved pasture and arable farming with a weak enclosure pattern;*
- *Semi-natural habitats are limited to pockets of rough grass and scrub with occasional areas of moss and wetland;*
- *Sparse woodland with only occasional small clumps and lines of trees and some coniferous plantations in the southwest;*

LCT 6: Undulating Open Farmland

- A sparsely settled landscape with a pattern of scattered farmsteads and houses accessed by a network of minor but often busy roads;
- The openness of this landscape allows extensive views particularly on the western edges of the city; and
- A landscape with a prevailing rural character although eastern areas are influenced by the proximity of the urban area.”¹⁹

The operational Kintore to Tealing 275 kV OHL passes through this LCT unit in a north to south alignment at the edge of the study area. Outside the study area, the LCT is increasingly settled towards Aberdeen.

Representative viewpoints within this LCT Unit:

- VP33: Little Eddieston (refer to **Volume 4b, Figure 9.37a-f: VP33: Little Eddieston**)

Sensitivity

The LCT unit is small to medium in scale, the topography is undulating with limited enclosure and “low smoothly rounded ridges”. The simple topography and “openness of this landscape,” indicates lower susceptibility. The inter-visibility afforded by this landscape type, including “extensive views with the western Hills forming a key focus” and views that “extend to distant outcrop hills such as Bennachie”, also indicates higher susceptibility. The enclosure pattern is generally weak throughout the fields of improved pasture and arable farming, and the wider landscape pattern is simple, indicating lower susceptibility. Coniferous plantations within the study area indicate reduced susceptibility. The settlement pattern is made up “of dispersed farmsteads and houses.”¹⁹ The susceptibility of the landscape is judged to be **Medium**.

The LCT is not located within any nationally or locally designated landscapes and there is limited recreational amenity. As such, the overall value of the LCT is judged to be **Low**.

Taking into account the judgements of susceptibility and value, the sensitivity of the LCT unit is judged to be **Medium**.

Magnitude of Change During Construction

The Proposed Development is not within the LCT and as the landform is gently undulating and contains several blocks of coniferous plantation, there would be many areas from which construction activities would not be perceptible. However, in areas of higher ground such as the rising land to Upper Anguston, construction activities would result in perceptual landscape impacts primarily resulting from views towards partially constructed steel lattice towers.

The scale of change is judged to be **Small**, resulting from perceptual changes relating to construction activity across a small geographical extent, broadly defined within the western extents of the LCT around Little Eddieston, North Eddieston and Over Anguston. Perceptual changes to the landscape during construction would be temporary.

The magnitude of change during construction would be **Low** around the area south of the coniferous plantation immediately south of Newleuchar Farm and west of the Baads Wood plantation, reducing to **Barely Perceptible** for remaining parts of the LCT.

Magnitude of Change During Operation

No physical effects would arise during the operational phase from the introduction of the Proposed Development, which would be located approximately 1 km west of the LCT unit.

The introduction of the Proposed Development in views would perceptually alter the “prevailing rural character” of the LCT. The Proposed Development would generally be seen at distance, and woodland would provide some screening of views.

Landscape mitigation and restoration proposals are presented in **Volume 5, Appendix 9.6: Outline Landscape Mitigation Design Guide**.

The scale of change would be **Low** across a small geographical area, as the Proposed Development would only be visible from higher elevations in the southwest of the LCT.

The magnitude of change during operation would be **Low** in the southwest of the area. The magnitude of change would reduce in the remaining parts of the LCT.

Significance of Effect during Construction

Significance of Effect during Operation

¹⁹ NatureScot, 2019. *National Landscape Character Assessment. Landscape Character Type 6: Undulating Open Farmland*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/LCA/LCT%20006%20-%20Undulating%20Open%20Farmland%20-%20Final%20pdf.pdf>.

LCT 6: Undulating Open Farmland

Taking account of the **Medium** sensitivity, the **Low** magnitude of change, and the temporary nature of construction activity, the landscape effects for this LCT are judged to be **Minor (Not Significant)** locally within the southwestern extents of the unit, reducing to **Negligible (Not Significant)** for remaining parts of the unit.

Taking account of the **Medium** sensitivity, and the **Low** magnitude of change locally, the landscape effects for this LCT are judged to be **Minor (Not significant)** in the southwest of the LCT and **Negligible (Not Significant)** for the remaining parts of the LCT.

Table 9.1.20: Outlying Hills and Ridges
LCT 28: Outlying Hills and Ridges
Baseline description

One unit of LCT 28: Outlying Hills and Ridges is partly located within the study area. This unit centres around Hill of Fare, a promontory “*integral to Aberdeenshire’s landscape identity.*”²⁰ The eastern part of this LCT unit extends into the study area at Meikle Tap, the eastern slopes of which descend to the lower lying LCT 26: Wooded Estates (Echt unit).

Key characteristics of the LCT include:

- “*Long and often narrow undulating ridges, punctuated with occasional pronounced hills, which stand proud of surrounding low-lying farmland;*
- *Distinctive and recognisable profiles of occasional dramatic outcrops of rock, creating local landmarks which are visible and ever-present across wide expanses of Aberdeenshire;*
- *Extensive tracts of coniferous woodland cover slopes, these interspersed with varying degrees with heather moorland;*
- *Green fields of pasture cover often gently folded lower slopes and this merges gradually with more intensively managed lowland farmland;*
- *Communication masts and wind farms are dominant features on parts of these outlying ridges;*
- *Spectacular views across the surrounding lowlands of Aberdeenshire from these promontories of higher ground;*
- *Strong visual relationship with wider Cairngorm massif; and*
- *Relatively remote and wild landscape character.”*²⁰

The operational Kintore to Fetteresso 275 kV OHL passes through the eastern area of the LCT unit, passing over the eastern slopes of Meikle Tap (359 m AOD).

Representative viewpoints within this LCT Unit:

- VP34: Meikle Tap (refer to **Volume 4b, Figure 9.38a-d: VP34: Meikle Tap**).

Sensitivity

The LCT unit is medium to large in scale due to the relatively open expansive nature of the moorland hills. The landcover is generally simple bare heather moorland on tops of the hills and ridges, coniferous forests on ridges and slopes, and fields at their bases, with much of the slopes of Hill of Fare hosting coniferous plantation forest, indicating lower susceptibility. The landform of the unit is distinctive, made up of moorland spurs that “*form an interrelated system of highland ridges and peaks which include various promontories, each integral to Aberdeenshire’s landscape identity*”²⁰, one of these being Hill of Fare, indicating higher susceptibility. The hills have a relatively wild and remote character and are prominent forms that serve as distinctive landmarks. Although settlement is limited, there are contemporary human structures within the Hill of Fare unit including a communication mast, which “*are very visible in skyline views*”, indicating lower susceptibility. The “*more prominent and distinctive outlier hills are*

²⁰ NatureScot, 2019. *National Landscape Character Assessment. Landscape Character Type 28: Outlying Hills and Ridges*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/LCA/LCT%20028%20-%20Outlying%20Hills%20and%20Ridges%20-%20Final%20pdf.pdf>.

LCT 28: Outlying Hills and Ridges

popular for recreation where they provide commanding views over the lowlands of Aberdeenshire". The inter-visibility with adjacent lowlands is important as the LCT provides "*outstanding focal points*," indicating higher susceptibility. On balance, the overall susceptibility of the landscape is judged to be **High**.

The unit is not located within any local or national landscape designations. Meikle Tap and Hill of Fare are recognised for their recreational value, given the "*commanding views*" they provide. The overall value of the LCT is judged to be **Medium**.

Taking into account the judgements of susceptibility and value, the sensitivity of the LCT unit is judged to be **Medium**.

Magnitude of Change During Construction	Magnitude of Change During Operation
From higher elevations of the east of Hill of Fare unit, construction activities would exert a small influence on the perception of the landscape. This would primarily result from views towards partially constructed steel lattice towers, which would be visible at distances of approximately 4.9 km from Meikle Tap (359 AOD) and 5.3 km from Greymore (393 AOD). Further west, construction would have little impact on the perception of landscape as construction activities would be screened by landform and conifer plantations. The scale of change would be Small, as the "<i>spectacular views</i>" afforded by the hills and ridges of the LCT would not be greatly altered from the Hill of Fare unit as the construction works would be seen from relatively long distances. The geographical extent would be Medium, focussed within the eastern extents of the LCT unit and the summits of Greymore and Meikle Tap where the higher elevations allow for extensive views across the surrounding lower-lying landform. Perceptual changes to the landscape during construction would be temporary. The magnitude of change during construction would be Low for the eastern extents of the LCT unit, reducing to Barely Perceptible for remaining parts of the LCT.	No physical effects would arise during the operational phase from the introduction of the Proposed Development, which would be approximately 1.2 km to the east of the LCT. The introduction of the Proposed Development into views would perceptually alter the "<i>relatively remote and wild landscape character</i>" of the LCT. Other key characteristics affected by the Proposed Development would be the "<i>spectacular views across the surrounding lowlands of Aberdeenshire</i>" from promontories of higher ground, such as the summits within the Hill of Fare unit. Landscape mitigation and restoration proposals are presented in Volume 5, Appendix 9.6: Outline Landscape Mitigation Design Guide. The Proposed Development would be visible from the eastern summits of the LCT unit including Meikle Tap (Viewpoint 34) and Greymore, at distances of 3 km to 4 km. At these distances, the Proposed Development would not be prominent, and the scale of change in character would be Small. This would decrease further west across the unit. The geographical extent would be Small, focussed within the eastern extents of the LCT unit and the summits of Greymore and Meikle Tap, owing to the extensive views afforded by the eastern summits within the unit. The magnitude of change during operation would be Low for the eastern extents of the LCT unit, reducing to Barely Perceptible for remaining parts of the LCT.
Significance of Effect during Construction	Significance of Effect during Operation
Taking account of the Medium sensitivity, the Low magnitude of change, and the temporary nature of construction activity, the landscape effects for this LCT are judged to be Minor (Not Significant) locally within the eastern extents of the unit, reducing to Negligible (Not Significant) for the remaining parts of the unit.	Taking account of the Medium sensitivity, and the Low magnitude of change, the landscape effects for this LCT are judged to be Minor (Not Significant) locally within the eastern extents of the unit, reducing to Negligible (Not Significant) for the remaining parts of the unit.

3. LANDSCAPE DESIGNATION TABLES

- 3.1.1 Local landscape designations are mapped on **Volume 3, Figure 9.4a.1 to 9.4a.6: Designated Landscapes, pp. 1-6**, and mapped with a ZTV overlain in **Volume 3, Figure 9.4b.1 to 9.4b.6: Designated Landscapes with Overhead Line Tower Height Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV), pp. 1-6**.
- 3.1.2 The 5 km LVIA study area includes parts of three LLAs in Angus and three SLAs in Aberdeenshire. For each designation, a table is presented which sets out:
- **baseline description** including location, extent within the study area, special qualities and Forces for Change;
 - an assessment of the potential for the Proposed Development to affect the special qualities of the designation, considering the assessed effects on LCTs and visual receptors (see **Volume 5, Appendix 9.2: Visual Assessment**) within the designated area; and
 - conclusions on the **magnitude of change** and **significance of the effect** on special qualities, and consideration of whether the integrity of the designation would be affected.
- 3.1.3 Where the Proposed Development would pass through the designated area, the assessment has assessed effects arising from both the construction and operational stages of the Proposed Development. Where the Proposed Development would not pass through the designated area, the assessment considers operation stage effects only, and does not assess effects arising during construction. Effects during construction would be perceptual only (eg views of construction activity) - there would be no physical effects on the landscape designation. Construction effects would be temporary in nature. It is not considered that temporary perceptual effects would significantly affect the special qualities to an extent that it would affect the integrity of the local landscape designation.
- 3.1.4 The Tables in this Section present the assessment of effects on the following local landscape designations, and a brief summary is provided below:
- **Table 9.1.21: Sidlaw LLA;**
 - **Table 9.1.22: River South Esk LLA;**
 - **Table 9.1.23: Angus Glens LLA;**
 - **Table 9.1.24: Braes of the Mearns SLA;**
 - **Table 9.1.25: Dee Valley SLA;** and
 - **Table 9.1.26: Bennachie SLA.**
- 3.1.5 The Proposed Development would cross the River South Esk LLA between Wofflaw and Murthill, and the Dee Valley SLA near Kirkton of Durrus. As such, effects as a result of construction activity on these landscape designations would be both physical and perceptual. The Proposed Development would have localised **Significant** effects on the “*sweeping meanders lined with trees*” and the “*strong rural character*” special qualities of the River South Esk LLA during construction, within the area between Inshewan, Quarryhill and Craigeassie. The Proposed Development would have localised **Significant** effects on the “*broad, meandering river, with wooded banks*” special qualities of the Dee Valley SLA during construction, within the area between Loch of Park, the A93, Upper Park, Kirkton of Durrus and Funach Wood. The effects on local landscape designations would be localised and temporary and would not affect the integrity of these designations.
- 3.1.6 During operation, an approximate length of 2.3 km of the Alignment would be located within the River South Esk LLA, and 3.1 km length within the Dee Valley SLA. Therefore, effects during operation would be both physical and perceptual. Physical effects on these designations would include the presence of steel lattice towers (six in the River South Esk LLA, nine in the Dee Valley

SLA) and conductors, access tracks, and localised areas of woodland loss. Woodland loss along the River South Esk would have a local influence on the meander between Inshewan and Craigeassie, and is expected to have **Significant** effects on the “sweeping meanders lined with trees” and the “strong rural character” special qualities of the River South Esk LLA. Likewise, woodland loss along the River Dee would have **Significant** effects on the “broad, meandering river, with wooded banks”, “visual diversity” and “richness of landscape character” special qualities of the Dee Valley SLA, particularly near Kirkton of Durrus. Effects on the remaining special qualities of both designations are judged to be **Not Significant**. Overall, it is considered that the Proposed Development would not affect the integrity of either the River South Esk LLA or Dee Valley SLA.

- 3.1.7 The Sidlaw LLA is located approximately 1 km west of the Alignment, the Angus Glens LLA is located approximately 0.8 km northwest, the Braes of the Mearns SLA is located approximately 1.4 km north, and the Bennachie SLA is located approximately 3.3 km northwest. The assessment does not include effects of construction on these landscape designations as the Alignment or any other elements of the Proposed Development do not pass through the designated area, and effects would be perceptual and temporary in nature. Therefore, it is expected that effects on the special qualities of these designations would be **Not Significant**.
- 3.1.8 Effects on these designations as a result of the Proposed Development during operation would be perceptual. Visibility of the Proposed Development would affect views from the hill summits and foothills within the Sidlaw LLA and Angus Glens LLA, respectively. It could have effects on the “popular recreational area” special quality of the Sidlaw LLA, and the “popular hillwalking landscape, with a number of hilltop destinations” special quality of the Angus Glens LLA. However, the prominence of the Alignment would be reduced from these designations as it would often be seen backclothed against distant landform beyond. The Proposed Development would be located within the setting of the Sidlaw LLA, Angus Glens LLA and the Braes of the Mearns SLA to the southeast. It would be seen in views towards these designations, including views towards the Sidlaw Hills and the Highland Boundary Fault, the latter contributing to the special qualities of the Angus Glens (“dramatic Highland Boundary Fault”) and the Braes of the Mearns (“highly visible ridge...from across the landscape to the southeast”). Given the Proposed Development would be largely backclothed in views to and from the Sidlaw Hills LLA, Angus Glens LLA and the Braes of the Mearns SLA, it is considered that the Proposed Development would have **Not Significant** effects on any of the special qualities of these designations and would not affect their integrity. Views of the Proposed Development from the Bennachie SLA would be largely limited due to the intervening distance and screening provided by woodland and forestry cover. Therefore, it is considered that the Proposed Development would have **Not Significant** effects on the special qualities of this SLA, and would not affect its integrity.

Table 9.1.21: Sidlaw LLA

Sidlaw LLA
Baseline description The Sidlaw LLA is located approximately 1 km west of the Proposed Development at its closest point. The designation extends from Balkello Hill westwards beyond the study area to Lundie, incorporating a number of distinctive hills that are popular for recreation with strong cultural heritage associations, including Balkello Hill, Kinpurney Hill (345 m AOD) and Auchterhouse Hill (426 m AOD). The special qualities for the Sidlaw LLA are set out in the Local Landscape Areas in Angus report²¹. Those of relevance to the Proposed Development include: • “Distinctive profile of smooth rounded hills with panoramic views; • Often pasture with a strong pattern of enclosure by dykes which creates scenic landscape topology;

²¹ Angus Council, 2024. Local Landscape Areas in Angus. Final Report. (Online) Available at: https://www.angus.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-04/Report%20109_24%20Local%20Landscape%20Areas%20in%20Angus_App%202.pdf.

Sidlaw LLA

- Often arable and improved pasture on lower slopes but with semi-natural pasture and extensive areas of heath on higher ground; and
- A popular recreational area... Auchterhouse Hill being a popular hilltop destination and often the focal point of path networks. Balkello Community Woodland... is also an important recreational area²².

With relation to Forces for Change and landscape guidance, the report notes that “As well as issues of creating a developed character and reducing wildness, tall structures can adversely affect the perception of scale, particularly when placed on top of hills or in a position where visual comparison is possible”.

An existing high voltage OHL (Alyth to Tealing 275 kV) passes through the eastern part of the LLA from Balluderon, skirting the base of Balkello Hill, and running northwest out the study area.

Representative viewpoints within this LLA:

- VP3: Cairns, Balkello Hill (refer to **Volume 4a, Figure 9.07a-c: VP3: Cairns, Balkello Hill**).

Potential for the Proposed Development to affect the special qualities of the LLA

The Proposed Development would not be located within the LLA.

The ZTV (refer to **Volume 3, Figure 9.4b.1: Designated Landscapes with Overhead Line Tower Height Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV), p. 1**) indicates relatively widespread visibility of the Proposed Development in the eastern part of the LLA within the study area, focused in the areas around Balkello Hill and Auchterhouse Hill. To the west of Auchterhouse Hill, visibility is limited to higher ground. Areas of woodland and forestry on the lower slopes of Balkello Hill and Auchterhouse Hill would reduce actual visibility in Balkello Community Woodland.

The LCT assessment in **Section 2** of this appendix did not identify significant effects on landscape character beyond 1 km from the Proposed Development in LCT 382 - Lowland Hill Ranges (refer to **Table 9.1.2**). **Moderate (Significant)** effects were identified in LCT 387 - Dipslope Farmland (Tealing Unit) (refer to **Table 9.1.1**) within the area between Myreton of Claverhouse, Balkemback, Prieston and Balluderon, although lesser effects may be experienced from parts of this area. Effects would reduce to **Not Significant** beyond these locations. This area of **Moderate** landscape effects is located approximately 9 km from the LLA at the closest point. Therefore, no significant effects are anticipated on the landscape character of the designated area.

The introduction of the Proposed Development has the potential to affect some of the special qualities of the LLA, including the “panoramic views” available from hill summits within the LLA and its special quality as a “popular recreational area”. From the eastern extents of the LLA, including at the summits of Balkello Hill and Auchterhouse Hill, the Proposed Development would be seen in middle distance views at distances ranging between approximately 2 km to 3 km. In these views, the Proposed Development would generally be backclothed by landform, reducing the prominence of the infrastructure, as illustrated by VP3: Balkello Hill (refer to **Volume 4a, Figure 9.07a-c: VP3: Cairns, Balkello Hill**). The Proposed Development would also be seen in the context of existing high voltage OHLs to the south and east, which already affect “panoramic views”. Effects on receptors at Balkello Hill are judged to be minor and not significant (see **Table 9.2.8 VRA A8 in Volume 5, Appendix 9.2: Visual Assessment**). From other recreational areas within the eastern extent of the LLA, including from some of the lower slopes of Balkello Hill, the Proposed Development would be seen in slightly closer views but often obscured by mixed woodland. From the popular Balkello Community Woodland at the southern edge of the LLA, views of the Proposed Development would be largely screened by the mixed woodland in this area.

The introduction of the Proposed Development also has the potential to affect the role the LLA plays in providing a setting to the surrounding lowland landscapes outside the LLA, particularly the perception of the “distinctive profile of smooth rounded hills”. From the lower lying areas immediately east and south of the Proposed Development to the south of the Sidlaw Hills, the Proposed Development would form a prominent and large-scale feature in some views towards Balkello Hill, breaking the skyline formed by the LLA beyond. The influence of the Proposed Development on views towards the LLA would locally affect the perception of the LLA’s “distinctive profile”, as viewed from a small area east of Balluderon.

Magnitude, Significance of Effect, and Integrity of the Designated Area

The Proposed Development would be located within the setting of the LLA to the southeast and would have a **Small** scale of effect on the “popular recreational area” special quality due to its presence in panoramic views, and a **Small** scale of effect on the “Distinctive profile of smooth rounded hills” special quality in views towards the Sidlaw LLA. The magnitude of change to these special qualities would be

²² Angus Council, 2024. Local Landscape Areas in Angus. Final Report. (Online) Available at: https://www.angus.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-04/Report%20109_24%20Local%20Landscape%20Areas%20in%20Angus_App%202.pdf (pages 14-16).

Sidlaw LLA

Low, and the magnitude of change to other special qualities would be **Barely Perceptible**. Effects on special qualities would be **Minor (Not significant)**, and the Proposed Development would not affect the integrity of this local landscape designation.

Table 9.1.22: River South Esk LLA

River South Esk LLA

Baseline description

The River South Esk LLA stretches east-west across the study area within the Angus Council administrative area. The designation extends from Cortachy and the Angus Glens in the west and past Brechin in the east, following the River South Esk. It incorporates designed landscapes at Brechin Castle and some areas of higher elevation with cultural heritage associations, including Hill of Finavon and Aberlemno. The special qualities for the River South Esk LLA are set out in the Local Landscape Areas in Angus report²³. Those of relevance to the Proposed Development include:

- “The River South Esk has large sweeping meanders lined with trees and narrow woodland strips;
- Scenic views from higher ground, most notably from Angus Hill, Aberlemno and Burghill which also provides a setting for Brechin... Views to the south towards the Braes of Angus are highly scenic;
- A strong rural character outwith Brechin ... houses are often associated with groups of trees which help integrate them into the landscape; and
- The River South Esk and its tributaries, together with associated riparian habitats form a blue/ green network which is often a focal feature in views”²⁴.

With relation to Forces for Change and landscape guidance, the report notes that “tall structures can adversely affect the perception of scale, particularly when placed on top of hills or in a position where visual comparison is possible”.

The existing high voltage Kintore to Tealing 275 kV OHL passes through parts of the LLA between the south of Hill of Finavon and to the west of Brechin, as does the A90 dual carriageway.

Representative viewpoints within this LLA:

- VP12: B957, near Cairnhill (refer to **Volume 4a, Figure 9.16a-f: VP12: B957, near Cairnhill**).
- VP14: Angus Hill Layby, B9134 (refer to **Volume 4a, Figure 9.18a-f: VP14: Angus Hill Layby, B9134**).

Potential for the Proposed Development to affect the special qualities of the LLA

Approximately 2.3 km of the Proposed Development would be located within the LLA where it crosses the River South Esk at Craigeassie. Potential effects would be both physical and perceptual during both construction and operation.

Physical impacts during construction would include localised disturbance and presence of construction machinery, haul roads and construction compounds. Infrastructure felling would be expected at the River South Esk crossing point, and at two minor burns on the north bank, to the west of Craigeassie. Woodland along the riverbank at Craigeassie would not be felled. Perceptual impacts during construction would be localised to the area between Inshewan, Quarryhill and Craigeassie where construction activity would be apparent.

Physical impacts during operation would include the ongoing change from the infrastructure felling, as well as the presence of six steel towers and conductors within the designated area. Perceptual effects would extend more widely depending on visibility. The ZTV (refer to **Volume 3, Figure 9.4b.2: Designated Landscapes with Overhead Line Tower Height Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV), p. 2**) indicates

²³ Angus Council, 2024. Local Landscape Areas in Angus. Final Report. (Online) Available at: https://www.angus.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-04/Report%20109_24%20Local%20Landscape%20Areas%20in%20Angus_App%202.pdf.

²⁴ Angus Council, 2024. Local Landscape Areas in Angus, Final Report. [Online] Available at: https://www.angus.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-04/Report%20109_24%20Local%20Landscape%20Areas%20in%20Angus_App%202.pdf (pages 11-13).

River South Esk LLA

extensive widespread visibility of the Proposed Development across the part of the LLA within the study area. Intervening features, such as scattered areas of woodland and forestry, and localised undulations in landform, would reduce actual visibility to some extent.

The LLA is located within LCT 384 - Broad Valley Lowlands - Tayside (Forfar Unit) (refer to **Table 9.1.4: Broad Valley Lowlands - Tayside (Forfar Unit)**). During construction, **Medium** magnitude of change was assessed within 1 km of the Proposed Development, and **Moderate (Significant)** effects locally. During operation, magnitude of change was identified as **High** for a narrow strip of the LCT unit and **Medium** up to 1 km either side of the Proposed Development. Operation effects were assessed as **Major (Significant)** along the route, particularly at the River South Esk, and **Moderate (Significant)** at up to 1 km from the Proposed Development.

Within the LLA, visual receptors including residents and road users around Cairn Farm, Craigeassie, Justinhaugh and East Murthill were identified to experience a **High** magnitude of change during both construction and operation (refer to **Table 9.2.33: VRA B12** and **Table 9.2.37: VRA B16** in **Volume 5, Appendix 9.2: Visual Assessment**).

The introduction of the Proposed Development has the potential to affect the “*sweeping meanders lined with trees and narrow woodland strips*”. The extent of woodland loss within the LLA would be small and localised, and the towers would have a local influence on meander between Inshewan and Craigeassie. This would affect the relationship with the River South Esk and the role it plays in visually connecting surrounding landscapes.

The introduction of the Proposed Development has the potential to perceptually affect the “*strong rural character*” and the “*River South Esk and its tributaries*” as a “*focal feature in views*”. In closer views, as illustrated by **VP12: B957 near Cairnhill** (refer to **Volume 4a, Figure 9.16a-f: VP 12: B957, near Cairnhill**), the Proposed Development would appear as a very prominent feature, standing tall above the horizon. The Proposed Development would introduce a new large-scale man-made feature into views that are currently largely unaffected by infrastructure, therefore affecting the “*strong rural character*”. The introduction of the Proposed Development would locally influence the setting of the River South Esk as a “*focal feature in views*”. In wider views, visibility of the Proposed Development would be reduced by intervening riparian woodland. A force for change for the LLA notes the adverse effect of “*tall structures*” on the scale of the landscape when placed in a “*position where visual comparison is possible*”, which would be possible in the small scale context of the river valley.

In the wider context and as distance from the Proposed Development increases, the OHL’s influence on the special qualities of the LLA would be reduced. For example, the elevated areas at Angus Hill, Aberlemno and Burghill where there are “*scenic views from higher ground*” are over 4 km away and the Proposed Development would be seen as a distant feature.

Magnitude, Significance of Effect, and Integrity of the Designated Area

The Proposed Development would result in localised impacts on the special qualities of the LLA during construction. The scale of change would be **Medium** for the “*sweeping meanders lined with trees*” and the “*strong rural character*”. The magnitude would be **Medium** locally and construction work would have **Moderate (Significant)** effects on these special qualities, within the area between Inshewan, Quarryhill and Craigeassie. These effects would be localised and temporary.

During operation, the Proposed Development would have a **Large** scale of change on the “*sweeping meanders lined with trees*” and the “*strong rural character*” within the vicinity of Craigeassie. The scale of change to other special qualities would be Small. The Proposed Development would have a **High** magnitude of change and **Major (Significant)** effects on the special qualities of the “*strong rural character*” and the “*sweeping meanders lined with trees*”. These effects would be localised to the area between Cairn Farm, Inshewan, Craigeassie and East Murthill. Effects on other special qualities would be **Minor (Not significant)**, and the wider LLA would be largely unaffected. The Proposed Development would not affect the integrity of this local landscape designation.

Table 9.1.23: Angus Glens LLA

Angus Glens LLA

Baseline description

The Angus Glens LLA is located approximately 0.8 km northwest of the Proposed Development at its closest point, within the Angus Council administrative area. The Proposed Development would run south of and broadly parallel with the southern boundary of the LLA, between the River North Esk and Edzell, where it is generally around 2 km from the LLA. The designation stretches from the edge of Strathmore

Angus Glens LLA

within the study area, to the Cairngorms National Park beyond the study area to the northwest. Within the study area the LLA includes the braes that mark the Highland Boundary Fault. The special qualities for the Angus Glens LLA are set out in the Local Landscape Areas in Angus report.²⁵ Those of relevance to the Proposed Development include:

- “An extensive elevated plateau and rounded hill tops which has strong unity despite being regularly incised by the Angus Glens;
- A mosaic of pasture, native woodland and heath combine in views to form patterns and scenic views with strong gestalt properties;
- The dramatic Highland Boundary Fault [where] The Highland Foothills are strongly associated with the Highland Boundary Fault;
- A popular hillwalking landscape, with a number of hilltop destinations;
- The Caterthuns near Edzell are popular tourist and recreational attractions”.

With relation to Forces for Change and management recommendations, the report notes that “As well as issues of creating a developed character and reducing wildness, tall structures can adversely affect the perception of scale, particularly when placed on top of hills or in a position where visual comparison is possible”.

An existing high voltage OHL (Fetteresso to Alyth 275 kV) passes through the southeastern edge of the LLA within the study area, between the River North Esk and the West Water.

Representative viewpoints within this LLA:

- VP16: Balhall Crescent (refer to **Volume 4a, Figure 9.20a-h: VP16: Balhall Crescent**).
- VP18: White Caterthun (refer to **Volume 4a, Figure 9.22a-d: VP18: White Caterthun**).

Potential for the Proposed Development to affect the special qualities of the LLA

The Proposed Development would not be located within the LLA.

The ZTV (refer to **Volume 3, Figure 9.4b.2 to 9.4b.3: Designated Landscapes with Overhead Line Tower Height Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV), pp. 2-3**) indicates widespread visibility of the Proposed Development along the southeastern edge of the LLA within the study area, across the areas between Milton of Ogil in the southwest and Hill of Edzell in the northeast. Due to the elevated nature of these slopes, views are likely to be open.

The LCT assessment in **Section 2** of this appendix identified localised **Moderate (Significant)** effects on a small area of LCT 379: Foothills – Tayside between Noranside and Fern (refer to **Table 9.1.6: Foothills - Tayside**) which is partly within this LLA. Effects on landscape character more widely within the LLA would not be significant.

Visual receptors along the southeastern edge of the LLA, including residents, recreational receptors and road users around Fern were identified to experience a **High** magnitude of change during operation (refer to **Table 9.2.47: VRA B26 in Volume 5, Appendix 9.2: Visual Assessment**). Visual receptors more widely within the LLA, who would experience more distant views of the Proposed Development, would experience a **Low** magnitude of change (refer to **Table 9.2.63: VRA C13 and Table 9.2.48: VRA B27 in Volume 5, Appendix 9.2: Visual Assessment**).

The introduction of the Proposed Development has the potential to affect some of the special qualities of the LLA and its setting, including the “scenic views” available from the foothills of the Angus Glens and its special quality as a “popular hillwalking landscape, with a number of hilltop destinations”. From the southeastern extents of the LLA within the study area, including summits such as **VP18: White Caterthun** (refer to **Volume 4a, Figure: 9.22a-d: VP18: White Caterthun**) and lower level views such as **VP16: Balhall Crescent** (refer to **Volume 4a, Figure: 9.20a-h: VP16: Balhall Crescent**), the Proposed Development would be seen in middle-to-long distance views, at between 1 km to 3 km. In these views, the Proposed Development would be generally backclothed by landform and seen at a lower elevations in the view, reducing the prominence of the infrastructure. In some locations, including around Milton of Ogil, the Proposed Development would also be seen in combined views with the existing Fetteresso to Alyth 275 kV OHL, and would appear as a more distant feature in comparison to the existing OHL.

²⁵ Angus Council, 2024. Local Landscape Areas in Angus, Final Report. [Online] Available at: https://www.angus.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-04/Report%20109_24%20Local%20Landscape%20Areas%20in%20Angus_App%202.pdf (pages 7-10).

Angus Glens LLA

The introduction of the Proposed Development has the potential to affect some of the special qualities of the LLA, including views of the “*dramatic Highland Boundary Fault*”. The Proposed Development would affect this quality in localised views from the south when seen in the foreground of the LLA.

Magnitude, Significance of Effect, and Integrity of the Designated Area

The Proposed Development would be located within the setting of the LLA to the south and would appear in some views towards the “*dramatic Highland Boundary Fault*”, resulting in a **Small** scale of change to this special quality across a localised area. The Proposed Development would not be prominent in views from the LLA and would therefore have a **Small** scale of change on the “*scenic views*” and “*popular hillwalking landscape*” special qualities. The Proposed Development would result in a **Small** magnitude of change and **Minor (Not Significant)** effects on these special qualities during operation. Other special qualities would not be affected. The Proposed Development would not affect the integrity of this local landscape designation.

Table 9.1.24: Braes of the Mearns SLA

Braes of the Mearns SLA

Baseline description

The Braes of the Mearns SLA is located approximately 1.4 km north of the Proposed Development at its closest point, within the Aberdeenshire Council administrative area. The Proposed Development would run south of, and broadly parallel with, the southern boundary of the SLA between Gannochy and Glenbervie, where it is generally between 1.5 km and 2.5 km from the SLA. The designation extends across the south-facing slopes of the Mounth from the B966 in the southeast, beyond the study area to the ridgeline between Sturdy Hill and Coyle Hill in the north. The special qualities for the Braes of the Mearns SLA are set out in Appendix 13 of the Local Development Plan (Aberdeenshire Special Landscape Areas)²⁶. Those of relevance to the Proposed Development include:

- “*Strong contrast between the distinctive flat Howe and the dramatic ridge of the Mounth to the north;*
- *Clear expression of the Highland Boundary Fault, where Highland and Lowland Scotland meet;*
- *Intact historic farmed landscape of the Howe of the Mearns, with a strong structure of beech woodland and avenues along the foot of the slopes;*
- *Highly visible ridge viewed from across the landscape to the southeast, including from the A90, which defines the Howe of the Mearns; and*
- *Wooded estate landscapes including Fasque, Fettercairn and Drumtochty whose distinctive policies and tree belts give a richness and cultural diversity, which reinforces the contrast of landscape character with the simplicity of land cover of the adjacent uplands.”²⁷.*

The report identifies “*development of renewable energy technologies (eg, onshore wind turbines and associated infrastructure)*” as a force for change in the landscape. The report recommends that the “*strong contrast between the distinctive flat Howe and the ridge of the Mounth to the north should be maintained*”, “*retain the distinctive rural character of the landscape*” and with regards to ridgeline notes that “*development proposals need to be carefully considered, sited and designed so as to avoid adverse impacts.*”

An existing 275 kV OHL (Fetteresso to Alyth) passes through the centre of the SLA in a southwest to northeast orientation towards Fetteresso Forest, largely outside the study area.

Representative viewpoints within this SLA:

- VP23: Minor road, west of Mains of Balnakettle (refer to **Volume 4b, Figure 9.27a-d: VP23: Minor road, west of Mains of Balnakettle**).

²⁶ Aberdeenshire Council, 2022. Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023. Appendix 13 Aberdeenshire Special Landscape Areas. (Online) Available at: <https://online.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/ldpmedia/LDP2021/Appendix13AberdeenshireSpecialLandscapeAreas.pdf>.

²⁷ Aberdeenshire Council, 2022. Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023. Appendix 13 Aberdeenshire Special Landscape Areas. (Online) Available at: <https://online.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/ldpmedia/LDP2021/Appendix13AberdeenshireSpecialLandscapeAreas.pdf> (page 1121).

Braes of the Mearns SLA

Potential for the Proposed Development to affect the special qualities of the SLA

The Proposed Development is not located within the SLA.

The ZTV (refer to **Volume 3, Figures 9.4b.3 to 9.4b.4: Designated Landscapes with Overhead Line Tower Height Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV), pp. 3-4**) indicates relatively widespread visibility of the Proposed Development from the south-facing slopes across the SLA within the study area. Areas of woodland and forestry on the lower slopes in the south, including Drumelzie Wood, Hill Wood, Hunters Hill, and several other smaller blocks and shelterbelts would reduce actual visibility.

Most of the SLA is within LCT 29 Summits and Plateaux – Aberdeenshire. The LCT assessment in **Section 2** of this appendix identified significant localised effects in some parts of LCT 29. However, the LCT assessment did not identify significant effects within the area of LCT 29 within which the SLA is situated (see **Table 9.1.12: Summits and Plateaux – Aberdeenshire**). For the LCTs to the east and southeast, the assessments did not identify significant effects on landscape character beyond 1 km from the Proposed Development (see **Table 9.1.10: Broad Valley Lowlands - Aberdeenshire** and **Table 9.1.11: Coastal Farmed Ridges and Hills – Aberdeenshire**). Therefore, no significant effects are anticipated on the landscape character of the designated area.

Within the SLA, visual receptors along the southeastern edge of the SLA including residents, recreational receptors and road users are considered to experience a magnitude of change not more than **Medium**. From the higher ground, eg at Strathfinella Hill, the magnitude of change in views would be **Low** (refer to **Table 9.2.90: VRA D13 in Volume 5, Appendix 9.2: Visual Assessment**).

The introduction of the Proposed Development has the potential to affect some of the special qualities of the SLA, including the “*strong contrast*” between the flat agricultural land of the Howe in the south and the “*ridge of the Mounth*” in the north which marks the Highland Boundary Fault, and the perception of the “*highly visible ridge...from across the landscape to the southeast*”. The Proposed Development would locally affect these qualities when it is viewed from the south outside the SLA, looking back at the ridge line. The effect would be localised to a small number of such views, where it would be seen partially backclothed by the landform of the Mounth, or potentially breaking the skyline.

From the southern slopes of the SLA, the Proposed Development would be seen in middle distance views, at distances ranging between approximately 1.4 km to 4 km, although longer ranging views would be afforded from more elevated locations within the SLA. In these views, the Proposed Development would be generally backclothed by distant landform which rises to the south of the Howe of the Mearns, notably the Hill of Garvock, and from lower-lying land in views from more elevated locations within the SLA. The Proposed Development would be afforded some screening by intervening landform and vegetation, on the lower slopes of the SLA and in the Howe of the Mearns. The backclothing and screening would reduce the prominence of the infrastructure, as illustrated by **VP23: Minor road, west of Mains of Balnakettle** (refer to **Volume 4b, Figure 9.27a-d: VP23: Minor road, west of Mains of Balnakettle**).

Magnitude, Significance of Effect, and Integrity of the Designated Area

The Proposed Development would be located within the setting of the SLA to the southeast and would have a **Small** scale of effect on the “*highly visible ridge...from across the landscape to the southeast*” and the “*Strong contrast between the distinctive flat Howe and the dramatic ridge of the Mounth*” special qualities, in certain views towards the SLA. The magnitude of change to these special qualities would be **Low**, and the magnitude of change to other special qualities would be **Barely Perceptible**. Effects on special qualities would be **Minor (Not significant)**, and the Proposed Development would not affect the integrity of this local landscape designation.

Table 9.1.25: Dee Valley SLA

Dee Valley SLA
Baseline description The Dee Valley SLA extends east-west along the valley of the River Dee, within the Aberdeenshire Council administrative area. The Proposed Development would cross the SLA in a north-south orientation between Kirkton of Durris and Loch of Park. The designation extends along the Dee Valley across the study area, extending to Dinnet in the west and Peterculter in the east. The special qualities for the Dee Valley SLA are set out in Appendix 13 of the Local Development Plan (Aberdeenshire Special Landscape Areas)²⁸. Those of relevance to the Proposed Development include: • <i>“Broad, meandering river, with wooded banks rising to moorland hills and occasional limestone outcrops;</i> • <i>Broadleaf woodland contributes to visual diversity and habitat value all along the valley, and reflect the long history of estate development;</i> • <i>The woodland along the Dee forms part of an intact habitat network, including policy woodland, plantations and riparian woodland, providing connectivity between the lowlands and uplands of Aberdeenshire. Mature woodland also provides diversity and richness of landscape character;</i> • <i>Key routes through the valley include the Royal Deeside Railway, the Deeside Tourist Route, long-distance walking, cycling and horse-riding trails. The valley is seen by large numbers of people using these routes;</i> • <i>Deeside is representative of Aberdeenshire’s identity, and is a popular tourist destination, both in itself and as a link between Aberdeen and the National Park”²⁹.</i> The report identifies “Development of renewable energy technologies on enclosing slopes to the river (eg onshore wind turbines, grid connection and associated infrastructure)” as a force for change in the landscape. With relation to management recommendations, the report recommends that proposals “should not impact on the sense of place provided by the river and wooded banks, rising to moorland hills”, and that “development proposed in the surrounding upland areas should be assessed to minimise the visual impact on the SLA, including views and vistas along the valley”. Two existing OHLs (Kintore to Fetteresso 275 kV/400 kV and Kintore to Tealing 275 kV) pass through the SLA in a broadly north-south orientation, with the former immediately to the west of the Proposed Development and the latter to the east. Representative viewpoints within this SLA: • VP30: Durris Bridge (refer to Volume 4b, Figure 9.34a-f: VP30: Durris Bridge). • VP31: Couper’s Road (refer to Volume 4b, Figure 9.35a-e: VP31: Couper’s Road). Potential for the Proposed Development to affect the special qualities of the SLA Approximately 3.1 km of the Proposed Development would be located within the SLA, and therefore potential effects would be both physical and perceptual during both construction and operation. Physical impacts during construction would include localised disturbance and presence of construction machinery, haul roads and construction compounds. Infrastructure felling would be expected at the River Dee crossing point on both banks, and at the A93. Access tracks and construction works on the north side of the A93 would be visible on rising ground. Perceptual impacts during construction would be localised to the area between Loch of Park, the A93, Upper Park, Kirkton of Durris and Funach Wood, where construction activity would be apparent. Physical impacts during operation would include the ongoing change from the infrastructure felling, as well as the presence of nine steel towers and conductors within the designated area, and as part of the Kintore to Fetteresso 275 kV realignment at Kirkton of Durris. Perceptual effects would extend more widely depending on visibility. The ZTV (refer to Volume 3, Figure 9.4b.5: Designated Landscapes with

²⁸ Aberdeenshire Council, 2022. Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan. Appendix 13 Aberdeenshire Special Landscape Areas. (Online) Available at: <https://online.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/ldpmedia/LDP2021/Appendix13AberdeenshireSpecialLandscapeAreas.pdf>.

²⁹ Aberdeenshire Council, 2022. Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan. Appendix 13 Aberdeenshire Special Landscape Areas. (Online) Available at: <https://online.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/ldpmedia/LDP2021/Appendix13AberdeenshireSpecialLandscapeAreas.pdf>.

Dee Valley SLA

Overhead Line Tower Height Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV), p. 5 indicates that there would be theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development from the entire area of the SLA within the study area. Areas of woodland and forestry along the River Dee and on the lower valley slopes would reduce actual visibility.

The area of the SLA where the Proposed Development runs is within LCT 31: Broad Wooded and Farmed Valley. The magnitude of landscape change during construction would be **Medium** locally, and during operation would be locally **High** to the west of Kirkton of Durris and across the River Dee, and would be **Medium** for the LCT unit within no more than 1 km of the Proposed Development (see **Table 9.1.14: Broad Wooded and Farmed Valley**).

Within the SLA, visual receptors including residents, recreational receptors and road users near the River Dee at Wester Durris, West Park, Nether Park, Upper Park and along NCN Route 195, the Deeside Way Long Distance Path and the A93 would experience a **High** magnitude of change during both construction and operation. Visual receptors further west and east within the SLA, who would experience more distant views of the Proposed Development, would experience a lower magnitude of change. Refer to relevant VRA assessments in **Volume 5, Appendix 9.2: Visual Assessment**, including **Table 9.2.116: VRA E15** at Kirkton of Durris and **Table 9.2.121: VRA F1** at Upper Park.

The introduction of the Proposed Development has the potential to affect several of the special qualities noted for the SLA, notably the *“broad, meandering river, with wooded banks”* which would be crossed by the Proposed Development. The effect of the Proposed Development on this quality would be most notable when the OHL is viewed crossing over the River Dee and from the banks of the river. Views of the Proposed Development would be possible from the more elevated slopes to the north and south of the River Dee, with the OHL visible in close views (eg, near Upper Park) as it crosses the foreground of the view, and in more distant views as it ascends the low enclosing slopes of the valley each side of the river.

Views of the Proposed Development would be experienced by those travelling along the River Dee and through the SLA on the *“key routes through the valley... long-distance walking, cycling and horse riding trails”*, which are used by large numbers of people.

The Proposed Development has the potential to affect the *“broadleaf woodland”, “wooded banks”* and *“policy woodland, plantations and riparian woodland”* which contribute strongly towards the landscape and visual diversity along the River Dee, although the need for vegetation clearance has been minimised through routeing design. The extent of woodland loss within the SLA is limited to the river crossing and would locally detract from the special qualities which are noted as *“providing diversity and richness of landscape character”*.

A force for change for the SLA also notes the adverse effect of *“renewable energy technologies... grid connections”* on the views along the river and into and out of the SLA. The presence of mature broadleaf woodland along the banks of the River Dee would help provide screening of the Proposed Development when viewed from within the valley, as illustrated by **VP30: Durris Bridge**. However, views of the Proposed Development would appear more noticeable from the elevated valley sides, where it would be seen crossing the higher land on the horizon.

The Proposed Development would result in both physical and perceptual effects on the SLA, as a result of the introduction of new large-scale vertical features which would be seen alongside the existing Kintore to Fetteresso 275 kV/400 kV OHL. The Proposed Development would result in the loss of areas of woodland along the River Dee, and as such it is considered that the Proposed Development would have a **High** magnitude of change and **Major (Significant)** effects on the *“broad, meandering river, with wooded banks”* and the broadleaf woodland which contributes to the *“visual diversity”* and *“richness of landscape character”*, particularly within the part of the SLA near Kirkton of Durris.

Magnitude, Significance of Effect, and Integrity of the Designated Area

The Proposed Development would result in localised impacts on the special qualities of the SLA during construction. The scale of change would be **Medium** for the *“broad, meandering river, with wooded banks”*. The magnitude would be **Medium** locally and construction work would have **Moderate (Significant)** effects on special qualities within the area between Loch of Park, the A93, Upper Park, Kirkton of Durris and Funach Wood. These effects would be localised and temporary.

During operation, the Proposed Development would have a **Large** scale of change on the *“broad, meandering river, with wooded banks”*, the *“visual diversity”* and the *“richness of landscape character”* along the route of the OHL, and particularly around the river crossing at Kirkton of Durris. The scale of change to other special qualities would be **Small**. The Proposed Development would have a **High** magnitude of change and **Major (Significant)** effects on these special qualities. These effects would be localised to the area between Funach Wood, Kirkton of Durris, Mills of Drum and Loch of Park. Effects on other special qualities would be **Minor (Not significant)**, and the wider SLA would be largely unaffected. The Proposed Development would not affect the integrity of this local landscape designation.

Table 9.1.26: Bennachie SLA

Bennachie SLA
Baseline description The Bennachie SLA focuses on the Bennachie ridge in the centre of Aberdeenshire. The northernmost part of the Proposed Development is located approximately 3.3 km to the southeast of the SLA. The majority of the SLA is located beyond the study area, extending west along the Bennachie ridge. The special qualities for the Bennachie SLA are set out in Appendix 13 of the Local Development Plan (Aberdeenshire Special Landscape Areas)³⁰. Those of relevance to the Proposed Development include: • <i>“Bennachie and, in particular, the summit of Mither Tap with its fortifications, is the iconic hill range of central Aberdeenshire, which is instantly recognisable from across the wider landscape, in both long and short range views;</i> • <i>Extensive woodland across lowland and upland, including native woods, estate policies and forestry plantations, with a substantial amount recognised as ancient woodland;</i> • <i>Hillforts are found on summits such as Mither Tap and Tillymuick, along with earlier prehistoric cairns and later post-medieval granite quarries, which emphasise the long history of settlement in the region. On the lower slopes lies the remains of the Early Medieval centre of Maiden Castle, and the later 19th century Colony site, which forms an important part of the oral history in the area;</i> • <i>The River Don is a key feature of Aberdeenshire, meandering through the upland glen south of Bennachie and across the farmland around Kemnay;</i> • <i>The farmland to the east provides the setting to Bennachie, but also typifies lowland Aberdeenshire with its mosaic of wooded estates and open farmland;</i> • <i>Panoramic views from the upland areas, particularly from the Bennachie summits, over the Don Valley and beyond to the patchwork of Aberdeenshire farmland”³¹.</i> The report identifies “Development of renewable energy technologies on enclosing slopes to the river (eg wind turbines, grid connection and associated infrastructure)” as a force for change in the landscape. The report recommends that proposals should be “located and designed to limit their wider visibility by protecting open skylines and rugged summits” in order to maintain its “largely undeveloped and remote character”, and that negative impacts on views to and from Bennachie ridge should be avoided, including by providing landscape mitigation. Two existing operational OHLs (Kintore to Blackhillock 275 kV and Kintore to Rothienorman 275 kV) pass through the eastern extends of the SLA in a broadly south-east to north-west orientation. There are no representative viewpoints within this SLA.
Potential for the Proposed Development to affect the special qualities of the SLA The Proposed Development is not located within the SLA. The ZTV (refer to Volume 3, Figure 9.4b.5: Designated Landscapes with Overhead Line Tower Height Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV), p. 5) indicates that there would be theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development from the majority of the SLA within the study area, to the north and south of Kemnay. However, areas of woodland and forestry would partially reduce actual visibility. The part of the SLA within the study area is covered by LCT 26: Wooded Estates – Aberdeenshire Kintore Unit. The LCT assessment did not identify significant effects on landscape character at more than 1 km from the Proposed Development (see Table 9.1.18: Wooded Estates – Aberdeenshire (Kintore Unit)). Therefore, no significant effects are anticipated on the landscape character of the designated area. Within the SLA, visual receptors including residents, recreational receptors and road users within Kemnay, and to the southwest and northeast of Kemnay, were identified to experience a Low magnitude of change during operation. The receptors include residents in isolated farms and properties, employees within industrial estates, and visitors at holiday homes and caravan parks (refer to Table 9.2.154: VRA F34 and Table 9.2.157: VRA F37 in Volume 5, Appendix 9.2: Visual Assessment).

³⁰ Aberdeenshire Council, 2022. Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan. Appendix 13 Aberdeenshire Special Landscape Areas. (Online) Available at: <https://online.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/ldpmedia/LDP2021/Appendix13AberdeenshireSpecialLandscapeAreas.pdf>.

³¹ Aberdeenshire Council, 2022. Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan. Appendix 13 Aberdeenshire Special Landscape Areas. (Online) Available at: <https://online.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/ldpmedia/LDP2021/Appendix13AberdeenshireSpecialLandscapeAreas.pdf>.

Bennachie SLA

Views of the Proposed Development would be possible from elevated south-east facing slopes, where intermittent visibility is indicated by the ZTV. Views of the Proposed Development would be experienced from the minor road network, the settlement of Kemnay and isolated properties, and from Core Paths to the north of Kemnay. However, the Proposed Development would be seen at a minimum distance of 3.3 km from the SLA, and visibility from properties and Core Paths would be reduced by the presence of woodland and buildings. Any views are likely to be glimpsed and are unlikely to affect any of the special qualities of the SLA.

A force for change for the SLA also notes the adverse effect of *“grid connection and associated infrastructure...”* on the views to and from the SLA. The Proposed Development is not located on the *“enclosing slopes”* noted as being sensitive, and any views would be glimpsed. The key views towards Mither Tap and the Bennachie Ridge from the eastern extents of the SLA would be unaffected by the Proposed Development due to appearing in a different angle of the view.

Magnitude, Significance of Effect, and Integrity of the Designated Area

The Proposed Development would be located outside the SLA, and due to the limited portion of the SLA with visibility, and the distance at which that visibility is afforded, it would have a **Barely Perceptible** scale of effect on the special qualities. The magnitude of change is considered to be **Barely Perceptible**. Effects on special qualities would be **Negligible (Not significant)**, and the Proposed Development would not affect the integrity of this local landscape designation.