

**Spittal to Loch Buidhe to Beauly 400 kV
OHL Connection
Environmental Impact Assessment
Volume 5 | Technical Appendix**

**Appendix 7.2 | Landscape and Visual
Assessment Methodology**

July 2025



VOLUME 5: APPENDIX 7.2 – LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

1.	LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY	1
1.1	Introduction	1
1.2	Assessment Guidance	1
1.3	Professional Judgement	2
1.4	Methodology	2
1.5	Assessment Stages	3
1.6	Establishment of the Study Area	3
1.7	Establishment of the Baseline Landscape and Visual Conditions	3
1.8	Appreciation of the Development Proposed	6
1.9	Identification of Key Landscape and Visual Receptors	6
1.10	Identification of Potential Effects	7
1.11	Mitigation	10
1.12	Assessment of Significance of Effects	11
1.13	Assessment of Cumulative Effects	12
1.14	Residential Visual Amenity	13
1.15	Limits of Deviation	13
1.16	Limitations and Assumptions	14

1. LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 This Appendix describes the methodology adopted in the undertaking of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) of the Proposed Development. The methodology is an update to the methodology submitted in the Scoping Report and captures changes to published guidance and addresses any need to adapt the approach to the assessment of the Proposed Development for specific project components. Where a variance to the methodology has been applied to specific components of the Proposed Development these variations are detailed within the respective Section reports in Volume 5 of this EIA report.
- 1.1.2 The assessment has been undertaken with reference to the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition (GLVIA3)¹. To inform and assist the decision maker, consultees and members of the public, the LVIA comprises two distinct assessments, as defined in GLVIA3 as follows:
- “Assessment of landscape effects: assessing effects on the landscape as a resource in its own right”; and
 - “Assessment of visual effects: assessing effects on specific views and on the general visual amenity experienced by people”.

1.2 Assessment Guidance

- 1.2.1 The LVIA has been prepared with reference to the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition (GLVIA3). The following additional guidance documents have also been referred to where relevant:
- Landscape Institute (2019) Technical Guidance Note 02/19: Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA)².
 - Landscape Institute (2021) Technical Guidance Note 02/21 Assessing Landscape Value Outside National Designations³;
 - Natural England (2002). Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity (Topic paper 6)⁴;
 - NatureScot (2010) The Special Qualities of The National Scenic Areas (Commissioned Report No.374)⁵;
 - NatureScot (2020) Assessing Impacts on Wild Land Areas – Technical Guidance⁶
 - NatureScot (2021) Assessing the Cumulative Impact of Onshore Wind Energy Developments NatureScot (2021)
 - NatureScot (2022) Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Guidance⁷;
 - NatureScot (2023) Landscape Character Assessment in Scotland (online only)⁸;

¹ Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment. 2013. Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition.

² Landscape Institute (2019) Technical Guidance Note 02/19: Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA), The Landscape Institute

³ Landscape Institute. 2021. Technical Guidance Note 02/21 Assessing Landscape Value Outside National Designations. Available online at: Technical Guidance Note 02/21 Assessing Landscape Value Outside National Designations. (Accessed on 20/11/2024).

⁴ Natural England. 2002. Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity (Topic paper 6). Available online at: Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity. (Accessed on 20/11/2024).

⁵ NatureScot. 2010. The Special Qualities of The National Scenic Areas (Commissioned Report No.374). Available online at: The Special Qualities of The National Scenic Areas. (Accessed on 20/11/2024).

⁶ NatureScot (2020) Assessing Impacts on Wild Land Areas – Technical Guidance

⁷ NatureScot. 2022. Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Guidance. Available online at: Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Guidance. (Accessed on 20/11/2024).

⁸ NatureScot. 2023. Landscape Character Assessment in Scotland. Available online at: Landscape Character Assessment in Scotland. (Accessed on 20/11/2024).

- NatureScot (2024) Guidance for Assessing the Effects on Special Landscape Qualities⁹;
- The Highland Council (2011) Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas¹⁰; and
- The Holford Rules: Guidelines for the Routeing of New High Voltage Overhead Transmission Lines (with National Grid Company plc (NGC) 1992 and Scottish Hydro-Electric Transmission plc (SHETL) 2003 Notes)¹¹.

1.3 Professional Judgement

- 1.3.1 GLVIA3 places a strong emphasis on the importance of professional judgement in identifying and defining the significance of landscape and visual effects. As part of the assessment, professional judgement has been used in combination with structured methods and pre-defined criteria to evaluate landscape value, receptor susceptibility and associated sensitivity in addition to magnitude of change. Professional judgement has then been applied in bringing sensitivity and magnitude of change together to determine the significance of effect; again using appropriate criteria.

1.4 Methodology

General

- 1.4.1 Landscape and visual assessments are separate, though linked, procedures. GLVIA3 advises that landscape and visual effects should be assessed from a clear understanding of the development proposed and any mitigation measures that are being adopted.
- 1.4.2 Additionally, the LVIA adheres to the guidelines that emphasise a clear differentiation and consistent usage of the terms 'impact' and 'effect' throughout the assessment, whereby:
- 'Impact' refers to the action being taken. For the Proposed Development, this encompasses the construction, operational, and decommissioning activities related to the steel lattice tower and its associated infrastructures; and
 - 'Effect' refers to the resulting changes from these actions, such as alterations in landscape character or modifications to the composition and quality of views in the receiving environment.
- 1.4.3 The GLVIA3 approach to landscape assessment involves an appreciation of the existing landscape resource, the susceptibility of its key components to accept the change proposed, and an understanding of the potential effects which could occur and how these could affect these key components.
- 1.4.4 Visual assessment deals with the effects of change and development on the views available to people and their visual amenity. It is concerned with assessing how the surroundings of individuals or groups of people may be specifically affected by changes in the content and character of views as a result of the change or loss of existing elements of the landscape and/or introduction of new elements.
- 1.4.5 Familiarity with the site and the extent, nature and expectation of existing views by visual receptors is a key factor in establishing the visual sensitivity in terms of the development proposed. The guidelines require evaluation of magnitude of change to views experienced by sensitive receptors, comprising individuals living,

⁹ NatureScot (2024) Guidance for Assessing the Effects on Special Landscape Qualities

¹⁰ The Highland Council. 2011. Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas. Available online at: Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas. (Accessed on 20/11/2024).

¹¹ The Holford Rules: Guidelines for the Routeing of New High Voltage Overhead Transmission Lines (with National Grid Company plc (NGC) 1992 and Scottish Hydro-Electric Transmission plc (SHETL) 2003 Notes)

working, travelling and carrying out other activities within the landscape, and the subsequent evaluation of the significance of effects.

1.5 Assessment Stages

1.5.1 The assessment stages applied to the LVIA comprise a combination of desk studies and field surveys, with subsequent analyses to define the value, sensitivity, magnitude of change, and significance of effect on landscape resource, views, and visual amenity. The assessment considers potential adverse and beneficial effects categorised on a matrix from Negligible to Major (Adverse/Beneficial), with Moderate or greater effects deemed significant.

1.5.2 The assessment includes the following key stages:

- Establishment of the study area
- Establishment of the baseline landscape and visual conditions;
- Understanding the development proposed;
- Identifying key landscape and visual receptors;
- Recognising potential significant effects; and
- Assessing the significance of effects.

1.5.3 These stages are discussed in more detail below.

1.6 Establishment of the Study Area

1.6.1 The LVIA has adopted a 10 km-wide study area centred on the Proposed Development. This study area has been applied to all sections of the Proposed Development. The extent of the study area has been established by visibility mapping, desk study and professional judgement and defined on the basis that beyond 10 km significant effects on landscape and visual receptors are unlikely to result from the Proposed Development.

1.7 Establishment of the Baseline Landscape and Visual Conditions

General

1.7.1 The baseline landscape and visual conditions have been identified following fieldwork, desk study and review of the following documents and sources:

- The Highland Council (2012) Highland-wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP)¹²;
- The Scottish Government (2000) Planning Advice Note 60 – Planning for Natural Heritage (PAN 60)¹³;
- The Scottish Government (2024) The National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)¹⁴;
- The Scoping Opinion and other consultation responses for the Proposed Development (refer to **Volume 2, Chapter 6: Scope and Consultation**);
- Work undertaken at previous stages of the design evolution, with further details provided in **Volume 2, Chapter 4: The Routeing Process and Alternatives**;

¹² The Highland Council. 2012. Highland-wide Local Development Plan. Available online at: Highland-wide Local Development Plan. (Accessed on 21/11/2024).

¹³ The Scottish Government. 2000. Planning Advice Note 60 – Planning for Natural Heritage (PAN 60). Available online at: Planning Advice Note 60 – Planning for Natural Heritage (PAN 60). (Accessed on 20/11/2024).

¹⁴ The Scottish Government. 2024. National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4). Available online at: The National Planning Framework 4 for Scotland (NPF4). (Accessed on 11/02/2025).

- Consultation feedback from routeing and alignment phase;
- Online mapping and aerial photography resources from Ordnance Survey, Google, Bing, and National Library of Scotland;
- Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) produced for the Proposed Development (see **Volume 3, Figure 7.1**); and
- Data and photographic records and notes obtained from site visits undertaken in 2024 and 2025.

Landscape Assessment Baseline

General

1.7.2 The desk studies for establishing the landscape baseline have included review of the following technical documents and resources:

- NatureScot (2010) The Special Qualities of The National Scenic Areas (Commissioned Report No.374)¹⁵;
- NatureScot (2020) Assessing Impacts on Wild Land Areas - Technical Guidance¹⁶;
- NatureScot (2023) Landscape Character Assessment in Scotland (online only)¹⁷;
- The Highland Council (2011) Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas¹⁸; and
- The Highland Council (2022) Management Plan for The Proposed Flow Country World Heritage Site¹⁹.

Criteria for Landscape Assessment Baseline

Landscape Value

1.7.3 The value of the landscape is an important consideration that informs later judgments regarding the significance of effects. Landscape value pertains to the perceived importance of the landscape as a whole and within the context of the study area. It is established through consideration of the following factors:

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

¹⁵ NatureScot. 2010. The Special Qualities of The National Scenic Areas (Commissioned Report No.374). Available online at: The Special Qualities of The National Scenic Areas. (Accessed on 20/11/2024).

¹⁶ NatureScot. 2020. Assessing Impacts on Wild Land Areas - Technical Guidance. Available online at: Assessing Impacts on Wild Land Areas - Technical Guidance. (Accessed on 20/11/2024).

¹⁷ NatureScot. 2023. Landscape Character Assessment in Scotland. Available online at: Landscape Character Assessment in Scotland. (Accessed on 20/11/2024).

¹⁸ The Highland Council. 2011. Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas. Available online at: Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas. (Accessed on 20/11/2024).

¹⁹ The Highland Council. 2022. Management Plan for the Proposed Flow Country World Heritage Site. Available online at: Management Plan for the Proposed Flow Country World Heritage Site. (Accessed on 22/11/2024).

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

1.7.5 Criteria for the allocation of perceived landscape value are outlined in **Table 1** below:

Table 1: Landscape Value Criteria

Landscape Value	Criteria
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The landscape is associated with features of international or national importance which are rare within the wider context; The landscape is of high scenic quality and forms a key part of an important designated landscape or planning constraint; and/or The landscape is an example of a scarce resource within the local context and is of considerable local importance for its scenic quality, recreational opportunities, and/or cultural heritage associations.
Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The landscape is associated with features of national or regional importance which are relatively common within the wider context; The landscape forms part of a designated landscape or is associated with other features of importance but is not rare or distinctive within the local context; and/or The landscape is one of a number within the local context appreciated for its scenic quality, recreational opportunities, and/or cultural heritage associations.
Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The landscape characteristics are common within the local and regional context and the landscape is not associated with any features or attributes considered to be important; and/or The landscape is of poor scenic quality and is not appreciated for any recreational or cultural associations.

Visual Assessment Baseline

1.7.6 A review of the ZTV was conducted to assess the extent to which visual receptors may be affected by the Proposed Development. Visual receptors are individuals occupying and using the study area who may have the potential to view the Proposed Development, including those from various locations such as buildings, recognised routes, and popular viewpoints frequented by the public.

1.7.7 Site visits were undertaken to verify the visual receptors identified through desk study, identify any further potential receptors that may have been overlooked, and gather information on baseline visual amenity. This included details on the types and activities of visual receptors likely present, as well as the nature of the existing views obtained. Site recording involved completing standardised recording forms and annotating 1:25,000 and 1:50,000 Ordnance Survey plans, supported by a photographic record of views from key receptor locations.

1.7.8 The following technical resources were used to enhance the understanding of potential visual receptors in the study area:

- 1:25,000, 1:50,000 and 1:250,000 mapping by Ordnance Survey;
- 5 m and 50 m Digital Terrain Model – Ordnance Survey;
- Interactive Map of Core Paths Inventory by The Highland Council;
- Outdoor Highlands by The Highland Council;
- Road Network by Meridian 2 Data; and
- Cumulative Data compiled by the ERM GIS Team;

- Web based and published sources providing information on local resources and activities within the study area.

Criteria for Visual Assessment Baseline

Value Attached to Views

- 1.7.9 The value attached to views and overall visual amenity was categorised as High, Medium, or Low. The value is based on the criteria set out in **Table 2**.

Table 2: Value Attached to Views

Value Attached to Views	Criteria
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The view from the location is highly exceptional, identified with a designated heritage asset, or a planning policy designation, and/or mentioned in a number of guidebooks or on tourist maps and/or referenced in art and literature; and/or • Where the views have a generally high scenic value. The view may be within, from or towards a designated heritage asset or a planning policy designation, and/or mentioned in a number of guidebooks or on tourist maps, and/or referenced in art and literature.
Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The view from the location has some scenic value, with moderate local importance and scenic quality: it is typically identified as a heritage asset and/or of local visual amenity importance. Limited potential for substitution of certain features within the view; some incongruous elements may be present.
Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The view from the location is not related to designated or non-designated heritage asset or a planning policy designation, and/or not mentioned in a guidebook or on tourist maps, and/or not referenced in art and literature, and/or of little visual amenity importance. Considerable potential for substitution of some features in the view; and/or • A degraded landscape in poor condition exhibits no scenic quality and holds low visual amenity importance. The view contains many incongruous features.

1.8 Appreciation of the Development Proposed

- 1.8.1 This stage has included a review of all available desk-based information and field survey recordings related to the Proposed Development in terms of its long-term physical appearance and requirements for construction and access. Appreciation of the Proposed Development involves the accumulation of a thorough knowledge of the proposal, including its nature, scale, and location within the baseline landscape, as well as any peripheral or ancillary features proposed. The assessment of the proposed activities and changes that would take place leads to an understanding of the potential effects that may occur on the landscape and visual resource.

1.9 Identification of Key Landscape and Visual Receptors

- 1.9.1 The initial step in assessing the potential for significant effects associated with the Proposed Development involves identifying key landscape and visual receptors that may be impacted. These receptors are defined as follows:
- Landscape receptors refer to key characteristics or individual features that contribute to the overall value of the landscape. These receptors are identified through a thorough assessment of baseline landscape resource, taking into account the potential effects that could arise from the Proposed Development; and
 - Visual receptors consist of individuals who experience views of the Proposed Development from various locations, including buildings, recognised routes, and popular viewpoints frequented by the public. Potential visual receptors are determined through desk resources, visibility mapping, and field surveys.

1.10 Identification of Potential Effects

- 1.10.1 The second step in the assessment process involves identifying potential effects arising from the interaction between the Proposed Development and the identified landscape and visual receptors. The assessment considers direct effects on existing views, landscape elements, features, key characteristics, and indirect effects due to changes in another landscape component or area.
- 1.10.2 Identifying potential effects is a two-fold process, considering how they may emerge from various aspects of the Proposed Development and how they can integrate with existing baseline features. Potential effects are evaluated by assigning criteria for sensitivity and magnitude of change.
- 1.10.3 Sensitivity pertains to the nature of the baseline landscape or visual resource and its capacity to accommodate the Proposed Development without compromising key features or composition. Two elements contribute to landscape and visual sensitivity: value and susceptibility to change. These two distinct aspects are detailed below:

Landscape Sensitivity

- Value: The baseline value of the landscape and the contributory value of individual landscape receptors to the landscape as a whole; and
- Susceptibility: The ability of landscape receptors to accommodate development of the type proposed without changing the intrinsic qualities of the landscape as a whole.

Visual Sensitivity

- Value: The baseline value of a particular view to the visual receptor, including the perceived; and
- Susceptibility: The susceptibility of the viewer to changes to the view, considering the particular activity they may be involved in, the composition of the baseline view, and the importance of the proposed area of change as a part of the view.

Criteria for Landscape and Visual Sensitivity

Landscape Sensitivity

- 1.10.4 The following categories in **Table 3** of landscape sensitivity are used, combining consideration of landscape value and susceptibility, with the criteria applied:

Table 3: Landscape Sensitivity Criteria

Sensitivity Rating	Criteria
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A landscape that is highly valued, such as one of national or international importance, whose character or key characteristics are susceptible to change; • Aspects of the landscape character that are highly valued as 'key characteristics' and are susceptible to change in national or local character assessments; • A landscape character that is highly valued for being intact and in good condition and is particularly vulnerable to disturbance; and/or • A highly valued landscape that has no or limited potential for substitution or replacement.
Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A landscape of local importance or value whose character or key characteristics are susceptible to change; • Other characteristics of the landscape character are also noted in national or local character assessments and are susceptible to change; • The landscape character is valued for moderate condition and is not particularly vulnerable to disturbance; and/or

Sensitivity Rating	Criteria
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A moderately valued landscape with some potential for substitution or replacement.
Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No or little evidence of value or importance attached to the landscape area, its features, or characteristics; Few features, characteristics, or qualities susceptible to disturbance or particularly susceptible to improvement or upgrading; and/or Good potential for substitution or replacement.
Negligible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A landscape that has undergone significant change due to human intervention, including industrial, urban, or intensive agricultural use; Areas that do not contribute to regional or local designated landscapes or protected sites; A landscape lacking distinct features, such as unique landforms, habitats, or cultural significance; and/or A landscape capable of accommodating development with minimal impact on its character or overall experience.

1.10.5 These are the criteria against which receptors are considered to arrive at a judgement as to their sensitivity, but it is not necessary for all the criteria set out for a category to apply.

Visual Sensitivity

1.10.6 The following criteria in **Table 4** for visual sensitivity, combining susceptibility and value considerations, are used:

Table 4: Visual Sensitivity Criteria

Sensitivity Rating	Criteria
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visual receptors from dwellings and publicly accessible buildings where the changed aspect is a key element in the view, with no detracting features; Visual receptors from recreational routes and locations where the changed aspect is a key element in the view, with no detracting features; Visual receptors with open views of the Proposed Development from residential or community properties; Views that are daily, prolonged, or sustained over a long period, or where the landscape view is a significant attractant; and/or Views from landscapes, recreation facilities, or routes of national or international visual amenity value.
Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visual receptors from dwellings and publicly accessible buildings where the changed aspect is a less important element in the view and/or some detracting features are present; Visual receptors from recreational routes and locations where the changed aspect is a less important element in the view and/or some detracting features are present; Visual receptors using roads and transport routes where the changed aspect is an important element in the view, with no detracting features; Visual receptors from workplaces where the changed aspect is an important element of the view, with no detracting features; Visual receptors from residential or community properties with partial or screened views of the Proposed Development; Visual receptors engaged in activities like sports or outdoor work, where the landscape is not the main reason for their presence or the focus on the view is only partial; and/or

Sensitivity Rating	Criteria
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A view of the Proposed Development from other valued landscapes or a regionally important recreation facility or route.
Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visual receptors from dwellings and publicly accessible buildings where the changed aspect is an unimportant element in the view and/or numerous detracting features are present; Visual receptors from recreational routes and locations where the changed aspect is an unimportant element in the view and/or numerous detracting features are present; Visual receptors using roads and transport routes where the changed aspect is a less important element in the view and/or some detracting features are present; Visual receptors from workplaces where the changed aspect is a less important element in the view and/or some detracting features are present; A view where the visual receptor's attention is not focused on their surroundings, indicating low importance or value; A view from a landscape of moderate or lesser importance; and/or Occasional open views or glimpsed views of the Proposed Development available to travellers in vehicles as they pass by.
Negligible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visual receptors from dwellings and publicly accessible buildings where the changed aspect is an imperceptible element in the view; Visual receptors from recreational routes and locations where the changed aspect is an imperceptible element in the view; Visual receptors using roads and transport routes where the changed aspect is an unimportant element in the view. Visual receptors from workplaces where the changed aspect is an unimportant element in the view; A view where the visual receptor's attention is not focused on their surroundings, indicating no importance or value; and/or Glimpsed or no views of the Proposed Development are available to visual receptors.

Landscape Magnitude of Change

1.10.7 The landscape magnitude of change arising from the Proposed Development is influenced by the size or scale of the development, the geographical extent of the area affected, and the duration and reversibility of the proposed changes. Elements specific to the evaluation of landscape magnitude of change are detailed below:

- The degree to which features or characteristics may be removed, altered, or added within the landscape;
- The geographical extent of proposed changes;
- Whether changes would be direct or indirect; and
- The potential duration and reversibility of proposed changes (taking into consideration proposed mitigation measures where relevant).

1.10.8 The scale of the magnitude of change is graded in **Table 5** as follows:

Table 5: Landscape Magnitude of Change Criteria

Magnitude Rating	Criteria
High	A major alteration in size or scale, affecting a large proportion of the landscape type or character of the area where the Proposed Development is located or extending across a wider region.
Medium	An intermediate alteration in size or scale, affecting part of the landscape type or character of the area where the Proposed Development is situated, or a larger-scale change confined

Magnitude Rating	Criteria
	to the corridor of land designated for installation, maintenance, and operation of the Proposed Development or its immediate surroundings.
Low	A minor alteration, affecting only a small proportion of the character type or area, or a small-scale change over a larger extent. These changes are virtually imperceptible and are limited to the corridor of land designated for installation, maintenance, and operation of the Proposed Development or its immediate surroundings.
Negligible	Minimal discernible change in any landscape characteristics or components.
None	No change in any landscape characteristics or components.

Visual Magnitude of Change

1.10.9 The visual magnitude of change is evaluated in terms of size or scale, the geographical extent of the area influenced, duration and reversibility, as detailed below:

- The scale or extent of proposed changes within the view;
- The location of proposed changes within the view, relevant to other existing features;
- The extent to which this may alter the composition or focus of the view; and
- The duration and reversibility of proposed changes (taking into consideration proposed mitigation measures where relevant).

1.10.10 Criteria for the evaluation of visual magnitude of change are presented in **Table 6** below.

Table 6: Visual Magnitude of Change Criteria

Magnitude Rating	Criteria
High	A major alteration in size or scale, affecting a large proportion of the viewing angle or impacting views from a wide area.
Medium	An intermediate alteration in size or scale, affecting the viewing angle or views from the wider context, or a larger-scale change in views from within the corridor of land designated for installation, maintenance, and operation of the Proposed Development or its immediate surroundings.
Low	A minor proportion of the viewing angle is affected, or the altered elements and characteristics make an insignificant contribution to the overall composition of the view.
Negligible	A barely perceptible change or one that is difficult to discern.
None	No visible alteration in the view, or any changes resulting from the Proposed Development remain out of sight.

1.11 Mitigation

1.11.1 The effects resulting from the Proposed Development vary in nature and degree throughout its lifecycle. Mitigation measures have been incorporated into the design of the development wherever feasible. Alternative measures may be proposed where the design cannot sufficiently address the potential significant adverse effects. The purpose of mitigation measures is, first, to prevent or avoid potentially adverse effects and, if it is not possible, to reduce the adverse effects. Where adverse effects are unavoidable, the purpose is to offset or compensate for the effect.

1.12 Assessment of Significance of Effects

- 1.12.1 The predicted significance of the effect is evaluated by assessing the magnitude of change in conjunction with the assessed landscape or visual sensitivity, considering proposed mitigation measures, and using professional judgment. Recognising that effects may vary over time, assessments are conducted for two stages: construction and operation. The significance of effect for landscape and visual elements is considered as follows:

Significance of Landscape Effect

- 1.12.2 The assessment considers the impact on existing landscape receptors, evaluating the extent of their loss or modification in relation to their importance in defining the baseline character.

Significance of Visual Effect

- 1.12.3 The assessment examines potential changes to visual composition, including how new features may distract from, screen, or alter the scale, structure, or focus of existing views.

Criteria for Assessing Landscape and Visual Significance of Effect

- 1.12.4 The significance of the effect on landscape receptors whether adverse or beneficial, is assessed by relating the sensitivity of the landscape receptor (refer to **Table 3**) and the magnitude of the change to the landscape receptor (refer to **Table 5**), and by considering the indicative criteria in **Table 7**.
- 1.12.5 The significance of the effect on visual receptors whether adverse or beneficial, is assessed by relating the sensitivity of the visual receptor (refer to **Table 4**) and the magnitude of the change (refer to **Table 6**) to the view or visual amenity, and by considering the indicative criteria in **Table 7**.

Table 7: Landscape and Visual Significance of Effect Criteria

Effect Significance	Criteria
Major Adverse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Proposed Development substantially contrasts with the landscape's landform, scale, and pattern, becoming a dominant feature that reduces scenic quality and alters intrinsic character; and/or It would be highly noticeable and detract from a valued and well-composed view.
Moderate Adverse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Proposed Development is out of scale or inconsistent with the local landscape pattern, potentially dominant in some areas, leading to a reduction in scenic quality; and/or It may introduce detracting elements into a valued view or become more prominent in a less well-composed view, causing noticeable deterioration.
Minor Adverse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Proposed Development does not fully align with the landscape's scale, landform, or pattern, causing minor intrusion but little reduction in scenic quality; and/or It may be perceptible but not overly detracting in a valued view or prominent in a poorly composed view, leading to slight deterioration.
Negligible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Proposed Development integrates well with the landscape's scale, landform, and pattern, causing no discernible reduction in scenic quality or change in character; and/or It would be barely perceptible in the view and have no noticeable impact.
None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Proposed Development leads to no reduction in scenic quality or change in character; and/or It would be imperceptible in the view and have no impact.

Effect Significance	Criteria
Minor Beneficial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Proposed Development introduces or removes features, leading to a small, localised improvement in landscape character and scenic quality; and/or It may enhance an existing less well-composed view by adding an attractive feature or removing a detracting one.
Moderate Beneficial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Proposed Development results in a noticeable improvement in landscape characteristics and scenic quality; and/or It may introduce an attractive feature or remove a detracting one, enhancing the composition and value of a poorly composed view.
Major Beneficial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Proposed Development brings a significant improvement to landscape characteristics and scenic quality; and/or It may create a striking new feature or eliminate a highly detracting one, greatly enhancing the composition and attractiveness of a poorly composed view.

1.12.6 **Table 8** describes the main correlations between magnitude of change and sensitivity. The matrix is not used as a prescriptive tool but instead allows for the exercise of professional judgement in the assessment of landscape and visual effects.

Table 8: Matrix for Determining the Significance of Effects

		Sensitivity			
		High	Medium	Low	Negligible
Magnitude of Change	High	Major	Major-Moderate	Moderate	Moderate-Minor
	Medium	Major-Moderate	Moderate	Moderate-Minor	Minor
	Low	Moderate	Moderate-Minor	Minor	Minor-Negligible
	Negligible	Moderate-Minor	Minor	Minor-Negligible	Negligible
	None	None	None	None	None

1.12.7 The gradations of magnitude of change and level of effect used in the LVIA represent a continuum; the assessor has used professional judgement when gauging the level of effect. For the purposes of this assessment, where the landscape or visual effect is classified as 'Major,' 'Major-Moderate' or 'Moderate' this has been considered to be significant. The assessment has been logically set out to maximise its transparency and ensure that conclusions are readily traceable.

1.13 Assessment of Cumulative Effects

1.13.1 The cumulative assessment evaluates the likelihood of significant cumulative landscape and visual effects when considered alongside other developments of a similar kind. The potential for cumulative landscape and visual effects throughout the Study Area arises from the addition of overhead line components alongside other developments that are under construction, consented, subject to a valid application for consent or at EIA Scoping stage. However, only developments likely to produce a similar type, scale, and extent of landscape and/or visual effects as the Proposed Development have been included in the assessment.

1.13.2 In addition, GLVIA3 emphasises the inclusion of reasonably foreseeable developments in cumulative assessment, ensuring that the assessment remains responsive to evolving planning contexts. Developments that are being scoped do not meet the threshold required for inclusion in the future baseline, as their

progression beyond the scoping stage remains uncertain. However, these developments may be considered in cumulative impact scenarios if they later progress to a more definitive stage.

1.14 Residential Visual Amenity

- 1.14.1 A key objective of the design of the Proposed Development has been to avoid the placement of individual structures in close proximity to residential properties. The alignment stage for the Proposed Development has sought to avoid siting infrastructure within a 170 m radius around all residential properties as far as possible and then maintain a minimum distance of 100 m wherever possible.
- 1.14.2 Where the proposed Development has resulted in towers being located within 170 m of a residential property, such properties have been assessed as part of a Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA), the assessment being undertaken in accordance with the Landscape Institute's Technical Guidance Note 02/19.

1.15 Limits of Deviation

- 1.15.1 In general terms a Limit of Deviation (LoD) defines the maximum extent within which a development can be built. In the case of the Proposed Development, an LoD is required for each of the key components of the Proposed Development i.e. each of the new steel lattice towers being installed and access track routes.
- 1.15.2 The design of the Proposed Development has been established following the identification of detailed environmental and technical considerations. The design process has included the appointment by SSEN Transmission of OHL Contractors to inform the design process and the constructability of the Proposed Development, including construction access. This will involve carrying out ground investigation works along the majority of the route to determine ground conditions. It is possible that micro-siting may be required during the construction process to reflect localised land, engineering and environmental constraints, and therefore the LoD provides some flexibility in this regard.
- 1.15.3 The horizontal LoD, for which consent is sought is typically as follows:
- OHL (steel lattice) – 200 m total LoD (100 m either side of the centre line); and
 - Access tracks – 200 m total LoD (100 m either side of the centre line).
- 1.15.4 In some areas, the LoD is increased or decreased to account for local constraints or known engineering challenges and environmental sensitivities. This is of particular importance at the crossing of existing transmission infrastructure where modification of 132kV or 275kV OHL's are needed to facilitate safe crossing of the proposed 400kV infrastructure – each of these crossing points presents its unique challenges which lead to variations on the size of LoD required, particularly where the nearest appropriate tension tower on the existing infrastructure is located at distance from the crossing point.
- 1.15.5 An Operational Corridor (OC) is required through areas of woodland and commercial forestry to ensure the safe operation of the OHL. The width of the OC would vary depending on the nature of the woodland or forestry but typically requires a distance of 45 m either side of the OHL.
- 1.15.6 A vertical LoD, i.e. the maximum height of a pole or tower above ground level, is also sought to allow a height increase or decrease of up to 9 m on the proposed tower height presented within **Volume 5, Appendix 3.1: Indicative Tower Schedule**. The 9 m variation is consistent with the extension panels to which steel lattice towers are designed (i.e. in 3m lengths), and therefore any increase or decrease of steel lattice towers would be no greater than 9 m (equivalent to 3 x 3 m panel extensions). With respect to the location of infrastructure, there is also a level of confidence in relation to the height of infrastructure given the engineering design work

undertaken to date. The vertical LoD provides some flexibility nonetheless, to account for presently unforeseen issues.

1.15.7 Where there is a requirement to vary the location of infrastructure within the LoDs, the relevant environmental information within this EIA Report would be reviewed to establish any potential constraints or adverse change in effect. Further advice on LoD changes would be sought from environmental specialists, and, where relevant, consultation would be sought from The Highland Council (as local planning authority) and any relevant statutory consultees as required. A full description of the approach to the LoD is provided in **Volume 2, Chapter 3: Description of the Proposed Development**.

1.15.8 In the undertaking of the LVIA, the assessment has assessed the design heights of the proposed towers and their location as per the tower schedule provided in **Volume 5, Appendix 3.1: Indicative Tower Schedule**. Where a change in the position of infrastructure within the LoD would be likely to give rise to a new significant, adverse effect, or for a moderate effect to become major, this has been noted in the reporting.

1.16 Limitations and Assumptions

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

- The Proposed Development would be permanent;
- The construction stage would be temporary and approximately 48 months in duration;
- The LVIA has assessed the design heights of the proposed towers and their location as per the tower schedule provided in **Volume 5, Appendix 3.1: Indicative Tower Schedule**. Variations in tower heights and deviations of the final alignment may occur at certain tower locations to account for undulations in the surrounding topography, and to align with best practices. Accordingly, the LVIA accounts for a vertical Limit of Deviation of +/- 9 m with the proposed towers heights and locations detailed in **Volume 5, Appendix 3.1: Indicative Tower Schedule**.
- A horizontal Limit of Deviation of up to 100 m in most cases, where necessary to avoid or minimise environmental impact while remaining consistent with wayleave boundaries. It is also recognised that the horizontal Limit of Deviation would be less than 50 m along some sections of the Proposed Alignment.
- The LVIA is undertaken on the assumption that the Proposed Development would be experienced in clear visibility and the assessment is carried out on that basis. Where appropriate, comment is made in relation to lighting and weather conditions, including visibility in winter months during periods of seasonal leaf-fall.
- The LVIA draws on field observations from publicly accessible locations. Accordingly, the assessment of effects at individual residential properties has been undertaken from publicly accessible locations within closest proximity to the dwelling to ensure appropriate representation of potential views, unless stated otherwise where access was granted by the property owner.
- The assessment of operational effects assumes that areas disturbed but not required for the operation of the Proposed Development—such as temporary tracks, laydown and compound areas, and excavations for tower foundations—would be successfully reinstated to reflect, as closely as possible, similar vegetation types and appearance to those present prior to construction. It is important to note that these vegetation types may not necessarily comprise habitat types and values identical to those that were previously present.
- The data used in the completion of the LVIA has some inherent limitations regarding data tolerances and levels of accuracy; however, these limitations have been factored into the assessment.