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Glen Earrach Pumped Storage Hydro

Environmental Impact Assessment Report

Volume 2: Main Report
Chapter 6: Landscape and Visual

Glen Earrach Energy Ltd

Glen Earrach AECOM

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6. Landscape and Visual

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), as presented within this chapter, assesses the potential landscape and visual effects arising from construction and operation of the Proposed Development, as part of this EIAR. The scope of the landscape and visual assessment and methodology has been informed by and agreed through consultation with the statutory stakeholders.

6.1.2 A full description of the Proposed Development is provided in **Chapter 2: Project and Site Description (Volume 2 Main Report)** and should be read in conjunction with the LVIA. The main above ground components of the Proposed Development are shown on **Figure 2.3 Above Ground Infrastructure (Volume 3: Figures)** are listed below:

- **Headpond:** The Headpond is the upper reservoir. The Headpond will be constructed through a combination of excavation (cut) and creation of three embankments and a spillway (fill). The existing topography is utilised in the design, to reduce embankment size and length, as far as practically possible. The components will include the Headpond waterbody, Main Dam 1, Saddle Dam 1, Saddle Dam 2, Spillway, Secondary Bund, Borrow Pit Search Area and the Upper Control Works (UCW).
- **Upper Control Works:** Where the Waterways exit the Headpond. It should be noted that Option B for the UCW has been assessed as a worst-case scenario (larger footprint and excavation), as outlined in **Chapter 2: Project and Site Description (Volume 2 Main Report)**. Therefore effects associated with Option A are considered to result in less of an effect on landscape character and visual amenity and have not been additionally assessed.
- **Borrow Pit Search Area:** An area earmarked for the acquisition of material to be used in the construction of the Proposed Development.
- **Spillway:** The Spillway allows for water to flow out of the Headpond in the event of overfilling.
- **Tailpond:** The Tailpond is the lower reservoir, and in the case of this Proposed Development, will be the existing body of Loch Ness.
- **Lower Control Works (LCW):** Where the Waterways enter the Tailpond, comprised of a partially submerged structure constructed into Loch Ness with access provisions, separated smolt and trash rack screens and provisions for isolation of the Waterways using bulkhead gates.
- **Compounds:** Temporary and permanent areas for equipment and material storage, access to the Tunnels, site office and welfare facilities and workers accommodation. There will be a number of compounds at various locations across the Proposed Development Site to facilitate different construction works.
- **Gas Insulated Switchyard (GIS):** A secured permanent compound housing electrical control equipment housed in purpose-built buildings.
- **Proposed Development Site Access:** Where the on-site access joins the public transport network. The Balnain Main Access planned as the construction access, is proposed off the A831 at Balnain via unclassified existing track through Forestry Land Scotland (FLS) plantation, terminating at the River Coiltie, referred to throughout this EIAR as the Balnain Main Access. Sections of this existing track would be repaired and upgraded where required. A new track is proposed to link the unclassified existing track at the Coiltie to the Headpond. Additional access will be required for the LCW on Loch Ness from the A82, although the construction work will largely be undertaken from the loch side.
- **Access Tracks:** Permanent and Temporary Access Tracks across the Proposed Development Site. The Permanent Access Tracks link the River Coiltie to the Headpond and the A82 to the LCW. The Temporary Access Tracks are within the Headpond site.
- **Watercourse Crossings:** Part of the access track works involves upgrading or creating new watercourse crossings; the upgrading of watercourse crossings to accommodate for the higher vehicular loads and increased amounts of passage. The creation of new watercourse crossings is necessary to avoid diverting the access tracks.

- **Temporary Workers Accommodation:** Temporary workers accommodation will be required to temporarily house construction workers during the construction of the Proposed Development.
- **Affric Kintail Core Path Realignment:** The realignment of the Affric Kintail Core Path that currently routes along the FLS track earmarked as the Balnain Main Access route into the Proposed Development Site.

6.1.3 Below ground construction components are detailed in **Chapter 2: Project and Site Description (Volume 2 Main Report).** The Proposed Development has been assessed during the Pre-Construction and Enabling Works, Construction and Operational phases of the Proposed Development. The LVIA also considers potential cumulative effects of the Proposed Development in combination with other developments.

6.1.4 The LVIA has been carried out by Chartered Landscape Architects, with extensive experience of the assessment of PSH projects in Scotland, and in accordance with best practice guidance and consultation with statutory stakeholders. This chapter is supported by the following figures presented in **Volume 3: Figures**:

- **Figure 6.1 Topography;**
- **Figure 6.2A Zone of Theoretical Visibility – Headpond and Embankments;**
- **Figure 6.2B Zone of Theoretical Visibility – Lower Control Works;**
- **Figure 6.2C Zone of Theoretical Visibility – Secondary Bund;**
- **Figure 6.2D Zone of Theoretical Visibility – Temporary Construction and Permanent Compounds;**
- **Figure 6.2E Zone of Theoretical Visibility – Construction Tracks;**
- **Figure 6.2F Zone of Theoretical Visibility – Permanent Tracks;**
- **Figure 6.2G Zone of Theoretical Visibility – Operational Elements Combined and Permanent Tracks;**
- **Figure 6.3 Special Landscape Areas and Operational Zone of Theoretical Visibility;**
- **Figure 6.4 Landscape Designations and Operational Zone of Theoretical Visibility;**
- **Figure 6.5 Landscape Character Types and Operational Zone of Theoretical Visibility;**
- **Figure 6.6 Local Walking Routes, Recreational Routes, Core Paths and Operational Zone of Theoretical Visibility;**
- **Figure 6.7a and b Viewpoints and Operational Zone of Theoretical Visibility;**
- **Figure 6.8 Cumulative Schemes (Scenario 1) and Operational Zone of Theoretical Visibility;** and
- **Figure 6.9 Cumulative Schemes (Scenario 2) and Operational Zone of Theoretical Visibility.**

6.1.5 Visualisations produced to both The Highland Council (THC) and NatureScot (NS) standards are contained in **Volume 4: Visualisations** and further information on the methodology is located within **Appendix 6.1: Landscape and Visual Methodology (Volume 5: Appendices)**.

6.1.6 This chapter is also supported by the following technical appendices presented in **Volume 5: Appendices**:

- **Appendix 6.1: Landscape and Visual Methodology;**
- **Appendix 6.2: Landscape Assessment;**
- **Appendix 6.3: Visual Assessment;** and
- **Appendix 6.4: Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan.**

6.1.7 The following terminology has been used throughout the assessment:

- **Landscape Character Types (LCT):** Areas of relatively homogenous landscape character. They are defined by the combination of elements that contribute to landscape context, character and value. Typical landscape elements include landform, land use, built development, vegetation and open space. Additional criteria are also considered such as scale, unity, the sense of remoteness, enclosure and perceptual quality.
- **Representative and specific viewpoints:** Viewpoints selected to represent the experience of different types of visual receptors including residential dwellers, users of transport and recreational routes and other outdoor locations. Representative and specific viewpoints are located within publicly accessible locations and have been selected in consultation with NS and THC.

- **Visual amenity:** Relates to the way in which people visually experience the surrounding landscape. Adverse visual effects may occur through the intrusion of new elements into established views, which are out of keeping with the existing structure, scale and composition of the view. Visual effects may also be beneficial, where an attractive focus is created in a previously unremarkable view, or the influence of previously detracting features is reduced. The significance of effects would vary, depending on the nature and degree of change experienced and the perceived value and composition of the existing view.
- **Visual receptors:** Special interest or viewer groups who would have views of the Proposed Development. Visual receptors have been identified through desk study and fieldwork.
- **Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV):** A computer-generated map based on a 3D model of the Proposed Development and the topography within the surrounding landscape, which shows areas of land within which the Proposed Development would theoretically be visible.

6.2 Legislation and Policy

6.2.1 This section identifies and describes legislation and policy of relevance to the assessment of the potential landscape and visual impacts associated with the Proposed Development. Legislation and policy have been considered on an international, national, regional and local level. The following is considered to be relevant to the landscape and visual assessment as it has influenced the sensitivity of the receptors, requirements for mitigation and the scope and methodology of the EIAR.

Legislation

European Landscape Convention

6.2.2 The European Landscape Convention (ELC)[1] was signed by the UK Government in 2006 and came into effect in March 2007. The ELC requires parties to recognise landscape in law. It focuses specifically on landscape issues and highlights the importance of integration of landscape into areas of policy, to promote protection, management and planning of all landscapes including the assessment of landscape and analysis of landscape change.

6.2.3 The ELC defines landscape as "*an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/ or human factors*". The ELC considers landscape as a whole (land or marine), from urban to rural areas, and whether special or degraded.

National Planning Policy

6.2.4 National planning policy relevant to landscape and visual matters includes:

- National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)[2]; and
- Planning Advice Note 60 – Planning for Natural Heritage (PAN 60) (2000)[3].

National Planning Framework 4

6.2.5 NPF4[2] is a long-term strategy for Scotland identifying a national spatial strategy. NPF4 highlights the importance and value of landscape to Scotland and notes the importance of landscape in place making and sustaining local distinctiveness.

6.2.6 Policy 3 of NPF4 sets out the intent to protect biodiversity, reverse biodiversity loss, deliver positive effects from development and strengthen nature networks. It notes under criterion (b) that "*development proposals for national or major development, or for development that requires an Environmental Impact Assessment would only be supported where it can be demonstrated that the proposal would conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity, including nature networks so they are in a demonstrably better state than without intervention. This would include future management.*"

6.2.7 Policy 11 of NPF4 sets out that development proposals for all forms of renewable, low-carbon and zero emissions technologies would be supported, including pumped storage hydro (which is recognised as a 'national' development). It notes under criterion (e)(ii) that developments must demonstrate how project design and mitigation have addressed any significant landscape and visual impacts. It provides however, that it should be

[1] *Council of Europe,* (2000). *Council of Europe Landscape Convention (ETS No. 176).* Council of Europe, Florence.
[2] *Scottish Government,* (2023) *National Planning Framework 4*. The Scottish Government, Edinburgh.
[3] *Scottish Natural Heritage* (2000) *Planning Advice Note 60 – Planning for Natural Heritage (PAN 60).* The Scottish Government, Edinburgh.

recognised that such impacts are to be expected for some forms of renewable energy and where impacts are localised and/or appropriate design mitigation has been applied, they would generally be considered acceptable.

6.2.8 NPF4 (page 04) sets out six overarching spatial principles as follows:

- "*Just transition: We would empower people to shape their places and ensure the transition to net zero is fair and inclusive;*
- *Conserving and recycling assets: We would make productive use of existing buildings, places, infrastructure, and services, locking in carbon, minimizing waste, and building a circular economy;*
- *Local living: We would support local liveability and improve community health and wellbeing by ensuring people can easily access services, greenspace, learning, work, and leisure locally;*
- *Compact urban growth: We would limit urban expansion so we can optimize the use of land to provide services and resources, including carbon storage, flood risk management, blue and green infrastructure, and biodiversity;*
- *Rebalanced development: We would target development to create opportunities for communities and investment in areas of past decline and manage development sustainably in areas of high demand; and*
- *Rural revitalisation: We would encourage sustainable development in rural areas, recognizing the need to grow and support urban and rural communities together*."

6.2.9 By applying these spatial principles, the national spatial strategy would support the delivery of:

- "*Sustainable Places where we reduce emissions, restore, and better connect biodiversity;*
- *Liveable Places where we can all live better, healthier lives; and*
- *Productive Places where we have a greener, fairer, and more inclusive wellbeing economy*."

6.2.10 **Table 6-1 Relevant Policies in NPF4 to Landscape and Visual Matters** below outlines the policies in the NPF4 most relevant for the Proposed Development in relation to landscape and visual matters.

6.2.11 Of note, Policy 4 (part d) refers to development proposal effects on local landscape designations. The policy sets out that "*Development proposals that affect a site designated as a local nature conservation site or landscape area in the LDP would only be supported where: i. Development would not have significant adverse effects on the integrity of the area or the qualities for which it has been identified; or ii. Any significant adverse effects on the integrity of the area are clearly outweighed by social, environmental or economic benefits of at least local importance*".

Table 6-1 Relevant Policies in NPF4 to Landscape and Visual Matters

Sustainable Places	Policy	Policy Principles
Tackling the Climate and nature crises	Policy 1	Policy Intent: To encourage, promote and facilitate development that addresses the global climate emergency and nature crisis. Policy Outcomes: • Zero carbon, nature positive places.
Climate mitigation and adaptation	Policy 2	Policy Intent: To encourage, promote and facilitate development that minimises emissions and adapts to the current and future impacts of climate change. Policy Outcomes: • Emissions from development are minimised. • Our places are more resilient to climate change impacts.
Biodiversity	Policy 3	Policy Intent: To protect biodiversity, reverse biodiversity loss, deliver positive effects from development and strengthen nature networks. Policy Outcomes: • Biodiversity is enhanced and better connected including through strengthened nature networks and nature-based solutions.
Natural Places	Policy 4	Policy Intent: To protect, restore and enhance natural assets making best use of nature-based solutions. Policy Outcomes:

Sustainable Places	Policy	Policy Principles
		• Natural places are protected and restored. • Natural assets are managed in a sustainable way that maintains and grows their essential benefits and services.
Forestry, woodland, and trees	Policy 6	Policy Intent: To protect and expand forests, woodland, and trees. Policy Outcomes: • Existing woodlands and trees are protected, and cover is expanded. • Woodland and trees on development sites are sustainably managed.
Historic assets and places	Policy 7	Policy Intent: To protect and enhance historic environment assets and places, and to enable positive change as a catalyst for the regeneration of places. Policy Outcomes: • The historic environment is valued, protected, and enhanced, supporting the transition to net zero and ensuring assets are resilient to current and future impacts of climate change. • Redundant or neglected historic buildings are brought back into sustainable and productive uses. • Recognise the social, environmental, and economic value of the historic environment, to our economy and cultural identity.
Energy	Policy 11	Policy Intent: To encourage, promote and facilitate all forms of renewable energy development onshore and offshore. Policy Outcomes: • Expansion of renewable, low-carbon and zero emissions technologies.

Planning Advice Note 60 – Planning for Natural Heritage (PAN 60) (2000)

6.2.12 The Planning Advice Note 60 – Planning for Natural Heritage (PAN 60)[3] as published by the Scottish Government in 2000. This document refers to safeguarding and enhancing landscape character as well as the use of published Landscape Character Assessments.

Local Planning Policy

6.2.13 The Proposed Development is within THC Local Authority Area. The implications of the statutory changes in relation to NPF4 means that if Local Development Plan (LDP) policies are not in accordance with the NPF4, then NPF4 would prevail until such time as all Local Planning Authorities update their LDPs. It is the more recently adopted policy that would prevail, where there is any incompatibility between NPF4 policies and LDP policies. Landscape character assessments would remain a relevant consideration where land is designated as a Local Landscape Area, Special Landscape or similar in the relevant LDP.

6.2.14 The Highland-wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP)[4] , which was adopted in 2012, sets out the spatial strategy general policies and local plan proposals relating to the future development. The HwLDP covers the entire Study Area (see section **Methodology** below). The following are policies which are relevant to this chapter:

- **Policy 28** - **Sustainable Design**. This policy sets out a number of requirements for all developments in the context of sustainable design and would be assessed in terms of its impact on landscape, scenery, cultural heritage, and its demonstration of sensitive siting with local character.
- **Policy 29 - Design Quality and Place-Making.** This policy seeks to ensure new development should be designed to make a positive contribution to the architectural and visual quality of the place in which it is located.
- **Policy 36** - **Development in the Wider Countryside**. This policy seeks to ensure that all developments are sympathetic to the existing landscape patterns and character. It outlines a number of requirements such as to avoid incremental expansion of any one particular development type within a landscape whose distinct character relies on an intrinsic mix and range of characteristics.

[4] *The Highland Council* (2012) *The Highland-wide Local Development Plan* [Online]. Available at: https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/178/development_plans/199/highland-wide_local_development_plan (Accessed: 11 September 2024).

- **Policy 51** - **Trees and Development**. This policy recognises the benefits of trees and woodland to the landscape character. It therefore ensures that proposals support the protection of existing trees and woodland.
- **Policy 57** - **Natural, Built and Cultural Heritage**. The policy sets out the criteria that development would be tested against; local and regionally important, nationally important, and internationally important, in terms of its natural and cultural heritage features. The following features are of relevance:
  - Local and regionally important - Special Landscape Areas (SLA), Settlement Setting, Amenity Trees, views over open water, Wild Areas, locally important croft land; and
  - Nationally important - Tree preservation orders, Inventories Gardens and Designed Landscapes, National Scenic Areas, National Park, Inventoried Ancient Woodland and Long-established woodland.
- **Policy 61** - **Landscape**. This policy seeks to ensure that new development reflects the landscape characteristics and special qualities in terms of its form, pattern and construction materials. It also encourages proposals to consider measures to enhance the landscape characteristics of the area.
- **Policy 67** - **Renewable Energy Developments**. The policy refers to all renewable energy developments and requires that they consider the significant effects and mitigation measures to a number of features, such as visual impacts and impacts on the landscape character of the surrounding area. This policy goes on to state that the design and location of proposals should reflect the scale and character of the landscape and seek to minimise landscape and visual impacts.
- **Policy 74** - **Green Networks**. The policy ensures that green networks are protected. Developments in these areas should avoid fragmentation of the green network.

6.2.15 THC have also published several guidance documents which have informed the landscape and visual assessment:

- Special Landscape Area Citation (2011)[5];
- Highland Renewable Energy Strategy and Planning Guidance (published May 2006) [6];
- Green Networks Supplementary Guidance (January 2013)[7];
- Sustainable Design Guide Supplementary Guidance (adopted January 2013) [8];
- Trees, Woodlands and Development Supplementary Guidance (adopted January 2013) [9];
- Highland Historic Environment Strategy (January 2013)[10]
- Highland Forest and Woodland Strategy (November 2018)[11]; and
- Biodiversity Enhancement Planning Guidance (May 2024)[12].

6.2.16 The Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan 2 (IMFLDP2) (2024)[13] was adopted in July 2024 and sets out the Council's view on how the Plan area should develop over the next 10 years and beyond. The Plan's Vision is expressed through four proposed, inter-related outcomes for the Inner Moray Firth (IMF) area, of which one is relevant to this chapter: "*Environment: The Inner Moray Firth's built, cultural and natural assets would be safeguarded and appropriately managed. Water, waste, heat, land and buildings would be used, re-used, located*

[5] *The Highland Council (2011). Special Landscape Area Citation.* Available at: https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/2937/assessment_of_highland_special_landscape_areas (Accessed: 28.10.2024).
[6] *The Highland Council* (2006). *Highland Renewable Energy Strategy and Planning Guidance.* Available at: https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/983/highland_renewable_energy_strategy_and_planning_guidelines
[7] *The Highland Council (2013). Green Networks Supplementary Guidance. Available at: https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/2959/green_networks_final_supplementary_guidance*
[8] *The Highland Council (2013). Sustainable Design Guide Supplementary Guidance. Available at: https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/3019/highland_council_sustainable_design_guide*
[9] *The Highland Council (2013). Trees, Woodlands and Development Supplementary Guidance. Available at: https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/354/trees_woodlands_and_development_supplementary_guidance*
[10] *The Highland Council (2013) Highland Historic Environment Strategy. Available at:* https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/11047/highland_historic_environment_strategy (Accessed: 28.10.2024).
[11] *The Highland Council (2018). Highland Forest and Woodland Strategy. Available at: https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/891/highland_forest_and_woodland_strategy*
[12] *The Highland Council (2024). Biodiversity Enhancement Planning Guidance. Available at:* https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/28840/biodiversity_enhancement_planning_guidance (Accessed: 28.10.2024).
[13] *The Highland Council,* (2024). *Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan 2 (IMFLDP2)*. Available at: https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/178/development_plans/202/inner_moray_firth_local_development_plan (Accessed: 11 September 2024).

and designed in a carbon clever way. The environmental quality of all places would be safeguarded and enhanced".

6.2.17 Within the IMFLDP2, general policies *'set out the overarching framework for planning decisions and underpin the Council's choices of particular local priorities and development sites in each main community.'* The following are policies which are relevant to this chapter:

- Placemaking Priorities 12: Drumnadrochit – *"Preserve the greenspaces and green corridors that permeate through the settlement and enhance their role as active travel routes"*; and
- Placemaking Priorities 36: Balnain - *"Better protect and enhance local greenspaces and Green Networks as conduits for the movement of people, wildlife and flood waters particularly along and across watercourses and woodland areas".*

6.2.18 Part of the Proposed Development Site is located within the draft Glen Urquhart Local Place Plan Area[14] (2024-2034) which was published in September 2024 by the Glen Urquhart Community Council. Within the 'Natural Environment and recreation' section of the plan, the document notes the important of Urquhart Castle, woodland areas and walking and cycle paths.

6.3 Consultation

6.3.1 Consultation with stakeholders relating to the LVIA is summarised within **Table 6-2 Summary of Consultation** below. This includes reference to consultation with NatureScot (NS) and The Highland Council (THC).

Table 6-2 Summary of Consultation

Date	Consultee	Key Topics	Summary of Response	Action Taken
25.06.2024 (scoping response)	NS	LVIA scope	NS noted that the Proposed Development will not affect any nationally important landscapes and were in agreement with the scope of the LVIA and suggested range of visualisations.	No action required.
19.09.2024 (scoping response)	THC	LVIA assessment, cumulative, guidance and visualisations.	Concerns over significant residual individual and cumulative effects. Use of THC material including SLA citations and published guidance to inform LVIA and cumulative schemes to include in the cumulative assessment. Production of visualisations to THC standard. Inclusion of all parts of the Proposed Development in the LVIA.	**Table 6-10 Summary of Effects: Operation Year 15** within this chapter reports the likely individual residual effects of the Proposed Development. This chapter sets out the guidance and THC material used to inform the LVIA, including SLA citations. The cumulative schemes that the LVIA have considered are also set out within this chapter. Visualisations have been produced to THC Standards (as well as to NatureScot guidance) (refer to **Volume 4: Visualisations**). All parts of the Proposed Development as outlined within **Chapter 2: Project and Site Description (Volume 2: Main Report)** have been included in the LVIA.
04.11.2024 (meeting held)	THC	Viewpoint selection, walking routes and sequential effects.	THC requested an additional viewpoint from a layby near to the LCW. THC also requested the addition of the Loch nam Breac Dearga trail (claimed right of way) to be included within the assessment. Discussed the routes to be included in the sequential assessment.	Additional Viewpoint from A82 layby near to the LCW (Viewpoint 13) was added. Loch nam Breac Dearga walking route has been added into the baseline and assessment of the LVIA, as well as the Glen Coiltie walking loop as discussed during the meeting. Sequential visual assessment has been included as part of the main

[14] *Glen Urquhart Community Council,* (2024). *Glen Urquhart Community Council Local Place Plan 2024-2034.* Available at: chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/http://glenurquhartcommunitycouncil.org.uk/GU%20LPP%20V5%202nd%20SEPTEMBER.pdf (Accessed: 17/01/25).

Date	Consultee	Key Topics	Summary of Response	Action Taken
				visual assessment and assessment of cumulative effects.

6.4 Methodology

Introduction

6.4.1 The following section summarises the methodology for the LVIA which builds on the general assessment methodology presented in **Chapter 4: Approach to EIA (Volume 2: Main Report).** It should be noted that the methodology for the LVIA does not use the standard significance matrix set out within Chapter 4, as the approach to determining significance is based on professional judgement supported by narrative descriptions. For clarity and in accordance with good practice, the assessment of potential effects on landscape character and visual amenity, although closely related, are undertaken separately.

Guidance and Standards

6.4.2 The LVIA has been undertaken using the following best practice guidance:

- Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition (GLVIA3)[15];
- Notes and Clarifications on Aspects of Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third edition (GLVIA3) Technical Guidance Note - 2024-01[16];
- Assessing landscape value outside national designations, Technical Guidance Note 02/21[17];
- Guide to Hydro Construction Good Practice[18];
- Visualisation Standards for Wind Energy Development[19];
- Assessing the cumulative landscape and visual impact of onshore wind energy developments[20];
- Visual representation of wind farms: Guidance – Version 2.2[21]; and
- Hydroelectric Schemes and the Natural Heritage[22].

6.4.3 GLVIA3 places a strong emphasis on the importance of professional judgement in identifying and defining the significance of landscape and visual effects. The LVIA has been undertaken by Chartered Landscape Architects who are experienced in undertaking and reporting assessments of similar types of projects. Professional judgement has been used in combination with structured methods and criteria to determine the sensitivity of landscape and visual receptors (informed by their value and susceptibility to change), the magnitude of effects on those receptors (i.e., the nature of the effect), and the significance of effects.

[15] *Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment.* (2013). *Guidelines for Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment* (Third Edition). Routledge.
[16] *Landscape Institute* (2024) *Notes and Clarifications on Aspects of Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third edition (GLVIA3) Technical Guidance Note - 2024-01.* Available at: https://www.landscapeinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/LITGN-2024-01-GLVIA3-NC_Aug-2024.pdf (Accessed: 16/10/2024).
[17] *Landscape Institute.* (2021). *Assessing landscape value outside national designations Technical Guidance Note 02/21* [Online]. Available: https://www.landscapeinstitute.org/publication/tgn-02-21-assessing-landscape-value-outside-national-designations/ (Accessed: 16/09/2024).
[18] *NatureScot.* (2019). *Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Scottish Renewables and the Association of Environmental Clerk of Works. Guidance - Guide to Hydro Construction Good Practice* [Online]. Available: https://www.nature.scot/doc/guidance-guide-hydro-construction-good-practice (Accessed: 16/09/2024).
[19] *The Highland Council.* (2016) *Visualisation Standards for Wind Energy Development* [Online]. Available: https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/12880/visualisation_standards_for_wind_energy_developments. (Accessed: 02/01/2025).
[20] *NatureScot.* (2021). *Guidance - Assessing the cumulative landscape and visual impact of onshore wind energy developments* [Online]. Available: https://www.nature.scot/doc/guidance-assessing-cumulative-landscape-and-visual-impact-onshore-wind-energy-developments (Accessed: 16/10/24).
[21] *Scottish Natural Heritage.* (2017). *Visual Representation of Wind Farms* [Online]. Available: https://www.nature.scot/doc/visual-representation-wind-farms-guidance (Accessed: 16/09/2024).
[22] *Scottish Natural Heritage.* (2015). *Hydroelectric Schemes and the Natural Heritage* [Online]. Available: https://www.nature.scot/doc/hydroelectric-schemes-and-natural-heritage (Accessed: 16/09/2024).

6.4.4 The method for the production of visualisations which support the completion of the assessment is set out in **Appendix 6.1: Landscape and Visual Methodology (Volume 5: Appendices).**

Other Relevant Guidance

6.4.5 Part of the Proposed Development Site lies within Forest Enterprise Scotland's (now Forestry and Land Scotland) Glen Urquhart Land Management Plan[23] area. The aim of the plan is to create a more varied forest with a greater range of species, gradually restoring native woodland while continuing timber productivity. The following plan objectives are relevant to this chapter:

- "*The Restoration of pinewood, broadleaf woodland and open habitat within Glen Urquhart;*
- *Provide opportunities for sustainable rural development through renewables projects and wood fuel production;*
- *Manage the forest sympathetically to the landscape and improve the visitor experience;*
- *Timber production, optimise the productive potential of the existing forest and develop native timber production over the long term; and*
- *Reduce risk to people and the environment through sustainable forest management, whilst building resilience for a changing climate*".

6.4.6 Part of the Proposed Development Site lies within the Forest Enterprise Scotland's (now Forestry and Land Scotland) Fort Augustus Forest Design Plan (FDP)[24] area. The aim of the plan is to restore native woodland at a landscape scale, and in the long term, to restore natural processes throughout the native woodland and open habitat from Glen Moriston to Fort Augustus. The following FDP objectives are relevant to this chapter:

- *"The restoration of native woodland at a landscape scale over the next 50 years;*
- *To minimise risk posed to people and the A82 trunk road through good design and practice;*
- *To protect and enhance the water quality of the Ness catchment;*
- *To promote resilience of the forest to the future challenges of climate change;*
- *To strengthen ties with the local community and enhance the landscape of the Great Glen and Loch Ness;*
- *Sustainable timber production within Inchnacardoch and the productive native woodland zones;*
- *To ensure that the network of open habitats of European and national importance within the plan area (blanket bog, dry and wet heaths and mountain scrub) are maintained as functional ecosystems and that their ecological value is preserved and enhanced through appropriate management practice; and*
- *To manage the heath habitats to favour some of the associated Species Action Framework as defined by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) such as black grouse".*

Study Area

6.4.7 The extent of the Study Area is determined by the potential visibility of the Proposed Development in the surrounding landscape and is proportionate to its size and scale and the nature of the surrounding landscape. For the purposes of this assessment the Study Area (shown on **Figures 6.1 to 6.9, Volume 3: Figures**) has been defined by a combination of ZTV analysis, fieldwork and professional judgement.

6.4.8 Based upon this, it is considered that it is highly unlikely that significant long term residual effects relating to landscape character and visual amenity would be possible from 15 kilometres (km) from the central part of the Proposed Development Site boundary. The Study Area has been extended approximately 20 km to the northeast and southwest due to the extent of theoretical visibility in these directions and the potential for likely significant effects.

[23] Forestry Commission Scotland (2016) *Glen Urquhart Land Management Plan Summary*. Available at: glen-urquhart-lmp-summary.pdf (forestryandland.gov.scot) (Accessed: 11/09/24).
[24] Forestry Commission Scotland (2014) *Fort Augustus Forest Design Plan 2014-2024*. Available at: fort-augustus-forest-design-plan.pdf (forestryandland.gov.scot) (Accessed: 11/09/24).

Assessment Scope

6.4.9 The assessment considers the effects during the three phases of the Proposed Development lifespan as identified in **Chapter 2: Project and Site Description (Volume 2: Main Report).** The phases comprise Pre-Construction and Enabling Works, Construction and Operation.

6.4.10 Decommissioning of PSH schemes is extremely rare and in the unlikely event that the Proposed Development was to be decommissioned the potential effects on the landscape and visual resource during decommissioning would be no worse than those assessed during the Construction and Operational Phases of works. Decommissioning effects are therefore not considered further in this chapter.

6.4.11 Landscape and visual effects can differ from one stage of the Proposed Development to the next and change over time as mitigation planting establishes and matures. The assessment therefore considers potential effects of the Proposed Development at each of the following stages:

- Pre-Construction and Enabling Works: including the upgrade of the existing Balnain Main Access (FLS access track), diversion of the Affric Kintail Way core path, site clearance, Borrow Pits, Temporary Construction Compound set up, Permanent Access Track construction, Tunnel Portal construction and exploratory tunnel excavation.
- Construction: including consideration of all temporary structures and works areas relating to construction, such as Temporary Construction Compounds including the workers accommodation, lay-down areas and the movement of plant and machinery. For the different parts of the Proposed Development, there are times within the Construction phase where the presence of plant, movement of material and construction works would be heightened, as summarised below. The construction programme is contained within **Chapter 2: Project and Site Description (Volume 2: Main Report).** The overall construction periods (Pre-Construction and Enabling Works and Construction) are expected to span up to eight years, however the more intensive periods are as follows:
  - Headpond construction: three years (short-term);
  - LCW construction: three years (short-term); and
  - Tunnel Portal construction: less than one year (short-term) at different points in the programme
- Operation year 1: potential effects associated with the Proposed Development following completion of the Construction phase and associated reinstatement of temporary construction works areas. This stage is intended to represent the potential worst-case operational effects prior to establishment of mitigation planting; and
- Operation year 15: potential longer-term effects of the Proposed Development 15 years after becoming operational. This stage is intended to help demonstrate how proposed mitigation planting would influence effects once it is established.

Baseline Data Collection

6.4.12 In order to assess the potential effects of the Proposed Development, it is necessary to determine the environmental conditions, resources and receptors that currently exist within the Proposed Development Site and in the surrounding area.

6.4.13 Field work was undertaken by Chartered Landscape Architects in May, October and November 2024 to inform the iterative design process, assess the existing character of the landscape and visit representative viewpoints. Seasonal differences are taken into consideration within the LVIA and the operational year 1 assessment on landscape character and visual amenity reports the worst-case scenario when broadleaf vegetation would not be in leaf.

6.4.14 Viewpoint photography was captured in November 2024, December 2024, January 2025 and February 2025.

6.4.15 Data sources that have been used to inform the baseline data gathering include but are not limited to the following:

- Planning policy and local plan evidence base documents;
- Published landscape character documents;
- Ordnance Survey mapping;
- ZTV mapping;

- Aerial photography; and
- Fieldwork photography.

Assessment Methodology

6.4.16 This section summarises the methodology for the LVIA for the Proposed Development. It builds on the general assessment methodology presented in **Chapter 4: Approach to EIA (Volume 2: Main Report)** and develops this to take account of the range of likely significant effects on the landscape character and visual amenity arising from the Pre-Construction and Enabling Works, Construction, Operation year 1 and Operation year 15 of the Proposed Development. The detailed description of the assessment methodology is included in **Appendix 6.1: Landscape and Visual Methodology (Volume 5: Appendices)** and is summarised below.

Summary of Landscape Assessment Methodology

6.4.17 In assessing and classifying the predicted effects from any likely impacts to the landscape resulting from the Proposed Development, the following criteria are considered:

- Landscape character baseline characteristics;
- Landscape sensitivity;
- Magnitude of landscape effects (note GLVIA3 refers to magnitude of effect rather than magnitude of impact as used in other chapters); and
- Resulting significance of landscape effects.

6.4.18 Landscape effects associated with the Proposed Development consider the change on landscape elements and features (or components), as well as the effect upon the general landscape character of the surrounding area and how it is experienced.

6.4.19 The relationship between sensitivity and magnitude of effect allows an assessment of the relative significance of predicted landscape effects to be made. The sensitivity of the landscape to change is a combination of the value of the LCT combined with the degree to which a particular LCT or feature can accommodate changes or new features, without unacceptable detrimental effects to its key characteristics.

6.4.20 The magnitude of landscape effect relates to the size, extent or degree of change likely to be experienced as a result of the Proposed Development. The magnitude takes into account whether there is a physical change resulting in the loss of landscape components, or a change beyond the land-take of the Proposed Development that might have an effect on the character of the area, and whether the impact is permanent or temporary.

6.4.21 The combination of the sensitivity of the landscape receptor and the magnitude of landscape effect determines the significance of landscape effects. For the purposes of this assessment, **moderate** and **major** effects would be deemed '**significant**'. Where significant environmental effects are identified, measures to mitigate these effects are proposed (where feasible) and remaining residual effects are identified.

6.4.22 A full explanation of the criteria used to assess sensitivity, magnitude of impact and classification of landscape effects is included in **Appendix 6.1: Landscape and Visual Methodology (Volume 5: Appendices)**.

Summary of Visual Assessment Methodology

6.4.23 The assessment of visual effects is structured by receptor groups (e.g., residents, users of recreational routes, and motorists). Individual receptors are identified through the analysis of the ZTV and field survey, within which views of the Proposed Development are likely to be possible. Individuals are subsequently categorised into receptor groups within different areas and representative or specific viewpoints are selected.

6.4.24 Views from each identified representative viewpoint are recorded, considering the receptor type, a baseline description of the existing views and the value of the view.

6.4.25 For the purposes of assessment, the sensitivity of a receptor and the magnitude of effect on that receptor are combined to determine the significance of effect that the Proposed Development is predicted to have on existing baseline visual conditions for that given receptor. As previously described for the landscape impact assessment, specific terminology is used to describe the magnitude of impact (see **Appendix 6.1: Landscape and Visual Methodology (Volume 5: Appendices)** for details).

Limitations and Assumptions

6.4.26 Regarding limitations, no technical difficulties or practical problems were encountered in producing the landscape and visual assessment. Fieldwork to inform the design process and assessment of the Proposed Development was undertaken in variable weather with moderate visibility, however, photographs used to inform the assessment were taken with good visibility.

6.4.27 Assumptions of the assessment of effects within the LVIA are set out as follows:

- The assessment has been undertaken based on the worst-case scenario of the Proposed Development. This includes the maximum heights and footprints of the various component parts of the Proposed Development and Option B for the UCW;
- The water level changes arising from the Proposed Development would result in more frequent variation in the water level of Loch Ness but would not exceed the existing maximum and minimum water levels. It has been assumed that there is not likely to be any material alteration to the appearance of the loch shore due to the more frequent variation in water level. Further information on water levels can be found within **Chapter 11: Flood Risk and Water Resources (Volume 2: Main Report)**;
- The movement of construction barges on the loch during the Construction phase would occur during both daytime and nighttime; and
- Lighting requirements would be as follows:
  - Pre-Construction and Enabling Works: TC01, TC02, TC03, TC05, TC06 and TC07. Such compounds are located in a small area near to the River Coiltie. Floodlights would be installed at the compounds and would be lit in low light levels;
  - Construction: TC05, PC08, TC09, TC10, TC11, PC12, TC13 (Headpond), PC14, PC15, TC16, TC17 and LCW. Floodlights would be installed at the compounds and would be lit in low light levels. Lighting rigs would be used, as required, to provide lighting in remote locations including at the Headpond. Navigational buoys for the LCW and the tower crane would be lit in low light levels. Construction barges on Loch Ness would be lit in low light levels and only if operating during the hours of darkness; and
  - Operation: PC04 (GIS Switchyard), PC07, PC08, PC13, PC15 and LCW. These areas would comprise motion-sensor lighting which would be activated as required in low light levels and during the hours of darkness.

6.5 Baseline Environment

6.5.1 An overview of the current baseline conditions for landscape and visual amenity is outlined in this section. The baseline provides a description of the relevant aspects of the current state of the environment that may be affected. In line with GLVIA3[15], the visual baseline therefore establishes the "*area in which the development may be visible*" (page 32) in order to define the relevant aspects of the current landscape and visual environment of the Study Area.

Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)

6.5.2 ZTVs show the area in which the Proposed Development would theoretically be visible, highlighting the locations where people may experience views of the Proposed Development and assisting in the identification of the Study Area, the scope of the LVIA and viewpoints in those locations that may be affected. The ZTVs are illustrated on the following figures **(Volume 3: Figures)**:

- **Figure 6.2A Zone of Theoretical Visibility – Headpond and Embankments;**
- **Figure 6.2B Zone of Theoretical Visibility – Lower Control Works;**
- **Figure 6.2C Zone of Theoretical Visibility – Secondary Bund;**
- **Figure 6.2D Zone of Theoretical Visibility – Temporary Construction and Permanent Compounds;**
- **Figure 6.2E Zone of Theoretical Visibility – Construction Tracks;**
- **Figure 6.2F Zone of Theoretical Visibility – Permanent Tracks;** and

- **Figure 6.2G Zone of Theoretical Visibility – Operational Elements Combined and Permanent Tracks**.

6.5.3 The ZTV parameters and limitations are detailed below:

- The ZTV is based on a bare earth ground model, generated using Ordnance Survey (OS) Terrain 5, which is a 5 m grid resolution terrain model and does not take into account the screening effects of vegetation, buildings or other structures;
- Some areas of theoretical visibility may comprise woodland, plantation, moorland or agricultural land, where there is effectively no public access and the likelihood of views being experienced is consequently low;
- The ZTV does not take account of the likely orientation of a viewer, such as the direction of travel and there is no allowance for reduction of visibility with distance, weather, or light;
- The operational tracks would be built at the end of the construction period however this will be over a limited amount of time and would not have construction vehicles along therefore these have been split out into the operational period for the purposes of ZTV production;
- Headpond (**Figure 6.2A**): The ZTV is based upon a grid of points at 50m apart within the Headpond Top Water Level; a grid of points at 20m apart on the embankments; a line of points at 20m apart along the embankment and Spillway top;
- LCW (**Figure 6.2B**): The ZTV is based upon a line of points at 20m intervals along the Access Road of the Smolt Screen, around the platform of the diffuser and along the raised Landscaping Area and Access Road to the A82. Heights within Table 6-5 are Above Ordnance Datum (AOD);
- Secondary Bund (**Figure 6.2C**): The ZTV is based upon a gird of points at 5m apart within the Secondary Bund Top Water Level and a grid of points 5m apart within the Headpond;
- Temporary Construction and Permanent Compounds (**Figure 6.2D**): The ZTV is based upon the information within Table 6-5. All Temporary Construction and Permanent Compounds that are not alluded to, use the palisade security fencing maximum heights and locations; and
- Construction and Permanent Access Tracks (**Figure 6.2E and Figure 6.2F**): The ZTV is based upon a series of points along the Construction Access Tracks and Permanent Access Tracks with 2 m high vehicles at 50 m intervals.

6.5.4 These limitations mean that the ZTV maps tend to overestimate the extent of the visibility, both in terms of the area from which the Proposed Development is visible and the extent of the Proposed Development which is visible. It should be considered as a tool to assist in assessing the theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development and not a measure of the visual effect.

6.5.5 The following table outlines the maximum height parameter assumptions used within the ZTV maps.

Table 6-3 ZTV maximum height assumptions

Feature	Height (m)	Location of Maximum Elevation on Feature
LCW – Smolt Screen Access Road	17.5 (AOD)	20 m intervals along access road
LCW – Diffuser Platform	18.5 (AOD)	At vertices and 20 m intervals along platform
LCW – Raised Landscaping Area	21 (AOD)	20 m intervals around raised area.
Secondary Bund Top Water Level	439 (AOD)	Based on 20m grid across the surface area
Headpond Top Water Level	518 (AOD)	Based on 50m grid across the surface area
Headpond Embankment Top	520 (AOD)	A line of points at 20m intervals

Feature	Height (m)	Location of Maximum Elevation on Feature
PC04 GIS Switchyard	15 (Above Ground Level)	At corners of structure and at 20 m intervals around perimeter.
TC16 Barge	2 (AOD)	At corners of compound and at 20 m intervals around perimeter.
Security Fences	2.4 (Above Ground Level)	20 m intervals around perimeter

6.5.6 **Table 6-4 Zone of Theoretical Visibility Baseline** below outlines the parts of the Proposed Development which ZTVs have been produced for as well as a brief description of the extent of theoretical visibility across the Study Area. It should be noted that the ZTVs do not include the screening effect of existing vegetation within the Study Area, including blocks of forestry plantation, therefore the actual visibility is likely to comprise a lesser extent than what is shown on the ZTV plans (**Figures 6.2 A-F (Volume 3: Figures)**).

Table 6-4 Zone of Theoretical Visibility Baseline

Zone of Theoretical Visibility	Part of Proposed Development included	Brief description of the extent of theoretical visibility	Figure reference
Headpond	All permanent aspects of the Headpond: Main Dam, Saddle Dam 1, Saddle Dam 2, Spillway and the Headpond waterbody.	The extent of the theoretical visibility of the permanent aspects of the Headpond is relatively limited within the Study Area. The theoretical visibility is concentrated within parts of the immediate landscape around the Headpond, further to the northeast along the edge of Loch Ness (noting that large parts of this area comprise forestry plantation which would screen views) and on higher parts of the landscape to the southwest. Due to the surrounding landform to the Headpond both immediately and in the wider landscape, there is typically a range of variations of parts of the Headpond visible at one time. There are only very limited areas where all elements of the Headpond would be visible at once, typically limited to areas of higher elevation in close proximity to and to the northeast and southwest of the Headpond.	**Figure 6.2A Zone of Theoretical Visibility – Headpond and Embankments (Volume 3: Figures)**
LCW	All permanent aspects of the LCW infrastructure including the smolt screen, raised area and diffuser platform.	The extent of the theoretical visibility of the permanent LCW infrastructure is broadly limited to the parts of the waterbody of Loch Ness, largely in the southern part, and also narrow bands along the loch shore (typically limited to within 1 km), predominantly on the southern edge of Loch Ness except a small area on the northern edge where the LCW would be located.	**Figure 6.2B Zone of Theoretical Visibility – Lower Control Works (Volume 3: Figures)**
Secondary Bund	All permanent aspects of the Secondary Bund.	The extent of the theoretical visibility of the permanent Secondary Bund would be limited to the area immediately around the infrastructure and very limited areas to the southwest on higher land.	**Figure 6.2C Zone of Theoretical Visibility – Secondary Bund (Volume 3: Figures)**
Temporary Construction and Permanent Compounds	All Temporary Construction Compounds and Permanent Compounds.	The extent of theoretical visibility of the Temporary Construction Compounds would be largely limited to the immediate landscape around which they are located, within the Balmacaan Forest (noting that large parts of this area comprise forestry plantation which would screen views) and small areas on the steep-sided glen and plateau landscape on the eastern and western edges of Loch Ness in the northern part of the loch. The theoretical visibility would also include the waterbody of Loch Ness, but this would largely be associated with the Temporary Construction Compound at the LCW. The theoretical visibility associated with the Permanent Compounds would be similar but more extensive, largely within the northern part of the Study Area. Large parts of the theoretical visibility would be within areas of existing forestry plantation, which would lessen actual visibility to more open and elevated areas of the landscape.	**Figure 6.2D Zone of Theoretical Visibility – Temporary Construction and Permanent Compounds (Volume 3: Figures)**
Construction Tracks	Temporary Construction Tracks	The extent of theoretical visibility of the Temporary Construction Tracks would be variable across the Study	**Figure 6.2E Zone of Theoretical**

Zone of Theoretical Visibility	Part of Proposed Development included	Brief description of the extent of theoretical visibility	Figure reference
	including the existing track to be upgraded (off the A831) and new tracks.	Area. The theoretical visibility would include the immediate landscape around the new tracks and upgrade of the existing access track off the A831, however limited in part by the landform in the surrounding area which would partially contain the theoretical visibility. The proximity of parts of the Temporary Construction Tracks to existing forestry plantation would likely limit actual visibility in this part of the landscape and the wider landscape. There would be theoretical visibility in pockets across the wider landscape, predominantly on higher elevation in the southern, eastern and northern parts of the Study Area. There would be limited pockets where both the existing track upgrade and new tracks would both be visible.	**Visibility – Construction Tracks (Volume 3: Figures)**
Permanent Tracks	Permanent Tracks including existing tracks (off the A831 and Alltsigh track) and new permanent tracks.	The extent of theoretical visibility of the Permanent Tracks would be variable across the Study Area. The theoretical visibility would include the immediate landscape around the Permanent Tracks and upgrade of the existing access track off the A831, however limited in part by the landform in the surrounding area which would partially contain the theoretical visibility. The proximity of parts of the Permanent Tracks to existing forestry plantation would likely limit actual visibility in this part of the landscape and the wider landscape. There would be theoretical visibility in pockets across the wider landscape, predominantly on higher elevation in the southern, eastern and northern parts of the Study Area. There would be theoretical visibility across part of the waterbody of Loch Ness associated with the upgrade of the existing Alltsigh track. There would be limited pockets where both the existing track upgrades and new tracks would be visible in combination.	**Figure 6.2F Zone of Theoretical Visibility – Permanent Tracks (Volume 3: Figures)**
Operational Elements Combined and Permanent Tracks	All permanent operational aspects of the Proposed Development, including the Main Dam, Saddle Dam 1, Saddle Dam 2, Spillway, the Headpond waterbody, LCW infrastructure including the smolt screen, raised area and diffuser platform, Secondary Bund, Permanent Compounds and Permanent Tracks.	The extent of theoretical visibility of the operational elements of the Proposed Development would be variable across the Study Area. The theoretical visibility would include the immediate landscape around the operational infrastructure, however limited in part by the landform in the surrounding area which would partially contain the theoretical visibility. The combined visibility of all the operational elements of the Proposed Development and the Permanent Tracks would be largely concentrated across the waterbody and eastern shore of Loch Ness and pockets within the northern and southern parts of the Study Area typically on higher elevation. There are limited situations where there is theoretical visibility of both the Headpond and the LCW. This occurs in concentrated areas in the northern part of the Study Area near to Dores and in the southern part to the north of Fort Augustus.	**Figure 6.2G Zone of Theoretical Visibility – Operational Elements Combined and Permanent Tracks (Volume 3: Figures)**

Landscape Baseline

Landform and Hydrology

6.5.7 The land within the Proposed Development Site boundary is primarily characterised by a rugged upland terrain, featuring plateau moors and forested areas (refer to **Figure 6.1 Topography, Volume 3: Figures**). The Proposed Development Site is characterised by diverse landform, including a rocky moorland plateau and steep sided glen. Higher points include Meall Fuar-mhonaidh (approximately +699 m AOD), Glas-Bheinn Mhòr (approximately +651 m AOD),and Loch nam Breac Dearga (approximately +480 m AOD) in the valley between these two high points. The terrain descends from the rocky moorland plateau to the hills surrounding Loch Ness at approximately +300 m AOD. From there, the hills further fall to form the broad steep sided glen, reaching approximately +20 m AOD at the loch side.

6.5.8 The Proposed Development Site lies partly within the catchment of the Allt Saigh watercourse, fed by several smaller streams and lochans in the mountains west of Loch Ness. The Allt Saigh flows into Loch Ness at Alltsigh, with the upper reaches diverted at a dam to the Livishie Power Station. The Proposed Development Site also lies within the catchment of the River Coiltie.

Movement and Connectivity

6.5.9 There are several A roads and B roads within the Study Area which are interconnected to a series of minor roads serving local towns and villages. This includes the A82 which runs within and adjacent to the Proposed Development Site boundary connecting Invermoriston to Drumnadrochit and continues north to Inverness on the western side of Loch Ness. The A831 lies to the north of the Proposed Development Site boundary, connecting Drumnadrochit to Cannich to the west. The B852 lies close to the loch-side on the eastern bank of Loch Ness.

6.5.10 There are several long distance recreational routes within the Study Area including the Loch Ness 360, Great Glen Way, Affric Kintail Way, Trail of the Seven Lochs, Monadhliath Trail and the South Loch Ness Trail (refer to **Figure 6.6 Local Walking Routes, Recreational Routes, Core Paths and Operational Zone of Theoretical Visibility, Volume 3: Figures**). There are also promoted cycling routes, including part of the National Cycle Network and the Caledonia Way. The routes typically lie adjacent to Loch Ness on either the western or eastern bank in the northern part of the Study Area near to the loch shore. Within the southern part of the Study Area, the routes on the western side of Loch Ness typically turn more inland to higher ground and do not follow the loch shore until reaching near to Fort Augustus. The exceptions are the Trail of the Seven Lochs, the Affric Kintail Way and Monadhliath Trail which are generally further inland. The Great Glen Canoe Trail is also located along the waterbody of Loch Ness itself.

6.5.11 Several core paths and named walking and cycling trails are found within the Study Area, connecting various popular recreational routes and settlements. The majority are around and within close proximity to Loch Ness, as well as a small concentration of routes around Glen Urquhart. Several walking routes are found within and nearby to the Proposed Development Site boundary, including the Glen Coiltie Walking Loop, a route along the River Coiltie from Drumnadrochit, the Meall Fuar-mhonaidh Route and Loch nam Breac Dearga Trail.

Land Use, Built Form and Vegetation

6.5.12 Land use within the Study Area is varied and includes agricultural land use, recreational walking and cycling and recreational watercraft. The land use includes deer stalking which is carried out on the estate upon which the Proposed Development Site lies. Forestry operations, including felling, are also commonplace within the Study Area.

6.5.13 Drumnadrochit is the most notable settlement, with Dores, Invermoriston, Fort Augustus and Foyers being other smaller settlements within the Study Area. Outside of these settlement areas, residential properties are sparsely located and are relatively limited. This includes residential properties on the loch shore which are characteristically white in render and are visible from the surrounding landscape. Other built form in the vicinity of the Proposed Development Site includes the power station at Foyers and Urquhart Castle.

6.5.14 The upland terrain that dominates the bulk of the Proposed Development Site is mainly blanket bog and heath, which supports a managed deer population. The blanket bog also supports notable bog flora, and there are localised areas of other species-rich habitats. Woodland including commercial plantation and local ancient semi-natural woodland is present in Glen Coiltie and in more peripheral parts of the Proposed Development Site to the west towards Balnain and the south beside Loch Ness. To the northeast and west of the Proposed Development Site boundary are two interconnected woodlands, comprised of Craigmonie community woodland and Balmacaan Wood. The woodlands consist of both ancient and mixed woodland and are located approximately 300 m to the Proposed Development Site boundary at the closest point.

6.5.15 The Proposed Development Site also contains pockets of plantation forest. Plantation forest is at various stages of maturity and subject to woodland management plans. Areas of woodland where felling has been identified can be found to the north and west of the Proposed Development Site boundary. At the time of writing there were no proposed felling sites within the Proposed Development Site boundary.

Landscape Scope

6.5.16 The landscape receptors included within the Study Area are outlined in **Table 6-5 Landscape Assessment Scope** below with further information on inclusion and exclusion within the Landscape Assessment (refer to **Appendix 6.2: Landscape Assessment (Volume 5: Appendices)**). A rationale is also included for explanation, and it has been informed by professional judgement, field work and various Zone of Theoretical Visibility Plans prepared (**Figures 6.2A to 6.2G, Volume 3: Figures**).

6.5.17 In 2019, NatureScot published national LCTs[25]. The LCTs represent areas of consistent and recognisable landscape character. The LCTs within the Study Area are shown on **Figure 6.5 Landscape Character Types and Operational Zone of Theoretical Visibility (Volume 3: Figures)**.

Table 6-5 Landscape Assessment Scope

Receptor	Inclusion or exclusion in landscape assessment	Rationale for inclusion or exclusion
Central Highlands Wild Land Area (WLA)	Excluded	Unlikely for significant effects on the special landscape qualities of the WLA or its setting due to distance.
Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA	Included	Potential for significant effects on the special landscape qualities due to proximity and intervisibility with the Proposed Development.
Aldourie Castle Gardens and Designed Landscape (GDL)	Excluded	Unlikely for significant effects on the special landscape qualities of the GDL or its setting due to distance and orientation of the views from the GDL.
Dochfour GDL	Excluded	Unlikely for significant effects on the special landscape qualities of the GDL or its setting due to distance and orientation of the views from the GDL.
LCT 222 Rocky Moorland Plateau – Inverness	Included	Likely for significant effects on the key characteristics due to proximity and intervisibility with the Proposed Development.
LCT 225 Broad Steep-Sided Glen	Included	Likely for significant effects on the key characteristics due to proximity and intervisibility with the Proposed Development.
LCT 220 Rugged Massif – Inverness	Included	Likely for significant effects on the key characteristics due to proximity and intervisibility with the Proposed Development.
LCT 221 Rolling Uplands – Inverness	Included	Likely for significant effects on the key characteristics due to proximity and intervisibility with the Proposed Development.
LCT 223 Flat Moorland Plateau with Woodland	Excluded	Unlikely for significant effects on the key characteristics due to distance and intervening vegetation coverage within the LCT resulting in limited intervisibility with the Proposed Development.
LCT 224 Farmed and Wooded Foothills	Included	Likely for significant effects on the key characteristics due to proximity and intervisibility with the Proposed Development.
LCT 226 Wooded Glen – Inverness	Included	Likely for significant effects on the key characteristics due to proximity and intervisibility with the Proposed Development.
LCT 227 Farmed Strath – Inverness	Included	Likely for significant effects on the key characteristics due to proximity and intervisibility with the Proposed Development.
LCT 229 Enclosed Farmland	Excluded	Unlikely for significant effects on the key characteristics due to distance and intervisibility with the Proposed Development due to intervening landform and vegetation.

Landscape Designations

6.5.18 Parts of the Study Area have been designated for their scenic qualities or historic landscape qualities as shown on **Figure 6.4: Landscape Designations and Operational Zone of Theoretical Visibility (Volume 3: Figures).** The ZTVs have been used to identify the extent to which there is theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development from these designated landscapes.

[25] NatureScot *(2019) Landscape character assessment in Scotland*. Available at: https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/landscape/landscape-character-assessment/landscape-character-assessment-scotland (Accessed: 22 January 2025).

6.5.19 Any designations that are not within the ZTVs have been scoped out of the LVIA as explained in **Table 6-5 Landscape Assessment Scope** and are consequently not included within the baseline section as there is no potential for the Proposed Development to result in effects on receptors outside the ZTVs.

6.5.20 Additional designated landscapes are present within the wider landscape including the Monadhliath WLA, Glen Affric NSA and Glen Strathfarrar NSA. These, however, are either on the periphery of the Study Area or beyond it and combined with analysis of the initial ZTV suggests that potential effects on the perceptual and special qualities of these designated areas are unlikely to be affected by the Proposed Development. This approach was presented at scoping stage which NS and THC both agreed with.

Special Landscape Areas (SLAs)

6.5.21 THC have designated particular landscapes considered to be of regional importance through designations entitled Special Landscape Areas (SLAs)[26]. The Proposed Development Site boundary lies partly within the Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA and the majority of the SLA lies within the Study Area (refer to **Figure 6.4: Landscape Designations and Operational Zone of Theoretical Visibility (Volume 3: Figures)**).

6.5.22 An overview of this SLA and key characteristics have been set out within the Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas[26]. This document states that:

6.5.23 *"This area surrounds and includes Loch Ness from Lochend in the north to Fort Augustus in the south. It includes the bounding hill slopes on the loch's western and eastern shores, the prominent hill Meall Fuar-mhonaidh, which lies between Drumnadrochit and Invermoriston, and the elevated interior moorland and agricultural plateau which contains Lochs Ashie, Duntelchaig, and Ruthven".*

6.5.24 "*This area is dominated by the vast linear expanse of Loch Ness within its dramatic landform trench, flanked by steep, towering wooded slopes leading to undulating moorland ridges and a contrasting remote interior plateau of upland lochs, small woods and rocky knolls…The loch and its environs are considered to be typical of the Great Glen as a whole*".

6.5.25 The key landscape and visual characteristics are set out as follows:

- "*The striking, linear landform trench containing Loch Ness offers a dramatic sequence of landscape elements along its 23 mile length. The horizontal water's surface combines with adjacent steep slopes to create a simple and distinctive profile of contrasting planes and edges. The skyline is generally horizontal although there are occasional features such as hill peaks, pylons, telecommunications mast and distant views of wind turbines;*
- *The steep sided slopes of the glen are frequently incised by burns, rivers and waterfalls which fall over sheer rocky cliffs;*
- *There are long vistas of grand proportions, and the sheer scale of the loch dwarfs the numerous boats, and yachts which frequent its waters;*
- *At regular intervals along the loch there are small areas of low-lying pasture with associated settlements, which nestle at the mouths of the rivers flowing into Loch Ness. These offer a human scale juxtaposed against the vast extent of open water and dramatic linear landform character. Public access to the loch's shore is typically limited to these areas of habitation due to the steepness of the glen side slopes;*
- *To the east of Loch Ness an undulating moorland plateau characterised by rocky knolls and small-scale woods and forests, and peppered with upland lochs, creates an intricate landscape mosaic which contrasts strongly with the adjacent simple drama of the Great Glen;*
- *The few quiet bays and more accessible areas of shore and forest give relief from the unrelenting linearity of Loch Ness and provide opportunity to savour its tranquillity;*
- *Historic features frequently form point foci within the glen, typically commanding positions of good defence, access or better farmland. These form landmarks while moving sequentially along the glen; and*
- *On the western shore there are more recent crofting townships and older irregular townships*".

[26] The Highland Council (2011). *Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas.* Available at: https://www.highland.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/2937/assessment_of_highland_special_landscape_areas.pdf (Accessed: 22 January 2025).

6.5.26 In addition to the key characteristics of the SLA, the special qualities focus on less tangible and experiential aspects of the landscape considered to contribute strongly to what is special about the area. The Special Qualities of this SLA are identified in the citation as follows:

The Dramatic Great Glen

- *"The imposing steep-sided landform trench, formed by a large strike-slip fault which slices through the centre of the Highlands, creates a dramatic linear landscape which is relatively easily to access and readily appreciated. The very striking profile of the glen is typically best appreciated from either end, or from the water, although good views are also obtained from elevated viewpoints upon the loch-side ridges and hill tops.*
- *The steep sided slopes of the glen are often deeply incised by watercourses, including the notable Falls of Foyers. These slopes are also flanked by a diverse mix of woodland and forests and form an open smooth moorland skyline ridge.*
- *Strong contrasts exist between the northern and southern slopes in terms of access, activity and settlement which are all considerably more limited on the south side of the loch, reflecting the variations in access, slope, aspect and microclimate.*
- *There are distinctive views of grand proportions and long vistas along a vast expanse of the loch, with the detail of foreground features gradually diminishing to distant silhouettes.*
- *Atmospheric mists and banks of low cloud often linger over Loch Ness and enhance its dramatic character. Limited visibility during these conditions may reinforce the myth of the monster which is responsible for the many visitor attractions and facilities in Drumnadrochit.*
- *Urquhart Castle is a prominent focus along the loch, occupying a magnificent situation on an irregular headland of rock jutting out into the loch and commanding splendid views up and down the Great Glen. Also of significance is Foyers imposing former British Aluminium Factory which is most clearly seen from the north slopes.*
- *The landscape is typically experienced from the B852, B851 and the A82. From these routes, however, the loch is viewed at an oblique angle and thus these do not reveal the striking 'v' shape of the glen that is visible at either end. High numbers of walkers and cyclists also view the landscape from the Great Glen Way, while others see it from a high number of boats on the loch, some travelling the length of the Caledonian Canal. From elevated locations along the glen, it is easier to appreciate the simple line, large scale and great expanse of the loch although, even from these places, it is typically difficult to see all of the loch in one view due to its great length. It is also difficult to perceive the scale of the landscape due to a lack of size indicators. From elevated viewpoints, the glen can be seen within its context of a landscape of elevated plateaux and hills.*
- *Most of the hills and high points along the enclosing ridges are indistinct in character, however Meal Fuar-mhonaidh is one example of a distinct hill peak, nearly 700m high, it stands out as a landmark clearly visible from both ends of the loch and is even prominent in views southwest from the castle in Inverness. Meall Fuar-mhonaidh is a good vantage point from which to appreciate the massive scale and alignment of the Great Glen fault within a backcloth of the Monadhliath massif to the south and the Balmacaan and Affric mountain interior to the northwest, both areas which possess wildness qualities."*

Contrasting Intimate Plateau

- *"An undulating moorland plateau of rocky knolls flanked by small-scale woods and forests, interspersed with a sequence of tranquil lochs, pastures and sporadic farmsteads, creates an intimate mix of diverse landscape elements of changing visual interest."*

Historic Landscape

- *"Achculin, accessed from the Balmore Road, is a well preserved depopulated township that is now a scheduled monument.*
- *The eastern shore of Loch Ness incorporating Loch Duntelchaig, Loch Ashie and Loch Ruthven were clear foci of intensive prehistoric activity. Numerous roundhouses and field systems, interspersed with ritual and burial monuments such as burial cairns, burnt mounds and standing stones proliferate in this area; 3 crannogs are located on Loch Ruthven. This was clearly a highly significant area in prehistory supporting a large population.*

- *Two features dominate Fort Augusts; the Caledonian Canal, with its conspicuous flight of locks, which links Loch Ness to Loch Oich and bisects the town, and Fort Augustus Abbey. The latter was enlarged in 1876 using stone from the original fort*."

6.5.27 The citation notes 'sensitivity to change' for the SLA, including the introduction of built development due to views up and down and across Loch Ness, the importance of the sequential experience when travelling along the loch and the tranquillity of the SLA. It also sets out 'potential for landscape enhancement', including the creation of views through to Loch Ness and native woodland planting.

6.5.28 The landscape value of the Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA is considered to be **high**.

Other relevant designations

6.5.29 Other designations that are found either within the Proposed Development Site boundary or within a 1 km buffer and may influence landscape value but are not assessed in relation to landscape and visual matters include various Sites of Special Scientific Interest, a Special Protection Area, Scheduled Monuments and Listed Buildings. For further information on other relevant designations, refer to **Chapter 7: Terrestrial Ecology (Volume 2 Main Report)** and **Chapter 12: Cultural Heritage (Volume 2 Main Report)**.

Landscape Character

6.5.30 The following section gives baseline information and a landscape value judgement for all those LCTs scoped into the assessment on landscape character.

LCT 222 - Rocky Moorland Plateau – Inverness

6.5.31 LCT 222[27] is located in the western part of the Study Area, to the west of Loch Ness and is split into a northern section and a southern section by the River Enrick and LCT 226: Wooded Glen - Inverness. The key characteristics of this LCT are given as follows:

- *"Open, gently rolling moorland plateaux with distinct edges descending to adjoining straths and glens or rising to merge with Rugged Massif;*
- *Plateau with a patchy texture of small rocky outcrop hills, bogs and lochans in no clear hierarchy or discernible pattern;*
- *Hilltops and upper slopes dominated by rocky heather moorland, except in the northeast where extensive, contrasting conifer forests dominate;*
- *Regenerating trees and scrub in glens with rivers and sheltered lower hillsides;*
- *Strong contrast in landcover and settlement between the plateau and adjoining straths and glens;*
- *Sparsely inhabited and little evidence of active land use;*
- *A few historic sites indicating past settlement and land use;*
- *Orientation is difficult due to the lack of hierarchy, pattern and foci in the landform and landcover;*
- *Within the plateau distance and scale are generally difficult to perceive due to the lack of elements of known size;*
- *Distinct edges isolate the plateau from adjacent areas and give the sense of a vast, remote, upland moor;*
- *At the plateau edges, expansive views over inhabited straths and glens create surprise;*
- *Eastern areas have a semi-exposed character with occasional views of distant hills framed by the distinct edges of conifer forests; and*
- *Perception of remoteness on the open plateau, from the rugged patchy texture and absence of obvious human artefacts."*

6.5.32 Within the LCT, the rocky moorland plateau has a strong sense of identity, including the summit of Meall Fuar-mhonaidh, scenic quality, wildness, tranquillity and strong recreational value such as recreational routes, including parts of the Great Glen Way, the Loch Ness 360 trail, and local walking routes. Small parts of the LCT are covered

[27] NatureScot *(2019) Landscape Character Type 222 ROCKY MOORLAND PLATEAU – INVERNESS.* Available at: https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/LCA/LCT%20222%20-%20Rocky%20Moorland%20Plateau%20-%20Inverness%20-%20Final%20pdf.pdf.

by the Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA. Taking all of this into account, the landscape value of this LCT in the Study Area is deemed to be **high.**

LCT 225 – Broad Steep-Sided Glen

6.5.33 LCT 225[28] is located is centrally located within the Study Area and incorporates the Great Glen and Loch Ness which together create the district's most prominent landscape feature. The key characteristics of this LCT are given as follows:

- *"A clearly defined, broad, linear, steep sided, V-shaped glen and deep loch cutting through mountains and hills, with limited areas of flatter ground.*
- *Large-scale conifer forests with small areas of open moorland covering most of the glen sides, particularly the lower slopes.*
- *Small patches of broad leaved woodlands, mostly in side glens and close to the shore.*
- *Agricultural land on less steep slopes, glen intersections and alluvial plains.*
- *A few settlements, with a well-defined core, located at glen intersections and on gentler slopes, separated by long stretches of relatively uninhabited land.*
- *Contrast between the busy trunk road and larger settlements on the west side and the quiet minor road on east side which has fewer settlements separated by large undeveloped areas.*
- *Strong evidence of past settlement in the number and diversity of archaeological and historic sites from prehistoric times to the 20th Century.*
- *Contrast between the visual and seasonal diversity of broadleaf woodland and bright, open pockets of farmland and the forested and moorland surroundings.*
- *Contrast between the smaller scale landscapes of settled, lower slopes and the large scale moorland and forested backdrop.*
- *A simple linear and enclosed visual composition of bands of land, water and sky, with long skylines of even height, and the glen and loch as unifying features.*
- *Visual focus directed along the linear route of the glen or across the water to the opposite shore and up to the skyline."*

6.5.34 Despite some detracting features, such as Foyers Power Station and forestry plantation, the LCT maintains strong cultural associations and a distinct sense of identity. Loch Ness itself has highly scenic qualities with a sense of wildness and tranquillity in parts. The area is well-served by numerous recreational routes, including pleasure craft, core paths and recreational routes, such as the Loch Ness 360 trail. The LCT is almost entirely covered by the Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA. Taking all of this into account, the landscape value of this LCT in the Study Area is deemed to be **high**.

LCT 220 – Rugged Massif

6.5.35 LCT 220[29] is located in the southern part of the Study Area to the west of Loch Ness and to the south of the River Moriston. It is situated between LCT 226 Wooded Glen – Inverness to the west and LCT 225 Broad Steep-Sided Glen to the east. The key characteristics of this LCT are given as follows:

- *"Parallel ranges of massive mountains of irregular landform divided by deep glaciated valleys.*
- *Mainly broad, sometimes rounded rugged summits connected by long ridges and relatively few individual mountain peaks, particularly in the east.*
- *Steep terrain with many mountain-side burns and occasional lochans in corries and depressions.*
- *Landcover of rock outcrops, glacial debris, deer-grazed heather and rough grassland create a smooth surface with mottled texture, with alpine habitats on high land to the west.*

[28] NatureScot *(2019) Landscape Character Type 225 BROAD STEEP-SIDED GLEN.* Available at: https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/LCA/LCT%20225%20-%20Broad%20Steep-Sided%20Glen%20-%20Final%20pdf.pdf
[29] NatureScot *(2019) Landscape Character Type 220 RUGGED MASSIF - INVERNESS.* Available at: https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/LCA/LCT%20220%20-%20Rugged%20Massif%20-%20Inverness%20-%20Final%20pdf.pdf

- *Almost uniform texture and cover from lower to upper levels in the east makes the size of the hills difficult to perceive.*
- *Tracts of Caledonian pinewoods and occasional small patches of open birch woodland add colour, texture and seasonal diversity.*
- *Largely uninhabited, few signs of human activity or human artefacts in the interior, and sparse archaeological evidence.*
- *Hill ranges combine to create a fairly even undulating skyline and a sense of enclosure when viewed from straths.*
- *Views from the hill tops at the edges of the massif offer expansive views of the adjacent straths and surrounding landscape character types.*
- *A sense of remoteness and wildness which is particularly strong within the interior."*

6.5.36 The LCT has a strong sense of identity due to the scale of mountains present. Within the Study Area there are recreational opportunities including summits and a core path. A sense of remoteness and wildness is apparent across this LCT with expansive views of Loch Ness, woodland, heathland and adjacent straths and glens resulting in scenic qualities. A small part of the LCT is located within the Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA. Considering all these factors, the landscape value of this LCT in the Study Area is assessed as **high.**

LCT 221 – Rolling Uplands - Inverness

6.5.37 LCT 221[30] is located to the east of Loch Ness within the southeastern part of the Study Area and consists of rolling hills. The uplands lie to the east of LCT 227 Farmed Strath - Inverness. The key characteristics of this LCT are given as follows:

- *"A series of large scale, smooth, rounded hills with summits of similar height forming broad, undulating upland plateaux containing occasional steep-sided straths.*
- *Open heather moorland dominates, the uniform colour and texture accentuating the landform.*
- *Straths floors contain inbye pastures, trees and small patches of woodland.*
- *Conifer forests limited to the lower edges of uplands and strath sides.*
- *Settlement limited to a few isolated farms in remote straths.*
- *A few mainly single track roads, integrated within the landform.*
- *Uninhabited interior, largely inaccessible to vehicles.*
- *Archaeological evidence of settlement and farming from prehistoric times to the 19th century.*
- *Striking colour and textural contrast between strath floors and moorland vegetation above.*
- *Expansive views from the hill tops and plateaux create a strong sense of openness and exposure.*
- *Scale and distance difficult to judge.*
- *Few signs of active management in the interiors, creating a strong perception of remoteness, although this is affected by a number of large wind farm developments."*

6.5.38 The LCT comprises large swathes of smooth rolling hills which are punctured by the occasional rocky outcrop, which create localised patterns on the upper slopes between areas of heather moorland, resulting in natural heritage value. Vistas from hilltops and plateaus are vast, evoking a profound sense of openness and exposure, and limited settlement contributes to scenic value and tranquillity qualities. The uninhabited interior has wildness qualities, albeit noting the context of large wind farm developments, and the archaeological evidence contributes to cultural heritage value. Within the Study Area defined recreational routes are limited to a very small section of the Loch Ness 360 trail. Considering all these factors, the landscape value of this LCT in the Study Area is assessed as **medium.**

[30] NatureScot *(2019) Landscape Character Type 221 ROLLING UPLANDS - INVERNESS.* Available at: https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/LCA/LCT%20221%20-%20Rolling%20Uplands%20-%20Inverness%20-%20Final%20pdf.pdf

LCT 224 – Farmed and Wooded Foothills

6.5.39 LCT 224[31] is located within the eastern part of the Study Area, to the east of Loch Ness which comprises a ridge of low rocky hills which backdrops the south side of the Great Glen. The key characteristics of this LCT are given as follows:

- *"Low rocky hills with a complex and irregular landform of steep sided slopes, rocky ridges and peaks, with some small corries, short glens and lochs.*
- *Open summits with heather moorland, crags and rough pasture, contrasting with mid and lower slopes of forests and woodlands interspersed with rough and improved pasture.*
- *A diverse mix of woodland, agricultural land use and open moorland creating a balanced but complex range of open and enclosed spaces.*
- *Small farms, crofts and farming settlements scattered on the mid to lower slopes, with a network of narrow roads, stone dykes and hedgerows field boundaries.*
- *Many archaeological relics from prehistoric to 18th-19th Century periods.*
- *Contrast between the panoramic views of the open, exposed upper slopes and summits, and the sheltered and enclosed lower, slopes with conifer forests and woodlands.*
- *A sense of care and prosperity in settled and farmed parts due to active agricultural land management."*

6.5.40 The LCT comprises a good landscape condition, particularly in the settled and farmed parts, and exhibits cultural heritage value due to the presence of archaeological relics. The LCT comprises a complex geology, which offers natural heritage value. Numerous core paths are found within this LCT, parts of the Loch Ness 360 trail recreational route and recreational activity within the conifer forests and woodland, offering recreational value. The scenic, wildness and tranquillity qualities are limited in comparison to other LCTs in the Study Area due to the strong influence that forestry and felling operations have on the character of the LCT. A large proportion of the LCT is covered by the Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA. Considering all these factors, the landscape value of this LCT in the Study Area is assessed as **high**.

LCT 226 – Wooded Glen – Inverness

6.5.41 LCT 226[32] features a mix of wooded and agricultural glens located to the west of Loch Ness. The LCT is located in the western part of the Study Area and is separated into two areas by LCT 222: Rocky Moorland Plateau - Inverness. The key characteristics of this LCT are given as follows:

- *"Long glens set within uplands and mountains, divided into upper and lower glens by a cross-cutting narrow farmed strath.*
- *Lower glens broader, with steep upper slopes, undulating lower slopes and a narrow floor mostly occupied by river terraces; upper glens are narrower and more rugged, influenced by the surrounding mountains.*
- *Rivers, water bodies (lochs and sometimes reservoirs), river flats and areas of wetland in valley floors.*
- *Balance between open and enclosed space formed by the diverse mix of landscape patterns, land uses, conifer forests, woodlands and fields.*
- *Distinctive mix of rugged hillsides, extensive Caledonian pine forest and lochs in the upper glens.*
- *Actively farmed and relatively settled lower glen floors, with small clusters of houses near roads, and farms and crofts in open areas at the base of slopes.*
- *Contrast between the settled and farmed floor of lower glens and their open heather moorland and forests of the upper slopes.*
- *Sparse settlement in upper glens, limited to a few farms and crofts, isolated lodges and clusters of estate buildings usually sheltered by trees or woodland.*

[31] NatureScot *(2019) Landscape Character Type 224 FARMED AND WOODED FOOTHILLS.* Available at: https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/LCA/LCT%20224%20-%20Farmed%20and%20Wooded%20Foothills%20-%20Final%20pdf.pdf
[32] NatureScot *(2019) Landscape Character Type 226 WOODED GLEN - INVERNESS.* Available at: https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/LCA/LCT%20226%20-%20Wooded%20Glen%20-%20Inverness%20-%20Final%20pdf.pdf

- *Central, major through-road in lower glens, with minor roads along the glen sides which are integrated with the landform and settlement pattern.*
- *Single track road along the base of the upper glens, terminating at the upper edge of the glen.*
- *Large number and range of archaeological remains in the lower glens.*
- *Strong sense of history in upper glens created by the Caledonian pinewood stands.*
- *Intimate, semi-enclosed landscape within the glen floor with limited visibility, due to the screening effect of trees and landform.*
- *Distant views along the glens from open hill ground creating a feeling of openness and exposure.*
- *Increasing sense of naturalness and remoteness traversing the upper glens into mountainous interior."*

6.5.42 The LCT comprises extensive areas of plantation forestry, which, despite being a detracting feature to scenic quality for parts of the LCT, contributes to the historic mosaic landscape pattern and provides functional landscape value. The LCT has cultural value due to the large number of archaeological remains and local distinctiveness due to the vegetation cover and hydrology. The LCT also comprises recreational opportunities including core paths, recreational routes, such as part of the Affric Kintail Way, Loch Ness 360 trail and the Great Glen Way and local walking paths. Considering all these factors, the landscape value of this LCT in the Study Area is assessed as **medium.**

LCT 227 – Farmed Strath - Inverness

6.5.43 LCT 227[33] is divided into two distinct straths, at Strathnairn/Stratherrick and Strathglass, located in the western and eastern parts of the Study Area, extending from southwest to northeast. The key characteristics of this LCT are given as follows:

- *"Linear to sinuous channels cut through uplands, with a central meandering river located in a flat or gently undulating strath floor, edged by the steep, rocky, side slopes.*
- *Pronounced and dynamic river meanders of Strathglass, emphasised by riparian trees, oxbow lakes and curved wetland features.*
- *Small scale broadleaf woodlands and small blocks of conifer forest within Strathnairn/Stratherrick strath floor which do not override openness of the strath.*
- *A few small settlements located on the strath floor or sides and infrequent small farms, crofts, estate buildings or groups of houses.*
- *Roads which generally relate well to landform, with a limited number of river crossing points.*
- *Many archaeological sites in Strathnairn dating from a range of periods.*
- *Contrast between the open, inhabited and agricultural landscape of the straths, the side slopes cloaked in alternating broadleaf woodlands, conifer forests and heather moorland, and the setting of adjacent rugged, remote uplands.*
- *Diversity of colour and texture added by river meanders, wetlands, damp pastures and thin bands of woodland.*
- *An overall sense of linear enclosure, which directs distant views along the strath and allows uninterrupted views of the flanking hill slopes."*

6.5.44 The LCT is comprised of two separate straths running southwest to northeast and these areas feature flat or gently undulating strath floors bordered by steep, rocky upland slopes, resulting in natural heritage value. The LCT comprises a strong sense of identity due to the contrasts in vegetation cover and landform compared with the adjacent uplands. The perceptual qualities are more limited compared to other LCTs due to the limited wildness, tranquillity and scenic qualities due to the influence of the road network and considerable forestry cover. Several core paths and recreational routes, including the Loch Ness 360 Trail and the Affric Kintail Way, traverse these areas. A very small part of the Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA lies within this LCT. Considering all these factors, the landscape value of this LCT in the Study Area is assessed as **medium.**

[33] NatureScot *(2019) Landscape Character Type 227 FARMED STRATH - INVERNESS.* Available at: https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/LCA/LCT%20227%20-%20Farmed%20Strath%20-%20Inverness%20-%20Final%20pdf.pdf

Visual Baseline

Visual Receptors

6.5.45 The visual assessment determines the degree of anticipated change to visual amenity experienced by people (visual receptor) that would occur as a result of the Proposed Development. The visual assessment considers static and sequential effects through analysis of individual viewpoints, considered representative of the range of views within the Study Area.

6.5.46 Visual receptors within the scope of this assessment are described in the following section and are grouped into the following categories:

- Residential, comprising those in residential dwellings;
- Recreational, including users of walking and cycling routes;
- Visitors to places of interest, including those visiting summits; and
- Road users, including users of the local transport network.

6.5.47 The visual receptors included within this scope of assessment are those located within the area of theoretical visibility shown on the ZTV plans (**Figures 6.2 A-F (Volume 3: Figures)**) as those outside of this theoretical visibility are not considered to have the potential for significant adverse effects by the Proposed Development.

Residential

6.5.48 There are a limited number of settlements and scattered properties within the Study Area. There are residential dwellers present which experience a range of views that have the potential to be affected by the Proposed Development.

6.5.49 **Drumnadrochit:** A settlement located on relatively low ground near the west shore of Loch Ness at the foot of Glen Urquhart. The settlement lies to the south of the River Enrick, with the majority of dwellings to the south of the A82. The majority of the residential properties have been orientated to take advantage of the wide-angle views towards Loch Ness and the slopes of the wooded glens on the far valley slopes. The settlement is contained by various blocks of existing mature vegetation, including Urquhart Bay Wood, Craig Monir Wood and Creag na h-Iolaire.

6.5.50 **Foyers:** A settlement located on the eastern shore of Loch Ness and is located approximately 15 km north of Fort Augustus. The landform rises steeply to the eastern part of the settlement from the lower levels of the settlement near to the loch shore. The B852 runs through the eastern part of the settlement and the Foyers Power Station lies off the B852 to the north of the settlement. The majority of the dwellings are perched on the steep valley slopes, offering expansive views of Loch Ness and the loch's western slopes. The settlement is a popular stopping place for tourists, with small hotels, holiday lodges and a camp site, although the focus is considered to be the Falls of Foyers. The settlement is contained by various blocks of existing mature vegetation. Views experienced from residential receptors within Foyers are represented by Viewpoint 2 as shown within **Volume 4: Visualisations.**

6.5.51 **Balnain:** A settlement located off the A831, to the north of the River Enrick and is located approximately 8 km west of Drumnadrochit. The settlement comprises mainly low-density housing, with dwellings either overlooking the rolling landscape towards the upland wooded glens or nestled within densely vegetated areas where views are largely screened. The settlement is contained by various blocks of existing mature vegetation.

6.5.52 **Dores:** Dores is a low-lying settlement on the eastern shore of the northern end of Loch Ness and is situated approximately 10 km southwest of Inverness. The settlement features densely arranged dwellings along both sides of the B852. Most residential properties are oriented to capture views over Loch Ness to the wooded glens to the west. Lower storey views are generally screened by mature loch side vegetation. Upper storey views from residential properties have more open and expansive views of Loch Ness and the surrounding landscape.

6.5.53 **Fort Augustus:** This settlement is located at the southern end of Loch Ness set back from the loch shore occupying low-lying ground. Divided by the River Oich and the Caledonian Canal, most residential development lies south of these watercourses along the A82. The settlement is a popular tourist stop, and it comprises small hotels, holiday lodges and campsites. Due to the low-lying land, loch views are limited, but views of the surrounding valley sides are visible from most dwellings, with upper storey views offering more expansive vistas. There is extensive forestry plantation to the north and west of the settlement.

6.5.54 **Individual properties and farmsteads:** Residential receptors are dispersed throughout the Study Area, including near to the loch shore of Loch Ness off the A82 and B852 networks. These include both individual dwellings and clusters of residential dwellings, often along a transport route. While views from these properties are often partially obscured by mature loch side vegetation, upper stories often offer expansive vistas across Loch Ness, rising craggy uplands and wooded glens in the wider landscape. Views experienced from residential receptors within individual properties and farmsteads at Bunloit are represented by Viewpoint 4 as shown within **Volume 4: Visualisations.**

Recreational

6.5.55 Local walking routes, long distance recreational routes and core paths are shown on **Figure 6.6, Local Walking Routes, Recreational Routes, Core Paths and Operational Zone of Theoretical Visibility (Volume 3: Figures)** and are described below. The recreational routes, core paths and local paths are evaluated further in **Chapter 16: Socio-Economic, Recreation and Tourism (Volume 2: Main Report)** in terms of their recreational merit.

6.5.56 **Recreational routes:** There are numerous recreational routes within the Study Area, including the Loch Ness 360, Great Glen Way, Affric Kintail Way, Trail of the Seven Lochs, South Loch Ness Trail and Monadhliath Trail. There are also promoted cycling routes, including part of the National Cycle Network and the Caledonia Way. The routes typically lie adjacent to Loch Ness on either the western or eastern bank in the northern part of the Study Area near to the loch shore. Within the southern part of the Study Area, the routes on the western side of Loch Ness typically turn more inland to higher ground and do not follow the loch shore until reaching near to Fort Augustus. The exceptions are the Trail of the Seven Lochs, the Affric Kintail Way and Monadhliath Trail which are generally further inland. While parts of the routes are surrounded by forestry plantation and woodland vegetation that limit long-distance views, there are locations along the routes that offer wide-angled, long-distance views with minimal screening elements across the various lochs and surrounding landscape including gently rolling moorland plateau, straths and glens, rocky outcrop hills and heather moorland, bogs and lochans and steep valley ridges. Views experienced from recreational routes are represented by Viewpoints 2, 4, 6, 7, 8 and 10 as shown within **Volume 4: Visualisations.**

6.5.57 **Core paths:** Within the Study Area there are numerous core paths connecting recreational routes and settlements. The majority are around and within close proximity to Loch Ness, as well as a small concentration of routes near to Glen Urquhart. Views experienced vary due to the network of forestry plantations and landform within the Study Area, which restricts views in places. In other places, there are wide panoramic views comprising lochs, steep sided glens, rocky outcrop hills and moorland and a backdrop of rugged mountains. Views experienced from core paths are represented by Viewpoints 3, 6, 7, 11 and 12 as shown within **Volume 4: Visualisations**.

6.5.58 **Local walking paths and informal tracks:** The Study Area includes various local walking routes, including a trail to the summit of Meall Fuar-mhonaidh, the Loch nam Breac Dearga Trail, the Glen Coiltie Walking Loop and a historic route following the River Coiltie. Views along these routes vary due to forestry plantations and landform, with some areas offering restricted views and others providing wide panoramic vistas across the landscape. Views experienced from local walking paths and informal tracks are represented by Viewpoints 1 and 12 as shown within **Volume 4: Visualisations**.

6.5.59 **Recreational watercraft:** Loch Ness supports recreational activities such as boating, canoeing and fishing. The Great Glen Canoe Trail is a recreational route which extends along Loch Ness. Views from the loch are typically expansive, encompassing the waterbody and the typically vegetated shorelines. These shorelines ascend to reveal views with minimal screening elements across the various lochs and surrounding landscape including gently rolling moorland plateau, straths and glens, rocky outcrop hills and heather moorland, bogs and lochans, and steep valley ridges. Views experienced from recreational watercraft are represented by Viewpoint 9 as shown within **Volume 4: Visualisations**.

Visitors to Places of Interest

6.5.60 **Summits:** The Study Area contains numerous high points, including the distinctive summit of Meall Fuar-mhonaidh. From this summit, receptors experience long-distance panoramic views that are primarily focused on the surrounding landscape. Minimal screening elements allow open views across the various lochs including gently rolling moorland plateau, straths and glens, rocky outcrop hills and heather moorland, bogs and lochans, and steep valley ridges. Views experienced from visitors to summits are represented by Viewpoint 1 as shown within **Volume 4: Visualisations**.

6.5.61 **Local landmarks and viewpoints:** There are several local landmarks and viewpoints in the Study Area surrounding Loch Ness, including the Suidhe viewpoint, Loch Ness View scenic viewing point off the B852 and

the viewing point on Dores Beach. The local landmarks and viewpoints typically have expansive views across Loch Ness with minimal intervening landform or vegetation. Views experienced from local landmarks and viewpoints are represented by Viewpoints 5, 7 and 8 as shown within **Volume 4: Visualisations.**

Road Users

6.5.62 **A82:** The A82 is located along the western edge of Loch Ness, linking Inverness to the north and Fort Augustus to the south. Within the Study Area, the A82 broadly follows the alignment of Loch Ness, diverting inland at Drumnadrochit and Invermoriston to cross the Waterways. Views of Loch Ness, both across to the opposite side of the steeply rising glen and the distinctive visual corridor along Loch Ness, are often intermittently screened or filtered by mature woodland or forestry plantation along the loch shore. There are occasional laybys which offer expansive vistas across the water. Views experienced from the A82 are represented by Viewpoint 13 as shown within **Volume 4: Visualisations.**

6.5.63 **A831:** The A831 is located within the northern part of the Study Area, running east to west from Kilmichael broadly following the River Enrick and Glen Urquhart for part of the route. The road is located along the glen floor and is predominantly enclosed by the rising slopes either side of the glen, mature woodland vegetation and forestry plantation. The surrounding vegetation and low-lying nature of parts of the road create a semi-enclosed landscape with long-distance views restricted however other sections of the road have more distant and exposed views along the glens.

6.5.64 **B852:** The B852 runs along the eastern shore of Loch Ness, connecting Dores in the north to Foyers further south. Within the Study Area, the B852 generally follows the path of Loch Ness and slightly inland when the route reaches Foyers. Some parts of the road are bordered by dense vegetation and forestry plantation, while other sections offer sweeping views across Loch Ness to the forested areas, open moorlands and rocky outcrops found on the opposite valley slopes. Views experienced from the B852 are represented by Viewpoints 2 and 5 as shown within **Volume 4: Visualisations.**

6.5.65 **B862:** The B862 runs along the eastern side of Loch Ness but is typically located slightly inland, except at Fort Augustus and at Dores where the route passes the shore of Loch Ness. The visibility from the route is varied as some parts are enclosed by adjacent blocks of forestry plantation whilst other sections have expansive views across the wider landscape due to elevated positioning and a lack of intervening vegetation or landform. The mix of fields, lochs and small scattered farming settlements creates a dynamic landscape with constantly changing views of open and enclosed spaces. Views experienced from the B862 are represented by Viewpoints 8 and 10 as shown within **Volume 4: Visualisations.**

6.5.66 **Local roads:** There is a network of local roads traversing the landscape linking farmsteads, crofts and settlements to the main transport corridors. These minor roads tend to be narrower and integrate with the landform and settlement pattern. Views from these roads range from more open views across the moorland plateau landscape and lochs to being enclosed and contained by woodland planting and blocks of forestry plantation. The local roads include the local network through Drumnadrochit, Foyers and Fort Augustus. Views experienced from the local road network are represented by Viewpoint 4 as shown within **Volume 4: Visualisations.**

Viewpoints

6.5.67 **Table 6-6 Viewpoints**, below, provides a list of the 13 specific and representative viewpoints that have been selected for assessment within the LVIA as the most likely to be significantly affected by the construction and operation of the Proposed Development. These viewpoints have been selected based on a desktop study, analysis of the ZTVs, targeted site work and consultation with THC. They have been selected to provide a range of viewing distance and viewing experience of the different scheme components (during Pre-Construction and Enabling Works, construction and permanent structures in operation). These viewpoints are shown on **Figure 6.7a and b Viewpoints and Operational Zone of Theoretical Visibility (Volume 3: Figures).**

6.5.68 It is acknowledged that part of the landscape within the Study Area is comprised of plantation forests at different stages of felling. It is assumed that this would remain to some degree as expressed within the baseline description and value judgements for each viewpoint below. Where any planned felling would affect views, this has been considered at the assessment phase.

Table 6-6 Viewpoints

Number	Location	Receptor Type and Rationale	Relevant Landscape Character Type	Theoretical Visibility with part of Proposed Development	Grid Reference	Above Ordnance Datum (AOD)
1	Meall Fuar-mhonaidh summit	Type: Specific Viewpoint Recreational users at the summit of Meall Fuar-mhonaidh and users of the walk to the summit of Meall Fuar-mhonaidh. Within Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA.	LCT 222: Rocky Moorland Plateau – Inverness	Headpond	NH 45706 22218	689 m
2	Settlement of Foyers	Type: Representative Viewpoint Residential, recreational and road users - receptors including residential receptors in Foyers, travellers on the B852, recreational receptors along the Caledonia Way and recreational users of the Loch Ness 360 trail and South Loch Ness Trail. Within Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA.	LCT 225: Broad Steep-Sided Glen near to the boundary of LCT 224: Farmed and Wooded Foothills	LCW	NH 49868 20253	155 m
3	Foyers Campsite	Type: Representative Viewpoint Recreational and visitors – receptors at the camping site and users of the core path network on the edge of Loch Ness. Within Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA.	LCT 225: Broad Steep-Sided Glen	LCW	NH 49277 21132	21 m
4	Great Glen Way and Bunloit Road near Bunloit	Type: Representative Viewpoint Recreational receptors along the Great Glen Way and Loch Ness 360 trail near to Bunloit, residential receptors off Bunloit Road and road users along Bunloit Road. Within but near to the boundary of the Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA.	LCT 225: Broad Steep-Sided Glen near to the boundary of LCT 222: Rocky Moorland Plateau - Inverness	Headpond	NH 49747 25266	256 m
5	Beach near to Loch Ness View off the B852	Type: Representative Viewpoint Recreational receptors from the beach near to the Loch Ness View scenic viewing point off the B852. Within Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA.	LCT 225: Broad Steep-Sided Glen	Headpond and LCW	NH 55076 28512	19 m
6	Great Glen Way near Urquhart Castle	Type: Representative Viewpoint Recreational receptors along the Great Glen Way, Loch Ness 360 trail and the core path network near to Urquhart Castle. Within Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA.	LCT 225: Broad Steep-Sided Glen	Headpond	NH 53599 30364	73 m

Number	Location	Receptor Type and Rationale	Relevant Landscape Character Type	Theoretical Visibility with part of Proposed Development	Grid Reference	Above Ordnance Datum (AOD)
7	Dores Beach	Type: Specific Viewpoint Recreational receptors near to the core path network, the Loch Ness 360 trail, South Loch Ness Trail and the Caledonia Way. Within Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA.	LCT 225: Broad Steep-Sided Glen	Headpond and LCW	NH 59813 34855	16 m
8	Suidhe Viewpoint off the B862	Type: Specific Viewpoint Recreational receptors along the Loch Ness 360 trail, South Loch Ness Trail and from the Suidhe Viewpoint and road users along the B862. Within Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA.	LCT 221: Rolling Uplands – Inverness near to the boundary of LCT 224: Farmed and Wooded Foothills	Headpond	NH 44961 10547	390 m
9	Loch Ness, canoeists and pleasure craft	Type: Representative Viewpoint Recreational receptors with views directed across Loch Ness from the Great Glen Canoe Trail. Representative of recreational users of those canoeing along Loch Ness and pleasure craft. Within Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA.	LCT 225: Broad Steep-Sided Glen	Headpond and LCW	NH 40820 11010	17 m
10	B862 and Loch Ness 360 Trail near to Fort Augustus	Type: Specific Viewpoint Recreational receptors along the Loch Ness 360 Trail and the Caledonia Way at the head of Loch Ness and road users along the B862. Within Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA.	LCT 225: Broad Steep-Sided Glen	LCW	NH 38603 08426	18 m
11	Core Path to the northwest of Fort Augustus	Type: Representative Viewpoint Recreational receptors on elevated land on core path network.	LCT 226: Wooded Glen – Inverness near to the boundary of LCT 220: Rugged Massif – Inverness	Headpond	NH 29443 11535	263 m
12	Local walking users off the Core Path network and Glen Coiltie Walking Loop	Type: Representative Viewpoint Recreational users – receptors on the local walking network along the River Coiltie just off the core path network and Glen Coiltie Walking Loop.	LCT 222: Rocky Moorland Plateau - Inverness	Temporary and Permanent Compounds and Temporary and Permanent Access Tracks	NH 46852 27044	264 m
13	A82 layby	Type: Representative Viewpoint Road users – users along the A82. Within Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA.	LCT 225: Broad Steep-Sided Glen	LCW	NH 48295 22035	27 m

Viewpoint 1 – Meall Fuar-mhonaidh summit

6.5.69 This viewpoint is a specific viewpoint which is experienced by recreational users walking to the summit of Meall Fuar-mhonaidh. The viewpoint is located on the western side of Loch Ness and is located within the central part of the Study Area. Further to the northwest of the viewpoint location, views overlooking Loch nam Breac Dearga are visible in the foreground from the steep rocky crags. Whilst the view from the summit is panoramic, the focus of the view is the body of Loch Ness and along the Great Glen.

6.5.70 The foreground of the view comprises the rocky moorland plateau which falls as it extends into the middle ground, before rising again to areas of higher ground in the middle ground and background. There are several lochs and lochans visible in the middle ground and background, including Loch Ruighe an t-Seilich. A high point in the middle ground which is prominent in the view is Glas-bheinn Mhor, however due to the elevated positioning of the viewpoint, this does not screen views to the mountains on the skyline in the far distance. An existing wind farm (Bhlaraidh Wind Farm) is visible in the background of the view, set against the landform beyond, however it does not dominate due to the large-scale landscape that it is set within and the panoramic nature of the view. The wider massif and mountains in the background of the view draws the eye due to the large-scale landscape and panoramic views across it.

6.5.71 The view contains an iconic view from the summit of Meall Fuar-mhonaidh which is recognised on maps and in guidebooks, and there is a specific route to reach the summit. The viewpoint is located within the Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA. Whilst the view does contain some detracting features, such as wind farm developments, this does not diminish the overall scenic quality of the view, such that the value of the view is deemed to be **very high**.

Viewpoint 2 – Settlement of Foyers

6.5.72 This viewpoint is a representative viewpoint which is experienced by residential, recreational and road users. The receptors include residential receptors off the B852 which generally have windows orientated towards Loch Ness, users of the Loch Ness 360 trail, the Caledonia Way and South Loch Ness Trail and users of the B852. The viewpoint is located on the eastern side of Loch Ness and is located within the central part of the Study Area.

6.5.73 The foreground comprises mature vegetation alongside the western side of the B852 which is on steeply sloping land down to the edge of Loch Ness in the middle ground of the view. The foreground vegetation heavily screens views towards the middle ground and background of the view, however there are filtered views and direct views through small gaps to the water body of Loch Ness and the broad steep-sided glen rising to the rocky moorland plateau on the western edge of Loch Ness. There is occasional movement on Loch Ness associated with recreational watercraft as well as on the western edge of Loch Ness with traffic on the A82. The residential receptors are located on relatively higher ground than the viewpoint location, therefore the intervening vegetation is likely to have less of a screening effect, notably from upper stories.

6.5.74 The landform visible in the background of the view is largely covered by forestry plantation along the loch shore and extending higher up the slope with small pockets of native woodland. There are occasional gaps exposing the steep slopes where scrub vegetation is evident along with sections of cleared forestry. The rocky moorland plateau is visible on the upper slopes forming the skyline, which is largely devoid of any vegetation cover.

6.5.75 Whilst the viewpoint is located within the Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA the view contains a typical view from the steep-sided glen on the edge of Loch Ness and does not have particularly scenic qualities due to the extensive forestry plantation cover in the view. The value of the view is deemed to be **medium**.

Viewpoint 3 – Foyers Campsite

6.5.76 This viewpoint is a representative viewpoint which is experienced by visitors and recreational users. The receptors include visitors to the camping site on the edge of Loch Ness and recreational users of the core path network. The viewpoint is located on the eastern side of Loch Ness and is located within the central part of the Study Area.

6.5.77 The foreground comprises open views towards the expansive water body of Loch Ness. There is occasional movement on Loch Ness associated with recreational watercraft as well as some passing traffic visible on the western edge of Loch Ness associated with the A82.The broad steep-sided glen rising to the rocky moorland plateau on the western edge of Loch Ness is visible in the middle ground. The background of the view down the loch to the east and west is largely screened by intervening loch side mature trees in the foreground.

6.5.78 The landform visible in the middle ground of the view is largely covered by forestry plantation along the loch shore and extending higher up the slope with small pockets of native woodland. There are occasional gaps where the sloping land is visible, generally with scrub vegetation formed on top, and some areas that have been felled. The rocky moorland plateau is then visible on the upper slopes forming the skyline, which is largely devoid of any vegetation cover.

6.5.79 The view is relatively typical of shore level vistas on the shore of Loch Ness and does not have particularly scenic qualities due to the extensive forestry plantation cover in the view. There are benches near to the viewpoint location which are orientated towards Loch Ness and the viewpoint is located within and is of the Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA, the value of the view is deemed to be **medium**.

Viewpoint 4 – Great Glen Way and Bunloit Road near Bunloit

6.5.80 This viewpoint is a representative viewpoint which is experienced by residential, recreational and road users. The receptors include residential receptors off Bunloit Road, recreational users of the Great Glen Way and users of Bunloit Road. The viewpoint is located on the western side of Loch Ness and is located in the central part of the Study Area.

6.5.81 The foreground comprises Bunloit Road with post and wire fencing on the northern edge of Bunloit Road and shrub vegetation on the southern edge as well as small-scale built form and caravans. There is also movement in the view associated with passing vehicles along Bunloit Road. The middle ground contains more wooden fencing as well as residential dwellings interspersed with pockets of mature vegetation and a wood pole line as the land rises away from the viewpoint location. The vegetation comprises a mix of native vegetation and areas of forestry plantation.

6.5.82 Higher landform within the background of the view is generally only visible through and between pockets of mature vegetation in the foreground and middle ground. The skyline is undulating, including the prominent summit of Meall Fuar-mhonaidh which is distinctive in the view as a high point.

6.5.83 The view contains a typical view from the steep-sided glen on the edge of Loch Ness within the Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA but does not have particularly scenic qualities due to the multitude of elements in the foreground and middle ground, including built form, vegetation and fencing, which along with pockets of forestry plantation, distract from the composition of higher landform on the horizon. The value of the view is deemed to be **medium.**

Viewpoint 5 – Beach near to Loch Ness View off the B852

6.5.84 This viewpoint is a representative viewpoint which is experienced by recreational users. The receptors include those using the beach on the edge of Loch Ness with steps from the Loch Ness View scenic viewing point. The beach is noted on the sign at the Loch Ness View scenic viewing point as "*one of the safest and easiest places to get down to the lochside*" and has more expansive views than the scenic viewing point due to a lack of intervening foreground vegetation. Receptors do not include users of the B852, Trail of the Seven Lochs, core paths, South Loch Ness Trail and Loch Ness 360 as the majority of views towards the loch are screened by intervening loch side vegetation.

6.5.85 The foreground comprises the expansive water body of Loch Ness which extends from the rocky beach with pockets of mature loch side vegetation. There is occasional movement on Loch Ness associated with recreational watercraft as well as on the western edge of Loch Ness associated with the A82. Landform rising on the western edge of Loch Ness is visible in the middle ground which rises steeply and includes Urquhart Castle on the promontory, however this is set against the rising landform which reduces its prominence in the view.

6.5.86 The steep-sided glen on the western side of Loch Ness, which extends into the background, is largely covered by expansive blocks of forestry plantation and mature native loch side vegetation with some gaps. The landform is relatively shallower with pockets of open agricultural enclosures and interspersed residential properties immediately opposite the viewpoint location towards Drumnadrochit. The landscape is large-scale across the wide panorama. The eye is drawn down the loch towards the higher landform in the background, which includes the summit of Meall Fuar-mhonaidh set behind an intervening landform of the steep-sided glen.

6.5.87 The view contains a scenic view from the edge of Loch Ness with expansive views of the water body and down the loch. The view is located near to the Loch Ness View scenic viewing point which has signage, picnic benches and associated parking. The view contains some detracting features such as forestry plantation, however, remains highly scenic due to the composition of the landform with the waterbody. The view also comprises Urquhart Castle which has cultural associations and is located within the Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA. The value of the view is deemed to be **very high**.

Viewpoint 6 – Great Glen Way near Urquhart Castle

6.5.88 This viewpoint is a representative viewpoint which is experienced by recreational users. The receptors include users of the Great Glen Way recreational route and the core path network. The viewpoint is located on the western side of Loch Ness and within the northern part of the Study Area.

6.5.89 The foreground comprises the route of the Great Glen Way recreational route which is bound by pockets of scrub and mature tree vegetation as well as a post and wire fence. The landform falls considerably down the steep-sided glen from the foreground into the middle ground which meets a band of mature native woodland on the loch edge. The expansive water body of Loch Ness extends into the middle ground which reaches the loch shore on the eastern edge of Loch Ness in the background of the view as well as the loch shore further along the western edge of Loch Ness. There is occasional movement on Loch Ness associated with recreational watercraft as well as glimpses of traffic on the A82.

6.5.90 Due to the angle of the view and interlocking nature of the steep landform, more extensive views of the loch are curtailed. The landform rises steeply from the distinctive Urquhart Castle as a focal part of the view on the loch edge along with residential buildings interspersed within areas of mature native and forestry vegetation and more open pastoral field enclosures. This part of the view also contains a large, felled area of forestry with access tracks visible. Beyond this landform, there are views to higher landform in the distance further to the north, however this is largely screened by intervening forestry plantation.

6.5.91 The view contains a typical view from the steep-sided glen on the edge of Loch Ness. It does have some scenic qualities associated with the water body of Loch Ness, diminished somewhat by forestry plantation and associated felling areas within the view. The view also comprises Urquhart Castle which has cultural associations, and the viewpoint is located within and is of the Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA. The value of the view is deemed to be **very high**.

Viewpoint 7 – Dores Beach

6.5.92 This viewpoint is a specific viewpoint which is experienced by recreational users. The receptors include users of Dores Beach, the core path network, the Loch Ness 360 trail, South Loch Ness Trail and the Caledonia Way. The viewpoint is located near to the head of the loch on the eastern side of Loch Ness and is located near to the northeastern boundary of the Study Area. The residential receptors nearby are generally not orientated with views of the loch, so the viewpoint is not considered to be representative of them.

6.5.93 The foreground is dominated by the expansive body of Loch Ness and the view comprises an open view across Loch Ness from an iconic viewing location on the beach at Dores. The viewing location includes the presence of signage with information about the view across Loch Ness. Loch Ness has minimal activity on the loch in this location, with only pleasure craft occasionally visible primarily in the background of the view.

6.5.94 The view is focused down the body of Loch Ness surrounded by the steep-sided glen and rocky moorland plateau on a higher elevation. The loch shore in the foreground and extending to the background is well vegetated, albeit with gaps in places in the middle and long distance. The vegetation on the steep-sided glen comprises native woodland but also pockets of forestry interspersed with occasional dwellings and built form which are distinctive due to the characteristic white colouring. The A82 is well concealed and traffic moving along the route is only occasionally visible where vegetative screening is limited. The skyline appears gently sloping, with the summit of Meall Fuar-mhonaidh visible as a more rounded and distinctive shape in the distance.

6.5.95 The view contains an iconic view down the body of Loch Ness and has the presence of signage associated with the view. The viewpoint is located within and is of the Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA. Any detracting features, such as forestry vegetation, do not diminish the scenic quality of the view, such that the value is deemed to be **very high**.

Viewpoint 8 – Suidhe Viewpoint off the B862

6.5.96 This viewpoint is a specific viewpoint which is experienced by recreational and road users. The receptors include users of the Loch Ness 360 trail, South Loch Ness Trail and road users along the B862. The viewpoint is located on the eastern side of Loch Ness and within the southern part of the Study Area.

6.5.97 The foreground comprises the route of the Loch Ness 360 Trail recreational route which is bound by pockets of scrub and moorland, as well as a post and wire fence, and the route of the B862. The landform falls considerably down the foothills to the from the foreground into the middle ground where there are a series of higher points including Beinn a' Bhacaidh and Meall na Targaid which largely screens views towards the steep-sided glen on the eastern and western sides of Loch Ness. The waterbody of Loch Ness is not visible due to intervening landform in the foreground and middle ground. The waterbody of Loch Knockie is surrounded by large-scale coniferous plantation and is visible in the middle ground providing a focus in the view.

6.5.98 In the background of the view, the rising steep-sided glen and rocky moorland plateau is visible with coverage of predominantly coniferous vegetation on the lower slopes and open moorland on the higher slopes. The skyline is gently undulating and includes the summit of Meall Fuar-mhonaidh. A wind farm (Bhlaraidh Wind Farm) is visible

against the skyline on the horizon for a small part of the view in the background, however there is very little other human influence of built form in the background of the view.

6.5.99 The view is taken from a scenic viewpoint which is identified on Ordnance Survey mapping and there is signage present relating to the view. The composition of the view has highly scenic qualities, despite the forestry in the view, due to the elevated position of the viewpoint with panoramic views across to the Great Glen. The viewpoint is located within and is of the Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA. The value is deemed to be **very high**.

Viewpoint 9 – Loch Ness, canoeists and pleasure craft

6.5.100 This viewpoint is a representative viewpoint which is experienced by recreational users. The receptors include users of watercraft travelling on Loch Ness, including along the Great Glen Canoe Trail. The viewpoint is located within the southern part of the Study Area.

6.5.101 This view comprises open panoramic views typically focused along the loch with the clearly defined steep-sided glen framing the waterbody. The steep-sided glen is predominantly covered by extensive conifer forestry, especially on the lower slopes, interspersed with small areas of open moorland and patches of broad-leaved woodlands mainly found near the shore. There is occasional movement on Loch Ness associated with recreational watercraft.

6.5.102 In the middle ground, the steep slopes of Glen Moriston appear prominent against the background of an undulating skyline and is highlighted by a traditional white render residential property at the loch shore which is a small yet prominent feature in the view due to the contrast in colour. In the background, the summit of Meall Fuar-mhonaidh is visible as a more rounded shape in the distance rising beyond intervening landform with extensive forestry coverage.

6.5.103 The view is an iconic view from the waterbody of Loch Ness focused down the loch and is advertised through local tourist boat trips. The viewpoint is located within and is of the Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA. Any detracting features, such as forestry, do not diminish the scenic quality and composition of the view, such that the value is deemed to be **very high**.

Viewpoint 10 – B862 and Loch Ness 360 Trail near to Fort Augustus

6.5.104 This viewpoint is a representative viewpoint which is experienced by recreational receptors. Receptors include those using the Loch Ness 360 Trail, the Caledonia Way and road users along the B862. The viewpoint is located within an agricultural field on the southern shore of Loch Ness and within the southern part of the Study Area.

6.5.105 The foreground is dominated by the expansive body of Loch Ness which extends from the rocky beach and the view comprises an open view focused up the length of the loch, with wooded glens and steep valley edges framing the waterbody. Loch Ness has limited activity on the loch in this location, with only pleasure craft occasionally visible primarily in the background of the view.

6.5.106 Extensive areas of forestry either side of the loch on the steep-sided glen rise to the rocky moorland plateau at higher elevations either side of the loch. The vegetation on the steep-sided glen comprises mainly forestry plantation, with pockets of native woodland interspersed with occasional dwellings and built form which are distinctive due to the characteristic white colouring. The A82 is well concealed by vegetation with only occasional vehicle movement visible. The skyline appears undulating, with the summit of Meall Fuar-mhonaidh visible as a more rounded shape in the distance.

6.5.107 The view contains an iconic view down the body of Loch Ness. The viewpoint is located within and is of the Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA. Any detracting features, such as forestry vegetation, do not diminish the scenic quality of the view, such that the value is deemed to be **very high**.

Viewpoint 11 – Core Path to the northwest of Fort Augustus

6.5.108 This viewpoint is a representative viewpoint which is experienced by recreational users of the core path network. The viewpoint is in an elevated location on the western side of Loch Ness, within the southern part of the Study Area.

6.5.109 The foreground and middle ground of the view is dominated by a felled area of coniferous forestry. The landform falls away from the viewpoint through the wooded glen associated with the River Moriston and several residential properties and farmsteads are visible. The landform then rises again to the rocky moorland plateau landscape in the middle ground and extending into the distance. This landscape comprises extensive coniferous plantation on the lower slopes and open moorland on higher slopes. The waterbody of Loch Ness is not visible due to intervening landform and vegetation.

6.5.110 In the background, the skyline is gently undulating and includes the summit of Meall Fuar-mhonaidh visible as a more rounded shape in the distance. A wind farm (Bhlaraidh Wind Farm) is set against the skyline and is noticeable on the top of the ridgeline and an overhead line with pylons are also visible through the forestry cover.

6.5.111 The view has detracting features, including the extensive forestry plantation cover throughout the view, an overhead line and a wind farm on the horizon. The view comprises part of the Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA but does not comprise all the special qualities. The value of the view is considered to be **low**.

Viewpoint 12 – Local walking users off the Core Path network and Glen Coiltie Walking Loop

6.5.112 This viewpoint is a representative viewpoint which is experienced by recreational users. The recreational users comprise receptors on the local walking network along the River Coiltie just off the core path network and Glen Coiltie Walking Loop. The viewpoint is located on the western side of Loch Ness and is located within the central part of the Study Area.

6.5.113 The foreground is dominated by undulating rocky moorland, which falls from the viewpoint towards the course of the River Coiltie in the middle ground and rises again towards Glas-bheinn Bheag which forms the skyline in the background. The landscape in the view comprises rocky outcrops surrounded by low level scrub vegetation and irregularly shaped swathes of native trees on relatively high ground. There are views of existing access tracks through the open sections of cleared forestry, however these are limited within the more open landscape rising towards Glas-bheinn Bheag where the landform is incised by various watercourses. The views are of a relatively enclosed and largely wild landscape with the perception of a more intimate scale due to the nature of the landform rising either side of the incised water course of the River Coiltie and with limited distant views.

6.5.114 From the core path network and the Glen Coiltie Walking Loop to the east of the viewpoint location, views are typically more enclosed within the lower section nearer to the viewpoint location due to intervening landform and forestry vegetation. This section of the route is also influenced by views of a Borrow Pit adjacent to the track. On more elevated land to the east, there are more expansive views across the rocky moorland plateau which contrast to the viewpoint location as they comprise fewer wild features, including views to wind farms on higher land in the distance, forestry plantation with tracks, maintenance vehicles on tracks to the existing hydro scheme and the influence of human activity including regularly shaped farmland interspersed with residential properties.

6.5.115 The view contains a typical view of the rocky moorland plateau with some scenic qualities associated with the wildness of the view, noting some influence of forestry and tracks. The composition of the view across the valley landscape has some scenic quality. The value of the view is deemed to be **medium.**

Viewpoint 13 – A82 layby

6.5.116 This viewpoint is a representative viewpoint which is experienced by road users. The road users comprise users of the A82 only as the layby would cease to exist during construction and operation of the Proposed Development. The viewpoint is located on the western side of Loch Ness and is located within the central part of the Study Area.

6.5.117 The foreground is dominated by scrub and tree vegetation on the loch side on the edge of the layby as well as road signage and bins. To the west the views are completely enclosed by the steep landform to the west of the A82 road corridor, which is dominated by a steep rock face with rock stabilisation and netting, scrub vegetation, and mature coniferous trees. The landform, which is largely covered in mature vegetation, then drops sharply to the east to meet the expansive water body of Loch Ness in the middle ground of the view, which is visible through and above the loch side vegetation. There is occasional movement on Loch Ness associated with recreational watercraft.

6.5.118 The remainder of the loch edge on the western side of Loch Ness is largely screened by intervening mature loch side vegetation in the foreground and middle ground of the view, resulting in the focus of the view largely being across the loch towards the eastern side of Loch Ness. The broad steep-sided glen and farmed and wooded foothills are visible on the eastern side of Loch Ness is visible in the background of the view. This comprises a mix of forestry and native vegetation, as well as the Foyers Power Station visible on the loch shore along with scattered properties visible on the rising land.

6.5.119 The view contains views across Loch Ness, albeit partially screened by mature loch side vegetation, however the scenic quality of the view is diminished by the fast-moving A82 road in very close proximity views of forestry and the Foyers Power Station on the opposite side of Loch Ness. The viewpoint is located within and is of the Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA. The value of the view is deemed to be **medium**.

Future Baseline

6.5.120 Predicting the future baseline involves a degree of speculation and uncertainty as acknowledged at paragraph 5.33 in GLVIA3[15]. It requires projecting forward any trends in change and considering how they may affect the landscape over time. The nature of the future baseline is influenced by a combination of natural and human processes, including climate change. Scoping and consented development proposals are able to influence the future baseline and are discussed in relation to the cumulative schemes (refer to **Chapter 4: Approach to EIA (Volume 2: Main Report)**).

6.5.121 The landscape within the Study Area is variable but includes uplands and plateau moorland, wooded as well as steep-sided glens. The vegetation across the Study Area, including mature loch side vegetation in parts and blocks of native woodland, will continue to mature but the inherent character and contrast between the more sparsely vegetated upland areas and vegetated lowland is unlikely to substantially change. The forestry operations across the Study Area, which involves different stages of felling and re-growth and are apparent across the landscape are considered to continue and there is unlikely to be changes to this management practice.

6.5.122 As highlighted by the number of schemes included within the cumulative assessment, the rise of energy infrastructure schemes is likely to increase, including wind developments. It is therefore likely that energy related infrastructure has the potential to expand in this area. Some impact of climate change could occur however it is difficult to predict the change on habitats.

6.5.123 In summary, the future baseline in the absence of the Proposed Development is likely to be similar to the current baseline.

6.6 Embedded Mitigation

6.6.1 Embedded mitigation measures, which have been incorporated within the design of the Proposed Development, or which are standard practice measures that have been committed to, are summarised in **Chapter 3: Evolution of Design and Alternatives (Volume 2: Main Report)**. Mitigation of views of the permanent infrastructure has been a key part of the design development process, in particular views of the LCW from the A82, Foyers and from recreational users of Loch Ness. The LCW has been carefully designed to limit the permanent footprint on the loch shore, removing the requirement for buildings and using a combination of material choice, surface treatment of the LCW platform and access road structure along with the extension of the foreshore and native woodland planting. The objective of these key interventions is to ensure that the LCW has minimal intervention on the Loch shore landscape and in views.

6.6.2 The elevated bridge structure will be designed to have slender piers and will be clad using a system of timber panels. The bridge structure will screen the concrete deck which will create a more natural treatment and a visually recessive structure and bridge profile. The timber structure will continue around the edge of the smolt screen and the diffusers which would add accents of natural materials across the new structure. The LCW platform will be broken up using a variety of muted surface treatments reflecting the colours in the landscape and natural rock tones. Areas of raised planting beds with native understorey and tree planting in keeping with retained adjacent native woodland will further break up and soften the retaining wall and the newly created rocky shoreline in between the diffusers will help integrate the LCW into the loch shore landscape. Further information is contained in **Appendix 6.4 Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (Volume 5: Appendices)**.

6.6.3 All mitigation planting measures for the landscape and visual impact assessment are embedded and are detailed in the outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (oLEMP) (refer to **Appendix 6.4 Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (Volume 5: Appendices)**). These measures have been developed collaboratively with the ecology, forestry and heritage specialists and provide a cohesive mitigation design response. The scale of mitigation planting and habitat restoration is extensive and will provide a substantial area of native woodland planting (552 ha) as well as large areas of natural regeneration. This will respond positively to the special qualities of the SLA as well as the key characteristics of the LCTs, resulting in a landscape scale of native planting and regeneration.

6.6.4 The landscape and habitat restoration proposals are as follows and are further expanded upon within **Appendix 6.4 Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (Volume 5: Appendices)**:

- Proposed native woodland planting (including riparian zones);
- Proposed montane willow scrub planting and regeneration zones;
- Proposed Scots pine, juniper and dwarf birch naturalistic planting and regeneration zones;

- Proposed shallow ponds with sphagnum and adjacent trees/shrubs for Emerald Dragonflies;
- Proposed waterbodies and rafts for Red-Throated Diver Breeding;
- Habitat enhancement for Slavonian Grebe;
- Proposed peatland restoration zones with a zone of conifer removal;
- Proposed off-site peatland restoration; and
- Ancient Woodland regenerative buffer and enhancement near to the River Coiltie.

6.6.5 The scale of the planting proposals is given as follows:

- 54 ha ancient semi-natural woodland enhancement, in Glen Coiltie, by protection to encourage regeneration;
- 22 ha ancient woodland regeneration buffer around the above ancient semi-natural woodland in the River Coiltie area;
- 552 ha native broadleaved woodland provision (including riparian planting where within 10 m of watercourses) and a further 19 ha of Scots pine Pinus sylvestris woodland provision at various locations, both beside the Proposed Development in the Glen Coiltie area, and extensively in the wider estate;
- 76 ha dwarf birch montane scrub zones, supplemented with juniper Juniperus communis and Scots pine;
- 27 ha of montane willow scrub planting and regeneration zone; and
- Small amounts of further native planting on retained slopes within the Lower Control Works construction area beside Loch Ness.

6.6.6 Where the planting proposals and habitat creation does not conflict with construction activity, these areas would be planted in advance of construction commencing to enable early establishment. This could happen in the first available planting season prior to the Enabling and Construction phase of works.

6.6.7 Whilst residual significant effects remain for some of the landscape and visual receptors, no additional mitigation is available that would be effective in further reducing effects.

6.7 Assessment of Effects

6.7.1 This section presents the findings of the landscape and visual impact assessment for the Pre-Construction and Enabling Works, Construction and Operational phases of the Proposed Development. The key components of the Proposed Development are detailed in **Chapter 2: Project and Site Description (Volume 2: Main Report)**.

6.7.2 It is acknowledged that part of the landscape within the Study Area comprises plantation forestry at different stages of felling. The landscape and visual impact assessment assumes that there would be no change to this management practice.

Summary of Assessment of Effects

6.7.3 A detailed assessment of landscape and visual effects is provided in **Appendix 6.2 Landscape Assessment (Volume 5: Appendices)** and **Appendix 6.3 Visual Assessment (Volume 5: Appendices)**. The following section provides a summary of the likely significant effects during the Pre-Construction and Enabling Works, Construction and Operation (at year 1 and year 15) phases on the landscape and visual resource.

Summary of Pre-Construction and Enabling Works Effects

Effects on Landscape Designations during Pre-Construction and Enabling Works

6.7.4 There are no anticipated significant effects on landscape designations at the Pre-Construction and Enabling Works phase. Full details of the landscape assessment are contained within **Appendix 6.2 Landscape Assessment (Volume 5: Appendices)**.

Effects on Landscape Receptors during Pre-Construction and Enabling Works

6.7.5 There are no anticipated significant effects on LCTs at the Pre-Construction and Enabling Works phase. Full details of the landscape assessment are contained within **Appendix 6.2 Landscape Assessment (Volume 5: Appendices)**.

Effects on Visual Receptors during Pre-Construction and Enabling Works

6.7.6 It is anticipated that one of the 13 viewpoints (**Viewpoint 12**) would experience significant adverse effects during the Pre-Construction and Enabling Works phase. Full details of the visual assessment are contained within **Appendix 6.3 Visual Assessment (Volume 5: Appendices)**. A summary of the visual effects based on receptor groups is provided below.

Recreational

6.7.7 **Core paths, local walking paths and informal tracks:** Views from a short section of the core path network and a short section of the Glen Coiltie Walking Loop in close proximity to the Proposed Development would be significantly affected at the Pre-Construction and Enabling Works phase. There would be direct views of works mainly in the foreground and middle ground, including clearance, new Temporary Access Tracks, material storage and Tunnel Portal construction in a small part of the landscape near to the River Coiltie. Despite being within the context of forestry tracks, the construction works would introduce incongruous activity in an otherwise relatively wild and still view due to the scale and degree of contrast due to the displacement of the rocky moorland plateau across a large proportion of the view.

6.7.8 Recreational receptors represented by **Viewpoint 12** (Local walking users off the Core Path network and Glen Coiltie Walking Loop) with a high sensitivity assessed alongside the high magnitude of effect, would result in a major adverse effect which is considered to be **significant**.

Summary of Construction Effects

Effects on Landscape Designations during Construction

6.7.9 It is anticipated that there would be significant effects on the Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA during construction. Full details of the landscape assessment are contained within **Appendix 6.2 Landscape Assessment (Volume 5: Appendices)** and a summary is provided below.

Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA

6.7.10 During construction, there would be a localised direct effect on the SLA associated with the LCW, Headpond, Secondary Bund and part of the Temporary Access Tracks. However, due to the long vistas available, there would be a wider influence across the SLA associated with the incongruent introduction of construction plant and activity and effects on the simple, horizontal character of the SLA on both the loch side and moorland plateau. The change would be less pronounced due to the context of nearby loch side physical interventions and several key characteristics of the SLA would remain intact.

6.7.11 The medium magnitude of effect, assessed alongside the high sensitivity would result in a moderate adverse effect, which is considered to be **significant**.

Effects on Landscape Receptors during Construction

6.7.12 Significant landscape effects are predicted for two of the seven LCTs assessed during construction. These are LCT 222: Rocky Moorland Plateau - Inverness and LCT 225: Broad Steep-Sided Glen, which the Proposed Development would be directly located within. Full details of the landscape assessment are contained within **Appendix 6.2 Landscape Assessment (Volume 5: Appendices)** and a summary is provided below.

LCT 222: Rocky Moorland Plateau - Inverness

6.7.13 During construction, plant and activity associated with the Headpond, Secondary Bund, Temporary Access Tracks and Temporary Construction Compounds, including Tunnel Portals, would be directly present within the LCT. The scale of the construction operations would substantially alter the more wild and natural aspects of the upland moorland in a small part of the LCT, which is fundamental to many of the key characteristics of the LCT. However, the geographical extent of the change experienced would be limited due to the containment of construction activity by the landform of the LCT and native and coniferous vegetation cover in the surrounding landscape.

6.7.14 The high magnitude of effect, assessed alongside the medium sensitivity would result in a moderate adverse effect, which is considered to be **significant**.

LCT 225: Broad Steep-Sided Glen

6.7.15 During construction, plant and activity associated with the LCW and associated Temporary Construction Compound would be directly present within the LCT. However, due to the openness across the water body of Loch Ness, there would be a wider influence across the LCT associated with the scale of construction plant and activity which would appear uncharacteristic within an otherwise undeveloped stretch of shoreline. This would be in combination with movement across the loch associated with the transportation of construction material. The change would be less pronounced due to the context of similar development and cranes present at the loch shore at Foyers and the large scale of the landscape. The remainder of key characteristics of the LCT would remain intact.

6.7.16 The medium magnitude of effect, assessed alongside the high sensitivity would result in a moderate adverse effect, which is considered to be **significant**.

Effects on Visual Receptors during Construction

6.7.17 It is anticipated that seven of the 13 viewpoints (**Viewpoints 1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 12 and 13**) would experience significant adverse effects during construction. Full details of the visual assessment are contained within **Appendix 6.3 Visual Assessment (Volume 5: Appendices)**. A summary of the visual effects based on receptor groups is provided below.

Residential

6.7.18 **Foyers:** Views from residential properties in the settlement of Foyers during construction would be significantly affected. The views would likely comprise activity and plant introduced into the view associated with the LCW and associated Temporary Construction Compound in the background of the view. The scale and intensity of construction activity would be pronounced as the construction activity would be directly visible across the loch from upper stories of residential properties on elevated land. This would be within the context of some detracting features in the view but would remain to be an incongruous addition in part of the view. It should be noted that for some residential properties in Foyers, intervening mature loch side vegetation would fully screen views to the construction works on the opposite side of the loch.

6.7.19 Residential receptors represented by **Viewpoint 2** (Settlement of Foyers) with a high sensitivity, assessed alongside the medium magnitude of effect, would result in a moderate adverse effect, which is considered to be **significant**.

Recreational

6.7.20 **Recreational routes:** There would be parts of recreational routes significantly affected during construction dependent on proximity to the Proposed Development and intervening built form, landform and vegetation. This would include views from the Caledonia Way, Loch Ness 360 trail and South Loch Ness trail from Foyers. Views would include activity and plant associated with various aspects of the Proposed Development, typically in the background of the view with views towards activity associated with the LCW. Typically, the scale and intensity of construction activity would be apparent as a contrast to the existing wide-angle views.

6.7.21 **Core paths:** There would be parts of the core path network with significantly affected receptors during construction dependent on proximity to the Proposed Development and intervening built form, landform and vegetation. Views would include activity and plant associated with various aspects of the Proposed Development. This would include parts of the core path network near to the River Coiltie and at the loch shore near to Foyers which would have views of construction activity in the foreground and middle ground of the views resulting in the activity and plant occupying a large proportion of the extent of the view.

6.7.22 **Local walking paths and informal tracks:** There would be parts of local walking paths and informal tracks that would experience significantly affected receptors during construction dependent on proximity to the Proposed Development and intervening built form, landform and vegetation. Views would include activity and plant associated with various aspects of the Proposed Development. This would include from parts of the Meall Fuar-mhonaidh Route, Glen Coiltie Walking Loop, Loch nam Breac Dearga Trail and route along the River Coiltie. Such routes are all located in relatively close proximity to the Headpond part of the Proposed Development and would typically have intermittent views of construction works, including associated with the Headpond, Temporary Construction Compounds and Temporary Access Tracks. The scale and intensity of construction activity would typically be prominent due to the scale of the works across the extent of the views and also the degree of contrast

to the existing moorland plateau. Part of the Glen Coiltie Walking Loop would be in close proximity and would experience views of activity and plant associated with Temporary Access Tracks and Temporary Construction Compounds in the foreground, middle ground and background. The scale and intensity of construction activity would result in a substantial change to the composition of the view due to the scale of the works across the majority of the horizontal and vertical extent of the view.

6.7.23 **Recreational watercraft:** Users on parts of the Glen Coiltie Canoe Trail and users of recreational watercraft on Loch Ness would experience significant effects during construction dependent on proximity to the Proposed Development and intervening built form, landform and vegetation. Views would typically include both to the plant and activity associated with the Headpond and LCW which are at different parts in the vertical extent of views which would increase the scale of change in the view. This would be in the context of panoramic views and generally at a distance from the construction works.

6.7.24 Recreational receptors represented by:

- **Viewpoint 1** (Meall Fuar-mhonaidh summit) with a very high sensitivity, assessed alongside a very high magnitude of effect, would result in a major adverse effect, which is considered to be **significant**;
- **Viewpoint 2** (Settlement of Foyers) with a high sensitivity, assessed alongside a medium magnitude of effect, would result in a moderate adverse effect, which is considered to be **significant**;
- **Viewpoint 3** (Foyers Campsite) with a high sensitivity, assessed alongside a very high magnitude of effect, would result in a major adverse effect, which is considered to be **significant**;
- **Viewpoint 9** (Loch Ness, canoeists and pleasure craft) with a very high sensitivity assessed alongside the medium magnitude of effect, would result in a moderate adverse effect, which is considered to be **significant**; and
- **Viewpoint 12** (Local walking users off the Core Path network and Glen Coiltie Walking Loop) with a high sensitivity assessed, alongside the very high magnitude of effect, would result in a major adverse effect, which is considered to be **significant**.

Visitors to Places of Interest

6.7.25 **Summits:** There would be significantly affected receptors at the Meall Fuar-mhonaidh summit during construction. Activity and plant introduced into the view would include that associated with the Headpond including the Main Dam, Saddle Dam 1 and Saddle Dam 2, as well as Temporary Construction Compounds including Tunnel Portal 4, the Secondary Bund and Temporary Access Tracks and this would be visible directly in the foreground and middle ground of the view. The scale and intensity of construction activity would be a substantial change to the composition of the view in the foreground.

6.7.26 **Local landmarks and viewpoints:** There would be significantly affected receptors at some local landmarks and viewpoints within the Study Area during construction dependent on proximity to the Proposed Development and intervening built form, landform and vegetation. This would include receptors at the Loch Ness View scenic viewing point off the B852. Views would include activity and plant associated with various aspects of the Proposed Development. This would include the combination of the activity at the Headpond and LCW from some views but typically at a distance. Typically, the scale and intensity of construction activity would be noticeable even if only in a small part of the view. The remainder of the view which encompasses expansive views across and along the loch would be unaffected other than the presence of construction barges moving across the view.

6.7.27 Visitors to places of interest represented by **Viewpoint 1** (Meall Fuar-mhonaidh summit) with a very high sensitivity assessed alongside the very high magnitude of effect, would result in a major adverse effect, which is considered to be **significant. Viewpoint 5** (Beach near to Loch Ness View off the B852) with a very high sensitivity assessed alongside the medium magnitude of effect, would result in a moderate adverse effect, which is considered to be **significant.**

Road Users

6.7.28 **A82:** There would be significantly affected receptors for a very short section of the A82 during construction as it passes immediately past the construction works associated with the LCW in the foreground. The scale and intensity of construction activity would be pronounced due to the proximity of the viewpoint receptor, however reduced in part due to the context of the A82 corridor and typically oblique nature of the view.

6.7.29 **B852:** There would be significantly affected receptors for sections of the B852 during construction dependent on proximity to the Proposed Development and intervening built form, landform and vegetation. This would include

where the route passes through the settlement of Foyers and alongside the loch shore further to the northeast. The views would typically predominantly include works at the LCW, with some sections also with views to works to other parts of the Proposed Development including the works associated with the Headpond which would draw the eye to activity in different parts of the view. The works may be visible in the context of some detracting features in views but would typically appear a pronounced change.

6.7.30 Road users represented by:

- **Viewpoint 2** (Settlement of Foyers) with a high sensitivity, assessed alongside the medium magnitude of effect, would result in a moderate adverse effect, which is considered to be **significant**;
- **Viewpoint 5** (Beach near to Loch Ness View off the B852) with a very high sensitivity, assessed alongside the medium magnitude of effect, would result in a moderate adverse effect, which is considered to be **significant**; and
- **Viewpoint 13** (A82 layby) with a medium sensitivity assessed alongside the high magnitude of effect, would result in a moderate adverse effect, which is considered to be **significant**

Summary of Effects at Operation Year 1

Effects on Landscape Designations during Operation Year 1

6.7.31 There are no anticipated significant effects on landscape designations at operation year 1. Full details of the landscape assessment are contained within **Appendix 6.2 Landscape Assessment (Volume 5: Appendices)**.

Effects on Landscape Receptors during Operation Year 1

6.7.32 Significant landscape effects are predicted for one of the seven LCTs assessed at operation year 1. This is LCT 222: Rocky Moorland Plateau - Inverness, which the Proposed Development would be directly located within. Full details of the landscape assessment are contained within **Appendix 6.2 Landscape Assessment (Volume 5: Appendices)** and a summary is provided below.

LCT 222: Rocky Moorland Plateau - Inverness

6.7.33 At operation year 1, the permanent infrastructure of the Headpond, Secondary Bund, Permanent Access Tracks and Permanent Compounds would be directly present across a small part of the LCT and would displace open moorland. There would be changes to some of the key characteristics of the LCT, including the remoteness and limited human intervention, however the changes would be experienced across a limited proportion of the LCT. The permanent infrastructure would be concentrated largely within two areas of the LCT which also lessens the degree of influence.

6.7.34 The medium magnitude of effect, assessed alongside the medium sensitivity would result in a moderate adverse effect, which is considered to be **significant**.

Effects on Visual Receptors during Operation Year 1

6.7.35 It is anticipated that four of the 13 viewpoints (**Viewpoints 1, 2, 3 and 12**) would experience significant adverse effects during operation year 1. Full details of the visual assessment are contained within **Appendix 6.3 Visual Assessment (Volume 5: Appendices)**. A summary of the visual effects based on receptor groups is provided below.

Residential

6.7.36 **Foyers:** Views from residential properties in the settlement of Foyers at operation year 1 would be significantly affected. There would be views of the LCW in the background of the view along with occasional movement of monitoring vehicles along the existing Alltsigh Access Track. The scale and nature of the LCW within a section of currently undisturbed shoreline would be a noticeable change in the composition in the background of the view.

6.7.37 Residential receptors represented by **Viewpoint 2** (Settlement of Foyers) with a high sensitivity assessed alongside the medium magnitude of effect, would result in a moderate adverse effect, which is considered to be **significant**.

Recreational

6.7.38 **Recreational routes:** There would be parts of recreational routes significantly affected at operation year 1 dependent on proximity to the Proposed Development and intervening built form, landform and vegetation. This would include views from the Caledonia Way, Loch Ness 360 trail and South Loch Ness trail from Foyers. Views

would include operational infrastructure and occasional monitoring movement along tracks typically in the background of the view with views towards activity associated with the LCW. Typically, the scale and nature of the permanent infrastructure would be a change in the composition of the view in the background of the view.

6.7.39 **Core paths:** There would be parts of the core path network with significantly affected receptors at operation year 1 dependent on proximity to the Proposed Development and intervening built form, landform and vegetation. Views would include various aspects of the operational parts of the Proposed Development. This would include parts of the core path network near to the River Coiltie and at the loch shore near to Foyers which would have views of operational infrastructure in the foreground and middle ground of the views resulting in views the scale of change being apparent in the composition of the view.

6.7.40 **Local walking paths and informal tracks:** There would be parts of local walking paths and informal tracks that would experience significantly affected receptors at operation year 1 dependent on proximity to the Proposed Development and intervening built form, landform and vegetation. Views would include various aspects of the operational parts of the Proposed Development. This would include from parts of the Meall Fuar-mhonaidh Route (noting that views from the summit towards Loch Ness would not be affected), Glen Coiltie Walking Loop, Loch nam Breac Dearga Trail and route along the River Coiltie. Such routes are all located in relatively close proximity to the Headpond part of the Proposed Development and would typically have intermittent views of operational elements, including associated with the Headpond, Permanent Compounds and Permanent Access Tracks. Whilst the scale and nature of the Headpond and associated dams would be a noticeable change in the foreground view, the remaining components of the view would be largely unchanged including the large-scale plateau with the backcloth of the massif and mountains. From part of the Glen Coiltie Walking Loop, there would be views of the Permanent Access Tracks and Permanent Compounds in the foreground, middle ground and background of the view. The scale and nature of Permanent Access Tracks and permanent infrastructure would appear as a noticeable change to the view.

6.7.41 Recreational receptors represented by:

- **Viewpoint 1** (Meall Fuar-mhonaidh summit) with a very high sensitivity, assessed alongside the medium magnitude of effect, would result in a moderate adverse effect, which is considered to be **significant**;
- **Viewpoint 2** (Settlement of Foyers) with a high sensitivity, assessed alongside the medium magnitude of effect, would result in a moderate adverse effect, which is considered to be **significant**;
- **Viewpoint 3** (Foyers Campsite) with a high sensitivity, assessed alongside the high magnitude of effect, would result in a moderate adverse effect, which is considered to be **significant**; and
- **Viewpoint 12** (Local walking users off the Core Path network and Glen Coiltie Walking Loop) with a high sensitivity, assessed alongside the medium magnitude of effect, would result in a moderate adverse effect, which is considered to be **significant**.

Visitors to Places of Interest

6.7.42 **Summits:** There would be significantly affected receptors at the Meall Fuar-mhonaidh summit at operation year 1. There would be direct views of the Headpond waterbody, Main Dam, Saddle Dam 1, Saddle Dam 2, Secondary Bund, Permanent Compounds, including Tunnel Portal 4, and Permanent Access Tracks in the foreground and middle ground of the view. Whilst the scale and nature of the Headpond and associated dams would be a noticeable change in the foreground view, the remaining components of the view would be largely unchanged including the large-scale plateau with the backcloth of the massif and mountains. The iconic views of Loch Ness would also remain unaffected thereby limiting the overall extent of change from this summit viewpoint.

6.7.43 Visitors to places of interest represented by **Viewpoint 1** (Meall Fuar-mhonaidh summit) with a very high sensitivity, assessed alongside the medium magnitude of effect, would result in a moderate adverse effect.

Road Users

6.7.44 **B852:** There would be significantly affected receptors for sections of the B852 at operation year 1 dependent on proximity to the Proposed Development and intervening built form, landform and vegetation. This would include where the route passes through the settlement of Foyers. There would be views of the LCW in the background of the view and occasional monitoring movement along the existing Alltsigh Access Track. The scale and nature of the LCW would be a noticeable change in the composition of the view in the background of the view.

6.7.45 Road users represented by **Viewpoint 2** (Settlement of Foyers) with a high sensitivity, assessed alongside the medium magnitude of effect, would result in a moderate adverse effect.

Sequential Users of Key Recreational Routes and Transport Corridors

6.7.46 **Loch nam Breac Dearga Trail:** It should also be noted that there are likely to be sequential significant effects on visual receptors travelling along the Loch nam Breac Dearga Trail at operation. The operational infrastructure is likely to have a significant residual effect on users of the trail due to the scale in close proximity to the receptors, as it would affect the majority of the most scenic part of the trail, and it would fundamentally alter Loch nam Breac Dearga which the receptors are focused on in the views.

Summary of Effects at Operation Year 15

Effects on Landscape Designations during Operation Year 15

6.7.47 There are no anticipated significant effects on landscape designations at operation year 15. Full details of the landscape assessment are contained within **Appendix 6.2 Landscape Assessment (Volume 5: Appendices)**.

Effects on Landscape Receptors during Operation Year 15

6.7.48 There are no anticipated significant effects on landscape designations at operation year 15. Full details of the landscape assessment are contained within **Appendix 6.2 Landscape Assessment (Volume 5: Appendices)**.

Effects on Visual Receptors during Operation Year 15

6.7.49 It is anticipated that one of the 13 viewpoints (**Viewpoint 1**) would experience significant adverse effects during operation year 15. Full details of the visual assessment are contained within **Appendix 6.3 Visual Assessment (Volume 5: Appendices)**. A summary of the visual effects based on receptor groups is provided below.

Recreational

6.7.50 **Local walking paths and informal tracks:** There would be parts of local walking paths and informal tracks that would experience significantly affected receptors at operation year 15 dependent on proximity to the Proposed Development and intervening built form, landform and vegetation. This would include from parts of the Meall Fuar-mhonaidh Route (noting that views from the summit towards Loch Ness would not be affected) and Loch nam Breac Dearga Trail. Such routes are located in close proximity to the Headpond part of the Proposed Development. The views would be similar to that of year 1 of operation, however any views of scarring from the Permanent Access Tracks would be less pronounced. The new planting in the wider landscape around the Headpond, including montane willow scrub regeneration and planting, native woodland (including riparian) planting and dwarf birch, juniper and Scots pine regeneration and planting would be perceptible within the view. This would soften views towards the Permanent Access Tracks and Compounds. The planting would also contribute to reinstating historic native planting in this part of the landscape and reinforce the scenic qualities in the view.

6.7.51 Recreational receptors represented by **Viewpoint 1** (Meall Fuar-mhonaidh summit) with a very high sensitivity, assessed alongside the medium magnitude of effect, would result in a moderate adverse effect, which is considered to be **significant**.

Visitors to Places of Interest

6.7.52 **Summits:** There would be significantly affected receptors at the Meall Fuar-mhonaidh summit at operation year 15. The views would be similar to that of year 1 of operation, however any views of scarring from the Permanent Access Tracks would be less pronounced. The new planting in the wider landscape around the Headpond, including montane willow scrub regeneration and planting, native woodland (including riparian) planting and dwarf birch, juniper and Scots pine regeneration and planting would be perceptible within the view. This would soften views towards the Permanent Access Tracks and Compounds. The planting would also contribute to reinstating historic native planting in this part of the landscape and reinforce the scenic qualities in the view. The iconic views of Loch Ness would also remain unaffected thereby limiting the overall extent of change from this summit viewpoint.

6.7.53 Visitors to places of interest represented by **Viewpoint 1** (Meall Fuar-mhonaidh summit) with a very high sensitivity, assessed alongside the medium magnitude of effect, would result in a moderate adverse effect, which is considered to be **significant**.

6.8 Additional Mitigation and Monitoring

6.8.1 As set out above, all mitigation is embedded, and no additional mitigation is available that would be effective in further reducing effects.

6.9 Residual Effects

6.9.1 As all mitigation is embedded in the Proposed Development and there is no additional mitigation, all effects described in the section above are residual. The following tables therefore present a summary of the landscape and visual impact assessment.

6.9.2 The following tables demonstrate that there are no expected residual significant effects at operation (year 1 and year 15) on local landscape designations as noted in Policy 4 of NPF4[2].

Table 6-7 Summary of Effects: Pre-Construction and Enabling Works

Receptor	Description of Effects	Effects	Additional Mitigation	Residual Effects	Significance
Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA	Effect on landscape character	Minor adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Minor adverse	Not significant
LCT 222 - Rocky Moorland Plateau - Inverness	Effect on landscape character	Minor adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Minor adverse	Not significant
LCT 225 – Broad Steep-Sided Glen	Effect on landscape character	Minor adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Minor adverse	Not significant
LCT 220 – Rugged Massif	Effect on landscape character	Negligible adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Negligible adverse	Not significant
LCT 221 – Rolling Uplands - Inverness	Effect on landscape character	Negligible adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Negligible adverse	Not significant
LCT 224 – Farmed and Wooded Foothills	Effect on landscape character	Negligible adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Negligible adverse	Not significant
LCT 226 – Wooded Glen - Inverness	Effect on landscape character	Negligible adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Negligible adverse	Not significant
LCT 227 – Farmed Strath – Inverness	Effect on landscape character	Negligible adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Negligible adverse	Not significant
Viewpoint 1 - Meall Fuar-mhonaidh summit	Effect on visual amenity	None	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	None	Not significant
Viewpoint 2 - Settlement of Foyers	Effect on visual amenity	None	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	None	Not significant
Viewpoint 3 - Foyers Campsite	Effect on visual amenity	None	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	None	Not significant
Viewpoint 4 - Great Glen Way and Bunloit Road near Bunloit	Effect on visual amenity	Minor adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Minor adverse	Not significant
Viewpoint 5 - Beach near to Loch Ness View off the B852	Effect on visual amenity	Negligible adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Negligible adverse	Not significant
Viewpoint 6 - Great Glen Way near Urquhart Castle	Effect on visual amenity	Negligible adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Negligible adverse	Not significant

Receptor	Description of Effects	Effects	Additional Mitigation	Residual Effects	Significance
Viewpoint 7 - Dores Beach	Effect on visual amenity	Negligible adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Negligible adverse	Not significant
Viewpoint 8 - Suidhe Viewpoint off the B862	Effect on visual amenity	None	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	None	Not significant
Viewpoint 9 - Loch Ness, canoeists and pleasure craft	Effect on visual amenity	None	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	None	Not significant
Viewpoint 10 - B862 and Loch Ness 360 Trail near to Fort Augustus	Effect on visual amenity	None	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	None	Not significant
Viewpoint 11 - Core Path to the northwest of Fort Augustus	Effect on visual amenity	None	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	None	Not significant
Viewpoint 12 - Local walking users off the Core Path network and Glen Coiltie Walking Loop	Effect on visual amenity	Major adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Major adverse	**Significant**
Viewpoint 13 - A82 layby	Effect on visual amenity	None	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	None	Not significant

Table 6-8 Summary of Effects: Construction

Receptor	Description of Effects	Effects	Additional Mitigation	Residual Effects	Significance
Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA	Effect on landscape character	Moderate adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Moderate adverse	**Significant**
LCT 222 - Rocky Moorland Plateau - Inverness	Effect on landscape character	Moderate adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Moderate adverse	**Significant**
LCT 225 – Broad Steep-Sided Glen	Effect on landscape character	Moderate adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Moderate adverse	**Significant**
LCT 220 – Rugged Massif	Effect on landscape character	Negligible adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Negligible adverse	Not significant
LCT 221 – Rolling Uplands - Inverness	Effect on landscape character	Negligible adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Negligible adverse	Not significant
LCT 224 – Farmed and Wooded Foothills	Effect on landscape character	Negligible adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Negligible adverse	Not significant
LCT 226 – Wooded Glen - Inverness	Effect on landscape character	Negligible adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Negligible adverse	Not significant
LCT 227 – Farmed Strath – Inverness	Effect on landscape character	Negligible adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Negligible adverse	Not significant
Viewpoint 1 - Meall Fuar-mhonaidh summit	Effect on visual amenity	Major adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Major adverse	**Significant**

Receptor	Description of Effects	Effects	Additional Mitigation	Residual Effects	Significance
Viewpoint 2 - Settlement of Foyers	Effect on visual amenity	Moderate adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Moderate adverse	**Significant**
Viewpoint 3 - Foyers Campsite	Effect on visual amenity	Major adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Major adverse	**Significant**
Viewpoint 4 - Great Glen Way and Bunloit Road near Bunloit	Effect on visual amenity	Minor adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Minor adverse	Not significant
Viewpoint 5 - Beach near to Loch Ness View off the B852	Effect on visual amenity	Moderate adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Moderate adverse	**Significant**
Viewpoint 6 - Great Glen Way near Urquhart Castle	Effect on visual amenity	Negligible adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Negligible adverse	Not significant
Viewpoint 7 - Dores Beach	Effect on visual amenity	Minor adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Minor adverse	Not significant
Viewpoint 8 - Suidhe Viewpoint off the B862	Effect on visual amenity	Minor adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Minor adverse	Not significant
Viewpoint 9 - Loch Ness, canoeists and pleasure craft	Effect on visual amenity	Moderate adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Moderate adverse	**Significant**
Viewpoint 10 - B862 and Loch Ness 360 Trail near to Fort Augustus	Effect on visual amenity	Negligible adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Negligible adverse	Not significant
Viewpoint 11 - Core Path to the northwest of Fort Augustus	Effect on visual amenity	Minor adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Minor adverse	Not significant
Viewpoint 12 - Local walking users off the Core Path network and Glen Coiltie Walking Loop	Effect on visual amenity	Major adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Major adverse	**Significant**
Viewpoint 13 - A82 layby	Effect on visual amenity	Moderate adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Moderate adverse	**Significant**

Table 6-9 Summary of Effects: Operation Year 1

Receptor	Description of Effects	Effects	Additional Mitigation	Residual Effects	Significance
Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA	Effect on landscape character	Minor adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Minor adverse	Not significant
LCT 222 - Rocky Moorland Plateau - Inverness	Effect on landscape character	Moderate adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Moderate adverse	**Significant**
LCT 225 – Broad Steep-Sided Glen	Effect on landscape character	Minor adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Minor adverse	Not significant
LCT 220 – Rugged Massif	Effect on landscape character	Negligible adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Negligible adverse	Not significant
LCT 221 – Rolling Uplands - Inverness	Effect on landscape character	Negligible adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Negligible adverse	Not significant
LCT 224 – Farmed and Wooded Foothills	Effect on landscape character	Negligible adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Negligible adverse	Not significant

Receptor	Description of Effects	Effects	Additional Mitigation	Residual Effects	Significance
LCT 226 – Wooded Glen - Inverness	Effect on landscape character	Negligible adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Negligible adverse	Not significant
LCT 227 – Farmed Strath – Inverness	Effect on landscape character	Negligible adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Negligible adverse	Not significant
Viewpoint 1 - Meall Fuar-mhonaidh summit	Effect on visual amenity	Moderate adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Moderate adverse	**Significant**
Viewpoint 2 - Settlement of Foyers	Effect on visual amenity	Moderate adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Moderate adverse	**Significant**
Viewpoint 3 - Foyers Campsite	Effect on visual amenity	Moderate adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Moderate adverse	**Significant**
Viewpoint 4 - Great Glen Way and Bunloit Road near Bunloit	Effect on visual amenity	Minor adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Minor adverse	Not significant
Viewpoint 5 - Beach near to Loch Ness View off the B852	Effect on visual amenity	Minor adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Minor adverse	Not significant
Viewpoint 6 - Great Glen Way near Urquhart Castle	Effect on visual amenity	Negligible adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Negligible adverse	Not significant
Viewpoint 7 - Dores Beach	Effect on visual amenity	Minor adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Minor adverse	Not significant
Viewpoint 8 - Suidhe Viewpoint off the B862	Effect on visual amenity	Minor adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Minor adverse	Not significant
Viewpoint 9 - Loch Ness, canoeists and pleasure craft	Effect on visual amenity	Minor adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Minor adverse	Not significant
Viewpoint 10 - B862 and Loch Ness 360 Trail near to Fort Augustus	Effect on visual amenity	Negligible adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Negligible adverse	Not significant
Viewpoint 11 - Core Path to the northwest of Fort Augustus	Effect on visual amenity	Minor adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Minor adverse	Not significant
Viewpoint 12 - Local walking users off the Core Path network and Glen Coiltie Walking Loop	Effect on visual amenity	Moderate adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Moderate adverse	**Significant**
Viewpoint 13 - A82 layby	Effect on visual amenity	Minor adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Minor adverse	Not significant

Table 6-10 Summary of Effects: Operation Year 15

Receptor	Description of Effects	Effects	Additional Mitigation	Residual Effects	Significance
Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA	Effect on landscape character	Minor adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Minor adverse	Not significant
LCT 222 - Rocky Moorland Plateau - Inverness	Effect on landscape character	Minor adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Minor adverse	Not significant
LCT 225 – Broad Steep-Sided Glen	Effect on landscape character	Minor adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Minor adverse	Not significant

Receptor	Description of Effects	Effects	Additional Mitigation	Residual Effects	Significance
LCT 220 – Rugged Massif	Effect on landscape character	Negligible adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Negligible adverse	Not significant
LCT 221 – Rolling Uplands - Inverness	Effect on landscape character	Negligible adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Negligible adverse	Not significant
LCT 224 – Farmed and Wooded Foothills	Effect on landscape character	Negligible adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Negligible adverse	Not significant
LCT 226 – Wooded Glen - Inverness	Effect on landscape character	Negligible adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Negligible adverse	Not significant
LCT 227 – Farmed Strath – Inverness	Effect on landscape character	Negligible adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Negligible adverse	Not significant
Viewpoint 1 - Meall Fuar-mhonaidh summit	Effect on visual amenity	Moderate adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Moderate adverse	**Significant**
Viewpoint 2 - Settlement of Foyers	Effect on visual amenity	Minor adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Minor adverse	Not significant
Viewpoint 3 - Foyers Campsite	Effect on visual amenity	Minor adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Minor adverse	Not significant
Viewpoint 4 - Great Glen Way and Bunloit Road near Bunloit	Effect on visual amenity	Minor adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Minor adverse	Not significant
Viewpoint 5 - Beach near to Loch Ness View off the B852	Effect on visual amenity	Negligible adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Negligible adverse	Not significant
Viewpoint 6 - Great Glen Way near Urquhart Castle	Effect on visual amenity	Negligible adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Negligible adverse	Not significant
Viewpoint 7 - Dores Beach	Effect on visual amenity	Minor adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Minor adverse	Not significant
Viewpoint 8 - Suidhe Viewpoint off the B862	Effect on visual amenity	Minor adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Minor adverse	Not significant
Viewpoint 9 - Loch Ness, canoeists and pleasure craft	Effect on visual amenity	Minor adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Minor adverse	Not significant
Viewpoint 10 - B862 and Loch Ness 360 Trail near to Fort Augustus	Effect on visual amenity	Negligible adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Negligible adverse	Not significant
Viewpoint 11 - Core Path to the northwest of Fort Augustus	Effect on visual amenity	Negligible adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Negligible adverse	Not significant
Viewpoint 12 - Local walking users off the Core Path network and Glen Coiltie Walking Loop	Effect on visual amenity	Minor adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Minor adverse	Not significant
Viewpoint 13 - A82 layby	Effect on visual amenity	Minor adverse	N/A (All mitigation embedded)	Minor adverse	Not significant

6.10 Cumulative Effects

Introduction

6.10.1 The following section provides an assessment of potential cumulative landscape and visual effects at year 15 of Operation. The approach and methodology for the cumulative landscape and visual assessment is detailed in **Appendix 6.2: Landscape Assessment (Volume 5: Appendices)** and **Appendix 6.3: Visual Assessment (Volume 5: Appendices)**.

Inter-Cumulative Effects

6.10.2 The assessment of likely cumulative effects based on the cumulative schemes identified in **Chapter 4: Approach to EIA (Volume 2: Main Report)**. Best practice guidance states that a landscape and visual cumulative assessment should focus on the most significant cumulative effects and conclude with a clear assessment of those which are likely to influence decision making. Therefore, only the relevant cumulative schemes have been considered within this assessment.

6.10.3 The following cumulative schemes set out in **Chapter 4: Approach to EIA (Volume 2: Main Report)** have been excluded from the landscape and visual cumulative assessment. The schemes have been excluded due to reasons including a combination of the type of development proposed, distance, lack of intervisibility and a lack of shared landscape receptors. Therefore, it is unlikely that there would be significant landscape or visual cumulative effects.

- Glen Affric Hydro-electric;
- Livishie Hydroelectric Power station;
- Stronelairg Wind Farm;
- Dunmaglass Wind Farm;
- Aberarder Wind Farm;
- Auchterawe Substation extension; and
- New Residential Development, Drumnadrochit;

6.10.4 Two cumulative scenarios have been defined based on their status, and these are set out below and shown on **Figure 6.8 Cumulative Schemes (Scenario 1) and Operational Zone of Theoretical Visibility** and **Figure 6.9 Cumulative Schemes (Scenario 2) and Operational Zone of Theoretical Visibility.**

- **Cumulative Scenario 1:** The cumulative baseline for this scenario includes schemes which have been consented and / or are under construction in addition to existing operational schemes; and
- **Cumulative Scenario 2:** The cumulative baseline for this scenario includes schemes at application stage in addition to existing operational schemes and those which have been consented and / or are under construction.

6.10.5 The assessment of cumulative magnitude of change and significance of effects involves consideration of the additional change resulting from the Proposed Development to each cumulative baseline scenario. Once the Proposed Development is in operation, the principal parts of the Proposed Development that influence the landscape are limited to the Headpond, LCW and GIS Switchyard, therefore the assessment of cumulative effects focuses on these parts of the Proposed Development.

6.10.6 For the purposes of this assessment, the following assumptions have been made:

- The Proposed Development would likely have a grid connection to Bingally substation. Although overhead lines are not part of these proposals a worst-case straight-line connection has been assumed at this stage and is included as Glen Earrach PSH grid connection; and
- The cumulative assessment is based on the information about the cumulative schemes that is available at the time of writing.

6.10.7 **Table 6-11 Landscape and Visual Cumulative Schemes**below sets out the cumulative schemes considered for each of the scenarios.

Table 6-11 Landscape and Visual Cumulative Schemes

Cumulative Scheme	Status (as of December 2024)	Approx. distance to LCW (km)	Approx. distance to Headpond (km)	Cumulative Scenario 1	Cumulative Scenario 2
Loch Na Cathrach PSH	Consented	17.29	18.62	✓	✓
Loch Kemp PSH	Application	5.76	6.25	✗	✓
Foyers PSH	Operational	2.07	4.59	✓	✓
Glenmoriston Hydroelectric power station	Operational	13.63	10.86	✓	✓
Glendoe Hydroelectric Power Station	Operational	18.21	18.12	✓	✓
Shenval Hydro	Operational	10.83	7.92	✓	✓
Coiltie Hydro	Operational	6.02	5.75	✓	✓
Allt Luaidhe Hydro-scheme	Operational	8.22	7.15	✓	✓
Gartally Micro-hydro	Consented	9.41	9.09	✓	✓
Loch Liath Wind farm	Application	7.84	4.15	✗	✓
Bhlaraidh Wind Farm	Operational	9.51	6.07	✓	✓
Bhlaraidh Wind Farm Extension	Consented	6.87	3.45	✓	✓
Chrathaich Wind Farm	Application	10.82	7.15	✗	✓
Fiodhag Wind Farm	Scoping	14.07	10.36	✗	✓
Corrimony Wind Farm	Operational	12.87	9.17	✓	✓
Cloiche Wind Farm	Consented	14.74	13.32	✓	✓
Corriegarth Wind Farm	Operational	4.58	6.83	✓	✓
Corriegarth 2 Wind Farm	Consented	4.53	6.75	✓	✓
New 33kV Overhead Line Spur for connection to New Communications Mast at Bunloit, Drumnadrochit	Consented	4.04	5.33	✓	✓
Erection of a 70m High Meteorological mast *	Consented	6.47	2.78	✓	✓
Corriegarth 2 Windfarm Grid Connection	Consented	10.49	12.78	✓	✓
Bhlaraidh Extension Wind Farm Grid Connection Works	Application	8.51	5.10	✗	✓
Bingally 400 kV Substation	Application	17.95	14.25	✗	✓
Bingally 400 kV Substation OHL tie-in	Application	18.04	14.34	✗	✓
Foyers Power Station extension	Application	2.63	4.99	✗	✓
Dell 2 Wind Farm	Application	7.95	8.32	✗	✓
Millennium East Wind Farm	Application	19.29	16.90	✗	✓
Cnoc Farasd Wind Farm	Scoping	10.98	8.12	✗	✓
Glen Earrach PSH grid connection	**	5.14	3.08	✗	✓

* Erection of a 70 m High Meteorological mast is a cumulative scheme which is planned to be in place for five years. The cumulative scheme has been included in the cumulative assessment as the worst-case scenario.

** Glen Earrach PSH grid connection has been included in Scenario 2 as the Proposed Development will require connection to the grid, the responsibility for the specification, design, routing and consenting of this are outwith the responsibility of the Applicant. However, the worst-case scenario of an OHL has been assumed from the Proposed Development to the Bingally substation (application scheme) solely for the purposes of this assessment. Any overhead line would be subject to its own separate consenting process under the Electricity Act, and this does not form part of the current proposals.

6.10.8 The approximate development extent of each of the cumulative schemes outlined above is shown on **Figure 6.8 Cumulative Schemes (Scenario 1) and Operational Zone of Theoretical Visibility** and **Figure 6.9 Cumulative Schemes (Scenario 2) and Operational Zone of Theoretical Visibility** in different formats dependent on the development type. This is generally set out as follows:

- Wind farms – development extent shown as the main cluster of turbines and access tracks as a polygon;
- Overhead line connections – development extent shown as lines; and
- Other types of development e.g. substations – development extent shown as points centred in the main part of the development.

6.10.9 The approximate development extent of each of the relevant cumulative schemes outlined above are also shown within **Volume 4: Visualisations** for each of the representative viewpoints. The approximate development extents are depicted by a line for wind farms and overhead line connections and arrows for other types of development.

Cumulative Landscape Effects

6.10.10 Potential significant cumulative effects can occur where the addition of the Proposed Development to the cumulative baseline would increase the prominence of energy infrastructure to the extent that they would potentially become either an influential characteristic or character-defining feature of a landscape.

6.10.11 The full cumulative landscape assessment is set out in **Appendix 6.2: Landscape Assessment (Volume 5: Appendices)**. The following sections provide a summary of the assessment of cumulative effects on landscape designations and landscape character.

Summary of the Assessment of Cumulative Effects on Landscape Designations

6.10.12 It is considered that there would be no significant cumulative effects on landscape designations as a result of the addition of the Proposed Development into the cumulative baseline scenario.

Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA

6.10.13 For both Scenario 1 and 2, the addition of the Proposed Development into the cumulative scenario would increase the influence of energy infrastructure, largely limited to the LCW, across the SLA but would be consistent with the existing pattern and scale of energy infrastructure. The addition of the Proposed Development, due to the scale of the SLA and key characteristics including the landform trench and long vistas unaffected, is considered to have a limited effect on the scenic quality of the SLA.

6.10.14 For both Scenario 1 and 2, the magnitude of cumulative effect resulting would be low. Taking account of the high sensitivity, the significance of cumulative effect is judged to be minor adverse (**not significant**).

Summary of the Assessment of Cumulative Effects on Landscape Character

6.10.15 It is considered that there would be no significant cumulative effects on landscape character as a result of the addition of the Proposed Development into the cumulative baseline scenario. The summary below focuses on those LCTs where the principal parts of the Proposed Development would be located.

LCT 222 - Rocky Moorland Plateau - Inverness

6.10.16 For both Scenario 1 and 2, the addition of the Proposed Development into the cumulative scenario would increase the influence of energy infrastructure within a small part of the large-scale LCT and would be apparent within a limited geographic area due to the landform pattern. The addition of the Proposed Development is considered to have a limited additional effect on the perceptual elements of the landscape, including remoteness and sense of scale.

6.10.17 For both Scenario 1 and 2, the magnitude of cumulative effect resulting would be **l**ow. Taking account of the medium sensitivity, the significance of cumulative effect is judged to be minor adverse (**not significant**).

LCT 225 - Broad Steep-Sided Glen

6.10.18 For both Scenario 1 and 2, the addition of the Proposed Development into the cumulative scenario would increase the influence of energy infrastructure across the LCT but would be consistent with the existing pattern and scale of energy infrastructure. The addition of the Proposed Development, due to the scale of the LCT and key characteristics including the landform unaffected, is considered to have a limited effect on the scenic quality of the LCT.

6.10.19 For both Scenario 1 and 2, the magnitude of cumulative effect resulting would be low. Taking account of the high sensitivity, the significance of cumulative effect is judged to be minor adverse (**not significant**).

Cumulative Visual Effects

6.10.20 Potential significant cumulative effects can occur where the addition of the Proposed Development to the cumulative baseline would increase the prominence of energy infrastructure to the extent that they would potentially become either an influential characteristic or character-defining feature in views across the landscape.

6.10.21 The full cumulative visual assessment is set out in **Appendix 6.3: Visual Assessment (Volume 5: Appendices).** The following sections provide a summary of the assessment of cumulative effects on representative viewpoints for the focused receptors as set out above.

Summary of the Assessment of Cumulative Effects on Visual Amenity

6.10.22 It is considered that there would be one significant cumulative effect on visual amenity as a result of the addition of the Proposed Development into the cumulative baseline scenario, under Scenario 2. The summary below focuses on the viewpoint where the significant effect is anticipated.

6.10.23 The summary below focuses on the viewpoint from which a significant cumulative effect is anticipated.

Viewpoint 1

6.10.24 For Scenario 2, the addition of the Proposed Development into the cumulative baseline scenario would be similar to that at Scenario 1 however it would add another energy development into the cluster of energy infrastructure in views to the west. There would continue to be separation between the Proposed Development and cumulative schemes due to distance and the type of development, however the addition would contribute to filling the view with energy infrastructure in this direction which creates additional focus away from the views towards Loch Ness. The views towards Loch Ness would remain to be unaffected.

6.10.25 For Scenario 2, the magnitude of cumulative effect resulting would be medium. Taking account of the very high sensitivity, the significance of cumulative effect is judged to be moderate adverse (**significant**).

Sequential Users of Key Recreational Routes and Transport Corridors

6.10.26 **Loch nam Breac Dearga Trail:** It should also be noted that there are likely to be sequential significant cumulative effects on visual receptors travelling along the Loch nam Breac Dearga Trail at operation. The addition of the Proposed Development would extend the influence of energy development across the horizontal extent of views and would be apparent for the most scenic part of the route. Due to the proximity of receptors, it would be apparent in views that the Proposed Development comprises energy infrastructure rather than more distant views where it is less noticeable as part of the large-scale landscape and contrasting to other cumulative energy schemes with vertical structures.

6.11 Intra-Cumulative Effects

6.11.1 The Chapters where there is the potential for intra-relationship effects include the following:

- **Chapter 7: Terrestrial Ecology (Volume 2: Main Report)** – There would be combined effects on landscape habitats, including the rocky moorland plateau and steep-sided glen landscapes, at Pre-Construction and Enabling Works, Construction and Operation.

- **Chapter 13: Access, Traffic and Transport (Volume 2: Main Report)** – Combined effects would be experienced by users of the road network during the Pre-Construction and Enabling Works, and Construction phase where the sense of activity would increase.
- **Chapter 14: Noise and Vibration (Volume 2: Main Report)** – Combined effects would be experienced by landscape and visual receptors in close proximity to construction activity through the Pre-Construction and Enabling Works, and Construction phase where the sense of activity would increase.
- **Chapter 16: Socio-Economic, Recreation and Tourism (Volume 2: Main Report)** – Combined effects would be experienced by recreational users of the recreational routes and core paths within the Study Area, where there would be intervisibility of the Proposed Development and where there are also diversions proposed.

6.12 Summary

6.12.1 This chapter provides an assessment of the effects on landscape character and visual amenity that are likely to arise from the Pre-Construction and Enabling, Construction and Operational Phases of the Proposed Development. The assessment of existing baseline conditions identified one local landscape designation, seven published landscape character types and 13 specific and representative viewpoints relevant to the assessment of effects.

6.12.2 The effects on landscape character and visual amenity during the Pre-Construction and Enabling Works phase would be limited due to the siting of the Proposed Development near to the valley associated with the River Coiltie. This would limit effects on the wider landscape and visual receptors. There would be one likely significant adverse visual effect during this phase (Viewpoint 12) due to the close proximity to the works and alteration to an otherwise relatively wild, upland view.

6.12.3 The effects on landscape character during the Construction phase would be likely to have a significant adverse effect on the Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA and the local landscape surrounding the Headpond and LCW (LCT 222: Rocky Moorland Plateau - Inverness and LCT 225: Broad Steep-Sided Glen). This would largely be due to the wider influence of the construction activity and plant which would contrast with the existing open moorland plateau and an otherwise stretch of undeveloped shoreline for a temporary period. At Operation year 1, this would reduce to a likely significant adverse effect from only the landscape surrounding the Headpond (LCT 222: Rocky Moorland Plateau – Inverness) as the effects on the key characteristics of the LCT, including remoteness and limited human intervention, would only be perceptible from a localised part of the LCT. There would be no anticipated residual significant adverse effects on the SLA at Operation year 1 or 15 and no anticipated residual significant adverse effects on LCTs at Operation year 15.

6.12.4 The effects on visual amenity during the Construction phase would be likely to have a significantly adverse effect on selected residential receptors, recreational receptors and road users. This would predominantly include receptors within a relatively close proximity to the Proposed Development, such as within Foyers and at the summit of Meall Fuar-mhonaidh (noting no change to the views towards Loch Ness from this summit viewpoint). Such receptors would typically be influenced by direct views of construction activity which would be a substantial change to the composition of the view. At Operation year 1, this would reduce to likely significant adverse effects to recreational receptors near to the Headpond infrastructure including receptors at the summit of Meall Fuar-mhonaidh with a direct view of the Headpond infrastructure, receptors with direct views from Foyers toward the LCW and from a local walking track near to the Permanent Compounds, Tunnel Portals and Permanent Tracks near to the River Coiltie. This would reduce to only recreational routes near to the Headpond by Operation year 15. It should be noted that the views towards Loch Ness and the wider landform of Glas-bheinn Mhor in the middle ground or the distant views of mountains on the skyline from the elevated landscape near to the Headpond would not be affected.

6.12.5 The likely effects at Operation year 15 are considered to be reduced due to the extensive landscape and ecological mitigation proposed as part of the Proposed Development. This includes large swathes of native woodland planting, montane willow scrub planting, Ancient Woodland regenerative buffer and enhancement near to the River Coiltie, peatland restoration and shallow pond creation. This would assist in the partial containment and integration of the Proposed Development, particularly around the River Coiltie. The planting would also contribute to reinstating historic native planting in this part of the landscape.

6.12.6 The effects on landscape character and visual amenity have also been reduced due to the siting of the permanent infrastructure. The proximity of the Headpond infrastructure to Meall Fuar-mhonaidh would not compromise the distinctive shape of this hill peak, maintaining its visibility as a landmark feature in views from both ends of Loch

Ness. The design of the LCW would result in a low-level structure at the loch shore and the materiality used would create a more natural treatment and visually recessive structure.

6.12.7 Overall, the likely residual adverse effects on landscape character and visual amenity would be highly localised due to the siting of the Proposed Development and proposed landscape and ecological mitigation. Residual significant adverse effects are likely to be limited to visual effects in close proximity to the Headpond and LCW with direct views.

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