

3. LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL APPRAISAL

3.1 Introduction

This Chapter presents a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) with the aim of identifying the predicted landscape and visual effects of the Project, comprising Proposed Development and Associated Development, as described in **Chapter 2: Project Description**.

The LVA is augmented by supporting text and graphics within the following annexes.

- Annex C – Landscape Assessment Methodology
- Annex D – Landscape Character Sensitivity Table
- Annex E – Photomontages and figures
 - Figure E.1 – Zone of Theoretical Visibility and Viewpoints;
 - Figure E.2 – Landscape Character;
 - Figure E.3 – Landscape Designations and Recreational Routes; and
 - Figure E.4 – Landscape Mitigation Plan.

Study Area

Taking a proportionate approach, a 5 km radius Study Area from the Project has been adopted for the assessment of landscape and visual effects (“the Study Area”). This has been informed by analysis of Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) maps and an early appraisal of potential effects for a development of this scale. It is considered that any notable landscape or visual effects would be confined within this geographical area.

3.2 Guidance and Methodology

3.2.1 Guidance

The methodology presented here is based on the following best practice guidance:

- Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Edition (GLVIA3); Institute of Environmental Management and Appraisal and the Landscape Institute, 2013;
- Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland; Prepared on behalf of the Countryside Agency and NatureScot, Land Use Consultants, 2002;
- Landscape Sensitivity Assessment - Guidance for Scotland (Consultation Draft); NatureScot, 2020; and
- Visual Representation of Development Proposals; Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 06/2019 (2019).

In addition, reference has been made to other published guidance and the appraisal work has drawn on the following relevant baseline information:

- National Landscape Character Assessment (web-based interactive map), NatureScot, 2019;
- The Special Qualities of the National Scenic Areas, SNH Commissioned Report No.374, NatureScot, 2010;
- Ordnance Survey Land ranger (1:50 000) and Explorer (1:25 000) maps;
- Field surveys; and
- Aerial photography.

3.2.2 Methodology

The LVA aims to identify and evaluate the potential landscape and visual effects arising from the Project. This includes discrete analysis of i) effects resulting specifically from the addition of the Proposed Development; ii) effects arising specifically from the Associated Development; and iii) the combined effects of both of these elements based on the addition of the Project to the baseline landscape.

Wherever possible, identified effects are quantified, albeit the nature of landscape and visual appraisal requires interpretation by professional judgement. In order to provide a level of consistency to the appraisal, the prediction of magnitude and appraisal of the residual landscape and visual effects have been based on pre-defined criteria. The complete appraisal methodology is set out in **Annex C**.

3.3 Planning Policy Context

The following section identifies the planning policy and other planning guidance material specifically relevant to the LVA. This includes consideration of the following:

- Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan, Argyll and Bute Council, 2015;
- Argyll and Bute Supplementary Guidance, Argyll and Bute Council, 2016;
- Biodiversity Technical Note for Planners and Developers, Argyll and Bute Council, 2017; and
- Woodland and Forestry Strategy, Argyll and Bute Council, 2011.

3.3.1 Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan 2015

The Local Development Plan (LDP) sets out the Council's vision for the area alongside planning policy to guide development. Relevant landscape-related policies from the LDP are summarised as follows:

- Policy LDP 3—Supporting the Protection, Conservation and Enhancement of our Environment, which seeks to protect established character and local distinctiveness of the landscape, the special qualities of landscape designations, and landscape features such as woodland. This encompasses consideration of potential cumulative effects.
- Policy LDP 9—Developing Setting, Layout and Design, which promotes high standards of design, with reference to site location, scale and density, and the sensitivity of the receiving landscape.

The LDP is augmented by further policy within the Supplementary Guidance 2016, which sets out additional information in relation to the interpretation of key policies.

3.3.2 Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan Supplementary Guidance 2016

The following landscape-related supplementary guidance clauses are linked to the Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan 2015:

- SG LDP ENV 1 – Development Impact on Habitats, Species and our Biodiversity: this outlines relevant legislation, policies and conservation objectives that will be consulted in regards to development proposals.
- SG LDP ENV 6 – Development Impact on Trees/Woodland: this outlines that the Council will protect trees and woodland by making Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs), and will resist development likely to have adverse effects on trees, with mitigation plans required.
- SG LDP ENV 8 – Protection and Enhancement of Green Networks: this highlights that the Council will encourage developments that contribute towards the overall health of green infrastructure.
- SG LDP ENV 12 – Development Impact on National Scenic Area (NSAs): this policy seeks to protect the integrity of NSAs from inappropriate development.

- SG LDP ENV 13 – Development Impact on Areas of Panoramic Quality (APQs), states that the Council will resist development in, or affecting, an APQ where its scale, location or design will have a significant adverse impact, unless these are outweighed by wider benefits.
- SG LDP ENV 14 – Landscape: this identifies that the Council will consider landscape impact when assessing development proposals, and will look for development that has correct scale, location and design in relation to the site context.

3.3.3 Biodiversity Technical Note for Planners and Developers 2017

The Technical Note states that the Council encourage high quality development that will make a positive contribution towards biodiversity within the local environment. The overall aims include the conservation and enhancement of existing biodiversity, as well as improving connectivity between key habitats. The Technical Note incorporates lists of suggested plant species, including native tree species, and their suitability for specific soil conditions and habitat types.

3.3.4 Argyll and Bute Woodland and Forestry Strategy 2011

This document outlines the prevalence of woodland and forestry across Argyll and Bute, and sets out a vision of how this resource can best contribute to the economy, communities and environment. The strategy aims to ensure native woodland expansion is integrated with other land uses including agriculture, improves connectivity between woodland areas, and contributes towards biodiversity. Across Kintyre, the strategy states that any loss of woodland will require compensatory planting elsewhere.

3.4 Landscape Baseline Environment

3.4.1 Local Landscape Context

Figure E.1 illustrates the geographic location of the Project, which is located on an area of commercial forestry approximately 2.5 km north east of the settlement of Lochgilphead. The local landscape comprises a dense and geographically extensive spread of coniferous commercial forestry that encompasses vast areas of the more elevated inland areas around Loch Fyne. This contrasts with the lower lying landscapes associated with the coastal areas and inland river valleys, which comprise mixed uses including agriculture, parcels of broadleaved woodland / shelterbelt and residential settlement.

Topography within the Project Site ranges from 100-150 m AOD. The surrounding landform is gently undulating, rising to 220 m AOD at the summit of Craig Murrail to the north. To the south and east, the undulating landform gradually slopes downwards towards the coast of Loch Fyne.

Overall, the locality is sparsely settled with Lochgilphead and Ardrishaig representing the closest settlements to the Project Site that are of notable size. However, the landscape is traversed by a network of roads and footways that link the villages, hamlets and farm steadings scattered throughout other parts of the locality. These include the A816 and A83, which represent the primary transport corridors in the locality (located to the south / south west of the Project Site). In addition, the Crinan Canal extends in a broadly north-south direction approximately 1.9 km to the south west.

Existing electricity infrastructure within the Study Area comprises overhead power lines, and an existing Substation at Port Ann, approximately 5 km to the south east of the Project Site.

Despite the widespread presence of actively managed forestry across upland areas and settlement on the lower lying coastal fringe (including existing electricity infrastructure), in general the landscape retains an overall sense of remoteness and tranquillity.

3.4.2 Landscape Character

Figure E.2 illustrates the Landscape Character Types (LCTs) within the Study Area, as defined within the National Landscape Character Assessment¹, which represents the most up-to-date assessment of landscape character across the Study Area. The Proposed Development Site and Associated Development are located within the Plateau Moor and Forest LCT. The key characteristics and sensitivities are listed below.

Key Characteristics of the Plateau Moor and Forest LCT

- 'Upland plateau with rounded ridges, craggy outcrops and an irregular slope profile;
- Upland Lochs;
- Winding narrow glens and wider glens with rivers;
- Extensive, large-scale mosaic of open moorland and forestry;
- No field boundaries;
- Very few buildings; occasional isolated dwellings on edges of moor;
- Small enclosed pastures and occasional farms and houses on lower hill slopes at the transition with adjacent character types and within the narrow glens which dissect these uplands; and
- Little access; roads follow shorelines.'

The sensitivity of the Plateau Moor and Forest LCT specific to the Project and its locality is assessed within **Annex D** as being Medium.

Relationship to Adjacent LCTs

As described above, the Plateau Moor and Forest LCT represents an extensive landscape area that is enveloped by lower-lying ground within the Rocky Coastland LCT, which forms a narrow band along Loch Fyne and inland river valleys. In addition, the Upland Parallel Ridges LCT and Flat Moss and Mudflats are located at greater distance to the west. The key characteristics of these LCT are listed below:

Key Characteristics of the Rocky Coastland LCT

- Uneven, hummocky landform with rocky outcrops and narrow glens;
- Raised benches, cliffs and distinctive rounded knolls;
- Rocky, indented coastlines with offshore islands and small sandy bays;
- Relatively small-scale landscape with a diverse mix of colours and textures;
- Steep wooded cliffs with hummocky, gorse-covered slopes;
- Stone walls provide partial enclosure;
- Relatively well-settled, with scattered isolated farm buildings and small villages in sheltered sites;
- A wide variety of archaeological sites; and
- Complex transitional landscape.

Key Characteristics of the Upland Parallel Ridges LCT

- Upland landscape of long, parallel ridges and narrow, linear lochs and glens;
- Tightly packed ridges follow a south-west/north-east alignment;
- Steep, sharp ridge-tops, with dramatic rocky outcrops;
- Extensive conifer forests;
- Deciduous, largely ancient oak woodland on steep, sheltered slopes of ridges and on loch edges;
- Small marginal pastures or moorland in isolated patches between the un-forested ridges; and

¹ National Landscape Character Assessment, NatureScot, 2019

- Dramatic, scenic upland landscape.

Key Characteristics of the Flat Moss and Mudflats LCT

- Broad lowland vale enclosed by steep, mountainous ridges;
- Transition from undulating farmland on margins of vale to extensive raised bog in low-lying areas and mudflats at the estuary mouth;
- Rocky outcrops are striking features, upstanding from the surrounding lowland; they are often partially clothed by stands of mature broadleaf woodland;
- Geometric farmland patchwork on fringes of moor, with straight hedgerows, stone walls and drainage ditches;
- Strong contrasts in colour and texture between the green farmland sward, the dull greens, browns and reds of the moss and the mudflats;
- Extensive conifer plantations on borders of bog;
- Numerous prominent standing stones and other important archaeological sites; and
- Wide variety of different landscape patterns within a relatively small area.

3.4.3 Landscape Designations

Landscape planning designations and policies are considered in the determination of the sensitivity of landscape and visual receptors as they provide an indication of value ascribed to the landscape or visual resource.

With reference to **Figure E.3**, the Proposed Development Site and Associated Development are not located within a landscape designation. However, within the wider parts of the Study Area the Knapdale National Scenic Area (NSA) is located 1.1 km to the north west. With reference to The Special Qualities of the National Scenic Areas², the special qualities of the NSA comprise:

- Distinctive ridges and loch-filled trenches;
- A landscape of skylines;
- A clothing of oak woodland over the ridges and hollows;
- A profoundly evocative, ancient place;
- Ever-changing patterns of colour, sound and smell;
- In the north, dramatic juxtaposition of ridges and volcanic plugs arising from the flat expanse of Mòine Mhòr bog;
- A centre of parallel ridges and secret lochans;
- Long, slow journeys to the sea;
- Dramatic sea views in the south; and
- The Crinan Canal.

In addition, the West Loch Fyne Area of Panoramic Quality (APQ) is located 3.2 km to the east. There are no other landscape designations or Gardens and Designed Landscapes (GDLs) within the Study Area.

3.5 Visual Baseline and Receptors

The following section describes the visual receptors within the Study Area. In each case, distances are listed in ascending order from the Proposed Development Site.

² The Special Qualities of the National Scenic Areas, SNH Commissioned Report No.374, 2010

3.5.1 Local Residents

With reference to **Figure E.1**, settlements within the Study Area from which there may be views of the Project would be limited to Lochgilphead, which is located 2.5 km to the south west and Cairnbaan, located 3.2 km to the west.

With reference to the ZTV, there would be no views from the small scale villages of Bridgend or Kilmichael Glassary, located 2.2 km and 2.4 km to the north west of the Proposed Development Site respectively, or from the village of Lochgair, located 4.1 km to the east.

Other residents within the Study Area are limited to dispersed dwellings and farmsteads. Those within 2.0 km of the Proposed Development Site comprise:

- Auchloish, 400 m to the south west;
- Monydrain, 1.1 km to the south west;
- Monydrain Cottage, 1.2 km to the south west;
- Cam Loch House, 1.2 km to the south west;
- Ach nabreck, 1.4 km to the south west;
- Ach nabreck Lodge, 1.5 km to the south west;
- Ach nabreac House, 1.6 km to the south west;
- Blarbuie House, 1.6 km to the south;
- Badden Farm, 1.7 km to the south west;
- Uillian, 1.8 km to the north west;
- Barr-nan-craobh, 1.9 km to the west;
- Forest Lodge, 1.9 km to the north west; and
- Fernoch, 1.9 km to the south west.

3.5.2 Recreational Receptors

With reference to **Figure E.3**, recreational routes and outdoor destinations / attractions within the Study Area are listed below:

- Core Path network;
 - Core Path C125 extends along the southern and eastern Proposed Development Site boundaries and also follows the same track as the proposed access route on the western side of the Proposed Development Site;
 - Other Core Paths within 2.0 km comprise C126 (600 m to the east), C315 & 459 (900 m to the west), C110 (1.2 km to the south west), C123 (1.5 km to the south) and C310 (1.9 km to the south);
- Lochgilphead Golf Club, 1.6 km to the south; and
- National Cycle Route 78 and the Crinan Canal, which follow the same route within the Study Area, extending within 1.9 km to the south west of the Proposed Development Site at the closest point.

With reference to the ZTV, there would be no views from Kilmory Castle or Kilmory Woodland Park and Garden (3.7 km to the south), the Standing Stones and Fort at Dunadd (3.8 km to the north west), the War Memorial and Castle at Lochgair (4.3 km to the east), or the layby and picnic site near Cairnbaan (4.4 km to the west).

3.5.3 Road and Rail Receptors

The main transport routes within the Study Area are aligned along the lower-lying coastal areas and river valleys. The key roads within the Study Area comprise the following:

- A816, which extends northwards from Lochgilphead towards Bridgend, 1.8 km to the west at the closest point;
- B841, which extends in a westerly direction from the A816, through Cairnbaan and along the side of the Crinan Canal, 2.5 km to the west at the closest point; and
- A83, which follows the coast between Ardrishaig, Lochgilphead and Lochgair, 2.7 km to the south of the Proposed Development Site at the closest point.

There are no railway lines within the Study Area.

3.6 Embedded Mitigation

The location of the Project has been chosen to avoid any notable ridgelines or visually prominent sections of skyline. The undulating landform in the locality in combination with extensive areas of forestry would restrict views of the Project across wider parts of the Study Area. From the higher summits in the wider surrounding areas, the Proposed Development and Associated Development would typically be back-clothed by the distant landscape and experienced below the skyline. In this way, the surrounding landform restricts potential effects on the surrounding landscape and visual amenity.

Furthermore, the Proposed Development Site and Associated Development are located in close proximity to existing electricity infrastructure, comprising nearby overhead lines extending north east to south west. As such, the Project would exert its primary influence over a local landscape already partially characterised by existing development, and avoids the spread of infrastructure into wider parts of the surrounding landscape.

The construction of the Project would result in the permanent loss of a localised area of coniferous forestry, a landscape feature which is widespread and common in the surrounding context. As noted in the Argyll and Bute Woodland Strategy 2011, any loss of woodland would require some form of compensation planting to be made elsewhere. To this end, the proposals seek to incorporate a comprehensive mitigation strategy to effectively integrate the Project into the surrounding landscape. In terms of design, the Project seeks to achieve the following landscape objectives:

- Land clearance and occupation would be limited to necessary areas only to minimise the geographic spread of the infrastructure and limit the potential impact on the local landscape fabric;
- The Proposed Development and Associated Development access track would utilise existing tracks to minimise effects associated with peripheral parts of the Project;
- The number of new towers comprising the Associated Development has been limited as far as possible (two towers in total) to minimise the effects resulting from this component of the Project;
- Temporary tracks and temporary overhead line diversions (for construction purposes) would be reinstated at the end of the construction phase, thereby further limiting the geographic extent of potential residual effects;
- Woodland planting would be employed as a mitigating feature. Species selection would comprise native broadleaved woodland edge tree / scrub species of local provenance and would provide a natural context to the proposed built form, provide visual screening, and also provide additional habitat type / biodiversity enhancement to the locality (see **Figure E.4**);
- Species-rich grassland (comprising upland wet-meadow mix in accordance with the local context) would be introduced within the Proposed Development Site, along the route of the Associated Development. This ground cover would increase biodiversity value and further soften the appearance of the Project;
- In terms of colour and materials, the buildings would be painted with a recessive colour (dark-brown, such as RAL 8014: Sepia Brown or similar approved) to assist blending in with the surrounding landscape context comprising plantation forestry; and

- Peat restoration could be introduced as a further means of increasing biodiversity value. Any peatland restoration works would be undertaken in line with the process set out in Schedule 1, Part 6, Class 20A in the T&CP(GPD) (S) O 1992 (as amended).

3.7 ZTV and Viewpoint Analysis

The potential landscape and visual effects arising from the Project have been analysed in two ways:

- Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) map analysis, to provide a general overview of the geographical extent of visibility of the Proposed Development and Associated Development within the Study Area; and
- Analysis of the potential effects at key viewpoints.

3.7.1 Zone of Theoretical Visibility Analysis

Theoretical visibility mapping of the Proposed Development and Associated Development is illustrated in **Figure E.1**. The ZTV illustrates the maximum overall visibility of the Proposed Development, with proposed buildings to the top height of 22 m; and of the Associated Development with towers of 55.47 m in height. The ZTV has been prepared on the basis of 'bare ground' and does not take into account the potential screening effects of surrounding vegetation / forestry.

With reference to the ZTV, the geographical extent of potential visibility of the Proposed Development would be highly fragmented and primarily focused within 1-2 km to the east and south, encompassing commercial coniferous forestry. To the north and west, ZTV coverage is very limited at distances greater than 500 m, reflecting the containing nature of the undulating landform. Within wider parts of the Study Area, there are additional of fragmented ZTV coverage to the south and south west. These more distant geographic areas also predominantly comprise upland areas with commercial forestry.

Potential views of the Associated Development would be slightly more widespread, in accordance with the increased height of this infrastructure. The additional areas of potential visibility would be primarily focused across fragmented areas of forestry and moorland, with limited public access, as well as parts of the Crinan Canal.

3.7.2 Viewpoint Analysis

Viewpoint analysis has been carried out on a selection of key viewpoint locations to assess the likely level of effects arising as a result of the Project. These locations were verified via consultation with the local planning authority (phone call Oct 2021). With reference to the geographical extent of visibility illustrated within the ZTV, a total of four viewpoints have been selected as being representative of the main views from publicly accessible locations within the Study Area (see **Figure E.1** for locations).

Table 3.1 Viewpoint Analysis

Viewpoint	Description
1. View north from Core Path C125	<p>Existing View (Figure E.5a) This viewpoint is located on the path / forestry track 0.45 km to the south of the Proposed Development Site, within the Plateau Moor and Forest LCT. The view is representative of views experienced by walkers. The existing views are characterised by rough grassland in the foreground with blanket coniferous forestry beyond. Built form within the view comprises a section of the existing Inveraray to Crossaig overhead line, overhead line. The tops of these existing towers extend above the horizon.</p> <p>Predicted View (Figures E.5b – E.5c) There would be open, close proximity views of the Proposed Development and Associated Development, in the same field of view as the existing overhead line. The upper parts of the taller infrastructure would be visible on the skyline. The recessive colour of the buildings would reduce their influence on the view.</p>

	<p>Effects on Visual Amenity The sensitivity of walkers is assessed as being High at this location.</p> <p>i) The Proposed Development would be experienced at close proximity, incorporating all built form and the surrounding compound. The deer fencing surrounding the mitigation planting would also be visible at close range. The magnitude of change at completion would be High, and the resultant level of effect would be Major. By Year 12 the proposed mitigation planting would be well established and completely screen the Proposed Development from view (no effect).</p> <p>ii) The two towers of the Associated Development would be visible at close proximity and extend above the horizon. However, these elements would be experienced in the same field of view as the existing overhead line, hence would not introduce new, incongruous elements to the locality, or extend the horizontal spread of infrastructure. Instead, the Associated Development would augment the presence of existing electrical infrastructure, resulting in a limited incremental effect. The magnitude of change at completion would be Medium/Low and the resultant level of effect would be Moderate. By Year 12 the proposed mitigation planting would be well established and completely screen the Associated Development from view (no effect).</p> <p>iii) The combined magnitude of change resulting from the addition of the Project would be High based on the close proximity and open nature of the view. The resultant level of effect would be Major. As mitigation planting within the Site establishes, views would be completely screened; by Year 12 there would be no effect.</p> <p>Landscape Effect The Plateau Moor and Forest LCT is assessed as being of Medium sensitivity to the Project.</p> <p>i) At this proximity, the Proposed Development would represent a recognizable new element within the local landscape, albeit within an area already influenced by electrical infrastructure and human activity. The magnitude of change at completion would be Medium and the effect on landscape character would be Moderate. As mitigation planting within the Site establishes over time the influence of the Proposed Development on landscape character would steadily reduce. By Year 12, there would be no effect.</p> <p>ii) The Associated Development would exert its influence on a local landscape already influence by towers. The magnitude of change would be Low/Negligible and the effect on landscape character would be Minor. By Year 12, there would be no effect.</p> <p>iii) The combined magnitude of change resulting from the addition of the Project would be Medium. The resultant level of effect would be Moderate. At Year 12, there would be no effect.</p>
<p>2. View west from Core Path C125</p>	<p>Existing View (Figure E.6a) This viewpoint is located on the path / forestry track 0.25 km to the east of the Proposed Development Site, within the Plateau Moor and Forest LCT. The existing views to the east are characterised by recently felled plantation in the foreground, with established forestry beyond. Built form within the view comprises the tops of existing towers, which rise above the forestry and are visible on the skyline.</p> <p>Predicted View (Figures E.6b– E.6c) Potential views of the Proposed Development and Associated Development would be subject to screening by intervening forestry. View would be restricted to the upper-most parts of the substation building and the tops of the towers. There would be no views of the lower-lying infrastructure, access tracks, or compound.</p> <p>Effects on Visual Amenity The sensitivity of walkers is assessed as being High.</p> <p>i) The Proposed Development would be part-screened and account for limited angle of view. The magnitude of change at completion would be Low/Negligible, and the level of effect would be Moderate/Minor. At Year 12 there would be no discernible change to the level of effect.</p>

	<p>ii) The two towers of the Associated Development would be partly visible beyond intervening forestry, within the same sector of view as existing towers. The net result would be a slight increase to the number of turbines in the landscape to the west. The towers would be visible against the skyline, albeit there would be no increase in the horizontal spread of infrastructure. The magnitude of change at completion would be Low at most and the resultant level of effect would be Moderate. At Year 12, the effects would remain unchanged.</p> <p>iii) The combined magnitude of change resulting from the addition of the Project would be Low. The resultant level of effect would be Moderate. At Year 12, the effects would remain unchanged.</p> <p>Landscape Effect The Plateau Moor and Forest LCT is assessed as being of Medium sensitivity to the Project.</p> <p>i) The Proposed Development would be part-screened, and experienced within a landscape context comprising plantation forestry with existing electrical infrastructure (towers). It would represent a slight increase in existing human influence within the locality. The magnitude of change at completion would be Low/Negligible and the effect on landscape character would be Minor. At Year 12, the effects would remain unchanged.</p> <p>ii) The Associated Development would be partially visible within a forested landscape with existing towers, representing a limited incremental change. The magnitude of change on landscape character would be Low/Negligible at most and the effect on landscape character would be Minor. At Year 12, the effect would be the same.</p> <p>iii) The combined magnitude of change resulting from the addition of the Project would be Low at most and the resultant level of effect would be Moderate/minor. At Year 12, the effects would remain unchanged.</p>
<p>3. View north east from Core Path C125</p>	<p>Existing View (Figure E.7a) This viewpoint is located on the forestry track 1.35 km to the south west of the Proposed Development Site, within the Plateau Moor and Forest - Argyll LCT. The existing views to the north east are characterised by a clearing within a wider area of plantation forestry. The existing Inveraray to Crossaig OHL extends through the clearing, with the towers visible at close proximity.</p> <p>Predicted View (Figures E.7b – E.7c) The Proposed Development and Associated Development would be experienced in the same field of view as the existing towers, forming additional elements of built form in the middle distance. The Proposed Development would be partly-screened by a rise in the intervening landform. The recessive colour of the buildings would reduce their influence on the view. The two towers of the Associated Development would be subject to screening by intervening forestry, and experienced behind an existing tower.</p> <p>Effects on Visual Amenity The sensitivity of walkers is assessed as being High.</p> <p>i) The Proposed Development would be part-screened and account for limited angle of view beyond existing electrical infrastructure. The magnitude of change at completion would be Low, and the level of effect would be Moderate. By Year 12 views of the buildings would soften slightly as intervening mitigation planting establishes. On balance, the level of effect would remain the same.</p> <p>ii) The two towers of the Associated Development would be part-screened and experienced beyond an existing tower. The net result would be a very slight increase to the number of turbines in the landscape to the north east. The magnitude of change at completion would be Negligible and the resultant level of effect would be Minor. At Year 12, the effects would remain the same.</p> <p>iii) The combined magnitude of change resulting from the addition of the Project would be Low based on the extent of existing infrastructure within the foreground. The resultant level of effect would be Moderate. By Year 12 views of the buildings would soften slightly as intervening mitigation planting establishes. On balance, the level of effect would remain the same.</p>

	<p>Landscape Effect The Plateau Moor and Forest LCT is assessed as being of Medium sensitivity to the Project.</p> <p>i) The Proposed Development would be experienced within a landscape context already notably influenced by electrical infrastructure. It would represent a slight increase in existing human influence within the locality. The magnitude of change at completion would be Low/Negligible and the effect on landscape character would be Minor. At Year 12, the magnitude of change would remain Low/Negligible and the level of effect would be Minor.</p> <p>ii) The Associated Development would be partially visible within a forested landscape beyond existing towers, representing a very limited incremental change. The magnitude of change on landscape character would be Negligible and the effect on landscape character would be Minor/Negligible. At Year 12, the effect would be the same.</p> <p>iii) The combined magnitude of change resulting from the addition of the Project would be Low/Negligible due to its proximity to existing infrastructure. The resultant level of effect would be Moderate/minor. At Year 12, the level of effect would remain the same.</p>
<p>4. View east from Crinan Canal towpath (NCR 78)</p>	<p>Existing View (Figure E.8a) This viewpoint is located on the Crinan Canal path / National Cycle Route 78, 3.25 km to the west of the Proposed Development Site. The viewpoint is located on the edge of the Upland Parallel Ridges LCT. The view is representative of those experienced by recreational walkers / cyclists on an open section of the path. The existing views are characterised by rough grassland with scattered scrub in the foreground, with larger parcels of woodland / forestry beyond. The landscape to the east rises in the distance to form a forested skyline. Existing built form incorporates scattered dwellings, as well as telecoms lines and overhead power lines.</p> <p>Predicted View (Figures E.8b – E.8c) The Project would be fully screened by the combination of intervening landform and vegetation. There would be no views and no effect on landscape character or visual amenity.</p>

3.8 Appraisal - Construction Effects

Whilst it is the operational stage of the Project that would give rise to prolonged landscape and visual effects, construction works detailed in **Chapter 2: Project Description** would give rise to medium-term temporary landscape and visual effects. The detailed construction programme is not known at this stage, although it is anticipated that construction of the Proposed Development and Associated Development would take approximately 30 months.

These effects would be temporary and would mainly arise through the gradual introduction of proposed buildings/infrastructure. The effects arising from other operations, including the vehicle movement, construction of the fencing and excavation works would be localised, and whilst potentially visible, would not appear prominently in views from the surrounding areas. As such, the construction phase effects would be limited in extent and duration.

3.8.1 Construction Landscape Effects

The Proposed Development Site is located in an area of commercial forestry with rough grassland, with the Associated Development located in the adjoining landscape to the east. During the construction stage, the coniferous forestry within the Proposed Development Site would be removed, along with any groundcover and understorey planting to facilitate construction activities. There would also be clearance activities associated with the construction of temporary and permanent access tracks for the Associated Development and temporary OHL diversion, as well as a short term, temporary increase in vehicle movements to and from the Project Site.

The existing landscape fabric is considered to be of Low sensitivity to the Project. This is based on the scale and extent of the surrounding forestry, within which the Project would comprise a very small area, and the ability of such landscapes to regenerate in a relatively short period of time.

The magnitude of change on existing landscape fabric based on the Proposed Development would be Medium, resulting in a Moderate/minor effect. The magnitude of change on landscape fabric based on the Associated Development would be Low/Negligible based on its smaller footprint and close geographical proximity to existing electrical infrastructure and access tracks, resulting in a Minor effect. The combined magnitude of change based on the addition of the Project would be Medium, resulting in a Moderate/Minor effect.

In terms of landscape character; the construction stage effects would be limited to a very localised part of the Plateau Moor and Forest LCT, which is considered to be of Medium sensitivity with reference to **Annex D**. The magnitude of change associated with the localised areas of felling, disturbance of the existing ground cover and additional presence of vehicles and temporary access tracks within the Project Site would be tempered by the extent of surrounding forestry that predominates throughout the local landscape, as well as the close geographical location of the Project in relation to existing electricity infrastructure. Within such landscapes, occasional vehicle movements and localised tree felling is considered to be a standard occurrence.

On balance, the magnitude of change on landscape character during the construction stage would be Low based on the Proposed Development, resulting in a Moderate/Minor effect. The magnitude of change on landscape character based on the Associated Development would be Low/Negligible, resulting in a Minor effect. The combined magnitude of change resulting from the addition of the Project would be Low, resulting in a Moderate/Minor effect.

3.8.2 Construction Effects on Visual Amenity

The visual effects of the activities during the construction phase would be temporary and limited to very localised areas due to the containing influence of surrounding forestry in combination with the underlying landform. As such, potential views would predominantly be experienced intermittently by hillwalkers on Core Path 125, and road users on the A816 as they pass the Proposed Development Site access.

In each case, the visual impacts would be lessened by appropriate mitigation, including the gradual reinstatement of ground cover and introduction of new areas of planting as works progress, and limited through good site management and the temporary nature of the construction activities. Potential visual impacts on views from the A816 would be restricted by the intervening landform and tree cover, and account for very a short section of the overall route.

In summary, the visual magnitude of change during the construction phase would be Low based on the Proposed Development, resulting in a Moderate effect at most on hillwalkers. The magnitude of change based on the Associated Development would be Low/Negligible, resulting in a Moderate/Minor effect. The combined magnitude of change resulting from the addition of the Project would be Low. The resultant effect on views would be Moderate.

3.9 Appraisal - Operational Landscape Effects

This Section examines the effects arising as a result of the Project with reference to landscape fabric, landscape character and landscape designations.

3.9.1 Effects on Landscape Fabric

The landscape features within the Proposed Development Site and surrounding context comprise coniferous forestry with rough grassland across localised clearings. This is assessed as being of Low sensitivity to the Project. There are no other features of note or value.

The Proposed Development would result in the permanent loss of a localised area of forestry and rough grassland and its replacement with the proposed buildings, site services and control equipment, and associated

infrastructure. The Associated Development would also result in localised loss of ground cover along the permanent access tracks and the introduction of the proposed towers. In both cases, the proposed infrastructure would account for a small parcel of land within an expansive area of surrounding forestry. Upon completion of the works, any areas of disturbed ground within the Proposed Development Site would be reinstated with new areas of native tree / scrub planting and species-rich grassland at the first available season, and would establish rapidly thereafter (refer to **Figure E.4: Landscape Mitigation**). This would represent the addition of beneficial landscape features to the locality that would exert increasing influence over time as they become more established.

Accordingly, the magnitude of change based on the Proposed Development would be Medium, giving rise to a Moderate/minor effect on landscape fabric. The magnitude of change based on the Associated Development would be Low/Negligible based on the small footprint of the towers and close geographical proximity to existing electrical infrastructure and access tracks, resulting in a Minor effect. The combined magnitude of change resulting from the addition of the Project would be Medium, resulting in a Moderate/Minor effect. Whilst the replacement of parcels of forestry with hard-standing and built form is regarded as adverse, the introduction of additional new areas of native broadleaved trees represents beneficial change.

3.9.2 Effects on Landscape Character

The effect of the Project on landscape character largely depends on the key characteristics of the receiving environment; the degree to which the development may be considered to be consistent with or at odds with it; and how the proposal would be perceived within its setting.

Plateau Moor and Forest LCT

The Project would be located within the Plateau Moor and Forest LCT, which is described previously in this Chapter (see Section 3.4: Landscape Baseline Environment). With reference to sensitivity analysis within **Annex D**, the Plateau Moor and Forest LCT is assessed as being of Medium sensitivity to the Project. The effects on this LCT would be direct (affecting the Proposed Development Site and route of the Associated Development) and indirect (affecting the visual and perceptual characteristics of the wider landscape).

In terms of direct effects, there would be localised loss of forestry and rough grassland to facilitate introduction of the proposed buildings, permanent access tracks and associated infrastructure. Due to the small footprint of the Project within an expansive area of surrounding, actively managed forestry, this would exert a fairly limited impact upon local landscape character. The immediate context would continue to be characterised by existing overhead power lines in combination with large-scale coniferous forestry; the vast majority of which would be completely unaffected. In addition to this, the proposed access route would make use of existing forestry tracks, thereby reducing the requirement for new permanent track. The short section of new permanent access track required would be assimilated with the existing pattern of development and would not result in any notable loss of landscape elements.

In terms of indirect effects, ZTV coverage for the Proposed Development is predominantly focused across parts of the LCT to the east and south of the Proposed Development Site, out to approximately 2.0 km. Theoretical views of the Associated Development would be slightly more widespread based on the higher height of the towers, albeit remain focused across very similar geographic areas. At greater distances (and in other directions) ZTV coverage is more fragmented and predominantly limited to more elevated areas. This includes the summit and upper slopes of Cnoc an Tigh-fhraoich 2.5 km to the south west. The fragmented ZTV coverage reflects the characteristic *'rounded ridges, craggy outcrops and... irregular slope profile'* of the Plateau Moor and Forest LCT, and signifies that views of the Proposed Development would be partially or completely screened across much of the LCT.

Within more open views the Project would represent a new element of built form within the landscape. This contrasts with the rural characteristics of the LCT as a whole, which is described as having *'very few buildings'* other than *'isolated dwellings on edges of the moor'*. However, the local landscape is influenced by existing

electricity infrastructure. The influence of the Project would be confined to the same geographic area, and therefore contain the potential effects of larger scale built objects to a particular location within the landscape. As a result, the Project would reinforce the presence of electrical infrastructure as a characteristic within the locality and exert extremely limited influence across wider parts of the LCT (thereby reducing the potential cumulative spread of development upon the surrounding landscape).

With reference to the characteristic '*large-scale mosaic of open moorland and forestry*' the Project would exert limited influence. The undulating landform and forestry would restrict views of the Proposed Development and associated Development across the vast majority of the LCT. As a result, the majority of the Plateau Moor and Forest LCT would be completely unaffected.

In summary, based on the addition of the Proposed Development, the main effects would be focused within approximately 300 m to the south / east, and within approximately 100 m to the north / west (where visibility drops off more sharply). Across these localised areas, the magnitude of change would be Medium and the level of effect would be Moderate. At greater distances, views would be predominantly screened by surrounding forestry in combination with the undulating landform. As a result, across the wider LCT the magnitude of change based on the Proposed Development would be Negligible and the level of effect would be Minor. The majority of the LCT would be unaffected.

The main effects resulting from the Associated Development would also be focused within the surrounding locality, within approximately 400 - 500 m of the towers. The Associated Development would represent a slight increase in the number of towers within the local landscape, rather than the addition of elements that are completely new to it. As such, the magnitude of change would be Low/Negligible and the effect would be Minor. Across wider parts of the LCT the magnitude of change based on the Associated Development would be Negligible, and the resultant effect would be Minor/Negligible.

The combined magnitude of change resulting from the addition of the Project would be Medium across the local landscape (out to approximately 400 - 500 m), resulting in a Moderate effect. Across wider parts of the LCT the combined magnitude of change based on the Project would be Negligible, and the resultant effect would be Minor.

Rocky Coastland LCT

The Rocky Coastland LCT extends around the Plateau Moor and Forest LCT (where the Proposed Development Site is located) along its western, southern and eastern side. The LCT is considered to be of High sensitivity to the Project with reference to its typically small scale, and the association with parts of the West Loch Fyne APQ and Knapdale NSA.

With reference to the ZTV, potential views of the Proposed Development would be limited to very localised parts of the LCT on the western side of Druim Hill, approximately 1.6 km to the south of the Proposed Development. This area coincides with parts of Lochgilphead Golf Club and surrounding rough grassland on the fringes of the adjoining upland plateau. Potential views of the Proposed Development from these areas would be extremely limited due to the presence of intervening forestry at Dippin Hill and the wider landscape to the north. Potential views of the Associated Development would be slightly more widespread, and encompass geographic areas on the edge of Lochgilphead, as well as parts of the Crinan Canal. In each case, these views would be restricted by intervening landform and vegetation, reducing the influence of the Associated Development on existing landscape character.

There would be no effects on the '*raised beaches*', '*indented coastline*' or '*archaeological sites*' within the LCT. There would be no discernible influence upon the '*hummocky landform*' or '*wooded cliffs*'. Based on the addition of the Proposed Development, the magnitude of change would be Negligible at most and the effect on landscape character would be Negligible. The magnitude of change based on the Associated Development would also be Negligible, resulting in a Negligible effect. The combined magnitude of change resulting from the addition of the

Project would be Negligible, resulting in a Minor/Negligible effect. The vast majority of the LCT would be completely unaffected.

Upland Parallel Ridges LCT

There are two discreet areas of Upland Parallel Ridges LCT within the Study Area; the closest area is located 2.2 km to the west, with the second area located 2.6 km to the north west.

ZTV coverage across the area to the north west is limited to the upper slopes / summits of Creagan Breac an Fiadhach Bharr (and primarily limited to the Associated Development only). From these areas the Project would be experienced in the distance, within the same field of view / behind the existing Inveraray to Crossaig overhead line. As such, it would exert extremely limited influence on existing landscape character.

ZTV coverage across the area to the west is also fragmented and primarily restricted to higher ground on the easterly-facing slopes of Creag Ghlas and Black Rock. This area comprises almost continuous commercial forestry, which prohibits longer distance views towards the Project. The ZTV illustrates that potential views of the Associated Development would also be experienced from the lower-lying edge of these slopes, which are more open. However, these views would remain restricted by the intervening landform and tree cover, and the Associated Development would be barely discernible in the distant landscape. On this basis there would be no effect on the 'long, parallel ridges and narrow, linear lochs and glens' or 'extensive conifer forests' within the LCT and no discernible change to the 'dramatic, scenic upland landscape'.

The magnitude of change would be Negligible based on the addition of the Proposed Development or the Associated Development, resulting in a Negligible level of effect in each case. Given the limited visibility and spatial separation, the combined magnitude of change resulting from the addition of the Project would also be Negligible and the combined effect on landscape character would be Negligible. The majority of the Upland Parallel Ridges LCT would be completely unaffected.

Flat Moss and Mudflats LCT

This LCT is located 2.2 km to the north west of the Proposed Development Site at the closest point. It is entirely outside the ZTV, hence there would be no effect on existing landscape character.

3.9.3 Effects on Landscape Designations

Knapdale NSA

The Knapdale NSA is located 1.1 km to the north west of the Proposed Development Site at its closest point. ZTV coverage is extremely limited across the NSA and potential views of the Project would be primarily restricted to very localised upper slopes of Creag Ghlas and Black Rock, 2.9 km to the south west at the closest point. This very localised area comprises near-continuous plantation forestry coverage that inhibits outward views to the wider landscape. The ZTV also illustrates potential views of the Associated Development from the upper slopes / summits of Creagan Breac an Fiadhach Bharr, 3.6 km to the north west (the Proposed Development would be fully screened). From these areas the Associated Development would be experienced in the distance, beyond the existing Inveraray to Crossaig overhead line. In terms of special qualities, there would be no effect on the existing skylines, the Crinan Canal, or the 'dramatic sea views'. There would be no discernible change to any other special qualities of the NSA. As such, the magnitude of change would be Negligible based on the addition of the Proposed Development or the Associated Development, resulting in a Negligible level of effect in each case. Given the limited visibility and spatial separation, the combined magnitude of change resulting from the addition of the Project would also be Negligible and the combined and the effect on the Knapdale NSA would be Negligible. The vast majority of the NSA would be completely unaffected.

West Loch Fyne APQ

The West Loch Fyne APQ is located 3.2 km to the east of the Proposed Development Site at the closest point. The APQ is completely outside the ZTV, hence there would be no views of the Project and no indirect landscape effect on the special qualities of the APQ.

3.10 Appraisal - Operational Visual Effects

This Section examines the visual effects based on changes to the existing view as experienced by people within the surrounding landscape (as described within Section 3.5: Visual Baseline and Receptors). This process draws on the results of the ZTV and viewpoint analysis.

3.10.1 Visual effects experienced by Local Residents

The Appraisal below considers the effects experienced by local residents in settlements, as well as those in isolated residential dwellings / steadings in closest proximity to the Project. In all cases, sensitivity is deemed to be High.

Lochgilphead

Lochgilphead is located 2.5 km to the south west of the Proposed Development Site. ZTV coverage across the settlement is extremely limited and restricted to the eastern edge of the settlement (in the vicinity of the Hospital and further south along MacDonald Terrace, Ellary Place and Duntrune Place). Site investigation confirms that potential views of the Project from the area in the vicinity of the Hospital would be extremely limited due to the presence of intervening forestry at Cnoc Mor and Dippin Hill, as well as further commercial plantation extending across the wider landscape to the north. Potential views from the residential area further south would be fully screened by intervening buildings and tree cover to the north. The magnitude of change would be Negligible at most based on the addition of the Proposed Development or the Associated Development, resulting in a Negligible level of effect in each case. The combined magnitude of change resulting from the addition of the Project would also be Negligible and the combined level of effect would be Negligible. The vast majority of residents would experience no views and no effect.

Cairnbaan

Cairnbaan is located 3.2 km to the west of the Proposed Development Site. With reference to the ZTV, there would be no views of the Proposed Development. ZTV coverage for the Associated Development is more widespread, and encompasses properties along the sides of the B841, as well as dwellings on the southern edge of the settlement (on Dunnans Road and Letter Dail). From these areas, potential views of the Associated Development would be subject to screening by intervening buildings and tree cover. In the most open views, visibility would be limited to the upper-most tops of the towers, which would be barely discernible in the distant landscape to the east. The magnitude of change would be Negligible at most (based solely on views of the Associated Development) resulting in a Negligible level of effect. The vast majority of residents would experience no views and no effect.

Isolated Residential Dwellings / Steadings

The isolated dwellings of Monydrain, Monydrain Cottage, Cam Loch House, Achnabreck, Achnabreck Lodge, Achnabreac House, Badden Farm, Uillian, Barr-nan-craobh, Forest Lodge and Fernoch are all located outside the ZTV. In all cases, residents would experience no views and no effect.

Auchloish is located 400 m to the south west of the Proposed Development Site, on the edge of the ZTV. There would be no views of the Proposed Development. Potential views of the Associated Development would be fully screened by intervening forestry. There would be no views and no effect.

Barbuie House is located 1.6 km to the south of the Proposed Development Site. The two-storey house and nearby single storey cottage are both primarily south west facing. Potential views of the Project would be oblique

to the main orientation of view and would be further restricted by established tree cover on the northern side of the properties in combination with intervening forestry extending across Dippin Hill and the wider landscape to the north. The magnitude of change based on the addition of the Proposed Development or the Associated Development would be Negligible at most and the level of effect would be Minor/Negligible. The combined magnitude of change resulting from the addition of the Project would also be Negligible and the combined level of effect would be Minor/Negligible.

3.10.2 Visual effects experienced by Recreational Receptors

Recreational receptors are of High sensitivity in all cases. The Appraisal is described below, listed in order of increasing distance from the Project.

Core Path C125

Core Path C125 extends along the southern and eastern Proposed Development Site boundaries and also follows the same track as the proposed access route on the western side of the Project. As such, there would be close proximity views of the Proposed Development and Associated Development along localised sections of the path, including infrastructure and associated ground level elements. These views would be predominantly restricted to sections of the path extending along the eastern side of the Proposed Development Site, up to 1.5 km in length. The most open views would be further restricted to a 500-600 m section in closest vicinity to the Project (see **Viewpoint 1**), with varying amounts of intervening screening along adjacent sections (see **Viewpoints 2-3**). This accounts for a relatively localised section of the overall path, which is approximately 5.0 km in length in total. In all cases, the Project would be experienced in the same field of view as the existing Inveraray to Crossaig overhead line, hence would not introduce incongruous elements to the locality, or extend the horizontal spread of infrastructure. Potential views from all other sections of the path would be subject to screening by intervening landform and forestry. From western sections of the path, there would be views of vehicle movements accessing / egressing the Proposed Development Site, albeit these would be infrequent and of short duration.

In summary, based on the Proposed Development, the magnitude of change experienced by walkers on very localised sections of the path (approximately 500-600 m in length) would be High and the level of effect would be Major. The effect along all other sections of the path would be tempered by intervening forestry, which would result in at least partial screening of the buildings and compound. The same forestry would completely screen views of the Proposed Development across the majority of the route. On balance, the magnitude of change across the path as a whole would be Low and the level of effect would be Moderate at most, with reference to the actively-managed forestry context that the Proposed Development would be experienced within.

Views of the Associated Development would be restricted to similar localised sections. The Associated Development would augment the presence of existing electrical infrastructure, resulting in a limited incremental effect. The magnitude of change would be Medium/Low at most, resulting in a Moderate level of effect. Across the route as a whole the Associated Development would exert a Negligible magnitude of change and Minor level of effect.

The combined magnitude of change based on the addition of the Project would be High at most, resulting in Major effect along a localised 500-600 m section. Views of the Project would be subject to increased screening along all other sections, hence the magnitude of change across the path as a whole would be Low and the level of effect would be Moderate at most.

Core Path C126

Core Path C126 extends north-south, 600 m to the east of the Proposed Development Site at the closest point. ZTV coverage across the path is fragmented and predominantly limited to a 1.0 km section in the north (at Leacan Roineach) and a 1.2 km section to the south (at Blarbuie). These represent relatively localised sections of the overall path, which is approximately 6.5 km in length in total.

There would be no views of the Project from the northern section due to the screening influence of intervening forestry. From the southern section, views of the Proposed Development and Associated Development would be restricted by intervening forestry and therefore limited to the upper-most part of the proposed infrastructure at most, experienced in a forested context at a distance of 1.2 km or more. In the most open views, the Project would be experienced in the same field of view as the existing Inveraray to Crossaig overhead line and would represent a very minor element within the background. There would be no views from any other section of the route. In summary, the magnitude of change based on the Proposed Development or Associated Development would be Negligible in each case and the level of effect would be Minor/Negligible at most. The combined magnitude of change based on the addition of the Project would also be Negligible, leading to a Minor/Negligible level of effect at most.

Core Paths C110, C315 & 459

Core Paths C110, C315 and 459 are located 900 m to the west of the main development area, albeit link with Core Path C125 in the vicinity of the access track. With reference to the ZTV, potential views would be limited to the Associated Development only from a 100m section of Core Path C110 south of Auchnabreck. These views would be fully screened by intervening forestry. As such, there would be no views of the proposed infrastructure. Views would instead be limited to sporadic vehicle movements accessing / egressing the Proposed Development Site, which would be infrequent and subject to screening by intervening forestry. The magnitude of change based on the Proposed Development or Associated Development would be Negligible in each case and the level of effect would be Negligible. The combined magnitude of change based on the addition of the Project would also be Negligible, resulting in a Negligible effect.

Core Path C123

Core Path C123 is located 1.5 km to the south of the Proposed Development Site at the closest point, where it adjoins path C126. ZTV coverage is extremely limited across the route and focused on the western-most 200 m section and a further 250 m section further east. From these sections of the path, potential views of the Project would be restricted by intervening tree cover north of Blarbuie House in combination with intervening forestry extending across Dippin Hill and the wider landscape to the north. In filtered views, the Project would be experienced in the same field of view as the existing Inveraray to Crossaig overhead line. The magnitude of change based on the Proposed Development and Associated Development would be Negligible at most and the level of effect would be Negligible in each case. The combined magnitude of change based on the addition of the Project would also be Negligible, resulting in a Negligible effect. There would be no views and no effect across the vast majority of the route.

Core Path C310

Core Path C310 extends along the north eastern edge of Lochgilphead, 1.9 km to the south of the Proposed Development Site at the closest point. Potential views would be extremely limited due to the presence of established tree cover along the path in combination with intervening forestry at Cnoc Mor and Dippin Hill. The magnitude of change based on the addition of the Project would be Negligible at most and the level of effect would be Negligible.

All other Core Paths

All other Core Paths within the Study Area are located at greater distances. In all cases, potential views of the Project would be subject to screening by intervening landform and forestry. As a result, the Project would be barely discernible. The magnitude of change based on the addition of the Project would be Negligible to none, and the level of effect would be Negligible. There would be no views from lengthy sections of the wider Core Path network.

Lochgilphead Golf Club

Lochgilphead Golf Club is located 1.6 km to the south of the Proposed Development Site. ZTV coverage is primarily limited to more elevated eastern parts of the course (extending slightly further to the west for the Associated Development based on the height of the towers). From all parts of the course potential views of the Project would be subject to screening by intervening forestry extending across the upland plateau to the north. Views would be limited to the upper-most part of the proposed infrastructure in the distance, experienced beyond existing overhead power lines in the foreground. The Proposed Development and Associated Development would be barely discernible.

The magnitude of change based on the Proposed Development or Associated Development would be Negligible in each case and the level of effect would be Minor/Negligible at most. The combined magnitude of change based on the addition of the Project would also be Negligible, leading to a Minor/Negligible level of effect at most.

National Cycle Route 78 and the Crinan Canal

National Cycle Route 78 and the Crinan Canal, which follow the same route within the Study Area, extend within 1.9 km to the south west of the Proposed Development Site at the closest point. The routes follow lower-lying ground within the Study Area and are entirely outside the ZTV for the Proposed Development (for which there would be no views and no effect). Potential views of the Associated Development would be restricted to a 1.7 km section between Lochgilphead and Cairnbaan. From this section of the route, views would be subject to screening by the intervening landform in combination with vegetation (see **Viewpoint 4**). Within the most open views, the tips of the towers would represent barely discernible elements in the background landscape to the north east. The magnitude of change would be Negligible and the level of effect would be Negligible. The effects based on the Project would be the same.

3.10.3 Visual effects experienced by Road and Rail Receptors

The sensitivity of road users and rail passengers is considered to be Medium in all cases unless otherwise stated.

A816

With reference to the ZTV, potential views of the Project from the A816 would be limited to a 1.1 km section between Lochgilphead and Cairnbaan, 2.5 km southwest of the Project. Potential views would be limited to the Associated Development only, which would be subject to screening by the intervening landform and vegetation. In glimpsed views oblique to the direction of travel, the Associated Development would be barely discernible. The magnitude of change based on the addition of the Associated Development would be Negligible and the level of effect would be Negligible. The effects based on the Project would be the same.

A83 and B841

The A83 and B841 form the other main transport routes within the Study Area. In each case, the routes are aligned along the lower-lying coastal areas and river valleys. As a consequence, these routes are entirely outside the ZTV. Road users would experience no views of the Project and no effect.

3.11 **Appraisal - Cumulative Effects**

This Section examines the potential cumulative effects of the Project in combination with other existing, consented and proposed power developments within the Study Area. In this instance, the assessment includes consideration of the following sites:

- Existing / under construction 81 km section of 275 kV OHL from Inveraray to Crossaig (extending through the Project Site);
- Existing overhead power lines (1.3 km to the south of the Project);
- Existing Substation at Port Ann (5.0 km to the south east of the Project); and

- Consented Wood-Fired Combined Heat and Power Plant on land at Achnabreck, Cairnbaan.

It is recognised that in addition to the above, there will be ongoing forestry activity within the surrounding locality in accordance with the Long Term Forestry Plan. Other proposals within the surrounding area comprise upgrading / retention of existing forestry tracks and associated extraction of stone from borrow pits. However, these activities and proposals are excluded from further consideration in the cumulative assessment based on the basis of their geographic separation from the Project, differing nature of development, and/or limited size. Similarly, proposals at pre-app or scoping stage are also excluded based on the uncertainty of these developments progressing to formal planning submissions and the potential changes to the proposals in the intervening time.

Landscape and visual receptors described within the main LVA as undergoing / experiencing a Low/Negligible magnitude of change (or less) are excluded from consideration in the cumulative assessment on the basis that the Project would exert such a limited effect in its own right that it would not meaningfully contribute to potential cumulative effects, and as such would not tip the balance from a minor cumulative effect to a notable cumulative effect.

To this end, cumulative effects are considered in relation to those on landscape character, specifically the Plateau Moor and Forest LCT, and on the visual amenity of walkers on Core Path C125 only. Cumulative effects on all other receptors are excluded from further consideration on the basis of the very limited visual influence of the Project as described above within the main assessment.

3.11.1 Cumulative Landscape Effects on the Plateau Moor and Forest LCT

In addition to the Project; existing sections of overhead power lines are located within the Plateau Moor and Forest LCT, thus exert direct effects upon local landscape character in their own right. This includes the Inveraray to Crossaig Overhead Line, which extends through the Proposed Development Site. The existing effects on landscape character are typically restricted to localised areas either side of the lines due to the presence of established tree cover and forestry in the surrounding area. The existing Substation at Port Ann is located in the adjacent Rocky Coastland LCT and exerts very limited influence on the Plateau Moor and Forest LCT due to the containing influence of surrounding tree cover and forestry. Similarly, the site for the Wood-Fired Combined Heat and Power Plant on land to the west of the Project is located in the adjacent Rocky Coastland LCT. As such, the cumulative influence of this development on the Plateau Moor and Forest LCT is limited to indirect effects, which are tempered by intervening tree cover.

With reference to the preceding assessment of effects on landscape character, the primary effects of the Project on the Plateau Moor and Forest LCT would be focused within approximately 400-500 m (where the magnitude of change would be Medium and the level of effect would be Moderate). There would be some coalescence of these effects with the characterising influence exerted by the existing Inveraray to Crossaig Overhead Line (particularly where it extends through the Proposed Development Site). The net result would be to augment the presence of the towers / associated infrastructure within the local landscape, without notably extending the cumulative influence across wider parts of the LCT.

Due to the geographic separation of the Project from other existing infrastructure in combination with the widespread presence of intervening forestry, there would be limited coalescence of characterising effects with other elements of infrastructure. Instead, the extensive swathe of commercial forestry would continue to represent the defining characteristic of the local area of the Plateau Moor and Forest LCT.

In summary, the Project would contribute to cumulative effects in combination with the overhead power lines extending through the LCT. However, the net result would be limited and contained. The localised loss of forestry within the Proposed Development Site to facilitate construction is considered immaterial given the extensive nature of the coniferous plantation that encompasses the surrounding landscape. As such there would be no discernible adverse effects on the wider character of the LCT, which would remain predominately unchanged as

a result. The cumulative magnitude of change across the LCT as a whole would be Low, and the cumulative level of effect would be Moderate/Minor.

No other proposed infrastructure developments were identified within the locality. As such, based on the addition of the Project to a scenario comprising existing, consented and other proposed schemes, there would be no notable change to the level of effect described above.

3.11.2 Cumulative Visual Effects Experienced by Walkers on Core Path C125

With reference to the main assessment, the primary effects of the Project would be experienced from a localised section of Core Path C125, 500 – 600 m in length, on the eastern side of the Project. From this section of the path the Project would be experienced simultaneously with the existing Inveraray to Crossaig Overhead Line as it extends through the Proposed Development Site, and above the path. In addition, there would be sequential views of the Wood-Fired Combined Heat and Power Plant from westerly sections of the route. Views of other infrastructure elements would be subject to screening by intervening forestry.

In summary, the Project would contribute to cumulative visual effects in combination with the overhead power lines extending through the local area, as well as the Wood-Fired Combined Heat and Power Plant. However, the net result would be limited to localised sections of the path. The trackside forestry would restrict views from lengthy sections of the path. On balance, the cumulative magnitude of change across the path as a whole would be Low. The cumulative level of effect would be Moderate at most with reference to the limited portion of the route affected, and the surrounding forestry context.

As described above, there are no other proposed infrastructure developments within the locality of the Project. As such, there would be no change to the level of effect described above based on a scenario comprising existing, consented and other proposed schemes.

3.12 Summary of Effects

In summary, the Project (comprising Proposed Development and Associated Development) would be located in an area of actively managed commercial forestry approximately 2.5 km north east of the settlement of Lochgilphead. The Project would result in the permanent loss of a localised area of forestry, which represents an extremely small parcel of land within an expansive area of surrounding forestry, which is bisected by existing overhead power lines.

In terms of landscape effects; the location of the Project in close proximity to an existing overhead power line within an expansive area of commercial plantation, means that landscape effects would be limited. The main effects of the Proposed Development would primarily focused within 300 m to the south / east, and within approximately 100 m to the north / west. The main effects of the Associated Development would be focussed within approximately 400-500 m of the towers. This accounts for a small part of the Plateau Moor and Forest LCT. The effects on the LCT as a whole would be limited. There would be no notable effects on surrounding landscape character areas or designations.

Visual effects would also be extremely restricted based on the geographic location of the Project, in particular its spatial separation from any major settlements, recreational attractions or transport routes, as well as the visual containment resulting from surrounding forestry in combination with the underlying landform. As such, the Project would be predominantly screened from the settlements and road network within the Study Area. The clearest views of the Proposed Development and Associated Development would be experienced from localised sections of Core Path C125, which extends along the Proposed Development Site boundary. Within the most open and closest views from this path, the effects would be notable. However, this would account for a short proportion of the overall route (500-600 m in length). For the majority of the route, views would be part or fully screened by intervening tree cover, and on balance the effects would be limited. There would be no notable effects on the views experienced by any other residents, recreational receptors or road users.

In terms of cumulative effects; the Project would augment the presence of existing power-related infrastructure in the locality, in particular the overhead power lines. However, the containing effect of surrounding tree cover would prevent the geographic spread of potential cumulative effects across wider parts of the surrounding landscape, and the existing forestry would remain a defining characteristic of local landscape character. The Project would exert a localised cumulative influence in views from parts of Core Path C125, albeit lengthy sections of the route would be unaltered. The Project would not notably contribute to cumulative effects on any landscape designation or upon the views experienced by any other residents, recreational receptors or road users.

In conclusion, it is assessed that the Project could be accommodated with very limited and localised effects on landscape character and visual amenity.

Table 3.2 Appraisal of Landscape and Visual Impact

Receptor	Project Interaction	Receptor Sensitivity	Magnitude (Project)	Effect (Project)
Landscape Fabric	Direct effects within Proposed Development Site	Low	Medium	Moderate/minor
Plateau Moor and Forest LCT	Direct Effects within Proposed Development Site, and indirect across wider LCT based on views.	Medium	Medium within 400 - 500 m Negligible across wider LCT	Moderate within 400 - 500 m Minor across wider LCT
Other LCTs	Indirect effects based on views	High - Medium	Negligible	Minor/Negligible or less
Landscape Designations	Indirect effects based on views	High	Negligible	Negligible
Lochgilphead	Views experienced by Residents	High	Negligible	Negligible
Cairnbaan	Views experienced by Residents	High	Negligible	Negligible
Isolated Dwellings	Views experienced by Residents	High	Negligible or less	Minor/Negligible or less
Core Path C125	Views experienced by Recreational Walkers	High	High along localised (500-600 m) section Low across wider Path	Major along localised (500-600 m) section Moderate, at most across wider Path
Core Path C126	Views experienced by Recreational Walkers	High	Negligible	Minor/Negligible
Other Core Paths	Views experienced by Recreational Walkers	High	Negligible	Negligible or less
Lochgilphead Golf Club	Views experienced by Recreational Golfers	High	Negligible	Minor/Negligible
National Cycle Route 78 and the Crinan Canal	Views experienced by Recreational Walkers and Cyclists	High	Negligible	Negligible
Road Users: A816	Transient views experienced from A road	Medium	Negligible	Negligible
Road Users: A83 & B841	Transient views experienced from A and B roads	Medium	No Views	No effect

3.13 References

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