

APPENDIX 4.1: LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT

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1. LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPES

Please see **Figure 4.2: Landscape Character and Designations with ZTV**.

Table 1.1: LCT 285: Rolling Farmland and Forests - Moray & Nairn

Baseline Description	
Description	This LCT is found within the foothills between the rivers Spey and Nairn. Overall this LCT is characterised by a complex landform made up of undulating slopes, low rolling hills and valleys. There is a high degree of tree cover, with a mixture of commercial forestry and broad-leaved woodland, interspersed with areas of farmland and pasture. This is a relatively well-settled landscape, with scattered farms and small settlements, connected by a network of single track roads. A number of historic sites including abbeys, castles and large estate buildings are located within this LCT. Within the study area it encompasses a small area west of the B9015 and Orton, which includes a couple of farm houses and fields nestled within woodland and forestry which clothe the western slopes of the Spey valley.
Key Characteristics	<p>NatureScot (2019) have identified the following characteristics for this LCT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Low to mid elevation, undulating landform with rolling, gently rounded, sometimes steep-sided hills, and broad and narrow valleys containing mainly natural, meandering courses of rivers and burns and associated ribbons of broad leaved woodland.</i> • <i>Prominent major hills and their forested tops and slopes, and occasionally steep sides, combined with farmed, wooded and intimate valleys.</i> • <i>Rich and varied texture of the landscape as a result of the rolling landform, mosaic of farmland and tree cover, mixed with historic buildings and ruins, vernacular estate and farm buildings.</i> • <i>Winding rural roads that respond to the landform and winding river valleys and numerous tributaries which run down and through this landscape from the elevated plateau to the south.</i> • <i>High proportion of connected tree cover, consisting of mixed conifers and broadleaves, in small to large plantations, woodlands, road side trees and tree belts, with many large and ancient trees associated with older forests and policy plantings.</i> • <i>Mix of pasture and arable in irregular shaped fields, often edged with banks and stone walls, gorse and remnant trees.</i> • <i>Frequent presence of gorse and broom providing seasonal interest from yellow flower displays.</i> • <i>Historical and cultural diversity provided by estate buildings, Pluscarden Abbey, castles, ruins and many traditional farm buildings and cottages, with their hill side or valley setting, and associated woodlands and many large and ancient trees.</i> • <i>Long distance views across the Firth, to the coasts and mountains of the north, and occasionally to the south, afforded from high points and roads descending from higher ground.”</i>
Landscape Value	This LCT is valued for its varied landscape with prominent hills and woodland, and its cultural and historical diversity. However, the landscape qualities present within the study area are considered to be locally common and similar to other adjacent landscape types. Landscape value is therefore considered to be Low .
Assessment of Effects	
Possible Landscape Receptors	Potential Effects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low to mid elevation, undulating landform with rolling, gently rounded, sometimes steep-sided hills, and broad and narrow valleys containing mainly natural, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New trident pole OHL in the adjacent LCT could appear noticeable and distract in views from steep-sided hills.

Baseline Description	
	meandering courses of rivers and burns and associated ribbons of broad-leaved woodland.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prominent major hills and their forested tops and slopes, and occasionally steep sides, combined with farmed, wooded and intimate valleys. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New trident pole OHL in adjacent LCT could appear distracting in views from prominent hill tops and/or diminish the intimate character within valleys
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rich and varied texture of the landscape as a result of the rolling landform, mosaic of farmland and tree cover, mixed with historic buildings and ruins, vernacular estate and farm buildings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New trident pole OHL in adjacent LCT could disrupt appreciation of the existing landscape pattern and varied texture.
Landscape Sensitivity	<p>While this LCT has some qualities which may be susceptible to the type of development proposed, these are not considered to be represented within the study area. The high degree of tree cover reduces susceptibility to development of the type proposed, and it is considered that this landscape has some capacity to accommodate development of this type.</p> <p>Landscape sensitivity is therefore considered to be Low.</p>
Nature and Magnitude of Change	<p>Construction works, including tree felling, would lead to activity and movement in an adjacent LCT. However due to the high degree of tree cover it is unlikely that this would be perceived from this LCT.</p> <p>During operation, the Proposed Development would pass to the south of this LCT, along the Spey Valley. However, it is unlikely that it would be experienced from this LCT.</p> <p>Magnitude of change would be Negligible during construction operation</p>
Significance of Effect	<p>The Proposed Development is unlikely to be experienced from this LCT during construction or operation due to the high degree of tree cover and is thus unlikely to affect any of the key characteristics of this LCT.</p> <p>The effect would be Negligible (not significant) during construction and operation</p>

Table 1.2: LCT 287: Broad Farmed Valley

Baseline Description	
Description	<p>This LCT covers the lower reaches of the Spey valley, characterised by the winding course of the River Spey, set within a wide, flat floodplain. Within the study area it covers the area from Rothes in the west to Auchroisk Distillery in the east. Tributary rivers and burns occasionally merge into the river through narrower side valleys and from upland basins. Vegetation cover is varied, with moorland and coniferous forestry dominating the upper valley sides, while mixed policy woodland occurs surrounding estates on some of the lower slopes. Within the valley the landscape pattern becomes smaller and more intimate in scale, consisting mainly of farmland, with shelterbelts and occasional patches of woodland. This is a well-settled landscape, consisting of distinctive settlements, estate houses, historic castles, distillery buildings and farm buildings, which give it a sense of local character. There is a well-developed network of B-roads and minor roads which run along the valley sides and tie in to the A941 which passes through the study area. The Speyside Way, a long distance walking route, follows the course of the river. The complex mosaic of landforms, vegetation cover and historic buildings result in a sequence of changing views, contrasting with the simpler landscape pattern on the forested valley sides.</p>
Key Characteristics	<p>NatureScot (2019) have identified the following characteristics for this LCT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“River and its setting, which is a combination of the main, well-defined, sinuous channel consisting of a low, wide and flat valley bottom with meandering Central River, and flanks of interlocking spurs of adjacent mainly forested hills, often rising steeply from the valley floor and with prominent, round, forested or open summits.</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Natural course of the meandering river and associated ribbons and patches of native broad-leaved woodland and scrub, gravel banks and wetlands.</i> • <i>Enclosed, descending side valleys with undulating valley floors, and sinuous tributary rivers and burns.</i> • <i>Farmed valley floor, and mainly traditional scattered buildings, farms, and rural estates with their policy plantings, extending up gentler slopes and interspersed with woodland and small forests.</i> • <i>Occasional but prominent historic towns, villages, distilleries and bridges, connected by winding roads which follow the river valley landform and impart a strong cultural identity of Speyside.</i> • <i>Ever-changing views within the valley, and the dominance of surrounding hill sides, hill tops and skylines, both from within the valley floor and from elevated view points on the valley sides."</i>
Landscape Value	<p>This is a highly valued landscape which is appreciated for its rich historic heritage, scenic qualities and recreational opportunities. This is evidenced by its inclusion in the Spey Valley SLA.</p> <p>Landscape value is therefore considered to be High.</p>
Assessment of Effects	
Possible Landscape Receptors	Potential Effects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The river and its setting, particularly the flanks of interlocking spurs of adjacent mainly forested hills, often rising steeply from the valley floor and with prominent, round, forested or open summits. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New trident pole OHL and construction activities could appear on the hills rising up from the valley floor and detract from the setting of the river.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occasional but prominent historic towns, villages, distilleries and bridges, connected by winding roads which follow the river valley landform and impart a strong cultural identity of Speyside. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New trident pole OHL and construction activities would introduce new built elements into the landscape which may not be in keeping with the existing landscape pattern and experienced cultural identity in parts of this landscape.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ever-changing views within the valley, and the dominance of surrounding hill sides, hill tops and skylines, both from within the valley floor and from elevated view points on the valley sides. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New trident pole OHL and construction activities may appear detracting in views both from within the valley floor and from elevated view points on valley sides.
Landscape Sensitivity	<p>This is a highly valued landscape with a strong cultural identity and some characteristics which make it susceptible to development of the type proposed, including its historic associations and ever-changing views. However, it is already a landscape with a degree of human influence and modern infrastructure including major roads, a railway, and vertical features such as trident pole lines and masts. Therefore, it can potentially accommodate some degree of change of the type proposed.</p> <p>Landscape sensitivity is therefore considered to be Medium.</p>
Nature and Magnitude of Change	<p>Construction works would lead to activity and movement within this LCT, including the construction of new and upgraded access tracks, and the use of existing routes and tree felling, which may be noticeable along the valley side where the Proposed Development follows the B9015 and the River Spey.</p> <p>In the longer term, the Proposed Development would be noticeable from more open areas running along the valley side.</p> <p>Magnitude of change would be Medium during construction and operation.</p>
Significance of Effect	<p>Construction works within this LCT would temporarily form a new focus and distraction within the local area, which is likely to slightly increase the prominence of development, within this already actively managed landscape.</p> <p>In the long term, the Proposed Development would introduce additional vertical structures into the landscape, which would potentially influence the experience of the river and its</p>

	<p>setting, as they would appear running along the valley floor and side slopes, particularly at points where the line crosses the B9015 and the River Spey near Boat o' Brig, although these would be experienced in the context of existing overhead lines and road and rail infrastructure.</p> <p>The effect would be Minor-Moderate (not significant) during construction and operation.</p>
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Table 1.3: LCT 288: Upland Farmland

Baseline Description	
Description	This LCT comprises the broad shallow valleys which are part of an area of mid-elevation uplands north-east of the River Spey. Agriculture is the main land use, with a mixture of improved pasture and large-scale rectilinear fields dominating the valley floor. On higher slopes pockets of forestry and heather moorland occur. Patches of native woodland can occasionally be found mainly near settlements. This is a relatively well-settled landscape, with small-scale farms, distilleries, small settlements and the planned town of Keith. It is well-connected by a number of major and minor roads, including the A95 and B9014 within the study area, as well as the railway which runs along the valley floor. There is a large concentration of overhead lines adjacent to Keith and Blackhillock substations, and wind turbines occasionally feature in views into adjacent landscapes types. There are extensive open views across the farmland and towards hills in adjoining landscapes.
Key Characteristics	<p>NatureScot (2019) have identified the following characteristics for this LCT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Broad shallow valleys.</i> • <i>Large scale, open landscape with a simple vegetation pattern.</i> • <i>Predominance of farming in valleys and the central basin.</i> • <i>Backdrop to farmland provided by the Low Forested Hills, with steeper north and western sides and shallow southern and eastern slopes, covered with extensive conifer forests, and simple, undulating skyline.</i> • <i>Broad, sweeping, rectilinear fields of the central farmland, interspersed with patches of smaller fields, peaty soils, marginal pastures and small plantations.</i> • <i>Relatively well settled farmland area, with an even distribution of farms accessed by a network of rural roads.</i> • <i>Small farmsteads often partially enclosed by isolated woodland pockets.</i> • <i>Views from top areas to Cairngorms and higher moorland edges to south, and to east across Buchan plain.</i> • <i>Limited visual diversity.”</i>
Landscape Value	<p>This landscape is valued for some of its small-scale rural qualities. However, it is a relatively common landscape type within the local context.</p> <p>Landscape value is therefore considered to be Low-Medium.</p>
Assessment of Effects	
Possible Landscape Receptors	Potential Effects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large scale, open landscape with a simple vegetation pattern. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New trident pole OHL and construction activities may introduce new foci into the landscape which may act as scale markers and disrupt the simple landscape pattern.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited visual diversity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New trident pole OHL and construction activities may introduce new foci into the landscape which could increase the perceived visual diversity of this landscape.
Landscape Sensitivity	This is a somewhat valued landscape which is already affected by OHLs particularly leading towards Blackhillock substation. The presence of road and rail infrastructure and the influence of wind development within adjacent landscape types further reduce its susceptibility to

	<p>development of this type. However other parts of the LCT which are less influenced by this type of development are potentially somewhat more susceptible to change.</p> <p>Landscape sensitivity is therefore considered to be Low-Medium.</p>
Nature and Magnitude of Change	<p>Construction works, including the use of existing routes (including any upgrades) and tree felling, would lead to an increase in movement and activity within this LCT. This would largely take place adjacent to the A95 and railway, and be perceived in the context of existing traffic and movement along these routes.</p> <p>In the long term, the Proposed Development would run along the valley floor adjacent to the A95 and the railway line, turning south across farmland towards Blackhillock substation. This change would be noticeable from areas along this route, and from open valley sides to the north. To the south the presence of forestry and woodland would limit effects to some degree.</p> <p>Magnitude of change would be Medium during construction and operation.</p>
Significance of Effect	<p>Construction works within this LCT would temporarily form a new focus and distraction within the local area, slightly increasing the presence of development.</p> <p>During operation, the Proposed Development would be experienced adjacent to existing OHLs and road and rail infrastructure, however it may increase the perception of development within some parts of this landscape.</p> <p>The effect would be Minor (not significant) during construction and operation.</p>

Table 1.4: LCT 289: Upland Farmed Valleys

Baseline Description	
Description	<p>This LCT comprises a series of long, elevated valleys east of the Spey, along the southern edge of the study area. They are composed of a patchwork of forestry, farmland and moorland. Settlement is relatively sparse, consisting of individual estates located mainly on the valley sides and scattered farms along the valley floor. These are connected by a network of sinuous roads which largely follow the topography of the landscape. Within this LCT views are often channelled along the valleys towards lowland farmland or distant hills, whereas more narrow valleys provide more intimate, changing views. Steel lattice towers, wind turbines and other structures occasionally feature in views, including three domestic turbines at Auchlunkart Home Farm and Hill of Towie Wind Farm which is located within this LCT, just outside the study area.</p>
Key Characteristics	<p>NatureScot (2019) have identified the following characteristics for this LCT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Network of long, elevated, well-drained, connected valleys containing rivers and large burns.</i> • <i>Extensive forest plantations on hillsides and some broad summits linked to the network of broadleaf woodlands, policy plantings, smaller forests and tree belts at lower levels, which are integrated with farmland.</i> • <i>A mix of larger, fields on gentler slopes, and more complex pattern of small and irregular fields on steeper slopes, upper margins, and in folds and indentations on hill sides.</i> • <i>Containment of the River Spey provided by the spurs and steep sides of the western slopes.</i> • <i>Relatively sparse, historic settlement pattern and distilleries, focussed in valleys, and connected by a simple framework of winding roads, with few areas of new development.</i> • <i>Contrast between the intimate views in narrower, undulating, wooded valleys, and the views from broader valleys which open up to reveal longer distance views of hills in surrounding landscapes, and to the coastal farmlands.”</i>
Landscape Value	<p>This LCT is somewhat valued for its historic associations, intimate wooded glens and long range views of surrounding hills. However, within the context of the study area it is a relatively common landscape type, which shares some of the agricultural qualities of the adjacent LCT 288 - Upland Farmland.</p> <p>Landscape value is considered to be Medium.</p>

Assessment of Effects	
Possible Landscape Receptors	Potential Effects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relatively sparse, historic settlement pattern and distilleries, focused in valleys, and connected by a simple framework of winding roads, with few areas of new development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New trident pole OHL and construction activities within adjacent LCTs may increase the perceived prominence of new development in the surrounding area.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contrast between the intimate views in narrower, undulating, wooded valleys, and the views from broader valleys which open up to reveal longer distance views of hills in surrounding landscapes, and to the coastal farmlands. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New trident pole OHL and construction activities may appear distracting in long distance views into surrounding landscapes.
Landscape Sensitivity	<p>This is a moderately valued landscape with a historic character which is somewhat susceptible to new development. However, its variable character, high degree of forestry and woodland cover and presence of vertical structures reduce its susceptibility to the type of development proposed.</p> <p>Landscape sensitivity is therefore considered to be Low-Medium.</p>
Nature and Magnitude of Change	<p>Construction works would lead to activity and movement within adjacent landscape types which may be perceptible from open slopes along the northern edge of this LCT.</p> <p>During operation, the Proposed Development would be perceptible in localised areas along the northern edge, although forestry would limit effects within much of this LCT.</p> <p>Magnitude of change would be Negligible-Low during construction and operation.</p>
Significance of Effect	<p>Construction works within the adjacent LCT 288 may form a temporary distraction along the northern margins of this LCT.</p> <p>During operation, the Proposed Development would be experienced from the edge of the LCT, running adjacent to the A95 and railway. It may marginally increase the presence of development in views into the adjacent valley. However, these effects would be localised and are unlikely to affect the landscape character within core areas, and in many areas the presence of forestry and woodland would contain effects.</p> <p>The effect would be Negligible-Minor (not significant) during construction and operation.</p>

Table 1.5: LCT 290: Upland Moorland and Forestry

Baseline Description	
Description	<p>This LCT is characterised by gently undulating plateaux surrounded by smooth, rounded hills. Land cover consists mainly of heather or grass moorland interspersed with forestry plantations forming large scale geometric patterns in the landscape. Occasionally the transition between the two is softened by patches of native pine and birch woodland. Some areas of semi-improved pasture can also be found, particularly to the east and near Glen of Rothes where the landscape begins to transition into farmland. Settlement consists of sparsely scattered farm buildings, found mainly in Glen of Rothes within the study area. Within the study area this LCT is more accessible than some of the core areas, and is traversed by a number of roads and forestry tracks, including the A941 and Core Path SP01 and SP12.</p>
Key Characteristics	<p>NatureScot (2019) have identified the following characteristics for this LCT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“Widely spaced, broad, rounded hills and upland plateaux with smooth, even, gentle slopes.</i> <i>Generally simple, large scale landscape with expansive scale of interior plateau area.</i> <i>More defined, higher hills on edge of the interior plateau, forming landmark features from the adjacent lower lying landscapes to the north and south and providing a backdrop to these.</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Predominantly simple landcover of extensive, geometric conifer forests and heather moorland.</i> • <i>Large scale commercial forestry blankets much of the mid and upper slopes, many of which are undergoing deforestation and restocking. The differing tree heights and open areas of landcover disturbance are prominent on the simple broad slopes, reinforced by the wider resurfaced forest roads upgraded for timber extraction.</i> • <i>More intimate farmed landscapes at the margins and close to burns and roads, with farms, small holdings and marginal pastures.</i> • <i>Large expanses of un-settled areas, with settlement very sparsely scattered near the very few roads.</i> • <i>Largely inaccessible core area with relatively limited visibility in from surrounding landscapes.</i> • <i>Regenerating native trees and lone pine trees in moorland areas.</i> • <i>Windfarm development both within the Landscape Character Type and in adjacent landscapes.</i> • <i>Small number of built features which are generally visually separated by distance, and do not coalesce to create visual confusion.</i> • <i>Central areas away from public roads have relatively strong wild character, due to their remoteness, rugged terrain and perceived naturalness.</i> • <i>Extensive views out of this landscape, through gaps in the forestry cover, to the north and to the south from elevated areas."</i>
Landscape Value	<p>The eastern end of this LCT falls within the Spey Valley Special Landscape Area (SLA), with the wooded slopes providing a backdrop to the farmed valley floor. Although it is somewhat valued for some of its upland characteristics, it is considered to be a relatively common landscape type within the local context.</p> <p>Landscape value is therefore considered to be Medium.</p>
Assessment of Effects	
Possible Landscape Receptors	Potential Effects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Widely spaced, broad, rounded hills and upland plateaux with smooth, even, gentle slopes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New trident pole OHL and construction activities could appear visible and distract on the gentle slopes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More intimate farmed landscapes at the margins and close to burns and roads, with farms, small holdings and marginal pastures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New trident pole OHL and construction activities may appear out of keeping with the more intimate character of these farmed landscapes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small number of built features which are generally visually separated by distance, and do not coalesce to create visual confusion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New trident pole OHL and construction activities may increase the prominence of built features and increase visual connection between existing built features.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central areas away from public roads have relatively strong wild character, due to their remoteness, rugged terrain and perceived naturalness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New trident pole OHL and construction activities could reduce the sense of remoteness and perceived naturalness by introducing human artefacts into this landscape.
Landscape Sensitivity	<p>This is a moderately valued landscape with some remote upland characteristics which would be susceptible to some degree of change of the type proposed. Although, the prominence of forestry within this landscape type reduces susceptibility to this type of development, there is some susceptibility on the open slopes and in more remote areas.</p> <p>Landscape sensitivity is therefore considered to be Medium.</p>
Nature and Magnitude of Change	<p>Construction works, including the use of existing routes and tree felling, would lead to activity and movement within a localised area of this LCT. However, these activities would likely be perceived to be somewhat similar to existing forestry operations within this area.</p>

	<p>During operation, the Proposed Development would be experienced within part of this LCT as it traverses the open moorland, areas of clear felling north of Cairn Cattoch and Ardcanney Wood, before crossing the Glen of Rothes. It would be relatively noticeable from some of the open slopes and recently felled areas within this part of the LCT. However, forestry and landform would limit influence further to the north and south.</p> <p>Magnitude of change would be Medium during construction and Low-Medium during operation.</p>
Significance of Effect	<p>Construction works within this LCT would temporarily form focal features within the local area, which may be distracting and may extend the influence of development within the LCT although this would be somewhat contained by forestry.</p> <p>During operation, the Proposed Development would increase the perceptibility of development and may slightly extend the perceived appearance of an active and inhabited landscape. The Proposed Development would also add further scale indicators and focal features within a localised part of this LCT, potentially detracting from the simple landscape pattern.</p> <p>The effect would be Minor-Moderate (not significant) during construction and Minor (not significant) during operation.</p>

Table 1.6: LCT 292: Open Upland

Baseline Description	
Description	<p>This LCT occurs across south-east Moray and beyond, extending to the Cairngorms National Park boundary, and is found along the southern part of the study area, overlooking the Spey Valley. It is characterised by a broad basin of upland moorland surrounded by a series of prominent, well-defined hills. Within the study area it comprises some of the northern slopes of Ben Aigan, including Knock More. Overall landcover consists mainly of upland moorland, with heather moorland dominating lower slopes. While forests are less common in this landscape type generally, there is a high degree of forest cover within the study area, with conifer forestry dominating. Areas of farmland can be found at the edge of this LCT where it transitions into <i>Upland Farmland</i> and <i>Upland Farmed Valleys</i>. Settlement is relatively sparse and mainly found adjacent to main roads, such as the A95, a short section of which passes through the LCT within the study area, where individual farmhouses can be found. This LCT provides a backdrop to the broad farmed valley of the River Spey. While there is a sense of remoteness within the hills this part of the LCT has a more settled feel.</p>
Key Characteristics	<p>NatureScot (2019) have identified the following characteristics for this LCT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Open, expansive landscape of smooth and steep-sided hills and exposed, rounded fractured rock summits which coalesce across elevated moorland valleys to form an arc of high ground.</i> • <i>Simple, large scale vegetation patterns and managed moorland of hill tops and sides, with occasional large conifer plantations.</i> • <i>Contrasting small scale pattern of land use at lower levels and close to minor roads, consisting of farmsteads, peat cuts, and rough pastures, sometimes integrated with small forest plantations.</i> • <i>North-east to south-west orientated burns and rivers with natural, meandering courses, and associated ribbons of native woodland on the sheltered, steeper valley sides.</i> • <i>Broad, farmed and sparsely settled central basin, almost encircled by the arc of hills.</i> • <i>Few roads and structures, other than occasional farms, cottages and abandoned stone buildings in lower areas.</i> • <i>Sense of remoteness, isolation and openness, resulting from the wide, sweeping scale of the internal landscape and limited settlement and roads, and presence of ruins and relicts.”</i>

Landscape Value	<p>This LCT is valued for some of its remote upland qualities. However, the part of the LCT included within the study corridor is not as representative of some of these qualities as other parts of the LCT, as it transitions into more settled, farmed landscape types. Nevertheless, it has value as a backdrop to the Spey Valley, and for recreation as the Speyside Way passes through the area.</p> <p>Landscape value is therefore considered to be Medium.</p>
Assessment of Effects	
Possible Landscape Receptors	Potential Effects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simple, large scale vegetation patterns and managed moorland of hill tops and sides, and contrasting small scale pattern of land use at lower levels and close to minor roads 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New trident pole OHL in a peripheral part of this LCT may alter the contrast between the large-scale patterns at higher elevations and the small scale land use at lower levels by introducing new foci at the lower levels which may alter the perception of scale.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Few roads and structures, other than occasional farms, cottages and abandoned stone buildings in lower areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New trident pole OHL in a peripheral part of this LCT would introduce new built structures into the landscape which may be out of keeping with the scale and character of existing built features.
Landscape Sensitivity	<p>This is a moderately valued LCT, and while it has some characteristics which may be susceptible to the type of development proposed, the area included within the study corridor is considered less representative of some of these qualities, as the sense of remoteness and isolation which can be experienced within other parts of this landscape type is not present to the same degree. The high degree of tree cover reduces susceptibility to development of the type proposed, and it is considered that this landscape has some capacity to accommodate development of this type.</p> <p>Landscape sensitivity is therefore considered to be Low-Medium.</p>
Nature and Magnitude of Change	<p>Construction works, including the use of existing routes (including upgrades) and tree felling, would lead to activity and movement in a peripheral part of this LCT, and in an adjacent LCT, as the Proposed Development would pass through a small section of this LCT at its northern edge.</p> <p>During operation, the Proposed Development would be experienced from a localised area at the edge of this LCT as it passes through forestry and adjacent farmland. Although it may theoretically be experienced from some more open elevated areas, forestry would limit effects within other parts of this landscape.</p> <p>Magnitude of change would be Low during construction and operation.</p>
Significance of Effect	<p>Construction works within this LCT, including felling, would temporarily form focal feature and distraction within a very localised area at the edge of the LCT, although this would be largely contained by forestry.</p> <p>During operation, the new Proposed Development may be experienced from areas of farmland at the edge of the LCT, where it is likely to be perceived in the context of existing trident pole lines, farm buildings and wind turbines within adjacent landscapes, and would only marginally increase the sense of development. It is considered unlikely to affect the overall landscape character.</p> <p>The effect would be Negligible-Minor (not significant) during construction and Negligible (not significant) during operation.</p>

Table 1.7: LCT 293: Low Forested Hills

Baseline Description	
Description	<p>This LCT consists of a ridge of broad, gently undulating hills running east to west. There is a high degree of forest cover, consisting mainly of large-scale conifer plantations found on the</p>

	upper slopes, which form geometric patterns. Occasional areas of farmland also occur on more gentle slopes. Settlement is generally sparse, although within the study area is more populated, with a number of farmhouses and cottages, served by a network of minor roads connecting with the B9103 in the adjacent Broad Farmed Valley and Upland Farmland LCTs.
Key Characteristics	<p>NatureScot (2019) have identified the following characteristics for this LCT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“A ridge of higher ground between the coastal farmland to the north and the upland farmland basin to the south.</i> • <i>Steeper slopes to the north descend from about 300 metres to the coastal plain; gentler southern slopes descend to the upland farmland of 100-150 metres.</i> • <i>Extensive woodland, mostly coniferous, caps the higher ground. It also occurs to lower levels on the sharper north and western slopes.</i> • <i>Pastoral fields, mostly divided by fences, adjoin the lower edges of the forestry.</i> • <i>Infrequent farmsteads and cottages are served by a network of minor roads.</i> • <i>Extensive views from higher ground which feels relatively remote and contrasts with the neighbouring busier areas to the north and south.”</i>
Landscape Value	<p>While this LCT is valued for some of its rural qualities and extensive views offered from higher ground, the main landscape components are otherwise locally common.</p> <p>Landscape value is therefore considered to be Low within the study area.</p>
Assessment of Effects	
Possible Landscape Receptors	Potential Effects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extensive views from higher ground which feels relatively remote and contrasts with the neighbouring busier areas to the north and south. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New trident pole OHL in an adjacent LCT may appear distracting in views from higher ground.
Landscape Sensitivity	<p>The wooded character of this LCT reduces its susceptibility to change of the type proposed. The extensive views afforded from higher elevations, may be somewhat susceptible to development, however views into adjacent areas already feature development of this type.</p> <p>Landscape sensitivity is therefore considered to be Low-Medium.</p>
Nature and Magnitude of Change	<p>Construction works would lead to an increase in movement and activity within adjacent LCTs along the valley floor. While these would potentially be perceived from more open south-facing slopes, they would appear relatively distant.</p> <p>In the long term, the Proposed Development would be perceptible running along the adjacent valley floor within the context of other development. Its influence would be limited to open slopes along the southern edge of this LCT, due to extensive woodland cover on higher ground.</p> <p>Magnitude of change would be Low during construction and operation</p>
Significance of Effect	<p>Construction works within adjacent LCTs may temporarily form a new foci and distract in views across the valley from open slopes within a localised area along the southern boundary of this LCT, which may slightly increase the sense of development, although this would fit the current contrast between the perceived remoteness on higher ground and the busier character of adjacent landscape types.</p> <p>During operation, the Proposed Development would be experienced in views from this area in the context of existing development within neighbouring landscapes, such as the B9103 and the railway which the overhead line would run alongside, as well as wind turbines within adjacent landscapes. While it may marginally increase the sense of development within adjacent landscapes, it is not considered that this would affect the key characteristics of this LCT.</p> <p>The effect would be Negligible (not significant) during construction and operation</p>

2. LANDSCAPE DESIGNATIONS

Please see **Figure 4.2: Landscape Character and Designations with ZTV.**

Table 2.1: The Spey Valley Special Landscape Area (SLA)

Baseline Description	
Description	The Spey Valley SLA comprises the broad Spey Valley and surrounding steep-sided hills which contain it. It is a diverse landscape, characterised by the broad, occasionally braided River Spey and the farmed floodplain and wooded hills that surround it. The flood plain is broad and views are generally open to the north but become narrower further upstream where the valley is contained by steep wooded slopes. There is a long history of human settlement and a number of distinctive settlements along the valley floor, and a rich cultural heritage, with historic associations to the whisky distilling industry.
Special Qualities (those of relevance to the Proposed Development are highlighted in bold)	<p>The special qualities for this SLA are cited as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The broad and open floodplain of the Spey south of Fochabers which narrows further upstream where the valley is increasingly constrained by steep hillsides. • The middle section of the valley is strongly contained on both sides by steep wooded slopes including those of the prominent heather-capped hill of Ben Aigan which looms over the valley. • The Spey is wide and occasionally braided forming banks of cobbles and vegetated islands. • The Spey Valley has a rich cultural heritage, including monuments such as the Scheduled Pictish symbol stones at Inveravon Parish Church, Knockando Parish Church, and Arndilly House, architectural features including traditional (and not so traditional) distilleries, the 16th century Ballindalloch Castle, numerous estate lodges, Telford's graceful high arched bridge spanning the Spey at Craigellachie, the planned settlements of Aberlour and Archiestown and the Victorian settlement of Craigellachie. • Smaller farms and houses are sited close to the minor road which forms the route for the Speyside Way on the east side of the valley between Fochabers and Boat o' Brig. Steep slopes and terraces, backed by extensive coniferous forest, accommodate small species-rich pastures and mixed woodlands fringed by ferns and gorse. This area has an intimate scale and more tranquil nature than the western side of the river in this area which is more intensively farmed and accommodates busy roads and the railway. • Narrow shelves of farmland and the retained historic field patterns of small croft houses and farms are perched above the floodplain of the Spey to the north-east of Rothes although increasingly in the middle sections of the valley within this SLA, the forested side slopes of hills dominate. • The distilleries and their history of whisky production in Speyside has led to the area being called the heart of single malt distilling in Scotland. • The association of the Spey valley with whisky distilling attracts visitors and conjures a romantic perception of the landscape and cultural heritage of the area. • The Speyside Way follows minor roads, forest tracks and the banks of the river through this landscape. • Views are generally open in the north but become more confined upstream where the valley is contained by steep-sided hills. • Adjacent uplands are highly visible west of Craigellachie and form part of the wider setting.
Landscape Value	<p>This SLA is valued for its diverse landscape qualities, scenic views and rich cultural heritage, with particular associations to whisky distilling. It also offers various opportunities for recreation and tourism, including the long-distance route of the Speyside Way. The river is also popular for fishing.</p> <p>Landscape value is considered to be High.</p>

Appraisal of Special Landscape Qualities (SLQ)			
Special Qualities of Relevance to the Proposed Development	Sensitivity	Nature of Change	Magnitude
The broad and open floodplain of the Spey	High	The Proposed Development would run along the valley floor west of the river between Sourden wood and Boat o' Brig, where it would cross the river. It would be relatively noticeable from the broad and open floodplain. There is likely to be some distraction during construction, and in the long run the Proposed Development may slightly increase the sense of development in this area by introducing new vertical elements to this part of the landscape. However, this is an area with active land use which is already affected by development, and the Proposed Development would be experienced in the context of other overhead lines, masts and road and rail infrastructure.	Construction: Medium Operation: Medium
The middle section of the valley is strongly contained on both sides by steep wooded slopes	High	The Proposed Development would run across the steep wooded slopes north of Rothes, passing through Sourden wood, before descending towards the valley floor. Some felling would be required along this part of the route, which would cause a temporary distraction during construction. In the long term the Proposed Development may appear noticeable on the steep slopes, although the presence of woodland would limit its perceived influence on the landscape.	Construction: Medium Operation: Medium
The steep slopes and terraces, on the east side of the valley between Fochabers and Boat o' Brig which has an intimate scale and more tranquil nature than the western side of the river.	High	The Proposed Development would cross the Spey just south of Boat o' Brig and the railway bridge. Due to the railway bridge, which forms a visual barrier, and the presence of woodland, the presence of Proposed Development is likely to be limited from this part of the SLA.	Construction: Negligible-Low Operation: Negligible-Low
Narrow shelves of farmland and the retained historic field patterns of small croft houses and farms are perched above the floodplain of the Spey to the north-east of Rothes although increasingly in the middle sections of the valley within this SLA, the forested side slopes of hills dominate.	High	The Proposed Development would pass through this section and descend the wooded slopes north of Rothes. It would traverse the valley floor west of the river, and would occasionally be experienced from narrow shelves of farmland above the floodplain, where not obscured by trees and vegetation. Construction would cause a temporary distraction, but while the Proposed Development may slightly increase the sense of development in the long term it would be seen in the context of other overhead lines, masts and the B9015 road as part of an active and managed landscape.	Construction: Medium Operation: Low-Medium
The association of the Spey valley with whisky distilling attracts visitors and conjures a romantic perception of the landscape and cultural heritage of the area.	High	The Proposed Development would pass close to distillery buildings near Rothes. However due to the already developed character of this area it is unlikely to detract from the romantic perception and cultural heritage of the area in the longer term. However, construction works could be locally disruptive in the short term.	Construction: Low Operation: Negligible

<p>Landscape Sensitivity</p>	<p>This is a highly valued landscape with a rich cultural heritage which is somewhat susceptible to new development. However, its variable character, degree of forestry and woodland cover as well as the strong human influence mean it has some potential to accommodate development of the type proposed.</p> <p>Landscape sensitivity is therefore considered to be Medium.</p>
<p>Nature and Magnitude of Change</p>	<p>Works within the SLA would include approximately 6.5 km of trident pole OHL, following the Spey Valley from north of Rothes to Bridgeton in the north-east.</p> <p>The landscape character assessment has identified that the magnitude of effect would be Medium during both construction and operation within LCT 287: Broad Farmed Valley (which contains the majority of the SLA within the study area) and Medium during construction and Low-Medium during operation within LCT 290: Upland Moorland and Forestry.</p> <p>Construction activities, including felling near Sourden wood, may result in a temporary increase in movement and activity, although this would be within an active and managed landscape where such activity is not anticipated to appear out of place. The Proposed Development would be experienced from some of the steep, wooded slopes and open valley floor north of Rothes, in the context of existing wood pole overhead lines, masts and road and rail infrastructure.</p> <p>These magnitude ratings are therefore considered to be representative of the likely effect on the SLA within LCT 287 and 290.</p> <p>Magnitude of change would be Medium during construction and Low-Medium during operation.</p>
<p>Assessment of Significance of Effect</p>	
	<p>The Proposed Development would be experienced from the middle section of this SLA between Rothes and Bridgeton, traversing the wooded slopes north of Rothes and descending onto the valley floor on the northern side of the River Spey, crossing it near Boat o' Brig. While it would form a somewhat noticeable feature within some of these areas, it would be perceived in the context of existing overhead lines and other infrastructure, in a relatively active and managed landscape.</p> <p>The effect would therefore be Minor-Moderate (not significant) during construction and operation.</p>