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8. LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT

8.1 Introduction

- 8.1.1 This chapter reports the assessment of likely significant effects on the landscape and on visual amenity arising from the Proposed Development. This chapter:
- describes the assessment methodology and significance criteria used in the assessment;
 - describes the landscape baseline and the visual amenity baseline;
 - sets out the potential impacts of the Proposed Development,
 - describes the mitigation measures proposed to address likely significant effects; and
 - describes the residual significant effects remaining following the implementation of mitigation including cumulative effects.
- 8.1.2 It is not intended to be read as a standalone assessment; reference should be made to the introductory chapters of this EIA Report (**Volume 2, Chapters 1 to 7**).
- 8.1.3 The Proposed Development is assumed to be a collection of separate developments on grouped but separate development platforms. The approximate heights of the different elements are detailed in **Volume 2, Chapter 3: Description of the Proposed Development** and are shown on **Volume 3, Figure 8.1: Zone of Theoretical Visibility and Viewpoint Locations**.
- 8.1.4 As discussed in **Volume 2, Chapter 4: Site Selection Process and Alternatives**, site selection studies have been carried out during 2022 to 2023. The site selection process identified the Site at Nethererton as the optimum location for the Proposed Development, considering various factors including the risk of adverse landscape and visual effects. Following desktop study and fieldwork, a preliminary landscape design was developed in 2023 as a first step in the iterative design process, to help inform the options for embedding mitigation into the design of the Proposed Development. Following a comprehensive design process between the design teams (including SSEN Engineering, Civil Engineers, Ecology, Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and Drainage teams) the Illustrative Landscape Masterplan has been developed, as shown in **Volume 3, Figure 8.5: Illustrative Landscape Masterplan**. The LVIA is based on this arrangement.

Landscape

- 8.1.5 The landscape assessment considers the effects of change and development on the landscape as a resource. The character of the landscape derives from a combination of physical factors, natural processes, and human intervention. Landscape effects are a combination of the physical changes to the fabric of the landscape arising from the Proposed Development and perceptual changes – the way these physical changes alter how the landscape is perceived.
- 8.1.6 The landscape assessment considers effects on significant individual elements of the landscape where appropriate, as well as effects on characteristic combinations or patterns of elements and how these are seen to affect its character and quality.

Visual

- 8.1.7 Visual assessment is concerned with the general visual amenity of people who may be affected by the Proposed Development and their perception and responses to changes in these views.
- 8.1.8 Visual effects arise from changes in the composition and character of views available in the area affected. The assessment considers the likely change that would be experienced, including the effects both on specific views and on general amenity – the pleasantness of the view or outlook – that the people affected enjoy.
- 8.1.9 For the purposes of the assessment, whilst it is the people living, working, passing through or enjoying recreational activities in the area who actually see the views and enjoy the visual amenity, it is the places or routes they may occupy that are mapped and described as the visual receptors.

8.1.10 **Volume 4, Technical Appendix 8.5** includes an additional study, a Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA) which has examined in further detail the potential visual impacts on residential properties within 1 km of the Site Boundary (note: information on the property inspections undertaken for the RVAA are located in **Volume 5, Confidential Technical Appendices**). It was considered beneficial to ascertain the number of properties to be potentially affected by the Proposed Development, and relevant Cumulative Developments. The RVAA has also informed the LVIA as to whether any nearby properties would be likely to meet the Residential Visual Amenity Threshold, indicating an overbearing effect on the visual amenity on an individual property. This chapter is accompanied by figures and technical appendices listed in **Table 8-1**.

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8.1.11 Refer to **Volume 4, Technical Appendix 1.1 EIA Team** for details on the competent experts who undertook the assessment.

8.2 Legislation, Policy and Guidance

Legislative Framework

8.2.1 The applicable legislative framework is summarised as follows:

- European Landscape Convention (ELC)⁴¹, aims to encourage public authorities to adopt policies and measures to ensure: “*landscape to be integrated into regional and town planning policies and in cultural, environmental, agricultural, social and economic policies, as well as any other policies with possible direct or indirect impacts on landscape*”. It also acknowledges that all landscapes can be important, whether they are designated or not.
- There is no legislation specifically covering landscape character or visual amenity but the spirit of the ELC is carried through in UK planning policy and government guidance.

Policy

8.2.2 The following planning policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant to the Proposed Development in relation to landscape and visual amenity:

- National Planning Framework 4⁴², Policy 4 Natural Places; and
- Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan (2023)⁴³, Policy E2 Landscape, Policy E3 Forestry and Woodland and Policy PR1 Protecting Important Resources.

Guidance

8.2.3 This assessment has been carried out in accordance with:

- The Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition (GLVIA3)⁴⁴;
- The Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 02/21 Assessing landscape value outside national designation⁴⁵;
- NatureScot Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Guidance Methodology⁴⁶ were referred to in defining the sensitivity of the local landscape; and
- Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 2/19 Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA)⁴⁷.

8.2.4 Photography has been undertaken and visualisations created in accordance with the Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 06/19 Visual Representation of development proposals⁴⁸ (which is consistent with NatureScot guidance). Further information on methodology is detailed in **Volume 4, Technical Appendix 8.1**.

8.3 Assessment Methodology and Significance Criteria

Scope of the Assessment

8.3.1 The scope of this assessment has been established through a scoping process. Further information can be found in **Volume 2, Chapter 6: Scope and Consultation** and within **Table 8-2** and **Table 8-3**.

⁴¹ Council of Europe, European Landscape Convention, ETS No 176 (2007).

⁴² Scottish Government, (2023). National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-planning-framework-4/>

⁴³ Aberdeenshire Council, (2023). Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023. Available at: <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/planning/plans-and-policies/ldp-2023>.

⁴⁴ Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, (2013). ‘Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment’, 3rd Edition.

⁴⁵ The Landscape Institute, (2021). Assessing landscape value outside national designations. Available at <https://www.landscapeinstitute.org/technical-resource/assessing-landscape-value-outside-national-designations/>.

⁴⁶ NatureScot, (April 2024), Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Guidance (Methodology) available at <https://www.nature.scot/doc/landscape-sensitivity-assessment-guidance-methodology#Introduction>.

⁴⁷ Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 2/19 Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (March 2019).

⁴⁸ The Landscape Institute, (2019). Technical Guidance Note 06/19 Visual Representation of Development Proposals.

- 8.3.2 The assessment of likely significant effects on the landscape and on visual amenity arising from the Proposed Development considers both construction and operational phases. The assessment considers the baseline conditions and the mitigation that has been built into the design.
- 8.3.3 The chapter then analyses the landscape and considers its sensitivity to the type of development proposed. It defines the extent to which the Proposed Development is likely to be visible and identifies the range and type of people (or places they may occupy) likely to be affected, which are illustrated by a representative sample of views.
- 8.3.4 The assessment reports on the residual effects of the Proposed Development, considering committed mitigation, assessed at Year 15 of operation.
- 8.3.5 The scope of the landscape and visual amenity cumulative assessment is defined in **paragraph 8.10.3**.
- 8.3.6 There are no Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) covering any part of the Site and therefore they are not discussed further within the assessment. Gardens and Designed Landscapes (GDLs) on the Historic Environment Scotland inventory are addressed in **Volume 2, Chapter 10: Cultural Heritage**.
- 8.3.7 The visual assessment includes consideration of residential receptors. It should be noted that a significant effect on an isolated residential receptor is an effect on their private visual amenity whereas a significant effect on a settlement may involve a degree of effect on the public good.

Issues Scoped Out of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA)

- 8.3.8 **Table 8-2** presents the issues considered very unlikely to be subject to significant effects from the Proposed Development and therefore not considered further.

Table 8-2 Items scoped out of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

Issues Scoped out of Assessment	Justification
Landscape Character: National Parks, National Scenic Areas, Wild Land Areas	Due to distance from the Proposed Development (the nearest area being approximately 80 km to the southeast) the effect on these designated landscapes and Wild Land Areas is unlikely to be significant.
Landscape Character: North Eastern Aberdeenshire Coast Special Landscape Area (SLA)	The SLA covers the coast and its immediate hinterland north and south of Peterhead, 6 km to 9 km east of the Proposed Development. Significant effects on local character and visual amenity would be unlikely to occur due to the distance, intervening topography, built form and vegetation.
Visual Receptors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residential properties: Nethererton Farm and ruin, Inverveddie House and Cottage, Roer Teach, Tiffery, Longleys and Langfield House. These are properties within the Site boundary or in close proximity. These properties either have been acquired by SSEN or they are in advanced negotiations to acquire. As their future use could be non-residential if required, these properties are excluded from the LVIA. Nethererton Farm is semi-derelict and currently unoccupied. • Derelict farmsteads – at the time of this report preparation, several properties within the Study Area are derelict. Their future use and function is unknown in terms of potential redevelopment, therefore these properties are excluded from the scope of this report. • Transport receptors beyond 2 km from the Site. Considering intervening vegetation, built form and topography, the varying angle of view and the occupation of the highway user concentrating on driving, these visual receptors are unlikely to experience significant effects. • Users of minor highway lanes at 2 km due to intervening built form and vegetation: C39B at Braehead, unnamed minor road to Redbog Farm from the C38B.

Extent of the Study Area

- 8.3.9 The study area for the visual assessment is based on the results of the visibility study as, by definition, visual effects can only occur where at least some part of the development can be seen. Although the Proposed Development may be visible beyond 3 km, professional experience of similar projects and survey of the site area at site selection and scoping stages has shown that significant effects are unlikely to occur beyond that distance: Therefore, the study area for the LVIA and for the cumulative assessment for the LVIA have been set at 3 km from the Site to ensure the assessment focuses on potentially significant effects.
- 8.3.10 The extent of the study area for the visual assessment is shown on **Volume 3, Figure 8.1: Zone of Theoretical Visibility and Viewpoint Locations**.

Zone of Theoretical Visibility

- 8.3.11 The Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) was produced by computer modelling using the ArcGIS viewshed analysis tool. The Proposed Development was overlain on a digital terrain model (DTM) and 'lines of sight' generated to show where these points may be seen from and thus the places from which the Proposed Development may be visible assuming 'bare ground', with no account taken of the screening effects from features such as vegetation or buildings. The ZTV used the Ordnance Survey Terrain 5 and a viewer eye height of 1.6 m.
- 8.3.12 The study area for the landscape assessment is informed by the visibility study and covers the full extent of the wider landscape around it which may be influenced in a significant manner by the Proposed Development (as per GLVIA3, paragraph 5.2).

Viewpoints

- 8.3.13 The ZTV was used to identify potential viewpoints from a range of distances, directions and elevations to give a representative sample of likely views of the Proposed Development to illustrate this assessment and to illustrate key and important views.
- 8.3.14 The viewpoints were agreed with the statutory consultees, Aberdeenshire Council and NatureScot. The locations are shown on **Volume 3, Figure 8.1: Zone of Theoretical Visibility and Viewpoint Location Plan** and are listed in **Table 8-5**. It should be noted that this assessment is not limited to consideration of the effects from the representative viewpoints illustrated.

Consultation Undertaken to Date

- 8.3.15 Consultation has taken place with several stakeholders; summaries of the responses and how they have been considered in this assessment are provided in **Table 8-3**.

Table 8-3 Summary of Consultation Undertaken

Organisation/ Body	Type of Consultation/ Date Received	Response	How response has been considered
Aberdeenshire Council	Pre-Application advice (ENQ/2023/0426) 12 May 2023	The Council provided the following advice: “Natural Heritage, Landscape and Access: Native woodland is identified on the northern boundary along the A950 and also to a small section within the development site at ‘Longleys’. There are no Tree Preservation Orders (TPO’s) located within the site or along its boundary. The site does not lie within an area designated nationally or locally for its landscape value, however you are encouraged to be mindful of views of the site from Special Landscape Areas (SLA) on the Buchan coast, given the likely scale of the development. A submission should be accompanied by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment. There appear to be no core paths or rights of way within or immediately adjacent to the proposed development site. Should you be aware of any informal use made by residents in the area, this should be discussed with our Environment Planner.”	As part of the design, existing vegetation has been surveyed and retained wherever feasible within and on the Site boundaries (please see Volume 3, Figure 8.5: Illustrative Landscape Masterplan for the proposed retained existing trees and hedgerows). During the development of the design the identified native woodland at ‘Longleys’ has been retained. The initial Site boundary has been amended to no longer include this area. The North East Aberdeenshire Coast SLA’s lie approximately 5.5 km to the north east and 7.5 km to the south east of the Site. It is considered that at this distance potential significant effects on landscape and visual amenity would be unlikely to occur, and therefore SLAs have been scoped out of further assessment. Core paths within the southern edge of Longside were identified and considered within the LVIA.
NatureScot	Response to Site Selection consultation 17 May 2023	The site selected will avoid impacts on National Scenic Areas and Wild Land Areas. We do not intend to offer comments on landscape and visual impacts for the Peterhead Hub [Netherton Hub] as Aberdeenshire Council are best placed comment on these.	Noted.
Aberdeenshire Council Carol Anderson External Landscape Architect	Response to Site Selection and Pre- Application advice request Response received: 28 July 2023	Key points from the response in relation to the EIA Report are summarised below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The site is not covered by any landscape designations with the closest landscape designation the North East Aberdeenshire Coast Special Landscape Area (SLA) which lies 5.5km to the north-east and 7.5km to the south-east of Site 4. I consider it unlikely that the proposal would incur significant effects on the special 	The principles of landscape mitigation proposed are very much those recommended by Aberdeenshire Council: create development platforms sat low in the landscape, dug in sufficient to generate the volume of fill necessary to create naturalistic rolling landforms around the site, particularly between the buildings and the A950. The exact levels are determined by earthworks balance calculations (to avoid material import or export) as well as by constraints on access road gradients, site drainage requirements and from existing infrastructure.

Organisation/ Body	Type of Consultation/ Date Received	Response	How response has been considered
		<p>qualities of this SLA or on views from the designated area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key views would be likely to occur from the A950, from minor roads in the surrounding area and from dispersed settlement in the surrounding area. • The proposal would introduce new built infrastructure (with the plethora of structures creating a visually complex scene) into a landscape where piecemeal industrial development is less obvious unlike the landscape closer to Peterhead. • The 400 kV substation appears from the indicative site plan to be located at the more elevated end of Site. It is not clear if ground works are proposed to sink the level of the Site and create screening earth mounds. This approach would provide some mitigation although the location of tall structures such as heavy gauge terminal towers on this elevated Site (where little close-by screening by landform/woodland is present) would be likely to increase landscape and visual effects. • It is recommended that mitigation measures should include earthworks to provide immediate screening of lower elements on the Site. • Advance planting of trees, woodlands and management/planting of hedgerows (letting them grow wider and higher and plugging gaps) should be undertaken in the area within approximately 2 km of the Site, focussing attention on planting on subtle ridges to enhance screening of the development. These measures would additionally enhance biodiversity and landscape character. • Connecting transmission lines to the Proposed Development are a concern with these likely to be 	<p>The aim being to ensure that in most views from sensitive locations (particularly the A950 and surrounding residential properties) only the upper parts of buildings would be visible, and ground-level clutter would be completely screened. This to be supplemented by extensive belts of new native woodland particularly where mitigation screening by landform is more difficult. More locally, hedgerows around the edge of the Site to be enhanced to screen low-level views such as from the lane along the southern site boundary (please see Volume 3, Figure 8.5: Illustrative Landscape Masterplan, for the proposed planting).</p> <p>It was noted that the incoming OHLs would still be widely visible. These are separate projects but teams working on these are aware of the potential impacts and particularly the need to minimise the risk of wirescape effects around the Netherton Hub. These projects have been considered in relation to the potential for cumulative in-combination effects with the Proposed Development in Section 8.9 of this chapter.</p> <p>The mitigation design also aims to enhance local biodiversity by habitat creation and will achieve a minimum 10 % Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). Please refer to Volume 2, Chapter 9, Ecology, Nature Conservation and Ornithology for further details on BNG.</p>

Organisation/ Body	Type of Consultation/ Date Received	Response	How response has been considered
		particularly intrusive to the southeast of the Site. Further detail on connecting transmission lines and elevational drawings of the Proposed Development would need to be seen to fully gauge potential landscape and visual effects.	
Aberdeenshire Council: Carol Anderson, external Landscape Architect	Response to email request (22 September 2023) to review the proposed approach to preparing visualisations, Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) and proposed viewpoint locations. 10 October 2023	Aberdeenshire Council confirmed the approach for preparing visualisations outlined is fine. They also confirmed that the representative viewpoints provided are likely to demonstrate good all-round views of the Proposed Development although I would wish to see an additional viewpoint selected at a high point on the A950 between Peterhead and the Proposed Development site, in the vicinity of the airfield where I think there are more open views.'	The approach to preparation of visualisations and viewpoint locations has been adopted in this report. As requested, an additional viewpoint has been included within the assessment, refer to Viewpoint 3, Table 8-5, Representative Viewpoints, paragraph 8.3.37 and Volume 3, Figure 8.1: Zone of Theoretical Visibility and Viewpoint Location Plan.
Scottish Gas	Response for the EIA Scoping Opinion (ENQ/2023/1465) 27 October 2023	Provided guidance on tree planting in proximity to gas pipelines.	Guidance regarding tree planting in proximity to gas pipelines has been taken into consideration. Small to medium size trees are not to be planted within 6 m of the centre line of the gas pipeline. Shrub planting may be planted within the easement however a 4 m strip centred on the mainline must be left clear at all times.
Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)	Response for the EIA Scoping Opinion (ENQ/2023/1465) 7 November 2023	SEPA requested consideration be given to minimise impacts on watercourse crossings and water features. A minimum buffer of 10 m requested around each watercourse. Consideration to be given to removal of manmade features and naturalising of the existing watercourses south of Flushing and on the western boundary.	The comments from SEPA have been incorporated in the design of the site layout, including the landform design (please see Volume 3, Figure 8.5: Illustrative Landscape Masterplan).
National Gas Transmission	Response for the EIA Scoping Opinion	National Gas Transmission requested that no development, construction or landscaping be undertaken	The comments from National Gas Transmission have been incorporated in the design of the site layout.

Organisation/ Body	Type of Consultation/ Date Received	Response	How response has been considered
	(ENQ/2023/1465) 22 November 2023	within the easement of the existing gas pipeline that crosses the site without seeking permission from National Gas Transmission.	No landscape works are to occur within the easement without formal written approval from National Gas Transmission.
Aberdeenshire Council	Response for the EIA Scoping Opinion (ENQ/2023/1465) 21 December 2023	The response welcomed the consideration that is being given by the landscape consultants to mitigation and stated they will review more detailed proposals, including wider off-site measures, when available.	Response noted.

Methodology

Baseline Data Collation

- 8.3.16 Information has been gathered primarily from desk study and site surveys. Relevant publications that have been taken into consideration include:
- NatureScot: Scotland Landscape Character Types⁴⁹;
 - NatureScot: Landscape Character Assessment: Aberdeenshire – Landscape Evolution and Influences⁵⁰;
 - Aberdeenshire Council: Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan (LDP)⁴³;
 - Aberdeenshire Council: Public access - planning and building register⁵¹ in relation to cumulative data; and
 - online mapping including Ordnance Survey maps, Google Earth Pro and Google Street View.
- 8.3.17 Site surveys were carried out in May 2023, October 2023 and August 2024 for assessment. The site photography for winter conditions was completed in December 2023. Weather conditions were generally dry and clear.

Visual Methodology

- 8.3.18 Within the study area, potential key visual receptors are individual residential properties, edges of settlement, users of nearby roads, and footpath and cycle networks used by local residents and visitors. Reference has been made to the Aberdeenshire Council Core Paths network.
- 8.3.19 The representative viewpoints are used to illustrate the visual effects on the receptors identified above. The locations of the agreed 11 representative viewpoints are shown on **Volume 3, Figure 8.1: Zone of Theoretical Visibility and Viewpoint Location Plan** and listed in **Table 8-5**. To assist in illustrating the potential level of impact magnitude, visualisations have been prepared for each of the representative viewpoints. The method for the production for the visualisations and the locations of the 11 viewpoints has been agreed through consultation with Aberdeenshire Council, see **Table 8-2** for further details. The visualisations were prepared in accordance with Landscape Institute *Technical Guidance Note 06/19 Visual Representation of development proposals*. Five of the representative viewpoints are illustrated by photomontages (Type 3) and six as photowires (Type 3). The camera location was surveyed on Site using a handheld Global Positioning System (GPS). Further detail on methodology is given in **Volume 4, Technical Appendix 8.1**.
- 8.3.20 The visualisations are based on the Proposed Development as illustrated on **Volume 3, Figure 8.5: Illustrative Landscape Masterplan**. It is important to note that the designs of the Converter Stations (Spittal to Peterhead HVDC Converter Station and Eastern Green Link 3 HVDC Converter Station) and HVDC Switching Station are based on an indicative design which is considered a worst-case in relation to potential landscape and visual impacts (the final design of these elements would be determined at the detailed design stage). The proposed built form is illustrated as typical simple rectangular blocks, with a pitched roof, similar in height and form to other similar types of transmission development. The built form is shown at a height and scale for the different elements to illustrate a 'worst-case' situation. The design of the proposed built form for the Operations Depot and Spares Buildings, 132 kV and 400 kV Substations are also shown as rectangular blocks with pitched roof in the visualisations. For the 400kV Substation there is additional detail shown of the proposed gantries to the south and west of the substation building (Design detail known at July 2024).
- 8.3.21 The cumulative visualisations illustrated on **Volume 3, Figures 8.31 to 8.41** show indicative overhead lines and terminal towers which form part of the wider Beauly to Blackhillock to New Deer to Peterhead 400 kV OHL and

⁴⁹ NatureScot, (2019). Scottish Landscape Character Types Map and Descriptions. [Online] Available at: <https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/landscape/landscape-character-assessment/scottish-landscape-character-types-map-and-descriptions> [Accessed: May 2024].

⁵⁰ NatureScot. Landscape Character Assessment: Aberdeenshire - Landscape Evolution and Influences. [Online] Available at: <https://www.nature.scot/doc/landscape-character-assessment-aberdeenshire-landscape-evolution-and-influences> [Accessed: May 2024].

⁵¹ Aberdeenshire Council. Public access - planning and building register. [Online] Available at: <https://upa.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/online-applications/search.do?action=simple&searchType=Application> [Accessed: June 2024].

Netherton/Peterhead 400 kV OHL Diversion and Repurposing projects. The existing 400 kV New Deer OHL to the south of the Proposed Development would be diverted into the Proposed Development from the west. The terminal tower of the Netherton/ Peterhead 400 kV OHL Diversion and Repurposing to the south of the Proposed Development is shown as part of the cumulative visualisations. The alignment of the route to the south is not yet known and is therefore not shown on the visualisations. It is anticipated that a section of the existing New Deer 400 kV OHL to the south of the Proposed Development would be removed, however the extent of tower removal is not known at this stage. Therefore, the existing towers have been retained as shown on the visualisations to present a worst-case scenario.

- 8.3.22 In the future, a new OHL of greater height than the existing New Deer 400 kV OHL (existing towers are approximately 45 m tall, proposed towers to be approximately 60 m) would be aligned from the Proposed Development to the existing 400 kV Peterhead Substation on a new route.
- 8.3.23 The indicative overhead lines and terminal towers are shown on the cumulative visualisations as they are an integral part of the wider transmission network upgrade. Cumulative developments such as underground cables would not be visible and consequently not shown. The cumulative visualisations are restricted to the other known transmission development connecting directly into the Proposed Development.
- 8.3.24 The visualisations consist of A1 single frame views with one or two sheets per viewpoint, depending on the extent of Proposed Development within the view. Each photomontage or photowire shows a 90° angle of view to illustrate the surrounding context. The first set of visuals show the existing view, and the second set show the proposed view at Years 1 and 15. The winter photography was completed in December 2023. The field photography and visualisations are included as **Volume 3, Figures 8.6A to 8.41**⁵².

Determining Sensitivity and Magnitude of Change of Receptors

- 8.3.25 This section provides an overview of the LVIA methodology. A full methodology is set out in **Volume 4, Technical Appendix 8.1: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Methodology**. The sensitivity of landscape and visual receptors determined by separately considering the receptor value and the susceptibility of the receptor to the change proposed. An explanatory description of definition of sensitivity is listed in **Volume 4, Technical Appendix 8.1: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Methodology**. The definition of sensitivity for each landscape character area and subtype is provided in **Volume 4, Technical Appendix 8.2: Landscape Character Definition of Sensitivity**.

Landscape Sensitivity

- 8.3.26 The value of a landscape may be indicated by its designation, nationally or locally. However, the absence of a designation does not preclude a landscape being considered important. The European Landscape Convention, to which the UK is a signatory, promotes a people-centred approach and the need to take account of all landscapes, not just those that might be considered special. Following this approach, some local authorities do not make local designations. Landscape value may therefore also be indicated by local consensus because of scenic or aesthetic qualities and/or cultural associations, or it may be identified by a professional considering aspects such as landscape and/or scenic quality, rarity and/or representativeness, conservation interests and recreational value. Local value may be indicated by local cultural or natural heritage records, works of art or levels of use.
- 8.3.27 Landscape susceptibility considers the ability of the receptor to accommodate the specific change proposed without undue consequences on its baseline character or how it is perceived.
- 8.3.28 Susceptibility and value are combined such that a combination of high susceptibility and high value is likely to result in the highest sensitivity, whereas a low susceptibility and low value is likely to result in the lowest level of sensitivity. As noted in GLVIA3, there can be complex relationships between the value attributed to a landscape

⁵² Please note when viewing the visualisations onscreen, to obtain a more accurate representation of the view, zoom into the image to 100% and position the screen at comfortable arm's length.

and its susceptibility to change, which can be particularly important when considering change in designated landscapes.

Visual Sensitivity

8.3.29 Value attributed to visual amenity relates to the level of recognition of the view; from highly celebrated nationally known views to views of no particular recognition. Susceptibility to the proposed change for visual receptors relates to the location of the people affected and their occupation. For example, residents at home would be highly susceptible to change, whereas people using indoor facilities where the nature of the surroundings is irrelevant to their activity would be of low or negligible susceptibility.

8.3.30 As with landscape, susceptibility and value are combined to form a judgement about the visual sensitivity of a given receptor. Whilst a valued view may serve to increase the overall sensitivity of a visual receptor, a low value would not necessarily reduce sensitivity. Visual receptors considered highly susceptible to the proposed change are normally considered to be of high sensitivity unless there are features associated with the value of the view that lead to a reduction in sensitivity.

Magnitude of Change

8.3.31 The magnitude of landscape and visual change depends on a combination of factors including:

- size, scale and nature of change in relation to the context;
- the geographical extent of the area influenced; and
- its duration or reversibility.

Level of Effect and Significance

8.3.32 Professional judgement is used to combine sensitivity and magnitude to gauge the level of effect and determine whether it is significant or not, with a clear rationale for the overall judgement provided. The level of effect (and thus significance) would vary depending on the circumstances, the type and scale of development proposed, the baseline context and other factors. The significance matrix in **Chapter 5, Table 5-1: Matrix for Determining the Significance of Effects** is used as a guide but professional judgement is used both in allocating magnitude and sensitivity ratings, and in the conclusions on significance derived from these.

8.3.33 The gradations of magnitude of change and level of effect used in the assessment represent a continuum, which are described on a four-point scale: major; moderate; minor; and negligible. Where appropriate, this assessment uses intermediate descriptors where the assessor considers that the effect falls between the levels.

8.3.34 Effects can be either beneficial or adverse or, in some cases, neutral (neither beneficial nor adverse) and effects assessed as moderate or greater are significant in terms of the EIA Regulations.

Cumulative effects

8.3.35 A list of potential cumulative sites was prepared initially considering developments up to 10 km from the Site, see in **Volume 2, Chapter 5: EIA Process and Methodology** for further details. On examination it was considered that of the in-combination cumulative developments, the nature of these was such that there would unlikely be significant effects on landscape character and visual amenity from any of the developments beyond 3 km from the Proposed Development. The Study Area for the cumulative assessment has therefore been set at 3 km. The list of cumulative sites is given in **Chapter 5, Table 5-2 Cumulative Developments**.

8.3.36 **Volume 3, Figure 15-1: Cumulative Developments** shows the location of each of these within the 3 km Cumulative Study Area.

8.4 Baseline Conditions

Landscape

Designations and Wild Land

- 8.4.1 There are no Wild Land or landscape-related designations within the landscape study area.

The Site and Surrounding Context

Topography and Hydrology

- 8.4.2 The Site is located within gently undulating topography. The Site lies on an elevated north facing slope, with the highest point in the southern most part at approximately 65 m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) falling northwards to approximately 30 m AOD. Refer to **Volume 3, Figure 8.2: Topography and Viewpoints**. The land falls to the west and to the north with a natural low-lying area in the centre of the Site. The underlying geology of the Site is predominantly glacial tills, overlain by mineral gley soils, with aspects of calcareous soils. Two small areas of peaty gleys soils are present towards the centre of the Site.
- 8.4.3 There are several ditches within the Site aligned alongside field boundaries draining northwards towards the lower lying land at the A950 on the southern boundary. Within the surrounding area to the east, there is the Burn of Faichfield, which drains into the River Ugie to the north, to the west is the Burn of Ludquham / Burn of Cairngall also draining into the River Ugie.

Land cover and Land Use

- 8.4.4 The Site is used for agriculture, a mixture of arable and pasture for grazing by cattle. The field patterns are medium in size and of a geometric irregular shape. The fields within the Site to the north, northwest and west are used for arable production. The fields to the south, east and southeast are pasture and used for grazing livestock (cattle).
- 8.4.5 Field boundaries are either fences, ditches or hedgerows or a mixture of all. Hedgerows are gorse or hawthorn or a mixture of shrub species. Less frequently, dry-stone walls appear along some field boundaries that separate the field from the A950 road. Drainage ditches also occur along some field boundaries. To the southwest, near Mains of Kinmundy, fields have tree belts as field boundaries to create shelter for livestock. A tree belt occurs on the northern most boundary of the A950 with a woodland copse near to Flushing. There is a small woodland copse within the Site to the west of Longleys and a larger woodland to the south of Longleys outside the Site boundary. Woodland is often associated with settlement surrounding isolated farmsteads or occurs as large coniferous plantations. These are present within the Study Area at Nether Kinmundy to the south.
- 8.4.6 A disused borrow pit is located within the eastern part of the Site near to Longleys.
- 8.4.7 The surrounding landscape within the Study Area is predominantly used for agriculture and is rural in character. To the northeast, approximately 1 km from the Site, is the Longside Airfield used for emergency purposes and recreational flying. Part of the airfield is used for storage and commercial premises with large sheds visible. The former airfield is allocated as Employment Land within the Aberdeenshire LDP.
- 8.4.8 The landscape alters in character from west to east, from rural to semi-industrial on the approach to Peterhead. Characteristic features of edge of an urban area become more prevalent with larger industrial sheds becoming more frequent and the presence of overhead transmission lines.

Settlement pattern

- 8.4.9 The village of Longside sits approximately 1 km to the northwest of the Site (approximately 1.3 km from the closest proposed building). Residential properties are a mixture of bungalows and one storey properties. The Longside Cemetery lies to the south of the village, adjacent to several new residential properties with an open view to the southeast towards the Site.

- 8.4.10 Flushing is the nearest hamlet, located adjacent to the A950, directly on the northern boundary of the Site (approximately 500 m from the closest proposed building). The hamlet contains several bungalows, some with a south facing aspect towards the Site.
- 8.4.11 Also, within the Study Area are isolated farms, farmsteads and small clusters of residential properties, with placenames such as Parkhill, Toddlehills and Nether Kinmundy. Properties are scattered across the whole Study Area, mostly in the order of 500 m to 1 km apart. Farms often have large storage sheds associated with the farmstead, used for storage of grain or housing livestock.

Transport

- 8.4.12 A main road the A950 lies along the northern boundary of the Proposed Development. A minor road (Aberdeenshire Council reference 55B) lies on the southern boundary at Inverveddie Farm. Minor Roads occur to the east, west and south connecting settlement and local farms and residences.
- 8.4.13 To the north of the Site lies the Formartine and Buchan Way, a regional trail used by walkers and cyclists. This route follows the old railway line from Peterhead to Maud, running east-west slightly over 1 km north of the Proposed Development.
- 8.4.14 At Longside, the Aberdeenshire Council Core Path 208.01 lies to the west, south and southeast of Longside. Refer to **Volume 3, Figure 8.3: Landscape Character and Landscape Planning**, which shows its location relative to the Proposed Development.
- 8.4.15 A footpath lies within the field edge alongside the minor road (unclassified road, Aberdeenshire Council reference Inn Brae C39B), between Longside to Ciola to allow safe access between the hamlet of Ciola and facilities at Longside.

Vertical elements:

- 8.4.16 The existing New Deer 400 kV OHL is located approximately 1 km to the south of the Site aligned from east to west.
- 8.4.17 Four wind turbines are present at Gallows Hill at approximately 1.5 km due west of the Site at 66 m AOD. There are also 33 kV electricity distribution lines, present to the east and west of the Site.
- 8.4.18 Existing vertical features such as OHLs, towers, communication masts and wind turbines are a feature within this local landscape and detract from the rural character.

Landscape Character

Coastal Agricultural Plain – Aberdeenshire (LCT 17)

- 8.4.19 The Site lies within the Coastal Agricultural Plain – Aberdeenshire (LCT 17), as defined in the *NatureScot Landscape Character Assessment*⁵³.
- 8.4.20 LCT 17 is an extensive character type, covering the area from Dyce in the south to Fraserburgh in the north and running inland an average of 10 km from the coastal strip. The NatureScot assessment finds that “*it is characterised by its gently undulating landform, relatively large scale, extensive mosses and the influence of development including transmission masts, electricity transmission lines, the A90 and A953, and the gas terminal at St Fergus on its eastern edge.*”

⁵³ NatureScot, (2019). Landscape Character Assessment, LCT 17 Coastal Plain.

Plate 8-1 A view to the west of Peterhead, looking east, illustrating typical characteristic features of LCT 17



8.4.21 The key characteristics of the LCT 17 relevant to the Site include:

- low-lying and very gently undulating landform, with a pattern of subtle ridges and valleys in the north-east;
- water courses in broad shallow valleys;
- mainly arable farming, with fairly extensive areas of moss and wetland;
- large, open, geometric fields;
- coniferous forest particularly extensive in southern part of the area;
- limited broadleaf woodland, forming rare shelterbelts and small groups around farms;
- well settled landscape of dispersed farms, many newer houses and a number of settlements, and occasional mansions in designed landscapes;
- communication structures and tall masts on some higher ground, and power and transmission lines radiating from Peterhead power station, which itself is highly visible.

Local Landscape Character Subtypes

8.4.22 Due to the scale of the LCT 17 covering an extensive area, two local subtypes have been defined, namely 'Peterhead urban fringe' and 'Rural area' to distinguish between some of the more subtle landscape differences across the 3 km Study Area. The Site lies within the Rural area approximately 1 km west of the edge of the Peterhead Urban Fringe. The subtypes are shown on **Volume 3, Figure 8.3: Landscape Character and Landscape Planning**.

8.4.23 Local key characteristics relevant to the Site and the local subtype Rural include:

- gently undulating topography with wide open panoramic views to surrounding landscape;
- arable and pasture land enclosed by field boundaries of predominantly hedgerow and stockproof fencing with occasional drystone walling. Often field boundaries associated with drainage ditches. Fields are medium in scale;
- tree belts as field boundaries or alongside highways for shelter;
- isolated farmsteads and isolated residential properties often with woodland;
- large grain storage sheds located adjacent to farmsteads or isolated locations;

- occasional woodland copse of native deciduous or mixed. Occasional conifer plantations arranged in geometric field pattern;
- presence of vertical detractors. Features such as wind turbines, transmission lines, Peterhead Power station and occasional large industrial or farm buildings; and
- minor roads with occasional footpaths for school access.

8.4.24 The Peterhead Urban Fringe Subtype covers the Longside Airfield and land to the east of the airfield within the A950 highway corridor where there are isolated industrial units present, often with large scale sheds. This contrasts with the Rural subtype which has features more related to agricultural production, with large sheds associated with grain storage, positioned in isolated location or adjacent to farmsteads.

8.4.25 Local key characteristics relevant to the local subtype Peterhead Urban Fringe include:

- industrial units associated with the Longside Airfield or sited alongside the A950 highway;
- occasional woodland copse of native deciduous or mixed;
- presence of vertical detractors. Features such as transmission lines, anaerobic digestion plant, wind turbines and industrial sheds.

Plate 8-2 Local Landscape Subtype: Rural Area The image is taken from the minor road at Mains of Ludquharn, looking south west (Viewpoint 8). The view represents the typical landscape characteristics of the Site, namely the hedgerow field boundary treatment, undulating arable/grassland fields, transmission line, large agricultural/industrial sheds and occasional woodland.



Visual Amenity

Overview

8.4.26 As noted above, whilst it is the people living, working, passing through or enjoying recreational activities in the area who see the view and enjoy the visual amenity, it is the places they may occupy that are mapped and described as the 'receptors' of the views.

8.4.27 The extent of visibility of the Proposed Development, and thus the area from which there may be visual effects, can be seen in the **Volume 3, Figure 8.1: Zone of Theoretical Visibility and Viewpoint Locations**. It should be noted however, that this is a bare ground ZTV and does not take account of the screening effects of woodland and forestry or built form and infrastructure. The locations of potential visual receptors within the 3 km Study Area are described in the following paragraphs.

8.4.28 As shown in **Volume 3, Figure 8.1: Zone of Theoretical Visibility and Viewpoint Locations** there would potentially be extensive visibility of the Proposed Development in all compass directions. As a bare-ground ZTV, based on the existing terrain this presents a worst-case scenario. On the ground, the visibility would be less due to the presence of intervening existing vegetation and built form, and further reduced by the proposed landform and soft landscape within the Site which is not considered in the ZTV. To focus on the potentially sensitive receptors, the study area for the visual assessment is the area covered by the ZTV within 3 km of the Site.

Residential receptors

8.4.29 As noted in the landscape baseline, in addition to the village of Longside and the hamlet of Flushing, there are scattered isolated farmsteads and residential properties across the whole of the Study Area.

8.4.30 The LVIA assesses the scattered residential receptors as groups and clusters of properties, banded in relation to their distance from the Site as set out below. The groups are mainly based on the naming of places on the Ordnance Survey Landranger map, and the degree to which properties are grouped for the assessment is inversely proportional to their distance from the Site. Nearer the Site, where more potential for significant effects is anticipated, the grouping is done at a fine grain with smaller groups. Further from the Site, where fewer significant effects are anticipated the grouping is done at a coarser grain, with larger groups.

8.4.31 This is therefore not a comprehensive list of all the residential properties that may be affected but a thorough sample to ensure the assessment fully considers potential views from the different distances and compass directions from the Site. There will be individual houses between the named groups, subject to effects similar to the places either side. A list of the settlements and properties considered in the assessment is provided below:

Settlements:

- Longside, northwest, 1 km; and
- Flushing, north, adjacent.

Scattered properties up to 1 km from the Site Boundary:

- Parkhill, east, 400 m;
- Mains of Kinmundy, southwest 600 m;
- Toddlehills, southeast, 600 m;
- Newmill, Drums, North Linshart, west, 1 km;

Properties between 1 km and 2 km from the Site Boundary:

- West Thunderton, east, 1.1 km;
- Nether Kinmundy, south, 1.4 km; and
- Willowbank northeast, 1.5 km.

Properties between 2 km and 3 km from the Site Boundary:

- Woodside, north, 2.5 km;
- Middleton of Rora, north, 2.8 km;
- Torterston, 2.2 km;
- Downiehills, east, 2.6 km;
- Hillhead of Cocklaw, southeast, 2.5 km;
- Meikle Dens, southeast, 2.5 km; and
- Millhill, west, 2.5 km.

Recreational Receptors

- 8.4.32 A regional trail, the Formartine and Buchan Way, a cycleway and footpath from Peterhead to Dyce follows a disused railway line that crosses the northern portion of the Study Area, running east-west approximately 1 km north of the Proposed Development.
- 8.4.33 An Aberdeenshire Council Core Path 208.01 at Longside is present approximately 1.3 km to the northeast of the Proposed Development.
- 8.4.34 There are occasional footpaths related to safe school access situated alongside minor roads within the field adjacent to the field boundary at Mains of Buthlaw linking up with the Formartine and Buchan Way, (north, 1.6 km) and south of Longside linking up to the hamlet of Durie (west, 1.5 km).

Transport Receptors

- 8.4.35 The Proposed Development would be visible by users travelling at speed in both directions, east to west, west to east, from the main highway traversing the Study Area, the A950 on the northern boundary to the Site. The Proposed Development would also be visible from a network of surrounding minor roads present in all compass directions in relation to the Site. A similar approach to the assessment of potential visual receptors from these minor highways has been used by grouping the receptors together using compass directions from the Site. The following highways within 2 km of the Site are listed as representative in **Table 8-4**. Minor highways between 2 km and 3 km have been scoped out of the assessment as it is considered at this distance, views would be obscured by intervening topography vegetation and built form and potential significant effects are unlikely to occur.

Table 8-4 Minor roads present within the Study Area with a potential view

Location	Distance from the Site
Highways to the north	
C79B – Longside to Braehead, travelling east<->west	1 km to 2 km
C43B – Flushing to Torterston, travelling east<->west	0 km to 2 km
C44B – A950 at Thunderton to Mains of Buthlaw north<->south	1.5 km to 2 km
Highways to the east	
C56B – A950 at Faichfield to Parkhill to Toddlehills to Meikle Dens north<->south	250 m to 2 km
C63B – A950 at Longside Airfield to Stockbridge northeast<->southwest	1 km to 2 km
Highways to the south	
C55B – from Toddlehills to the Site to Mains of Urquhart east<->west	500 m to 1 km
C38B – Denholm to the hamlet of Nether Kinmundy east<->southwest	0.25 km to 2 km
C57B – C55B to Nether Savock and Upper Savock to the C56B	1 km to 2 km
C181B - C55B to C38B at hamlet of Nether Kinmundy	500 m to 1 km
Highways to the west	
Inn Brae C39B – Woodside via Longside to South Braeside, travelling north<->south	1 km to 2 km
C52B – from C39B to Millhill	1.5 km to 2 km

Commercial Receptors

8.4.36 There are no obvious purely commercial receptors in the Study Area. There are commercial properties within Longside however these are screened by intervening built form, vegetation and topography. There are several farms which are also residential receptors and are considered as such.

Representative Viewpoints

8.4.37 This assessment includes a series of viewpoint photographs from a range of distances and directions showing a representative sample of the likely views of the Proposed Development, including key and important views. These viewpoints were initially identified as part of the desk study and early fieldwork, and they were discussed and agreed with the statutory consultees. Some minor changes were made during fieldwork where a better or more representative viewpoint was obtainable or where necessary to ensure a safe location. The representative viewpoints are shown on **Volume 3, Figure 8.1: Zone of Theoretical Visibility and Viewpoint locations** and listed in **Table 8-5**.

Table 8-5 Representative Viewpoints

Viewpoint (VP)	Description	Receptor(s)	Distance/Direction from Site (approximate)
1	Flushing, on A950 looking south	Residential	0 m/north
2	Formantine and Buchan Way	Recreational	1.7 km/northeast
3	A950 travelling west	User of A road	1.25 km/northeast
4	Bridge of Faichfield looking southwest	Residential User of minor road	500 m/northeast
5	Crossroads at Parkhill	Residential User of minor road	300 m/southeast
6	C55B, minor road, east of Nether-ton Farm	User of minor road	0 m/southeast
7	C38B, minor road at Nether Kinmundy	Residential User of minor road	1.0 km/south
8	Castlepark of Ludquharn Farm, looking northeast	Residential	1.1 km/southwest
9	C39B, Inn Brae, minor road, crossroads with Green Lane at entrance to Drums Farm	Residential User of minor road	900 m/west
10	South edge of Longside, looking southeast, Core Path	Residential Recreational	1.1 km/northwest
11	A950 travelling east	User of A road	400 m/northwest

8.5 Future Baseline

8.5.1 There are proposals by the Scottish Government as part of renewable and low carbon energy policy to promote onshore and offshore opportunities, support the development of the hydrogen sector and carbon capture and storage through Emerging Energy Technologies Fund and to support renewable sources, all of which could change the character of the landscape. This part of Aberdeenshire with the proximity to the coast and high wind levels would lend itself to potential new renewable energy developments.

8.5.2 If the Proposed Development does not occur, there is potential that the land would remain in agricultural use or be developed for a renewable energy project.

- 8.5.3 The Scottish Government is pursuing initiatives to deal with the twin climate and biodiversity crises. Aberdeenshire Council completed a Regional Land Use Pilot in 2016⁵⁴ to examine nature-based solutions such as woodland expansion, peatland restoration, natural flood management and creating greenspaces. The Aberdeenshire Council recently published the Forestry and Woodland Strategy⁵⁵, mapping areas of existing woodland and preferred areas for new woodland creation. The Site is defined as two types of area, either 'Sensitive' that is an area with one or more significant constraint either agricultural value or nature conservation interest and as 'Preferred', that is with no significant constraints and there may be opportunities for new woodland creation. It is considered there is potential for woodland planting within part of the Site, recognised by the Local Planning Authority and in line with the Scottish Government initiatives.
- 8.5.4 With future changes in the Scottish Government's new agriculture support framework it is possible that the appearance of the rural landscape would alter with changes in land management, livestock production and nature protection and restoration.

8.6 Potential Impacts

- 8.6.1 The potential landscape character and visual impacts due to the Proposed Development during the construction and operation phases are described in **Table 8-6** and **Table 8-7**.

Table 8-6 Potential Impacts on Receptors during the Construction Phase

Sensitive Receptor	Potential impacts
Landscape Character Impacts	
The Site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temporary localised landscape impacts due to the presence of stationary and moving machinery, regrading of landform, new planting, construction compounds, flashing lights, beepers, temporary spoil heaps, potentially tall temporary structures such as piling rigs (12m) and cranes hoisting prefabricated structures into position; • the active change underway as development progresses and the gradual emergence of the Proposed Development buildings and landform; • vegetation clearance to facilitate construction is anticipated to occur during the initial mobilisation and subsequent phases, requiring the permanent removal of landscape features that contribute to the vegetation cover; • lighting of a currently dark sky. During construction, lighting would be present and turned off once the shift has finished at each platform. At each platform there would be permanent background lighting on overnight (fencing perimeter, walkways and access roads). Between each platform there would be permanent background lighting on access routes. For the main Contractors Compound, (CDM Area), near the secondary entrance, there would be permanent background lighting (fencing perimeter, walkways and access); and • extensive areas of bare earth from temporary stockpiles and new landforms before they have had a chance to 'green up' from the landscape works.

⁵⁴ The James Hutton Institute & Aberdeenshire Council, (2016). Aberdeenshire Regional Land Use Pilot, Consequences of future land use change under different policy priorities: the tool.

⁵⁵ Aberdeenshire Council. LDP23: Forestry Strategy. [Online] Available at: https://spatialdata-abdnshire.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/03d927b1cf1a44b6a5f047e53a003ea0_0/explorer?location=57.504553%2C-1.910071%2C13.99 [Accessed May 2024].

Sensitive Receptor	Potential impacts
Local Character: Rural Area	Temporary alteration in part of this character subtype due to gradual change in land use from farmland to an area undergoing extensive construction activity with introduction of features listed above.
Local Character: Peterhead Urban Fringe	The Site lies outside this landscape character subtype. There would be a change in the view to the southwest from within this subtype due to alteration in land use from rural to a more industrial style landscape.
Coastal Agricultural Plain. – Aberdeenshire (LCT 17)	Temporary alteration in part of this local area due to gradual change in land use from farmland to an area undergoing extensive construction activity with introduction of features listed above.
Visual Impacts	
Residential Properties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Views of the gradual emergence of the Proposed Development built form and highway infrastructure with reworked landform and new vegetation pattern; temporary localised visual impacts due to the increase of construction traffic, presence of stationary and moving machinery, new entrance and access road, construction compounds, flashing lights, beepers, temporary spoil heaps, potentially tall temporary structures such as piling rigs (12 m) and cranes hoisting prefabricated structures into position; Lighting of a currently dark sky. During construction, lighting would be present and turned off once the shift has finished at each platform. At each platform there would be permanent background lighting on overnight (fencing perimeter, walkways and access roads). Between each platform there would be permanent background lighting on access routes. For the main Contractors Compound, (CDM Area), near the secondary entrance, there would be permanent background lighting (fencing perimeter, walkways and access); and views of emerging landforms, particularly noticeable because of changes over a short timescale, and the extent of bare earth visible.
Recreational: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formantine and Buchan Way; and Core Path 208.0.1 	Views would be sequential and vary according to presence of intervening topography, vegetation and built form, distance from the Site and angle of view in relation to the direction of travel.
Transport: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A950; and minor roads north, east, south and west. 	Views would be sequential and vary according to presence of intervening topography, vegetation and built form, distance from the Site and angle of view in relation to the direction of travel.

Table 8-7 Potential Impacts on Receptors during the Operational Phase

Sensitive Receptor	Potential Impacts
Landscape Character Impacts	
The Site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The introduction of a complex of large buildings, access road with an industrial appearance into a rural landscape; the loss of landscape features such as farmland, field boundaries, woodland copse;

Sensitive Receptor	Potential Impacts
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> diversion of a watercourse; the creation of new landforms; diversification of habitat introducing natural vegetation, from wet grassland, wildflower grass meadow, hedgerow, scrub, wet woodland and broadleaf woodland; and intermittent lighting in a currently dark sky. There would be lights from occasional maintenance vehicles. Floodlights would be installed but would only be used in the event of a fault, shift overrun or security breach. The access roads would not be lit permanently.
Local Character: Rural	Alteration in local landscape character with introduction of features listed above.
Local Character: Peterhead Urban Fringe	Change in view from this neighbouring landscape subtype of the alteration in local character with introduction of features listed above.
Coastal Agricultural Plain. – Aberdeenshire (LCT 17)	Potential impacts as described above in localised part of the LCT 17. The type of features introduced into the LCT are similar to existing features on edge of urban settlement e.g. large sheds, transmission equipment, regraded landform and native woodland plantation.
Visual Impacts	
Residential properties from 0 m to 3 km distance to the Proposed Development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change in view due to alteration in land use from farmland to a complex of large buildings with associated electricity transmission equipment; changes to appearance in the landform; and views of intermittent lighting in a currently dark sky. There would be lights from occasional maintenance vehicles. Floodlights would be installed but would only be used in the event of a fault, shift overrun or security breach. The access roads would not be lit permanently.
Recreational: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formantine and Buchan Way; and Core Path 208.01. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Views would be sequential and vary according to presence of intervening topography, vegetation and built form, distance from the Site and angle of view in relation to the direction of travel Occasional views of intermittent lighting in a currently dark sky by vehicles and floodlighting along access roads, within compounds and walkways.
Transport: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A950; and Minor roads north, east, south and west. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Views would be sequential and vary according to presence of intervening topography, vegetation and built form, distance from the Site and angle of view in relation to the direction of travel Occasional views of intermittent lighting in a currently dark sky by vehicles and floodlighting along access roads, within compounds and walkways.

8.7 Mitigation Measures

Introduction

- 8.7.1 The following section describes the potential mitigation during the construction and operation of the Proposed Development, summarising the approach to be adopted to ensure potential effects on landscape and visual receptors are reduced as much as possible.

Mitigation during Construction

8.7.2 A Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) will be produced by the incumbent Principal Contractor. The following measures will be included in the CEMP to ensure mitigation of potential effects on landscape and visual receptors during construction:

- a construction compound would be located to the south of the Proposed Development sited within the landscape landform to reduce wider visibility where possible;
- lighting of compounds and construction areas would be restricted to the minimum necessary for safe working and site security;
- materials and machinery would be stored tidily during the works. Tall machinery including cranes would not be left in place for longer than required for construction purposes, to minimise its impact in views;
- roads providing access to site compound and works areas would be maintained free of dust and mud; and
- on completion of construction, all remaining construction materials would be removed from the Site.

8.7.3 Monitoring by site inspections and regular reporting during implementation of the earthworks and soft landscape by an experienced Landscape Architect would ensure quality of materials and workmanship were at an appropriate standard.

Landscape Mitigation Strategy

8.7.4 The Proposed Development lies on gently undulating land at elevation above the surrounding landscape. The land slopes from south to north towards the A950. Achieving a design solution that provides complete screening is not feasible due to the scale of the Proposed Development and the topographic relationship between the visual receptors and the development. The proposed landscape mitigation is shown on **Volume 3, Figure 8.4: Landscape Analysis** and **Volume 3, Figure 8.5: Illustrative Landscape Masterplan**. This includes the mitigation measures set out in the following paragraphs.

8.7.5 The strategy which emerged from the design process aims to:

- create new landform in such a way as to assist in the integration of the proposed built form and ancillary infrastructure into the local landscape;
- reduce the extent of visibility of the built form, through a combination of 3D landform, screen planting to a degree sufficient to reduce potential adverse effects on the local visual amenity;
- introduce a similar style of architecture for the proposed built form of large agricultural/commercial sheds with pitched roof;
- introduce landscape features e.g. woodland, hedgerows, wetland in a way that not only provides screening of the Proposed Development but also complements and enhances the existing landscape character; and
- introduce native habitat types in keeping with local biodiversity targets to encourage wildlife and help combat climate change.

8.7.6 The design strategy aims to position the Proposed Development at as low a level as technically feasible within the landscape (whilst considering drainage requirements, highway and building requirements and materials balance). The landform design excavates into the higher ground to the south, then reshapes the material arising to create naturalistic landforms around the sides of the Site to give the appearance that the Proposed Development sits within the undulating landscape ideally backdropped by landform and vegetation for most visual receptors. The following paragraphs set out a general description of the landscape mitigation adopted in the design.

Building Platforms

8.7.7 The individual platform levels for the HVDC Switching Station, the two Converter Stations and the 400 kV and 132 kV substations have been designed to ensure the proposed buildings would appear to sit into the landscape rather than at existing ground levels. Design constraints were the existing ground conditions, existing

gas pipeline, drainage pattern, existing and proposed operational constraints, proposed underground cable and overhead line easements and proposed highway levels. The proposed platform levels vary from 44 m AOD to 51 m AOD. To create these platforms earth would be excavated from the area of the building platforms and between these and used to create sympathetic new landforms.

Colour Strategy

- 8.7.8 Due to the scale of the Proposed Development, it was considered appropriate at this stage to consider the colours to be used for the proposed buildings. An Environmental Colour Assessment has been completed to identify the natural colours present in the surrounding landscape during the different seasons. Photography from four viewpoints at the different compass directions were used to identify the best use of colour pattern and hues from the different geographic directions. A colour strategy was developed and will form part of a Design Code for the further detailed design development. Further information is given in **Volume 2, Chapter 3: Description of the Proposed Development, Section 3.13**. The selected colour hues have been used to assist in preparation of the photomontage visualisations illustrated in **Volume 3, Figures 8.17A and 17B, 8.18A and 18B, 8.20 and 8.21, 8.24A and 24B, 8.25A and 25B, 8.28A. and 28B, 8.30A and 8.30B**.

Landform Design

- 8.7.9 New landscape landforms would be created to provide immediate screening of the Proposed Development from a number of key views. The landform design aims to ensure that the development sits in to the landscape in such a way that for the majority of potential viewers only the upper parts of the buildings would be visible, behind new gentle hills.
- 8.7.10 The main landforms would be located between the development platforms and the A950, substantially screening views of the Proposed Development from the north and northwest, and there would be secondary landforms along the eastern side of the site providing partial screening in views from the east and southeast. The building platform levels are below the existing ground levels of the southern part of the Site, such that the existing landform would provide partial screening in views from the south.
- 8.7.11 The landform design is constrained by the need to provide level platforms for operation and construction laydown areas, deliver a balance in cut and fill material and a workable drainage solution, as well as by the land available. Further technical constraints are an existing high pressure gas pipeline across the north of the site and safety and operational limits on altering ground levels where underground cables and overhead lines enter the Site.
- 8.7.12 From the A950 at 33 m AOD, the land rises gradually to the south to Nethererton and Inverveddie Farms at between 60 m and 65 m AOD. The proposed landforms foreshorten the view by the creation of landforms in the northern part of the Site to a height of 50 m to 60 m AOD. The new landforms would require steeper slopes than is common in the existing local landscape but would, as far as possible, take the shape of naturalistic small rolling hills, with gradients in the order of 1 in 6 where visible to the public, with steeper gradients on the 'inside' towards the development platforms. This reduces land take for the landform and enables more sympathetic gradual slope angles to be used on outward facing slopes.
- 8.7.13 The new landforms would be used to create a variety of habitat types: wildflower grass meadow, marshy grassland, scrub and woodland. Detention basins are anticipated at the northern, eastern, western and southern edges of the Site to attenuate surface water runoff flows before connecting into nearby watercourses.

Fencing

- 8.7.14 A stock/deer proof fence, minimum height of 1.8 m would be installed close to the Site boundary to protect the mitigation planting. Existing drystone walls, hedgerows, hedgerow trees and tree groups around the Site boundary would be retained where possible, with the stock/deer fence installed to the inside of these to avoid the fence becoming a feature in its own right. Palisade security fencing 3 m in height would enclose the building platforms, within the new landforms. With the new landforms, retention of the existing vegetation and new

hedgerow planting, the security fencing would be substantially screened from the outside of the Site. A passing view would be present from nearby highways of the two site entrances, in the north and south of the Site.

Habitat Creation

- 8.7.15 A range of priority habitats are proposed, the selection of which is informed by various criteria as set out in **Chapter 9, Ecology, Nature Conservation and Ornithology**. The Site is located in the exposed coastal plain, with strong winds affecting tree growth. Soil conditions are varied across the Site from poorly drained land in the southeast portion, and alongside the A950, to drier soils in the west and southwest. With the proposed landforms and change in land use away from agriculture, the local drainage patterns will be altered, offering the potential to introduce a variety of habitats including marshy grassland. The woodland areas and tree belts which are required for screening would be designed to provide new valuable habitats as well as connectivity for wildlife with existing and adjacent habitat.
- 8.7.16 The landscape landforms, service easements, within overhead line easements and surrounding individual compounds would be seeded with a species-rich grass and wildflower seed mix (Acidic Grassland) designed to provide a sward of natural appearance using commonly found local species. The land would be mown one to two times per year with arisings removed. A location will be identified at detailed design stage for a grass arising storage location, should this be required. **Volume 3, Figure 8.5: Illustrative Landscape Masterplan** shows a potential indicative location at Inverveddie Farm. Low lying areas with poor drainage, marshy grassland would be left to regenerate naturally. These areas would be left unmown.
- 8.7.17 Tree belts and woodland copses would be planted to further assist in reducing the visual impact of the Proposed Development where feasible within the constraints of underground cable and overhead line easements. Native broadleaved tree and shrub species would be used with occasional conifers relating to common woodland types found in the local landscape. At the perimeter of woodland blocks, a mosaic of shrubs would be added for additional wildlife interest.
- 8.7.18 Hedgerows retained within the Site and on the boundaries would be gapped up using a mixture of native tree and shrubs species common to the local area.
- 8.7.19 The native plant material would be specified to be of local provenance as far as commercially available. All areas of land disturbed by the works would be lightly cultivated and graded ready for seeding.
- 8.7.20 The detention basins and banks of the realigned watercourse would be seeded with a grass mix sufficient to avoid erosion but open enough to allow it to be colonised naturally from local seed sources.
- 8.7.21 Within the western, north-western and south-eastern portions of the Site there are areas where the need for future underground cable and overhead line access constrains the potential for landform and introduction of screen planting. These areas would be left open and seeded with a species-rich grass and wildflower meadow mix.

Site Access

- 8.7.22 The Site would be accessed by a new access road from the A950 from a point between Flushing and Bridge of Faichfield, with a secondary site entrance/exit to the south to a minor road near Netherton Farm also proposed, primarily from a health and safety perspective to ensure the Site is not limited to a single access point. Large bell-mouth entrances would be required along with clear visibility splays, requiring the removal of some trees and hedgerow. The entrances would be larger than an ordinary road junction because of the size of equipment to be delivered but within these constraints would be made as small as practically feasible. Trees and hedgerow lost would be replaced with new planting once the construction of the access road is complete.
- 8.7.23 The access road (and the main site drainage ditch alongside) would be aligned to minimise direct views into the Site of the buildings.

Drainage Design

- 8.7.24 An existing ditch draining the north of the Site would be diverted as part of the works. Within the constraints of land available, the diverted burn would be designed with a more naturalistic watercourse profile. With creation of new landforms there would be low lying areas of land which would regenerate as natural marshy grassland.
- 8.7.25 Four detention basins would be created on the perimeters of the Site to attenuate surface water flows before the water discharges into nearby watercourses. Open swales would be constructed wherever feasible alongside roads and development platforms and on the perimeter creating an opportunity for enhanced biodiversity in addition to their main function of water attenuation.

Ecology and BNG commitments

- 8.7.26 Bat and bird boxes would be added once construction works are complete in suitable locations that avoid conflicts with the Proposed Development operation.
- 8.7.27 A steep north facing slope with the correct type of material excavated from the quarry would be used to create nesting habitat for sand martins.

Landscape Mitigation Commitments

- 8.7.28 **Table 8-8** sets out the mitigation described above in terms of specific commitments.

Table 8-8 Landscape Mitigation Measures

Mitigation Reference	Description
LV1	During the detailed design and construction stages, the site platform levels will be set below existing ground level (each individual development platform below the mean level of the platform area) at levels that between them generate sufficient fill to allow the creation of landforms that screen on average at least 60% of the height of the tallest proposed buildings on each platform in at least 60% of the views from the A950 between St John's Church, Longside and the access to Longleys on the A950.
LV2	Landforms will be created in the area between the development platforms and the A950 that will meet the screening requirements of LV1 and, in conjunction with further screen landforms along the eastern side of the Site, allow a balance of cut and fill to minimise requirements for materials import or export.
LV3	As far as possible, landforms will be created early in the construction period, and construction activities will be concentrated in the area screened by the new landforms.
LV4	The main site drainage (excluding drainage of the operational site platforms) will primarily be a series of open swales, designed with suitable longitudinal grade and cross-section profile, mimicking that of a natural burn. Detention basins are proposed at the site perimeter within each catchment to attenuate surface water runoff before entering natural watercourses present to the north and west of the Site.
LV5	New landforms will be rounded off both top and bottom to the largest radius practical and generally shaped to create a naturalistic landform. The landforms will have gradual slopes to the outward (public facing) side and an irregular rounded profile mimicking the local landform albeit slightly steeper. Publicly visible slopes would average a maximum of 16% slope (1:6) with locally steeper areas up to a maximum 33% (1:3). Inward facing slopes (sides towards the development platforms) may be steeper and more regular.
LV6	The ends of new landforms will be tapered out at a gradient of not more than 15% to avoid sharp and un-natural transitions between landforms, except at locations where this is required for specific habitat creation purposes (e.g. creation of steep sandy bank as sand martin nesting habitat).
LV7	Land over underground cable easements will be graded to no more than 1 in 10 slopes due to technical restrictions on cable alignment.

Mitigation Reference	Description
LV8	Existing vegetation of native hedgerow, hedgerow trees, tree groups and belts will be retained wherever possible to maximise retained biodiversity.
LV9	The final shape of the new landforms will be determined on Site, by eye, by a landscape architect employed directly by the Principal Contractor to ensure that the finished form meets the descriptions given above. The degree of subtlety cannot be easily translated into 3D setting-out coordinates.
LV10	If circumstances arise during the construction works that require amendment to the platform levels, any design development shall consider the relationship between landform height and site platform level, so that the screening effect described in this assessment and provided on the application drawings is not reduced.
LV11	All native species planting will be carried out using plant material of local provenance (the closest provenance that is available in commercial quantities) to ensure maximum benefit for local biodiversity.
LV12	An Environmental Colour Assessment has been undertaken, and a colour strategy design code produced to be followed for the detailed design of the different elements of the Netherton Hub to ensure a coordinated approach. The detailed design of the individual elements will be required to follow the guidance set out in colour strategy design code to seek to reduce their visual impact, with Aberdeenshire Council acting as final arbiter regarding the acceptability of the colours proposed.
LV13	A Landscape and Habitat Management Plan will be prepared at the detailed design stage to ensure the long term aims and objectives of the LVIA and BNG mitigation are met.

8.8 Landscape Assessment

Introduction

- 8.8.1 The paragraphs below set out the potential landscape effects of the Proposed Development incorporating the mitigation described in **Section 8.6** and illustrated on **Volume 3, Figure 8.5: Illustrative Landscape Masterplan**.
- 8.8.2 The degree to which any development affects the landscape depends in part on the size of the development in relation to the extent of the landscape being considered. In the case of the Proposed Development, it would completely replace the existing agricultural landscape within the Site, and noticeably change the character of the locality south of the A950 adjacent to Flushing.
- 8.8.3 This assessment considers the effect on the landscape at the scale of the individual unit of NatureScot defined LCT. As the significance of potential effects on the landscape character local to the Site would inevitably be greater than the significance of the impacts on the LCT, the effects on the landscape at a more local scale are also considered. Two areas of local landscape character have been defined: Rural and Peterhead Urban Fringe, these are described in **Section 8.4** and shown on **Volume 3, Figure 8.3: Landscape Character and Landscape Planning**.

Nature of Change

- 8.8.4 The Proposed Development lies within the NatureScot LCT 17 Coastal Agricultural Plain. The Coastal Agricultural Plain is characterised by low-lying and very gently undulating landform. The Site is located on a north facing gentle slope with open expansive views predominantly to the north, east and west.
- 8.8.5 The Proposed Development would introduce a cluster of large buildings of an industrial nature into a rural landscape, adjacent to defined Local Landscape Character Area: Peterhead Urban Fringe which includes industrial units on the nearby Longside Airfield. The Site lies within a defined Local Landscape Area: Rural which contains isolated farms with large scale buildings used for storage and housing livestock. The Proposed

Development would involve reshaping the existing land, creating several large level development platforms which cut into the gradual north facing slope. The building platforms would be surrounded by landscape landforms which reflect surrounding contours with a vegetation pattern that relates to existing landscape character.

Landscape Character Type 17 Coastal Agricultural Plain

Landscape Sensitivity

- 8.8.6 The Coastal Agricultural Plan covers a large area of low-lying windswept landscape. The area is influenced by development with a range of industry from electricity transmission, St Fergus Gas Terminal, Peterhead Power Station, wind farms and single turbines. The gently undulating land offers open expansive views extending along the coast and inland. Vertical features are prominent. The presence of large scale industrial development within this undulating landscape means that part of this LCT could be susceptible to an industrial development requiring a large flat development platform. The nature of the topography and pattern of vegetation and presence of industry does give the potential to absorb, or be less affected by, a large development.
- 8.8.7 The majority of LCT 17 is undesignated landscape and, with the exception of the coastal areas east of the A90 which form part of the North East Aberdeenshire Coast SLA and which are too far from the Proposed Development to be affected by it, the landscape value is considered to be low. Overall, considering the value and susceptibility and the local characteristic landscape features, the sensitivity of LCT 17 to the Proposed Development is considered to be **Medium to Low** (refer to **Volume 4, Technical Appendix 8.2: Landscape Character Definition of Sensitivity**).

Magnitude of Change

- 8.8.8 As noted above, the Proposed Development would involve intensive change to the landscape over a limited area. It would therefore be a high magnitude of change very locally (considered at a scale of a few hundred metres all round) and a medium level of change locally (considered at a scale in the order of a kilometre all round). In the context of LCT 17 considered as a whole, the Proposed Development would be a low degree of change. During construction, the degree of change would be greater when considered locally, but again in the context of the affected unit of this LCT, this would be a **low** degree of change.

Assessment: Construction Period (temporary effects)

- 8.8.9 The Proposed Development would cause a low degree of change to the extensive LCT17 of medium to low sensitivity during construction. This would give rise to a temporary **Minor Adverse (not significant)** effect to LCT17.

Assessment: Operational Period (permanent effects)

- 8.8.10 During operation the Proposed Development would cause a low degree of change to the extensive LCT17 of medium to low sensitivity. This would give rise to a permanent **Minor Adverse (not significant)** effect to LCT17.

Local Landscape Character Subtype: Rural

- 8.8.11 The Site lies in the defined local landscape character subtype (LLCT): Rural. The land use is predominantly mixed farmland of arable and grazing pasture with occasional farmsteads and isolated residential properties. There are few ecology or heritage features and little in the way of recreational facilities. The vegetation consists of a mixture of arable crops, pasture for grazing livestock. There are a number of conifer or mixed woodland plantations, tree belts and a patchwork of hedgerows in varying condition. There is occasional development of electricity transmission lines, single turbines and a windfarm and the busy highway the A950. Local farmsteads have large scale agricultural buildings. There are views to the surrounding areas of industrial development.

Local Landscape Sensitivity

- 8.8.12 The combination of undulating topography and pattern of vegetation of woodland blocks with occasional development present means the local landscape subtype would have some ability to accommodate the development type with mitigation. The level of sensitivity is moderated to a degree by the existence of the nearby Longside Airfield with industrial sheds, and clusters of large farm buildings in the vicinity. The Proposed Development would become a characterising element in the local landscape (considered at a radius in the order of a 2 km from the Site). The sensitivity of the LLCT Rural is considered to be **medium to low**.

Assessment: Construction Period (temporary effects)

- 8.8.13 During the construction period the presence of construction compounds, temporary spoil heaps, moving machinery, active change and the bare earth of temporary stockpiles and new landforms would have a greater effect on the landscape character than the settled nature of the development on completion, with a new vegetated landform around it. The scale of the works is such that during construction there would be a temporary high magnitude of change to the landscape character very locally (considered at a scale of a few hundred metres) causing a **Major to Moderate Adverse (significant)** effect locally. There would be a medium magnitude of change on the local landscape subtype. At the wider scale, in the order of 2 km there would be a **Moderate to Minor Adverse (significant to not significant)** effect on the local landscape character subtype.

Assessment: Operational Period (permanent effects)

- 8.8.14 The Proposed Development would involve considerable change to the landscape over a limited area, changing the shape of the land and introducing larger scale buildings than exist in this predominantly rural area. There would be a high magnitude of change to the landscape character very locally (considered at a scale of up to 1 km) and a medium magnitude of change locally (considered at a scale in the order of 2 km and beyond). This would give rise to a **Major to Moderate Adverse (significant)** effect on the landscape character very locally, and a **Moderate Adverse (significant)** effect on the local landscape character subtype.

*Local Landscape Character Subtype: Peterhead Urban Fringe*Local Landscape Sensitivity

- 8.8.15 Commercial activity often involving industrial units, yards storage areas characterised by large industrial sheds are a common feature along the A950 extending west from Peterhead and land surrounding the Longside Airfield. This area is defined as its own landscape character subtype: Peterhead Urban Fringe. The sensitivity of the LLCT Peterhead Urban Fringe is considered to be low. Refer to **Volume 4, Technical Appendix 8.2: Landscape Character Definition of Sensitivity**.

Assessment: Construction Period (temporary effects)

- 8.8.16 During the Construction Period, activity would be visible on the Site from locations within the southern and western portions of this LLCT. As the Site is not located within this LLCT there would not be any material change within this landscape character subtype. Construction activity within the Site would be noticeable on the elevated land to the southeast, slightly altering how the surrounding landscape is perceived. At locations within the southwest part of this subtype there would be a Low magnitude of change which would give rise to a **Minor Adverse (not significant)** effect.

Assessment: Operational Period (permanent effects)

- 8.8.17 During operation, there would be no changes to the land within the LLCT. The Proposed Development would be noticeable from parts of this LLCT on nearby land, which would alter how the surrounding landscape would be perceived. The level of magnitude would be low and the effect would be **Minor Adverse (not significant)**.

8.9 Visual Assessment

General and Specific Limitations

- 8.9.1 The assessment has been carried out by assuming the worst case of greatest visibility i.e. on a clear, bright winter's day with no screening from deciduous foliage.
- 8.9.2 The ZTV is based on 'bare ground' and does not consider the screening effects of built form, forestry and vegetation, nor distance and the reduction in visibility with distance that can occur on less than a perfectly clear day, all of which can prevent or reduce visibility. The ZTV considers the proposed built form and does not consider the landscape mitigation of landform and future vegetation pattern. Therefore, the ZTV presents a worst-case scenario.
- 8.9.3 The assessment of visual effects on residential receptors has been undertaken from publicly accessible locations. Assumptions have therefore been made on the main outlooks and importance of views from these properties or groups of properties.

Overview

- 8.9.4 The Proposed Development is anticipated to be noticeably visible to the 'ordinary'⁵⁶ observer to approximately 3 km from the Site in all directions. The following paragraphs describe the overall extent of visibility and should be read in conjunction with the **Volume 3, Figure 8.1: Zone of Theoretical Visibility and Viewpoint Locations** and with reference to the viewpoint photos and visualisations, **Volume 3, Figures 8.6 to 8.30B**.
- 8.9.5 There would be views from the north, east and west of the upper portion of the buildings with the lower portion screened by the new landforms, from some places by intervening topography and existing vegetation and, over time, by the mitigation planting. The Proposed Development would be visible as a large massing of bulky buildings grouped together and visible above the skyline. As the Proposed Development is sited on a north facing slope intervening topography would screen the lower parts of the buildings from visual receptors to the south.

Residential receptors

- 8.9.6 The land within the Study Area has scattered settlement of isolated farmsteads and individual residential properties adjacent to farmsteads or arranged alongside the minor roads in small clusters, which can range from two to up to twelve properties, such as Toddlehills in the southeast and Nether Kinmundy in the southwest. There are the settlements of the village of Longside, 1 km to the northwest and the hamlet of Flushing on the northern boundary. **Volume 3, Figure 8.1: Zone of Theoretical Visibility and Viewpoint Location** illustrates the potential visibility to residential receptors within the 3 km Study Area.
- 8.9.7 Because of this broad scatter of settlement, the Proposed Development would be visible to a varying degree to approximately 150 individual residential receptors across the open agricultural land to the north, west and south of the site within the Study Area. Of these, approximately 130 would be within 1 km of the Proposed Development Site Boundary. The nearest residential properties lie within the hamlet of Flushing to the north, approximately 50 m from the Site Boundary. To the east lies Parkhill Farm and to the west are several properties at Mill of Tiffery and North and South Linshart, to the southwest are several properties Nether Kinmundy Farm and Mains of Kinmundy Farm. As mentioned in **Table 8-2** the visual receptors at Nethererton Farm and ruin, Inverveddie House and Cottage, Roer Teach, Tiffery, Longleys and Langfield House are scoped out of the LVIA. Residential receptors, people enjoying the view from their home are usually considered to be highly susceptible to visual change and thus considered in this assessment to be **high** sensitivity receptors, even at locations where the actual view enjoyed may not be particularly valued.

⁵⁶ A member of the public who is looking at the view whilst going about their ordinary business, whether at home or as a tourist passing by, as opposed to someone specifically looking to identify the Proposed Development or considering a specific visual relationship.

- 8.9.8 The following paragraphs set out the effects on residential receptors in all directions, under subheadings according to distance from the Site boundary: up to 1 km, 1 km to 2 km and, 2 km to 3 km.
- 8.9.9 Refer to **Volume 4, Technical Appendix 8.3: Visual Effects** for viewpoint descriptions, **Volume 3, Figure 8.1: Zone of Theoretical Visibility and Viewpoint Location** for the ZTV and viewpoint locations and **Volume 3, Figures 8.6 to 8.16** for photography of the existing view and **Volume 3, Figures 8.17 to 8.30** for photomontage/Photowire of the proposed views at Year 1 and Year 15 following 15 years of tree and shrub growth.
- Residential Properties up to 1 km
- 8.9.10 This area covers the edge of the settlement of Longside and Flushing, the clusters of properties at Parkhill, Toddlehills and isolated farmsteads to the south and west at Mains of Kinmundy and North Linshart.
- 8.9.11 The following viewpoints are representative of residential properties up to 1 km:
- Viewpoint 1 – Flushing, 50 m, north, (**Volume 3, Figures 8.6, 8.17, 8.18**);
 - Viewpoint 4 – Bridge of Faichfield, 500 m, northeast, (**Volume 3, Figures 8.9, 8.20, 8.21**);
 - Viewpoint 5 – Parkhill, 300 m, southeast, (**Volume 3 Figures 8.10, 8.23**) and
 - Viewpoint 10 – Longside, 1 km, northwest, (**Volume 3, Figures 8.15, 8.29**).
- 8.9.12 All the receptors discussed below would have views of the construction works. The active change, movement of construction vehicles, temporary lighting and bare earth of new landforms and temporary stockpiles would be more noticeable than the permanent works due to the level of disturbance. The extent of change in the view would alter from individual properties depending on the aspect of the property in relation to the Site, presence of garden planting and intervening local landform and vegetation.
- Assessment: Construction Period (temporary effects)*
- 8.9.13 **Flushing:** a tree belt on the southern side of the hamlet offers partial screening during the winter months and fuller screening in summer when the leaves are on the trees. The plantation consists of broadleaved species with a low understorey and occasional shrubs. The hamlet consists predominantly of single storey dwellings, several of which on the southern edge have a south facing aspect. Viewpoint 1 represents the view from the Minor Road on the eastern edge of the settlement and presents a worst-case scenario, as at this location there would be an open view from the highway of the construction activity. Within the settlement itself all properties have partial screening by the intervening vegetation. The magnitude of change at Viewpoint 1 is **high**, due to proximity to the Site and open view, which would be a temporary **Major Adverse (significant)** visual effect. From the residential properties in Flushing with the partial screening of the intervening vegetation there would be filtered views during the winter months. The level of magnitude varies with individual groups of properties from negligible for those with greater screening by planting or/and built form to **low**, for those properties having a slight change to the view. This would give rise to a temporary negligible (not significant to **Moderate Adverse (significant)**) visual effect during the construction.
- 8.9.14 **Bridge of Faichfield:** a cluster of properties with an open southwest facing aspect towards the Site. Viewpoint 4 represents the view from this location. The level of magnitude of change would be **high** with a wide horizontal angle of view of construction activity on the horizon beyond Parkhill Farm. This would cause a temporary **Major Adverse (significant)** visual effect during construction.
- 8.9.15 **Parkhill:** a cluster of properties with an open northwest facing aspect towards the Site. Viewpoint 5 represents the view from this location. The level of magnitude of change would be **medium**, the bulk of the Site screened from view by intervening topography and vegetation. This would cause a temporary **Moderate Adverse (significant)** visual effect during construction.
- 8.9.16 **Toddlehills:** a cluster of properties with open views predominantly west, north and east. Several properties in the southern part of the cluster have a northwest facing aspect towards the Site. The level of magnitude would

be **low**, the bulk of the Site screened from view by intervening topography and vegetation. This would cause a temporary **Moderate Adverse (significant)** visual effect during construction.

- 8.9.17 **Mains of Kinmundy**: a group of properties, southwest of the Site with views to the northeast, partially screened by intervening topography and vegetation of field hedgerows, hedgerow trees and woodland copse. The taller elements of construction activity would be visible above the intervening vegetation. The level of magnitude would be **low**, given the bulk of the Site screened from view. This would cause a temporary **Moderate Adverse (significant)** visual effect during construction.
- 8.9.18 **Drums Farm and North Linshart**: there are a few properties west of the Site, Drums Farm and a cluster of properties at North Linshart located between 500 m and 750 m to the west. The farmsteads at South and North Linshart are located on low lying land with a predominantly northwest facing aspect and only the tallest part of the emerging built form would be anticipated to be visible on the horizon to the east. The level of magnitude would be **low**, the bulk of the Site screened from view, and the effect would be temporary **Moderate Adverse (significant)**.
- 8.9.19 **Longside**: the majority of properties within the village would not have a view of the Proposed Development due to the intervening topography, vegetation and built form. Properties within the village tend to be inward looking or have an aspect to the north, south or west. Properties at the south eastern edge of the village with a southeast facing aspect would potentially have a view of construction activity on the far horizon, over a wide horizontal angle of view. Construction activity would be noticeable although part of the Site would be hidden from view by intervening topography and vegetation. Viewpoint 10 is representative of a small group of properties south of Longside adjacent to Longside Cemetery with a southeast facing aspect. For the majority of the village the level of magnitude would be negligible with a **Negligible Adverse (not significant)** visual effect. Properties on the southern edge of the settlement with a southwest facing aspect would have a view towards the Site and the magnitude of change would be **medium**, with a temporary **Major Adverse (significant)** visual effect.

Assessment: Operational Period (permanent effects)

Flushing

- 8.9.20 **Year 1**: the existing tree groups alongside the A950 would be retained at this location, visible in the foreground. From the residential properties within Flushing with the partial screening of the existing vegetation there would be filtered views during the winter months. The new landforms would foreshorten the view with the upper part of the buildings visible on the horizon, the lower part screened by the landform. In the foreground there would be new tree and shrub planting and gapping up of the roadside hedgerow with wildflower meadow areas in the middle distance.
- 8.9.21 Viewpoint 1 is representative of the view from the Minor Road at the junction with the A950 and illustrates a clearer view than that available from the nearby residential receptors. At this location there is an open view overlooking south into the Site. The magnitude of change here would be **high**, due to proximity to the Site and open view, which would result in a **Major Adverse (significant)** visual effect. From within the settlement itself for the residential properties due to the presence of intervening vegetation, the magnitude of change would be **negligible to low**, due to the intervening vegetation. This would cause a **Moderate Adverse (significant)** visual effect at Year 1.
- 8.9.22 **Year 15**: From Viewpoint 1, at Year 15, the growth of the roadside hedgerow and planting within the Site would screen the bulk of the Proposed Development. There would be a medium magnitude of change but as it would be neither adverse nor beneficial it is considered a **moderate neutral effect (significant)**. For residential properties within Flushing, after 15 years tree growth, with the existing tree belt south of the hamlet and new tree and shrub planting within the Site on the northern boundary, the Proposed Development would be screened from view during the winter and summer months. There would be a small change in the view with the additional screening of views to the south. The magnitude of change would be negligible to low with a negligible (not significant) to **Moderate Neutral (significant)** visual effect.

Bridge of Faichfield

- 8.9.23 Year 1: the upper part of the buildings would be visible on the far horizon with a wide horizontal angle of view partially screened by the intervening, built form of Parkhill Farm, topography and vegetation. The new landforms on the eastern perimeter of the Site would screen the lower part of the buildings. The Proposed Development would be a prominent feature on the horizon (see Viewpoint 4). The magnitude of change would be **high**, giving rise to a **Major Adverse (significant)** visual effect.
- 8.9.24 Year 15: with the growth of tree and shrub planting on the new irregular landforms on the eastern perimeter of the Site, there would be partial screening of the built form with the upper part of the buildings visible on the horizon. The Proposed Development at Year 15 would still be a noticeable feature on the landscape. The magnitude of change would be **medium** with a **Major Adverse (significant)** visual effect. Over time, the appearance of the development would soften with further plant growth.

Parkhill

- 8.9.25 Year 1: from the residential properties with a northwest and north facing aspect, there would be a view of the upper part of the Proposed Development on the far horizon (see Viewpoint 5). The level of magnitude would be **medium**, the bulk of the Site screened from view by intervening topography and vegetation. This would cause a **Moderate Adverse (significant)** visual effect.
- 8.9.26 Year 15: the view of the Proposed Development would lessen over time with the growth of tree and shrub planting in the south eastern part of the Site. The planting would assist in screening the built form further with the upper part of the tallest elements of the building remaining visible over the intervening vegetation. The level of magnitude would remain **medium**, with a **Moderate Adverse (significant)** visual effect.

Toddlehills

- 8.9.27 Year 1: from Toddlehills, due to the elevated location, there are open expansive views to the north and west. For residential properties with a northwest facing aspect, the bulk of the Proposed Development would be screened by intervening vegetation and topography, with the upper portion of the taller elements of the built form visible in the far distance, backdropped by the land beyond. Within the view to the south, west and north there are vertical features, transmission lines and wind farms visible in the distance. The level of magnitude would be low, with a **Moderate Adverse (significant)** visual effect.
- 8.9.28 Year 15: with growth of the woodland plantations within the Site on the south eastern perimeter the appearance of the built form would soften into the landscape with the upper portion of the buildings present in the south eastern part of the Site visible in the far distance backdropped by the land beyond. The proposed 400 kV Substation would assist in screening the Converter stations beyond. The level of magnitude would be **low**, a **Moderate Adverse (significant)** visual effect.

Mains of Kinmundy

- 8.9.29 Year 1: the upper portion of the built form would be visible above the intervening vegetation. This would cover a wide horizontal angle of view. The level of magnitude would be **low**, the bulk of the Site screened from view. This would cause a **Moderate Adverse (significant)** visual effect.
- 8.9.30 Year 15: with growth of the woodland plantations within the Site on the south western corner, there would be further screening of the built form with the upper part of the built form remaining visible in the far distance beyond the intervening vegetation during the winter months. This would cover a wide horizontal angle of view. The level of magnitude would be **low** with a **Moderate Adverse (and significant)** visual effect.

Drums Farm and North Linshart

- 8.9.31 Year 1: the taller elements of the emerging built form would be visible on the distant horizon to the east. At this location there are open views to the west, north and east. The Proposed Development would occupy a small

element of the view. The level of magnitude would be **low**, causing a **Moderate Adverse (significant)** visual effect.

- 8.9.32 Year 15: with growth of the woodland plantations in the western portion of the Site and new landforms the lower portion of the Proposed Development would become further screened from view, with only the upper part of the built form visible. Due to the proximity to the Site the built form within the western part of the Site, particularly the HVDC Switching Station would remain noticeable in the view to the east. The level of magnitude would be **low** with a **Moderate Adverse (significant)** effect.

Longside

- 8.9.33 Year 1: for the majority of Longside the views towards the Site are obscured by intervening topography, vegetation and built form. Viewpoint 10 is representative of the potential view from a group of residential properties located to the south of the settlement. At this location on the perimeter of settlement, the HVDC Switching Station would be visible in the far distance as a noticeable feature, partially backdropped by the land beyond. The HVDC Switching Station and Spittal to Peterhead HVDC Converter Station would assist in screening the other buildings within the Proposed Development. The buildings would be partially backdropped by the land beyond. For these properties on the southern edge of Longside, the magnitude of change would be **medium**, a **Major Adverse (significant)** visual effect.

- 8.9.34 Year 15: with the new landforms screening the lower part of the built form and growth of woodland plantations on the raised land, there would be a softening of the appearance of the buildings within the landscape. The magnitude of change for residential properties on the southern edge of the settlement would remain **medium** due to the scale of the development with a **Moderate Adverse (significant)** visual effect. For the bulk of the settlement of Longside the magnitude of change would be negligible with a **Negligible Adverse (not significant)** visual effect.

Residential Properties from 1 km to 2 km

- 8.9.35 There are few scattered isolated farmsteads and individual residential properties within this area. To the north is the settlement of Longside which is described above. The land to the north beyond 1 km is low lying alongside the River Ugie. At Willowbank there are a few properties present with restricted visibility due to intervening landform and vegetation. To the northeast is the Longside Airfield used for commercial ventures. Within and beyond the airfield to the north fieldwork found negligible visibility towards the Site due to intervening topography and vegetation. To the east there are few properties at Denholm and Dens with restricted visibility towards the Site due to intervening built form, vegetation and topography. To the south at Nether Kinmundy there are scattered properties with views to the north. In the west there are few properties and those present have views away from the Site or have restricted views due to topography and garden planting.

- 8.9.36 The following viewpoints are representative of residential properties within 1 km to 2 km:

- Viewpoint 2 – Formantine and Buchan Way, adjacent to Willowbank, northeast, 1.7 km, **(Volume 3, Figures 8.7 8.19)**;
- Viewpoint 3 – A950 travelling west, near to West Thunderton, east, 1.25 km, **(Volume 3, Figures 8.8, 8.20, 8.21)**;
- Viewpoint 7 – Nether Kinmundy, 1.1 km, south **(Volume 3, Figures 8.12, 8.26)** and
- Viewpoint 8 – Castlepark of Ludquharn Farm, 1.1 km, southwest, **(Volume 3, Figures 8.13, 8.27)**.

Assessment: Construction Period (temporary effects)

Properties to the north e.g. Auchlea, Mains of Buthlaw, Willowbank, Cadgerhill

- 8.9.37 Visibility varies from each of these individual clusters of properties due to presence of intervening topography, vegetation and aspect of the property in relation to the Site. There are open expansive views in all compass directions from this location. For visual receptors with a south facing view the Proposed Development would be

partially visible by the presence of construction activity in the far distance. The level of magnitude would be **low** with a small portion of the view altered, causing a temporary **Moderate Adverse (significant)** visual effect.

Nether Kinmundy

- 8.9.38 Visibility varies from each of these individual properties due to presence of intervening topography, vegetation and aspect of the property in relation to the Site. There are open expansive views predominantly to the north from this location. The existing New Deer 400 kV OHL is a prominent visual detractor in the locality, located between 100 m to 500 m from the individual properties. For visual receptors with a north facing view, construction activity within the Site would be partially visible over a small angle of view. The level of magnitude would be **low** with a small portion of the view altered, causing a temporary **Moderate Adverse (significant)** visual effect.

Assessment: Operational Period (permanent effects)

Properties to the north e.g. Auchlea, Mains of Buthlaw, Willowbank, Cadgerhill

- 8.9.39 Year 1: for visual receptors with a south facing view the taller elements of the Proposed Development would be partially visible in the far distance, the lower elements screened by intervening landform and existing vegetation. Due to intervening topography and vegetation the level of magnitude would be **low** with a small portion of the view altered, causing a temporary **Moderate Adverse (significant)** visual effect.
- 8.9.40 Year 15: With the intervening topography and growth of vegetation screening further the taller elements of the Proposed Development and the growth of intervening vegetation the level of magnitude at Year 15 would be reduced further to **negligible** causing a **Negligible Adverse (not significant)** visual effect.

Nether Kinmundy

- 8.9.41 Year 1: the upper part of the built form would be visible on the distant horizon partially screened by intervening topography, vegetation and isolated farmsteads. The Proposed Development would be visible for a small portion of the view within this open expansive vista. The magnitude of change would be **low** with a **Moderate Adverse (significant)** visual effect.
- 8.9.42 Year 15: after 15 years growth, the upper part of the tallest elements of the built form would be visible above the intervening vegetation. The woodland plantations on the southwest corner of the Site would further screen the buildings. The magnitude of change would be **negligible** with a **Negligible Adverse (not significant)** visual effect.

Residential Properties within 2 km to 3 km

- 8.9.43 Within this zone, there is varied potential visibility due to the undulating topography, and during fieldwork it was found the presence of intervening vegetation and built form further reduced the potential visibility. To the north there are scattered properties at Woodside, Millbank and Middleton of Rora. There are open expansive views present to the south with the Site visible on the distant horizon as a small element of the view.
- 8.9.44 To the east, there are properties at Downiehills, alongside the A950, Clubscross, Hillhead of Cocklaw and Blackhills. There are locations with open expansive views to the west towards the Site, which would be visible as a small element of the view, partially backdropped by the land beyond due to the elevated location.
- 8.9.45 To the south, there are properties at Meikle Dens, Moss of Savock and South Redbog. At this elevated location there are open expansive views to the north. Views are detracted by the presence of the New Deer 400kV overhead line and Peterhead to Kintore (VX2)/Peterhead to Persley (VP)275kV overhead line visible in the foreground or middle distance. Views of the Site are screened by the intervening vegetation, built form and topography.
- 8.9.46 To the west, there are few properties present and there is limited potential visibility due to the intervening topography vegetation and built form.

Assessment: Construction Period (temporary effects)

- 8.9.47 At 2 km to 3 km from the Site, due to the presence of intervening topography, vegetation and built form, potential visibility of construction activity within the Site for residential properties to the north, south and east the magnitude of change to the view would be **negligible** with a **Negligible (not significant)** visual effect.

Assessment: Operational Period (permanent effects)

- 8.9.48 At Years 1 and Years 15, due to the distance from the Site and presence of intervening topography, vegetation and built form the level of magnitude of change to the view for residential properties to the north, south and east, at 2 km to 3 km, would be **negligible** with a **Negligible adverse (not significant)** visual effect.

Recreational and Visitor Receptors

- 8.9.49 The following viewpoints are representative of recreational receptors:

- Viewpoint 2 – Formantine and Buchan Way, 1.7 km, northeast, **(Volume 3, Figures 8.7, 8.17, 8.18)**;
- Viewpoint 9 – Greenway at crossroads with Green Lane at entrance to Drums Farm, 900 m, west, **(Volume 3, Figures 8.14, 8.28)**; and
- Viewpoint 10 – Aberdeenshire Council Core Path 208.01, south of Longside, 1 km west **(Volume 3, Figures 8.15, 8.30)**.

Users of the Formantine and Buchan Way

- 8.9.50 Cyclists and footpath users of this regional trail would have an oblique view to the south towards the Site in relation to their direction of travel. Within the Study Area, the route lies on a disused railway line from Peterhead westward to the north of Longside. The route is at ground level with open views north and south. Refer to Viewpoint 2 for the representative view on this route looking south to the Site.

Assessment: Construction Period (temporary effects)

- 8.9.51 Construction activity on the Proposed Development would be visible to path users in the far distance partially screened by intervening landform and vegetation. The potential level of visibility would vary along the route with more visibility available to the south on the more elevated sections of the route. The built form would be a slightly noticeable due to the colour, size and scale of the buildings in relation to the surrounding predominantly rural landscape. The level of magnitude would be **low**, with a temporary **Moderate Adverse (significant)** visual effect.

Assessment: Operational Period (permanent effects)

- 8.9.52 Year 1: the upper part of the built form would be a slight change to the view when observing the view to the south at 90° to the direction of travel. The level of magnitude would be **low** with a **Moderate Adverse (significant)** visual effect.

- 8.9.53 Year 15: with establishment of woodland plantations on new landform to the south of the Proposed Development, the woodland would provide a backdrop to the built form, the view of the upper part of the built form would become less discernible on the horizon. The woodland planting to the north of the Proposed Development with landform would screen the lower part of the built form. Overall, the extent of view of the proposed built form would be less and hardly noticeable in the context of this wide expansive view at this location. The level of magnitude would be **negligible** with a **Negligible Adverse (not significant)** visual effect.

Users of Core Path 208.01 at Longside

- 8.9.54 The Core Path at Longside passes from the A950 to the west of Longside, crossed Yokieshill Cottages Lane, heads south to Longside Cemetery and then joins the C39B Inn Brae on the east side of Longside and ends at the Longside Primary School. Users of the C39B, Inn Brae would have a potential view when walking the route in either direction. Views of the Site by users of the Core Path at the west of Longside would be screened from view by intervening built form and vegetation. Refer to Viewpoint 10.

Assessment: Construction Period (temporary effects)

- 8.9.55 There are open views to the south and east across undulating farmland with occasional properties and farms. The New Deer 400kV overhead line is visible on the far horizon. Construction activity would be visible in the far distance on the horizon with part of the site screened by topography. The activity would be a noticeable element with earthmoving and emerging built form. The level of magnitude would be **medium**, with a temporary **Major Adverse (significant)** visual effect.

Assessment: Operational Period (permanent effects)

- 8.9.56 Year 1: the upper part of the taller elements of built form would be visible on the horizon above the intervening undulating landform. The built form would 'read' as one single mass of building due to siting of the buildings close together. The buildings would be a noticeable element in the view due to the size and scale. The level of magnitude would be **medium** with a **Major Adverse (significant)** visual effect.
- 8.9.57 Year 15: tree planting on the landform on the western perimeter of the Site would assist in screening the lower portion of the built form with the upper portion of the taller elements remaining visible on the horizon. The level of magnitude would be **low** with a **Moderate Adverse (significant)** visual effect.

Transport Receptors

- 8.9.58 Within the ZTV, the Proposed Development would be visible from the busy A950 and from a network of minor and unclassified roads that link settlement across the whole study area. Users of the A950 and minor roads within the Study Area are considered to have a medium susceptibility to change due to speed of travel with a medium sensitivity to development of this nature.
- 8.9.59 Due to the distance from the Site, the presence of intervening topography, vegetation and built form all vehicle users of minor and major roads at a distance of 2 km to 3 km are considered to have an insignificant effect on visual amenity. This is due to the partial screening effects, the varying angle of view to direction of travel and the occupation of the viewer which would be concentrating on observing the highway and other traffic users predominantly in the direction of travel.
- 8.9.60 The following viewpoints are representative of users of local highways:
- Viewpoint 1 – unnamed minor road at Flushing, 0 km, north, **(Volume 3, Figures 8.6, 8.17, 8.18)**;
 - Viewpoint 3 – A950, travelling west, 1.25 km, northeast, **(Volume 3, Figures 8.7, 8.19)**;
 - Viewpoint 4 – minor road (C56B), at Bridge of Faichfield looking south west, 500 m, northeast, **(Volume 3, Figures 8.13, 8.27)**;
 - Viewpoint 5 – minor roads (C56B and C38B) at crossroads at Parkhill, 300 m, southeast, **(Volume 3, Figures 8.10, 8.23)**;
 - Viewpoint 6 – minor road (C55B) at Nethererton Farm, looking north, 0 m, south, **(Volume 3, Figures 8.11, 8.24, 8.25)**;
 - Viewpoint 7 – minor road (C38B) at Nether Kinmundy, 1.1 km, south, **(Volume 3, Figures 8.12, 8.26)**;
 - Viewpoint 9 – minor road, Inn Brae (C39B) at crossroads with Green Lane at Drums Farm, 1.1 km, southwest, **(Volume 3, Figures 8.14, 8.28)**; and
 - Viewpoint 11 – A950, travelling east, 400 m, northwest, **(Volume 3, Figures 8.16, 8.30)**.

A950

- 8.9.61 The A950 is the main route for local and commuter traffic from Peterhead to the hinterland to the west. Between Longside and Peterhead the route crosses open farmland with views in all directions, mostly expansive, although in parts foreshortened by roadside trees, woodland and development. The road forms the northern boundary of the Proposed Development over approximately 1.2 km.
- 8.9.62 Approaching from the west, there are views to the Site over approximately 3 km, initially distant views in the direction of travel, with Inverveddie Farm on the horizon, the existing New Deer 400kV OHL on the far horizon

to the south. Large industrial sheds on the Longside Airfield and alongside the highway from Peterhead are a noticeable feature on either side of the highway. Nearer Bridge of Faichfield, trees around the settlement and roadside planting screen the site over approximately 600 m and closer to the site, where the view becomes more oblique to the direction of travel, trees at Parkhill Farm filter views of the northern part of the Site.

8.9.63 For eastbound travellers, after leaving Longside the Proposed Development would be clearly visible slightly to the right of the direction of travel for several hundred metres, then screened in summer and filtered in winter for several hundred metres past Briar Lodge, then again clearly visible obliquely to the direction of travel over approximately 400 m.

8.9.64 The Proposed Development would be visible at right angles to the direction of travel for all road users passing the Site over approximately 1.2 km, occasionally partially screened by the intermittent belt of trees along the roadside. Refer to Viewpoints 3 and 11. Road users travelling at 60 kph (40 mph) would have a view of the Proposed Development for approximately 2½ minutes approaching from the west, for less than a minute approaching from the east, and slightly over a minute passing the site.

Assessment: Construction Period (temporary effects)

8.9.65 During construction there would be close up and long distance intermittent views from travellers in both directions, albeit intermittently screened by roadside vegetation. When passing the Site the emerging landform and built form would be visible to the horizon. This would be a **high** magnitude of change for receptors of medium sensitivity, a **Major Adverse (significant)** visual effect.

Operational Period (permanent effects)

8.9.66 Year 1: as during construction, there would be close up and long-distance views from travellers in both directions, intermittently screened by roadside vegetation. Approaching from the west, the Proposed Development would be clearly visible on elevated land to the southwest, noticeable due to its size and scale, with the lowest parts of the buildings partially screened by landform. Approaching from the east, there would be clear close views of the Proposed Development with the new landforms in the foreground substantially screening some buildings and partially screening others. Passing the site, the new landforms would form a near horizon with the tops of the buildings visible in places, for example when looking up the new access road. There would be a **high** magnitude of change for receptors of medium sensitivity, a **Major Adverse (significant)** visual effect.

8.9.67 Year 15: by year 15, the extensive tree planting on the north and northeastern sides of the site would have started to mature and would further screen and soften views of the Proposed Development, although the buildings on southern parts of the site would remain clearly noticeable in more distant views from the west. Passing the site, except from tall vehicles, the roadside hedge on the site boundary would screen most views. Overall, the developing mitigation planting would reduce the magnitude of change perceived to low to medium, giving rise to a **Minor to Moderate Adverse (not significant to significant)** visual effect.

Minor Roads

8.9.68 Users of the following minor roads within 2 km of the Proposed Development would have potential views of the Site:

- C79B, Longside to Braehead, travelling east<->west – 1 km to 2 km;
- C43B, Flushing to Torterston, travelling east<->west – 0 km to 2 km;
- C44B, A950 at Thunderton to Mains of Buthlaw north<->south – 1.5 km to 2 km;
- C56B, A950 at Faichfield to Parkhill to Toddlehills to Meikle Dens – 250 m to 2 km;
- C63B, A950 at former Longside Airfield to Stockbridge – 1 km to 2 km;
- C55B, from Toddlehills to the Site to Mains of Ludquharn – 500 m to 1 km;
- C38B, Denholm to the hamlet of Nether Kinmundy – 250 m to 2 km
- C57B – C55B to Nether Savock and Upper Savock to the C56B – 1 km to 2 km;

- C181B - C55B to C38B at hamlet of Nether Kinmundy – 500 m to 1 km;
- Inn Brae C39B, Woodside via Longside to South Braeside –1 km to 2 km; and
- C52B, from C39B to Millhill –1.5 km to 2 km.

8.9.69 All these minor lanes have sections of highway with open expansive views towards the Proposed Development, at varying distances, sometimes in the direction of travel sometimes at an oblique angle. As noted in **Table 8-2**, beyond 2 km from the Site visual amenity effects would be **Negligible (not significant)**. The findings of significance below apply to those parts of these roads within 2 km of the Site. A full assessment of the level of magnitude and effects on users of these minor roads is given in **Volume 4, Technical Appendix 8.4: Visual Assessment of Minor Roads** and summarised below.

C79B – Longside to Braehead

8.9.70 A short section of highway used by local residents. The Proposed Development would be visible to the southwest on the horizon from this local high section of highway with open expansive views to the south, visible when travelling east towards Longside. During construction, activity would be visible over a wide horizontal angle of view giving a temporary **Moderate Adverse (and significant)** visual effect. On completion at Year 1, the taller elements of the western part of the Proposed Development would be partially visible. After 15 years with growth of the mitigation planting the level of effect would be reduced to **Minor Adverse (not significant)** which would reduce further over time as the mitigation planting develops.

C43B (Flushing to Torterston).

8.9.71 Visibility would vary along the length of this minor road, with visibility to the south near to Flushing, screened by intervening vegetation, the buildings at Flushing and topography. There are wide expansive views in all directions in the northern section of this route. During construction, activity would be distantly visible at 45° to the direction of travel from some sections of the lane, a temporary **Minor Adverse (not significant)** visual effect. On completion, the upper parts of buildings would be distantly visible with irregular new landform screening their lower parts, a **Minor Adverse (not significant)** visual effect, which would reduce over time as the mitigation planting develops.

C44B From the A950 at Thunderton to Mains of Buthlaw.

8.9.72 The bulk of the Proposed Development would be screened from view by existing vegetation at Faichfeld from a large section of this road. There are open views to the south across farmland with isolated farmsteads and commercial buildings at the airfield visible in the direction of travel. During construction, activity would be visible in places, mostly backdropped by higher ground beyond, a temporary **Minor Adverse (not significant)** visual effect. On completion, some parts of the Proposed Development would be distantly visible from short sections of road, a **Minor Adverse (not significant)** visual effect, falling to **Negligible Adverse (not significant)** over time as the mitigation planting develops.

C56B From the A950 at Faichfield to Parkhill to Toddlehill to Meikle Dens

8.9.73 During construction, activity would be visible on the horizon depending on location, albeit with partial screening by intervening topography and existing vegetation, with a temporary **Moderate Adverse (significant)** visual effect. On completion the taller elements of the Proposed Development would be visible in the middle distance or on the horizon from sections of this route, a **Moderate Adverse (significant)** visual effect. Over time the mitigation planting and landform would help soften the view, but it would remain a **Moderate Adverse (significant)** visual effect at locations closest to the Site, with the level of magnitude reducing at distance to a **Minor Adverse (not significant)** effect as only the taller elements of the Proposed Development would be visible above the intervening vegetation and landform.

C63B – A950 at Longside Airfield to Stockbridge

8.9.74 There are open expansive views at this elevated section of minor road in all direction. The Site is visible in the far distance to the west. During construction, the activity would be visible in the far distance, partially screened by intervening topography and vegetation, with a temporary **Minor Adverse (not significant)** effect. At

completion the taller elements of the Proposed Development would be visible on the distant horizon to the west, partially backdropped by the land. This would be a **Minor Adverse (not significant)** effect which would soften over time with establishment of planting. A **Minor Adverse (not significant)** effect would remain.

C55B From Toddlehills to the Site to Mains of Ludquharn.

- 8.9.75 There would be close up views of the Proposed Development at 90° to the direction of travel passing the Site. Elsewhere, the visibility is very varied due, partly due to high roadside hedgerows as well as intervening topography, buildings and vegetation. During construction, despite the partial screening provided by the roadside hedge, there would be a **Major Adverse (significant)** visual effect. On completion, there would be close views of the Proposed Development when passing the site, a **Major Adverse (significant)** visual effect. Over time the mitigation planting would screen or filter most views except for glimpses through gaps at cable wayleaves, reducing the visual effect to **Moderate Adverse (significant)** in the longer-term.

C38B – Denholm to the hamlet of Nether Kinmundy

- 8.9.76 Potential visibility would vary according to direction of travel, distance and presence of intervening vegetation and topography. The route passes from undulating elevated land in the east with far reaching views with the Site visible on the far horizon, to lower lying land at Parkhill and then rises up to Nether Kinmundy with distant views in all directions.

- 8.9.77 During construction, activity would be visible on the distant horizon for a wide horizontal but small vertical angle of view, with the lower parts of the Proposed Development screened by intervening topography and vegetation with a **Minor Adverse (not significant)** to **Moderate Adverse (significant)** visual effect. On completion the taller elements of the Proposed Development would remain visible on the horizon, a **Minor Adverse (not significant)** visual effect, reducing over time as the mitigation planting matures.

C57B – C55B to Nether Savock and Upper Savock to the C56B

- 8.9.78 At this elevated location there are open views to the north towards the Site. Due to the presence of intervening vegetation of coniferous plantation, tree belts and high roadside vegetation the potential visibility varies along the minor roads. At Construction, the bulk of the activity would not be visible due to screening with a low level of magnitude and a **Minor Adverse (not significant)** visual effect. There would be a wide horizontal angle of view with a small vertical angle of view of the proposed emerging development. At completion, the taller elements of the Proposed Development would be visible in the far distance with a **Minor Adverse (not significant)** effect reducing over time to **Negligible Adverse (not significant)** with the establishment of vegetation.

C181B - C55B to C38B at hamlet of Nether Kinmundy

- 8.9.79 For users of the highway travelling north the Site is only partially visible in the far distance at this elevated location. There are far ranging views to the north towards the Site, which is partially screened by intervening topography and vegetation. The Site is partially visible backdropped by the land beyond with visual detractors of overhead lines and wind turbines visible on the horizon. At construction only the taller elements of activity would be visible, for a small horizontal and vertical angle of view with a **Minor Adverse (not significant)** effect. At completion at Year 1 the upper part of the tallest buildings would be visible in the far distance, with partially screening of the lower parts of the buildings by landform, with a **Minor Adverse (not significant)** effect. At Year 15, with the growth of vegetation this would reduce further leading to a **Negligible Adverse (not significant)** effect.

Inn Brae C39B – Woodside via Longside to South Braeside

- 8.9.80 There would be open views to the Proposed Development at 90° to the direction of travel. The HVDC Switching Station would be a prominent feature in the view with partial view of buildings behind. Refer to Viewpoints 9 and 10. During construction activity in the western part of the Site would be visible on the horizon, a temporary **Moderate Adverse (significant)** visual effect. On completion there would be open views of the upper parts of the taller buildings within the western part of the Proposed Development, with a **Moderate Adverse (significant)** visual effect. Over time there would be some reduction in effect from the northern and southern

ends of this road as mitigation planting develops but no change from the middle section so it would remain **Moderate Adverse (significant)**.

C52B – from C39B to Millhill

- 8.9.81 For highway users travelling east there are long ranging views to the east with the Site partially visible in the far distance backdropped by the land and screened by intervening vegetation and topography. During construction there would be visibility into the Site from this elevated location however the angle of view would be small with a **Negligible Adverse (not significant)** effect. At completion the taller elements of the Proposed Development would be partially visible, partially screened by vegetation and landform. Due to distance and presence of intervening topography and vegetation the effect would remain at **Negligible Adverse (not significant)** visual effect.

8.10 Cumulative Effects

- 8.10.1 **Volume 4, Technical Appendix 8.1: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Methodology** describes the methodology used for assessment of cumulative effects in relation to landscape and visual impacts in detail. In-combination effects consider the combined effects of the Proposed Development together with other schemes of the assessment. The Cumulative Developments considered within this assessment are listed in **Volume 2, Chapter 5 EIA Process and Methodology, Table 5-2 Cumulative Developments**, along with a description of the schemes. It has been assumed that the SSEN Transmission schemes that would connect to the Netherton Hub: Spittal to Peterhead HVDC UGC, Eastern Green Link 3 HVDC UGC, Netherton/Peterhead 400 kV OHL Diversion and Repurposing and the Beauly to Blackhillock to New Deer to Peterhead 400 kV OHL construction programmes would overlap with the Proposed Development construction programme.
- 8.10.2 **Volume 3, Figures 8.31 to 8.41** illustrate the potential cumulative visual effects of the overhead line development linked to Netherton Hub, that is the Beauly to Blackhillock to New Deer to Peterhead 400 kV OHL and the Netherton/Peterhead 400 kV OHL Diversion and Repurposing. Three terminal towers for the OHL connecting into the Proposed Development are shown. The Preferred Alignment⁵⁷ of the two potential OHL to the west are shown. The alignment of the Netherton/Peterhead 400 kV OHL Diversion and Repurposing heading south from Netherton to the existing Peterhead 400 kV Substation is not shown, as only the location of the terminal tower is known at this stage (July 2024). As part of this diversion of the existing OHL, a section will be demolished, the extent of tower removal not yet known. Therefore, the existing towers are retained in the visualisations to present a worst-case scenario.

Scope of the Assessment

- 8.10.3 The following criteria are used to define the cumulative assessment in relation to landscape and visual amenity:
- The In-combination assessment considers developments within the 3 km study area. It is considered that the Zone of Influence of the Proposed Development for potential significant effects would not extend beyond this distance.
 - The cumulative assessment considers receptors that are reported as receiving major, moderate or minor effects from the Proposed Development on its own. Minor effects while not significant are considered on the basis that multiple minor effects may interact to result in a significant effect. Receptors judged to receive a negligible effect from the Proposed Development are not considered for cumulative assessment on the basis that any significant cumulative effects arising would primarily be caused by the Cumulative Developments and unlikely to be contributed by the Proposed Development.
 - The assessment considers potential effects during the construction phase and at Operation Year 1. Effect interactions or Intra related effects can only be considered against other environmental topics at Year 1, as no other topics contain assessment at the Operation Year 15.

⁵⁷ Preferred Alignment. The route identified by SSEN Transmission at time of writing this report, July 2024. Both alignments could be subject to change as the design of the projects develop further.

- Where more than one residual effect on a receptor has been identified the Effect Interactions assessment has considered the potential further additional mitigation measures that may be required.

Table 8-7 In-combination effects of the Proposed Development and Cumulative Developments

ID No	Development Name	Potential In-combination Effects	Proposed Mitigation	Potential in-combination cumulative effect
1	Spittal to Peterhead HVDC UGC	<p><u>Construction Phase</u></p> <p>Landscape Character: the construction works of installing access roads and underground cables would have a temporary effect. LCT 17 is anticipated to experience a minor adverse effect as the activity would be localised in a small part of the LCT. There would be a localised effect on the Rural LLCT and Peterhead Urban Fringe LLCT with a minor adverse effect on the area close to the Proposed Development due to the extended area of construction activity.</p> <p>Visual Amenity: Residential properties to the north and west of the Netherton Hub within approximately a 1 km of the UGC works would experience a moderate adverse effect from the Proposed Development. It is anticipated the properties would experience a temporary major adverse in-combination effect due to the extended area of construction activity. Users of the minor roads and the A950 close to the UGC works would similarly experience a temporary major adverse effect.</p> <p><u>Operation</u></p> <p>The majority of the development would be underground and not visible above ground. Once site restoration is complete and vegetation becomes established, the effects both on landscape character and visual amenity are anticipated to be negligible.</p>	No additional mitigation is proposed.	<p><u>Construction Phase</u></p> <p>Landscape Character:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LCT17 – Minor Adverse (not significant) • LLCT Rural – Minor Adverse (not significant) • LLCT Peterhead Urban Fringe – Minor Adverse (not significant) <p>Visual Amenity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major Adverse (Significant) <p><u>Operation</u></p> <p>Landscape Character and Visual Amenity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negligible (not significant)
2	Eastern Green Link 3 (EGL3) HVDC UGC	<p><u>Construction Phase</u></p> <p>Landscape Character: the construction works of installing access roads and underground cables would have a temporary effect. LCT 17 is anticipated to experience a minor adverse effect as the activity would be localised in a small part of the LCT. There would be a localised effect on the Rural LLCT and Peterhead Urban Fringe LLCT with a minor adverse effect on the area close to the Proposed Development due to the extended area of construction activity.</p> <p>Visual Amenity: residential properties east, south and west of the Site, within approximately 1.25 km, at Parkhill and Toddlehills and Mains of Kinmundy Farms could potentially have a temporary in-combination major adverse effect due to the extended area of construction activity. Minor roads directly east,</p>	No additional mitigation is proposed.	<p><u>Construction Phase</u></p> <p>Landscape Character:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LCT17: Minor Adverse (not significant) • LLCT Rural – Minor Adverse (not significant) • LLCT Peterhead Urban Fringe – Minor Adverse (not significant) <p>Visual:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major Adverse (Significant)

ID No	Development Name	Potential In-combination Effects	Proposed Mitigation	Potential in-combination cumulative effect
		<p>south and west of the Site would similarly have a temporary major adverse effect due to the extended area of construction activity.</p> <p><u>Operation</u></p> <p>The majority of the development would be underground. Once site restoration is complete and vegetation becomes established, the effects both on landscape character and visual amenity are anticipated to be negligible.</p>		<p><u>Operation</u></p> <p>Landscape Character and Visual Amenity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negligible (not significant)
3	Netherton/Peterhead 400 kV OHL Diversion and Repurposing	<p><u>Construction Phase</u></p> <p>Landscape Character: the construction of additional towers for the OHL diversion would have a cumulative adverse effect on landscape character within 3 km of the Proposed Development, although very locally there would be some beneficial effects where existing towers are removed. The in-combination effect on LCT17 would be moderate to minor adverse. The effects on the LLCT Rural would be moderate to minor adverse, LLCT Peterhead Urban Fringe Minor adverse.</p> <p>Visual Amenity: Residential properties surrounding the Netherton Hub in all directions to a distance of 1.25 km would potentially have a temporary major to moderate adverse effect due to the extended area of construction activity. Users of the local highways and recreational routes would have a minor to moderate adverse effect depending on the locality and aspect in relation to the proposed works.</p> <p><u>Operational Phase</u></p> <p>Landscape Character:</p> <p>The effects would be as described during construction above, with the effect due to the presence of the additional towers in combination with the Proposed Development.</p> <p>Visual Amenity: residential properties surrounding the Netherton Hub in all directions to a distance of 1.25 km would have a major to moderate adverse cumulative effect due to the proximity to the Proposed Development and terminal towers. The towers would be a prominent change to the view.</p> <p>Users of the local highways within 3 km of the Proposed Development would notice a change to the view while travelling. There are OHLs present within the</p>	No additional mitigation is proposed.	<p><u>Construction Phase</u></p> <p>Landscape Character:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LCT 17 – Moderate to Minor Adverse (Significant) • LLCT Rural – Moderate to Minor Adverse (Significant) • LCT Peterhead Urban Fringe – Minor Adverse (not significant) <p>Visual Amenity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major to Moderate to Minor Adverse (Significant to not significant) <p><u>Operation</u></p> <p>Landscape Character</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LCT 17 – Moderate to Minor Adverse (Significant) • LLCT Rural – Moderate to Minor Adverse (Significant) • LCT Peterhead Urban Fringe – Minor Adverse (not significant)

ID No	Development Name	Potential In-combination Effects	Proposed Mitigation	Potential in-combination cumulative effect
		<p>landscape currently. The level of cumulative effect would vary with direction of travel, angle of view and speed of travel from moderate to minor adverse.</p> <p>Recreational routes would have a moderate to minor adverse effect depending on the locality and aspect in relation to the proposed work.</p>		<p>Visual Amenity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major to Moderate to Minor Adverse (Significant to Not significant)
4	<p>Beauly to Blackhillock to New Deer to Peterhead 400 kV OHL</p>	<p><u>Construction Phase</u></p> <p>Landscape Character: the introduction of the new OHL would have localised cumulative effects on landscape character within 3 km of the Proposed Development. The cumulative effects on LCT 17 would be localised and temporary, moderate to minor adverse. The cumulative effects on the LLCT Rural would be moderate to minor adverse, LLCT Peterhead Urban Fringe, minor adverse as neither development occurs within this LLCT.</p> <p>Visual Amenity: Residential properties west of the Netherton Hub to a distance of approximately 2 km would potentially have a temporary major to moderate adverse effect due to the extended area of construction activity.</p> <p>Users of the local highways and recreational routes in the same area are anticipated to have a minor to moderate adverse effect depending on the locality and aspect in relation to the proposed works.</p> <p>Recreational routes would have a moderate to minor adverse effect depending on the locality and aspect in relation to the proposed work.</p> <p><u>Operation:</u></p> <p>Landscape Character: As the Construction Phase described above, with the effect due to the presence of the additional towers in combination with the Proposed Development.</p> <p>Visual Amenity: the in-combination effect of the OHL terminal towers with the Proposed Development are anticipated to have a major to moderate adverse cumulative effect on residential properties within approximately 1.25 km of the Netherton Hub in all directions, extending to approximately 2 km to the west where there would also be an in-combination effect with the line towers. For road users in the same area, the level of cumulative effect would vary with direction of travel, angle of view and speed of travel from moderate to minor adverse. Recreational routes would have a moderate to minor adverse effect depending on the locality and aspect in relation to the proposed work.</p>	<p>No additional mitigation is proposed.</p>	<p><u>Construction Phase</u></p> <p>Landscape Character:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LCT17 – Moderate to Minor Adverse (Significant) • LLCT Rural – Moderate to Minor Adverse (Significant) • LLCT Peterhead Urban Fringe – Minor Adverse (Not significant) <p>Visual Amenity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major to Moderate to Minor Adverse (Significant to Not Significant) <p><u>Operation</u></p> <p>Landscape Character:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LCT17 – Moderate to Minor Adverse (Significant) • LLCT Rural – Moderate to Minor Adverse (Significant) • LLCT Peterhead Urban Fringe – Minor Adverse (Not significant) <p>Visual Amenity:</p> <p>Major to Moderate to Minor Adverse (Significant to Not Significant)</p>

ID No	Development Name	Potential In-combination Effects	Proposed Mitigation	Potential in-combination cumulative effect
5	Green Volt Offshore Windfarm, installation of onshore infrastructure	<p>Construction and Operational Phases:</p> <p>Landscape Character: temporary localised effect on the regional LCT 17, LLCT Rural and LLCT Peterhead Urban Fringe. The potential in-combination effects would be negligible.</p> <p>Visual Amenity: in-combination effects would be negligible due to intervening topography vegetation and built form.</p>	No additional mitigation is proposed.	<p>Construction Phase</p> <p>Landscape Character:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negligible (Not significant) <p>Visual Amenity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negligible (Not significant) <p>Operational Phase</p> <p>Landscape Character:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negligible (Not significant) <p>Visual Amenity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negligible (Not significant)
6	Extension of Bridgend Quarry – Extraction of Rock Longside	<p>Construction and Operational Phases</p> <p>Landscape Character: temporary localised effect on the regional LCT 17, LLCT Rural and LLCT Peterhead Urban Fringe. In-combination cumulative effects would be negligible.</p> <p>Visual Amenity: effects of the Quarry site and Netherton Hub would be negligible due to intervening topography vegetation and built form.</p>	No additional mitigation is proposed.	<p>Construction Phase</p> <p>Landscape Character:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LCT 17, LLCT Rural and Peterhead Urban Fringe – Negligible (Not significant) <p>Visual Amenity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negligible (Not significant) <p>Operational Phase</p> <p>Landscape Character:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LCT 17, LLCT Rural and Peterhead Urban Fringe – Negligible (Not significant) <p>Visual Amenity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negligible (Not significant)

8.11 Summary of Significant Landscape and Visual Effects

8.11.1 As described in the above chapter, a thorough site selection process, followed by a comprehensive design process have been undertaken, with Landscape professionals involved from the outset. This has ensured that landscape and visual effects have been a key consideration of the development of the design, with landscape and visual amenity embedded into the mitigation. It is recognised that a National Development of this scale and nature would result in localised significant landscape and visual effects, however, through the iterative and collaborative design the extent of the potential landscape and visual impacts from the Proposed Development, has been reduced. The landscape and visual effects will reduce over time as the mitigation planting develops and matures.

Landscape Character:

8.11.2 The Proposed Development would change the shape of the land and introduce larger scale buildings than currently exist into a predominantly rural landscape. It would have a significant adverse effect on the landscape very locally both during construction and on completion but a non-significant effect on the landscape more widely. The effect on the local landscape would reduce over time as the mitigation planting becomes established.

8.11.3 In relation to in-combination cumulative effects, the two proposed OHL Cumulative Developments, Beauly to Blackhillock to New Deer to Peterhead 400 kV OHL and Netherpton/Peterhead 400 kV OHL Diversion and Repurposing at Year 15, would result in potential significant cumulative effects (Moderate Adverse) in areas of the LCT 17 in closest proximity to the Proposed Development. Existing overhead transmission lines are already present in the locality. In relation to the in-combination cumulative effects, with the Spittal to Peterhead HVDC UGC, the Eastern Green Link 3 UGC, there would be a localised effect on landscape character during construction only. During operation, the effects on the local landscape character would be negligible

Visual Amenity:

8.11.4 During construction and operation at Year 1 there would potentially be visual effects on approximately 150 residential properties within 2 km of the Site. The degree of significance on individual properties varies according to their elevation in relation to the Site, local topography, aspect and the presence or absence of intervening vegetation and garden planting. The effect on visual amenity would reduce over time as the mitigation planting develops. By Year 15, the number of residential properties within 2 km significantly affected would reduce further.

8.11.5 The RVAA (**Volume 4, Technical Appendix 8.5**) found that the visual effects initiated by the Proposed Development on residential properties within 1 km of the Netherpton Hub would be below the Residential Visual Amenity Threshold. This is due to presence of screening by the intervening topography, built form or/and vegetation within their curtilage and nearby fields and also due to the aspect and nature of the property itself. The RVAA found that at Year 15, of the 123 residential properties within 1 km of the Site Boundary, 44 would have a potential view, of which 22 would have a significant adverse view with the Proposed Development. Of the total 22 with a significant effect, the results are one Major Adverse and 21 Moderate Adverse effect in relation to the Proposed Development at Year 15. The remainder are not significant. The effects would continue to decrease over time as the woodland plantations become established.

8.11.6 In relation to the in-combination cumulative effects, with the Spittal to Peterhead HVDC UGC, the Eastern Green Link 3 UGC, visual receptors within approximately 1 km of the works would experience **Major Adverse** significant effects during construction only. During operation, the effects on visual amenity would be negligible.

8.11.7 The two proposed OHL Cumulative Developments, Beauly to Blackhillock to New Deer to Peterhead 400 kV OHL and Netherpton/Peterhead 400 kV OHL Diversion and Repurposing would result in potential significant cumulative effects (**Major and Moderate Adverse**) at Year 15, to residential receptors within 2 km to the Proposed Development, users of local highways within 3 km and recreational routes at Longside and the Formantine and Buchan Way. Existing overhead transmission lines are already present in the locality.

- 8.11.8 From the RVAA, (**Volume 4, Technical Appendix 8.5**) it was found that the two proposed OHL Cumulative Developments, Beauly to Blackhillock to New Deer to Peterhead 400 kV OHL and Netherpton/Peterhead 400 kV OHL Diversion and Repurposing overhead transmission lines would result in potential significant cumulative effects with 33 of the 44 residential properties with a view of the Hub within 1 km of the Proposed Development. The effects range from Major to Moderate Adverse (Significant) effects depending on topography, distance from the Site and presence of intervening built form and vegetation.
- 8.11.9 During construction, there would be significant visual effects (Moderate Adverse) on users of Core Path at Longside, the A950 approaching the site from both directions and minor roads when travelling alongside or towards the Site, within a distance of approximately 1.3 km. At Year 15, significant effects (**Moderate Adverse**) would remain to users of a small section of the Core Path 208.01 south of Longside for users looking to the southwest, to users of the A950 approaching the Site from both directions, east and west, and users of minor roads close to the Site to the east, south and southeast travelling alongside or towards the Site, within 1.3 km.