Scottish & Southern Electricity Networks

Fanellan Hub 400 kV Substation and Converter Station

Environmental Impact Assessment

Volume 2 | EIA Report

Chapter 8- Landscape Character and Visual Amenity

February 2025

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8. LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AND VISUAL AMENITY

8.1 Introduction

8.1.1 This chapter assesses the effect of the Proposed Development on landscape and on visual amenity. It describes and analyses the existing landscape of the area that may be affected and considers its sensitivity to the type of development proposed. It defines the extent to which the Proposed Development would be visible and illustrates and analyses a representative sample of views to give a clear indication of the effect the development might have on visual amenity.

8.1.2 The Proposed Development is comprised of a new substation and converter station development, with the Site extents being approximately 305 m x 810 m. The buildings of the Proposed Development range in height from approximately 5 m to a maximum height of approximately 27.5 m.

8.1.3 Landscape and visual assessments are separate although linked processes, describing closely related but distinct sets of effects.

8.1.4 Landscape effects are direct physical changes to the landscape caused by the development, or indirect changes to landscape character and how the landscape is perceived following the development. Landscape impact assessment considers these effects both in terms of the individual components of the landscape and on the structure, coherence and character of the landscape as a whole.

8.1.5 Visual effects are changes in the composition and character of views available in the area affected by the Proposed Development. Visual impact assessment considers the response of the people who experience these effects, who may be living or working in the area, enjoying recreational activities or simply passing through. The assessment considers the overall consequence of the effects on visual amenity - the pleasantness of the view or outlook – that the people affected enjoy.

8.1.6 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. This chapter is accompanied by the following figures and appendices:

- Figure 8.1 Zone of Theoretical Visibility – 10 km;
- Figure 8.2 Zone of Theoretical Visibility – 5 km;
- Figure 8.3 Zone of Theoretical Visibility – 5 km with exclusions;
- Figure 8.4 Zone of Theoretical Visibility – 5 km – Upper portions only;
- Figure 8.5 Cumulative Zone of Theoretical Visibility – 10 km SSEN Sites Only;
- Figure 8.6 Viewpoint Locations Plan;
- Figure 8.7 Landscape Character;
- Figure 8.8 Landscape Context;
- *Figure 8.9 – Not Used*
- Figure 8.10 Landscape Sections;
- Figure 8.11 Landscape Mitigation Plan;
- Figures 8.12 – 8.39 - Visualisations;
- Appendix 8.1 Landscape and Visual Methodology;
- Appendix 8.2 Landscape Character Sensitivity;
- Appendix 8.3 Landscape Character Effects;

- Appendix 8.4 Visual Sensitivity and Effects; and
- Appendix 8.5 Colour Study.

8.1.7 This chapter is not intended to be read as a standalone assessment: reference should be made to the introductory chapters of this EIA Report (**Chapters 1 to 7**).

8.1.8 The Proposed Development is described in detail in **Volume 2, Chapter 3: Description of the Proposed Development**. The key points relevant to this assessment are that the maximum height of the converter buildings would be 27.5 m, on a development platform at 127 m AOD.

8.1.9 In addition to the substation, 4 terminal towers associated with separate overhead lines will be erected around the site. These form part of separate development packages (consented by the Scottish Ministers via the Energy Consents Unit) and are therefore only considered in this chapter as a cumulative development.

8.1.10 This chapter has been prepared based on design information available as of October 2024. Any revisions to the design and consequent potential re-evaluation of impacts to Landscape and Visual Amenity will be captured in an addendum to the EIA which will be issued at a later date if required.

Information Sources

8.1.11 The following sources of information have been used to inform this report:

- Desk study – a desk-based review of existing information and online resources to inform the field surveys and subsequent assessment.
- Field Survey – undertaken in February 2024 and October 2024 to undertake initial site review, verify the desk study findings, confirm the extent of visual influence and take photographs.

8.2 Scope of Assessment and Methodology

Scope of Assessment

8.2.1 As noted in the introduction, this chapter reports on the assessment of likely significant effects on the landscape and on visual amenity as a result of the Proposed Development, during both the construction and operation phases. It describes the assessment methodology, the baseline conditions and the mitigation that has been built into the design.

8.2.2 This chapter then analyses the landscape and considers its sensitivity to the type of development proposed. It also 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 viewpoints.

8.2.3 The assessment reports on the residual effects of the Proposed Development, taking into account committed mitigation, assessed at Year 15 of operation. Where mitigation planting is particularly prominent in a view, an interim Year 7 planting year is included.

8.2.4 There are no Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) covering any part of the Site and they are therefore not discussed further. It is noted that there are Veteran trees on site (which have been considered in the design so as to avoid them and their root protection areas) and further information is provided within **Volume 2, Chapter 15: Forestry**. Gardens and Designed Landscapes (GDLs) on the Historic Environment Scotland inventory are addressed in **Volume 2, Chapter 11: Archaeology and Cultural Heritage.**

8.2.5 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 as a whole may involve a degree of effect on the public good.

8.2.6 This assessment has been carried out in accordance with the following:

- Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, '*Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment'*, 3rd Edition (2013) (GLVIA3[1]).
- Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 06/19 '*Visual Representation of development proposals'* (2019). Photography has been undertaken and visualisations created in accordance with Landscape Institute guidance 2 (which is consistent with NatureScot guidance).
- The Highland Council, '*Visualisation Standards for Wind Energy Developments'*, 2016[3].
- NatureScot, '*Visual Representation of Wind Farms - Guidance'*, 2017, Scottish Natural Heritage[4]

Extent of the Study Area

8.2.7 The study area for the visual assessment is the area from which the Proposed Development may be seen and 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 is visible. This is then cut-off at a study area limit to ensure the assessment focuses on potentially significant effects. The initial Study Area was set at 10 km, based on analysis of the anticipated scale and likely geographical influence of the Proposed Development, and in line with The Highland Council request in their Scoping Opinion S402655/SCOP August 2024 and in which The Highland Council also noted refinement of the study area can then take place.

8.2.8 The Study Area for the landscape assessment is also defined by the area from which the Proposed Development may be seen and informed by the visibility study, but the assessment considers potentially affected landscapes in terms of the character area or unit as a whole, not just the part from which there may be visibility (as per GLVIA3 paragraph 5.2).

Zone of Theoretical Visibility

8.2.9 The first step in the visibility assessment is to establish the area from which the Proposed Development may be seen - called the 'Zone of Theoretical Visibility' (ZTV). The ZTV was produced by computer modelling, whereby the high point of the Proposed Development is overlain on a digital terrain model and computer generated 'lines of sight' are generated to show what can be seen from this point and thus the places from which the Proposed Development may be visible.

8.2.10 The ZTV used Ordnance Survey Terrain 5 / 50 DTM as the base map and used a viewer eye height of 2 m as per NatureScot guidance. The ZTV Plan has been prepared in line with the proposed maximum parameters of 27.5 m on a site platform at 127 m Ordnance Datum (AOD).

8.2.11 This is a 'bare ground' ZTV, making no allowance for screening from either existing or proposed buildings or vegetation, and therefore the ZTV has to be 'ground truthed' through site visits to understand the screening effects of buildings, vegetation and any detracting features. In this way, the study area can be reviewed and refined down as appropriate.

[1] Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013). 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment', 3rd Edition (2013).
[2] Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 06/19 'Visual Representation of development proposals', (2019).
[3] The Highland Council, 'Visualisation Standards for Wind Energy Developments' (July 2016).
[4] NatureScot, 'Visual Representation of Wind Farms Guidance', February 2017, Scottish Natural Heritage

8.2.12 This initial 10 km ZTV is shown in **Figure 8.1 Zone of Theoretical Visibility – 10 km.**

8.2.13 The initial 10 km ZTV indicates that the Proposed Development is potentially visible across the 10 km Study Area, with potential visibility broadly to the south of the Proposed Development across C1106 (Fanellan Road) towards Culbernie, Kiltarity and Tommacross, and to the low-lying landscape associated with the River Beauly to the south and southeast.

8.2.14 The ZTV also indicates potential views of the Proposed Development from the north are limited, although there may be visibility in longer distance views from residents to the north at Broallan, Ruilick, and for tourists travelling along the Moray Firth Tourist Route. However, as distance northwards increases, visibility lessens and becomes more limited, with views from the north obscured by the adjacent woodland and topography at Ruttle Wood and Torr Mor. In longer distance views, the Proposed Development is also likely to be glimpsed and filtered by intervening taller elements, including Ruttle Wood, built form, and the existing OHLs.

8.2.15 In the wider landscape to the east, theoretical visibility towards the Proposed Development remains extensive. There are, however, many intervening features which limit visibility, including the existing Beauly Substation and overhead lines at Wester Balblair which are likely to be more apparent in views from the east than the longer distance views beyond towards the Proposed Development. It is also recognised that receptors further east are more likely to be focused on coastal views towards the Beauly Firth and surrounding landscape rather than on more distant hillside to the west.

8.2.16 To the west, it is anticipated that the extensive woodland planting to the south and west would further filter views. It is recognised that taller aspects of the Proposed Development may be visible over and above the intervening vegetation.

Study Area Refinement

8.2.17 As a 'bare ground' map, the ZTV at **Figure 8.1** does not account for the screening effects afforded by vegetation or buildings and can therefore be considered a 'worst-case' picture of the extent to which the Proposed Development may be visible. In many places, particularly more distant from the Site, existing buildings and walls, tall hedges and blocks of woodland would partially or wholly screen the view. Numerous site visits were therefore conducted to understand the baseline and further support the desktop study. During the site visits and following further desk-based review of OS mapping, aerial photography, and use of professional judgement gained from experience of similar projects, it became apparent that, despite some longer distance visibility, the potential for *significant* landscape or visual effects beyond 5 km falls considerably.

8.2.18 To focus on potentially *significant* effects, whilst exercising a degree of caution, the initial Study Area for this assessment has been refined down from 10 km to a radius of 5 km for the main assessment, although retained for consideration of cumulative effects. Although the Proposed Development may be visible beyond 5 km, professional experience of similar projects and survey of the site area at site selection, scoping, and assessment stages has indicated that significant effects are highly unlikely to occur beyond that distance. A refined Study Area of 5 km from the Proposed Development has therefore been taken forward to capture likely significant landscape and visual effects during the construction and operational phases. This refined Study Area is shown in **Figure 8.2 Zone of Theoretical Visibility – 5 km.**

8.2.19 To help further understand the extents of visibility, two additional ZTVs were run. The first is shown in **Figure 8.3 Zone of Theoretical Visibility – 5 km with exclusions** which used a digital surface model as the base map, which takes into account all objects that may contribute to screening views, such as existing built form, trees and woodlands, in addition to the underlying topography. This can be considered a 'best-case' picture of the extent to which the Proposed Development may be visible.

8.2.20 The second ZTV - shown on **Figure 8.4 Zone of Theoretical Visibility – 5 km – Upper portions only -** was run to show where the upper portions of the Proposed Development only would be visible (i.e. the top 12.5 m of the Proposed Development).

8.2.21 The 5 km Study Area ZTVs are discussed further in **Section 8.2.9** of this Chapter.

Viewpoints

8.2.22 The ZTVs were 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, and to illustrate this assessment.

8.2.23 Viewpoint locations were agreed with the statutory consultees, including The Highland Council (THC) and NatureScot, and are shown on **Figure 8.6 Viewpoint Locations Plan.** The visual receptors and representative viewpoint Locations are listed in **Section 8.3** in the baseline section below, from **Paragraph 8.3.36** onwards.

CONSULTATION

8.2.24 Consultation has taken place with a number of stakeholders - summaries of the consultations and responses are provided in **Table 8-1**.

Table 8-1 - Landscape and Visual Consultation

Organisation	Type of Consultation	Response	How response has been considered
The Highland Council (THC)	Email	Initial request issued on 25/01/24 to agree 11 viewpoint locations. THC accepted the initial proposed viewpoint locations and requested additional viewpoint locations to demonstrate elevated views from between Drumindorsair and Farley and the settlement of Crask of Aigas.	Two additional viewpoint locations were added from higher ground at Crask of Aigas (Viewpoint 12) and Farley (Viewpoint 13).
THC	Email	Email issued to THC on the 21/02/24 to confirm additional viewpoint locations and amendments to existing proposed locations to respond to comments re revised views.	Additional viewpoints agreed. No further action needed.
THC	Pre-app Meeting	Pre-app Meeting undertaken 13/03/24. Meeting notes included [*own numbering used for ease of reference*]: 1. Queries regarding the ZTV and option for including native woodland within ZTV scope to provide a more accurate representation of likely visibility, in addition to inclusion of the anticipated height for open air infrastructure on site for the same. 2. Request to review forestry management plans for the surrounding commercial woodland to review/consider implications of these upon visual amenity. 3. Micro-siting of viewpoints has been requested in addition to imagery of tripod locations to confirm exact siting of views. 4. Wireframes have been requested in preference of photomontage for selected VPs. 5. LVIA is requested to consider roof treatments and use of materials and colour to minimise effects upon the landscape and visual amenity.	1. Additional ZTV created to include vegetation 2. Forestry is covered under the **Chapter 15 - Forestry**, but consideration of management felling is included within this **Chapter 8** and accompanying photomontage where forestry is a key element of the view. 3. Visualisation methodology is set out in **Appendix 8.1.** Viewpoints were micro-sited on site with resultant coordinates shown in **Figures 8.11-8.39.** These also include photography of tripod locations. 4. Wireframes are included for the requested VPs. 5. A colour study has been produced to examine colour options for the building facades, as set out within **Appendix 8.5**. 6. Discussion on alternative options is provided in **Chapter 4 – Site Selection and Alternatives.**

Organisation	Type of Consultation	Response	How response has been considered
		6. Decision to proceed with HVDC building location was queried. EIA to clearly justify why this cannot be situated within the existing quarry. 7. Cut and fill approach and new landforms were supported but query as to if lower levels could be achieved. 8. THC's expectation is for new landform to be tree planted to help screen the development, alongside further planting on site. Planting to reflect existing landscape character. 9. Internal site configuration to be reviewed within EIA to limit visual impacts. 10. Number of OHL towers was queried. Close spacing, and scope to underground towers was requested to be reviewed at EIA alongside micrositing to limit visibility.	7. Approach to cut and fill levels is provided in **Chapter 8 –** 8. Landform and planting included as mitigation and shown on **Figure 8.11 –Landscape Mitigation Plan.** 9. Internal configurations discussed during design development workshops 10. Tower locations are not within the scope of this assessment. They will be considered as part of their respective development applications.
THC	Scoping Opinion	A summary is provided as follows [*own numbering used for ease of reference*]: 1. The Council expects the EIAR to consider the landscape and visual impact of the development. The Council require single frame images with different focal lengths taken with a 35mm format full frame sensor camera – not an 'equivalent.' The focal lengths required are 50mm and 75mm. These images should form part of the EIAR and not be separate from it. Photomontages should follow the Council's Visualisation Standards and are subject to an independent verification check upon receipt. The following are minimum requirements for the printed copies: • For hard copies - Visuals should be presented in their own bound version of the document. • The first image should clearly set out the location of the viewpoint and directions on how to get there (as per Figure 2 of the Standards). • The second page should include a photomontage presented at A3 with a 50 mm field of view for landscape assessment (as per Figure 6 of the Standards).	A summary of the Consultation with THC (email dated 09.05.2024) proposed and agreed the following [*own numbering used for ease of reference]*: 1. Landscape and Visual impacts will be considered as separate (although linked) items in **Chapter 8** of the EIAR. Single frame images will form part of the EIAR. The requirements for presentation, including requirements for hard copies, will be met. We proposed a variation on the visualisation approach shown in the Highland Council Guidance for Windfarms to better illustrate a linear development. As well as the 65.5 degree visualisations and individual 75 mm (50 mm extracted) visuals to align with the guidance (and to correspond to the First – Fifth Visualisation page requirements), we will also include 90-degree

Organisation	Type of Consultation	Response	How response has been considered
		• The third page should include a baseline photograph at 50 mm field of view and wirelines at the same scale as per Figure 7 or Figure 8 of the Standards). • The fourth page should include a 50 mm image photomontage (as per Figure 10 of the Standards). • The fifth page should include a 75 mm image photomontage for assessment of visual impacts (as per Figure 12 of the Standards). • The document requires to be printed single sided with a high-quality laser printer or equivalent on photo quality paper. 2. In instances where the development is largely screened, for example by tree cover, monochrome photomontages of the same focal length shall be submitted showing site buildings and infrastructure in red. 3. Where landscaping and planting is proposed, you should include visualisations for Operation years 0, 5, and 10. 4. Assessments should cover impacts of all elements of the development, including the substation building, substation infrastructure, OHL infrastructure, security fencing, tree felling, lighting, access roads, temporary compounds, laydown areas, soil and overturned stores, fencing and any associated road improvement works both on site, and potentially off-site including bridge upgrades / replacements. 5. Separate volumes of visualisations should be prepared to both Highland Council Standards and NatureScot guidance. These should be provided in hard copy. It would be beneficial for THC's volume to be provided in a A3 leaver arch folder for ease of use. We are happy to provide advice on this matter going forward. 6. All elements of the proposal are to be rendered into photomontages. 7. The finalised list of Viewpoints (VP) and wireframes for the assessment must be agreed in advance with THC and NatureScot. 8. It is noted that the recreational receptor of attendees at Belladrum Festival Grounds are proposed to be scoped out of assessment. The	panoramic visualisations. Visualisations will be provided as a hard copy file. A detailed methodology is set out within **Appendix 8.1**. 2. Due to the nature of the Proposed Development and limited vegetation removal it is not considered that monochrome photomontages will add additional value. However, wirelines show the Proposed Development in red, as requested. 3. Photomontage visualisations have been prepared for 2 assessment scenarios (year 0/1 and year 15). Given the limited proposed planting it is not considered that a 3rd visualisation scenario will add additional value. A detailed methodology is set out within **Appendix 8.1**. 4. The assessment considers the impacts of all elements of the Proposed Development. The Black Bridge replacement works and the Beauly Denny OHL diversion are considered as part of the cumulative section as they do not form part of this application. A summary of work at the Black Bridge and potential effects are presented in **Volume 4: Appendix 3.2**. 5. Separate volumes will be prepared and provided in hard copy. 6. All elements of the operational Proposed Development will be shown in the photomontages where there is sufficient information to do so. **Figure 8.12 – 8.39** Visualisations – these visualisations also illustrate the Proposed Development alongside the following three SSEN proposed developments:

Organisation	Type of Consultation	Response	How response has been considered
		Council considers it reasonable to include this with a representative viewpoint or series of wireframes across the grounds. 9. When micro-siting viewpoints, the photographer should have in their mind whether the VP is representative or specific; who the receptors are; and ideally have a 3D model on a laptop when they go out on site to help orientation. 10. Baseline photography should be undertaken in appropriate weather conditions, and when visibility is not excessively obscured by intervening vegetation. 11. Production of Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) and route analysis considering the nature and type of intervening trees, woodland, with further consideration given to woodland management plans and committed felling and planting cycles is required. 12. The detailed location of viewpoints will be informed by site survey, mapping and predicted ZTVs and should be selected in order to show the proposal from as open a viewpoint as possible. 13. Community Council's may request additional viewpoints, and it would be recommended that any pre-application discussions with the local community take this into account. 14. The purpose of the selected and agreed viewpoints shall be clearly identified and stated in the supporting information. However, Visual Effects are defined by GLVIA3 not just as effects on views, but as 'Effects on specific views and on the general amenity experienced by people'. 15. Based on the information presented to date, the proposed 5 km Study Area may not be sufficient. It is suggested that a study area of around 10 km may be more appropriate to investigate further. Refinement of an enlarged study area can then take place. 16. The LVIA Chapter should clearly set out the methodology including definitions of each point on the scale of magnitude of change and	• Beauly to Peterhead (B2P) 400 kV Overhead Line; • Spittal to Beauly 400 kV Overhead Line; and • Beauly to Denny 400kV Overhead Line Diversion and Tie-In (permanent alignment). 7. The finalised list of VPs were agreed with THC and NatureScot. 8. An additional viewpoint has been added at Belladrum Festival Grounds to represent recreational receptors within this area, as requested. 9. The Photographer had this in mind. 360 degree photographs were taken at each location to avoid any issues of orientation. 10. Baseline photography was undertaken in winter, with good visibility. 11. Additional ZTVs have been produced to consider effects of vegetation as shown on **Figure 8.3.** 12. VPs were micro-sited on site to ensure open views. 13. The Community Council was consulted via email through the Community Liaison Group and no additional viewpoint locations were requested. 14. The purpose of the VP selection will be clearly stated in **Table 8-5** of the Chapter, but we also consider effects on people, not just VPs. 15. A wider Study area has been considered. **Figure 8.1 - 10 km Study Area** has been produced to demonstrate the theoretical visibility, and the associated text description is set out in **Chapter 8 paragraph 8.2.9.** Further review and narrative will

Organisation	Type of Consultation	Response	How response has been considered
		sensitivity of receptor. 17. The LVIA Chapter should identify the threshold to which the applicant considers a significant effect is reached. For the avoidance of doubt the Council consider that Moderate impacts can be significant. 18. A clear matrix approach supported by descriptive text setting out how you have reached your conclusion of effect on landscape character, designated landscapes, visual receptors, and residential amenity. The LVIA should contain an assessment of singular and cumulative effects for each of the representative viewpoints following this methodology. 19. For key routes where there is shown to be prolonged sections of theoretical visibility towards the site, these should be subject of sequential route analysis, with provision of baseline photography at regular intervals, together with wireframes of the proposed development. 20. When assessing the impact on recreational routes please ensure that all core paths, rights of way, national cycle network, and long-distance trails are assessed. 21. An assessment of the impacts of the proposal on landscape should assess the impacts on any landscapes designated at a national and local scale.	be provided to support the refinement down to a 5 km Study Area. 16. The full methodology and matrix for the LVIA is set out within **Appendix 8.1** 17. Effects of Moderate or above are considered significant, as outlined in **Chapter 8 paragraph 8.2.46**. 18. The full methodology and matrix for the LVIA is set out within **Appendix 8.1**. Cumulative effects are considered in **Chapter 8 Section 8.9** and **Chapter 17: Cumulative Effects.** 19. Sequential views were not identified and as such no sequential visualisations were included. 20. When assessing the impact on recreational routes, users of core paths, rights of way, national cycle network, and long-distance trails are assessed in the LVIA. A detailed list of receptors taken forward for assessment is set out **Chapter 8 paragraph 8.3.40.** 21. There are no designated landscapes considered likely to experience significant effects and they were therefore scoped out of the assessment – as outlined in **Chapter 8 paragraphs 8.3.28 – 8.3.30**

Organisation	Type of Consultation	Response	How response has been considered
THC	Email	Email on 24/09/24 regarding the representative viewpoints and photomontage methodology. THC provided the following response: *"I am happy with the proposed additional viewpoint's location and with the overall proposal for the presentation of visualisations, with the exception to not include an intermediate year between 0 and 15 for the VP location from which the proposed planting would be important mitigation… while I am happy for the final year to be set at 15 rather than 10, I would still recommend an intermediate year visualisation for VPs 1 and 2 and would suggest setting that at 7 or 8 years."*	This was agreed and interim Visualisations for VPs 1 and 2 will be included. Visualisations for VPs 1 and 2 will therefore show Operation year 0, Operation Year 7 and Operation Year 15. A detailed methodology is set out within **Appendix 8.1** and visualisations are presented in **Figure 8.12 – 8.39.**

Methodology

Data Collection

8.2.25 Information has been gathered through desk study and site surveys. Relevant publications that have been taken into consideration, and mapping reviewed include:

- NatureScot's National Landscape Character Assessment. Landscape Character Types, 2019;
- Highland Council's Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas, 2019;
- NatureScot's National Scenic Areas;
- NatureScot's Wild Land Areas map and descriptions 2014; and
- Online mapping including Ordnance Survey maps, Google Earth Pro and Google Street View.

8.2.26 Site surveys were carried out in February and October 2024 for this assessment. Weather conditions were generally dry and clear, although weather conditions were changeable throughout each day.

Visualisation Presentation

8.2.27 To assist in illustrating the potential magnitude of impact to visual receptors, visualisations have been prepared for each of the 14 representative viewpoints identified on **Figure 8.6 Viewpoint Locations**. The method for the production of the visualisations and the locations of the 14 viewpoints have been agreed with The Highland Council and NatureScot (September 2024), and as shown in **Table 8-1.** The visualisations were prepared in accordance with Landscape Institute (LI) Technical Guidance Note 06/19 *Visual Representation of Development Proposals****Error! Bookmark not defined.*** and THCs *Visualisation Standards for Wind Energy Developments.*[5] Five of the representative viewpoints are illustrated by photomontages, (Type 3) and the remaining nine as 3D photowires (Type 3). The camera location was surveyed on site using a handheld Global Positioning System (GPS).

8.2.28 The visualisations are presented in two formats per viewpoint in accordance with the relevant guidance set out above. All viewpoint photography shows the current view, and the proposed view at Years 0 and 15 using a 3D model of the Proposed Development. Following consultation with THC, viewpoints 1 and 2 also illustrated the proposed view at Year 7 to illustrate an interim year.

8.2.29 Details of the presentation requirements for the visualisations, as required by THC and NatureScot/ Landscape Institute, are set out in Appendix 8.2 and summarised in **Table 8-2** below. TGN 06/19 is broadly consistent with NatureScot's SNH 2017 guidance and has been used. The winter photography was completed in February 2024 and October 2024. The visualisations are shown in **Figures 8-12 to 8-39.**

Table 8-2: Visualisation Presentation Requirements

The Highland Council **Visualisation Standards for Wind Energy Developments July 2016**	**Landscape Institute Guidance** TGN 06/19 Visual Representation of Development Proposals 2019 **NatureScot** **Visual representation of wind farms: Guidance 2017**
Viewpoints 1, and 2 will have a third scenario (Year 7) as part of the Highland Council Package	
Pg 1 Location, Directions of how to get there (Figure 2 of Highland standards) & photo of camera on site	Pg 1 90 degree baseline– A1 820mm width Pg 2 90 degree photowire – A1 820mm width

[5] The Highlands Council. "Visualisation Standards for Wind Energy Developments," (2016).

Pg 2 A3 65.5 degree baseline Pg 3 A3 65.5 degree photowire - (substation and terminal towers) Pg 4 A3 65.5 degree photowire - cumulative Pg 5 A3 65.5 degree Year 0 photomontage - (substation and terminal towers) Pg 6 A3 65.5 degree Year 0 photomontage - cumulative Pg 7 A3 65.5 degree Year 15 photomontage (substation and terminal towers) Pg 8 A3 65.5 degree Year 15 photomontage – cumulative Pg 9 A3 50mm photowire- (substation and terminal towers) Pg 10 A3 50mm photowire - cumulative Pg 11 A3 50mm Year 0 photomontage - (substation and terminal towers) Pg 12 A3 50mm Year 0 photomontage - cumulative Pg 13 A3 50mm photomontage Year 15 (substation and terminal towers) Pg 14 A3 50mm photomontage Year 15 cumulative Pg 15 A3 75mm photowire (50mm extract) (substation and terminal towers) Pg 16 A3 75mm photowire (50mm extract) - cumulative Pg 17 A3 75mm photomontage (50mm extract) Year 0 (substation and terminal towers) Pg 18 A3 75mm photomontage (50mm extract) Year 0 - cumulative Pg 19 75mm photomontage Year 15 – substation and terminal towers Pg 20 75mm photomontage Year 15 - cumulative	Pg 3 90 degree photowire – A1 820mm width - cumulative Pg 3 90 degree photomontage Year 0 – A1 820mm width Pg 4 90 degree photomontage Year 0 – A1 820mm width -cumulative Pg 5 90 degree photomontage Year 15 – A1 820mm width Pg 6 90 degree photomontage Year 15 – A1 820mm width – cumulative Pg 7 50mm single image photowire – A3 390mm x 260mm image Pg 8 50mm single image photowire– A3 390mm x 260mm image -cumulative Pg 9 50mm single image photomontage Year 0 – A3 390mm x 260mm image Pg 10 50mm single image photomontage Year 0 – A3 390mm x 260mm image - cumulative Pg 11 50mm single image photomontage Year 15 – A3 390mm x 260mm image Pg 12 50mm single image photomontage Year 15 – A3 390mm x 260mm image - cumulative

8.2.30 The key visual receptors that were identified within the study are shown on **Figure 8.6** and included residents within individual residential properties; residents on the edge of settlements; recreational, tourist and transport receptors using the surrounding roads, footpath and cycle networks. Reference has been made to The Highland Council's Core Paths network.

8.2.31 The representative viewpoints are used to help illustrate the assessment of visual effects on the receptors identified above. The locations of the agreed fourteen representative viewpoints are shown on **Figure 8.1, 8.2 and 8.6** and listed in **Table 8-5.**

Determining Sensitivity of Receptors and Magnitude of Change

8.2.32 This section provides an overview of the LVIA methodology although a full methodology is set out **in Appendix 8.1 Landscape and Visual Methodology**.

Sensitivity of Receptors

8.2.33 The sensitivity of landscape and visual receptors is arrived at by separately considering the receptor value and the susceptibility of the receptor to the type of change proposed.

Landscape Sensitivity

8.2.34 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. Landscape value may 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.

8.2.35 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.

8.2.36 Susceptibility and value are then combined to determine receptor sensitivity. 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 and its susceptibility to change, which can be particularly important when considering change in designated landscapes.

8.2.37 A full sensitivity assessment of the affected Landscape Character Types (LCTs) is given in **Volume 4, Technical Appendix 8.2.**

Visual Sensitivity

8.2.38 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.

8.2.39 Susceptibility of visual receptors to the type of change proposed relates to the location of the person 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.

8.2.40 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.

8.2.41 Professional judgement is always used in determining the sensitivity of a receptor.

Magnitude of Change

8.2.42 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.

8.2.43 Professional judgement is always used in determining the magnitude of change.

Determining Effect Significance

8.2.44 Sensitivity and magnitude are then combined to gauge the overall 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) will vary depending on the circumstances, the type and scale of development proposed, the baseline context and other factors. The significance matrix in **Appendix 8.1: LVIA Methodology, Table 8** 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. For ease of reference, the matrix is shown below.

Table 8-3: Matrix for Determining the Significance of Effects

		Sensitivity of Landscape or Visual Receptor			
		High	**Medium**	**Low**	**Negligible**
Magnitude of Change/ Effect	**High**	Major	Major or Moderate	Moderate or Minor	Minor or Negligible
	Medium	Major or Moderate	Moderate	Minor	Negligible
	Low	Moderate or Minor	Minor	Minor	Negligible
	Negligible	Minor or Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

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

8.2.46 Effects can be either beneficial or adverse or, in some cases, neutral (neither beneficial nor adverse). As stated in **Chapter 5: EIA Process and Methodology,** effects found to be moderate or greater are normally considered to be significant in the context of the EIA Regulations, whilst effects less than moderate are considered not significant.

8.2.47 It should be noted that there are situations where the conclusions regarding significance in this chapter differ from that suggested by the matrix in **Chapter 5.** This is most frequent where there is a low but not negligible magnitude of visual impact on a receptor of high sensitivity, where following the table gives a conclusion of moderate effect but the assessor considers the effect not to be significant. In this circumstance the significance would be found to be 'minor to moderate' or even 'minor'. This chapter therefore uses a developed version of this matrix, shown as **Table 8.3** above.

Cumulative Effects

8.2.48 The LVIA considers 'in-combination' landscape and visual effects: the additional changes caused by the Proposed Development in combination with other similar or related developments. The Cumulative Study Area is extended to 10 km as a large portion of the cumulative developments are steel lattice towers. The initial LVIA Study Area was 10 km as Perceptibility studies[6] have shown that steel lattice tower overhead lines can be noticeably visible up to 10 km away. Whilst the Study Area for consideration of the Proposed Development on its own was refined down to 5 km in order to focus on likely *significant* effects, when considering cumulative projects of similar size and scale, visibility of two schemes may occur over a wider distance. The cumulative study area wass therefore retained at 10 km and anticipated theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development in combination with the three SSEN overhead cumulative schemes is shown on **Figure 8.5. ZTV – Cumulative Sites (SSEN Only**).

[6] Perceptibility of Overhead Steel Lattice Transmission Towers, Collected Papers, Mark Turnbull Landscape Architects 2015

8.2.49 There are four proposed SSEN electricity transmission projects within the 10 km Cumulative Study Area related to Fanellan Hub and which would have a cumulative effect on the Proposed Development. These are listed as follows:

- Proposed Beauly to Peterhead 400 kV Overhead Line (BBNP);
- Proposed Spittal to Beauly 400 kV Overhead Line (SLBB);
- Proposed Beauly to Denny 400 kV Overhead Line Temporary Diversion, Permanent Diversion and Tie-ins (to the Proposed Development); and
- Proposed Western Isles Link HVDC underground cable.

8.2.50 **Figure 17.1 Cumulative Developments** illustrates the location of each of these proposed developments and within the 10 km Cumulative Study Area. Given that these proposed developments are integrally linked to the Fanellan Hub, we have included the indicative alignment (correct as of 22.12.2024) terminal towers for the first three within the visualisations (there are no terminal towers associated with the underground cable line). However, the impact and resulting effects of the towers in relation to Fanellan Hub are considered as part of the Cumulative effects assessment only.

8.2.51 **Figures 8.11-8.39** illustrate the photomontages from the 14 Viewpoint locations showing the Proposed Development and the proposed three cumulative SSEN developments listed above.

8.2.52 “Intra-project” cumulative effects – where the cumulation of different types of environmental impact on specific receptors increases the overall impact on that receptor (for example, a residential receptor subject to both visual and noise effects) - are considered in **Chapter 17: Cumulative Effects**.

8.2.53 The underlying approach to the assessment of cumulative effects is the same as for the assessment of effects of the Proposed Development alone.

8.2.54 The cumulative effects assessment looks at proposed developments within 10 km of the Proposed Development as set out in **Volume 2:Chapter 5- EIA Methodology Table 5-2** and considers the potential effects on receptors found to be subject to an effect from the Proposed Development of minor or above.

Items Scoped Out of the Assessment

8.2.55 **Table 8-4** sets out the items and issues considered very unlikely to be subject to significant effects from the Proposed Development (and the reasons why) and are therefore not considered further.

Table 8-4: Items scoped out of the LVIA

Issues Scoped out of Assessment	Justification
Landscape Character: National Parks, National Scenic Areas, Wild Land Areas	The nearest national landscape designation is the Glen Strathfarrar National Scenic Area located approximately 10 km to the southwest and outwith the Zone of Theoretical Visibility. Any potential visibility beyond this is not considered likely to result in any significant effects. The Central Highlands Wild Land Area 24, whilst not a statutory designation, is located approximately 6 km to the northwest at its nearest point. The WLA covers a highly extensive area of land (1,327 km^2) extends westwards across the highlands. Due to distance and screening provided by the undulating topography and tree planting, as well as existing infrastructure and settlements to the east of the WLA, views towards the Site will be limited and

Issues Scoped out of Assessment	Justification
	any effect unlikely to be significant. As a result, the WLA has been scoped out of the assessment.
Landscape Character: **Landscape Character Types**	The following LCTs lie within the 5 km Study Area but are unlikely to be directly affected by the Proposed Development: Farmed and Forested Slopes – Ross & Cromarty (LCT 345), Open Farmed Slopes (LCT 346), Rugged Massif – Inverness (LCT 220) and Rocky Moorland Plateau – Inverness (LCT 222). Due to the scale of the LCTs, intervening vegetation, and the undulating nature of the local topography, the extent to which the Proposed Development would be perceived from these wider landscapes is limited. There is therefore not considered a likelihood that these LCTs would experience significant effects, and they are therefore scoped out of further assessment.
Visual Amenity: **Recreational users**	• Recreational: Visitors to Beaufort Castle are likely to be focussed on the castle and the immediate landscape rather than wider views. • Recreational: Users of the River Beauly, due to the extensive vegetation on its banks and recreational users of this area being focussed on their water-based activities rather than views of the wider landscape. • Recreational: Local recreational users of core paths IN20.01 are located south west of the study area approximately 4 km from the Proposed Development, the route predominantly runs through woodland and as a result views towards the Proposed Development would be limited. • Recreational: Local recreational users of core paths IN20.02, IN20.03, IN20.04, (near Belladrum Festival Grounds) are located at the periphery of the 5 km Study Area. Due to intervening vegetation and the undulating nature of the local topography, the extent to which the Proposed Development would be perceived is limited. • Recreational users of Forestry Commission Access Land. Due to the wooded nature of these areas, intervisibility with the wider landscape is limited. These receptors have therefore been scoped out of the assessment.
Visual Amenity: **Transport users**	• Transport: There are two tourist routes: The North Coast 500 and the Moray Firth Routes, to the north-east of the study area near Beauly. Due to intervening vegetation and topography, effects are not anticipated to be significant. These receptors have therefore been scoped out of the assessment.
Visual Amenity: **Commercial/ Industrial workers**	• Commercial: There are limited commercial receptors in the study area such as workers at Kilmorack gallery, Post Office etc. As places of work, the majority of these receptors are focussed on inward facing views rather than the wider landscape. They are consequently considered to be of low sensitivity and unlikely to result in significant effects, and so these receptors are scoped out of the assessment. • Commercial: There are a number of farms and B&Bs which are also residential receptors. As residential receptors are generally of higher

Issues Scoped out of Assessment	Justification
	sensitivity, these receptors are considered as residential receptors not commercial ones. • Industrial/ Utility: The Proposed Development would be visible from the existing Beauly Substation. As a workplace with no notable view to the Site and where workers attention is not focussed on the landscape, their visual amenity is not likely to be significantly affected, and they are therefore scoped out of further assessment.
Visual Amenity: **Users of indoor facilities**	• Indoor Facilities: the majority of users of indoor facilities such as primary schools, libraries and village halls, are focussed on inward facing views rather than the wider landscape. They are consequently considered to be of lower sensitivity and unlikely to result in significant effects, and so these receptors are scoped out of the assessment. Such facilities are typically accessed via the road network and are therefore considered as such.
Visual Amenity: **Derelict Farmsteads**	• Derelict properties have been excluded as their future use and function is unknown
Visual Amenity: **Receptors beyond 5 km from the Site boundary**	• Site work in the early stages of the assessment process confirmed that, although the Proposed Development may be visible more widely, significant effects are very unlikely beyond 5 km from the site boundary. This was confirmed by the assessment of views from the representative viewpoints, given in **Appendix 8.4**. This applies to the main assessment only, not cumulatively.
Visual Amenity: **Nighttime assessment**	• Night time working is not anticipated to be required and proposed buildings are not expected to be illuminated at night during normal operation. There would be emergency floodlights installed for health and safety purposes, but these would not be permanently lit. The access roads would also not be lit under normal operation. As such, there are no anticipated impacts from light pollution as a result of the Proposed Development and a night-time visual assessment has therefore been scoped out of this assessment.

Limitations and Assumptions

8.2.56 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.

8.2.57 **Figures 8.1 and 8.2:** ZTV – 10 km and ZTV – 5 km respectively are based on 'bare ground' and do not take into account the screening effects of existing 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 ZTVs in **Figures 8.1 and 8.2** present the worst-case scenario.

8.2.58 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, based on what can be seen of them from the adjacent public highway.

8.2.59 The assessment does not consider the landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Development on the proposed Belladrum Estate should it successfully become designated as a Garden and Design Landscape. However, visual effects are considered and assessed for recreational receptors attending Belladrum Tartan Heart Festival in line with the current baseline.

8.2.60 Following consultation with THC, the assessment of viewpoints 1 and viewpoint 2 (only) will consider an additional scenario at Operation year 7 and are represented in **Figure 8.12 – 8.39 Viewpoint Photography and Visualisations.**

8.3 Baseline Conditions

Landscape

The Site & Surrounding Context

Topography and Hydrology

8.3.1 The Site as a whole (as defined by the application boundary) is situated south of the A831, on the south facing side of the broad valley of the River Beauly. The core of the Site lies on a hill approximately on the 140 m contour, falling to approximately 130 m AOD at the southeast and south edge of the Site, on rising ground just below the ridgeline of Torr Mor and overlooking the valley of the Teanacoil Burn and Brulach burn.

8.3.2 The River Beauly is a major watercourse and noticeable feature within the study area. It meanders as it flows east, passing to the south of Beauly and into the Beauly Firth. There are also numerous small watercourses and burns to the north and south which drain into the River Beauly.

Land cover and Land Use

8.3.3 The Site itself contains primarily pastoral fields bounded by scattered trees, scrub, and post and wire fencing or rough timber fencing. A woodland belt (part of Ruttle Wood) is located along the northern boundary and copses are located in the southwest and southeast of the Site (largely adjacent to C1106 Fanellan Road). There are also some existing properties within the Red Line Boundary (Upper Fanellan Cottages and Fanellan Croft). Immediately to the north and northeast, the Site is enclosed by Ruttle Wood, a predominantly pine plantation with some broadleaved woodland mixed in. The area immediately south and east of the Site is relatively open, with sloping pastoral and arable fields and scattered mature trees along the lines of old hedgerows.

8.3.4 The Site is crossed by a number of towers and the overhead line associated with the Beauly-Denny 400 kV OHL which form prominent vertical elements.

8.3.5 A large extent of the Study Area is covered by blocks of woodland. The northern section is covered by Farley Wood, Ruttle Wood and woods west of Torr a Bhealaich; whilst the southern section is dominated by Fanellan, Femnock, Teanacoil, Eskadale and Boblainy Woods, which all enclose the Site and form a particularly distinctive feature of the landscape pattern.

Settlement pattern

8.3.6 Settlement in the immediate vicinity of the Site is limited to a small number of farmsteads, individual cottages, and houses scattered immediately to the south, west and east along C1106 (Fanellan Road), as well as within the Red Line Boundary. Within the northeast section of the Study Area is the Far North Line railway line. Directly beyond the railway line to the north is the village of Beauly, the largest within the Study Area. Other smaller settlements within the study area include Kilmorack and Wester Balblair to the northeast, Aigas to the west and Kiltarlity to the southeast.

8.3.7 In addition to the present-day settlement, the landscape includes many visible archaeological assets including tumuli, standing stones, Beaufort Castle and the church and cemetery near Black Bridge. The historic landscape and effects thereon are discussed in **Chapter 11: Archaeology and Cultural Heritage**. It is indirectly considered here because the extensive visible archaeology not only indicates a long history of development but also contributes to the present-day landscape character.

Transport

8.3.8 The main roads within the Study Area include the A831 approximately 1 km north of the Site, and part of the Moray Firth tourist route, as well as the A833, approximately 3 km southeast of the Site at its nearest point. The A862, located c3 km northeast of the Site at its nearest point, connects the A831 and A833 around Beauly, and is a key tourist route between Inverness and the northern Scottish Highlands.

8.3.9 There is a dense network of minor and unclassified roads and tracks linking the scattered farms, as can be seen on **Figure 8.6**. C1106 (Fanellan Road), used by local residents, farm vehicles and SSEN traffic, runs through the centre of the Site.

8.3.10 A few Core Paths intersect the study area to the south of the Site, including Core Paths IN20.11 and IN20.05 merging with Core Path IN20.06 south of Beaufort Castle. The latter splits up to IN20.08 and IN20.10 on one side and IN20.07 and IN20.09 on the other side. In the area that lies between Beaufort Castle and Wester Balblair are Core Paths IN03.03 and IN03.04. To the southeast edge of the Study Area within Black Wood are Core Paths IN20.03 and IN20.04 while to the southwest edge of the Study Area near Eskadale is Core Path IN20.01.

Landscape Character Types

8.3.11 This assessment considers the effects of the Proposed Development on the character of the landscape locally, in the immediate vicinity of the Site, and at the scale of the areas identified in the NatureScot Landscape Character Assessment (2019).

8.3.12 The NatureScot Landscape Character Assessment (2019) identifies eight Landscape Character Types (LCTs) in the landscape Study Area, as shown in **Figure 8.7 Landscape Character**.

8.3.13 The Site is located partly within LCT 227: Farmed Strath – Inverness LCT, which is located at the top of a hill enclosed to the north by Ruttle Wood and Torr Mor; and partly within LCT 229: Enclosed Farmland – Inverness LCT, which is more open and runs south-east towards Fanellan to the south of the Site.

8.3.14 Immediately south of LCT 229: Enclosed Farmland, and south of Culburnie and Camault Muir, lies LCT 222: Rocky Moorland Plateau. This transitions to the northeast into the flatter lands around the edge of the Beauly Firth and LCT 342: Farmed River Plains. To the north of it, along the lower part of the southeast facing slopes of the broad valley of the River Beauly, lies LCT 346: Open Farmed Slopes, approximately 4.5 km^2 in extent which runs from Kilmorack to Clashandorran. The higher parts of the valley side transition into a strip of LCT 345: Farmed and Forested Slopes between 0.5 km and 1 km wide, then into the low summits of a large area of LCT 220: Rugged Massif and the hills of LCT 331: Rounded Rocky Hills to the north.

8.3.15 As per the scoping report, due to the scale of the LCTs, intervening vegetation, and the undulating nature of the local topography, the extent to which the Proposed Development would be perceived from these wider landscapes is limited. As a result, only the two LCTs in which the Site is located will be taken forward for further assessment in this chapter, namely:

- Enclosed Farmland (LCT 229); and
- Farmed Strath – Inverness (LCT 227).

8.3.16 These two LCTs are described further below.

LCT 229: Enclosed Farmland

8.3.17 The Enclosed Farmland LCT 229 consists of an area of north facing, sheltered, sloping farmland located to the west of Inverness. The LCT forms a transition between LCT 222: Rocky Moorland Plateau – Inverness to the south and the intensively farmed lowland plain of LCT 227: Farmed Strath-Inverness to the north.

8.3.18 Key characteristics of LCT 229 include:

- "Broad undulating glens interspersed with low, rounded ridges sloping to lower plains.
- Mixed agricultural land-use balanced with a high proportion of trees, woodlands, small scale forests and hedgerows.
- Tree cover provides varying degrees of enclosure for fields and buildings as well as a diverse mix of landscape patterns, colours and textures.
- Large areas of intensive agriculture with medium-sized geometric fields divided by rows of mature deciduous trees and woodland, with some stone dykes.
- Contrasting small scale, intimate croft lands, small rectangular fields, simple arrangement of buildings, narrow lanes, gullies and small scrubby woodlands.
- Diverse range of settlement with many small farms and crofts, several villages and estates.
- Large estate houses set in woodlands and parklands with avenues of trees, prominent in the intensive agricultural land.
- Network of major and minor roads following geometric field boundaries.
- Wide distribution and range of historic sites dating from prehistoric cairns and settlements to more recent sporting estates.
- Landform and tree cover limit long distance views, creating intrigue and screen many settlements from roads.
- Restricted views and increased sense of enclosure in crofting areas, due to the density and close proximity of vertical landscape elements."

8.3.19 **Plate 8-1** below is a photograph from within LCT 229 illustrating some of its landscape characteristics.

Plate 8-1: View north from Fanellan Road

8.3.20 LCT 229 is a glacial landscape, characterised by broad undulating glens and low rounded ridges which slope gently down towards the north to merge with the intensively farmed plains of the Moray Firth.

8.3.21 The LCT description notes that tree cover is an important component of this landscape, stating: *"Trees combine with a mix of arable and pastoral fields to create a landscape which has a broad range of colour, texture and seasonal diversity."* Broadleaf woodlands follow streams, and line banks of the meandering rives, whereas coniferous forests (small scale) are located on lower river terraces, side slopes and on areas of raised ground where conditions are less favourable for agriculture.

8.3.22 The LCT is strongly influenced by human activity, with a consistent distribution of croft housing creating a relatively populated feel to the landscape in the south. There are also large houses set in woodlands and parklands with avenues of trees to the northwest. To the northwest the landscape is intensively farmed with medium sized fields bordered by hedgerows and stone dykes. To the south, in the areas of higher ground, field patterns are smaller and linear in nature, comprised of semi-improved pasture divided by stone wall, fences, narrow lanes, gullies and small woodlands.

8.3.23 The LCT contains a diverse range of settlements, from small villages, scattered farms, and crofting townships to individual grand houses in woodlands. Villages are typically associated with road junctions and organised in a linear arrangement.

8.3.24 Visibility within the LCT tends to be limited due to the screening effect of woodland and landform, creating "*intrigue and a varying range of spaces which constantly change whilst travelling through the area*". Areas of semi enclosure convey a sense of intimacy, where attention is focussed on the immediate landscape due to the shelter created by these spaces. Areas of trees and woodland planting provide screening and visual containment for the majority of built form, which helps maintain a rural character. Similarly, views from crofting areas *"…tend to be restricted by the density and close proximity of vertical landscape elements which also increase the sense of enclosure."*

LCT 227: Farmed Strath – Inverness

Within the Study Area, LCT 227: Farmed Strath – Inverness is comprised of open farmland valley floors and a meandering river contained within steep, mainly forested and wooded slopes.

8.3.25

8.3.26 **Plate** 8-2: View south – west from the Crask of Aigas

below illustrates some of the key characteristics of this LCT.

8.3.27 Key characteristics of relevance to the Study Area include:

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

- Diversity of colour and texture added by river meanders, wetlands, damp pastures and thin bands of woodland.

Plate 8-2: View south – west from the Crask of Aigas

8.3.28 The assessment notes a strong sense of enclosure, noting that, "The consistency of the strath sides, combined with the flatness of the strath floor, creates a sense of linear enclosure, which directs distant views along the strath and allows uninterrupted views of the flanking hill slopes."

Designated and Protected Landscapes

8.3.29 **Figure 8.8 Landscape Context Plan** illustrates the landscape designations and protected areas within the Study Area.

National Scenic Area

8.3.30 The Glen Strathfarrar National Scenic Area (NSA) lies over 10 km to the west of the Site. Due to distance and screening provided by the undulating topography and tree planting, views towards the Site will be limited. As a result, the NSA has been scoped out of the assessment.

Wild Land Area

8.3.31 The Central Highlands Wild Land Area (WLA) 24 encloses Glen Strathfarrar to the north and south of the glen. The Site lies within approximately 6 km of the WLA at its nearest point. Due to distance and screening provided by the undulating topography and tree planting, views towards the Site will be limited. As a result, the WLA has been scoped out of the assessment.

Visual Introduction & Overview

8.3.32 The extent of visibility of the Proposed Development, and thus the area from which there may be visual effects, can be seen in the ZTVs (**Figures 8.1 and 8.2**). It should be noted however, that these are bare ground ZTVs that do not take account of the screening effects of woodland and forestry or built form and infrastructure. **Figure 8.3 Zone of Theoretical Visibility – 5 km with exclusions** accounts for the screening effects of vegetation and built form.

8.3.33 As shown in **Figure 8.3**, even with consideration of vegetation and built form, there would potentially be extensive visibility to the south and east of the Site, across the sloping land beyond C1106 (Fanellan Road), as well as to the north east extending along the River Beauly valley. By contrast, visibility to the north and west is generally more contained due to the vegetation within Ruttle Wood and Aigas Community Forest.

8.3.34 Whilst the ZTV indicates visibility beyond the 5 km Study Area, as discussed in **Section 8.2.18**, above, in order to focus on potentially sensitive receptors, the Study Area for the visual assessment is the area covered by the

ZTV, cut off at 5 km from the substation platform boundary. The discussion of receptors in the following paragraphs is limited to this 5 km Study Area to focus on potentially significant effects.

Visual Receptors

8.3.35 For the purpose of the assessment, 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.

8.3.36 The visual receptors in the Study Area are discussed below, identified as residential, recreational, transport and commercial receptors.

Residential receptors

8.3.37 As noted in the landscape baseline above, lower lying land in the Study Area is extensively settled. To the north-east the hamlet of Wester Balblair is located on the flood plain off the A831 and A862, whilst the largest settlement in the Study Area – Beauly – is located further northeast along the A862. To the south and southeast, small clusters of hamlets, villages and individual properties are located on the sloping valley sides including: Fanellan, Culburnie, Drumbagarrachan, Kiltarlity, Camault Muir and Glaichbea are located off the network of local roads. To the north and west, settlement follows lower-lying land alongside the River Beauly with the Crask of Aigas located to the west off the A831 in a densely vegetated area, and Kilmorack to the north, located near Black Bridge which crosses the River Beauly. Individual cottages, houses and farmsteads are scattered fairly evenly along local roads in the area.

8.3.38 Because of this broad scatter of settlement, the Proposed Development would be visible, to varying degrees, to a range of residential receptors across the undulating land to the south, east, and northeast of the Site in particular. Of these, approximately 567 residential receptors are spread fairly evenly along the local road network and would be located within one kilometre of the Site boundary fence. Approximately 21 residential receptors are located within 500 m of the Site boundary fence. The nearest residential receptors are Fanellan Croft and Upper Fanellan Cottages, located in the Red Line Boundary to the north of C1106 Fanellan Road, and Fanellan Cottages located in the Red Line Boundary to the south of C1106 Fanellan Road. Two further houses are located southwest of the Site Boundary off C1106 Fanellan Road at Bredaig and Sunnybrae, with a further cluster of properties at the junction between the C1106 (Fanellan Road) near Butlers Cottage. It is noted that Upper Fanellan Cottages is proposed to be demolished as part of the Proposed Development, so is not considered within this Chapter (see **Volume 2, Chapter 3** for further details).

8.3.39 For the purposes of assessment, residential receptors are considered as groups and clusters of properties, mainly based on the naming of places on the Ordnance Survey Landranger map. The degree to which properties are grouped is inversely proportional to their distance from the Site as well as topography/ potential visibility identified. Nearer the Site, where more potential for significant effects is anticipated, the grouping is done at a finer grain with smaller groups, except where topography suggests limited visibility. Further from the Site, where fewer significant effects are anticipated the grouping is done at a coarser grain, with larger groups, except where topography suggests visibility may be greater.

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

[7] Numbers of receptors are given as 'approximate' because in a number of locations there are small clusters of buildings where it is difficult to distinguish the exact number of separate residential receptors.

Residents within 1 km

- Residents of Fanellan Cottages and Fanellan Croft (within the Site)
- Residents of Butlers Cottage, Broomhill & Hill View (adjacent to the Site boundary)
- Residents of Fanellan
- Residents of Bredaig and Sunnybrae
- Residents of Hughton
- Residents of Culburnie
- Residents of Kilmorack

Residents between 1 km and 2 km from the Site boundary

- Residents of Torgormack and Broallan
- Residents of Wester Balblair
- Residents of Ruisaurie
- Residents of Crask of Aigas
- Residents of Crerag

Residents between 2 km and 5 km from the Site boundary

- Residents of Eskadale
- Residents of Camault Muir and Glaichbea
- Residents of Kiltarlity and Tomnacross
- Residents of Beauly
- Residents of Farley

Recreational & visitor receptors

8.3.41 The two main visitor and recreational receptor groups are visitors to Beaufort Castle and visitors to Belladrum Tartan Heart Festival to the southeast. There would be limited views from core paths around Beaufort Castle and the remainder of the Estate as recreational users of these footpaths are likely to be focussed on the immediate landscape rather than wider views. They have therefore been scoped out of the assessment. Additionally, **Figure 8.3** illustrates that visibility will be limited due to the intervening vegetation located south of the Proposed Development. Similarly, recreational users of the River Beauly are likely to be focussed on their water-based leisure activities such as fishing, sailing and kayaking and the immediate landscape rather than wider views and therefore have been scoped out of the assessment.

8.3.42 People visiting the Kilmorack Cemetery (New – now an art gallery); and Kiltarlity/ Tomnacross Cemetery are likely to be focused on the immediate landscape surrounding the church and cemeteries and have been scoped out of the assessment. The ZTV (**Figure 8.3**) also demonstrates that there would be no visibility from the ruined Church at Black Bridge (Old Kilmorack burial ground) due to intervening topography and vegetation separating the burial ground from the Site. People visiting this site have therefore also been scoped out of this assessment.

8.3.43 Belladrum Tartan Heart Festival attracts a large number of visitors each year and lies approximately 4 km south - east of the Proposed Development. Given the nature of the festival, the focus of visitors would be primarily within the festival grounds. This, along with blocks of woodland surrounding the Site and between the Belladrum Tartan Heart Festival site and the Site, as well as the distance, is unlikely to result in any significant visual effects. However, at the request of The Highland Council, receptors at Belladrum have been included in this assessment.

8.3.44 Recreational users of core paths IN03.01 and IN03.02 (within Beauly) have been scoped out of the assessment as views will be largely obscured by built form and woodland planting in Beauly.

8.3.45 Recreational users of Forestry Commission Access Land have also been scoped out of the assessment due to the wooded nature of these areas strongly limiting any intervisibility with the wider landscape.

8.3.46 There are no Great Trails or National Cycle Routes within the Study Area.

8.3.47 The key recreational and visitor receptors who may therefore experience a view and are scoped into this assessment are:

- Recreational users of core paths IN20.01;
- Recreational users of core paths IN20.11 and IN20.05;
- Recreational users of core paths IN20.06, IN20.08 and IN20.10;
- Recreational users of core paths IN20.07 and IN20.09; and
- Visitors to Belladrum Festival.

Transport receptors

8.3.48 Within the Study Area, the Proposed Development would be visible from many points along local roads (albeit heavily filtered by topography and vegetation) including C1106 (Fanellan Road) which runs through and adjacent to the Site; the A831 located to the north and west of the Site and the C1106 road which connects the A831 with C1106 Fanellan Road via Black Bridge. Other major 'A' roads include the A862 which connects the A831 with Beauly and Inverness; and the A833 which connects the A862 southwards. There is also an established network of minor and unclassified winding narrow roads with passing places that link the scattered development across the whole Study Area and are used by both commuters and tourists.

8.3.49 People travelling to Beauly centre via the train also have an appreciation of wider views due to the nature of their travel. Views towards the Proposed Development will be filtered by intervening vegetation, and views will be transient from the moving train, but glimpsed views of the Proposed Development are likely to be available in the background of the view.

8.3.50 **Figure 8.6** illustrates there are two tourist routes: The North Coast 500 and the Moray Firth Route, both located to the northeast of the study area near Beauly. Due to intervening vegetation and topography, theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development is limited as shown on **Figure 8.3**; as a result, these receptors have been scoped out of the assessment.

8.3.51 The key transport receptors who may experience a view and are scoped into this assessment are:

<u>Major 'A' Roads</u>

- Road users travelling along the A831,
- Road users travelling along the A833,
- Road users travelling along the A862,

<u>Minor roads to the east</u>

- Road users travelling along C1106 Fanellan Road and Black Bridge connecting them with the A831;

<u>Minor roads to the north</u>

- Road users travelling into Wester Balblair;
- Road users of minor roads connecting Ruilick, Ruisaurie and Drumindorsair to the A831;
- Road users of the route between Torgormack and Drumindorsair;

- Road users of the connecting route between Farley and Torgormack;

Minor roads to the south

- Road users of the existing route between Culburnie and Fanellan;
- Rural road users of the route connecting Crerag with Culburnie;
- Road users of the connecting routes between and connecting the A833, Kiltarlity and Tomnacross (including Allarburn Drive and Post Office Brae);

Minor roads to the west

- Road users of the exiting residential road corridor connecting Crask of Aigas to the A831; and

Railways

- Rail users travelling along the railway towards Beauly.

Commercial receptors/ Users of Indoor facilities

8.3.52 The are limited commercial receptors in the study area, typically concentrated in villages such as Kilmorack (e.g. the art gallery and Post Office), and Kiltarlity (such as the post office and village store). As places of work, the majority of these receptors are focussed on inward facing views rather than the wider landscape. They are considered to be of low sensitivity and would therefore be highly unlikely to be significantly affected by the Proposed Development. As a result, these receptors are scoped out of the assessment. There are a number of farms and B&Bs which are also residential receptors, and they are therefore considered as such (being of higher sensitivity and scoped into this assessment).

8.3.53 The Proposed Development would be visible from Beauly Substation. As workers within Beauly substation would be focused on their work rather than the wider landscape, and as the Proposed Development would be very similar in character to their workplace, these receptors are considered to be of low sensitivity and highly unlikely to be significantly affected. They are thus not considered further in this assessment.

8.3.54 Workers include commercial receptors noted above, and workers/ visitors to/ users of indoor community facilities such as primary schools, libraries, and village halls. Users of these facilities are generally focussed on inward facing views rather than the wider landscape and therefore have lower sensitivity. However. access to these facilities is via the road network and which typically include views towards, and appreciation of, the wider landscape and therefore consideration of users of community facilities are considered under transport receptors.

8.3.55 There are consequently no commercial receptors / Users of Indoor facilities considered within this assessment.

Viewpoints

8.3.56 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.

8.3.57 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 clearer or more representative viewpoint was obtainable or where necessary to ensure a safe location.

8.3.58 A description of each viewpoint, details of the receptors which have a view similar to that from the viewpoint, and an assessment of the effects anticipated from the viewpoint is given in **Appendix 8.4**. The viewpoints agreed with the statutory consultees (The Highland Council and NatureScot) to illustrate this assessment are shown on **Figure 8.6** and listed in **Table 8-5: Representative Viewpoints** below.

Table 8-5: Representative Viewpoints

Viewpoint (VP) and type	Description	Receptor(s) for whom the VP is representative	Distance & Direction from Proposed Development (approximate)
VP 1 Illustrative Viewpoint	View looking west from C1106 (Fanellan Road) at Fanellan Cottages	Road users & adjacent residential receptors	North-West / 0 m
VP 2 Representative Viewpoint	View looking north from near Sunnybrae and Bredaig	Road users & adjacent residential receptors	North / 231 m
VP 3 Representative Viewpoint	View looking south-west from the north-western edge of Wester Balblair	Road users & adjacent residential receptors	South-West / 1.9 km
VP 4 Representative Viewpoint	View looking south-west from Ruisaurie	Road users & adjacent residential receptors	South-West / 2.4 km
VP 5 Representative Viewpoint	View looking north-west from Tomnacross primary School entrance (south of Kiltarlity)	Road users, Recreational & adjacent residential receptors	North-West / 2.0 km
VP 6 Representative Viewpoint	View looking north from the western edge of Culburnie	Road users & adjacent residential receptors	North / 660m
VP 7 Representative Viewpoint	View looking north-east from near Crerag	Road users & adjacent residential receptors	North-East / 1.2 km
VP 8 Illustrative Viewpoint	View looking south-west from Beauly train Station car park	Rail and Road Users & adjacent residential receptors	South-West / 3.1 km
VP 9 Representative Viewpoint	View from Togormack and Broallan	Road users & adjacent residential receptors	South / 1.7 km
VP 10 Representative Viewpoint	View looking south-west from Kilmorack	Road users & adjacent residential receptors	South-West / 500 km
VP 11 Representative Viewpoint	View north-west from Camault Muir and Glaichbea	Road users & adjacent residential receptors	North-West / 2.4 km
VP 12 Representative Viewpoint	View looking north-east from Crask of Aigas	Road users & adjacent residential receptors	East / 1.1 km
VP 13 Representative Viewpoint	View looking south-east from Farley	Residents	South / 2.1 km

Viewpoint (VP) and type	Description	Receptor(s) for whom the VP is representative	Distance & Direction from Proposed Development (approximate)
VP 14 Illustrative Viewpoint	View looking north-west from Belladrum Tartan Heart Festival Grounds	Recreational Users	South-East / 2.4m

8.4 Future Baseline

8.4.1 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 the Emerging Energy Technologies Fund and to support renewable sources, all of which could change the character of the landscape.

8.4.2 Substations with grid connection capacity, such as Fanellan Hub, may attract energy storage developments and as such, applications for battery or other storage developments in the area would not be unexpected. A full list of cumulative sites is set out in **Chapter 5, Table 5.2.**

8.4.3 In the event that the Proposed Development does not proceed, it is likely that the majority of the landscape and visual baseline within the planning application boundary would remain similar to that of the current baseline (agricultural use). In this instance, ecological conditions associated with agricultural land (arable and grazed pasture), are unlikely to significantly change over the coming years. Although vegetation species abundance and distribution within the planning application boundary may fluctuate, it is assumed that there would be no significant changes to species composition or geographical extent of vegetation cover if the Site remains in agricultural use. Where management lapses over time, natural succession of habitats from grassland to scrub and woodland may occur. However, as future conditions would include the move to carbon neutrality and achieving net zero energy goals, there is potential that the land would be developed for a renewable energy project, or that the existing OHL will be retained/replaced beyond their current lifespan.

8.4.4 A more subtle change which may affect the landscape baseline is changes to deer management regimes, and commercial thinning regimes of plantation woodland which could promote and/or suppress the natural regeneration of woodland. Ruttle Wood has had thinning applications previously and may therefore be subject to future thinning practices.

8.4.5 Small fluctuations in population density in the surrounding area may occur, slightly increasing traffic on the surrounding road network, but the extent of change is not expected to be significant.

8.4.6 With forthcoming changes in the Scottish Government's 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.

8.5 Sensitive Receptors

8.5.1 The identified sensitive landscape receptors to be taken forward to assessment are as follows:

- LCT 227 Farmed Strath – Inverness; and
- LCT 229 Enclosed Farmland

8.5.2 For visual amenity, the identified sensitive receptors are as follows:

- Residential Receptors within 1 km:

- Residents of Fanellan Cottages and Fanellan Croft;
- Residents of Butlers Cottage, Broomhill & Hill View;
- Residents of Fanellan;
- Residents of Bredaig and Sunnybrae;
- Residents of Hughton;
- Residents of Culburnie;
- Residents of Kilmorack;

- Residential Receptors between 1 km and 2 km from the Site boundary:
  - Residents of Togormoack and Broallan;
  - Residents of Wester Balblair;
  - Residents of Ruisaurie;
  - Residents of Crask of Aigas;
  - Residents of Crerag;
- Residential Receptors between 2 km and 5 km from the Site boundary:
  - Residents of Eskadale;
  - Residents of Camault Muir and Glaichbea;
  - Residents of Kiltarlity and Tomnacross;
  - Residents of Beauly;
  - Residents of Farley;
- Recreational Receptors:
  - Recreational users of core paths IN20.01;
  - Recreational users of core paths IN20.11 and IN20.05;
  - Recreational users of core paths IN20.06, IN20.08 and IN20.10;
  - Recreational users of core paths IN20.07 and IN20.09;
  - Visitors to Belladrum Tartan Heart Festival grounds;
- Transport Receptors:
  - Users of Major 'A' Roads:
    - Road users travelling along the A831,
    - Road users travelling along the A833,
    - Road users travelling along the A862,
  - Users of Minor roads to the east:
    - Road users travelling along C1106 (Fanellan Road) and Black Bridge connecting them with the A831;
  - Users of Minor roads to the north:
    - Road users travelling into Wester Balblair;
    - Road users of minor roads connecting Ruilick, Ruisaurie and Drumindorsair to the A831;
    - Road users of the route between Torgormack and Drumindorsair;
    - Road users of the connecting route between Farley and Torgormack;
  - Users of Minor roads to the south:

- Road users of the existing route between Culburnie and Fanellan;
- Rural road users of the route connecting Crerag with Culburnie;
- Road users of the connecting routes between and connecting the A833, Kiltarlity and Tomnacross (including Allarburn Drive and Post Office Brae);

- Users of Minor roads to the west:
  - Road users of the exiting residential road corridor connecting Crask of Aigas to the A831; and
- Railways:
  - Rail users travelling along the railway towards Beauly.

8.6 Potential Impacts

Potential Landscape Impacts

8.6.1 The Proposed Development may affect the landscape in a number of ways, as outlined below.

Construction Period – Temporary Impacts

8.6.2 During the construction period there may be landscape impacts from a number of sources including:

- The presence of construction compounds, laydown areas and temporary spoil heaps;
- Large machinery moving about, with flashing lights and reversing beepers, and potentially tall temporary structures such as cranes;
- Presence of people working at the site, and driving to/from their temporary accommodation to their temporary place of work at the Site;
- The active change underway as development progresses and the gradual emergence of the Proposed Development buildings and landform;
- Light in a currently dark landscape, from floodlighting to allow a full working day in winter; 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.

8.6.3 The construction period assessment considers the temporary effects of the construction activities. The long-term effects of the introduction of the Proposed Development are considered as operational period permanent impacts, although it is acknowledged that they occur progressively during the construction period.

Operational Period - Permanent Impacts

8.6.4 The Proposed Development may give rise to permanent impacts on the landscape for a number of reasons, including:

- The introduction of a complex of large buildings and infrastructure (such as busbars) with an industrial appearance into a rural landscape and adjacent to Ruttle Wood at the top of the hill;
- The permanent loss of landscape features such as woodland planting, plantation woodland and areas of open agricultural grassland;
- The creation of new landforms and changes to the existing landform;
- Alteration of the pattern of field boundaries;
- Occasional vehicle lights and occasional site or security lighting at night in a previously dark landscape; and
- Some diversification of habitat through introducing natural vegetation, from wetland meadow grassland within SuDs, wildflower grass meadow, and broadleaf woodland.

Potential Visual Impacts

8.6.5 The Proposed Development may affect the visual amenity of receptors in the surrounding area in a number of ways, including:

Construction Period

- The installation of a large construction compound and the new access roads;
- The movement and activity of large construction machinery within the site, usually with flashing hazard lights;
- Increased vehicle movements on surrounding access roads for construction workers, Site visitors and movement of vehicles carrying plant and materials;
- Views of potentially large plant and equipment such as cranes;
- New landforms, particularly noticeable because of changes over a short time-scale, and the extent of bare earth visible;
- Temporary material stockpiles ; and
- Floodlighting of areas for evening and morning working during the winter.

Operational Period - Permanent Impacts

8.6.6 The Proposed Development may affect the visual amenity of receptors in the surrounding area in a number of ways, including:

- Introduction of a complex of large buildings that may stand out or intrude in the view;
- Changes to landform that may stand out in the view;
- The loss of some areas of existing woodland, and the introduction of new blocks of woodland;
- Views of occasional vehicle lights and site or security lighting at night; and
- The increased visual presence of development, such that development forms a larger part of the view or is incongruous in the view

8.7 Mitigation

8.7.1 As discussed in **Chapter 4: The Site Selection Process and Alternatives**, a substation site selection study was carried out by SSEN Transmission in 2023. This identified the Site as the optimum location for the Proposed Development, as being the best on balance when assessing a number of environmental, technical and cost considerations, including the risk of adverse landscape and visual effects, and to minimise the overall increases in infrastructure across the area. Whilst not an optimum location in either landscape or visual terms, the site enables a level of landscape mitigation to be achieved.

8.7.2 As part of the iterative design process the landscape team have regularly consulted with the project engineers and design team to help inform options for embedding mitigation into the design of the Proposed Development and have also taken into consideration environmental constraints identified through surveys e.g. the identification of three veteran trees within the site around which the landscape form was designed in order to protect the trees and their root protection areas.

8.7.3 Feedback from public consultation events has also been taken into consideration with colour suggestions incorporated into the Colour Study and noting the preference for as much native planting as possible.

Landscape Design Strategy

8.7.4 The Proposed Development lies at the top of a hill adjacent to Ruttle Wood. Immediately to the north and west of the Site, the land is well wooded, being comprised of broadleaved woodland, plantation and areas of Ancient Woodland (LEPO) running down to the banks of the River Beauly. Land is much more open to the southeast as it slopes down into the valley. Achieving a design solution that completely screens the substation is not feasible

due to the scale of the Proposed Development and the topographic relationship between the visual receptors and the development.

8.7.5 The design strategy, which forms part of the environmental commitments, aims to:

- Site the Proposed Development and create new landform in such a way as to help integrate it into the local landscape - so that to most observers the Proposed Development appears to sit within the existing landscape at the top of the hill;
- Reduce the extent to which the substation buildings would be visible through a combination of landform and architectural design to a degree sufficient to avoid adverse visual effects on all but the most local residential receptors;
- Introduce landscape features e.g. landform, woodland and 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 locate the Proposed Development at as low a level as technically feasible (whilst considering drainage requirements and material balance) cutting into the hillside, then reshaping the material arising to create a naturalistic new landform around the south and east sides of the Site to give the appearance that the Proposed Development sits within the hillside.

8.7.7 This siting and landform has been designed to ensure that the Proposed Development is largely screened by the new landscape forms for most receptors and will ensure that buildings are only visible against the skyline in a minority of cases. **Appendix 8.5: Colour Study** demonstrates potential colour considerations on those parts of the buildings that remain visible will help make them visually 'recessive' - blending into the background as far as practical.

8.7.8 The following paragraphs set out a general description of the landscape mitigation adopted in the design. This is illustrated in **Figure 8.11 Landscape Mitigation Plan.**

Site Platform

8.7.9 The Site platform would be located at a level of 127 m AOD for both the proposed Switching Station and Converter Station. The Site slopes from north-west to south-east, with the Site platform similarly orientated. The north-western half of the site platform would be cut in by an average of approximately 10 m below existing ground level and built up by between seven and 12 m at the south-eastern half where the ground drops away.

8.7.10 This is a level that is technically feasible whilst ensuring positive drainage (no pumping or off-platform pipes), maintaining the existing land drains, where necessary, creating new SuDS ponds downstream of the new landforms, and generating sufficient material to create the new landforms whilst minimising import of stone and spoil.

Landform design

8.7.11 New naturalistic landforms would be created to provide immediate screening of the Proposed Development from a number of key views as illustrated on **Figure 8.10. Landscape Sections**. 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.

8.7.12 The main landforms would be located between the development platform and C1106 (Fanellan Road), screening many views of the Proposed Development from the south and southeast. From C1106 (Fanellan

Road) at 110 m AOD, the land rises gradually to the north to Ruttle Wood and Torr Mor at between 152 and 156 m AOD. The development platform levels sit below the existing ground levels of the northern part of the Site, such that views from the north, north-east and north-west remain largely obscured by the existing rising landform and mature woodland of Torr Mor and Ruttle Wood. The proposed landforms would foreshorten views to the south, helping to screen the built form behind.

8.7.13 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 as far as is practicable; deliver a workable drainage solution; and is constrained by the land available and maintenance requirements. Even so, the landforms would mimic the existing landform to the north of the Site (Torr Mor), with irregular rounded profiles. The new landforms would have an average crest height of between 8 and 10 m above existing ground (i.e. with a crest height at between 143 and 145 m AOD) but would require steeper slopes than is common in the existing local landscape due to landowner restrictions. They would as far as possible take the shape of naturalistic small rolling hills, with gradients in the order of 1 in 3 where visible to the public. This reduces land take for the landform and enables more sympathetic gradual slope angles to be used on publicly visible slopes.

8.7.14 These landforms (minus mitigation planting) would ensure that approximately 1/2 of the height of the tallest buildings are screened in views from C1106 (Fanellan Road).

8.7.15 The final detail of this landform will be developed on site by eye under the supervision of a landscape inspector as this degree of subtlety cannot be easily translated into 3D setting-out coordinates. Indicative cross-sections are provided in **Figure 8.10 Landscape Sections**.

8.7.16 The new landforms[8] will be planted with native woodland planting to assist further with screening and integration (assumed 2/3rds screened and 100% in some views from the west.). The land in between the new landforms and C1106 (Fanellan Road) will be returned to agricultural use (semi-improved grazing) on completion of the works, so that they are maintained with an appearance similar to the surrounding landscape.

Habitat Creation

8.7.17 A variety of habitats are proposed, informed by the findings of **Chapter 9, Ecology and Nature Conservation** and the **Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)** calculations which have been made for the Site.

8.7.18 On the proposed landforms, areas of woodland and woodland edge planting would be installed which would, over time, further help screen the Proposed Development whilst providing additional habitat and connectivity for wildlife with existing and adjacent habitat.

8.7.19 Areas that cannot be planted because of technical constraints (OHL corridors, site security zone) would be seeded with a species-rich neutral grass and wildflower seed mix designed to provide a sward of natural appearance using commonly found local species, including species attractive to pollinators such as the great yellow bumblebee.

8.7.20 The margins and banks of the SuDS basins would be seeded with a wet meadow or pond edge seed mix, whilst the bases of the SuDS basins would be seeded with a wetland seed mix such as Emorsgate EM8 Meadow Mixture for Wetlands.

8.7.21 Areas to be handed back to the landowner would be seeded with a grass seed mix designed to provide a semi-improved sward of natural appearance, similar to the surrounding land, whilst being suitable for grazing by sheep. Small clumps of trees and shrubs, as well as hedgerows, could also be introduced to provide additional

[8] At least the outside faces. The inside faces may be kept under SSE control for security and safety reasons.

longer-term screening or to soften the appearance of the new landforms, subject to agreement with the landowner who will manage the grazed areas.

Fencing

8.7.22 A 4.2 m high palisade security fence would enclose the site platform, and within the new landforms so that it is less visible from the outside. It is, however, likely to be glimpsed from the south where there is a break in the landform to allow the proposed 400 kV Beauly to Peterhead Overhead Line to connect in to the Site. As such, a passing view would be present from C1106 (Fanellan Road), in the south of the Site.

8.7.23 A 2.4 m (maximum height) high deer fence is required to protect the new planting which, in line with operational requirements, would be installed close to the site perimeter to protect the mitigation planting. Existing hedgerows, hedgerow trees and tree groups around the site perimeter would be retained where possible, with the deer fence installed to the inside of these to avoid the fence becoming a feature in its own right.

Site access

8.7.24 The Site would be accessed along a new road from the eastern end of C1106 (Fanellan Road), just to the west of the junction with the C1106 (Fanellan Road) opposite the properties at Broom Hill and Hill View. Its location is determined in part by the agricultural use of the land. Sections of the access road will be on embankment up to about 1 m high. The slopes of this embankment will be slackened and rounded out to create a more naturalistic form and allow them to be returned to agriculture as part of the adjacent fields. Likewise, if any areas of the access require to be in cutting this will be designed with slack slopes to enable a return to agriculture.

8.7.25 Where the Site access meets C1106 (Fanellan Road) a new bell-mouth entrance will be required. The geometry of this is partly determined by the turning radii of delivery vehicles for construction or future maintenance, as well as the need to ensure water does not run off onto C1106 (Fanellan Road) and, potentially, visibility splays and compliance with the Highland Council road specification and design requirements to be agreed with them. Within these constraints, the entrance (which will be larger than an ordinary road junction because of the size of equipment to be delivered) will be made as small as practically feasible.. The Site gates near the roadside will be field gates.

Drainage Design

SUDs Basins and drainage

8.7.26 The Proposed Development incorporates five SUDs basins around the Site to attenuate surface water runoff flows before connecting into nearby watercourses. Each basin would be designed with a naturalistic watercourse profile. Existing land drains will also be diverted to outfall into the SuDS basins as part of the works.

Colour Strategy

8.7.27 Due to the scale of the Proposed Development, it was considered appropriate at this early stage to consider the colours to be used for the buildings. An Environmental Colour Assessment was undertaken to identify the natural colours present in the surrounding landscape during different seasons. Using these, a colour strategy was developed and will form part of a Design Code for the further detailed design development. Further information is given in **Chapter 3: Description of the Proposed Development.** The selected colour hues have been used to assist in preparation of the visualisations illustrated in **Appendix 8.5 Colour Study**, which provides three potential colour options using a combination of the following colours:

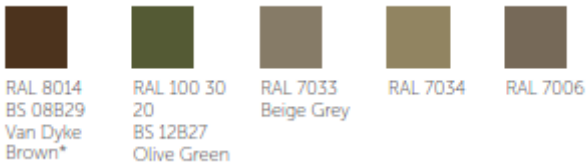

Plate 8.3: Colour Palette Extract

8.7.28 Public feedback from consultation events included suggestions for greens, browns and blacks, or a mix, with the prominent requests noted for subdued greens and browns which have been included in the colour palette. The above colours also include a mid-grey colour, as requested by The Highland Council, along with browns, greens and grey.

Mitigation Commitments

Embedded Mitigation

8.7.29 The landscape mitigation is shown on **Figure 8.11 Landscape Mitigation Plan** and includes the mitigation measures set out in the Landscape Design Strategy above. These embedded, and committed, design mitigation measures are set out more specifically in the below table.

Table 8-6: Landscape Mitigation Measures

Mitigation Reference	Description
LV1	The site platform levels will be set below existing ground level at levels that between them generate sufficient fill to allow the creation of landforms that screen on average at least 60 % of the tallest proposed buildings on each platform in at least 60% of the views from C1106 (Fanellan Road).
LV2	New landforms will be created in the area between the development platforms and C1106 (Fanellan Road) that will meet the screening requirements of LV1 and, in conjunction with further screen landforms along the eastern side of the site, allow as close as possible to a balance of cut and fill to minimise, as much as possible, requirements for material import or export.
LV3	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 up to 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 where required.
LV4	The ends of new landforms will be tapered out at a gradient of not more than I in 3 slopes to avoid sharp and un-natural transitions between landforms.
LV5	Land over underground cable easements will be graded to no more than 1 in 10 slopes due to technical restrictions on cable alignment.
LV6	The final shape of the new landforms will be determined on Site, by eye, by an experienced landscape architect employed directly by SSEN Transmission to ensure that the finished form meets the descriptions given above. The degree of subtlety cannot be easily translated into 3D setting-out coordinates.

Mitigation Reference	Description
LV7	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.
LV8	A series of detention basins will be created around the Site to attenuate surface water runoff before entering natural watercourses present to the north and west of the Site.
LV9	Parts of the SuDS areas will be seeded with appropriate wetland and marginal species for functional, visual and biodiversity reasons.
LV10	Existing vegetation of native hedgerow, hedgerow trees, tree groups and belts will be retained wherever possible to maximise retained biodiversity.
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	All areas of land temporarily disturbed by the construction works will be lightly cultivated and graded ready for seeding, in accordance with the **Landscape Mitigation Plan at Figure 8.11.**
LV13	Small quantities of rowan and elm may be introduced locally where microclimatic conditions are suitable to increase biodiversity and add local interest. Species used would be selected from those listed in **Table 8-8**.
LV14	An Environmental Colour Assessment set out in **Appendix 8.5** has been undertaken and a colour strategy design code will be produced for the detailed design of the different elements of the Fanellan Hub to ensure a coordinated approach between developers. The aim of the colour strategy is to further mitigate potential adverse visual effects. The colours selected would aim to ensure the Proposed Development is not viewed as a single mass of built form but broken into smaller portions and sensitive to the natural hues found within the rural landscape.
LV15	Regular monitoring of both earthworks and planting will be undertaken by a professional, experienced Landscape Architect during the construction phase and the initial establishment periods to ensure the works are carried out to an appropriate standard. Monitoring to continue during Year 5, 10 and 15 of operation to enable assessment of the success of the planting in screening the development as anticipated within the LVIA.
LV16	An outline Landscape and Habitat Management Plan has been prepared and will be updated at detailed design stage and on completion of construction to ensure the long-term objectives of the LVIA and BNG mitigation are met.

Table 8-7: Indicative Species to be used in permanently wet areas and pond margins

Common Name	Latin Name
Permanently wet areas and pond margins	
Reed Canary-grass	Phalaris arundinacea
Common Reed	Phragmites australis
Common spike-rush	Eleocharis palustris

Common Name	Latin Name
Jointed rush	Juncus articulatus
Floating sweet-grass	Glyceria fluitans
Pond margins only	
Meadowsweet	Filipendula ulmaria
Ragged robin	Lychnis flos-cuculi
Yellow flag	Iris pseudacorus
Marsh marigold	Caltha palustris
Brooklime	Veronica beccabunga

Table 8-8: Species used in new woodland planting

Common Name	Latin Name
Silver Birch	Betula pendula
Goat Willow	Salix caprea agg.
Sessile Oak	Quercus petraea
Additional species that may be used to the rear	
Blackthorn	Prunus spinosa
Wild Cherry	Prunus avium
Hawthorn	Crataegus monogyna
Hazel	Corylus avellana
Rowan	Sorbus aucuparia
Elm	Ulmus procera

Mitigation during Construction

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

- 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.

8.7.31 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 and in accordance with the Landscape Mitigation Plan and specifications.

8.7.32 The construction compounds are proposed to be located to the southeast of the substation platform, in an area which is generally lower in the landscape which reduces wider visibility.

8.8 Assessment of Likely Impacts and Effects

8.8.1 The paragraphs below set out the potential landscape effects of the Proposed Development incorporating the mitigation described and committed above in **Section 8.5 Mitigation Measures** and as illustrated on **Figure 8.11 Landscape Mitigation Plan.**

Landscape Assessment

Nature of change

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 north of C1106 (Fanellan Road), within the context of the existing OHL.

8.8.3 The Proposed Development lies within the boundary of LCT 227: Farmed Strath – Inverness, and LCT 229: Enclosed Farmland. The Site itself is primarily pastoral fields bounded by scattered trees, scrub and post and wire fencing or rough timber fencing. Immediately to the north and northeast, the Site is enclosed by Ruttle Wood, a mixed woodland, predominantly pine plantation and partly broadleaved woodland. The area immediately south of the Site is relatively open to sloping pastoral and arable fields with scattered mature trees along the lines of old hedgerows.

8.8.4 The Proposed Development would introduce a cluster of large buildings of an industrial nature into a rural landscape, albeit one which already includes many clusters of domestic and farm buildings and an existing overhead line. The Proposed Development would involve reshaping the interface between the hill and the lower land, creating a large level development platform on the crest of a hill, albeit cutting in to the top of the hill and surrounded by landscape landforms reflecting the wider hummocky landscape. The development platform would be surrounded by landscape landforms which reflect surrounding contours with a vegetation pattern that relates to existing landscape character.

8.8.5 This assessment considers the effect on the landscape at the scale of the individual NatureScot defined LCTs. 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 within the assessment.

8.8.6 A detailed assessment of effects on landscape character is set out in **Appendix 8.3: Landscape Character Effects**. A summary overview of likely effects is provided below.

LCT 227: Farmed Strath – Inverness

Landscape Sensitivity

8.8.7 LCT 227: Farmed Strath – Inverness occurs in two locations and covers an area of open and farmed / wooded slopes and plains surrounding Inverness. The majority of LCT 227 is undesignated except for Culloden Battlefield located over 20 km to the east of the Site.

8.8.8 The rural and wooded character of the landscape means that this part of the LCT would be susceptible to a development requiring vegetation clearance, earthworks and the construction of a large flat platform. However, the dense vegetation pattern of conifer plantation, tree belts and woodland within Ruttle Wood and Torr Mor provide screening. The susceptibility to change is considered High.

8.8.9 There are no landscape designations in the LCT although Culloden Battlefield is located in Strathnairn (outside the study area). A reasonable number of people (including tourists) pass through the LCT on the A831, whilst the River Beauly is popular for recreation. Users will be familiar with the landscape and any changes to it.

8.8.10 The landscape may be considered ordinary and commonplace though attractive and, as such its value is considered Medium**.** Overall, considering the value and susceptibility and the local characteristic landscape features, the sensitivity of LCT 227 to the Proposed Development is considered to be **High.**

Assessment: Construction Period (temporary effects)

8.8.11 During the construction phase the Proposed Development is anticipated to result in a low degree of change to LCT 227 giving rise to a temporary **Minor Adverse** (not significant) effect. Locally, the change would be greater, and the temporary landscape effect would be **Moderate Adverse** (significant).

Assessment: Operational Period (permanent effects) – Year 0

8.8.12 During the operation phase, the Proposed Development is anticipated to result in a low degree of change to a very localised area of LCT 227. With a sensitivity of high and a low magnitude of change, the landscape effect on LCT 227 would be **Minor Adverse** (not significant).

Assessment: Operational Period (permanent effects) – Year 15

8.8.13 By Year 15, landscape planting and duller appearance of infrastructure would result in a negligible degree of change to LCT 227. With a sensitivity of high and a negligible magnitude of change, the landscape effect on LCT 227 would be **Negligible** (not significant).

LCT 229: Enclosed Farmland

Landscape Sensitivity

8.8.14 LCT 229: Enclosed Farmland consists of an area of sheltered, north facing, sloping farmland located to the west of Inverness. It forms a transition between the Rocky Moorland Plateau - Inverness to the south and the intensively farmed lowland plain to the north.

8.8.15 The rural and undulating character of the landscape means that views are available across wide aspects of this LCT and it would be susceptible to an industrial development requiring vegetation clearance, earthworks and the construction of a large flat platform. However, the dense vegetation pattern of conifer plantation, tree belts and woodland, such as within Ruttle Wood and Torr Mor, along the river Beauly, and north of Kiltarlity, will all help provide screening from the north. The landscape is crossed by energy infrastructure, and there are patches of built development throughout. However, there is limited capacity to accommodate localised land raising without this affecting the wider character. The susceptibility to change is considered High.

8.8.16 There are no statutory designations within the LCT. Designated heritage interest includes the private estate of Beaufort Castle Garden and Designed Landscape and other smaller scattered heritage assets, including a church and cemetery near Black Bridge. There are no landscape designations in the LCT.

8.8.17 The Core Paths/ designated public path network within the LCT is relatively sparse. A reasonable number of people pass through the LCT on the A833 and short sections of the A831/ A862 to access Black bridge cemetery, Kiltarlity and paths alongside the River Beauly, so will be familiar with the landscape and any changes to it. The landscape may be considered ordinary and commonplace though reasonably attractive and, as such its value is considered Medium. Overall, considering the value and susceptibility and the local characteristic landscape features, the sensitivity of LCT 229 to the Proposed Development is considered **High**.

Assessment: Construction Period (temporary effects)

8.8.18 Construction of the Proposed Development will be located on an elevated part of LCT 229 near Fanellan, south of Ruttle Wood and Torr Mor in the vicinity of an existing Beauly Denny 400 kV OHL. The landscape within this character area is principally characterised by sloping agricultural land with some urban influences. The proposals will introduce industrial features within an open elevated area of this LCT which is relatively exposed

to the south which will influence the wider setting and will be noticeable. A landscape of high sensitivity giving rise to a temporary localised **Major Adverse** effect (significant).

Assessment: Operational Period (permanent effects) – Year 0

8.8.19 During the operation phase the Proposed Development is anticipated to result in a medium degree of change to a localised area of LCT 229. With a sensitivity of high and a medium magnitude of change, the landscape effect on a localised area of LCT 229 would be **Moderate Adverse** (significant). The duration of these effects would be long-term, and the nature of these effects would be permanent.

Assessment: Operational Period (permanent effects) – Year 15

8.8.20 During the operation phase the Proposed Development is anticipated to result in a medium degree of change to a localised area of LCT 229. With a **low to medium** magnitude of change, the landscape effect on LCT 229 would be **Minor to Moderate Adverse** (significant). The duration of these effects would be long-term, and the nature of these effects would be permanent.

Visual Assessment

Nature of change

8.8.21 The Proposed Development is anticipated to be noticeably visible to the 'ordinary'[9] observer to approximately 3 km from the Site. The following paragraphs describe the overall extent of visibility and should be read in conjunction with the **ZTV (Figure 8.3)** and with reference to the viewpoint photos and visualisations **(Figures 8.11 – 8.39).**

8.8.22 To the south, southeast and southwest, the Proposed Development would be visible across the lower lying land beyond C1106 (Fanellan Road) as well as to the northeast extending along the River Beauly valley. The Proposed Development will be noticeably visible, due to vegetation loss opening up views and the proposed earthworks and built form replacing views of open agricultural land near Ruttle Wood. Viewpoints 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, and 11 illustrate views from this area.

8.8.23 To the north, northwest and west, the Proposed Development would be generally more contained due to the vegetation within Ruttle Wood and Aigas Community Forest. Visibility of the Proposed Development would be largely limited to the eastern profile and the upper aspects of the taller parts of the Proposed Development (notably the Converter Station) appearing above the vegetation at Ruttle Wood in some more elevated views. Viewpoints 4, 9, 12 and 13 illustrate views from this area.

8.8.24 To the east and northeast, towards Wester Balblair and Beauly, the Proposed Development would be visible in the background of the view, where the vegetation removed during construction has opened up views towards the Proposed Development. The Proposed Development would be distantly visible, amongst the vegetation at Ruttle Wood and Torr Mor, beyond the existing OHL running towards Fanellan. Viewpoints 3, 8, and 10 illustrate views from this area.

8.8.25 A detailed assessment of effects on visual receptors is set out in **Appendix 8.4: Visual Sensitivity and Effects**. A summary overview of likely effects is provided below.

[9] 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.

Residential Receptors

8.8.26 As noted in the baseline (**Section 8.3**, above) lower lying lower land in the study area is widely settled, with residential receptors scattered across the area as individual farmsteads and isolated houses, clusters of two to five properties, and as defined settlements, including Kiltarlity, Kilmorack, and Beauly.

8.8.27 The Proposed Development would be visible to a varying degree to residential receptors across the open agricultural land mainly to the south, east and northeast of the site. Of these, approximately 21 residential receptors are located within 500 m of the Site boundary fence, of which half are covered by the 'with screening' ZTV (**Figure 8.3**) and approximately 5610 residential receptors are spread fairly evenly along the local road network and located within 1 km of the Site boundary fence, of which one in four are covered by the 'with screening' ZTV.

8.8.28 Residential receptors - people enjoying the view from their home - are usually considered to be highly susceptible to visual change and are thus considered in this assessment to be high sensitivity receptors, even where the actual view enjoyed may not be particularly valued.

8.8.29 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.

Fanellan - Fanellan Cottages and Fanellan Croft

8.8.30 Residents of Fanellan, including Fanellan Cottages, Fanellan Croft, Bredaig and Sunnybrae are located along or off C1106 (Fanellan Road). Most houses front onto C1106 (Fanellan Road), but the primary focus of views is south-eastwards across the valley, with long-distance views across to distant hills.

8.8.31 Fanellan Cottages and Fanellan Croft are located within the Site and will be retained throughout the construction works. They will be surrounded by construction activity throughout the construction period. **Viewpoint 1** is located outside Fanellan Cottages and would also be illustrative of views from this area, including Fanellan Croft.

8.8.32 **Construction phase.** There would be a close view of construction activity and the emerging development either side of C1106 (Fanellan Road), with earthworks set back from the road beyond the compounds (containing temporary 2 storey buildings) and laydown areas to the north of the Site. This would be a **high** magnitude of change, resulting in a temporary **Major adverse (significant)** visual amenity effect.

8.8.33 **Operation Year 0.** On completion of the works there would be open views northwards from Fanellan Cottages and westwards from Fanellan Croft, with timber post and rail fence bounding a pasture field in the foreground and new mitigation woodland planting on new landforms behind deer fencing in the middle distance. Views northwards would be partially contained by the new landforms partially screening the substation and converter station buildings. Views southwards would be restored with reinstated pasture fields. Even so, the Proposed Development would remain a substantial portion of the view and a **high** magnitude of change from the baseline situation, thus a **Major Adverse (significant)** visual amenity effect would remain.

8.8.34 **Operation Year 15.** By year 15, the maturing mitigation woodland would further screen views of the substation and converter station buildings, but fencing and the converter station elements would remain in a key portion of

[10] Numbers of receptors are given as 'approximate' because in a number of locations there are small clusters of buildings where it is difficult to distinguish the exact number of separate residential receptors.

the views. The magnitude of change would remain **high**, and the **Major Adverse (significant)** visual amenity effect would remain.

Fanellan - Butlers Cottage, Broomhill & Hill View

8.8.35 Residents of Butlers Cottage, Broomhill & Hill View are adjacent to the eastern most part of the Site boundary, with the access road and new bellmouth junction in the foreground of their views. Butlers Cottage is slightly north of the other properties and slightly more enclosed by garden planting.

8.8.36 **Construction phase.** Elements of the construction activity are located in very close proximity to these receptors, beyond the roadside hedgerow boundary vegetation. Activity includes earthworks and the movement of plant and materials, and the clearance of vegetation along C1106 (Fanellan Road) will be noticeable within the view. This will result in prominent changes to the key characteristics of the view resulting in a **High** magnitude of change from the baseline situation to give a temporary **Major Adverse (significant)** visual amenity effect.

8.8.37 **Operation Year 0.** On completion of the works there would be open views westwards across the new access track, reinstated pasture fields, and up to the Converter station buildings in the middle distance, taking up a smaller portion of the view. The magnitude of change would reduce to **Medium**, resulting in a **Moderate Adverse (significant)** visual amenity effect.

8.8.38 **Operation Year 15.** By year 15, the maturing vegetation to the south and east of the substation and converter stations would not be readily discernible from this area. The magnitude of change would therefore remain **Medium**, and thus a **Moderate Adverse (significant)** visual amenity effect.

Hughton – Bredaig, Sunnybrae, Fanellan & Hughton

8.8.39 Residents of Fanellan, Bredaig and Sunnybrae largely front onto Fanellan Road with oblique views towards the Site. The primary focus of views is south-eastwards across the valley, with long-distance views across to distant hills. The impact of construction activity will decrease with distance, although any construction traffic utilising C1106 (Fanellan Road) will be visible to all. **Viewpoint 2** is located on Fanellan Road just to the northeast of Sunnybrae, whilst Bredaig is some 400 m northeast of Viewpoint 2 (and adjacent to the south west corner of the Site). Residents of Hughton are some 200 m southwest of Sunnybrae.

8.8.40 Bredaig, despite being in closer proximity to the Site, is anticipated to have a similar impact as Sunnybrae as it is expected that the existing woodland screening adjacent to C1106 (Fanellan Road) will remain and help filter views of construction.

8.8.41 **Construction phase.** The construction activity of the Proposed Development is located in the middle distance within the context of the existing towers and OHL. Views will be available over and above intervening vegetation and where gaps allow, although views will be less filtered in winter months. Visible construction activity will include the traffic along C1106 (Fanellan Road) and the creation of earthworks, substation platform and substation, beyond the middle-distance field boundary. Despite filtered views, there will be noticeable changes to key characteristics in the middle distance. The level of magnitude is **High**, resulting in a temporary **Major Adverse (significant)** visual amenity effect.

8.8.42 **Operation Year 0.** At completion of the works there would be filtered views during the winter months to the northeast and east towards the Site. Landforms would be clearly visible in the middle distance, helping to restrict views of the substation infrastructure beyond. The level of magnitude would reduce to **medium** resulting in a **Moderate Adverse (Significant)** effect.

8.8.43 **Operation Year 15.** By year 15 the maturing woodland planting on the landforms would have grown sufficiently to soften the landforms and screen much of the built form and infrastructure beyond. The level of magnitude would reduce further to **low** resulting in a **Minor Adverse (Not Significant)** effect.

Culburnie

8.8.44 Culburnie is a scattered hamlet containing residential properties with varying aspect. It is located southeast of the Site on lower ground, with the Site and Ruttle Wood as skyline features in views northwards. The area is well treed, both with small broadleaved copses and plantations, and with garden and roadside vegetation. The Culburnie / Teanacoil Burn passes through the area at the bottom of the valley and is also well treed.

8.8.45 **Viewpoint 6** is located on the western edge of Culburnie and northern edge of Culburnie Muir. Both illustrate the view north towards the Site. The Site is visible in the middle distance on the rising slopes beyond the properties at Bredaig, Lonbuie and Fanellan. It is partially screened by intervening topography, vegetation and occasional buildings but the existing Beauly-Deny 400 kV OHL is clearly visible on the horizon.

8.8.46 **Construction phase.** Construction activity would be clearly visible in the middle distance, occupying a moderate portion of the view. Tall infrastructure would appear above the skyline, obscuring a portion of views towards Ruttle Wood and the mountain ranges beyond. This would be a change of **medium** magnitude, resulting in a temporary **Major Adverse (Significant)** effect.

8.8.47 **Operation Year 0.** At completion of the works the Proposed Development would remain clearly visible, albeit partially screened behind the new landforms. The level of activity and movement found at construction would cease. The level of magnitude would remain **medium** but with a **Moderate Adverse (Significant)** effect.

8.8.48 **Operation Year 15.** By year 15 the maturing mitigation woodland would have grown sufficiently to screen views of the Proposed Development in the middle distance, softening the landforms and screening much of the substation beyond. The level of magnitude would reduce to **low** resulting in a **Minor Adverse (Not Significant)** effect.

Kilmorack

8.8.49 Kilmorack is a small hamlet with houses of varying aspect, and situated on the north bank of the River Beauly, 5 km west of Beauly. It is located some 250 m north of the nearest Site boundary, just beyond Black Bridge. The area is well treed with small broadleaved copses, garden vegetation and roadside trees. Views southwest towards the Site include the rising landform of Torr Mor and the woodland of Ruttle Wood. The banks of the River Beauly are also well treed, and the Kilmorack Power Station and dam are distinctive features beyond the southern edge of the hamlet. **Viewpoint 10** is located some 350 m east of the Kilmorack Art Gallery, which sits on the eastern edge of the hamlet. Existing OHL and towers are distinctive features to the south and southeast.

8.8.50 **Construction phase.** Construction activity would be visible in the background, occupying a small portion of the view. Vegetation loss within Ruttle Wood and presence of taller plant would be visible, mainly below the summit of Tòrr Mòr but with some encroaching into the skyline. This will result in some noticeable changes to background characteristics but to a small proportion only. This would be a change of **medium** magnitude, resulting in a temporary **Moderate Adverse (Significant)** effect.

8.8.51 **Operation Year 0.** At completion of the works there would be filtered views during the winter months southwest towards the Site, with the converter station buildings visible in the middle distance adjacent to Ruttle Wood. The sympathetic facade colours of the converter station buildings helps to make them appear more recessive in the landscape. The level of magnitude would therefore reduce to **low,** resulting in a **Minor Adverse (not significant) effect**.

8.8.52 **Operation Year 15.** By year 15, maturing woodland to the south and southeast of the Site would not be readily visible from this location and therefore would not contribute to any screening. The level of magnitude would remain **low** and thus a **Minor Adverse (not significant)** effect.

Residents of Torgormack and Broallan

8.8.53 The hamlets of Torgormack and Broallan are located to the northwest of Kilmorack on rising ground. However, properties are almost entirely screened from the Site by the landform of Tòrr Mòr and vegetation of Ruttle Wood. **Viewpoint 9** illustrates the views from this area.

8.8.54 **Construction phase.** Construction activity would be largely screened, although tree loss within Ruttle Wood and presence of taller plant may be just discernible on the skyline. This will result in some minor changes to background characteristics and to a very small proportion only. This would be a change of **low** magnitude, resulting in a temporary **Minor Adverse (not significant)** effect.

8.8.55 **Operation Year 0.** At completion of the works there would be no readily discernible changes to the background view. The level of magnitude would be **negligible** with a **negligible (not significant)** effect.

8.8.56 **Operation Year 15.** Vegetation planting is unlikely to be discernible for these residents, so the magnitude of change would remain **negligible** and thus the effect remains **negligible (not significant).**

Residents of Wester Balblair

8.8.57 The hamlet of Wester Balblair is located to the northeast of Kilmorack on low-lying ground. The scattered properties are almost entirely screened from the Site by the built form of Kilmorack, and vegetation at Balblair Woods, along the intervening River Beauly, and at Ruttle Wood. The existing electricity substation with associated towers and OHL infrastructure are significant detracting features in the foreground of views. **Viewpoint 3** is illustrative of views from this area.

8.8.58 **Construction phase.** Construction activity would be largely screened, with glimpses of construction activity in the background filtered by intervening vegetation. The magnitude of change would be **low**, resulting in a temporary **Minor Adverse (not significant)** effect.

8.8.59 **Operation Year 0.** At operation, glimpses of the converter station buildings may be discernible in background in filtered views, albeit adding to the energy infrastructure presence in the area. Even so, the level of magnitude would reduce to **negligible**, resulting in a **negligible (not significant)** effect.

8.8.60 **Operation Year 15.** Vegetation planting is unlikely to be discernible for these residents, so the magnitude of change would remain **negligible** and thus the effect remains **negligible (not significant).**

Residents of Ruisaurie

8.8.61 Ruisaurie is a hamlet of scattered houses some 2 km north of the nearest point of the Site, and adjoining Broallan to its northeast. The view towards the Site varies across the area, in many places limited by intervening topography and blocks of plantation woodland. **Viewpoint 4** is illustrative of views southwest towards the Site from this area.

8.8.62 **Construction phase.** During construction there would be limited views of activity on site. Loss of trees in Ruttle Wood and construction of taller elements and plant (such as cranes) may be discernible, but in the background of the view. It would be a small element in a broader view, with the existing OHL remaining a distinctive and detracting feature on the skyline. The magnitude of change from individual receptors would vary, depending on the detail of aspect and position from **low to negligible**, giving rise to temporary **Minor Adverse (not significant)** effects.

8.8.63 **Operation Year 0.** On completion of the works the upper parts of the substation infrastructure may be visible to some of the individual receptors, but as a small and not particularly noticeable change to the view. The sympathetic facade colour treatment will also make them appear more recessive in the landscape. The magnitude of change would be **negligible** with a **negligible (not significant)** effect.

8.8.64 **Operation Year 15.** Over time, the upper parts of the converter station buildings and the visible parts of external infrastructure would have dulled down, slightly reducing the level of effect. The magnitude of change would remain **negligible** and thus the effect remains **negligible (not significant).**

Residents of Crask of Aigas

8.8.65 Crask of Aigas is a small hamlet around 1 km west of the Site, with the scattered hamlet of Aigas located a short distance to its southwest. Crask of Aigas is located on a hill overlooking the River Beauly. Visibility towards the Site is almost entirely screened by the landform of Tòrr Mòr and vegetation of Ruttle Wood, as well as forestry around Crask of Aigas itself. Small pockets of open land on the hillside allow some views eastwards, where the existing 400 kV overhead line is a noticeable feature above Ruttle Wood. **Viewpoint 12** illustrates views from this area.

8.8.66 **Construction phase.** Construction activity would be largely screened, although a small amount of tree loss in Ruttle Wood and presence of taller plant would be discernible on the skyline. This will result in some minor changes to background characteristics but to a very small proportion of the view only. This would be a change of **low** magnitude, resulting in a temporary **Minor Adverse (not significant)** effect.

8.8.67 **Operation Year 0.** At completion of the works there would be no readily discernible changes to the background view. The level of magnitude would be **negligible** resulting in a **negligible (not significant)** effect.

8.8.68 **Operation Year 15.** Vegetation planting is unlikely to be readily discernible for these residents, so the magnitude of change would remain **negligible** and thus a **negligible (not significant)** effect.

Residents of Crerag

8.8.69 The hamlet of Crerag is located west of Culburnie on the same side of the valley but on slightly higher, rising ground. The elevated views across the landscape are of largely of scenic agricultural farmland with existing large-scale infrastructure visible below the skyline. The existing 400 kV overhead lines within the middle distance are a noticeable vertical feature that punctuate the skyline in some locations. Views from elevated areas of Crerag look across towards the Site on the opposite hillside, backdropped by more distant hills. **Viewpoint 7** is located on the southern, most elevated edge of Crerag. Despite being distant, the elevated nature of views from this location enable clear visibility across the valley towards the Site on the opposite hillside.

8.8.70 **Construction phase.** Construction activity would be clearly visible as distinctive activity on the opposite hillside. It would occupy a noticeable portion of the view, albeit at distance. Even so, this would be a change of **medium** magnitude, resulting in a temporary **Major Adverse (significant)** effect.

8.8.71 **Operation Year 0.** At operation the substation infrastructure and converter station buildings would be readily discernible, albeit partially screened behind the new landforms. The immature planting will not provide any screening or integration at this point. The level of magnitude would reduce to **medium** resulting in a **Moderate Adverse (significant)** effect.

8.8.72 **Operation Year 15.** Over time, the infrastructure would become duller, and vegetation planting would mature to provide increased screening and integration of the Site into the wider landscape. The sympathetic facade colour

would continue to help make the buildings more recessive. The magnitude of change would reduce to **low** resulting in a **Minor Adverse (not significant)** effect.

Residents of Eskadale

8.8.73 Eskadale is a small hamlet situated on the south bank of the River Beauly, and around 3 km southwest of the nearest Site boundary. Visibility is highly limited due to topography and vegetation up the valley side, such that properties are almost entirely screened from Site.

8.8.74 **Construction phase.** Construction activity would be predominantly screened, although tree loss within Ruttle Wood and presence of taller plant may be just discernible on the distant skyline. This will result in barely discernible changes to background characteristics and to a very small proportion only, resulting in a **negligible** magnitude of change and a temporary **negligible (not significant)** effect.

8.8.75 **Operation Year 0.** At completion of the works there would be no readily discernible changes to the background view. The level of magnitude would remain **negligible** with a **negligible (not significant)** effect.

8.8.76 **Operation Year 15.** Vegetation planting is unlikely to be discernible for these residents, so the magnitude of change would remain **negligible** and thus the effect remains **negligible (not significant).**

Residents of Kiltarlity and Tomnacross

8.8.77 Kiltarlity is a small village on the south bank of the Bruiach Burn. Views of residents within the village itself are largely screened by intervening vegetation and other buildings, but pockets of more open views are available for more scattered properties around the edge of the village, particularly to the south and east – including from Tomnacross, located around 350 m to the southeast of Kiltarlity. Tomnacross is a small hamlet of scattered houses and part of the village of Kiltarlity. It is the location of the Kiltarlity village school (Tomnacross Primary), Kiltarlity Church, and a cemetery. The more open ground between Tomnacross and Kiltarlity allows for greater visibility across the valley and Fanellan Wood towards the elevated position of the Site, backdropped by Ruttle Wood and more distant hills. **Viewpoint 5** illustrates the view from this area.

8.8.78 **Construction phase.** Construction activity for properties in Tomnacross would be clearly noticeable on the rising slopes beyond Kiltarlity against the hill and ridgeline, with taller plant (such as cranes) potentially impinging onto the skyline. This would result in a **medium** magnitude of change resulting in a temporary **Moderate Adverse (significant)** effect.

8.8.79 **Operation Year 0.** For properties in Tomnacross, the substation and converter station infrastructure, as well as landforms, would be clearly discernible in the view, obscuring a portion of views towards Ruttle Wood and the summit of Tòrr Mòr. The level of magnitude would remain **medium** with a **Moderate Adverse (significant)** effect.

8.8.80 **Operation Year 15.** For properties in Tomnacross, the proposed vegetation planting will soften the landforms and provide a screening function for much of the substation infrastructure. Whilst the converter station buildings will remain distinctive features in the view, the sympathetic facade colour treatment will make them appear more recessive. No element of the Site will be skylined in views, so the back drop of more distant hills remains. This results in a **low** magnitude of change and a **Minor Adverse (not significant)** effect**.**

8.8.81 As many residents in Kiltarlity have more screened views than those in Tomnacross, the effects of the Proposed Development on residents in Kiltarlity are likely to be similar or reduced compared to Tomnacross.

Residents of Camault Muir and Glaichbea

8.8.82 Camault Muir is a scattered crofting community and part of the village of Kiltarlity. It is situated on a boggy plateau about 0.6 miles south of the main part of Kiltarlity. Views to the Site are partially obscured by intervening topography and vegetation, although the elevated nature of the plateau allows views across towards distant hills. The extent of view of the Site varies between receptors, depending on aspect, elevation and, for those properties with a northwest facing aspect, the presence or absence of intervening vegetation. Undeveloped, the Site is barely discernible, backdropped by rising ground beyond, save for the distinctive tower and OHL which just creeps into the skyline. **Viewpoint 11** illustrates the view from this area.

8.8.83 **Construction phase.** Construction activity would be clearly noticeable on the opposite hillside, with taller plant (such as cranes) impinging onto the skyline. Even so, this would be in the background of views and would not generally block views of distant hills beyond. This would be a **low** magnitude of change resulting in a temporary **Minor Adverse (not significant)** effect.

8.8.84 **Operation Year 0.** The substation and converter station infrastructure, as well as landforms would be discernible and distinctive features in the background of the view. The level of magnitude would remain **low** with a **Minor Adverse (not significant)** effect.

8.8.85 **Operation Year 15.** Vegetation planting will soften the landforms and provide a screening function for much of the substation infrastructure. Whilst the converter station buildings will remain distinctive features in the view, the sympathetic facade colour treatment will make them appear more recessive. Infrastructure will also become duller over time, resulting in a **negligible** magnitude of change and a **negligible (not significant)** effect**.**

Residents of Beauly

8.8.86 Beauly is a large village, and the largest settlement within the Study Area located to the northeast of the Site. Visiblity from properties within the village are distinctly limited by intervening vegetation, distance and built form. Where views towards the Site are visible (from the southern edge of the village), it is the summit of Tòrr Mòr and more distant hills that provides the background, albeit the low-lying valley between provides many vertical features that contribute to the skyline of views in the foreground and middle distance. **Viewpoint 8** illustrates the view from the southern edges of Beauly.

8.8.87 **Construction phase.** Construction activity would be visible in the background of the view, albeit heavily filtered by intervening vegetation and the farming infrastructure at the south-western edge of Beauly. Vegetation loss and tall construction plant are likely to be discernible in the background and on the skyline adjacent to Ruttle Wood, but in only a very small portion of the view. The magnitude of change is **low** resulting in a temporary **Minor Adverse (not significant)** effect.

8.8.88 **Operation Year 0.** Much of the Site will be screened from view, although upper parts of the converter station buildings may be visible as a very small portion in filtered views. The colour of the built form will be carefully chosen to blend with the natural colours of the landscape, thereby reducing its visual prominence in views. The level of magnitude would reduce to **negligible** resulting in a **negligible (not significant)** effect.

8.8.89 **Operation Year 15.** Vegetation planting will not be readily noticeable from this direction, although the sympathetic facade colours will have weathered to become slightly duller, making them appear slightly more recessive over time. The magnitude of change will be **negligible** and thus a **negligible (not significant)** effect**.**

Residents of Farley

8.8.90 Farley is a hamlet of scattered houses to the northwest of Torgormack and Broallan. It has a similar level of visibility as residents in Ruisaurie. Views towards the Site varies across the area, in many places limited by intervening topography and blocks of plantation woodland, but its elevated nature allows some longer-distance views across the valley towards Ruttle Wood and more distant hills beyond.

8.8.91 **Construction phase.** During construction there would be limited views of activity on site. Loss of trees in Ruttle Wood and construction of taller elements and plant (such as cranes) may be discernible, but in a very small portion of much broader views. The magnitude of change from individual receptors would vary, depending on the detail of aspect and position from **low to negligible**, giving rise to temporary **Minor Adverse effects (not significant).**

8.8.92 **Operation Year 0.** On completion of the works, the upper parts of the substation infrastructure may be distantly visible to some of the individual receptors, but as a very small and not readily noticeable change to the view. The magnitude of change would be **negligible** with a **negligible (not significant)** effect.

8.8.93 **Operation Year 15.** Over time, the visible parts of external infrastructure would have dulled down, slightly reducing the level of effect. The magnitude of change would remain **negligible** and thus the effect remains **negligible** (not significant).

Recreational Receptors

8.8.94 Recreational receptors are considered to have a high sensitivity to the proposed development. The main recreational receptors are users of surrounding Core Paths and Visitors to Belladrum Festival. **Viewpoint 5** is from Core path IND20.07 and **Viewpoint 14** is from Belladrum.

Core paths IN20.11 and IN20.05

8.8.95 Core paths IN20.11 and IN20.05 run east – west through the Study Area in a valley from Lonbuie towards Beaufort Castle in between Viewpoints 1 and 6. **Figure 8.3: ZTV with exclusions (screening)** illustrates that views towards the Proposed Development are screened for the majority of the route by topography and vegetation. Theoretical visibility is available closer to Beaufort Castle where the Proposed Development will be visible in the background of the views on the rising slopes of Torr Mor.

8.8.96 **Construction phase.** Construction activity would be visible in the background occupying a small portion of the view. Tall infrastructure would appear below the skyline amongst existing landscape features but obscuring a portion of views towards Ruttle Wood and the mountain ranges beyond. The magnitude of change will be **low** for the section of path around Beaufort Castle and negligible elsewhere, resulting in a temporary **Minor Adverse (not significant)** effect.

8.8.97 **Operation Year 0.** At completion of the works there would remain some filtered views towards the Proposed Development for the section of path around Beaufort Castle. New woodland planting on the landforms would do little to further filter views of the Proposed Development from this area. The level of magnitude would remain **low** with a **Minor Adverse (not significant**) effect.

8.8.98 **Operation Year 15.** By year 15 the maturing woodland planting would have grown sufficiently to provide more screening of the Proposed Development, softening the landforms and screening much of the substation beyond. The level of magnitude would reduce to **negligible** with a **negligible (not significant)** effect.

Core paths IN20.06; IN20.08; IN20.10; IN20.07; and IN20.09

8.8.99 These Core Paths run north – south through the Study Area from Kiltarlity in the southeast to Core Path IN20.05 near Beaufort Castle to the east. **Figure 8.3: ZTV with exclusions (screening)** illustrates that views towards the Proposed Development are screened for the majority of the route by topography and vegetation. Theoretical visibility is available closer to south of Kiltarlity towards Tomnacross School, where the Proposed Development will be visible in the background of the views on the rising slopes of Torr Mor in the vicinity of the existing OHL and towers. **Viewpoint 5** is illustrative of views from Core path IN20.07.

8.8.100 **Construction phase.** Construction activity would be visible in the background, replacing views of the open agricultural land with tall plant and earthworks obscuring a portion of views towards Ruttle Wood and the mountain ranges beyond. Vegetation loss would be discernible, and the Proposed Development would result in a **Medium** magnitude of change resulting in a temporary **Moderate Adverse (Significant)** effect.

8.8.101 **Operation Year 0.** At completion of the works there would be filtered views towards the Proposed Development. New woodland planting on the landforms would do little to further filter views at this stage, and some blocking of views of Ruttle Wood and the summit of Tòrr Mòr will remain. The level of magnitude would remain **Medium** with a **Moderate Adverse (Significant)** effect.

8.8.102 **Operation Year 15.** By year 15 the maturing mitigation woodland planting would have grown sufficiently to help integrate the lower aspects of the Proposed Development, however the top of the infrastructure will remain visible. Even so, the level of magnitude would reduce to **low** with a **Minor Adverse (not significant)** effect.

Belladrum Festival Grounds

8.8.103 Belladrum's Tartan Heart Festival Grounds is located to the southeast of the Study Area, near Tomnacross. Festival goers are likely to have some appreciation of the wider landscape, however receptors are going to be focussed on the festival activities. **Figure 8.3: ZTV with exclusions (screening)** illustrates that views towards the Proposed Development are screened for the majority of the festival grounds. Receptors in this location are represented by **Viewpoint 14**.

8.8.104 **Construction phase.** Construction activity would be visible in a very small portion of the background view, with tall plant and emerging built infrastructure obscuring a portion of views towards Ruttle Wood. However, activities will appear below the skyline amongst existing landscape features. Changes to key characteristics will be barely discernible and will result in a **negligible** magnitude of change resulting in a temporary **negligible (not significant)** effect.

8.8.105 **Operation Year 0.** At completion of the works the loss of any vegetation within Ruttle Wood and the introduction of new landscape features will remain barely perceptible at this distance. This will result in very limited or no discernible changes to the key characteristics of the view and the magnitude of change will remain **negligible** and thus a **negligible (not significant)** effect.

8.8.106 **Operation Year 15**. By year 15, maturing woodland planting would contribute to the wider woodland character and would not be readily discernible. The magnitude of change will remain **negligible** and thus a **negligible (not significant)** effect.

Transport Receptors

8.8.107 The Proposed Development would be visible on parts of the A831 and A862 for users traveling away from Beauly, and from parts of the network of minor roads across the study area.

8.8.108 Transport receptors are generally considered to be of medium susceptibility to the type of development proposed, and thus of medium sensitivity.

Major 'A' Roads - A862 and A831

8.8.109 Visibility of receptors travelling along these routes is limited to short sections only. Views are predominantly rural with a well wooded character and mature roadside vegetation partially filters views. Beyond the layering of vegetation, the existing Beauly Denny 400 kV towers and overhead line are noticeable in the gaps in vegetation and above the skyline in the background of views. **Viewpoints 8 and 10** are illustrative of views from these users.

8.8.110 **Construction phase.** Construction activity would be visible in the background view. Views of construction activities will be limited to the removal of vegetation within Ruttle Wood and the movement of tall plant in the vicinity of the existing OHL. Construction activities will be more noticeable the further travellers move southwest from Beauly. The magnitude of change will be **low to medium** with a temporary **Minor Adverse (not significant)** to **Moderate Adverse (significant)** effect.

8.8.111 **Operation Year 0.** At completion of the works the loss of any vegetation within Ruttle Wood will open up some views towards the Proposed Development, which will remain visible on the skyline adjacent to the existing OHL. The immature landscape mitigation planting will not provide any screening or integration at this stage. The Proposed Development will be more noticeable the further southwest travellers move away from Beauly. The magnitude of change will be **negligible to low** with a **negligible to Minor Adverse (not significant)** effect.

8.8.112 **Operation Year 15.** The top of the Proposed Development will remain visible above the existing vegetation on the skyline. Mitigation planting is located primarily to the front of the substation building and therefore will not provide much additional screening from this location. The Proposed Development will be more noticeable the further south-west travellers move from Beauly. The magnitude of change will remain **negligible to low** and thus a **negligible to Minor Adverse (not significant)** effect.

Major 'A' Roads - A833

8.8.113 Visibility of receptors travelling along this road would be limited by distance and intervening vegetation, built form ad topography. Existing views are predominantly rural with a well wooded character and mature roadside vegetation which helps to filter views west towards the Site.

8.8.114 **Construction phase.** Construction activity would be partially discernible in the background view, but limited to the removal of vegetation within Ruttle Wood and the movement of tall plant in the vicinity of the existing OHL. Views of construction would be glimpsed, transient and at distance. The magnitude of change would be **low** with a temporary **Minor Adverse (not significant)** effect.

8.8.115 **Operation Year 0.** At completion of the works the loss of any vegetation within Ruttle Wood will retain some views towards the Proposed Development, visible on the skyline at distance alongside the existing OHL, but the distracting movement and activity at construction would cease. The immature landscape mitigation planting will not provide any screening or integration at this stage. The magnitude of change would reduce to **negligible to low** with a **negligible to Minor Adverse (not significant)** effect.

8.8.116 **Operation Year 15.** The top of the Proposed Development may be discernible in glimpsed views, but softened by mature mitigation planting and in front of duller infrastructure which would become duller with time. The magnitude of change will be **negligible** and thus a **negligible (not significant)** effect.

Minor roads to the east - C1106 (Fanellan Road) to the A831 via Black Bridge

8.8.117 Receptors here include road users travelling along Fanellan Road, Black Bridge and the associated unnamed road connecting them with the A831. C1106 (Fanellan Road) runs east – west through the Site, connecting Hughton and Eskadale with Fanellan and Kilmorack via Black Bridge. The views the landscape to the north is predominantly rural in character and comprised of pastoral farmland bound by intermittent hedgerow, stock fencing, the existing residential built form (Upper Fanellan Cottages) and existing Overhead Line, set beyond the existing field boundary vegetation. The background view is comprised of the dense mixed plantation and native woodland at Ruttle Wood. Southwards, views are again rural in character and comprised of pastoral farmland bound by intermittent hedgerow and stock fencing with longer views down across the valley to distant hills. Individual residential properties front C1106 (Fanellan Road). Views for users of C1106 (Fanellan Road) and the A831 are represented by **Viewpoints 1, 2 and 10**.

8.8.118 **Construction phase.** Construction activity would be clearly visible in the foreground on both sides of C1106 (Fanellan Road) at close proximity. Travellers will experience clear uninterrupted views across its length due to removal of boundary vegetation, including views of 2 storey compound buildings, laydown areas and earthworks. Construction activities will become filtered by intervening vegetation the further travellers move towards Eskadale or Kilmorack. Construction will result in prominent changes to the key characteristics of the view resulting in a **medium to high** magnitude of change, depending on the proximity of users to the Site. this will result in a temporary **Moderate Adverse (significant) to Major Adverse (significant)** effect.

8.8.119 **Operation Year 0.** At completion, the landscape forms will be prominent in views, set back from the road beyond stock proof fencing along C1106 (Fanellan Road), and the 1.8m high deer fencing along the base of the landscape forms. The immature planting on the landscape forms will not provide any integration or screening initially, although views south will be restored to pastoral farmland. The Proposed Development will remain a prominent feature in views northwards, particularly where in closest proximity, when gaps in the landforms will allow direct views into the Site. Views will become filtered by intervening vegetation the further travelers move from Fanellan. The magnitude of change will remain **Medium to High** with a **Moderate Adverse (significant) to Major Adverse (significant)** effect.

8.8.120 **Operation Year 15.** The growth of the landscape mitigation planting will help integrate the landscape forms visible beyond the deer fencing, whilst providing screening to Fanellan Substation. However, there will still be a noticeable change in the middle distance and background views with the upper parts of the Converter station buildings remaining visible beyond screen planting and between landforms. The magnitude of change will reduce to **Low to Medium** with a **Minor Adverse (not significant) to Moderate Adverse (significant)** effect.

Minor roads to the north

8.8.121 Road users of the following roads: into Wester Balblair; the minor roads connecting Ruilick, Ruisaurie and Drumindorsair to the A831; the route between Togormack and Drumindorsair; and the connecting route between Farley and Torgormack are largely illustrated by **Viewpoints 3, 4, 9 and 13.**

8.8.122 **Figure 8.3** illustrates that the visibility from these minor roads is limited to short sections of these routes. Views along them are predominantly from elevated positions which look out over a rural landscape with a well wooded character. Infrastructure elements are present throughout the landscape, with the existing 400kV towers, overhead line and substation being noticeable in many transient views from these routes.

8.8.123 **Construction phase.** Construction activity would be visible in the background of transient views, heavily filtered by the trees within Ruttle Wood and roadside vegetation. Views of construction activities will be limited to the removal of vegetation and tall construction plant protruding above and amongst vegetation along the skyline. Visibility for users will vary along the routes, with views opening up and then becoming obscured as vegetation and road alignment changes. The magnitude of change will be **negligible to low** resulting in a temporary **Negligible to Minor Adverse (not significant)** visual effect.

8.8.124 **Operation Year 0.** At completion of the works, the top portions of the Converter station buildings may remain visible, but the existing vegetation will help screen this and it will be a small portion within intermittent, transient views. The magnitude of change will therefore reduce to **negligible** with a **Negligible (not significant)** effect.

8.8.125 **Operation Year 15.** The landscape planting will not be readily visible from these locations, such that the tops of the Converter Station buildings will remain visible. The magnitude of change will therefore remain **negligible** with a **Negligible Adverse (not significant)** effect.

Minor roads to the south

8.8.126 Road users of the following minor roads: between Culburnie and Fanellan; connecting Crerag with Culburnie; and the routes between and connecting the A833, Kiltarlity and Tomnacross (including Allarburn Drive and Post Office Brae) are largely illustrated by **Viewpoints 5, 6 and 7**. Users of these routes will experience pockets of visibility north or westwards towards the Proposed Development along the majority of the routes. Existing views are predominantly rural in character with open grassland/pastoral land in the foreground sloping down to the mature broadleaved woodland in the middle ground. Rising ground enables views of the pastoral fields and individual scattered properties along C1106 (Fanellan Road). However, good levels of roadside and garden vegetation, residential properties and agricultural infrastructure limit many views such that the Proposed Development is anticipated to be only intermittently visible, where there are gaps in vegetation.

8.8.127 **Construction phase.** Construction activity would be visible in the middle distance on the rising slopes beyond the properties along C1106 (Fanellan Road) and in the vicinity of the existing OHL and towers. Views would remain transient and intermittent, and would vary as roads meander along the valley side. The magnitude of change will be **low to medium** with a temporary **Minor (not significant) to Moderate Adverse (significant)** effect.

8.8.128 **Operation Year 0.** At completion, the Proposed Development will introduce a new large scale infrastructure element into views and remain readily noticeable where there are open views northwards, albeit partially screened by the landforms. The magnitude of change will remain **low to medium** with a **Minor Adverse (not significant) to Moderate Adverse (significant)** effect.

8.8.129 **Operation Year 15.** Over time, the growth of the landscape planting will help screen the lower portions of the Proposed Development, and the substation infrastructure will become duller. Whilst the top of the converter station buildings will remain visible, the sympathetic facade colour will help them appear more recessive in the landscape. The magnitude of change will therefore reduce to **negligible to low** with a **Negligible (not significant) to Minor Adverse (not significant)** effect.

Minor roads to the west

8.8.130 Road users of the exiting residential road corridor connecting Crask of Aigas to the A831 experience very limited, glimpsed views towards the Site due to the screening effects of intervening vegetation, topography around Tòrr Mòr and the trees of Ruttle Wood. Pockets of open land alongside the roads allow some views eastwards, where the existing 400 kV overhead line is a noticeable feature above Ruttle Wood. **Viewpoint 12** illustrates views from this area.

8.8.131 **Construction phase.** Construction activity would be largely screened, although tree loss within Ruttle Wood and presence of taller plant would be discernible in glimpsed views on the skyline. This will result in some minor changes to background characteristics but to a very small proportion of the view only. This would be a change of **negligible to low** magnitude, resulting in a temporary **Negligible to Minor Adverse (not significant)** effect.

8.8.132 **Operation Year 0.** At completion of the works there would be no readily discernible changes to the background view. The level of magnitude would be **negligible** resulting in a **negligible (not significant)** effect.

8.8.133 **Operation Year 15.** At Year 15, there would continue to be no readily discernible change to the view, so the magnitude of change would remain **negligible** and thus a **negligible (not significant)** effect.

Railway

8.8.134 Rail users on the line between Inverness and Beauly will have transient, intermittent views across the lower-lying landscape towards the elevated Site. views are limited to a short section of the railway line as it curves

around the southern edge of Beauly. **Viewpoint 8** is located adjacent to the train station so illustrates views for users of the station or on the train adjacent. The landscape is predominantly rural in character, with wide open views across the flat arable and pastural farmland in the foreground. Tree planting is limited to the roadside boundaries and along the River Beauly; this vegetation limits low-level views beyond the middle ground. Urban influences including telegraph poles, agricultural buildings, residential development at the eastern edge of Wester Balblair and the existing 400kv towers and overhead lines converging at Beauly Substation are present throughout the view, and as rail passengers enter Beauly station.

8.8.135 **Construction phase.** Construction activity would be visible in the background view albeit heavily filtered by intervening vegetation and the farming infrastructure at the western edge of Beauly. Views of construction activities will be limited to the removal of vegetation and tall construction plant protruding above and amongst vegetation along the skyline. The magnitude of change will be **low** resulting in a temporary **Minor Adverse (not significant)** effect.

8.8.136 **Operation Year 0.** At completion of the works, views of the Proposed Development will remain substantially obscured although the upper portions of the Converter Station buildings are likely to remain an additional element in the view. The magnitude of change will be **negligible** resulting in a **Negligible (not significant)** effect.

8.8.137 **Operation Year 15.** The planting to the south and east of the substation would not provide any additional screening from this location, so the magnitude of change would remain **negligible** and thus with a **Negligible (not significant)** effect.

Limitations Of Assessment

8.8.138 This 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.

8.8.139 **Figures 8.1 and 8.2** are based on 'bare ground' ZTVs and do 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. These ZTVs present the worst-case scenario.

8.8.140 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 residential properties.

8.8.141 **Figure 8.11 Illustrative Landscape Masterplan** shows the proposed landscape mitigation considered as embedded mitigation within the assessment. However, the soft landscaping areas identified as 'handed over' are not considered within the assessment as there is no guarantee of their future maintenance/management by the landowner. It therefore cannot be relied on as mitigation in this assessment. Embedded mitigation only is therefore considered.

8.9 Cumulative Effects

8.9.1 The cumulative effects considered here are in-combination effects: the effects of the Proposed Development combined with other developments in the area that may affect the same receptors. Intra-project effects, where a given receptor may be subject to a cumulation of different types of environmental effect (such as noise + visual) from the Proposed Development are considered in **Chapter 17: Cumulative Effects**.

8.9.2 Whilst the LVIA study area is set at 5 km and no significant 'stand-alone' effects of the Proposed Development have been found beyond a 5 km from the site boundary, the cumulative assessment considers developments within 10 km of the Site at the request of The Highlands Council.

8.9.3 **Table 5-2 Cumulative Developments** in **Volume 2, Chapter 5 EIA Process and Methodology** gives a summary description of the potential cumulative developments identified in the area and **Volume 3, Figure 17-1 Cumulative Developments** shows their locations.

8.9.4 **Table 8-9** below lists the potential cumulative developments scoped out of this assessment.

Table 8-9: Cumulative developments scoped out of Chapter 8 LVIA

Application Ref	Location	Description	Reason for Scoping Out
20/02801/FUL	Fanellan Farmhouse Kiltarlity	Erection of agricultural building	Already constructed and forms part of the baseline assessment
24/01548/FUL	South of Balblair Quarry	Erection and operation of battery energy storage system	Shared receptors on the western edge Beauly and southern edge of Wester Balblair are anticipated to view the Proposed Development and the Cumulative Site in combination, however due to the intervening vegetation and topography between the sites it is not anticipated that the cumulative effect will be greater than Minor Adverse (not significant) in construction, reducing to Negligible at year 0 and year 15.
23/03772/SCRE	South of Balblair Quarry	A Battery Energy Storage System [BESS) Up to 49.9MW, and associated infrastructure located on restored ground within a disused area of Balblair Quarry	Shared receptors on the western edge Beauly and southern edge of Wester Balblair are anticipated to view the Proposed Development and the Cumulative Site in combination, however due to the intervening vegetation and topography between the sites it is not anticipated that the cumulative effect will be greater than Minor Adverse (not significant) in construction, reducing to Negligible at year 0 and year 15.
24/02885/SCRE	South Of Dunballoch	Construction and operation of Battery Energy Storage System	Shared receptors on the western edge Beauly are anticipated to view the Proposed Development and the Cumulative Site in combination, however due to the intervening vegetation and topography between the sites it is not anticipated that the cumulative effect will be greater than Minor Adverse (not significant) in construction, reducing to Negligible at year 0 and year 15.
22/04835/PAN, 24/02830/FUL	North of Aigas Power Station	Aigas Substation - Replacement and Construction of existing Aigas Substation	These cumulative sites are located in the River Beauly valley north of Ruttle Wood. Due to intervening topography and vegetation receptors with views towards the sites in combination appears to be of limited impact and sufficiently distant to have low risk of effect.

8.9.5 The Table below lists the developments considered to have the potential for cumulative effects in combination with the Proposed Development and sets out the cumulative assessment.

8.9.6 The three developments considered to have permanent significant effects in combination with the Proposed Development are the proposed new Beauly to Spittal 400 kV OHL and Beauly to Peterhead 400 kV OHL which would connect into the Proposed Development, and the proposed Beauly to Denny 400 kV OHL Diversion and tie-in required for the Proposed Development. Developments of this scale inevitably have significant visual effects all along their length, but the terminal towers can be seen to indicate the location of the substation and thus to draw the eye to the Site. **Figure 8.5 Cumulative Zone of Theoretical Visibility (SSEN Sites only)** shows the ZTV of some of these cumulative sites overlain on the ZTV of the Proposed Development. This cumulative assessment assumes that the construction period for the OHL would overlap with that for the Proposed Development.

Table 8-10: In-combination effects of the Proposed Development and Cumulative Developments

Name & Location	Application Ref / Type of Development	Distance from the Site	Potential in combination effects	Proposed Mitigation	Potential in-combination cumulative effects
Kilmorack Power Station – replacement of existing Kilmorack Substation	22/04837/PAN, 23/05130/PAN, 23/04885/SCRE, 24/02831/FUL	Approx 1.3 km northwest at the closest point.	Construction Phase **Landscape Character:** construction works (access roads and construction of the power station) are anticipated to have a temporary adverse effect locally on LCT 229 and LCT 227 in and around Black Bridge. This would intensify construction activities within a localised area of the LCT extending the influence of construction activity on the landscape, giving rise to a temporary local **Moderate Adverse (significant)** cumulative landscape effect on LCT 229, and a temporary local **Minor Adverse (not significant)** cumulative landscape effect on LCT 227. **Visual Amenity:** receptors living in Kilmorack, recreational users of the River Beauly and road users of the A831 (representative viewpoint 10) are anticipated to experience adverse visual effects from the construction works associated with Kilmorack Substation, but with limited cumulative effects relating to the Proposed Development's construction works. It is anticipated that a small number of receptors near Black Bridge would experience a temporary **Moderate Adverse cumulative effect**, whilst those further from one or the other would experience lesser effects. Operational phase **Landscape Character:** As the works at Kilmorack Power Station are replacing the existing power station, the combined effect of the Kilmorack Power Station with the Fanellan Hub would not be noticeably different to the effects of Fanellan Hub on its own. The combined effect on LCT 229 and LCT 227 would be marginally worse on a very localised area. There would therefore be a **negligible effect**	None confirmed.	Construction Phase Landscape Character: Locally **Moderate Adverse** (significant) on LCT 229 and **Minor Adverse** (not significant) on LCT227. Visual Amenity: Temporary **Moderate Adverse** (significant). Operational Phase Landscape Character: Locally **Minor Adverse** (not significant) falling to **Negligible** (not significant) over time. Visual Amenity: **Minor Adverse** (not significant)

Name & Location	Application Ref / Type of Development	Distance from the Site	Potential in combination effects	Proposed Mitigation	Potential in-combination cumulative effects
			(not significant) on both LCTs as a whole, and **Minor Adverse** (not significant) for the localised area, reducing to **negligible** over time as mitigation matures. **Visual Amenity:** Visibility between Kilmorack and Fanellan Hub is limited, and once operational the Kilmorack power station will be very similar to the existing power station. There will therefore be limited cumulative effects. A small number of sensitive receptors could be subject to a low magnitude of change, giving rise to **Minor Adverse (not significant)** visual effects.		
Proposed energy storage facility (BESS)	20/04849/PAN	Approx 2 km northwest at the closest point.	Construction Phase Landscape Character: Distance between the two sites is likely to limit intensification of construction works, with construction occurring in different LCTs. The degree of change is considered to be negligible, giving rise to a **Negligible (not significant)** effect on LCT 220 and LCT 229 as a whole. Visual Amenity: Distance between the two sites, and screening by vegetation in Ruttle Wood are likely to limit intervisibility of the two schemes at construction, resulting in a small or negligible cumulative magnitude of change on receptors to the north, northwest and northeast, resulting in a temporary **Negligible to Minor Adverse (not significant)** cumulative effect. Operational phase Landscape Character: Combined, there is anticipated to be a negligible degree of change on LCT 220 and LCT 229 as a whole, resulting in a **Negligible (not significant)** effect. Visual Amenity: At operation, there is likely to be a small to negligible degree of change for a few visual receptors to the north, northeast or	None (there is nothing that can be done on the Site to reduce any cumulative effects more than is achieved by the mitigation built in to the Proposed Development).	Construction Phase Landscape Character: Locally **Negligible** (not significant) effects on LCT 220 and 229 as a whole. Visual Amenity: Temporary **Negligible to Minor Adverse** (not significant) effect. Operational Phase Landscape Character: **Negligible** (not significant) effects on LCT 220 and 229 as a whole.

Name & Location	Application Ref / Type of Development	Distance from the Site	Potential in combination effects	Proposed Mitigation	Potential in-combination cumulative effects
			northwest, giving rise to **Negligible to Minor Adverse (not significant)** visual effects.		Visual Amenity: **Minor Adverse** (not significant) effects.
Erection of replacement Overhead Line	22/03536/PNO	Approx 1.8 km north-west at the closest point.	Construction Phase **Landscape Character:** construction works would be much less intensive than for a substation, resulting in very small magnitude of change on LCT 229, and none anticipated on LCT 227 or LCT 346. This would give rise to a temporary local **Negligible adverse** (not significant) cumulative landscape effect on LCT 229. **Visual Amenity:** receptors living in Kilmorack and Crask of Aigas may experience a degree of change as a result of the cumulative construction works, but this would be very small, resulting in a temporary **Minor Adverse to Negligible (not significant)** cumulative effect. Operational phase Landscape Character: It is assumed that the replacement OHL will be larger than existing, intensifying effects on the LCT and giving rise to a **Minor Adverse** (not significant) effect. Visual Amenity: Combined, a small number of sensitive receptors may be subject to a low degree of change (increased size replacement OHL infrastructure plus Fanellan Hub converter station buildings visible), giving rise to **Minor Adverse (not significant)** visual effects.	None	Construction Phase Landscape Character: **Negligible** (not significant) effects on LCT 229. Visual Amenity: Temporary **Minor Adverse to Negligible** (not significant) effects. Operational Phase Landscape Character: **Minor Adverse** (not significant) effect. Visual Amenity: **Minor Adverse** (not significant) effect**.**
The proposed Spittal-Beauly 400 kV OHL adjacent to the	400 kV OHL on steel lattice towers in the order of 90 m tall.	0 m The OHL will connect into the Proposed	Construction Phase Landscape Character: construction works would extend the area affected north and west although the level of activity would be much less intensive than that of a substation construction. Much of the	None confirmed.	Construction Phase Landscape Character: **Major Adverse** (significant) effect on LCT 227; **Moderate**

Name & Location	Application Ref / Type of Development	Distance from the Site	Potential in combination effects	Proposed Mitigation	Potential in-combination cumulative effects
Proposed Development		Development	construction activity associated with Fanellan Hub is screened from the north-west, although it is assumed that vegetation clearance required for the OHL corridor through Ruttle Wood would be more extensive, resulting in an increase in magnitude and a temporary localised **Major Adverse (significant)** cumulative effect on LCT 227 and **Moderate Adverse (significant)** effect on LCT 229. Visual Amenity: The loss of woodland through Ruttle Wood would be highly visible and potentially open up views towards the Hub construction works from the north. Receptors south of the Proposed Development would also see construction of both developments, resulting in a medium to high magnitude of change, and a temporary **Moderate to Major Adverse** cumulative visual effect. <u>Operational Phase</u> Landscape Character: The OHL would increase the localised area of LCT 227 and 229 affected by transmission development. However, this would still be small in relation to each LCT as a whole and a **Minor Adverse** (not significant) effect. Locally the cumulative effect would remain **Major Adverse** (significant), due to the anticipated permanent vegetation loss within an artificially straight corridor through Ruttle Wood. Visual Amenity: The cleared OHL operational corridor through Ruttle Wood will appear as a large, artificial straight line through the woodland, particularly in views from the north, and this, along with the presence of towers over the crest of the hill and terminal towers for the OHL are anticipated to strongly draw the eye to the location of the substation, making the Proposed Development more noticeable. This is anticipated to increase the effect on receptors within 1 – 2		**Adverse** (significant) effect on 229. Visual Amenity: **Moderate** to **Major Adverse** (significant) effects. <u>Operational Phase</u> Landscape Character: **Major Adverse** (significant) effects Visual Amenity: **Moderate** to **Major Adverse** (significant) effects (potentially reducing with mitigation for some receptors)

Name & Location	Application Ref / Type of Development	Distance from the Site	Potential in combination effects	Proposed Mitigation	Potential in-combination cumulative effects
			kilometres of the Proposed Development, variously experiencing a change of medium to high magnitude, giving rise to **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** visual effects.		
The proposed Beauly-Peterhead 400 kV OHL adjacent to the Proposed Development	400 kV OHL on steel lattice towers in the order of 59 m tall.	0 m The OHL will connect into the Proposed Development	<u>Construction Phase</u> Landscape Character: construction works would extend the area affected south and east although the level of activity would be much less intensive than that of a substation construction, a slight increase in magnitude of effect and a temporary **Minor Adverse (not significant)** cumulative effect. Visual Amenity: Receptors south of the Proposed Development would see both development construction works at the same time, anticipated to be a medium magnitude of change, and a temporary **Moderate Adverse (significant)** cumulative visual effect. <u>Operational Phase</u> Landscape Character: The OHL would increase the area of LCT 229 affected by transmission development and locally the effect would be more intense. However, this would still be small in relation to the LCT as a whole, a **Minor Adverse** (not significant) effect. Locally the cumulative effect would be **Moderate Adverse** (significant). Visual Amenity: The terminal towers for the OHL are anticipated to draw the eye to the location of the substation, making the Proposed Development more noticeable. This is anticipated to increase the effect on receptors within 1-2 kilometres of the Proposed Development, variously experiencing a change of medium to high magnitude, giving rise to **Moderate to Major Adverse** (significant) visual effects.	None confirmed.	Landscape Character: **Minor Adverse** (not significant) on LCT 229. Visual Amenity: **Moderate Adverse** (significant) effects. <u>Operational Phase</u> Landscape Character: **Moderate Adverse** (significant) Visual Amenity: **Moderate to Major Adverse** (significant).

Name & Location	Application Ref / Type of Development	Distance from the Site	Potential in combination effects	Proposed Mitigation	Potential in-combination cumulative effects
The proposed Western Isles Link HVDC underground cable (tying into the Proposed Development)		0 m The HDVC will connect into the Proposed Development	Construction Phase Landscape Character: construction works (access roads, construction of the HDVC and vegetation clearance) are anticipated to have a temporary adverse effect locally on LCT 229 and LCT 227 in close proximity to Black Bridge and Fanellan. This would intensify construction activities within a localised area of the LCTs extending the influence of construction activity closer to the Proposed Development, giving rise to a temporary local **Moderate Adverse (significant**) cumulative landscape effect on LCT 229, and a temporary local **Minor Adverse (not significant)** cumulative landscape effect on LCT 227. Visual Amenity: Receptors living in Kilmorack, along C1106 (Fanellan Road), Fanellan Croft, Fanellan Cottages and local road users (representative viewpoints 1 and 2) are anticipated to see both development construction works simultaneously, particularly where there is vegetation loss, and variously experiencing a change of medium to high magnitude. This would give rise to a temporary **Moderate to Major Adverse (significant)** cumulative effect. Operational phase Landscape Character: The operational corridor of the HVDC cable route would be revegetated, albeit without trees, but with a rural, natural character reflective of the LCTs. The underground cable will connect directly into the Proposed Development, giving rise to a **Minor Adverse (not significant)** effect on LCT 229 and **negligible (not significant)** effect on LCT 227.	None (there is nothing that can be done on the Site to reduce any cumulative effects more than is achieved by the mitigation built in to the Proposed Development).	Landscape Character: Temporary **Moderate Adverse** (significant) on LCT 229 and **Minor Adverse** (not significant) on LCT 227. Visual Amenity: Temporary **Moderate to Major Adverse** (significant) effects Operational Phase Landscape Character: **Minor Adverse** (not significant) Visual Amenity: **Minor Adverse** (not significant)

Name & Location	Application Ref / Type of Development	Distance from the Site	Potential in combination effects	Proposed Mitigation	Potential in-combination cumulative effects
			Visual Amenity: The HVDC corridor will not be readily noticeable in views and would therefore not exert a cumulative effect resulting in a small impact and **Minor Adverse (not significant)** effects.		
The proposed Beauly-Denny OHL Diversion, which will be required to facilitate the Proposed Development and tying into it		0 m The OHL will connect into the Proposed Development	<u>Construction Phase</u> Landscape Character: construction works (access roads and construction of the OHL diversion) are anticipated to slightly extend the area affected, a slight increase in magnitude of effect and a temporary **Minor Adverse (not significant)** cumulative effect on LCT 229, and a **Negligible (not significant)** cumulative landscape effect on LCT 227. Visual Amenity: Receptors to the south, south-west and south-east in particular are anticipated to experience small cumulative effects, but construction activity of the OHL diversion would be far less intensive than for the substation, resulting in negligible to small magnitude of change and thus **Negligible to Minor Adverse (not significant)** cumulative effects. <u>Operational Phase</u> Landscape Character: The OHL already exists, but some additional towers, including terminal towers, will be present at the back of the substation (which is cut into the hillside). Operational effects would marginally increase the area of LCT 229 affected by transmission development, to a negligible or small magnitude, resulting in a **Minor Adverse (not significant)** effect locally and **negligible (not significant)** elsewhere. Visual Amenity: Additional towers, including terminal towers are anticipated to slightly draw the eye to the location of the substation, although their location to the back of the substation infrastructure will	None (there is nothing that can be done on the Site to reduce any cumulative effects more than is achieved by the mitigation built in to the Proposed Development).	Landscape Character: **Minor Adverse** (not significant) on LCT 229 and **Negligible** (not significant) on LCT227. Visual Amenity: **Minor Adverse to negligible (not significant)** effects. <u>Operational Phase</u> Landscape Character: **Minor Adverse** (not significant) to **negligible** (not significant). Visual Amenity: **Minor Adverse** to **negligible** (not significant) effects.

Name & Location	Application Ref / Type of Development	Distance from the Site	Potential in combination effects	Proposed Mitigation	Potential in-combination cumulative effects
			lessen its impact and move it further into the hillside. This is anticipated to result in negligible or small magnitudes of change only, giving rise to **Negligible and Minor Adverse** visual (not significant) effects.		
Black Bridge	Temporary Bridge installation and access works	100m	Construction Phase **Landscape Character:** construction works to the Black Bridge (temporary bridge installation/ strengthening works) would slightly intensify construction activities within a localised area of the LCTs extending the influence of construction activity closer to the Proposed Development, giving rise to a temporary local **Minor Adverse (not significant)** cumulative landscape effect on LCT 229, a temporary local **Negligible (not significant)** cumulative landscape effect on LCT 227. **Visual Amenity:** Receptors living in Kilmorack, recreational users of the River Beauly and road users of the A831 (representative viewpoint 10) are anticipated to experience adverse visual effects from the construction works associated with Black Bridge improvements, but construction effects from Fanellan Hub are limited. It is anticipated that a small number of receptors near Black Bridge would experience a temporary **Moderate Adverse (significant)** cumulative effect, whilst those further from one or the other development would experience lesser effects. Operational phase Landscape Character: Combined, the Black Bridge Improvements would not significantly alter the character of the LCTs, resulting in **Negligible** (not significant) effects.	None confirmed.	Landscape Character: **Minor Adverse** (not significant) effects on LCT 229 and **Negligible** (not significant) effects on LCT227. Visual Amenity: Temporary **Moderate Adverse** (significant) effects. Operational Phase Landscape Character: **Negligible** (not significant) effects. Visual Amenity **Negligible** (not significant) effects.

Name & Location	Application Ref / Type of Development	Distance from the Site	Potential in combination effects	Proposed Mitigation	Potential in-combination cumulative effects
			Visual Amenity: Combined, the Black Bridge Improvements would not significantly alter visual amenity with negligible magnitude of change anticipated, giving rise to **Negligible** (not significant) visual effects.		

8.10 Summary of Significant Effects

8.10.1 Landscape character and visual amenity have been important considerations through the iterative design process, from site selection through to detailed design. The final design incorporates both landscape landforms, designed to mitigate some effects immediately, and screen planting which will provide further mitigation over time as it develops and matures. The use of colour will also be developed to aid integration of the built form into the landscape.

Landscape Character

8.10.2 The Proposed Development would change the shape of the land and introduce larger scale infrastructure than currently exists 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.

Visual Amenity

8.10.3 The degree of significance at individual receptors varies according to their orientation in relation to the Site, local topography, and the presence or absence of screening elements such as buildings, walls, trees and shrubs between the receptor and the Site.

8.10.4 During construction and on commencement of operation there would be significant adverse visual effects on high sensitivity visual receptors represented by viewpoints 1, 2, 5, 6 and 7 within two kilometres of the Site. There would also be significant adverse visual effects on transient users of six minor roads close to the site.

8.10.5 The effect on visual amenity would reduce over time as the mitigation planting develops. By Year 15, the number of residential receptors significantly affected would have reduced although significant effects would remain for high sensitive visual receptors represented by viewpoint 1 and located within the redline boundary (Fanellan Croft and Fanellan Cottages) or approximately 500 m of the red line boundary (including Butlers Cottage, Broomhill, Hill View, Fanellan, Bredaig and Sunnybrae). Of these, two would be neutral in nature: substantially changed but, once the mitigation is established, visual amenity would be different but not necessarily better or worse. Significant effects would also remain for users of C1106 (Fanellan Road) along the southern edge of the site.

Cumulative Landscape Effects

8.10.6 Cumulatively, there would be significant effects during construction on LCT 229 with Kilmorack Power Station; the Spittal-Beauly 400 kV OHL; and the Western Isles Link HVDC underground cable. There would also be cumulative effects on LCT 227 with the Spittal-Beauly 400 kV OHL.

8.10.7 At operation, significant cumulative effects would remain for LCT 229 and LCT 227 with the Spittal-Beauly 400 kV OHL and a significant effect for LCT 229 with Beauly-Peterhead 400 kV OHL.

Cumulative Visual Effects

8.10.8 At construction, there would be cumulative effects on local visual receptors with Kilmorack Power Station; Spittal-Beauly 400 kV OHL; Beauly-Peterhead 400 kV OHL; the Western Isles Link HVDC underground cable; and Black Bridge.

8.10.9 At operation, significant cumulative effects would remain for visual receptors in relation to Spittal-Beauly 400 kV OHL; and Beauly-Peterhead 400 kV OHL.