

Chapter 8: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment - Contents

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8. Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

8.1 Executive Summary

- 8.1.1 A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) has been undertaken for the Proposed Development within a study area of approximately 10 km. The LVIA has been undertaken by Chartered Landscape Architects at ASH design+assessment Ltd (ASH), a registered practice with the Landscape Institute, in accordance with best practice guidance, the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition (GLVIA3) (Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013).¹
- 8.1.2 The LVIA considers the two separate subjects of landscape and visual amenity as follows:
- The landscape assessment has considered the potential effects of the Proposed Development on landscape character, designated and protected landscapes; and
 - The visual assessment has considered the potential effects of the Proposed Development on the visual amenity of those present within the landscape, including established views from residential areas and routes.
- 8.1.3 Potential effects were considered both during the construction phase of the Proposed Development and also during operation, approximately 10 years following completion, when proposed landscape mitigation and regeneration would be established.
- 8.1.4 The scope of the LVIA was developed in agreement with The Highland Council (THC) and NatureScot.
- 8.1.5 Embedded mitigation measures including landform, planting, seeding and the encouragement of vegetation growth at rock cuttings, as well as the sensitive location and design of permanent new structures, are all proposed as part of the Proposed Development. The assessment of operational effects has assumed that these measures would be in place as part of the Proposed Development.

Landscape Effects

- 8.1.6 The landscape assessment has considered the potential effects of the Proposed Development to Landscape Character Types (LCTs) identified within the NatureScot National Landscape Character Assessment of Scotland (SNH, 2019 [online]²) and within the Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA, described within the Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas (Horner + MacLennan and Wood, 2011)³.
- 8.1.7 During the construction phase of the Proposed Development, temporary significant effects are predicted within two of the five LCTs assessed: LCT 224 (Farmed and Wooded Foothills); and LCT

¹ Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment. (2013). Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition.

² NatureScot: (2019): Scottish Landscape Character Types Map and Descriptions [ONLINE] <https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/landscape/landscape-character-assessment/scottish-landscape-character-types-map-and-descriptions> [accessed August 2023].

³ Horner + MacLennan and Wood, M. (2011). Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas. Commissioned by The Highland Council in partnership with Scottish Natural Heritage. June 2011.

225 (Broad Steep-Sided Glen). These effects would be localised, affecting the landscape around the key areas of the Proposed Development at the lower reservoir works on the shore of Loch Ness (LCT 225) and the upper reservoir works at Loch Kemp (LCT 224). Elsewhere within LCT 224 and LCT 225, effects would be not significant. Potential effects to the remaining three LCTs assessed within the study area: LCT 221 (Rolling Uplands -Inverness), LCT 222 (Rocky Moorland Plateau -Inverness) and LCT 227 (Farmed Strath-Inverness) would not be significant during the construction of the Proposed Development.

- 8.1.8 During the operational phase of the Proposed Development, after 10 years, adverse effects predicted within LCT 224 and LCT 225 would be reduced and would not be significant.
- 8.1.9 With regard to the Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA, the assessment has determined that although during the construction of the Proposed Development there would be some temporary localised significant effects on the Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA, these effects would reduce to a non-significant level during operation, and it is therefore considered that the integrity of the SLA designation would not be affected.

Visual Effects

- 8.1.10 The detailed assessment of effects on visual amenity has considered potential effects on visual receptors (those obtaining views) based in buildings and residential areas, using transport and recreational routes, and taking advantage of the view at defined outdoor locations.
- 8.1.11 During construction, the assessment has identified that localised significant effects would occur for visual receptors based at four of the nine building based receptor groups identified, and localised significant effects for two out of eight routes identified. Visual receptors at the two outdoor locations identified would not experience significant effects during construction or operation of the Proposed Development.
- 8.1.12 The building based receptor locations where significant effects are predicted to occur during the construction phase, are all located where an open view, albeit narrow or oblique in some locations, is afforded to either the lower reservoir works or upper reservoir works of the Proposed Development. However, once the intensity of activities associated with the construction phase has ceased and when mitigation planting and vegetation re-growth associated with the Proposed Development begins to establish, the effects would be further reduced. Therefore, it is considered that during the operational phase, none of the identified building based receptors would have a significant effect.
- 8.1.13 Localised significant effects are predicted for route based receptors, using Loch Ness during the construction phase, where elements of the Proposed Development sited on the loch shore as well as associated tracks, would be noticeable additions into the landscape setting and prominent locally, although becoming increasingly less visible at further distances or when viewed in oblique views. The increased movement of traffic on the loch itself, by barge or boat, as well as views of cranes and other associated construction activity, would lead to temporary locally significant effects. In the longer term during the operational phase, it is predicted that the effects would be reduced to a non significant level, as the powerhouse building would become a feature of architectural and recreational interest on Loch Ness, located within a mature landscape setting. Temporary localised significant effects are also predicted during the construction of the scheme for route based receptors using a popular recreational route to the east of Proposed Development. The construction of Dam 3 would be seen in localised open views to the west. However, following completion of

construction, when mitigation earthworks and planting has established, it is predicted that all effects would be reduced to a not significant level.

- 8.1.14 No significant effects are therefore predicted for any visual receptors during the operation of the Proposed Development.

Cumulative Landscape and Visual Effects

- 8.1.15 Cumulative landscape and visual effects may occur where the effects of more than one development combine to form a greater level of effect on a landscape area or within a view.

- 8.1.16 The cumulative landscape and visual assessment has identified that there would be no significant cumulative landscape or visual effects, arising from the addition of the Proposed Development when considered in addition to proposed associated works, including the cable and switching station, as well as other major hydro and wind farm development within the study area.

8.2 Introduction

- 8.2.1 This Chapter presents the findings of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) for the Proposed Development. The purpose of the LVIA is to identify and describe potential significant effects which may occur as a result of the Proposed Development to views obtained by those living, working and visiting in the area, and to the wider landscape resource, as well as any residual predicted significant effects after mitigation.
- 8.2.2 This assessment has been carried out by Chartered Landscape Architects at ASH design + assessment Ltd (ASH), a registered practice with the Landscape Institute. The assessment has been undertaken in accordance with best practice guidance, the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition (GLVIA). A table presenting relevant qualifications and experience of key staff involved in the preparation of this Chapter is included in **Appendix 4.1: EIA Team**, contained within **Volume 4** of this EIA Report.

8.3 Scope of Assessment

Consultation and Scoping

- 8.3.1 The scope of the assessment has been determined through a combination of professional judgement, reference to the relevant guidance documents and consultation with stakeholders through a formal EIA scoping process and pre-application advice.
- 8.3.2 **Table 8.1** summarises the scoping responses and additional consultation relevant to the LVIA and Cumulative Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (CLVIA) and provides information on where and / or how points raised have been addressed in this assessment.
- 8.3.3 Full details on the consultation responses and scoping opinion can be reviewed in **Chapter 5: Scoping and Consultation**, and associated appendices.

Table 8.1 Consultation Responses

Consultee	Consultation Type	Issue Raised	Action
Energy Consents Unit	Scoping	Scottish Ministers request that the Applicant addresses the Planning Authority's request in their response as regards landscape and visual assessment and specifically that relating to cumulative effects and viewpoints, and address Mountaineering Scotland's request in their response for additional required viewpoint assessment.	This has been addressed (see below), in consultation with THC and Mountaineering Scotland.

The Highland Council (THC)	Scoping	The EIA Report should recognise the existing land uses affected by the development (para. 3.2 of THC Scoping Response).	A separate chapter on Land Use and Recreation has been included as part of the EIA Report (see Chapter 9: Land Use and Recreation)
		The EIA Report should recognise the existing land uses affected by the development including key sensitive receptors as per the onshore wind energy supplementary guidance (para 3.2 of THC Scoping Response).	Impacts on land use are discussed within Chapter 9: Land Use and Recreation . Key receptors included in the Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance are considered within Volume 4, Appendix 8.5: Appraisal of The Highland Council's Criteria for the Consideration of Onshore Wind Proposals .
		Landscape and Visual Impact require separate assessment and therefore presentation of visual material in different ways (para 3.7 of THC Scoping Response).	The LVIA chapter considers the two separate subjects of Landscape, and Visual Amenity. Visualisations which are representative of views which may be obtained, have been prepared from agreed locations to both THC's Visualisation Standards ⁴ & NatureScot guidance ⁵ (see Volume 3a and Volume 3b as well as Appendix 8.1: Technical Methodologies for Visual Representation). The visualisations are referenced within the LVIA, with their locations presented in Volume 2, Figure 8.6: Visualisation Locations with ZTV .
		Photomontages to be produced for Year 1, Year 3 and Completion of the Construction process and Year 1, 7 and 10 post completion (para 3.9 & 3.12 of THC Scoping Response)	The final number and timing of visualisations subsequently agreed with THC are as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Year 1 during construction; • Year 3 during construction; • Year 1 post completion; and • Year 10 post completion. The photomontages prepared to THC Visualisation Standards are included in Volume 3b .
		THC consider that the study area for cumulative and solus effects should be extended to 10 km from the outermost elements of the Proposed Development and consider that the assessment of landscape and visual	This matter was addressed in a letter (issued via email) dated 10 th November 2022 (Ref 120019-L-THC3-1.0.0) to THC, which confirmed that the LVIA study area would be extended to 10 km from the outermost elements of the Proposed Development.

⁴ The Highland Council (2016) Visualisation Standards for Wind Energy Developments. Available at: https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/12880/visualisation_standards_for_wind_energy_developments

⁵ Scottish Natural Heritage (2017) Visual Representations of Wind Farms. Version 2.2. Available at: <https://www.nature.scot/doc/visual-representation-wind-farm-guidance>

		impact should be completed in full across the entire study area.	
		As well as similar applications, THC consider that the cumulative assessment should be expanded to include wind energy development in the study area (para. 3.11 of THC Scoping Response).	The cumulative assessment has included consideration of other hydro developments within the vicinity of the Proposed Development, as well as agreed wind farms within the study area. This is detailed in Section 8.11 of this Chapter. It was clarified during the pre-app meeting with THC on the 11 th May 2022, that it is the tracks associated with wind farms rather than the turbines, which are to be considered (see Section 5.2 of Chapter 5: Scoping and Consultation).
		The finalised list of viewpoints (VP) and wireframes is to be agreed in advance. Request for a further VP provided in vicinity of Invermoriston (para.3.12 of THC Scoping Response) The purpose of the selected and agreed viewpoints shall be clearly identified and stated in the supporting information	The proposed list of visualisations was issued to THC in a letter (issued via email) dated 10 th November 2022 (see Section 5.2 of Chapter 5: Scoping and Consultation) as illustrated in Volume 2, Figure 8.6: Visualisation Locations with ZTV . THC confirmed in their response on the 17 th November 2022 that VLs were generally appropriate, with suggestion for a further two VLs to be considered – (Great Glen Way and vicinity of Portclair Forest at the end of the towpath in Fort August). In an email dated 9 th May 2023, ASH requested approval to exclude these two additional visualisation locations, as further site work had shown visibility to be too limited. THC agreed with this request in their response (via email) on the 23 rd May 2023. A marked up photograph has been included pinpointing the location of the powerhouse building in views from the canal tow path within Volume 3b. The purpose of the selected and agreed viewpoints is clearly identified and stated in Section 8.5 of this Chapter.
		The LVIA chapter of the EIA Report should clearly set out the methodology (para 3.16 of THC Scoping Response).	The LVIA methodology and assessment criteria are detailed in Section 8.5 of this Chapter.
		When assessing the impact on recreational routes ensure that all core paths, national cycle	Potential impacts on recreational routes are discussed in Section 8.10 of this Chapter, with reference to recreational routes in Volume 4, Appendix 8.2:

		network and long-distance trails are assessed (para 3.17 of THC Scoping Response).	Visual Assessment Tables and, where relevant, cross referenced with Chapter 9: Land Use and Recreation, Section 9.7 . See also Volume 4, Appendix 9.1: Draft Outdoor Access Management Plan .
		Given the scale of the proposals there may be an impact on the Loch Ness and Duntelchaig Special Landscape Area (para 3.18 of THC Scoping Response).	Discussed in Section 8.9 of this Chapter, with reference to the Assessment of the SLA included in Volume 4, Appendix 8.4: Assessment of Special Landscape Area .
		An assessment of the proposal against the criterion set out in THC's Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance (OWESG) is to be included in the LVIA chapter (para 3.19 of THC Scoping Response).	An assessment of the Proposed Development against the criterion set out in THC's OWESG has been included in Volume 4, Appendix 8.5: Appraisal of The Highland Council's Criteria for the Consideration of Onshore Wind Proposals .
		Residential Visual Amenity should not be scoped out (para 3.21 of THC Scoping Response)	This issue is discussed in Section 8.10 of this Chapter, with reference to building based receptors in Volume 4, Appendix 8.2: Visual Assessment Tables . Also see Section 5.3 of Chapter 5: Scoping and Consultation
NatureScot	Scoping	The proposal will not affect any designated landscape and NS agree the proposed scope of the LVIA and suggested range of visualisations.	It is noted that NatureScot agree with the proposed scope of the LVIA and suggested visualisations. Visualisations produced in accordance with NatureScot's visualisation guidance are included within Volume 3a of this EIA Report.
Mountaineering Scotland (MS)		Mountaineering Scotland suggest the inclusion in visualisation assessment of Meall Fuar-mhonaidh, which should include the extent of the proposed drawdown zone surrounding Loch Kemp and the design and construction of new permanent tracks.	Visualisations from Meall Fuar-mhonaidh have been included in the EIA Report (see Volume 3a, Figures V3a-6a to V3a-6g and Volume 3b, Figures V3b-6a to V3b-6n) illustrating views of the Proposed Development during construction (year 1 and year 3), as well as year 1 post completion and year 10 post completion, when vegetation, including any mitigation planting, has had the opportunity to establish. Potential effects have been assessed as part of the LVIA (see Section 8.10 of this Chapter).

Study Area

- 8.3.4 The LVIA study area comprises the area where any potentially significant effects resulting from the Proposed Development would be likely to occur and has been established through consideration of the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) (see paragraphs 8.3.5 to 8.3.9 below), and professional

judgement. In agreement with THC, a study area of approximately 10 km radius from the Development Area has been adopted for the LVIA (see **Volume 2, Figure 8.1: Study Area with ZTV**).

Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)

- 8.3.5 As an aid to establishing the scope for the LVIA, ZTVs have been produced for the Proposed Development. A ZTV is a computer generated diagram which uses a terrain model to indicate areas from which the Proposed Development would be theoretically visible. The ZTVs for the Proposed Development have been generated using ESRI ArcGIS software based on a terrain modelled using Ordnance Survey (OS) T5 DTM data. ZTV mapping has been used throughout the design process as an iterative design tool.
- 8.3.6 The ZTVs have been produced from points representing the operational height of the key built elements of the scheme. The following height parameters have been used:
- Dams – run to a height of 207.5 m AOD; and
 - Powerhouse Building – run to a height of 28 m and a ground level of 19 m AOD (assuming an approximate building roof height level of 47 AOD).
- 8.3.7 The ZTVs for the key elements listed above are shown on **Volume 2, Figure 8.1: Study Area with ZTV**.
- 8.3.8 The ZTV takes account of earth curvature and light refractivity, set to 0.075 in accordance with NatureScot guidance.
- 8.3.9 Whilst the ZTV is a useful tool for the identification of potential effects, it is not indicative of an effect in itself. The ZTV does not take into account the potential screening effects of woodland and other localised features such as buildings, trees or local landform which are not captured by the OS T5 data. Nor does it give indication of the way in which a development may relate to its broader landscape context and the receding scale and visibility of features with distance. However, consideration of these aspects is taken into account during the assessment including through professional judgement.

8.4 Legislation, Policy and Guidance

- 8.4.1 The assessment has taken into account national, regional and local policy and guidance relating to landscape character and visual amenity relevant to the Proposed Development. Detailed information on planning policy is contained within the Planning Statement accompanying the application for the Proposed Development and **Chapter 6: Planning**. The following provides a summary with respect to the LVIA.

National Context

- 8.4.2 The following national policy documents and statements have been referred to in carrying out this assessment:
- The Fourth National Planning Framework for Scotland (NPF4) (2023);
 - Scottish Government Online Planning Guidance for Onshore Wind Turbines (last updated May 2014);
 - Scottish Energy Strategy: The future of energy in Scotland (2017);

- Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan (2023);
- Planning Advice Note 60 – Planning for Natural Heritage (PAN60), 2000;
- Renewable Energy and the Natural Heritage, SNH Policy Document, 2010; and
- Wildness in Scotland’s Countryside, SNH Policy Statement 02/03.

Regional Context

8.4.3 The following document has been considered in the assessment:

The Highland-wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP), 2012⁶.

8.4.4 The HwLDP forms the basis for spatial planning policy for the Proposed Development within the Highland Council area. Policy 28, Sustainable Design details the parameters under which all development proposals are considered. The policy is supportive of development proposals which *“...promote and enhance the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the people of the Highland.”*

8.4.5 Also referred to is Policy 51, Trees and Development which ensures that *“...additional tree / hedge planting [is secured] within a tree planting or landscape plan to compensate removal and enhance the setting of any new development.”*

8.4.6 Policy 52, Principle of Development in Woodland states that *“Development proposals will only be supported where they offer clear and significant public benefit. Where this involves woodland removal, compensatory planting will usually be required.”*

8.4.7 Policy 61, Landscape, concerns the protection of the landscape resource, and states that *“New developments should be designed to reflect the landscape characteristics and special qualities identified in the Landscape Character Assessment of the area in which they are proposed. This will include consideration of the appropriate scale, form, pattern and construction materials, as well as the potential cumulative effect of developments where this may be an issue.”*

Supplementary Guidance

8.4.8 The following Supplementary Guidance (SG) has been considered in the assessment:

- The Highland Council Onshore Wind Energy SG, 2016;
- Physical Constraints SG, 2013;
- Sustainable Design Guide SG, 2013;
- Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas, 2011; and
- Trees, Woodlands & Development SG, 2013.

⁶ The Highland Council (2012) Highland-wide Local Development Plan. Available at: https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/178/local_and_statutory_development_plans/199/highland_wide_local_development_plan

8.5 Methodology

- 8.5.1 Landscape assessment and visual impact assessments are separate, though linked, procedures. Assessment of likely effects on the landscape considers the potential effects on the environmental resource (i.e. the landscape). Assessment of likely visual effects considers the potential for inter-related effects on visual amenity.
- 8.5.2 Landscape effects derive from changes in the physical landscape which may give rise to changes in its character and how this is experienced, including consideration of landscape perception, which may in turn affect the perceived value ascribed to the landscape.
- 8.5.3 Visual effects relate to changes that arise in the composition of available views as a result of the changes to the landscape, to people's responses to the changes, and to the overall effects with respect to visual amenity.
- 8.5.4 The potential to mitigate adverse effects should also be considered for both landscape and visual assessment.

Assessment Guidance

- 8.5.5 The LVIA has been prepared with reference to the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Assessment, Third Edition (GLVIA3)⁷ and Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland⁸.

Professional Judgement

- 8.5.6 GLVIA3 places a strong emphasis on the importance of professional judgement in identifying and defining the significance of landscape and visual effects.
- 8.5.7 As part of this assessment, professional judgement has been used in combination with structured methods and criteria to evaluate landscape value and landscape and visual sensitivity, magnitude and significance of effect. The assessment has been undertaken and verified by two Landscape Professionals (Chartered Landscape Architects) to provide a robust and consistent approach.

Key Stages of the Assessment

- 8.5.8 GLVIA3 advises that landscape and visual effects should be assessed from a clear understanding of the development proposed and any mitigation measures which are being adopted.
- 8.5.9 The GLVIA3 methodology for landscape assessment involves an appreciation of the existing landscape resource, the susceptibility of its key components to accept the change proposed, and an understanding of the potential effects which could occur and how these could affect these key components.
- 8.5.10 Familiarity with the site and the extent, nature and expectation of existing views by visual receptors is a key factor in establishing the visual sensitivity in terms of the development proposed. The

⁷ Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013). *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Assessment, Third Edition*.

⁸ Scottish Natural Heritage, The Countryside Agency (2002). *Landscape Character Assessment : Guidance for England and Scotland*

guidelines require evaluation of magnitude of change to views experienced by sensitive receptors, comprising individuals living, working, travelling and carrying out other activities within the landscape, and the subsequent evaluation of the significance of effects.

8.5.11 There are five key stages to the assessment:

- Establishment of the baseline;
- Appreciation of the development proposed;
- Identification of key landscape and visual receptors;
- Identification of potential effects; and
- Assessment of significance of effect.

Establishment of the Baseline

8.5.12 Establishment of the baseline conditions has been undertaken through a combination of desk study and site appraisal.

Desk Study

8.5.13 An appraisal of the baseline landscape and visual characteristics of the site, relevant planning policy relating to the Proposed Development site and study area and of the characteristics of the study area was undertaken via an initial desk study.

8.5.14 The desk review has involved review of the following documents and sources:

- National, Regional and Local Planning Policy – summarised in **Section 8.4** and detailed in **Chapter 6: Planning**;
- The Scoping Opinion and other consultation responses for the Proposed Development (see **Table 8.1** and **Volume 4, Appendix 5.2**);
- Online mapping and aerial photography resources from Ordnance Survey, Google⁹, Bing¹⁰ and National Library of Scotland¹¹;
- Information on tracks and paths including the Core Paths Interactive Map (The Highland Council)¹² and Scottish Hill Tracks (Scottish Rights of Way and Access Society, 2011)¹³
- The ZTV for the Proposed Development (see **Volume 2, Figure 8.1**); and
- Site surveys undertaken in September 2021 and December 2022.

⁹ Google mapping aerial photography (online). Available at: <https://www.google.co.uk/maps/>

¹⁰ Bing Mapping aerial photography (online). Available at: <https://www.bing.com/maps/>

¹¹ National Library of Scotland mapping (online). Available at: <https://maps.nls.uk/>

¹² The Highland Council, Core Paths Interactive Map (online). Available at: <https://highlnd.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=2fd3fc9c72d545f7bcf1b43bf5c8445f>

¹³ Scottish Rights of Way and Access Society (2011). Scottish Hill Tracks. 5th edition. Scottish Mountaineering Trust.

8.5.15 In addition, the following specific baseline activities were undertaken for the two differing assessments of landscape and visual effects:

Landscape Assessment Baseline Tasks

8.5.16 The desk review for the landscape assessment has included review of the following additional documents and resources:

- Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas (Horner + MacLennan and Wood, 2011); and
- NatureScot Landscape Character Types (LCTs) and Descriptions (SNH, 2019 [online]).

Site Appraisal

8.5.17 The ASH assessment team undertook an initial site familiarisation visit in September 2021, taking cognisance of the surrounding baseline conditions and views towards and from within the Site, and then a further follow up site visit was carried out in early December 2022.

8.5.18 During the follow up site visit, the visualisation locations agreed with THC were ground truthed. Public roads and footpaths were used to gain access to these key locations. Visualisations from six locations have been produced in accordance with both NatureScot and THC visualisation standards and are presented in **Volume 3a** and **Volume 3b** respectively. These show indicative activity during year 1 and 3 of the construction phase, the predicted appearance of the Proposed Development at year 1 post completion prior to the establishment of mitigation planting, and after 10 years, once planting is expected to be established. The following visualisation locations have been included, and are presented on **Volume 2, Figure 8.6: Visualisation Locations with ZTV:**

1. In the vicinity of the A82 north of Invermoriston - illustrative of worst-case views of the powerhouse building and associated lower reservoir works from across Loch Ness;
2. The upper Great Glen Way in the vicinity of Allt sigh - illustrative of worst-case views from the Great Glen Way;
3. Core Path IN25.01 near Whitebridge - illustrative of views obtained by residents at nearby properties on Dell Estate and walkers along this core path which forms a part of the South Loch Ness trail;
4. Summit by Suidhe Viewpoint off the B862 - illustrative of high-level views obtained from popular viewpoint;
5. A82 south of Invermoriston - illustrative of views from the vicinity of Invermoriston; and
6. Meall Fuar-mhonaidh (245889, 822181) – illustrative of high level views from across Loch Ness from popular local summit (listed as a ‘Graham’ and also requested by Mountaineering Scotland).

8.5.19 The visualisations have been produced to illustrate the Proposed Development and to support the LVIA work. They are intended to show the appearance of the Proposed Development within the landscape setting. Visualisation Locations have not been assessed as viewpoints. The visual assessment is a receptor-based assessment giving consideration to all potential visual receptors, rather than a viewpoint-based assessment.

Identification of Baseline Landscape Value

- 8.5.20 The value of the landscape is an important consideration in informing later judgement of the significance of effects. Landscape value concerns the perceived importance of the landscape when considered as a whole, and within the context of the study area and is established through consideration of the following factors:
- Presence of landscape designations, other inventory or registered landscapes / landscape features or identified planning constraints;
 - The scenic quality of the landscape;
 - Perceptual aspects, such as wildness or tranquillity;
 - Conservation interests, such as cultural heritage features or associations, or if the landscape supports notable habitats or species;
 - Recreational value; and
 - Rarity, either in the national or local context, or if it is considered to be a particularly important example of a specific landscape type.
- 8.5.21 It should be noted that absence of a designation does not necessarily mean that a landscape or component is not highly valued, as factors such as accessibility and local scarcity can render areas of nationally unremarkable quality highly valuable as a local resource.
- 8.5.22 Criteria for the allocation of perceived landscape value are outlined in **Table 8.2**.

Table 8.2 Landscape Value Criteria

Landscape Value	Criteria
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The landscape is closely associated with features of international or national importance which are rare within the wider context; • The landscape is of high scenic quality and forms a key part of an important designated landscape or planning constraint; and / or • The landscape is an example of a scarce resource within the local context and is of considerable importance for its scenic quality, recreational opportunities or cultural heritage associations.
Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The landscape is associated with features of national or regional importance which are relatively common within the wider context; • The landscape forms part of a designated landscape or is associated with other features of importance but is not rare or distinctive within the local context; and / or • The landscape is one of a number within the local context appreciated for its scenic quality, recreational opportunities or cultural heritage associations.
Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The landscape characteristics are common within the local and regional context and the landscape is not associated with any particular features or attributes considered to be important; and / or • The landscape is of poor scenic quality and is not appreciated for any recreational or cultural associations.

Visual Assessment Baseline Tasks

- 8.5.23 A combination of desk and field survey was used to establish the range and distribution of potential visual receptors within the study area. Visual receptors can be defined as individuals occupying and using the study area with the potential to obtain views of the Proposed Development. Potential visual receptors included in the assessment have included those experiencing views from locations such as buildings, recognised routes and popular viewpoints used by the public.
- 8.5.24 The following additional resources were used to enhance understanding of the use of the study area by potential visual receptors:
- The Highland Council (THC) Core Paths Interactive Map [online];
 - Scottish Hill Tracks (Scottish Rights of Way and Access Society (Scotways), 2011); and
 - Other web based and published sources providing information on local resources and activities within the study area (see the list of references in **Section 8.14**).
- 8.5.25 Site visits were undertaken to verify the visual receptors identified through desk study, identify any further potential receptors which had been missed and collate information on baseline visual amenity, including information on the types and activities of visual receptors likely to be present, and the nature of the existing views which are obtained. Site recording involved the completion of standardised recording forms and annotation of 1:25,000 and 1:50,000 Ordnance Survey plans, supported by a photographic record of views from key receptor locations.

Appreciation of the Development Proposed

- 8.5.26 Appreciation of the Proposed Development involves the accumulation of a thorough knowledge of the proposal, its nature, scale and location within the baseline landscape, and any peripheral or ancillary features proposed. Analysis of the proposed activities and changes which would take place leads to an understanding of the potential effects that may occur to the landscape and visual resource.
- 8.5.27 The Proposed Development comprises a number of components, some of which are temporary to facilitate construction of the development. Some components of the Proposed Development are underground so not likely to result in any potential visual effects, although there may be a degree of landscape effect near the entrance of the underground elements. Other components would result in permanent new additional features into the landscape and would potentially result in both landscape and visual effects.
- 8.5.28 A review took place of available desk-based information relating to the Proposed Development in terms of its long-term physical appearance and requirements for construction and access as well as gaining an understanding of the construction activities which would be involved.
- 8.5.29 A detailed description of the Proposed Development can be found in **Chapter 3: Description of Development**.

Identification of Key Landscape and Visual Receptors

- 8.5.30 The identification of key landscape and visual receptors with the potential to be affected by the Proposed Development is the first step in the analysis of the potential for significant effects to occur. Landscape and visual receptors can be described as follows:

- Landscape receptors comprise key characteristics or individual features which contribute to the value of the landscape and have the potential to be affected by the Proposed Development. Landscape receptors are identified through analysis of baseline characteristics when considered in relation to the impacts which might result from a development of the type proposed.
- Visual receptors comprise individuals experiencing views from locations such as buildings, recognised routes and popular viewpoints used by the public. Potential visual receptors are identified through analysis of desk resources, mapping and field survey, as described under 'Establishment of the Baseline' above. A review of the ZTV in the context of site survey is used to identify the potential for visual receptors to be affected by the Proposed Development.

Identification of Potential Effects

- 8.5.31 The second step in the assessment process involves the identification of potential effects which may occur as a result of the interaction of the Proposed Development with the identified landscape and visual receptors.
- 8.5.32 The assessment takes into account direct effects upon existing views, landscape elements, features and key characteristics and, also, indirect effects which may occur secondarily to changes affecting another landscape component or area. The identification of potential effects is a two-fold process, giving consideration to how these effects may arise from aspects of the Proposed Development and how they may be accommodated by the existing baseline features.

8.5.33 Where it is established that potential effects could be limited by mitigation measures, these are also given consideration.

8.5.34 Potential effects are evaluated through the allocation of criteria for sensitivity and magnitude.

Landscape and Visual Sensitivity

8.5.35 Sensitivity concerns the nature of the baseline landscape or visual receptor, and the ability to accommodate development of the type proposed without compromising the key characteristics and / or composition.

8.5.36 There are two aspects which contribute to the evaluation of landscape and visual sensitivity: value and susceptibility to change. The consideration of these two aspects in the differing assessments for landscape and visual amenity are outlined below:

- Landscape
 - **Value:** The baseline value of the landscape and the contributory value of individual landscape receptors to the landscape as a whole; and
 - **Susceptibility:** The ability of landscape receptors to accommodate development of the type proposed without changing the intrinsic qualities of the landscape as a whole.
- Visual Amenity
 - **Value:** The baseline value of a particular view to the visual receptor, including the perceived; and

- **Susceptibility:** The susceptibility of the viewer to changes to the view, giving consideration to the particular activity they may be involved in and also the composition of the baseline view and importance of the proposed area of change as part of the view.

8.5.37 Sensitivity is described as high, medium, or low according to the following criteria.

Table 8.3 Landscape and Visual Sensitivity Criteria

Sensitivity Rating	Criteria	
	Landscape Sensitivity	Visual Sensitivity
High	A highly valued landscape of particularly distinctive character susceptible to relatively small changes of the type proposed.	Visual receptors obtaining views from: Dwellings and publicly accessible buildings where the changed aspect is an important element in the view and there are no detracting features present; and Recreational routes and locations where the changed aspects are an important element in the view and there are no detracting features present.
Medium	A reasonably valued landscape with composition and characteristics tolerant of some degree of change of the type proposed.	Visual receptors obtaining views from: Dwellings and publicly accessible buildings where the changed aspect is a less important element in the view and / or where some detracting features are present; Recreational routes and locations where the changed aspect is a less important element in the view and / or where some detracting features are present; Roads and transport routes where the changed aspect is an important element in the view and there are no detracting features present; and Workplaces where the changed aspect is an important element of the view and there are no detracting features present.
Low	A relatively unimportant landscape which is potentially tolerant of a large degree of change of the type proposed.	Visual receptors obtaining views from: Dwellings and publicly accessible buildings where the changed aspect is an unimportant element in the view and / or numerous detracting features are present; Recreational routes and locations where the changed aspect is an unimportant element in the view and / or where numerous detracting features are present; Roads and transport routes where the changed aspect is a less important element in the view and / or where some detracting features are present; and Workplaces where the changed aspect is a less important element in the view and / or where some detracting features are present.

8.5.38 As the susceptibility of landscape and visual receptors can vary depending on a correlation of several factors, the determined sensitivity of each receptor is determined by the assessor on a case-by-case basis. As such, intermediate grades such as high / medium are possible.

Landscape and Visual Magnitude

8.5.39 Magnitude of change concerns the extent to which the existing landscape character or view would be altered by the Proposed Development. Elements specific to the evaluation of magnitude of change for the differing assessments of landscape and visual amenity are detailed below:

- Landscape
 - The degree to which features or characteristics may be removed, altered or added within the landscape;
 - The geographical extent of proposed changes;
 - Whether changes would be direct or indirect; and
 - The potential duration and reversibility of proposed changes (taking into consideration proposed mitigation measures where relevant).
- Visual Amenity
 - The scale or extent of proposed changes within the view;
 - The location of proposed changes within the view, relevant to other existing features;
 - The extent to which this may later change the composition or focus of the view; and
 - The duration and reversibility of proposed changes (taking into consideration proposed mitigation measures where relevant).

8.5.40 Criteria for the evaluation of magnitude of change are presented in **Table 8.4**. In recognition of the differing changes that would occur over time, two ratings for magnitude of change have been included, during the construction of the Proposed Development, and during operation, approximately 10 years post construction once landscape / habitat reinstatement and any other mitigation or planting has had time to establish and mature.

Table 8.4 Landscape and Visual Magnitude of Change Criteria

Magnitude of Change	Criteria	
	Landscape	Visual
High	Notable change in landscape characteristics over an extensive area ranging to a very intensive change over a more limited area.	Where the Proposed Development would result in a very noticeable change in the existing view.
Medium	Perceptible change in landscape characteristics over an extensive area ranging to notable change in a localised area.	Where the Proposed Development would result in a noticeable change in the existing view.

Low	Virtually imperceptible change in landscape characteristics over an extensive area or perceptible change in a localised area.	Where the Proposed Development would result in a perceptible change in the existing view.
Negligible	No discernible change in any landscape characteristics or components.	Where the Proposed Development would result in a barely perceptible change in the existing view.

Assessment of Significance of Effects

- 8.5.41 Evaluation of the predicted significance of effect has been carried out through the analysis of the anticipated magnitude of change in relation to the landscape or visual sensitivity, taking into account any proposed mitigation measures, and is established using professional judgement.
- 8.5.42 The significance of effect for landscape and visual elements is considered as follows:
- Landscape Effects
 - The assessment takes into account identified effects upon existing landscape receptors and assesses the extent to which these would be lost or modified in the context of their importance in determining the existing baseline character.
 - Visual Effects
 - The assessment takes into account likely changes to the visual composition, including the extent to which new features would distract or screen existing elements in the view or disrupt the scale, structure or focus of the existing view.
- 8.5.43 The assessment takes into consideration the potential for effects to be adverse, where changes such as the addition of new distracting features, or the removal of existing positive features, are anticipated to negatively affect the landscape or view; or beneficial, where changes, such as the removal of existing distracting features or the addition of associated planting or other mitigation measures are anticipated to positively influence the landscape or view.
- 8.5.44 Criteria used for the assessment of effects are presented in **Table 8.5**. For the purposes of the LVIA, effects with a rating of **moderate** or greater are considered to be significant in terms of the EIA Regulations.

Table 8.5 Landscape and Visual Significance of Effect Criteria

Effect Significance	Criteria	
	Landscape Effects	Visual Effects
Major Adverse	The Proposed Development is at considerable variance with the landform, scale and pattern of the landscape and would be a dominant feature, resulting in considerable reduction in scenic quality and large-scale change to the intrinsic landscape character of the area.	The Proposed Development would become a prominent and very detracting feature and would result in a very noticeable deterioration to an existing highly valued and well composed view.
Moderate Adverse	The Proposed Development is out of scale with the landscape, or inconsistent	The Proposed Development would introduce some detracting features to an existing

	with the local pattern and landform and may be locally dominant and / or result in a noticeable reduction in scenic quality and a degree of change to the intrinsic landscape character of the area.	highly valued view or would be more prominent within a pleasing or less well composed view, resulting in a noticeable deterioration of the quality of view.
Minor Adverse	The Proposed Development does not quite fit with the scale, landform or local pattern of the landscape and may be locally intrusive but would result in an appreciable reduction in scenic quality or change to the intrinsic landscape character of the area.	The Proposed Development would form a perceptible but not detracting feature within a pleasing or valued view or would be a prominent feature within a poorly composed view of limited value, resulting in a small deterioration to the existing view.
Negligible	The Proposed Development sits well within the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape and would not result in any discernible reduction in scenic quality or change to the intrinsic landscape character of the area.	The Proposed Development would form a barely perceptible feature within the existing view and would not result in any discernible deterioration or improvement to the view.
Minor Beneficial	The Proposed Development would add / remove landscape features or alter the composition of landscape components which would result in a small or localised improvement to the landscape characteristics and scenic quality of the landscape.	The Proposed Development would form a fairly attractive feature and / or remove a fairly detracting feature from an existing less well composed view, resulting in a small improvement to the attractiveness, composition and value of the existing view.
Moderate Beneficial	The Proposed Development would add / remove landscape features or later the composition of landscape components which would result in a noticeable improvement to the landscape characteristics and scenic quality of the landscape.	The Proposed Development would become a new attractive feature within or result in the removal or partial removal of an existing detracting feature from, a poorly composed or less well composed view leading to a noticeable improvement to the attractiveness, composition and value of the existing view.
Major Beneficial	The Proposed Development would add / remove landscape features or alter the composition of landscape components which would result in a very noticeable improvement to the landscape characteristics and scenic quality of the landscape.	The Proposed Development would form a prominent new attractive feature within or result in the removal of an existing very detracting feature from, a poorly composed view leading to a very noticeable improvement to the attractiveness, composition and value of the existing view.

Assumptions and Limitations

8.5.45 The LVIA is subject to the following limitations and assumptions:

- The prominence of the Proposed Development in the landscape would vary according to the prevailing weather conditions. The assessment has been carried out, as is best practice, by assuming the 'worst-case' scenario i.e., on a clear, bright day in winter, when neither foreground deciduous foliage nor haze can interfere with the clarity of the view obtained;
- The assessment of operational effects assumes that disturbed areas not required for the operation of the Proposed Development (temporary tracks, laydown and working areas, excavations for borrow pits etc) would be successfully reinstated to reflect, as far as possible, similar vegetation types and appearance to that present prior to construction. It is noted that

these vegetation types may not necessarily comprise identical habitat types and value to those previously present. Potential impacts of the Proposed Development on habitats is discussed separately in **Chapter 10: Terrestrial Ecology**;

- ZTVs are used to inform the landscape, visual and cumulative assessments. The limitations and technical specifications for production of ZTVs are included in paragraph 8.3.9 and further detailed in the **Volume 4, Appendix 8.1: Technical Methodologies for Visual Representation**;
- The assessment of visual effects has been undertaken from the nearest public road, footpath or open space to each property and assumptions have been made about the types of rooms, and about the types and importance of views obtained from these rooms. For there to be a visual effect, there is the need for a viewer and therefore only buildings that are in use have been considered in the visual assessment;
- The assessment of effects on visual receptors occupying building such as residences and public buildings includes consideration of potential for views from exterior areas associated with the building including gardens where appropriate. These effects are referenced where relevant; and
- The assessment reflects the baseline situation at the time of site work and therefore does not take into account any changes to the landscape fabric which have taken place after this time.

8.6 Baseline Conditions: Landscape

Overview

- 8.6.1 The Proposed Development is located in Dell Estate, which is actively managed for sporting activities including fishing, shooting (partridge and grouse) and stalking (deer). The Site comprises a mixture of coniferous plantation, strongly undulating craggy landform with rough grazing / pasture and small bodies of inland water. The east of the site is bordered by the River Fechlin, the banks of which are lined with native woodland. The slopes between the upper reservoir (Loch Kemp), and the lower reservoir (Loch Ness), comprise a combination of native woodland (some of which form part of the Ness Woods Special Area of Conservation (SAC), and large swathes of bracken with individual trees, as well as upland moorland managed for game shooting as part of the estate sporting activities.
- 8.6.2 Other features within the upper area of the Site include wetland areas, individual mature trees, inland water bodies, and areas of forestry with associated tracks. The landform associated with the upper reservoir effectively forms a 'natural bowl' in which Loch Kemp is situated.
- 8.6.3 There is also a small fishing lodge located on the northeastern edge of Loch Kemp.
- 8.6.4 Topography across the Site falls from a summit peak of 308 m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) at Loch Paiteag to approximately the 200 m contour AOD along the B862 to the southeast. Similarly, although the western boundary of the Site extends to the Loch Ness waters, the shoreline is at approximately 15 m AOD.
- 8.6.5 From within elevated parts of the Site, views towards the hill summits on the western side of Loch Ness can be seen. It is only from a flatter plateau area towards the west-northwest of the Site that views towards the large waterbody of Loch Ness itself can be seen. The majority of the Site is hidden from wider views by the prevailing topography, and this coupled with the existing mature woodland and forestry, means that other than the Loch Ness shoreline, and the steeply sloping land between Loch Ness and Loch Kemp, a large percentage of the Site is screened from the surrounding area.

Landscape Designations

- 8.6.6 Landscapes can be ascribed an international, national, regional or local designation that recognises the importance of the landscape for its scenic interest or attractiveness. Areas of landscape may also be protected by planning policy at either a national or regional level.

National Context

- 8.6.7 There are no nationally designated landscapes within the study area. A small part of Wild Land Area (WLA) 20: Monadhliath would be included within the study area. WLAs have been defined by SNH (now NatureScot), as those areas comprising the greatest and most extensive areas of wild characteristics within Scotland. Although not a designation, these areas are given protection within the planning system through NPF4¹⁴. Due to the small area included, distance to the Proposed Development and limited ZTV coverage WLA 20 has been scoped out of the assessment.

Regional/Local Context

- 8.6.8 The majority of the Site itself and a large central portion of the study area falls within the Loch Ness and Duntelchaig Special Landscape Area (SLA), which encompasses Loch Ness and its surroundings from Lochend in the north to Fort Augustus in the south, including the bounding hill slopes on the loch's western and eastern shores, the prominent summit of Meall Fuar-mhonaidh, which lies between Drumnadrochit and Invermoriston, and the elevated moorland and agricultural interior plateau which contains Lochs Ashie, Duntelchaig and Ruthven. The area is dominated by the vast linear expanse of Loch Ness within its dramatic landform trench, flanked by steep, towering wooded slopes leading to undulating moorland ridges and a contrasting remote interior plateau of upland lochs, small woods and rocky knolls.
- 8.6.9 The Special Qualities for the Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA are cited as follows (those of relevance to the study area are highlighted in bold):
- The Dramatic Great Glen, including:
 - The striking profile of the glen, seen from either end, the water and elevated viewpoints on loch-side ridges and hill tops;
 - Steep-sided slopes, incised by watercourses with woodland and forest and an open smooth moorland skyline ridge;
 - **The contrast between northern and southern loch-side in relation to access, activity and settlement;**
 - **Distinctive views of grand proportions and long vistas along Loch Ness;**
 - Atmospheric mists and low clouds;
 - Urquhart Castle and Foyers former British Aluminium Factory, prominent focal points along the loch;

¹⁴ Scottish Government (2023). Fourth National Planning Framework (NPF4).

- Experience of the striking 'v' shape of the glen, the simple line, large scale and great expanse of the loch and difficulty perceiving scale of the landscape due to lack of scale indicators, as well as the experience of the SLA from the B852, B851, and A82, Great Glen Way and Caledonian Canal; and
 - Prominent landmark of Meall Fuar-mhonaidh and role as a vantage point.
 - Contrasting Intimate Plateau, including:
 - Intimate mix of landscape elements of changing visual interest.
 - Historic Landscape, including:
 - The Caledonian Canal and Abbey within Fort Augustus.
- 8.6.10 This SLA has been described in further detail in **Volume 4, Appendix 8.4: Assessment of Special Landscape Area.**

Landscape Character

- 8.6.11 NatureScot has undertaken detailed review and classification of various landscape areas and types of Scotland (SNH, 2019 [online]). The Proposed Development sits within the LCT 224: Farmed and Wooded Foothills, LCT 225: Broad Steep-Sided Glen and LCT 227: Farmed Strath – Inverness. although the study area as a whole encompasses the following seven LCTs as presented in **Volume 2, Figure 8.3: Landscape Character Types with ZTV:**
- LCT 220: Rugged Massif – Inverness
 - LCT 221: Rolling Uplands – Inverness
 - LCT 222: Rocky Moorland Plateau - Inverness
 - LCT 224: Farmed and Wooded Foothills
 - LCT 225: Broad Steep-Sided Glen
 - LCT 226: Wooded Glen: Inverness
 - LCT227: Farmed Strath - Inverness
- 8.6.12 Following a baseline review LCT 226 Wooded Glen: Inverness and LCT 220 Rugged Massif – Inverness have been scoped out of the assessment due to the limited extent of potential visibility, which would be further reduced due to the mature prevailing woodland and vegetation structure within.
- 8.6.13 Detailed baseline description of the remaining five LCTs is included in **Volume 4, Appendix 8.3: Assessment of Landscape Character Types.**

8.7 Baseline Conditions: Visual Amenity

Interpretation of the ZTV

- 8.7.1 As described in **Section 8.3** above ZTVs were produced for the key elements of the Proposed Development. The ZTVs show the theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development would be broadly split into two main groups:

- Theoretical visibility of the upper reservoir works represented by one or more of the dams potentially affecting the following:
 - the higher summits of the upland areas to the west of Loch Ness;
 - higher summits predominantly to the east and southeast to the upland area east of Loch Ness;
 - limited lengths of the B862 to the northeast;
 - short lengths of South Loch Ness Trail / core path INV25.01 / Trail of the Seven Lochs; and
 - small number of building based receptors.
- Theoretical visibility of the lower reservoir works comprising the powerhouse building and tailrace structure potentially affecting the following:
 - A82;
 - The Great Glen Way;
 - building based receptors located on the western shoreline; and
 - recreational users of Loch Ness.

8.7.2 The proposed dams, upper reservoir and associated tracks would be located within a natural basin formed by the prevailing topography. The majority of the upper area of the Proposed Development would therefore be largely concealed from views in the wider area by the natural topographic screening. This coupled with the existing mature woodland areas, effectively screens a large percentage of the upper area of the Site from identified receptors, other than from limited elevated areas and hill summits.

8.7.3 The location of the proposed powerhouse building on the eastern shoreline of Loch Ness, with the land rising steeply to the east, means that the lower works are potentially visible from receptors to the west, with open views from Loch Ness itself. However, views from the east are largely screened by the steep topography. Due to existing woodland and forestry on the western slopes of Loch Ness, potential views towards the Proposed Development are often screened, or filtered.

Visual Receptors

8.7.4 Visual receptors within the study area comprise residents or others, present in and around buildings and settlement areas, popular viewpoints and those using routes (including transport and recreational routes) through the study area.

Building based Receptors

8.7.5 Building based receptors (B1 – B9) are described in **Volume 4, Appendix 8.2: Visual Assessment Tables, Table 1.2.1** and their locations shown on **Volume 2, Figure 8.5: Visual Receptors Included within Assessment with ZTV**. These receptor locations can be broadly divided into two main areas:

- Along the A82 and western side of Loch Ness including north and south of the edge of Invermoriston; and

- Along or in the vicinity of the B862 to the east and northeast of the Site.

Route-based Receptors

8.7.6 Potential route-based visual receptors include those using public roads, and recreational users of Loch Ness waterbody, paths, tracks and other established walking routes. Views from the routes have been identified within the study area for inclusion within the assessment (as described in **Volume 4, Appendix 8.2: Visual Assessment Tables, Table 1.3.1** and shown on **Volume 2, Figure 8.5: Visual Receptors Included within Assessment with ZTV**). These can be classified into two different categories:

- Public Roads; and
- Recreational Routes.

Public Roads

8.7.7 The following public roads have been considered for assessment:

- A82; and
- B862.

Recreational Routes

8.7.8 The following recreational routes have been identified and considered for assessment:

- Great Glen Way (also part of the Loch Ness 360);
- South Loch Ness Trail;
- Trail of the Seven Lochs;
- Identified Core Paths (taken from THC Adopted Core Paths Plan 2011); and
- Loch Ness.

Outdoor Locations

8.7.9 The following outdoor locations comprise summit locations that are part of popular walking routes, and were selected as representative local high points either side of the Loch Ness for inclusion in the assessment:

- Meall Fuar-mhonaidh (located on the northwestern side of Loch Ness); and
- Suidhe Viewpoint (located off the B862 to the southeastern side of Loch Ness).

8.7.10 The outdoor locations have been described within **Volume 4, Appendix 8.2: Visual Assessment Tables, Table 1.4.1 (O1-O2)** and are shown on **Volume 2, Figure 8.5: Visual Receptors Included within Assessment with ZTV**.

8.8 Embedded Mitigation

Embedded mitigation measures developed during the design of the scheme (see **Chapter 2: Design Evolution and Alternatives**) form part of the Proposed Development, in order to minimise or offset significant and other landscape and visual effects, as well as to improve the visual appearance and assimilation of the Proposed Development into the landscape setting.

- 8.8.1 The following design principles have been followed where possible to minimise potential landscape and visual effects.
- The considered positioning of permanent, above-ground features to minimise landscape and visual effect and optimise the opportunity for additional mitigation measures;
 - Minimising the permanent design footprint as far as is possible including the scale of required rock cuttings on the shore of Loch Ness and requirements for woodland removal, particularly woodland included within the Ness Woods SAC; and
 - The sensitive design of all permanent above ground structures to create a positive change, and to ensure a good fit into the landscape in the longer term, including a high quality of design of built elements and the use of materials which are in keeping with the local context, as well as the provision of amenity value to users of Loch Ness, where possible.
- 8.8.2 Embedded mitigation measures would also include habitat and landform reinstatement which would be integral to the restoration of areas disturbed during construction and would assist in ensuring that the Proposed Development would be successfully accommodated into the existing landscape. Where possible borrow pits would be within the inundation area to reduce visibility once the scheme is operational.
- 8.8.3 Mitigation earthworks would re-use materials excavated during the construction period, and new landform would be modelled around new structures to ensure that these tie smoothly into their surroundings where possible. This would be supplemented where appropriate with native planting and seeding and the use of rocks and boulders to reflect the pre-construction landscape character (refer to **Volume 4, Appendix 3.1: Design and Sustainability Statement**).
- 8.8.4 Around the main permanent structures at the upper and lower works, native woodland planting is proposed to help soften the appearance of new features and compensate for trees and woodland lost through construction activities as follows:
- At the upper works: new areas of fencing are proposed pre-construction to facilitate natural regeneration of native woodland (as shown on **Volume 2, Figure 3.1: Proposed Development**). These natural regeneration areas are considered Advanced Works and would be undertaken in advance of the Proposed Development (see **Section 3.6 of Chapter 3: Description of Development**) so would be well established by the time the Proposed Development is operational. This would be supplemented by planting, as necessary. Dam 3 would receive additional mitigation earthworks on the dry side of the dam face, in order to soften the steep slopes of the structural dam (refer to **Volume 2, Figure 3.1: Proposed Development**). The mitigation earthworks would be soiled and planted with native woodland to help soften the appearance of the dam structure, and help assimilate it into the landscape (refer to **Volume 3a and 3b. Figures V3a-3a to V3a-3g and Figure V3b-3a to V3b-3n VL3 - Core Path IN25.01 near Whitebridge, and Appendix 3.1: Design and Sustainability Statement.**).
 - At the lower works: softening of the appearance of the new powerhouse platform and excavation into hillside with strategic placement of earthworks, soils, and planting with native woodland and scrub understorey species, reflective of those within the nearby landscape resource. In addition to this, in order to soften the appearance of the rock cuts, mounding of stored soils would be placed at the base of the cuttings, supplemented by the encouragement of natural vegetation growth at the base of the cutting and on cutting benches, where possible. Refer to **Volume 2, Figure 3.4: Indicative Layout of Lower Reservoir Works – During Construction, and Figure 3.5: Indicative Layout of Lower Reservoir Works – During Operation, and Volume 4, Appendix 3.1: Design and Sustainability Statement.**

- 8.8.5 A range of woodland restoration and compensation measures have also been included within Ness Woods SAC, which would further enrich the landscape setting of the Proposed Development. Further detail can be found in **Chapter 10: Terrestrial Ecology** (and associated Appendices) and the Compensatory Measure Package, included within the Derogation Report (submitted as a standalone supporting document).
- 8.8.6 It is envisaged that a Landscape Clerk of Works and an Architect would also be involved during the detailed design and the construction phases of the Proposed Development where required, to ensure the key principles of the design mitigation are realised.

8.9 Landscape Assessment: Assessment of Effects

- 8.9.1 This section provides an assessment of the effects that the Proposed Development would have on landscape character and designated and protected landscapes during the construction and operational phases, in accordance with the effects criteria outlined in **Section 8.5**. The assessment of landscape character is presented first, as this is used to feed into the assessment of effects on the one protected landscape designation within the study area, which is the Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA.
- 8.9.2 Anticipated effects to LCTs and the SLA are summarised in **Table 8.6** below. For the purposes of this assessment, effects with a rating of moderate or greater are significant. All effects are considered to be adverse.

Assessment of Effects on Landscape Character Types

- 8.9.3 The seven landscape character types within the study area are presented on **Volume 2, Figure 8.3: Landscape Character Types with ZTV**. Due to the limited extent of potential visibility from LCT 226 Wooded Glen: Inverness, and LCT 220 Rugged Massif – Inverness which would be further reduced by the mature prevailing woodland and vegetative structure within, these LCTs have been scoped out of the assessment of effects on LCTs in the study area. Detailed assessment of the remaining five LCTs which fall within the study area is provided in **Volume 4, Appendix 8.3: Assessment of Landscape Character Types, Tables 1.2.1 – 1.2.5**.

Summary of Landscape Effects During Construction

- 8.9.4 As indicated by **Table 8.6** below, during construction some localised temporary significant effects are anticipated in close proximity to the Proposed Development within two landscape character types; LCT 224: Farmed and Wooded Foothills and LCT 225: Broad Steep-Sided Glen.
- 8.9.5 In the case of LCT 224 the significant effects are predicted to be localised to the upper reservoir site around Loch Kemp, where there would be direct impacts resulting from the introduction of temporary borrow pits, site establishment areas and compounds, as well as the construction of dams and tracks. The presence of construction activities within this LCT would be noticeable within the area immediately surrounding the Proposed Development, although effects would be very localised. This would result in a localised **Moderate Adverse** (significant) effect, while the overall effect within the wider LCT context is predicted to be **Minor Adverse** (not significant).
- 8.9.6 LCT 225 would experience both direct and indirect effects, resulting from the introduction of the powerhouse platform and powerhouse building, the associated outlet area, rock cuttings, quayside and pier, as well as the new tracks down to the eastern shore of Loch Ness.

- 8.9.7 During construction the increase in movement and activity on the eastern shoreline would temporarily reduce the quiet wooded, largely unified character of a localised part of the eastern side of the glen.
- 8.9.8 It is predicted that there would be localised **Moderate Adverse** (significant) effects during the construction phase of the works, associated with the tailrace and powerhouse building on the shoreline as well as a reduction in the quiet, intimate character of the eastern side of the glen. However, the overall effect within the wider LCT context is predicted to be **Minor Adverse** (not significant).
- 8.9.9 Of the remaining three LCTs assessed, a very localised **Minor - Moderate Adverse** (not significant) effect is predicted to LCT 227: Farmed Strath, where the construction of Dam 3 would occur at the very edge of the LCT prior to mitigation planting on the eastern side of the dam establishing, with a **Minor Adverse** (not significant) effect overall. While the Proposed Development would be noticeable from some parts of this LCT, the presence of existing woodland and forestry would partially limit effects.
- 8.9.10 Effects within LCT 221: Rolling Uplands Inverness would be **Negligible** (not significant), during the construction of the Proposed Development. Effects within LCT 222: Rocky Moorland Plateau – Inverness would be locally **Minor Adverse** (not significant), where some intervisibility with the Proposed Development would be experienced during construction, however, the impact on the LCT as a whole during construction would be **Negligible** (not significant), as it is considered that any potential intervisibility would lead to no perceptible change to landscape characteristics.

Summary of Landscape Effects during Operation

- 8.9.11 During the operational phase of the Proposed Development (assumed 10 years post construction) when new planting would be well established, it is predicted that all effects would be reduced to levels which would not be significant. The permanent above-ground components of the Proposed Development: the dams, reservoir, intake structure and tracks, associated with the upper works would however, lead to some localised changes to the landscape fabric. Within LCT 224, while the Proposed Development would become a noticeable feature within the immediate context of the site and result in a localised **Minor Adverse** (not significant) effect on the existing landscape resource, within other parts of the LCT the effect would be **Negligible** (not significant), and it is unlikely to noticeably alter the overall landscape characteristics.
- 8.9.12 Within LCT 225 in the long-term, the powerhouse building and associated infrastructure on the loch shore would likely become a focal feature in some views from the loch, where they would be perceived in close proximity and locally reduce the current more unified landscape pattern on the eastern side of the loch. However, the high quality design of the new building, and the mitigation earthworks and planting around the powerhouse building, would help harmonise the new elements into the landscape setting, and the scale of the built form would not appear at odds with existing similar development in the vicinity and in the context of the vast scale of the overall landscape. There would be a localised **Minor Adverse** (not significant) effect within the immediate context of the lower works, with the overall effect on the landscape character within this LCT considered to be **Negligible** (not significant).
- 8.9.13 Within other LCTs, effects would be **Negligible** (not significant) in the long-term, as any effects would generally be indirect and very localised, without impacting on the overall effect of the landscape character and quality.

Assessment of Effects on Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA

- 8.9.14 The designated and protected landscapes within the study area are presented on **Volume 2, Figure 8.2: Designated and Protected Landscapes with ZTV**. The detailed assessment of the SLA, Loch Ness and Duntelchaig which forms a large central sector within the study area is provided in **Volume 4, Appendix 8.4: Assessment of Special Landscape Area**.

Summary of Effects During Construction

- 8.9.15 There would be some direct effects on the SLA resulting from the introduction of the powerhouse building and associated infrastructure on the eastern shore of Loch Ness and the upper reservoir and new dams on the moorland plateau on the eastern side of the glen which forms part of the wider landscape context. During construction there may be some localised **Moderate Adverse** (significant) effects due to construction activities at the lower works, and the transportation of equipment across the loch, which would introduce noise, activity and movement in the landscape. This increased activity may have a temporary effect on the quieter qualities of the eastern loch shore which forms part of the special qualities of this designation. There would also be increased vehicle movement along the B862 to facilitate the development, and construction activity including crane and construction vehicles within the Site. Works may also intrude on views up and down and across the loch, although they would only be perceived within a relatively localised area. Construction works would also be experienced at a distance in views from elevated areas including the prominent landmark of Meall Fuar-mhonaidh. Although there may be a small effect on “the role of Meall Fuar-mhonaidh as a vantage point” this would not affect the appreciation of Meall Fuar-mhonaidh as a landmark in the Great Glen (see **Volume 3a** and **3b, VL6 - Meall Fuar-mhonaidh**). Overall, it is predicted that the effect within the SLA as a whole during construction, would be **Minor Adverse** (not significant).

Summary of Effects During Operation

- 8.9.16 In the longer term, it is considered that the effect on the SLA would be locally **Minor Adverse** (not significant) in close proximity to components of the Proposed Development. The powerhouse building would form a new permanent feature on the loch shore and be perceived in views across the loch. The modification to the landform and introduction of permanent features within the upper reservoir site would have some limited effects within this part of the SLA. However, the effects would be localised and unlikely to become a dominating feature in the landscape. In respect of the perceived effect on the special landscape qualities of the SLA, overall it is predicted that the effect would be **Negligible** and that the integrity of the designation would not be affected.

Table 8.6 Summary of Effects to Landscape Character Types

Local Character Zone	Effect during construction						Effect during operation					
	Negligible	Minor	Minor to Moderate	Moderate	Moderate to Major	Major	Negligible	Minor	Minor to Moderate	Moderate	Moderate to Major	Major
LCT 221 – Rolling Uplands – Inverness	*						*					
LCT 222 – Rocky Moorland Plateau - Inverness	*	L					*					
LCT 224 – Farmed and Wooded Foothills		*		L			*	L				
LCT 225 – Broad Steep-Sided Glen		*		L			*	L				
LCT 227 – Farmed Strath – Inverness		*	L				*					
SLA Loch Ness and Duntelchaig		*		L			*					

L indicates that the effect would be localised to only part of the LCT within the study area, within close proximity to the Proposed Development.

8.10 Visual Assessment: Assessment of Effects

- 8.10.1 This section of the LVIA discusses the findings of the detailed visual assessment undertaken for the Proposed Development. It evaluates and describes the likely changes to existing views from buildings, routes, outdoor location receptors during the construction and operational phases of the Proposed Development and the extent to which these changes would affect the visual amenity of residents, visitors and other users of the landscape in accordance with the effects criteria outlined in **Section 8.5**.
- 8.10.2 The detailed assessment of effects on the visual amenity of building based receptors, route-based receptors and outdoor locations is presented in **Volume 4, Appendix 8.2: Visual Assessment Tables**. Predicted effects are summarised below.

Building-based Receptors

Effects Likely to be Significant

B2 – Loch Ness Highland Lodges

- 8.10.3 Most of the Loch Ness Highland Lodges sit on the open shoreline, located approximately 3 km to the southwest of the Proposed Development. Their living areas and outdoor seating areas are situated to take best advantage of the open views directed across the loch and towards the forested slopes of the opposite shoreline. The visual sensitivity therefore is classed as **Medium – High**.
- 8.10.4 During construction there would be an increase in movement and potential noise from transportation of materials across the loch and construction activities associated with the powerhouse building and tailrace structure on the shoreline, with views of cranes and other construction equipment seen in oblique views. It is therefore considered that the magnitude of change during construction would be **Medium**. The magnitude of change during the operational phase would reduce to **Low - Medium** as the proposed mitigation planting matures and the building appears more nestled into the landscape due to the maturing landscape measures and natural weathering of the materials used in the façade of the built form.
- 8.10.5 In the longer term, it is anticipated that the powerhouse building would become a feature of architectural and recreational interest, with recreational boats, including organised tour boats, stopping at the quayside to enable visitors to call in at the visitor facilities.
- 8.10.6 It is considered therefore that the significance of effect during construction would be **Moderate Adverse** (significant), reducing to **Minor Adverse** (not significant) during the operational phase.

B3 – Invermoriston South

- 8.10.7 This receptor group consists of residential properties that are located near the western shoreline of Loch Ness, a minimum of approximately 3 km from the Proposed Development. During the leafless seasons they would experience relatively open, front-facing views towards the Proposed Development, while views would become more filtered when the trees are in leaf. Their location not only benefits from trees along the shoreline but also within the headland immediately to their northeast. The visual sensitivity is therefore classed as **Medium - High**.
- 8.10.8 During construction there would likely be an increase in movement and traffic as seen across the loch, including the transport of equipment by boat along Loch Ness as well as views of cranes and other construction equipment. Construction work associated with the powerhouse access track and potentially some of the upper works would also potentially be visible on the hillside. In the longer term, it is anticipated that the powerhouse building would become a feature of architectural and recreational interest. The maturing mitigation planting at the lower works would also help assimilate the new powerhouse building into the surrounding context. The magnitude of change would thus be considered to be **Medium** during construction, reducing to **Low - Medium** during operation.
- 8.10.9 During the construction phase the effect would be **Moderate Adverse** (significant) reducing to **Minor Adverse** (not significant) during the operational phase.

B4 – Glenurquhart Estate

- 8.10.10 In terms of their location, this receptor group are the closest on the opposite shoreline to the Proposed Development, approximately 2 km at the closest point. The immediate setting to the

properties benefits from large mature trees and tree groups along the shoreline and ‘framing’ the private grounds. The residential properties sit at a slightly elevated level so some oblique views may be obtained above the trees along the shoreline from some of these properties. The introduction of new built forms in the landscape setting would be a noticeable change. As such the sensitivity is considered to be **Medium - High**.

- 8.10.11 Where gaps in tree cover allow, glimpsed views of elements of the Proposed Development including the tailrace structures, powerhouse building and the track to the lower works may be noticeable across the loch in filtered views in relatively close proximity. Due to the increased noise and movement associated with transportation of equipment across the loch, as well as construction activities at the lower works, including views of cranes and other equipment on the loch shore and the movement of personnel, it is considered that the magnitude would be **Medium** during the construction phase. However, this would reduce to **Low - Medium in the long-term**, as the built elements would be of a high quality, and materials used would be in keeping with the local context. Landscape mitigation earthworks and planting would also help to soften and screen the permanent features and the new track to the lower works.
- 8.10.12 The overall significance of effect during the construction period would be **Moderate Adverse** (significant) reducing to **Minor Adverse** (not significant) during the operational phase.

B6 – Dell Estate

- 8.10.13 This receptor group is the closest in proximity to the Proposed Development, although these receptors only have potential views to the upper works. It comprises of a small number of properties including Dell Lodge, Keepers Cottage and Dell Bungalow. The nature of their existing view is across multiple directions depending on the orientation of the property. In general, the views are over improved grassland with occasional bands of tree shelterbelts and woodland blocks, towards craggy moorland hills. While there are large coniferous woodland blocks and broadleaf shelterbelts in their vicinity, there are also natural breaks in the mature vegetation structure. As such the sensitivity is considered as **Medium - High**.
- 8.10.14 Dam 3 may appear as a new prominent feature in some limited views. During construction there would be an increase in activity and movement as a result of construction activities relating to the dam and tracks, with views of cranes and other equipment in close proximity. In the long-term, while the dam would become a new feature in the landscape, additional landscape mitigation earthworks, and mitigation planting on the eastern face of the dam would help assimilate it into the landscape, which at present already contains some man-made structures, such as fencing and electricity poles, although these are generally of a relatively small scale. The magnitude of change is therefore considered to be **Medium** during the construction phase (with additional visual impact from construction activity), reducing to **Medium - Low** during the operational phase.
- 8.10.15 It is considered that the significance of effect during the construction phase would be **Moderate Adverse** (significant). During the operational phase this would reduce as mitigation planting establishes and matures, resulting in a **Minor Adverse** (not significant) effect.

Effects Likely to be Not Significant

- 8.10.16 No significant effects are anticipated from other building based receptors within the study area.
- 8.10.17 Receptors at B1: Portclair, situated on the western shore of Loch Ness over 4 km southwest from the Proposed Development, benefit from a localised setting that is rich in existing vegetation

- including shoreline trees, woodland blocks and garden vegetation. While there is potential for views from upper floors of buildings, the oblique views are screened or filtered from ground level locations, and the potential effects would be **Minor – Moderate Adverse** (not significant) during construction and **Minor Adverse** (not significant) during operation.
- 8.10.18 From receptors to the east – northeast of the Proposed Development with the exception of B6 discussed above, there may be some temporary non-significant effects on visual amenity, but in the long-term it is anticipated that proposed mitigation measures would help the Proposed Development to assimilate into the surrounding landscape context and make it a barely perceptible feature within the wider setting.
- 8.10.19 From B7: Compass, existing mature coniferous trees within the private garden grounds of the property as well as existing shelterbelt and individual hedgerow trees in the fore and middle ground would provide a degree of screening/filtering, but where there are gaps in the existing vegetation structure some more open narrow framed views are afforded towards the Proposed Development. During construction, cranes and other construction equipment may be visible in views approximately 1 km away at the closest point. As part of the mitigation measures the closest dam (Dam 3), would be extended with additional earthworks and planting on the eastern face, and once vegetation establishes and matures, would help assimilate it into the landscape setting. The significance of effect during construction would be **Minor – Moderate Adverse** (not significant) and during the operational phase would be **Negligible** (not significant).
- 8.10.20 B8 – The Old Boleskine Schoolhouse and B9 are located further to the northeast of the Proposed Development, and while they would both potentially experience views of cranes and other equipment during construction due to their somewhat elevated position, these views would be distant and often filtered or screened by vegetation in the fore or middle ground. It is therefore considered that the visual effect on these properties would be **Negligible** (not significant), both during construction and in the long-term.
- Other building-based receptors
- 8.10.21 There are a number of properties that have been identified in the ZTV which required professional judgement, established from desk top assessment but not verified through a field survey assessment, due to prohibited access to private grounds. It was ascertained that the majority of these properties would not have a view of the Proposed Development in its operational phase due to the screening effect of woodland, roadside vegetation and field boundary vegetative delineation. It has been recognised that some of the properties in the ZTV may have potential temporary views of cranes as well as increased movement during the construction phase in the worst-case scenario. This would be further reduced when the abundant tree cover in the contextual setting is in full leaf.
- 8.10.22 There are a small number of properties that have been identified as being in the ZTV to the northeast of the study area, or to the west of Loch Ness, and close to the outer reaches of the 10 km radius. It is considered that if any view was afforded towards the Proposed Development, it would be oblique and seen within a wide contextual setting. The distance coupled with existing and proposed mitigation would effectively minimise any potential impact. In this respect the properties have been scoped out of a detailed assessment.
- 8.10.23 It is recognised that there are a small number of cluster groups of receptors with potential views towards the upper works of the Proposed Development, and from where there may be potential impacts during both the construction and operational phase. These include the properties at Bailebeag, near Drumtemple Cemetery on the minor road which also forms part of the Trail of the Seven Lochs (northern section). Also forming part of this judged desktop assessment is the cluster

of receptors at Corriegarh Lodge along the southern section of the Trail of the Seven Lochs. Where a detailed site assessment was not possible due to access restrictions, professional judgement based on desk top survey analysis was carried out.

Route Based Receptors

- 8.10.24 Following interpretation of the ZTV and site assessment work, it was established that users of minor roads, with the majority of them located to the northeast of the Site, would have extremely limited views towards the Proposed Development. The B852 has been scoped out from the detailed assessment. The existence of a mature vegetation structure including shelterbelts and woodland which either edges the minor routes or fully encases them, effectively screen any potential views. Where there are gaps in the roadside vegetation as per the B852, the existing topography including hill landforms prevent views towards the Site. The perceived impact therefore is lessened to a negligible status, and they have been scoped out of the assessment. Some of the minor routes double as recreational routes where some limited lengths may have a potential view towards part of the Proposed Development and have been covered in the following section. The Monadhliath Trail and the Scottish Hill Track have also been scoped out of the assessment, as they do not fall within areas of theoretical visibility as presented in **Figure 8.4: Potential Visual Receptors with ZTV**.

Effects Likely to be Significant

R8 Loch Ness

- 8.10.25 Loch Ness hosts several recreational activities as well as being home to the first non-coastal RNLI station located on the western shore near Drumnadrochit. Its sensitivity is classed as **Medium - High**, due to the potential number of users that enjoy the expansive vistas experienced up and down the loch and to both shoreline edges and beyond towards the often tree covered slopes.
- 8.10.26 The lower works of the Proposed Development, including the tailrace structure, powerhouse building and associated infrastructure on the eastern shoreline would be noticeable in views from the loch, appearing locally prominent but becoming less visible at further distances and seen in increasingly oblique views within the wider context when travelling up and down the loch. During construction the increased activity on the loch and on its shoreline is likely to be noticeable and the magnitude of change is considered to be locally **Medium** within close proximity to the lower works. This would reduce to **Low** during operation. Elsewhere the magnitude of change is considered to be **Negligible** during both construction and operation.
- 8.10.27 In the longer term, it is anticipated that the powerhouse building would become a feature of architectural and recreational interest, with recreational boat traffic stopping at the quayside, to enable visitors to access the visitor facilities. The built design elements would be of a high quality and materials used, would be appropriate and in keeping with the local context. Landscape mitigation earthworks and planting would also help to soften and screen the permanent features and the new track between the upper and lower works. The significance of effect is therefore predicted to be locally **Moderate Adverse** (significant) during construction and **Minor Adverse** (not significant) during operation.
- 8.10.28 R6: Core Path IN25.01 – Dell Lodge – Foyers, which is also part of the South Loch Ness Trail, passes by Dam 3 in relatively close proximity (see **Volume 3a and 3b, VL3 – Core Path IN25.01 near Whitebridge**). While the majority of the route is through woodland with limited visibility, where more open views are afforded, it is recognised that the new dam structure would appear as a new prominent feature in the view particularly during construction. However, during the operational phase, when the visibility of the dam would be reduced by the use of additional mitigation

earthworks, mitigation seeding and planting on the eastern face of the dam, this would help assimilate the structure into the surrounding landscape. The significance of effect is predicted to be locally **Moderate Adverse** (significant) and **Negligible** (not significant) elsewhere during construction and **Negligible** (not significant) during operation.

Effects Likely to not be Significant

- 8.10.29 All other effects on route based receptors within the study area are considered to be at non-significant levels.
- 8.10.30 For receptors to the west of Loch Ness include R1: A82, which is the main road route to the west of Loch Ness, the experience is often of an enclosed nature with fleeting glimpses of the water through small gaps in tree cover. The existing screening vegetation, short duration of limited lengths where views are obtained combined with proposed mitigation measures, means that the Proposed Development would not affect the visual amenity of the users of the A82. The significance of effects on transitory receptors on the A82 would therefore be deemed as locally **Minor Adverse** (not significant) during construction and **Negligible** (not significant), during the operational phase.
- 8.10.31 From R5 - Great Glen Way / Core Path IN18.01 -Dalcataig circuit, which is located on the western side of Loch Ness and wraps around the lower and upper wooded slopes of the Broad Steep-Sided Glen, the mature vegetation structure present would screen views towards the Proposed Development for the majority of this route. However, filtered to open views occur from limited locations where gaps in the vegetation structure allow. Elevated open views of the Proposed Development may occasionally be obtained where an area of forestry has recently been felled along the upper route near Alltsigh (see **Volume 3a** and **Volume 3b, VL2 - The upper Great Glen Way in the vicinity of Alltsigh**), from where glimpsed views of the Proposed Development including the upper works may be visible. However, these views would be very localised, as much of the route is enclosed in woodland. The significance of effects during construction would be locally **Minor – Moderate Adverse** (not significant), and **Negligible** (not significant), elsewhere. Effects during the operational phase would reduce to locally **Minor Adverse**, remaining **Negligible** elsewhere.
- 8.10.32 Receptors to the east of Loch Ness include R2: B862/National Cycle Route 78, which has varied views ranging from wide expansive views to enclosed views where there is roadside vegetation on both sides. For the majority of this route there would be no view of the Proposed Development. However, the site entrance would be located along this route within Whitebridge plantation, where there would be views of construction traffic entering and leaving the site, and from a short section of the route north of Whitebridge one of the dams may be visible in filtered views towards the west through trees, although in the long-term visibility would be greatly reduced through the implementation of mitigation earthworks and mitigation woodland planting. While there is some theoretical visibility of the dams from elevated sections of the route near Suidhe viewpoint, they are unlikely to appear perceptible from here due to intervening forestry and woodland (refer to **Volume 3a** and **3b, VL4 – Summit by Suidhe Viewpoint off the B862**). During construction there may be glimpsed views of tips of cranes as well as an increase in activity and movement as seen from the section of the route north of Whitebridge. The overall effect would be deemed as locally **Minor – Moderate Adverse** (not significant) and **Negligible** (not significant), elsewhere during the construction phase, reducing to **Negligible** overall during operation.
- 8.10.33 R3 – Minor road to Garthbeg, which forms part of the southern section of the Trail of the Seven Lochs, would have elevated, open views towards the Proposed Development from a short section at the northern end of the route, in which Dam 3 may be partially visible in at the base of forested slopes across the strath floor. However, it would occupy a relatively small part of the overall field of view. From other, less elevated sections of the route views would likely be filtered/screened by trees

in midground. During construction there may be views of cranes and from the northern section of the route there may be views of the construction of the dam resulting in an increase in movement and activity in this part of the view. The visibility of the dam would be mitigated in the longer term, by the use of additional mitigation earthworks, mitigation seeding and planting on the eastern face of the dam to help assimilate the structure into the surrounding landscape, further reducing its perceptibility in distant filtered views. The overall effect during construction is predicted to be **Minor Adverse** (not significant) reducing to **Negligible** (not significant) during operation.

- 8.10.34 From other route receptors to the northeast, which comprise R4 – Minor Road to Tyndrum and R7 – Core Path IN25.02 – Garthbeg to Errogie, south side of Loch Mhor, it is considered that overall the Proposed Development would be barely perceptible, particularly in the long-term when mitigation earthworks, seeding and planting on the eastern face of the dam would help assimilate the structure into the surrounding landscape. The effect on these routes would therefore be considered to be **Negligible** both during construction and operation.

Outdoor Locations

- 8.10.35 Two outdoor locations were identified for inclusion in the assessment, where potential views of the Proposed Development may be obtained by visual receptors at the summit of Meall Fuar-mhonaidh and Suidhe Viewpoint on the B862, which represent popular recreational viewpoints within the study area.

O1 – Meall Fuar-mhonaidh

- 8.10.36 Meall Fuar-mhonaidh is a popular hill summit to the north-northwest of the Site which sits at approximately 699 m AOD and is over 5 km from the Proposed Development at its closest point. From the viewpoint there are expansive views towards the upper forested slopes of the broad steep-sided glen on the eastern side of Loch Ness and the moorland with inner lochans of the farmed and wooded foothills. The views then extend towards the far distant hills of the rolling uplands, all set against the large expanse of an open skyscape. The interior lochs including Loch Kemp are visible. The view towards Loch Ness itself is fragmented with the waterbody broken into sections that are visible. 360° panoramic views are afforded from the summit, although the experience of the view is dependant on weather conditions.
- 8.10.37 From here the lower works of the Proposed Development are obscured from view, screened by the localised topography. Views towards the upper works would be afforded in the distance, with dams and other construction elements visible. The maximum inundation area would be visible but it is considered that because Loch Kemp is already an existing feature in the landscape, the characteristics of the increased waterbody would not detract from the existing baseline conditions. The dams would be a perceptible change but within the large scale setting it is considered that the dams would be ‘absorbed’ effectively into the existing landscape setting. During construction there would be a degree of movement both on Loch Ness and within the upper area of the Site, including vehicle movement (both water and land based) and cranes. The movement on the water would appear sporadic from the summit and because the lower works cannot be seen, this increased movement may not register. Distant glimpsed views of cranes and vehicular movement may be seen in views towards the upper works. During construction the effect of both water and land-based activity is predicted to be **Minor – Moderate Adverse** (not significant). During the operation of the Proposed Development this would reduce to **Negligible** (not significant). Refer to **Volume 3a and 3b, VL6 – Visualisation Location 6: Meall Fuar – mhonaidh**.

O2 – Suidhe Viewpoint, B862

- 8.10.38 Suidhe viewpoint is an elevated viewpoint near the B862 and part of the South Loch Ness Trail. The summit sits at approximately 450 m AOD, offering 360 degrees of expansive views over a large landscape context, but due to topography, Loch Ness is not visible. Views from the undulating moorland plateau comprise of rich textured, wide landscape with blocks of woodland, inner waterbodies, rounded peaks of middle ground and distant hills with an overarching wide extensive skyscape. The Proposed Development itself is located over 5 km from this view at its closest point and is located within a ‘natural bowl’ formed by localised topography. The visual sensitivity is **Medium – High**.
- 8.10.39 There is a combination of factors that influence the potential magnitude of change. These include the topography, which effectively screens the majority of the upper site elements, and curtails any views to the lower works, and also the distance from the Proposed Development and the scale of the contextual setting within which features of the Proposed Development are seen. From this location, the Proposed Development would be seen within the context of a large scale landscape including existing inland waterbodies and man made features such as wind turbines. This can be considered for both the construction and operational phases of the Proposed Development whereby the scale of any increased activity e.g. crane movement would be absorbed within the context of the view. The significance of effect during the construction and operational phases is predicted to be **Negligible**. Refer to **Volume 3a and 3b, VL4 - Summit by Suidhe Viewpoint off the B862**.

Summary of Visual Effects

- 8.10.40 In broad terms the potential visual receptors can be split into two main groups:
- Those located to the west of Loch Ness and looking towards the Site who may be impacted by the lower works at the shore of Loch Ness; and
 - Those located to the east of Loch Ness and looking towards the Site who may be impacted by the upper works around Loch Kemp.
- 8.10.41 A summary of the effects on visual receptors during construction and operation is presented in **Table 8.7**. Significant effects are those identified as being Moderate or greater.

Table 8.7 Summary of Visual Effects During Construction and Operation

Receptor Type	Effect during construction						Effect during operation					
	Negligible	Minor	Minor to Moderate	Moderate	Moderate to Major	Major	Negligible	Minor	Minor to Moderate	Moderate	Moderate to Major	Major
Buildings / Building Groups (B)	2	1	2	4	–	–	4	5	–	–	–	–
Routes	2	2	2	2	–	–	5	3	–	–	–	–

Outdoor Locations (O)	1	–	1	–	–	–	2	–	–	–	–	–
Totals	5	3	5	6	–	–	11	8	–	–	–	–

Summary of Visual Effects During Construction

- 8.10.42 The summary table indicates that during construction, a small number of temporary significant visual effects would be expected from the Proposed Development. A **Moderate Adverse** (significant) effect is predicted for visual receptors at four of nine building-based receptors and two out of eight route based receptors. This is primarily due to the increased activity associated with the construction including increased traffic, both vehicles and boat activity, crane and on-site vehicle movement.
- 8.10.43 The building-based receptors where significant effects would be anticipated to occur during construction of the scheme are all located where an open view, albeit narrow or oblique in some locations, is afforded to the Proposed Development, either towards the lower works at the shore of Loch Ness or to the upper works surrounding Loch Kemp. Increased activity including vehicular and crane movement, may appear noticeable in what is a relatively quiet rural landscape. Closer proximity views to the upper works may be obtained from B6, while direct open views straight across Loch Ness could be afforded from B4, towards the lower works including the powerhouse platform and rock cuttings on the loch shore. Within areas to the northeast of the upper works the visual effect would be moderated due to the existing prevailing vegetation structure.
- 8.10.44 Significant effects would also be anticipated for visual receptors on R8. This is primarily due to construction traffic which would be using Loch Ness for transportation of equipment, as well as construction activities on the loch shore associated with the lower works, including construction of the powerhouse platform and rock cuttings. Views would vary ranging from open and direct in close proximity and from the opposite shoreline locations to oblique filtered views at further distances.

Summary of Visual Effects During Operation

- 8.10.45 In the long-term, once construction activities have ceased and mitigation planting has established and matured, it is expected that all visual effects would be reduced to levels that are not significant. **Minor Adverse** (not significant) effects are predicted at B2, B3 and B4 from where there would be views towards the powerhouse building and tailrace. While the Proposed Development would introduce new built structures which would be relatively noticeable in views from these receptors, the built design elements would be of a high quality and materials used would be appropriate and in keeping with the local context, and landscape mitigation earthworks and planting would also help to soften and screen the permanent features once established and matured. **Minor Adverse** (not significant) effects are also predicted at B6 from where mitigation earthworks and planting would help to assimilate the new Dam 3 structure into the surrounding landscape.
- 8.10.46 A localised **Minor Adverse** (not significant) effect is predicted for R8 within close proximity of the lower works, where the powerhouse building would remain a noticeable feature within the view, although it is expected that in the long-term it would become a feature of architectural and recreational interest, while the effect for this receptor would be considered to be **Negligible** (not significant) overall.
- 8.10.47 For other receptors within the study area operational effects would also be expected to be not significant, ranging from **Minor** to **Negligible** (not significant).

8.11 Cumulative Effects

8.11.1 Cumulative effects are those which occur where the effects of more than one development of a similar type within a particular landscape combine to produce a greater level of effect. In relation to the Proposed Development, there are several ways in which cumulative landscape or visual effects may occur:

- During construction, other activities of similar type may increase the perceived presence of this type of activity in the landscape;
- During operation, permanent features of the scheme (such as the dams, upper reservoir, powerhouse building and tailrace structure) may be seen in association with other similar features leading to a greater perception of this type of development in the landscape; and / or
- The permanent features of the Proposed Development may be viewed sequentially whilst travelling through the study area which may lead to a greater perception of this type of development in the landscape.

8.11.2 The Proposed Development would also be closely associated and dependent on the construction of proposed Associated Works (as shown on **Volume 2, Figure 3.1: Proposed Development**) comprising a buried cable and 275 kV switching station, which would be subject to separate consent. The cumulative assessment has therefore considered the effects of the Proposed Development in addition to these other associated elements. In addition, the cumulative assessment has also included consideration of other similar types of development within the study area.

8.11.3 The cumulative assessment baseline has been set out considering two different scenarios as follows:

- Scenario 1: Including other associated development, including:
 - The proposed 275 kV cable connection from the powerhouse building to the 275 kV switching station, particularly the section of buried cable between the vertical cable shaft and the switching station (Pre-Application); and
 - The proposed 275 kV switching station, located to the northeast of Loch Kemp, near Dell Farm (Pre-Application).
- Scenario 2: Including other unrelated developments in addition to those included in Scenario 1 within the vicinity of the study area:
 - Red John Pumped Storage Scheme (Consented);
 - Coire Glas Pumped Storage Scheme (Consented);
 - Foyers Pumped Storage Scheme (Operational);
 - Glendoe Hydro Scheme (Operational);
 - Bhlaraidh Wind Farm (Operational);
 - Bhlaraidh Wind Farm Extension (Consented);
 - Loch Liath Wind Farm (Application);

- Corriegarth Wind Farm (Operational);
 - Corriegarth 2 Wind Farm (Appeal); and
 - Dell Wind farm (Scoping).
- 8.11.4 These developments have been included in the cumulative assessment, in agreement with THC and are included in **Volume 2, Figure 1.2: Site Context**.
- 8.11.5 Cumulative effects are assessed from a baseline where the Proposed Development forms an addition to the other cumulative developments, which would include operational developments such as Foyers PSH. Because a Negligible effect is considered highly unlikely to lead to a significant cumulative effect, any receptors predicted to have a Negligible effect from the Proposed Development, have been scoped out of the cumulative assessment (see **Volume 4, Appendix 8.2: Visual Assessment Tables, 8.3: Assessment of Landscape Character Types and 8.4: Assessment of Special Landscape Area**).
- Cumulative Landscape Effects
- Construction (Scenario 1 and 2)*
- 8.11.6 The analysis of cumulative effects during construction is difficult due to uncertainty as to when the Proposed Development may be constructed and what other work may be ongoing at that time. Therefore, the consideration of effects during construction can only be taken on a theoretical basis.
- 8.11.7 The cumulative baseline during construction of the various Scenario 1 developments would lead to direct effects from the proposed cable and switching station within LCT 227: Farmed Strath - Inverness resulting from construction activities relating to the cable and switching station. However, these effects would be relatively localised, as the site of the switching station is largely contained by surrounding forestry and landform. There would also be some direct effects as a result of construction works associated with the cable within LCT 224: Farmed and Wooded Foothills. These would be closely associated with and largely perceived as part of the works associated with the Proposed Development. The landscape assessment has also identified some potential direct and indirect effects within LCT 225: Broad Steep-sided Glen. However, these effects would be associated more with the lower works of the Proposed Development on the shore of Loch Ness, and it is unlikely that works associated with the cable or switching station would be experienced from this LCT. The cable would be located inside an underground tunnel in this area.
- 8.11.8 While construction works relating to the Proposed Development would lead to an increase in movement and activity and a greater sense of development within a localised area, it is not anticipated that the proposed Associated Works relating to the underground cable and switching station would lead to a greater level of effect than would occur with the Proposed Development alone because the areas affected by both developments would be similar.
- 8.11.9 The consented Red John Pumped Storage Scheme is located approximately 15 km to the north of the Proposed Development, at the northern end of Loch Ness, with the powerhouse building being situated on the eastern shore of Loch Ness south of Dores, and the upper reservoir on Ashie Moor. Most effects would be concentrated within LCT 225: Broad Steep-Sided Glen, within which the development is located. Coire Glas Pumped Storage, also consented, is located over 20 km to the southwest.

- 8.11.10 Depending on the timing of construction, there is the potential that construction works for the Proposed Development could combine with Red John Pumped Storage Scheme resulting in a greater impression of development within the area surrounding Loch Ness. However, due to distance, construction activities related to Red John Pumped Storage Hydro would not be experienced in the same part of the landscape as the Proposed Development and they are unlikely to be perceived as forming a cluster. While there is potential that they may both be experienced from elevated points across Loch Ness, they would not be seen in the same part of the landscape, and would be perceived within a wide overall landscape context. It is unlikely that there would be any cumulative landscape effects resulting from the construction of Red John Pumped Storage Hydro. Similarly, due to the distance (up to 30 km) and intervening topography and other development and land use, it is considered unlikely that there would be any cumulative effects when the Proposed Development is considered together with Coire Glas Pumped Storage Scheme.
- 8.11.11 In terms of other major development projects within the nearby landscape context, there is one consented wind farm (Bhlairaidh Wind Farm Extension) located around 6 km to the northwest of the Proposed Development, an application for Loch Liath Wind Farm, 10 km to the northwest, an application for Dell Wind Farm, to the southeast and an appeal for Corriegarth 2 Wind Farm, to the east-southeast. The access track to Dell Wind Farm would be located further south along the B862 from the site entrance of the Proposed Development. Depending on the timing of construction, construction activities related to these wind farm developments may be experienced in combination with construction relating to the Proposed Development from elevated locations within the surrounding area. However, due to the distance and the sense of containment of the Proposed Development by landform and forestry, any such effects would be temporary and considered likely to be of minimal increased effect when compared to the Proposed Development alone.

Operation (Scenario 1 and 2)

- 8.11.12 Similar to the construction phase, under Scenario 1 landform and forestry would limit the landscape effects to very localised areas, and with the smaller operational footprint of the developments, and anticipated use of planting and or other mitigation for the cumulative baseline developments, it is unlikely that the different developments would be experienced concurrently. Taking this into account, it is considered that the cumulative effect of the Proposed Development in addition to the cumulative assessment baseline, would be no greater than it is was considered alone.
- 8.11.13 Under Scenario 2 it is noted that hydro development forms an established part of the wider landscape context within the Great Glen, with the Foyers powerhouse building located along the eastern shore of Loch Ness approximately 7.5 km to the north of the Proposed Development. The upper reservoir of the Foyers Pumped Storage scheme is located at Loch Mhor, with the historic main dam and intake tower visible, forming a memorable feature within Stratherrick. The tailrace of the Glendoe Hydro Scheme is located approximately 10 km to the south at the south eastern end of Loch Ness, while the upper reservoir is located within the Monadhliath plateau.
- 8.11.14 The dams and reservoirs of hydro developments generally sit well within the overall landscape, not appearing distracting within the context of existing waterbodies such as lochs and lochans. Effects are considered more likely to occur in relation to built structures on the shore of Loch Ness. Although the eastern shore of Loch Ness is generally quieter and less developed, and as such more sensitive to development, hydro development along the loch shore is an established part of the baseline. While the addition of the Proposed Development may slightly increase the sequential experience of development from the loch and loch shores, the distance to other developments e.g. Foyers powerhouse building and Glendoe hydro tailrace, would mean that they would not be experienced

together, and it is unlikely that there would be any significant cumulative impacts resulting from the addition of the Proposed Development.

- 8.11.15 In terms of wind farm developments and associated tracks, wind farms within the study area are mainly located in elevated areas surrounding Loch Ness, within LCT 221: Rolling Uplands - Inverness and LCT 222: Rocky Moorland Plateau – Inverness. Due to the existing prevailing landform combined with the mature vegetation structure, and distance to these developments, it is not anticipated that tracks associated with the Proposed Development would be viewed together with wind farm tracks other than possibly in very wide contextual settings which dilute the perceived cumulative impact due to other intervening features in the existing baseline.

Cumulative Visual Effects

Construction (Scenario 1 and 2)

- 8.11.16 The analysis of cumulative effects during construction is indicative only, due to uncertainty as to when the Proposed Development may be constructed and what other work may be ongoing at that time. Two different kinds of potential effects have been considered under Scenario 2 – potential views of other hydro developments, and potential views of wind farm tracks.
- 8.11.17 Because of their location, views of construction works associated with the cable and switching station would be limited to receptors east of Loch Ness, and would largely be hidden from view from building based receptors within the study area, due to landform and tree cover. The cumulative baseline developments included in Scenario 1 would therefore be unlikely to lead to any cumulative visual effects when considered together with the Proposed Development.
- 8.11.18 Other hydro developments are most likely to be experienced in sequential views along routes going through the Great Glen, such as along the A82, B862 and the Great Glen Way. Depending on timing of construction, construction activities associated with Red John Pumped Storage may be experienced by receptors within the glen during construction of the Proposed Development, potentially increasing the sense of development surrounding Loch Ness, but due to the distance to the Proposed Development (approximately 15 km) these would not be seen in the same field of view, and it is unlikely that the two developments would be perceived as associated. Construction activities related to the consented Coire Glas Pumped Storage scheme may also take place concurrently, but due to the considerable distance (up to 30 km) and intervening landform and vegetation it is highly unlikely that these would be perceived together.
- 8.11.19 In terms of wind farm developments and associated tracks within the area, these would mainly be perceived from elevated locations within the study area. Depending on the timing of construction, construction activities relating to Bhlaraidh Wind Farm Extension may be perceptible from O1 – Meall-Fuar Mhonaigh, from where construction of turbines and tracks would likely be visible in relatively close proximity. If consented, construction activities relating to Loch Liath Wind Farm may be visible in views west. Although construction activities associated with the upper works of the Proposed Development and the track down to the powerhouse building would be visible from here, these would be seen in a different part of the view to the above wind farms and appear much more distant. From O2 – Suidhe Viewpoint construction activities relating to the upper works of the Proposed Development at Dam 3 would be perceptible, although contained to a large extent by forestry and landform. Although construction works associated with Bhlaraidh Wind Farm Extension, Loch Liath Wind Farm and Corriegarth 2 Wind Farm could potentially be visible from this location, they would appear distant, and considering the limited visibility of the Proposed Development from this location, it is unlikely that this would result in any significant cumulative

effects. As the access to Dell Wind Farm would be located further south along R2 (B862) from access to the Proposed Development, they would be perceived in sequential views, and depending on timing of construction there may be a slightly increased perception of construction traffic along this route. However, as the Proposed Development would generally not be perceived together with Dell Wind Farm, and, apart from the site entrance, the Proposed Development tracks would generally be contained and not be seen in views from this receptor, this would be unlikely to result in a significant cumulative effect.

Operation (Scenario 1 and 2)

- 8.11.20 During operation, the Scenario 1 developments (the switching station in particular) would be briefly visible from R6 and seen in sequential views with the Proposed Development. However, the anticipated use of planting and other mitigation for the cumulative baseline developments, is likely to reduce any potential visual effects. It is not considered that there would be any long-term cumulative effects experienced from any of the building based receptors within the study area from the addition of the Proposed Development.
- 8.11.21 Hydro developments are most likely to be experienced in sequential views within the Great Glen, by receptors on roads and recreational routes adjacent to Loch Ness, or from the loch itself. However, the tree covered slopes on both sides of the glen would limit views. The lower works of existing hydro developments, such as the Glendoe hydro tailrace (which is largely imperceptible except in very close views, as a result of the mature mitigation planting that surrounds it) and Foyers powerhouse building, as well as Red John Pumped Storage (if constructed), are all found on the eastern shore of Loch Ness, but because of the steep slopes leading down to the loch would be most likely to be perceived from the opposite shore. The Proposed Development may add to the perceived sense of development along the eastern shoreline, although because of the distance to other hydro developments mentioned above it would be unlikely to be seen in combination with these apart from high points in the landscape. It is therefore considered unlikely that there would be any significant cumulative impacts on the building based receptors along the shoreline from the addition of the Proposed Development. Due to distance and intervening landform and vegetation it is considered unlikely that the Proposed Development would be seen in combination with Coire Glas Pumped Storage scheme.
- 8.11.22 Cumulative effects arising from the Proposed Development tracks in combination with wind farm tracks within the study area are unlikely, as the operational effects of the Proposed Development would be less than the anticipated construction phase effects and it is assumed that this would also be the case for the baseline cumulative developments. Wind farm tracks are most likely to be seen from elevated locations in the landscape. However, due to the containment of the Proposed Development by landform and forestry it is not anticipated that tracks would be seen from many of these locations. From 01 – Meall Fuar-mhonaidh the tracks of Bhlaraidh Wind Farm and Bhlaraidh Wind Farm Extension, if constructed, would be visible in close proximity to the southwest. Tracks associated with the Proposed Development, would mainly be replacing existing tracks around Loch Kemp, and as such where visible, these would be seen in an area where tracks were already part of the baseline. Therefore, it is considered unlikely that they would contribute to a greater sense of development or become distracting in views when perceived in combination with other tracks seen from this location. From 02 – Suidhe viewpoint operational effects would be considered to be **Negligible** (not significant), and as such it is highly unlikely that there would be any cumulative visual effects during operation. While there may be views of tracks associated with Dell Wind Farm from the B862, the effects on this receptor would be **Negligible** (not significant) in the long-term, and as such it is unlikely that there would be any cumulative visual effects on this receptor from the addition of the Proposed Development.

8.12 Residual Effects

- 8.12.1 The assessment of effects takes into account the likely benefits of mitigation inherent in the design and assumes best practice construction working methods and therefore the effects identified should be considered representative of residual effects.
- 8.12.2 Residual effects of proposed mitigation planting and reinstatement have been reported within the assessment as those occurring after 10 years. With the inclusion of mitigation planting, no significant long-term residual effects are predicted.

8.13 Summary and Conclusions

Landscape Effects

- 8.13.1 The landscape assessment has identified that there would be some temporary localised significant effects likely as a result of the Proposed Development during construction, but the majority of the landscape receptors would experience no significant effects either during the construction or operation in the short or longer term. This is largely due to the location and context of the Proposed Development, with areas characterised by existing forestry plantations, which largely contain views of the Proposed Development site, and existing water bodies, some of which are already harnessed for hydro development. Mitigation proposals including additional landscape mitigation earthworks and planting at Dam 3, and at the lower work too, as well as woodland planting around the new upper reservoir, would further reduce potential effects.
- 8.13.2 During the construction phase of the Proposed Development, temporary significant effects would be anticipated within two LCT's, LCT 224: Farmed and Wooded Foothills and LCT 225: Broad Steep-Sided Glen. These effects would be localised, affecting the landscape around the key areas of the Proposed Development at the lower works on the shore of Loch Ness (LCT 225) and the upper reservoir works at Loch Kemp (LCT 224). Effects would arise due to the intensity of temporary construction activities occurring within the rural managed estate landscape and along the loch shore, which would form a new temporary focus and distraction.
- 8.13.3 During the operational phase of the Proposed Development, assumed for this assessment to be 10 years post construction when mitigation planting would be well established, it is anticipated that all effects would be reduced to levels which would be not significant. The permanent above-ground components of the Proposed Development: the dams, reservoir and tracks, associated with the upper part of the Site and the powerhouse building and tailrace on the shore of Loch Ness would lead to some very localised changes to the landscape fabric.
- 8.13.4 With regard to the Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA, the landscape assessment has further established that although there would be some locally **Moderate** (significant) effects during the construction of the scheme, in the immediate vicinity of the Proposed Development, during the operation of the scheme the effect on the SLA is predicted to be **Negligible** (not significant). The integrity of the Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA designation would therefore not be affected.

Visual Effects

- 8.13.5 The visual assessment has identified some short-term localised significant effects during the construction phase of the Proposed Development for four building-based receptors, located in close proximity to either the upper or lower works, and one route-based receptor. The building based

receptors located on the shore of Loch Ness facing the lower works would have views across Loch Ness towards the powerhouse building, tailrace and associated tracks, and during construction would experience increased movement and activity, associated with the construction of the scheme. Route receptors on Loch Ness would be similarly affected, although effects would be localised and concentrated within proximity of the lower works. Building based receptors in close proximity to Dam 3 with relatively open views of construction activities relating to the construction to the dam and tracks, would experience views of cranes and other construction equipment as well as felling around the working areas.

- 8.13.6 During operation these effects would all reduce to a non-significant level due to the existing topography and vegetation structure, combined with the maturing of the proposed mitigation measures. It is anticipated that the powerhouse building would become a feature of architectural and recreational interest and the maturing mitigation planting at the lower works would help assimilate the new built structures into the surrounding context.

Cumulative Effects

- 8.13.7 A cumulative landscape and visual assessment has been carried out, assessing cumulative effects which may arise from the Proposed Development in combination with proposed associated works as well as other hydro development or wind farm development within the area during construction and operation. The assessment has identified that there would be no significant cumulative landscape or visual effects arising from the addition of the Proposed Development to the cumulative baseline scenario. This is because of the relatively contained context within which the Proposed Development sits, and the distance to other development which means it would rarely be experienced together with the cumulative developments included in the cumulative baseline scenario. In the few instances where it would be seen in combination with the proposed associated works, it is not considered that the effect would be significantly greater than the effects as assessed for the Proposed Development alone.

Conclusion

- 8.13.8 The LVIA has established that a limited number of localised and temporary significant landscape and visual effects would occur during the construction of the Proposed Development. However, in the longer term during the operation of the Proposed Development, all effects are anticipated to be reduced to a not significant level. It is therefore concluded that the landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Development would not be significant, in the longer term.