Proposed Battery Energy Storage Site: Flushing, near Longside, Aberdeenshire

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

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Hermitage Environmental Planning and Landscape Architecture Limited (HEPLA)
11 South Charlotte Street, Edinburgh, EH2 4AS United Kingdom | T +44 7818 514397 / 0131 297 2194 www.hepla.co.uk

Contents

Figures

1. General Introduction

1. This Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment is prepared and submitted on behalf of Harmony FL Ltd. ('the Applicant') and in support of an application for consent under S36 of the Electricity Act 1989 ('the application') and also comprises a request that Scottish Ministers give a direction under section 57(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 that planning permission for the development be deemed to be granted. It addresses matters referred to in Schedule 9 to the Electricity Act, to development plan and policy guidance and to consideration of material matters.

2. The application comprises land within Aberdeenshire Council Area – 20.72ha ('Application Site').

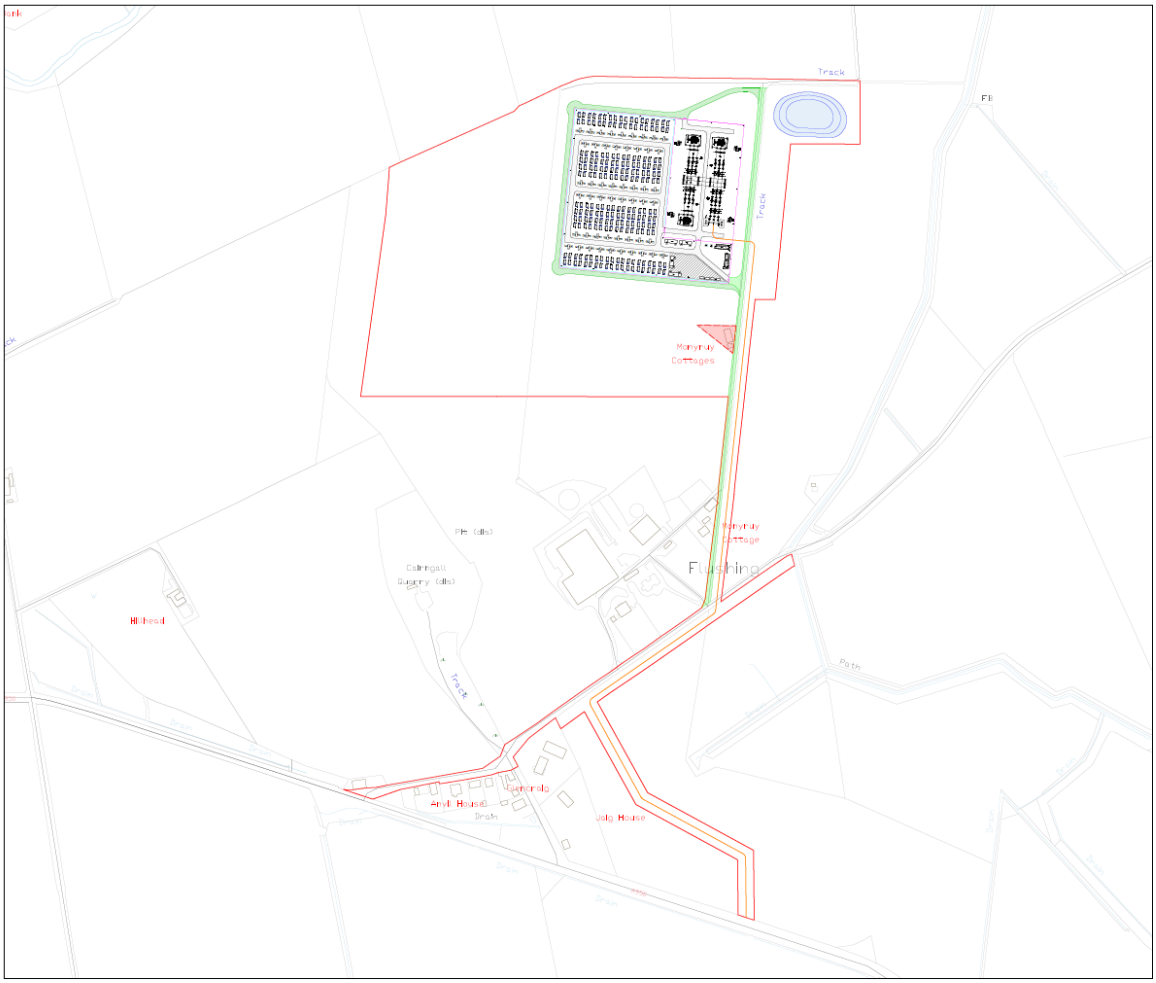

Figure 2 Proposed Site Plan - Extract

3. The description of the proposed development which is the subject of this application is as follows: 'Construction and operation of a 400MW Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) with associated infrastructure including, access roads, sub-station buildings, supporting equipment, fencing, drainage infrastructure and landscaping.' at Land North of Longside Road, Flushing, Peterhead (GR: 405524, 847560).

4. This Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment is part of a suite of documents submitted with the application, as outlined below. These supporting documents are in addition to the formal application documents comprising the accompanying plans, sections, and elevations. The full suite of supporting documents is as follows:

    - Planning Design and Access Statement (PDAS)

- Community Wealth Building Plan (CWBP)
- Pre-Application Consultation Report (PACR)
- Confidential Ecological Survey Report [note, contains sensitive information]
- Confidential Protected Species Report [note, contains sensitive information]
- Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment (ADBA)
- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) and Landscape Strategy
- Noise Impact Assessment (NIA)
- Flood Risk & Drainage Assessment Report (FRDAR)
- Fire Water Management Plan (FWMP)
- Private Water Supply Impact Assessment
- Topographical Surveys
- Construction Traffic Management Plan
- Transport Statement
- Outline Battery Safety Management Plan (OBSMP)

5. The Electricity Works Environmental Impact Assessment (Scotland) Regulations 2017 are also relevant to the proposal as the proposal comprises development falling within Schedule 2 of those Regulations. A Screening request has been submitted to the ECU and the Decision was received on 17th March 2025. It confirmed that, *"Scottish Ministers adopt the opinion that* ***the proposal does not constitute EIA development and that the application submitted for this development does not require to be accompanied by an EIA report****."* (Emphasis Added)

2. Introduction to the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

6. HEPLA were invited to prepare a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment by Harmony Energy Limited ("the Client") in support of a planning application for a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) ("the Proposed Development"), located at Flushing, near Longridge, Aberdeenshire. This report focuses on landscape and visual considerations.

7. The Assessment was informed by fieldwork and photography, undertaken in October 2024. The fieldwork work provided an initial appreciation of the relationship between the Proposed Development and the existing landscape and visual receptors.

8. This report, presents an assessment of the likely landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Development and in particular, consideration is given in the appraisal to potential effects on:

- Landscape character and resources, including effects on the aesthetic values of the landscape, caused by changes in the elements, characteristics, character and qualities of the landscape as a result of the Proposed Development; and
- Visual amenity, including effects upon potential viewers and viewing groups caused by change in the appearance of the landscape as a result of the Proposed Development.

9. Landscape character and resources are considered to be of importance in their own right and are valued for their intrinsic qualities regardless of whether they are visible / seen by people or not. Effects on visual amenity as perceived by people are clearly distinguished from, although closely linked to, effects on landscape character and resources. Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments are therefore separate, but linked processes.

10. This report provides a summary of relevant planning policy, and a description of the methods used in the assessment. This is followed by a description of the relevant baseline conditions of the Proposed Development Location ("the Site") and surrounding area, and an assessment of the likely effects of the completed Proposed Development. Mitigation measures are identified, where appropriate to avoid, reduce or offset any adverse effects identified, together with the nature and significance of likely residual effects.

11. The LVIA includes an Assessment of Cumulative Landscape and Visual Effects arising from the operation of the Proposed Development in conjunction with other proposed grid projects within the study area at planning application stage. Note that this is incorporated into the main assessment under consideration of each receptor rather than being presented separately.

12. This report has been prepared by a Chartered Landscape Architect experienced in Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) in accordance with the guidance issued by the Landscape Institute.

13. The LVIA is supported by figures including: a combined Site Location Plan, Viewpoint Location, Landscape Character Type and Landscape Designations Plan**, Figure 1.1.1**; Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) Plan overlaid with Viewpoint Locations, **Figure 1.1.2** and a Cumulative Sites Location Plan, **Figure 1.1.3**. The Assessment of Landscape and Visual effects is supported by viewpoint photographs and visualisations in **Figures 1.2.1a-c to 1.2.7a-c**. The Landscape Strategy Plan is shown in **Figure 1.3.1**.

3. Scope and Methodology

General Approach

14. The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment has been based on guidelines provided in the following publications:

- NatureScot National Landscape Character Assessment Introduction & Review Methodology Document; and
- Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Assessment, 3rd Edition 2013) (GLVIA 3).

15. The general approach to the LVIA includes the following tasks:

- Baseline Assessment (comprising desk study and field survey); and
- Analysis and Reporting.

16. These tasks are described in detail below:

Scope of the Assessment

17. The assessment is focussed on a core Study Area of circa (c.) 2 km beyond the Site Boundary (as shown on **Figure 1.1.1**), to appraise landscape and visual effects. The following viewpoint locations were included in those confirmed to Aberdeenshire Council during July 2024:

- Viewpoint 1, View west from Entrance to Bridge of Buthlaw.
- Viewpoint 2, View south from the Formartine and Buchan Way.
- Viewpoint 3, View north west from Monyruy Cottages (View Left).
- Viewpoint 4, View south west from Monyruy Cottages (View Right).
- Viewpoint 5, View south from Newton of Rora.
- Viewpoint 6, View south west from the Formartine and Buchan Way.
- Viewpoint 7, View north west from the walker's car park at entrance to Buthlaw, Faichfieldburn Path.

Baseline Assessment

18. The first stage of the assessment reviews the existing landscape and visual resource of the Study Area in terms of its character, quality (i.e., the baseline condition) and establishes sensitivity of the resources/receptors. The baseline assessment forms the basis against which to appraise the

magnitude and significance of the predicted landscape and visual effects arising from the Proposed Development.

19. The baseline assessment has three elements:

- Description – the process of collecting and presenting information about landscape and visual resources in a systematic manner;
- Classification – the more analytical activity whereby landscape and visual resources are refined into units of distinct and recognisable character; and
- Evaluation – the process of attributing a sensitivity rating to a given landscape or visual resource, by reference to specified criteria.

20. In determining these elements, the baseline assessment process comprises three stages: desk study, field survey and analysis. These are described below:

Desk Study

21. As part of the desk study, existing map and written data regarding the Proposed Development Site and its environs were reviewed, including:

- NatureScot – Online Scottish Landscape Character Types Map and Descriptions;
- Ordnance Survey (OS) Explorer Sheet No.427, Peterhead and Fraserburgh;
- Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan, 2023; and
- Historic Environment Scotland Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes.

22. The desk study enabled the definition of the baseline landscape and visual resource within the Study Area and therefore the main users of the area, key viewpoints and key features were identified (these were subsequently confirmed as part of the field studies).

23. The aim of the baseline visual assessment was to ensure that a representative range of viewpoints were included in the visual assessment in order to represent the identified receptors. The potential extent of visibility of the Proposed Development was identified by reference to Ordnance Survey map data and observations were made in the field. Following this, potential visual receptors likely to be affected by the Proposed Development were identified.

24. The viewpoints were selected to ensure that the visual assessment included a representative range in relation to the following criteria:

- Type of receptor - including different landscape character areas if appropriate;
- Distance of receptor from the Proposed Development - to a maximum distance of 1.5 km from the Proposed Development; and
- Direction of receptor from the Proposed Development, with the aim of achieving an even distribution from different compass points around the Site.

25. The desk study provides the basis for subsequent field survey work. It informs the description of the Landscape Character Areas for the Study Area, the definition of the potential extent of visibility and the identification of the principal viewpoints and receptors, which were subsequently confirmed during the field survey.

Field Survey

26. Field survey was undertaken to verify the landscape character areas identified within the Study Area and to gain a full appreciation of the relationship between the Proposed Development and the existing landscape.

27. Field survey work also verified the appropriateness of the proposed viewpoints. This involved checking the initial viewpoint selection on the ground, to ensure that there would be views of the Proposed Development from these locations. In some instances, this can be remedied by slight

adjustments of the location, although this has to remain relevant to the particular receptor(s) for which the viewpoint was selected. It is also important to ensure that the selected viewpoints are a representative view and demonstrate potential visibility of the Proposed Development for the selected location. The fieldwork was supported by analysis of OS maps, and observations were recorded with photographs.

Analysis and Reporting

28. Analysis and reporting of the baseline assessment took place after completion of the desk and field surveys. The baseline landscape assessment provided a description, classification and evaluation of the landscape of the Study Area from which to appraise the potential landscape effects of the Proposed Development. The baseline visual assessment provided an initial list of viewpoints for the viewpoint assessment, with brief commentary on viewpoint location, distance from the Proposed Development, receptors and rationale for selection, from which to appraise the potential visual effects of the Proposed Development. The baseline assessment is supported by **Figure 1.1.1**, which shows the Site Location and Landscape Character Types/ Landscape Designations, and **Figure 1.1.2**, Viewpoint Locations overlaid onto the ZTV Plan. **Figure 1.1.3** shows the site in relation to cumulative grid infrastructure related projects.

29. The baseline assessment provided a description of the landscape and visual resource from which an assessment of the landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Development can be undertaken to determine the development's acceptability in principle and the appropriate mitigation measures.

Assessment of Residual Landscape and Visual Effects

30. The assessment describes the changes in the character and quality of the landscape and visual resources that are expected to result from the Proposed Development. It covers both landscape effects, i.e., changes in the fabric, character and key defining characteristics of the landscape; and visual effects, i.e., changes in available views of the landscape and the significance of those effects on people.

31. In assessing landscape effects, the potential direct effects on the fabric of the landscape are considered, together with the potential effects on the perception of landscape character. The latter depends on a number of factors:

- The nature of the Landscape character area, including factors such as the nature of views and sense of enclosure;
- The extent of the potential visibility of the Proposed Development (e.g., the number of potential viewpoints and extent of the development seen);
- The proportion of the character area with potential visibility; and
- The distance to the Proposed Development.

32. The baseline landscape character assessment together with an assessment of the potential effects on landscape character types is included in the assessment, along with consideration of the extent of potential effects.

33. A viewpoint analysis has been carried out to identify and evaluate the potential effects on visual amenity arising from the Proposed Development at specific representative locations in the Study Area. The viewpoints selected are considered to be representative of the spectrum of receptors in the Study Area, located at different distances, directions and elevations relative to the Proposed Development.

34. The assessment involved the preparation of viewpoints to illustrate views towards the Proposed Development, to predict views of the Proposed Development, and to assist in the assessment of effects. These are shown in **Figures 1.2.1 a-c – 1.2.7 a-c**.

4. Assessment Criteria

35. The aim of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment is to identify, predict and evaluate potential key effects arising from a development. Wherever possible, identified effects are quantified, however, the nature of LVIA requires an element of interpretation using professional judgement. In order to provide a level of consistency to the assessment, the prediction of magnitude of change and assessment of significance of the residual landscape and visual effects have been based on pre-defined criteria.

Sensitivity of the Landscape and Magnitude of Change

36. The capacity of the landscape to accommodate change of the type and scale involved in the formation of the Proposed Development has been appraised. Part of this process involves an assessment of landscape sensitivity, and susceptibility to change, in the context of this proposal.

37. The sensitivity of the landscape is not absolute and varies according to the existing landscape, the nature of the Proposed Development and the type of change being considered. The determination of the sensitivity of the landscape resource to changes associated with the Proposed Development is defined as high, medium, low or negligible - or intermediate bands between these. It is developed from guidance within GLVIA 3, and based on professional interpretation of a combination of parameters as follows:

- Key landscape characteristics - a professional evaluation informed by the key characteristics of the landscape and existing character assessments, describing the elements that make up the landscape including:
  - landscape value, as reflected by local, regional or national landscape designation;
  - landscape scale - which is the relative size of the main landscape elements and components;
  - Physical influences such as landform;
  - Land cover, including different types of vegetation and patterns and types of tree cover; and
  - The nature of views - whether open, closed, long or short distance, simple or diverse.

38. GLVIA 3 advises that the two components of ‘value’ and ‘susceptibility’ to change are taken into account in assigning sensitivity to change from the Proposed Development to landscape and visual receptors. The two factors are described and explained in greater detail below:

Landscape Value

39. Establishing landscape value requires an understanding of how society values different Landscapes. This is used to inform judgements on the significance of effects. Value is most often expressed through designation; however, undesignated landscapes and components of individual landscapes also need to be examined. As part of the baseline the following factors are considered when developing an understanding of landscape value:

- Landscape quality/condition - the physical state of the landscape;
- Scenic quality - aspects of the landscape that appeal to the senses;
- Rarity - presence of unusual or rare features;
- Representativeness - the landscape may be representative of a typical landscape;
- Recreation values - particularly where landscape experience is important;
- Perceptual aspects - value for particular experience such as tranquillity; and
- Cultural associations - with people such as writers or artists, events, etc.

40. Information on landscape value is included in the baseline descriptions of landscape character, in information included from the citations of designated landscapes. This information has been

reviewed and refined through survey and analysis.

Susceptibility to Change

41. GLVIA 3 defines susceptibility to change as *'the ability of the landscape to accommodate the proposed development without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation and/or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies.'*

42. The degree to which a particular landscape type or area can accommodate change will vary with:

- existing land use;
- the pattern and scale of the landscape;
- visual enclosure/openness of views, and distribution of visual receptors; and
- the scope for mitigation, which will be in character with the existing landscape.

43. Key characteristics likely to be affected by the Proposed Development are evaluated, taking into account *'quality, value, contribution to landscape character, and the degree to which the particular element or characteristic can be replaced or substituted'.*

Landscape Sensitivity

44. In order to evaluate the sensitivity of the landscape/visual receptor the criteria outlined in **Table 1** below have been used, combining an understanding of the landscape value and susceptibility to change, based on GLVIA 3.

Table 1: Landscape Sensitivity

Description	Sensitivity
Landscape with important components, usually of particularly distinctive character and high quality, susceptible to relatively small changes and for which mitigation will be difficult or not possible. Some less distinctive or lower quality landscapes may also fall into this category where characteristics are such that mitigation of negative changes will be difficult. Landscape is often recognised through designation.	High Sensitivity
Landscape with characteristics reasonably tolerant of changes or for which mitigation is likely to be possible. These landscapes may be of high quality or of distinctive character but will usually be relatively ordinary and moderately valued.	Medium Sensitivity
A less distinctive or relatively poor landscape with few features of quality or interest, potentially tolerant of substantial change and with scope for mitigation of any negative changes.	
Considerably modified or degraded landscape, with few/no features of quality or interest e.g., heavily industrialised landscapes.	Low Sensitivity

45. In some instances, a landscape with important components and high quality may be of a lower sensitivity as a result of its potential tolerance to change and opportunities for mitigation. Conversely a landscape with few features of interest may be of a higher sensitivity because it is vulnerable to change with little opportunity to mitigate change.

46. Having described the landscape resource and the key components that contribute to the character of the landscape character areas and categorised the sensitivity of each landscape type to change, the probable magnitude of change sustained as a result of the Proposed Development is assessed. This change could be adverse, neutral or beneficial. The assessment of the magnitude of change is described below:

Magnitude of Change on Landscape Receptors

47. Each effect on landscape needs to be assessed in terms of its size or scale, the geographical extent of the area influenced, and its duration and reversibility.

Size or Scale (including nature of influence on landscape character)

48. Judgements are made about the size or scale of the change in the landscape that are likely to be experienced as a result of the Proposed Development. The judgements take account of:

- The extent to which landscape elements will be lost, the proportion of the total extent that this represents and the contribution of that element to the character of the landscape;
- The degree to which aesthetic or perceptual aspects of the landscape are altered either by removal of existing components of the landscape or by addition of new ones; and

- Whether the effect changes the key characteristics of the landscape which are critical to its distinctive character.

Geographic Extent

49. The geographic extent over which landscape effects are considered to be distinct from size or scale, the extent of effects will vary according to the nature of the proposal. The effect of a development may have an influence at the following scales:

- At site level, within the development site itself;
- At the level of the immediate setting of the site;
- At the scale of the landscape character area within which the proposal lies; or
- At a larger scale influencing several landscape character areas.

Judgement on Magnitude of Change

50. Magnitude of change on landscape is categorised as substantial, moderate, slight, or negligible – or intermediate categories – as set out in **Table 2** below. There may also be no magnitude of change, where further analysis of potential effects upon landscape receptors reveals that there will be no alteration as a result of the Proposed Development.

Table 2: Definition of Magnitude

Level of Magnitude	Definition of Magnitude
Substantial	Total loss or major alteration to key elements/features/characteristics of the baseline (pre-development) conditions such that post development character/composition of baseline will be fundamentally changed.
Moderate	Partial loss or alteration to one or more key elements/features/characteristics of the baseline (pre-development) conditions such that post development character/ composition/ attributes of baseline will be partially changed.
Slight	Minor loss of or alteration to one or more key elements/features/characteristics of the baseline (pre-development) conditions. Change arising from the loss/alteration will be discernible but underlying character/composition of the baseline condition will be similar to pre-development circumstances/patterns.
Negligible	Very minor loss or alteration to one or more key elements/features/characteristics of the baseline (pre-development) conditions. Change barely distinguishable, approximating to the "no change" situation.
None	No change.

Visual Receptor Sensitivity and Magnitude of Change

51. The sensitivity of visual receptors depends upon:

- The location of the viewpoint;
- The context of the view;
- The activity of the receptor; and
- Frequency and duration of the view.

Value attached to Views

52. Judgements are also made about the value attached to views experienced taking account of:

- Recognition of the value attached to particular views, for example in relation to heritage assets, or through planning designations; and
- Indication of value attached to particular locations as a distinctive view through appearance in guide books, provision of formal facilities such as a car park and sign board, references in art and literature.

Susceptibility of Visual Receptors to Change

53. The susceptibility of different visual receptors to changes in views is a function of:

- The occupation or activity of people experiencing the view at particular locations; and
- The extent to which their attention or interest may therefore be focussed on the views and visual amenity they experience at particular locations.

54. Visual receptor susceptibility is defined as high, medium, or low, or a gradation of these, as set out in **Table 3**.

Table 3: Definition of Visual Receptor Sensitivity

Level of Sensitivity	Definition of Visual Receptor Sensitivity
High	• Users of outdoor recreational facilities including strategic recreational footpaths, cycle routes or rights of way, whose attention may be focused on the landscape; important landscape features with physical, cultural or historic attributes; views from principal settlements; visitors to beauty spots and picnic areas.
Medium	• Other footpaths; people travelling through or past the landscape on roads, train lines or other transport routes, views from minor settlements.
	• People engaged in outdoor sports or recreation (other than appreciation of the landscape), those whose attention may be focused on their work or activity rather than the wider landscape.
Low	• Views from heavily industrialised or densely built-up areas.

Magnitude of Change on Visual Receptors

55. The magnitude of visual change arising from the Proposed Development is described as substantial, moderate, slight, or negligible/none based on the overall extent of visibility. For individual viewpoints it will depend upon:

- distance of the viewpoint from the development;
- duration of effect;
- angle of view in relation to main receptor activity;
- proportion of the field of view occupied by the development;
- background to the development; and
- the extent of other built development visible, particularly vertical, elements.

Size or Scale

56. Judging magnitude of visual effects identified needs to take account of:

- The scale of change in the view with respect to the loss or addition of features in the view and changes in its composition, including the proportion of the view occupied by the Proposed Development;
- The degree of contrast or integration of any new features or changes in the Landscape with the existing or remaining landscape elements and characteristics in terms of form, scale and mass, line, height, colour and texture; and
- The nature of the Proposed Development, in terms of the relative amount of time over which it will be experienced and whether views will be full, partial or glimpses.

Geographical Extent

57. The geographical extent of a visual effect will vary with different viewpoints and is likely to reflect:

- The angle of the view in relation to the main activity of the receptor;
- The distance of the viewpoint from the Proposed Development; and
- The extent of the area over which the changes would be visible.

Duration and Reversibility of Visual Effects

58. The magnitude of changes that would be experienced by receptors as a result of the Proposed Development relates in part to the duration of effects and their permanence/ reversibility. The effects will be permanent on completion of the Proposed Development.

Level and Significance of Effects

59. The significance of any identified landscape or visual effect has been assessed as major, moderate, minor or no effect. These categories have been determined by consideration of viewpoint sensitivity (combining susceptibility and value) and predicted magnitude of change (size, scale, geographical extent, duration) as described above, with the following matrix in **Table 4** used as a guide to correlating sensitivity and magnitude to determine significance of effects.

Table 4: Significance of Effects on the Landscape Resource and Visual Receptors

SENSITIVITY	MAGNITUDE OF CHANGE			
	Substantial	Moderate	Slight	Negligible
	←			→
High ↕	Major	Major/Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/Minor
Medium ↕	Major/Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/Minor	Minor
Low ↕	Moderate	Moderate/Minor	Minor	Minor/None

60. 54. Where the landscape or visual effect has been classified as major or major/moderate, this is considered to be a significant effect in terms of the EIA Regulations (if applicable). It should be noted that significant effects need not be adverse and may be either negative or positive. The

61. assumption is that with regard to intrinsic nature of the landscape and visual effects, effects are negative unless stated.

62. The matrix is not used as a prescriptive tool, and the methodology and analysis of potential effects at any particular location must make allowance for the exercise of professional judgement. Thus, in some instances, a particular parameter may be considered as having a determining effect on the analysis.

Supporting Graphics

Approach

63. The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment is supported by a range of figures including viewpoint photography. These have been prepared in adherence to the principles presented in the Landscape Institute's Guidance Note TGN 06/19 Visual Representation of Proposed Development Proposals and the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Assessment, 3rd Edition 2013).

Photography

64. All photography was undertaken through the use of a full frame digital Single Lens Reflex (dSLR) (Canon EOS 5d) camera mounted with a 50 millimetre (mm) 'fixed' lens (Canon EF 50mm - f/1.4 USM). The camera was mounted on a tripod with a panoramic head in order to obtain a stable platform for the single frame and panoramic views. The position of the tripod was recorded with a handheld GPS device. In addition to recording the location of the viewpoint, observations with regard to time of day, weather, cloud cover, and visibility were recorded.

65. Following completion of the fieldwork, the photography was reviewed and the clearest images selected for the production of panoramic images. In some cases, small adjustments are made to the images through the use of Adobe Photoshop/CS3 software in order to improve clarity.

66. The panoramas were then prepared through the joining of two or more images (typically three) in Photoshop.

Visualisations

67. The visualisations supporting the LVIA are presented in order to provide a view of the Proposed Development Site within its landscape context and assist the assessor in determining the change and resultant effect on the Viewpoint Location.

68. The photomontages were prepared through the use of AutoCAD and Adobe Photoshop. A photomontage is a visualisation based on the superimposition of an image of the Proposed Development on to a photograph for the purpose of creating a realistic representation of proposed or potential changes to a view, generated using computer software.

69. The presentation of graphics material requires careful consideration in order to prepare a visualisation that provides an accurately scaled depiction of the Proposed Development for use at the Viewpoint Location. The following images were produced to support the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment:

- A 53.5° image of the existing view.
- A 53.5° a matching rendered photomontage of the Proposed Development at Year 1
- A 53.5° a matching rendered photomontage of the Proposed Development at Year 15

70. The visualisations were used by the assessor in the field in order to help inform an understanding of the effect resulting from the Proposed Development at the viewpoint location.

5. Landscape Planning Policy Context

71. In the preparation of this Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, consideration has been given to the policies, guidance and advice contained in National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) which

forms part of the statutory development plan and also the Aberdeenshire Local Proposed Development Plan, 2023.

72. Please refer to Planning Statement for the full assessment. Key policies relevant to the LVIA are set out below:

National Policy

National Planning Framework 4

73. The document sets out the Scottish Government's current National Planning Policies. It is an important core element of the Development Plan forming the most up to date planning policy position will therefore inform the determination of the application. The following policy extracts set out below taken from NPF4 are relevant considerations that have been taken into account in the design of the Proposed Development.

***Policy 3:** Biodiversity*

74. Policy 3 is intended to: *"To encourage, promote and facilitate development that addresses the global climate emergency and nature crisis."*

75. In the context of the Proposed Development the policy has been given careful consideration. In particular with regard to the reduction of landscape and visual effects arising from the construction of the Proposed Development:

a) *"Proposed Development proposals will contribute to the enhancement of biodiversity, including where relevant, restoring degraded habitats and building and strengthening nature networks and the connections between them. Proposals should also integrate nature-based solutions, where possible."*

c) *"Proposals for local development will include appropriate measures to conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity, in accordance with national and local guidance. Measures should be proportionate to the nature and scale of development."*

d) *"Any potential adverse impacts, including cumulative impacts, of development proposals on biodiversity, nature networks and the natural environment will be minimised through careful planning and design. This will take into account the need to reverse biodiversity loss, safeguard the ecosystem services that the natural environment provides, and build resilience by enhancing nature networks and maximising the potential for restoration."*

***Policy 5:** Soils*

76. Policy 5 seeks to *"protect carbon-rich soils, restore peatlands and minimise disturbance to soils from development."*

***Policy 6:** Forestry, Woodland and Trees*

77. Policy 6 is intended to: *"To protect and expand forests, woodland and trees"* and confirms that:

e) *"Proposed Development proposals that enhance, expand and improve woodland and tree*

cover will be supported."

Policy 11: *Energy*

78. Policy 11 is intended to: *"encourage, promote and facilitate all forms of renewable energy development onshore and offshore. This includes energy generation, storage, new and replacement transmission and distribution infrastructure"* and confirms that:

> *e) "project design and mitigation will demonstrate how the following impacts are addressed:*
>
> *ii. significant landscape and visual impacts, recognising that such impacts are to be expected for some forms of renewable energy. Where impacts are localised and/or appropriate design mitigation has been applied, they will generally be considered to be acceptable;"*

79. These matters have been fully considered in the proposed development strategy.

Local Planning Policy

Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan, 2023

80. The site falls within the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan, 2023.

Policy HE2 Protecting Historic, Cultural and Conservation Areas

81. Policy HE2 states that *"Proposed Development affecting an inventory battlefield or inventory garden and designed landscape will only be permitted if:*

- *the proposal would not have an adverse impact that compromises the objectives of the designation of an inventory garden or designed landscape, or the key landscape characteristics and special qualities of an inventory battlefield; or,*
- *any significant adverse effects are outweighed by long-term social or economic benefits of overriding public importance and there is no alternative site for the development.*

82. No designated sites will be affected by the Proposed Development.

Policy C2 Renewable Energy

83. Policy C2 confirms that: "We will support renewable energy developments, including...energy storage projects, which are in appropriate sites and of the appropriate design. Assessment of the acceptability of such developments will take account of any effects on: landscape and visual aspects", amongst other topics.

"Other renewable energy developments are required to relate well to the source of the renewable energy required for operation and satisfactory steps must be taken to mitigate any negative impacts on occupiers of affected properties."

6. Baseline Assessment

Introduction

84. This section provides a general description of the existing landscape and visual context of the

Proposed Development and the wider Study Area.

Landscape Resources

Site Setting

85. The Site lies to the east of the compact settlement at Longside, and to the north of hamlet at Flushing, within an extensive area of broadly rolling arable farmland, forming part of the wider *Coastal Agricultural Plain - Aberdeenshire* Landscape Character Type. The surrounding landscape is relatively open with few field boundaries, and occasional blocks of plantation forestry, opening to the level floodplain of the winding South Ugie Water and tributaries. The Proposed Development area, currently in use as a single field of arable farmland, is positioned across the northern extent of a round hill, to the south of the floodplain. The hillside rises up steadily to the south from Flushing and west from Longside to the broad summit which extends to the north, gently shelving and tapering to the north east to the flood plain at the Haughs of Rora. An existing pole mounted power line crosses the southern edge of the site, from west to east, just to the north of Monyruy Cottage. An existing gravelled access track connects to the cottage, running south to north, and continues to the north east of the cottage forming the eastern boundary of the site. The minor road passing to the south east of the site connects at Flushing to the A950, leading west to Longside and east to Peterhead.

86. The immediate Site setting comprises a single rectilinear field of arable farmland, framed to the south by the cluster of agricultural buildings and yard at the Monyruy Farm cattle farm, and the disused and now vegetated Hillside Quarry which extends into the southern extent of the hill. The quarry lies beyond the site to the south east. These features, the rising terrain and the further tree belts around Flushing, Faichfield House and towards Longside provide the Site with relative local containment from the south, south east and south west respectively. However, views are generally open across the gently rolling terrain and the open vale of the South Ugie Water/River Ugie to the north.

The Study Area

87. The Study Area comprises a core 2 km radius circle centred on the Proposed Development Site. This area was selected to reflect the areas of main visibility of the Site in longer views to the north and to focus the assessment on key local receptors.

88. The key features of the Study Area landscape are as follows:

Topography

89. The sloping Site lies between c.45 m and c.27 m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD). The landscape is low-lying and very gently undulating, with a pattern of low rounded hills framing the lower lying valley of the River Ugie, which meanders across a large floodplain west of Peterhead. Occasional coniferous shelter belts and woodland blocks provide some limited local containment to visibility across this open terrain.

Settlement

90. This is a relatively well settled landscape with farmsteads and detached properties scattered across the landscape. In some areas there are individual new dwellings which are more prominent in the landscape. A series of small hamlets are located along the network of minor roads. The village of Longside lies c.2 km to the west, Peterhead lies c.5 km to the east. Within the surrounding landscape there is a regular pattern of farmsteads, often emphasised by their enclosing shelter of trees.

Existing Infrastructure

91. The A950 trunk road runs through the arable landscape c.500 m to the south of the Site. Minor roads run through the local landscape connecting settlements. Small groups of large wind turbines and masts are sited on the local ridges and hills in the wider landscape.

Landscape Classification

92. Landscape classification is a means of sub-dividing the landscape into different areas with distinctive landscape character. Landscape types differ in their range of landscape features and the patterns these create, and consequently their ability to accommodate different types of development. Some areas may be particularly sensitive, others more resilient.

93. NatureScot has used a system of landscape character assessment to identify, describe, classify and map Scotland. Using accepted, systematic methods of landscape character assessment, the countryside has been subdivided into different Landscape Character Types (LCTs), each with a distinctive character based upon local patterns of geology, land form, land use, cultural and ecological features. These provide information that can be used to guide landscape change and provide a baseline against which to make judgements on the likely effects of the Proposed Development upon landscape character.

94. The Scottish Landscape Character Types Mapping classifies the immediate Site and its context as falling within the "*Coastal Agricultural Plain" LCT*. This LCT is described in further detail in the table below using information from the Character Assessment to provide a baseline against which the potential effect of the Proposed Development on the landscape and visual amenity of the area can be judged:

Table 5: Coastal Agricultural Plain - Aberdeenshire Landscape Character Type

Key Characteristics

- A large scale and open landscape of smoothly rolling ridges and shallow valleys. Narrow ravines cutting through the ridges towards the coast.
- Low-lying and very gently undulating landform, with a pattern of subtle ridges and valleys in the north-east.
- Prominent landmark feature of Mormond Hill on the western edge of the area.
- Water courses in broad shallow valleys.
- Mainly arable farming, with fairly extensive areas of moss and wetland.
- Large, open, geometric fields.
- Coniferous forest particularly extensive in southern part of the area.
- Limited broadleaf woodland, forming rare shelterbelts and small groups around farms.
- Well settled landscape of dispersed farms, many newer houses and a number of settlements, and occasional mansions in designed landscapes.
- Communication structures and tall masts on some higher ground, and power transmission lines radiating from Peterhead power station, which itself is highly visible.
- Major roads crossing the area.

Sensitivity to Change

Medium – The landscape is relatively open; development is visible locally and the landscape is susceptible to change. However, the landscape is undramatic and sensitivity to landscape change tends to be medium.

Landscape Designations

95. The Proposed Development is set back from the sensitive landscapes and there are no designated landscapes that will be influenced by the Proposed Development.

Baseline Visual Resources

96. A key component of the assessment is the assessment of effects from key locations within the Study Area. This assessment is undertaken through comprehensive field work, establishing the extent of visibility to the Proposed Development in the field.

Viewpoint Selection

97. Viewpoints for the visual assessment were identified following a detailed analysis of the visibility of the Proposed Development and finalised during fieldwork. The type of receptors considered included the following:

- The local settlement pattern;
- Roads (main and minor); and
- The route of the Formartine and Buchan Way, a former railway line, which now provides a long distant route for walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

98. In order to confirm the appropriateness of the viewpoint selection, field survey verification was carried out. This involved checking the viewpoint grid references on the ground, to ensure that there would be views of the Proposed Development from these locations.

99. The final list of viewpoints is shown in **Table 6** and their locations are illustrated in **Figure 1.1.1**. Photographs of the existing views from these viewpoints are shown in **Figures 1.2.1 to 1.2.4**. The effect of the Proposed Development on these viewpoints is reviewed in the assessment below:

Table 6: Viewpoint Locations

No.	Location	Distance and Direction to the Proposed Development	Receptors and Sensitivity
1.	View west from the entrance to the property at Bridge of Buthlaw	665 m to the north west.	Road users, Medium sensitivity.
2.	View south east from the Formartine and Buchan Way	450 m to the south east.	Walkers, High sensitivity.
3.	View north west from Monyruy Cottages (within land ownership boundary)	90 m to the north west.	Residents, High sensitivity.
4.	View west from Monyruy Cottages	125 m to the west.	Residents, High sensitivity.

No.	Location	Distance and Direction to the Proposed Development	Receptors and Sensitivity
5.	View south from Newton of Rora	1.9 km to the south.	Road users, Medium sensitivity.
6.	View south west from the Formartine and Buchan Way	625 m to the south west.	Walkers, High sensitivity.
7.	Walkers car park at entrance to Buthlaw, Faichfieldburn Path	365 m to the north west.	Walkers, High sensitivity.

Other Baseline Grid Projects

100. At the time of writing, there were two other large scale grid infrastructure projects proposed within the immediate study area that are at screening stage with the Energy Consents Unit:

- Netherton Hub Grid Station Site
- Field Netherton Ltd. BESS Development

101. The location of these sites is illustrated on **Figure 1.1.3**, Cumulative Sites Plan.

7. The Proposed Development

102. The Proposed Development Layout is shown in Planning Application drawings package, reference, Proposed Site Plan – PA-70-PSP, and is described in more detail in the Supporting Statement that accompanies the application.

103. The BESS units will be assembled offsite and installed in a series of containers, c.6m by 2.5m in size, set within a c.233 m by c.212 m Site compound. The plant will be used to store electricity from the grid as an energy storage solution.

104. The proposed works comprise the following main elements (as shown on Planning Application figures as referenced):

- Grid Station (to be operated by SSEN);
- Customer Grid Station;
- Hardstanding (e.g., for manoeuvring and parking of trucks);
- Access Tracks;
- Up to 204 containerised Energy Storage Units;
- Up to 51 inverter/transformer units;
- Switch Room;
- Switchgear;
- Water Tanks;
- Welfare Unit;
- Perimeter security fencing;
- CCTV columns;
- Profiled development platform and associated cuttings and embankments;
- SUDs pond;

- Landscape works including tree and shrub planting, 2.5 m high, timber post and wire, perimeter deer proof fencing; and
- External artificial lighting to specific work areas (see mitigation in paragraphs 105 and 106, below).

105. The new built form will be set within new lengths of new native woodland shelter belt of planting which, alongside the existing hedgerow to the east of the site that will be retained, will together filter views to the site.

106. The existing access road to the east of Monyruy Farm, connecting onto the minor road, will be used as the main construction access route.

107. The existing points of access, to the east of Monyruy Cottage, leading to the adjoining minor road will be retained, as a metalled surface, and as the permanent site access, by way of the minor road, through to the A950.

8. Assessment of Construction Stage Effects

108. Short term effects upon the landscape and upon visual amenity will arise from the Proposed Development construction phase. The summary list below identifies those elements which will give rise to landscape and visual effects during the construction phase:

- Formation of temporary construction compound, site access track, and fencing;
- Soil stripping and excavations;
- Erection of new built forms;
- Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) and special load movement;
- Construction site lighting in winter months;
- Views of site operations and plant; and
- Reinstatement work, including removal of temporary accommodation.

Mitigation of Construction Stage Effects

109. The location and management of the construction operations identified above will be carefully considered to minimise effects on the landscape resource and visual receptors. The following measures will be required to minimise temporary effects:

- Visual impact is minimized through careful site selection, design, and retention of existing vegetation for screening purposes.
- The proposed planting plan will retain the existing hedgerow to the east of the site, and supplement this with new sections of native woodland shelter belts around the entire site boundary, using native species, providing valuable wildlife habitats and effective screening.
- During the construction phase good standards of housekeeping will be employed to ensure that the Site is kept tidy;
- Protection of valued features within the application boundary;
- Maintenance of tidy and contained construction compound and laydown area;
- External lighting will be kept to a minimum (the site will be dark during normal operation); where lighting is required for health and safety reasons, directional lighting or shields shall be used to minimise the potential for light spillage and glare;
- The construction working area will be fenced at the outset, and all trees, shrubs and other vegetation which can be retained will be fenced and protected to the limit of their root zones (the canopy spread), in accordance with British Standards (BS) 5837:2012 *Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction.* No vehicular access, spoil, soil or equipment storage will be permitted within the fenced areas;

- No unnecessary tree or shrub removal will be undertaken, and vegetation which is to be removed will be marked and agreed onsite prior to any felling. No tree removal will be undertaken beyond the approved Site. If any removal which has not been anticipated (e.g., trees that may fall on the Site and need to be removed for safety reasons), new planting will be undertaken to offset the loss;
- Where services trenching crosses an existing tree belt which is to be retained, existing gaps will be used where possible so that vegetation removal is minimised. Where removal is required, vegetation will be cleared to a width of around 10 m, or the minimum possible to achieve access;
- The existing masonry wall to the west of the BESS site will be retained and protected through the works;
- The topsoil will be carefully scraped from the site of the proposed development platforms to a depth of 200-600 mm (or the actual depth of the topsoil) and stored in mounds no greater than 2 m high at the perimeter of the Site, in locations where they will aid visual screening. This soil will not be tracked on by vehicles, in order to conserve soil microbiology and the seed bank within it. In areas where the mounds are to be in place for long periods of time will be seeded with grass to help reduce erosion and prevent weed colonisation. Geotextile (a strong woven synthetic material) will be laid to protect the subsoil, and a temporary surface installed (usually gravel or crushed stone). Upon completion of construction, surfacing and geotextile will be removed, the subsoil ripped and topsoil re-spread, prior to seeding;
- Contractor compounds will be located in a place of low sensitivity (i.e., away from residential properties and areas of valued trees and shrubs);
- Topsoil mounds will generally be used to screen the construction compounds from sensitive areas where practicable;
- Materials and machinery will be stored tidily during the works;
- Lighting of compounds and works sites will be restricted to agreed working hours and that which is necessary for safety and security. Construction lighting will be designed so that it does not impinge into sensitive views, such as close views from bedroom windows of residential properties. Low level lighting will be used where possible, rather than lighting on tall columns;
- Roads providing access to Site compounds and works areas will be maintained free of dust and mud;
- On completion of construction, all remaining construction materials will be removed from the site and work compounds, hard standing and temporary access roads will be reinstated; and
- Areas of regraded soil will be seeded with wild flower seed.

110. Once the Proposed Development is complete there will be an ongoing requirement to repair, service and maintain the facility. This may result very infrequently in large vehicles and or cranes being present onsite for a few days and could result in landscape and visual effects for short periods of time.

Assessment of Residual Construction Stage Effects

111. The overall effect of the construction phase on landscape and visual amenity is not anticipated to be any greater than the effects during the operational phase and therefore a separate construction phase assessment is not required. In addition, it should be noted that the construction phase will be relatively short-term and temporary.

112. Effects on medium to long distance views and the perception of the landscape character will be as discussed in detail below in the assessment of residual effects with respect to landscape resource and visual amenity. Locally to the Site, there will be short term effects due to the construction phase on landscape and visual amenity.

Operational Stage Effects & their Mitigation

113. The proposed Site plan has been finalised to present a coherent development form which will be seen to fully integrate with its setting.

Design Mitigation

114. Design iteration of the Proposed Development was undertaken as part of the Landscape Assessment to reduce the landscape and visual effects. The subsequent assessment has, therefore, been completed taking into account the following embedded mitigation measures which will be adopted within the design.

Topography and Landform

115. Local ground modelling will be required to accommodate the Proposed Development platforms and built form, and whilst the general flow of the topography of the site will be substantially retained across the Site, the proposed development will be set upon graded benches tapered into the northern flank of the hillside. This local ground modelling will have the added benefit of reducing, or indeed, negating the need to remove surplus material from the Site.

Integrating Massing and Form

116. Visual integration will be secured through orientation, positioning of buildings and structures, profile, colour and facade treatments, design detailing, use of materials, all selected to give cohesion to the Proposed Development and create an appropriate response to the components of the surrounding landscape.

117. The containers and ancillary components will be painted in a dark receding shade of green and the security fencing will also be painted in a dark green powder coated finish.

Sympathetic Lighting

118. No night time lighting would be required unless in the event of emergency repairs. A sympathetic lighting strategy will be prepared in such event within the context of the design of the storage containers to minimise any potential adverse effects. A number of measures will be introduced within the context of the operational requirements of the Site to minimise the unwanted effects associated with light sources. These will include:

- Cowls/shielding of lights to prevent glare;
- Minimisation of light spread through the use of directional lighting;
- Minimising the potential for sky glow by avoiding the potential for upward reflected light;
- Reducing the operational hours of the lighting to reduce the potential for disturbance; and
- In some areas intelligent dimming technology may be used to activate lighting through activity.

119. These measures are proposed to minimise light pollution and reduce night time glare, while providing limited temporary night time illumination within the Proposed Development when required. There will be no permanent security lighting left on during hours of darkness.

Undergrounding of Services

120. The Site drainage strategy will, subject to the necessary agreements, be based upon drainage via buried pipes/culverts as necessary, providing inflow to a SuDS system comprising an infiltration basin at the north eastern extent of the site.

Applied Mitigation

121. Exposed ground, including the newly profiled slopes, embankments and verges will be carefully seeded with native wildflower grassland.

122. Landscape mitigation works is focussed on the formation of native planting around the perimeter of the Proposed Development as sections of new woodland tree belts. The proposed structure planting will be implemented at the earliest opportunity and within the first planting season following the completion of the final ground modelling, subject to the detailed Landscape Management Plan being agreed with the Aberdeenshire Council.

123. The proposed planting will establish over the short term to soften direct views to the Proposed Development.

124. The landscape proposals will be used to help integrate the scheme into the surrounding landscape, to anchor it and make it part of the landscape and will reflect the character of the existing setting and the wider landscape.

125. A detailed landscape design will be implemented and inspected by a Chartered Landscape Architect at intervals as required, and not less than 6 months apart. This will be first approved by the Council as a planning condition to planning application process.

126. The landscape proposals are identified on the Landscape Strategy Plan, **Figure 1.3.1**:

127. Native trees and shrubs, of local provenance, will be planted to form new tree belts around the perimeter of the site. Species will be carefully selected to respond to the prevailing Site conditions and the character of the surrounding landscape. The planting details will be agreed with officers from Aberdeenshire Council by way of a condition on any consent issued by Ministers and subject to deemed planning permission. All planted areas will be protected by both perimeter deer proof fencing and individual tree and shrub guards.

Management and Maintenance

128. Measures, to be adopted as part of a landscape management plan for the scheme, are described below:

- Wild flower grass areas beyond a five metre buffer of the BESS will be left uncut once established;
- Areas of natural woodland and grassland will be left with only minimal management activity;
- Any trees or shrubs planted within the Site will be maintained and replanted if there is any damage/death or loss of plants during each planting season within a 3-year maintenance period; and
- Shrub ties and guards etc., will be weeded and adjusted annually, and will be removed at the end of the maintenance period.

9. Assessment of Residual Operational Effects on the Landscape Resource

Introduction

129. This section comprises the assessment of the residual effects on the landscape resources arising from the Proposed Development during the operational period. The effects are residual because they take into account the design mitigation measures described above.

130. The landscape resource is the distinctive physical pattern of components and features that combine to form and characterise the landscape. The effects of the Proposed Development on this resource are those that will directly alter this physical pattern and will thus have an effect on the character of the landscape. These effects will only occur within the landscape character area in which the Proposed Development is located. Beyond this, changes to the landscape character would be confined to indirect changes to the landscape resource. The assessment of the effects on the landscape resource is subdivided into direct effects on the landscape resource and indirect effects on landscape character.

131. Identification of the potential for residual effects has been undertaken following the comprehensive field work carried out in February 2025, informing the judgements made by the landscape professional undertaking the assessment.

Assessment of Direct Effects on the Landscape Resource

Location

132. The baseline assessment identified a c. 20.72 Hectares (ha) area as the context for the Proposed Development. The Proposed Development Site is in an area of sloping, open arable farmland. No clearance of trees or other vegetation will be necessary to accommodate the Proposed Development.

Landscape Sensitivity

133. It is considered that the sensitivity of the Landscape to change is **Medium**. The factors which have contributed to this judgement are as follows:

Value

134. Medium: The Site encompasses areas of productive arable farmland.

Susceptibility to Change

135. Medium: The Site is relatively open to local views although topography provides containment to the south. The components of the local landscape are simple with rectilinear fields and the presence of existing large farm buildings in the landscape. As such, the landscape is less susceptible to the changes associated with the Proposed Development.

Magnitude of Change

136. The overall magnitude of change to the existing landscape fabric is **Substantial.** The factors which have contributed to this judgement are as follows:

Size or Scale

137. As a result of the Proposed Development there will be a change to the existing landscape resources as follows:

- An area of arable land will be built upon; and
- New woodland shelterbelts will be established over the short term around the perimeter of the Site.

Geographical Extent

- The total Site occupies c. 20.72 ha within which the developed site area extends to c. 10.4 hectares, including the are set aside for the associated structure planting proposals.

Significance of Effect

138. Whilst the Proposed Development will have a direct effect on the existing landscape resources the Proposed Development presents an opportunity for areas of native woodland planting to improve the landscape resources. The combination of the individual judgements of **Medium** sensitivity and

Substantial magnitude of change on the fabric of the landscape at the operational stage of the Proposed Development, are considered to result in a **Major/Moderate** effect, which in the context of this assessment is considered to be Significant. These effects are localised to the Proposed Development location and in the context of the wider landscape resource it is considered that the proposed effect will be **Minor**, and Not Significant. The Proposed Development brings a beneficial restructuring of the landscape with areas of new native woodland planting which is considered to bring positive change to the existing landscape.

10. Assessment of Effects on Landscape Character

139. This section appraises effects upon Landscape Character Areas within c.2.5 km of the Proposed Development. Beyond c.2.5 km, due to the effect of distance, existing tree belts and topographic screening, the direct influence of the Proposed Development will be significantly reduced. As such, the resulting effects on landscape character will only give rise to no more than negligible magnitudes of change beyond 2.5 km and therefore no further assessment is considered to be appropriate. As described in the baseline a single landscape character type covers the Site, the "*Coastal Agricultural Plain, Aberdeenshire" Landscape Character Type* (LCT). Due to the screening effects of terrain, effects on landscape character will be limited to this landscape character type.

140. The Landscape Character Type is shown on **Figure 1.1.1**.

141. The following paragraphs provide a detailed analysis of the sensitivity, magnitude and assessment of effect on landscape character:

Coastal Agricultural Plain, Aberdeenshire LCT.

Location

142. The Proposed Development is located to the east of Longridge, focussed on the expansive shallow vale of the River Ugie set within an arabale landscape of large, open, geometric fields.

Landscape Sensitivity

143. The sensitivity is considered to be **Medium**. The factors which have contributed to this judgement are set out below:

Value

144. Low:

- This area of the *Coastal Agricultural Plain, Aberdeenshire LCT* is not covered by any landscape designations.

Susceptibility to Change

145. Medium:

- Gently sloping landform;
- Predominantly arable land with a limited palette;
- Contrast between more open views and oblique views restricted by the undulating terrain and presence of very occasional forestry shelter belts;
- Presence of existing structures, large farm buildings, wind turbines and pylons/transmission infrastructure reduces sensitivity; and
- The Site is framed by a hedgerow to the east which provides some limited containment to

the Site.

146. Overall, the LCT has a **Moderate** capacity to accommodate change associated with the Proposed Development without undue consequence to baseline qualities.

Magnitude of Change

147. The magnitude of change in the *Coastal Agricultural Plain, Aberdeenshire LCT* will be **Substantial** within the immediate vicinity of the Proposed Development with the establishment of a permanent area of built development. In wider views the effects will be **Moderate**, reducing to Slight over 2 km as development assimilates with other development in the wider landscape over distance and the proposed mitigation planting softens direct views. The factors which have contributed to this judgement are as follows:

Size and Scale.

- The Proposed Development will only have a limited effect on the wider landscape, as the new built form will be located to the north of the low hill at Monyruy which will limit influence to the south;
- The relatively well contained nature of views as the proposed mitigation planting establishes to provide an effective level of containment to the Proposed Development;
- The proposed development will be seen within the context of existing scattered relatively large scale farming related built form; and
- The Proposed Development will be accessed via the existing access point on to the unclassified road at Monyruy.

148. Geographical Extent

- Visibility is restricted by topography as illustrated on the ZTV plan.

Potential for Future Cumulative Effects

149. The addition of the proposed development to the screening stage proposals at Netherton BESS and Netherton Hub which are located to the south will result in a Moderate and Not Significant combined and sequential cumulative effect locally from the network of minor roads to the south of Flushing. Locally grid development within the agricultural plain will become locally noticeable element and characteristic of the landscape. These effects will not influence the key characteristics of the wider LCT.

Significance of Effect

150. The combination of the individual judgements of **Medium** sensitivity and locally **Substantial** magnitude of change to local character within the immediate vicinity of the Site, but generally a **Moderate** magnitude of change from wider views are considered to result in locally **Major/Moderate** effects and generally **Moderate** Effects on the perception of the *Coastal Agricultural Plain, Aberdeenshire LCT*. In the context of this assessment the local effects are considered to be Significant. As the proposed structure planting matures over the short to medium term local effects on landscape character will reduce to **Slight**, with a **Moderate/Minor**, and Not Significant effect with the establishment of beneficial new landscape elements.

Implications for Landscape Designations

151. The Proposed Development does not have intervisibility with any landscape designations and the key characteristics and integrity of designated landscapes will not be altered by the Proposed Development.

11. Assessment of Residual Effects on Visual Receptors

General

152. The following sections provide an assessment of the residual visual effects that would be likely to arise from the Proposed Development during the operational period. The effects are residual because they take into account the design and mitigation measures discussed above.

153. The following assessment addresses effects on the visual amenity of people, through assessing:

- Effects on settlement;
- Effects on transport routes; and
- Effects at viewpoints.

154. The assessment has been undertaken through field survey in order to confirm the likely nature of visibility. An overview of the nature of the visibility of the Proposed Development (the components most likely to be visible) within the Study Area is provided below:

General Assessment of Visibility of the Proposed Development

155. The potential visual influence of the Proposed Development is closely related to a range of parameters, the most important of which is distance. Within c.2 km elements of the Proposed Development may be visible, beyond this distance visibility is less distinct, assimilating with existing elements in wider views of the landscape. A ZTV plan is included at **Figure 1.1.2** which provides an indication of the bare terrain visibility and does not take account of the screening effects of local terrain and vegetation cover. As such, the actual visibility will be less than is illustrated. The ZTV differentiates between visibility of the two main component parts of Proposed Development, the BESS and the adjoining grid station and also visibility of the fences and bunds.

Visibility from the North

156. A band of combined visibility extends to the north across the adjoining open arable fields, encompassing the raised embankment of the former Formatine and Buchan Railway and beyond to shallow vale of the of the River Ugie floodplain, extending north to the low hills framing the north side of the vale feature. **Viewpoint 5, Figure 1.2.5** illustrates the view from Newton of Rora, looking south across the very low lying terrain at the Haughs of Rora, to the rising terrain beyond. Viewpoints 2 and 6 illustrate views south from the Formatine and Buchan Railway from the north west and north east respectively, illustrating direct visibility in the short term. Views towards the Proposed Development will become filtered by mitigation planting in the short to medium term.

Visibility to the South

157. Locally to the Site, from the south there will be oblique views towards the Proposed Development from the farmland to the south east, as illustrated in **Viewpoint 7, Figure 1.2.7**, The view indicates limited visibility to the structure of the grid station in the short term. This will become heavily filtered by mitigation planting in the short to medium term. Further local visibility to the south is curtailed by terrain and the well defined vegetation structure around Faichfield House, at Flushing and along the corridor of the A950.

A band of more distant visibility is picked across the slightly higher hills to the south at Netherton, Toddiehills and Hillhead of Cocklaw. The extent of direct view will be limited by terrain, existing tree belts and the proposed comprehensive structure planting.

Visibility to the West

158. The ZTV indicates a band of visibility across the open farmland to the north of Longside. Visibility to the west will reduce incrementally over the short to medium term as mitigation planting establishes.

Visibility to the East

159. **Viewpoint 4, Figure 1.2.4**, illustrates the view west from the entrance to the property at the Bridge of Buthlaw. The view indicates direct visibility in the short term. This will become filtered by mitigation planting in the short to medium term. To the east the oblique nature of views across the undulating terrain alongside the existing vegetation structure will truncate the extent of views locally to the east. Visibility to the west will reduce incrementally over the short to medium term as mitigation planting establishes.

Assessment of Effects on Settlement

160. In accordance with the criteria outlined in the detailed methodology above, residential receptors, within settlements in the Study Area, have a high susceptibility to change as views are experienced regularly for prolonged periods and are generally considered to have a high sensitivity overall to the Proposed Development.

161. Fieldwork and analysis of mapping has indicated that visibility from the main settlements in the Study Area will be substantially contained by topography and existing vegetation cover and no Significant effects are predicted to arise.

162. No additional assessment is considered appropriate given the limited and partial nature of the effects.

Assessment of Effects on the Visual Amenity of Route Corridors

163. This section of the LVIA provides an assessment of the Proposed Development from route corridors within the Study Area. Fieldwork and analysis indicate that there will be no important areas of direct visibility from the A950 to the south and east. Some sections of the minor roads will experience views of the Proposed Development where it will constitute a locally visible new element, these effects are covered in detail in the assessment of effects at specific viewpoints below.

164. An indication of the predicted extent of visibility along route corridors is provided within the ZTV visibility mapping in **Figure 1.1.2**.

Potential for Future Cumulative Effects

165. The addition of the proposal to the screening stage Netherton Grid Sites which are located to the south will result in a Moderate and Not Significant combined and sequential cumulative effect locally from the network of minor roads to the south of Flushing. Locally grid development within the agricultural plain to the south will become locally noticeable element and characteristic of the landscape.

12. Assessment of Effects at Viewpoints

166. The viewpoint assessment has been carried out to identify and evaluate the potential effects on

visual amenity arising from the Proposed Development at specific representative locations in the Study Area. The selection of viewpoints is discussed above.

167. The supporting Figures include: existing photographic view alongside a photomontage visualisation in **Figures 1.2.1 a-b to 1.2.7 a-b** which are accurate in terms of the positioning, spatial distribution and size of the Proposed Development. These visualisations have been prepared in adherence with the principles presented in the Landscape Institute's Technical Guidance Note (TGN) 06/19 Visual Representation of Proposed Development Proposals.

168. For the purposes of assessing the effects on visual amenity, the sensitivity of the receptors is as defined **Table 3**, **'Definition of Visual Receptor Sensitivity'** in the methodology.

169. The following detailed analysis of the seven viewpoints includes a description of the existing and predicted view, an assignment of receptor sensitivity (including confirmation of receptor susceptibility and the value applied to the viewpoint), an analysis of the magnitude of change, and an assessment of the level of predicted effects on visual amenity and a determination of their significance.

Duration and Reversibility of the Visual Effects

170. The magnitude of changes that would be experienced by visual receptors as a result of the Proposed Development relates in part to the duration of effects and their permanence/ reversibility.

171. As the duration of the effects of the Proposed Development will be common to all visual receptors, they have been implicitly considered with regard to the likely magnitude of change in all views but are not repeated with regard to each viewpoint.

172. A summary of the effects is provided in **Table 7**.

Viewpoint 1: View west from the entrance to the property at Bridge of Buthlaw.

Location and Rationale for Selection

173. Viewpoint 1 is located on the minor road to the east of the site at the entrance to farm at the Bridge of Buthlaw, as indicated on the Viewpoint Location Plan **Figure 1.1.1**. The nearest built form of the Proposed Development lies c.665 m to the west of the viewpoint and represents typical views for road users and farm workers. The farm house at the Bridge of Buthlaw is relatively well contained by existing trees and lies to the east of outbuildings and as such views towards the Proposed Development will be limited. **Figure 1.2.1 a** shows the 53.5° existing view, **Figure 1.2.1 b** shows a visualisation of the Proposed Development at Year 1, presented to a corresponding 53.5° angle of view, **Figure 1.2.1 c** shows a visualisation of the Proposed Development at Year 15, also to 53.5° angle of view, following the establishment of the proposed structure planting.

Description of Existing View

174. The view looks west, across the expansive open arable field to the property at Monyruy Cottages which lies to the east of the Site. The land rises beyond to the low hill at Hillhead to the west of the site. The profile of the disused Hillhead Quarry is seen on the horizon to the left of the view. Local transmission lines traverse the landscape supported on regularly timber poles. The view beyond is oblique to the lowlands of the Aberdeenshire agricultural plain, the northern edge of Longside is seen to the right of the view, set against the distant low forested hill at the Forest of Deer.

Visual Sensitivity

175. The overall sensitivity of receptors at this location is considered to be **Medium** for road users and farm workers. The factors that have contributed to this judgement are as follows:

Susceptibility to Change

176. **Medium**: Farm workers will be moderately aware of changes in the landscape.

177. **Medium**: Road users will be focussed on views looking along the road and across the surrounding landscape.

Value attached to View

178. **Medium/Low**: The viewpoint looks across a productive arable landscape with limited scenic qualities.

Magnitude of Change

179. The effects on visual receptors have been evaluated according to the nature of the change to the view in terms of size, scale and character; the geographical extent of the predicted visibility and its duration as part of the overall visual experience of the receptor as follows:

Size or Scale (including nature of influence on the character of the view)

- The Proposed Development will be visible in oblique views across the adjoining arable farmland, as a narrow band of structures, partly filtered by the existing low hedgerow to the east of the site;
- The Proposed Development will be set against the backdrop of the low hill beyond, with the taller structures, particularly the grid station, breaking the skyline;
- The proposed design mitigation including the native woodland tree belt planting, will soften views to the Proposed Development over the short to medium term, forming a well-defined edge to the development and an attractive new feature in the landscape.

Geographical Extent (including influence on focus of the view)

- The view to the Proposed Development lies to the east at c.270° to the viewpoint;
- The Proposed Development will be seen over a separation distance of 665 m.

Potential for In-Combination Effects

180. There will not be combined effects from this viewpoint, as the sites of the proposed grid sites are oblique to the terrain with limited intervisibility.

Judgement on Magnitude of Change

181. Based on factors considered above, the overall magnitude of change to this viewpoint is considered to be **Substantial** in the short term in respect of the Proposed Development. Effects will reduce to **Slight** as the proposed structure planting matures over the short to medium term with the establishment of new beneficial landscape elements.

182. Level and Significance of EffectThe **Medium** sensitivity of the farm workers and road users the **Substantial** magnitude of change are considered to result in a **Major/Moderate** level of effect in the short term, which in the context of this assessment is considered to be **Significant**. As the proposed structure planting matures over the short to medium term effects will reduce to **Slight**, with a **Moderate/Minor** and **Not Significant** effect on farm workers and road users with the establishment of beneficial new landscape elements.

Viewpoint 2: View south from the Formartine and Buchan Way.

Location and Rationale for Selection

183. Viewpoint 2 is located on the Formartine and Buchan Way, on the raised embankment of the former Formatine and Buchan Railway, immediately to the west of the bridge crossing of the South Ugie Water. The viewpoint lies c.450 m to the north west of the Proposed Development, as indicated on the **Viewpoint Location Plan**, **Figure 1.1.1**. The viewpoint was selected as being representative of views experienced by walkers and cyclists accessing the footpath/cycleway. **Figure 1.2.2 a** shows the 53.5° existing view, **Figure 1.2.2 b** shows a visualisation of the Proposed Development at Year 1, presented to a corresponding 53.5° angle of view, **Figure 1.2.2 c** shows a visualisation of the Proposed Development at Year 15, also to 53.5° angle of view, following the establishment of the proposed structure planting.

Description of Existing View

184. The view looks south away from the east-west alignment of the route corridor across the expansive open arable fields to the south. The view looks across empty freshly tilled fields framed by low stone walls, rising to a low horizon. Pole mounted transmission lines traverse the skyline. The view beyond rises to the low ridgeline and plantation forestry belts beyond, with the new property at Maes Glas seen on the hillside beyond the site. Clemandwells is seen to the left of the image and the distant properties along the minor road at the Hill of Auchleuchries are seen to the right.

Visual Sensitivity

185. The overall sensitivity of receptors at this location is considered to be **High** for Walkers and Cyclists on the Formartine and Buchan Way, accessing the route for recreation. The factors that have contributed to this judgement are as follows:

Susceptibility to Change – Medium

186. **High:** The view will be experienced by cyclists and walkers who will be engaged in views to the landscape.

Value attached to View

187. **Medium/Low**: The viewpoint looks across an intensively farmed agricultural landscape.

Magnitude of Change

188. The effects on visual receptors have been evaluated according to the nature of the change to the view in terms of size, scale and character; the geographical extent of the predicted visibility and its duration, as part of the overall visual experience of the receptor, as follows:

Size or Scale (including nature of influence on the character of the view)

- The Proposed Development will introduce new structures into the view, on the crest of the hill, visible as a narrow band of structures, seen in oblique views;
- The Proposed Development will be visible in the short to medium term until the structure planting, which is proposed as design mitigation, establishes;
- The character of wider views will be maintained, with the Proposed Development fitting into the pattern and scale of landscape features seen in the landscape; and
- Over the short to medium term the proposed design mitigation will introduce a new woodland belt that will establish to soften the profile of the Proposed Development, forming a well-defined edge to the Proposed Development and an attractive new feature in the landscape.

Geographical Extent (including influence on focus of the view)

- The view to the Proposed Development lies to the west at c. 165° to the viewpoint;
- The Proposed Development lies over a separation distance of c.450 m from the viewpoint.

Potential for In-Combination Effects

189. There will not be combined effects from this viewpoint, as the sites of the proposed grid sites are screened from view.

Judgement on Magnitude of Change

190. Based on factors considered above, the overall magnitude of change to this viewpoint is considered to be **Substantial** in the short term in respect of the Proposed Development. Reducing to **Slight** as the proposed structure planting matures over the short to medium term.

Level and Significance of Effect

191. The **High** sensitivity of the walkers and cyclists and **Substantial** magnitude of change are considered to result in a **Major** level of effect, which in the context of this assessment are considered to be **Significant**.. As the proposed structure planting matures over the short to medium term effects will reduce to no greater than a **Moderate/Minor** and Not significanteffect on Walkers and Cyclists with the establishment of beneficial new landscape elements.

Viewpoint 3: View north west from Monyruy Cottages

Location and Rationale for Selection

192. Viewpoint 3 is located on the farm track to the north of Monyruy Cottages, south east of the Proposed Development and has been selected to illustrate effects on the isolated rural property to the south east of the site. Monyruy cottages are located within the land ownership boundary. The viewpoint lies c.90 m to the south east of the Proposed Development, as indicated on the **Viewpoint Location Plan**, **Figure 1.1.1**. The viewpoint was selected as being representative of views experienced by farm workers and local residential receptors. **Figures 1.2.2 a-b** show the adjoining 53.5° existing views to north west and north of Monyruy Cottages, **Figure 1.2.2 c-d** show visualisations of the Proposed Development at Year 1, presented to corresponding 53.5° angles of view, **Figure 1.2.2 e-f** show visualisations of the Proposed Development at Year 15, also to 53.5° angles of view, following the establishment of the proposed structure planting.

Description of Existing View

193. The existing views look north west and north, across the open fields of freshly tilled arable land. The view to the north captures the well defined hedgerow to the east of the existing farm track that will assist in softening wider views to the proposed Development. The wider view expands to the north to the shallow agricultural vale of the River Ugie. The large wind turbines at St Fergus Moss are visible on the skyline beyond the blocks of forestry at Bruxfin Wood.

Visual Sensitivity

194. The overall sensitivity of receptors at this location is considered to be **High** for residents and **Medium** for farm workers. The factors that have contributed to this judgement are as follows:

Susceptibility to Change

195. **High**: Awareness of views by the residents of Monyruy Cottages who will experience filtered views in the direction of the Proposed Development.

196. **Medium**: Farm workers will be moderately aware of changes in the landscape.

Value attached to View

197. **Medium/Low**: The viewpoint looks across a productive, intensively farmed landscape.

Magnitude of Change

198. The effects on visual receptors have been evaluated according to the nature of the change to the view in terms of size, scale and character; the geographical extent of the predicted visibility and its duration, as part of the overall visual experience of the receptor, as follows:

Size or Scale (including nature of influence on the character of the view)

- The Proposed Development will be directly visible immediately to the north in the short term;
- Over the medium term the proposed design mitigation including areas of new woodland planting, will establish to form visible new elements and attractive new features in the landscape.
- The character of wider views will be changed with a new woodland belt defining the edge of the farm track in the long term with heavily filtered views towards the BESS.

Geographical Extent (including influence on focus of the view)

- The view to the Proposed Development lies to the west at c.320° to the viewpoint;
- The Proposed Development lies over a separation distance of c.90 m from the viewpoint; and
- Views of this nature will be seen from the curtilage of the cottages and access track.

Potential for In-Combination Effects

199. There will not be combined effects from this viewpoint, as the sites of the proposed grid sites are screened from view.

Judgement on Magnitude of Change

200. Based on factors considered above, the overall magnitude of change to this viewpoint is considered to be **Substantial** in respect of the Proposed Development. Effects will reduce to a Slight effect incrementally over time as the proposed structure planting matures over the short to medium term.

Level and Significance of Effect

201. The **High** sensitivity of residents and **Substantial** magnitude of change are considered to result in a **Major** level of effect on residents and a **Major/Moderate** effect on farm workers, which in the context of this assessment are considered to be **Significant**. As the proposed structure planting matures over the short to medium term effects will reduce with the establishment of beneficial new landscape elements, reducing to a Moderate/Minor effect on residents and a Minor effect on farm workers, both **Not Significant** effects.

Viewpoint 4: View south west from Monyruy Cottages

Location and Rationale for Selection

202. Viewpoint 3 is located on the farm track to the north of Monyruy Cottages, south east of the Proposed Development and has been selected to illustrate effects on the isolated rural property to the south east of the site. Monyruy cottages are located within the land ownership boundary. The viewpoint lies c.125 m to the south east of the Proposed Development, as indicated on the Viewpoint Location Plan, **Figure 1.1.1**. **Figure 1.2.4 a** shows the 53.5° existing view, **Figure 1.2.4 b** shows a visualisation of the Proposed Development at Year 1, presented to a corresponding 53.5° angle of view, **Figure 1.2.4 c** shows a visualisation of the Proposed Development at Year 15, also to 53.5° angle of view, following the establishment of the proposed structure planting.

Description of Existing View

203. The existing view looks towards the cottage which seen against the back drop of the rolling agricultural landscape beyond. The wider view expands to the north to the shallow agricultural vale of the River Ugie. The large wind turbines at St Fergus Moss are visible on the skyline beyond the blocks of forestry at Bruxfin Wood. The existing pole mounted power line is a prominent element in the view.

Visual Sensitivity

204. The overall sensitivity of receptors at this location is considered to be **High** for nearby residents and **Medium** for farm workers.. The factors that have contributed to this judgement are as follows:

Susceptibility to Change

205. **Moderate**: Awareness of views by the residents who will experience direct views to the eastern sector of the Proposed Development.

206. **Medium**: Farm workers will be moderately aware of changes in the landscape.

Value attached to View

207. **Medium**: The viewpoint looks across the adjacent intensively farmed arable landscape.

Magnitude of Change

208. The effects on visual receptors have been evaluated according to the nature of the change to the view in terms of size, scale and character; the geographical extent of the predicted visibility and its duration, as part of the overall visual experience of the receptor, as follows:

Size or Scale (including nature of influence on the character of the view)

- The Proposed Development will introduce direct views to new structures to the north of Monyruy Cottages;
- Over the medium term the mitigation including areas of new woodland planting will establish to form a well-defined edge to the development and an attractive new feature in the landscape; and
- The character of wider views will be changed with a new woodland belt defining the edge of the farm track in the long term with heavily filtered views towards the BESS.

Geographical Extent (including influence on focus of the view)

- The view to the Proposed Development lies to the west at c.320° to the viewpoint; and
- The Proposed Development lies over a separation distance of c.125 m from the viewpoint.

Potential for In-Combination Effects

209. There will be limited combined effects from this viewpoint, with the sites of the proposed grid sites potentially visible in filtered views to the south.

Judgement on Magnitude of Change

210. Based on factors considered above, the overall magnitude of change to this viewpoint is considered to be **Substantial** in the short term in respect of the Proposed Development, reducing as the proposed structure planting matures over the short to medium term.

Level and Significance of Effect

211. The **High** sensitivity of residents and the **Substantial** magnitude of change are considered to result in a **Major** level of effect on residents and **Major/Moderate** effect on farm workers, which in the context of this assessment are considered to be **Significant**.. As the proposed structure planting matures over the short to medium term effects will reduce to **Negligible** with a **Moderate/Minor** effect on residents and a **Minor** effect on farm workers, both **Not Significant** effects, with the establishment of beneficial new landscape elements.

Viewpoint 5: View south from Newton of Rora

Location and Rationale for Selection

212. Viewpoint 5 is located on the minor road on the north side of the expansive Vale of the River Ugie, to the north of the Proposed Development and has been selected to illustrate effects on the scattered rural properties to the north. The viewpoint lies c.1.9 km to the north of the Proposed Development, as indicated on the **Viewpoint Location Plan**, **Figure 1.1.1**. **Figure 1.2.5 a** shows the 53.5° existing view, **Figure 1.2.5 b** shows a visualisation of the Proposed Development at Year 1, presented to a corresponding 53.5° angle of view, **Figure 1.2.5 c** shows a visualisation of the

Proposed Development at Year 15, also to 53.5° angle of view, following the establishment of the proposed structure planting.

Description of Existing View

213. The existing view looks to south, across the expansive intensively farmed vale bounding the River Ugie open fields of arable farmland with occasional tree belts breaking up the view. The wider view expands to the subtle rising terrain and forestry at Lenabo to the south. The farm scale wind turbines close to the Haughs of Rora are seen to the left of the view. Pylons traverse the distant skyline.

Visual Sensitivity

214. The overall sensitivity of receptors at this location is considered to be **Medium** for road users and **High** for nearby residents. The factors that have contributed to this judgement are as follows:

Susceptibility to Change

215. **High**: Awareness of views by the residents at Newton of Rora who will experience distant views in the direction of the Proposed Development.

216. **Medium**: Road users will be focussed on views looking along the road and across the surrounding landscape.

Value attached to View

217. **Medium**: The viewpoint looks across am intensively farmed arable landscape.

Magnitude of Change

218. The effects on visual receptors have been evaluated according to the nature of the change to the view in terms of size, scale and character; the geographical extent of the predicted visibility and its duration, as part of the overall visual experience of the receptor, as follows:

Size or Scale (including nature of influence on the character of the view)

- There will be distant visibility to the Proposed Development which will be seen as a noticeable new element against the rising terrain;
- The character of wider views will be maintained, with the development fitting into the pattern and scale of landscape features seen in the landscape; and
- Over the short to medium term the proposed design mitigation including areas of new woodland planting, will establish to form visible new elements and attractive new features in the landscape.

Geographical Extent (including influence on focus of the view)

- The view to the Proposed Development lies to the west at c. 200° to the viewpoint;
- The Proposed Development lies over a separation distance of c.1.9 km from the viewpoint; and
- Views of this nature will be seen from the minor road and scattered settlement.

Potential for In-Combination Effects

219. There will be limited combined effects from this viewpoint, with the sites of the proposed grid sites potentially visible in distant filtered views to the south.

Judgement on Magnitude of Change

220. Based on factors considered above, the overall magnitude of change to this viewpoint is considered to be **Slight** in respect of the Proposed Development. Effects will reduce to Negligible incrementally over time as the proposed structure planting matures over the short to medium term.

Level and Significance of Effect

221. The **High** and **Medium** sensitivity of residents and road users respectively and the **Slight** magnitude of change are considered to result in a **Moderate** level of effect on residents and a **Moderate/Minor** effect on road users, which in the context of this assessment are considered to be **Not Significant**.. As the proposed structure planting matures over the short to medium term effects will further reduce to Moderate/Minor and Minor, Not Significant effects, with the establishment of beneficial new landscape elements.

Viewpoint 6: View south west from the Formartine and Buchan Way.

Location and Rationale for Selection

222. Viewpoint 6 is located on the Formartine and Buchan Way, on the raised embankment of the former Formatine and Buchan Railway, at the crossing of the Burn of Faichfield. The viewpoint lies c.625 m to the north east of the Proposed Development, as indicated on the **Viewpoint Location Plan**, **Figure 1.1.1**. The viewpoint was selected as being representative of views experienced by walkers and cyclists accessing the footpath/cycleway. **Figure 1.2.6 a** shows the 53.5° existing view, **Figure 1.2.6 b** shows a visualisation of the Proposed Development at Year 1, presented to a corresponding 53.5° angle of view, **Figure 1.2.6 c** shows a visualisation of the Proposed Development at Year 15, also to 53.5° angle of view, following the establishment of the proposed structure planting.

Description of Existing View

223. The view looks south away from the east-west alignment of the route corridor across the expansive open arable fields to the south. The view looks across empty freshly tilled fields framed by low stone walls, rising to a low horizon. Pole mounted transmission lines traverse the skyline, with the turbines of Gallow Hill Wind Farm seen to the right of the view. Monyruy Cottages are seen to the left of the image and Monyruy Farm beyond.

Visual Sensitivity

224. The overall sensitivity of receptors at this location is considered to be **High** for Walkers and Cyclists on the Formartine and Buchan Way, accessing the route for recreation. The factors that have contributed to this judgement are as follows:

Susceptibility to Change – Medium

225. **High:** The view will be experienced by cyclists and walkers who will be engaged in views to the landscape.

Value attached to View

226. **Medium/Low**: The viewpoint looks across an intensively farmed agricultural landscape.

Magnitude of Change

227. The effects on visual receptors have been evaluated according to the nature of the change to the view in terms of size, scale and character; the geographical extent of the predicted visibility and its duration, as part of the overall visual experience of the receptor, as follows:

Size or Scale (including nature of influence on the character of the view)

- The Proposed Development will introduce new structures into the view, just below the crest of the hill, visible as a narrow band of structures, seen in oblique views;
- The Proposed Development will be visible in the short to medium term until the structure planting, which is proposed as design mitigation, establishes;
- The character of wider views will be maintained, with the Proposed Development fitting into the pattern and scale of landscape features seen in the landscape; and
- Over the short to medium term the proposed design mitigation will introduce a new woodland belt that will establish to soften the profile of the Proposed Development, forming a well-defined edge to the Proposed Development and an attractive new feature in the landscape.

Geographical Extent (including influence on focus of the view)

- The view to the Proposed Development lies to the west at c. 220° to the viewpoint;
- The Proposed Development lies over a separation distance of c.625 m from the viewpoint.

Potential for In-Combination Effects

228. There will not be combined effects from this viewpoint, as the sites of the proposed grid sites are oblique to the terrain with limited intervisibility.

Judgement on Magnitude of Change

229. Based on factors considered above, the overall magnitude of change to this viewpoint is considered to be **Substantial** in the short term in respect of the Proposed Development. Reducing to **Slight** as the proposed structure planting matures over the short to medium term.

Level and Significance of Effect

230. The **High** sensitivity of the walkers and cyclists and **Substantial** magnitude of change are considered to result in **a Major** level of effect, which in the context of this assessment is considered to be **Significant**.. As the proposed structure planting matures over the short to medium term effects will reduce to no greater than a **Moderate/Minor** and **Not Significant** effect on Walkers and Cyclists with the establishment of beneficial new landscape elements.

Viewpoint 7: Walker's car park at entrance to Buthlaw, Faichfieldburn Path.

Location and Rationale for Selection

231. Viewpoint 7 is located at the walkers car park, beside the Burn of Faichfield, on the Faichburn Path which links north to the Formartine and Buchan Way. The viewpoint lies c.365 m to the south east of the Proposed Development, as indicated on the **Viewpoint Location Plan**, **Figure 1.1.1**. The viewpoint was selected as being representative of views experienced by walkers accessing the footpath. **Figure 1.2.7 a** shows the 53.5° existing view, **Figure 1.2.7 b** shows a visualisation of the Proposed Development at Year 1, presented to a corresponding 53.5° angle of view, **Figure 1.2.7 c** shows a visualisation of the Proposed Development at Year 15, also to 53.5° angle of view, following the establishment of the proposed structure planting.

Description of Existing View

232. The view looks to the north east across the expansive open arable fields to the north. The view looks across a harvested field of stubble, rising to a low horizon, with Monyruy Cottage at the centre of the view. Pole mounted transmission lines traverse the skyline, the intermittent hedgerow marks the line of the farm track to the east of Monyruy Cottage.

Visual Sensitivity

233. The overall sensitivity of receptors at this location is considered to be **High** for Walkers on the Faichburn Path, accessing the route for recreation. The factors that have contributed to this judgement are as follows:

Susceptibility to Change – Medium

234. **High:** The view will be experienced by walkers who will be engaged in views to the landscape.

Value attached to View

235. **Medium/Low**: The viewpoint looks across an intensively farmed agricultural landscape.

Magnitude of Change

236. The effects on visual receptors have been evaluated according to the nature of the change to the view in terms of size, scale and character; the geographical extent of the predicted visibility and its duration, as part of the overall visual experience of the receptor, as follows:

Size or Scale (including nature of influence on the character of the view)

- The Proposed Development will introduce new structures into the view, rising above the skyline, with the elements of the sub station most visible to the north of Monyruy Cottages;
- The Proposed Development will be visible in the short to medium term until the structure planting, which is proposed as design mitigation, establishes;
- The character of wider views will be maintained, with the Proposed Development fitting into the pattern and scale of landscape features seen in the landscape; and
- Over the short to medium term the proposed design mitigation will introduce a new woodland belt that will establish to soften the profile of the Proposed Development, extending across the skyline, forming a well-defined edge to the Proposed Development and an attractive new feature in the landscape.

Geographical Extent (including influence on focus of the view)

- The view to the Proposed Development lies to the west at c. 340° to the viewpoint;
- The Proposed Development lies over a separation distance of c.365 m from the viewpoint.

Potential for In-Combination Effects

237. There will be limited combined effects from this viewpoint, with the sites of the proposed grid sites potentially visible in distant filtered views to the south.

Judgement on Magnitude of Change

238. Based on factors considered above, the overall magnitude of change to this viewpoint is considered to be **Moderate** in the short term in respect of the Proposed Development. Reducing to **Slight** as the proposed structure planting matures over the short to medium term.

Level and Significance of Effect

239. The **High** sensitivity of the Walkers and **Moderate** magnitude of change are considered to result in **a Major/Moderate** level of effect, which in the context of this assessment is considered to be **Significant**. As the proposed structure planting matures over the short to medium term effects will reduce to no greater than a **Moderate/Minor**, **Not Significant** effect on Walkers with the establishment of beneficial new landscape elements.

240. **Table 7** below provides a summary of effects on viewpoints resulting from the Proposed Development.

No.	Location	Receptors and Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Effect	Significance
1.	View west from the entrance to the property at Bridge of Buthlaw.	Road users, Medium sensitivity Farm Workers, Medium sensitivity	Substantial Reducing to Slight in the short to medium term.	Major/ Moderate Reducing to Moderate/ Minor in the short to medium term.	Significant reducing to Not Significant
2.	View south from the Formartine and Buchan Way.	Walkers/ Cyclists High sensitivity.	Substantial Reducing to Slight in the short to medium term.	Major Reducing to Moderate/ Minor in the short to medium term.	Significant reducing to Not Significant

No.	Location	Receptors and Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Effect	Significance
3.	View north west from Monyruy Cottages.	Residents High sensitivity. Farm Workers, Medium sensitivity	Substantial Reducing to Slight in the short to medium term.	Major effect on Residents, and a Major/ Moderate effect on farm workers Reducing to in the short to medium term to a Moderate/ Minor effect on residents and a Minor effect on farm workers..	Significant reducing to Not Significant
4.	View south west from Monyruy Cottages.	Residents, High sensitivity Farm Workers, Medium sensitivity	Substantial Reducing to Negligible in the short to medium term.	Major effect on Residents, and a Major/ Moderate effect on farm workers Reducing to in the short to medium term to a Moderate/Minor effect on residents and a Minor effect on farm workers..	Significant reducing to Not Significant
5.	View south from Newton of Rora.	Residents (High). Road users, Medium sensitivity	Slight Reducing to in the short to medium term.	Moderate on Residents, Moderate/ Minor on Road Users Reducing in the short to medium term Moderate/Minor and Minor effects	Not Significant
6.	View south west from the Formartine and Buchan Way.	Walkers/ Cyclists High sensitivity.	Substantial Reducing to Slight in the short to medium term.	Major Reducing to Moderate/ Minor in the short to medium term.	Significant reducing to Not Significant

No.	Location	Receptors and Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Effect	Significance
7.	Walker's car park at entrance to Buthlaw, Faichfieldburn Path.	Walkers High sensitivity.	Moderate Reducing to Slight in the short to medium term.	Major/ Moderate Reducing to Moderate/ Minor in the short to medium term.	Significant reducing to Not Significant

Summary

241. In summary, a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment has been undertaken for the Proposed Development in order to identify effects on landscape and visual receptors, the receptors being identified through desk study and field work.

242. The Proposed Development area and the Study Area within the Proposed Development's ZTV are not covered by any form of landscape designation.

243. This assessment reviewed potential effects on the landscape fabric, landscape character and effects on visual amenity.

Assessment of Residual Effects on the Landscape Resource

244. As a result of construction on the Site, there will be a change to landscape resources in the area. Sections of the Site will be built upon and lost as arable land in perpetuity. With further areas of land planted with native woodland as mitigation.

245. Effects on the fabric of the landscape will be limited in extent. The physical changes to the landscape, such as the formation of the site earthworks, access track, the construction of the Grid Station and BESS and accommodation/storage buildings will extend across the existing field. Areas at the edges of the Site have been identified for native woodland/hedgerow planting. The Proposed Development will be undertaken in such a way as to mitigate the extent of any unnecessary damage, potential soil erosion or indirect off-site effects due to changed surface or groundwater conditions.

246. The Proposed Development will have a Substantial local magnitude of change on this existing landscape resource. Taking into account adjacent land uses, it is considered that the sensitivity to change of this landscape resource is Medium. The direct effects on the Proposed Development Site itself will be Major/Moderate. These effects are localised to the Proposed Development location and in the context of the wider landscape resource it is considered that the proposed effect will be Minor. The Proposed Development brings a beneficial restructuring of the landscape with areas of new native woodland planting which is considered to bring positive change to the existing landscape.

Assessment of Residual Effects on Landscape Character

247. Due to a combination of topography, the influence of the Proposed Development will be significantly reduced beyond c.500 m to the south of the Proposed Development Location.

248. The assessment has concluded that the effect on the Coastal Agricultural Plain, Aberdeenshire Landscape Character Type will be Major/Moderate within the immediate vicinity of the Proposed

Development with the establishment of a permanent area of built development. Effects will reduce over the short to medium term to a Minor effect as the proposed structure planting establishes. In wider views the effects will be Slight or None as the terrain and the proposed extensive areas of mitigation planting will screen views.

249. No further important effects on Landscape Character have been identified.

Assessment of Residual Effects on Landscape Designations

250. The Development does not have intervisibility with any landscape designations and the key characteristics and integrity of designated landscapes will not be altered by the Proposed Development.

Assessment of Residual Visual Effects

251. The study included an assessment of the effects of the Proposed Development upon settlements, transport corridors and viewpoints representative of a range of receptors within the Study Area.

252. The effect on visual amenity from adjoining settlement pattern within the 2.5 km Study Area was appraised. The Proposed Development is considered to be well contained and to retain the character of the existing views.

253. Effects on visual amenity from principal transport corridors within the 2.5 km Study Area were also assessed. There will be limited visibility from the A950 to the south. Some sections of the local minor road network will experience views of the Proposed Development where it will constitute a locally visible new element in the short term.

254. The nature of the visibility of the Proposed Development was also assessed from seven viewpoints. The viewpoints included residential properties, adjoining settlement, footpaths/cycleways, route corridors, and the local road network. The design mitigation proposals include a comprehensive structure planting strategy. This will mature to establish beneficial new landscape elements. The assessment of the viewpoints concluded that there would be a localised Major, important effects and a Major to Major Moderate effects in the short term from Monyruy Cottages, the Formartine and Buchan Way and the Faichfield Path. Effects will reduce over the short to medium term from these locations as the comprehensive design mitigation structure planting proposals establish and mature, reducing effects to Moderate/Minor to Minor and Not Significant effects. No further important effects on views were identified. The new woodland belts will contribute an attractive new beneficial feature to the landscape.

255. Importantly, the Proposed Development would appear in a large and diverse context which can accommodate the level of change associated with the scale of the development proposed.

Cumulative Landscape and Visual Effects

256. The assessment of cumulative effects with the screening stage Netherton BESS site and Netherton Hub Grid Station is incorporated into the main LVIA, with separate judgements for the cumulative effects. This section summarises the key issues, informed by the analysis and assessment which has already been presented.

257. The grid sites would be seen in very limited areas in combined and or sequential views from some limited parts of the landscape to the south of Flushing, extending the influence of grid development as a characteristic of the landscape locally. These changes give rise to no greater than Moderate and Not Significant local effects which will not influence the key characteristics of the wider landscape.

Conclusion

258. The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment has established that the Proposed Development will change the existing landscape and visual baseline conditions in perpetuity.

259. Although there will be locally moderate effects to both the landscape resource and to visual amenity, these effects will be localised.

260. The Proposed Development will incorporate embedded design mitigation measures in relation to the design of the proposed built form with additional site-specific design mitigation measures. The Proposed Development will cause local change to the immediate setting and give rise to local effects only, consistent with the provisions of NPF4 Policy 11 (Energy) Paragraph e). Effects will quickly reduce over a short distance, as the intervening terrain, and proposed mitigation measures assist in containing views.

261. The development strategy incorporates a comprehensive approach to establishing a well-defined landscape framework to the Proposed Development which will soften and filter direct views to the Proposed Development, incorporating a native species-based woodland. This will be supported by other measures such as the selection recessive materials and paint colours.

262. Where effects arise, they are in relation to the perception of the influence of a new development within the context of an intensively farmed arable landscape. Whilst there will be an increase in the footprint of development seen in very localised views, giving rise to local change, the overall massing and scale of development proposed will be seen to merge with the existing setting and as an appropriate scale of new development in the wider landscape. The proposed mitigation measures and comprehensive structure planting strategy will prevent significant effects. The proposed woodland belts will introduce new beneficial features for long term retention into the landscape.