CORRIEMOILLIE BESS

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL APPRAISAL

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Table of Contents

1	Introduction……..	1
2	Guidance and Methodology……	2
3	Assumptions……..	3
4	Consultation……..	4
5	Planning Policy Context……	4
6	Baseline Description……..	6
7	Proposed Development and Mitigation..	9
8	ZTV and Viewpoint Analysis……..	10
9	Construction Stage Effects……..	13
10	Residual Landscape Effects……	15
11	Residual Visual Effects……..	18
12	Cumulative Effects……..	21
13	Conclusions……..	23

Appendix A – LVA Methodology
Appendix B – Landscape Character Sensitivity
Appendix C – LCT Descriptions
Appendix D – Landscape Figures

1 Introduction

The proposed Corriemoillie BESS (the 'Proposed Development') is located in an area of commercial forestry 1.4m north of Loch Luichart, Highlands. This Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) of the Proposed Development has been prepared by TGP Landscape Architects Ltd, a firm of independent consultants. The LVA report has been prepared with the aim of identifying the predicted landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Development, comprising Substation Compound, Battery Containers and ancillary infrastructure including attenuation and security fencing, CCTV, access / parking, landscaping and grid connection.

The LVA is augmented by supporting text and graphics within the appendices. This includes the following figures within **Appendix D**:

- Figure 1a – Zone of Theoretical Visibility and Viewpoints;
- Figure 1b – Zone of Theoretical Visibility including Building and Vegetation Screening;
- Figure 2 – Landscape Character;
- Figure 3 – Landscape Designations, Ancient Woodland and Visual Receptors;
- Figure 4 – Residential Receptors; and
- Figure 5 – Landscape Mitigation Plan (drg no. 2211 L01).

1.1 Scope of the LVA

The LVIA seeks to identify the potential landscape and visual effects that would occur as a result of the Proposed Development and is organised in the following sections:

- Guidance and Methodology – outlines the general methodology, with reference to established guidance (full version in **Appendix A**);
- Planning Policy Context;
- Baseline Description – including the fabric, character and quality of the local landscape which could be affected by the Proposed Development, as well as a description of the main visual receptors within the Study Area;
- Proposed Development and Mitigation – describes the aspects of the Proposed Development which have the potential to result in landscape or visual effects, and the measures incorporated into the project design to mitigate these potential effects;
- ZTV and Viewpoint Analysis – analysis of the geographic extents of visibility and the potential magnitude of change at a selection of viewpoints;
- Construction Stage Effects – assesses the effects of the Proposed Development during the temporary construction stage;
- Landscape Effects – assesses the effects arising from the Proposed Development on the landscape fabric, landscape character and quality of the landscape designations within the Study Area;
- Visual Effects – assesses the effects arising from the Proposed Development on the visual amenity of the receptors within the Study Area;
- Cumulative Effects - considers the combined effects of the Proposed Development in combination with other notable electrical infrastructure; and

- Conclusions – a summary of the LVA results.

1.2 Study Area

A 4km radius Study Area has been adopted from the Proposed Development for the assessment of landscape and visual effects. This has been informed by analysis of Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) maps and an early appraisal of potential effects for a Proposed Development of this scale. It is considered that any notable landscape or visual effects would be confined well-within this geographical area.

2 Guidance and Methodology

2.1 Guidance

The methodology presented here is based on the following best practice guidance:

- *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Edition (GLVIA3),* Institute of Environmental Management and Appraisal and the Landscape Institute, 2013;
- *Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland,* Prepared on behalf of the Countryside Agency and NatureScot, Land Use Consultants, 2002;
- *Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Guidance,* NatureScot, 2022;
- *Visualisation Standards for Wind Energy Developments,* Highland Council, 2016; and
- *Visual Representation of Development Proposals, Technical Guidance Note 06/2019;* Landscape Institute, 2019.

In addition, reference has been made to other published guidance and the appraisal work has drawn on the following relevant baseline information:

- *National Landscape Character Assessment (web-based interactive map),* NatureScot, 2019;
- Ordnance Survey Land ranger (1:50 000) and Explorer (1:25 000) maps;
- Field surveys; and
- Aerial photography.

2.2 Methodology

The LVA aims to identify and evaluate the potential landscape and visual effects arising from the Proposed Development. Wherever possible, identified effects are quantified, albeit the nature of landscape and visual appraisal requires interpretation by professional judgement. In order to provide a level of consistency to the appraisal, the prediction of magnitude and appraisal of the residual landscape and visual effects have been based on pre-defined criteria.

GLVIA3 states that: “Professional judgement is a very important part of the LVIA.” (para 2.23) “In all cases there is a need for the judgements that are made to be reasonable and based on clear and transparent methods so that the reasoning applied at different stages can be traced and examined by others” (para 2.24).

Landscape and Visual Appraisals are distinct, though linked procedures. The appraisal of the

landscape effects takes cognisance of the potential changes in the physical components of the landscape and associated changes in its character and how it is experienced, which may in turn affect the perceived value ascribed to the landscape.

Visual effects relate to changes in the composition of existing views as a result of changes to the landscape, to people's responses to the changes and to the overall effects with respect to visual amenity.

Level of Effect

The level of any identified landscape or visual effect has been assessed in terms of being Major, Moderate, Minor or Negligible. Intermediate correlations are also possible and depend upon professional judgement, e.g. Major/Moderate. These categories are based on the juxtaposition of visual or landscape sensitivity with the predicted magnitude of change, as set out in Table 1.

Table 1: Landscape & Visual Effects Matrix

Receptor Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change				
		Substantial	Moderate	Slight	Negligible
	High	Major	Major/Moderate	Moderate	Minor
	Medium	Major/Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/Minor	Minor/Negligible
	Low	Moderate	Moderate/Minor	Minor	Negligible

This juxtaposition is not used as a prescriptive tool, rather it allows for the exercise of professional judgement. Thus, in some instances a particular parameter may be considered as having a determining effect on the analysis. Where the landscape or visual effect has been classified as Major or Major/Moderate this is considered to be notable. Where Moderate effects are predicted, professional judgement is applied to ensure that the potential for notable effects arising has been thoroughly considered. The complete appraisal methodology is set out in **Appendix A**.

3 Assumptions

The following assumptions have been made in respect to the LVA:

- The Site – refers to the land located within the red line boundary (as shown in Figures 1 – 5). All distances listed within this LVA are in measured in relation to this area.
- The Proposed Development – comprises the Substation Compound, Battery Containers and ancillary infrastructure including noise attenuation barrier and security fencing, CCTV, access / parking, landscaping and grid connection. The main components likely to contribute to landscape and visual impacts are described in greater detail in Section 6.
- For the purposes of the LVA, the Proposed Development is regarded as being permanent. The construction stage would be temporary, approximately 24 months in duration.

- The landscape proposals within the Site (comprising new planting) form an integral component of the Proposed Development.
- Viewpoint locations included in the assessment are from publicly accessible locations.
- Visual effects are assessed on the basis of good visibility. Visual effects can be expected to vary e.g. poor visibility at times of low cloud, rainfall and dusk. At these times a reduction in visual clarity, colour and contrast would be experienced. Reduced visibility would limit the extent of view, particularly from mid to long distance views. Consequently, the assessment of effects is based on the worst-case scenario, where the Proposed Development would be most visible.

4 Consultation

Consultation in relation to the Proposed Development has been undertaken with the Highland Council in the form of an EIA Screening Request. In addition, public exhibition and consultation events were held to inform local residents of the Proposed Development and obtain feedback. Proposed viewpoint locations were shared with the Council (email dated 11/09/2024). The viewpoint locations are listed in Table 2 below, alongside the rationale for their selection.

Due to limited ZTV coverage / potential views from publicly accessible areas, Viewpoints 2 and 3 are located within the hillslopes to the north and east of the Site respectively. These viewpoints do not exhibit signs of regular visitation by the public, and require navigation through the field system and deer fencing. The summit of Beinn a'Bhric requires cross-country walk across the upper slopes where there is no track.

Table 2: Viewpoint Locations

Viewpoint	Rationale
1. View northwest from the A832, at junction to Corriemoillie Farm	Representative of views from local road to the southeast of the Site, experienced by road users.
2. View south from Beinn a'Bhric	Elevated vantage point from summit to the north, experienced by hill walkers (non-promoted / sign-posted route).
3. View west from farm track to Loch Bad Leabhraidh	Elevated view from hillside to the east, experienced by walkers on a non-promoted / sign-posted track.

5 Planning Policy Context

The following section identifies the planning policy and other planning guidance material specifically relevant to the LVA. This includes consideration of the following:

- *National Planning Framework 4*, Scottish Government, 2023;
- *Highland-wide Local Development Plan,* Highland Council, 2012;
- *West Highlands and Islands Local Development Plan,* Highland Council, 2019;
- *Sustainable Design Guide,* Highland Council, 2013.

5.1 National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)

NPF4 recognises the distinctive landscapes across the regions of Scotland and respective areas of high landscape quality. Its overarching policies seek to protect the integrity of key landscapes and landscape features from significant adverse effects. There is also general support for proposals to enhance, expand and improve woodland and tree cover.

Policy 11 focuses specifically on Energy, and sets out high-level support for all forms of renewable, low-carbon and zero emissions technologies. This includes both energy generation and energy storage developments, such as battery storage. NPF4 acknowledges that significant landscape and visual impacts are to be expected for some forms of renewable energy. Where these impacts are localised and/or appropriate design mitigation has been applied, they will generally be considered to be acceptable.

5.2 Highland-wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP)

The HwLDP sets out THC's vision statement and spatial strategy for the area alongside the policies against which the Proposed Development will be assessed. Policy 67: Renewable Energy Development is of relevance to the Proposed Development and states that THC will support renewable energy proposals where they are located, sited and designed such that they will not be significantly detrimental to a range of factors, including the natural environment and visual amenity.

Key landscape policies comprise Policy 61: Landscape, which highlights the importance of scale, form, pattern, materials, and cumulative effects in relation to landscape character, and Policy 57: Natural, Built and Cultural Heritage, which seeks to safeguard sites / features of local to international value. Other landscape-related policies comprise:

- Policy 28: Sustainable Design;
- Policy 29: Design Quality and Place-Making
- Policy 36: Development in the Wider Countryside;
- Policy 51: Trees and Development;
- Policy 52: Principle of Development in Woodland;
- Policy 74: Green Networks
- Policy 77: Public Access; and
- Policy 78: Long Distance Routes.

5.3 West Highlands and Islands Local Development Plan (WestPlan)

The WestPlan sits alongside the HwLDP and Supplementary Guidance. The WestPlan sets out guidance for development at a more localised level across the western Highlands, including detailed information in relation to development / land allocations at key settlements, and the provision of appropriate infrastructure to support local communities.

5.4 Sustainable Design Guide

The Sustainable Design Guide incorporates additional information in relation to sustainable design, with the aim of conserving and enhancing the character of the Highland area, using resources efficiently, minimising potential environmental impact of development, and enhancing the viability of Highland communities.

As part of this process, tree felling and removal of habitats such as woodlands, hedgerows and meadows should be avoided. New planting should be based on native species with the aim of enhancing biodiversity. Works should take cognisance of bird nesting seasons, and bat roosts. The layout, scale, and proportion of development proposals should respond to local landscape character.

6 Baseline Description

6.1 Local Landscape Context

Figure 1 illustrates the geographic location of the Proposed Development, which is located in an area of commercial forestry, on low-lying slopes 1.4km north of Loch Luichart.

The landscape comprises a mix of farmland, parcels of woodland, shelterbelt and riparian vegetation extending across lower-lying parts of the Study Area. These elements are typically replaced by open moorland and swathes of commercial plantation across the more elevated surrounding slopes and summits. The local landscape also incorporates numerous watercourses, including the Allt Coire Mhuilidh to the east of the Site, and the Allt Ceann Loch Luichart to the west. These watercourses drain southwards from the higher ground in the northern part of the Study Area towards the open water of Loch Luichart.

The landform within the Study Area rises upwards from Loch Luichart, reaching the summits of Creag Mhor (384m AOD), Beinn a'Bhric (442m AOD), Carn Bad Leabhridh (409m AOD), on the northern side, and Creag nan Corrachan (486m AOD) towards the south. These summits extend in a broadly circuitous manner around the Site to the northeast, north, northwest and south respectively. The Site is located on the lower, south-facing, slopes of Beinn a'Bhric at an elevation of approximately 140-160m AOD.

The landscape is primarily rural and remote in character, albeit incorporates localised settlement in the form of isolated dwellings and farmsteads, which are focused along the route of the A832. This route extends broadly parallel to the Kyle of Lochalsh Line, east-west along the lower-lying farmland on the northern side of Loch Luichart.

In addition to the above, the local landscape incorporates existing elements of electricity infrastructure. These include Corriemoillie Substation (160m to the southwest of the Site), and the associated overhead lines (OHL). These OHL extend outwards from the substation, before diverting east and west along the northern side of Loch Luichart. Other notable developments in the locality include the operational Corriemoillie Wind Farm, 1.8km to the north, and Lochluichart Wind Farm, 2.6km to the northwest of the Site, as well as smaller-scale hydro-power infrastructure, including

Mossford Power Station, 2km to the southwest.

At a local level, the Site comprises plantation forestry, which also extends across the surrounding slopes to the south, east and west of the Site. Accordingly, other than forestry tracks, there are no notable landscape elements of value within the Site. The forestry on the northern side of the Site has been recently felled, albeit is scheduled for re-stocking and ongoing forestry management.

6.2 Landscape Character

Figure 2 illustrates the Landscape Character Types (LCTs) within the Study Area as defined within NatureScot's National Landscape Character Assessment (2019), which represents the most up-to-date assessment of landscape character across the Study Area. The Site is located within the Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes – Ross & Cromarty LCT. The key characteristics and sensitivities of this LCT are as follows:

Key Characteristics of the Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes – Ross & Cromarty LCT

- *'Broad, rounded hills and upland moorlands with smooth, gentle slopes down to broad straths, creating an undulating skyline.*
- *Occurs in a large tract which weaves around and between the adjoining Rounded Mountain Massif and Rugged Mountain Massif – Ross &Cromarty and unifies the mountain groups.*
- *Large areas of uniform moorland vegetation with occasional surface detail of rivers, lochs, riparian woodland, woodland patches, and regenerating trees.*
- *Large coniferous forests on accessible lower slopes.*
- *Broad straths with natural, meandering rivers and occasionally highlighted by green, unenclosed, improved pastures and riparian trees.*
- *Occasional major trunk roads curve through the lowest major straths, with very little associated service development.*
- *Small groups of mainly traditional buildings around road junctions and at rail stations.*
- *Man-made structures of pylons, wind farms and reservoirs occur as occasional features within a large scale landscape.*
- *Many archaeological features on lower ground from prehistoric, medieval and later periods.*
- *Large, remote interior areas of vast scale with wildness characteristics.'*

The sensitivity of local landscape character at the Site, specific to the Proposed Development and its locality, is assessed within **Appendix B** as being Medium.

Relationship to Adjacent Character Types

The surrounding area encompasses parts of the Strath - Ross & Cromarty LCT 80m to the south, the Rounded Rocky Hills - Ross & Cromarty LCT 850m to the south / southeast, and the Rounded Mountain Massif LCT 2.5km to the northwest. The key characteristics of these LCTs are listed in **Appendix C**.

6.3 Landscape Designations

Landscape planning designations and policies are considered in the determination of the sensitivity of landscape and visual receptors as they provide an indication of value ascribed to the landscape or

visual resource. With reference to **Figure 3**, the Site is not located within a landscape designation, and there are no landscape designations within the Study Area.

The Fisherfield – Letterewe – Fannichs Wild Land Area is located just outside the Study Area, at a distance of 4.1km to the northwest of the Site. This is entirely outside the ZTV, hence would be entirely unaffected.

6.4 Visual Baseline and Receptors

The following section describes the visual receptors within the 4km Study Area.

Local Residents

With reference to **Figure 1**, settlement within the Study Area is extremely limited. The small-scale hamlet of Gorstan is located 3.7km to the southeast of the Site, in an area that is entirely outside the ZTV. There would be no views from this settlement due to the screening influence of the intervening landform. Accordingly, it is not considered further in the assessment.

Other residents within the Study Area are limited to isolated dwellings and farmsteads. With reference to **Figure 4**, those located in closest proximity of the Site (within 2km) comprise:

- Corriemoillie Farm, 320m to the east;
- Glenview, 400m to the south;
- Corriemoillie Croft, 520m to the south;
- Gardener's Cottage, 780m to the east;
- Tigh Tioram, 830m to the east;
- Corriemoillie Lodge, 910m to the east;
- Lochluichart Lodge, 1.5km to the southwest.
- Ardachy, Forest Hill and Burnside, 1.5km to the west;
- Gardens Cottage and Druim Eorna, 1.8km to the southwest; and
- Strathmore house, 2.0km to the east.

Recreational Receptors

With reference to **Figure 3**, there are no promoted recreational routes within the Study Area. Other potential outdoor destinations / attractions within the Study Area are listed below:

- Hill walking at the summit of Beinn a'Bhric and the slopes at Cnoc na h-Iolaire, approximately 900m – 1.1km to the north / northeast;
- Water sports on Loch Luichart, 1.3km to the south at the closest point; and
- Picnic Area off the A832, 3.9km to the southwest.

Road and Rail Receptors

Potential vehicular receptors within the Study Area are limited to road users on the following roads:

- A832, located 280m to the south of the Proposed Development at the closest point; and
- A835, located 3.8km to the east.

Potential rail users within the Study Area comprise those on the Kyle of Lochalsh Line, 800m to the

south of the Site at the closest point.

7 Proposed Development and Mitigation

This section describes the aspects of the Proposed Development with the potential to cause landscape and visual effects within in the Study Area.

7.1 Proposed Development Description

The location of the Proposed Development is illustrated on **Figure 1**. The Proposed Development would involve localised areas of ground clearance to facilitate construction within the Site, and the introduction of the following key elements:

- Re-grading earthworks to form a level plateau;
- Substation Compound, including substation building and grid transformers (max height 8.0m), and associated grid connection;
- Battery Containers (3.2m max height);
- Acoustic Fence, 5.0m height;
- Perimeter fence, 2.4m palisade fence with wire top (3.0m max height);
- CCTV cameras and security lighting;
- Access track (5m width), including box culvert;
- SUDS, including attenuation basin, ditch and swale; and
- Landscape planting mitigation features.

The LVA takes cognisance of each of these elements and makes reference to them within the appraisal where relevant.

7.2 Landscape Design and Mitigation

Site Location

The location of the Proposed Development has been chosen to avoid any notable ridgelines or visually prominent sections of skyline. Instead, the Site is located within an area of forestry, in close proximity to the existing Corriemoillie Substation and associated OHL. As such, the Proposed Development would be enclosed by surrounding vegetation, and exert its primary influence over a local landscape already characterised by existing human activity in the form of active forestry, and existing electricity infrastructure. Similarly, its location within forestry ensures it is spatially and physically separated from areas of settlement. The concentration of forestry and surrounding tree cover in the wider area means that potential views of the Proposed Development would be restricted to very localised vantage points.

Design

In terms of design, the proposals seek to incorporate a comprehensive mitigation strategy to effectively integrate the Proposed Development into the surrounding landscape. This involves consideration of the scale and spread of the Proposed Development, and the most appropriate methods of lessening its potential influence on landscape and visual amenity. To this end, the

Proposed Development has been designed to achieve the following landscape objectives:

- Land clearance and occupation would be limited to necessary areas only to minimise the geographic spread of the infrastructure and limit the potential impact on the local landscape fabric.
- Exiting pockets of Birch woodland and Scots Pine within the southeastern corner of the Site would be protected during the course of the construction works, and retained. Similarly, ecologically-important areas of heath within the outer edges of the Site would also be retained for their ongoing habitat value;
- In terms of colour and materials, the Acoustic Fence would be painted with a recessive colour (muted green, such as RAL 6006: Olive Green, or similar approved) to soften the appearance of the Proposed Development;
- Proposed landscape works would incorporate the creation of native scrub, woodland, and tree planting around peripheral parts of the Site. With reference to **Figure 5** (TGP drg no. 2211 L01: Landscape Plan - Rev E), this would extend around the sides of the Site, where it would link with the surrounding forestry. The planting approach would be based on native species to provide visual containment and screening of the proposed built form (including the boundary fencing) and contribute towards biodiversity enhancement.
- In addition, ecologically-valued species-rich acid grassland would be introduced around peripheral parts of the Site, including the SUDS areas, to further soften the appearance of the Proposed Development and provide enhancement to local biodiversity. An extended area of heath would also be incorporated to the north of the main compound as an ecological enhancement measure. This would be sown at the first available season and would establish rapidly thereafter, and represent a habitat type in-keeping with local ground conditions.

8 ZTV and Viewpoint Analysis

The potential landscape and visual effects arising from the Proposed Development have been analysed in two ways:

- Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) map analysis, to provide a general overview of the geographical extent of visibility of the Proposed Development within the Study Area; and
- Analysis of the potential effects at key viewpoints.

8.1 Zone of Theoretical Visibility Analysis

Theoretical visibility mapping of the Proposed Development is illustrated in **Figures 1a – 1b**. The ZTV illustrates the maximum overall visibility of the proposed infrastructure.

The ZTV in **Figure 1a** has been prepared on the basis of 'bare ground' and does not take into account the potential screening effects of surrounding buildings or vegetation. The ZTV in **Figure 1b** incorporates the screening influence of surrounding buildings and vegetation. This is based on 2m Digital Surface modelling (aerial photography derived).

With reference to **Figure 1a**, the geographical extent of potential visibility would be focused within 1km, in particular the higher ground to the north (at Beinn a'Bhric) and northeast (towards Cnoc na h-Iolaire). At greater distances ZTV coverage becomes more fragmented and primarily focused across areas of higher ground. This includes the slopes on the opposite side of Loch Luichart, where

public access is extremely limited.

With reference to **Figure 1b**, potential visibility would be further restricted across localised areas to the south of the Site, including the A832 road corridor and adjoining low-lying farmland along the edge of Loch Luichart. Instead, potential views would be focused across areas of higher ground.

8.2 Viewpoint Analysis

Viewpoint analysis has been carried out on a selection of key viewpoint locations to assess the likely level of effects arising as a result of the Proposed Development. With reference to the geographical extent of visibility illustrated within the ZTV, a total of three viewpoints have been selected as being representative of the main views from publically accessible locations within the Study Area (see **Figures 1a – 1b**). The viewpoint analysis described below takes cognisance of the landscape mitigation measures described in Section 7 of this appraisal. This includes appraisal of potential effects at completion, and those at six years post-completion (hereafter referred to as 'Year 6'), when the planting proposals have had time to establish.

Viewpoints 2 and 3 are illustrated as photomontages, illustrating the form and appearance of the Proposed Development, including boundary fencing. Viewpoint 1 is subject to intervening screening and is therefore shown as a wireline overlay that illustrates the location and massing of the buildings within the surrounding landscape context.

<u>Viewpoint 1: View northwest from the A832, at junction to Corriemoillie Farm</u>

This viewpoint is located 490m to the southeast of the Site (within the Strath - Ross & Cromarty LCT) and represents views experienced by local road users. The existing views to the northwest are characterised by pastoral farmland in the foreground, which is contained by established tree cover and forestry across the surrounding area. In the distance, the landform rises towards the summit of Beinn a'Bhric. Parcels of commercial plantation extending across the lower slopes have been felled, resulting in a patchwork of differing colours and textures. The upper slopes and summits are characterised by open moorland. Built form within the view comprises the A832 carriageway, the tops of pylons beyond intervening tree cover, and scattered dwellings / farmsteads (including Corriemoillie Farm to the north). In addition, the blades / tips of wind turbines at Loch Luichart Wind Farm are visible on the skyline to the northwest.

Predicted View

The Proposed Development would be fully screened by intervening forestry. There would be no views and no effect.

<u>Viewpoint 2: View south from Beinn a'Bhric</u>

This viewpoint is located at the summit of Beinn a'Bhric, 950m to the north of the Site (within the Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes - Ross & Cromarty LCT). It is representative of elevated views experienced by hill walkers at the summit. The summit does not exhibit signs of regular visitation by the public, and is only accessible via cross-country walk through moorland (lengthy sections with no

track) and navigation of deer fencing. The existing views from the summit are expansive and encompass sweeping vistas across Loch Luichart to the south. The surrounding landscape comprises a mosaic of open farmland, demarcated by lines of field trees, as well as larger swathes of woodland and forestry. Localised parcels of plantation forestry on the lower slopes have been cleared, with some areas showing evidence of being re-stocked. In contrast, the distant hills at Creag nan Corrachan on the opposite side of the loch are characterised by open moorland. Built form within the view incorporates the existing Corriemoillie Substation, overhead power lines and scattered dwellings / farmsteads.

Predicted View

The Proposed Development would be experienced in the lower-lying forestry to the south. There would be open views across the battery storage and substation compound areas from this vantage point, albeit the infrastructure would be back-clothed by the areas of forestry, and experienced in the same field of view as the existing Corriemoillie Substation and associated OHL. As the proposed boundary planting within the Site establishes over time, views of the Proposed Development would soften.

Effects on Visual Amenity

The sensitivity of hill walkers at this location is assessed as being High, although it is not a promoted or readily-accessible summit (the summit does not exhibit signs of regular visitation by the public). Within southerly views the magnitude of change would be Moderate based on the open, elevated nature of views across the Site, balanced by the close geographic proximity to the existing substation. The Proposed Development would be experienced within the same field of view, thus limiting the spread of infrastructure across wider parts of the landscape. The resultant effect would be Major/Moderate (notable). At Year 6, the views of the Proposed Development would be partly screened by the established planting, albeit there would continue to be elevated views over parts of the Site. On balance, there would be no change to the overall level of effect.

Landscape Effects

The Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes - Ross & Cromarty LCT is assessed as being of Medium sensitivity to the Proposed Development. The Proposed Development would be visible from this part of the LCT, albeit would represent the introduction of a new element within the lower-lying southern edge of the LCT. This part of the LCT is already partly influenced by the existing Corriemoillie substation and associated OHL. The magnitude of change would be Moderate/Slight and the level of effect would be Moderate/Minor. There would be no change to the level of effect at Year 6.

<u>Viewpoint 3: View west from farm track to Loch Bad Leabhraidh</u>

This viewpoint is located 1,167m to the east of the Site (within the Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes - Ross & Cromarty LCT). It is representative of elevated views experienced by hill walkers on a non-promoted / sign-posted track. There is no sign of regular visitation by the public, and requires

navigation through field gates and deer fencing. The existing views to the west encompass sloping farmland in the foreground, which is broken up by tree belts and larger areas of forestry beyond. Loch Luichart is visible on the left-hand-side of the view (towards the southwest). Across the wider areas, the landform rises to form a series of undulating summits along the horizon. Built form within the view incorporates the existing Corriemoillie Substation, overhead power lines and scattered dwellings / farmsteads.

Predicted View

The Proposed Development would be experienced within the area of forestry to the west. Given the elevated nature of views from this section of the track, there would be views above the intervening tree cover towards the battery storage and substation compound areas beyond. The Proposed Development would be back-clothed by the landform and forestry in the distance, and would be experienced in the same field of view as the existing Corriemoillie Substation and associated OHL. As the proposed boundary planting within the Site establishes over time, views of the Proposed Development would soften.

Effects on Visual Amenity

The sensitivity of walkers at this location is assessed as being High, although the farm track does not form part of a promoted walking route. With reference to the partly-screened nature of views, in which the Proposed Development would be located in the same context as the existing Substation, the magnitude of change would be Moderate/Slight. The resultant effect would be Moderate, which is considered notable in this instance based on the elevated nature of views over the Site. At Year 6, the views of the Proposed Development would be partly screened by the established planting, albeit there would continue to be elevated views over parts of the Site and there would be no change to the level of effect.

Landscape Effects

The Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes - Ross & Cromarty LCT is assessed as being of Medium sensitivity to the Proposed Development. The Proposed Development would be visible from this part of the LCT, albeit would represent the introduction of a new element within the context of existing infrastructure on the southern edge of the LCT. The magnitude of change would be Moderate/Slight and the level of effect would be Moderate/Minor. There would be no change to the level of effect at Year 6.

9 Construction Stage Effects

Whilst it is the operational stage of the Proposed Development that would give rise to prolonged landscape and visual effects, temporary effects at the construction stage would also occur based on the following operations:

- Erection of temporary perimeter fencing;
- Installation of temporary construction compound (including storage and welfare facilities);

- Creation of temporary laydown areas;
- Site clearance and excavation works for foundations;
- Increased vehicular movement within the Site;
- Gradual introduction of proposed buildings; and
- Reinstatement works, including the removal of the temporary accommodation.

The works detailed above would give rise to some landscape and visual effects. The detailed construction programme is not known at this stage, albeit is anticipated to be of 24 months duration. The associated effects would be temporary and would mainly arise through the gradual introduction of proposed buildings/infrastructure within the Site. The effects arising from other operations, including the vehicle movement, construction of the fencing and excavation works would be localised, and whilst potentially visible, would not appear prominently in views from the surrounding areas. As such, the construction phase effects would be limited in extent and duration.

9.1 Construction Stage Landscape Effects

During the construction stage, areas of the forestry ground cover within the Site would be cleared. There would be localised earthworks to re-grade the Site to a more level plateau, and further excavation works to facilitate construction of the parking and access areas, foundations of the buildings and cable routes. This would result in a change to the current landscape fabric within the Site. There would also be a short term, temporary increase in vehicle movements to and from the Site. However, there would be no loss of existing tree cover / forestry in the neighbouring areas surrounding the Site.

Construction Effects on Landscape Fabric

In terms of landscape fabric; the existing area of forestry within the Site would be cleared. This is considered to be of Medium sensitivity to the Proposed Development due to its relative commonality, and its status as a commercial crop. Existing areas of ecologically-valued birch and scots pine woodland would be retained, as would areas of acid grassland and heath. The magnitude of change on landscape fabric would be Substantial/Moderate, and the resultant level of effect would be Major/Moderate, notable.

Construction Effects on Landscape Character

In terms of landscape character; the construction stage effects would be limited to an extremely localised part of the Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes – Ross & Cromarty LCT that is already heavily influenced by forestry activity, as well as large-scale infrastructure at Corriemoillie Substation and the associated OHL. With reference to **Appendix B** the landscape character at the Site is considered to be of Medium sensitivity to the Proposed Development.

The magnitude of change associated with the disturbance of the existing ground cover, re-grading, temporary fencing / laydown areas, and additional presence of vehicles within the Site would be tempered by the expanse of forestry around the Site which would contain potential effects. Accordingly, the main influence of the construction activities would extend northwards, across the

south-facing slopes of Beinn a'Bhric, and towards the slopes at Cnoc na h-lolaire to the east. The magnitude of change across these parts of the Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes – Ross & Cromarty LCT during the construction stage would be Moderate/Slight, resulting in a Moderate/Minor effect. The vast majority of the LCT would be completely unaffected by the construction activities.

9.2 Construction Phase Effects on Visual Amenity

The visual effects of the activities during the construction phase would be temporary, intermittent and limited to extremely localised areas in the vicinity of the Site due to the containing effect of surrounding tree cover, forestry and landform, in combination with the low-lying nature of activities associated with clearance / excavation.

Views would be primarily experienced by walkers in the hills to the north / northeast of the Site at Beinn a'Bhric and Cnoc na h-lolaire, which are not readily accessible or actively promoted / sign-posted. In more open views from these locations, the construction activities would be experienced within a local context comprising surrounding forestry and the existing Corriemoillie Substation, well below the skyline. Along with the Site clearance / excavation activities, and an increase in traffic movement within the Site, the visual effects would occur primarily from the gradual appearance of the proposed infrastructure and perimeter fence (which are considered below under 'Operational Effects'). The influence of construction activities on existing views would be tempered by the introduction of new areas of planting within the Site. The effects would be further reduced through good site management and the temporary nature of the construction activities. For hill walkers on the upper slopes at Beinn a'Bhric and Cnoc na h-lolaire the magnitude of change during the construction phase would be Moderate, resulting in a Major/Moderate effect (notable).

10 Operational Landscape Effects

This section examines the effects arising as a result of the Proposed Development with reference to landscape fabric within the Site, landscape character and landscape designations.

10.1 Effects on Landscape Fabric

The landscape within the Site predominantly comprises existing forestry. Given its relative commonality and status as a commercial crop, it is assessed as being of Medium sensitivity to the Proposed Development.

The Proposed Development would result in the permanent loss of a small area of forestry, which would remain enveloped by surrounding forestry on all sides. The existing fabric would be replaced by the proposed substation compound, battery stores, and ancillary infrastructure including fencing and access tracks. The existing areas of ecologically-valued birch and scots pine woodland and areas of heath and acid grassland would be retained. The Proposed Development would incorporate new areas of native scrub, woodland and tree cover, as well as species-rich acid grassland (to be undertaken at the first available planting / sowing season). Similarly, the Proposed Development

would also introduce an extended area of heath to the north of the main compound as an ecological enhancement measure (introduced at the first practicable opportunity). These elements would augment the retained habitats within the Site and represent the addition of beneficial landscape features to the locality that would exert increasing influence over time as they become more established. On balance, the magnitude of change upon the fabric within the Site would be Moderate, giving rise to a Moderate level of effect. This is assessed as notable in this instance given the absence of existing built form within the Site.

10.2 Effects on Landscape Character

The effect of the Proposed Development on landscape character largely depends on the key characteristics of the receiving environment; the degree to which the development may be considered to be consistent with or at odds with it; and how the proposal would be perceived within its setting.

Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes – Ross & Cromarty LCT

The Proposed Development would be located within the Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes – Ross & Cromarty LCT. With reference to sensitivity analysis within **Appendix B**, the local landscape character at the Site is assessed as being of Medium sensitivity to the Proposed Development. The effects on landscape character would be direct (predominantly affecting the Site itself) and indirect (affecting the visual and perceptual characteristics of the surrounding area).

In terms of direct effects, existing ground cover within the Site comprises forestry, which would be cleared to facilitate introduction of the proposed infrastructure. The surrounding forestry that envelops the Site would not be affected by the Proposed Development. The proposed Site access would make use of the existing forestry access track, which also links with the existing Corriemoillie Substation. As such, this would assimilate with the existing track network and minimise any incremental effects. With reference to **Figure 5**, the Proposed Development would incorporate the planting of native trees, scrub and woodland along the Site boundary, which would represent beneficial elements within the local landscape, whose influence on landscape character would steadily increase over time in accordance with their establishment.

In terms of indirect effects, ZTV coverage is primarily focused across localised parts of the LCT to the north and northeast of the Site (out to a distance of 1km). This reflects the rising landform in these areas, as well as the recent felling of forestry on the northern side of the Site. From vantage points in these areas, the Proposed Development would be experienced within the context of surrounding forestry, and existing infrastructure at Corriemoillie Substation (see Viewpoints 2 and 3). The area of recently felled forestry on the northern side of the Site (north of the proposed heath enhancement area) is scheduled to be restocked in the near future, and retained as an area of ongoing commercial forestry landuse. Accordingly, as the area of restocked forestry to the north of the Site gradually re-establishes, the potential spread of visibility in this direction would be reduced.

At greater distances to the north / northeast the Proposed Development would be subject to

screening by the intervening landform. Accordingly, there would be no views across more elevated central parts of the LCT. Similarly, the influence of the Proposed Development across parts of the LCT to the south, east and west of the Site would be curtailed by surrounding forestry. As such, the potential effects across those parts of the LCT would be very limited.

On this basis, the Proposed Development would exert limited influence on surrounding landscape character. There would be no effect on the *'large, remote interior areas of vast scale with wildness characteristics'* or the *'large areas of uniform moorland vegetation'.* The Proposed Development would be spatially separate from the *'small groups of mainly traditional buildings around road junctions and at rail stations'.* It would represent a new element within an area of *'large coniferous forests on accessible lower slopes*', in the context of existing *'man-made structures of pylons'.* The proposed infrastructure would be well screened from the *'broad straths'* and the *'occasional major trunk roads*'.

In summary, the main effects would be focused within the Site, extending approximately 500m to north. Within this localised area the magnitude of change would be Substantial/Moderate and the level of effect would be Major/Moderate, notable. At greater distances to the north and northeast, the effects would gradually diminish, and the Proposed Development would increasingly represent a more distant element in the context of surrounding forestry and existing infrastructure elements in the wider area (including Corriemoillie Substation and the associated OHL – see Viewpoints 2 and 3). Accordingly, the effects on existing landscape character at distances beyond approximately 500m are assessed as being not notable. Across the vast majority of the Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes – Ross & Cromarty LCT there would be no views of the Proposed Development and no effect.

<u>Strath - Ross & Cromarty LCT</u>

The Strath - Ross & Cromarty LCT is located 80m to the south of the Proposed Development. ZTV coverage across the ZTV is extremely limited, and restricted to very localised areas of low-lying farmland on the northern side of Loch Luichart. From these areas, potential views of the Proposed Development would be restricted by intervening tree cover and forestry beyond (see Viewpoint 1). Views would be limited to the upper parts of the infrastructure at most, which would be experienced in the context of surrounding forestry, and back-clothed by the rising landform beyond. The existing OHL that extends though this LCT would remain a prominent focal point in the foreground. Based on the limited geographic spreads of visibility and the restricted nature of view, the Proposed Development would represent a very discreet element in the background landscape to the north. Accordingly the effects on the existing landscape characteristics of the Strath - Ross & Cromarty LCT would be extremely limited. In summary, the magnitude of change would be Negligible and the level of effect would be Minor/Negligible, not notable. The majority of the Strath - Ross & Cromarty LCT would be completely unaffected.

<u>Rounded Rocky Hills - Ross & Cromarty LCT</u>

The Rounded Rocky Hills - Ross & Cromarty LCT is located 850m to the south / southeast of the Proposed Development. ZTV coverage across the LCT is extremely limited and focused on very

localised areas at the slopes / summits of Cnoc an Tearnaidh and Cnoc na h-Iolaire to the southeast, and Creag nan Corrachan to the south. From these elevated vantage points the Proposed Development would represent a new element of infrastructure on the geographically separate area of forestry to the north / northwest, beyond the open water of Loch Luichart and/or the settled farmland along its northern side. The proposed infrastructure would be partly-screened by intervening tree cover and forestry, and would be back-clothed by forestry and the rising landform beyond. The visible extents of infrastructure would be experienced in the context of the existing Corriemoillie Substation and associated OHL. As a result, the Proposed Development would exert very limited influence on the existing landscape characteristics of the Rounded Rocky Hills - Ross & Cromarty LCT.

On balance, the magnitude of change would be Slight/Negligible, and the level of effect would be Minor (not notable). Across the vast majority of the LCT, there would be no views and no effect. There would be no notable change at Year 6.

Rounded Mountain Massif LCT

The Rounded Mountain Massif LCT is located 2.5km to the northwest of the Proposed Development. There is no ZTV coverage across this LCT, hence there would be no effect.

10.3 Effects on Landscape Designations

There are no landscape designations within the Study Area, and no effects.

11 Operational Visual Effects

This section examines the visual effects based on changes to the existing view as experienced by people within the surrounding landscape (as described in Section 6.4). This process draws on the results of the ZTV incorporating screening as illustrated in **Figure 1b**, and viewpoint analysis.

11.1 Visual effects experienced by Local Residents

The Appraisal below considers the effects experienced by local residents in settlements, as well as those in isolated residential dwellings / steadings in closest proximity to the Site. In all cases, sensitivity is deemed to be High.

Gorstan

The hamlet of Gorstan is located 3.7km to the southeast of the Site. The settlement is completely outside the ZTV. Residents would experience no views of the Proposed Development and no effect.

Isolated Residential Dwellings / Steadings

Corriemoillie Farm is located 320m to the east of the Proposed Development. The two-storey property is primarily south-facing. Within oblique views from the house or parts of the surrounding curtilage, potential views of the Proposed Development would be subject to screening by intervening tree cover along the Allt Coire Mhuilidh in combination with forestry beyond. Views would be limited to the upper parts of the infrastructure at most, which would be experienced in the

context of surrounding forestry, and the tops of existing OHL in the vicinity of the nearby Corriemoillie Substation. There would be no effect on primary views towards Loch Luichart to the south. On balance the magnitude of change would be Slight/Negligible and the level of effect would be Minor, not notable.

Glenview is located 400m to the south of the Proposed Development. It is outside the ZTV, hence residents would experience no views of the Proposed Development and no effect.

Corriemoillie Croft is located 520m to the south of the Proposed Development. It is outside the ZTV, hence residents would experience no views of the Proposed Development and no effect.

Gardener's Cottage is located 780m to the east of the Proposed Development. The property is located on the cusp of the ZTV. However, potential views of the Proposed Development would be fully screened by intervening woodland in combination with the landform. There would be no views and no effect.

Tigh Tioram is located 830m to the east of the Proposed Development. As above, the property is on the edge of the ZTV, but views would be fully screened by intervening vegetation. Residents would experience no view and no effect.

All other isolated dwellings within the Study Area are located outside the ZTV. Residents at Corriemoillie Lodge (910m to the east of the Proposed Development), Lochluichart Lodge (1.5km to the southwest), Ardachy, Forest Hill and Burnside (1.5km to the west), Gardens Cottage and Druim Eorna (1.8km to the southwest), and Strathmore House (2.0km to the east) would experience no views and no effect.

11.2 Visual effects experienced by Recreational Receptors

The Appraisal of effects experienced by recreational receptors is described below, listed in order of increasing distance from the Proposed Development. Recreational receptors are considered to be of High sensitivity unless stated otherwise.

<u>Hill walking at Beinn a'Bhric and Cnoc na h-Iolaire</u>

The surrounding slopes and summits provide opportunities for elevated views across the Study Area, albeit as described above, these slopes and summits are not readily accessible or promoted for recreational purpose. Accordingly, they are not sign-posted, and require navigation through field gates and deer fencing. There are no tracks to the summit of Beinn a'Bhric, hence the walker must traverse uneven, unsurfaced moorland to reach the summit. The potential effects on the closest slopes and summits within the ZTV are assessed below.

The summit of Beinn a'Bhric is located approximately 900m to the north of the Proposed Development. With reference to Viewpoint 2, there would be open views across the proposed infrastructure from the summit. The infrastructure would experience in the context of surrounding forestry, within the same field of view as the existing Corriemoillie Substation and associated OHL. Based on the open, elevated nature of view, the magnitude of change would be Moderate and the

resultant effect would be Major/Moderate (notable). At Year 6, views of the proposed infrastructure would soften as the tree planting within the Site establishes, although there would continue to be views of the infrastructure beyond. On balance, there would be no change to the level of effect.

The upper slopes at Cnoc na h-lolaire are located approximately 900m – 1.1km to the northeast of the Proposed Development. With reference to Viewpoint 3, the proposed infrastructure would be experienced within the area of forestry to the west. The Proposed Development would be back-clothed by the landform and forestry in the distance, and would be experienced in the same field of view as the existing Corriemoillie Substation and associated OHL. Given the partly-screened nature of views, the magnitude of change would be Moderate/Slight. The resultant effect would be Moderate, which is considered notable in this instance based on the elevated nature of views over the Site. At Year 6, views would soften slightly as the tree planting within the Site establishes, albeit there would be no change to the overall level of effect.

Watersports on Loch Luichart

Loch Luichart is located 1.4km to the south of the Proposed Development at the closest point. ZTV coverage is almost entirely absent across the loch and limited to very fragmented areas on the southern edge. From these areas, potential views of the Proposed Development would be limited to the upper parts of the infrastructure at most, which would be experienced in the context of surrounding forestry, and the tops of existing OHL in the vicinity of the nearby Corriemoillie Substation. At this distance, the magnitude of change would be Negligible and the level of effect would be Negligible, not notable.

Picnic Area off the A832

The picnic area is located 3.9km to the southwest of the Proposed Development. It is outside the ZTV, hence visitors would experience no views and no effect.

11.3 Visual effects experienced by Road and Rail Receptors

The sensitivity of road users and rail passengers is considered to be Medium in all cases unless otherwise stated.

A832

The A832 extends east-west through the Study Area, 330m to the south of the Proposed Development at the closest point. ZTV coverage is almost entirely absent across the route based on landform and intervening tree cover, which is extensive along lengthy sections of the route. From the most open sections of the route, the Proposed Development would remain well screened by intervening tree cover and forestry in the landscape to the north (see Viewpoint 1). Accordingly, road users would experience no views and no effect.

Kyle of Lochalsh Line

The Kyle of Lochalsh Line extends broadly parallel to the A832, 900m to the south of the Proposed Development at the closest point. There is fragmented ZTV coverage along the route as it passes the foot of Cnoc an Tearnaidh to the south of the Site. Potential views of the Proposed Development

from this localised section of the route (approximately 700m length in total) would be restricted by the intervening tree cover along the Allt Coire Mhuilidh in combination with forestry beyond. Views would be limited to the upper parts of the infrastructure at most, which would be experienced in the context of surrounding forestry, and back-clothed by the rising landform beyond. Given the transient nature of the receptor and the distance of view, the magnitude of change would be Negligible and the level of effect would be Minor/Negligible, not notable.

A835

The A835 is located 3.9km to the east of the Proposed Development at the closest point. It is outside the ZTV, hence road users would experience no views and no effect.

12 Cumulative Effects

This section examines the potential cumulative effects of the Proposed Development in combination with other similar elements of electrical infrastructure within the Study Area. The assessment includes consideration of the Existing Corriemoillie Substation, located 160m to the southwest.

A review of The Highland Council planning portal, undertaken 9th Oct 2024, also identified a potential 200MW BESS scheme at Land East of Ardarchy (ref: 23/03736/PAN). In lieu of any detailed proposals, or information in relation to the timescale / likelihood of its progression to a formal planning application, this scheme is excluded from further consideration within the cumulative assessment.

Landscape and visual receptors described in Sections 10 and 11 above as undergoing / experiencing a Negligible or Slight/Negligible magnitude of change (or less), are excluded from consideration in the cumulative assessment on the basis that the Proposed Development would exert such a limited effect in its own right that it would not meaningfully contribute to potential cumulative effects. As such, it would not tip the balance from a minor cumulative effect to a notable cumulative effect.

12.1 Cumulative Landscape Effects

Cumulative Effects on the Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes – Ross & Cromarty LCT

In addition to the Proposed Development, the existing Corriemoillie Substation is located within the Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes – Ross & Cromarty LCT, thus exerts direct effects upon local landscape character in its own right. However, due to the extent of established forestry surrounding the substation, the effects are primarily confined to the substation compound and the nearby slopes and summits on its northern side, including Beinn a'Bhric and Cnoc na h-loloaire.

The Proposed Development would exert an influence across similar parts of the LCT. With reference to the preceding landscape character assessment in Section 10.2, the primary effects of the Proposed Development on this LCT would be focused within the Site, extending approximately 500m to north (where the level of effect would be Major/Moderate, notable). Across the slopes and summits further to the north / northeast, the effects would gradually diminish. The landscape effects in the vicinity of Beinn a'Bhric and Cnoc na h-loloaire would be Moderate/Minor, not notable. These

effects would coalesce with the characterising influence currently exerted by the existing Corriemoillie Substation. The Proposed Development would extend the spread of existing infrastructure across slightly wider parts of the nearby landscape. However, given their close geographical proximity to one another, the developments would be experienced in the same low-lying context of plantation forestry on the southern edge of the LCT.

At greater distances to the north / northeast, both the existing substation and the Proposed Development would be fully screened by the intervening landform. Accordingly, there would be no cumulative effects across more elevated, central parts of the LCT. Similarly, the cumulative influence of the existing substation and the Proposed Development across parts of the LCT to the south, east and west would be curtailed by surrounding forestry. As such, the cumulative effects across those parts of the LCT would also be extremely limited.

In summary, the Proposed Development would contribute to cumulative effects in combination with the existing Corriemoillie Substation within the Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes – Ross & Cromarty LCT. The net result would be to slightly increase the spread of infrastructure on the southern edge of the LCT, within an area of forestry. These effects would be very localised due to containment of both developments by landform and tree cover. The vast majority of the LCT would remain unaffected. From the summit of Beinn a'Bhric, the combined magnitude of change would rise to Moderate, and the cumulative level of effect would be Moderate. This is assessed as not notable in this instance based on the very large scale of the receiving landscape and panoramic views. Across the LCT as a whole, the cumulative level of effect would be Minor at most (not notable). The Proposed Development would exert extremely limited incremental cumulative influence.

12.2 Cumulative Visual Effects

Cumulative Effects: Hill walking at Beinn a'Bhric and Cnoc na h-lolaire

As described in the main assessment, walkers at the summit of Beinn a'Bhric would experience views of the Proposed Development within the same field of view as the existing Corriemoillie Substation. The developments would be experienced within the same context, of low-lying forestry in the landscape to the south. The Proposed Development would extend the spread of existing infrastructure across slightly wider parts of the nearby landscape. However, the combined presence of both schemes would account for a minor proportion of the panoramic views across a very large scale landscape. The combined magnitude of change would remain Moderate, and the cumulative level of effect would be Major/Moderate (notable). At Year 6 there would be no change to the level of effect.

From the upper slopes at Cnoc na h-lolaire, there are also views of the existing Corriemoillie Substation. However, this scheme is subject to screening by intervening forestry and accordingly it represents a relatively discreet element within southwesterly views. On balance, there would be no increase to the level of effect described within the main assessment, which would be Moderate, notable. There would be no change at Year 6.

13 Conclusions

In summary, the Proposed Development would be located in an area of forestry, on the lower slopes north of Loch Luichart. The Development would result in the introduction of a substation compound, battery storage and associated infrastructure to the Site, as well as landscape planting and ecological enhancement measures. This includes new woodland, upland scrub and acid grassland within the Site, as well as new area of heath habitat to the north of the main compound. The existing areas of ecologically-valued birch and scots pine woodland, acid grassland and heath within the Site would be retained.

In terms of landscape effects, the containment by forestry in combination with the surrounding landform means that the main effects would be very localised. Notable effect would be primarily focused across the Site, and within approximately 500m to the north. This accounts for an extremely localised part of the host Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes – Ross & Cromarty LCT. There would be no notable effects on wider parts of this LCT or neighbouring LCTs. There would be no effects on any landscape designation.

Visual effects would also be extremely restricted based on the Site location, which is spatially remote from sizeable settlement, and which exhibits strong visual enclosure based on the surrounding forestry to the south, east and west, and rising landform to the north. There would be no notable effects on views experienced by local residents, or road users. Instead, notable visual effects would be limited to recreational hillwalkers exploring the elevated slopes and summits to the north of the Site, specifically at Beinn a'Bhric and the upper slopes at Cnoc na h-lolaire. These summits are not actively promoted / sign-posted for recreational purposes, nor readily accessible due to intervening field boundaries, deer fencing, and unsurfaced / uneven ground conditions.

In terms of cumulative effects, the Proposed Development would augment the presence of the existing Corriemoillie Substation. However, the cumulative effects would be very limited due to the extent of surrounding tree cover and forestry. The key effects would be focused across the same localised areas / receptors identified within the main assessment.

In conclusion, it is assessed that the Proposed Development could be accommodated at the Site with limited and extremely localised effects on landscape character and visual amenity.

References

Publications

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Appendix A: LVA methodology

Landscape Effects

The starting point for the assessment of landscape effects was a desk-based review of published landscape assessments.

The sensitivity of the landscape to change resulting from a Proposed Development is not absolute and varies according to the existing landscape, the nature of the Proposed Development and the type of change being proposed. Good practice guidance differentiates between baseline sensitivity of the landscape and the sensitivity of a landscape to a specific development proposal. Accordingly, the concept of 'sensitivity to change' to new development, as described within the baseline published landscape character assessments, is distinct from the consideration of landscape sensitivity to the specific development proposal.

The baseline for consideration of landscape effects is the established landscape character. The landscape effects of a Proposed Development are considered against the key characteristics of the receiving landscape. The degree to which the Proposed Development may change 'the distinct and recognisable pattern that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse' (Countryside Agency and NatureScot, 2002), enables a judgement to be made as to the significance of the effect in landscape character terms. This involves consideration of where the Proposed Development may give rise to a different landscape character type or sub-type.

In general terms, a distinctive landscape of acknowledged value (e.g. covered by a designation) and in good condition is likely to be more sensitive to change than a landscape in poor condition and with no designations or acknowledged value. General guidance on the evaluation of sensitivity is provided below; however, the actual sensitivity would depend on the attributes of the landscape receiving the proposals and the nature of those proposals.

In order to reach an understanding of the effects of development upon the landscape it is necessary to consider different aspects of the landscape as follows:

- Landscape Fabric / Elements: The individual features of the landscape, such as hills, valleys, woods, hedges, tree cover, vegetation, buildings and roads for example which can usually be described and quantified;
- Landscape Quality: The state of repair or condition of elements of a particular landscape, its integrity and intactness and the extent to which its distinctive character is apparent;
- Landscape Value: The importance attached to a landscape, often used as a basis for designation or recognition which expresses national or regional consensus, because of its special qualities/attributes including aesthetic or perceptual aspects such as scenic beauty, tranquillity or wildness, cultural associations or nature conservation interest; and
- Landscape Key Characteristics: The particularly notable elements or combinations of elements which makes a particular contribution to defining or describing the character of an area, which may include experiential characteristics such as wildness and tranquillity.

The sensitivity of the landscape to a particular development considers the susceptibility of the landscape and its value. The overall sensitivity is described as high, medium or low. This is assessed by taking into account the existing landscape quality, landscape value, and landscape capacity or susceptibility to change, which often vary depending on the type of development proposed and the particular Site location, such that sensitivity needs to be considered on a case by case basis. This should not be confused with 'inherent sensitivity' where areas of the landscape may be referred to as inherently of 'high' or 'low sensitivity.

For example, a National Park may be described as inherently of high sensitivity on account of its designation, but it may prove to be less sensitive to particular development and/or the design of that development.

Alternatively, an undesignated landscape may be of high sensitivity to a particular development and/or the design of that development regardless of the lack of local or national designation. The main factors to consider are discussed as follows:

Landscape susceptibility according to GLVIA3 means "the ability of the landscape to accommodate the Proposed Development without undue consequences for maintenance of the baseline situation and/or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies". Judgements on landscape susceptibility include references to both the physical and aesthetic characteristics and the potential scope for mitigation that would be in character with the landscape.

The judgements regarding susceptibility and value of the landscape character are identified within the sensitivity table included within **Appendix B**. These relationships can be complex and value alone does not automatically or by definition have high susceptibility to all types of change. Examples and on the evaluation of landscape sensitivity are provided below:

Table A.1: Landscape sensitivity criteria

High Sensitivity	Landscape character, characteristics and elements which would generally be of lower landscape capacity or scope for landscape change, and of notable landscape value and quality. These are landscapes that may be considered to be of particular importance to conserve and which may be particularly sensitive to change if inappropriately dealt with.
Medium Sensitivity	Landscape character, characteristics and elements where there would be a moderate landscape capacity or some scope for landscape change. Often include landscapes of moderate landscape value and quality which may be locally designated.
Low Sensitivity	Landscape Character, characteristics and elements where there would be higher landscape capacity or scope for landscape change to accommodate the proposed type of development. Usually applies to landscapes with of lesser landscape susceptibility or higher landscape capacity for the Proposed Development.

The level of landscape effects is not absolute and can only be defined in relation to each development and its location. It is for each assessment to determine the assessment criteria and thresholds using well informed and reasoned judgements.

The magnitude of landscape change arising from the Proposed Development at any particular location is described as substantial, moderate, slight or negligible based on the interpretation of a combination of largely quantifiable parameters, as follows:

- degree of loss or alteration to key landscape features/elements or characteristics;
- distance from the development;
- duration of effect;
- landscape backdrop to the development; and
- landscape context of other built development, particularly vertical elements.

In order to differentiate between different levels of magnitude the following definitions are provided:

Table A.2: Landscape magnitude of change definitions

Substantial	Total loss or extensive alteration to key landscape elements/features/ characteristics of the baseline, or introduction of uncharacteristic elements which would give rise to a fresh characterising effect.
Moderate	Partial loss or alteration to one or more key landscape elements/features/ characteristics of the baseline and/or introduction of elements that may be prominent, but not necessarily substantially uncharacteristic with the attributes of the receiving landscape (which could co-characterise parts of the landscape).
Slight	Minor loss or alteration to one or more key landscape elements/features/ characteristics of the baseline and/or introduction of elements that may not be uncharacteristic with the surrounding landscape or may not lead to a characterising or co-characterising effect.
Negligible	Very minor loss or alteration to one or more key landscape elements/features/ characteristics of the baseline and/or the introduction of elements that are not uncharacteristic of the surrounding landscape. Change would be barely distinguishable approximating to no change.

Having established where the observation of varying levels of change to the landscape baseline may occur, the geographical extent of the change can be identified and a judgement made as to the level of effect in landscape character terms at varying scales.

The importance of the effect on the landscape resource may be determined by correlating the magnitude of the landscape change (substantial, moderate, slight or negligible) with the sensitivity of the landscape resource (high, medium or low). The following table sets out the main correlations between magnitude and sensitivity.

Table A.3: Landscape effects matrix

Landscape sensitivity	Magnitude of Change				
		Substantial	Moderate	Slight	Negligible
	High	Major	Major/Moderate	Moderate	Minor
	Medium	Major/Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/Minor	Minor/Negligible
	Low	Moderate	Moderate/Minor	Minor	Negligible

Visual Effects

The sensitivity of potential visual receptors will vary depending on the location and context of the viewpoint, the activity of the receptor and importance of the view. Visual receptor sensitivity is defined as high, medium, or low in accordance with the criteria in Table A.4.

Table A.4: Visual sensitivity criteria

High Sensitivity	Residents within the curtilage of their homes; users of outdoor recreational facilities including footpaths, cycle ways and recreational road users; people experiencing views from important landscape features of physical, cultural or historic interest, beauty spots and picnic areas.
Medium Sensitivity	Road users and travelers on trains experiencing views from transport routes. People engaged in outdoor sport other than appreciation of the landscape, e.g. nature conservation, golf and water based recreation.
Low Sensitivity	Workers, users of facilities and commercial buildings (indoors) experiencing views from buildings.

The magnitude of visual change arising from the Proposed Development at any particular location is described as substantial, moderate, slight or negligible based on the interpretation of a combination of largely quantifiable parameters, as follows:

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

It is assumed that the change would be seen in clear visibility and the assessment is carried out on that basis. Where appropriate, comment may be made on lighting and weather conditions. In order to differentiate between levels of magnitude the following definitions are provided in Table A.5:

Table A.5: Visual magnitude of change definitions

Substantial	Where the proposals would have a defining influence on the view. Change very prominent leading to substantial obstruction or complete change in character and composition of the baseline existing view.
Moderate	Where the proposals would be clearly noticeable and an important new element in the view. It may involve partial obstruction of existing view or partial change in character and composition of the baseline existing view
Slight	The proposals would be partially visible or visible at sufficient distance to be perceptible and result in limited or minor changes to the view. The character and composition, although altered will be similar to the baseline existing situation
Negligible	Change would be barely perceptible. The composition and character of the view would be substantially unaltered, approximating to little or no change.

The threshold for different levels of visual effects relies to a great extent on professional judgement. Criteria and local circumstances require close study and careful judgement.

Beneficial effects upon receptors may result from a change to a view by the removal of eyesores or through the addition of well-designed elements which add to the sense of place in a beneficial manner.

The following Table A.6 sets out the main correlations between magnitude and sensitivity.

Table A.6: Visual effects matrix

Visual sensitivity	Magnitude of Change				
		Substantial	Moderate	Slight	Negligible
	High	Major	Major/Moderate	Moderate	Minor
	Medium	Major/Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/Minor	Minor/Negligible
	Low	Moderate	Moderate/Minor	Minor	Negligible

Level of Effect

As per the matrices in Table A.3 and Table A.6; the level of any identified landscape or visual effect has been assessed in terms of major, moderate, minor, negligible or none. Intermediate correlations are also possible and depend upon professional judgement, e.g. Major/moderate. These categories are based on the juxtaposition of viewer or landscape sensitivity with the predicted magnitude of change. This matrix should not be used as a prescriptive tool but must allow for the exercise of professional judgement. Effects which area judged to be Major/moderate or Major are considered to be notable. Where Moderate effects are predicted, professional judgement is applied to ensure that the potential for notable effects arising has been thoroughly considered.

Type of Effect

Landscape and visual effects are described with reference to type (direct, indirect, secondary or cumulative), timeframe (short, medium, long term, permanent, and temporary) and whether they are beneficial or adverse (beneficial or adverse). The various types of effect are described as follows:

Temporary / Residual Effects

If a proposal would result in an alteration to an environment whose attributes can be quickly recovered, then judgements concerning the significance of effects should be tempered in that light. Commercial development applications typically include permanent, long term elements as well as minor alternations to landform resulting in residual landscape and visual effects.

Direct/Indirect

Direct and indirect landscape and visual effects are defined in Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA3). Direct effects may be defined "*result directly from the development itself"* (para 3.22). An indirect (or secondary) effect is one that results "*from consequential change resulting from the development*" (para 3.22) and is often produced away from the Site of the Proposed Development or as a result of a complex pathway or secondary association. The direct or physical landscape effects of the Proposed Development would generally be limited to an area around the development itself. Any indirect landscape effects are concerned with the view of the changes from outside the local landscape.

Beneficial/Adverse

Landscape and visual effects can be beneficial or adverse and in some instances may be considered neutral. Beneficial effects upon landscape receptors may result from changes to the landscape involving beneficial enhancement measures or through the addition of well-designed elements, which add to the landscape experience or sense of place in a complementary manner.

The landscape impacts of the Proposed Development have been considered against the landscape baseline, taking account of the landscape characteristics. Taking a precautionary approach, changes to rural landscapes involving construction of man-made objects of a large scale are generally considered to be adverse, as they are not usually actively promoted as part of a district wide landscape strategy and therefore in the assessment of landscape effects they are assumed to be adverse, unless specified otherwise in the text.

It is important to recognise that for the same development, some may consider the visual effects for a development of this nature as adverse or beneficial. This depends to some extent on the viewer's predisposition towards landscape change but also the principle of commercial building features in the landscape. Taking a precautionary approach in making an assessment of the 'worst case scenario', the assessment considers that all effects on views which would result from the construction and operation of the Proposed Development to be adverse, unless specified otherwise in the text. It is noted, however, that not all people would consider the effects to be adverse.

Visualisation Methodology

Zone of Theoretical Visibility Maps

Computer generated Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) Maps have been prepared to assist in viewpoint selection and to indicate the potential influence of the Proposed Development in the wider landscape.

With reference to **Figure 1a**, the ZTV has been prepared at 1:30,000 scale to indicate the extent of potential visibility on the basis of bare ground, and does not include the screening effects of intervening established tree cover.

Figure 1b illustrates the ZTV incorporating the screening influence of surrounding buildings and vegetation. This is calculated based on GetMapping 2m Digital Surface Model (Aerial Photography Derived).

The Visibility Map indicates areas from which it might be possible to secure views of part, or parts, of the Proposed Development (based on its maximum height / elevation). However, use of the Visibility Maps needs to be qualified on the following basis:

- There are a number of areas within the Visibility Maps from which there is potential to view parts of the proposal, but which comprise open moorland, or other land where the general public do not appear to exercise regular access;
- The Visibility Maps do not account for the likely orientation of a viewer – for example when travelling in a vehicle.

In addition, the accuracy of the Visibility Maps has to be considered. In particular, the ZTV presented in **Figure 1a** is generated from Ordnance Survey (OS) Landform Panorama digital data based on a gridded terrain model with 5m cell sizes. The resolution of this model cannot accurately represent small-scale terrain features, which can therefore give rise to inaccuracy in the predicted visibility. This can lead to underestimation of visibility – e.g. a raised area of ground permitting views over an intervening obstruction, or can lead to overestimation of visibility – such as where a roadside embankment obscures a view.

Appendix B: Landscape Character Sensitivity

The sensitivity of the Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes - Ross & Cromarty LCT is assessed in detail below. Landscape sensitivity is not absolute and can only be defined in relation to each development and its location taking account of susceptibility as described in the methodology. To understand the sensitivity of a particular landscape and its location it is good practice to consider a range of criteria as set out in the table below.

The table below highlights the inherent sensitivities of this landscape to the development proposed, with reference to characteristics as described within NatureScot's 2019 *National Landscape Character Assessment* where relevant. Extracts from this document are included in italics.

Table B.1: Sensitivity of the Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes - Ross & Cromarty LCT

Factors affecting the sensitivity	Lower Sensitivity	Higher Sensitivity	Characteristics of local landscape at the Site	Sensitivity Rating
Physical				
Scale	Large scale featureless landscapes	Small to medium scale landscapes with some scaling features	The scale across the LCT varies. The upland areas to the north are of large scale, with panoramic views. The Site locality is more enclosed and of moderate scale.	Medium
Openness	Enclosed and sheltered landscapes	Open and exposed landscapes	The upland areas to the north of the Site are typically open and of large scale. The Site locality is very much more enclosed by tree cover and forestry.	Low
Landform	Smooth regular flowing, flat or uniform landscapes	Dramatic, rugged and complex landscapes	The landscape comprises *'Broad, rounded hills and upland moorlands with smooth, gentle slopes down to broad straths, creating an undulating skyline'*.	High/Medium
Land cover	Extensive areas of simple regular land cover (including farming and forestry)	Complex, intimate or mosaic cover	The local area around the Site is characterised by forestry, with nearby areas of farmland on the lower-lying areas, as well as moorland across upper slopes and summits to the north.	Medium
Complexity and patterns	Simple and sweeping lines, linear features and patterns	Complex or irregular patterns	The LCT incorporates a mix of *'large coniferous forests on accessible lower slopes'* as well as *'large areas of uniform moorland vegetation'* across the more elevated areas. In accordance with the undulating landform, this adds to the complexity of the landscape.	High/Medium
Built Environment	Contemporary masts, pylons, industrial elements, buildings infrastructure, settlements	Established, traditional or historic built character	The LCT is partly influenced by modern elements such as *'pylons, wind farms and reservoirs* [which] *occur as occasional features'.* In other areas the landscape exhibits more traditional / historic continuity.	Medium
Overall physical sensitivity				Medium

Factors affecting the sensitivity	Lower Sensitivity	Higher Sensitivity	Characteristics of local landscape at the Site	Sensitivity Rating
Perceptual				
Wildness / Sense of Remoteness	Busy evidence of human activity	Remote, peaceful or sense and tranquillity, solitude and emptiness	The upper slopes and summits within more central parts of the LCT are remote and exhibit 'vast scale with wildness characteristics'. However, the lower-lying southern edge of the LCT is influence by forestry and existing infrastructure including Corriemoillie Substation and associated OHL.	Medium
Perception of Change	Dynamic or modern landscapes	Ancient landscapes, designed landscapes or with obvious historical continuity	As above, built form in the Site locality incorporates existing contemporary elements in the form of substations, overhead power lines. However, the hills to the north are less settled.	Medium
Overall Perceptual Sensitivity				Medium
Visual				
Landscapes that form settings, skylines, backdrops, focal points	Generally low lying landscapes without distinctive landform or horizon	Areas with strong features, focal points that define the setting or skyline	The upper slopes and summits towards the north of the Site are visible on the skyline. However, the Site is located at the lower-lying southern edge of the LCT, well-below the horizon.	Low
Views intervisibility	Visually contained and have limited inward or outward views	Extensive views within or of the area with distant horizons.	The extent of surrounding forestry and tree cover limits potential views in the vicinity of the Site, which is reflected in the ZTV. However, views from areas of higher ground further north are expansive and encompass wider parts of Loch Luichart and the surrounding hillsides.	High/Medium
Overall Visual Sensitivity				Medium

Factors affecting the sensitivity	Lower Sensitivity	Higher Sensitivity	Characteristics of local landscape at the Site	Sensitivity Rating
Value				
Rarity	Commonplace	Rare	The Site is in an area of forestry, albeit the surrounding hillsides and loch increase the sense of uniqueness.	High/Medium
Designated scenic quality	No specific designation	National or regional designation	No landscape designations within the Study Area.	Low
Cultural associations	No specific cultural associations	Strong cultural association	Moderate associations within the Site locality, including Loch Luichart.	Medium
Amenity and recreation	Limited amenity function	Well used for amenity/recreation, especially for National trails or other long distance routes	There are very few promoted activities, locations or routes within the Study Area. Many areas provide very limited public access.	Medium/Low
Overall Value				Medium
Overall Sensitivity of the Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes - Ross & Cromarty LCT				**Medium**

Appendix C: LCT Descriptions

The following text describes the key characteristics of neighbouring LCTs within the Study Area, with reference to NatureScot's 2019 *National Landscape Character Assessment*.

Strath - Ross & Cromarty LCT

- *'Sinuous or curved channels with steep sides channelling through upland and mountainous landscapes.*
- *Wide flat strath floor at the coast or terminating water body, where the presence of water dominates.*
- *Narrowing channel inland, with a rising strath floor, terminating at a narrow glen or mountain pass.*
- *Meandering central river, becoming broad and braided at the lower end, terminating in wetlands and pebbly beaches.*
- *Abrupt change in topography from strath to slope emphasised by change from regular field patterns to forest, woodland and moorland.*
- *Riparian woodland and patches of native woodlands on the strath floor and lower slopes.*
- *Limited settlement, usually located at inland bridging points at the entrance to straths.*
- *Rural estate landscapes including broad, green, regular fields of pasture, large estate houses and associated features such as farm buildings, stone walls and policy woodlands.*
- *Occasional small linear crofting townships and small holdings on slopes adjoining the road access.*
- *Through-road along the strath length located on the edge of the strath floor.*
- *Historic land use evidence in abandoned 19th and early 20th Century settlements.*
- *Restricted views in upper reaches, channelled along the strath, contrasting with openness of the wide strath at the lower end, the latter enhanced by reflection of light on the sea or terminal loch.*
- *Intriguing views along curved straths which are enhanced on un-improved roads which closely follow the curving landform of the strath sides.'*

Rounded Rocky Hills - Ross & Cromarty LCT

- *'Moderate scale, well-defined hills with rounded and domed profiles, relatively steep sides and rocky moorland surface texture.*
- *Hills separated by low, curving glens, lochs and straths.*
- *High proportion of exposed, glaciated rock at upper levels, with perched lochans, bogs and burns.*
- *Mosaic of vegetation and variety of textures at lower levels consisting of heather, rough grassland, pockets of broad leaved woodland and regenerating trees, and coniferous forests.*
- *Rocky landform and low, moorland land cover contrasts with surrounding sheltered wooded glens and smoother moorlands.*
- *Low intensity land use and limited access contrasts with adjacent farmed plains and straths.*
- *Extensive views of adjoining plains, firths and mountains from higher levels.*

- *Occasional masts and pylons tend to be visually absorbed by rocky landforms and vegetation.*
- *Wild character in the south-west area, which is more remote and has few built structures.'*

Rounded Mountain Massif LCT

- *'High, broad-based, smooth sided, lobed mountains found in discrete groups set within, and sweeping down to, smooth, lower hills and high level straths and u-shaped valleys, giving a sense of grandeur.*
- *Well-defined summits with either a rounded or angular profile. Often both occur on the same summit where rounded tops have been sculpted by glacial activity into corries and cliff faces.*
- *Similar height to Rugged Mountain Massif – Ross & Cromarty, but appear lower due to their landform.*
- *Fresh snow lines disclose the true height of the mountains.*
- *Rugged or stony summits and extensive moorland groundcover.*
- *Strong relationship with adjoining Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes – Ross & Cromarty type which unifies the mountain groups into a vast landscape.*
- *Limited settlement, few footpaths or other structures, and little evidence of historic or current land use.*
- *Far reaching views from upper reaches to the mountains, plains and firths in adjacent areas.*
- *Vastness of the landscape due to simple lines of mountain profile, sweeping horizons, undifferentiated ground cover, and few man-made structures to indicate scale.*
- *Wild character over much of the area.'*

Appendix D: Landscape Figures