

TECHNICAL APPENDIX 8.9: APPRAISAL OF THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL'S CRITERIA FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF ONSHORE WIND PROPOSALS

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1. Technical Appendix 8.9: Appraisal of The Highland Council's Criteria for the Consideration of Onshore Wind Proposals

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 *The Highland Council Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance (OWESG)*¹ details The Highland Council (THC) policy and guidance on measures to be considered for the design and assessment of onshore wind farms. In relation to landscape and visual amenity it identifies ten criteria to be used by THC as a framework and focus for assessing proposals. This Appendix provides analysis of the Proposed Development in relation to these criteria.

1.1.2 The ten criteria are outlined in Table 1.1.1:

Table 1.1.1: OWESG Criteria for the Consideration of Onshore Wind Farm Proposals

Criterion	Threshold <i>"Development should seek to achieve a threshold where:"</i>
<p>Criterion 1. "Relationship between Settlements / Key locations and wider landscape respected."</p> <p><i>"The extent to which the proposal contributes to perception of settlements or key locations being encircled by wind energy development."</i></p>	<p><i>"Turbines are not visually prominent in the majority of views within or from settlements / Key Locations or from the majority of its access routes."</i></p>
<p>Criterion 2. "Key Gateway locations and routes are respected."</p> <p><i>"The extent to which the proposal reduces or detracts from the transitional experience of key Gateway Locations and routes."</i></p>	<p><i>"Wind Turbines or other infrastructure do not overwhelm or otherwise detract from landscape characteristics which contribute the distinctive transitional experience found at key gateway locations and routes."</i></p>
<p>Criterion 3. "Valued natural and cultural landmarks are respected"</p> <p><i>"The extent to which the proposal affects the fabric and setting of valued natural and cultural landmarks."</i></p>	<p><i>"The development does not, by its presence, diminish the prominence of the landmark or disrupt its relationship to its setting."</i></p>
<p>Criterion 4. "The amenity of key recreational routes and ways is respected."</p> <p><i>"The extent to which the proposal affects the amenity of key recreational routes and ways (e.g. Core Paths, Munros and Corbetts, Long Distance Routes etc.)"</i></p>	<p><i>"Wind Turbines or other infrastructure do not overwhelm or otherwise significantly detract from the visual appeal of key routes and ways."</i></p>

¹ The Highland Council. (2017). *Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance*. November 2016 (with addendum, December 2017).

<p>Criterion 5. "The amenity of transport routes is respected."</p> <p><i>"The extent to which the proposal affects the amenity of transport routes (tourist routes as well as rail, ferry routes and local road access)."</i></p>	<p><i>"Wind Turbines or other infrastructure do not overwhelm or otherwise significantly detract from the visual appeal of transport routes."</i></p>
<p>Criterion 6. "The existing pattern of Wind Energy Development is respected."</p> <p><i>"The degree to which the proposal fits with the existing pattern of nearby wind energy development, considerations include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Turbine height and proportions,</i> • <i>density and spacing of turbines within developments,</i> • <i>density and spacing of developments,</i> • <i>typical relationship of development to the landscape.</i> • <i>previously instituted mitigation measures</i> • <i>Planning Authority stated aims for development of area"</i> 	<p><i>"The proposal contributes positively to existing pattern or objectives for development in the area."</i></p>
<p>Criterion 7. "The need for separation between developments and / or clusters is respected."</p> <p><i>"The extent to which the proposal maintains or affects the spaces between existing developments and/or clusters."</i></p>	<p><i>"The proposal maintains appropriate and effective separation between developments and / or clusters"</i></p>
<p>Criterion 8. "The perception of landscape scale and distance is respected."</p> <p><i>"The extent to which the proposal maintains or affects receptors' existing perception of landscape scale and distance."</i></p>	<p><i>"The proposal maintains the apparent landscape scale and / or distance in the receptors' perception"</i></p>
<p>Criterion 9. "Landscape setting of nearby wind energy developments is respected."</p> <p><i>"The extent to which the landscape setting of nearby wind energy developments is affected by the proposal."</i></p>	<p><i>"Proposal relates well to the existing landscape setting and does not increase the perceived visual prominence of surrounding wind turbines."</i></p>
<p>Criterion 10. "Distinctiveness of Landscape character is respected."</p> <p><i>"The extent to which a proposal affects the distinction between neighbouring landscape character types, in areas where the variety of character is important to the appreciation of the landscape."</i></p>	<p><i>"Integrity and variety of Landscape Character Areas are maintained."</i></p>

- 1.1.3 An analysis of the Proposed Development in relation to these criteria is presented in section 1.3 of this Appendix.

Loch Ness Sensitivity Study

- 1.1.4 Section 5.2 of the OWESG also includes the *Loch Ness Landscape Sensitivity study* which identifies Key Views, Key Routes and Gateways as well as Landscape Character Area sensitivities and guidance. These aspects are considered in section 1.2 of this Appendix and feed into the analysis of the criteria.

1.2 Appraisal of Loch Ness Sensitivity Study**Key Views, Key Routes and Gateways**

- 1.2.1 Key Views, Key Routes and Gateways identified in the OWESG are detailed in Table 1.2.1, Table 1.2.2 and Table 1.2.3 which identify those of potential relevance to the Proposed Development and potential for effects.

Table 1.2.1: Appraisal of Key Views included in the Loch Ness Sensitivity Study

Key View (as noted in the OWESG: p39-41)	Appraisal	Potential Effects
Loch Ness West <i>"End-to-end views over Loch Ness looking southwest"</i>	The ZTV illustrates that there would be no view of the Proposed Development from Loch End, Aldourie Castle Designed Landscape and An Torr. The ZTV covers a very small part of the eastern edge of Dores Beach, where it is anticipated the Proposed Development would be barely perceptible, if at all. For receptors further south, in Dores, visual effects (assessed as R6 in the Appendix 8.6) would be negligible and locally negligible-minor (not significant).	No
Loch Ness East <i>"End-to-end Views over Loch ness looking Northeast"</i>	The ZTV shows that there would be no view of the Proposed Development from locations where this view can be obtained, in and around Fort Augustus.	No
Urquhart Castle from Loch <i>"Water-level views looking up at Castle"</i>	There would be some limited visibility of the Proposed Development from Loch Ness near Urquhart Castle, as illustrated by the area of ZTV cover near Drumnadrochit. From the loch, tips of the Proposed Development may be visible on the skyline (1-5 tips), but are likely to be barely perceptible and seen alongside turbines of the Operational Development. Turbine tips of the Proposed Development would be seen in a different part of the view from Urquhart Castle and would be unlikely to affect the focus or value of the castle in the view. This is illustrated in Figures 7.6 to 7.7 (Cultural Heritage Viewpoint 2 from Loch Ness). Views from the loch would be similar to views illustrated from VP 8 (Figures 8.16.1 to 8.16.4, as assessed in Appendix 8.6), where visual effects would be negligible (not significant). Views from boat routes on the Loch were scoped out of the detailed assessment due to the lack of potential for significant effects (see Appendix 8.2).	No
Urquhart Castle Land Based	There are few locations from which the Proposed Development would be seen in elevated views looking towards the castle	No

<p><i>"Generally elevated views looking towards the castle from above"</i></p>	<p>from above. For example, the ZTV illustrates there would be no views of the Proposed Development from the A82 above Urquhart Castle.</p> <p>From the A82 across Urquhart Bay, roadside trees would screen turbine tips of the Proposed Development, as well as Urquhart Castle.</p> <p>From elevated locations north of Drumnadrochit, Urquhart Castle is visible against a backdrop of water. This is illustrated from VP 4 (Figures 8.12.1 to 8.12.4, see also Appendix 8.6), where visual effects would be negligible-minor (not significant). The Proposed Development would be in a different part of the view to Urquhart Castle and would be unlikely to affect the focus or value of the castle in the view. It is not considered this would affect views looking towards the castle.</p>	
<p>Loch Ness from Urquhart Castle <i>"Views primarily towards the North east and Urquhart Bay"</i></p>	<p>The ZTV shows that there would be no view of the Proposed Development from Urquhart Castle or visitor centre.</p>	No
<p>Great Glen from Meall Fuar-mhonaidh <i>"Principal views are NE and SW up and down the Great Glen"</i></p>	<p>The Proposed Development would not be seen in the principal views north-east and south-west but would be seen in the western view, in close proximity, and in combination with the Operational Development.</p> <p>The Proposed Development viewed by receptors at the summit of Meall Fuar-Mhonaidh is assessed as VP 3 in Appendix 8.6, accompanied by Figure 8.11.1 to 8.11.4. Visual effects from this location would be minor-moderate (not significant).</p>	Yes, but not significant.
<p>Loch Tarff 'Local Hero' location View west-north-west from <i>"passing place east of Loch Tarff"</i></p>	<p>The ZTV shows that there would be no views of the Proposed Development from this location or in this view.</p> <p>It would be visible from a short section of road and passing places further west, next to Loch Tarff, but seen through a gap in the landform, with the Operational Development turbines. This would not affect appreciation of view recognised from 'Local Hero'.</p>	No
<p>A87 viewpoint above Loch Garry <i>"Panoramic views, easily accessible by tourists. Across Great Glen, east to the rolling uplands"</i></p>	<p>The ZTV shows that there would be no view of the Proposed Development from this location.</p>	No
<p>A887T Views west <i>"Not a 'point view' but a corridor from which the</i></p>	<p>The Proposed Development would not be visible in views west from this section of road.</p>	No

<i>sequence of westward views forms a significant transitional experience”, relevant to “views west from points west of Achlain”, which is situated in Glenmoriston.</i>		
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Table 1.2.2: Appraisal of Key Routes included in the Loch Ness Sensitivity Study

Key Route (as noted in the OWESG: p42-43)	Appraisal	Potential Effects
A82 T	Visual effects for receptors on the A82 are assessed in Appendix 8.6. Visual effects anticipated from the Proposed Development would be negligible (not significant).	No
B862 Stratherrick	Visual effects for receptors on the B862 are assessed in Appendix 8.6. Visual effects anticipated from the Proposed Development would be minor (not significant), considering the experience along the whole route. Significant visual effects are noted for receptors at some specific localised areas however (see VP 5, 7 and a few receptors in R13).	Yes, but localised effects and not significant for the route as a whole.
B851 Strathnairn and Loch Ness side	The ZTV indicates very limited theoretical visibility from the B851 but due to screening, distance, context and magnitude of change, visual effects would be unlikely to be significant (as noted in Appendix 8.2, whereby this route was scoped out of further detailed assessment).	No
A9 T	The ZTV indicates limited theoretical visibility from the A9 but due to screening, distance, context and magnitude of change, visual effects would be unlikely to be significant (as noted in Appendix 8.2, whereby this route was scoped out of further detailed assessment).	No
A833 Glen Convinth	Visual effects for receptors on the A833 are assessed in Appendix 8.6. Visual effects anticipated from the Proposed Development would be negligible (not significant).	No
A831 Glen Urquhart	The ZTV illustrates there would be no view of the Proposed Development from the A831 (as noted in Appendix 8.2).	No
A887 T Glen Moriston	Visual effects for receptors on the A887 are assessed in Appendix 8.6. Visual effects anticipated from the Proposed Development would be locally minor, elsewhere negligible during construction, and negligible during operation (not significant).	Yes, but not significant.

A87 above Loch Garry	The ZTV illustrates there would be no view of the Proposed Development from the A87 above Loch Garry.	No
B861 Tombreck – Inverness	The ZTV indicates some theoretical visibility from the B861 but due to distance, context and magnitude of change, visual effects would be unlikely to be significant (as noted in Appendix 8.2, whereby this route was scoped out of further detailed assessment).	No
B852 South Loch Ness shore	The ZTV indicates some theoretical visibility from the B852 but due to screening, context and magnitude of change, it would barely be visible and visual effects would be unlikely to be significant (as noted in Appendix 8.2, whereby this route was scoped out of further detailed assessment).	No
Dunain – Blackfold – Abriachan	The ZTV indicates theoretical visibility from the C1060 (Dunain – Blackfold – Abriachan) minor road. As noted in Appendix 8.2, this is not assessed individually as a route, but it is referenced within the assessment of the Great Glen Way, with which it overlaps for part of this long-distance route. It is also referenced in the assessment of residential grouping R5 (see Appendix 8.6) where visual effects would be locally minor, elsewhere negligible (not significant). VP 10 is also located on this section of road / Great Glen Way (see Figures 8.18.1 to 8.18.4 and Appendix 8.6) where visual effects would be minor (not significant).	Yes, but not significant.
Minor Road – Caiplich (UC1072)²	The ZTV indicates theoretical visibility from the C1072 (Abriachan – Foxhole) minor road. As noted in Appendix 8.2, this is not assessed individually as a route, but it is referenced within the assessment of residential grouping R5 (see Appendix 8.6) where visual effects would be locally minor, elsewhere negligible (not significant).	Yes, but not significant.
Minor Road – Bunloit	The ZTV illustrates there would be no view of the Proposed Development from the U1640 (Bunloit Road, Lewiston, Drumnadrochit) minor road (as noted in Appendix 8.2). This route is also part of the Great Glen Way, which is assessed in Appendix 8.6, due to visibility of the Proposed Development from other route sections.	No
Great Glen Way	Visual effects for receptors on the Great Glen Way are assessed in Appendix 8.6. Visual	Yes, but not significant

² It is suggested that the reference in the OWESG is to the C1072 road (Abriachan – Foxhole Road), rather than the UC1072.

	effects anticipated from the Proposed Development would be locally minor-moderate, elsewhere negligible (not significant).	
Great Glen Canoe Trail	The ZTV indicates there would be no visibility from the majority of the Great Glen Canoe Trail, but some very limited theoretical visibility, localised to two small sections of Loch Ness, near Invermoriston and near Drumnadrochit. Due to screening, context and magnitude of change, visual effects would be unlikely to be significant (as noted in Appendix 8.2, whereby this route was scoped out of further detailed assessment).	No
Caledonian Canal and lochs / open water	There would be some very limited visibility of the Proposed Development from lochs / open water, localised to two small sections of Loch Ness, near Invermoriston and near Drumnadrochit. Due to screening, context and magnitude of change, visual effects would be unlikely to be significant (as noted in Appendix 8.2, whereby these routes were scoped out of further detailed assessment).	No

Table 1.2.3: Appraisal of Gateways included in the Loch Ness Sensitivity Study

Gateway (as noted in the OWESG: p45-68)	Appraisal	Potential Effects
Glen Urquhart <i>"forms a transitional corridor, contributing to a gateway sense of arrival at Drumnadrochit, where the landform opens out ..."</i> (OWESG: p45) and <i>"Drumnadrochit – marking transition from LCA1 Wooded Glen, to Broad Wooded Glen"</i> (OWESG: p66)	There would be no view of the Proposed Development on arrival at Drumnadrochit and the Great Glen from Glen Urquhart. This gateway would therefore not be affected.	No
<i>"Transitional corridor between A887 and A87 at Bun Loyne Junction and Achlain"</i> where <i>"the sequence of westward views forms a significant transitional experience which cannot be pinpointed to one 'Gateway location'"</i> (OWESG: p46)	As noted in Table 1.2.1 relating to the 'A87T Views west', the Proposed Development would not be visible in views west from this corridor. However, in views looking north-east from the A87 at this junction, the Proposed Development would be visible. VP 26 illustrates views from a layby near this junction (see Appendix 8.6 and Figures 8.34.1 to 8.34.4), where visual effects would be minor (not significant).	No, not in westward views.

<p><i>"A87 - above Loch Loyne"</i> (OWESG: p49 and 67)</p>	<p>The Proposed Development would be visible from the A87 to the north of Loch Loyne, near Bun Loyne. Visual effects for receptors on the A87 are assessed in Appendix 8.6, where visual effects would be locally minor, elsewhere negligible (not significant). Visual effects are also assessed for receptors at VP 26, from a layby on the A887 at Bun Loyne (see Appendix 8.6 and Figures 8.34.1 to 8.34.4), where visual effects would be minor (not significant).</p>	<p>Yes, but not significant.</p>
<p><i>"A9 at Inshes: Sense of arrival at Inner Moray Firth and Inverness"</i> (OWESG: p52)</p>	<p>Although there is theoretical visibility from the A9 east of Inshes, due to screening from buildings, there would be no view of the Proposed Development from this location.</p>	<p>No</p>
<p><i>"Abriachan – marks approximate transition of the higher ground of the Aird to the Great Glen when travelling south-east"</i> (OWESG: p53)</p>	<p>The ZTV illustrates no theoretical visibility at Abriachan or the route travelling south-east into the Great Glen.</p> <p>Although not specifically referenced in the OWESG, it may be worth noting that the ZTV illustrates theoretical visibility to the north-west of Abriachan (assessed in Appendix 8.6 within residential grouping R5), where could be interpreted to form part of this gateway experience. Visual effects for this grouping would be locally minor, elsewhere negligible (not significant).</p> <p>As such, it is unlikely that the limited and distant tips visible to the south-west would affect the sense of gateway to the south-east.</p>	<p>No</p>
<p><i>"Moniack Mhor – locally significant gateway area where views open out towards Beaully strath"</i> (OWESG: p53 and 64)</p>	<p>There would be no view of the Proposed Development from this location.</p>	<p>No</p>
<p><i>"Loch Dochfour – marking transition between lochside landscapes and LCA7, Rolling Farmland and Woodland"</i> (OWESG: p66)</p>	<p>There would be no view of the Proposed Development from this location.</p>	<p>No</p>
<p><i>"Invermoriston – marking transition from LCA2 Wooded Glen, to Broad Wooded Glen"</i> (OWESG: p66)</p>	<p>The ZTV illustrates theoretical visibility of the the Proposed Development from Invermoriston, but as described in the assessment of R1 (see Appendix 8.7), visual effects would be negligible (not significant).</p>	<p>No</p>
<p><i>"Fort Augustus – arrival at Loch Ness from south"</i> (OWESG: p66)</p>	<p>There would be no view of the Proposed Development from Fort Augustus.</p>	<p>No</p>
<p><i>"Dores – arrival at Loch Ness from Inverness"</i></p>	<p>The ZTV illustrates some limited theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development from Dores, but not from the B862 between Dores and Inverness. Visual effects from Dores</p>	<p>No</p>

<i>hinterland</i> " (OWESG: p66)	(assessed as R6 in Appendix 8.6) would be negligible and locally negligible-minor (not significant). Given the minimal localised effect that would be experienced by receptors in Dores (largely from a few properties with open views of the water), it is not considered that there would be potential effects on Dores as a gateway location for receptors arriving at Loch Ness.	
<i>"Invergarry – transition into great glen from Glen Garry"</i> (OWESG: p66 and 67)	There would be no view of the Proposed Development from Invergarry.	No

Landscape Character Guidance

1.2.2 The Loch Ness Landscape Sensitivity study contained within the OWESG identifies sensitivities of landscapes around Loch Ness to wind farm development and provides guidance for their siting. The Proposed Development would be located within OWESG Landscape Character Area (LCA) LN10: *Separation of Glen Urquhart and Glen Moriston, Rocky Moorland Plateau*. This area is identified (OWESG: p57) as having:

- *"No scope for small or medium turbines"*
- *"Limited scope for Micro turbines where closely associated with buildings"*
- *"Limited scope for ... Additional Large turbines within the existing pattern"*

1.2.3 The following recommendations (OWESG: p57) are provided for the siting of wind turbines within this LCA:

"Turbines should

- *Be set back from Key Routes*
- *Preserve mitigation established by current schemes*
- *Maintain the landscape setting of each existing scheme.*
- *Respect spacing and scale of existing development pattern.*
- *Minimise visual confusion from higher ground to the west and north and with Meall Fuar-mhonaidh"*

1.2.4 This LCA (OWESG LCA LN10) is assessed in the LVIA as National Landscape Character Type (LCT) 222: Rocky Moorland Plateau – Inverness (see Table 1.2.3 of Appendix 8.5 and Figure 8.4.3). The assessment has concluded that the landscape effect to this area would be generally **minor** (not significant), but that there would be a **localised minor-moderate** (not significant) landscape effect relating to direct effects and indirect effects close to the Proposed Development. During construction, this would relate to construction activities in and around the site itself; and during operation, this would relate to turbines becoming more prominent, typically in the localised area to the north-east of the Proposed Development.

1.2.5 The recommendations in the OWESG have particular significance for landscape and visual effects within the Great Glen Area, and hills on its western edge, such as Meall Fuar-mhonaidh. This area is mostly covered by the assessment for LCT 225 – Broad Steep-sided Glen (included in OWESG as LCA LN19) (see Table 1.2.5 of Appendix 8.5 and Figure 8.4.3) and LCT 226 – Wooded Glen – Inverness (included in OWESG as LCA LN2) (see Table 1.2.6

of Appendix 8.5). For these two areas, the assessment has concluded that the landscape effect associated with the Proposed Development would not be significant and for the most part would be **negligible**. For LCT 225, there would also be **locally minor** (not significant) landscape effects for elevated areas on the eastern shore, south of Dores; and for LCT 226, there would be **locally negligible-minor** (not significant) landscape effects in Glen Moriston.

1.2.6 Analysis of the recommendations for siting wind turbines is provided in Table 1.2.4.

Table 1.2.4: Analysis of Recommendations for Siting Turbines in OWESG LCA LN10

OWESG Recommendation	Analysis
<p><i>“Be set back from Key Routes”</i></p>	<p>The Proposed Development is not located close to the majority of OWESG Key Routes (as summarised in Table 1.2.2).</p> <p>The closest OWESG Key Routes to the Proposed Development are the Great Glen Way, the A887 and the A82.</p> <p>For receptors on the Great Glen Way, the nearest theoretically visible turbine may be around 3.5-4km from the route at its closest: from the section north-east of Invermoriston, north to Allt Saigh watercourse (a stretch of around 2.8km). Between 2-6 new turbines would be visible from most of this section, and 8-16 new turbines from a shorter section near Meall Doire Bhrath (around 700m). For the majority of this whole section, the Operational Development turbines would also be visible and both would be seen on the skyline, behind a ridgeline for the most part. Visual effects for receptors on the Great Glen Way (as assessed in Appendix 8.6) would be locally minor-moderate, elsewhere negligible (not significant). So, although the Proposed Development turbines would be noticeable in close proximity from this section of the Great Glen Way, their effect is not considered to be significant as they would be experienced with the Operational Development, largely behind a ridgeline.</p> <p>For receptors on the A887, the nearest theoretically visible turbine may be around 3.2-3.7km from the route, at its closest points: from just west of Invermoriston and by Bhlaraidh properties. Where visible from the A887, the Proposed Development would be seen as blades and potentially some hubs on the skyline, but in the context of the Operational Development and not noticeably changing the perceived distance from wind development. Landform and trees would screen the majority of views. This is reflected in the assessment for receptors on the A887, and receptors in residential groupings at Invermoriston (R1) and Bhlaraidh (R2), which anticipates negligible (not significant) visual effects (see Appendix 8.6). For the receptors on the A887, locally minor (not significant) visual effects would occur during construction since access for the Proposed Development would also be situated on this road.</p> <p>For receptors on the A82, the nearest theoretically visible turbine may be around 4.8km from the route, at its closest: from Invermoriston. Visual effects for receptors on the A82 and in Invermoriston (R1) (as assessed in Appendix 8.6) would be negligible (not significant).</p> <p>Therefore, although the Proposed Development would be in close proximity to some of the OWESG Key Routes, significant visual effects are not anticipated. Turbines would be closer to receptors</p>

	<p>on some routes, such as the Great Glen Way, but seen in the context of the Operational Development turbines and with a degree of separation afforded by landform.</p>
<p><i>“Preserve mitigation established by current schemes”</i></p>	<p>The Proposed Development would be located adjacent to the Operational Development, set back within the interior of an upland plateau area of rocky moorland. As illustrated in Figure 8.8.5, this location and layout has led to a broadly similar pattern of theoretical visibility within the area, whereby the landform on the whole limits the intrusion of the Proposed Development and reduces the extent of significant adverse landscape and visual effects.</p> <p>Some areas of ‘new’ visibility would be introduced but, as illustrated at VPs 4 and 6 (see Appendix 8.6), significant effects are not anticipated for these areas.</p> <p>Some of the Proposed Development turbines would be located in areas where turbines were previously removed for the Operational Development for mitigation purposes at the time, for example, in order to minimise effects on receptors at Meall Fuar-mhonaidh (VP 3), Suidhe Viewpoint (VP 5) and from Loch Ness (Cultural Heritage VP 2); and reduce perceived stacking from Meall Mòr (VP 11), as described in THC (2012)³. These have been key design considerations in the evolution of the Proposed Development, alongside other constraints and influencing factors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For receptors at VP 3, a non-significant visual effect (minor-moderate) is anticipated (as described in Appendix 8.6). The design evolution of the Proposed Development is successful in minimising significant effects and has maximised the distance between the turbines and this summit viewpoint to minimise encroachment towards the viewer and perceptible contain the Operational and Proposed Development turbines by landform, as far as possible. - For receptors at VP 5, a significant visual effect (moderate) is anticipated, but a relatively balanced layout of an even vertical extent has been achieved that minimises its extent along the skyline, as far as possible, and is clearly associated / clustered with the Operational Development, leading to a cohesive grouping in part of the overall panoramic view. As noted in Appendix 8.6, the part of the view affected by the Proposed Development is not perceived to be the main focus on this view, which is to the north-east over Loch Ness. - For receptors on Loch Ness, a non-significant visual effect is anticipated (as described in Appendix 8.2), and illustrated in Cultural Heritage Viewpoint 2 (Figures 7.6 to 7.7). These would be similar, if not to a lesser degree, to views from VP 8 (Figures 8.16.1 to 8.16.4) whereby negligible (not significant) effects are anticipated.

³ The Highland Council. (2012). 12/02556/S36 – APPENDIX A AMENDMENTS REQUIRED TO BHLARAIDH WIND FARM PRIOR TO ANY CONSENT BEING GRANTED and 12/02556/S36 – APPENDIX B SUGGESTED CONDITIONS FOR BHLARAIDH WIND FARM, in the Letter from David Baldwin, Development Management Planner, THC on 17 December 2012, addressed to Debbie Flaherty, Energy Consents Unit, Energy and Climate Change Directorate, The Scottish Government.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For receptors at VP 11, whilst the Proposed Development turbines would be relatively tightly clustered, turbines 5 and 13 would be stacked (see Figure 8.19.3). However, this would be a barely perceptible feature of the design, particularly when considered within the wider landscape context (see Figure 8.19.4), whereby the Proposed Development would occupy a relatively small part of the overall view, at 14.6km from the nearest (theoretically) visible turbine. As described in Appendix 8.6, visual effects would be negligible-minor (not significant). <p>It is considered that the Proposed Development still largely adheres to the principles of these mitigation measures since it leads to very few long term significant effects which are localised to an area to the east of Loch Ness.</p> <p>During the design development of the Operational Development, turbines were sited to minimise effects from Invermoriston, Loch Ness, Glen Urquhart, as well as other LVIA constraints, and other disciplines. The layout of the Proposed Development has also followed these principles, as well as minimising effects on other sensitive visual receptor locations and landscape areas. Mitigation through siting and design is discussed further in Section 8.7 of Chapter 8.</p> <p>In considering “<i>mitigation established by existing schemes</i>”, it is also important to recognise that the baseline context for the LVIA (and CLVIA) for the Proposed Development differs to the baseline context when the Operational Development was assessed, both in terms of wind development as well as other aspects of the landscape and visual context, such as electrical transmission infrastructure, substation development, changes to forestry and settlements and receptor locations. It is therefore difficult to fully compare ‘mitigation’ for different schemes in this regard, since landscape and visual sensitivity and susceptibility differ with the baseline and the effects of the Proposed Development have been evaluated and assessed in relation to the baseline context at the time of this assessment, which features the Operational Development, other wind developments and landscape features, as established features within the landscape. Therefore, given the different landscape and visual baseline context, it may not always be suitable or possible to preserve “<i>mitigation established by existing schemes</i>”.</p>
<p><i>“Maintain the landscape setting of each existing scheme”</i></p>	<p>The Proposed Development would be located next to the Operational Development and within the same landscape character area. It is considered that this would not adversely affect the setting of the Operational Development as it would form a cohesive group with the existing wind farm when seen from almost all locations and would generally not lead to any significant increase in landscape and visual effect, other than from a few positions on the eastern side of Loch Ness (described in Appendix 8.6 from VPs 5, 7 and localised parts of R13).</p>
<p><i>“Respect spacing and scale of existing development pattern.”</i></p>	<p>Given its location adjacent to the Operational Development, setback into the interior of the upland plateau area, the Proposed Development would maintain the existing distribution of wind farm groupings within the landscape and reflect the pattern of existing wind development clusters, particularly when viewed from the Great Glen where the existing influence of wind farms to the west</p>

	<p>of Loch Ness comprises turbines of the Operational Development seen on the skyline.</p> <p>The spacing of the turbines within the Proposed Development would be largely similar to those of the Operational Development, and other wind developments and has been designed to achieve a balanced and compact layout, which minimises overlapping/stacking from key views, such as VP 3 and 5.</p> <p>From several locations, the scale of the Proposed Development turbines would be perceived to be similar to those of the Operational Development (such as those illustrated from VPs 1, 11, 14, 21) and other wind development in the landscape context. From some locations, the scale difference would be perceptible, to varying degrees, and often in a context where other wind developments of varying scales would be experienced within the landscape and visual context.</p> <p>Therefore, whilst from some locations, a scale difference between the existing and proposed turbines may be perceptible, on balance the scheme fits within the existing development pattern and is perceived to be a cohesive design from the majority of locations.</p>
<p><i>“Minimise visual confusion from higher ground to the west and north and with Meall Fuar-mhonaidh”</i></p>	<p><i>“Higher ground to the west and north”</i> of this area (LCA LN10 / LCT 222 – Rocky Moorland Plateau – Inverness) that is covered by the ZTV for the Proposed Development includes summits and elevated areas north and south of Glen Affric (see VPs 20, 21, 11), high ground north of Glen Shiel (see VP 13), and elevated areas north of Glens Strathfarrar (see VP 22), Urquhart and Cannich. Visual effects for receptors at VPs in these locations (see Appendix 8.6) would range between negligible and negligible-minor (not significant), whereby it is not considered that the Proposed Development would lead to <i>“visual confusion”</i> given its visual association and grouping with the Operational Development.</p> <p>From some locations, the Proposed Development would be visible with Meall Fuar-mhonaidh. However, as described in the assessment of effects on the Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA (see Table 1.3.1 of Appendix 8.4), the Proposed Development would not affect the focal point landmark and setting of Meall Fuar-mhonaidh when seen from other parts of the SLA (see in particular VPs 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 17) as well as the wider landscape. It would therefore not be considered to lead to <i>“visual confusion”</i> with Meall Fuar-mhonaidh.</p> <p>Furthermore, it would not be perceived to lead to <i>“visual confusion”</i> from Meall Fuar-mhonaidh either, as shown in Figure 8.11.4, given the clustering of turbines as a cohesive unit within one part of the view and balanced spread of turbines, which does not affect the appreciation of the Great Glen or other parts of the landscape in other directions.</p>

1.3 Analysis of Criteria

Criterion 1. Relationship between Settlements / Key locations and wider landscape are respected.

1.3.1 The Proposed Development would not be visible from the majority of the main settlements within the study area, as described in Appendix 8.2. Where visible, from residential areas, it is considered unlikely to lead to many significant visual effects,

although some significant visual effects are anticipated for a small number of visual receptors in scattered properties to the east of Loch Ness (grouping R13).

- 1.3.2 There would be no effect or very minimal effects from most 'key' locations highlighted in the OWESG (Key Views, Key Routes and Gateways detailed in Table 1.2.1, Table 1.2.2 and Table 1.2.3). Visual effects would be experienced by receptors in a few 'key' OWESG locations, but these would not be significant and many would be localised and minimal. These would include from the Great Glen from Meall Fuar-mhonaidh; the B862 Stratherrick (for the route as a whole), the A887 T Glen Moriston, the C1060 (Dunain-Blackfold-Abriachan) minor road, the C1072 (Abriachan-Foxhole) road, the Great Glen Way and the A87 above Loch Loyne.
- 1.3.3 It is therefore concluded the threshold for this criterion would not be exceeded by the Proposed Development, since it would not be *"visually prominent in the majority of views within or from settlements / Key Locations or from the majority of its access routes"*.

Criterion 2. "Key Gateway locations and routes are respected"

- 1.3.4 The majority of Key Gateway locations and routes would not be affected by the Proposed Development.
- 1.3.5 As detailed in Table 1.2.2 there would be some degree of visual effect on a small number of the Key Routes, including the B862 Stratherrick (as a whole), the A887 T Glen Moriston, the C1060 (Dunain – lackfold – Abriachan) minor road, the C1072 (Abriachan – Foxhole) minor road and the Great Glen Way but these effects would not be significant. Significant visual effects would be anticipated for receptors at points on the B862 Stratherrick (at VP 5 and 7), but these would be specific to these localised points and effects on the overall visual experience of the route would not be significant.
- 1.3.6 As detailed in Table 1.2.3, only one of the Key Gateways would be potentially affected by the Proposed Development: A87 – above Loch Loyne, where effects would not be significant. This effect is represented by VP 26 (see Appendix 8.6 and Figures 8.34.1 to 8.34.4).
- 1.3.7 It is therefore concluded that the threshold for this criterion would not be exceeded by the Proposed Development, because it would not *"overwhelm or otherwise detract from landscape characteristics which contribute the distinctive transitional experience found at key gateway locations and routes"*.

Criterion 3. Valued natural and cultural landmarks are respected

- 1.3.8 Valued natural landmarks referred to under this criterion are considered to comprise geological features such as the Great Glen, key landmarks within the landscape such as Meall Fuar-mhonaidh, and important lochs such as Loch Ness, Loch Oich and Loch Lochy and other features which comprise the Special Qualities of designated landscapes. Valued cultural landmarks are considered to comprise important and popular cultural sites such as Urquhart Castle, and other designated cultural heritage sites.
- 1.3.9 It is considered that the Proposed Development would not diminish the prominence or disrupt the setting to any natural or cultural heritage landmarks. Key landmarks within the Great Glen (such as Urquhart Castle viewed from Loch Ness or land based viewpoints, Meall Fuar-mhonaidh viewed from the Great Glen, and the Great Glen viewed from Meall Fuar-mhonaidh) would not be affected, as detailed in Table 1.2.1. There would be no significant effects to the setting of any cultural heritage sites (see Chapter 7).

- 1.3.10 It is therefore concluded that the threshold for this criterion would not be exceeded by the Proposed Development since it *“does not, by its presence, diminish the prominence of the landmark or disrupt its relationship to its setting”*.

Criterion 4. The amenity of key recreational routes and ways is respected

- 1.3.11 The Proposed Development would not lead to any significant effects on any of the recreational Key Routes identified in the OWESG.
- 1.3.12 The visual assessment has identified that visual effects for receptors on the Great Glen Way (which also overlaps the C1060 Dunain – Blackfold – Abriachan minor road) would be **locally minor-moderate** and **elsewhere negligible** (described in Appendix 8.6), where it would be seen with the Operational Development. Effects would be localised in particular to the section north-east of Invermoriston and open parts of the C1060 road near VP 1 (see Figures 8.18.1 to 8.18.4) but would not be significant.
- 1.3.13 It is considered that the threshold for this criterion would not be exceeded, because the Proposed Development would *“not overwhelm or otherwise significantly detract from the visual appeal of key routes and ways”*. This is also considered the case for other hill summits and recreational routes assessed in the LVIA, particularly given the baseline context of existing wind development, whereby wind turbines are an accepted part of the visual landscape from key routes and ways, and the addition of the Proposed Development would not significantly change the experience from these routes and locations.

Criterion 5. The amenity of transport routes is respected

- 1.3.14 As detailed in Table 1.2.2, the majority of Key Routes would not be affected by the Proposed Development. There would be some degree of visual effect on a small number of the Key Routes, such as the B862 Stratherrick (for the route as a whole), the A887 T Glen Moriston, the C1060 (Dunain – Blackfold – Abriachan) minor road and the C1072 (Abriachan – Foxhole) minor road A87 but these effects would not be significant and effects would be localised.
- 1.3.15 It is therefore considered that the threshold for this criterion would not be exceeded since the Proposed Development would not *“overwhelm or otherwise significantly detract from the visual appeal of transport routes.”*

Criterion 6. The existing pattern of Wind Energy Development is respected

- 1.3.16 This criterion (p19) cites the following considerations to be taken into account:
- *“Turbine height and proportions,*
 - *density and spacing of turbines within developments,*
 - *density and spacing of developments,*
 - *typical relationship of development to the landscape.*
 - *previously instituted mitigation measures*
 - *Planning Authority stated aims for development of area”*
- 1.3.17 As detailed in Table 1.2.4, given its location adjacent to the Operational Development, set back into the interior of the upland plateau area, the Proposed Development would maintain the existing distribution of wind farm groupings within the landscape and reflect the pattern of existing wind development clusters, particularly when viewed from the

Great Glen where the existing influence of wind farms to the west of Loch Ness comprises turbines of the Operational Development seen on the skyline.

- 1.3.18 The spacing of the turbines within the Proposed Development would be largely similar to those of the Operational Development, and other wind developments and has been designed to achieve a balanced and compact layout, which minimises overlapping/stacking from key views, such as VPs 3 and 5.
- 1.3.19 From several locations, the scale of the Proposed Development turbines would be perceived to be similar to those of the Operational Development (such as those illustrated from VPs 1, 11, 14, 21) and other wind development in the landscape context. From some locations, the scale difference would be perceptible, to varying degrees, and often in a context where other wind developments of varying scales would be experienced within the landscape and visual context.
- 1.3.20 Therefore, whilst from some locations, a scale difference between the existing and proposed turbines may be perceptible, on balance the scheme fits within the existing development pattern and is perceived to be a cohesive design from the majority of locations.
- 1.3.21 It is therefore considered that the threshold for this criterion would not be exceeded, as it is considered that the Proposed Development forms a well-located wind farm site which enables the generation of renewable energy with the minimum of significant landscape and visual effects. The Proposed Development respects the pattern of existing development with the Rolling Moorland Plateau – Inverness LCT (OWESG LCA LN10) and the objectives laid out for this area (as detailed in Table 1.2.4), as well as previously instituted mitigation measures for the Operational Development.

Criterion 7. The need for separation between developments and / or clusters is respected

- 1.3.22 As detailed in Table 1.2.4, the Proposed Development would be located adjacent to the Operational Development and would appear as a cohesive grouping with these existing turbines. Both would be set back within the interior of an upland plateau of rocky moorland and would maintain a strong landscape buffer between the nearest existing wind development of Corrimony, to the north (see Figure 8.7.2). The existing pattern of development clusters and open spaces would therefore be maintained, particularly when seen from the Great Glen area, as well as other parts of the landscape.
- 1.3.23 It is therefore considered that the threshold for this criterion would not be exceeded by the Proposed Development.

Criterion 8. The perception of landscape scale and distance is respected

- 1.3.24 The Proposed Development would be formed of slightly larger turbines than those of the Operational Development, to which it would be adjacent. This difference in scale may be perceived from a relatively small number of VPs and landscape areas close to the Proposed Development, and from some VPs the larger turbines may appear to bring turbines slightly closer to the viewer. This may slightly reduce a perceived scale of the landscape in some locations which would contribute to landscape and visual effects. However, it would not affect the overriding perception of expansive scale within the landscape and would be only a small contributory factor to any of the limited non-significant effects which are experienced. This effect would not be experienced from any

of the Key Views (see Table 1.2.1), Key Routes as a whole (see Table 1.2.2) or Gateways (see Table 1.2.3). Localised significant visual effects would be anticipated for points on the B862, however.

- 1.3.25 It is therefore considered that the threshold for this criterion would not be exceeded by the Proposed Development because the apparent landscape scale and distance perceived by receptors is likely to be maintained.

Criterion 9. Landscape setting of nearby wind energy developments is respected

- 1.3.26 As detailed in Table 1.2.4, the Proposed Development would be located adjacent to the Operational Development and within the interior of the upland plateau area which limits the extent of visibility. It is considered that this would not adversely affect the setting of the Operational Development as it would form a cohesive group with this existing wind farms when seen from almost all locations and would generally not lead to any significant increase in landscape and visual effect, other than from a few positions.
- 1.3.27 The Proposed Development would not encroach on any other existing wind energy developments and would therefore not be detrimental to the setting of these.
- 1.3.28 Overall, it is considered that the threshold for this criterion would not be exceeded because the design and layout of the Proposed Development respects the original design objectives of the Operational Development and does not adversely affect the setting of any other site.

Criterion 10. Distinctiveness of Landscape character is respected

- 1.3.29 The Proposed Development is anticipated to lead to some localised effects on landscape character (described in Appendix 8.5 and summarised in Section 8.11 of Chapter 8), none of which would be significant.
- 1.3.30 These localised effects would occur within adjacent, nearby or similar upland LCTs where existing wind energy development is already a characteristic of parts of the landscape and the wider effect on these LCTs is therefore considered to be not significant. Surrounding LCTs would also not be significantly affected and the complexity and variety of landscape character experienced within the study area would therefore be retained.
- 1.3.31 It is therefore considered that the threshold for this criterion would not be exceeded by the Proposed Development.

1.4 Summary and Conclusions

- 1.4.1 The analysis of the THC criteria for the consideration of onshore wind farm proposals has taken account of the anticipated landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Development detailed in Chapter 8 of the EIA Report, and in particular, the effects on the Key Views, Key Routes and Gateways identified in the OWESG, and the recommendations for OWESG LCA LN10 (LCT 222: Rocky Moorland Plateau – Inverness) included in the Loch Ness Landscape Sensitivity study. This has concluded that there would be no significant effect on any of the Key Views, Key Routes or Gateways, that the layout and design of the Proposed Development is broadly in line with the LCA LN10 recommendations and that the landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Development, although locally significant for some visual receptors would not lead to the threshold for any of the ten THC criteria being exceeded.

- 1.4.2 The Proposed Development is therefore considered to be in broad conformity with THC's criteria for the consideration of onshore wind farm proposals.