

Chapter 9: Visual Amenity

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Glossary of Terms

Baseline	The current, pre-construction condition against which a development proposal is assessed.
Cumulative Assessment	The assessment of effects which may occur where more than one development of a particular type combine to create a greater level of effect.
Effect	The change resulting from the action taking place.
Highland-wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP)	Forms the basis for spatial planning within the Highland Council area as a whole.
Impact	The action being taken which may lead to an effect.
Landscape Assessment	The assessment of the degree and significance of potential changes to landscape character and value resulting from a development.
Magnitude of change	The degree to which a development may alter the appearance of the existing view. Consideration is given to factors such as the scale or extent of changes within the view, the extent to which this may alter the composition or focus of the view and the duration and reversibility of these changes.
Professional Judgement	The informed view of a qualified and experienced professional (Chartered Landscape Professional).
Scoping Opinion	The written opinion of the determining authority as to the scope and level of detail of information to be provided in an EIA report.
Scottish Planning Policy (SPP)	Sets out national planning policies which reflect Scottish Ministers' priorities for operation of the planning system and for the development and use of land.
Significant Effects	Effects deemed to be significant in relation to the EIA Regulations.
SNH (Scottish Natural Heritage)	The body responsible for promoting, caring for and improving natural heritage in Scotland, and advising Government on natural heritage issues.
Study Area	A defined area within which the assessment has been undertaken – taken to be the area in which it is considered that significant effects may occur.
THC (The Highland Council)	The local authority and planning authority.
Third National Planning Framework for Scotland (NPF3)	Sets the context for development planning in Scotland and provides a framework for the spatial development of Scotland as a whole.
Visual Assessment	The assessment of the degree and significance of potential changes within views obtained by members of the public.
Visual Receptors	Those with the potential to obtain a view of the proposed development.
Visual Sensitivity	The degree to which the viewer is sensitive to the proposed change in the view: considers the value of the existing view to the viewer and the scale and nature of potential change.
West Highland and Islands Proposed Local Development Plan (proposed WestPlan)	More detailed Local Development Plan for the West Highlands and Islands area which focuses on where development should and should not occur in the West Highland and Islands area over the next 20 years. As yet un-adopted.
The West Highland and Islands Local Development Plan (WHILP), 2012	Detailed Local Development Plan for the West Highlands and Islands. Superseded by the HwLDP but remains in force in some areas, primarily spatial planning within settlement boundaries. Will be superseded by the proposed WestPlan once adopted.

Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)	A computer generated diagram which uses a 3d terrain model to indicate areas from which a development would theoretically be visible.
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9 Visual Amenity

9.1 Executive Summary

9.1.1 A detailed visual amenity assessment has been undertaken for The Proposed Development. The assessment has considered the degree and significance of potential changes to views from properties, routes and locally popular vantage points and has also considered the potential for cumulative visual effects to occur.

Predicted Visual Effects

9.1.2 During construction, a number of significant visual effects would be expected from The Proposed Development. Significant effects are anticipated to views from nine of thirty-five built properties / property groups, two out of four transport routes, five of eight footpaths or walking routes and six out of ten other outdoor locations included within the assessment. These effects would be predominantly localised, usually within around 1 km of The Proposed Development, with none more than 2.5 km distant. Effects are primarily anticipated in relation to views of either the upper or lower reservoir works and associated road or track construction, upgrading and use, with users of a small number of walking routes potentially obtaining views of both areas during the course of their walk.

9.1.3 During operation, the majority of these effects are anticipated to reduce to a non-significant level. However, a small number of significant effects are anticipated during the operational phase of The Proposed Development. These would be localised to views of the dam and upper reservoir area and are anticipated to effect views from mountain summits and ridges of Ben Tee and Sròn a' Choire Ghairbh which enclose Coire Glas and the walking routes used to approach these locations.

Cumulative Effects

9.1.4 The assessment has identified that there would be few other features within the surrounding landscape with which The Proposed Development would be likely to be viewed in combination. Whilst some cumulative effects may occur as a result of other activities during the construction of The Proposed Development, no significant short or long term cumulative effects are considered likely.

9.2 Introduction

9.2.1 This Chapter details the findings of the detailed visual assessment undertaken for The Proposed Development. It describes and evaluates the potential change in existing views obtained from residential properties, places of work, routes, popular destinations and strategic viewpoints during the construction and operational phases of The Proposed Development, and the extent to which these affect residents, visitors and users of the landscape.

Potential Effects

9.2.2 Visual amenity relates to the way in which people visually experience the surrounding landscape. Adverse visual effects may occur through the intrusion into established views of new features, out of keeping with the existing structure, scale and composition of the view. However, visual effects may also be beneficial where an attractive focus is created in

a previously unremarkable view or the influence of previously detracting features is reduced. The significance of effects will vary, depending on the nature and degree of change experienced and the perceived value and composition of the existing view.

9.2.3 In the context of The Proposed Development, key concerns relate to:

- The appearance of construction activities and permanent scheme components in views from buildings; and
- The appearance of construction activities and permanent scheme components in views from roads and established recreational routes and popular public viewing locations.

9.2.4 The assessment has been undertaken by ASH design + assessment Ltd.

9.2.5 This chapter should be read in conjunction with Chapter 8: Landscape Character.

9.3 Scope of Assessment

Study Area

Defining the Zone of Theoretical Visibility

9.3.1 The ZTV is a computer generated diagram which uses a terrain model to indicate areas from which The Proposed Development would theoretically be visible. The ZTV for The Proposed Development was generated using ArcGIS software based on a terrain modelled using Ordnance Survey (OS) T5 DTM data. The ZTV was produced from points representing the operational height of the key built elements of the scheme as follows:

- Dam: points located at 50 m intervals along the length of the dam at crest height – 560 m AOD;
- Intake tower: points located at the four corners of this structure at 574 m AOD (the dam was added to the terrain model for this ZTV as it would screen this structure from some areas);
- Surge shaft: 3 m above existing ground level to represent any potential surrounding land form or barrier; and
- Administration building: points located at the outer corners of the building at 11 m above proposed ground level.

9.3.2 The ZTVs for the key elements listed above are shown on Figure 8.1.

9.3.3 Whilst the ZTV is a useful tool for the identification of potential effects, it is not indicative of an effect in itself. The ZTV is generated over a bare ground terrain model and does not take into account the potential screening effects of localised features, buildings or vegetation or reduction in perceptibility over distance. Nor does it give indication of the way in which a development may relate to its broader landscape context.

Defining the Study Area

9.3.4 The study area for the visual assessment has been identified with the aid of ZTV diagrams, and initial site survey and comprises all areas within which any significant effects would be

expected to occur. The study area stretches north-east along the Great Glen as far as Aberchalder at the northern end of Loch Oich, and south-west to Invergloy. To the north-west and south-east the edges of the study area run parallel to the Great Glen; approximately 5 km to the south-east and 7.5 km to the north-west. For consistency, this study area has been used for both the landscape and visual assessments (see Chapter 8: Landscape Character).

Scoping and Consultation

9.3.5 The Scoping Opinion and other pre-application consultation for The Proposed Development has identified key issues to be given consideration within the assessment. These are outlined in Table 9.1.

Table 9.1: Scoping and Consultation Responses Relevant to Visual Amenity

Consultee	Summary Response	Comment/Action Taken
The Highland Council (THC)	There are a number of properties that will be significantly affected by The Proposed Development, on the approach to the lower tunnel outlet. Impact is not just on residential impact but the current quiet, rural amenity that forms the basis for tourist activities. An assessment on these matters should be well grounded.	Consideration of the visual amenity of properties is discussed in paragraphs 9.6.9 to 9.6.10 and Appendix 9.1 (Visual Effects Tables). The effects of The Proposed Development on Land Use and Recreation is considered in Chapter 19, whilst effects on tourism are considered in Chapter 20. Chapter 17 considers potential effects on noise.
THC	Images produced to support the planning application should follow THC's Visualisation Standards for Wind Energy Developments, including for non wind farm projects.	Visualisations which are representative of views which may be obtained have been prepared to THC's Visualisation Standards (see Figures 3.4 to 3.7).
Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH)	SNH support the proposal to update the LVIA. The EIA Report should explain the design process to select the final layout assessed in the EIA Report, alternatives considered and how L&V mitigation has been incorporated.	The design process and consideration of alternatives are set out in Chapter 2: Consideration of Alternatives and the Design Statement: Appendix 3.1.
SNH	SNH recommend a cumulative assessment. In the analysis of alternatives, consideration should be given to the design compatibility with adjacent schemes, to mitigate cumulative L&V impacts.	This is considered in section 9.9 of this Chapter.
Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS)	Consider the implications of restructuring the stability of the woodland remaining and impact on landscape. Key is the Forest Design Plan and restocking proposals.	The effects of The Proposed Development on forestry and the current Forest Design Plans are considered in Chapter 21: Forestry.
FCS	Consideration should be given to the implication of felling operations on such things as habitat connectivity, landscape	The visual assessment has taken the impact of forestry felling into consideration.

Consultee	Summary Response	Comment/Action Taken
	impact, impact on timber transport network and forestry policies included in the local and regional Forestry and Woodland Strategies and LDP.	

9.3.6 It is recognised that Scoping comments from consultees relate to The Proposed Development and that previous comments which were made in relation to The Consented Development are also relevant. This assessment therefore considers all relevant aspects which were taken into account within the LVIA prepared for The Consented Development.

9.4 Policy, Legislation & Guidance

9.4.1 The assessment has taken account of national, regional and local policy and guidance relating to landscape character and visual amenity relevant to the proposal. Detailed information on planning policy is contained within the Planning Statement accompanying the application for The Proposed Development and Chapter 5: Planning Policy Context. The following provides a summary with respect to Visual Amenity.

9.4.2 The following policy documents and statements have been referred to in carrying out this assessment:

National

- The Third National Planning Framework for Scotland (NPF3);
- Scottish Planning Policy (SPP);
- Planning Advice Note 60 – Planning for Natural Heritage (PAN 60), 2000;
- Renewable Energy and the Natural Heritage, SNH Policy Document, 2010; and
- Wildness in Scotland’s Countryside, SNH Policy Statement 02/03.

Regional

- The Highland-wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP), 2012;
- The West Highland and Islands Local Development Plan (WHILP), 2012; and
- The West Highland and Islands Proposed Local Development Plan (WestPlan), 2017.

9.4.3 The HwLDP forms the key element of spatial planning policy for The Proposed Development. Policy 28, Sustainable Design details the parameters under which all development proposals are considered. This includes the extent to which the impact on “individual and community residential amenity”, and “scenery”.

9.4.4 In addition, Policy 61, Landscape, which concerns the protection of the landscape resource is also relevant.

9.4.5 Policy 57 concerning the protection of Natural, Built and Cultural Heritage is also of relevant, referring to the importance of “views over open water”. These views are noted as locally / regionally important. With respect to areas of local / regional importance Part 1 of this policy states:

“...we will allow developments if it can be satisfactorily demonstrated that they will not have an unacceptable impact on the natural environment, amenity and heritage resource.”

9.5 Methodology

Assessment Guidance

- 9.5.1 The assessment has been prepared with reference to the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Third Edition), 2013, published by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (GLVIA3).

Professional Judgement

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

Key Stages of the Assessment

- 9.5.3 GLVIA3 suggests that visual effects are assessed from a clear understanding of the development proposed and any mitigation measures which are being adopted. Familiarity with the site and the extent, nature and expectation of existing views is also a key factor in establishing the visual sensitivity in terms of the development proposed. The guidelines require evaluation of magnitude of change to views experienced by sensitive receptors, comprising individuals living, working, travelling and carrying out other activities within the landscape, and subsequent evaluation of effect significance.
- 9.5.4 There are four key stages to the assessment:
- Establishment of the baseline;
 - Appreciation of the development proposed;
 - Analysis of visual receptors and potential effects; and
 - Assessment of effect significance.

Establishment of the Baseline

- 9.5.5 Establishment of the baseline conditions has been undertaken through combination of desk study and site appraisal. The following specific tasks have been undertaken:
- A review of the relevant development plans as described in Section 9.4;
 - Generation and review of Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) diagrams;
 - Identification of sensitive visual receptors; and
 - Field survey to establish the nature and context of individual visual receptors and the key elements and qualities of the existing view.

Visual Receptors

- 9.5.6 For there to be a visual effect there is the need for a viewer. Individuals experiencing views from locations such as buildings, recognised routeways and popular viewpoints used by the public have been included in the assessment. Those experiencing views are referred to as visual receptors.
- 9.5.7 Potential visual receptors have been identified through analysis of the ZTV in combination with targeted field survey.

Appreciation of The Proposed Development

- 9.5.8 Appreciation of The Proposed Development involves the accumulation of a thorough knowledge of the proposal, its nature, scale and location within the baseline landscape, and any peripheral or ancillary features proposed. The consideration of any mitigation or other planting in the vicinity is also important in the understanding of potential longer term effects.

Analysis of Visual Receptors and Potential Effects

- 9.5.9 Preparation of the visual baseline is followed by the systematic identification of likely effects on the potential visual receptors. This is a two-fold process, giving consideration to how effects may arise from aspects of The Proposed Development, and how these changes may be accommodated in the existing baseline view.
- 9.5.10 Locations of visual receptors and representative viewpoints identified for inclusion in the assessment were visited and key information on the nature, composition and characteristics of the existing visual experience recorded. Consideration is given to the likely perceived value of a particular view to the viewer, taking into account the nature of the receptor and the potential activity they may be involved in, and factors such as elevation, extent and key features or attractions which may feature in the view.

Visual Receptor Sensitivity

- 9.5.11 The evaluation of visual sensitivity considers both the perceived value of the existing view and the susceptibility of the visual receptor to change. It is important to note that the judgement of visual sensitivity is considered in relation to an understanding of both the existing view and the development proposed and therefore perceived value of the area of change as a part of the view as a whole contributes to the sensitivity evaluation.
- 9.5.12 Visual sensitivity to the change proposed has been evaluated using a three-point scale as follows:

High

- Dwellings where the changed aspect is an important element in the view; and
- Footpaths, tracks and vantage points where the changed aspect is an important element in the view.

Medium

- Dwellings where the changed aspect is a less important element in the view;

- Footpaths, tracks and vantage points where the changed aspect is a less important element in the view;
- Roads where the changed aspect is an important element in the view; and
- Farm buildings not used as dwellings and industrial buildings where the changed aspect is an important element in the view.

Low

- Dwellings where the changed aspect is an unimportant element in the view;
- Footpaths, tracks and vantage points where the changed aspect is an unimportant element in the view;
- Roads where the changed aspect is a less important element in the view; and
- Farm buildings not used as dwellings and industrial buildings where the changed aspect is a less important element in the view.

Magnitude of Change

9.5.13 Magnitude of change concerns the extent to which the existing view would be altered by The Proposed Development. The evaluation of magnitude gives consideration to factors such as the scale or extent of the changes within the view, the extent to which this may alter the composition or focus of the view and the duration and reversibility of these changes.

9.5.14 Magnitude of change has been evaluated using a four point scale comprised of the following criteria:

- High – Where The Proposed Development would result in a very noticeable change in the existing view;
- Medium – Where The Proposed Development would result in a noticeable change in the existing view;
- Low – Where The Proposed Development would result in a perceptible change in the existing view; and
- Negligible – Where The Proposed Development would result in a barely perceptible change in the existing view.

9.5.15 In recognition of the differing changes that would occur as proposed vegetation and mitigation measures establish and mature, ratings for magnitude of change have been included during the construction of The Proposed Development, and after ten years, post completion.

Assessment of Effect Significance

9.5.16 The level of effect identified concerns the importance of changes resulting from The Proposed Development. Evaluation of the visual effect is based on consideration of the magnitude of change in relation to visual sensitivity, taking into account proposed mitigation measures, and is established using professional judgement. The assessment takes into account likely changes to the visual composition, including the extent to which

new features would distract or screen existing elements in the view or disrupt the scale, structure or focus of the existing view.

9.5.17 The prominence of The Proposed Development in the view will vary according to the prevailing weather conditions. The assessment has been carried out, as is best practice, by assuming the 'worst case' scenario i.e. on a clear, bright day in winter, when neither foreground deciduous foliage nor haze can interfere with the clarity of the view obtained.

9.5.18 Effect significance has been evaluated using a four point scale and using the following criteria:

- Major – The Proposed Development would become a prominent and very detracting feature and would result in a very noticeable deterioration to an existing highly valued and well composed view;
- Moderate – The Proposed Development would introduce some detracting features to an existing highly valued and well composed view, or would be prominent within a pleasing or less well composed view, resulting in a noticeable deterioration of the view;
- Minor – The Proposed Development would form a perceptible but not detracting feature within a pleasing or valued view or would be a more prominent feature within a poorly composed view of limited value, resulting in a small deterioration to the existing view; and
- Neutral – The Proposed Development would form a barely perceptible feature within the existing view and would not result in any discernible deterioration to the view.

9.5.19 As for magnitude of change, the differing potential effects have been considered during the construction of The Proposed Development and at one year and ten years following completion.

9.5.20 For the purposes of the assessment effects with a rating of Moderate or above are considered to be significant.

Limitations of the Assessment

9.5.21 The use and limitations of ZTVs is described in Section 9.3.

9.5.22 The assessment of visual effects has been undertaken from the nearest public road, footpath or open space to each property and assumptions have been made about the types of rooms, and about the types and importance of views obtained from these rooms.

9.6 Baseline Conditions

Overview

9.6.1 The baseline landscape and its broad visual context are described in Section 8.6 of Chapter 8: Landscape Character.

Interpretation of the ZTV

9.6.2 As described in Section 9.3, ZTVs were produced for the key elements of The Proposed Development. The ZTVs show that visibility of The Proposed Development would be broadly split into two groups:

- Visibility of the upper reservoir works represented by the dam and intake tower affecting upland parts of the landscape around Coire Glas and the northern part of the Great Glen; and
- Visibility of the surge / ventilation shaft and lower reservoir works (represented by the ZTV of the administration building), chiefly affecting the southern part of the Great Glen around Loch Lochy and eastern hill summits.

9.6.3 The dam and upper reservoir would be located within a steep sided corrie enclosed on three sides and as such the ZTV illustrates that visibility would be mostly limited to the corrie and ridgelines which surround it. The ZTV indicates some small areas of visibility from the plateau moorland to the north and south of Invergarry and more distant but widespread visibility from the slopes along the south side of Loch Oich and the northern end of the loch. Visual receptors potentially obtaining these views are most likely to be recreational users accessing the surrounding mountains with some potential views from properties and the A82 around Aberchalder.

9.6.4 The ZTV for the administration building suggests that views would also be somewhat limited by topography. The main areas of visibility of the building are shown to be from Loch Lochy and the steep eastern valley side with patchy visibility extending north up the Great Glen to include areas of Laggan and sections of the eastern glen-side up to Loch Oich. Visual receptors with the potential to obtain these views are likely to include a variety of residents, travellers and visitors within the Great Glen, using the A82, walking, cycling and boating routes and occupying residential and tourist properties.

9.6.5 The ZTV of the surge / ventilation shaft shows that potential visibility of these structures would be focussed within the Great Glen affecting the eastern slopes of the glen and open water areas across the southern part of Loch Lochy. Potential visual receptors in these areas may comprise occupants of residential and holiday properties on the eastern shore of Loch Lochy, travellers on the A82 and boat users within the loch. This ZTV does not consider any mitigation landform which would be likely to reduce the extent of visibility.

9.6.6 In addition to the above views indicated by the ZTVs, views of other features associated with these permanent structures may be obtained from other areas. These include views of tracks, site establishment areas and potential borrow pits.

9.6.7 The operational ZTVs for The Proposed Development are shown on Figure 8.1.

Visual Receptors

9.6.8 Visual receptors included in the assessment are indicated on Figure 9.1 and described in Appendix 9.1.

9.6.9 The visual receptors identified can be subdivided into two separate categories:

- Views from buildings; and

- Views from outdoor locations.

Views from Buildings

- 9.6.10 Views from buildings within the study area would potentially be obtained from a number of scattered properties, generally located along the shores of Loch Lochy, the valley floor at Laggan and Glengarry, to the west of Invergarry, near White Bridge. Building receptors are referenced (B) on Figure 9.1.
- 9.6.11 The main groups of buildings within the study area where views of The Proposed Development may be obtained are summarised below:
- **Aberchalder (Receptors B1 and B2):** a small number of residential and farm properties at the northern end of Loch Oich with views, some elevated, across and down the Great Glen;
 - **Properties on shore of Loch Garry (Receptors B3 and B4):** two properties set on the wooded shore of Loch Garry with views across the loch, filtered by loch-shore woodland;
 - **Invergarry and Faichem (Receptors B5 – B11):** comprising a variety of residential properties and a caravan park with views elevated over Glen Garry or across the valley floor, often filtered by woodland and forest;
 - **Laggan (Receptors B12 – B26):** a variety of residential and holiday properties set on the floor of the Great Glen between Loch Lochy and Loch Oich with mixed views across the valley floor or loch to the surrounding hills, sometimes filtered or screened by woodland; and
 - **Loch Lochy eastern shore (Receptors B27 – B35):** groups and individual residential properties and two large hotels sited alongside the A82 and the shore of Loch Lochy with views across the open water of the loch or contained within woodland.

Views from Outdoor Locations

- 9.6.12 Views from outdoor locations fall within one of three categories:
- Views from roads and transport routes;
 - Views from footpaths and other identified walking routes; and
 - Views from other recognised publically accessible locations where the view is considered important.

Views from roads and transport routes

- 9.6.13 Road and transport receptors are referenced (R) on Figure 9.1.
- 9.6.14 Three roads have been included in the assessment including the main routes of the A82 (**Receptor R3**) and A87 (**Receptor R1**) and the minor single track route to Kilfinnan (**Receptor R4**). These routes have mixed views, with open views across Loch Lochy and Loch Oich obtained from some sections of the A82 and more enclosed, valley views, sometimes reduced by woodland from the A87 and minor road.

- 9.6.15 A section of the Caledonian Canal between Loch Lochy and Loch Oich has also been included in the assessment (**Receptor R2**). The canal has low, funnelled views and is predominantly enclosed by woodland and landform, although more open views are obtained at either end of the section, approaching the lochs.

Views from footpaths and other identified walking routes

- 9.6.16 The study area is popular for recreation and there are a number of walking routes throughout. This includes low level routes within the valleys and higher level routes within the surrounding hills. Footpaths and walking route receptors are referenced (F) on Figure 9.1.
- 9.6.17 Lower level routes include the Great Glen Way long distance route (**Receptors F1 and F8**) and a variety of woodland walks around Glen Garry (**Receptor F3**). These routes are often enclosed by forest and woodland with short sections having open, more extensive views, such as views across Loch Lochy from the Great Glen Way.
- 9.6.18 High level routes include ascent routes up Ben Tee (**Receptors F4 and F5**) and Sròn a Choire Ghairbh (**Receptor F7**) and a variety of longer distance routes through the surrounding upland valleys and glens (**Receptors F2 and F6**). These routes have more varying views, expansive and open from elevated sections but more restricted within valleys and at the starts and ends of the routes which are usually within forest.

Views from other recognised public viewing locations

- 9.6.19 There are a number of other locations within the study area referenced (O) on Figure 9.1 which are noted for their views:
- Boating areas on Loch Oich (Receptor O1) and Loch Lochy (**Receptor O9**) with low vantage but open and expansive views; and River Garry white water (**Receptor O3**) with more enclosed views;
 - The summits of mountains: Ben Tee (**Receptor O4**); Sròn a' Choire Ghairbh (**Receptor O5**); and Meall na Teanga (**Receptor O6**); and
 - Parking and picnic areas at Invergarry shinty pitch (**Receptor O2**), White Bridge (**Receptor O3**), the A82 (**Receptors O7 and O8**) and at Laggan Locks (**Receptor O10**).

9.7 Mitigation Measures

- 9.7.1 Mitigation measures associated with the reduction of potential adverse visual effects, involved the consideration and development of scheme alternatives as described in Chapter 2: Consideration of Alternatives, and in particular, the location and design of the structures on the shore of Loch Lochy. For detailed information on the design process adopted for The Proposed Development, refer to Chapter 2: Consideration of Alternatives and Appendix 3.1: Design Statement.
- 9.7.2 Landscape mitigation developed for The Proposed Development would also have effect as visual mitigation and is described in Section 8.7.
- 9.7.3 The following specific mitigation measures are recommended in order to achieve the levels of effect identified in this assessment:

- Receptor B9: it is recommended that a temporary physical barrier be considered on the eastern side of this property to help screen close up views of access traffic passing the house to the agreement of the appropriate parties; and
- Receptor F3: it is recommended that a temporary physical barrier be erected to screen construction traffic from sections of these routes which lie immediately adjacent to the main access route to the dam.

9.8 Assessment of Effects on Visual Amenity

9.8.1 The following section gives a description of predicted effects on all receptors. For the purpose of this assessment significant effects are those considered to be Moderate or greater. Individual receptor references relate to those indicated on Figure 9.1 and described in Appendix 9.1.

Views from Buildings

9.8.2 Significant effects to views from a number of buildings are likely during the construction of The Proposed Development. However, it is anticipated that no significant effects would carry through to the longer term operational phase.

Aberchalder (Receptors B1 to B2)

9.8.3 Properties at the northern end of Loch Oich are distant from The Proposed Development. The top of the dam structure and potentially some access may be visible from this area. However, these would be small within the view and although some visual effect is anticipated, this is predicted to be **Minor Adverse** for Receptor B1 and **Neutral** for Receptor B2 during both construction and operation. Both effects are considered to be not significant.

Properties on shore of Loch Garry (Receptors B3 and B4)

9.8.4 Views from both of these properties are anticipated to be **Neutral** during construction and operation due to the screening effects of trees and likely minimal visibility of elements of The Proposed Development.

Invergarry and Faichem (Receptors B5 – B11):

9.8.5 One property within this grouping has been identified as having a potential significant effect to visual amenity: Receptor B9, a two storey house within forestry at White Bridge. This property is located adjacent to the main access track to the dam area and would gain views of track upgrading and close passing traffic. Although this is anticipated to appear similar to existing forestry traffic, it would be at much greater frequency. Therefore, the effect is anticipated to be **Moderate** and significant during construction. However, this would reduce to **Neutral** during operation as maintenance visits would be infrequent.

9.8.6 Views from other properties within this group are all anticipated to be not significant. **Minor** effects during construction are anticipated from three properties which have the potential to gain views of construction activities within the forest and above the forest line: Receptor B5 (Faichemard Farm), Receptor B6 (Faichem Park) and Receptor B11 (Wester Mandally). All effects are anticipated to be **Neutral** in the longer term.

Laggan (Receptors B12 – B26)

- 9.8.7 Potential significant effects have been identified during construction to views from five groups of properties within this group: Receptor B12 (a group of ten properties near Laggan Swing Bridge), Receptor B14 (North Laggan Farm), Receptor B17 (South Laggan), Receptor B18 (Laggan Locks), and B19 (Stoneyfield). This is predominantly related to views of upgrading works and construction traffic using the minor road to Kilfinnan including potential loss of features along the edge of the road and new cuttings and embankments. In addition, Receptors B17 and B18 are likely to gain views of the construction and use of the temporary haul road between the lower reservoir works and the upper reservoir works which may be prominent in the view. The construction phase effect is therefore anticipated to be **Moderate** and significant to views from these properties. However, this effect would reduce to a non-significant level during the operational phase with **Neutral** effects for Receptors B17 and B18, and **Minor** effects for Receptors B12, B14 and B19 which would continue to obtain views of the upgraded, wider road.
- 9.8.8 Non-significant effects are predicted from Receptors B13, B15, B16 and B20 to B26. Whilst Receptors B15 and B20 to B26 are located adjacent to the minor road which would be upgraded and used for construction purposes, this activity would only be visible to the rear of these properties, and in many cases would be partially screened or filtered by vegetation. It is therefore considered that the visual effect on views from these properties would be only **Minor** and not significant during construction and would reduce to **Neutral** in the longer term as operational use of the road would generally comprise smaller vehicles at a much reduced frequency.
- 9.8.9 Visual effects to views from Receptor B13 and B16 are also anticipated to be **Minor** during construction, reducing to **Neutral** during operation as visibility of the access tracks would be more limited by trees and woodland.

Loch Lochy eastern shore (Receptors B27 – B35)

- 9.8.10 During construction, significant effects are predicted to views from a number of properties alongside Loch Lochy due to the appearance of extensive activities taking place at the lower reservoir works, surge shaft, and the temporary haul road from the lower reservoir works to the upper reservoir works. This includes consideration of forestry felling, rock cuttings and tunnel portals, site establishment, the administration building and jetty and associated movement of construction vehicles and barges on the loch. This is predicted to lead to a **Moderate** significant visual effect on Receptor 30 (a new 1.5 storey house at Letterfinlay) and Receptor 31 (two holiday cabins at Letterfinlay hotel) both of which have main views orientated towards the area of The Proposed Development, and Receptor B27 (Corriegour Cottage) which would also obtain views of these works, but filtered by vegetation and traffic on the A82, due to its low position. However, these effects are anticipated to reduce to **Minor** and not significant in the longer term, due to the smaller scale of permanent features and reduced movement associated with the operation of The Proposed Development, which are considered likely to be less distracting.
- 9.8.11 Views from all other properties along this eastern shore of Loch Lochy are considered unlikely to be significant, as they would be screened or filtered by loch shore vegetation, or are distant from The Proposed Development. **Minor** effects are predicted during construction to views from Receptors B28, B29, B32 and B34 which may receive filtered or oblique views of construction activities at the lower reservoir works and surge shaft.

Neutral effects are predicted from Receptors B33 and B35 where views are anticipated to be screened or very minimal. Operational effects to all of these receptors are anticipated to be **Neutral** as it is not considered that the permanent features of The Proposed Development would be visible to a degree sufficient to result in a discernible deterioration of the view.

Views from Outdoor Locations

Views from Roads and Transport Routes

- 9.8.12 Of the four transport routes included in the assessment, travellers on two roads were identified as potentially receiving a significant visual effect during the construction of The Proposed Development.
- 9.8.13 Travellers on Receptor R3 (the A82) would gain open views across the water of Loch Lochy towards the proposed extensive construction activities at the lower reservoir works, and the construction and use of the temporary haul road from the lower reservoir works to the upper reservoir works. This effect would vary along the length of the A82 within the study area with more distant effects relating to views of the surge shaft, access tracks and the dam also likely from some areas. Overall, due to the level of effect on the section of the route alongside Loch Lochy where the visual amenity is highly valued, a **Major** effect is predicted during construction. However, this would reduce to **Minor** during the operational phase when the majority of activities would have ceased and vegetation would have been allowed to re-establish.
- 9.8.14 In addition, a significant **Major** visual effect is also predicted to views from Receptor R4 (the minor road to Kilfinnan from North Laggan). This road would be upgraded to form the main access to the lower reservoir works leading to close, frequent views of construction activities, and regular use by construction traffic. During operation, the road would be wider than existing, although views across other areas would be little different. As such, the operational effect would reduce to **Minor** and would not be significant.
- 9.8.15 Visual effects to users of two other roads or transport routes: Receptor R1 (the A87) and Receptor R2 (the Caledonian Canal between Loch Lochy and Loch Oich); are predicted to be not significant during both construction and operation because views of The Proposed Development would be limited by trees and landform. These effects are therefore anticipated to be **Minor** during construction and **Neutral** during operation.

Views from footpaths and other identified walking routes

- 9.8.16 Significant effects to the visual amenity of a number of walking routes are anticipated during the construction of The Proposed Development as follows:
- 9.8.17 Users of **Receptor F1** (the Great Glen Way and Cycle Route) would be redirected around the lower reservoir works and this section would be likely to receive notable views of construction activities on the shore of Loch Lochy, site establishment areas and the construction and use of the temporary haul road from the lower reservoir works to the upper reservoir works. Views would also be obtained of this temporary haul road from sections of the route around Laggan Locks with additional views of upgrading and use of the Kilfinnan public road. Whilst the visual effect on the short section of route which would pass the lower reservoir works is likely to be Major, when considering the visual amenity of

this route within the study area as a whole, the effect is considered to be **Moderate**, and significant. Long term, the redirected route is considered likely to receive minimal views of The Proposed Development and therefore the effect is expected to be **Neutral**.

- 9.8.18 Users of **Receptor F4** (Ben Tee from Glengarry) and **Receptor F5** (Ben Tee from Kilfinnan) comprising ascent routes for Ben Tee, would gain considerable views of construction activities for The Proposed Development. Receptor F4 follows a similar route to the main access track to the upper reservoir works and walkers would have close up views of track upgrading, construction traffic, site establishment and potential borrow pits, increasing with height to include the temporary haul road from the lower reservoir works, and access to the surge and ventilation shafts. However, views of the dam would be unlikely to be obtained until the summit. Receptor F5 crosses the main access track with walkers likely to obtain views towards the construction works at the dam including site establishment, and construction and use of temporary haul road from the lower reservoir works, and access to the surge / ventilation shaft. These views would increase with height with views likely to feature an extensive area of works around the dam, intake tower and upper reservoir. The construction term effect on both routes is therefore anticipated to be **Major**. During the operational phase, this would reduce to **Minor** and not significant for Receptor R4 due to the limited extent of permanent features likely to be visible from this route. However, the effect on the visual amenity of Receptor R5 is anticipated to continue as a significant **Moderate** effect, due to the permanent presence of the dam, upper reservoir and associated drawdown, intake tower and tracks within the view.
- 9.8.19 **Receptor F6** comprises a cross country walking route between Loch Garry and Laggan Locks documented as Scottish Hill Track 239, in the Scottish Hill Tracks publication by the Scottish Outdoor and Access Society. The route passes through the bealach between Meall a' Choire Ghlais and Ben Tee before crossing moorland at the mouth of Coire Glas and descending to Kilfinnan. Users of this route would therefore obtain views of construction works at the dam, access track to the surge / ventilation shafts and the temporary haul road from the lower reservoir works. The visual effect is likely to be Major for this part of the route, and is considered likely to contribute to a **Moderate**, significant effect on the visual amenity of this route as a whole. Visual effects during operation for this short section of the route may continue to be significant, but, as the majority of the route would not be affected, the overall effect is considered likely to reduce to a **Minor** effect which would not be significant.
- 9.8.20 **Receptor F7** comprises a circular route ascending / descending Sròn a Choire Ghairbh from Kilfinnan. This route would use short sections of the access routes to the lower reservoir works which would be upgraded and pass close to the lower reservoir works and site establishment. With the tree felling expected, these activities would be likely to be prominent from this section. From the summit of the mountain, along the ridge of Sean Mheall and returning to Kilfinnan, the upper reservoir works would be very prominent in the Coire below. The route would also cross the high level access tracks to the surge shaft and between the lower and upper reservoir works with works at the surge shaft also likely to be visible. As such, a **Major** significant effect is predicted to this route during construction. During operation, with the cessation of construction works and regrowth of forest and woodland, the dam and reservoir, the surge shaft and some access tracks would comprise the permanent features of The Proposed Development appearing within views. Given the size of some of these features and extent of the route which may be affected, a **Moderate** and significant effect is anticipated.

- 9.8.21 Two other walking routes within the study area, Receptor F2 (Scottish Hill Track 238, from Lock Arkaig to Invergarry) and Receptor F3 (White Bridge Forest Trails) were identified as having localised significant visual effects to small portions of the route. However, these effects were considered unlikely to lead to a significant effect on the visual amenity of these routes as a whole. Effects have therefore been identified as **Minor Adverse** during construction, reducing to **Neutral** during operation.
- 9.8.22 One remaining walking route, Receptor F8 through forest above Invergarry which is signposted as an alternative to the usual Great Glen Way route, was identified as likely to have a **Neutral** effect to views during construction and operation.

Views from other recognised public viewing locations

- 9.8.23 Of the ten other outdoor location receptors included in the assessment, six are anticipated to experience significant effects to views during the construction of The Proposed Development. These can be split into two types of location: views from mountain summits which would feature views of the upper reservoir works; and, views from parking and picnic areas around Loch Lochy which would gain views of the lower reservoir works. Whilst views of the lower reservoir works would mostly be reduced to non-significant levels during operation as activities ceased, working areas were removed and woodland, forestry and other vegetation was able to establish, views of the upper reservoir works are likely to continue to be significant to some degree due to the continued presence of the dam, intake tower and upper reservoir which would be very large features within the view.
- 9.8.24 From the summits of **Receptor O4** (Ben Tee) and **Receptor O5** (Sròn a' Choire Ghairbh), construction activities at the upper reservoir works would be prominent within the foreground views including construction of the dam and intake tower, site establishment and activities within the reservoir footprint and access tracks. Views from Ben Tee would also feature the construction and use of high level access tracks from the lower reservoir works and up to the surge / ventilation shaft. This is predicted to result in a **Major** visual effect during construction for both locations, reducing to **Moderate** in the longer term once views were limited to the permanent structures. Both short and long term effects are considered to be significant.
- 9.8.25 Views from outdoor locations around Loch Lochy with the potential to experience significant visual effects comprise **Receptor O7** and **Receptor O8** (both parking areas on the A82), **Receptor O9** (views from boats on Loch Lochy) and **Receptor O10** (Laggan Locks picnic area).
- 9.8.26 A significant **Major Adverse** effect during construction is anticipated from two of these areas: Receptors O7 and O8, the two parking areas on the A82. As these areas are across the loch from the lower reservoir works there would be open views of an intensive area of construction including tree felling, rock cuttings, construction of the lower control works, administration building and jetty and associated movement of barges, and site establishment. The temporary haul road from the lower reservoir works to the upper reservoir works would also be a very noticeable feature. During operation, whilst rock cuttings are likely to remain very visible feature from these locations, revegetation would assist in reducing the effect. The administration building, with good design, has the opportunity to become a new positive feature within these views. The operational effect is therefore anticipated to be **Minor** and not significant for both locations.

- 9.8.27 **Receptor O9** includes views from boats throughout Loch Lochy. These views would be variable across the wide expanse of water. However, passing close to the lower reservoir works, construction activities would be prominent with movement of barges also evident through the loch, although this would appear similar to other boats. Overall, during construction, although Major effects would be experienced close to the works, the anticipated effect on the overall visual amenity of boat users is considered to be **Moderate**, but significant. This is anticipated to reduce to **Minor** during the longer term operation of The Proposed Development.
- 9.8.28 **Receptor O10** comprises views from a picnic area and popular vantage point at Laggan Locks. From this location open views across Loch Lochy of upgrading works and traffic on the main access road to the lower control works would be visible, along with views of construction of, and vehicles using, the temporary haul road from the lower reservoir works to the upper reservoir works. Whilst elements of these features may remain visible into the longer term operational phase, this is considered unlikely to form a notable distraction to the view. The effect is therefore anticipated to be **Moderate** and significant during construction, and **Neutral** during operation.
- 9.8.29 Views from all other outdoor viewing locations included in the assessment are anticipated to be not significant with potential **Minor** effects during construction from Receptors O2 (Invergarry shinty pitch) and O3 (White Bridge Forest car park) due to potential visibility of access routes and site establishment within the forest. This would reduce to **Neutral** during operation. Visual effects to all other outdoor locations would be **Neutral** during both construction and operation.

Summary

- 9.8.30 Table 9.2 provides a summary of the collective visual impacts within the study area associated with The Proposed Development. For the purposes of this assessment a rating of Moderate or above is considered to be significant.

Table 9.2: Summary of Visual Effects

Location	Effect during construction				Effect during operation			
	Neutral / No View	Minor Adverse	Moderate Adverse	Major Adverse	Neutral / No View	Minor Adverse	Moderate Adverse	Major Adverse
Views from buildings	8	18	9	-	27	8	-	-
Views from roads and transport routes	-	2	-	2	2	2	-	-
Views from footpaths and other walking routes	1	2	2	3	4	2	2	-
Views from recognised outdoor viewing locations	2	2	2	4	5	3	2	-
Totals	11	24	13	9	38	15	4	-

- 9.8.31 The summary table indicates that during construction, a number of significant visual effects would be expected from The Proposed Development. Moderate effects are anticipated to views from nine of thirty-five built properties / property groups, two out of four transport routes, five of eight footpaths or walking routes and six out of ten other outdoor locations. These effects would be predominantly localised, usually within around 1 km of The Proposed Development, with none more than 2.5 km distant. During operation, many of these effects are anticipated to reduce to a non-significant level. However, a small number of significant effects to views from footpaths and recognised viewing locations are anticipated during the operational phase of The Proposed Development.

Views from buildings

- 9.8.32 Significant visual effects on views from built properties primarily relate to views of the lower reservoir works and the upgrading and construction of roads and access tracks within the Great Glen and Glen Garry. These effects are all anticipated to reduce to Minor or Neutral, and therefore not significant during the operation of The Proposed Development.

Views from roads and transport routes

- 9.8.33 Significant visual effects affecting travellers on roads and transport routes are confined to sections of road within the Great Glen. During construction localised Major effects to a short section of the A82 are anticipated to lead to a Moderate effect overall within the study area, whilst a Major effect is anticipated to the minor public road from North Laggan to Kilfinnan which would be upgraded and used as the main access to the lower reservoir works. However, these significant effects are also predicted to reduce to Minor during operation which is not considered to be significant.

Views from footpaths and walking routes

- 9.8.34 Significant Major and Moderate effects to footpaths and walking routes during construction can be broadly classified into two groupings, being affected by either close, passing views of the lower reservoir works, site establishment and access routes within the Great Glen, or views of the upper reservoir works within Coire Glas. Major effects are anticipated to three walking routes which would have elevated views over the upper reservoir area and interactions with the main access routes for The Proposed Development. This includes two alternative walking routes up Ben Tee and a circular ascent of Sròn a Choire Ghairbh. Whilst one of these routes (Ben Tee from Glen Garry) would reduce to a non-significant level during operation, the other two are anticipated to remain Moderate and significant during the operational phase due to the continued appearance of the dam, upper reservoir, intake tower and access tracks in views.
- 9.8.35 Localised Major effects are anticipated to two further walking routes considered likely to lead to a Moderate significant effect on visual amenity overall. These include the Great Glen Way and Scottish Hill Track 239 from Loch Garry to Laggan Locks. However, effects on these routes are not anticipated to be significant in the long term during the operation of The Proposed Development.
- 9.8.36 In addition, a further two walking routes which follow parts of the main access route in Glen Garry forest have been identified to have localised Moderate effects. However, these are considered to lead to only a Minor effect on overall visual amenity for these routes

which is therefore not considered to be significant, and there would be no discernible effect to views from these routes during operation.

Views from other public viewing locations

- 9.8.37 Significant effects to views from outdoor public viewing locations also broadly fall into two categories: those effects relating to views of the lower reservoir works, site establishment and access tracks within the Great Glen; and those which relate to views of the upper reservoir works in Coire Glas. In the former category, Major effects from two parking laybys on the A82, and Moderate effects from a picnic area at Laggan locks are anticipated. A localised Major effect to views from boats using Loch Lochy is also anticipated to lead to an overall Moderate effect during construction. All these effects would reduce to Minor and not significant during the operation of The Proposed Development. In the latter category, views from the mountain summits of Ben Tee and Sròn a Choire Ghairbh are anticipated to be Major during construction, reducing to Moderate during operation. The effect on views from these two summits is therefore anticipated to continue to be significant in the long term.

9.9 Cumulative Effects

- 9.9.1 Cumulative impacts are those which occur where the effects of more than one development of a similar type combine to produce a greater level of effect on visual amenity. Cumulative visual effects may be experienced 'in combination' where two different developments appear within the same field of view, or in 'in succession' where the viewer would need to turn to see different developments. Cumulative visual effects may also be 'sequential' where different developments are seen when travelling through the landscape; for example, from a road.

- 9.9.2 In relation to The Proposed Development, potential cumulative effects may include:

- During construction, other activities of similar type may increase the perceived scale of this type of activity in the view or cause a larger part of the view to be affected. This may include the presence of a number of developments which would be seen in succession when travelling along a route. Such activities may include other major construction projects or forestry felling; and
- During operation, permanent features of The Proposed Development (such as the dam, upper reservoir, shafts and administration building) may be seen in association with other, similar features which are present within the view, leading to an increased effect of this type of development. This could include the presence of a number of similar features seen when travelling along a route.

Cumulative Effects During Construction

- 9.9.3 The analysis of cumulative effects during construction is difficult due to uncertainty as to when The Proposed Development may be constructed and what other work may be ongoing at that time. Therefore, this can only be considered on a theoretical basis.
- 9.9.4 Forestry plans indicate that felling of some compartments is proposed along the shore of Loch Lochy within the future 26 years. Therefore it is reasonable to assume that, at some point during the construction of The Proposed Development some forest felling would also be ongoing. Given the extensive tracts of forest along the lower glen slopes of the Great

Glen and Glen Garry, it is also likely that some felling would occur within the wider area at some points during construction. This has the potential to result in sequential cumulative effects for travellers on the A82 and on longer distance recreational routes through the study area such as the Great Glen Way and Caledonian Canal. It could also result in combined and successive cumulative effects within some static views from the A82 and around the shores of Loch Lochy. However, forestry is a very typical feature of this area and it is considered that viewers would be likely to be habituated to seeing some degree of felling within the landscape. As such, and given the degree of effect likely to result from The Proposed Development alone, it is considered that although cumulative effects could occur, these should not be of significantly greater concern.

- 9.9.5 In the White Bridge area, the forest is predominantly shown to be either 'Low impact silvicultural system' or Natural Reserve, with areas of felling up on the higher slopes, proposed between 2018 and 2032. Felling may therefore be seen to be taking place in these areas by some individuals on walking routes and potentially the A87. However, these areas of forest are not widely evident from the majority of visual receptor locations and it is considered that this would not comprise a significantly increased effect.
- 9.9.6 With regards to other major development projects which may occur within the nearby landscape context, there is one consented wind farm proposal (Beinneun Extension) located around 9.5 km to the north of The Proposed Development. There is the potential that construction works for The Proposed Development could lead to sequential cumulative effects from walking routes and the A87. However, any such effects are anticipated to be minimal, given the generally contained views from these routes.

Cumulative Effects During Operation

- 9.9.7 During operation, cumulative effects would be most likely to occur with other similar development types. The administration building would appear as a large loch-shore building when seen by travellers or from static viewing locations on the A82. Other buildings of this scale currently visible from the A82 mostly comprise hydroelectric power stations or sometimes hotels. Such buildings are relatively infrequent through the Great Glen and it is considered unlikely that the addition of The Proposed Development would be seen as any notable addition to a development type when travelling along this route. Rather, as a high standard of design is proposed for this building, it may be seen to reflect an existing visual pattern of landmark buildings associated with the journey.
- 9.9.8 Other features similar to the dam and upper reservoir also exist within the wider upland landscape and may potentially be visible from walking routes or elevated vantage points such as the summits of Ben Tee or Sròn a Choire Ghairbh. These may include dams at Loch Garry, Loch Quoich and Glendoe. These dams are mostly difficult to perceive from these elevated areas with the Loch Garry dam being within forestry and the Loch Quoich and Glendoe dams being distant. The Glendoe and Loch Quoich dams could be seen in combination with The Proposed Development from Sròn a' Choire Ghairbh but views would be likely to be successive from Ben Tee. These would be very small features if visible and it is considered that the close presence of the proposed dam and upper reservoir would be more likely to draw the eye. The other reservoirs within the wider landscape mostly comprise established lochs and it is considered unlikely that these would form a negative association in combination with the proposed upper reservoir. As such, a significant cumulative effect in relation to dams and reservoirs is considered very unlikely.

9.10 Conclusions

- 9.10.1 The assessment has concluded that significant effects to the visual amenity of the study area would occur as a result of The Proposed Development. During construction, significant moderate and major effects are anticipated to some views from buildings, transport and recreational routes and recognised static viewing locations within approximately 2.5 km of The Proposed Development. This would largely relate to views of construction activities at either the upper reservoir works or the lower reservoir works, with the addition of the upgrading, construction and use of proposed access tracks and roads. The exception would be a few high level walking routes where viewers would experience differing views of both areas from parts of the routes.
- 9.10.2 During the operation of The Proposed Development, most visual effects are anticipated to be either imperceptible or not significant. A small number of moderate significant effects are expected to continue during the operational phase to views from mountain summits and ridges surrounding Coire Glas and the walking routes used to approach these locations.
- 9.10.3 The assessment has further concluded that whilst cumulative effects during construction are difficult to predict, these are considered unlikely to be of significant concern, and no notable cumulative effects are anticipated during the operation of The Proposed Development.

9.11 References

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