Moray Council

Moray Just Transition
Landscape Sensitivity Study for Blackhillock Substation

Draft report
Prepared by LUC
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Chapter 1
Introduction

Background to the Study

1.1 In January 2023, Moray Council (MC) requested a 'landscape capacity assessment' to inform the development of a masterplan for the area surrounding Blackhillock Substation. NatureScot's Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Guidance (2022) recommends use of the term 'landscape sensitivity' in place of 'landscape capacity', as the latter requires consideration of wider issues such as demand for development. LUC has therefore undertaken a Landscape Sensitivity Assessment (LSA) for the project study area, setting out the relative sensitivity of different areas to development.

Purpose and Scope

1.2 The NatureScot sensitivity guidance (2022) defines LSAs as "*strategic appraisals of the relative sensitivity of landscapes to development types or land use changes. They are an important tool to help guide development to less sensitive locations*."

1.3 The purpose of the landscape sensitivity assessment is to inform the development of the proposed masterplan, helping to guide development to less sensitive locations. The study includes potential mitigation measures that could be applied in different areas. Where appropriate, high level suggestions on landscape enhancement relating to existing electricity infrastructure are also provided.

1.4 The following tasks have been undertaken:

- A study area of 2km radius around Blackhillock Substation was defined for the LSA, in agreement with MC;
- Existing landscape character assessments and other available landscape baseline information were reviewed;
- Local landscape character areas were defined to form the basis for the LSA, and their key characteristics described;
- Sensitivity criteria were developed in agreement with MC and informed by the NatureScot sensitivity guidance (2022);

- A site visit was carried out to verify the landscape character areas and gather information for the LSA;
- A site assessment was completed for each character area, and each area assigned an overall sensitivity rating; and
- For each character area, brief recommendations on opportunities for siting development, and the types of landscape/visual mitigation that may be appropriate, is provided. Where appropriate, suggestions around landscape enhancement relating to existing electricity infrastructure have also been made.

1.5 The report is accompanied by the following figures:

- Figure 1: Location and Study Area;
- Figure 2: National and Local Landscape Character Areas;
- Figure 3a: Landscape Sensitivity Results – Type 1; and
- Figure 3b: Landscape Sensitivity Results – Type 2.

Limitations of the Study

1.6 This report is intended only to inform development of a wider masterplan for the Blackhillock area. The findings and conclusions of this report should not be relied upon in isolation to determine the suitability or otherwise of any site to a particular proposal. All development proposals will require to be assessed on their own merits based on site-specific analysis.

1.7 The report is a strategic study based on the assessment of local landscape character areas. There are likely to be spatial variations in character within any one assessment area and these are described in the text where applicable.

Chapter 2
Methodology

Study area

2.1 The LSA focuses on the area immediately surrounding the existing Blackhillock Substation, within a radius of 2km, as shown in **Figure 1**. It is considered that this area captures potential development pressure and landscape sensitivities within the masterplan area and its immediate surroundings. The study area was agreed with MC.

Development scenarios

2.2 NatureScot sensitivity guidance (2022) recommends that sensitivity studies consider the likely levels of sensitivity to specified types of development or land use (para 21). The use of high-level scenarios for development types recognises that different types of built development have different physical and visual characteristics, different infrastructural requirements and different landscape and visual impacts.

2.3 Planning applications within the study area were reviewed to identify specific development pressures in the Blackhillock area. The project team also consulted with Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN) on their proposals in the wider area. The following scenarios have been used to reflect the different scales of development that may be proposed around Blackhillock Substation, in agreement with MC:

- **Type 1 - Electricity sub-stations / converter stations**, representing large-scale industrial-style development, in the form of large buildings, outdoor electrical infrastructure and associated road infrastructure. Development will potentially occupy a larger footprint than Type 2; and
- **Type 2 - Battery Energy Storage Systems / solar farms**, representing industrial-style development of more modest scale, in the form of 'shipping container' size buildings and / or solar arrays and associated road infrastructure. Development will potentially occupy a smaller footprint than Type 1 (unless it relates to a larger scale solar farm).

2.4 Ongoing planning applications have not informed the LSA, as they do not form part of the current baseline.

Sensitivity to Wind Energy Development

2.5 Moray Council requested that the LSA consider sensitivity to proposed wind farms, noting that there is a proposal to extend the existing Edintore Wind Farm (6 turbines, 125m height to tip). The Edintore Extension proposal is currently at scoping stage (Application Ref 21/00033/SCO) and would extend the existing wind farm across the upper parts of Cairds Hill, to the south-west of the LSA study area.

2.6 However, on reflection LUC has excluded wind energy as a development scenario. It is considered more appropriate for landscape sensitivity studies for wind to be carried out at a regional scale, such as has been undertaken in the Moray Wind Energy Landscape Capacity Study (MWELCS) (Carol Anderson Landscape Associates, 2017, with forthcoming update in 2023).

2.7 In the 2017 MWELCS, which considers turbines of up to 130m tip height, the study area is identified as being within the Upland Farmland LCT. The Upland Farmland LCT is of high sensitivity to turbines over 50m height to tip, with no capacity for turbines over 50m height to tip. A key constraint to wind farm development is noted to be "*Potential cumulative landscape and visual effects associated with multiple developments of the large, medium and small-medium typologies where they could exacerbate visual clutter around Keith and in the north-east of this character type where existing large turbines and transmission lines are present*" (paragraph 13.2.2).

2.8 The Moray Wind Energy Landscape Sensitivity Study Final Report (Carol Anderson Landscape Associates, 2023) considers turbines of up to 250m height to tip. The study area has been partially redefined, with lower-lying areas in the Upland Farmland LCT and Cairds Hill in the Low Forested Hills LCT. A constraint to wind farm development within the Upland Farmland LCT is noted to be "*Cumulative effects with larger turbines in the adjacent Low Forested Hills and exacerbating the existing clutter of wind turbines sited near Grange Crossroads and Lurg Hill and transmission line and sub-station infrastructure around Keith*" (paragraph 11.2.2). "*Potential sequential cumulative visual effects on views from the A95 and A96*" are also noted to be a potential cumulative issue (paragraph 11.2.1). A high sensitivity is identified for turbines over 100m height to tip, due to the potential for cumulative effects to occur. There would be a high-medium sensitivity to turbines 50-100m high and a medium sensitivity to turbines <50m.

2.9 Within the Low Forested Hills LCT, "*Wind farm developments located on the majority of the lower, less pronounced upland plateaux and ridges within this landscape impacting on views from the adjacent Upland Farmland, potentially creating a dominant 'encircling' effect*" is identified as a potential cumulative issue, as is "*Potential sequential cumulative visual effects on views from major roads including the A96 and the A95*" (paragraph 12.2.1). There would be a high sensitivity to turbines over 150m and a high-medium sensitivity to turbines 100-150m high.

Landscape sensitivity criteria

2.10 The LSA is based on an assessment of local landscape character areas using carefully defined criteria, agreed with MC. The criteria are presented in detail in **Appendix 1**, and are summarised below:

- Physical character (including topography and scale);
- Natural character;
- Historic landscape character;
- Form, density, identity and setting of existing settlement/development;
- Views and visual character including skylines;
- Access and recreation; and
- Perceptual and experiential qualities.

2.11 The table in **Appendix 1** provides a description of each of the sensitivity criteria, reflecting the qualities of the landscape and the extent to which development could affect these, including both 'landscape' and 'visual' aspects of sensitivity.

2.12 A five-point rating from 'low' to 'high' landscape sensitivity is used to illustrate levels of sensitivity to each individual criteria. Examples of the types of landscape character or features that could indicate lower or higher sensitivity against each criterion are provided in **Appendix 1**.

Making an overall judgement on levels of landscape sensitivity

2.13 An overall sensitivity judgement for each local landscape character area was derived based on the individual criteria ranks. This is not a linear process as it recognises that some attributes or elements of particular local landscape character areas may be more important in defining character than others and may be given more 'weight' in reaching an overall judgement. Professional judgement is therefore used rather than a system of numerical scoring.

2.14 The overall rating illustrates an overarching level of landscape sensitivity – i.e. how susceptible the character and quality of the landscape would be to the two development scenarios considered. The judgement is based on

professional analysis and is given on a five-point scale. Guideline definitions of sensitivity levels are given in **Table 2.1** below.

2.15 Whilst the study provides an initial indication of landscape sensitivity, it should not be interpreted as a definitive statement on the suitability or otherwise of individual sites for a particular development or land use change. All proposals will need to be assessed on their own merits. The overall sensitivity rating should not therefore be relied on without reference to the detailed criteria-based assessment for each site.

2.16 The overall judgement on levels of landscape sensitivity is tailored to the plan making process and planning decisions should take into account the findings of the specific criteria based assessment. It should also be noted that the overall score may not apply to all circumstances, and different areas of the local landscape character areas will have varying sensitivities. Some indication is provided for each character area on variations in sensitivity, and development guidelines, but these are initial observations and do not cover every scenario.

Table 2.1: Sensitivity Criteria

Sensitivity judgement	Definition
High	The character area has strong character and qualities with notable features which are highly vulnerable to change as a result of the introduction of the development scenario. Development is likely to result in a substantial change in character and/or significant adverse effects on landscape character and visual amenity.
Moderate-high	The key characteristics and qualities of the character area are vulnerable to change as a result of the introduction of the development scenario. Development is likely to result in a change in character and/or some significant adverse effects on landscape character and visual amenity.
Moderate	The character area has some distinctive characteristics and valued qualities, that may be vulnerable to change as a result of the introduction of the development scenario. Development may result in more limited changes in character and/or some potentially significant effects on landscape character and visual amenity.
Low-moderate	Few of the key characteristics and qualities of the character area are vulnerable to change as a result of the introduction of the development scenario. Development may result in limited changes in character and/or few potentially significant effects on landscape character and visual amenity.
Low	The character area lacks distinct character and qualities and has few notable features, or is robust with regard to the introduction of the development scenario. Development may result in little or no change in character and little or no significant effect on landscape character and visual amenity.

Chapter 3
Landscape Baseline and Planning Policy

Description of Site and Study Area

3.1 Blackhillock Substation is located approximately 1.5km to the south of Keith, in the MC local authority area as shown on **Figure 1**. The substation, which is owned and operated by SSEN, was recently expanded. A High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) Converter Station was recently built to the north-west of the substation to convert electricity from Beatrice Offshore Wind Farm. The substation is accessed via minor roads which connect to the A96 to the north and east.

3.2 The substation is located on elevated ground on the north-eastern lower hill flank of Cairds Hill. The landform slopes down from around 115m AOD in the south-west of the site to around 90m AOD in the north-east.

3.3 The Blackhillock Substation site is occupied by large scale industrial buildings and outdoor electricity infrastructure housed within a compound, and partially contained by bunding and planting. These buildings and the three 275kV overhead lines which terminate at the substation are visible from the wider study area, particularly from the north-east and west.

3.4 Within the study area the landform rises to a high point of around 300m AOD at Cairds Hill, in the south-west. The hill is blanketed in large blocks of forestry. Edintore Wind Farm is a notable features on its southern side.

3.5 To the west and north-west of the study area the land slopes gently into Strathisla, which cuts across the north-western part of the study area. This area comprises farmland, with dispersed farmsteads throughout, and is crossed by a network of minor roads, the railway and the River Isla.

3.6 To the north of the study area the landform falls into the valley of the Den Burn before rising again to low hills above Strathisla and Burn of Drum. The settlement of Keith is located across these low hills with the River Isla flowing through the settlement from south to north.. The town has a distinctive grid structure which was laid out in the 18th century.

3.7 The eastern and south-eastern part of the study area is a broad, farmed valley which slopes gently to the east and west away from the Nethertown Burn. The A96 follows the burn along the valley floor. The landform rises to around 190m AOD at the wooded Dunnyduff Hill in the north-east of the study area.

Landscape Character

National and Regional Landscape Character

3.8 At the national scale, the site and study area are part of the Upland Farmland Landscape Character Type (LCT) (NatureScot National Landscape Character Assessment, 2019). The Upland Farmland LCT is an area of coastal uplands to the north-east of the Spey, and its key characteristics are described as follows:

- "*Broad shallow valleys.*
- *Large scale, open landscape with a simple vegetation pattern.*
- *Predominance of farming in valleys and the central basin.*
- *Backdrop to farmland provided by the Low Forested Hills, with steeper north and western sides and shallow southern and eastern slopes, covered with extensive conifer forests, and simple, undulating skyline.*
- *Broad, sweeping, rectilinear fields of the central farmland, interspersed with patches of smaller fields, peaty soils, marginal pastures and small plantations.*
- *Relatively well settled farmland area, with an even distribution of farms accessed by a network of rural roads.*
- *Small farmsteads often partially enclosed by isolated woodland pockets.*
- *Views from top areas to Cairngorms and higher moorland edges to south, and to east across Buchan plain.*
- *Limited visual diversity.*"[1]

3.9 LCTs are also defined in the MWELCS (2017) which pre-dates the NatureScot Landscape Character Assessment. The site and study area fall within the Upland Farmland LCT, the boundaries of which are broadly coincident with the NatureScot LCT.

Local Landscape Character Areas

3.10 Informed by desk study and field work, a finer grain landscape character assessment has been undertaken to inform this sensitivity study. The study area has been sub-divided into eleven local landscape character areas (LLCAs). The key characteristics of these areas are described in **Chapter 4,** and they are shown on **Figure 2**.

Designated Landscapes

3.11 There are no nationally or locally designated landscapes within the study area. The closest designated landscapes are the Deveron Valley Special Landscape Area (SLA) approximately 8km to the east, the Spey Valley SLA approximately 10km to the north-west and the Ben Rinnes SLA approximately 11km to the south-west.

Planning Policy

National Planning Policy

3.12 The Scottish Government's recently adopted National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) is the national spatial strategy for Scotland. It sets out our spatial principles, regional priorities, national developments and national planning policy. 'Strategic Renewable Energy Generation and Transmission Infrastructure' is identified as a national development in the national spatial strategy. **T**he key policies of relevance to the Blackhillock LSA are as follows:

- Policy 4 Natural Places intends to "*protect, restore and enhance natural assets making best use of nature-based solutions*" (page 40);
- Policy Green Belts intends to "*encourage, promote and facilitate compact urban growth and use the land around our towns and cities sustainably*" and requires that "*the character, landscape, natural setting and identity of settlements is protected and enhanced*" (page 48); and
- Policy 11 Energy intends to "*encourage, promote and facilitate all forms of renewable energy development onshore and offshore. This includes energy generation, storage, new and replacement transmission and distribution infrastructure and emerging low-carbon and zero emissions technologies including hydrogen and carbon capture utilisation and storage (CCUS)*" (page 53).

3.13 Other policies may be of relevance to the development of a masterplan for the Blackhillock area, including Policy 3 Biodiversity, Policy 6 Forestry Woodland and Trees and Policy 7 Historic assets and places.

Local Planning Policy

3.14 The relevant plan for the area is the Moray Local Development Plan 2020, which sets out the policies and land use proposals to guide development across Moray up to 2030 and beyond. The following planning policies are of relevance to landscape matters:

[1] SNH National Landscape Character Assessment Landscape Character Type 288 Upland Farmland

- **DP1 Development Principles** – states that development proposals will be supported if they conform to the relevant policies, proposals and guidance. In relation to design, the policy states that it must be demonstrated that the development is able to "*conserve and enhance the natural and built environment and cultural heritage resources, retain original land contours and integrate into the landscape*";
- **DP9 Renewable Energy** – states that proposals will be considered favourably where they are "*compliant with policies to safeguard and enhance the built and natural environment*" and "*avoid or address any unacceptable significant adverse impacts including: landscape and visual impacts…*"
- **EP1 Natural Heritage Designations** – relates to the protection of European Sites (a), National Designations (b), Local Designations (c), European Protected Species (d) and Other Protected Species (e);
- **EP2 Biodiversity** – states that development proposals must retain, protect and enhance features of biological interest and provide for their appropriate management;
- **EP3 Special Landscape Areas and Landscape Character** – relates to the protected of special qualities in SLAs (i) and landscape character with reference to the Moray and Nairn Landscape Character Assessment (2019);
- **EP4 Countryside Around Towns (CAT)** – states that development proposals within CATs will be refused unless allocated for long-term housing or necessary for the purposes of land uses including agriculture and forestry;
- **EP6 Settlement Boundaries** – states that development proposals immediately outwith settlement boundaries will not be acceptable;
- **EP7 Forestry, Woodlands and Trees** – relates to the protection of trees including areas of Ancient Woodland and areas within Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs); and
- **EP8 Historic Environment** – relates to the protection of designated and undesignated sites.

Chapter 4
Landscape Sensitivity Findings

4.1 For each local landscape character area (refer to **Figure 2**), an assessment has been completed that presents:

- A description of existing landscape character including key characteristics and representative photographs;
- A landscape assessment against each of the criteria with sensitivity ranking and justification, and an assessment of overall sensitivity;
- A statement of how consistent the local landscape character area is considered to be, in terms of landscape sensitivity; and
- High-level development opportunities, landscape mitigation proposals and, where appropriate, suggestions for landscape enhancement relating to existing electricity infrastructure.

4.2 Sensitivity ratings are given on a scale of low (L), low-moderate (L-M), moderate (M), moderate-high (M-H), and high (H).

Table 4.1: Landscape Sensitivity Assessment for LLCA 1

LLCA 1 Blackhillock Industrial Area		
Key Characteristics		**Representative Photograph**
■ Elevated area on the lower north-facing slopes of Cairds Hill and extending eastwards to the valley of the Burn of Tarnash, where the landform has been modified to accommodate bunding and quarrying; ■ Blackhillock Substation and the adjacent Beatrice HVDC Substation are characterised by large scale buildings and outdoor infrastructure housed within a compound, and partially contained by bunding and planting (some undertaken recently and not yet providing a screening function); ■ Blackhillock Quarry is a heavily modified area contained by the enclosing landform and woodland which provide screening from the surrounding area; ■ Due to its elevation the LLCA is widely visible from the surrounding valley landscapes and other hills, with pylons and other infrastructure sitting prominently on the skyline; and ■ There are some expansive views out from the fringes of the LLCA across to adjacent landscapes.		
Landscape Sensitivity Assessment		
Criteria	Description	Rating
Physical character (including topography and scale)	■ Elevated plateau has been heavily modified for quarry operations and bunding to screen parts of Blackhillock Substation. ■ Large scale buildings and overhead line infrastructure are characteristic.	L-M
Natural character	■ Intensively developed. ■ Some woodland around the fringes of the quarry and recent tree planting has been undertaken around Blackhillock Substation. ■ No designated ecological assets.	L-M
Historic landscape character	■ No designated heritage assets. ■ Field patterns in surrounding area date to 19th and 20th century.	L-M
Form, density, identity and setting of existing development	■ Characterised by large-scale industrial development, overhead lines and quarrying. ■ Existing electricity infrastructure creates hard edges in the landscape.	L
Views and visual character including skylines	■ Buildings and pylons are widely visible from the surrounding area, due to their elevated location and lack of established planting to provide screening. ■ Pylons are particularly prominent and typically seen against the skyline. ■ New planting around substation is immature, and may provide further screening when established (including planting on areas of bunding). ■ Quarry is visually contained by the enclosing landform and mature vegetation.	M-H

Access and recreation	■ No core paths or recreational facilities and the area is not accessible to the public.	L
Perceptual and experiential qualities	■ Strongly influenced by industrial development, and new development would not be out of character.	L

Overall Assessment of Landscape Sensitivity					
Development Scenario	Sensitivity				
Type 1				L-M	
Type 2				L-M	

The LLCA is of **low-moderate** sensitivity to both development scenarios. This is due to its intensively developed nature, lack of features of historic or ecological interest and lack of recreational opportunities, balanced with its elevated and therefore widely visible nature. The more elevated areas around Blackhillock Substation are considered to be more sensitive than areas at a lower elevation around the quarry.

Development Opportunities: As Blackhillock Quarry comes to the end of its operational lifespan, there is an opportunity to develop within its boundaries. The quarry benefits from screening from the surrounding area by the enclosing landform and vegetation and could accommodate Type 2 development (in particular battery storage) which would likely be screened from the surrounding area.

Landscape Mitigation/Enhancement Opportunities:

- Reprofiling of platforms where possible to provide a more naturalistic landform.
- Mixed woodland planting along A96 to screen views towards the quarry and potential development sites.
- Enhanced planting around Blackhillock Substation and Beatrice HVDC Converter Station to screen in views from the west, north and east.
- Rationalisation/ potential undergrounding of overhead lines in the vicinity of the substation, to help reduce the prominence of larger scale vertical electricity infrastructure in the area.
- Consider colour palette of buildings in substation sites, using colours which help structures recede into views.

Table 4.2: Landscape Sensitivity Assessment for LLCA 2

LLCA 2 Quarryhead Lower Hill Slopes		
Key Characteristics		**Representative Photograph**
■ Gently sloping north-facing side of Cairds Hill; ■ Large, open and rectilinear fields in mixed use separated by drainage ditches and / or post and wire fencing; ■ Tree cover is limited to small coniferous shelterbelts and a ribbon of broadleaved woodland which follows a tributary of the River Isla; ■ Beatrice Offshore HVDC Converter Station is prominent on the skyline in the neighbouring LLCA to the east. Other notable structures include a large scrapyard and overhead lines which cross the LLCA; and ■ There are views northwards across Strathisla to more distant wooded hills, and southwards to the skyline formed by forestry across Cairds Hill, with Edintore Wind Farm also visible on the skyline.		
Landscape Sensitivity Assessment		
Criteria	Description	Rating
Physical character (including topography and scale)	■ Gently sloping and open lower hillside; ■ Fields typically large in scale and regular in shape; and ■ Landscape features include linear drainage ditches and riparian woodland.	L-M
Natural character	■ Mixed arable and pastoral farmland, enclosed by post and wire fencing; ■ Some broadleaved riparian woodland along tributary of the River Isla; and ■ No ecologically designated areas.	L-M
Historic landscape character	■ No designated heritage assets; and ■ Field patterns in surrounding area date from 18th century to present.	L-M
Form, density, identity and setting of existing development	■ Development limited to scattered farms, pylons and a scrap yard.	M
Views and visual character including skylines	■ Open views northwards across Strathisla; ■ Close views of forestry and wind turbines across Cairds Hill to the south, and industrial development in the neighbouring LLCA which occupies the skyline; and ■ Relatively few receptors likely to have close views of the area.	M
Access and recreation	■ No core paths or recreational facilities.	L
Perceptual and experiential qualities	■ Rural in character with some urbanising features including the scrapyard and an overhead line, as well as industrial development in the neighbouring LLCA.	M
Overall Assessment of Landscape Sensitivity		

Development Scenario	Sensitivity				
Type 1			M		
Type 2				L-M	

The LLCA is of **moderate** sensitivity to the Type 1 development scenario, due to its elevation, sense of openness and rural character balanced with its lack of features of historic or ecological interest and lack of recreational opportunities. If large buildings were constructed, they would be widely visible from the surrounding area and potentially seen on the skyline. This would likely result in some potentially significant effects on landscape and visual receptors.

The LLCA is of **low-moderate** sensitivity to the Type 2 development scenario. Low height buildings or structures would potentially result in fewer landscape and visual effects as they would be easier to screen and are less likely to be seen on the skyline in views from neighbouring valleys.

The LLCA is consistent in terms of landscape character.

Development Opportunities: There is the potential for low height (i.e. Type 2) development in the fields to the west of the Beatrice Converter Station and south-east of the scrapyard, subject to appropriate mitigation.

Landscape Mitigation/ Enhancement Opportunities:

- Native hedgerow planting along field boundaries to enhance landscape character and strengthen the habitat network / enhance biodiversity.
- Native riparian woodland along tributary burns to enhance landscape character, strengthen habitat networks / enhance biodiversity and filter views towards the Beatrice Converter Station.

Table 4.3: Landscape Sensitivity Assessment for LLCA 3

LLCA 3 Denwell Valley and Enclosing Slopes	
Key Characteristics	**Representative Photograph**
■ Shallow and self-contained valley of the Den Burn, running south-west to north-east, with gently sloping sides; ■ Large, open and rectilinear fields occupied by pasture / wet grassland and separated by linear drainage ditches; ■ Scattered farmsteads along the valley floor and hill tops, and some urban influences in proximity to Keith and the A96; ■ A minor road follows the valley floor and overhead lines cross the LLCA; and ■ Outward views from the valley floor are contained by the valley sides, but more distant views are available from upper slopes / summits, particularly to the north across Strathisla and Keith to more distant hills.	

Landscape Sensitivity Assessment		
Criteria	Description	Rating
Physical character (including topography and scale)	■ Self contained valley with gently sloping sides rising to flat-topped hills, on a notable ridgeline; ■ Fields are typically large in scale and regular in shape; and ■ Landscape features include linear drainage ditches and occasional groups of scattered trees.	M-H
Natural character	■ Mainly pastoral farmland, with some wet grassland along the valley floor; ■ Tree cover limited to scattered groups of trees; and ■ No ecologically designated areas.	L-M
Historic landscape character	■ No designated heritage assets; and ■ Field patterns in surrounding area date from 18th century to present.	L-M
Form, density, identity and setting of existing development	■ The northern end of the LLCA forms the rural setting to the southern edge of Keith; and ■ Development is limited to scattered farms and overhead lines with pylons.	M-H
Views and visual character including skylines	■ Residents and road users on the valley floor have views to the enclosing valley sides; ■ At the south-western end of the valley there are more distant views to forested hill slopes; and ■ From hill tops there are panoramic views, particularly to the north across Strathisla to more distant hills.	H
Access and recreation	■ There are core paths in the north of the LLCA which provide connections between Keith and the adjacent rural area.	M
Perceptual and experiential qualities	■ The area has rural qualities with some urbanising features including the adjacent settlement edge and overhead lines.	M

Overall Assessment of Landscape Sensitivity					
Development Scenario	Sensitivity				
Type 1	H				
Type 2		M-H			

The LLCA is of **high** sensitivity to the Type 1 development scenario and of **moderate-high** sensitivity to the Type 2 development scenario. This is due to its prominent ridgeline, rural nature, role in providing the setting to Keith and intervisibility with other landscapes. Development has the potential to result in significant adverse landscape and visual effects in this valley landscape.

The more elevated areas are likely to be of greater sensitivity due to their intervisibility with the surrounding landscape including views from Keith.

Development Opportunities: None identified due to prominence of ridgeline – development would be widely visible.

Landscape Mitigation/ Enhancement Opportunities:

- Rationalisation/ potential undergrounding of overhead lines on the approach to Blackhillock Substation, to the south, to help reduce the prominence of larger scale vertical electricity infrastructure in the area.

Table 4.4: Landscape Sensitivity Assessment for LLCA 4

LLCA 4 Strathisla Broad Valley	
Key Characteristics	**Representative Photograph**
■ Broad valley following the meandering course of the River Isla, with a flat valley floor and moderately sloping valley sides; ■ Large, open and rectilinear fields in mixed use, separated by drainage ditches and / or post and wire fencing; ■ Some riparian woodland along the River Isla and its tributary burns; ■ Scattered farmsteads throughout, and some urban influences in proximity to Keith including an overhead line; ■ B9014 and railway line run broadly parallel to the river; and ■ There are views across the LLCA to more distant wooded hills.	

Landscape Sensitivity Assessment		
Criteria	Description	Rating
Physical character (including topography and scale)	■ The valley has moderately steeply sloping sides with some areas of steeper slope e.g. at Brandy Brae and Douglasbrae; ■ Fields are typically large in scale and regular in shape; and ■ Landscape features include linear drainage ditches and riparian woodland.	M
Natural character	■ Mixed arable and pastoral farmland, enclosed by post and wire fencing; ■ Some broadleaved riparian woodland along meandering River Isla and its tributaries; and ■ No ecologically designated areas although there is some Ancient Woodland along its fringes at Wood of Maisley.	M
Historic landscape character	■ No designated heritage assets; and ■ Field patterns in surrounding area date from 18th century to present.	L-M
Form, density, identity and setting of existing development	■ The north-eastern end of the LLCA forms the rural setting to the south-western edge of Keith; and ■ Development is limited to scattered farms, overhead lines with pylons and road / rail infrastructure.	M
Views and visual character including skylines	■ There are open views across the valley from the B9014, the railway line, and minor road which connects the B9014 with the A96 via Braehead; ■ The eastern end of the LLCA is visible from the edge of Keith and the core path network in this area; and ■ There are few receptors along the glen floor with the potential to see the enclosing skyline.	M
Access and recreation	■ There are core paths in the east of the LLCA which provide connections between Keith and the adjacent rural area.	M
Perceptual and experiential qualities	■ The area has rural qualities with some urbanising features including the adjacent settlement edge and overhead line in the east.	M

Overall Assessment of Landscape Sensitivity					
Development Scenario	Sensitivity				
Type 1			M		
Type 2			M		
The LLCA is of **moderate** sensitivity to both development scenarios, due to its valley landform with meandering river and riparian woodland, sense of openness and rural character and role in providing the setting to Keith (at its northern end). Development in this LLCA would be visible from a wide area including the southern edge of Keith. This would result in some potentially significant effects on landscape and visual receptors. The LLCA is considered to be more sensitive in the north where it forms the setting to Keith and is visible from the edge of the settlement.					
Development Opportunities: None identified due to visual separation with existing development at Blackhillock.					
Landscape Mitigation/ Enhancement Opportunities: ■ N/A as no development opportunities identified.					

Table 4.5: Landscape Sensitivity Assessment for LLCA 5

LLCA 5 Keith Urban Area		
Key Characteristics		**Representative Photograph**
■ Lies to the east and west of the River Isla, occupying the floor and sides and flat-topped hills of Strathisla; ■ Has origins in the late 12th century, but has a strong and distinctive grid structure which was laid out in the 18th century; ■ Buildings typically traditional and simple in style, constructed of sandstone, some with render or harling; ■ Two Conservation Areas: Keith Mid Street, focusing on Mid Street, Reidhaven Square and the A-listed St Thomas's Catholic Church, and Fife Keith, centred on Regent Square; ■ Mixed land uses on the settlement fringes including parks / greenspaces and a showground to the south, and industrial areas to the east and west at Kynoch Park and Fife Park, respectively; and ■ Occasional framed views north and south to more distant forested hills above the settlement.		
Landscape Sensitivity Assessment		
Criteria	Description	Rating
Physical character (including topography and scale)	■ Located on the upper sides and flat-topped hills above Strathisla and incorporating the valley landform; and ■ Topography overlain by a distinctive grid pattern of streets and squares.	M-H
Natural character	■ Mature woodland lines the River Isla; ■ Some parks and green spaces along the River Isla and at the settlement fringes; and ■ No ecologically designated areas.	M
Historic landscape character	■ Distinctive grid structure laid out in 18th century; and ■ Heritage assets include Keith Mid Street Conservation Area and numerous listed buildings including Category A listed St Thomas' Catholic Church.	H
Form, density, identity and setting of existing development	■ Urban and historic character with a strong and distinctive grid structure; and ■ Some larger-scale industrial buildings on settlement fringes to east and west.	M-H
Views and visual character including skylines	■ Views generally contained by buildings and vegetation; ■ Occasional framed views north and south to more distant forested hills above the settlement, and east across adjacent farmland; and ■ Visible from surrounding hills.	M-H
Access and recreation	■ There are core paths which provide connections with adjacent rural areas and recreational facilities including parks and playing fields.	M-H

Perceptual and experiential qualities	■ Urban in character with some pockets of more naturalistic character, including along the River Isla.	L-M

Overall Assessment of Landscape Sensitivity					
Development Scenario	Sensitivity				
Type 1	H				
Type 2	H				

The LLCA is of **high** sensitivity to both development scenarios. This is due to its historic character including distinctive street patterns, designated heritage assets and intervisibility with farmed and wooded hills in the wider landscape. Development of the nature proposed would result in a substantial change to character and significant landscape and visual effects.

The LLCA is consistent in terms of landscape character.

Development Opportunities: None identified due to sensitivity and visual separation with existing development at Blackhillock.

Landscape Mitigation/ Enhancement Opportunities:

- N/A as no development opportunities identified.

Table 4.6: Landscape Sensitivity Assessment for LLCA 6

LLCA 6 Dunnyduff and Den Burn (Wooded Hill)		
Key Characteristics		**Representative Photograph**
■ Low wooded hill rising to 186m AOD, with steeply sloping sides in the west and more gently sloping sides in the south and east; ■ Bound by the wooded valleys of the Burn of Drum to the west and Herricks Burn to the south; ■ Broadleaved woodland along the Den Burn, Burn of Drum and across the top of Dunnyduff Hill is identified as Ancient Woodland; ■ Tarnish Falls and Dunnyduff Wood are a recreational area with waymarked trails, and there are numerous core paths; ■ Farmstead at Tarnash Farm tucked into the hillside; and ■ Distant views are available from the core path network on Dunnyduff Hill to Keith, Balloch and the surrounding area.		
Landscape Sensitivity Assessment		
Criteria	Description	Rating
Physical character (including topography and scale)	■ Low wooded hill which slopes steeply to the west into the Burn of Drum and south into Herricks Burn; ■ Fields are typically medium to large in scale and regular in shape; and ■ Landscape features include extensive broadleaved woodland across Dunnyduff Hill and along the Burn of Drum and Herricks Burn.	M-H
Natural character	■ Mixed farmland and broadleaved woodland, much of which is Ancient Woodland; and ■ Tarnash Waterfall occurs near the confluence of several burns.	M-H
Historic landscape character	■ No designated heritage assets; and ■ Field patterns in surrounding area date from 18th century to present.	M
Form, density, identity and setting of existing development	■ Development is limited to one farmstead; and ■ The LLCA provides a backdrop to the surrounding valley landscapes, including as seen from the A96 which follows the Den Burn and Burn of Tarnash.	M-H
Views and visual character including skylines	■ The wooded hill forms the skyline in close views from the surrounding valleys, including views from the A96 and Keith, and also in more distant views where it is seen alongside the larger Balloch Hill; and ■ There are panoramic views from the core path network on Dunnyduff Hill, to Keith, Balloch and the surrounding area.	H
Access and recreation	■ There are core paths / waymarked trails at Dunnyduff Wood and Tarnash Waterfall.	M-H
Perceptual and experiential qualities	■ Rural in character, and broadleaved woodland cover contributes to a sense of naturalness and provides separation from the A96.	M-H
Overall Assessment of Landscape Sensitivity		

Development Scenario	Sensitivity				
Type 1		M-H			
Type 2		M-H			
The LLCA is of **moderate - high** sensitivity to both development scenarios. This is due to its landform and role as a backdrop to neighbouring valleys and Keith, its broadleaved woodland including some Ancient Woodland, its recreational value and sense of naturalness, and its visibility from the A96 and more distant wooded hills. Development in this LLCA is likely to result in a change in character and some significant landscape and visual effects. The LLCA is of increased sensitivity on the north-western flanks of the hill where it provides the backdrop to views from Keith.					
Development Opportunities: None identified due to moderate-high sensitivity and visual separation with existing development at Blackhillock.					
Landscape Mitigation/ Enhancement Opportunities: ■ N/A as no development opportunities identified.					

Table 4.7: Landscape Sensitivity Assessment for LLCA 7

LLCA 7 Gibston Farmed Valley Sides	
Key Characteristics	**Representative Photograph**
■ North-east facing lower slopes of Cairds Hill, following a shallow valley of a tributary of the Den Burn; ■ Large, open and rectilinear fields occupied by mixed farmland and enclosed by post and wire fencing; ■ Some broadleaved woodland along the tributary burn; ■ Large farmsteads are visible on upper slopes; ■ Strongly influenced by adjacent industrial development, as well as overhead lines which cross the LLCA; ■ Elevation affords distant views north across Keith and Strathisla to rolling forested hills including Knock Hill and Lurg Hill, and east to Meikle Balloch Hill; and ■ LLCA is visible from the A96 which follows its north-eastern boundary.	

Landscape Sensitivity Assessment		
Criteria	Description	Rating
Physical character (including topography and scale)	■ Gently sloping landform; ■ Fields are typically large in scale and regular in shape; and ■ Large scale infrastructure influences the LLCA in proximity to Blackhillock Substation.	L-M
Natural character	■ Mixed farmland with some limited broadleaved woodland along the tributary burn; and ■ No ecologically designated areas.	L-M
Historic landscape character	■ No designated heritage assets; and ■ Field patterns in surrounding area date from 18th century to present.	L-M
Form, density, identity and setting of existing development	■ Adjacent development at Blackhillock Substation and Blackhillock Quarry has a strong influence, creating hard edges to the west and south of the LLCA; and ■ The LLCA provides a backdrop to the valley of the Den Burn as seen from the A96.	M
Views and visual character including skylines	■ A relatively open landscape with limited vegetation cover; and ■ Visible from the valley of the Den Burn including the A96.	M
Access and recreation	■ There are no core paths or recreational facilities.	L
Perceptual and experiential qualities	■ Rural in character, but with modern influences including overhead lines and highly visible industrial development in the neighbouring LLCA; and ■ A96 locally reduces tranquillity.	L-M

Overall Assessment of Landscape Sensitivity					
Development Scenario	Sensitivity				
Type 1			M		
Type 2				L-M	

The LLCA is of **moderate** sensitivity to the Type 1 development scenario. This is due to its lack of features of ecological or heritage interest, lack of recreational opportunities and influence of overhead line infrastructure, balanced with its rural character and visibility in close views from the A69. Development of the nature proposed may result in some significant landscape and visual effects.

The LLCA is of **low-moderate** sensitivity to the Type 2 development scenario. Lower height buildings and structures may result in fewer significant landscape and visual effects and could be more easily screened in views from the A96.

The LLCA is consistent in terms of landscape sensitivity.

Development Opportunities: Potential opportunity to site Type 2 development on lower slopes, with appropriate mitigation to screen from nearby residential receptors and the A96.

Landscape Mitigation/ Enhancement Opportunities:

- Mixed woodland planting along A96 to screen views towards Blackhillock Substation and potential development sites in the LLCA.
- Native hedgerow planting along field boundaries to enhance landscape character and strengthen the habitat network / enhance biodiversity.
- Rationalisation/ potential undergrounding of overhead lines on the approach to Blackhillock Substation, to the west, to help reduce the prominence of larger scale vertical electricity infrastructure in the area.

Table 4.8: Landscape Sensitivity Assessment for LLCA 8

LLCA 8 Nethertown West Farmed Valley Sides					
Key Characteristics				**Representative Photograph**	
■ East-facing, gently sloping lower slopes of Cairds Hill, draining to the east into the Nethertown Burn; ■ Large, open and rectilinear fields occupied by mixed farmland and enclosed by post and wire fencing and with occasional woodland shelterbelts and linear drainage ditches along field boundaries; ■ Scattered large farmsteads located on valley sides; and ■ Intervisible with the A96 which follows the course of the Nethertown Burn, and from the rising hills to the east including Little Balloch Hill.					
Landscape Sensitivity Assessment					
Criteria	Description				Rating
Physical character (including topography and scale)	■ Gently sloping valley sides; ■ Fields are typically large in scale and regular in shape; and ■ Landscape features include some woodland shelterbelts.				M
Natural character	■ Farmed landscape with some woodland shelterbelts; and ■ No ecologically designated areas.				L-M
Historic landscape character	■ No designated heritage assets; and ■ Field patterns in surrounding area date from 18th century to present.				L-M
Form, density, identity and setting of existing development	■ Development limited to large farmsteads; and ■ Limited intervisibility with Keith.				L-M
Views and visual character including skylines	■ Visible in close views from the A96; and ■ Views across valley between wooded enclosing hills.				M-H
Access and recreation	■ No core paths or recreational facilities.				L
Perceptual and experiential qualities	■ Rural in character; and ■ A96 locally reduces tranquillity.				M
Overall Assessment of Landscape Sensitivity					
Development Scenario	Sensitivity				
Type 1		M-H			
Type 2			M		
The LLCA is of **moderate-high** sensitivity to the Type 1 development scenario. This is due to its large-scale fields, lack of features of historic or ecological interest and lack of recreational opportunities balanced with its visibility from the A96 and					

role of the valley in separating enclosing wooded hills. Development may result in some potentially significant landscape and visual effects, including cumulative effects.

The LLCA is of **moderate** sensitivity to the Type 2 development scenario. Lower height buildings and structures may still result in some significant landscape and visual effects but could be more easily screened in views from the A96 with appropriate mitigation.

The LLCA is consistent in terms of landscape character.

Development Opportunities: Potential opportunity to site Type 2 development south of Blackhillock quarry, with appropriate mitigation.

Landscape Mitigation/ Enhancement Opportunities:

- Mixed woodland planting along A96 / Nethertown Burn to screen views towards the quarry and potential development site.
- Native hedgerow planting along field boundaries to enhance landscape character and strengthen the habitat network / enhance biodiversity.
- Native riparian woodland along tributary burns to enhance landscape character, strengthen habitat networks / enhance biodiversity and filter views towards the quarry edge from the A96 and local residential properties.
- Rationalisation/ potential undergrounding of overhead lines on the approach to Blackhillock Substation, to the north-west, to help reduce the prominence of larger scale vertical electricity infrastructure in the area.

Table 4.9: Landscape Sensitivity Assessment for LLCA 9

LLCA 9 Nethertown East Farmed Valley Sides		
Key Characteristics		**Representative Photograph**
■ West / north-west-facing, gently sloping lower slopes of The Balloch, draining to the west into the Nethertown Burn; ■ Large, open and rectilinear fields occupied by mixed farmland and enclosed by post and wire fencing with linear drainage ditches along field boundaries; ■ Occasional small shelterbelts and deciduous woodland along Birken Burn and Burn of Tarnash, including some Ancient Woodland; ■ Scattered large farmsteads located on valley sides and a small quarry adjacent to the A96; and ■ Intervisible with the A96 which follows the course of the Nethertown Burn, and from the rising hills to the west including Cairds Hill.		
Landscape Sensitivity Assessment		
Criteria	Description	Rating
Physical character (including topography and scale)	■ Gently sloping valley sides; ■ Fields are typically large in scale and regular in shape; and ■ Landscape features include some woodland shelterbelts and deciduous riparian woodland.	M
Natural character	■ Mainly farmland with some small shelterbelts and deciduous woodland; and ■ Broadleaved woodland along the Burn of Tarnash classified as Ancient Woodland.	M
Historic landscape character	■ No designated heritage assets; ■ Field patterns in surrounding area date from 18th century to present; and ■ Old Military Road indicated on OS maps.	M
Form, density, identity and setting of existing development	■ Development limited to large farmsteads; and ■ Limited intervisibility with Keith.	L-M
Views and visual character including skylines	■ Visible in close views from the A96; and ■ Views across valley between wooded enclosing hills.	M-H
Access and recreation	■ No core paths or recreational facilities.	L
Perceptual and experiential qualities	■ Rural in character, but with modern influences including the adjacent A96 which locally reduces tranquillity.	M
Overall Assessment of Landscape Sensitivity		
Development Scenario	Sensitivity	

Type 1		M-H			
Type 2			M		

The LLCA is of **moderate-high** sensitivity to the Type 1 development scenario. This is due to its large-scale fields, lack of features of historic interest and lack of recreational opportunities balanced with its broadleaved woodland including some Ancient Woodland, visibility from the A96 and role of the valley in separating enclosing wooded hills. Development may result in some potentially significant landscape and visual effects, including cumulative effects.

The LLCA is of **moderate** sensitivity to the Type 2 development scenario. Lower height buildings and structures may still result in some significant landscape and visual effects but could be more easily screened in views from the A96 with appropriate mitigation.

The LLCA is consistent in terms of landscape character.

Development Opportunities: None identified due to visual separation with existing development at Blackhillock.

Landscape Mitigation/ Enhancement Opportunities:

- N/A as no development opportunities identified.

Table 4.10: Landscape Sensitivity Assessment for LLCA 10

LLCA 10 Cairds Hill Wooded Hill with Turbines		
Key Characteristics		**Representative Photograph**
■ Rounded hill with steeply sloping sides, rising to a summit of 301m AOD and dissected by narrow stream valleys of tributaries of the River Isla and Burn of Davidston; ■ Landcover comprises a mosaic of heathland and farmland (pasture and arable) on the hill sides, with coniferous forestry blanketing the top (most of which is Ancient Woodland) and some riparian woodland along burns; ■ The six turbines of Edintore Wind Farm are prominent on the south-facing side of the hill, contrasting with the underlying farmland and forestry; and ■ Elevated nature affords expansive views including east to The Balloch and north across Keith to a more distant wooded skyline.		
Landscape Sensitivity Assessment		
Criteria	Description	Rating
Physical character (including topography and scale)	■ Elevated summit in the context of the study area as a whole; and ■ Mosaic of land cover including heathland, farmland and forestry.	M-H
Natural character	■ Forestry across upper slopes and summits classified as Ancient Woodland; and ■ Mainly farmed or forested but with some areas of broadleaf woodland e.g. along burns.	M
Historic landscape character	■ No designated heritage assets; and ■ Field patterns in surrounding area from 18th century to present.	L-M
Form, density, identity and setting of existing development	■ Wind farm on southern side has a local influence as do overhead lines which cross the LLCA; and ■ Forms the backdrop to southerly views from Keith.	M
Views and visual character including skylines	■ Hill is widely visible, forming a backdrop to views from neighbouring valleys and the settlement of Keith; and ■ Wind turbines are prominent across the south side of the hill and typically seen against the skyline.	M-H
Access and recreation	■ No core paths or recreational facilities but elevation may attract local walkers.	L-M
Perceptual and experiential qualities	■ Rural in character, but with modern influences including wind turbines and overhead lines having a localised influence.	M
Overall Assessment of Landscape Sensitivity		
Development Scenario	Sensitivity	

Type 1		M-H			
Type 2			M		

The LLCA is of **moderate-high** sensitivity to Type 1 development as the LLCA due to its elevated landform with steeply sloping sides and role as a backdrop to views from Keith and surrounding valleys. Large buildings could be seen to detract from this notable landscape feature and would be widely visible due to the elevation of the hill. The LLCA is of **moderate** sensitivity to Type 2 development because smaller buildings or units would be less likely to conflict with the scale of the landform and could be integrated subject to appropriate mitigation.

The landscape sensitivity of the LLCA varies. Areas on the more gently sloping farmland in the north may be of lower sensitivity as these areas are lower lying and therefore less likely to be seen on the skyline. They are also in proximity to existing industrial development.

Development Opportunities: Potential opportunity to site Type 1 or 2 development in the very north of the LLCA, to the south of Beatrice HVDC Converter Station, with appropriate mitigation. Potential opportunity to site Type 2 development south of Blackhillock Substation, with appropriate mitigation.

Landscape Mitigation/ Enhancement Opportunities:

- Expansion and diversification of woodland on Cairds Hill to soften the linear forestry edge, strengthen the habitat network / enhance biodiversity and filter / screen views towards existing development and potential development site from the north-west.

Chapter 5
Conclusions & Recommendations

5.1 The overall findings of the sensitivity assessment are summarised in **Table 5.1**, see below. The landscape sensitivity assessment has identified that the following areas are of high or moderate-high sensitivity to Type 1 development.

- LLCA 3 - Denwell Valley and Enclosing Slopes (high);
- LLCA 5 - Keith Urban Area (high);
- LLCA 6 - Dunnyduff and Den Burn Wooded Hill (moderate-high);
- LLCA 8 - Nethertown West Farmed Valley Sides (moderate-high);
- LLCA 9 - Nethertown East Farmed Valley Sides (moderate-high); and
- LLCA 10 - Cairds Hill Wooded Hill with Turbines (moderate-high).

5.2 We therefore recommend that these areas are unsuitable for Type 1 development. LLCAs 4, 8, 9 and 10 are of slightly lower sensitivity (moderate) to Type 2 development. There may be some limited scope for development of this type, subject to sensitive siting and appropriate landscape mitigation.

5.3 The study also recognises that there may be some limited scope for Type 1 development in LLCA 1 and Type 2 development in LCAs 1, 2 and 7.

5.4 The following types of landscape/visual mitigation and landscape enhancement have been identified as potentially appropriate in each LLCA:

LLCA 1

- Reprofiling of platforms where possible to provide a more naturalistic landform.
- Mixed woodland planting along A96 to screen views towards the quarry and potential development sites.
- Enhanced planting around Blackhillock Substation and Beatrice HVDC Converter Station to screen in views from the west, north and east.

- Rationalisation/ potential undergrounding of overhead lines in the vicinity of the substation, to help reduce the prominence of larger scale vertical electricity infrastructure in the area.
- Consider colour palette of buildings in substation sites, using colours which help structures recede into views.

LLCA 2

- Native hedgerow planting along field boundaries to enhance landscape character and strengthen the habitat network / enhance biodiversity.
- Native riparian woodland along tributary burns to enhance landscape character, strengthen habitat networks / enhance biodiversity and filter views towards the Beatrice Converter Station.

LLCA 3

- Rationalisation/ potential undergrounding of overhead lines on the approach to Blackhillock Substation, to the south, to help reduce the prominence of larger scale vertical electricity infrastructure in the area.

LLCA 7

- Mixed woodland planting along A96 to screen views towards Blackhillock Substation and potential development sites in the LLCA.
- Native hedgerow planting along field boundaries to enhance landscape character and strengthen the habitat network / enhance biodiversity.
- Rationalisation/ potential undergrounding of overhead lines on the approach to Blackhillock Substation, to the west, to help reduce the prominence of larger scale vertical electricity infrastructure in the area.

LLCA 8

- Mixed woodland planting along A96 / Nethertown Burn to screen views towards the quarry and potential development site.
- Native hedgerow planting along field boundaries to enhance landscape character and strengthen the habitat network / enhance biodiversity.
- Native riparian woodland along tributary burns to enhance landscape character, strengthen habitat networks / enhance biodiversity and filter views towards the quarry edge from the A96 and local residential properties.
- Rationalisation/ potential undergrounding of overhead lines on the approach to Blackhillock Substation, to the north-west, to help reduce the prominence of larger scale vertical electricity infrastructure in the area.

LLCA 10

- Expansion and diversification of woodland on Cairds Hill to soften the linear forestry edge, strengthen the habitat network / enhance biodiversity and filter / screen views towards existing development and potential development site from the north-west.

5.5 Whilst this study provides an initial indication of landscape sensitivity, it should not be interpreted as a definitive statement on the suitability or otherwise of individual sites for a particular development or land use change. All proposals will need to be assessed on their own merits. The overall sensitivity rating should not therefore be relied on without reference to the detailed criteria-based assessment for each site.

5.6 The overall judgement on levels of landscape sensitivity is tailored to the plan making process and planning decisions should take into account the findings of the specific criteria based assessment.

Table 5.1: Overall landscape sensitivity score for the local landscape character areas

LLCA No	LLCA Name	Overall sensitivity rating: Type 1	Overall sensitivity rating: Type 2
1	Blackhillock Industrial Area	Low - moderate	Low - moderate
2	Quarryhead Lower Hill Slopes	Moderate	Low - moderate

LLCA No	LLCA Name	Overall sensitivity rating: Type 1	Overall sensitivity rating: Type 2
3	Denwell Valley and Enclosing Slopes	High	Moderate-high
4	Strathisla Broad Valley	Moderate	Moderate
5	Keith Urban Area	High	High
6	Dunnyduff and Den Burn Wooded Hill	Moderate – high	Moderate – high
7	Gibston Farmed Valley Sides	Moderate	Low - moderate
8	Nethertown West Farmed Valley Sides	Moderate-high	Moderate
9	Nethertown East Farmed Valley Sides	Moderate-high	Moderate
10	Cairds Hill Wooded Hill with Turbines	Moderate – high	Moderate

Appendix A
Landscape Sensitivity Criteria

Table 1: Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Criteria

Physical character (including topography and scale)

This considers the shape and scale of the landform, landscape pattern and landscape elements in relation to the scale of potential development. Smooth, gently undulating or flat landforms are likely to be less sensitive to development than a landscape with a dramatic landform, distinct landform features or incised valleys with prominent slopes. This is because developments may mask distinctive topographical features which contribute to landscape character.

This criterion considers how developments fit with the scale of the landform (understanding the scale of the development proposed is important when applying this criterion). Larger scale, simple landforms are likely to be less sensitive to larger scale developments than smaller scale, enclosed landforms (where large scale developments could appear out of scale with the underlying landform). Conversely, smaller developments may be able to be screened within enclosed landforms, therefore reducing landscape sensitivity. Existing small-scale features in the landscape in the form of existing buildings or trees will influence the scale of development that can be accommodated in the landscape.

Low sensitivity	Low-moderate sensitivity	Moderate sensitivity	Moderate-high sensitivity	High sensitivity
e.g. the landscape has smooth, gently undulating or featureless landform with uniform large-scale landscape pattern and low density of overlying landscape features.		*e.g. the landscape has an undulating landform and some distinct landform features; it is overlain by a mixture of small-scale and larger scale field patterns and a moderate density of small-scale landscape features.*		*e.g. the landscape has a dramatic landform or distinct landform features that contribute positively to landscape character; and/or the area has a high density of small-scale landscape features; and/or is overlain by a small-scale field pattern.*

Natural character

This criterion considers the 'naturalistic' qualities of the landscape in terms of coverage of semi-natural habitats and valued natural features (e.g. trees, hedgerows) which could be vulnerable to loss from development. Areas with frequent natural features (including large areas of nationally or internationally designated habitats) result in increased sensitivity to development, while landscapes with limited natural features (including intensively farmed areas or areas with high levels of existing development) will be less sensitive.

Low sensitivity	Low-moderate sensitivity	Moderate sensitivity	Moderate-high sensitivity	High sensitivity

e.g. much of the landscape is intensively farmed or developed with little semi-natural habitat coverage and few valued natural features.		*e.g. there are areas of valued semi-natural habitats and features found in parts of the landscape, whilst other parts are intensively farmed or developed.*		*e.g. large areas of the landscape are nationally or internationally designated for their nature conservation interest; there is a frequent occurrence of valued natural features across the landscape.*

Historic landscape character

This considers the extent to which the landscape has 'time-depth' (a sense of being an historic landscape, with reference to Historic Land-use Assessment (HLA) and/or the presence of heritage assets that are important to landscape character (i.e. Conservation Areas, Scheduled Monuments, listed buildings, archaeological features and remains or other features listed in the landscape character assessment).

Landscapes with small-scale, more irregular field patterns of historic origin are likely to be more sensitive to the introduction of modern development than landscapes with large, regular scale field patterns because of the risk of losing characteristic landscape patterns.

Low sensitivity	Low-moderate sensitivity	Moderate sensitivity	Moderate-high sensitivity	High sensitivity
e.g. A landscape with relatively few historic features important to the character of the area and little time depth (i.e. large intensively farmed fields).		*e.g. A landscape with some visible historic features of importance to character, and a variety of time depths.*		*e.g. A landscape with a high density of historic features important to the character of the area and great time depth (i.e. piecemeal enclosure with irregular boundaries)*

Form, density, identity and setting of existing development

This considers the quantity and type of current development in the landscape, and whether development in the assessment area would be in accordance with the general pattern, setting and form of current development. It also relates to the landscape pattern associated with existing development, for example if it is well integrated by woodland cover or open and exposed to form a 'hard edge' to the adjoining landscape.

This criterion also considers the extent to which the landscape contributes to the identity and distinctiveness of settlements, by way of its character and/or scenic quality, for example by providing an attractive backdrop/ setting to the settlement edge, or playing an important part in views from a settlement. This criterion also considers the extent to which the area contributes to a perceived gap between developments (the loss of which would increase coalescence).

Low sensitivity	Low-moderate sensitivity	Moderate sensitivity	Moderate-high sensitivity	High sensitivity

e.g. the area does not contribute positively to the setting of nearby settlements. Development in the assessment area would have a good relationship with the form/ pattern of existing development, and could provide the opportunity to improve the edge of existing development.		*e.g. the area provides some contribution to the setting of nearby settlements, and/or plays some part in views from the settlement. Development in the assessment area may be slightly at odds with the form/ pattern of existing development, and may adversely affect the edge of existing development to some extent.*		*e.g. the area provides an attractive backdrop/ setting to the settlement, plays an important part in views from the settlement, or forms an important part in the perception of a gap between developments. Development in the assessment area would have a poor relationship with the existing development form/pattern, or would adversely affect an existing settlement edge (which may be historic or distinctive).*

Views and visual character including skylines

This considers the visual prominence of the assessment area, reflecting the extent of openness or enclosure in the landscape (due to landform or land cover), and the degree of intervisibility with the surrounding landscape (i.e. the extent to which potential development would be visible).

Visually prominent landscapes are likely to be more sensitive to development than those which are not so visually prominent. Landscapes which are visually prominent and inter-visible with adjacent landscapes (both urban and rural) are likely to be more sensitive to development than those which are more hidden or less widely visible.

It also considers the skyline character of the area including whether it forms a visually distinctive skyline or an important undeveloped skyline. Prominent and distinctive and/or undeveloped skylines are likely to be more sensitive to development because new buildings/structures may detract from these skylines as features in the landscape. Important landmark features on the skyline might include historic features or monuments.

Low sensitivity	Low-moderate sensitivity	Moderate sensitivity	Moderate-high sensitivity	High sensitivity
e.g. the area is enclosed/visually contained and/or has a low degree of visibility from surrounding landscapes and the area does not form a visually distinctive or important undeveloped skyline.		*e.g. the area is semi-enclosed or has some enclosed and some open areas. It is likely to have some inter-visibility with surrounding landscapes, and may have some visually distinctive or undeveloped skylines within the area.*		*e.g. the area is open and/or has a high degree of visibility from surrounding landscapes, and/or the area forms a visually distinctive skyline or an important undeveloped skyline.*

Access and recreation

This criterion considers the presence of features and facilities which enable enjoyment of the landscape, and the importance of these. They may include core paths, open access land, and outdoor tourist / visitor attractions with facilities. Recreation activities such as walking, cycling, horse riding or more formal recreation activities where enjoyment of the landscape is important to the experience. Importance of features may be indicated by designation as long distance footpaths or recreation routes, national cycle routes, proximity to areas of local population and outdoor tourist attractions often marked on Ordnance Survey maps.

Low sensitivity	Low-moderate sensitivity	Moderate sensitivity	Moderate-high sensitivity	High sensitivity
e.g. recreation value limited to community sports facilities and local open spaces. *Limited provision of access routes which are likely to be of community importance, e.g. core paths, bridleways and limited areas of open access land.*		*e.g. landscapes with green spaces or recreation areas valued in the local context.* *Well-used landscapes with some core paths, access land or possibly with long distance recreational routes.*		*e.g. landscapes regionally important for access and enjoyment of the landscape, e.g. country parks or a concentration of important outdoor attractions with visitor facilities.* *Presence of well-connected long distance routes and core paths linking centres of population.*

Perceptual and experiential qualities

This considers qualities such as the rural character of the landscape (traditional land uses with few modern human influences), sense of remoteness or tranquillity. Landscapes that are relatively remote or tranquil (due to freedom from human activity and disturbance and having a perceived naturalness or a traditional rural feel with few modern human influences) tend to increase levels of sensitivity to development compared to landscapes that contain signs of modern development. High scenic value and dark night skies also add to sensitivity in relation to this criterion. This is because development will introduce new and uncharacteristic features which may detract from a sense of tranquillity and or remoteness/naturalness.

Low sensitivity	Low-moderate sensitivity	Moderate sensitivity	Moderate-high sensitivity	High sensitivity

e.g. the area is significantly influenced by development/ human activity, where new development would not be out of character.		*e.g. A landscape with some sense of rural character, but with some modern elements and human influences.*		*e.g. A tranquil or highly rural landscape, lacking strong intrusive elements. A landscape of high scenic value with dark skies and a high perceived degree of rural character and naturalness with few modern human influences.*

Appendix B
Supporting Figures

Blackhillock Substation Landscape Sensitivity Study
Moray Council

LUC

Figure:1 Local Landscape Character Areas

- Site boundary
- Site boundary 1km buffer
- Site boundary 2km buffer
- Refer to Keith North-East Landscape Sensitivity Study

Local Landscape Character Area

- 1: Blackhillock Industrial Area
- 2: Quarryhead Lower Hill Slopes
- 3: Denwell Valley and Enclosing Slopes
- 4: Strathisla Broad Valley
- 5: Keith Urban Area
- 6: Dunnyduff and Den Burn Wooded Hill
- 7: Gibston Farmed Valley Sides
- 8: Nethertown West Farmed Valley Sides
- 9: Nethertown East Farmed Valley Sides
- 10: Cairds Hill Wooded Hill with Turbines

0 0.5 1 km

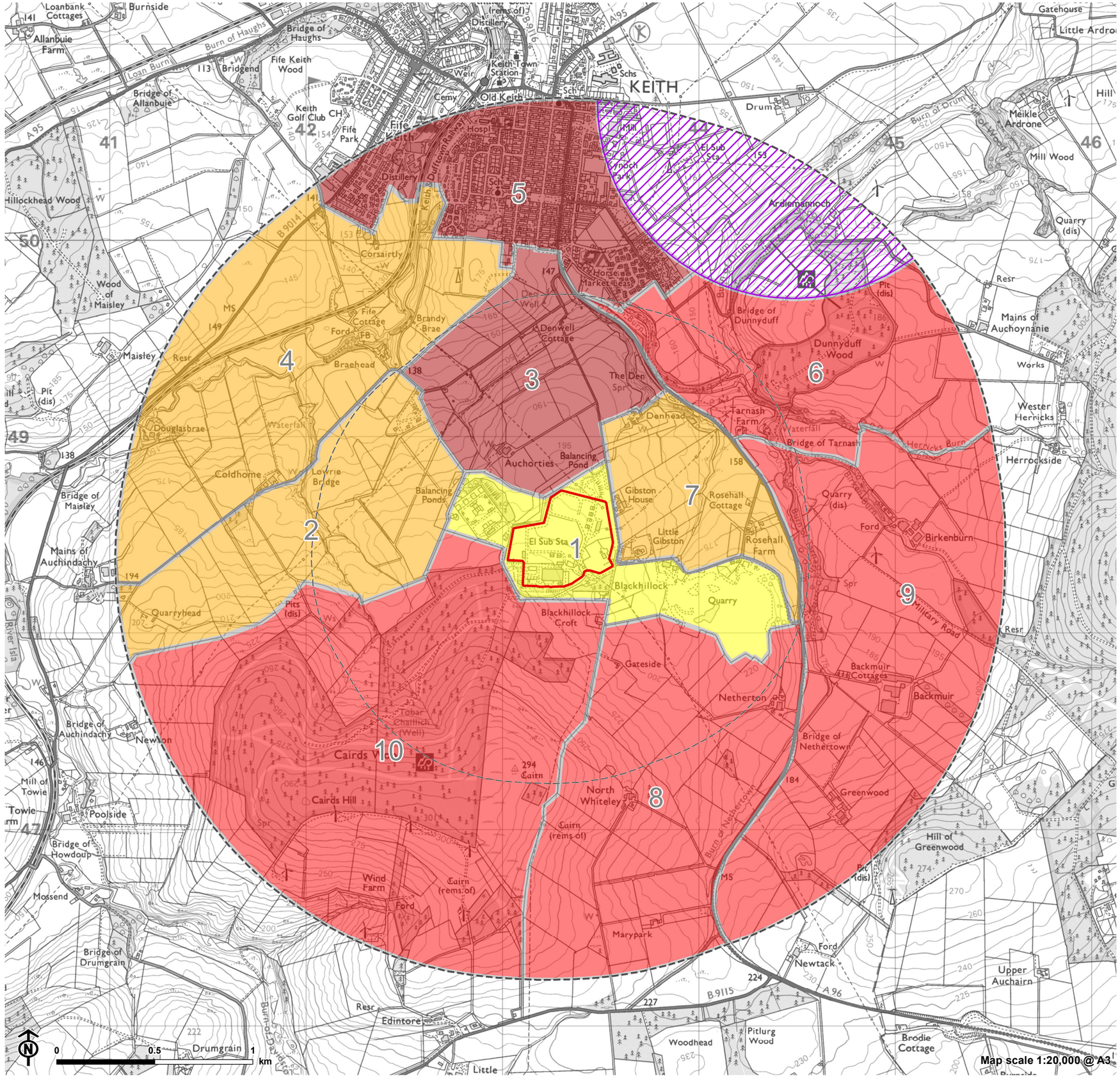
Map scale 1:20,000 @ A3

CB:LT EB:Tembo_L LUC 12348_FIG1_r0_P_LLCA_A3L 17/05/2023
Source:LUC, MC

Blackhillock Substation Landscape Sensitivity Study
Moray Council

LUC

Figure 2a:Landscape Sensitivity Results – Type 1



CB:LT EB:Tembo_L LUC 12348_FIG2_A_r0_P_LSR_Type1_A3L 19/05/2023
Source:LUC, MC

Blackhillock Substation Landscape Sensitivity Study
Moray Council

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Figure 2b:Landscape Sensitivity Results – Type 2

Site boundary
Site boundary 1km buffer
Site boundary 2km buffer

Overall sensitivity rating: Type 2

Low - moderate
Moderate
Moderate-high
High
Refer to Keith North-East Landscape Sensitivity Study

Local Landscape Character Area

1: Blackhillock Industrial Area
2: Quarryhead Lower Hill Slopes
3: Denwell Valley and Enclosing Slopes
4: Strathisla Broad Valley
5: Keith Urban Area
6: Dunnyduff and Den Burn Wooded Hill
7: Gibston Farmed Valley Sides
8: Nethertown West Farmed Valley Sides
9: Nethertown East Farmed Valley Sides
10: Cairds Hill Wooded Hill with Turbines

0 0.5 1 km

Map scale 1:20,000 @ A3

CB:LT EB:Tembo_L LUC 12348_FIG2_B_r0_P_LSR_Type2_A3L 17/05/2023
Source:LUC, MC

Moray Council

Moray Just Transition
Keith North-east Landscape Sensitivity Study (Appendix to the Blackhillock Study)

Draft report
Prepared by LUC
May 2023

Moray Council

Moray Just Transition
Keith North-east Landscape Sensitivity Study (Appendix to Blackhillock Study)

Project Number
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1.	Draft	NE	LC	PDM	18.05.2023

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Contents

Chapter 1
Introduction

Background to the Study

1.1 In January 2023, Moray Council (MC) requested a Landscape Sensitivity Assessment (LSA) to inform the development of a masterplan for the area surrounding Blackhillock Substation.

1.2 Following this, in April 2023, MC commissioned additional LSA to inform the development of a larger masterplan, which encompasses the area to the north-east of Keith as well as the area surrounding Blackhillock Substation. The area is subject to development pressure for electricity infrastructure which would benefit from being in close proximity to the existing Keith Substation. Furthermore, and as part of the 'Beauly Blackhillock New Deer Peterhead 400kV' project, Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN) have been undertaking public consultation for a proposed substation in this area.

1.3 The following study is an appendix to the Blackhillock Substation LSA. The methodology used in the Blackhillock Substation LSA is used in this study, as summarised in **Chapter 2**. Relevant National and Local Planning Policy, as set out in the Blackhillock Substation LSA, is not repeated in this Appendix report.

Purpose and Scope

1.4 The NatureScot sensitivity guidance (2022) defines LSAs as "*strategic appraisals of the relative sensitivity of landscapes to development types or land use changes. They are an important tool to help guide development to less sensitive locations*."

1.5 The purpose of this landscape sensitivity assessment is to inform the development of the proposed masterplan, helping to guide development to less sensitive locations. The study includes potential mitigation measures that could be applied in different areas. Where appropriate, high level suggestions on landscape enhancement relating to existing electricity infrastructure are also provided.

1.6 The following tasks have been undertaken:

- A study area was defined to the north-east of Keith, including the existing Keith Substation and surrounding

land experiencing development pressure, and was agreed with MC;

- Existing landscape character assessments and other available landscape baseline information were reviewed;
- Local landscape character areas were defined to form the basis for the LSA, and their key characteristics described;
- Sensitivity criteria, developed in agreement with MC for the Blackhillock Substation LSA and informed by the NatureScot sensitivity guidance (2022), were applied to the local landscape character areas identified in this study;
- A site visit was carried out to verify the landscape character areas and gather information for the LSA;
- A site assessment was completed for each character area, and each area assigned an overall sensitivity rating; and
- For each character area, brief recommendations on opportunities for siting development, and the types of landscape/visual mitigation that may be appropriate, is provided. Where appropriate, suggestions around landscape enhancement relating to existing electricity infrastructure have also been made.

1.7 The report is accompanied by the following figures:

- Figure 1: Local Landscape Character Areas;
- Figure 2a: Landscape Sensitivity Results – Type 1; and
- Figure 2b: Landscape Sensitivity Results – Type 2.

Limitations of the Study

1.8 This report is intended only to inform development of a wider masterplan which includes the Keith north-east area. The findings and conclusions of this report should not be relied upon in isolation to determine the suitability or otherwise of any site to a particular proposal. All development proposals will require to be assessed on their own merits based on site-specific analysis.

1.9 The report is a strategic study based on the assessment of local landscape character areas. There are likely to be spatial variations in character within any one assessment area and these are described in the text where applicable.

Chapter 2
Methodology

Study area

2.1 The LSA focuses on the area around Drum Farm, to the north-east of Keith, within a radius of 1km, as shown in **Figure 1**. It is considered that this area captures potential development pressure and landscape sensitivities within the extended masterplan area and its immediate surroundings. The study area was agreed with MC.

Development scenarios

2.2 NatureScot sensitivity guidance (2022) recommends that sensitivity studies consider the likely levels of sensitivity to specified types of development or land use (para 21). The use of high-level scenarios for development types recognises that different types of built development have different physical and visual characteristics, different infrastructural requirements and different landscape and visual impacts.

2.3 Planning applications within the study area were reviewed to identify specific development pressures. The project team also consulted with SSEN on their proposals in the wider area. The following scenarios have been used to reflect the different scales of development that may be proposed in the Keith north-east study area in the future, in agreement with MC:

- **Type 1 - Electricity sub-stations / converter stations**, representing large-scale industrial-style development, in the form of large buildings, outdoor electrical infrastructure and associated road infrastructure. Development will potentially occupy a larger footprint than Type 2; and
- **Type 2 - Battery Energy Storage Systems / solar farms**, representing industrial-style development of more modest scale, in the form of 'shipping container' size buildings, smaller data centre buildings and / or solar arrays and associated road infrastructure. Development will potentially occupy a smaller footprint than Type 1 (unless it relates to a larger scale solar farm or large scale data centre).

2.4 Ongoing planning applications have not informed the LSA, as they do not form part of the current baseline.

Sensitivity to Wind Energy Development

2.5 As with the Blackhillock Substation LSA, wind energy has been excluded as a development scenario. It is considered more appropriate for landscape sensitivity studies for wind to be carried out at a regional scale. The Keith North-east area is considered in the Moray Wind Energy Landscape Capacity Study (MWELCS) (2017 and updated 2023).

2.6 The study area falls within the Upland Farmland LCT, and the 2017 MWELCS does not identify any scope for turbines over 50m height to tip. A key constraint to wind farm development is noted to be "*Potential cumulative landscape and visual effects associated with multiple developments of the large, medium and small-medium typologies where they could exacerbate visual clutter around Keith and in the north-east of this character type where existing large turbines and transmission lines are present*" (paragraph 13.2.2).

2.7 The Moray Wind Energy Landscape Sensitivity Study Final Report (Carol Anderson Landscape Associates, 2023) considers turbines of up to 250m height to tip. The study area is within the Upland Farmland LCT. A constraint to wind farm development is noted to be "*Cumulative effects with larger turbines in the adjacent Low Forested Hills and exacerbating the existing clutter of wind turbines sited near Grange Crossroads and Lurg Hill and transmission line and sub-station infrastructure around Keith*" (paragraph 11.2.2). "*Potential sequential cumulative visual effects on views from the A95 and A96*" are also noted to be a potential cumulative issue (paragraph 11.2.1). A high sensitivity is identified for turbines over 100m height to tip, due to the potential for cumulative effects to occur. There would be a high-medium sensitivity to turbines 50-100m high and a medium sensitivity to turbines <50m.

Landscape sensitivity criteria

2.8 The LSA is based on an assessment of local landscape character areas using carefully defined criteria. These were developed and agreed with MC as part of the Blackhillock Substation LSA, and the same criteria are applied in this LSA. The criteria are presented in detail in **Appendix 1**, and are summarised below:

- Physical character (including topography and scale);
- Natural character;
- Historic landscape character;
- Form, density, identity and setting of existing settlement/development;
- Views and visual character including skylines;
- Access and recreation; and
- Perceptual and experiential qualities.

2.9 The table in **Appendix 1** provides a description of each of the sensitivity criteria, reflecting the qualities of the landscape and the extent to which development could affect these, including both 'landscape' and 'visual' aspects of sensitivity.

2.10 A five-point rating from 'low' to 'high' landscape sensitivity is used to illustrate levels of sensitivity to each individual criteria. Examples of the types of landscape character or features that could indicate lower or higher sensitivity against each criterion are provided in **Appendix 1**.

Making an overall judgement on levels of landscape sensitivity

2.11 An overall sensitivity judgement for each local landscape character area was derived based on the individual criteria ranks. This is not a linear process as it recognises that some attributes or elements of particular local landscape character areas may be more important in defining character than others and may be given more 'weight' in reaching an overall judgement. Professional judgement is therefore used rather than a system of numerical scoring.

2.12 The overall rating illustrates an overarching level of landscape sensitivity – i.e. how susceptible the character and quality of the landscape would be to the two development scenarios considered. The judgement is based on professional analysis and is given on a five-point scale. Guideline definitions of sensitivity levels are given in **Table 2.1** below.

2.13 Whilst the study provides an initial indication of landscape sensitivity, it should not be interpreted as a definitive statement on the suitability or otherwise of individual sites for a particular development or land use change. All proposals will need to be assessed on their own merits. The overall sensitivity rating should not therefore be relied on without reference to the detailed criteria-based assessment for each site.

The overall judgement on levels of landscape sensitivity is tailored to the plan making process and planning decisions should take into account the findings of the specific criteria based assessment. It should also be noted that the overall score may not apply to all circumstances, and different areas of each local landscape character areas will have varying sensitivities. Some indication is provided for each character area on variations in sensitivity, and development guidelines, but these are initial observations and do not cover every scenario.

Table 2.1: Sensitivity Criteria

Sensitivity judgement	Definition
High	The character area has strong character and qualities with notable features which are highly vulnerable to change as a result of the introduction of the development scenario. Development is likely to result in a substantial change in character and/or significant adverse effects on landscape character and visual amenity.
Moderate-high	The key characteristics and qualities of the character area are vulnerable to change as a result of the introduction of the development scenario. Development is likely to result in a change in character and/or some significant adverse effects on landscape character and visual amenity.
Moderate	The character area has some distinctive characteristics and valued qualities, that may be vulnerable to change as a result of the introduction of the development scenario. Development may result in more limited changes in character and/or some potentially significant effects on landscape character and visual amenity.
Low-moderate	Few of the key characteristics and qualities of the character area are vulnerable to change as a result of the introduction of the development scenario. Development may result in limited changes in character and/or few potentially significant effects on landscape character and visual amenity.
Low	The character area lacks distinct character and qualities and has few notable features, or is robust with regard to the introduction of the development scenario. Development may result in little or no change in character and little or no significant effect on landscape character and visual amenity.

Chapter 3
Landscape Baseline and Planning Policy

Description of Study Area

3.1 The Keith north-east study area is focused on area centred around Drum Farm, to the north-east of Keith. The landform across this area comprises a minor summit, to the immediate east of Keith (161m AOD), upon which sits the existing Keith Substation. A subtle ridge extends from west to east, lowering in elevation towards the River Isla, to the north-east, and the Burn of Drum, to the south-east. South of the Burn of Drum the landform rises, forming the lower north-western flank of Meikle Balloch and minor summits to the north-west of this hill.

3.2 The landcover across the study area is predominantly farmland, with a mix of medium to larger sized irregular shaped fields of pasture and arable. There are areas of mixed and coniferous woodland along the Burn of Drum valley, to the south, and the A95 corridor, to the north of the study area. There are mature scattered trees along the Drum Road and in certain field boundaries. Field boundaries tend to be defined by open post and wire fences. The landscape is generally quite open in character, offering middle to longer distance views over Strathisla and the enclosing hills in the wider setting.

3.3 The study area is generally rural in character, but human influences are apparent through the existing substation to the east of Keith and overhead power lines which link into this; major roads (A95) and a railway to the north; and a small single turbine on the northern flank of Dunnyduff to the south of the study area. To the west of the study area, the influence of the settlement of Keith is apparent, with residential and commercial buildings and schools imparting a more rural fringe character.

Landscape Character

National and Regional Landscape Character

3.4 At the national scale, the site and study area are part of the Upland Farmland[1] Landscape Character Type (LCT) (NatureScot National Landscape Character Assessment, 2019). The key characteristics are set out in detail in

[1] https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/LCA/LCT%20288%20-%20Upland%20Farmland%20-%20Final%20pdf.pdf

Chapter 3 of the Blackhillock Substation LSA, and are not repeated here.

Local Landscape Character Areas

3.5 Informed by desk study and field work, a finer grain landscape character assessment has been undertaken to inform this sensitivity study. The study area has been sub-divided into four Keith North-east local landscape character areas (KNE LLCAs). The key characteristics of these areas are described in **Chapter 4,** and they are shown on **Figure 1**.

Designated Landscapes

3.6 There are no nationally or locally designated landscapes within the study area. The closest designated landscapes are the Deveron Valley Special Landscape Area (SLA) approximately 9km to the east, and the Spey Valley SLA approximately 9km to the north-west.

Planning Policy

National and Local Planning Policy

3.7 Relevant national and local planning policy is set out in **Chapter 3** of the Blackhillock Substation LSA, and is not repeated here.

Chapter 4
Landscape Sensitivity Findings

4.1 For each local landscape character area (refer to **Figure 1**), an assessment has been completed that presents:

- A description of existing landscape character including key characteristics and representative photographs;
- A landscape assessment against each of the criteria with sensitivity ranking and justification, and an assessment of overall sensitivity;
- A statement of how consistent the local landscape character area is considered to be, in terms of landscape sensitivity; and
- High-level development opportunities, landscape mitigation proposals and, where appropriate, suggestions for landscape enhancement relating to existing electricity infrastructure.

4.2 Sensitivity ratings are given on a scale of low (L), low-moderate (L-M), moderate (M), moderate-high (M-H), and high (H).

Table 4.1: Landscape Sensitivity Assessment for KNE LLCA 1

KNE LLCA 1 Keith Urban Fringe		
Key Characteristics		**Representative Photograph**
■ Area of gently rising land, on the eastern fringes of the settlement of Keith; ■ Urban fringe character with mixed land uses on the settlement edge including football pitches (Kynoch Park) and greenspaces, residential areas, schools, industrial areas/ builder's merchants and farmland; ■ Urban development tends to be more modern in character, outside the historic core of Keith (set around a grid pattern) which is further to the west of the LLCA; ■ Existing substation and converging overhead lines, with steel towers, are notable features on higher ground on the eastern edge of the LLCA and in certain views from the settlement edge of Keith; and ■ Higher ground to east of LLCA offers views to west, over settlement of Keith, and containing hills to the north-west of Strathisla.		
Landscape Sensitivity Assessment		
Criteria	Description	Rating
Physical character (including topography and scale)	■ Located on rising ground (from west to east) to the east of Keith, the range in terrain is approximately 15m with the existing Keith Substation sitting on a minor high point, at 161m AOD; and ■ Smaller scale landscape, where built form masks underlying landscape scale in places.	M-H
Natural character	■ Some parks and green spaces and smaller areas of woodland, which are valued due to their proximity to the settlement; and ■ No ecologically designated areas.	M
Historic landscape character	■ Some historic buildings, on the settlement fringes (including the gatehouse at the cemetery and stone-built period houses along Drum Road); ■ Modern urban fringe development has eroded any sense of a more historic rural fringe character; and ■ No cultural heritage assets.	M
Form, density, identity and setting of existing development	■ Range of larger scale industrial buildings to smaller scale residential buildings; ■ Very mixed urban fringe character with a range of building types and scales, which detracts from the rural fringe setting; and ■ The large existing substation notably alters the character and rural setting to the east of Keith.	M
Views and visual character including skylines	■ Views from the lower ground further west generally contained by buildings and vegetation on the edge of Keith (looking west) and more distant views to the east are screened by the gently rising ground to the east; ■ The existing substation and converging overhead lines form a notable feature on the skyline, in more open views east from the settlement edge; and	H

	■ Views from the higher ground to the east look over the settlement of Keith towards the containing hills to the north-west of Strathisla.	
Access and recreation	■ There are core paths which provide connections with adjacent rural areas and recreational facilities including parks and playing fields on the eastern edge of Keith.	M
Perceptual and experiential qualities	■ Urban fringe in character with a mix of industrial/ residential/ recreational and rural areas. A somewhat varied landscape character but areas of farmland do offer a rural fringe setting, which is of value to residents in Keith.	M

Overall Assessment of Landscape Sensitivity

Development Scenario	Sensitivity				
Type 1	H				
Type 2		M-H			

The LLCA is of **high** sensitivity to Type 1 development. This rating has been weighted towards the following considerations: the LLCA's proximity to and visibility from the settlement; the nature of the terrain which provides a rising, rural setting; and the influence of the existing substation (and potential for cumulative effects). Further large scale electricity infrastructure would erode the remaining rural characteristics of this LLCA. Further development of this type would result in a change to character and significant visual effects for high sensitivity residential receptors on the settlement edge.

The LLCA is of **moderate-high** sensitivity to Type 2 development. Due to the smaller scale of these types of features, there may be scope to locate development of this type in pockets of space between existing industrial development, subject to careful siting and appropriate landscape mitigation.

Development Opportunities: Some limited opportunities for smaller scale Type 2 development, in pockets of space around existing industrial development, with appropriate landscape mitigation.

Landscape Mitigation/ Enhancement Opportunities:

- Explore opportunities to rationalise/ underground existing overhead line electricity infrastructure, on approach to existing substation. Any steel tower pylons which are not in use should also be removed. This would help minimise the influence of larger scale vertical electricity infrastructure in views from the settlement edge.
- Consider colour palette of buildings, using colours which help structures recede into views from the settlement edge.
- New areas of woodland and hedgerows would help to break up and screen views of existing industrial development, on the eastern edge of Keith. This would help to restore a more rural fringe setting, whilst providing opportunities to screen smaller areas of new Type 2 development.

Table 4.2: Landscape Sensitivity Assessment for KNE LLCA 2

KNE LLCA 2 Drum Plateau Farmland		
Key Characteristics		**Representative Photograph**
■ Small plateau of farmland to the east of Keith, which falls away to the north towards Strathisla, and to the south-east towards the Burn of Drum Valley; ■ Large, generally open and rectilinear fields in mixed use, separated by drainage ditches and/ or post and wire fencing; ■ Large substation and converging overhead lines form a notable feature to the west of the LLCA, located on high ground; and ■ The elevation of the LLCA affords long views including to the south-east to Meikle Balloch Hill and north-east across Strathisla to more distant wooded skylines.		
Landscape Sensitivity Assessment		
Criteria	Description	Rating
Physical character (including topography and scale)	■ Flatter to gently falling landform; ■ Fields are typically large in scale and regular in shape; and ■ Large substation, to west of LLCA, and overhead lines influence character to the west of the LLCA.	M
Natural character	■ Farmland with limited tree cover; and ■ An area of Ancient Woodland along the A95 to the north of the LLCA.	M-H
Historic landscape character	■ Period stone-built farmhouse at Drum Farm; ■ No designated heritage assets; and ■ Field patterns in surrounding area date from 18th century to present.	M
Form, density, identity and setting of existing development	■ Residential development is low density. Four properties at Drum Farm, on Drum Road, including period farmhouse and three more modern properties to the north of the road, forming a small cluster to centre of the LLCA; ■ Large substation, to west of LLCA, and converging overhead lines are notable features to the west of the LLCA; and ■ Forms the rural setting on eastern approach to Keith.	M
Views and visual character including skylines	■ Open in character and widely visible from surrounding farmland, with medium to longer views to the north, east and south; ■ Provides the rural setting on the eastern approach to Keith, and is highly visible from the A95; and ■ The nature of the terrain somewhat limits intervisibility with Keith. Higher ground to the west of the LLCA contains views from the edge of Keith. Lower ground to the east of the LLCA is not visible from Keith.	H
Access and recreation	■ There are core paths which provide connections with Keith.	M

Perceptual and experiential qualities	■ Rural in character but influenced by the existing large substation and associated overhead lines. ■ The area is relatively consistent is terms of landscape character. There are small areas of more varied character, including a small wooded valley to the south of Drum Road, and the open flood plain to the south of the River Isla, to the far north of the LLCA, which are of increased sensitivity.	M-H

Overall Assessment of Landscape Sensitivity

Development Scenario	Sensitivity				
Type 1		M-H			
Type 2		M-H			

The LLCA is of **moderate-high** sensitivity to both development scenarios. This rating has been weighted towards the following considerations: the area provides a rural setting on the eastern approach to Keith (visible from the A95) and, due to its open nature, is visible from wider areas of farmland. Large scale electricity infrastructure/ buildings are likely to result in significant landscape and visual effects. However, the existing substation and converging overhead lines have altered the rural landscape. The nature of the terrain also offers scope to limit views from Keith of further electricity infrastructure, on lower ground to the east of the LLCA, and located in flatter areas where less cut and fill would be required.

Development Opportunities: Some potential for Type 1 and Type 2 development in the LLCA, subject to sensitive siting (avoiding the highest ground to the west of the LLCA and further views of development from the settlement edge of Keith) and with appropriate landscape mitigation.

Landscape Mitigation/ Enhancement Opportunities:

- Rationalisation/ potential undergrounding of overhead lines in the vicinity of the substation, to help reduce the prominence of larger scale vertical electricity infrastructure in the area and in views from the settlement edge of Keith.
- Consider colour palette of buildings, using colours which help structures recede into wider views from surrounding farmland.
- New areas of woodland and hedgerows would help to break up and screen views of any new development, helping to integrate these features into the rural landscape and provide better connections between habitats though and outside the LLCA.

Table 4.3: Landscape Sensitivity Assessment for KNE LLCA 3

KNE LLCA 3 Dunnyduff Hillside		
Key Characteristics		**Representative Photograph**
■ Minor summit to west of Meikle Balloch; ■ Low wooded hill rising to 186m AOD, with steeply sloping ground around the Burn of Drum Valley; ■ Broadleaved woodland along the Burn of Drum and across the top of Dunnyduff Hill is identified in the Ancient Woodland Inventory; ■ Dunnyduff Wood used for recreation, with waymarked trails and core paths; ■ Farmstead at Ardiemannoch tucked into woodland on the hillside, with a small wind turbine to the north-east of the farm; and ■ Longer distance views are available from open sections of the core path network on Dunnyduff Hill, to Keith and the surrounding area.		
Landscape Sensitivity Assessment		
Criteria	Description	Rating
Physical character (including topography and scale)	■ Low wooded hill which slopes steeply downwards to the north-west, into the Burn of Drum; ■ Fields are typically medium to smaller in scale and regular in shape with more informal edges where they meet with areas of woodland; and ■ Landscape features include extensive broadleaved woodland across Dunnyduff Hill.	M-H
Natural character	■ Mixed farmland and broadleaved woodland, much of which is on the Ancient Woodland Inventory.	M-H
Historic landscape character	■ No designated heritage assets; ■ Historic farm buildings set on a wooded hillside; and ■ Field patterns in surrounding area date from 18th century to present.	M
Form, density, identity and setting of existing development	■ Development is limited to one farmstead; and ■ The LLCA provides the setting to the Burn of Drum and wider farmland to the north around Keith.	M-H
Views and visual character including skylines	■ The wooded hill forms the skyline in close views from the Burn of Drum and also in more distant views where it is seen alongside the larger Meikle Balloch; and ■ There are panoramic views from open sections of the core path network on Dunnyduff Hill, to Keith and the surrounding area.	H
Access and recreation	■ There are core paths / waymarked trails at Dunnyduff Wood.	M-H
Perceptual and experiential qualities	■ Rural in character, and broadleaved woodland cover contributes to a sense of naturalness; and	H

	■ Due to the varied terrain and woodland cover, the LLCA has areas which are more intimate in character. More open areas of the hillside reveal larger scale views to the north.				
Overall Assessment of Landscape Sensitivity					
Development Scenario	Sensitivity				
Type 1	H				
Type 2	H				
The LLCA is of **high** sensitivity to both development scenarios. This rating has been weighted towards the following considerations: the nature of the landform and role as a backdrop to the neighbouring valley; its broadleaved woodland including some on the Ancient Woodland Inventory; its recreational value and sense of naturalness; and its visibility from wider farmland around Keith and more distant hills to the north-west. Development in this LLCA is likely to result in a change in character and significant landscape and visual effects.					
Development Opportunities: None identified due to high sensitivity.					
Landscape Mitigation/ Enhancement Opportunities: ■ N/A as no development opportunities identified.					

Table 4.4: Landscape Sensitivity Assessment for KNE LLCA 4

KNE LLCA 4 Burn of Drum Valley		
Key Characteristics		**Representative Photograph**
■ Minor valley, to north of Dunnyduff Hill. ■ Smaller areas of broadleaved woodland in the valley floor; ■ Overhead electricity line with steel towers passes through northern extents of LLCA; ■ No settlement; and ■ Views along the valley floor, partially contained/ foreshortened by areas of woodland. Valley terrain contains longer distance views to north and south.		
Landscape Sensitivity Assessment		
Criteria	Description	Rating
Physical character (including topography and scale)	■ Minor small-scale valley along the Burn of Drum, which flows from south-west to north-east towards the River Isla; ■ Steeper valley sides and slopes; ■ Fields are typically medium to smaller in scale and regular in shape, orientated with the direction of the valley floor; and ■ Landscape features include smaller areas of broadleaved woodland.	M-H
Natural character	■ Mixed farmland and small areas of broadleaved woodland; ■ Burn of Drum watercourse gently meanders through the valley, with areas of riparian woodland along its banks; and ■ No ecological designations.	M
Historic landscape character	■ No designated heritage assets; and ■ Field patterns in surrounding area date from 18th century to present.	M
Form, density, identity and setting of existing development	■ No settlement; and ■ An overhead electricity line with steel towers passes through northern extents of LLCA, and exerts a strong influence on the small scale valley character.	M
Views and visual character including skylines	■ Generally smaller scale views looking along the valley floor, partially broken by smaller areas of woodland in the valley; and ■ The rising terrain to the north and south of the valley foreshortens views in these directions.	H
Access and recreation	■ There are core paths around the higher valley sides in the southern extents of the LLCA, linking the settlement of Keith to Dunnyduff Wood.	M

Perceptual and experiential qualities	■ Rural and secluded in character, areas of broadleaved woodland within and surrounding the LCA contributing to a sense of naturalness. This is somewhat eroded by the overhead electricity line which passes through northern extents of the valley; and ■ The LLCA is consistent in terms of landscape character.	H

Overall Assessment of Landscape Sensitivity

Development Scenario	Sensitivity				
Type 1	H				
Type 2		M-H			

The LLCA is of **high** sensitivity to Type 1 development and **moderate-high** sensitivity to Type 2 development. This rating has been weighted towards the following considerations: the smaller scale and secluded nature of the valley landscape; the valley landform and slopes which are not suited to larger scale development; and the potential for cumulative effects with existing electricity infrastructure . Any further larger scale development of this nature in the LLCA is likely to result in an alteration of the key landscape characteristics and significant landscape and visual effects. Due to the nature of the terrain and existing woodland cover (both of which provide screening potential), there might be some limited scope for some sensitively sited Type 2 development, avoiding areas of woodland.

Development Opportunities: Some limited opportunities for smaller scale Type 2 development, with appropriate landscape mitigation.

Landscape Mitigation/ Enhancement Opportunities:

- Consider colour palette of buildings, using colours which help structures recede into views from the settlement edge.
- New areas of woodland and hedgerows would provide opportunities to screen smaller areas of new Type 2 development and promote links between and an extension of habitats through the valley.

Chapter 5
Conclusions & Recommendations

5.1 The overall findings of the sensitivity assessment are summarised in **Table 5.1**, see below. The landscape sensitivity assessment has identified that the following areas are of high sensitivity to Type 1 development.

- KNE LLCA1 – Keith Urban Fringe;
- KNE LLCA3 – Dunnyduff Hillside; and
- KNE LLCA4 – Burn of Drum Valley.

5.2 We therefore recommend that these areas are unsuitable for Type 1 development.

5.3 There may be some limited scope for Type 1 development in KNE LLCA2 – Drum Plateau Farmland. However, this would be subject to sensitive siting and appropriate landscape mitigation.

5.4 The study also recognises that there may be some limited scope for Type 2 development in KNE LLCA1 and 4.

5.5 The following types of landscape/visual mitigation and landscape enhancement have been identified as potentially appropriate in each LLCA:

KNE LCA1 – Keith Urban Fringe

- Explore opportunities to rationalise/ underground existing overhead line electricity infrastructure, on approach to existing substation. Any steel tower pylons which are not in use should also be removed. This would help minimise the influence of larger scale vertical electricity infrastructure in views from the settlement edge.
- Consider colour palette of buildings, using colours which help structures recede into views from the settlement edge.
- New areas of woodland and hedgerows would help to break up and screen views of existing industrial development, on the eastern edge of Keith. This would help to restore a more rural fringe setting, whilst providing opportunities to screen smaller areas of new Type 2 development.

KNE LLCA 2 - Drum Plateau Farmland

- Rationalisation/ potential undergrounding of overhead lines in the vicinity of the substation, to help reduce the prominence of larger scale vertical electricity infrastructure in the area and in views from the settlement edge of Keith.
- Consider colour palette of buildings, using colours which help structures recede into wider views from surrounding farmland.
- New areas of woodland and hedgerows would help to break up and screen views of any new development, helping to integrate these features into the rural landscape and provide better connections between habitats though and outside the LLCA.

KNE LLCA4 – Burn of Drum Valley

- Consider colour palette of buildings, using colours which help structures recede into views from the settlement edge.
- New areas of woodland and hedgerows would provide opportunities to screen smaller areas of new Type 2 development and promote links between and an extension of habitats through the valley.

5.6 Whilst this study provides an initial indication of landscape sensitivity, it should not be interpreted as a definitive statement on the suitability or otherwise of individual sites for a particular development or land use change. All proposals will need to be assessed on their own merits. The overall sensitivity rating should not therefore be relied on without reference to the detailed criteria-based assessment for each site.

5.7 The overall judgement on levels of landscape sensitivity is tailored to the plan making process and planning decisions should take into account the findings of the specific criteria based assessment.

Table 5.1: Overall landscape sensitivity score for the local landscape character areas

KNE LLCA No	KNE LLCA Name	Overall sensitivity rating: Type 1	Overall sensitivity rating: Type 2
1	Keith Urban Fringe	High	Moderate-high
2	Drum Plateau Farmland	Moderate-high	Moderate-high
3	Dunnyduff Hillside	High	High
4	Burn of Drum Valley	High	Moderate-high

Appendix A

Landscape Sensitivity Criteria

Table 1: Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Criteria

Physical character (including topography and scale)

This considers the shape and scale of the landform, landscape pattern and landscape elements in relation to the scale of potential development. Smooth, gently undulating or flat landforms are likely to be less sensitive to development than a landscape with a dramatic landform, distinct landform features or incised valleys with prominent slopes. This is because developments may mask distinctive topographical features which contribute to landscape character.

This criterion considers how developments fit with the scale of the landform (understanding the scale of the development proposed is important when applying this criterion). Larger scale, simple landforms are likely to be less sensitive to larger scale developments than smaller scale, enclosed landforms (where large scale developments could appear out of scale with the underlying landform). Conversely, smaller developments may be able to be screened within enclosed landforms, therefore reducing landscape sensitivity. Existing small-scale features in the landscape in the form of existing buildings or trees will influence the scale of development that can be accommodated in the landscape.

Low sensitivity	Low-moderate sensitivity	Moderate sensitivity	Moderate-high sensitivity	High sensitivity
e.g. the landscape has smooth, gently undulating or featureless landform with uniform large-scale landscape pattern and low density of overlying landscape features.		*e.g. the landscape has an undulating landform and some distinct landform features; it is overlain by a mixture of small-scale and larger scale field patterns and a moderate density of small-scale landscape features.*		*e.g. the landscape has a dramatic landform or distinct landform features that contribute positively to landscape character; and/or the area has a high density of small-scale landscape features; and/or is overlain by a small-scale field pattern.*

Natural character

This criterion considers the 'naturalistic' qualities of the landscape in terms of coverage of semi-natural habitats and valued natural features (e.g. trees, hedgerows) which could be vulnerable to loss from development. Areas with frequent natural features (including large areas of nationally or internationally designated habitats) result in increased sensitivity to development, while landscapes with limited natural features (including intensively farmed areas or areas with high levels of existing development) will be less sensitive.

Low sensitivity	Low-moderate sensitivity	Moderate sensitivity	Moderate-high sensitivity	High sensitivity

e.g. much of the landscape is intensively farmed or developed with little semi-natural habitat coverage and few valued natural features.		*e.g. there are areas of valued semi-natural habitats and features found in parts of the landscape, whilst other parts are intensively farmed or developed.*		*e.g. large areas of the landscape are nationally or internationally designated for their nature conservation interest; there is a frequent occurrence of valued natural features across the landscape.*

Historic landscape character

This considers the extent to which the landscape has 'time-depth' (a sense of being an historic landscape, with reference to Historic Land-use Assessment (HLA) and/or the presence of heritage assets that are important to landscape character (i.e. Conservation Areas, Scheduled Monuments, listed buildings, archaeological features and remains or other features listed in the landscape character assessment).

Landscapes with small-scale, more irregular field patterns of historic origin are likely to be more sensitive to the introduction of modern development than landscapes with large, regular scale field patterns because of the risk of losing characteristic landscape patterns.

Low sensitivity	Low-moderate sensitivity	Moderate sensitivity	Moderate-high sensitivity	High sensitivity
e.g. A landscape with relatively few historic features important to the character of the area and little time depth (i.e. large intensively farmed fields).		*e.g. A landscape with some visible historic features of importance to character, and a variety of time depths.*		*e.g. A landscape with a high density of historic features important to the character of the area and great time depth (i.e. piecemeal enclosure with irregular boundaries)*

Form, density, identity and setting of existing development

This considers the quantity and type of current development in the landscape, and whether development in the assessment area would be in accordance with the general pattern, setting and form of current development. It also relates to the landscape pattern associated with existing development, for example if it is well integrated by woodland cover or open and exposed to form a 'hard edge' to the adjoining landscape.

This criterion also considers the extent to which the landscape contributes to the identity and distinctiveness of settlements, by way of its character and/or scenic quality, for example by providing an attractive backdrop/ setting to the settlement edge, or playing an important part in views from a settlement. This criterion also considers the extent to which the area contributes to a perceived gap between developments (the loss of which would increase coalescence).

Low sensitivity	Low-moderate sensitivity	Moderate sensitivity	Moderate-high sensitivity	High sensitivity

e.g. the area does not contribute positively to the setting of nearby settlements. Development in the assessment area would have a good relationship with the form/ pattern of existing development, and could provide the opportunity to improve the edge of existing development.		*e.g. the area provides some contribution to the setting of nearby settlements, and/or plays some part in views from the settlement. Development in the assessment area may be slightly at odds with the form/ pattern of existing development, and may adversely affect the edge of existing development to some extent.*		*e.g. the area provides an attractive backdrop/ setting to the settlement, plays an important part in views from the settlement, or forms an important part in the perception of a gap between developments. Development in the assessment area would have a poor relationship with the existing development form/pattern, or would adversely affect an existing settlement edge (which may be historic or distinctive).*

Views and visual character including skylines

This considers the visual prominence of the assessment area, reflecting the extent of openness or enclosure in the landscape (due to landform or land cover), and the degree of intervisibility with the surrounding landscape (i.e. the extent to which potential development would be visible).

Visually prominent landscapes are likely to be more sensitive to development than those which are not so visually prominent. Landscapes which are visually prominent and inter-visible with adjacent landscapes (both urban and rural) are likely to be more sensitive to development than those which are more hidden or less widely visible.

It also considers the skyline character of the area including whether it forms a visually distinctive skyline or an important undeveloped skyline. Prominent and distinctive and/or undeveloped skylines are likely to be more sensitive to development because new buildings/structures may detract from these skylines as features in the landscape. Important landmark features on the skyline might include historic features or monuments.

Low sensitivity	Low-moderate sensitivity	Moderate sensitivity	Moderate-high sensitivity	High sensitivity
e.g. the area is enclosed/visually contained and/or has a low degree of visibility from surrounding landscapes and the area does not form a visually distinctive or important undeveloped skyline.		*e.g. the area is semi-enclosed or has some enclosed and some open areas. It is likely to have some inter-visibility with surrounding landscapes, and may have some visually distinctive or undeveloped skylines within the area.*		*e.g. the area is open and/or has a high degree of visibility from surrounding landscapes, and/or the area forms a visually distinctive skyline or an important undeveloped skyline.*

Access and recreation

This criterion considers the presence of features and facilities which enable enjoyment of the landscape, and the importance of these. They may include core paths, open access land, and outdoor tourist / visitor attractions with facilities. Recreation activities such as walking, cycling, horse riding or more formal recreation activities where enjoyment of the landscape is important to the experience. Importance of features may be indicated by designation as long distance footpaths or recreation routes, national cycle routes, proximity to areas of local population and outdoor tourist attractions often marked on Ordnance Survey maps.

Low sensitivity	Low-moderate sensitivity	Moderate sensitivity	Moderate-high sensitivity	High sensitivity
e.g. recreation value limited to community sports facilities and local open spaces. *Limited provision of access routes which are likely to be of community importance, e.g. core paths, bridleways and limited areas of open access land.*		*e.g. landscapes with green spaces or recreation areas valued in the local context.* *Well-used landscapes with some core paths, access land or possibly with long distance recreational routes.*		*e.g. landscapes regionally important for access and enjoyment of the landscape, e.g. country parks or a concentration of important outdoor attractions with visitor facilities.* *Presence of well-connected long distance routes and core paths linking centres of population.*

Perceptual and experiential qualities

This considers qualities such as the rural character of the landscape (traditional land uses with few modern human influences), sense of remoteness or tranquillity. Landscapes that are relatively remote or tranquil (due to freedom from human activity and disturbance and having a perceived naturalness or a traditional rural feel with few modern human influences) tend to increase levels of sensitivity to development compared to landscapes that contain signs of modern development. High scenic value and dark night skies also add to sensitivity in relation to this criterion. This is because development will introduce new and uncharacteristic features which may detract from a sense of tranquillity and or remoteness/naturalness.

Low sensitivity	Low-moderate sensitivity	Moderate sensitivity	Moderate-high sensitivity	High sensitivity

e.g. the area is significantly influenced by development/ human activity, where new development would not be out of character.		*e.g. A landscape with some sense of rural character, but with some modern elements and human influences.*		*e.g. A tranquil or highly rural landscape, lacking strong intrusive elements. A landscape of high scenic value with dark skies and a high perceived degree of rural character and naturalness with few modern human influences.*

Appendix B
Supporting Figures

Keith North-east Landscape Sensitivity Study
Moray Council

LUC

Figure 1:Local Landscape Character Areas

Site boundary 1km buffer

Local Landscape Character Area

- KNE 1: Keith Urban Fringe
- KNE 2: Drum Plateau Farmland
- KNE 3: Dunnyduff Hillside
- KNE 4: Burn of Drum Valley

Map scale 1:10,000 @ A3

CB:LT EB:Tembo_L LUC 12348_FIG1_r0_P_LLCA_A3L 16/05/2023
Source:LUC, MC

Keith North-east Landscape Sensitivity Study
Moray Council

LUC

Figure 2a:Landscape Sensitivity Results – Type 1

Site boundary 1km buffer

Overall sensitivity rating: Type 1

- Moderate – high
- High

Local Landscape Character Area

- KNE 1: Keith Urban Fringe
- KNE 2: Drum Plateau Farmland
- KNE 3: Dunnyduff Hillside
- KNE 4: Burn of Drum Valley

KNE 1
KNE 2
KNE 3
KNE 4

Map scale 1:10,000 @ A3

CB:LT EB:Tembo_L LUC 12348_FIG2_A_r0_P_LSR_Type1_A3L 16/05/2023
Source:LUC, MC

Keith North-east Landscape Sensitivity Study
Moray Council

LUC

Figure 2b:Landscape Sensitivity Results – Type 2

Site boundary 1km buffer

Overall sensitivity rating: Type 2

Moderate – high

High

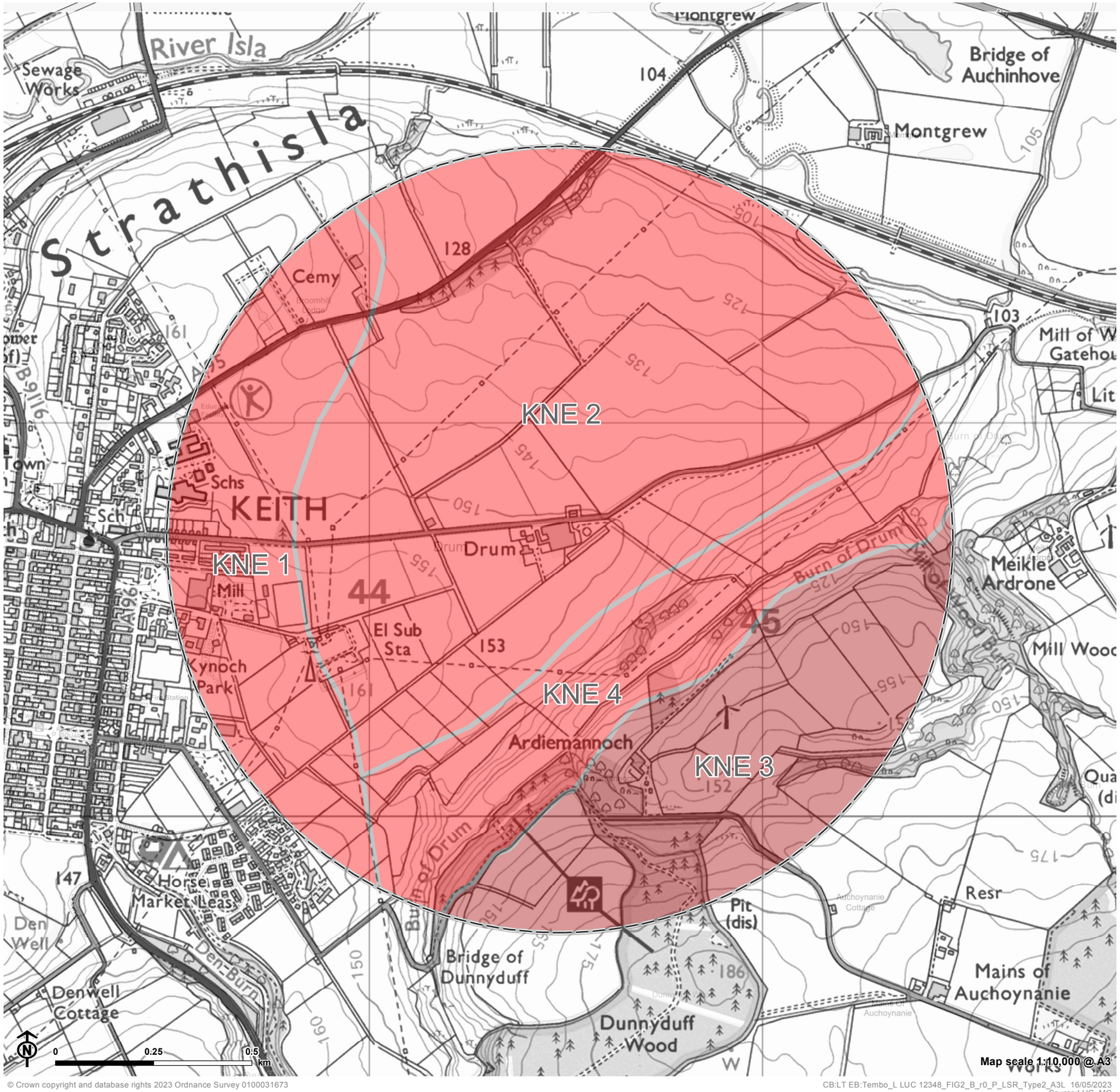
Local Landscape Character Area

KNE 1: Keith Urban Fringe

KNE 2: Drum Plateau Farmland

KNE 3: Dunnyduff Hillside

KNE 4: Burn of Drum Valley



Map scale 1:10,000 @ A3

CB:LT EB:Tembo_L LUC 12348_FIG2_B_r0_P_LSR_Type2_A3L 16/05/2023
Source:LUC, MC