

## **A9.1: Local Landscape Character Areas**

### **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 This appendix supports Chapter 9 (Landscape) of the Environmental Statement, and sets out the baseline landscape character using Local Landscape Character Areas (LLCAs) to describe the study area, encompassing land up to 3km from the proposed Scheme.
- 1.2 For each LLCA a description includes location, topography, drainage, land use, settlement and views with a further tabular summary stating Key Characteristics, Positive Character Attributes, Negative Character Attributes and including an assessment of Value (including Landscape Designations, Landscape Quality (Condition), Scenic Quality, Rarity, Representativeness, Conservation/Cultural Interest, Recreation Value, Perceptual Aspects and Associations), Susceptibility to Change (including Landscape Elements and Landscape Features) and Sensitivity (which has been derived from Value and Susceptibility).
- 1.3 GLVIA 3 (p. 156) defines Landscape Elements as 'Individual parts which make up a landscape, such as, for example, trees hedges and buildings', and Landscape Features as 'Particularly prominent or eye-catching elements within the landscape, such as tree clumps, church towers or wooded skylines or a particular aspect of the project proposal.'
- 1.4 Urban areas have been identified as LLCAs within the baseline, however, the proposed Scheme does not directly affect the urban areas and the extent of visibility from the urban LLCAs is limited. It has been considered that there would be no potential for significant impact to the urban character of these LLCAs from the proposed Scheme and thus they have been not been included within this appendix.
- 1.5 The location of the LLCAs are shown on Figure 9.1 of the ES (Volume 3: Figures). Examples of typical views from the LLCAs are illustrated in Figure 9.4.

### **2 Baseline Conditions**

- 2.1 The LLCAs within the study area are described below.

#### **Culloden Estate Farmlands LLCA**

- 2.2 The Culloden Estate Farmlands LLCA is a medium sized character area, located inland from the southern shore of the Moray Firth, immediately to the east of Inverness. The LLCA is backed by a ridgeline topped with woodland to the south, which gently undulates towards the coastal plain. The north-west edge of the LLCA adjoins the Moray Firth and Cairnlaw Burn runs through the west with small tributaries throughout.
- 2.3 The LLCA comprises a remnant estate landscape with simple, large scale and well-maintained geometric field patterns. Mixed fields are enclosed by mature deciduous shelterbelts, areas of deciduous woodland, fragmented hedgerows and post and wire fencing. Woodland, particularly that surrounding the former listed Stratton Lodge Hotel, Culloden and vegetation around Allanfean frequently limits long distance views to the existing A96 and the Moray Firth and Black Isle beyond.
- 2.4 The variety of vegetation and mature deciduous trees dispersed throughout the landscape add to the range of colours and textures that change with the seasons.
- 2.5 Settlement consists of the hamlet of Milton, scattered farm steadings and individual properties which border the existing A96. Beyond the LLCA boundaries, residential housing, retail and infrastructure developments, including those on the edge of Culloden and Inverness have encroached on field patterns, in contrast to existing agricultural uses and the former estate character.
- 2.6 There are no landscape designations within the LLCA, although some designated Cultural Heritage Sites are scattered throughout and are mainly associated with farmsteads. These are not

considered to contribute greatly to the character of the landscape area. The existing A96 and the Aberdeen to Inverness Railway Line are run in parallel to each other from the north-east to the south-west of the LLCA and the Highland Council core paths are located throughout. In parts, the existing A96 is embanked and lined with gorse, screening views from the surrounding landscape. However, from adjoining fields and properties there are generally unobstructed views to the road and the area lacks a sense of tranquillity given its presence and encroaching settlement. An area lying between the existing A96 and Culloden has been allocated as Inverness City Mixed Use within the Inner Moray Firth Proposed Local Development Plan (IMFLDP). This area covers a large percentage of the Culloden Estate Farmlands LLCA and if this planned development is brought forward it is considered that the LLCA's baseline sensitivity to the proposed scheme would be unlikely to be any greater than that of the existing rural landscape, due to the urbanising effect of the future development.

**Table 1: Landscape Character Culloden Estate Farmlands LLCA**

Landscape Attributes	Description
Key Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>flat to gently undulating coastal flood plain;</li> <li>a remnant estate landscape with a well-established character and landscape structure;</li> <li>mature trees and blocks of woodland throughout, which generally limit long distance views;</li> <li>geometric fields enclosed by mature tree lines;</li> <li>settlement within the LLCA comprises generally of dispersed farm steadings; and</li> <li>some open views towards the Kessock Bridge, Moray Firth and the opposite shoreline of the Black Isle.</li> </ul>
Positive Character Attributes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>remnant mature estate woodland with mature beech avenues;</li> <li>strong simple rectilinear field pattern; and</li> <li>enclosed quiet character with occasional views to the coast and beyond.</li> </ul>
Negative Character Attributes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>intrusive transport corridor of the existing A96; and</li> <li>new developments contrast with the existing agricultural and former estate character.</li> </ul>
Value	<p>landscape designations: none</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>landscape quality (condition): medium. Well-maintained farmland, woodlands are well-established;</li> <li>scenic quality: low to medium. Distant views to Moray Firth partially restricted by landform and woodland;</li> <li>rarity: low. No rare landscape elements or features;</li> <li>representativeness: low to medium. Remnant estate landscape is a feature; conservation/cultural interest: low. Some scheduled monuments and cultural heritage sites;</li> <li>recreational value: low. Recreational features limited to core paths;</li> <li>perceptual aspects: low. Landscape is not valued for its wildness or tranquillity; and</li> <li>associations: low. No notable associations to landscape.</li> </ul> <p>Overall value: Low to Medium</p>
Susceptibility to Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>landscape elements: low. Hedgerows in particular are in poor condition. Changes to shelterbelts and hedgerows would not greatly alter the landscape character; and</li> <li>landscape features: medium. Changes to mature tree blocks, historic avenues and field patterns may potentially alter the landscape character, although the character area may have some ability to accommodate the proposed Scheme.</li> </ul> <p>Overall susceptibility: Medium</p>
Sensitivity (derived from Value and Susceptibility)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>landscape elements: low. Considered potentially tolerant to substantial change; and</li> <li>landscape features: low to medium. Considered to have some ability to accommodate the proposed Scheme.</li> </ul> <p>Overall sensitivity: Low to Medium</p>

**Open Coastal Lowland LLCA**

- 2.7 The Open Coastal Lowland LLCA extends over a large part of the study area, along and towards the southern coastline of the Moray Firth. The flat to gently undulating LLCA has little variation in landform and is of an open and expansive scale, with simple wide horizons.
- 2.8 The LLCA consists of large, mostly arable fields enclosed by timber post and wire fencing and fragmented gorse and broom hedges with interspersed coniferous plantation. AWI woodland is scattered throughout the LLCA, including that north of Tornagrain Wood, east of the intersection of the B9006 Millburn Roundabout – Culcabock – Castle Hill – Culloden Moor – Croy – Gollanfield – Fort George road with the existing A96 and near Blackcastle Cottage, with more extensive areas of long-established AWI of plantation origin found west of Inverness Airport and in the north-east. Shelterbelts along field boundaries, tree clumps, scattered trees and areas of gorse add to the variety of vegetation and seasonal interest.
- 2.9 Farm steadings and individual properties are scattered across the character area and are often surrounded by mature trees, woodland and hedgerows. The character area also includes Dalcross Industrial Estate, part of Inverness Airport and holiday accommodation near Gollanfield, which is in contrast to the predominately rural landscape within the LLCA.
- 2.10 Fiddler’s Burn runs in the west of the character area and Rough Burn in central parts with tributaries and ponds throughout. There are no landscape designations within the LLCA, although Ardersier Conservation Area is found in the north-east and there are several Scheduled Monuments and designated Cultural Heritage Sites dispersed along either side of the existing A96, with the Ring Cairn 125m south-west of Isle View and Castle Stuart visible within close proximity although contributing little to the overall character area.
- 2.11 The stack at Easter Glackton Farm is a prominent local feature, in an area where there is little visual diversity, and across the LLCA there are open views to the Moray Firth and Black Isle beyond. From northern parts of the character area, near Castle Stuart, there is a greater sense of remoteness compared to other parts of the LLCA, given the proximity to the Moray Firth and setback from the existing A96 and industrial land uses.
- 2.12 The existing A96 and the Aberdeen to Inverness Railway Line are located within study area and the Highland Council core paths can be found within the LLCA. The railway line runs partially in low cutting with gorse covered banks and is not always apparent within the landscape. The open nature of the LLCA combined with the generally flat landform allows visibility of existing A96 within the landscape, particularly from adjacent fields and properties, although the focus is often on more expansive long distance views to the hills to the south and Moray Firth and Black Isle to the north.
- 2.13 Several areas to the west of the LLCA been allocated as either Business or Mixed Use within the IMFLDP, this includes areas close to Castle Stuart, the Inverness Airport Business Park and part of the Tornagrain development. These areas cover a small percentage of the Open Coastal Lowland LLCA and if brought forward it is unlikely is considered that the LLCA’s baseline sensitivity to the proposed scheme would be unlikely to be any greater than that of the existing rural landscape, due to the urbanising effect of the future development.

**Table 2: Landscape Character Summary for Open Coastal Lowland LLCA**

Landscape Attributes	Description
Key Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>flat to gently rolling landform;</li> <li>predominantly open, arable fields;</li> <li>scattered farmsteads often associated with mature trees and forestry;</li> <li>frequent long distant views to the Moray Firth and Black Isle beyond; and</li> <li>strong horizontal scale of the landscape.</li> </ul>
Positive Character Attributes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>open views across the Moray Firth and beyond; and</li> <li>popular holiday destination.</li> </ul>
Negative Character Attributes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>visual diversity is mainly limited to seasonal changes in</li> </ul>

Landscape Attributes	Description
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>vegetation;</li> <li>views to Dalcross Industrial Estate and Inverness Airport; and</li> <li>in parts, the existing A96 and Aberdeen to Inverness Railway Line are prominent features.</li> </ul>
Value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>landscape designations: none</li> <li>landscape quality (condition): low to medium. Generally well-maintained farmland although some boundaries are fragmented, woodlands are well-established;</li> <li>scenic quality: medium. Landform and lack of extensive woodland allows for open views to the Moray Firth;</li> <li>rarity: low. No rare landscape elements or features;</li> <li>representativeness: low to medium. Landscape character, features and elements are not particularly unique;</li> <li>conservation/cultural interest: low. Some scheduled monuments and the Ardesier Conservation Area;</li> <li>recreational value: low. Recreational features limited to core paths;</li> <li>perceptual aspects: low. Landscape is not valued for its wildness or tranquillity; and</li> <li>associations: low. No notable associations to landscape.</li> </ul> <p>Overall value: Low to Medium</p>
Susceptibility to Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>landscape elements: low. Hedges in particular are in poor condition. Changes to shelterbelts and hedgerows would not greatly alter the landscape character; and</li> <li>landscape features: low to medium. Large scale changes to the open views may have the potential to alter the landscape character.</li> </ul> <p>Overall susceptibility: Low to Medium.</p>
Sensitivity (derived from Value and Susceptibility)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>landscape elements: low. Considered potentially tolerant to substantial change; and</li> <li>landscape features: low to medium. Considered to have some ability to accommodate the proposed Scheme.</li> </ul> <p>Overall sensitivity: Low to Medium</p>

**Enclosed Firth LLCA**

- 2.14 The Enclosed Firth LLCA is a medium scale character area, comprising the southern shoreline of the Moray Firth, the waters being partially land locked by the peninsulas at Fort George and Chanonry Point near Fortrose. The coast comprises a mixture of rocky intertidal areas, sandy beaches and mud flats, with the land rising gently behind. There are extensive panoramic views across the Moray Firth to the Black Isle beyond.
- 2.15 Medium scale arable and pasture fields are enclosed by low hedgerows and these together with the shades of the seascape, due to variations in season, light and weather, give a consistency in colour and texture across the LLCA.
- 2.16 The LLCA contains a few farms and individual properties which are generally orientated out to sea. The LLCA is not covered by any landscape designations, although Ardesier Conservation Area is located in the north-east and three Scheduled Monuments found in central parts. The character area lies adjacent to Longman and Castle Stuart Bays Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and the Inner Moray Firth Special Protected Area (SPA), which is an important ecological site. The conservation area and scheduled monuments do not contribute to the landscape character, although the SSSI and SPA, coastal weather conditions and views to the Moray Firth give the LLCA a sense of wildness and isolation.
- 2.17 A Highland Council core path runs along the coast with sections of the path in central and eastern parts of the study area having views to the existing A96. Milton Sewage Works is located within the LLCA.
- 2.18 The coastal edge location and lack of vegetation allows for wide panoramic views of a horizontal nature, with perceptions of the landscape greatly affected by variations in light and weather. The sheltered waters which are partially cut off from the open sea give a sense of enclosure to the

seascape.

**Table 3: Landscape Character Summary for Enclosed Firth LLCA**

Landscape Attributes	Description
Key Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>coastal landscape;</li> <li>little woodland and vertical elements;</li> <li>agricultural fields divided by wire fences sloping towards the shore;</li> <li>open views to the Moray Firth and beyond; and</li> <li>intermittent settlement consisting of farms and individual properties.</li> </ul>
Positive Character Attributes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>fields form uniformity in colour and texture; and</li> <li>panoramic views of the Moray Firth.</li> </ul>
Negative Character Attributes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>views of the existing A96 from slightly elevated parts in the south; and</li> <li>exposed coastal character.</li> </ul>
Value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Landscape designations: none.</li> <li>landscape quality (condition): medium. Generally well-maintained farmland with low hedgerows although some industry and abandoned areas to the south;</li> <li>scenic quality: high. Limited vegetation allows for panoramic views to the Moray Firth;</li> <li>rarity: low. No rare landscape elements or features;</li> <li>representativeness: low to medium. Landscape character, features and elements are not particularly unique;</li> <li>conservation/cultural interest: medium. Fort George, scheduled monuments and the Ardesier Conservation Area;</li> <li>recreational value: low to medium. Recreational features include a golf course and core paths;</li> <li>perceptual aspects: medium. Landscape is not wild due to its developed nature but does have a sense of wildness and isolation and is generally tranquil; and</li> <li>associations: medium. The 18th century garrison Fort George is associated with the Jacobite uprising.</li> </ul> <p>Overall value: Medium.</p>
Susceptibility to Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Landscape elements: low. Changes to field boundaries or hedgerows would not greatly change the landscape character.</li> <li>Landscape features: medium. Changes to the characteristic open views would potentially alter the landscape character.</li> </ul> <p>Overall susceptibility: Medium</p>
Sensitivity (derived from Value and Susceptibility)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Landscape elements: low. Considered potentially tolerant to substantial change.</li> <li>Landscape features: medium. Moderately susceptible, although the proposed Scheme is set further south of the character area.</li> </ul> <p>Overall sensitivity: Medium</p>

**Forest Edge Farmland LLCA**

- 2.19 The Forest Edge Farmland LLCA is a large scale character area, characterised by a diverse mix of open agricultural land and woodlands superimposed on a complex landform of rolling, north-facing hill slopes and plateaux.
- 2.20 The LLCA encompasses extensive areas of woodland and forestry including Culloden Forest with the adjoining Forested Backdrop character area to the south. Woodland creates a strong sense of enclosure across the LLCA and where visibility is limited by forested horizons, attention is frequently focussed on the characteristic undulating landform which is clothed with the uniform colours and textures of large scale fields, seen against the dark green backdrop of the forest edge. In contrast, open areas on the upper slopes allow distant views northwards to the Moray Firth and beyond..
- 2.21 The LLCA comprises a mixture of arable fields and those set to pasture and grassland which are

enclosed by stone walls, timber post and wire fencing, hedges and shelterbelts. The character area includes a diverse range of vegetation including AWI woodland, shelterbelts, tree clumps and riparian scrub along tributaries. Woodland creates a uniformity of texture and colour with diversity seen with seasonal changes to deciduous trees and gorse along field boundaries. Farmland is balanced by a settlement pattern of villages including Balloch and Croy, scattered farmsteads and individual properties.

- 2.22 Woodland forming the western edge of Dalcross Garden and Designed Landscape is located within the LLCA as well as several Scheduled Monuments and designated Cultural Heritage Sites including farm buildings, cairns, ring ditches and enclosures, which are not noticeable features in the landscape and thereby do not contribute visually to the overall character of the area.
- 2.23 The Highland Council core paths are located throughout, and mainly across the south-west, through and along the edge of woodland and forestry. NCR1 is located in the west, and runs through Balloch and partially through Culloden Forest.
- 2.24 The existing A96 is located in the west of the LLCA and is generally visible from this part of the character area. The Norbord Factory lies to the north of the existing road and the chimney stack and its associated plume are local industrial landmarks in the landscape. There is a sense of isolation and tranquillity from paths within woodland, although this is limited throughout the LLCA given the prominence of the existing A96 in the west, settlement and the Norbord Factory.
- 2.25 An area to the east of Tournagrain has been allocated as Mixed Use within the IMFLDP and falls within the Forest Edge Farmland LLCA. This localised area covers a small percentage of the LLCA and thus if the development is brought forward it is considered that the LLCA's baseline sensitivity to the proposed scheme would be unlikely to be any greater than that of the existing rural landscape, due to the urbanising effect of the future development.

**Table 4: Landscape Character Summary for Forest Edge Farmland LLCA**

Landscape Attributes	Description
Key Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Convex north facing slopes and plateaux;</li> <li>Undulating to gently sloping topography;</li> <li>Fields enclosed by stone walls, timber post and wire fencing, hedges and shelterbelts. Views locally are focussed on uniform undulating slopes with long distance views to the Moray Firth from elevated parts.</li> <li>Settlement within the LLCA comprises of the villages, and dispersed farm steadings and properties</li> </ul>
Positive Character Attributes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>long distance views to the Moray Firth from elevated parts;</li> <li>topography and extensive woodland creates a sense of enclosure</li> </ul>
Negative Character Attributes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Norbord factory and stack is a prominent vertical feature; and</li> <li>pylons located in the south and east.</li> </ul>
Value	<p>landscape designations: Dalcross, Leys Castle and Cawdor Castle GDLs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>landscape quality (condition): medium. Generally well-maintained farmland, forestry and woodlands are well-established;</li> <li>scenic quality: medium. Views to the Moray Firth from elevated areas, the Norbord factory stack forms a prominent local feature;</li> <li>rarity: low. No rare landscape elements or features;</li> <li>representativeness: low. Landscape character, features and elements are not particularly unique;</li> <li>conservation/cultural interest: high. Dalcross, Leys Castle and Cawdor Castle GDLs, Culloden Battlefield and some scheduled monuments;</li> <li>recreational value: low. Recreational features limited to core paths;</li> <li>perceptual aspects: low. Landscape is not valued for its wildness or tranquillity; and</li> <li>associations: high. The historic battlefield of Culloden lies within the LLCA.</li> </ul>



Landscape Attributes	Description
	Overall value: Medium
Susceptibility to Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>landscape elements: medium. Changes to the characteristic flow of the undulating landform may potentially alter the landscape character; and</li> <li>landscape features: low. The GDLs and Culloden Battlefield do not experience external visibility to the existing A9 road corridor.</li> </ul> Overall susceptibility: Low to Medium
Sensitivity (derived from Value and Susceptibility)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Landscape elements: medium. Considered potentially tolerant to substantial change; and</li> <li>Landscape features: low. Considered to have some ability to accommodate the proposed Scheme.</li> </ul> Overall sensitivity: Low to Medium

### **Tornagrain Woods LLCA**

- 2.26 Tornagrain Woods LLCA is a small sized character area, comprising a flat to gently sloping landform which is predominately covered by dense and long established coniferous plantation woodland dominated by Scots Pine, which forms a strong sense of enclosure. The majority of the area is designated as AWI woodland.
- 2.27 The existing A96 runs through the LLCA, from south-west to north-east and mature trees restrict long distance visibility from the road with views limited to the linear route corridor. Petty Church and a War Memorial are designated cultural heritage sites which lie adjacent to the existing A96. To the west of the church the landscape transitions to an open low lying area of rough grazing with boggy areas of gorse and broom enclosed by plantation trees. The Aberdeen to Inverness Railway Line forms the northern boundary of the LLCA, although it has limited influence on the character of the area as it is screened by intervening woodland.
- 2.28 Petty Church and the War Memorial are the only built features within the LLCA with Kerrowaird Farm Cottages and cottages of Tornagrain located out-with and adjacent to the LLCA to the south. Planning permission for an initial development stage to create a new community of approximately 5,000 residential properties within Tornagrain Woods has been granted by the Highland Council and will have significant potential to affect the landscape character of the LLCA due to the large scale of the development and the removal of the existing forest resource. The baseline is based on current conditions of the study area and any planned or future development at Tornagrain has not been included within it.
- 2.29 There are no landscape designations within the LLCA, although designated Cultural Heritage Sites are found throughout and a curling pond is located to the west. A sense of tranquillity and isolation is experienced along the Highland Council core paths through Tornagrain Wood, particularly those which are set back from the existing A96.
- 2.30 Several areas within the LLCA been allocated as Business, Industry or Mixed Use within the IMFLDP, this includes at Morayhill to the east of the Norbord Factory, the Tornagrain development to the east of Petty Church and Inverness Airport Business Park. These adopted areas cover approximately 40% of the Tornagrain Woods LLCA and if brought forward it is considered that the LLCA's baseline sensitivity to the proposed scheme would be unlikely to be any greater than that of the existing rural landscape, due to the urbanising effect of the future development.

**Table 5: Landscape Character Summary for Tornagrain Woods LLCA**

Landscape Attributes	Description
Key Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>flat to gently sloping landform;</li> <li>long established AWI woodland covers a large proportion of the LLCA ;</li> <li>a strong sense of enclosure with topography and woodland giving a sheltered character;</li> <li>the A96 and the Aberdeen to Inverness Railway Line create parallel linear transport corridors; and</li> <li>transition from woodland to open fields at Petty Church.</li> </ul>

Landscape Attributes	Description
Positive Character Attributes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the existing A96 is screened in views from the majority of the LLCA by dense woodland; and</li> <li>woodland forms uniformity in colour and texture.</li> </ul>
Negative Character Attributes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>visibility of Norbord factory in adjoining LLCA; and</li> <li>lack of diversity within vegetation.</li> </ul>
Value	<p>landscape designations: none.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>landscape quality (condition): low to medium. Dense plantation AWI woodland contrasting with areas of rough grazing and bog;</li> <li>scenic quality: medium. Long distance views are restricted by dense woodland cover;</li> <li>rarity: low. No rare landscape elements or features;</li> <li>representativeness: low. Landscape character, features and elements are not particularly unique;</li> <li>conservation/cultural interest: medium. Local landmarks of Petty Church and War Memorial and curling pond;</li> <li>recreational value: low to medium. Recreational paths within forest;</li> <li>perceptual aspects: low. Landscape is not valued for its wildness or tranquillity; and</li> <li>associations: low. No notable associations to the landscape.</li> </ul> <p>Overall value: Low</p>
Susceptibility to Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>landscape elements: Low to medium. Extensive changes to plantation woodland cover has potential to alter the enclosed nature of the landscape character; and</li> <li>landscape features: Low to medium. Changes to the setting of features such as Petty Church has potential to alter the landscape character.</li> </ul> <p>Overall susceptibility: Low to Medium</p>
Sensitivity (derived from Value and Susceptibility)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>landscape elements: Low. Considered to have some ability to accommodate the proposed Scheme; and</li> <li>landscape features: Low. Considered to have some ability to accommodate the proposed Scheme.</li> </ul> <p>Overall sensitivity: Low</p>

### **Flemington Eskers LLCA**

- 2.31 The Flemington Eskers LLCA is a medium sized character area, which comprises a long linear area of glacial gravel ridges falling within the Kildrummie Kames SSSI and whose landform creates a distinct feature within the landscape. The ridges are about 5-10m high and stretch for about 8km to the east of Inverness towards Nairn. The complex landform of ridges comprising uneven mounds with frequent water bodies and kettle lochs including Loch Flemington is contrasted by the surrounding large scale fields and woodland.
- 2.32 Within the LLCA, small scale fields are covered by scrub, stunted trees, gorse and bracken or else set to rough pasture and are enclosed by remnant stone walls, fragmented hedgerows and timber post and wire fencing. Specific habitats found within the ridges include juniper scrub and by the waterbodies, sedge swamp and willow carr, with a section in the far west of the LLCA designated as AWI woodland.
- 2.33 Settlement comprises farmsteads and scattered residential properties with the hamlet of Lochside lying adjacent to the north. There are no landscape designations but the area is recognised as one of the best examples of an intact system of braided esker ridges in Britain and considered important both for its unusual glacial landforms and biological features. Within the LLCA there are Scheduled Monuments and several designated Cultural Heritage Sites including the cottages and farmhouse at Mid Coul, although these designations do not contribute to the overall character of the area.
- 2.34 From the top of the ridges there are views north to the Moray Firth and the Black Isle and to the hills in the south but frequently views are contained within the distinct landform of the LLCA and this gives a sense of enclosure and separation, with the slight air of abandonment in marked contrast in character to the ordered large scale agricultural land which surrounds the LLCA. This is



also experienced near lochs, particularly Loch Flemington and the Loch of the Clans, where there is a sense of isolation and tranquillity.

- 2.35 The existing A96 runs approximately 500m to the north of the LLCA and there are views to the road from the northern edge of the LLCA, although these are frequently screened by intervening vegetation and landform.
- 2.36 Part of the Tournagrain development between Mid Coul and Drumine has been allocated as Mixed Use within the IMFLDP and falls within the Flemington Eskers LLCA. This development would cover a small localised area within the western part of the LLCA and thus it is considered that the LLCA's baseline sensitivity to the proposed scheme would be unlikely to be any greater than that of the existing rural landscape, due to the urbanising effect of the future development.

**Table 6: Landscape Character Summary for Flemington Eskers LLCA**

Landscape Attributes	Description
Key Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>linear glacial ridges known as Eskers;</li> <li>small scale fields enclosed by stone walls, remnant stone walls, hedges and timber post and wire fencing; and</li> <li>limited settlement.</li> </ul>
Positive Character Attributes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>unique glacial ridges which have a distinct undeveloped character within the landscape;</li> <li>specialised and rare vegetation within water bodies and kettle lochs;</li> <li>remote, quiet and overlooked historic character despite its relative proximity to the developed surrounding farmlands; and</li> <li>views of Moray Firth and hills beyond from ridge tops.</li> </ul>
Negative Character Attributes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>poor condition of some stone walls enclosing fields</li> </ul>
Value	landscape designations: none <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>landscape quality (condition): high. High quality of naturalness;</li> <li>scenic quality: high. Distinctive vegetation and landform with views to the Moray Firth from elevated parts;</li> <li>rarity: high. Distinct landform of intact braided esker ridges, which are important biological features;</li> <li>representativeness: high. Landscape character represents a nationally important example of undeveloped braided esker;</li> <li>conservation/cultural interest: high. Kildrummie Kames SSSI, Loch Flemington SPA, scheduled monuments;</li> <li>recreational value: low. Some core paths in the west;</li> <li>perceptual aspects: medium. Landscape is valued for its naturalness; and</li> <li>associations: medium. Iron Age fort at Easter Lochend.</li> </ul> Overall value: High
Susceptibility to Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>landscape elements: medium. Individual elements are unlikely to be affected by the development; and</li> <li>landscape features: high. Adjacent development may alter the perception of remoteness and potentially alter the landscape character.</li> </ul> Overall susceptibility: Medium to High
Sensitivity (derived from Value and Susceptibility)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>landscape elements: medium; and</li> <li>landscape features: high. Considered to have limited ability to accommodate the proposed Scheme.</li> </ul> Overall sensitivity: High

**Enclosed Forest Edge Farmland LLCA**

- 2.37 The Enclosed Forest Edge Farmland LLCA is a medium scale character area comprising a quiet and mostly undeveloped rural landscape. This gently undulating local landscape character area derives a sense of enclosure from the woodland which lies on higher land to the north, the Flemington Eskers ridge, which rises to the south-west and the wooded River Nairn corridor to the east. The relationship and balance between low lying open fields to woodland is an important characteristic within the LLCA.
- 2.38 Land use is predominantly arable with some pasture and the generally large scale fields are enclosed by timber post and wire fencing, shelterbelts and hedgerows. The LLCA also contains a variety of deciduous woodland cover with shelterbelts and small pockets of woodland and larger scale Scots Pine plantation woodland in Delnies Wood to the north, which is designated as AWI woodland.
- 2.39 The landform in south and areas of woodland create a sense of enclosure in parts, although generally the landscape is open, with rolling fields allowing for long distance views to the hills in the south from more elevated locations. The canalised Alton Burn runs through the centre of the character area, with drainage ditches and ponds found throughout.
- 2.40 There are no landscape designations within the character area, although there are two Scheduled Monuments and various designated Cultural Heritage Sites scattered throughout the LLCA, which include enclosures, barrows and farm buildings. These designations are not noticeable features in the landscape and thereby do not contribute to the overall character of the area. .
- 2.41 A network of narrow minor roads connects scattered clusters of houses and farmsteads which are frequently sheltered by mature trees. Pylons cross the eastern part of the LLCA and are a prominent vertical feature from some locations, although are frequently screened by the intervening landform and vegetation.
- 2.42 The Aberdeen to Inverness Railway Line runs through open central parts of the LLCA with the existing A96 running through Delnies Wood to the north. Highland Council core paths are located at Moss-side and south of Meikle Kildrummie. Moss-side and Delnies Wood are popular holidaying and recreational sites with accommodation and tracks and footpaths within them. The character area lacks a great sense of tranquillity due to the presence and views of the existing A96.

**Table 7: Landscape Character Summary for the Enclosed Forest Edge Farmland LLCA**

Landscape Attributes	Description
Key Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>gently rolling low lying landform;</li> <li>large scale fields enclosed by surrounding landform and vegetation;</li> <li>extensive areas of woodland, shelterbelts and hedgerows;</li> <li>scattered farms and traditional style buildings often surrounded by vegetation; and</li> <li>network of narrow roads.</li> </ul>
Positive Character Attributes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>strong relationship between woodland and farmland; and</li> <li>enclosed and quiet rural character.</li> </ul>
Negative Character Attributes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>pylons located in the south-east; and</li> <li>in some locations, the existing A96 and the Aberdeen to Inverness Railway Line are prominent features.</li> </ul>
Value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>landscape designations: none.</li> <li>landscape quality (condition): medium. well-maintained large scale fields, well-established woodlands;</li> <li>scenic quality: medium. A sheltered character with open long distance views to the hills to the south;</li> <li>rarity: low. No rare landscape elements or features;</li> <li>representativeness: low. Landscape character, features and elements are not particularly unique;</li> <li>conservation/cultural interest: medium to high. Eastern part of Kildrummie Kames SSSI, some scheduled monuments and cultural heritage sites;</li> <li>recreational value: medium. Moss-side and Delnies Wood</li> </ul>

Landscape Attributes	Description
	providing popular holiday/ recreational areas with nearby woodland core paths; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>perceptual aspects: medium. Landscape is tranquil due to lack of development; and</li> <li>associations: low. No notable associations to the landscape.</li> </ul> Overall value: Medium
Susceptibility to Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>landscape elements: medium. Changes to farmland and woodland would influence the existing landscape pattern; and</li> <li>landscape features: medium. The introduction of a transport corridor would alter the character of the quiet and mostly undeveloped rural landscape.</li> </ul> Overall susceptibility: Medium
Sensitivity (derived from Value and Susceptibility)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>landscape elements: low to medium. Considered potentially tolerant to substantial change; and</li> <li>landscape features: medium to high. Considered to have limited ability to accommodate the proposed Scheme.</li> </ul> Overall sensitivity: Medium

### River Nairn Corridor LLCA

- 2.43 The River Nairn Corridor LLCA is a small scale character area formed by the valley of the River Nairn. The river runs south-west to north-east through the LLCA cutting a gentle v-shaped valley through the coastal plain. The banks of the River Nairn are enclosed by mature deciduous woodland including AWI woodland near Broadley and between Wester Allanaha and Newton of Cawdor, which contrasts strongly with the character of the surrounding open rolling farmland. The River Nairn is locally famous as the 'River of Alders' due to the high percentage of *Alnus glutinosa* along the banks of the watercourse.
- 2.44 The river is crossed by a footbridge, the B9090 Loch Flemington – Clephanton – Cawder – Nairn Road via the Howford Bridge in the north, several fords and by electricity pylons to the north of the bridge. A Highland Council core path follows both banks of the river in the north and follows the eastern bank of the river from the footbridge at Howford Road to Cawder. Along parts of the river there is a strong sense of isolation and tranquillity with limited views beyond and the sound of flowing water.
- 2.45 External views from the LLCA are generally screened by the mature vegetation with scenic linear views experienced along the course of the river, particularly from Howford Bridge. From the edges of the LLCA, longer distance views are obtained to surrounding fields, roads and housing, including that forming the southern edge of Nairn. Electricity pylons running from the north of the Howford Bridge and beyond Blairnafade Farm form prominent vertical elements from some locations, being visible against the skyline due to their scale and proximity.
- 2.46 There are no landscape designations or settlement within the LLCA. Designated Cultural Heritage Sites are mainly located in the north, including enclosures in fields and Howford Bridge, which is a key feature in the character area.
- 2.47 The existing A96 runs beyond the northern boundary of the LLCA and is not visible given the long separation distance, topography and intervening built form and vegetation.

**Table 8: Landscape Character Summary for the River Nairn Corridor LLCA**

Landscape Attributes	Description
Key Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>narrow v shaped valley of the river Nairn;</li> <li>the river corridor is covered by a dense deciduous riparian woodland with a high percentage of Alder; and</li> <li>a strong contrast between the enclosed character of the mature broadleaved woodland and the surrounding open agricultural farmland.</li> </ul>
Positive Character Attributes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>mature riparian deciduous woodland which provides an enclosed character;</li> <li>quiet and tranquil character;</li> <li>woodland creates uniformity of colour and texture; and</li> </ul>

Landscape Attributes	Description
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>attractive riverside path.</li> </ul>
Negative Character Attributes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>relatively new housing development on the outskirts of Nairn encroaching onto the LLCA in the north; and</li> <li>pylons are prominent features in central and south parts.</li> </ul>
Landscape and other Relevant Designations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>no landscape designations;</li> <li>several designated cultural heritage sites; and</li> <li>AWI woodland.</li> </ul>
Value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>landscape designations: none</li> <li>landscape quality (condition): medium. woodland is well established and river banks are in good condition although vegetation along the paths is overgrown in parts;</li> <li>scenic quality: high. Landform and woodland along the river form a sheltered character and restrict distant views;</li> <li>rarity: medium. Mature riparian river woodland is rare locally ;</li> <li>representativeness: low. Landscape character, features and elements are not particularly unique;</li> <li>conservation/cultural interest: medium. Several designated cultural heritage sites and AWI woodland;</li> <li>recreational value: medium. Popular core paths along riverbank;</li> <li>perceptual aspects: medium. Landscape is tranquil due to lack of development; and</li> <li>associations: medium. The riparian Alder woodland is a historical feature of the local area.</li> </ul> <p>Overall value: Medium</p>
Susceptibility to Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>landscape elements: medium to high. Removal of mature riparian woodland would alter structure of woodland and open up views ; and</li> <li>landscape features: medium to high. Changes to the mature woodland would alter the strong sense of tranquillity and enclosure experienced along the river.</li> </ul> <p>Overall susceptibility: Medium to High</p>
Sensitivity (derived from Value and Susceptibility)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>landscape elements: Medium to high. Considered to have limited ability to accommodate the proposed Scheme; and</li> <li>landscape features: Medium to high. Considered to have limited ability to accommodate the proposed Scheme.</li> </ul> <p>Overall sensitivity: Medium to High</p>

### **Auldearn Forested Rolling Farmland LLCA**

- 2.48 The Auldearn Forested Rolling Farmland LLCA is a medium to large scale area, characterised by its undulating topography with outcrops at the base of convex slopes and extensive areas of woodland on gentle hill slopes. Large areas of AWI woodland, shelterbelts, policy belts and tree clumps are found throughout, including coniferous plantation woodland at Bognafuaran Wood, Craigs Wood and Russell's Wood, creating a sense of enclosure and uniformity of colour and texture across the LLCA.
- 2.49 Woodland is evenly balanced by mixed farmland, which is formed by a pattern of rectilinear fields enclosed by stone walls, gorse and scrub hedges and timber post and wire fencing. Auldearn Burn runs through the LLCA lined with riparian vegetation and drainage ditches and ponds are found throughout.
- 2.50 The LLCA encloses the village of Auldearn and settlement comprises small clusters of houses and scattered farms and properties, connected by narrow roads, B-roads and A-roads including the existing A96. NCR1 runs in a north to south direction in the west, near Crook Cottage and the Highland Council core paths are found throughout the character area. Pylons are located in the north-west of the LLCA and unlike the adjoining Auldearn Open Farmland LLCA; these structures do not appear prominent in views, given the intervening rolling landform and dense woodland.
- 2.51 There are no landscape designations within the LLCA although there a number of Cultural Heritage designations scattered throughout including the site of Auldearn Battlefield in the north, two Scheduled Monuments and several designated cultural heritage sites across central and western

parts.

2.52 The existing A96 is located in the north-east of the LLCA and is visible from a small number of adjoining scattered properties and fields given the limited separation distance and lack of intervening vegetation, although is screened from views from a large proportion of the character area by embankment along parts of the road, the rolling landscape and woodland. There is a limited sense of tranquillity throughout the LLCA, given visibility to the existing A96 and network of minor roads and settlement.

**Table 9: Landscape Character Summary for the Auldearn Forested Rolling Farmland LLCA**

Landscape Attributes	Description
Key Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• undulating topography with convex slopes;</li> <li>• even balance of agricultural fields and woodland;</li> <li>• rectilinear fields enclosed by dry stone dykes, timber, post and wire fencing and hedges and scrub;</li> <li>• blocks of AWI woodland throughout, which generally limits long distance views;</li> <li>• burns, drainage ditches and ponds are located throughout; and</li> <li>• the existing A96 is located in the north-west.</li> </ul>
Positive Character Attributes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• intervening landform and vegetation screens views to pylons and the existing A96;</li> <li>• extensive woodland creates a uniformity of texture and colour; and</li> <li>• well-maintained farmland.</li> </ul>
Negative Character Attributes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• in parts, limited views to wider context due to dense vegetation; and</li> <li>• pylons located in the north-west and west.</li> </ul>
Value	<p>landscape designations: none.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• landscape quality (condition): medium. Well-maintained farmland, woodlands are well-established;</li> <li>• scenic quality: medium. Landform and woodland create a relatively sheltered character and restrict distant views;</li> <li>• rarity: low. No rare landscape elements or features;</li> <li>• representativeness: low. Landscape character, features and elements are not particularly unique;</li> <li>• conservation/cultural interest: high. Auldearn Battlefield, some scheduled monuments and cultural heritage sites;</li> <li>• recreational value: low. Recreational features limited to core paths;</li> <li>• perceptual aspects: low. Landscape is not valued for its wildness or tranquillity; and</li> <li>• associations: high. Site of Auldearn Battlefield.</li> </ul> <p>Overall value: Medium</p>
Susceptibility to Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• landscape elements: low to medium. Changes to shelterbelts, hedges and stone walls will not greatly alter the landscape character; and</li> <li>• landscape features: medium. Changes to the landform, field patterns, ponds and vegetation, particularly woodland may potentially alter the balance of these features and sense of enclosure in parts, although the character area has some ability to accommodate the proposed, given the road already runs through it.</li> </ul> <p>Overall susceptibility: Medium.</p>
Sensitivity (derived from Value and Susceptibility)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• landscape elements: low to medium. Considered potentially tolerant to substantial change; and</li> <li>• landscape features: medium. Considered to have some ability to accommodate the proposed Scheme.</li> </ul> <p>Overall sensitivity: Medium</p>

**Auldearn Open Farmland LLCA**

- 2.53 The Auldearn Open Farmland LLCA is a medium scale area, consisting of gently rolling landform with elevated parts frequently restricting views beyond the character area. The LLCA comprises a mixture of large scale arable fields and those set to pasture and grassland. Field boundaries are enclosed by mainly timber post and wire fencing with occasional shelterbelts and hedgerows. The LLCA includes a diverse range of vegetation including shelterbelts, tree clumps, riparian scrub along tributaries and small scattered areas and lines of woodland including AWI woodland west of Kilnhill Farm.
- 2.54 Scattered farms and properties are connected by narrow roads with the Aberdeen to Inverness Railway Line found towards the centre of the LLCA, which does not greatly influence the character of the area. NCR1 and the Highland Council core path run the same east to west alignment in the north, along the boundary with the Forested Backdrop LLCA. There are no landscape designations within the character, although there is one Cultural Heritage Site and one Scheduled Monument, a tower house, located in the north, which is only visible in close proximity and does not contribute to the character of the LLCA.
- 2.55 Farm buildings and woodland are visible along slightly elevated ridgelines with pylons and timber poles appearing as more prominent features against the skyline. The LLCA contrasts in character with the adjacent Auldearn Forested Rolling Farmland LLCA and Hardmuir Forest Edge Farmland LLCA due to limited woodland, giving it a more open character.
- 2.56 The existing A96 is located in the south-east of the LLCA and is visible from adjoining properties and fields given the limited separation distance and lack of intervening vegetation, although is screened from views from a large proportion of the character area by the rolling landscape. There is a sense of isolation in parts of the LLCA, although this is limited to areas where development and scattered properties are screened by the landform.

**Table 10: Landscape Character Summary for the Auldearn Open Farmland LLCA**

Landscape Attributes	Description
Key Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>gently rolling landform;</li> <li>large scale mostly arable fields enclosed by post and wire fencing;</li> <li>scattered farmsteads;</li> <li>rolling topography and adjacent woodland gives the area a relatively sheltered character; and in parts, medium to long distance views are restricted by the landform</li> <li>narrow country roads cut through the LLCA with the existing A96 located beyond the southern boundary;</li> </ul>
Positive Character Attributes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a quiet, undisturbed and rural landscape character; and</li> <li>an open undulating landscape.</li> </ul>
Negative Character Attributes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>pylons and timber post power lines break the skyline and appear prominent in local views</li> </ul>
Value	<p>landscape designations: none.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>landscape quality (condition): medium. Well-maintained arable farmland;</li> <li>scenic quality: medium. A unified landscape with rolling topography partially limiting long distance views;</li> <li>rarity: low. No rare landscape elements or features;</li> <li>representativeness: low. Landscape character, features and elements are not particularly unique;</li> <li>conservation/cultural interest: low. AWI woodland and some scheduled monuments and cultural heritage sites;</li> <li>recreational value: low. Recreational features limited to core paths;</li> <li>perceptual aspects: medium. A tranquil character due to the quiet, undisturbed and rural landscape; and</li> <li>associations: low. No notable associations to landscape.</li> </ul> <p>Overall value: Low to Medium</p>
Susceptibility to Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>landscape elements: low. Changes to field patterns and</li> </ul>



Landscape Attributes	Description
	shelterbelts would not greatly alter the landscape character; and <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>landscape features: medium. The introduction of development has the potential to affect the tranquil nature of the LLCA.</li> </ul> Overall susceptibility: Low to Medium
Sensitivity (derived from Value and Susceptibility)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>landscape elements: low. Considered potentially tolerant to substantial change; and</li> <li>landscape features: medium. Considered to have some ability to accommodate the proposed Scheme.</li> </ul> Overall sensitivity: Low to Medium

### Forested Backdrop LLCA

- 2.57 The Forested Backdrop LLCA comprises two areas, one to the south-east of the study area which comprises the Brae of Brightmony, part of the forested northern foothills of the Cairngorms and one to the north-east of the study area which comprises the flatter coastal expanse of Culbin Forest.
- 2.58 In both areas, large scale, extensive geometric blocks of commercial coniferous forestry and AWI woodland create a strong sense of enclosure. The character area has a consistency in colour and texture due to the extent of woodland cover. Coniferous plantations dominate, contrasting with the surrounding open farmland and limiting views. The dense vegetation creates a sheltered and enclosed character and a strong sense of isolation.
- 2.59 There are no landscape designations within the LLCA, although there are six Scheduled Monuments including cairns and the fort at Castle Findlay, which are not noticeable features in the landscape. The Culbin Sands, Culbin Forest and Findhorn Bay SSSI covers much of the northern character area and long distance views across the Moray Firth from the northern edge of the LLCA impart a further sense of wildness.
- 2.60 Due to the forested nature of the LLCA, opportunities for views to the existing A96 are limited to a few locations on the peripheries of the LLCA.

**Table 11: Landscape Character Summary for the Forested Backdrop LLCA**

Landscape Attributes	Description
Key Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>steep sided foothills covered by coniferous plantation woodland to the south;</li> <li>flat coastal sands with coniferous plantation at Culbin Forest to the north;</li> <li>woodland and shelterbelts create a strong sense of enclosure with glimpsed views to the surrounding landscape; and</li> <li>large blocks of coniferous woodland and forestry bound by pasture fields enclosed by timber post and wire fencing and stone walls.</li> </ul>
Positive Character Attributes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>on the edge of the forest long distance views across the agricultural coastal plain and the Moray Firth to the Black Isle beyond;</li> <li>well screened from the existing A96 due to the separation distance and extensive woodland; and</li> <li>established mature coniferous woodland with a diverse variety of ecological elements.</li> </ul>
Negative Character Attributes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a lack of ecological and visual diversity within some plantation blocks.</li> </ul>
Value	landscape designations: Darnaway Castle GDL. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>landscape quality (condition): medium. Generally well-maintained mature forestry and woodlands;</li> <li>scenic quality: low to medium. Views generally restricted by woodland with some long distance views from forest edge;</li> <li>rarity: low. No rare landscape elements or features;</li> <li>representativeness: medium. Forestry at Culbin a good example of coastal pine forest;</li> <li>conservation/cultural interest: high. Darnaway Castle GDL, Culbin Sands, Culbin Forest and Findhorn Bay SSSI and AWI</li> </ul>

Landscape Attributes	Description
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>woodland;</li> <li>recreational value: medium. Walking, cycling and horse trails at Culbin Forest;</li> <li>perceptual aspects: medium. a sheltered and enclosed character with a strong sense of isolation; and</li> <li>associations: low. No notable associations to landscape.</li> </ul> Overall value: Medium
Susceptibility to Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>landscape elements: low to medium. Changes to views from the forest edge will not greatly alter the overall landscape character; and</li> <li>landscape features: low. Darnaway Castle GDL and Culbin Sands, Culbin Forest and Findhorn Bay SSSI do not experience visibility to the existing A9 road corridor.</li> </ul> Overall susceptibility: Low to Medium
Sensitivity (derived from Value and Susceptibility)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>landscape elements: low to medium. Considered potentially tolerant to substantial change; and</li> <li>landscape features: medium. Considered to have some ability to accommodate the proposed Scheme.</li> </ul> Overall sensitivity: Medium

### Open Firth LLCA

- 2.61 The Open Firth LLCA is a medium scale character area, comprising the southern shoreline of the Moray Firth, to the immediate east and west of Nairn. The topography is formed by a flat to gently rolling coastal edge with a mixture of dunes, tidal channel and shingle bars and sandy beaches including Nairn Beach.
- 2.62 In the west, sandy beaches are backed by medium scale arable fields enclosed by mainly timber post and wire fencing and a low-lying alluvial area forming the Carse of Delnies. Within the LLCA, vegetation is characterised by wetland and coastal plants with occasional shelterbelts along field boundaries and forestry along the edge of adjoining LLCAs. There are subtle differences in the texture and colour of the natural landscape and coastal edge, with variations due to changes during seasons, light and weather conditions.
- 2.63 The LLCA includes Nairn Golf Course, a few farms and individual properties on the edge of Nairn and these are generally orientated to take advantage of coastal views. The character area is partly covered by the Inner Moray Firth Special Landscape Character Area, across the Carse of Delnies. One Scheduled Monument (Anti-landing obstacle north – north-west and west of Culbin Forest) is located in the east, which extends across Culbin Sands and consists of World War II anti-glider poles rising from the sand.
- 2.64 Several ecological sites extend over the character area and include the Whiteness Head SSSI, the Moray Firth SAC and the Moray and Nairn Coast SPA. These sites, along with the Scheduled Monument contribute to the experience of the area, with wide panoramic views across the Moray Firth giving a strong sense of space and distance and along with the sound of the sea and birds, increase the sense of openness and isolation.
- 2.65 The Highland Council core paths run generally along the coast, allowing for views to landmarks including the lighthouse at Nairn and across the Moray Firth and Black Isle beyond. Given the limited separation distance, there are views from fields in the western part of the LLCA to the existing A96.

**Table 12: Landscape Character Summary for Open Firth LLCA**

Landscape Attributes	Description
Key Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>flat to gently undulating landform;</li> <li>coastal landscape comprising dunes, shingle bars and sandy beaches;</li> <li>vegetation generally consisting of wetland and coastal plants;</li> <li>arable fields mainly divided by wire fences;</li> <li>open views to the Moray Firth and beyond; and</li> <li>settlement limited to farmstead and individual properties.</li> </ul>

Landscape Attributes	Description
Positive Character Attributes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>panoramic views of the Moray Firth; and</li> <li>strong sense of space, distance and isolation along the coast.</li> </ul>
Negative Character Attributes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>distant views of the existing A96 from fields in the west; and</li> <li>exposed coastal character.</li> </ul>
Value	<p>landscape designations: Inner Moray Firth SLCA.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>landscape quality (condition): medium. A mixture of well-maintained farmland with some wilder coastal sites;</li> <li>scenic quality: high. Limited vegetation allows for panoramic views to the Moray Firth;</li> <li>rarity: low. No rare landscape elements or features;</li> <li>representativeness: low to medium. Landscape character, features and elements are not particularly unique;</li> <li>conservation/cultural interest: high. Inner Moray Firth SLCA, Whiteness Head SSSI and Culbin Sands, Culbin Forest and Findhorn Bay SSSI;</li> <li>recreational value: medium. Recreational features include a golf course and core paths;</li> <li>perceptual aspects: medium. Landscape is unkempt in places and is generally tranquil; and</li> <li>associations: medium. WWII fortifications.</li> </ul> <p>Overall value: Medium to High</p>
Susceptibility to Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>landscape elements: low. Changes to landscape elements in adjacent LLCAs would not greatly alter the landscape character; and</li> <li>landscape features: medium to high. Changes to views and the introduction of development would potentially alter the tranquil and undeveloped landscape character.</li> </ul> <p>Overall value: Medium to High.</p>
Sensitivity (derived from Value and Susceptibility)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>landscape elements: low. Considered potentially tolerant to substantial change; and</li> <li>landscape features: medium to high. Considered to have limited ability to accommodate the proposed Scheme.</li> </ul> <p>Overall value: Medium to High</p>

### **Hardmuir Forest Edge Farmland LLCA**

- 2.66 The Hardmuir Forest Edge Farmland LLCA is a medium to large scale character area, in the east of the study area. It consists of a contrasting patchwork of dense AWI woodland and pasture and arable fields enclosed by timber post and wire fencing and occasional fragmented shelterbelts. Given the extent of woodland within the character area and within the adjoining Forested Backdrop LLCA, there is a strong sense of enclosure throughout with more open views from the southern edge to farmland and from above the woodland to distant hills in the north, including those on the Black Isle.
- 2.67 Areas of AWI woodland extends across most of the LLCA, including that at Wester Hardmuir Wood and the adjoining Hardmuir Wood, at Inshoch Wood and south of Earlsmill Farm. This woodland creates uniformity in colour and texture with farmland, shelterbelts, scattered trees, rough scrub and wetland surrounding the Burn of Feddan adding some diversity through seasonal changes. The meandering Muckle Burn and stone built Earlsmill Bridge are local features, with the burn running through farmland and woodland in south-eastern parts of the LLCA and generally enclosed by riparian woodland and scrub.
- 2.68 Settlement consists of scattered farmsteads and properties with woodland associated with Darnaway Castle Garden and Designed Landscape. Dense woodland generally screens views to these designations and thereby they do not add to the experience of the LLCA.
- 2.69 From undesignated paths within woodland, there is a sense of isolation which is limited in others parts of the character area, where there are views to the existing A96, timber post power lines in the north and south and pylons in the north that break the skyline and scattered properties and farms.

2.70 The existing A96 runs through the centre of the LLCA and is visible from adjoining properties and fields, although views from the remaining landscape areas are limited by dense woodland.

**Table 13: Landscape Character Summary for the Hardmuir Forest Edge Farmland LLCA**

Landscape Attributes	Description
Key Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>sloping topography that rises to the south;</li> <li>arable and pasture fields enclosed by timber post and wire fencing and fragmented shelterbelts;</li> <li>extensive AWI woodland which limits long distance views throughout with limited visibility of the Black Isle from the south and existing A96 in central parts; and</li> <li>settlement consists of scattered farmsteads and properties.</li> </ul>
Positive Character Attributes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>topography and woodland creates a sense of enclosure and limits visibility of the existing A96 from the majority of the LLCA;</li> <li>diverse vegetation including woodland, shelterbelts, rough and riparian scrub and wetland surrounding the Burn of Feddan; and</li> <li>some long distance views from elevated areas on forest edges.</li> </ul>
Negative Character Attributes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>fragmented shelterbelts</li> <li>power lines add vertical elements of development on the skyline</li> </ul>
Value	<p>landscape designations: Brodie Castle GDL, Darnaway Castle GDL.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>landscape quality (condition): medium. Generally well-maintained farmland and forestry;</li> <li>scenic quality: low to medium. Views generally restricted by woodland with some long distance views from forest edges and more elevated areas;</li> <li>rarity: low. No rare landscape elements or features;</li> <li>representativeness: low. Landscape character, features and elements are not particularly unique;</li> <li>conservation/cultural interest: high. Darnaway Castle and Brodie Castle GDLs, AWI woodland;</li> <li>recreational value: low to medium. Caravan park, core paths through woodland;</li> <li>perceptual aspects: low. a sheltered and enclosed character; and</li> <li>associations: low. No notable associations to landscape.</li> </ul> <p>Overall value: Low to Medium</p>
Susceptibility to Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>landscape elements: low to medium. Changes to shelterbelts and woodland would not greatly alter the landscape character; and</li> <li>landscape features: low. Darnaway and Brodie Castle GDLs are enclosed by woodland and do not experience visibility of the existing A9 road corridor Overall susceptibility: Low to Medium</li> </ul>
Sensitivity (derived from Value and Susceptibility)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>landscape elements: low to medium. Considered to have some ability to accommodate the proposed Scheme; and</li> <li>landscape features: low. Considered potentially tolerant to substantial change.</li> </ul> <p>Overall sensitivity: Low to Medium</p>

## References

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The Highland Council (2015b). The Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan (IMFLDP).

The Highland Council (2012). Highland-wide Local Development Plan.