

A9.2: Landscape Objectives

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The proposed Scheme presents significant opportunities to contribute to, and enhance, the environmental quality of the existing A96 road corridor in order to deliver a high quality, integrated, biodiverse, adaptable and sustainable transport corridor. At the broadest level these landscape opportunities have been identified with a view to meeting the four key aims of Fitting Landscapes: Securing more Sustainable Landscapes (Transport Scotland 2014) policy, which are to:
- ensure high quality of design and place;
 - enhance and protect natural heritage;
 - use resources wisely; and
 - build in adaptability to change.
- 1.2 In order to capture and address these opportunities, the Landscape Objectives have been developed and adapted from the above four key aims. This process of setting the objectives has been informed through engagement with statutory consultees, review of findings from the SEA process and collaborative design working of the landscape architects with other technical and design disciplines such as ecology, cultural heritage, noise, hydrology, land use, community and private assets and highways engineers.

2. Landscape Objectives

- 2.1 The Landscape Objectives for the proposed Scheme are as follows:
- **Respect the Character and Sensitivities of the Surrounding Area and Integrate the Proposed Scheme into the Landscape**
 - **Take Opportunities to Enhance the Landscape**
 - **Provide for Varied, Interesting and Scenic Views both of and from the Proposed Scheme**
 - **Minimise Landscape and Visual Impacts on the Land and People**
 - **Promote a Clear Approach for Westbound Travellers Approaching Inverness and Create a Sense of Arrival**
 - **Use Resources Wisely**
 - **Design for Adaptability to Change**
 - **Enhance the 'Sense of Place' and Connectivity with Surrounding Communities**

2.2 Details on how the Landscape Objects would be tailored to the receiving landscape are outlined below:

Respect the Character and Sensitivities of the Surrounding Area and Integrate the Proposed Scheme into the Landscape:

- by respecting and reflecting existing patterns of land use and vegetation cover, using distinctive planting appropriate to the specific location.
- by drawing upon / exploiting the characteristics of the local landscape and creating a clear identity. E.g. urban characteristics on approach to Inverness, estate woodland planting on the outskirts of Inverness; open agricultural fields between Culloden, Balloch and Tornagrain, enclosure of Woodland at Tornagrain, Brackley and outskirts of Nairn; the open infrastructure corridor adjacent to the airport; and undulating wooded farmland as the proposed Scheme bypasses Nairn and Auldearn.
- by recognising the different local landscape character areas the proposed Scheme passes through and providing visual reference points along the proposed Scheme (e.g. approach to Inverness; the Nairn East and West Junctions; Mid Coul Junction leading to the airport and westbound approach to Auldearn).
- by influencing the design of the route alignment and earthworks profiling to provide the best possible landform fit and minimise impacts on important features using sensitive engineered solutions (e.g. careful consideration of the extent and alignment of the proposed Scheme in the vicinity of the battlefield at Auldearn and identification of opportunities for grading out to assist marry the proposed Scheme into the surrounding topography).
- by designing the shape and orientation of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS) basins/ponds to achieve the best landscape fit.

Take Opportunities to Enhance the Landscape:

- by reintroduction of lost or degraded elements which make a positive contribution to the character of the landscape to increase diversity and enhance the proposed Scheme corridor (e.g. planting hedgerows to mitigate the impact of severance and by tying back into defunct field boundaries);
- by increasing the diversity of native plant species throughout the area; and
- by working closely with the ecologists on the integrated approach to habitat creation.

Provide for Varied, Interesting and Scenic Views both of and from the Proposed Scheme:

- by maintaining important vistas, particularly those to the north towards the Black Isle, in addition to those towards the Kessock Bridge and Beaully and Moray Firths, and north-west to the Northern Highlands;
- by maximising opportunities to gain new views of attractive scenery and notable features in the landscape (e.g. on the outskirts of Nairn and Auldearn);
- by manipulation of earthworks, planting and screening elements to control the sequential views experienced by travellers;
- by influencing, where appropriate, the setting of engineering interventions to assist them become celebrated moments in the landscape, e.g. the Nairn River Crossing, junction under and over bridges, noise mitigation measures and watercourse realignments;
- by creating attractive, interesting short range views within the road corridor, e.g. views towards SUDS basins/ ponds, adjacent settlements and towards the airport; and
- by creation of a varied and interesting sequence of views from the road

Minimise Landscape and Visual Impacts on the Land and People:

- by fitting the road into the landscape and protecting sensitive views;
- by ensuring the protection and management of retained established vegetation where appropriate;
- by supporting biodiversity and taking into consideration local biodiversity action plans when designing landscape mitigation;
- by using a balanced holistic approach to the design of landscape mitigation measures;
- by providing screening measures such as planting and earth mounding where appropriate;
- by careful consideration of landscape surrounding noise mitigation measures; and
- by balancing landscape mitigation of short-term construction impacts with longer term potential gains.

Promote a Clear Approach for Westbound Travellers Approaching Inverness and Create a Sense of Arrival:

- by maintaining views across the farmland landscapes to Inverness, in addition to views of the Kessock Bridge on approach to the city;
- to provide for clear sight lines and reduce visual clutter/distraction when approaching Inverness so as to aid drivers; and
- by carefully considering the landscape setting, integration and aesthetics of potential noise mitigation barriers.

Design for Adaptability to Change:

- by encouraging resilience by using suitable native planting stock and planting species mixes; and
- by influencing the design of sustainable drainage systems to fit with the adjacent landscape and land use as far as practicable.

Enhance the 'Sense of Place' and Connectivity with Surrounding Communities:

- by using distinctive planting and seeding and earthwork design (appropriate to the location);
- by using a consistent design approach throughout the scheme that is sympathetic to the overall context but recognises and celebrates clear local identities, and
- by designing the landscape on approaches to key junctions to create a sense of anticipation to a choice and as an indicator to the outlying communities beyond, e.g. the Nairn East and West Junctions.