

## 10 Visual

This chapter presents the visual assessment of the proposed Scheme and is linked with the assessment of landscape effects which is set out in Chapter 9 (Landscape). This chapter assesses the degree of anticipated change the proposed Scheme would have upon the visual amenity along the dual carriageway and predicts the likely visual effects upon buildings, outdoor public areas, local roads, railways and routes used by pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians, which are collectively described as “built and outdoor receptors”.

A study area of up to 3km from the proposed Scheme was defined following an appraisal of the potential visibility of the proposed Scheme. The baseline conditions were established through desk-based assessment, mapping of theoretical visibility (ZTV), site surveys and consultation.

Within the study area, 675 individual properties (forming 179 receptor groups), and 67 outdoor receptor locations have been identified. Effects on each receptor are assessed for both winter year of opening (when all mitigation elements will be in place but the mitigation planting is not fully effective) and during the summer 15 years after opening (when mitigation planting had become established and contributes to screening).

Proposed mitigation includes sensitive grading of earthworks to provide integration with the surrounding landform, road cuttings, retention of existing trees and vegetation, extensive new planting of mixed and deciduous woodland, feathered and standard trees, riparian and scrub woodland and hedgerows and seeding adjacent to the proposed Scheme to replace trees lost during construction, provide screening where appropriate, enhance biodiversity and to reflect and enhance local landscape character.

The mitigation proposals are shown on Figure 9.5., whilst Appendices A10.1. (Built Receptor Assessment Table) and A10.2 (Outdoor Receptor Assessment Table) provide detailed information on the application of the specific mitigation measures for individual receptors. Cross-sections indicating the relationship between the proposed Scheme and various visual receptors, together with mitigation proposals, are shown on Figure 9.5.

In the winter year of the proposed Scheme opening, 365 (54.1 %) individual built receptors and 30 (44.8%) outdoor receptors would be affected by significant (Moderate or greater) adverse effects. By the summer, 15 years after the proposed Scheme opening, mitigation would reduce the total number of properties affected by significant adverse effects to 150 (22.2%), and for the outdoor receptors, the total would have reduced to 19 (28.4%). Table 10.6 summarises the total number of receptors affected to different degrees in the winter year of opening and residual effects by summer 15 years after opening.

### 10.1 Introduction

- 10.1.1 This chapter presents the results of the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) Stage 3 Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the A96 Dualling Inverness to Nairn (including Nairn Bypass) scheme (hereafter referred to as the proposed Scheme) in relation to effects on the visual amenity and character of views from buildings, viewpoints, roads and footpaths (collectively referred to as receptors).
- 10.1.2 The assessment methodology is explained below followed by a description of the baseline visual amenity. An assessment is then made of the potential effects on visual amenity that would result from the proposed Scheme, taking account of incorporated mitigation. This includes an assessment of the changes in the content and character of views as a result of the alteration or loss of existing elements in the landscape and/or introduction of new elements.
- 10.1.3 The chapter is supported by the following appendices and figures which are cross referenced where relevant:
- Appendix A10.1 (Built Receptor Assessment);
  - Appendix A10.2 (Outdoor Receptor Assessment);
  - Figure 10.1 (Zone of Theoretical Visibility - Existing A96);
  - Figure 10.2 (Zone of Theoretical Visibility - Proposed Scheme);

- Figure 10.3 (Visual Effect on Built Receptors);
- Figure 10.4 (Visual Effect on Outdoor Receptors);
- Figure 9.5 (Landscape and Ecological Mitigation);
- Figure 9.6 (Cross Sections); and
- Figure 9.7 (Visualisations).

- 10.1.4 Visual receptors collectively refer to buildings, outdoor public areas, local roads, railways and routes used by pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians. For practical reasons properties of similar sensitivity located in close proximity, and experiencing similar effects, were assessed together as built receptor groups. Appendix A10.1 (Built Receptor Assessment) includes the number and names of individual properties within each receptor group and the location of each group is shown on Figure 10.3 (Visual Effects on Built Receptors). Longer/larger outdoor receptors have been divided into multiple sections as the views experienced throughout their extents can differ, therefore resulting in different effects. The extent of the outdoor receptors is shown on Figure 10.4 (Visual Effects on Outdoor Receptors).
- 10.1.5 Further considerations related to the visual assessment are addressed separately within the following chapter:
- (Chapter 9: Landscape) in relation to the effects on the character, quality, physical fabric of the landscape and mitigation proposals;
  - (Chapter 14: Cultural Heritage) in relation to effects on the setting of historic buildings and heritage sites;
  - (Chapter 16: People and Communities: All Travellers) in relation to the inter-related assessment of the effects of the proposed Scheme upon the views experienced by travellers on the A96); and
  - (Chapter 18: Policies and Plans) in relation to national, regional and local planning policies and guidance relevant to landscape and visual impacts).

### **Legislative and Policy Background**

- 10.1.6 Appendix A18.1 (Planning Policy Context for Environmental Assessment) describes the planning policies and guidance from national to local level which are relevant to landscape. An assessment of the compliance of the proposed Scheme against all development plan policies relevant to this environmental topic is reported in Appendix A18.2 (Assessment of Development Plan Policy Compliance) and a summary overview is provided in Section 18.4 (Assessment of Compliance) in Chapter 18 (Policies and Plans).

## **10.2 Methodology**

### **Approach to the assessment**

- 10.2.1 The visual assessment was undertaken in accordance with the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) Interim Advice Note IAN135/10 Landscape and Visual Effects Assessment (Highways Agency 2010) (hereafter referred to as IAN135/10), updated to incorporate current best practice methodology included in Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Edition (Landscape Institute 2013) (hereafter referred to as GLVIA3). GLVIA 3 is more a recently published guidance document and provides greater clarity with regard to:
- the interrelationship between susceptibility and value in determining sensitivity to the proposed scheme: and
  - the interrelationship between size or scale, geographical extent of influence, duration and reversibility in determining magnitude of impact.
- 10.2.2 This was taken into account in assigning significance of effects.

- 10.2.3 The approach to the assessment and the development of mitigation proposals has been informed by Fitting Landscapes: Securing more Sustainable Landscapes (Transport Scotland 2014).

### **The Study Area**

- 10.2.4 Within a 5km radius, Zones of Theoretical Visibility (ZTVs) have been prepared for the existing A96 and for the proposed Scheme and are shown on Figures 10.1 to 10.2. The ZTVs have been produced using a bare-earth Digital Terrain Model (DTM), and the maximum extent of the area from which the existing A96/the proposed Scheme and vehicles would be theoretically visible however, they do not take into account screening or filtering of visibility by local landform, built features or vegetation, which were considered during subsequent site survey work. Figure 10.1 illustrates the ZTV for the alignment of the existing A96, Figure 10.2 illustrates the ZTV for the proposed Scheme together with lighting, closed-circuit television (CCTV) and Variable Message Signs (VMS).
- 10.2.5 Following an appraisal of the theoretical visibility displayed by the ZTVs the visual assessment has focused on the potential visual impacts along the alignment of the proposed Scheme and a study area up to 3km in distance from it. Based on professional judgement it was assessed that beyond this extent, due to topography and distance from the proposed Scheme, visual effects would not be significant.

### **Baseline Conditions**

- 10.2.6 The existing baseline conditions were identified in order to gain an understanding of visual amenity and views within the study area. Identification of the baseline conditions was established through a desk-based assessment, site walkovers and surveys as discussed below.

#### Desk-based Assessment

- 10.2.7 The desk-based assessment has been informed through a review of the following documents and information:
- Geographical Information Systems (GIS) data;
  - aerial photography (GetMapping June 2015);
  - web-based photography;
  - Jacobs GIS environmental constraints datasets (obtained through consultation with stakeholders);
  - 1:25,000 and 1:50,000 Ordnance Survey (OS) mapping;
  - A96 Dualling Inverness to Nairn (including Nairn Bypass) DMRB Stage 2 Scheme Assessment Report (Jacobs 2014);
  - The Highland-wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP) (The Highland Council 2012);
  - The Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan (IMFLDP) (The Highland Council 2015)
  - A96 Dualling Programme Strategic Environmental Assessment - Tier 2 Environmental Report (CH2M 2015); and
  - A96 Dualling Programme: Strategic Environmental Assessment - Post Adoption Statement (CH2M 2016).

#### Site Surveys

- 10.2.8 Site surveys were conducted throughout the assessment process in order to verify the nature of existing views and visual amenity as well as to gain a full appreciation of the relationship between the proposed Scheme and the affected visual receptors.
- 10.2.9 The field surveys, undertaken between September 2015 and April 2016, were carried out from publicly accessible locations and from private land where approved by the landowner. All surveys

were undertaken by a minimum of two landscape architects, including at least one chartered landscape architect.

**Effect Assessment**

- 10.2.10 The assessment of visual effects was undertaken using the approach outlined below, where the level of significance is assessed based on the sensitivity to change of the existing views and the magnitude of change that would be experienced.
- 10.2.11 The assessment considers both built and outdoor receptors. Built receptors are identified as dwellings, historic buildings, workplaces and recreational buildings. Outdoor receptors are identified as major and well-used minor roads, railways, outdoor recreational spaces, Rights of Way (ROWs), footpaths and core paths identified by The Highland Council, cycleways and equestrian routes. As detailed in paragraph 10.1.4 some built receptors are grouped and longer/larger outdoor receptors were divided into multiple sections.

Sensitivity to Change

- 10.2.12 In accordance with GLVIA3, the assessment of sensitivity combines judgements on the susceptibility of the visual receptor to the specific type of development proposed, and the value attributed to that receptor.

*Susceptibility of Visual Receptors to Change*

- 10.2.13 Susceptibility of a visual receptor to changes in views and visual amenity is set out in GLVIA3 as being *'a function of the occupation or activity of people experiencing the view at particular locations; and the extent to which their attention or interest may therefore be focussed on the views and the visual amenity they experience at particular locations'*.
- 10.2.14 The criteria in Table 10.1 (based on GLVIA3) were applied, along with professional judgement, to evaluate the susceptibility of different types of receptors.

**Table 10.1: Visual Receptor - Susceptibility to Change**

Susceptibility	Receptor Type
High	Residents. People engaged in outdoor recreation, including users of public rights of way, whose attention is likely to be focused on the landscape and on particular views. Visitors to heritage assets or other attractions where views of the surroundings are an important part of the experience. Communities where views contribute to the landscape setting and are enjoyed by residents. Travellers on scenic routes where awareness of views is likely to be particularly high.
Medium	Travellers on road, rail or other transport routes (where awareness of views is likely to be higher along recognised scenic routes). Schools and other institutional buildings and their outdoor areas.
Low	People engaged in outdoor sport or recreation, which does not involve appreciation of views. People at their place of work, whose attention may be focused on their work and where the setting is not important to the quality of working life.

*Value Attached to Views*

- 10.2.15 In determination of the sensitivity to change of a visual receptor, this assessment also considered the value likely to be attached to the view experienced. As indicated in GLVIA3, this may relate to recognition of views in relation to heritage assets or through planning designations, or indicators of value attached to views by visitors such as publications, signage and the provision of facilities such as parking places.
- 10.2.16 The criteria in Table 10.2 were used, along with professional judgement, to help determine the value of the views experienced by each visual receptor.

**Table 10.2: Value of Views**

Value	Views
High	Viewpoints within landscapes of national importance, or highly popular visitor attractions where the view forms an important part of the experience, or has important cultural associations.
Medium	Viewpoints within landscapes of regional/district importance or moderately popular visitor attractions where the view forms part of the experience, or has local cultural associations.
Low	Viewpoints within landscapes of no designations, not particularly popular/important as a viewpoint and with minimal or no cultural associations.

*Evaluation of Sensitivity of Visual Receptors*

10.2.17 The sensitivity of visual receptors to changes in their views was evaluated in accordance with the criteria provided in Table 10.3, based on the susceptibility to change of the receptor and the value of views. Where applicable interims of medium to high or low to medium may be used. All residential receptors were assessed to be of high sensitivity as they are considered to be particularly susceptible to changes in their visual amenity, residents at home being more likely to experience views for longer periods of time than people briefly passing through an area.

**Table 10.3: Visual Receptor - Sensitivity to Change**

Sensitivity	Criteria
High	Receptors where the existing view is of high value and/or where the receptor would experience an appreciable change to visual amenity by reason of the nature of activity and their expectations (receptors where the view is important to users will be considered to be of high sensitivity).
Medium	Receptors where the existing view is valued, but not critical to amenity and/or the nature of the view is valued, but not a primary consideration of the users (receptors where users are likely to spend time outside of participation in their activity looking at the view and users of workplaces with windows that take advantage of views will be considered to be of medium sensitivity).
Low	Receptors where the existing view is unimportant and/or users are not sensitive to change (receptors where users are unlikely to consider the views an important element of their activity will generally be assessed to be of low sensitivity).

Magnitude of Visual Impact

10.2.18 As noted in GLVIA3 the magnitude of change that would be experienced by the identified visual receptors relates to the size or scale of change, its geographical extent, and the duration and reversibility of change.

*Size or Scale*

10.2.19 GLVIA3 recommends that the magnitude of visual effects identified should take account of:

- the scale of the change in view with respect to loss or addition of features in the view and changes in its composition, including the proportion of the view occupied by the proposed Scheme;
- the degree of contrast or integration of any new features or change in the landscape with the existing or remaining landscape elements and characteristics; and
- the nature of the view of the proposed Scheme, in terms of the relative amount of time over which it would be experienced and whether views would be full, partial or glimpses.

*Geographical Extent*

10.2.20 GLVIA3 notes that the geographical extent of a visual effect will vary with different viewpoints, and will reflect:

- the angle of view in relation to the main activity of the receptor;
- the distance of the viewpoint from the proposed Scheme; and
- the extent of area over which the changes would be visible.

*Duration and Reversibility*

- 10.2.21 The magnitude of visual impact also takes into consideration the duration and reversibility of the effect. Short-term, reversible visual effects from temporary construction operations are generally considered to be of lower magnitude than long-term or irreversible effects.
- 10.2.22 Magnitude of visual impact was assessed on a scale of high, medium or low, using the criteria, provided in Table 10.4 along with professional judgement, giving consideration to the duration and reversibility of the impact. Where applicable interims of medium to high or low to medium were used.

**Table 10.4: Magnitude of Visual Impact**

Magnitude	Criteria
High	Where the proposed Scheme or elements of the proposed Scheme would dominate the view and fundamentally change its character and components over a large geographic area.
Medium	Where the proposed Scheme or elements of the proposed Scheme would be noticeable in the view, affecting its character and altering some of its components and features over a notable geographic area.
Low	Where the proposed Scheme or elements of the proposed Scheme would be only a minor element of the overall view, over a small geographic area that are likely to be missed by the casual observer and/or scarcely appreciated.

**Significance of Effect**

- 10.2.23 The degree of significance of effects on visual amenity has been determined through consideration of both the sensitivity of the visual receptors to changes in their views and the predicted magnitude of impact as a result of the proposed Scheme. Significance is defined as Negligible, Slight, Moderate or Substantial, in addition to being either adverse or beneficial as shown in Table 10.5 (where applicable interims of moderate to substantial or slight to moderate or negligible to slight were used). For the purposes of this assessment effects are considered to be adverse unless otherwise stated. Where a long-term effect of Moderate Significance is identified, this is considered to be a significant effect in the context of this assessment. As detailed in the criteria below, a moderate significance is where the level of effect becomes obvious to the viewer therefore triggering the need for mitigation measures.

**Table 10.5: Significance of Visual Effects**

Level of Effect	Criteria
Substantial	Adverse: The proposed Scheme would cause major deterioration to a view or loss of a view from a highly sensitive receptor, and would constitute a major discordant element in the view. Beneficial: The proposed Scheme would lead to a major improvement in a view from a highly sensitive receptor
Moderate	Adverse: The proposed Scheme would cause obvious deterioration to a view from a moderately sensitive receptor, perceptible damage to a view from a more sensitive receptor. Beneficial: The proposed Scheme would cause obvious improvement to a view from a moderately sensitive receptor, or perceptible improvement to a view from a more sensitive receptor.
Slight	Adverse: The proposed Scheme would cause limited deterioration to a view from a receptor of medium sensitivity or cause greater deterioration to a view from a receptor of low sensitivity. Beneficial: The proposed Scheme would cause limited improvement to a view from a receptor of medium sensitivity, or would cause greater improvement to a view from a receptor of low sensitivity.
Negligible	No perceptible change in the view.

**Consultation**

- 10.2.24 Consultation was undertaken with statutory and non-statutory consultees, including The Highland Council and Inverness Airport and the A96 Dualling Environmental Steering Group (ESG). The ESG included Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), Historic Environment Scotland (HES) and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA). Further information on consultation is provided in Chapter 6 (Scoping and Consultation).

### **Limitations**

- 10.2.25 This assessment has been undertaken on the DMRB Stage 3 proposed Scheme design as per draft Orders. With regards to the assessment of visual effects in accordance with DMRB, a number of limitations to the assessment were identified.
- 10.2.26 Where land is allocated within the local development plan or where land has extant planning permission or is pending a decision of a planning application, the land-take has been allocated to the development land category and assessed accordingly in Chapter 15 (People and Communities: Community and Private Assets). Given the limited information currently available regarding the future proposals within the development land allocations, it has not been possible to assess the potential visual effects of the proposed Scheme on them with any degree of certainty, so these allocations have not been considered in this chapter.
- 10.2.27 At the time of assessment details of methods of construction and information on the timescale and phasing of works, locations of haulage routes and construction compounds were largely unknown. There is an acknowledgement that construction activities associated with road schemes are short-term and cause generally temporary adverse visual effects. The assessment is based on assumptions on where the most likely significant, although short term effects from construction activities, may result. Those identified include the construction of junctions, new bridge structures, the demolition of existing structures and large scale earthworks. The location of these activities tends to correlate with the areas where the magnitude of operational impacts would be highest, hence the greatest construction phase effects are generally expected to occur in similar locations to those of the greatest operational effects, as identified for the winter year of proposed Scheme opening before mitigation planting has established. Given the above, together with the relatively short duration of construction activities, it is considered unlikely that construction visual effects would be of greater significance than those assessed for the winter year of proposed Scheme opening.

## **10.3 Baseline Description and Evaluation**

### **Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)**

- 10.3.1 As noted in Chapter 9 (Landscape), the key outcomes of the Strategic Transport Projects Review Strategic Environmental Assessment Environment Report and Post Adoption Statement (Jacobs, Faber Maunsell, Grant Thompson and Tribal Consulting 2008 and 2009 respectively) and the A96 Dualling Programme Strategic Environmental Assessment – Tier 2 Environmental Report and Post Adoption Statement (CH2M 2015 and 2016 respectively) have been reviewed and taken into consideration within the visual assessment in relation to the mitigation proposals. The mitigation proposals taken into account in the visual assessment are explained in Section 10.6 (Mitigation) and are shown on Figure 9.5.
- 10.3.2 Paragraphs 9.3.3 to 9.3.5 of Chapter 9 (Landscape) summarises the outcomes of these reports which taken into account in the visual assessment.

### **Visual Baseline**

- 10.3.3 As noted in IAN135/10 the assessment of landscape and visual effects are separate but linked procedures. The visual context and baseline description of the study area is therefore incorporated to a considerable extent in Chapter 9 (Landscape) and the supporting Appendix A9.1 (Local Landscape Character Areas (LLCAs)).
- 10.3.4 Baseline visual conditions around the area are summarised below. Sensitivity is described generally in this section for areas and for key features to provide an overview of baseline visual sensitivity.

### **Built Receptors**

- 10.3.5 The study area encompasses a wide range of built receptors, concentrated mostly within settlements on low lying inland areas. The main settlements found within the study area are

Inverness, Culloden, Smithton, Balloch, Nairn and Auldearn, along with the hamlets of Milton, Tornagrain, Lochside and Brackadale. Farm steadings and individual properties are also dispersed throughout the study area. Built receptors are those residential dwellings, offices and industrial or commercial properties within the study area, which have been identified through desk top assessment and verified during site surveys as being likely to experience notable change in their views as a result of the proposed Scheme. Properties which would be unlikely to gain views of the proposed Scheme are not recorded within the visual assessment.

- 10.3.6 During the process of identifying visual receptors it was recognised that within main settlements there are some areas including residential suburbs in elevated locations, for example the south eastern extents of Culloden and Balloch, which could have partial visibility of the proposed Scheme, but where the visual effects would be very limited due to factors such as the extended viewing distance and the presence of intervening buildings, vegetation and topography. It was judged that any visual effects from the proposed Scheme at these properties would not be significant, and they were therefore not included within the detailed visual assessment.
- 10.3.7 A general description of built receptors and their associated settlements within the study area is provided below.

*Inverness*

- 10.3.8 The city of Inverness lies at the western edge of the study area, situated on the edge of the Great Glen Fault at the confluence of the Moray and Beaully Firths on the banks of the River Ness. The study area encompasses part of the eastern outskirts of the city.
- 10.3.9 The existing A96 is dualled between the Raigmore Interchange with the A9 and the West Seafield Roundabout. This lies within a relatively flat landform which gently slopes towards the coast, with the road corridor partially enclosed by embankment and roadside vegetation. Land use for the area comprises predominantly industrial and commercial development, with the Inverness Retail and Business Park located to the south of this section of the existing A96. Views to the north of the road are largely screened by a band of woodland which separates the existing A96 and the Moray Firth. A farm and a small cluster of dwellings lie to the north of the existing A96 between the West Seafield Roundabout and the Smithton Junction, but only a few of the properties experience views of the existing A96 due to screening from built form and established vegetation. As the majority of these receptors are residential properties they are considered to be of high sensitivity.

*Smithton and Westhill*

- 10.3.10 Smithton is located on the eastern outskirts of Inverness and lies adjacent to Culloden in the west of the study area, approximately 1km to the south of the existing A96. The topography gently slopes down from the south, with open fields abutting the northern edge of the settlement. In central parts of the village external views are limited by built form, but along the northern edge of the settlement several of the properties on Sinclair Terrace, Sinclair Park, Cranmore Drive and Smithton Road experience filtered views to the existing A96 across farmland, with the Moray Firth and Black Isle in the distance. Receptors here are generally considered to be of high sensitivity.
- 10.3.11 To the south of Smithton, a small cluster of dwellings is located near the farm at Stratton, adjacent to Barn Church Road (C1032) at a distance of approximately 350m to the existing A96. The dwellings are surrounded by mature vegetation which limits visibility to the existing A96. As these receptors are residential properties they are considered to be of high sensitivity.

*Culloden*

- 10.3.12 Culloden is near the western end of the study area. The village was originally formed by houses associated with Culloden House Estate, which currently operates as a hotel and is surrounded by a mixture of traditional stone and more modern housing. The compact settlement is set on a gentle slope which falls from south to north with mature woodland and avenues of trees associated with Culloden House Garden and Designed Landscape (GDL) and Culloden House Policies Conservation Area (CA), both found within the village and to the north and east, whilst the settlement is bound to the south by Culloden Wood.

10.3.13 In central parts of the village external views are limited by built form, but properties located on the northern and north-western edges of the settlement experience views across the surrounding open rural landscape and from some locations there are views to the north towards the Moray Firth and hills beyond. The views from the majority of the properties on the northern and north-western edge of the settlement are filtered through roadside vegetation and intervening remnant estate avenues, although some properties gain more open views through gaps in the vegetation, with the existing A96 visible as it bypasses Culloden. As the receptors in this area are residential properties, they are considered to be of high sensitivity.

10.3.14 Several properties lie to the north of Culloden, including those at Milton, Burnside, Milton of Culloden and Allanfearn. These properties are located either adjacent to the existing A96 or on local roads which lead off it. The small settlement of Milton is situated to the north of the existing A96 and the Aberdeen to Inverness Railway Line at a lower elevation. Views to the south and east of the settlement are largely restricted by topography and intervening vegetation. Properties at Burnside, Milton of Culloden and Allanfearn are set within more open countryside; a few scattered properties situated adjacent to the existing A96 where the existing A96 is already a prominent feature in views. All of the receptors in this area are considered to be of high sensitivity as they are residential properties.

#### *Balloch*

10.3.15 The village of Balloch is located to the east of Culloden, and set approximately 500m to the south of the existing A96. The settlement is built on a hillside which rises to a ridgeline to the south-east, allowing for views across the open fields of the coastal plain towards the Moray Firth and Black Isle beyond. Focal points to the north include the white plume from the Norbord Factory stack and the long distance vista to the Moray Firth.

10.3.16 Due to the elevated nature of the village in relation to the existing A96, and the lack of intervening vegetation, the existing A96 is a prominent feature in views for most of the receptors due to some direct visibility of the road, particularly from properties on the north-western edge of the village. These include modern single and two storey housing and also a school and village hall. The majority of these receptors are considered to be of high sensitivity as they are residential properties. Balloch Primary School and the village hall are considered to be of low/medium sensitivity.

10.3.17 To the north of Balloch, Upper Cullernie Farm is situated in an elevated position within open agricultural fields overlooking the coastal plain to the north. The farm includes a number of cottages and semi-detached houses that lie below the farm buildings, with the majority of the properties experiencing direct views to the existing A96 and to the Balloch Junction, and are considered to be of high sensitivity.

#### *Tornagrain*

10.3.18 Tornagrain is a small hamlet located towards the centre of the study area. It is situated on a small rise to the south of the existing A96, overlooking the low-lying fields, the existing road and the western part of Tornagrain Wood. Housing consists of a mixture of traditional stone cottages and mid-20th century semi-detached houses, with many of the properties experiencing views of the existing A96, which runs within 50m of the settlement. To the south eastern boundary of Tornagrain Wood the first phase of Tornagrain new town is currently under construction. Receptors within Tornagrain are residential properties, therefore they considered to be of high sensitivity.

#### *Culblair*

10.3.19 Culblair is a collection of properties centred around Culblair House to the south of Inverness Airport. Traditional houses are set along the estate access road and experience filtered long distance views across a flat landscape. The existing A96 is visible to the south from some of the western properties, but is partially screened by mature trees and the rolling topography from other properties. All of these receptors are considered to be of high sensitivity.

*Lochside*

- 10.3.20 Lochside is a linear hamlet located towards the centre of the study area and set in a scenic and enclosed position within the Kildrummie Kames Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The majority of the hamlet is situated immediately to the north of Loch Flemington and to the south of a low ridge which limits views to the north and the existing A96. A few properties are located to the north of the ridge and have opportunities for views to the north and the existing A96. As these receptors are residential properties, they are considered to be of high sensitivity.

*Cockhill*

- 10.3.21 Cockhill is a small group of houses located towards the centre of the study area. The small cluster of modern houses is situated on an elevated location at the edge of the Blackcastle Quarry with open views across undulating pastoral fields. Due to the undulating landform to the north of the properties there are no views to the existing A96, which lies at a distance of 250m to the north. Receptors at Cockhill are considered to be of high sensitivity.

*Moss-side*

- 10.3.22 Moss-side comprises a linear collection of properties near the western edge of Nairn located off C1170 Moss-side - Mosshall - Broadley Road, in an elevated position relative to the low lying farmland of the Enclosed Forest Edge Farming LLCA to the south. Most of the properties at Moss-side have open aspects to the south with long distance views to the forested hills. The existing A96 lies to the north beyond Delnies Wood at a distance of 550m and is not visible from any of the properties. All of these receptors are considered to be of high sensitivity.

*Nairn*

- 10.3.23 The historic royal burgh of Nairn is an ancient fishing port, market and seaside town, built around the estuary of the River Nairn on the south coast of the Moray Firth. It is a popular holiday destination with a harbour, beaches and two golf courses. The southern outskirts of Nairn are located in the east of the study area, and the existing A96 runs through the town. The majority of views from these locations are contained by remnant estate woodland and blocks of forestry. Traditional stone farm steadings and individual properties are found to the south of Nairn and set amongst the woodland of the Auldearn Forested Rolling Farmland LLCA. In some locations surrounding woodland and landform limit views, but some properties experience scenic long distance views across the landscape.. Receptors in these locations are considered to be of high sensitivity.

*Auldearn*

- 10.3.24 The village of Auldearn lies to the east of Nairn, at the eastern end of the study area. Auldearn is surrounded by gently rolling farmland, with a slight elevation in the northern part of the village, from where there are views across the village and to the surrounding rural landscape. Architectural styles include traditional stone buildings within the older central parts with more modern houses in the south. Historic sites in the village include the designated old parish church, a motte on the site of the Royal Castle of Auldearn and the prominent Boath Doocot on Dooket Hill, where there is a viewpoint.
- 10.3.25 The village is partially enclosed by the gradient of the landform and narrow streets create an enclosed and intimate character within central parts. The existing A96 is located along the northern edge of Auldearn and some properties on the northern side of the village experience filtered views through roadside vegetation to the road. The majority of these receptors are considered to be of high sensitivity.
- 10.3.26 To the north and east of Auldearn traditional stone farm steadings and individual properties are set within the undulating landform of the Auldearn Forested Rolling Farmland LLCA and Auldearn Open Farmland LLCA. Views from some properties are limited by blocks of mature AWI woodland including remnant policy woods associated with Boath House.

*Scattered properties*

- 10.3.27 Between Culloden and Nairn, a number of traditional stone farm steadings and individual properties are located adjacent to the existing A96 and are generally set amongst the undulating open farmland of the Open Coastal Lowland LLCA and within the more enclosure Enclosed Forest Edge Farmland LLCA. In some locations surrounding vegetation or landform limit views, but some properties take advantage of scenic long distance views obtained across the landscape. Receptors in these locations have been individually considered. All receptors which are residential properties are considered to be of high sensitivity, while commercial and industrial developments vary between low to low/medium sensitivity. Petty Church is considered to be of low/medium sensitivity.
- 10.3.28 Crook Wood and Bognafuaran Wood limit views for some nearby properties which are located to the south east of Nairn, although a number of properties in this area still experience aspects of long distance views between the neighbouring woodland areas. Properties around Househill Mains have either filtered views through garden vegetation or open, long distance views to the forested hills to the south, due to their elevated position. All residential receptors in the area are considered to be of high sensitivity, while Grigorhill Industrial Estate is considered to be of low/medium sensitivity.
- 10.3.29 For most of the scattered properties located to the east of Nairn, the rolling landform limits views, although from some properties scenic long distance views are obtained across the landscape. In these locations the majority of the receptors are residential properties and considered to be of high sensitivity, apart from a commercial development at Boghead which is considered to be of low/medium sensitivity
- 10.3.30 To the east of Auldearn, a number of residential properties are located near the existing A96 and are set within the Auldearn Forested Rolling Farmland LLCA. Some of these properties are aligned towards the north-west to take advantage of views across the Moray Firth. Dwellings and farm steadings further south west, located along the boundary of the Hardmuir Forest Edge Farmland and the Forested Backdrop LLCA, also experience attractive panoramic views over the landscape and towards the Moray Firth and Black Isle, due to their elevated position. Scattered dwellings and farm buildings within the Auldearn Open Farmland experience attractive, long range views over the undulating agricultural fields towards the forested backdrop. All of the properties within the area are considered to be of high sensitivity.

Outdoor Receptors

*Roads*

- 10.3.31 The existing A96 runs from the Raigmore Interchange with the A9 to the east of Inverness. The route follows the southern coastline of the Moray Firth, east to Nairn and beyond to Forres. The route passes through a generally flat coastal plain with a mixture of arable and pasture fields interspersed with blocks of coniferous woodland.
- 10.3.32 The only other A road in the study area is the A939 Tomintoul - Grantown on Spey - Nairn Road which joins the existing A96 to the east of Nairn and travels south to cross the northern foothills of the Cairngorms.
- 10.3.33 B roads in the study area include:
- B9039 Newton - Castle Stuart – Ardersier Road, which runs from the A96 north of Balloch to Ardersier;
  - B9006 Millburn Roundabout - Culcabock - Castle Hill - Culloden Moor - Croy - Gollanfield - Fort George Road, a former military road which runs from Croy to Fort George;
  - B9091 Croy - Clephanton - Kildrummie - Nairn Road, which runs from Croy to Nairn;
  - B9092 Ardersier - Nairn Road, which runs from Ardersier to the existing A96 to the west of Nairn;
  - B9090 Loch Flemington – Clephanton – Cawdor – Nairn Road, an old military road which loops south from Loch Flemington and then north to Nairn;

- B9101 Auldearn - Cawdor Road, a short road south of Nairn which runs from the B9090 Loch Flemington – Clephanton – Cawdor – Nairn Road near Geddes House to a junction with the A939 A939 Tomintoul - Granttown on Spey - Nairn Road; and
- B9111 Auchnacloch – Auldearn Road, a short section of road linking the existing A96, which runs through the centre of Auldearn.

10.3.34 In addition, minor roads also have the potential to be affected by the proposed Scheme. These include:

- Barn Church Road (C1032);
- Stratton Lodge Road (U1058);
- Dalcross Station Road (C1020);
- Kerrowgair – Croy Road (C1017);
- Milton Road (U1136);
- Gollanfield Road (C1013);
- Tomhommie - Ballinreich - Balnagowan Road (U1029);
- McDermotts Road (U2218);
- Delnies – Kildrummie – Howford Road (C1163);
- Moss-side – Mosshall - Broadley Road (C1170);
- Househill – Raitloan – Howford Road (C1175);
- Blackpark - Grigorhill - Newmill Road (U3010);
- Waterloo – Eastertown – Inshoch Road (U2997);
- Auldearn – Station – Drum Road (C1172);
- Penick Road (U3164); and
- Auldearn - Moyness Road (C1171).

10.3.35 Receptors travelling on the above roads are generally considered to be of medium sensitivity.

#### *Rail*

10.3.36 The Aberdeen to Inverness Railway Line runs through the study area from south-west to north-east, generally following the direction of the existing A96. Only one station falls within the study area (Nairn), which is located in the southern part of the town. The Aberdeen to Inverness Railway Line runs through a generally flat landscape, with sections in cutting and on embankment and associated trackside vegetation which consists of trees and scrub being generally more prevalent in the east of the study area. Rail users travelling on the rail line are considered to be of low to medium sensitivity.

#### *Air*

10.3.37 Inverness Airport lies approximately 10km to the east of Inverness. The airport is set in open flat land to the north of the existing A96, bordered to the north by several farmsteads and the Moray Firth coastline beyond. Inverness Airport passengers and workers are considered to be of low sensitivity.

#### *Core Paths*

10.3.38 Core paths are found throughout the study area. Notable routes which may experience effects include those close to the proposed Scheme near Smithton and Culloden and the River Nairn footpath. Users of the core paths are considered to range from medium to high sensitivity.

*National Cycle Routes*

- 10.3.39 National Cycle Network Route 1 (NCN1) is a long distance cycle route which links Scotland and England and two sections of NCN1 pass through the study area. The route travels through the centres of Smithton, Culloden and Balloch and also follows the eastern side of the River Nairn valley to Nairn where it heads east along the coastal road to Lochloy Wood. Visibility of the existing A96 from the route is limited to a small open section between Culloden and Balloch and where it crosses the existing A96 at the Nairn Bridge in Nairn. Cyclists travelling on the NCN1 are considered to be of medium sensitivity.

*Recreational*

- 10.3.40 Dooket Hill in Auldearn is the location of a Scheduled Monument motte and dovecot which is also a popular local viewpoint. From the top of the hill panoramic views across the Auldearn Open Farmland LLCA are obtained in all directions. Visitors to Dooket Hill are considered to be of high sensitivity.

## **10.4 Potential Effects: Construction**

- 10.4.1 Construction activities associated with road schemes generally cause temporary adverse visual effects typically resulting from:

- removal of woodland and scrub vegetation;
- vehicles moving machinery and materials to and from the site;
- machinery potentially including heavy excavators, earth moving plant, concrete batching plant, pile drivers, cranes etc;
- exposed bare earth over the extent of the proposed works;
- structures, earthworks, road surfacing and ancillary works during construction including watercourse realignment and excavation of Sustainable Drainage Systems e.g. Basin and Pond (hereafter referred to as SUDS);
- temporary site compound areas including site accommodation and parking;
- temporary soil storage heaps and construction materials stockpiles;
- lighting associated with night-time working and site accommodation;
- traffic congestion and queuing during work to tie proposed Scheme with the existing road;
- demolition operations; and
- temporary works associated with bridge construction operations.

- 10.4.2 The significance of effects depends on the scale and duration of the construction activities and their location in relation to sensitive receptors. In general the most significant impacts would therefore be likely to occur where major earthworks or structural works are being carried out. Visual intrusion from construction activities can affect views and also reduce the enjoyment of the landscape. The locations where these impacts are likely to occur are as follows (from west to east):

- Smithton Junction (construction of junction, underbridge, SUDS and associated earthworks);
- Milton of Culloden Non-Motorised User (NMU) Underpass (construction of underpass, SUDS and associated earthworks);
- Balloch Junction (construction of junction, underbridge, SUDS and associated earthworks);
- Areas of significant embankments between Morayston and Kerrowaird;
- A96 Kerrowaird Underbridge (construction of underbridge, SUDS and associated earthworks);
- C1020 Dalcross Station Road Overbridge (construction of overbridge and associated earthworks);
- Mid Coul Junction (construction of junction, overbridge, SUDS and associated earthworks);

- Brackley Junction (construction of junction, overbridge and associated earthworks);
- Gollanfield Road Overbridge (construction of overbridge and associated earthworks);
- A96 Gollanfield Rail Bridge (Demolition of existing A96 550 Gollanfield Rail Underbridge and construction of rail bridge and associated earthworks);
- Nairn West Junction (construction of junction, overbridge and associated earthworks);
- Moss-Side A96 Rail Bridge, Moss-Side C1163 Rail Bridge and Moss-Side NMU Underpass (construction of rail bridges, underpass, SUDS and associated earthworks);
- B9090 Overbridge (construction of overbridge, SUDS and associated earthworks);
- River Nairn Underbridge (construction of underbridge and associated earthworks);
- C1175 Underbridge (construction of underbridge and associated earthworks);
- A939 Overbridge (construction of overbridge and associated earthworks);
- Nairn East Junction (construction of junction, underbridges, SUDS and associated earthworks);
- C1172 Underbridge (construction of underbridge and associated earthworks);
- Hardmuir Overbridge No 1 (construction of overbridge, SUDS and associated earthworks); and
- Hardmuir Overbridge No 2 (construction of overbridge and associated earthworks).

10.4.3 Temporary visual effects can also occur due to temporary construction compounds. As explained in Chapter 4 (The Proposed Scheme), detail on the phasing of the works, haulage routes, the location of construction compounds is not known at this stage, as these will be determined by the appointed contractor depending on phasing and execution of the works.

## **10.5 Potential Effects: Operation**

10.5.1 Potential visual effects arising from the elements of the proposed Scheme and the changes that may affect the visual amenity of receptors within the study area, from winter year of opening onwards, are identified as follows:

- alteration of views and visual distraction from the landmarks of the area due to the introduction of new elements, including road surface, noise barriers, SUDS, overbridges, underbridges, culverts, signage, Advance Directional Signs (ADS), VMS, CCTV masts, and the increased presence and movement of vehicles, into an essentially rural landscape;
- increased presence of artificial lighting during the hours of darkness on sections of the proposed Scheme with permanent street lighting (i.e. junctions), VMS, and lit signage, with additional impacts from vehicle headlights on unlit sections of the proposed Scheme across open countryside and from temporary lighting during maintenance works;
- changed appearance of landform due to new soft cuttings, embankments and noise bunds adjacent to the road and bridges; and
- alteration to vegetation patterns and field patterns by tree loss and stripping of groundcover vegetation and topsoil, followed by reinstatement and new planting.

10.5.2 Visual impacts taking mitigation into account are set out in Section 10.7 (Residual Impacts).

## **10.6 Mitigation**

### **General**

10.6.1 As mitigation of adverse landscape and visual effects are closely related and inter-dependent, mitigation of visual effects would be incorporated in the specific landscape mitigation measures (**Mitigation Item V1**) which have been developed in consultation with other disciplines as part of the iterative approach to the DMRB Stage 3 design of the proposed Scheme.

- 10.6.2 All proposed landscape mitigation measures are described in Section 9.6 (Mitigation) of Chapter 9 (Landscape), and are illustrated on Figure 9.5. As explained in paragraph 10.3.1 the relevant outcomes from the STPR and A96 Dualling SEAs have also been taken into account in the DMRB Stage 3 design and mitigation for the proposed Scheme.
- 10.6.3 Landscape mitigation is concerned primarily with mitigation of adverse impacts, and those assessed as being of Moderate or greater significance were considered to represent key landscape changes where mitigation would generally be required to avoid or reduce impacts, where practicable.
- 10.6.4 Landscape mitigation proposals that assist in reducing visual impacts are summarised below:
- retention and management of existing vegetation where possible and planting of new vegetation to screen views and reflect and reinforce existing landscape character, including individual trees, woodland areas, shelterbelts and hedgerows (e.g. scrub, riparian, coniferous, mixed), ;
  - earthworks, including provision of bunding to screen or restrict views of the road; and
  - sensitive grading and profiling of disturbed areas including embankments to improve integration with the surrounding landform and to allow the potential to return to agriculture.
- 10.6.5 The application of the above as specific mitigation measures for individual receptors is provided in Appendix A10.1 (Built Receptor Assessment Table) and A10.2 (Outdoor Receptor Assessment Table):
- 10.6.6 Cross-sections indicating the relationship between the proposed Scheme and various visual receptors, together with mitigation proposals, are shown on Figure 9.6.
- 10.6.7 Mitigation measures are taken into account for winter year of opening, when integrated landscape earthworks and other built screening elements, such as noise barriers and bunds, are in place, but before new planting has become established. The impacts of the proposed Scheme are also assessed for the summer 15 years after opening when mitigation planting would be established. The former is intended to represent the 'maximum effect' scenario and the latter the 'least effect' scenario for permanent impacts.

### **Lighting**

- 10.6.8 The introduction of artificial lighting from road lighting and other fixtures may create or contribute to light pollution in the form of sky glow, glare and/or light trespass/spill. It is therefore beneficial to minimise these potential adverse effects on landscape character and protect views of dark skies in rural areas.
- 10.6.9 Where lighting is essential, it has been incorporated as part of the DMRB Stage 3 design of the proposed Scheme such that the effect on the night sky is minimised; seeking to reduce or avoid excessive, unnecessary and obtrusive lighting by appropriate selection, location and arrangement of lighting elements to achieve the necessary safety standards of useful light, while minimising intrusiveness in the form of spillage, glare and reflection. **(Mitigation Item V2)**
- 10.6.10 Consideration has been given to light mitigation by installing passive lighting in the form of reflective road markings and signage wherever possible and using lighting controlled by motion sensors in NMU underpasses to reduce the level of lighting introduced into rural locations as a result to the proposed Scheme.

## **10.7 Residual Effects**

- 10.7.1 As noted in Section 10.2 (Methodology), visual effects reported in this chapter are considered adverse unless otherwise stated.
- 10.7.2 Receptors likely to be affected by the proposed Scheme are identified on Figures 10.3 and 10.4.

- 10.7.3 Visualisations prepared for the project are provided in Figure 9.7, alongside photographs showing the existing views. They are combination of wirelines and photomontages produced for illustrative purposes only; they have not been used to inform the visual assessment. They illustrate the proposed change to the landform in views of the proposed Scheme and provide indicative views of the proposed Scheme once mitigation planting and seeding has become established.

### **General**

- 10.7.4 The gently rolling topography and scattered mature woodland of the study area would limit visual impacts of the proposed Scheme for much of the route corridor. Impacts would be further limited in some locations as the proposed Scheme would be visible in close proximity to the existing A96, such that the insertion of the proposed Scheme would be likely to result in broadly similar views from some areas. The most significant impacts would occur to the south of Nairn and across the farmland to the north of Auldearn as a result of the introduction of the proposed Scheme into the largely undeveloped rolling farmland of these areas. The deep cuttings on some sections of the proposed Scheme would help to limit the visual impacts in some areas, although the proposed junctions and large scale earthworks would affect the visual amenity in the more rural areas. The dense forestry plantations of Tornagrain Wood, Delnies Wood, Crook Wood, Russell's Wood and Wester Hardmuir Wood would help to prevent views from the wider area. Some or all of the woodland may be felled by the relevant landowners in the future as part of ongoing forestry operations regardless of the proposed scheme, which would reduce the screening of views or potentially increase views. Extensive proposed new woodland planting to replace areas of lost woodland would assist in softening any potential future impacts resulting from opening up views from surrounding areas as a result of future felling operations.
- 10.7.5 Lighting on the proposed Scheme would be limited to the junctions, and impacts from lighting are anticipated to be restricted to receptors located within the proximity of the junctions. Impacts from lighting at the proposed Smithton Junction and at the proposed Mid Coul Junction would be likely to be less significant due to the presence of existing lighting on the road corridor, and at the existing roundabout at Mid Coul, but the introduction of lighting to otherwise unlit areas at the other junctions is likely to contribute significantly to the effect experienced in these areas. The alignment of the proposed Scheme to the south of Nairn and to the north of Auldearn would also lead to impacts from the presence of headlights from vehicles travelling at night being introduced to the previously unlit rural areas, but between Inverness and Blackcastle this impact would be likely to be limited due to the visibility of headlights on the existing A96.
- 10.7.6 When assessing magnitude and sensitivity, the impact of road lighting and headlights have been taken into account so that the level of impact determined for each of the receptors affected encompasses all elements of the proposed Scheme.
- 10.7.7 The visual effect assessment for built receptors and outdoor receptors is presented together with details of proposed mitigation measures in Appendix A10.1 (Built Receptor Assessment Table) and Appendix A10.2 (Outdoor Receptor Assessment Table). This information is summarised in Table 10.6 to show the total number of receptors affected to different degrees in the winter year of opening and residual effects by summer 15 years after opening.
- 10.7.8 The results of the visual effect assessment are summarised below and illustrated on Figure 10.3 for built receptors and Figure 10.4 for outdoor receptors. The summaries include reference to landscape types/areas shown on Figure 9.1, where they are appropriate to the context of the visual effect assessment.

### **Built Receptors**

#### General

- 10.7.9 The following section provides a summary of the detailed visual effect assessment presented in Appendix A10.1 (Built Receptor Assessment Table) for built receptors and highlights those locations which are likely to experience significant impact post mitigation.

*Eastern Inverness (approx. ch900 to ch3000) (Figure 10.3a)*

- 10.7.10 Effects for receptors to the east of Inverness range from Substantial to Negligible/Slight, depending on their location and the screening provided by existing landscape elements.
- 10.7.11 Adverse effects would be greater on receptors which are located in close proximity to the proposed Scheme with clear or partially obscured views, with the revised lighting at the proposed Smithton Junction and along the dual carriageway, and the adjacent SUDS and noise mitigation fencing likely to cause changes to the existing views from the groups of dwellings either side of the existing A96, although most of the properties are already adversely affected by views of the existing A96. Properties at Milton of Culloden (receptor 25) and adjacent cottages (receptor 24), which are situated to the south of the proposed Scheme, would experience Substantial and Moderate effects respectively during the winter year of opening due to the proximity of the proposed Scheme, the introduction of SUDS and the westbound adjacent 2.8m high noise barrier. In the summer 15 years after opening the establishment of the mitigation woodland and hedges would reduce effects to Moderate/Substantial and Slight/Moderate respectively.
- 10.7.12 For Firth View Cottage, Roseacre, and The Brambles (receptor 3), the dual carriageway on embankment, and the introduction of the proposed Smithton Junction, road lighting, CCTV and signage would result in Substantial effects during the winter year of opening. By the summer after 15 years, the establishment of the proposed mitigation planting and the screening by the existing trees around the properties would help to reduce residual effects to Moderate. Similarly, the properties situated immediately adjacent to the existing A96 and the Aberdeen to Inverness Railway Line near Milton (receptor 29) would experience Moderate/Substantial effects during the winter year of opening due to the elevation of the dual carriageway on embankment and the introduction of the NMU underpass (Milton of Culloden NMU Underpass). The effect would be reduced to Moderate by the establishment of the mitigation planting by the summer 15 years after opening.
- 10.7.13 A number of the other scattered residential properties to the east of the Inverness Retail and Business Park (receptors 1, 2, 26, 27) would be likely to experience minor effects ranging from Slight to Negligible/Slight as their views of the proposed Scheme including traffic, road lighting and signage, are likely to be very similar in nature to their current views of the existing A96, with views partially screened by existing mature trees in the foreground. Residual effects for these receptors would reduce to Negligible/Slight or Negligible by the summer after 15 years due to the screening by existing trees and established mitigation planting. The dwellings and farm buildings at Stratton Farm (receptor 4), at Ashton Farm (receptor 5) and would be likely to experience marginally higher effects due to views of the proposed Smithton Junction with associated noise barrier, signage, ADS and CCTV, although effects would be limited to Slight/Moderate during the winter year of opening due to the mature woodland around receptor 4 and the screening provided by existing shelterbelt for receptor 5, which would reduce to Slight by the summer after 15 years. Similarly, effects for Du Allan, Glenericht and Isle View (receptor 23) and for Friars Croft and No2 (receptor 28) would be Slight/Moderate during the winter year of opening due to the screening by the existing woodland around properties, reducing to Slight by the summer after 15 years, once the mitigation planting becomes established along the dual carriageway. Oakdene Cottage (Receptor 30) would experience Moderate/Substantial effects during the winter year of opening due to the loss of adjacent woodland, the direct views to the proposed Scheme on embankment and the westbound adjacent 2.8m high noise barrier. Residual effects for receptor 30 would reduce to Moderate in summer after 15 years.

*Smithton and Westhill (approx. ch1000 to ch2300) (Figure 10.3a)*

- 10.7.14 Within Smithton, views of the proposed Scheme would be largely restricted to locations on the northern fringe of the village, with additional views from a few properties on higher ground in Westhill on Woodside Village (receptors 15 and 16), Woodlands Drive (receptor 14), and Woodlands Crescent and Woodlands Walk (receptor 13). Receptors 13 and 14 would experience Moderate effects during the winter year of opening, which would reduce to Negligible/Slight by the summer after 15 years due to the establishment of the mitigation planting and the screening by the scrub vegetation along the Highland Main Line in the foreground. Effects for receptor 16 would be Slight/Moderate during the winter year of opening as views would be more limited by buildings in

the foreground, reducing to Negligible/Slight by the summer after 15 years. Effects on receptor 15 would be limited to Negligible/Slight during the winter year of opening due to the lower sensitivity of the commercial receptor and the partial screening by the intervening buildings, with residual effects in summer after 15 years reducing to Negligible.

- 10.7.15 At the northern edge of the settlement, properties on Caulfield Road North (receptors 6, 9 and 10), Resaurie Gardens (receptors 7 and 8), Cranmore Drive and Sinclair Park (receptor 11) have relatively open views to the north towards the Moray Firth, although the mature trees around the receptor 10 properties partially obscure views. The properties on Smithton Road, Sinclair Terrace and the northern end of Sinclair Park (receptor 12) experience similar views, although their existing views are more notably affected by the presence of Barn Church Road (C1032) in the foreground. The large scale earthworks at the proposed Smithton Junction location would elevate the main dual carriageway and would increase visibility of traffic within views, with additional impacts from the revised lighting at the junction, which during the winter year of opening would result in significant effects of Moderate/Substantial for receptors 6 and 9, and Moderate for receptors 8, 10 and 11. By the summer after 15 years, the establishment of the proposed mitigation planting would reduce residual effects to Slight/Moderate or Slight. Effects on properties in receptor 12 would be limited to Slight due to the partial screening by the rolling topography and mature trees in the foreground, with impacts reducing to Negligible by the summer 15 years after opening. For receptor 7, effects would be limited to Slight during the winter year of opening due to the acute angle of the views, reducing to Negligible by the summer after 15 years due to screening by the established mitigation and trees in the foreground.

*Culloden (approx. ch1800 to ch3900) (Figure 10.3a)*

- 10.7.16 The introduction of the proposed Scheme into the generally flat, open farmland around Culloden would result in elements of the proposed Scheme becoming more prominent in views for properties on the north-western edge of the settlement, which would have a greater influence on visual amenity than the existing A96. Effects for residents on Birch Place, Larch Place and Fir Place (receptor 19), Blackthorn Road and the western end of Hazel Avenue (receptor 20), and Hazel Avenue (receptors 21 and 22) would range from Substantial to Moderate during the winter year of opening, with receptors 20 and 21 likely to experience the most significant effects (Moderate/Substantial and Substantial respectively); the proximity of the proposed Scheme would represent a more notable change to their views. Residual effects in summer 15 years after opening for all of the receptors would be likely to reduce, ranging from Moderate/Substantial to Slight, with properties along the eastern part of Hazel Avenue experiencing the greatest reduction due to the screening provided by an existing shelterbelt in the foreground. Properties at Moray Park Wynd (receptor 38) are located on higher ground and would have long range views to the proposed Scheme, although their views are already dominated by urban areas and their long distance from the dual carriageway would limit effects to Slight. Residual effects would be reduced to Slight/Negligible in summer after 15 years, once the mitigation planting becomes established.

- 10.7.17 For residents along the southern part of Stratton Lodge Road (U1058) (receptors 17 and 18) the alignment of many of the houses and the screening provided by the intervening landform and existing woodland in the foreground would limit effects to Slight during the winter year of opening. These would reduce to Negligible/Slight and Negligible respectively by the summer after 15 years as a result of the establishment of the mitigation planting and the screening provided by the existing trees.

*Balloch (approx. ch3900 to ch5200) (Figure 10.3b)*

- 10.7.18 To the north-east of Culloden the proposed Scheme would run through the generally open farmland between the existing A96 and the settlement of Balloch. As the primary views of many of the properties are aligned towards the north-west to take advantage of views across the Moray Firth, the proposed Scheme, including the roundabouts, underbridge, lighting and signage of the proposed Balloch Junction would have a significant adverse effect on views. However, effects would be generally limited to properties at the edge of the settlement as the rooftops of the adjacent buildings would limit views for the rest of the area.

- 10.7.19 The most significant effects would be experienced by Upper Cullernie Cottages (receptor 43), Upper Cullernie Farm and adjacent dwellings (receptor 45) and dwellings at Balmachree (receptor 46), which would all have Substantial effects during the winter year of opening due to the direct views of the proposed Balloch Junction and the associated signage, CCTV and lighting. While the mitigation planting would help to partially screen the junction, residual effects would be likely to remain significant (Moderate/Substantial) for all three receptors. Other receptors on Cullernie Road, Upper Cullernie Place and Wellside Gardens (receptor 41) and Upper Cullernie Court (receptor 44) would gain views of the junction, although the more acute angle of the views and the partial screening by the intervening buildings would limit effects during the winter year of opening to Moderate/Substantial and Moderate respectively, which would reduce to Moderate and Slight/Moderate by the summer after 15 years. Views for properties at Braeside Park and along Meadow Rd (receptor 42) would be very limited to the proposed Scheme by intervening dwellings, by rolling topography and by existing woodland, resulting in Negligible/Slight effects during the winter year of opening, reducing to Negligible in summer after 15 years.
- 10.7.20 Impacts for Balloch Primary School and Village Hall (receptor 39) and Cherry Park (receptors 37 and 40) would be caused by the increased visibility of the proposed Scheme, although the proposed Balloch Junction would be unlikely to be visible. During the winter year of opening effects would range from Moderate to Slight/Moderate, with partial screening by the intervening topography and foreground vegetation. By the summer after 15 years effects would be unlikely to change for receptors 39 and 40, but the foreground vegetation would be likely to reduce effects for residential properties at the western end of Cherry Park (receptor 37) to Slight/Moderate.
- Allanfearn, Blackhill, Redhill, Lower Cullernie (approx. ch3000 to ch5000) (Figure 10.3a-10.3b)*
- 10.7.21 To the north of Culloden the proposed Scheme would cross the open farmland in close proximity to Allanfearn Farmhouse and adjacent cottages (receptor 33) and Allanfearn Cottage (receptor 31), severing agricultural fields and resulting in loss of existing hedgerows and mature woodland shelterbelts. These receptors would receive Substantial and Moderate/Substantial effects respectively during the winter year of opening due to their generally open views to the proposed Scheme, although the 2m high noise bund with scrub woodland planting would help to partially screen views of traffic. The establishment of the mitigation planting would help to reduce residual effects in summer after 15 years to Moderate for receptor 31 and Moderate/Substantial for receptor 33.
- 10.7.22 To the north of the existing A96, more open, long range views to the proposed Scheme including the proposed Balloch Junction would be gained by Lower Cullernie Farmhouse (receptor 35) and 1 Lower Cullernie Farm (receptor 36). Both receptors would experience Substantial effects during the winter year of opening, which would reduce to Moderate/Substantial by the summer after 15 years once woodland mitigation becomes established.
- 10.7.23 The proposed Scheme would also be likely to be visible from the dwellings at the Rail Crossing, Blackhill and Redhill (receptors 32, 34 and 47 respectively), although effects would be unlikely to be significant due to the intervening rolling topography which would largely limit views.
- Newton of Petty, Morayston and Moray Hill (approx. ch5400 to ch7500) (Figure 10.4b)*
- 10.7.24 While the proposed Scheme would be further away than the existing A96 from the Newton of Petty Farmhouse (receptor 48), its elevated position and the introduction of SUDS and more distant views to the proposed Balloch Junction with associated signage, ADS and CCTV, would result in Moderate/Substantial effects during both the winter year of opening and the summer after 15 years.
- 10.7.25 Between Newton of Petty and Morayston the proposed Scheme would be on high embankment across the rolling farmland on the rising hillside to the south of the existing A96. The proposed Scheme would be prominent in views for the cottages beside Morayston (receptors 60 and 61), resulting in Substantial effects during the winter year of opening, which would reduce to Moderate/Substantial by the summer after 15 years due to the establishment of the mitigation planting. Chestnut Cottage (receptor 57) would also experience open views of the proposed Scheme, which would result in Moderate/Substantial effects in the winter year of opening which would be unlikely to reduce over time.

- 10.7.26 Views from Keepers Cottage (receptor 58), which is situated adjacent to the existing A96 near Morayston, are partially screened by a high garden wall and garden vegetation. The proposed Scheme would be further away from the property but to a more elevated position, which would result in a Moderate effect during the winter year of opening, which would reduce to Slight/Moderate following the establishment of the mitigation planting. Other receptors in the area (receptors 55, 56 and 59) are significantly screened by existing mature garden vegetation. During the winter year of opening effects for these receptors would range from Slight/Moderate to Slight, with Slight residual effects for all three receptors by the summer after 15 years.

*Castle Stuart and Surrounding Properties (approx. ch6400 to ch8000) (Figure 10.3b)*

- 10.7.27 Effects for receptors in the vicinity of Castle Stuart would range from Moderate to Slight/Negligible during the winter year of opening. The Norbord Factory, which is located to the east of the area, is a detracting element in views from several of the properties, with the existing A96 largely screened by the existing woodland and rolling topography in the foreground.
- 10.7.28 While the proposed Scheme would be further away from the receptors than the existing A96, its elevated position between Newton of Petty and Morayston and the generally open views to the dual carriageway, which would run across the rolling farmland, would result in Moderate effects during the winter year of opening for Castle Stuart (receptor 52) and Castle Cottage (receptor 51). The establishment of the mitigation planting would help to reduce the effects for both receptors to Slight/Moderate. Due to the more remote location of Old Petty and The Barn Brae (receptor 50) and the additional screening by surrounding tree, effects would be Slight/Moderate during the winter year of opening, with residual effects reducing to Slight in summer after 15 years.
- 10.7.29 Partial screening by the rolling topography and the existing woodlands around Morayston and the Norbord Factory would limit effects for Scottack Farmhouse (receptor 53) and Burnside Cottage (receptor 54) to Slight and Negligible/Slight respectively during winter year of opening. These would be reduced to Negligible/Slight and Negligible by the summer after 15 years due to the establishment of the mitigation planting. The proposed Scheme would be largely screened by the intervening landform from Lonnie (receptor 49), which would result in a Slight effect during the winter year of opening, which would be reduced to Negligible over time.

*Morayhill, Norbord Factory, Wester and Easter Dalziel and Kerrowaird (approx. ch7800 to ch8955) (Figure 10.3c)*

- 10.7.30 For dwellings at Kerrowaird (receptor 64) and Kerrowaird Cottages (receptors 65 and 66) the proposed Scheme on high embankment, the introduction of the underbridge (PS03 A96 Kerrowaird Underbridge), and SUDS would result in Moderate/Substantial (receptors 64 and 66) and Moderate (receptor 65) effects during the winter year of opening, which would reduce to Moderate and Slight/Moderate respectively, due to the establishment of the mitigation planting and the screening provided by an existing coniferous woodland to the north of the receptors.
- 10.7.31 Effects on dwellings in Wester Dalziel (receptor 70), Easter Dalziel Farm (receptor 71) and for Dalcross Station House and the Station Cottages (receptor 69) would be limited to Slight/Moderate and Slight during winter year of opening due to the screening provided by the intervening topography and existing woodland, which would reduce to Slight for receptors 70 and 71 and to Negligible for receptor 69 by the summer after 15 years.
- 10.7.32 Views of the proposed Scheme from Morayhill Farmhouse (receptor 62) adjacent to the Norbord Factory would largely be restricted by the rising landform to the south and the established vegetation in the foreground, resulting in Slight/Moderate effects during the winter year of opening, which would be reduced to Negligible/Slight in summer after 15 years. The adjacent Norbord Factory (receptor 63) would receive a Slight effect during the winter year of opening, which would become Negligible over time as the receptor is largely surrounded by established scrub woodland which would help to screen the majority of views.

*Tornagrain and Petty Church (approx. ch9150 to ch9400) (Figure 10.3c)*

- 10.7.33 As the proposed Scheme would be further away than the existing A96 from the residential properties in the settlement of Tornagrain (receptor 67), many of the properties would benefit from the reduction of traffic on the existing A96; although impacts as a result of the severance of fields, the loss of mature woodland plantation and the loss of hedgerows and hedgerow trees and the proposed VMS would result in Negligible/Slight effects during the winter year of opening. By the summer 15 years after opening the establishment of the mitigation planting along the dual carriageway would help to largely screen the proposed Scheme, resulting in Slight Beneficial effects for the dwellings.
- 10.7.34 While the proposed Scheme would result in a reduction in traffic on the adjacent existing A96 and the view is not a primary consideration for users, the loss of woodland due to the construction of the PS04 C1020 Dalcross Station Road Overbridge and embankment, and the views to the dual carriageway to the north would cause Slight/Moderate effects for Petty Church (receptor 68). This would become Slight by summer after 15 years once the mitigation planting has established along the dual carriageway.

*Inverness Airport (approx. ch10500 to ch12100) (Figure 10.3c)*

- 10.7.35 Effects on residential properties at Wester Connage Cottages (receptor 72) would be limited to Slight due to their long distance from the proposed Scheme, the screening by existing woodland in the foreground, and their close proximity to Inverness Airport, which already adversely affects the visual amenity of the houses. By the summer after 15 years of opening, the establishment of the mitigation planting around the proposed Mid Coul Junction would reduce residual effects to Negligible.
- 10.7.36 While the proposed Scheme would be notable in views to the south-east from Inverness Airport (receptor 73), effects during the winter year of opening would be limited to Slight due to the lower sensitivity of the receptor, becoming Negligible/Slight over time as the mitigation planting becomes established. Due to their closer proximity to the proposed Scheme, effects for the Bristows SAR and Bond Air Services at Inverness Airport (receptor 74) would be Slight/Moderate during the winter year of opening, reducing to Slight, once the mitigation planting at Mid Coul Junction becomes established.

*Mid Coul and Culblair (approx. ch10600 to ch11300) (Figure 10.3c)*

- 10.7.37 To the north-east of Tornagrain Wood, the introduction of the proposed Mid Coul Junction and overbridge with associated lighting and signage would be likely to cause changes to the existing views from properties around Culblair and Mid Coul, although existing views from most of the properties are already adversely effected by the existing A96 and Inverness Airport during both day and night. Effects for receptors in the area are predicted to range from Substantial to Negligible/Slight.
- 10.7.38 Effects for properties on the south-western part of Culblair Farm Cottages (receptor 78) would be Substantial during the winter year of opening due to their close proximity to the proposed Scheme and their generally open views to the proposed dual carriageway, which would be prominent in views towards the Black Isle. The establishment of woodland mitigation planting along the proposed dual carriageway would help to reduce residual effects to Moderate by the summer after 15 years. Despite the close proximity of Culblair Farmhouse (receptor 79) to the proposed Scheme, the screening provided by the existing mature trees and farm buildings in the foreground would help to limit the initial effects on the properties to Moderate during the winter year of opening. This would be reduced to Slight/Moderate by the establishment of the mitigation planting by the summer 15 years after opening.
- 10.7.39 Impacts on the farmhouse at Mid Coul (receptor 75) which is located on higher ground and aligned towards the north-west to take advantages of views of the Black Isle would receive Moderate effects during the winter year of opening, with partial screening by existing garden vegetation and adjacent farm buildings. These would reduce to Slight/Moderate by the summer after 15 years, following the establishment of the mitigation planting. Mid Coul cottages (receptor 77), situated on

the northern side of the existing A96 immediately adjacent to the road, would be also affected by Moderate initial effects which would reduce to Slight/Moderate by the summer after 15 years.

- 10.7.40 Mid Coul Cottage (receptor 76), which is located immediately adjacent to the southern side of the existing A96, would gain very limited views to the proposed Scheme due to the screening by existing garden vegetation, resulting in Negligible/Slight effects during the winter year of opening. The proposed Scheme would be further away from the receptor and would result in a reduction in traffic on the existing A96, resulting in Slight Beneficial effects once mitigation planting matures around the proposed Mid Coul junction.

*Brackley (approx. ch12200 to ch14100) (Figure 10.3d)*

- 10.7.41 To the east of Culblair, the proposed Scheme would cross generally flat agricultural fields on low embankment and would largely follow the alignment of the existing A96 on the approach to the proposed Brackley Junction.
- 10.7.42 The direct views to the proposed dual carriageway, the adjacent SUDS, and the more distant views to the proposed Brackley Junction, overbridge and associated lighting and signage, would result in Substantial and Moderate/Substantial effects respectively during the winter year of opening for Milton of Braichlaich Bungalow and The Cottar House (receptor 84) and Polfalden (receptor 85). While the mitigation planting, hedgerow and scrub woodland mitigation planting along the dual carriageway and mixed woodland around SUDS, would help to provide partial screening, residual effects would be likely to reduce but remain significant for both receptor 84 (Moderate/Substantial) and receptor 85 (Moderate) by the summer after 15 years. Views for the farmhouse at Milton of Braichlaich Farm (receptor 83) would be largely screened by the existing vegetation and farm sheds in the foreground, but the views to the south-west would be affected by Moderate effects in the winter year of opening as a result of the introduction of the proposed Scheme, which would be likely to reduce to Slight/Moderate by the summer after 15 years.
- 10.7.43 The proposed Brackley Junction and overbridge would cause a major deterioration in views for Ozzy's Restaurant and The Cottage (receptor 89) and for Brackley Farmhouse and Brackley Farm Cottage (receptor 90), which would result in Substantial effects for both receptors during the winter year of opening. While the establishment of the mitigation planting would help to partially screen elements of the junction, effects would be unlikely to reduce over time due to their close proximity to the proposed Scheme.
- 10.7.44 Despite its proximity to the proposed Brackley Junction effects on Laurel Cottage (receptor 91) would be limited to Moderate during the winter year of opening due to the partial screening by the rolling landform and the existing woodland in the foreground, which would reduce to Slight/Moderate once the woodland mitigation becomes established at the junction.
- 10.7.45 Rolling topography would limit views of the proposed Scheme from several dwellings located to the north and north-west of the proposed Brackley Junction (receptors 86, 87 and 88). Effects for Balspardon Farmhouse and Balspardon Cottage (receptor 88) would be limited to Slight/Moderate during the winter year of opening, which would reduce to Slight by the summer after 15 years due to the establishment of the mitigation planting at the junction. Receptors 86 (Ballagan House and adjacent dwellings) and 87 (Old Station houses) would only gain views of the proposed access roads. The Slight/Moderate effects for receptor 87 would remain unchanged over time, but the Negligible/Slight effects for receptor 86 would reduce to Negligible over time due to the screening by the new hedgerow to the east and garden vegetation.
- 10.7.46 Due to the existing screening provided by the existing woodland in the foreground, effects on Drumine Farmhouse (receptor 81) and Drumine Cottages (receptor 82) would be limited to Negligible during the winter year of opening. The combined effect of mitigation planting providing screening of limited views of the proposed Scheme and the assumed reduction of traffic movement on the existing A96 would result in Slight Beneficial effects by the summer after 15 years.
- 10.7.47 While the proposed Scheme would move the majority of traffic further away from Drumine Bungalow (receptor 80), it would remain visible within views north towards the Black Isle, although the partial screening by the existing woodland in the foreground would limit effects to Slight during

the winter year of opening. By the summer after 15 years the establishment of the hedge along the proposed Scheme would help to reduce effects to Negligible/Slight.

*Lochside, Gollanfield, Brackadale and Easter Glackton (approx. ch14600 to ch17100) (Figure 10.3e)*

- 10.7.48 To the east of Brackley the proposed Scheme would run through an area of coniferous woodland and move into cutting on the approach to a proposed overbridge (PS21:Gollanfield Road Overbridge) before crossing the Aberdeen to Inverness Railway Line (PS07:Gollanfield Rail Bridge) on low embankment. For the majority of receptors in the area changes to views would generally be minor, as the houses are already adversely affected by the existing A96 and the Aberdeen to Inverness Railway Line, and as the proposed Scheme would be situated in close proximity to the existing A96, views would be broadly similar in nature. The introduction of the overbridge and the dual carriageway along with the loss of established scrub along the existing road corridor would result in effects ranging from Moderate to Slight in the area.
- 10.7.49 Dwellings at the edge of Lochside (receptors 92 and 94), located to the south of the proposed overbridge would experience Moderate and Slight/Moderate effects respectively during winter year of opening, becoming Slight/Moderate and Slight once mitigation planting becomes established along the dual carriageway and around the overbridge. Effects for The Rowan (receptor 93) on the northern edge of the small hamlet of Lochside are predicted to be Slight/Moderate in the winter year of opening, which would reduce to Slight over time.
- 10.7.50 While several scattered properties, situated on the higher ground in the area to the north and south of the proposed Scheme (receptors 96, 97, and 102), would gain generally open views of the proposed Scheme including SUDS within the rolling farmland, effects during the winter year of opening would be limited to Moderate as the proposed Scheme would appear broadly similar to the existing A96. The establishment of the mitigation planting would help to reduce effects to Slight/Moderate and Slight by the summer 15 years after opening. The proposed Scheme on embankment, the introduction of the PS07 A96 Gollanfield Rail Bridge and the 1.6m high noise barrier would be prominent in views and would distract long distance views towards the Moray Firth for Easter Glackton, Rowanhill, Brackadale, Cala-Na-Sithe, New House (receptor 101), resulting in Moderate/Substantial effects during the winter year of opening. Residual effects would reduce to Slight/Moderate by the summer after 15 years.
- 10.7.51 For other receptors in the area (receptors 95, 98, 99, 100), the rolling topography would limit views, resulting in effects which would range from Slight/Moderate to Slight during winter year of opening. The proposed mitigation planting would reduce residual effects for receptors 98 and 99 (Negligible/Slight and Slight respectively), but effects would remain unchanged for receptors 95 and 100 (Slight and Slight/Moderate respectively) in summer after 15 years.

*Cockhill and Blackcastle (approx. ch17400 to ch17500) (Figure 10.3e)*

- 10.7.52 As the land rises to the south of the existing A96, the proposed Scheme would be situated in a deep cutting around Cockhill and on the approach to Blackcastle Quarry.
- 10.7.53 The proposed Scheme would be screened from the group of dwellings at Cockhill (receptor 105) by landform and by the existing coniferous woodland located to the north, although the properties may be aware of the proposed lighting at the Nairn West Junction at night. The proposed Cockhill Access Road would have a minor effect on the houses which would result in Slight effects during the winter year of opening, which would reduce to Negligible/Slight, once hedge mitigation matures along the access road.
- 10.7.54 Effects for Blackcastle Cottage (receptor 104) would be limited due to the screening by the landform to the south and the existing woodland to the east of the property. While the proposed Scheme would result in the reduction of traffic on the existing A96, the receptor would still experience filtered views through the existing woodland to the Nairn West Junction, resulting in Slight/Moderate effects during the winter year of opening. By the summer after 15 years the additional screening from the established mitigation planting would help to reduce impacts to Slight. Effects for Blackcastle Farm (receptor 103), which is located immediately adjacent to the existing

A96, would be Moderate during the winter year of opening due to the introduction of SUDS in cutting, causing the alteration of the existing landform as a result of the partial removal of the roadside scrub vegetation and embankment. By the summer after 15 years effects would reduce to Slight due to the screening by the established mitigation riparian woodland around SUDS. The intervening, rising landform would also provide screening for the property.

*Drumdivan, Mosshall, Moss-side, Balnaspirach and Meikle Kildrummie* (approx. ch18600 to ch21300) (Figure 10.3f)

- 10.7.55 At present, receptors in small settlement of Moss-side and the surrounding area typically experience relatively open views across open farmland and woodlands towards the distant hills to the south, with the Aberdeen to Inverness Railway Line the main detracting element within views. For these receptors, the introduction of the proposed Scheme including SUDS, the two rail bridges (Moss-Side C1163 Rail Bridge and the Moss-Side C1163 Rail Bridge), as well as the realignment of local roads, would represent a significant new feature appearing across the visible landscape. As a result, the majority of receptors on the high ground in and around Moss-side would receive significant effects.
- 10.7.56 Between Drumdivan and Meikle Kildrummie the proposed Scheme would be situated on a large embankment, with a proposed bridge over the railway (Moss-side A96 Rail Bridge) and for local access (Moss-Side C1163 Rail Bridge). The introduction of the proposed Scheme and changes to the landform in close proximity to Drumdivan (receptor 107) and the group of dwellings around Mardon House and Moss Hall (receptor 108) would result in Moderate/Substantial and Substantial effects respectively during the winter year of opening. By the summer after 15 years, the establishment of a belt of mixed woodland beside the proposed Scheme would help to provide screening and reduce the residual impacts to Moderate and Moderate/Substantial. While a new dwelling to the south of the proposed Scheme near Mardon House (receptor 106) would be situated in very close proximity, the screening provided by the existing vegetation across a small rise in the topography beside the house would help to limit effects during the winter year of opening to Moderate. The proposed 1.5m high noise barrier would also assist screening of the traffic movement. Residual effects would reduce to Slight by the summer after 15 years as a result of the additional screening by the summer foliage of the intervening vegetation.
- 10.7.57 In the Newlands of Delnies area, Elim House (receptor 109) would experience Substantial effects during the winter year of opening, which would reduce to Moderate by the summer after 15 years due to the screening by the established mitigation woodland. Effects on the adjacent dwellings of Newlands of Delnies Cottage (receptor 110), Newlands of Delnies Farmhouse and "Tigh Ceilidh" (receptor 111) and Delnies Croft House (receptor 112) would be Moderate during the winter year of opening, due to their greater distance from the proposed Scheme and partial screening by the rolling topography, existing woodland in the foreground and the embankments of the realigned local road. By the summer after 15 years, the establishment of the mitigation planting would help to reduce residual effects for these three receptors to Slight/Moderate. Initial effects on Caskieben (receptor 113) would be limited to Slight due to the existing woodland and garden trees around the property, which would reduce to Negligible/Slight by the summer after 15 years due to the additional screening provided by the mitigation planting along the road corridor.
- 10.7.58 In the Moss-side area, receptor 114 on the western side of the settlement and receptor 115 on the southern edge would experience Substantial and Moderate effects respectively during the winter year of opening due to the introduction of the proposed Scheme across their panoramic views across the rolling farmland. By the summer after 15 years, the establishment of the mixed woodland planting beside the road corridor would help to reduce residual effects to Moderate and Slight/Moderate respectively. Effects on properties on the northern side of the settlement (receptor 116) would be limited to Slight during the winter year of opening as the majority of views would be obstructed by the adjacent houses and garden vegetation, with residual effects reducing to Negligible due to the additional screening provided by the foreground trees and the established mitigation planting.
- 10.7.59 The introduction of the proposed Scheme in close proximity to the properties at Balnaspirach would result in significant effects on the properties (receptors 117 and 118). Both receptor groups would experience Substantial effects during the winter year of opening, which would reduce to Moderate

by the summer after 15 years as a result of the establishment of the mitigation planting beside the proposed Scheme.

- 10.7.60 To the south of the proposed Scheme, the properties at Meikle Kildrummie (receptor 119) would receive Moderate/Substantial effects impacts during the winter year of opening due to their views of the proposed Scheme as it crosses the adjacent open agricultural fields. By the summer after 15 years, the establishment of the proposed woodland mitigation and the mature trees around the properties would help to reduce effects to Moderate.

*South of Nairn/River Nairn area (approx. ch22100 to ch22400) (Figure 10.3f)*

- 10.7.61 Views from properties on the southern fringe of Nairn would be largely screened by the rolling topography and mature trees around the edge of the settlement, with effects limited to a few properties at the edge of the town as the proposed Scheme crosses the open, gently sloping fields on approach to the crossing of the River Nairn (PS14: River Nairn Underbridge).
- 10.7.62 Properties around Broadley House (receptors 122 and 123), dwellings at the eastern end of Cawdor Road (receptor 120) and Howford Farm (receptor 121) would experience significant effects on their visual amenity due to the introduction of the proposed Scheme close to these dwellings, including the crossing of the River Nairn (PS14: River Nairn Underbridge) and the introduction of an overbridge (PS13: B9090 Overbridge) for the B9090 Loch Flemington – Clephanton – Cawdor – Nairn Road. Effects for these properties would range from Moderate/Substantial to Moderate in the winter year of opening, with the establishment of the mitigation planting and additional screening by existing trees in the foreground reducing residual effects to Moderate (receptor 122), Slight/Moderate (receptor 121) and Slight (receptors 120 and 123) in summer after 15 years.

*Scattered properties on the south-eastern edge of Nairn (approx. ch22800 to ch24600) (Figure 10.3g)*

- 10.7.63 To the east of the River Nairn, the proposed Scheme would run through Crook Wood on embankment and then move into cutting to cross the rolling farmland at Skene Park, continuing through Bognafuaran Wood at Blackpark.
- 10.7.64 The introduction of the proposed Scheme to the rural landscape to the south of Nairn would have a significant effect on the views from properties at Skene Park Farm (receptor 132), Woodlea and Skene Park Cottages (receptor 126) and Blackpark farm (receptor 131), which would all be likely to incur Substantial effects during the winter year of opening due to their close proximity and open views to the proposed Scheme as it severs fields and cuts through nearby woodland. The establishment of the mitigation planting would help to reduce residual effects for all three receptors to Moderate/Substantial by the summer 15 years after opening. In addition to the mitigation planting, the proposed 2.2m high noise bund would also help to partially screen views of traffic for receptor 132.
- 10.7.65 Dwelling at Crook Farm (receptor 125) would receive Moderate/Substantial effects during the winter year of opening due to the loss of woodland around the property, which would be reduced to Slight/Moderate once the replanted woodland mitigation establishes. Effects on Crook Cottage (receptor 124) would be limited to Negligible/Slight during the winter year of opening, reducing to Negligible by the summer after 15 years, due to the screening provided by the existing mature woodland around the property which would screen views of the dual carriageway, with the realignment of the adjacent local road likely to be the only element visible.
- 10.7.66 Despite their distance from the proposed Scheme, property and the farm and coffee shop at Househill Mains (receptors 129 and 127) would experience Moderate effects during the winter year of opening due to their elevated position and their open long distance views to proposed Scheme, which would cross the rolling farmland, severing agricultural fields, with partial screening by the cutting. In the summer 15 years after opening the establishment of the mitigation planting would reduce effects for both receptors to Slight/Moderate. Effects on Househill Mains Farmhouse (receptor 128) would be limited to Slight/Moderate due to the screening provided by the mature garden trees around the property, with residual effects reducing to Slight by the summer after 15 years.

- 10.7.67 For other receptors in the area (receptors 130, 133, 134, 135 and 136) the screening provided by existing woodland and the rolling topography of the area would limit effects on visual amenity to Slight during the winter year of opening, with residual effects ranging from Negligible/Slight to Negligible due to the additional screening by established mitigation planting, the 2.2m high noise bund and garden vegetation.

*Nairn (north of proposed Scheme) (Figure 10.3g)*

- 10.7.68 The bypassing of Nairn would result in a reduction in the volume of traffic travelling through the town. While this would be likely to have a minor benefit for views of properties situated adjacent to the existing A96, the visual amenity of the properties would remain adversely affected by the movement of traffic through the urban area. Individual properties have not been identified as part of the assessment due to distance and screening of the proposed Scheme by intervening topography, woodland and adjacent buildings.

*Scattered Properties to the East of Nairn (approx. ch25700 to ch27500) (Figure 10.3g)*

- 10.7.69 After passing Blackpark, the proposed Scheme would run through Russell's Wood in cutting, before crossing the rolling farmland between Nairn and Auldearn on embankment, with significant earthworks required for the proposed Nairn East Junction which would be a notable change to views for a number of the outlying dwellings of Nairn.
- 10.7.70 At the south-eastern corner of Bognafuaran Wood, the properties of Grigorhill (receptor 138) and Brawview (receptor 137) would have views of the proposed Scheme as it cuts through Russell's Wood, with long range views of the Nairn East Junction, which would cause Moderate effects respectively during the winter year of opening. By the summer after 15 years the establishment of the mitigation woodland to reinstate the edge of Russell's Wood would reduce effects to Slight for both receptors..
- 10.7.71 Due to the close proximity of the Waterloo cottages (receptor 149), Drumduan Mill (receptor 150) and Millhill (receptor 151) to the proposed Scheme, the introduction of the proposed dual carriageway, Nairn East Junction and underbridge with associated lighting and signage would result in Substantial effects at winter year of opening for all three receptors. By the summer 15 years after opening the established mitigation planting around the junction would help to reduce effects to Moderate/Substantial for these three receptors. Auchnacloch Farm (receptor 148) and Drumduan Farm (receptor 152) would experience similar views, although effects during the winter year of opening would be marginally lower at Moderate/Substantial due to their greater distance from the proposed Scheme.
- 10.7.72 Properties at the eastern edge of Nairn on Lawrie Drive (receptor 147) would have Moderate effects during winter year of opening from the proposed Scheme due to distant, but generally open views to the proposed Nairn East Junction. These effects would reduce to Slight/Moderate in summer after 15 years, due to the establishment of the mitigation planting and the screening of an existing shelterbelt in the foreground.
- 10.7.73 To the east of Nairn the properties of Drumduan Cottages, Railway House, Egilsay House, Railbank and Kildonan (receptor 153) would receive Moderate/Substantial effects during the winter year of opening due to the introduction of the proposed Scheme to their views across the rolling farmland to the south. By the summer after 15 years the establishment of the mitigation woodland would reduce effects to Moderate. Effects for the adjacent Amhuinnsuidhe and property at Bogheads (receptor 154) would be limited to Slight/Moderate during the winter year of opening due to partial screening by trees in the foreground, with effects reducing to Slight over time. The commercial development at Bogheads (receptor 155) would also experience Slight/Moderate initial effects, with the rolling topography and some trees in the foreground helping to partially screen views. The establishment of the mitigation planting would help to reduce effects to Slight by the summer after 15 years.

*Auldearn (approx. ch24700 to ch28700) (Figure 10.3g-10.3h)*

- 10.7.74 Within Auldearn, views of the proposed Scheme would be largely restricted by landform, intervening planting and buildings. The outlying property at Kinnudie Farm and Orchard House (receptor 139) and Kinnudie Cottage (receptor 140) to the west of the village would experience the most significant adverse effects due to their closer proximity than the other properties within Auldearn. From these locations, visibility of the proposed scheme and changes in the available views would be more apparent, particularly in regard to the formation of proposed Nairn East Junction, which would increase visibility of traffic and introduce large scale earthworks, bridges, lighting and signage to views, and the partial loss of woodland within Russell's Wood. This would result in Moderate/Substantial effects for receptor 139 and Moderate effects for receptor 140 during the winter year of opening. By the summer after 15 years these effects would reduce to Moderate and Slight/Moderate respectively due to the establishment of the mitigation planting.
- 10.7.75 At the western edge of the village, Sunnyside on Garlichill (receptor 141), Garlichill Court (receptor 142) and Battle Hill (receptor 143) would have limited views of the proposed Scheme due to the screening from the intervening rolling topography. Receptors 141 and 143 would experience Slight/Moderate effects during the winter year of opening, while receptor 142 would experience Negligible/Slight effects. By the summer after 15 years the establishment of the mitigation planting around the proposed Nairn East Junction would reduce effects for all three receptors, with residual effects ranging from Slight to Negligible.
- 10.7.76 The proposed Scheme would not be visible from the majority of the eastern side of the village, as it is located to the north of Auldearn and would be largely screened by the intervening topography. A number of receptor groups would experience a change in their views as a result of the reduction of traffic using the existing A96, particularly heavy goods vehicles, which would reduce the adverse effect on their visual amenity. Glebe House (receptor 144), properties along Moyness Road (receptor 146), Broombank (receptor 162), Broombank Cottage (receptor 163), Meadowfield (receptor 164) and Cairnfield, Roundall Wood (receptor 165) would experience Slight Beneficial effects in the winter year of opening, which would remain in the summer after 15 years. A section of the proposed Scheme would be visible from properties on Forres Road (receptor 145) as it crosses the farmland north of Boath Steading. This would have Negligible effect in the winter year of opening, which would reduce to Slight Beneficial as mitigation planting matures to provide screening, with the properties also benefitting from a reduction of traffic on the existing A96 in the foreground.

*Bogside, Penick and Muirend (approx. ch26600 to ch29000) (Figure 10.3g-10.4h)*

- 10.7.77 The proposed Scheme to the north of Auldearn would introduce a new major road corridor to the views from a number of the scattered properties in an area where the existing A96 is largely screened from view, which would result in significant effects for several properties.
- 10.7.78 The dwellings of East Lodge Cottage and Mill of Boath (receptor 159) and Wendy House (receptor 158) at the edge of the Boath House estate would be likely to incur Substantial and Moderate/Substantial effects respectively during the winter year of opening due to the close proximity to the proposed Scheme and the introduction of SUDS beside the properties; although the provision of the approximate 2.2m high earth bund would help to provide partial screening of vehicle movement. While the establishment of the mitigation planting around SUDS would help to provide some screening for these receptors and reinforce the screening provided by existing mature trees adjacent to the properties, residual effects would be Moderate/Substantial for receptor 159 and Moderate for receptor 158 in summer after 15 years, as the introduction of the proposed Scheme would significantly alter the character of their views.
- 10.7.79 Effects for the nearby receptors of Boath House Hotel (receptor 161) and Boath Steading (receptor 160) would be limited to Moderate and Slight/Moderate respectively during the winter year of opening due to the partial screening by the mature woodland around the Boath House estate, with residual effects for both receptors reducing to Slight by the summer after 15 years as a result of the additional screening by the established mitigation planting and the summer foliage of the mature trees around the properties.

- 10.7.80 The dwelling at Bogside of Boath (receptor 157) would also have Substantial effects during the winter year of opening due to the introduction of the proposed dual carriageway and the underbridge (C1172 Underbridge) in close proximity to the property. Following the establishment of the mitigation woodland, proximity would reduce to Moderate by the summer after 15 years.
- 10.7.81 As the proposed Scheme continues to the east it would move into cutting, which would help to enhance the screening provided by the undulating landform for the dwellings at Bogside of Brodie (receptor 156). Effects would be still significant due to the changes to the landform and the open views to the realigned local roads and the proposed underbridge (C1172 Underbridge), resulting in Moderate/Substantial effects in the winter year of opening, which would be reduced to Moderate by the summer after 15 years due to the screening by established mitigation planting around the underbridge.

*Scattered Properties to the East of Auldearn (approx. ch28400 to ch29700) (Figure 10.3h)*

- 10.7.82 The proposed Scheme would have the most significant impacts in this area on the residential properties at Courage Steading and Innesfree (receptor 170), where receptors would experience Substantial effects on their visual amenity during the winter year of opening. The residential properties at Courage are situated on higher ground above the existing A96 and have long range views over the undulating open landscape towards the Black Isle. The introduction of the proposed Scheme including the dual carriageway, the overbridge (Hardmuir Overbridge No 1) for the existing A96 realignment and the realignment of the access road to the properties, would cause a significant change to the landform in the foreground and the character of their views. While the proposed woodland mitigation would help to partially screen the proposed Scheme, the effects on the receptor would not reduce over time, remaining Substantial in the summer after 15 years.
- 10.7.83 To the north of Gallows Hill the proposed Scheme would be visible from Penick Farm and Farmhouse, Inshoch Farmhouse (receptor 174), and the increased visibility of the dual carriageway and the changes to the landform for the overbridge (Hardmuir Overbridge No 1) would have Moderate/Substantial effects on the views from the properties. By the summer after 15 years, the establishment of the mitigation planting along the road corridor would help to screen the road and reduce effects to Moderate. Kinnaird, Oak Side (receptors 175) and Muirend Croft (receptor 176) would also gain views of the overbridge, which would cause Moderate and Slight/Moderate effects respectively during the winter year of opening. The establishment of the mitigation planting would help to reduce residual effects for the properties to Slight/Moderate and Negligible/Slight in summer after 15 years.
- 10.7.84 Gallows View and Old Telephone Exchange (receptor 167), which are located immediately adjacent to the existing A96 near Gallows Hill, would also experience Moderate/Substantial effects in the winter year of opening due to the close proximity to the proposed Scheme, including SUDS and overbridge (PS19: Hardmuir Overbridge No 1). Once the mitigation planting around SUDS and the overbridge becomes established the effects for this receptor would reduce to Slight/Moderate.
- 10.7.85 Effects for Courage Cottage, Little Penick (receptor 168) on the southern side of the existing A96 would be limited to Moderate during the winter year of opening as the embankment for the existing A96 would partially screen the proposed Scheme, and the proposed Scheme would move the visible traffic further away from the properties. By the summer after 15 years, the establishment of the mitigation planting would help to reduce residual effects to Slight.
- 10.7.86 For Sylvan House and Roundhall Wood (receptor 166) to the south of the existing A96, the proposed Scheme, including SUDS and overbridge (Hardmuir Overbridge No 1) would be visible through the mature trees around the properties and in the foreground, with effects during the winter year of opening limited to Slight/Moderate. By the summer after 15 years the establishment of the mitigation planting and the summer foliage of the existing trees would reduce effects to Negligible/Slight. Effects on Garblies Farm (receptor 169) would also be limited to Slight/Moderate during the winter year of opening, as the adjacent farm buildings and existing woodland in the foreground would help to screen the majority of their views. The establishment of the mitigation planting would help to reduce the residual effects to Slight in summer after 15 years.

- 10.7.87 To the south of Wester Hardmuir Wood, several scattered properties on the higher ground to the south (receptors 171, 172 and 173) have attractive panoramic views over the landscape and towards the Moray Firth and Black Isle. The proposed Scheme, including the introduction of the overbridge (Hardmuir Overbridge No 1) would increase the prominence of the road within their views, although it would be visible below their sightline to the Moray Firth. Effects would be limited to Moderate for receptor 171 and Negligible/Slight for receptors 172 and 173 during the winter year of opening, reducing to Slight/Moderate and Negligible in summer after 15 years.

*Wester Hardmuir (approx. ch30400 to ch31100) (Figure 10.3h)*

- 10.7.88 After the proposed Scheme crosses the existing A96 near Courage, it would move into cutting as it crosses the northern edge of Wester Hardmuir Wood. The loss of woodland due to the construction of the proposed dual carriageway and the introduction of the overbridge (Hardmuir Overbridge No 2) would cause Slight effects for the houses and farm shop at Wester Hardmuir (receptor 177), with the majority of the proposed Scheme screened from view by the deep cutting which would help to limit effects. By the summer after 15 years the establishment of the mitigation woodland planting would help to provide additional screening, which would help to reduce residual effects to Negligible/Slight, as the receptor would benefit from the majority of traffic being removed from their view.
- 10.7.89 At the eastern end of the proposed Scheme Heathfield (receptor 178) and Toll Brae (receptor 179) would gain views of the proposed Scheme as it ties back in to the alignment of the existing A96. However, the change to views would be likely to be limited, with the majority of effects caused by the loss of woodland due to the creation of the access road to Wester Hardmuir. During the winter year of opening both receptors would experience Slight effects, which would reduce to Negligible by the summer after 15 years once woodland and hedge mitigation becomes established.

### **Outdoor Receptors**

#### General

- 10.7.90 The following descriptions summarise the results of the visual effects assessment and highlight the predicted residual effects on outdoor receptors. For detailed information on the effects, mitigation and residual significance for all assessed receptors refer to Appendix A10.2 (Visual Receptors – Outdoor).

*Inverness (start of proposed Scheme at ch1500) (Figure 10.4a)*

- 10.7.91 The proposed Scheme would be visible from two core paths in the semi-urban eastern periphery of Inverness. From core paths IN08.10 (receptor O1) and a short section of IN08.30 (receptor O2) the proposed Scheme would be visible as it largely follows the line of the existing A96 and would appear to be broadly similar to the existing road corridor. Receptor O1 would experience Slight/Moderate effects during the winter year of opening as a result of the proposed 2m high noise barrier, embankments, underbridge, lighting and signage and CCTV of the proposed Smithton Junction, becoming Slight in summer after 15 years following the establishment of the mitigation planting. Views from receptor O2 would be largely screened by the established woodland along the path and the intervening topography, although the elevation of the dual carriageway through the proposed Smithton Junction would potentially result in the lighting at the junction becoming more notable. However, the very limited visibility of the proposed Scheme would limit effects to Negligible during both the winter year of opening and the summer after 15 years.

*Culloden (approx. ch1500 to ch4000) (Figure 10.4a – 10.4b)*

- 10.7.92 The proposed Scheme would be visible from several roads and core paths surrounding the village of Culloden and the adjacent settlements of Smithton and Milton of Culloden.
- 10.7.93 Northbound travellers on the western section of Barn Church Road (C1032) (receptor O5) would experience views to the proposed Smithton Junction. The elevation of the dual carriageway on high embankments, the 2m high noise barrier, new roundabouts and underbridge and the revised

lighting, CCTV, ADS and signage would result in Moderate effects during the winter year of opening, which would reduce to Slight/Moderate by the summer after 15 years.

- 10.7.94 Distant views to the proposed Scheme would be available across the remnant estate farmland which surrounds the settlement from Stratton Lodge Road (U1058) (receptor O6), although views would be partially screened by the rolling topography and existing vegetation in the foreground. Local residents using the road would experience Negligible/Slight effects during the winter year of opening, which would reduce to Negligible in summer after 15 years.
- 10.7.95 Core path IN08.03 (receptor O7) follows the widened access route at Stratton Lodge Road (U1058), with views of the existing A96 partially screened by the mature trees bordering the road. While the core path would be upgraded as part of the revised access, the trees would be retained and the proposed Scheme would be likely to look broadly similar to the existing A96, which would result in Slight effects during the winter year of opening. These would reduce to Negligible/Slight by the summer after 15 years due to screening by the trees in the foreground and the establishment of the mitigation planting.
- 10.7.96 Views from core path IN08.05 (receptor O8) would be more significantly affected by the proposed Scheme, with the northern section of the path realigned through an underpass (Milton of Culloden NMU Underpass). The dual carriageway on embankment, the 2.8m high noise barrier and the introduction of SUDS would result in Moderate effects during the winter year of opening, which would reduce to Slight/Moderate in summer after 15 years as mitigation woodland becomes established.
- 10.7.97 After passing the properties at Burnside the proposed Scheme would run offline across the more open fields. As a result core paths IN08.21 (receptor O9), IN08.15 (receptor O10) and IN08.16 (receptor O12) would be severed by the proposed Scheme. Users of the paths would experience significant changes to their views due to their close proximity to the proposed Scheme, which would cause Substantial effects for all three receptors during the winter year of opening. This would reduce to Moderate/Substantial for O9, due to the screening provided by the mature mitigation planting along the NMU Shared Use Path and on the eastbound adjacent 2m high noise bund. Similarly, impacts would reduce to Moderate/Substantial for O10 and O12 by the summer after 15 years once the mitigation planting has established. Due to the distance of Culloden Academy Sport Grounds (receptor O11) from the proposed Scheme and the screening of the existing shelterbelts, effects for would be limited to Negligible/Slight during the winter year of opening, which would reduce to Negligible by the summer after 15 years.

*Balloch (approx. ch4000 to ch5700) (Figure 10.4b)*

- 10.7.98 From the village of Balloch, travellers on the eastern section of Barn Church Road (C1032) (receptor O13) would experience views northwards across the low lying farmland to the proposed Scheme including the proposed Balloch Junction. The proposed Scheme including the proposed Balloch Junction would also be visible for users of core path IN 08.32 (receptor O14). During the winter year of opening both receptors would experience Moderate/Substantial effects as a result of the elevation of the dual carriageway on embankment and underbridge (PS20: Balloch Junction Underbridge) and the introduction of the roundabouts, lighting, CCTV and signage for the junction. This would reduce to Moderate by the summer 15 years after opening as the mitigation planting around the junction becomes established.

*Newton of Petty to Tornagrain (approx. ch5700 to ch9700) (Figure 10.4b – 10.4c)*

- 10.7.99 The proposed Scheme would be visible to southbound travellers on sections of the B9039 Newton - Castle Stuart - Ardersier Road (receptors O15A and O15B), with the rolling topography and embankments for the Aberdeen to Inverness Railway Line obstructing views to the south of the Scottack Farmhouse. From receptor O14A at the southern end of the road, the proposed Scheme including SUDS would be visible on the rising slopes to the south of the existing A96, which would result in Slight/Moderate effects during the winter year of opening, with the establishment of the mitigation planting reducing residual effects to Slight by the summer after 15 years. Effects on the other section of the road (receptor O15B) would be limited to Slight during the winter year of

opening due to the distance of the receptor from the proposed Scheme, with effects reducing to Negligible/Slight by the summer after 15 years.

- 10.7.100 The southern end of Dalcross Station Road (C1020) (receptor O16A) would be realigned across a bridge (C1020 Dalcross Station Road Overbridge) to take the local road over the proposed Scheme, with the associated loss of vegetation in Tornagrain Wood causing Moderate effects during the winter year of opening. By the summer after 15 years the establishment of the mitigation woodland around the overbridge would help to largely screen the proposed Scheme and reduce effects to Slight. Effects on the northern section of Dalcross Station Road (C1020) (receptor O16B) after it crosses the Aberdeen to Inverness Railway Line would be more limited due to the screening provided by the established trees in Tornagrain Wood, with effects during the winter year of opening limited to Slight. This would reduce to Negligible in summer after 15 years as a result of the screening provided by the summer foliage of the woodland and the establishment of the mitigation planting.

*Inverness Airport (approx. ch9700 to ch12200) (Figure 10.4c)*

- 10.7.101 Travellers on the Kerrowgair – Croy Road (C1017) (receptor O17) would obtain views to the proposed Scheme as they travel southwards away from Inverness Airport, with the proposed Mid Coul Junction prominent in views. The junction, and particularly the overbridge (PS05: Mid Coul Junction Overbridge), lighting, CCTV, ADS and signage would cause Slight/Moderate effects for travellers during the winter year of opening, which would reduce to Slight by the summer after 15 years as mitigation planting becomes established.

*Gollanfield, Brackley, Lochside and Easter Glackton (approx. ch12200 to ch16500) (Figure 10.4d – 10.4e)*

- 10.7.102 For travellers on the Milton of Breachlich Road (U1025) (receptor O18), the B9006 Croy – Gollanfield – Fort George Road to the north of the proposed Scheme (receptor O19) and Gollanfield Road (C1013) and Wester Glackton – Balcroy – Kilrevock – Cawdor Road (U1017) (receptor O21), the existing A96 represents a notable feature in views across the open landscape. The proposed Scheme would run adjacent to the existing A96 through this area and would appear to be broadly similar to the existing road corridor in views from the receptors, which would all experience Slight/Moderate effects during the winter year of opening, which would reduce to Slight in summer after 15 years with the establishment of the mitigation planting.
- 10.7.103 For northbound travellers on the B9006 Croy – Gollanfield – Fort George Road to the south of the proposed Scheme (receptor O20), the proposed Scheme would be partially screened from view by the rolling topography and established woodland in the area, with the proposed Brackley Junction becoming prominent in views north towards the Black Isle. The introduction of the revised slip roads, overbridge, lighting and ADS associated with the junction, along with the realignment of the receptor across the overbridge, would have a Moderate effects on views during the winter year of opening. This would reduce to Slight/Moderate by the summer after 15 years as the proposed mixed woodland and scrub planting around the junction becomes established.

*Cockhill and Nairn West Junction (approx. ch16500 to ch18400) (Figure 10.4e)*

- 10.7.104 The proposed Nairn West Junction would be visible from McDermotts Road (U2218) (receptor O24) as it passes the Delnies Community Woodland, with the roundabout, lighting and signage on the northbound side visible through the existing woodland beside the existing A96. The effects would be Moderate on the receptor during the winter year of opening, which would reduce to Slight by the summer after 15 years due to the additional screening provided by the established mitigation planting.
- 10.7.105 Travellers on the B9092 Ardersier - Nairn Road (receptors O22A, O22B and O22C) would experience intermittent distant views to the proposed Scheme as it runs parallel with the existing A96 before turning south to bypass Nairn, with views from much of the road screened by existing woodland and the intervening topography. Between Carse Wood and McDermotts Road (U2218), B9092 (receptor O22B) travellers on the road would gain views of the dual carriageway as it moves offline in cutting and approaches the proposed Nairn West Junction, with the changes to the

landform, loss of established woodland and the lighting at the junction causing a Slight/Moderate effects to views during the winter year of opening. These would reduce to Slight by the summer after 15 years when the mitigation planting has established. Effects on the western section of the road (receptor O22A) would be limited to Negligible/Slight during the winter year of opening as the proposed Scheme would appear broadly similar to the existing A96 and at a long distance from the receptor, with the establishment of the mitigation planting along the proposed Scheme reducing effects to Negligible over time. For receptor O22C at the eastern end of the road, travellers would experience Slight Beneficial effects starting from the winter year of opening due to the reduction in the volume of traffic that would be visible on the existing A96 as a result of the proposed Scheme, with all elements of the proposed Scheme screened from view by the established mature woodland and topography in the foreground.

- 10.7.106 The existing A96 is a notable feature in views from the Tomhommie - Ballinreich - Balnagowan Road (U1029) (receptor O23) as it crosses the rolling farmland to the north of the existing A96. The proposed Scheme would be visible in close proximity to the existing A96, although the elevation of sections of the proposed dual carriageway on embankment and the railway bridge (A96 Gollanfield Rail Bridge) would increase the prominence of the road and cause a Slight/Moderate effects during the winter year of opening. This would reduce to Slight by the summer 15 years after opening once the mitigation planting has established.
- 10.7.107 At Delnies Community Woodland a short section of core path NA04.15 (receptor O25) would gain views of the proposed Nairn West Junction to the south. Views for users of the path would be largely screened by the established woodland around the path and along the existing A96, with no views available from the majority of the path through the woodland. During the winter year of opening, users would experience adverse effects as a result of the proposed roundabout, lighting and signage at the junction, although effects would be limited to Slight due to the benefits of the reduction in traffic on the existing A96 as a result of the new alignment of the proposed Scheme. By the summer after 15 years the establishment of the mitigation planting and the additional screening by the maturing woodland in the foreground would reduce residual effects to Negligible.

*Moss-side (approx. ch18400 to ch21600) (Figure 10.4e – 10.4f)*

- 10.7.108 The introduction of the proposed Scheme to the relatively undeveloped rural landscape of the Moss-side area would have a significant effect on the visual amenity of the local roads through the area.
- 10.7.109 Travellers on the Delnies – Kildrummie – Howford Road (C1163) (receptor O26) and B9091 Croy - Clephanton - Kildrummie - Nairn Road (receptor O29) would be most significantly affected due to the severance and realignment of the roads, which would cause Moderate/Substantial effects for both receptors during the winter year of opening. By the summer 15 years after opening the establishment of the mitigation measures along the proposed Scheme would help to reduce residual effects to Moderate.
- 10.7.110 Views from Moss-side – Mosshall-Broadley Road (C1170) (receptor O27) would also be significantly affected by the introduction of the proposed Scheme into open views, although effects would be limited to Moderate as views are intermittent due to screening from adjacent intervening residential properties. The establishment of the mitigation woodland beside the proposed Scheme by the summer after 15 years would help to provide significant screening for the road which would reduce effects to Slight.
- 10.7.111 Views to the proposed Scheme for users of core paths NA04.11 and NA04.13 (receptor O28) and core path NA04.20 (receptor O30) would be largely screened by the intervening woodland and residential properties, with glimpsed views through the trees that would experience Slight effects during the winter year of opening that would reduce to Negligible/Slight for O30 and Negligible for O28 after 15 years following the establishment of the mitigation planting.

*River Nairn (approx. ch21600 to ch22700) (Figure 10.4f)*

- 10.7.112 The B9090 Loch Flemington – Clephanton – Cawdor – Nairn Road (receptors O31 and O32) run to the west of the River Nairn valley through open undulating farmland, and would cross the proposed

Scheme, which lies in cutting, via an overbridge (B9090 Overbridge). During the winter year of opening the introduction of the proposed Scheme with the crossing of the River Nairn (River Nairn Underbridge) would have a Moderate effects on both receptors, which would reduce to Slight/Moderate by the summer after 15 years as a result of the establishment of the mitigation planting.

- 10.7.113 Core path NA04.03 (receptor O33) is a scenic riverside path along the River Nairn which passes through riparian woodland, connecting with the centre of Nairn. The introduction of the crossing of the River Nairn (River Nairn Underbridge) would result in the removal of mature riverside trees and the introduction of a large scale structure and road corridor development into a relatively undeveloped landscape, which would result in Substantial effects for users of the path during the winter year of opening. By the summer 15 years after opening the additional screening provided by the summer vegetation of the existing woodland and the established replacement trees near the bridge would help to reduce residual effects to Moderate/Substantial.

*Crook Wood, Bognafuaran Wood and Russell's Wood (approx. ch22700 to ch25400) (Figure 10.4g)*

- 10.7.114 Road users and cyclists on the NCN1 at the Househill – Raitloan – Howford Road (C1175) (receptor O34) would gain views of the proposed Scheme as it crosses the farmland to the east of the River Nairn and cuts into the woodland plantation at Crook, with the receptor being realigned through an underbridge (C1175 Underbridge) to cross the dual carriageway. During the winter year of opening users would experience Moderate/Substantial effects which would reduce to Moderate by the summer after 15 years as a result of the establishment of the proposed mitigation planting around the underbridge.
- 10.7.115 To the south-east of Nairn the A939 Tomintoul - Granttown on Spey - Nairn Road (receptor O35) and the Blackpark – Grigorhill – Newmill Road (U3010) (receptor O36) pass through the wooded farmland landscape, with the extents of their existing views generally limited by the established forestry in the area.
- 10.7.116 The proposed Scheme would be partially screened for receptor O35 by the rolling topography and intervening woodland, although the realignment of the road onto embankment and overbridge (A939 Overbridge) through Bognafuaran Wood would have a Moderate effects on views. The establishment of the mitigation woodland around the A939 Tomintoul - Granttown on Spey - Nairn Road would help to reduce effects to Slight by the summer after 15 years.
- 10.7.117 While the proposed Scheme would be visible from receptor O36, it would be partially screened by the proposed Scheme cutting and the established woodland in the foreground, and as the road would be severed by the proposed Scheme, and would only be used for access following the opening of the proposed Scheme, effects during the winter year of opening would be limited to Slight/Moderate. By the summer after 15 years the establishment of the mitigation planting around the realigned A939 Tomintoul - Granttown on Spey - Nairn Road and the hedge along the proposed dual carriageway would help to reduce residual effects to Slight.
- 10.7.118 Travellers on the western section of the B9101 Auldearn - Cawdor Road (receptor O39) would experience some visibility of the proposed Scheme as it cuts through Russell's Wood and heads towards the proposed Nairn East Junction, although effects would be limited to Slight/Moderate during the winter year of opening due to the angle of the views and the partial screening by trees in the foreground. By the summer after 15 years the establishment of the mitigation woodland along the proposed Scheme would help to reduce residual effects to Slight.

*Nairn East and Auldearn (approx. ch25400 to ch26300) (Figure 10.4g-h)*

- 10.7.119 The B9111 Auchnacloch – Auldearn Road and core path NA04.07 (receptor O38) traverse the open, undulating farmland between Auldearn and the existing A96 to the east of Nairn. The proposed Scheme, including the Nairn East Junction would introduce a significant new feature within the landscape for travellers on this route, which would be realigned to pass underneath the proposed Scheme (: B9111 Underbridge). The receptor would experience Substantial effects

during the winter year of opening, which would reduce to Moderate/Substantial by the summer after 15 years once the mitigation planting around the junction becomes established.

- 10.7.120 While the football pitch at the Dunbar Recreation Ground (receptor O40) would be situated near the proposed Nairn East Junction, views from the receptor would be largely screened by the surrounding rolling topography and a line of trees on the receptor boundary. The proposed Scheme would be visible as it emerges from Russell's Wood, which would cause Slight/Moderate effects during the winter year of opening, which would reduce to Slight by the summer after 15 years as the proposed mitigation planting around the junction becomes established.
- 10.7.121 Travellers on the eastern section of the B9101 Auldearn - Cawdor Road at the edge of Auldearn (receptor O41) would experience long range views of the proposed Scheme, with partial screening by intervening topography and woodland. The proposed Scheme would cause a Slight/Moderate effects during the winter year of opening, reducing to Slight by the summer after 15 years as the mitigation planting around the proposed Scheme becomes established.
- 10.7.122 Boath Doocot (receptor O42) is located at the summit of Docket Hill at the western end of Auldearn, and affords visitors panoramic views across the surrounding rolling farmland that was the site of the Battle of Auldearn. The viewpoint would gain views to the proposed Scheme including the Nairn East Junction, with the elevation of the dual carriageway on embankment and underbridge (Nairn East Junction Underbridge), the roundabouts, lighting, CCTV, ADS and signage increasing the prominence of the proposed Scheme within views and causing Moderate/Substantial effects during the winter year of opening. This would reduce to Moderate after 15 years as the proposed mitigation planting becomes established.
- 10.7.123 On the eastern side of Auldearn core path NA01.02 (receptor O48) runs through a small area of community woodland close to the existing A96. The proposed Scheme would be screened from view by the intervening topography and established woodland in the foreground, but the reduction in traffic volume on the existing road would have a Slight Beneficial effects during both the winter year of opening and the summer after 15 years.
- 10.7.124 A section of the proposed Scheme would be visible from Auldearn Primary School Playground (receptor O47) as it crosses the farmland north of Boath Steading. This would have Negligible effect in the winter year of opening, which would reduce to Slight Beneficial due to the screening provided by established mitigation planting along the cutting of the Auldearn – Station – Drum Road (C1172) and around the PS18: C1172 Underbridge, with users of the playground also benefitting from the reduction of traffic on the existing A96 in the foreground.
- 10.7.125 Distant views to the proposed Scheme would be obtained from two stretches of the Moyness Road. The western end of Moyness Road (receptor O49) would gain views to the east along the existing A96 to the proposed Scheme as the existing A96 is realigned over the proposed Scheme (Hardmuir Overbridge No 1) near Courage, while the eastern section of Moyness Road (receptor O50) would gain views of the proposed Scheme, overbridge and SUDS from the high ground to the south of Courage. Both receptors would experience Slight effects during the winter year of opening which would reduce to Negligible/Slight by the summer after 15 years as the planting around the proposed Scheme becomes established.

*Boath House to Hardmuir\_(approx. ch26300 to ch31100) (Figure 10.4g – 10.4h)*

- 10.7.126 The Waterloo – Eastertown – Inshoch Road (U2997) (receptor O43) runs from the existing A96 near the Waterloo Cottages to the Bogside of Boath, running around the edge of the Boath House estate. The existing A96 is largely screened from view by the rolling topography and existing woodland around Boath, and the proposed Scheme would introduce a major new infrastructure element to the area that would have significant effects on views, and would also sever the road. At the western end of the road the proposed Nairn East Junction would be prominent on embankment on the rolling farmland to the south of the receptor. The eastern end of the road would be situated in close proximity to the proposed Scheme, with the dual carriageway, underbridge (C1172 Underbridge) and SUDS likely to dominate views. As a result of the extensive change to views the road would experience Substantial effects during the winter year of opening, which would reduce to Moderate/Substantial by the summer after 15 years once the mitigation planting along the dual

carriageway and around the junction and SUDS has established. The proposed approximate 2.2m high landscape earthwork would also contribute to the screening for a short section adjacent to SUDS.

- 10.7.127 The proposed Scheme would be visible to the south of the Auldearn – Station – Drum Road (C1172) (receptor O44), and the southern end of the receptor would be realigned to pass through an underbridge (C1172 Underbridge). The introduction of the proposed Scheme to the existing views across the open rolling farmland would have a Moderate/Substantial effects during the winter year of opening. By the summer after 15 years the establishment of the mitigation planting would help to partially screen the proposed Scheme and reduce residual effects to Moderate.
- 10.7.128 While the rolling topography of the area would help to screen the proposed Scheme from sections of Penick Road (U3164), the western and eastern sections of the road (receptors O45A and O45B respectively) would gain views of elements of the proposed Scheme. Receptor O45A would be more significantly affected by the introduction of the proposed Scheme near the crest of the low rise to the north-east of Boath House, including a bridge (C1172 underbridge) for the road to be realigned, which would have a Substantial effects on views during the winter year of opening. The establishment of the mitigation planting along the dual carriageway and around the underbridge would help to reduce effects to Moderate by the summer after 15 years. At the eastern end of Penick Road (U3164) (receptor O45B), the dual carriageway of the proposed Scheme would be screened from views by the cutting and intervening topography, but the overbridge (Hardmuir Overbridge No 1) for the realignment of the existing A96, would be visible for eastbound travellers. The new structure and associated earthworks would have a Slight/Moderate effects on views during the winter year of opening, which would reduce to Slight by the summer after 15 years as a result of the screening provided by the establishment of the mitigation planting.

*Existing A96 Road Corridor (Figure 10.4a – 10.4h)*

- 10.7.129 As a result of the proposed Scheme, the existing A96 would be de-trunked and utilised as a local road for access to the scattered communities and properties along the route corridor.
- 10.7.130 Between Inverness and Blackcastle the proposed Scheme would be visible from much of the existing A96, but would be screened from view from short sections of the existing A96 by established woodland around the road corridor or the rising topography. Effects would range from Substantial to Slight during the winter year of opening for the sections of the existing A96 that would experience views (receptors O3A to O3H), with residual effects for all sections reducing by the summer after 15 years as a result of the establishment of the mitigation planting.
- 10.7.131 Receptors O3A and O3B would experience the most significant effects, as these sections of the existing A96 would be situated directly adjacent to the proposed Scheme, with the proposed junctions resulting in extensive changes to the landform and introducing large scale structures into their views, causing Moderate/Substantial and Substantial effects respectively. Receptor O3G would also experience significant effects during the winter year of opening due to its proximity to the proposed Scheme, which would also result in a minor realignment of the receptor, causing Moderate/Substantial effects. Residual effects on all three receptors would reduce over time due to the establishment of the mitigation planting. On receptor O3D to the west of Tornagrain, the alignment of the proposed Scheme would result in it crossing the existing A96 on an underbridge (Kerrowaird Underbridge), with large embankments on either side of the road. As part of the mitigation incorporated into the design of the proposed Scheme, the embankment slopes would be graded out where possible to help integrate the earthworks more naturally into the landform, which would help to limit visual effects on the receptor to Slight/Moderate during the winter year of opening. The establishment of the mitigation planting around the underbridge would help to reduce effects to Slight by the summer after 15 years.
- 10.7.132 To the east of Nairn, the proposed Scheme including the Nairn East Junction would be prominent in views between Sainsbury's and Boath House estate (receptor O37). The introduction of the dual carriageway on embankment and Nairn East Junction underbridge, as well as the introduction of new lighting, CCTV, ADS and signage to the rolling farmland would have a Moderate/Substantial effect on views during the winter year of opening, which would reduce to Moderate by the summer after 15 years as a result of the establishment of the mitigation planting.

- 10.7.133 As the existing A96 passes Auldearn (receptor O46A), a short section of the existing A96 would see the proposed Scheme crossing the rolling farmland to the north, with the cuttings, embankments and underbridge (PS18: C1172 Underbridge) visible near Bogside of Boath. This change to the farmland would have a Slight effect on views during the winter year of opening, which would reduce to Negligible/Slight over time following the establishment of the mitigation planting.
- 10.7.134 To the east of Auldearn, views for travellers would be affected by the proposed Scheme crossing the line of the existing A96, with additional effects from its realignment on embankment and overbridge (Hardmuir Overbridge No 1) near Courage, which would cause a notable change to the landform in the area. The proposed Scheme would then pass through Wester Hardmuir Wood in deep cutting, which would remove a large section of the woodland. As a result, between Auldearn and Hardmuir this section of the existing A96 (receptor O46B) would experience Moderate/Substantial effects during the winter year of opening, which would reduce to Moderate by the summer after 15 years as the mitigation planting becomes established.

*Aberdeen to Inverness Railway Line (Figure 10.4a – 10.4h)*

- 10.7.135 The proposed Scheme would be likely to be visible from sections of the Aberdeen to Inverness Railway Line between Inverness and the western side of Nairn, and for a short section to the east of Nairn, although this would often be limited by the cuttings and established vegetation along the railway, or by the intervening topography and woodland. Impacts would vary along the length of the proposed Scheme, with the only significant effects likely to affect views from the trains as they cross the open farmland to the south-west of Nairn (receptor O4D), where the introduction of the proposed Scheme into the long range views towards the distant hills would have a Moderate effects during the winter year of opening. Effects for the other sections of the railway line would be Slight (receptors O4A and O4B) and Slight/Moderate (receptor O4C) during the winter year of opening. By the summer after 15 years, the establishment of the mitigation planting along the proposed Scheme- would help to reduce impacts for all sections of the Aberdeen to Inverness Railway Line, with no significant residual effects for rail travellers.
- 10.7.136 Table 10.6 provides a summary of the effects for both built and outdoor receptors during the winter year of opening and the summer 15 years after opening. It should be noted that the total number of built receptors, as individual properties, is 675, and for the purposes of the assessment these were grouped into receptor groups (179 receptor groups). For outdoor receptors, 50 individual outdoor receptors were identified within the study area, however to accurately capture the magnitude of impact and significance of effect for longer/larger receptors, such as the existing A96, they were divided into multiple sections. Therefore the total number of outdoor receptor locations individually assessed was 67. In addition to the receptors, which are included in the table, a number of other properties within Nairn would potentially benefit from the proposed Scheme. These properties are located along the existing A96 and would have slight beneficial effects from the year of opening, due to the reduction of the traffic on the existing road.

**Table 10.6: Residual Effects (Adverse Unless Otherwise Stated)**

Receptor Type	Substantial		Moderate/ Substantial		Moderate		Slight/ Moderate		Slight		Negligible/ Slight		Negligible		Slight Beneficial	
	Winter Year of Opening	Summer 15 Years after Opening														
<b>No. of Built Receptors (as individual properties) and % of Total (675)</b>	89	7	75	62	201	81	74	162	154	99	47	103	15	115	20	46
	13.2%	1%	11.1%	9.2%	29.8%	12%	11 %	24%	22.8%	14.7%	7%	15.3%	2.2%	17%	3%	6.8%
<b>No. of Outdoor Receptor locations and % of Total (67</b>	8	0	11	7	11	12	17	7	13	20	3	10	2	8	2	3
	11.9%	0%	16.4%	10.4%	16.4%	17.9%	25.4%	10.4%	19.4%	29.9%	4.5%	14.9%	3%	11.9%	3.1%	4.5%

- 10.7.137 The proposed Scheme would follow a route across a varied landscape of predominantly undulating open farmland and woodland blocks resulting in a range of visual impacts for a total of approximately 675 built receptors (as individual properties) and 67 outdoor receptors.
- 10.7.138 Overall, 365 (54.1%) built receptors (individual properties) and 30 (44.8%) outdoor receptors would be affected by significant (Moderate or greater) adverse effects in the winter year of the proposed Scheme opening. By the summer, 15 years after the proposed Scheme opening, mitigation in the form of road cuttings, planting of mixed and deciduous woodland, feathered and standard trees, riparian and scrub woodland and hedgerows would reduce the total number of properties affected by significant adverse effects to 150 (22.2%), and for the outdoor receptors, the total would have reduced to 19 (28.4%).

## **10.8 References**

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