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## TECHNICAL APPENDIX 8.10: APPRAISAL OF THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL'S CRITERIA FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF ONSHORE WIND PROPOSALS

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## 1. Technical Appendix 8.10: Appraisal of The Highland Council's Criteria for the Consideration of Onshore Wind Proposals

### 1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 *The Highland Council Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance (OWESG)<sup>1</sup>* details The Highland Council (THC) policy and guidance on measures to be considered for the design and assessment of onshore wind farms. In relation to landscape and visual amenity it identifies ten criteria to be used by THC as a framework and focus for assessing proposals. This Technical Appendix provides analysis of the Proposed Development in relation to these criteria.

1.1.2 The ten criteria are outlined in **Table 1.1.1**:

**Table 1.1.1: OWESG Criteria for the Consideration of Onshore Wind Farm Proposals**

Criterion	Threshold <i>“Development should seek to achieve a threshold where:”</i>
<b>Criterion 1. “Relationship between Settlements / Key locations and wider landscape respected.”</b> <i>“The extent to which the proposal contributes to perception of settlements or key locations being encircled by wind energy development.”</i>	<i>“Turbines are not visually prominent in the majority of views within or from settlements / Key Locations or from the majority of its access routes.”</i>
<b>Criterion 2. “Key Gateway locations and routes are respected.”</b> <i>“The extent to which the proposal reduces or detracts from the transitional experience of key Gateway Locations and routes.”</i>	<i>“Wind Turbines or other infrastructure do not overwhelm or otherwise detract from landscape characteristics which contribute the distinctive transitional experience found at key gateway locations and routes.”</i>
<b>Criterion 3. “Valued natural and cultural landmarks are respected”</b> <i>“The extent to which the proposal affects the fabric and setting of valued natural and cultural landmarks.”</i>	<i>“The development does not, by its presence, diminish the prominence of the landmark or disrupt its relationship to its setting.”</i>
<b>Criterion 4. “The amenity of key recreational routes and ways is respected.”</b> <i>“The extent to which the proposal affects the amenity of key recreational routes and ways (e.g. Core Paths, Munros and Corbetts, Long Distance Routes etc.)”</i>	<i>“Wind Turbines or other infrastructure do not overwhelm or otherwise significantly detract from the visual appeal of key routes and ways.”</i>

<sup>1</sup> The Highland Council. (2017). *Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance*. November 2016 (with addendum, December 2017).

<p><b>Criterion 5. "The amenity of transport routes is respected."</b></p> <p><i>"The extent to which the proposal affects the amenity of transport routes (tourist routes as well as rail, ferry routes and local road access)."</i></p>	<p><i>"Wind Turbines or other infrastructure do not overwhelm or otherwise significantly detract from the visual appeal of transport routes."</i></p>
<p><b>Criterion 6. "The existing pattern of Wind Energy Development is respected."</b></p> <p><i>"The degree to which the proposal fits with the existing pattern of nearby wind energy development, considerations include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Turbine height and proportions,</i></li> <li>• <i>density and spacing of turbines within developments,</i></li> <li>• <i>density and spacing of developments,</i></li> <li>• <i>typical relationship of development to the landscape.</i></li> <li>• <i>previously instituted mitigation measures</i></li> <li>• <i>Planning Authority stated aims for development of area"</i></li> </ul>	<p><i>"The proposal contributes positively to existing pattern or objectives for development in the area."</i></p>
<p><b>Criterion 7. "The need for separation between developments and / or clusters is respected."</b></p> <p><i>"The extent to which the proposal maintains or affects the spaces between existing developments and/ or clusters."</i></p>	<p><i>"The proposal maintains appropriate and effective separation between developments and / or clusters"</i></p>
<p><b>Criterion 8. "The perception of landscape scale and distance is respected."</b></p> <p><i>"The extent to which the proposal maintains or affects receptors' existing perception of landscape scale and distance."</i></p>	<p><i>"The proposal maintains the apparent landscape scale and / or distance in the receptors' perception"</i></p>
<p><b>Criterion 9. "Landscape setting of nearby wind energy developments is respected."</b></p> <p><i>"The extent to which the landscape setting of nearby wind energy developments is affected by the proposal."</i></p>	<p><i>"Proposal relates well to the existing landscape setting and does not increase the perceived visual prominence of surrounding wind turbines."</i></p>
<p><b>Criterion 10. "Distinctiveness of Landscape character is respected."</b></p> <p><i>"The extent to which a proposal affects the distinction between neighbouring landscape character types, in areas where the variety of character is important to the appreciation of the landscape."</i></p>	<p><i>"Integrity and variety of Landscape Character Areas are maintained."</i></p>

1.1.3 An analysis of the Proposed Varied Development in relation to these criteria is presented in section 1.3 of this Technical Appendix.

#### Loch Ness Sensitivity Study

1.1.4 Section 5.2 of the OWESG also includes the *Loch Ness Landscape Sensitivity study* which identifies Key Views, Key Routes and Gateways as well as Landscape Character Area sensitivities and guidance. These aspects are considered in section 1.2 of this Technical Appendix and feed into the analysis of the criteria.

## 1.2 Appraisal of Loch Ness Sensitivity Study

### Key Views, Key Routes and Gateways

1.2.1 Key Views, Key Routes and Gateways identified in the OWESG are detailed in **Table 1.2.1**, **Table 1.2.2** and **Table 1.2.3** which identify those of potential relevance to the Proposed Varied Development and potential for effects.

**Table 1.2.1: Appraisal of Key Views included in the Loch Ness Sensitivity Study**

Key View (as noted in the OWESG: p39-41)	Appraisal	Potential Effects
<b>Loch Ness West</b> <i>"End-to-end views over Loch Ness looking southwest"</i>	<p>The 2021 LVIA concluded that there would be no potential effects on this key view, due to no/limited visibility of the Consented Development.</p> <p>The ZTV for the Proposed Varied Development illustrates that there would still be no view from Loch End, Aldourie Castle Designed Landscape and An Torr.</p> <p>There is some additional theoretical visibility from Dores beach, but it is anticipated that the Proposed Varied Development would still be barely perceptible, if at all, from here.</p>	No
<b>Loch Ness East</b> <i>"End-to-end Views over Loch ness looking Northeast"</i>	<p>The 2021 LVIA concluded that there would be no potential effects on this key view for the Consented Development. The ZTV for the Proposed Varied Development shows that there would continue to be no view of the from locations where this view can be obtained, in and around Fort Augustus.</p>	No
<b>Urquhart Castle from Loch</b> <i>"Water-level views looking up at Castle"</i>	<p>The 2021 LVIA concluded that there would be no potential for effects on this key view for the Consented Development.</p> <p>The ZTV for the Proposed Varied Development illustrates that there would be some limited visibility from Loch Ness near Urquhart Castle, as illustrated by the area of ZTV cover near Drumadrochit. From the loch, tips of the Proposed Varied Development may be visible on the skyline (1-5 tips), but are likely to be barely perceptible and usually seen alongside turbines of the Operational Development.</p> <p>Turbine tips of the Proposed Varied Development would be seen in a different part of the view from Urquhart Castle and would be unlikely to affect the focus or value of the castle in the view. This is illustrated in <b>Figures 7.4 to 7.5</b> (Cultural Heritage Viewpoint 2 from Loch Ness).</p> <p>Views from the loch would be similar to views illustrated from VP 8 (<b>Figures V3a-7.1-4 and V3b-7.1-5</b>, as assessed in <b>Technical</b></p>	No

	<b>Appendix 8.6: Visual Assessment Tables</b> ), where visual effects would be <b>Negligible-Minor</b> (not significant).	
<b>Urquhart Castle Land Based</b>  <i>"Generally elevated views looking towards the castle from above"</i>	<p>The 2021 LVIA concluded that there would be no potential for effects on this key view for the Consented Development.</p> <p>There are few locations from which the Proposed Varied Development would be seen in elevated views looking towards the castle from above. For example, the ZTV illustrates there would be no views of the Proposed Development from the A82 above Urquhart Castle.</p> <p>From the A82 across Urquhart Bay, roadside trees would screen turbine tips of the Proposed Varied Development, as well as Urquhart Castle.</p> <p>From elevated locations north of Drumnadrochit, Urquhart Castle is visible against a backdrop of water. The Proposed Varied Development would be in a different part of the view to Urquhart Castle and would be unlikely to affect the focus or value of the castle in the view. It is not considered this would affect views looking towards the castle.</p>	No
<b>Loch Ness from Urquhart Castle</b>  <i>"Views primarily towards the North east and Urquhart Bay"</i>	<p>The 2021 LVIA concluded that there would be no potential for effects on this key view for the Consented Development. The ZTV for the Proposed Varied Development shows that there would continue to be no view from Urquhart Castle or visitor centre.</p>	No
<b>Great Glen from Meall Fuar-mhonaidh</b>  <i>"Principal views are NE and SW up and down the Great Glen"</i>	<p>The 2021 LVIA concluded that there would be some potential for effects from this view for the Consented Development, but that these would not be significant.</p> <p>The Proposed Varied Development would not be seen in the principal views across the glen but would be seen in the western view, in close proximity, and in combination with the Operational Development.</p> <p>The Proposed Varied Development viewed by receptors at the summit of Meall Fuar-Mhonaidh is assessed as VP 3 in Appendix 8.6, accompanied by <b>Figure V3a-3.1-5 and V3b-3.1-5</b>. Visual effects from this location were assessed to be <b>Moderate</b> (significant).</p>	Yes
<b>Loch Tarff 'Local Hero' location</b>  View west-north-west from <i>"passing place east of Loch Tarff"</i>	<p>The 2021 LVIA concluded that there would be no potential for effects on this key view for the Consented Development.</p> <p>The ZTV for the Proposed Varied Development shows that there would continue to be no views of the Proposed</p>	No

	<p>Development from this location or in this view.</p> <p>It would be visible from a short section of road and passing places further west, next to Loch Tarff, but seen through a gap in the landform, with the Operational Development turbines. This would not affect appreciation of the view recognised from 'Local Hero'.</p>	
<b>A87 viewpoint above Loch Garry</b> <i>"Panoramic views, easily accessible by tourists. Across Great Glen, east to the rolling uplands"</i>	<p>The 2021 LVIA concluded that there would be no potential for effects on this key view for the Consented Development.</p> <p>The ZTV for the Proposed Varied Development shows that there would be no view of the Proposed Development from this location.</p>	No
<b>A887T Views west</b> <i>"Not a 'point view' but a corridor from which the sequence of westward views forms a significant transitional experience", relevant to "views west from points west of Achlain", which is situated in Glenmoriston.</i>	<p>The 2021 LVIA concluded that the Consented Development would not be visible in views west from this section of road.</p> <p>The ZTV for the Proposed Varied Development shows that while there would be a slight increase in theoretical visibility from a section of this route west of Achlain, this would be limited to small numbers of turbine tips which would be located to the north-east, with actual visibility likely to be screened by woodland.</p>	No

**Table 1.2.2: Appraisal of Key Routes included in the Loch Ness Sensitivity Study**

Key Route (as noted in the OWESG: p42-43)	Appraisal	Potential Effects
<b>A82 T</b>	<p>The 2021 LVIA concluded that effects for the Consented Development would be <b>Negligible</b> (not significant) from this route.</p> <p>This route has been scoped out of the visual assessment for the Proposed Varied Development. The ZTV shows that there would continue to be no view of the Proposed Varied Development from the majority of this route. While there is some theoretical visibility near Invermoriston and Drumnadrochit, vegetation is likely to screen views.</p>	No
<b>B862 Stratherrick</b>	<p>The 2021 LVIA concluded that the Consented Development would result in some localised, not significant effects for this route.</p> <p>Visual effects for receptors on the B862 are assessed in <b>Technical Appendix 8.6: Visual Assessment Tables</b> as <b>Minor</b> (not significant), considering the experience along the whole</p>	Yes, but localised effects and not significant for the route as a whole.

	route. Significant visual effects are noted for receptors at some specific localised areas (see VP5, VP7 and a few receptors in R13).	
<b>B851 Strathnairn and Loch Ness side</b>	<p>The 2021 LVIA concluded that there would be no potential for effects on this key route for the Consented Development.</p> <p>This route was scoped out of the visual assessment for both the Consented Development and the Proposed Varied Development. The ZTV for the Proposed Varied Development indicates a slight increase in theoretical visibility from this route, however theoretical visibility would continue to be limited, and due to screening, distance, context and magnitude of change, visual effects would be unlikely to be significant.</p>	No
<b>A9 T</b>	<p>The 2021 LVIA concluded that there would be no potential for effects on this key route for the Consented Development.</p> <p>This route was scoped out of the visual assessment for both the Consented Development and the Proposed Varied Development. The ZTV for the Proposed Varied Development indicates a very limited increase in theoretical visibility from the A9. However, due to screening, distance, context and magnitude of change, visual effects would be unlikely to be significant.</p>	No
<b>A833 Glen Convinth</b>	<p>The 2021 LVIA concluded that there would be no potential for effects on this key route for the Consented Development. As effects were assessed as being Negligible (not significant) in the 2021 LVIA it was scoped out of the assessment for the Proposed Varied Development. The ZTV for the Proposed Varied Development indicates a limited increase in theoretical visibility from this route, however views would continue to be screened by roadside vegetation and as such it is not considered that there would be potential for effects on this key route for the Proposed Varied Development.</p>	No
<b>A831 Glen Urquhart</b>	<p>The 2021 LVIA concluded that there would be no potential for effects on this key route for the Consented Development.</p> <p>The ZTV for the Proposed Varied Development illustrates there would be no view of the Proposed Development from the A831.</p>	No
<b>A887 T Glen Moriston</b>	<p>The 2021 LVIA concluded that there would be some potential for localised, not significant effects for receptors on this key route for the Consented Development during construction as a result of construction activity and traffic at the site entrance.</p>	Yes, but not significant.

	<p>The ZTV for the Proposed Varied Development indicates a limited increase in theoretical visibility along this route. However this would be limited to small numbers of tips, likely to be screened by vegetation. It is anticipated that effects relating to construction activity and traffic for the Proposed Varied Development would be as for the Consented Development, with the potential to result in some localised non-significant effects at the site entrance.</p>	
<b>A87 above Loch Garry</b>	<p>The 2021 LVIA concluded that there would be no potential for effects on this key route for the Consented Development.</p> <p>The ZTV for the Proposed Varied Development illustrates there would be no view of the Proposed Development from the section of the A87 above Loch Garry.</p>	No
<b>B861 Tombreck – Inverness</b>	<p>The 2021 LVIA concluded that there would be no potential for effects on this key route for the Consented Development.</p> <p>This route was scoped out of the visual assessment for both the Consented Development and the Proposed Varied Development. The ZTV for the Proposed Development indicates some theoretical visibility from the B861 but due to distance, context and magnitude of change, visual effects would be unlikely to be significant.</p>	No
<b>B852 South Loch Ness shore</b>	<p>The 2021 LVIA concluded that there would be no potential for effects on this key route for the Consented Development.</p> <p>This route was scoped out of the visual assessment for both the Consented Development and the Proposed Varied Development. The ZTV for the Proposed Varied Development indicates some limited additional theoretical visibility from the B852 but due to screening, context and magnitude of change, it would barely be visible and visual effects would be unlikely to be significant.</p>	No
<b>Dunain – Blackfold – Abriachan</b>	<p>The 2021 LVIA concluded that there would be some potential for localised, not significant effects for receptors on this key route for the Consented Development.</p> <p>The ZTV for the Proposed Varied Development indicates theoretical visibility from the C1060 (Dunain – Blackfold – Abriachan) minor road. This is not assessed individually as a route, but it is referenced within the assessment of the Great Glen Way, with which it overlaps for part of this long-distance route.</p> <p>VP 10 is also located on this section of road / Great Glen Way (see <b>Figures V3a-8.1-4 and V3b-8.1-5</b> and <b>Technical Appendix 8.6: Visual</b></p>	Yes, but not significant.

	<b>Assessment Tables)</b> where visual effects would be <b>Minor</b> (not significant).	
<b>Minor Road – Caiplich (C1072)<sup>2</sup></b>	<p>The 2021 LVIA concluded that there would be some potential for localised, not significant effects for receptors on this key route for the Consented Development.</p> <p>This route was scoped out of the visual assessment for the Proposed Varied Development. The ZTV for the Proposed Varied Development indicates a slight increase in theoretical visibility from the C1072 (Abriachan – Foxhole) minor road. However, this is likely to consist of small numbers of tips and is unlikely to result in a significant increase in effects.</p>	Yes, but not significant.
<b>Minor Road – Bunloit</b>	<p>The 2021 LVIA concluded that there would be no potential for effects on this key route for the Consented Development. The ZTV for the Proposed Varied Development illustrates that there would be no view of the Proposed Development from the U1640 (Bunloit Road, Lewiston, Drumnadrochit) minor road. This route is also part of the Great Glen Way, which is assessed in Appendix 8.6, due to visibility of the Proposed Varied Development from other route sections.</p>	No
<b>Great Glen Way</b>	<p>The 2021 LVIA concluded that there would be some potential for localised, not significant effects for receptors on this key route for the Consented Development.</p> <p>Visual effects for the Proposed Varied Development for receptors on the Great Glen Way are assessed in Appendix 8.6. A localised Moderate (significant) effect was identified from the high-level route north of Invermoriston near Achnaconeran, with some localised <b>Minor-Moderate</b> (not significant) effects from other parts along this section of the route.</p>	Yes, some localised significant effects
<b>Great Glen Canoe Trail</b>	<p>The 2021 LVIA concluded that there would be no potential for effects on this key route for the Consented Development</p> <p>The ZTV for the Proposed Varied Development indicates there would be no visibility from the majority of the Great Glen Canoe Trail, but some very limited theoretical visibility, localised to two small sections of Loch Ness, near Invermoriston and near Drumnadrochit, as well as from the eastern shoreline across from Alltsigh. Due to screening, context and</p>	No

<sup>2</sup> It is suggested that the reference in the OWESG is to the C1072 road (Abriachan – Foxhole Road), rather than the UC1072.

	<p>magnitude of change, visual effects would be unlikely to be significant. This route was scoped out of the visual assessment for both the Consented Development and the Proposed Varied Development.</p>	
<b>Caledonian Canal and lochs / open water</b>	<p>The 2021 LVIA concluded that there would be no potential for effects on this key route for the Consented Development.</p> <p>There would be some very limited visibility of the Proposed Varied Development from lochs / open water, localised to two small sections of Loch Ness, near Invermoriston and near Drumnadrochit, as well as from the eastern shoreline across from Alltsigh. Due to screening, context and magnitude of change, visual effects would be unlikely to be significant. This route was scoped out of the visual assessment for both the Consented Development and the Proposed Varied Development.</p>	No

**Table 1.2.3: Appraisal of Gateways included in the Loch Ness Sensitivity Study**

<b>Gateway</b> (as noted in the OWESG: p45-68)	<b>Appraisal</b>	<b>Potential Effects</b>
<i>Glen Urquhart “forms a transitional corridor, contributing to a gateway sense of arrival at Drumnadrochit, where the landform opens out ...” (OWESG: p45) and “Drumnadrochit – marking transition from LCA1 Wooded Glen, to Broad Wooded Glen” (OWESG: p66)</i>	<p>The 2021 LVIA concluded that there would be no potential for effects on this gateway for the Consented Development.</p> <p>There would be no view of the Proposed Varied Development on arrival at Drumnadrochit and the Great Glen from Glen Urquhart. This gateway would therefore not be affected.</p>	No
<i>“Transitional corridor between A887 and A87 at Bun Loyne Junction and Achlain” where “the sequence of westward views forms a significant transitional experience which cannot be pinpointed to one ‘Gateway location’” (OWESG: p46)</i>	<p>The 2021 LVIA concluded that there would be no potential for effects on this gateway for the Consented Development in westward views.</p> <p>As noted in Table 1.2.1 relating to the ‘A87T Views west’, the Proposed Varied Development would not be visible in views west from this corridor.</p> <p>However, in views looking north-east from the A87 at this junction, the Proposed Varied Development would be visible. VP 26 illustrates views from a layby near this junction (see <b>Technical Appendix 8.6: Visual Assessment Tables and Figures V3a-15.1-4 and V3b-15.1-5</b>), where visual effects would be <b>Minor-Moderate</b> (not significant).</p>	No, not in westward views.

<p><i>"A87 - above Loch Loyne"</i> (OWESG: p49 and 67)</p>	<p>The 2021 LVIA concluded that there would be some potential for non-significant effects on this gateway for the Consented Development. The Proposed Varied Development would be visible from the A87 to the north of Loch Loyne, near Bun Loyne.</p> <p>The A87 has been scoped out of the assessment for the Proposed Varied Development. However visual effects have been assessed for receptors at VP 26, from a layby on the A87 at Bun Loyne (see <b>Technical Appendix 8.6: Visual Assessment Tables and Figures V3a-15.1-4 and V3b-15.1-5</b>), where visual effects would be <b>Minor-Moderate</b> (not significant).</p>	<p>Yes, but not significant.</p>
<p><i>"A9 at Inshes: Sense of arrival at Inner Moray Firth and Inverness"</i> (OWESG: p52)</p>	<p>The 2021 LVIA concluded that there would be no potential for effects on this gateway for the Consented Development.</p> <p>While there is some additional theoretical visibility from the A9 east of Inshes for the Proposed Varied Development, due to screening from buildings, there would be no view of the Proposed Varied Development from this location. The A9 has been scoped out of the assessment for the Proposed Varied Development.</p>	<p>No</p>
<p><i>"Abriachan – marks approximate transition of the higher ground of the Aird to the Great Glen when travelling south-east"</i> (OWESG: p53)</p>	<p>The 2021 LVIA concluded that there would be no potential for effects on this gateway for the Consented Development.</p> <p>The ZTV for the Proposed Varied Development illustrates no theoretical visibility at Abriachan or the route travelling south-east into the Great Glen. This gateway was therefore scoped out of the assessment for the Proposed Varied Development.</p>	<p>No</p>
<p><i>"Moniack Mhor – locally significant gateway area where views open out towards Beauly strath"</i> (OWESG: p53 and 64)</p>	<p>The 2021 LVIA concluded that there would be no potential for effects on this gateway for the Consented Development. There would be no view of the Proposed Varied Development within northern views towards Beauly Strath. This gateway was therefore scoped out of the assessment for the Proposed Varied Development.</p>	<p>No</p>
<p><i>"Loch Dochfour – marking transition between lochside landscapes and LCA7, Rolling Farmland and Woodland"</i> (OWESG: p66)</p>	<p>The 2021 LVIA concluded that there would be no potential for effects on this gateway for the Consented Development. There would be no view of the Proposed Varied Development from this location. This gateway was therefore scoped out of the assessment for the Proposed Varied Development.</p>	<p>No</p>
<p><i>"Invermoriston – marking transition from LCA2 Wooded Glen, to</i></p>	<p>The 2021 LVIA concluded that there would be no potential for effects on this gateway for the Consented Development. The ZTV for the</p>	<p>No</p>

<i>Broad Wooded Glen</i> " (OWESG: p66)	Proposed Varied Development illustrates theoretical visibility from Invermoriston, but due to tree screening visibility would be limited. A <b>Minor</b> (not significant) effect has been identified from VP2 (Old Bridge, Invermoriston, see <b>Technical Appendix 8.6: Visual Assessment Tables and Figures V3a-2.1-5 and V3b-2.1-5</b> ) which is representative of close proximity views from Invermoriston.	
<i>"Fort Augustus – arrival at Loch Ness from south</i> " (OWESG: p66)	The 2021 LVIA concluded that there would be no potential for effects on this gateway for the Consented Development. There would be no view of the Proposed Varied Development from Fort Augustus. This gateway was therefore scoped out of the assessment for the Proposed Varied Development.	No
<i>"Dores – arrival at Loch Ness from Inverness hinterland</i> " (OWESG: p66)	The 2021 LVIA concluded that there would be no potential for effects on this gateway for the Consented Development. The ZTV illustrates a limited increase in theoretical visibility of the Proposed Varied Development from Dores, consisting of one turbine tip, but not from the B862 between Dores and Inverness. Visual effects from Dores have been scoped out of the assessment as significant effects are considered unlikely, and it is not considered that there would be potential effects on Dores as a gateway location for receptors arriving at Loch Ness.	No
<i>"Invergarry – transition into great glen from Glen Garry</i> " (OWESG: p66 and 67)	The 2021 LVIA concluded that there would be no potential for effects on this gateway for the Consented Development. There would be no view of the Proposed Varied Development from Invergarry and this gateway is therefore scoped out.	No

### Landscape Character Guidance

1.2.2 The Loch Ness Landscape Sensitivity study contained within the OWESG identifies sensitivities of landscapes around Loch Ness to wind farm development and provides guidance for their siting. The Proposed Varied Development would be located within OWESG Landscape Character Area (LCA) LN10: *Separation of Glen Urquhart and Glen Moriston, Rocky Moorland Plateau*. This area is identified (OWESG: p57) as having:

- *"No scope for small or medium turbines"*
- *"Limited scope for Micro turbines where closely associated with buildings"*
- *"Limited scope for ... Additional Large turbines within the existing pattern"*

1.2.3 The following recommendations (OWESG: p57) are provided for the siting of wind turbines within this LCA:

*"Turbines should*

- *Be set back from Key Routes*
- *Preserve mitigation established by current schemes*

- *Maintain the landscape setting of each existing scheme.*
- *Respect spacing and scale of existing development pattern.*
- *Minimise visual confusion from higher ground to the west and north and with Meall Fuar-mhonaidh”*

1.2.4 This LCA (OWESG LCA LN10) is assessed in the LVIA as National Landscape Character Type (LCT) 222: Rocky Moorland Plateau – Inverness (see **Technical Appendix 8.3: Assessment of Landscape Character Types** and **Figure 8.5: Landscape Character Types within Detailed Study Area with Proposed Varied Development ZTV**). The assessment has concluded that the landscape effect to this area would be generally **Minor** (not significant), but that there would be a localised **Moderate** (significant) landscape effect relating to direct effects and indirect effects close to the Proposed Varied Development. During construction, this would relate to construction activities in and around the site itself; and during operation, this would relate to turbines becoming more prominent, typically in the localised area up to around 5 km to the east and north-east of the Proposed Development.

1.2.5 The recommendations in the OWESG have particular significance for landscape and visual effects within the Great Glen Area, and hills on its western edge, such as Meall Fuar-mhonaidh. This area is mostly covered by the assessment for LCT 225 – Broad Steep-sided Glen (included in OWESG as LCA LN19) (see **Table 1.2.2 of Technical Appendix 8.3: Assessment of Landscape Character Types** and **Figure 8.5: Landscape Character Types within Detailed Study Area with Proposed Varied Development ZTV**) and LCT 226 – Wooded Glen – Inverness (included in OWESG as LCA LN2) (see **Table 1.2.3 of Technical Appendix 8.3: Assessment of Landscape Character Types**). For these two areas, the assessment has concluded that the landscape effect associated with the Proposed Varied Development would not be significant. For LCT 224, there would be a **Minor** (not significant) landscape effect. For LCT 225, there would be **locally Minor** (not significant) landscape effects for elevated areas on the eastern shore, south of Dores. For LCT 226, there would also be **locally Negligible-Minor** (not significant) landscape effects in Glen Moriston.

1.2.6 Analysis of the recommendations for siting wind turbines is provided in **Table 1.2.4**.

**Table 1.2.4: Analysis of Recommendations for Siting Turbines in OWESG LCA LN10**

OWESG Recommendation	Analysis
“Be set back from Key Routes”	<p>The Proposed Varied Development is not located close to the majority of OWESG Key Routes (as summarised in Table 1.2.2).</p> <p>The closest OWESG Key Routes to the Proposed Varied Development are the Great Glen Way, the A887 and the A82.</p> <p>For receptors on the Great Glen Way, the nearest theoretically visible turbine may be around 3.5-4km from the route at its closest: from the section north-east of Invermoriston, north to Allt Saigh watercourse (a stretch of around 3km). Between 2-12 Proposed Varied Development turbines would be visible from most of this section, and 2-15 turbines from a shorter section near Meall Doire Bhrath (around 700m). For the majority of this whole section, the Operational Development turbines would also be visible and both would be seen on the skyline, behind a ridgeline for the most part.</p> <p>The assessment of visual effects for receptors on the Great Glen Way (as assessed in <b>Technical Appendix 8.6: Visual Assessment</b>)</p>

	<p><b>Tables</b>) has identified a localised <b>Moderate</b> (significant) effect from a localised section of the Great Glen Way from the high-level route north of Invermoriston, around Achnaconeran. From the rest of this section the effect would be locally <b>Minor-Moderate</b>, and elsewhere <b>Negligible</b> (not significant).</p> <p>Although there would be a localised significant effect for this route, this would affect a short section of this route.</p> <p>For receptors on the A887, the nearest theoretically visible turbine may be around 3.3-3.5km from the route at its closest points, from just west of Invermoriston. Where visible from the A887, the Proposed Development would be seen as blades and some hubs on the skyline, but usually in the context of the Operational Development and not noticeably changing the perceived distance from wind development. Landform and trees would screen the majority of views. This route has been scoped out of the assessment for the Proposed Varied Development, as there was not considered to be potential for significant effects, although some localised effects would occur during construction since access for the Proposed Varied Development would also be situated on this road. The construction effects for the Proposed Varied Development are considered to be comparable to those of the Consented Development, for which a localised <b>Minor</b> (not significant) effect was identified.</p> <p>For receptors on the A82, the nearest theoretically visible turbine would be around 4.8km from the route at its closest, from Invermoriston. This route has been scoped out of the assessment for the Proposed Varied Development, as there was not considered to be potential for significant effects.</p> <p>Although the Proposed Development would be in close proximity to some of the OWESG Key Routes, no significant effects are anticipated for the majority of these routes. Although some localised significant effects are expected from a section of the Great Glen Way, where the turbines would be closer to receptors, they would usually be seen in the context of the Operational Development turbines and with a degree of separation afforded by landform.</p>
<p><i>"Preserve mitigation established by current schemes"</i></p>	<p>The Proposed Varied Development would be located adjacent to the Operational Development, set back within the interior of an upland plateau area of rocky moorland. As illustrated in <b>Figure 8.14: Cumulative ZTV - Proposed Varied Development with Bhlaraidh</b>, this location and layout has led to a broadly similar pattern of theoretical visibility within the area, whereby the landform on the whole limits the intrusion of the Proposed Varied Development and reduces the extent of significant adverse landscape and visual effects. Some areas of 'new' visibility would be introduced but, significant effects are not anticipated for these areas.</p> <p>Some of the Proposed Varied Development turbines would be located in areas where turbines were previously removed for the Operational Development, in order to minimise effects on receptors at Meall Fuar-mhonaidh (VP3), Suidhe Viewpoint (VP5) and from Loch Ness (Cultural Heritage VP 2). These were key design considerations in the evolution of the Consented Development and the Proposed Varied Development, alongside other constraints and influencing factors.</p>

	<p>Although there would be some localised long term significant effects around the summit of Meall Fuar-mhonaidh and an area on the eastern side of Loch Ness, it is considered that the Proposed Varied Development doesn't undermine the mitigation principles of the Operational Development.</p> <p>During the design development of the Operational Development, turbines were sited to minimise effects from Invermoriston, Loch Ness, Glen Urquhart, as well as to minimise effects on other environmental constraints. The layout of the Consented Development and Proposed Varied Development has also followed these principles, as well as minimising effects on other sensitive visual receptor locations and landscape areas. The design evolution of the Proposed Varied Development is discussed in <b>Chapter 2: Design Iteration and Proposed Varied Development</b>.</p> <p>In considering "<i>mitigation established by existing schemes</i>", it is also important to recognise that the baseline context for the LVIA (and CLVIA) for the Proposed Varied Development differs to the baseline context when the Operational Development was consented and built. Both the policy and planning context and the actual landscape in terms of wind development, other aspects such as electrical transmission infrastructure, substation development, changes to forestry and settlements and receptor locations have changed. It is therefore difficult to fully compare 'mitigation' for different schemes in this regard, since landscape and visual sensitivity and susceptibility differ with the baseline and the effects of the Proposed Varied Development have been evaluated and assessed in relation to the baseline context at the time of this assessment. Therefore, given the different landscape and visual baseline context, it may not always be suitable or possible to preserve "<i>mitigation established by existing schemes</i>".</p>
<p><i>"Maintain the landscape setting of each existing scheme"</i></p>	<p>The Proposed Varied Development would be located next to the Operational Development and within the same landscape character area. It is considered that this would not adversely affect the setting of the Operational Development as it would form a cohesive group with the existing wind farm when seen from most locations and would generally not lead to any significant increase in landscape and visual effect, other than from a few positions on the eastern side of Loch Ness, and immediately to the east/north-east of the Proposed Varied Development (described in <b>Technical Appendix 8.6: Visual Assessment Tables</b> from VP3, VP5, VP7 and localised parts of R13 and the Great Glen Way).</p>
<p><i>"Respect spacing and scale of existing development pattern."</i></p>	<p>Given its location adjacent to the Operational Development, setback into the interior of the upland plateau area, the Proposed Varied Development would maintain the existing distribution of wind farm groupings within the landscape and reflect the pattern of existing wind development clusters, particularly when viewed from the Great Glen where the existing influence of wind farms to the west of Loch Ness comprises turbines of the Operational Development seen on the skyline.</p> <p>The spacing of the turbines within the Proposed Varied Development would be largely similar to those of the Operational Development, and other wind developments. It has been designed</p>

	<p>to achieve a balanced and compact layout, which minimises overlapping/stacking from key views, such as VP3 and VP5. From some locations, the scale of the Proposed Varied Development turbines would be perceived to be similar to those of the Operational Development (such as those illustrated from VP1 and VP21) and other wind development in the landscape context. From some locations the scale difference would be perceptible to varying degrees. However, it would often be perceptible in a context where other wind developments of varying scales would be experienced within the wider landscape and visual context. Whilst from some locations, a scale difference between the existing and proposed turbines would be noticeable, on balance the scheme fits within the existing development pattern and is perceived to be a cohesive design from the majority of locations.</p>
<p><i>"Minimise visual confusion from higher ground to the west and north and with Meall Fuar-mhonaidh"</i></p>	<p><i>"Higher ground to the west and north"</i> of this area (LCA LN10 / LCT 222 – Rocky Moorland Plateau – Inverness) that is covered by the ZTV for the Proposed Varied Development includes summits and elevated areas north and south of Glen Affric (see VP21, <b>Figures V3a-14.1-5 and V3b-14.1-5</b>), high ground north of Glen Shiel, and elevated areas north of Glens Strathfarrar, Urquhart and Cannich. Visual effects for receptors at VP21 (see <b>Technical Appendix 8.6: Visual Assessment Tables</b>) have been assessed as <b>Minor</b> (not significant). It is not considered that the Proposed Varied Development would lead to <i>"visual confusion"</i> given its visual association and grouping with the Operational Development. From some locations, the Proposed Varied Development would be visible with Meall Fuar-mhonaidh. As described in the assessment of effects on the Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA (see Table 1.2 of <b>Technical Appendix 8.4: Assessment of Designated and Protected Landscapes</b>), although a <b>Moderate</b> (significant) effect was identified for areas around the summit of Meall Fuar-mhonaidh, where the Proposed Varied Development, it would not affect the focal point landmark and setting of Meall Fuar-mhonaidh when seen from other parts of the SLA (see in particular VP5, VP6, VP7, VP8 and VP17) as well as the wider landscape. It would therefore not lead to <i>"visual confusion"</i> with Meall Fuar-mhonaidh. Furthermore, it would not lead to <i>"visual confusion"</i> from Meall Fuar-mhonaidh, as the clustering of turbines would appear as a cohesive unit within one part of the view and the balanced spread of turbines, would not affect the appreciation of the Great Glen or other parts of the landscape in other directions (see VP3 (<b>Figures V3a-3.4 and V3b-3.4-3.5</b>)).</p>

### 1.3 Analysis of Criteria

#### Criterion 1. Relationship between Settlements / Key locations and wider landscape are respected.

##### *Summary of analysis for Consented Development*

1.3.1 The Consented Development would not be visible from the majority of the main settlements within the study area. Some significant visual effects were identified for a small number of visual receptors in scattered properties to the east of Loch Ness (residential grouping R13).

1.3.2 No effect or very minimal effects were found from most 'key' locations highlighted in the OWESG. Visual effects were identified for receptors in a few 'key' OWESG locations, but these were not considered to be significant and many were found to be localised and minimal. These included from the Great Glen from Meall Fuar-mhonaidh; the B862 Stratherrick (for the route as a whole), the A887 T Glen Moriston, the C1060 (Dunain-Blackfold-Abriachan) minor road, the C1072 (Abriachan-Foxhole) road, the Great Glen Way and the A87 above Loch Loyne.

1.3.3 It was concluded the threshold for this criterion would not be exceeded by the Consented Development, since it would not be "*visually prominent in the majority of views within or from settlements / Key Locations or from the majority of its access routes*".

#### *Analysis for Proposed Varied Development*

1.3.4 The Proposed Varied Development would be unlikely to lead to any increased prominence of wind turbines from the main settlements within the study area. Effects from *R13 - A range of properties on or in the vicinity of the B862 minor public road in the area near Whitebridge* would continue to be significant. Although a range of effects would still be experienced within this grouping, more properties would potentially experience **Moderate** (significant) effects. Effects would increase from one other receptor grouping: *R9 - Easter and Wester Aberchalder and Migovie*, but would remain not significant.

1.3.5 While there would be some localised significant effects on receptor groupings, overall it is not considered that the threshold for this criterion would be exceeded.

#### **Criterion 2. "Key Gateway locations and routes are respected"**

##### *Summary of analysis for Consented Development*

1.3.6 The assessment for the Consented Development found that the majority of Key Gateway locations and routes would not be affected by the Consented Development.

1.3.7 It was concluded that there would be some degree of visual effect on a small number of the Key Routes, including the B862 Stratherrick (as a whole), the A887 T Glen Moriston, the C1060 (Dunain – Blackfold – Abriachan) minor road, the C1072 (Abriachan – Foxhole) minor road and the Great Glen Way but these effects would not be significant. Significant visual effects were identified for receptors at points on the B862 Stratherrick (at VP 5 and 7), but these would be specific to these localised points and effects on the overall visual experience of the route would not be significant. Only one of the Key Gateways would be potentially affected by the Consented Development, the A87 above Loch Loyne, where effects would not be significant.

1.3.8 It was therefore concluded that the threshold for this criterion would not be exceeded by the Consented Development, because it would not "*overwhelm or otherwise detract from landscape characteristics which contribute the distinctive transitional experience found at key gateway locations and routes*".

##### *Analysis for Proposed Varied Development*

1.3.9 The assessment for the Proposed Varied Development has found that the effect for the B862 as a whole would continue to be **Minor** (not significant), while effects for VP5 and VP7, which illustrate views from localised points along this route, would remain **Moderate** (significant). Although the C1060 (Dunain – Blackfold – Abriachan) minor road has not been assessed individually as a route, it is referenced within the assessment of

the Great Glen Way, with which it overlaps, but significant effects are not anticipated for this part of the Great Glen Way. VP 10 for which **Minor** (not significant) effects have been identified is also located on this section of road / Great Glen Way (see **Figures V3a-8.4** and **V3a-8.5** and **Technical Appendix 8.6: Visual Assessment Tables**). A **localised Moderate** (significant) effect has been identified from the Great Glen Way for the high-level route north of Invermoriston near Achnaconeran, with some **localised Minor-Moderate** (not significant) effects from other parts along this section of the route.

1.3.10 The A887 T Glen Moriston and the Minor Road – Caiplich (UC1072) have both been scoped out of the assessment as significant effects are considered unlikely. However, as some non-significant effects were identified for the Consented Development it is anticipated that some non-significant effects would continue to be experienced from these routes. The ZTV for the Proposed Varied Development indicates a slight increase in theoretical visibility from both of these routes, however this is likely to consist of small numbers of tips. For the A887 T road, where the entrance to the Site would be located, it is anticipated that effects relating to construction activity and traffic for the Proposed Varied Development would be as for the Consented Development, with the potential to result in some localised non-significant effects at the site entrance.

1.3.11 Only one of the Key Gateways would be potentially affected, the A87 above Loch Loyne. While the A87 has been scoped out of the assessment for the Proposed Varied Development, a **Minor-Moderate** (not significant) effect has been identified for receptors at VP26, from a layby on the A87 at Bun Loyne (see **Technical Appendix 8.6: Visual Assessment Tables** and **Figures V3a-15.4** and **V3b-15.5**). It is therefore considered that effects on this gateway would not be significant.

1.3.12 While there would be some localised significant effects on key routes, overall it is not considered that the threshold for this criterion would be exceeded.

### **Criterion 3. Valued natural and cultural landmarks are respected**

#### *Summary of analysis for Consented Development*

1.3.13 Valued natural landmarks referred to under this criterion are considered to comprise geological features such as the Great Glen, key landmarks within the landscape such as Meall Fuar-mhonaidh, and important lochs such as Loch Ness, Loch Oich and Loch Lochy and other features which comprise the Special Qualities of designated landscapes. Valued cultural landmarks are considered to comprise important and popular cultural sites such as Urquhart Castle, and other designated cultural heritage sites.

1.3.14 It was considered that the Consented Development would not diminish the prominence or disrupt the setting of any natural or cultural heritage landmarks. Key landmarks within the Great Glen (such as Urquhart Castle viewed from Loch Ness or land based viewpoints, Meall Fuar-mhonaidh viewed from the Great Glen, and the Great Glen viewed from Meall Fuar-mhonaidh) would not be affected, as detailed in **Table 1.2.1**. No significant effects were found to the setting of any cultural heritage sites.

1.3.15 It was therefore concluded that the threshold for this criterion would not be exceeded by the Consented Development since it “*does not, by its presence, diminish the prominence of the landmark or disrupt its relationship to its setting*”.

*Analysis for Proposed Varied Development*

1.3.16 A localised significant effect has been identified for the Proposed Varied Development within the Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA, around the western ridge and summit of Meall Fuar-mhonaidh, where the effect is considered to be **Moderate** (significant) during construction and operation. Nevertheless, it is considered that Meall Fuar-mhonaidh would remain an integral part of the SLA and its setting in relation to the Great Glen would not be affected. No new significant effects have been identified to other key landmark features which contribute to NSAs or SLAs as a result of the Proposed Varied Development.

1.3.17 A **Moderate** (significant) effect has also been identified for VP3 – Meall Fuar-mhonaidh within the visual assessment. However, no new effects are anticipated for Meall Fuar-mhonaidh viewed from the Great Glen, or the Great Glen viewed from Meall Fuar-mhonaidh).

1.3.18 No new significant effects were found to the setting of any cultural heritage sites.

1.3.19 It is therefore concluded that the threshold for this criterion would not be exceeded by the Proposed Varied Development since it “does not, by its presence, diminish the prominence of the landmark or disrupt its relationship to its setting”.

**Criterion 4. The amenity of key recreational routes and ways is respected**

*Summary of analysis for Consented Development*

1.3.20 It was considered that the Consented Development would not lead to any significant effects on any of the recreational Key Routes identified in the OWESG.

1.3.21 The visual assessment identified **locally Minor-Moderate** and **elsewhere Negligible** visual effects for receptors on the Great Glen Way (which also overlaps the C1060 Dunain – Blackfold – Abriachan minor road), where it would be seen with the Operational Development. Effects would be localised in particular to the section north-east of Invermoriston and open parts of the C1060 road near VP10 but would not be significant.

1.3.22 It was considered that the threshold for this criterion would not be exceeded, because the Consented Development would “*not overwhelm or otherwise significantly detract from the visual appeal of key routes and ways*”. This was also considered the case for other hill summits and recreational routes assessed in the LVIA, particularly given the baseline context of existing wind development, whereby wind turbines are an accepted part of the visual landscape from key routes and ways.

*Analysis for Proposed Varied Development*

1.3.23 As discussed under Criterion 2, some **localised Moderate** (significant) effects have been identified for a short section of the Great Glen Way along the high-level part of the route to the north of Invermoriston, specifically around Meall Doire Bhrath. Effects for other parts of this route would continue to be not significant, with some **locally Minor-Moderate** and **elsewhere Negligible** visual effects.

1.3.24 It is therefore considered that the threshold for this criterion would not be exceeded. This is also considered the case for other recreational routes assessed.

### **Criterion 5. The amenity of transport routes is respected**

#### *Summary of analysis for Consented Development*

1.3.25 The assessment for the Consented Development found that the majority of Key Routes would not be affected. While some degree of visual effect was identified on a small number of the Key Routes, such as the B862 Stratherrick (for the route as a whole), the A887 T Glen Moriston, the C1060 (Dunain – Blackfold – Abriachan) minor road and the C1072 (Abriachan – Foxhole) minor road and A87, these effects were considered to be localised and not significant.

1.3.26 It was therefore considered that the threshold for this criterion would not be exceeded since the Consented Development would not “*overwhelm or otherwise significantly detract from the visual appeal of transport routes.*”

#### *Analysis for Proposed Varied Development*

1.3.27 The majority of Key Routes would continue to be unaffected by the Proposed Varied Development. While some degree of visual effect would continue to be experienced by receptors on a small number of the Key Routes, these effects would be localised and not significant. There would be no increase in the effect rating for the B862 Stratherrick route. While the C1060 (Dunain – Blackfold – Abriachan) minor road has been scoped out of the assessment for the Proposed Varied Development, the effect for VP10 - Great Glen Way near Carn a' Bhodaich which is located along this route would remain **Minor** (not significant). The A887 T Glen Moriston, C1072 (Abriachan – Foxhole) minor road and A87 have all been scoped out of the assessment for the Proposed Varied Development. Although there would be some small areas of new theoretical visibility from these routes, this is considered unlikely to result in significant effects.

1.3.28 It is therefore considered that the threshold for this criterion would not be exceeded.

### **Criterion 6. The existing pattern of Wind Energy Development is respected**

#### *Summary of analysis for Consented Development*

1.3.29 This criterion (p19) cites the following considerations to be taken into account:

- “*Turbine height and proportions,*
- *density and spacing of turbines within developments,*
- *density and spacing of developments,*
- *typical relationship of development to the landscape.*
- *previously instituted mitigation measures*
- *Planning Authority stated aims for development of area”*

1.3.30 It was considered that given its location adjacent to the Operational Development, set back into the interior of the upland plateau area, the Consented Development would maintain the existing distribution of wind farm groupings within the landscape and reflect the pattern of existing wind development clusters. This is particularly the case when viewed from the Great Glen where the existing influence of wind farms to the west of Loch Ness comprises turbines of the Operational Development seen on the skyline.

1.3.31 The spacing of the turbines within the Consented Development would be largely similar to those of the Operational Development, and other wind developments and was

designed to achieve a balanced and compact layout, minimising overlapping/stacking from key views, such as VP3 and VP5.

- 1.3.32 From several locations, the scale of the Consented Development turbines would be perceived to be similar to those of the Operational and other wind development in the landscape context. From some locations, the scale difference would be perceptible, to varying degrees, often in a context where other wind developments of varying scales would be experienced.
- 1.3.33 Therefore, whilst from some locations, a scale difference between the existing and consented turbines may be perceptible, on balance it was considered that the scheme would fit within the existing development pattern and was perceived to be a cohesive design from the majority of locations.
- 1.3.34 It was therefore considered that the threshold for this criterion would not be exceeded. The Consented Development would form a well-located wind farm site which would enable the generation of renewable energy with a minimum of significant landscape and visual effects. The Consented Development would respect the pattern of existing development within the Rolling Moorland Plateau – Inverness LCT (OWESG LCA LN10) and the objectives laid out for this area (as detailed in Table 1.2.4), as well as previously instituted mitigation measures for the Operational Development.

*Analysis for Proposed Varied Development*

- 1.3.35 Since the analysis of the Consented Development one further wind farm is currently under construction (Abetarder), and six additional developments have been consented (Kirkan, Corriegarth 2, Cloiche, Bunloinn, Tomchrasky and Chrathaich).
- 1.3.36 The Proposed Varied Development turbines would largely be located in the same locations as the Consented Development turbines. Due to the increased tip height and resultant change to wake zones and increased safety buffers for topple distance, some turbines required repositioning. In some areas the increased turbine height would lead to greater numbers of turbines becoming visible, in other areas it would lead to turbines appearing closer within the view. From westerly / south-westerly areas, the Proposed Varied Development would be seen to the rear of existing turbines, and while a few more hubs and tips would be visible from some locations there would be no noticeable increase in landscape effects.
- 1.3.37 The difference in turbine height compared to the Operational Development turbines would be clearly apparent from some locations as the Proposed Varied Development would be seen to the fore of the Operational Development turbines, mainly in views from the east, drawing the turbines closer, such as VP3 (see **Figure V3a-3.5 and V3b-3.5**), VP5 (**Figure V3a-4.5 and V3b-4.5**), VP7 (**Figure V3a-6.4 and V3b-6.5**) and VP17 (**Figure V3a-12.4 and V3b-12.5**).
- 1.3.38 Overall, while the larger scale turbines would extend the influence of the Proposed Varied Development, it would continue to be situated within a well-located site and effects would remain relatively localised, respecting the pattern of existing development within the Rolling Moorland Plateau – Inverness LCT. It is therefore considered that the threshold for this Criterion would not be breached.

**Criterion 7. The need for separation between developments and / or clusters is respected**

*Summary of analysis for Consented Development*

1.3.39 The assessment for the Consented Development concluded that it would be located adjacent to the Operational Development and would appear as a cohesive grouping with these existing turbines. Both would be set back within the interior of an upland plateau of rocky moorland and would maintain a strong landscape buffer between the nearest existing wind development of Corrimony, to the north. The existing pattern of development clusters and open spaces would therefore be maintained, particularly when seen from the Great Glen area, as well as other parts of the landscape.

1.3.40 It was therefore considered that the threshold for this criterion would not be exceeded by the Consented Development.

*Analysis for Proposed Varied Development*

1.3.41 While there would be a noticeable scale difference between the Proposed Varied Development turbines and the Operational Development turbines, they would continue to appear as a cohesive grouping, and would often be seen within the same context as other operational and consented wind farms. While the larger turbines would appear to bring turbines closer in views from areas to the east, they would continue to be set back within the interior of the upland plateau.

1.3.42 Therefore, whilst the Proposed Varied Development would lead to an increased presence of wind farm development within the area, it is not predicted to lead to any change in the way existing development clusters are seen.

1.3.43 It is therefore considered that the threshold for this criterion would not be exceeded by the Proposed Varied Development.

**Criterion 8. The perception of landscape scale and distance is respected**

*Summary of analysis for Consented Development*

1.3.44 While the Consented Development would be formed of larger turbines than those of the Operational Development, to which it would be adjacent, it was considered that this difference in scale may be perceived from a relatively small number of VPs and landscape areas close to the Consented Development, and from some VPs the larger turbines may appear to bring turbines slightly closer to the viewer, slightly reducing a perceived scale of the landscape in some locations which would contribute to landscape and visual effects. However, it was concluded that this would not affect the overriding perception of expansive scale within the landscape and would be only a small contributory factor to any of the limited non-significant effects which would be experienced. This effect would not be experienced from any of the Key Views, Key Routes as a whole or Gateways, although localised significant visual effects were anticipated for points on the B862.

1.3.45 It was therefore considered that the threshold for this criterion would not be exceeded by the Consented Development because the apparent landscape scale and distance perceived by receptors was likely to be maintained.

*Analysis for Proposed Varied Development*

1.3.46 The Proposed Varied Development turbines would be larger in scale than Consented Development turbines, contributing further to the perception of turbines appearing

closer to the viewer from some locations. This increase in scale would be most apparent from closer areas such as VP3 – Meall Fuar-mhonaidh (see Figures **V3a-3.5 and V3b-3.5**) and to the east of Loch Ness, such as VP6 (see **Figure V3a-5.1-4 and V3b-5.1-5**) and VP7 (**Figure V3a-6.4 and V3b-6.5**), where the Proposed Varied Development would be seen in front of the Operational Development turbines. This would have some potential to alter perceptions of scale and distance due to the greater size of the turbines in comparison to other surrounding developments including the Operational Development. However from westerly summits, the Proposed Varied Development would be seen to the rear of the Operational Development, and is not considered to affect the sense of scale which is experienced from these areas.

- 1.3.47 From some lower areas the Proposed Varied Development turbines may appear more visible due to the increased scale of the turbines, with more hubs and tips appearing above landform (see VP8 - Lochside picnic layby on B852, **Figure V3a-7.4 and V3b-7.5**). However the turbines would still be relatively contained by the surrounding landform, resulting in a minimal increase in effect which is considered unlikely to affect the perceived scale of the terrain.
- 1.3.48 It is therefore considered that the threshold for this criterion would not be exceeded by the Proposed Varied Development because the apparent landscape scale and distance perceived by receptors is likely to be maintained.

#### **Criterion 9. Landscape setting of nearby wind energy developments is respected**

##### *Summary of analysis for Consented Development*

- 1.3.49 As the Consented Development would be located adjacent to the Operational Development and within the interior of the upland plateau area which limits the extent of visibility, it was considered that this would not adversely affect the setting of the Operational Development as it would form a cohesive group with this existing wind farm when seen from almost all locations and would generally not lead to any significant increase in landscape and visual effect, other than from a few positions.
- 1.3.50 The Consented Development was not considered to encroach on any other existing wind energy developments and would therefore not be detrimental to the setting of these.
- 1.3.51 Overall, it was therefore concluded that the threshold for this criterion would not be exceeded because the design and layout of the Consented Development respected the Operational Development and would not adversely affect the setting of any other site.

##### *Analysis for Proposed Varied Development*

- 1.3.52 The impact on the setting of the Operational Development is considered to be generally comparable for the Proposed Varied Development and the Consented Development. While the difference in scale would become more apparent and may bring turbines closer in views from some areas, the Proposed Varied Development would continue to form a cohesive group with the Operational Development from most locations.
- 1.3.53 The Proposed Varied Development would not encroach on any other existing wind energy developments and would therefore not be detrimental to the setting of these.
- 1.3.54 Overall, it is considered that the threshold for this criterion would not be exceeded because the design of the Operational Development would still be respected, and the setting of other sites would not be adversely affected.

#### **Criterion 10. Distinctiveness of landscape character is respected**

##### *Summary of analysis for Consented Development*

1.3.55 The assessment for the Consented Development identified some localised non-significant effects on landscape character, which would occur within adjacent, nearby or similar upland LCTs where existing wind energy development is already a characteristic of parts of the landscape and the wider effect on these LCTs was therefore considered to be not significant. Surrounding LCTs would also not be significantly affected and the complexity and variety of landscape character experienced within the study area would therefore be retained.

1.3.56 It was therefore considered that the threshold for this criterion would not be exceeded by the Consented Development.

##### *Analysis for Proposed Varied Development*

1.3.57 The landscape assessment has identified some increased effects for the Proposed Varied Development compared to the Consented Development. Within LCT 222 - Rocky Moorland Plateau – Inverness a **localised Moderate** (significant) effect has been identified extending from the immediate area surrounding the site up to around 5km to the north-east and east towards Meall Fuar-mhonaidh. However, the overall effect within this LCT would remain unchanged.

1.3.58 The effect within LCT 224 – Farmed and Wooded Foothills is also anticipated to increase from a **localised Negligible – Minor** (not significant) effect to an overall **Minor** (not significant) effect. No other increases in effect are anticipated to LCTs included within the assessment.

1.3.59 Within the Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA, the level of effect is predicted to increase slightly from a **localised Minor** (not significant) effect to a **Minor** (not significant) effect on the SLA as a whole. The effect is also predicted to increase to **localised Moderate** (significant) within the area around Meall Fuar-mhonaidh.

1.3.60 Therefore, while the Proposed Varied Development would result in some new significant effects, these would be localised, and overall, it is considered that the threshold for this criterion would not be exceeded.

#### **1.4 Summary and Conclusions**

1.4.1 The analysis of the THC criteria for the consideration of onshore wind farm proposals has taken account of the anticipated landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Development detailed in Chapter 8 of the EIA Report, and in particular, the effects on the Key Views, Key Routes and Gateways identified in the OWESG, and the recommendations for OWESG LCA LN10 (LCT 222: Rocky Moorland Plateau – Inverness) included in the Loch Ness Landscape Sensitivity study. This has concluded that the layout and design of the Proposed Development is broadly in line with the LCA LN10 recommendations and that the landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Development, although locally significant for some visual receptors would not lead to the threshold for any of the ten THC criteria being exceeded.

1.4.2 The Proposed Development is therefore considered to be in broad conformity with THC's criteria for the consideration of onshore wind farm proposals.