

Planning Application for the Installation and Operation of a Battery Storage Plant at Drum Farm, Keith

Landscape & Visual Assessment

PREPARED BY PEGASUS GROUP ON BEHALF OF RES LTD. | MARCH 2022 | P22-0056.001A



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Landscape and Visual Assessment has been prepared on behalf of RES Ltd. by Pegasus Group. It relates to a parcel of land to the east of Keith and lies in proximity Keith Substation to the west and Drum Farm to the north-east, as shown on Figure 1. This Landscape and Visual Assessment considers the site and its surrounding context in both landscape and visual terms, to assess the potential effects of the proposed battery storage plant upon:

- Landscape features;
- Landscape character; and
- Visual amenity.

1.2 This assessment has been guided by the assessment criteria set out in Appendix 1. It should be noted that all of the landscape and visual effects stated within assessments such as this are considered adverse unless stated otherwise. It should also be noted that all effects are considered direct, long-term and permanent unless otherwise stated.

1.3 The assessment has been prepared through a desk study analysis of the site and its policy context as well as site visits to gain an appreciation of the landscape and visual context of the site.

1.4 A detailed landscape proposals plan conveys the landscape strategy and is shown by Figure 6. This Landscape and Visual Assessment of the site is based on this detailed landscape proposals plan, which is also produced as a separate plan in support of the planning application.

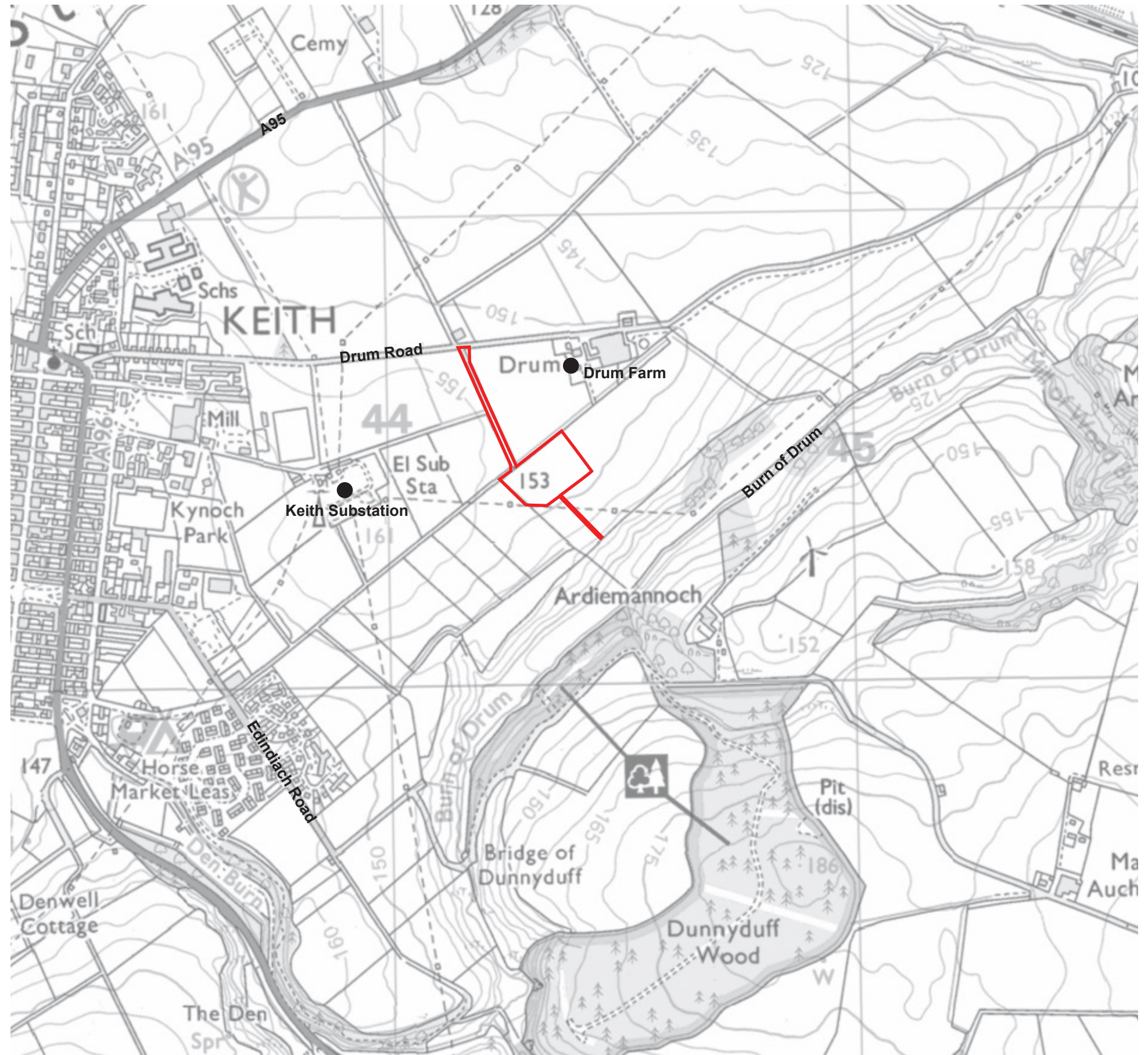


Figure 1: Site Location and Surroundings

2. METHODOLOGY

Published LVA Guidance

2.1 The LVA has been undertaken in accordance with the principles of best practice, as outlined in published guidance documents listed in the reference section of this report, notably the third edition of the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Assessment (GLVIA3), (Landscape Institute and the Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013).

2.2 The methodology and assessment criteria for the assessment have been developed in accordance with the principles established in this best practice document. It should be acknowledged that GLVIA3 establishes guidelines, not a specific methodology. The preface to GLVIA3 states:

'This edition concentrates on principles and processes. It does not provide a detailed or formulaic 'recipe' that can be followed in every situation – it remains the responsibility of the professional to ensure that the approach and methodology adopted are appropriate to the task in hand.'

2.3 The approach set out below and in detail in Appendix 1 has therefore been developed specifically for this assessment to ensure that the methodology is fit for purpose.

Distinction between Landscape and Visual Effects

2.4 In accordance with the published guidance, landscape and visual effects were assessed separately, although the procedure for assessing each of these is closely linked. A clear distinction has been drawn between landscape and visual effects as described below:

- Landscape effects relate to the effects of the indicative proposals on the physical and perceptual characteristics of the landscape and its resulting character and quality; and
- Visual effects relate to the effects on specific views experienced by visual receptors and on visual amenity more generally.

Types of Landscape and Visual Impacts Considered and Duration

2.5 The LVA assesses both the permanent effects of the development and the temporary effects associated with its construction.

2.6 Consideration has been given to seasonal variations in the visibility of the development and these are described where necessary.

2.7 Both beneficial and adverse effects are identified in the assessment and reported as appropriate. Where effects are described as 'neutral' this is where beneficial effects are deemed to balance the adverse effects. The adverse and beneficial effects are communicated in each case so that the judgement is clear.

2.8 As part of the proposed development, new planting would be introduced. Newly planted vegetation takes a number of years to mature and average growth rates have been taken into consideration in this assessment. The effectiveness of vegetation would improve over time (both in terms of integrating the development into the surrounding landscape and in providing visual screening) and this needs to be considered appropriately.

2.9 Therefore, permanent landscape and visual impacts of the project are assessed both in the winter of year 1 (the year in which the development is completed) and also in the summer of year 15 (15 years after completion of the development). In this second scenario it is assumed that vegetation planted as part of the development will have established and exhibit a degree of maturity.

Assumptions and Limitations of the Assessment

Assessed Proposal

2.10 The project proposals have been developed iteratively in conjunction with the production of the LVA with the intention of incorporating mitigation into the project from the outset. The effects identified and described as part of this LVA are based on the landscape proposals as shown in Figure 6.

Study Area

2.11 This LVA has focussed on an initial 3km study area. Based on an understanding of visibility gained during site visits and the results of the screened zone of theoretical visibility plan (Figure 9), it was considered that given the context of the landscape and the scale of the proposed development, this was a sensible study area. However, most landscape and visual receptors are within 1km of the site.

Baseline Information

2.12 The baseline landscape resource and visual receptors were identified in part through a desk based study of Ordnance Survey mapping, published landscape character studies, relevant planning policies, interrogation of aerial photography, as well as photographs taken and observations made during a site visit conducted during February 2022.

2.13 Access during site visits was restricted to publicly accessible locations or land within the ownership of the site landowners. No access was possible to private properties and therefore, assumptions have been made regarding the view from private properties. These assumptions have been based on an understanding of the properties and features present within the wider landscape gained during the site visit from publicly accessible locations. Assumptions are guided by professional experience and judgement.

2.14 Site visits were conducted during optimal visibility conditions allowing a good understanding of the landscape and the general visibility. It is recognised that site visits were undertaken when vegetation was in not in leaf and therefore, represents a worst-case visual baseline.

3. SITE CONTEXT

3.1 The site is located on agricultural land to the east of Keith, in proximity to Drum Road and the A95 further to the north.

3.2 The main part of the site is located within one corner of a large scale sloping rectangular pastoral field, used to graze sheep. Northern and western edges of the site are located adjacent to field boundaries defined by post and wire fencing with some limited areas of scrub potentially as part of former hedgerows. The southern and eastern boundaries are open. The site boundary extends up to Drum Road to the north, a minor single lane road serving as access for Drum Farm and other properties further to the east to Keith and is located directly adjacent to a core path (KT07). The site boundary also extends part way across the fields to the south-east, towards Burn of Drum, crossing steep falling land.

3.3 The site is located approximately 0.2km east of the Keith Substation complex, which has a number of large scale pylons and associated overhead powerlines radiating from it, a number of which lie in proximity to the site. Other prevalent electrical infrastructure is located to the south of Keith, namely Blackhillock Substation and Beatrice Onshore Substation for offshore windfarm connections, with associated connecting large scale pylons and associated overhead powerlines crossing the landscape.

3.4 The site is located in proximity to a number of core paths which cross in between agricultural fields to the west and north of the site, as well as following Drum Road and link south-eastern parts of Keith to Dunnyduff Wood to the south of the site.

3.5 A photographic record of views toward the site and its local context is provided in Appendix 2, with the photographic locations illustrated in Figure 10.

4. DESIGNATION AND POLICY CONTEXT

4.1 This section provides an overview of the policies and designations of particular relevance to landscape and visual issues. Figures 2 to 5 illustrate relevant designations within the locality of the site. The site is located within the administrative boundaries of Moray Council.

Landscape Designations

- 4.2 The site is not covered by any national or local landscape designations. Surrounding designations are illustrated by Figures 2 and 4.
- 4.3 Special Landscape Areas in proximity to the site are shown on Figure 2. There are no Special Landscape Areas located within the study area, nor within 5km of the site.
- 4.4 Part of a Core Path (KT07) is located within the site, before continuing to the west towards Keith and further north toward Broomhill Cemetery. A number of other core paths are located in proximity to the site, which are illustrated by Figure 3.
- 4.5 There are no Tree Preservation Orders covering the site. There are no listed buildings, scheduled monuments or conservation areas on or near the site, with those closest illustrated by Figure 4. Keith Mid Street (CA185) is the closest conservation area to the site, lying approximately 1km to the west at its closest point, containing numerous listed buildings, including Category A Roman Catholic Church of St Thomas and Presbytery (LB35623).

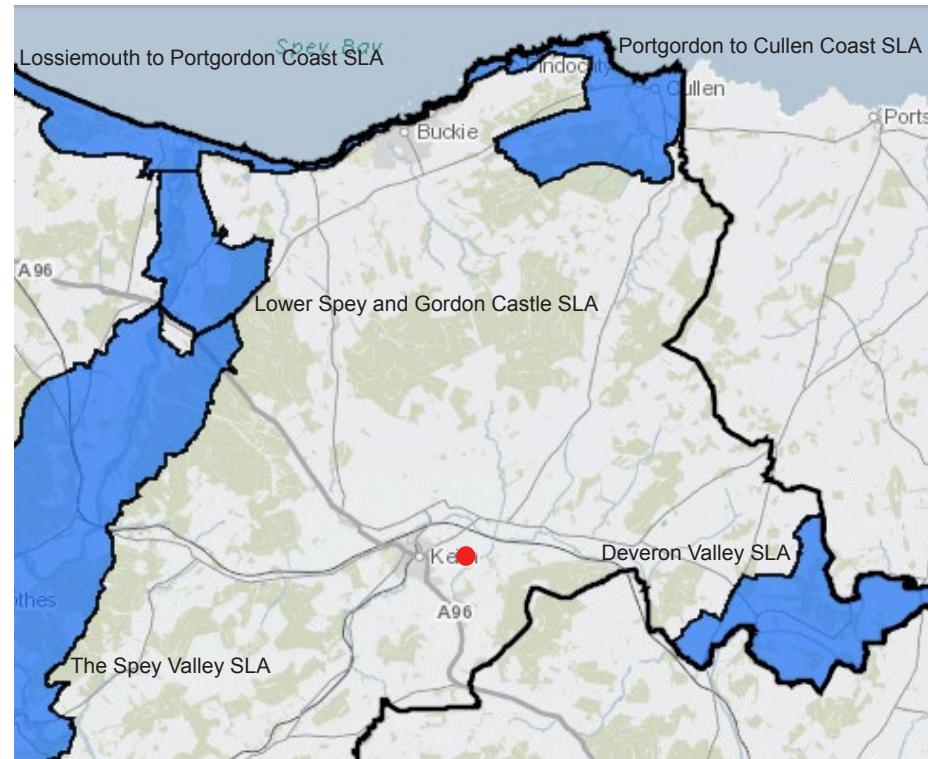


Figure 2: Extract from Moray Councils Special Landscape Area interactive mapping (approximate site location shown as red dot)

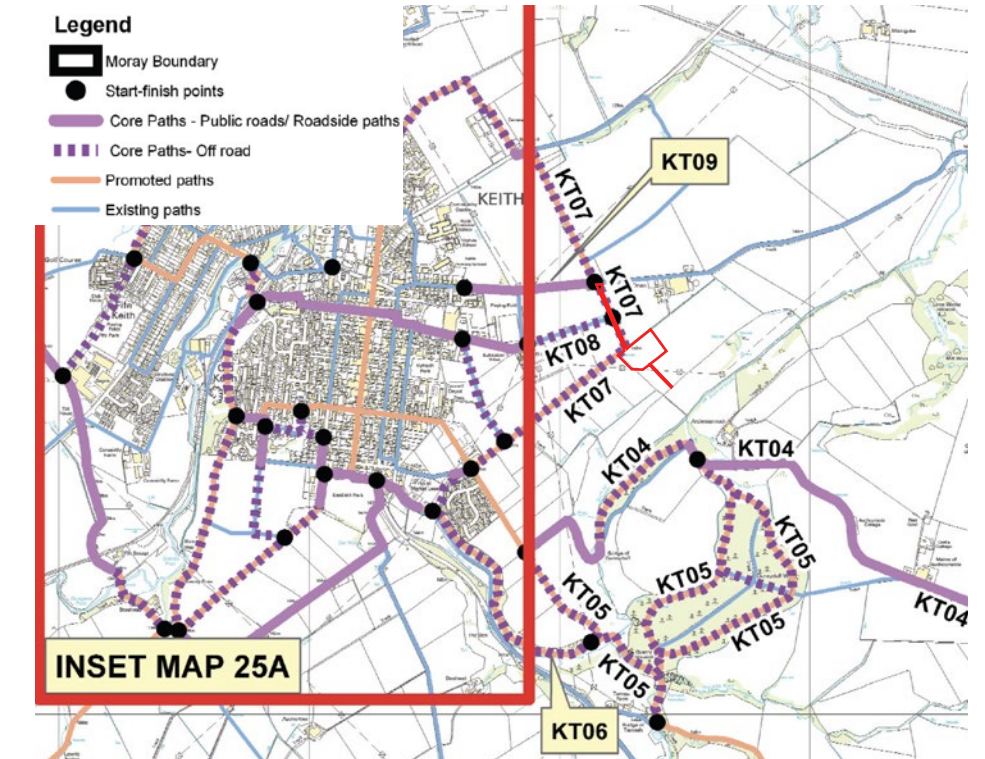


Figure 3: Extract from Adopted Moray Core Path Plan Keith Area (Map 25) (site boundary shown as red line)

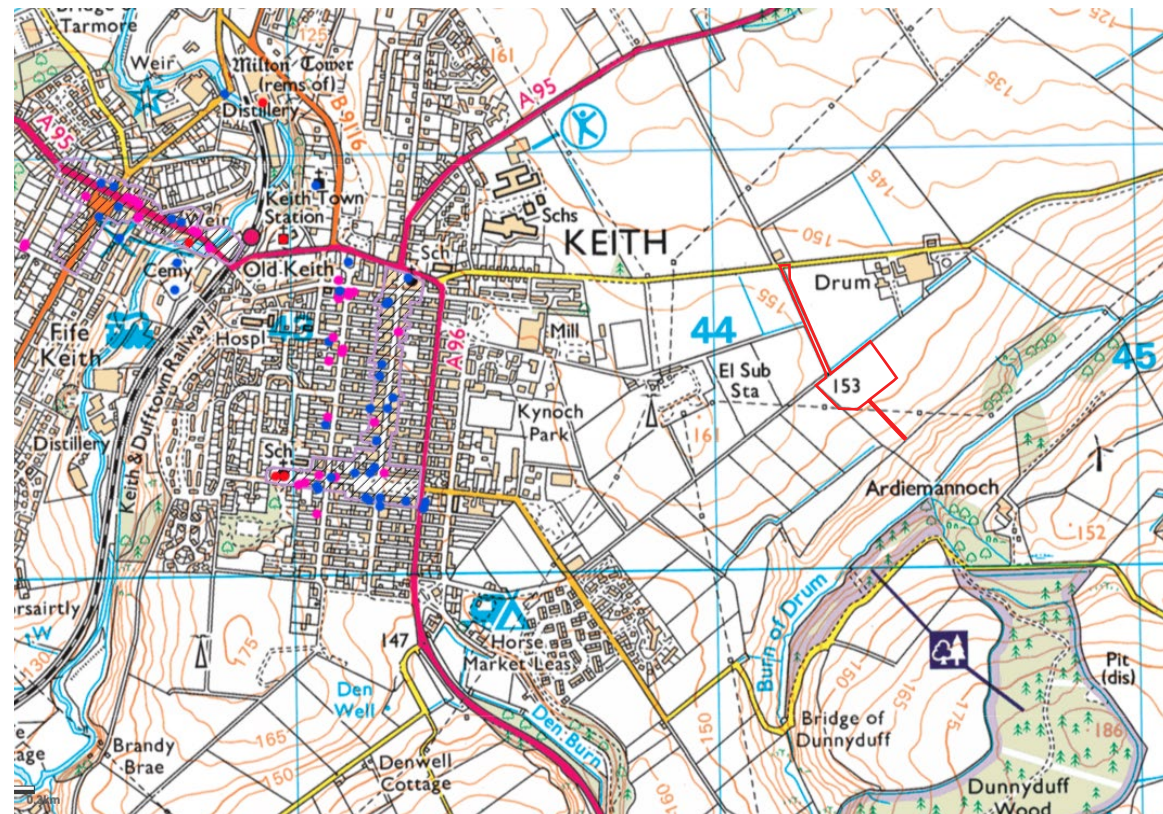


Figure 4: Extract from Historic Environment Scotland Interactive Designation Map (site boundary shown as red line)

Relevant Landscape Planning Policy

National Planning Guidance

4.6 The National Planning Framework for Scotland 3 (2014) and Scottish Planning Policy (2014) provide strategic planning guidance in Scotland. Scottish Planning Policy sets out four main outcomes as follows:

- *Outcome 1: A successful, sustainable place – supporting sustainable economic growth and regeneration, and the creation of well-designed, sustainable places.*
- *Outcome 2: A low carbon place – reducing our carbon emissions and adapting to climate change.*
- *Outcome 3: A natural, resilient place – helping to protect and enhance our natural and cultural assets, and facilitating their sustainable use.*
- *Outcome 4: A more connected place – supporting better transport and digital connectivity.*

4.7 A full and detailed consideration of the regulatory and planning policy frameworks applicable to the proposed development are provided in the Planning Statement accompanying the planning application.

Local Planning Policy

4.8 The site is situated within the administrative area of Moray Council (MC). MC has formally adopted the Moray Local Development Plan 2020 (MLDP) as of 27 July 2020 and is set out in five volumes. Those policies of relevance to the site are considered below and an extract from the MLDP Interactive web map is illustrated in Figure 5.

4.9 In Volume 1 of the MLDP, Primary Policy PP3 in relation to infrastructure and services, states that 'Development must be planned and co-ordinated with infrastructure to ensure that places function properly and proposals are adequately served by infrastructure and services' and goes on to state the following:

'b)Development proposals will not be supported where they...

ii) Adversely impact on active travel routes, core paths, rights of way, long distance and other access routes and cannot be adequately mitigated by an equivalent or better alternative provision in a location convenient for users...'

4.10 In Volume 1 of the MLDP, DP1 in relation to development principles, the policy states that impact assessments would need to be provided for

certain elements, including 'landscape' and 'provide mitigation to address these impacts'. The policy goes on to set out principles in relation to design, as well as other elements.

4.11 In Volume 1 of the MLDP, EP3 in relation to Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) and Landscape Character, the policy states:

'ii)Landscape Character

New developments must be designed to reflect the landscape characteristics identified in the Landscape Character Assessment of the area in which they are proposed.'

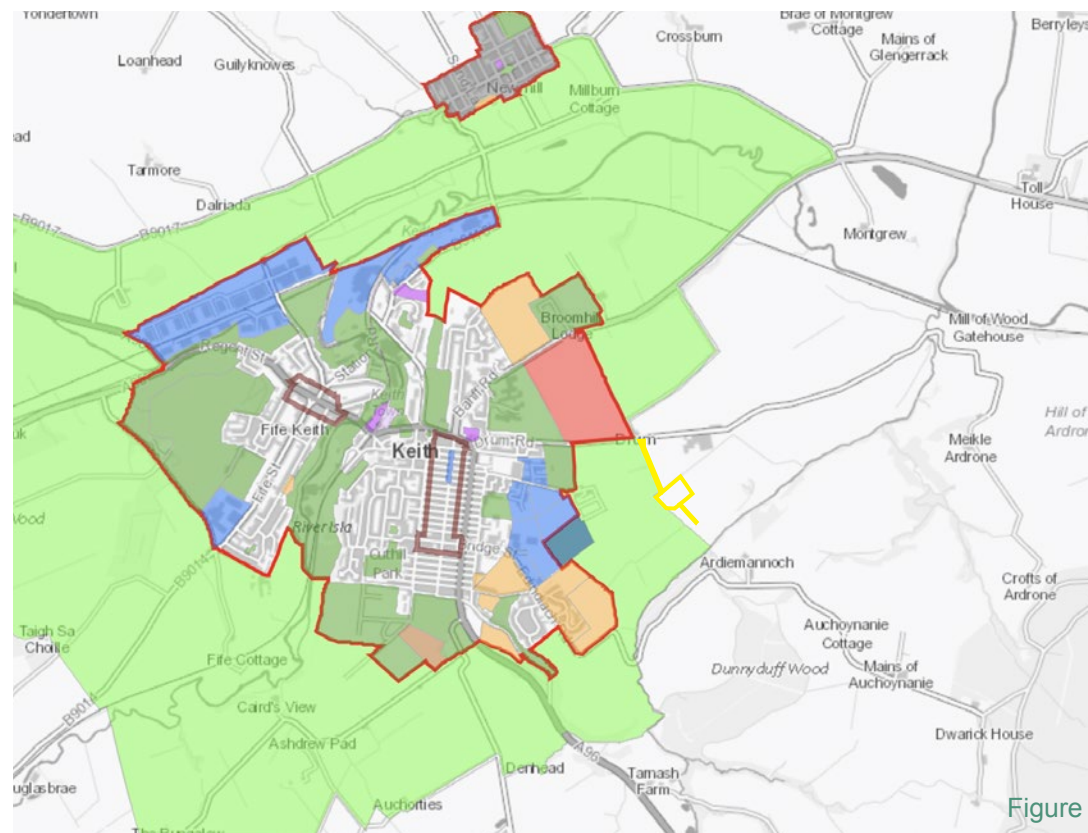
4.12 The site lies adjacent to an area identified as Countryside Around Towns (CAT's). Within Volume 1 of the MLDP, Policy EP4 in relation to CAT's states:

'Development proposals within the Countryside Around Towns (CAT's) areas identified around...Keith...will be refused unless they;

a)Involve the rehabilitation, conversion, limited extension, replacement or change of use of existing buildings, or

b)Are necessary for the purposes of agriculture, forestry, low intensity recreational or tourism use or specifically allowed under the terms of other Local Development Plan policies or settlement statements within these areas (excluding houses in all these cases), or

c)Are a designated "LONG" term housing allocation released for development under the terms of Policy DP3.'



Moray Local Dev Plan 2020 Settlement Designations

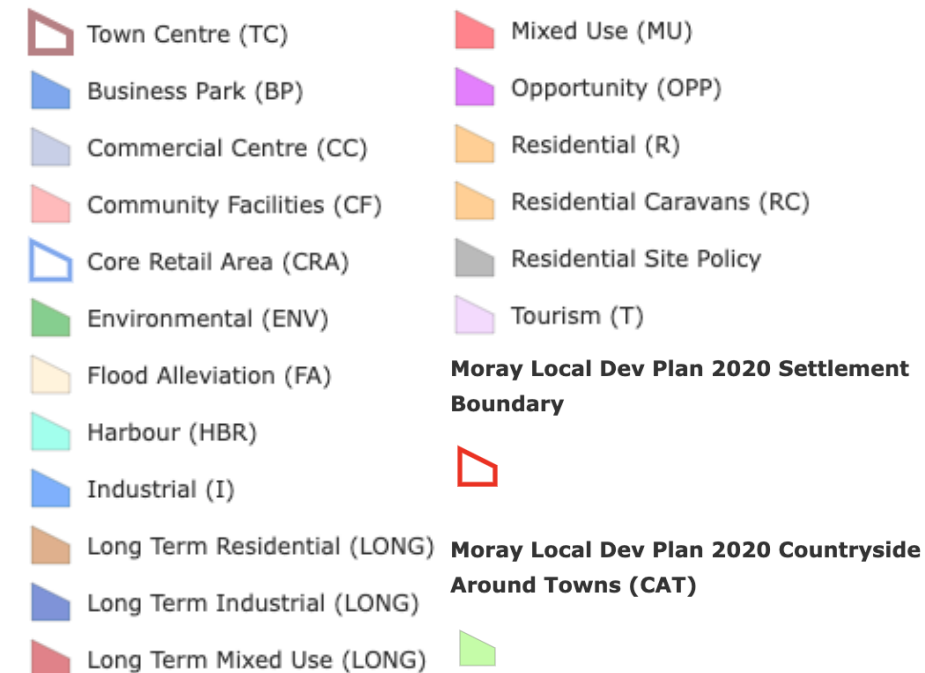


Figure 5: Extract from Moray Local Development Plan 2020 Interactive web map (site boundary shown as yellow line)

5. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

5.1 The proposed development comprises an energy storage facility with associated equipment and infrastructure. The proposed development would consist of the following:

- 36no. battery storage containers and associated PCSs and transformers, substation, auxiliary transformer, pre-insertion resistor, harmonic filter and storage container, set within a surfaced compound;
- A surfaced access track from Drum Road along the route of core path KT07 and connecting to the surfaced compound;
- A pole mounted CCTV system, located at strategic points around the compounds;
- An acoustic timber fence up to 3m high;
- Earth bunds to the north-west and south-west of the compound; and
- Attenuation feature to the south-east of the compound.

Mitigation Proposals

5.2 In order to mitigate against landscape and visual impacts, the landscape planting plan as illustrated at Figure 6, takes account of the identified areas of sensitivity by providing additional planting where required and maintenance notes for existing planting.

5.3 The landscape mitigation proposals include the following:

- Creation of new native tree and woodland planting on earth bunds to the north-west and south-west of the proposed compound to provide visual enclosure to the development;
- Provision of new native tree lined hedgerow planting along boundaries to the north-east and south-east of the development;
- Provision of native scrub on earth bund to the south-west, where in proximity to the overhead powerlines;
- Enhancement of other areas surrounding the compound through proposed grassland; and
- Ongoing landscape management of planting during the lifetime of the proposed development.

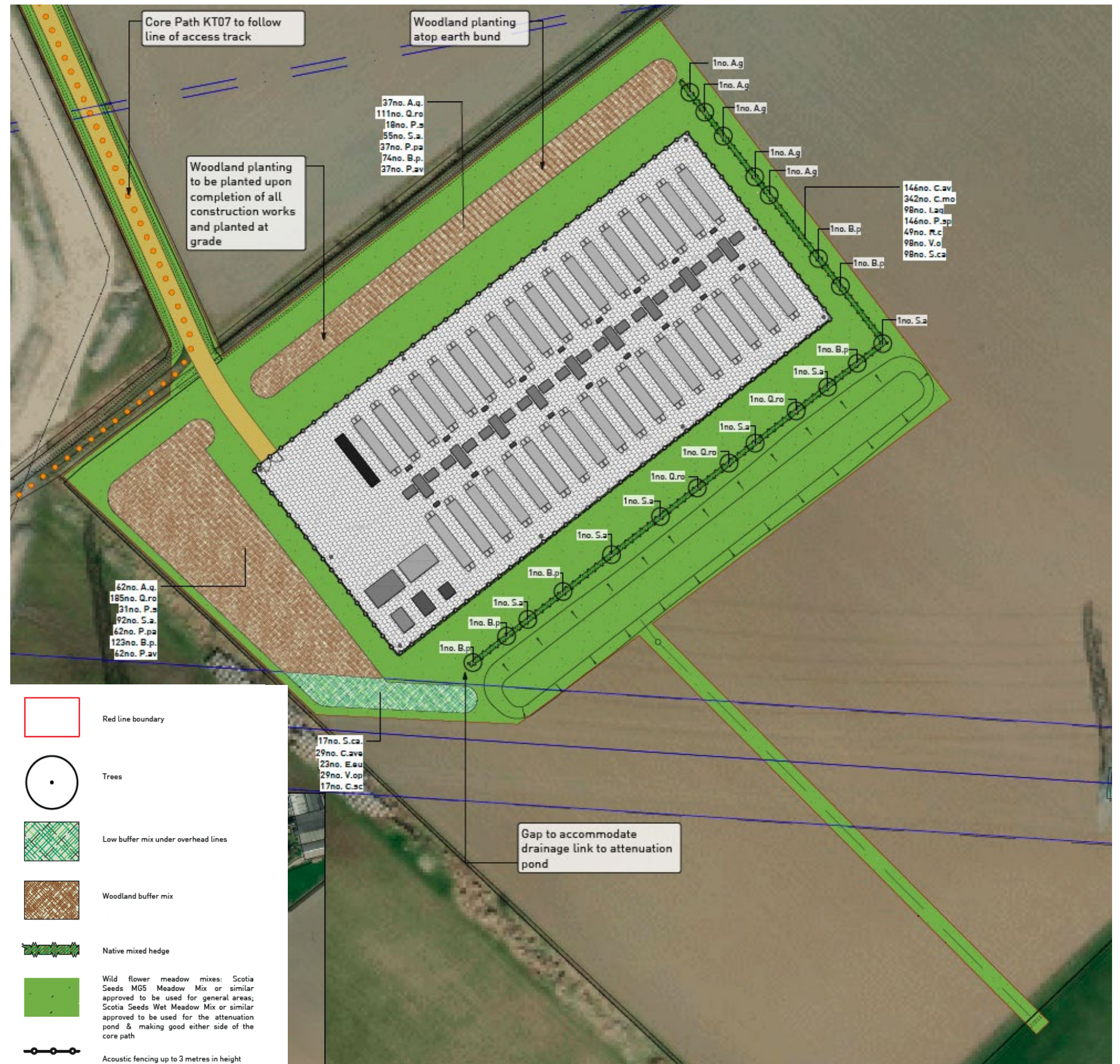


Figure 6: Detailed Landscape Proposals

6. LANDSCAPE BASELINE AND EFFECTS

- 6.1 The assessment of Landscape Effects deals with the changes to the landscape as a resource. Different combinations of the physical, natural and cultural components (including aesthetic, perceptual and experiential aspects) of the landscape and their spatial distribution create the distinctive character of landscapes in different places.
- 6.2 Effects are considered in relation to both landscape features and landscape character during construction, at Year 1 and at Year 15 and beyond. A summary of landscape effects are included in Table 1.

Landscape Features

Landform and Topography

- 6.3 The landform of the site is generally gently undulating to the north, with the highest point located to the north-west along the core path at approximately 155m AOD, sloping gently down towards Drum Road to the north-west and towards the main area of the site to south-east. The main part of the site is situated at around 150m AOD, with south-eastern parts falling steeply to 115m AOD toward the Burn of Drum.
- 6.4 To the west, land continues to rise, with Keith Substation located on a locally high point at around 160m AOD, before falling towards western and central areas of Keith. Land also gently falls to the north of Drum Road towards the River Isla and more steeply to the east towards the Burn of Drum. To the south, land rise steeply to the south of the Burn of Drum forming a steep valley either side of the water course.
- 6.5 The landform is not unusual in the locality, however, it is in keeping with the landscape character type description of gently undulating with short shallow valleys. The sensitivity of the landform is deemed to be medium.
- 6.6 There would be notable changes to the landform of the site to accommodate foundations of the proposed compounds and their fencing, the access track and other structures, as well as the creation of earth bunds and the attenuation feature. During construction, the magnitude of change is considered to be medium, which would result in Moderate adverse level of effect, which would be temporary in nature.
- 6.7 Upon completion, all earthworks works would be completed, with new features either planted or seeded, resulting in a low magnitude of change, resulting in a Moderate to Minor level of effect in the longer term.

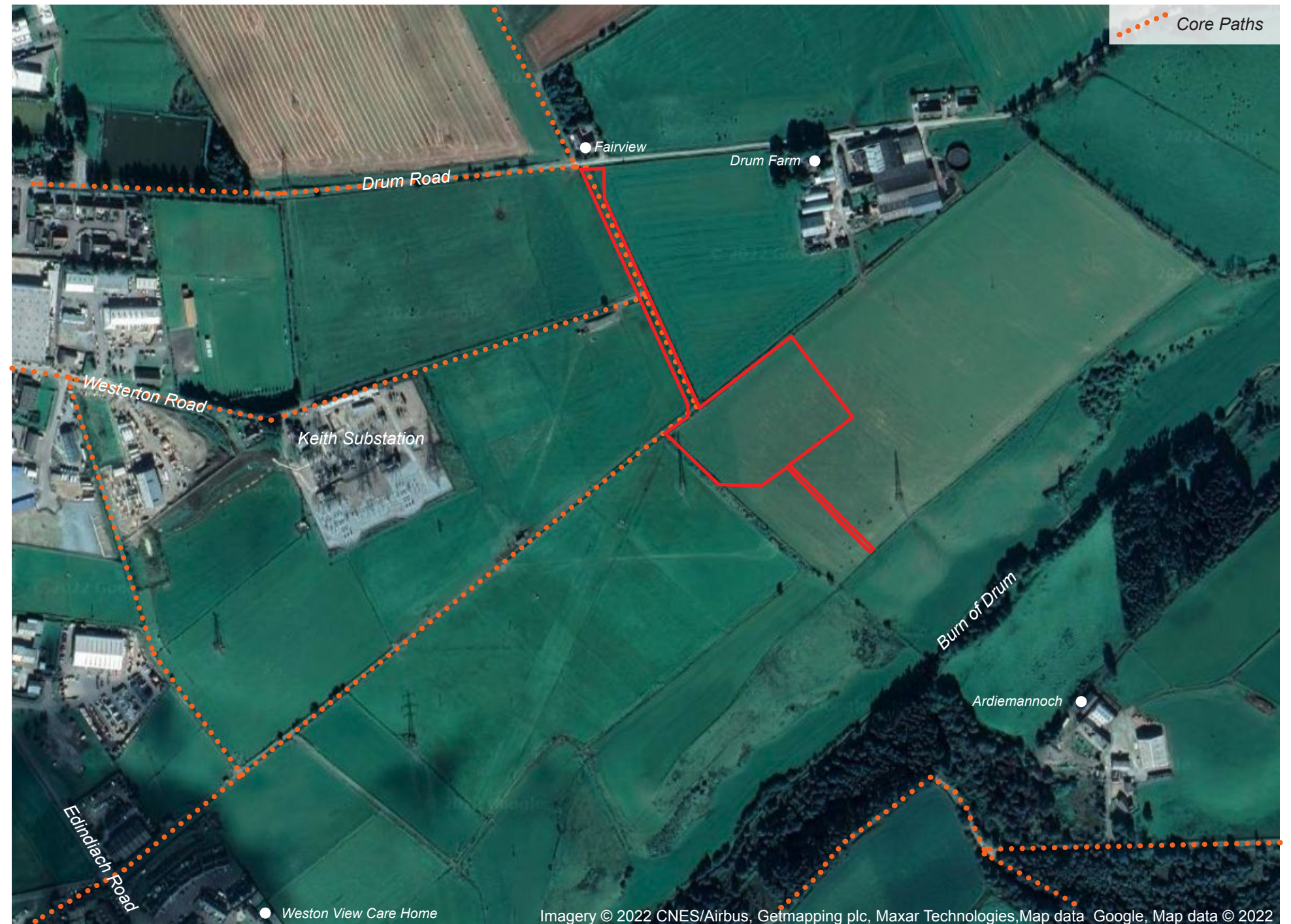


Figure 7: Aerial Photograph of site and immediate surroundings

Water Features and Drainage

- 6.8 There are no watercourses within the site, however, the south-eastern edge of the site is in proximity to the Burn of Drum. A number of agricultural ditches align the core path within the site and follow the field boundary to the north of the main site area.
- 6.9 Due to the lack of drainage features within the site, the sensitivity of these water features is deemed to be low to the type of development which is proposed.
- 6.10 There would be no direct or indirect effects upon the water features in proximity to the site. However, the proposed development would create a new attenuation feature, which would be appropriately seeded. A very low beneficial magnitude of change is predicted upon completion of the proposed development, resulting in a Minor beneficial long-term effect.

Land Use, Buildings and Infrastructure

- 6.11 The site comprises part of a large scale rectangular pastoral field, with no built form on the site, however, the north-eastern part of the site forms a core path. The site is strongly influenced by numerous surrounding infrastructure features, including the large scale Keith Substation to the west and electricity pylons with associated powerlines on all sides. The site lies adjacent to Drum Road, a minor road to the north. Keith is located to the west, with industrial and commercial uses concentrated closest to the site which align the eastern edge of the town.
- 6.12 It is considered that although a greenfield site with recreational access, it is typical of the surrounding agricultural landscape, influenced by surrounding land uses, particularly the pylons and Keith Substation, and therefore is deemed to have no greater than medium sensitivity.
- 6.13 The proposed development would represent an inevitable change to the current land use from part of an agricultural field to an operational battery storage facility with associated infrastructure, albeit in context of nearby large scale infrastructure in proximity to the site. Despite the surrounding influences, the magnitude of change is assessed as medium to high during construction and at Year 1 of operation, resulting in a Moderate adverse level of effect.
- 6.14 With the benefit of maturing landscape proposals on all sides of the proposed compounds within the site, the proposed development would appear further integrated with its surroundings. A medium magnitude of change is predicted at Year 15 of operation with a Moderate level of effect continuing.

Vegetation

- 6.15 There is very limited vegetation within the site, limited to scattered gorse and other vegetation within agricultural ditches and along field boundaries adjacent to the core path.
- 6.16 Vegetation in proximity to the site is similarly sparse, limited to small scattered areas of remnant hedgerows. Some mature planting is present surrounding nearby properties including Drum Farm and Fairview and a mature tree lined hedgerows occur along Drum Road and nearby field boundaries to the east of the site. Some mature planting is located sporadically either side of the Burn of Drum to the south of the site, with areas of plantation woodland present on higher land to the south-east, including Balloch Wood. There is distinct lack of vegetation surrounding Keith Substation and other industrial uses on the eastern edge of Keith, the exception being vegetation surrounding sports fields and school grounds.
- 6.17 Due to the limited nature and value of the immediate and nearby vegetation structure, the sensitivity of vegetation is deemed to be low.
- 6.18 During construction, some limited areas of vegetation may be removed adjacent to the core path whilst it is upgraded to an access track. A very low magnitude of change is predicted during construction giving rise to a Minor adverse temporary landscape effect.
- 6.19 Proposed native tree planting would be provided along northern and western boundaries of the main site area as illustrated in Figure 6, to better integrate the proposals with the surrounding areas. In addition, native tree lined hedgerows would define the eastern and southern boundaries. A very low beneficial magnitude of change is predicted at Year 1 as planting would not have matured, giving rise to a Minor beneficial landscape effect in the short term. In the longer term, the proposed vegetation would integrate the development with its surroundings and bring about a number of localised benefits, resulting in a long-term Minor beneficial landscape effect.

Landscape Character

6.20 This section provides an overview of the landscape character of the site and its locality. It provides an indication of the sensitivity of the landscape character to the proposed development and the resulting effects which would arise from the development proposals.

National Level Landscape Character

6.21 Scotland has a digital map-based national LCA, published in 2019 by Nature Scot, showing Landscape Character Types i.e. areas of consistent and recognisable landscape character. This mapping now supersedes those landscape character studies from the 1990s.

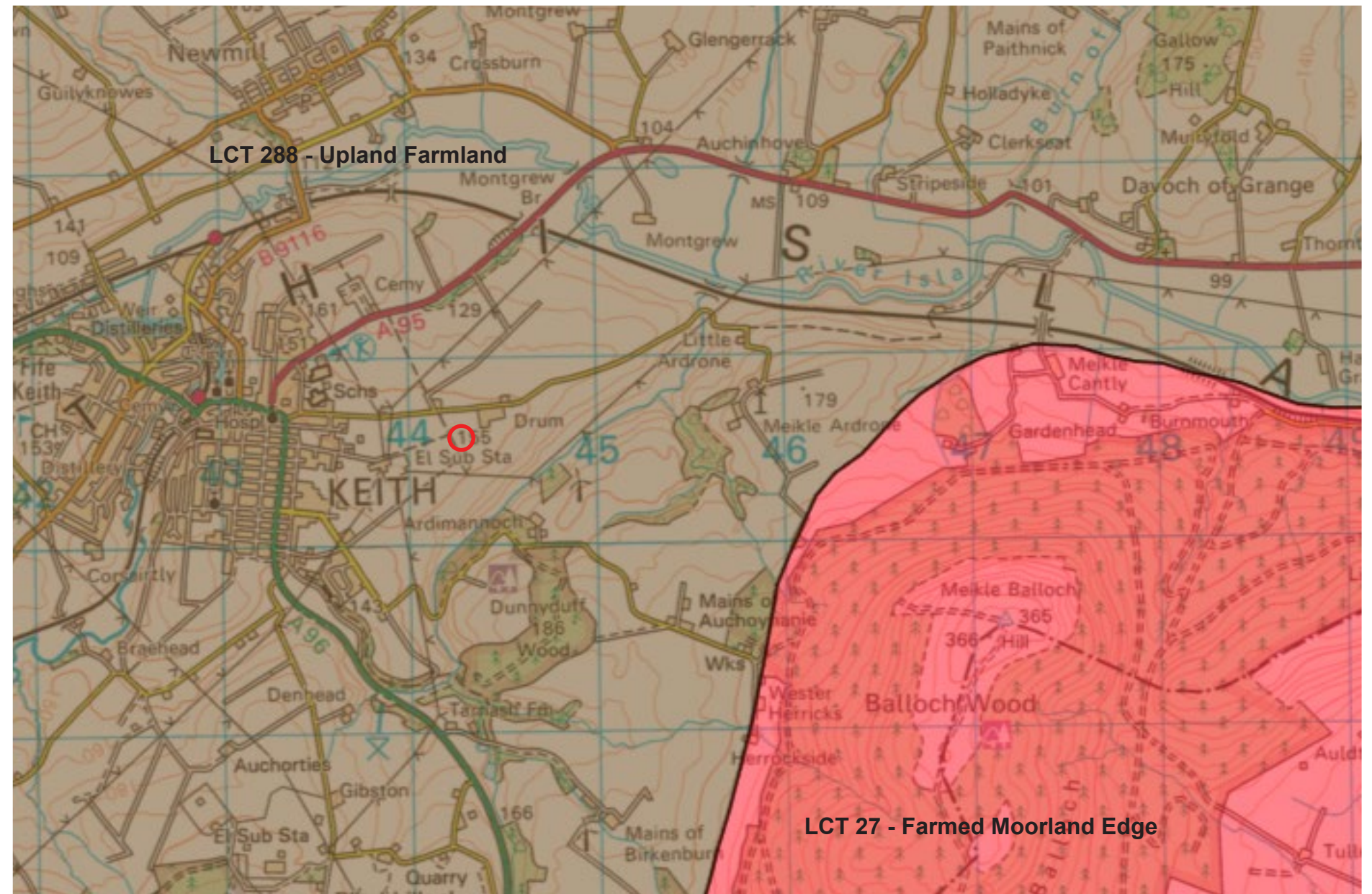
6.22 The site and most of the study area lies within Landscape Character Type (LCT) 288 - Upland Farmland as illustrated by Figure 8. The key characteristics of LCT 288 are as follows:

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

6.23 In addition, the site is located in proximity to LCT 27 - Farmed Moorland Edge. The key characteristics of LCT 27 are as follows:

- *Low rolling hills and valleys with some rocky ridges on higher slopes.*
- *Dark heather-clad and forested hills often form the backdrop to these upland fringe areas.*

Figure 8: Extract from Nature Scot Landscape Character Types Interactive Map (site shown as red circle)



- *Areas of moorland are interspersed with farmland on higher slopes.*
- *Marginal upland farming, sheep grazing and patches of gorse scrub, birch and willow occurs at the transition with the uplands.*
- *More intensive farmland is present on softly rolling ground.*
- *Areas of waterlogged ground and small bogs in places, particularly at the transition with moorland or in wetter valley bottoms.*
- *Scrubby patches of birch, willow and Scots pine occur in more marginal areas.*
- *Clumps of broadleaf trees and shelterbelts pattern farmed lower slopes.*
- *Mixed policy-influenced plantings more common in some areas.*
- *Farm buildings of grey/brown stone are often marked by clumps of trees.*
- *Derelict buildings are particularly evident on marginal upland areas.*
- *Prehistoric monuments and artefacts, including stone circles, carved stone balls and souterrains.*
- *Strong sense of history and culture, giving the landscape a timeless character.'*

Effects upon LCT 288 - Upland Farmland

- 6.24 The site lies centrally within the LCT, which encompasses the River Isla valley to the east and west of the town. The site is typical of the LCT being part of a farming valley and a rectilinear field with a simple vegetation pattern within the surrounding area. The LCT is influenced by numerous development and infrastructure, including electricity pylons and substations which are close to the site. On balance, the sensitivity of LCT 288 - Upland Farmland is assessed as being medium.
- 6.25 Within the wider character area, the proposals would constitute a development on agricultural land, appearing separate from similar nearby land uses, however, perceived in context of large-scale electricity pylons with associated overhead powerlines and other nearby infrastructure. Due to the locally elevated location of the site within the Burn of Drum valley, the development would have some influence upon the surrounding landscape to the south-east in particular. Due relative scale of the development relative to the size of the LCT, the proposed development would only effect a small part of a wider broad character area, which is already influenced by similar land uses.
- 6.26 It is therefore predicted that the proposed development would give rise to a no greater than low magnitude of change upon the wider LCT, resulting in a Moderate to Minor level of effect, which would reduce in the longer-term due to the proposed mitigation.

Effects upon LCT 27 - Farmed Moorland Edge

- 6.27 The site lies approximately 1.7km to the north-west of LCT 27 - Farmed Moorland Edge at its closest point, where the LCT occupies Balloch Wood and Meikle Balloch. The part of the LCT within the study area is typical of its character, being rolling forested hills acting as backdrop to upland fringe areas. The area is however indirectly influenced by Keith and its associated electricity infrastructure which surrounds the town. The sensitivity of LCT 27 - Farmed Moorland Edge is therefore considered to be medium to high.
- 6.28 Due to the presence of Balloch Wood, the proposed development would have very limited indirect influence upon the LCT, with any visibility from Meikle Balloch and farmland adjacent to Balloch Wood, already influenced by development within Keith and surrounding electricity infrastructure, including Blackhillock Substation. Only a very limited part of this the LCT would be influenced by the proposed development.
- 6.29 It is therefore predicted that the proposed development would give rise to a no greater than very low magnitude of change upon the wider LCT, resulting in only a Minor level of effect.

Effects on Local Landscape Character

Sensitivity of the site

- 6.30 The site is located on gently sloping agricultural land, with limited vegetation within the site and in proximity to numerous electricity pylons crossing the nearby landscape. Part of the site to the north-east is publicly accessible in the form of core path KT07.
- 6.31 The site is not covered by any landscape designations, has limited vegetation or other landscape features within the site and is influenced by surrounding detractors, including nearby substations, numerous powerlines and in proximity to Keith. The site has limited scenic qualities or conservation interests, however, is partly accessible. On balance, the value of the site is considered to be no greater than medium to low.
- 6.32 The site is influenced by the surrounding infrastructure, settlements and roads, however, is physically separated from these uses and appears as part of a wider agricultural valley setting, therefore, the susceptibility of the development upon the landscape character would be medium to high.
- 6.33 Overall, as an area of medium to low value and medium to high susceptibility to change, the character of the site is therefore considered to be of no greater than medium sensitivity.

Effects on the site

- 6.34 The landscape character of the site has the potential to be influenced to some degree by the proposed development. The proposed development would introduce a new feature into the landscape, which although of only limited height and scale and in proximity to similar such infrastructure, it would incorporate most of the site area and therefore adversely alter the physical and perceptual attributes of the site.
- 6.35 The magnitude of change to the site itself during construction and at Year 1 of operation is assessed as medium to high, which when combined with its medium sensitivity would result in a Moderate level of effect upon the landscape character of the site.
- 6.36 The landscape mitigation proposals would provide some enhancements to the scheme around peripheral areas, enclosing the proposed development and would have the potential to enhance local landscape character, in particular from the local core path network. In the longer-term, the magnitude of change to the site itself would reduce to medium, resulting in a Moderate level of effect at Year 15 of operation.

Receptor	Sensitivity	Development Phase	Magnitude of change	Level of Effect
Landscape Features				
Landform and topography	Medium	Construction	Medium	Moderate adverse
		Year 1	Medium to Low	Moderate to Minor
		Year 15	Medium to Low	Moderate to Minor
Water features and drainage	Low	Construction	No effect	--
		Year 1	Very Low	Minor benefit
		Year 15	Very Low	Minor benefit
Land use, buildings and infrastructure	Medium	Construction	Medium to High	Moderate adverse
		Year 1	Medium to High	Moderate adverse
		Year 15	Medium	Moderate adverse
Vegetation	Low	Construction	Very Low	Minor adverse
		Year 1	Very Low	Minor benefit
		Year 15	Low	Minor benefit
Landscape Character				
LCT288 – Upland Farmland	Medium	Construction	Low	Moderate to Minor adverse
		Year 1	Low	Moderate to Minor adverse
		Year 15	Low	Moderate to Minor adverse
LCT 27 – Farmed Moorland Edge	Medium to High	Construction	Very Low	Minor adverse
		Year 1	Very Low	Minor adverse
		Year 15	Very Low	Minor adverse
The site itself	Medium	Construction	Medium to High	Moderate adverse
		Year 1	Medium to High	Moderate adverse
		Year 15	Medium	Moderate adverse

Table 1: Summary of Landscape Effects

7. VISUAL EFFECTS

Introduction

7.1 An assessment of visual effects considers the potential for changes in views and visual amenity. The aim is to establish the area in which the development may be visible, the different groups of people who may experience views of the development, the places where they will be affected, and the nature of the views and visual amenity (meaning the overall quality and pleasantness to a view).

7.2 Effects are considered during construction, at Year 1 and at Year 15 and beyond. New planting takes a number of years to mature and average growth rates have been taken into consideration. The effectiveness of the vegetation both in terms of integrating the development into the surrounding landscape and in providing visual screening would improve over time and needs to be considered appropriately. A summary of visual effects are included in Table 2.

7.3 Photography is set out within the photographic record set out in Appendix 2. Viewpoint locations are shown on Figure 10.

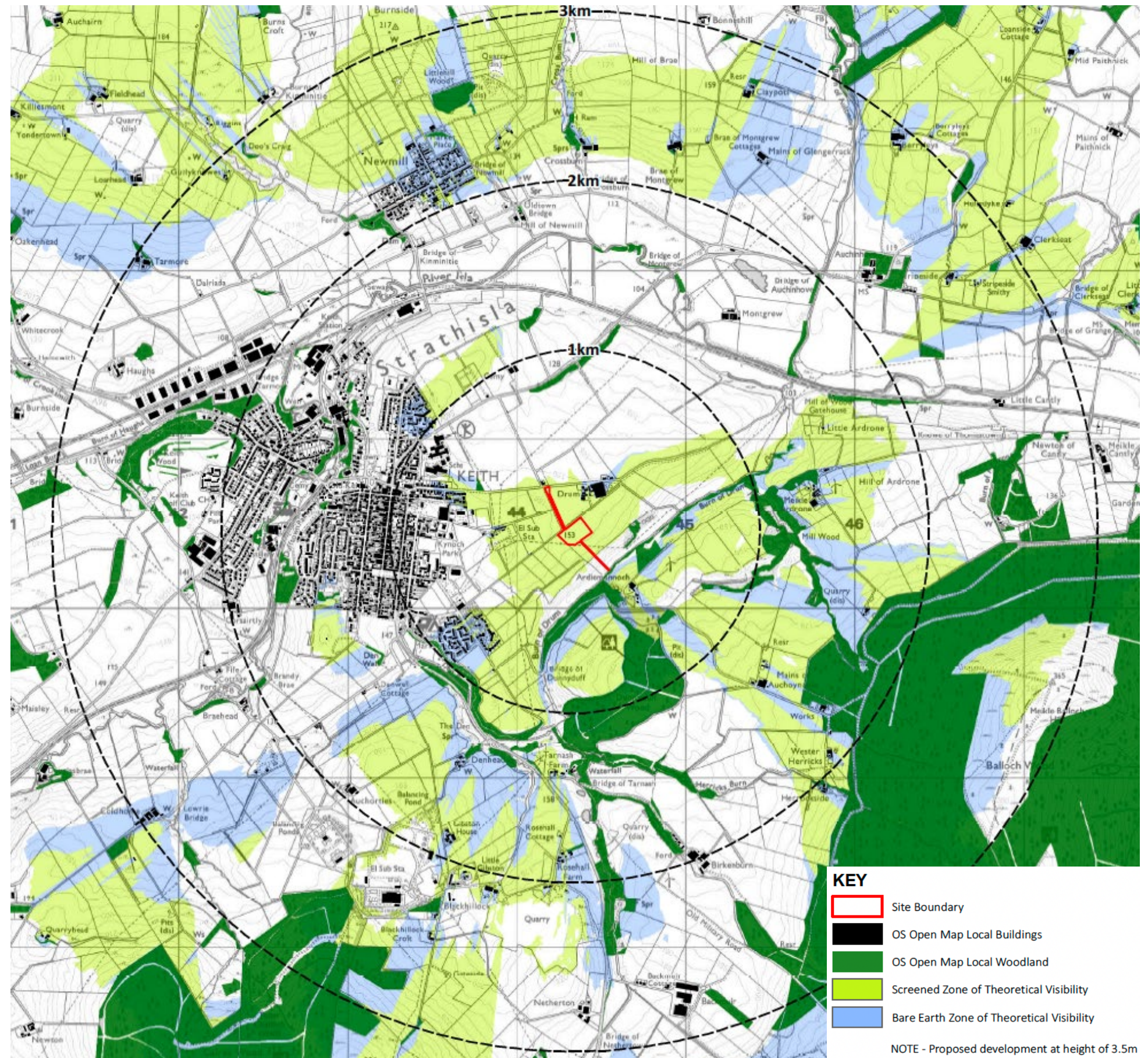
Zone of Theoretical Visibility

7.4 The Screened Zone of Theoretical Visibility (Figure 9) identifies the potential locations from which the development may be visible. The Screened Zone of Theoretical Visibility (SZTV) has been produced using Digital Terrain Modelling (DTM) data. Existing built development (8m tall) and larger blocks of woodland have also been modelled (15m tall) to take account of the screening effect that these would provide. However, the screening effect provided by smaller blocks of woodland, individual trees and hedgerows have not been taken into account, and consequently the actual extent of the area from which the proposed development is visible is likely to be much smaller. Figure 9 also conveys the bare earth scenario, assuming that only the DTM data is used and there are no elements providing screening.

7.5 The SZTV has been run at an average height of 3.5m across the site for the elements which form the Proposed Development.

Sensitivity

7.6 Residential receptors, users of Core Paths and walking routes and visitors to cemeteries are of high visual sensitivity. Users of the local minor road network where the view is not the focus of activity are of medium sensitivity. People using larger A-roads are of low sensitivity. The approach to sensitivity of visual receptors is set out in Appendix 1.



KEY

- Site Boundary
- OS Open Map Local Buildings
- OS Open Map Local Woodland
- Screened Zone of Theoretical Visibility
- Bare Earth Zone of Theoretical Visibility

NOTE - Proposed development at height of 3.5m

Figure 9: Zone of Theoretical Visibility Plan

Residential Receptors

7.7 For the purpose of this assessment, it is assumed as a worst-case, that all nearby dwellings are permanent residences.

Fairview

7.8 Views are indicatively represented by photographs taken from Viewpoint 1 in Appendix 2.

7.9 The property lies adjacent to the north-eastern most part of the site, on the northern side of Drum Road. Despite the proximity of the property, with the benefit of surrounding garden vegetation, views towards the main part of the site would be limited, however, glimpses would be possible when leaving the driveway.

7.10 During construction, the formation of the access track would be in the foreground, with glimpses of activity within the main part of the site and construction traffic passing close to the property from Drum Road. At worst, a medium magnitude of change is predicted during construction, resulting in a Moderate adverse level of effect.

7.11 At Year 1, the access track would be complete, appearing as an upgrade to the existing track along the core path. Due to the gently sloping landform, most direct views of the proposed development would be obscured, however, glimpses above landform would be possible. A worst case medium to low magnitude of change is predicted at Year 1, giving rise to a Moderate to Minor level of effect.

7.12 At Year 15, once proposed planting has established around the proposed development, most direct views would be filtered, however, some glimpses maybe possible. A low magnitude of change is predicted at Year 15, with a Moderate to Minor level of effect continuing.

Drum Farm

7.13 Views are indicatively represented by photographs taken from Viewpoint 2 in Appendix 2.

7.14 Most direct views towards the main part of the site are obscured by mature vegetation surrounding the property and by agricultural buildings to the south. However, some glimpses would be possible from upper floors towards the north-western parts along the core path.

7.15 During construction, the formation of the access track and construction traffic along Drum Road would be visible from upper floors, with glimpses of activity within the main part of the site. At worst, a medium magnitude

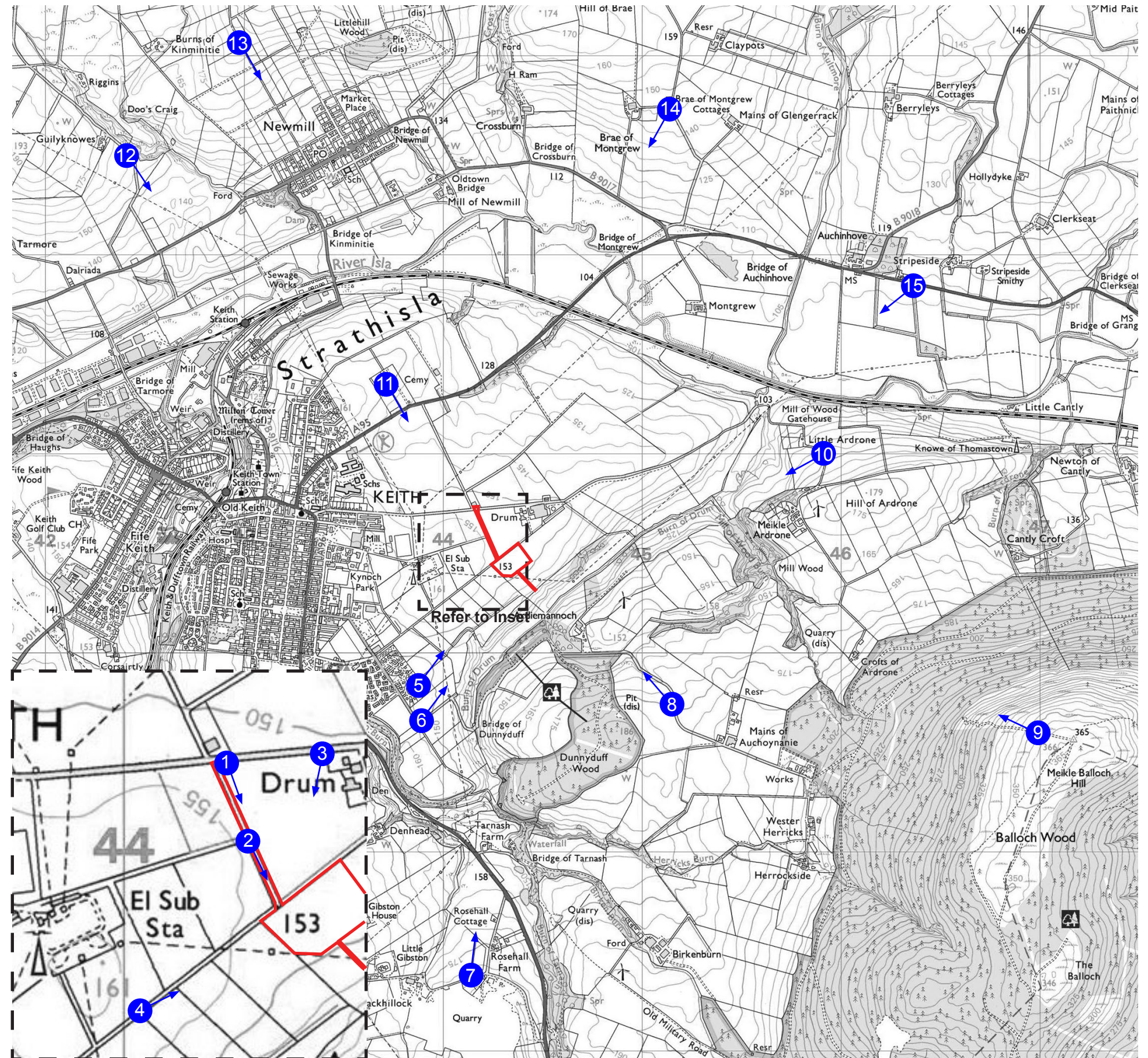


Figure 10: Viewpoint Location Plan

of change is predicted during construction, resulting in a Moderate adverse level of effect.

7.16 At Year 1, the access track would be complete, with glimpses towards the proposed development limited by intervening vegetation surrounding the property. At worst, a medium to low magnitude of change is predicted at Year 1, giving rise to a Moderate to Minor level of effect.

7.17 At Year 15, once proposed planting has established around the proposed development, most direct views would be filtered, however, some limited glimpses maybe possible. A low magnitude of change is predicted at Year 15, with a Moderate to Minor level of effect continuing.

Ardiemannoch

7.18 The properties to the south of the main farm complex would have no views towards the site, however, the property to the north has uninterrupted views over the valley towards the site.

7.19 Due to the elevated location of the property on the opposing valley side, views towards the proposed development would be notable, however, seen in context of large scale electricity pylons and with a backdrop of the Keith substation. A worst case medium to high magnitude of change would occur during construction, resulting in a Moderate to Major temporary adverse level of effect. Once completed, at Year 1 the magnitude of change would reduce to medium, resulting in a Moderate adverse level of effect.

7.20 With the benefit of maturing planting on all sides of the proposed development, views would be partly filtered. A medium to low magnitude of change is predicted at Year 15, with a Moderate to Minor level of effect.

Sellar Crescent / Weston View Care Home, Keith

7.21 Views are indicatively represented by photographs taken from Viewpoint 5 in Appendix 2.

7.22 Properties adjacent to open agricultural land would have potential to view the site. However, most properties along the street and those within the care home facing towards Keith, would have no view towards the site.

7.23 During construction, there would be views towards the proposed development within the main part of the site, as well as glimpses of construction traffic accessing from Drum Road. Any views would be seen in context of numerous pylons crossing the landscape, as well as Keith Substation. A medium to low magnitude of change is predicted during construction, with a Moderate to Minor level of effect. At Year 1, the proposed landscape mitigation would yet to have matured, therefore, a Moderate to Minor level of effect would continue.

7.24 With the benefit of proposed mitigation along site boundaries, the magnitude of change is predicted to reduce to no greater than low at Year 15, resulting in a Moderate to Minor level of effect.

Den Crescent, Keith

7.25 Due to the intervening landform in the foreground views toward the proposed development would be limited. A low magnitude of change is predicted during construction at Year 1, resulting in a Moderate to Minor level of effect.

7.26 With the benefit of proposed mitigation along site boundaries, the magnitude of change is predicted to reduce to very low at Year 15, resulting in a Minor level of effect.

Properties at Blackhillock

7.27 Views are indicatively represented by photographs taken from Viewpoint 7 in Appendix 2.

7.28 A number of properties in elevated locations have outward views towards the site, which in some cases is framed by nearby woodland and vegetation, which obscures views towards Keith. Due to the distance from the site and context of other built form including Keith Substation and industrial buildings on the eastern edge of Keith, a low magnitude of change is predicted during construction and at Year 1, resulting in a Moderate to Minor level of effect.

7.29 With the benefit of proposed mitigation along site boundaries, the magnitude of change is predicted to reduce to very low at Year 15, resulting in a Minor level of effect.

Auchoynanie Cottage / Mains of Auchoynanie

7.30 Views are indicatively represented by photographs taken from Viewpoint 8 in Appendix 2.

7.31 Both properties are orientated to face away from the site in a south-westerly direction, with Mains of Auchoynanie being surrounded by garden vegetation limiting outward views. However, oblique views towards the site are possible, seen in context of other development, including Keith Substation and housing to the north-east of Keith.

7.32 Due to the elevated location of the properties on the opposing valley, views towards the proposed development would be notable, however, seen in context of large scale electricity pylons, a backdrop of the Keith substation and other development within Keith. A worst case medium magnitude of change would occur during construction and at Year 1,

resulting in a Moderate adverse level of effect.

7.33 With the benefit of maturing planting on all sides of the proposed development, views would be partly filtered. A medium to low magnitude of change is predicted at Year 15, with a Moderate to Minor level of effect.

Properties adjacent to Balloch Wood

7.34 Due to the properties elevated location and outlook towards Keith and the site, the proposed development would be visible above Dunnyduff Wood. However, at a distance of around 2km, the proposed development would not be prominent in the wider view. A medium to low magnitude of change would occur during construction and at Year 1, resulting in a Moderate to Minor adverse level of effect.

7.35 With the benefit of maturing planting on all sides of the proposed development, views would be partly filtered. A low magnitude of change is predicted at Year 15, with a Moderate to Minor level of effect continuing.

Properties off Drum Road to east

7.36 Views are indicatively represented by photographs taken from Viewpoint 10 in Appendix 2.

7.37 These scattered properties are located to the north-east of the site, on the opposing valley. Some direct views are curtailed by field boundary vegetation, however the site is visible on sloping ground.

7.38 Construction activity within the main part of the site would be visible from the properties, albeit in context of numerous electricity pylons crossing the landscape both in the foreground, as well as beyond the site, and at a distance of approximately 1.5km. A medium to low magnitude of change is predicted during construction, with a Moderate to Minor level of effect.

7.39 The level of effects would continue at Year 1. However, with the benefit of maturing planting on all sides of the proposed development, views would be partly filtered. A low magnitude of change is predicted at Year 15, with a Moderate to Minor level of effect.

Newmill

7.40 Newmill is situated on rising land on the opposing River Isla valley, with all properties is orientated towards the site. As the site slopes away from the town, being part of an opposing valley, views towards the proposed development would be limited. As a result, a very low magnitude of change is predicted at all time periods, leading to a Minor level of effect.

Properties east and west of Newmill

- 7.41 Views are indicatively represented by photographs taken from Viewpoints 12, 13 and 14 in Appendix 2.
- 7.42 A number of scattered properties are located on higher ground to the east, west and north of Newmill with panoramic views over the surrounding landscape including towards the site.
- 7.43 Any view towards the proposed development from these properties would be seen in context of Keith to the west and other infrastructure within the valley. A worst case low magnitude of change would occur during construction and at Year 1, resulting in a Moderate to Minor adverse level of effect.
- 7.44 With the benefit of maturing planting along site boundaries, a very low magnitude of change is predicted at Year 15, resulting in a Minor level of effect.

Recreational Receptors

Core Path KT07

- 7.45 Views are indicatively represented by photographs taken from Viewpoints 1, 2 and 4 within Appendix 2.
- 7.46 The core path provides a loop from northern to southern parts of Keith via agricultural land to the east of the town. The route forms the north-eastern part of the site and passes close to the main part of the site, where it follows access routes and spaces in-between field boundaries. Views over the surrounding countryside are possible from the core path, however, parts of the site are influenced by the proximity to nearby infrastructure and built form.
- 7.47 The route of the core path from Drum Road to the main part of the site would be temporarily diverted during construction, with construction of the proposed development appearing notable in views from parts of the path to the west. Views from the core path to the north of Drum Road would be limited by landform and intervening vegetation surrounding Fairview. A high magnitude of change is predicted during construction, affecting an approximate length of 850m of the route, resulting in a temporary Major level of effect.
- 7.48 At Year 1, the length of route between Drum Road and the main part of the site would be restored, with an improved walking surface, acting as the access route to the proposed development. Views towards the proposed development would be prominent from parts of the route where closest to the main part of the site, with most direct views filtered by earth

bunding and fencing surrounding the proposed storage area. A worst case medium to high magnitude of change is predicted at Year 1, which would result in a Moderate to Major adverse level of effect.

- 7.49 With the benefit of new planting around the periphery of the site, direct views towards the proposed development from the core path would reduce and appear integrated with the surrounding area. However, due to the proximity of the core path to the proposed development, a worst case medium magnitude of change is predicted at Year 15, resulting in a Moderate level of effect. It should be noted, however, that the level of effect is likely to be less where further from the proposed development to the north and west of the route, with no view beyond Drum Road and beyond 0.5km to the west.

Core Path KT08

- 7.50 Views are indicatively represented by photographs taken from Viewpoint 2 within Appendix 2.
- 7.51 The core path provides a direct connection between Keith and core path KT07, passing along the access track to Keith Substation, before passing in-between agricultural fields further to the east.
- 7.52 During construction, clear and open views would be possible towards the main part of the site and formation of the access track along the line of core path KT07 along a length of approximately 250m of the route. Beyond 250m to the east, views would be curtailed by Keith Substation and vegetation surrounding a nearby football pitch. A medium to high magnitude of change is predicted during construction, resulting in a Moderate to Major level of effect.
- 7.53 At Year 1, the access track along KT07 would be complete, with only oblique views towards the proposed development within the main part of the site, seen in context of the adjacent Keith Substation. A medium magnitude of change is predicted at Year 1 over a short length of the core path, resulting in a Moderate level of effect.
- 7.54 With the benefit of maturing planting on all sides of the proposed development, views would be partly filtered. A medium to low magnitude of change is predicted at Year 15, with a Moderate to Minor level of effect.

Core Path KT09

- 7.55 Views are indicatively represented by photographs taken from Viewpoint 1 within Appendix 2.
- 7.56 The core path follows Drum Road between the edge of Keith up to where it meets core path KT07.

- 7.57 Construction traffic would use Drum Road to access the site, which would affect the setting of the route. In addition, construction of the access track along core path KT07 would be visible, with oblique glimpses towards the main part of the site possible in context of Keith Substation and intermittent vegetation aligning the road. Due to the proximity of construction activity, a worst case medium magnitude of change is predicted during construction, resulting in a short-term and temporary Moderate level of effect.
- 7.58 At Year 1, the access track would be complete, and due to the gently sloping landform, most direct views of the proposed development would be obscured, with some limited oblique glimpses possible above landform. A worst case medium to low magnitude of change is predicted at Year 1, giving rise to a Moderate to Minor level of effect.
- 7.59 At Year 15, once proposed planting has established around the proposed development, most direct views would be filtered, however, some oblique glimpses may be possible. A low magnitude of change is predicted at Year 15, with a Moderate to Minor level of effect continuing.

Core Path KT04

- 7.60 Views are indicatively represented by photographs taken from Viewpoints 6 and 8 within Appendix 2.
- 7.61 The core path follows mostly minor roads between the south-eastern edge of Keith, to the car park at Balloch Wood, passing for a short length through woodland adjacent to Burn of Drum. Glimpses of the site would be possible where the road is elevated adjacent to Keith over a short distance (refer to Viewpoint 6), then visibility would become very limited due to intervening landform, woodland and built form, until close to Auchoynergie Cottage where the route is elevated once again.
- 7.62 Due to the elevated location of the core path both near Keith and on rising land on the opposing valley, views towards the proposed development would be notable in select location. However, any views of the proposed development would be seen in context of large scale electricity pylons crossing the landscape, Keith substation and other development within Keith. A worst case medium magnitude of change would occur during construction and at Year 1, resulting in a Moderate adverse level of effect.
- 7.63 With the benefit of maturing planting on all sides of the proposed development, most views towards the proposed development along the route would be partly filtered. A medium to low magnitude of change is predicted at Year 15, with a Moderate to Minor level of effect.

Core Path KT05

- 7.64 Views are indicatively represented by photographs taken from Viewpoints 6 within Appendix 2.
- 7.65 Core Path KT05 provides a walk from Edindiach Road to the south-east of Keith, along a looped path through Dunnyduff Wood and back again. Most of the route would have limited views towards the site views towards the site due to intervening woodland, however, at the start and finish of the walk, some oblique views from the path would be possible.
- 7.66 During construction, there would be views towards the proposed development within the main part of the site, as well as glimpses of construction traffic accessing from Drum Road. Any views would be seen in context of numerous pylons crossing the landscape, as well as Keith Substation. A medium to low magnitude of change is predicted during construction, with a Moderate to Minor level of effect, which would be limited to a 400m stretch of the core path. At Year 1, the proposed landscape mitigation would yet to have matured, therefore, a Moderate to Minor level of effect would continue.
- 7.67 With the benefit of proposed mitigation along site boundaries, the magnitude of change is predicted to reduce to no greater than low at Year 15, resulting in a Moderate to Minor level of effect.

Herricks Walk, Balloch Woods

- 7.68 Views are indicatively represented by photographs taken from Viewpoint 9 in Appendix 2.
- 7.69 The Herricks Walk is a 2 1/4 mile walk around Balloch Wood, including up to Meikle Balloch (365m AOD) which has been signposted by Forestry Commission Scotland. Due to the dense coniferous woodland and the location of the walk, there is little visibility towards the site from the route. However, over an approximate 450m stretch of the route, the site is visible, seen as part of a wider panoramic view over the town and surrounding landscape. It should be noted that there is no view towards the site from Meikle Balloch trig point.
- 7.70 Due to the distance from the site at over 2km and the panoramic nature of the view, the proposed development would form only a limited part of the overall view. A low magnitude of change is predicted during all time periods, resulting in a Moderate to Minor level of effect.

Broomhill Cemetery

- 7.71 Views are indicatively represented by photographs taken from Viewpoint 11 in Appendix 2.

- 7.72 The site is not visible from the cemetery as a result of intervening landform and vegetation. Some very limited glimpses of the proposed development would be possible over these intervening features.
- 7.73 A very low magnitude of change is predicted during all time periods, resulting in a Minor level of effect.

Road Users

Drum Road

- 7.74 Views are indicatively represented by photographs taken from Viewpoints 1, 3 and 10 within Appendix 2.
- 7.75 This dead end minor road provides access from Keith to numerous residential properties beyond the edge of the town and borders the north-eastern edge of the site.
- 7.76 Construction traffic would use Drum Road to access the site, which would affect the setting of part of the route up to Drum Farm, as well as construction of the access track along core path KT07 and oblique glimpses towards the main part of the site being visible, in context of Keith Substation and intermittent vegetation aligning the road. Beyond Drum Farm and for much of the road up to Little Ardrone to the east, road side vegetation combined with field boundary trees and hedgerow would filter views towards construction activity. Beyond this property, some glimpses would be possible towards construction activity over a short steep section of the road. At worst, due to the proximity of construction activity to those parts of the road adjacent to the site, a medium magnitude of change is predicted during construction, resulting in a short-term and temporary Moderate level of effect.
- 7.77 At Year 1, the access track would be complete, with most direct views of the proposed development obscured where closest to the site. To the east, the main part of the site would be visible from the road, albeit in context of numerous electricity pylons crossing the landscape both in the foreground, as well as beyond the site. A worst case medium to low magnitude of change is predicted at Year 1, giving rise to a Moderate to Minor level of effect.
- 7.78 At Year 15, once proposed planting has established around the proposed development, most direct views would be filtered from the road. A low magnitude of change is predicted at Year 15, with a Moderate to Minor level of effect continuing.

Edindiach Road

- 7.79 Views are indicatively represented by photographs taken from Viewpoint 6 within Appendix 2.
- 7.80 Most of the road would have no view towards the site due to the presence of intervening properties aligning the eastern edge, however, some oblique glimpses are possible towards the site from the southern most parts of the road.
- 7.81 There would be views towards the proposed development within the main part of the site. Any views would be seen in context of numerous pylons crossing the landscape, as well as Keith Substation. A medium to low magnitude of change is predicted during construction and at Year 1, with a Moderate to Minor level of effect,
- 7.82 With the benefit of proposed mitigation along site boundaries, the magnitude of change is predicted to reduce to no greater than low at Year 15, resulting in a Moderate to Minor level of effect.

Minor Road to south-east (KT04)

- 7.83 The assessment of this road is set out under Core Path KT04, which concludes a Moderate to Minor long-term level of effect.

Minor elevated roads to north

- 7.84 Views are indicatively represented by photographs taken from Viewpoints 12, 13 and 14 within Appendix 2.
- 7.85 Any view towards the proposed development from elevated parts of these roads would be seen in context of Keith to the west and other infrastructure within the valley. A worst case low magnitude of change would occur during construction and at Year 1, resulting in a Moderate to Minor adverse level of effect.
- 7.86 With the benefit of maturing planting along site boundaries, a very low magnitude of change is predicted at Year 15, resulting in a Minor level of effect.

A95

- 7.87 Views are indicatively represented by photographs taken from Viewpoint 15 within Appendix 2.
- 7.88 Limited sections of the road would have any view towards the proposed development, which would be limited by intervening vegetation and seen at a distance of over 2km. A worst case very low magnitude of change is predicted during all time periods, resulting in a Minor level of effect.

Receptor	Sensitivity	Development Phase	Magnitude of change	Level of Effect
Residential Receptors				
Fairview	High	Construction	Medium	Moderate adverse
		Year 1	Medium to Low	Moderate to Minor adverse
		Year 15	Low	Moderate to Minor adverse
Drum Farm	High	Construction	Medium	Moderate adverse
		Year 1	Medium to Low	Moderate to Minor adverse
		Year 15	Low	Moderate to Minor adverse
Ardiemannoch	High	Construction	Medium to High	Moderate to Major adverse
		Year 1	Medium	Moderate adverse
		Year 15	Medium to Low	Moderate to Minor adverse
Sellar Crescent / Weston View Care Home, Keith	High	Construction	Medium to Low	Moderate to Minor adverse
		Year 1	Medium to Low	Moderate to Minor adverse
		Year 15	Low	Moderate to Minor adverse
Den Crescent, Keith	High	Construction	Low	Moderate to Minor adverse
		Year 1	Low	Moderate to Minor adverse
		Year 15	Very Low	Minor adverse
Properties at Blackhilllock	High	Construction	Low	Moderate to Minor adverse
		Year 1	Low	Moderate to Minor adverse
		Year 15	Very Low	Minor adverse
Auchoynanie Cottage / Mains of Auchoynanie	High	Construction	Medium	Moderate adverse
		Year 1	Medium	Moderate adverse
		Year 15	Medium to Low	Moderate to Minor adverse
Properties adjacent to Balloch Wood	High	Construction	Medium to Low	Moderate to Minor adverse
		Year 1	Medium to Low	Moderate to Minor adverse
		Year 15	Low	Moderate to Minor adverse
Properties off Drum Road to east	High	Construction	Medium to Low	Moderate to Minor adverse
		Year 1	Medium to Low	Moderate to Minor adverse
		Year 15	Low	Moderate to Minor adverse
Newmill	High	Construction	Very Low	Minor adverse
		Year 1	Very Low	Minor adverse
		Year 15	Very Low	Minor adverse

Receptor	Sensitivity	Development Phase	Magnitude of change	Level of Effect
Properties west and east of Newmill	High	Construction	Low	Moderate to Minor adverse
		Year 1	Low	Moderate to Minor adverse
		Year 15	Very Low	Minor adverse
Recreational Receptors				
Core Path KT07	High	Construction	High	Major adverse
		Year 1	Medium to High	Moderate to Major adverse
		Year 15	Medium	Moderate adverse
Core Path KT08	High	Construction	Medium to High	Moderate to Major adverse
		Year 1	Medium	Moderate adverse
		Year 15	Medium to Low	Moderate to Minor adverse
Core Path KT09	High	Construction	Medium	Moderate adverse
		Year 1	Medium to Low	Moderate to Minor adverse
		Year 15	Low	Moderate to Minor adverse
Core Path KT04	High	Construction	Medium	Moderate adverse
		Year 1	Medium	Moderate adverse
		Year 15	Medium to Low	Moderate to Minor adverse
Core Path KT05	High	Construction	Medium to Low	Moderate to Minor adverse
		Year 1	Medium to Low	Moderate to Minor adverse
		Year 15	Low	Moderate to Minor adverse
Herricks Walk, Balloch Woods	High	Construction	Low	Moderate to Minor adverse
		Year 1	Low	Moderate to Minor adverse
		Year 15	Low	Moderate to Minor adverse
Broomhill Cemetery	High	Construction	Very Low	Minor adverse
		Year 1	Very Low	Minor adverse
		Year 15	Very Low	Minor adverse

Receptor	Sensitivity	Development Phase	Magnitude of change	Level of Effect
Road Users				
Drum Road	High	Construction	Medium	Moderate adverse
		Year 1	Medium to Low	Moderate to Minor adverse
		Year 15	Low	Moderate to Minor adverse
Edindiach Road	High	Construction	Medium to Low	Moderate to Minor adverse
		Year 1	Medium to Low	Moderate to Minor adverse
		Year 15	Low	Moderate to Minor adverse
Minor Road to south-east (KT04)	High	Construction	Medium	Moderate adverse
		Year 1	Medium	Moderate adverse
		Year 15	Medium to Low	Moderate to Minor adverse
Minor elevated roads to north	Medium	Construction	Low	Moderate to Minor adverse
		Year 1	Low	Moderate to Minor adverse
		Year 15	Very Low	Minor adverse
A95	Low	Construction	Very Low	Minor adverse
		Year 1	Very Low	Minor adverse
		Year 15	Very Low	Minor adverse

Table 2: Summary of Visual Effects

8. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Landscape Character

- 8.1 The proposed development would introduce a new feature into the landscape, which although of only limited height and scale and adjacent to similar such infrastructure, it would adversely alter the physical and perceptual attributes of the site. The proposed development would give rise to Moderate long-term adverse effects upon the landscape character of the site itself, however, the landscape mitigation proposals would provide some enhancements to the scheme around peripheral areas.
- 8.2 The site lies within LCT 288 - Upland Farmland, where the proposals would constitute a development on agricultural land, which is located in proximity to similar land uses. Due to the size of the LCT and scale of the proposed development, only a small part of a wider LCT would be affected, which is already influenced by similar land uses, therefore giving rise to a long-term Moderate to Minor level of effect, which would reduce over time, as a result of the proposed mitigation.
- 8.3 The site lies approximately 1.7km to the north-west of LCT 27 - Farmed Moorland Edge. Due to the presence of Balloch Wood within the LCT, the proposed development would have very limited indirect influence upon the LCT, with any visibility already influenced by development within Keith and surrounding electricity infrastructure, including Blackhillock Substation. Therefore, a no greater than Minor level of effect is predicted.

Landscape Features

- 8.4 There would be notable changes to the landform of the site to accommodate the proposed development, leading to Moderate temporary adverse levels of effect. However, once the proposals are completed and with new features either planted or seeded, adverse effects would reduce in the longer term.
- 8.5 The proposed development would represent an inevitable change to the current land use from agricultural fields to an operational battery storage facility, albeit in context of nearby infrastructure. A Moderate adverse level of effect is predicted in the longer-term, although the surrounding influences and benefits of landscape proposals are noted providing some local enhancements.
- 8.6 In the long-term, the additional planting in the form of new woodland and tree lined hedgerows would enhance the landscape structure of the site and would give rise to Minor landscape and wildlife benefits. The creation of new attenuation feature would also give rise to limited beneficial landscape effects.

Visual Receptors

- 8.7 The proposed layout has sought to integrate and minimise harmful visual effects through introduction of proposed woodland and tree lined hedgerows around its boundaries. However, it is likely there will be some limited sensitive residential and recreational receptors that could experience Major to Moderate adverse effects as a result of the proposed development, most notably, users of the core path network in proximity to the site (KT07, KT08 and KT04), along with some residents either side of the Burn of Drum valley. Any views towards the proposed development would be seen in context of development within Keith and Keith Substation, as well as numerous pylons crossing the surrounding landscape. The new planting mitigation around peripheral areas of the site would assist with reducing these effects in the long-term, particularly to those residential properties and core paths closest to the site.
- 8.8 In general, other receptors are mostly considered to give rise to Moderate to Minor or Minor adverse effects due to the intervening landform, pattern of vegetation, including large scale woodlands and the screening effect provided by development within Keith.

Conclusion

- 8.9 From a landscape and visual perspective, any effects on landscape character as a result of the proposed development would be confined to the surrounding local areas, with visual effects reduced by the proposed mitigation planting in both local views within the Burn of Drum valley.
- 8.10 Overall the total extent of the landscape and visual effects would be localised and limited in nature.

9. REFERENCES

- 9.1 The following documents have been consulted during the preparation of this statement:
- National Planning Framework for Scotland 3 (2014);
 - Scottish Planning Policy (2014);
 - Moray Local Development Plan 2020;
 - Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (3rd edition) - Landscape Institute/ Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013);
 - Landscape Institute (June 2013) GLVIA3 Statement of Clarification 1/13, LI;
 - Visual Representation of Development Proposals, Technical Guidance Note 06/19, September 2019; and
 - Nature Scot National Landscape Character Assessment (2019).

APPENDIX 1: ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

INTRODUCTION

This appendix presents the assessment criteria adopted for the appraisal of landscape and visual effects arising from the proposed development.

The primary source of best practice for LVA in the UK is The Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition (GLVIA3) (Landscape Institute and the Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013). The assessment criteria adopted to inform the appraisal of effects has been developed in accordance with the principles established in this best practice document. It should however be acknowledged that GLVIA3 establishes guidelines not a specific methodology. The preface to GLVIA3 states:

“This edition concentrates on principles and processes. It does not provide a detailed or formulaic ‘recipe’ that can be followed in every situation – it remains the responsibility of the professional to ensure that the approach and methodology adopted are appropriate to the task in hand.”

The criteria set out below have therefore been specifically tailored for this appraisal to ensure that the methodology is appropriate and fit for purpose.

The purpose of an LVA when undertaken outside the context of an EIA is to identify and describe the relative level of any landscape and visual effects arising as a result of the proposals. As confirmed in GLVIA3 Statement of Clarification 1/13 (Landscape institute, 10th June 2013) an LVA for development which has been screened as not requiring EIA should avoid concluding whether the effects are significant or not and this is the approach adopted in this LVA.

An LVA must consider both:

- effects on the landscape as a resource in its own right (the landscape effects); and
- effects on specific views and visual amenity more generally (the visual effects).

Therefore, separate criteria are set out below for the assessment of landscape and visual effects.

NATURE (SENSITIVITY) OF LANDSCAPE FEATURES

The nature or sensitivity of an individual landscape feature or element reflects its susceptibility to change and any values associated with it. It is therefore a function of factors such as its quality, rarity, contribution to landscape character, degree to which the particular element can be replaced and cultural associations or designations that apply. A particular feature may be more 'sensitive' in one location than in another often as a result of local values associated with the feature or in relation to its function as a key or distinctive characteristic of that local landscape. Therefore it is not possible to simply place different types of landscape features into sensitivity bands. Where individual landscape features are affected, professional judgement is used as far as possible to give an objective evaluation of its sensitivity. Justification is given for this evaluation where necessary.

The nature or sensitivity of individual landscape features has been described as very high, high, medium, low or very low.

NATURE (SENSITIVITY) OF LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

The nature or sensitivity of landscape character reflects its susceptibility to change and any values associated with it. It is essentially an expression of a landscape's ability to accommodate a particular type of change, in this case a housing development. It varies depending on the physical and perceptual attributes of the landscape including but not necessarily limited to: scale; degree of openness; landform; existing land cover; landscape pattern and complexity; the extent of human influence in the landscape; the degree of remoteness/wildness; perception of change in the landscape; the importance of landmarks or skylines in the landscape; inter-visibility with and influence on surrounding areas; condition; rarity and scenic quality of the landscape, and any values placed on the landscape including any designations that may apply.

In this appraisal, the nature or sensitivity of landscape character is considered with reference to published landscape character areas/types and where relevant local landscape units as defined in this LVA for the purposes of this study. Information regarding the key characteristics of these local character areas/units has been extrapolated from relevant published studies where possible. Together with on-site appraisal, an assessment of landscape sensitivity to housing development has been undertaken employing professional judgement for relevant local landscape character areas/types/units.

The nature or sensitivity of landscape character has been described as very high, high, medium, low or very low.

NATURE (SENSITIVITY) OF VISUAL RECEPTORS

The nature or sensitivity of a visual receptor group reflects their susceptibility to change and any values associated with the specific view in question. It varies depending on a number of factors such as the occupation of the viewer, their viewing expectations, duration of view and the angle or direction in which they would see the site. Whilst most views are valued by someone, certain viewpoints are particularly highly valued for either their cultural or historical associations and this can increase the sensitivity of the view. The following criteria are provided for guidance only and are not exclusive:

- Very Low Sensitivity – People engaged in industrial and commercial activities or military activities.
- Low Sensitivity - People at their place of work (e.g. offices); short - medium stay patients at hospital, shoppers; users of trunk/major roads and passengers on commercial railway lines (except where these form part of a recognised and promoted scenic route).
- Medium Sensitivity - Users of public rights of way and minor roads which do not appear to be used primarily for recreational activities or the specific enjoyment of the landscape; recreational activities not specifically focused on the landscape (e.g. football); motel users.
- High Sensitivity – Residents at home; users of long distance or recreational trails and other sign posted walks; users of public rights of way and minor roads which appear to be used for recreational activities or the specific enjoyment of the landscape; users of caravan parks, campsites and 'destination' hotels; tourist attractions with opportunities for views of the landscape (but not specifically focused on a particular vista); slow paced recreational activities which derive part of their pleasure from an appreciation of setting (e.g. bowling, golf); allotments.
- Very High Sensitivity - People at recognised vantage points (often with interpretation boards), people at tourist attractions with a focus on a specific view, visitors to historic features/estates where the setting is important to an appreciation and understanding of cultural value.

It is important to appreciate that it is the visual receptor (i.e. the person) that has a sensitivity and not a property, public right of way or road. Therefore, a large number of people may use a motorway for example but this does not increase the sensitivity of the receptors using it. Conversely, a residential property may only have one person living in it but this does not reduce the sensitivity of that one receptor. The number of receptors affected at any given location may be a planning consideration, but it does not alter the sensitivity of the receptor group.

Where judgements are made about the sensitivity of assessment viewpoints, the sensitivity rating provided is an evaluation of the sensitivity of the receptor group represented by the viewpoint and not a reflection of the number of people who may experience the view.

NATURE (MAGNITUDE) OF EFFECTS – GENERAL NOTE

The following discussion sets out the approach adopted in this LVA in relation to a specific issue arising in GLVIA3 which requires a brief explanation.

Prior to the publication of GLVIA3, LVA practice had evolved over time in tandem with most other environmental disciplines to consider significance principally as a function of two factors, namely: sensitivity of the receptor and magnitude of the effect (the term 'magnitude' being a word most commonly used in LVA and most other environmental disciplines to describe the size or scale of an effect).

Box 3.1 on page 37 of GLVIA3 references a 2011 publication by IEMA entitled 'The State of EIA Practice in the UK' which reiterates the importance of considering not just the scale or size of effect but other factors which combine to define the 'nature of the effect' including factors such as the probability of an effect occurring and the duration, reversibility and spatial extent of the effect.

The flow diagram on page 39 of GLVIA3 now suggests that the magnitude of effect is a function of three factors (the size/scale of the effect, the duration of the effect and the reversibility of the effect).

For clarification, the approach taken in this LVA has been to consider magnitude of effect solely as the scale or size of the effect in the traditional sense of the term 'magnitude'. Having identified the magnitude of effect as defined above the LVA also describes the duration and reversibility of the identified effect before drawing a conclusion on the overall level of effect taking all of these factors into account.

In the context of the above discussion the following criteria have been adopted to describe the magnitude of effects.

NATURE (MAGNITUDE) OF EFFECTS ON LANDSCAPE FEATURES

Professional judgement has been used as appropriate to determine the magnitude of direct physical effects on individual existing landscape features using the following criteria as guidance only:

- Very Low Magnitude of Change - No loss or alteration to existing landscape features;
- Low Magnitude of Change - Minor loss or alteration to part of an existing landscape feature;
- Medium Magnitude of Change - Some loss or alteration to part of an existing landscape feature;
- High Magnitude of Change - Major loss or major alteration to an existing landscape feature;
- Very High Magnitude of Change - Total loss or alteration to an existing landscape feature.

NATURE (MAGNITUDE) OF EFFECTS ON LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

The magnitude of effect on landscape character is influenced by a number of factors including: the extent to which existing landscape features are lost or altered, the introduction of new features and the resulting alteration to the physical and perceptual characteristics of the landscape. Professional judgement has been used as appropriate to determine the magnitude using the following criteria as guidance only. In doing so, it is recognised that usually the landscape components in the immediate surroundings have a much stronger influence on the sense of landscape character than distant features whilst acknowledging the fact that more distant features can have an influence on landscape character as well.

- Very Low Magnitude of Change - No notable loss or alteration to existing landscape features; no notable introduction of new features into the landscape; and negligible change to the key physical and/or perceptual attributes of the landscape.
- Low Magnitude of Change - Minor loss or alteration to existing landscape features; introduction of minor new features into the landscape; or minor alteration to the key physical and/or perceptual attributes of the landscape.
- Medium Magnitude of Change - Some notable loss or alteration to existing landscape features; introduction of some notable new features into the landscape; or some notable change to the key physical and/or perceptual attributes of the landscape.
- High Magnitude of Change - A major loss or alteration to existing landscape features; introduction of major new features into the

landscape; or a major change to the key physical and/or perceptual attributes of the landscape.

- Very High Magnitude of Change - Total loss or alteration to existing landscape features; introduction of dominant new features into the landscape; a very major change to the key physical and/or perceptual attributes of the landscape.

NATURE (MAGNITUDE) OF EFFECTS ON VIEWS AND VISUAL AMENITY

Visual effects are caused by the introduction of new elements into the views of a landscape or the removal of elements from the existing view.

Professional judgement has been used to determine the magnitude of impacts using the following criteria as guidance only:

- Very Low Magnitude of Change - No change or negligible change in views;
- Low Magnitude of Change - Some change in the view that is not prominent but visible to some visual receptors;
- Medium Magnitude of Change - Some change in the view that is clearly notable in the view and forms an easily identifiable component in the view;
- High Magnitude of Change - A major change in the view that is highly prominent and has a strong influence on the overall view.
- Very High Magnitude of Change – A change in the view that has a dominating or overbearing influence on the overall view.

Using this set of criteria, determining levels of magnitude is primarily dependant on how prominent the development would be in the landscape, and what may be judged to flow from that prominence or otherwise.

For clarification, the use of the term 'prominent' relates to how noticeable the features of the development would be. This is affected by how close the viewpoint is to the development but not entirely dependent on this factor. Other modifying factors include: the focus of the view, visual screening and the nature and scale of other landscape features within the view. Rather than specifying crude bands of distance at which the proposed development would be dominant, prominent or incidental to the view etc, the prominence of the proposed development in each view is described in detail for each viewpoint taking all the relevant variables into consideration.

TYPE OF EFFECT

The assessment identifies effects which may be 'beneficial', 'adverse' or 'neutral'. Where effects are described as 'neutral' this is where the beneficial effects are deemed to balance the adverse effects.

DURATION OF EFFECT

For the purposes of this appraisal, the temporal nature of each effect is described as follows:

- Long Term – over 5 years
- Medium Term – between 1 and 5 years
- Short Term – under 1 year

REVERSIBILITY OF EFFECT

The LVA also describes the reversibility of each identified effect using the following terms:

- Permanent – effect is non reversible
- Non-permanent – effect is reversible

LEVEL OF EFFECT

The purpose of an LVA when produced outside the context of an EIA is to identify the relative level of effects on landscape and visual amenity arising from the proposed development. The judgements provided within the LVA may then inform the planning balance to be carried out by the determining authority.

In this LVA, the relative level of the identified landscape and visual effects has been determined by combining judgements regarding the sensitivity of the landscape or view, magnitude of change, duration of effect and the reversibility of the effect. The level of effect is described as Major, Major/Moderate, Moderate, Moderate/Minor or Minor. No Effect may also be recorded as appropriate where the effect is so negligible it is not even noteworthy. In determining the level of residual effects, all mitigation measures are taken into account.

APPENDIX 2: PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD



Drum Farm

Meikle Balloch Hill

Approximate extent of main site area
(not visible beyond falling landform)



Core Path KT07

Keith Substation

Drum Road



Approximate extent of main site area

Meikle Balloch Hill

Ardiemannoch



Approximate extent of main site area

Blackhillock Substation

Keith Substation

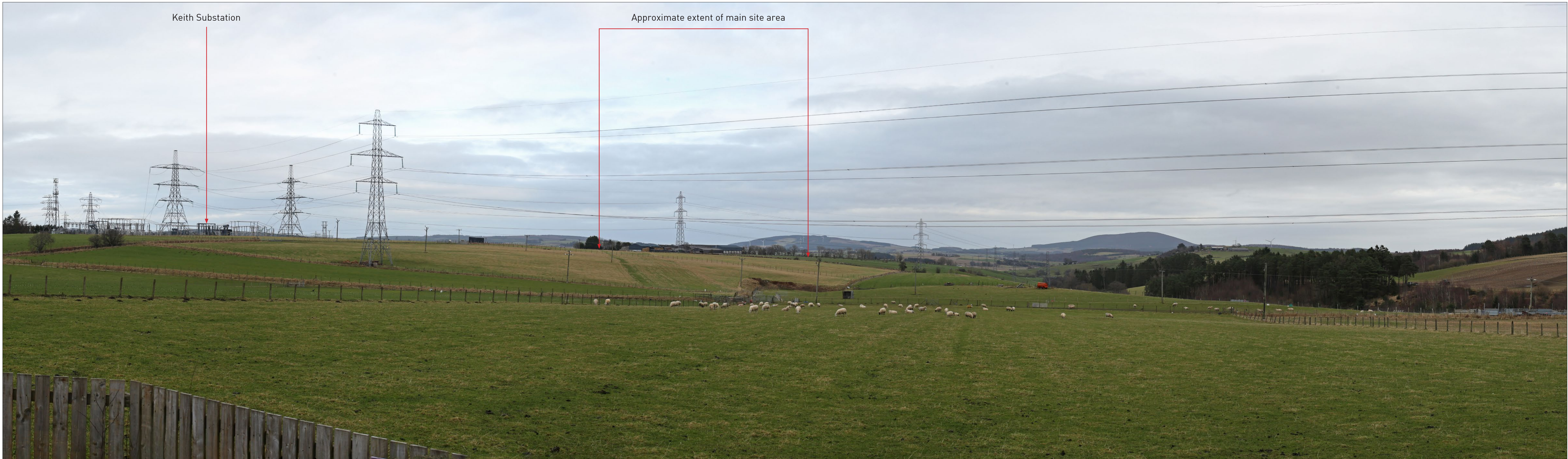


Drum Farm

Approximate extent of main site area

Meikle Balloch Hill

Ardiemannoch



Keith Substation

Approximate extent of main site area

Bungalows along Sellar Crescent

Approximate extent of main site area





Eastern edge of Keith

Keith Substation

Approximate extent of main site area

Rosehall Farm



Eastern edge of Keith

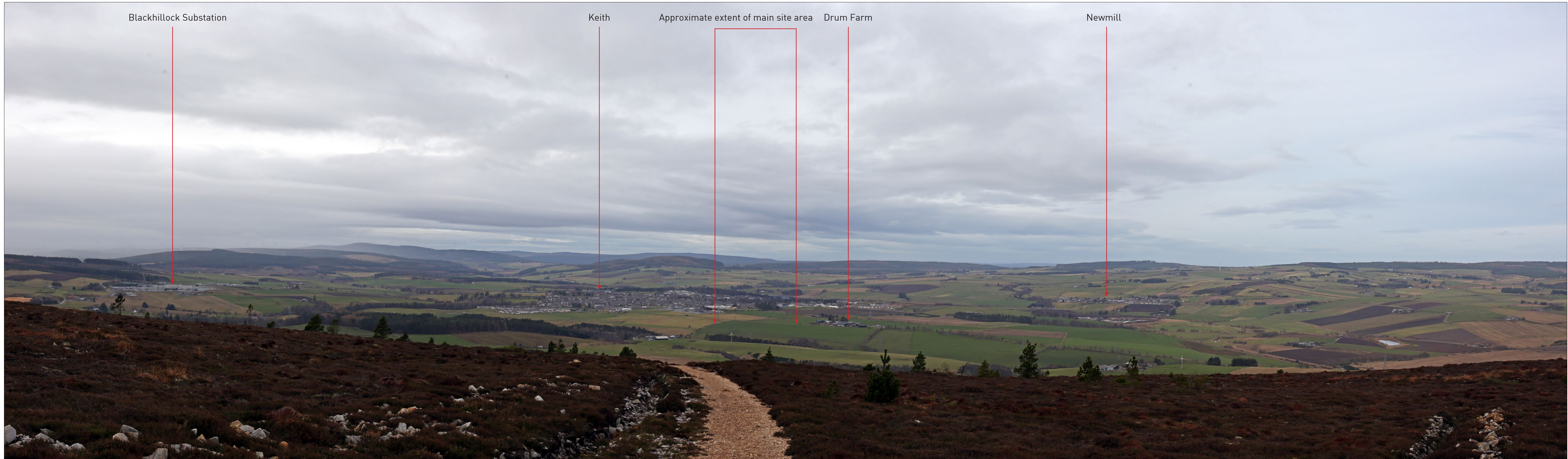
Keith Substation

Approximate extent of main site area

Drum Farm

Newmill

Rosehall Farm



Blackhillock Substation

Keith

Approximate extent of main site area Drum Farm

Newmill



Weston View Care Home and properties along Sellar Crescent

Approximate extent of main site area

Drum Farm

Properties to north of Keith



Meikle Balloch Hill

Drum Farm

Approximate extent of main site area (not visible beyond intervening landform and vegetation)

Keith Substation



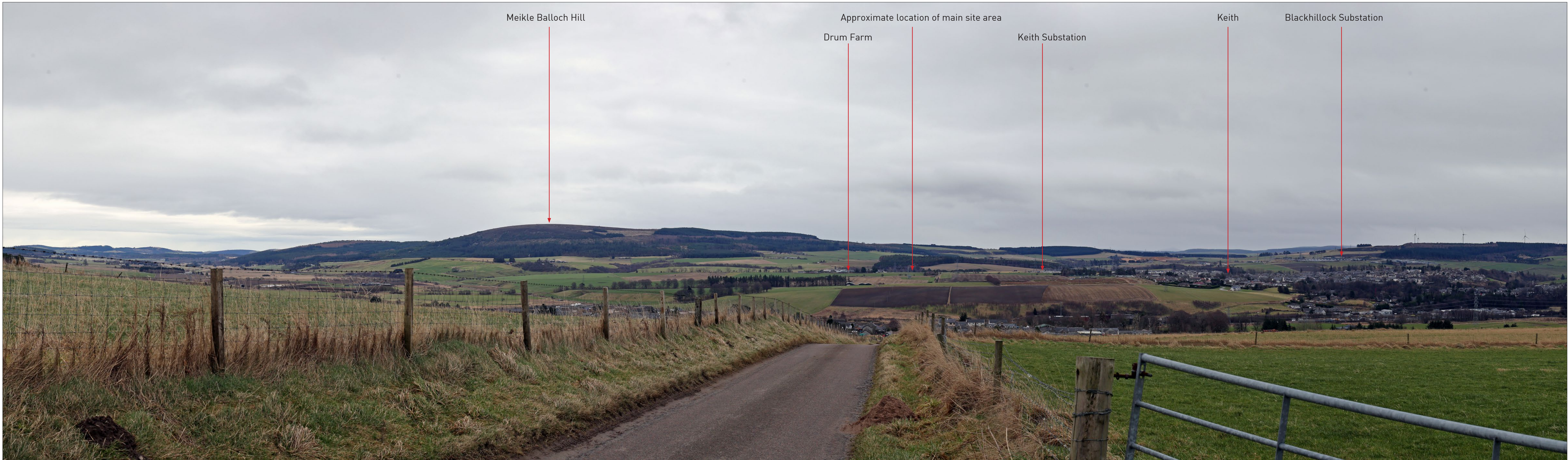
Meikle Balloch Hill

Approximate location of main site area

Keith

Blackhillock Substation

Drum Farm



Meikle Balloch Hill

Approximate location of main site area

Keith

Blackhillock Substation

Drum Farm

Keith Substation



Approximate location of main site area seen behind Drum Farm

Keith Substation

Keith

VIEWPOINT 14 - LOOKING SOUTH-WEST
 Minor road adjacent to Brae of Montgrew Cottages



Approximate location of main site area
seen behind intervening vegetation

Drum Farm

Keith

A95



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