



**MILL OF FOREST
STONEHAVEN**

**Landscape and Visual
Impact Assessment**

**BARRATT EAST
SCOTLAND LTD**

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RSK GENERAL NOTES

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Where field investigations have been carried out these have been restricted to a level of detail required to achieve the stated objectives of the work.

This work has been undertaken in accordance with the Quality Management System of RSK Environment Ltd.

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Landscape and Visual

Introduction

- 1.1 This chapter comprises of a landscape and visual impact assessment for the proposed development on the Mill of Forest Site, in Stonehaven, Aberdeenshire.
- 1.2 Landscape Impacts, including:
- direct impacts upon specific landscape elements within and adjacent to the site;
 - effects on the overall pattern of the landscape elements which give rise to the landscape character of the site and it's surroundings; and
 - impacts upon any special interests in and around the site.
- 1.3 Visual Impacts:
- direct impacts of the development upon views in the landscape; and
 - overall impact on visual amenity.

Methodology

- 1.4 As a matter of best practice the assessment has been undertaken in accordance with the advisory guidelines set out in the document "*Guidelines for Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment 2nd Edition*", published by The Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Assessment (2002). The landscape assessment criteria and visual assessment criteria used for this assessment are based on guidance included in this "Guidelines" document.
- 1.5 The assessment has been based on a preliminary desk based assessment of relevant published information followed by detailed site appraisals.
- 1.6 The principal objectives of the assessments are:
- to identify and classify the existing landscape likely to be affected by the construction and operation of the proposed development
 - to identify the principal 'visual receptors' with views of the proposed development,
 - to assess the significance of the landscape and visual effect without implementation of mitigation
 - to assess the significance of the landscape and visual effect, taking into account the measures proposed to mitigate any impacts identified. In this report these are termed 'residual' effects

Baseline Study

- 1.7 The landscape and visual assessment includes baseline studies that describe, classify and evaluate the existing landscape and visual resources, focusing on their sensitivity and ability to accommodate change.
- 1.8 The following sources of information were obtained or consulted during the course of the assessment:
- Consultations with the client regarding the development proposals;
 - The National Programme of Landscape Character Assessment, undertaken by SNH. South and Central Aberdeenshire Landscape Character Assessment - Scottish Natural Heritage Review No 102;
 - Aerial photography;
 - Ordnance Survey Mapping at 1:10,000, 1:25,000 and 1:50,000 scale;
 - Aberdeenshire Council Core Paths Plans;
 - Site visits and fieldwork to confirm data derived from available mapping and to identify and assess potential impacts.

Method of Assessment

- 1.9 The landscape and visual impact assessments have been based on an evaluation of the sensitivity of the receiving landscape and visual receptors, and the magnitude of change associated with the introduction of the proposed scheme into the landscape and visual context of the study area.

Landscape Character Assessment Criteria

- 1.10 Description and classification of existing landscape character has involved a review of published regional and sub-regional landscape character assessment information.
- 1.11 Local landscape character has been defined by taking account of landform, hydrology, vegetation, settlement, land use pattern, and cultural and historic features and associations and has been categorised as follows;

Quality

- 1.12 Local landscape quality within the study area has been considered based on the criteria described in the following table (Table 1.1a).

Table 1.1a. Landscape Quality (or Condition)

Landscape Quality (or Condition)	Typical Indicators
Very High	All landscape elements remain intact and in good repair. Buildings are in local vernacular and materials. No detracting elements are evident
High	Most landscape elements remain intact and in good repair. Most buildings are in local vernacular and materials. Few detracting elements are evident
Medium	Some landscape elements remain intact and in good repair. Some buildings are in local vernacular and materials and some detracting elements are evident
Low	Few landscape elements remain intact and in good repair. Few buildings are in local vernacular and materials. Many detracting or incongruous elements are evident
Very Low	No landscape elements remain intact and in good repair. Buildings are not in local vernacular and materials. Detracting or incongruous elements are much in evidence

Value

- 1.13 Consideration has been given to the value of the local landscape within the study area. Value is frequently addressed by reference to international, national, regional and local designations determined by statutory and planning agencies. Absence of such a designation, however, does not infer a lack of quality or value. Factors such as accessibility and local scarcity can render areas of nationally unremarkable quality highly valuable as a local resource and are based on the criteria described in the following table (Table 1.1b).

Table 1.1b. Landscape Value

Landscape Value	Typical Indicators
Very High	Areas comprising a clear composition of valued landscape components in robust form and health, free of disruptive visual detractors and with a strong sense of place. Areas containing a strong, balanced structure with distinct features worthy of conservation. Such areas would generally be internationally or nationally recognised designations, e.g. National Parks and National Scenic Areas (NSAs)
High	Areas primarily containing valued landscape components combined in an aesthetically pleasing composition and lacking prominent disruptive visual detractors. Areas containing a strong structure with noteworthy features or elements, exhibiting a sense of place. Such areas would generally be locally designated areas, such as Areas of Great Landscape Value (AGLVs) or Regional Scenic Areas (RSAs). Such areas may also relate to the setting of internationally or nationally designated areas, e.g. National Parks or National Scenic Areas (NSAs). Also included are areas assessed as 'wild land', which while not representing designated landscapes, are valued at a national and international scale for their characteristics.

Landscape Value	Typical Indicators
Medium	Areas primarily of valued landscape components combined in an aesthetically pleasing composition with low levels of disruptive visual detractors, exhibiting a recognisable landscape structure. Such areas may relate to the setting of regionally and locally recognised areas, e.g. AGLV or RSA designated areas.
Low	Areas containing some features of landscape value but lacking a coherent and aesthetically pleasing composition with frequent detracting visual elements, exhibiting a distinguishable structure often concealed by mixed land uses or development. Such areas would be commonplace at the local level and would generally be undesignated, offering scope for improvement.
Very Low	Areas lacking valued landscape components or comprising degraded, disturbed or derelict features, lacking any aesthetically pleasing composition with a dominance of visually detracting elements, exhibiting mixed land uses which conceal the baseline structure. Such areas would generally be restricted to the local level and identified as requiring recovery.

Character sensitivity

- 1.14 Local landscape character within the study area has been rated in relation to its potential sensitivity to the introduction of the proposed scheme, taking landscape elements and composition into account. Sensitivity criteria used in the assessment are described in the following tables.

Table 1.1c. Character Sensitivity

Character Sensitivity	Typical Indicators
Very High	<p>Landscape Elements: Important elements of the landscape susceptible to change and of high quality and condition.</p> <p>Scale and Enclosure: Small-scale landform/land cover/ development, human scale indicators, fine grained, enclosed with narrow views, sheltered.</p> <p>Manmade Influence: Absence of manmade elements, traditional or historic settlements, natural features and 'natural' forms of amenity parkland, perceived as natural 'wild land' lacking in man-made features, land use elements and detractors</p> <p>Remoteness and Tranquillity: Sense of peace, isolation or wildness, remote and empty, no evident movement.</p>
High	Where, on the whole, indicators do not meet the Very High criteria but exceed those for Medium
Medium	<p>Landscape Elements: Important elements of the landscape of moderate susceptibility to change and of medium quality and condition.</p> <p>Scale and Enclosure: Medium-scale landform/land cover/ development, textured, semi-enclosed with middle distance views.</p> <p>Manmade Influence: Some presence of man-made elements, which may be partially out of scale with the landscape and be of only partially consistent with vernacular styles.</p> <p>Remoteness and Tranquillity: some noise, evident, but not dominant human activity and development, noticeable movement.</p>

Character Sensitivity	Typical Indicators
Low	Where, on the whole, indicators do not meet the Medium criteria but exceed those for Very Low.
Very Low	<p>Landscape Elements: Important elements of the landscape insusceptible to change and of low quality and condition.</p> <p>Scale and Enclosure: Large-scale landform/land cover/ development, Featureless, coarse grained, open with broad views.</p> <p>Manmade Influence: Frequent presence of utility, infrastructure or industrial elements, contemporary structures e.g. masts, pylons, cranes, silos, industrial sheds with vertical emphasis, functional man-made land-use patterns and engineered aspects.</p> <p>Remoteness and Tranquillity: Busy and noisy, human activity and development, prominent movement.</p>

Landscape Visual Sensitivity:

- 1.15 Landscape visual sensitivity relates to the nature and number of visual receptors present within a landscape, and the probability of change in visual amenity due to the development being visible. It should be noted that landscape visual sensitivity refers to the visual sensitivity of the entire landscape that is being assessed, rather than an assessment of the visual effects of a specific, individual development.
- 1.16 The following table (Table 1.1d) provides an overview of the typical indicators of visual sensitivity, which can be used to give a transparent, reasoned judgement regarding landscape visual sensitivity.

Table 1.1d. Landscape Visual Sensitivity

Landscape Visual Sensitivity	Typical Indicators
Very High	<p>Visual Interruption: Flat or gently undulating topography, few if any vegetative or built features.</p> <p>Nature of Views: Densely populated, dispersed pattern of small settlements, outward looking settlement, landscape focused recreation routes and/or visitor facilities, distinctive settings, gateways or public viewpoints.</p>
High	Where, on the whole, indicators do not meet the Very High criteria but exceed those for Medium.
Medium	<p>Visual Interruption: Undulating or gently rolling topography, some vegetative and built features.</p> <p>Nature of Views: Moderate density of population, settlements of moderate size with some views outwards, routes with some degree of focus on the landscape.</p>
Low	Where, on the whole, indicators do not meet the Medium criteria but exceed those for Very Low.

Landscape Visual Sensitivity	Typical Indicators
Very Low	<p>Visual Interruption: Rolling topography, frequent vegetative or built features.</p> <p>Nature of Views: Unpopulated or sparsely populated, concentrated pattern of large settlements, introspective settlement, inaccessible, indistinctive or industrial settings.</p>

Overall Landscape Sensitivity

- 1.17 The overall landscape sensitivity is derived by combining the assessed values attributed to landscape quality, landscape value, character sensitivity and effects on landscape elements and landscape visual sensitivity, to define an overall value within the range of Very High, High, Medium and Low.
- 1.18 Since each criterion has a varying weight in its contribution to sensitivity the overall value is determined by professional judgement.
- 1.19 For the purposes of this assessment greater weight is attributed to Landscape Value and Landscape Character Sensitivity since these factors have greater defining criteria in the description of the landscape characterisation.

Magnitude of Change

- 1.20 Magnitude of change has been predicted by considering the anticipated loss or disruption to character forming landscape elements (e.g. tree planting, landform, buildings, and watercourses etc) and their distribution or pattern within the landscape that would be altered and arise through the introduction of the proposed scheme.

Table 1.2: Definition of Magnitude of Landscape Impacts

Magnitude	Description
Large	Total loss of or major alteration to key valued elements, features, and characteristics of the baseline or introduction of elements considered being prominent and totally uncharacteristic when set within the attributes of the receiving landscape. Would be at a considerable variance with the landform, scale and pattern of the landscape. Would cause a high quality landscape to be permanently changed and its quality diminished.
Medium	Partial loss of or alteration to one or more key elements, features, characteristics of the baseline or introduction of elements that may be prominent but may not be considered to be substantially uncharacteristic when set within the attributes of the receiving landscape. Would be out of scale with the landscape, and at odds with the local pattern and landform. Will leave an adverse impact on a landscape of recognised quality.
Small	Minor loss or alteration to one or more key elements, features, characteristics of the baseline or introduction of elements that may be prominent but may not be uncharacteristic when set within the attributes of the receiving landscape. May not quite fit into the landform and scale of the landscape. Affect an area of recognised landscape character

Magnitude	Description
Negligible	Very minor loss or alteration to one or more key elements features, and characteristics of the baseline or introduction of elements that are not uncharacteristic when set within the attributes of the receiving landscape. Maintain existing landscape quality, and maybe slightly at odds to the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape.

Significance of Landscape Effects

- 1.21 The significance of the landscape character effects is determined by the assessment of landscape sensitivity set against the magnitude of change as indicated by the matrix in Table 1.2.
- 1.22 For the purposes of this assessment and with reference to the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 1999, 'Significant' landscape effects would be those effects assessed to be major or major/moderate and are indicated by shading in the following table (Table 1.3).

Table 1.3: Significance of Landscape Effects

Magnitude	Sensitivity			
	Very High	High	Medium	Low
Large	Major	Major	Major/moderate	Moderate
Medium	Major	Major/moderate	Moderate	Moderate/minor
Small	Moderate	Moderate/minor	Minor	Negligible
Negligible	Minor/moderate	Minor	Minor/ Negligible	Negligible

- 1.23 The significance of the landscape effects may be beneficial or adverse. The assessment has identified that there are no beneficial impacts in relation to landscape character areas.

Visual Assessment Criteria

- 1.24 In conjunction with the landscape character assessment, a visual assessment has been undertaken in order to assess any potential visual effects arising as a result of the proposed development.
- 1.25 In order to evaluate what the visual effects of the development will be and, if appropriate, what can be done, to ameliorate the impact, it is necessary to describe the existing situation to provide a basis against which any change can be assessed. The assessment of visual impact from any one location takes into account the:

- Sensitivity of the views and viewers (visual receptor) affected;

- Nature, scale or magnitude and duration of the change
- Extent of the proposed development that will be visible;
- Degree of visual intrusion or obstruction that will occur;
- Distance of the view;
- Change in character or quality of the view compared to the existing.

Zone of Theoretical Visibility Study

- 1.26 For this type of relatively low-level development an initial study area of 10km radius is used on the basis that beyond this distance the visibility of the development, to the human eye would be at such a range that it would be near to the limit of acuity of human eye. The study area is initially plotted, on a radius, from the centre of the site. In order to assist in the assessment of the potential visual effects of the development, a computer-generated Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) is normally modelled.
- 1.27 The computer ZTV is used as a working tool to inform the assessment team of the extent of the zone within which the proposed development may have an influence or effect on visual amenity and the areas within which the site survey work should be concentrated and preliminary viewpoints can be selected. It should be noted that this is a topographical information based exercise with no account being taken of the screening effects of vegetation or buildings.

Site Appraisal/ Photographic Studies

- 1.28 The initial photographic study was undertaken between 28th September 2009 and 3rd October 2009, based on the preliminary viewpoints selected based on the ZTV. Viewpoints at varying close distance from the site were selected to represent the typical views of the site. The Viewpoint Selection Figure, in the Appendix, shows the location of these viewpoints.
- 1.29 From the results of the initial desk study and site appraisal it is clear that the proposed development will be visible from a limited number of locations, at varying but close distances, and from both public and private areas.
- 1.30 In order to evaluate what the visual impact of the development will be and, if appropriate, what can be done to ameliorate the impact, it is necessary to describe the existing situation to provide a basis against which any change can be assessed. Each assessment of visual impact has therefore been made taking into consideration the character and quality of the existing view. The assessment of the significance of effect is a result of the assessment of magnitude of the change related to the assessment of sensitivity of the receptor. The criteria used in this assessment are summarised in Tables 1.4 to 1.6.

Visual Receptor Sensitivity

- 1.31 The locations from which the proposed development will be visible are known as visual receptors. In accordance with the 'Guidelines for Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment 2nd Edition', for the

purposes of the visual assessment the visual receptors have been graded according to their sensitivity to change against criteria set out in Table 1.4

Table 1.4: Visual Receptor sensitivity

Receptor Sensitivity	Description
High	Occupiers of residential properties. Users of outdoor recreational facilities, including public rights of way, whose attention or interest may be focused on the landscape Communities where the development results in changes in the landscape setting or valued views enjoyed by the community.
Medium	People travelling through or past the affected landscape in cars, on trains or other transport routes where higher speeds are involved and views sporadic and short-lived. People engaged in outdoor recreation where enjoyment of the landscape is incidental rather than the main interest.
Low	People at their place of work, Industrial facilities.

Visual Magnitude of Change

- 1.32 The visibility of the proposals and the magnitude of their change upon a view and the resulting significance of visual effect are dependent on the range of factors already outlined, together with, the angle of the sun, the time of year and weather conditions. Of equal importance will be whether the site is seen completely, or in part; whether the site appears on the skyline; whether it is viewed with a backcloth of land or vegetation; or with a complex foreground; and whether the site forms part of an expansive landscape or is visible within a restricted view. The aspect of dwellings and whether the view is from a main window or a secondary window, which may be used less frequently, is also a consideration. From highways, the direction and speed of travel are also a consideration. In the assessment, magnitude of change is ranked in accordance with the following table (Table 1.5).

Table 1.5: Definition of Magnitude of Visual Impact

Magnitude	Examples
Very Large	The development would result in a dramatic change in the existing view and/or would cause a dramatic change in the quality and/or character of the view. The development would appear large scale and/or form the dominant elements within the overall view and/or may be in full view the observer or receptor. Commanding, controlling the view.
Large	The development would result in a prominent change in the existing view and/or would cause a prominent change in the quality and /or character of the view. The development would form prominent elements within the overall view and/or may be easily noticed by the observer or receptor. Standing out, striking, sharp, unmistakable, easily seen.

Magnitude	Examples
Medium	The development would result in a noticeable change in the existing view and/or would cause a noticeable change in the quality and/or character of the view. The development would form a conspicuous element within the overall view and/or may be readily noticed by the observer or receptor. Noticeable, distinct, catching the eye or attention, clearly visible, well defined, obvious.
Small	The development would result in a perceptible change in the existing view, and/or without affecting the overall quality and/or character of the view. The development would form an apparent small element in the wider landscape that may be missed by the observer or receptor. Visible, evident.
Very Small	The development would result in a barely perceptible change in the existing view, and/or without affecting the overall quality and/or would form an inconspicuous minor element in the wider landscape that may be missed by the observer or receptor. Lacking sharpness of definition, not obvious, indistinct, not clear, obscure, blurred, indefinite.
Negligible	Only a small part of the development would be discernible and/or it is at such a distance that no change to the existing view can be appreciated. Weak, not legible, near limit of acuity of human eye.

Significance of Visual Effect

- 1.33 The significance of the visual effects is determined by the assessment of receptor sensitivity set against the magnitude of change as indicated by the matrix in Table 1.6.
- 1.34 For the purposes of this assessment and with reference to the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 1999, 'Significant' landscape effects would be those effects assessed to be severe, major or major/moderate and are indicated by shading in the following table (Table 1.6).

Table 1.6: Significance of Visual Effects

Magnitude	Sensitivity		
	High	Medium	Low
Very large	Major	Major	Major/moderate
Large	Major	Major/moderate	Moderate
Medium	Major/moderate	Moderate	Moderate/minor
Small	Moderate	Moderate/minor	Minor
Very Small	Minor	Minor	Negligible
Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

Limitations of Assessment

- 1.35 Viewpoints were selected as being representative following a field study of the wider area to establish the visibility of the proposed development site. The locations were finally determined on the basis of public accessibility, preference for high sensitive receptors and the likely number of receptors affected.
- 1.36 In determining the viewpoints, whether in the immediate locality or further away, the main public highways, sections of public footpaths, and some of the publicly available spaces within the study area were visited. It is acknowledged that from public places, more viewers are likely to be affected thereby adding to the significance of the impact upon receptors in those locations.

Legislation / Policy

- 1.37 The following extracts from County and District planning policies are outlined in relation to landscape or visual issues.

Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire Structure Plan 2001-2016

- 1.38 The main policy, relating to landscape and visual issues is contained within the Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire Structure Plan 2001 – 2016, adopted 25 June 2008.

Policy 19 – Wildlife, Landscape and Land Resources

- 1.39 *“Development will be sited and designed to avoid adverse impacts on the biodiversity of a site, including its environmental quality, ecological status and viability. All new development should take into consideration the character of the landscape in terms of scale, siting, form and design. Developers are encouraged to seek sites which would not entail the permanent loss of productive agricultural land.”*

Aberdeenshire Local Plan

- 1.40 The following policies, relating to landscape and visual issues are contained within the Aberdeenshire Local Plan, adopted 23 June 2006.

POLICY ENV 8 - Trees and Woodlands

- 1.41 *“Development that would cause the loss of, or serious damage to, trees or woodlands, which are EITHER covered by an existing or proposed Tree Preservation Order OR of significant ecological, recreational, historical, shelter or landscape value, will be refused unless: a) its public benefits at the local level clearly outweigh the value of the habitat; b) the development will be sited and designed to minimise adverse impacts on the biodiversity of the site, including its environmental quality, ecological*

status and viability; c) there will be no further fragmentation or isolation of habitats as a result of the development; AND d) the development incorporates satisfactory measures to replace and/or enhance existing trees and woodlands.”

POLICY ENV 9 - Forestry and Woodland Enhancement

- 1.42 *“The Council seeks to promote the creation and protection of sensitively designed and managed forests and woodlands for their ecological, recreational, landscape and natural heritage value, and to improve economic diversity. This includes promotion of community woodlands and habitat creation through planting and natural regeneration of native species and enhancement of landscape features such as shelter belts.”*

Existing Baseline Conditions

National Landscape Character Area

- 1.43 The National Programme of Landscape Character Assessment, undertaken by SNH in partnership with local authorities and other agencies, involved the assessment of landscape character for all of Scotland.
- 1.44 The site is located wholly within the South and Central Aberdeenshire Landscape Character Assessment - Scottish Natural Heritage Review No 102, Landscape Character Type 9: Garvock and Glenbervie.
- 1.45 The key characteristics of this landscape character type are:
- *Large-scale landscape with open rolling ridges.*
 - *Large fields of arable land and pasture and red soils, presenting a tapestry of colours.*
 - *Scarcity of hedges and dykes.*
 - *Radio masts prominent on high points.*
 - *Scattered settlement pattern with varied architectural styles including large stately homes in variety of materials, traditional cottages made of local red sandstone, and modern suburban style development.*
 - *Evidence of built development pressure, particularly around existing settlements on major communication routes such as Lochside outside St Cyrus.*
 - *Quite numerous archaeological remains, including recumbent stone circles and carved stone balls.*
 - *Long distance views across Howe of the Mearns (Area 8) to The Mounth (Area 18).*
- 1.46 Also included within the 10km study boundary: Landscape Character Type 2: Kincardine Cliffs. The key characteristics of this landscape character type are:

- Steep, weathered coastal cliffs with stacks and arches especially between Stonehaven and Aberdeen.
 - Cliff erosion prevalent in some areas, particularly on sandstone cliffs south of Stonehaven.
 - Raised beach platforms can give deep stepped profile to the coastline.
 - Grass and scrub covered slopes on shallower cliffs; bare rock on steep slopes.
 - Farmland extends to edge of cliffs.
 - Major communications corridor behind the cliffs, notably the A90 and east coast railway.
 - Settlements cluster on cliff tops; older villages and harbours nestle at cliff base accessed by steep roads down to the sea.
 - Extensive new development at edge of coastal towns.
 - Expansive views out to sea provide vast sense of scale.
 - Weather is fundamental to character; coast is often windswept or lashed by rain and spray; resulting sense of exposure is great.
- 1.47 As part of the South and Central Aberdeenshire Landscape Character Assessment published character description is a note relating to its sensitivity or ability to accept change, under the heading 'Forces for Change'
- 1.48 Pressures from intensive farming, neglect of field boundaries and new built developments are prevalent. The Landscape Character Type description for the area states,
- "The landscape is able to absorb some development within its rolling relief and large scale, but visibility can also be high. The large-scale rolling hills are sensitive to elements, which may disrupt their smooth forms and visual flow, particularly on ridges and hilltops. The pronounced agricultural pattern is sensitive to changes in land use and management, which may alter its ordered appearance. Woods add structure to the landscape but are susceptible to neglect and depletion."*
- 1.49 While other landscape Character Areas (LCA 13; Kincardine Plateau and LCA 18; The Mounth) are shown within the study area, the extent of the ZTV into these LCA's are limited and fragmented. As such therefore they are not considered to be of relevance in this assessment and no further account of their character is included. The extent and location of these areas can be seen in Figure 1.

Sub-Regional Character

- 1.50 There is no sub-regional landscape character assessment for the proposed study area.

Landscape Character of the Site and Its Surroundings

- 1.51 This section describes the local landscape character of the site and its surroundings.

LOCATION

- 1.52 Local landscape character relates to an area approximately 10km radius around the proposed development site. The findings of published regional landscape character assessments have been used to aid description of the local landscape character, supported by additional field survey observations where appropriate.
- 1.53 The proposed development site is located to the southwest of Stonehaven, on the east coast of Aberdeenshire. The total site area is approximately 83 Ha (206 acres).
- 1.54 It is bound by the small settlement Kirkton of Fetteresso and a railway line to the north; by the A90, the Stonehaven bypass, to the east; by Toucks Cottages and Stonehaven Street to the south; and Broomhall Road to the west and southwest.
- 1.55 The site is not located within any designated landscape areas.

LANDSCAPE FABRIC AND LANDCOVER

- 1.56 The landcover of the site and the immediate area predominantly comprises of arable and pasture farmland and small woodlands, with a scattering of farmsteads and small groups of dwellings.
- 1.57 A narrow watercourse, Toucks Burn, runs parallel to the southern boundary of the site, and a wetlands area is located in the north eastern corner of the site. Toucks Burn is a tributary to the larger Carron Water, which meanders through Stonehaven in the east and into the North Sea. Several drainage ditches also transect the site in a geometrical pattern, following the course of the field boundaries.
- 1.58 The vegetation within the site includes hedgerows of gorse and whin; scattered trees mainly associated with the existing farmsteads; and a small, semi-natural broad leaf woodland in the south-eastern corner. Small, semi-natural broadleaf woodlands are a key characteristic of the immediate surrounding area, often in a linear form, and help embody the landscape pattern. Linear woodland of this type follows the course of Carron Water. A small coniferous plantation, Toucks Belt, is also located along the western boundary of the site, and similarly, such plantations are also a key characteristic of the immediate surrounding area.

SCALE AND ENCLOSURE

- 1.59 This is an area of gently rolling topography. The site slopes gently in a north easterly direction towards the railway cutting and viaduct on the periphery of Stonehaven, falling between 80m AOD to 35m AOD.
- 1.60 The field boundaries within the site are of a small to medium scale, are of a bold, geometric pattern, and are lined by the remains of hedgerows of gorse and whin. The crop patterns emphasise the characteristic patchwork. Fencing is now predominantly post and wire.

HUMAN INFLUENCE

- 1.61 Much of this landscape has a managed farmland character, with evidence of recent built development, particularly around the existing settlement edge to the south east, being evident in the form of new housing estates.

SETTLEMENT PATTERN

- 1.62 This is a well-settled landscape with the small town of Stonehaven located along the north eastern boundary of the site, and numerous small clusters of dwellings scattered across the landscape in a dispersed pattern. There is also a dense pattern of farmsteads, often emphasised by their enclosing shelter of trees. This is evident at the Feathers and Neather Toucks farmsteads within the site boundary. Two small villages, Fetteresso and Kirkton of Fetteresso are located near the northern site boundary.

COMMUNICATIONS AND TRANSPORT

- 1.63 The busy A90 runs between the settlement of Stonehaven and the proposed development site. This main trunk road bypasses Stonehaven, and provides connectivity along the east coast of Aberdeenshire. A smaller network of A and B roads and lanes link the surrounding landscape.
- 1.64 Several communication masts are located on prominent positions surrounding the immediate area of the site.
- 1.65 Overall, given the main regional characteristics and setting these against the description of the more localised landscape it can be concluded that the development site displays characteristics that occur in the wider parts of this region of Scotland.

Landscape Quality of Study Area

- 1.66 The overall landscape character around the site and within the local area reflects many of the features and elements of the wider regional landscape character areas. This was also determined from observations during the site surveys.
- 1.67 Overall, on this basis of the landscape quality beyond the site boundaries and within both the local and wider landscape, the landscape quality can be determined to be medium with some landscape elements remaining intact such as woodland and arable field patterns, however given the loss of traditional field boundaries, proximity of the railway, A90, Stonehaven and other urban influences it could be argued that the area is influenced by many detracting elements. This balance, given the close proximity of Stonehaven would lead to a rating of **low** for landscape quality.

Landscape value

- 1.68 The development site and surrounding area is not covered by any specific designations to protect its landscape character and the site is located in a prominent location fronting onto the A90. The proposals to redevelop the site will inevitably result in a degree of change. The study area contains some features of landscape value, including an aesthetically pleasing composition with low levels of disruptive visual detractors if viewed in isolation, however if the dominating influence of Stonehaven and transport links are taken into account along with its lack of scarcity as a recognisable landscape structure this would reduce its overall value. In accordance with Table 1.1b the landscape value is assessed as **low**.

Character Sensitivity of Study Area

- 1.69 Set against the earlier landscape character descriptions it is determined that the characteristics of the development will have an influential presence on important elements of the landscape including some loss of field pattern, arable use and loss of some trees and hedges. In terms of scale and enclosure it can be described as large scale with some open and broad, long distance views. In certain directions mainly southward this reduces to enclosed narrow views. All views display human scale indicators. Finally in terms of manmade influence, remoteness and tranquillity the study area can be described as having the frequent presence of manmade influences including roads, extensive urban areas, coniferous plantations and other engineered infrastructure. These elements overall only dominate locally around the actual site. Overall landscape characteristics fall within a number of sensitivity indicators that in accordance with Table 1.1c do not meet the medium sensitivity criteria but exceed those for very low. This would therefore give an overall rating of **low** character sensitivity.

Landscape Visual Sensitivity

- 1.70 The study area landscape character is described as large scale with open rolling ridges and large fields of arable land. Woodland, both deciduous and coniferous, is a key landscape element, along with small villages and farmsteads in a scattered pattern. If Stonehaven is included and the fact that the development site is located on elevated slopes these typical indicators suggest that the overall visual sensitivity is greater than medium (based on visual interruption) but lower than very high (based on dense population). As indicated in Table 1.1d, this variation in indicators would lead to an assessment of **high**.

Summary of Landscape Sensitivity

- 1.71 Overall, the landscape sensitivity of the study area can be assessed against the various criteria values, given to each of the landscape character components. In addition consideration is given to the nature and size of the development and has been weighted more against landscape value and character sensitivity. On this basis landscape sensitivity is assessed as **Low**.

Assessment of Impacts

- 1.72 This section aims to identify the issues relating to the impacts of the proposed development during construction and operation.
- 1.73 The characteristics of the proposed development that have been considered as part of this assessment are described below. The potential visual impact of the proposed development is assessed from the Viewpoint Assessment Areas (See figure 2 - Viewpoint locations).

Characteristics of the Proposed Development

- 1.74 Landscape and visual impacts may result during both the temporary construction period and the subsequent occupation of the proposed development. However, impacts may result from the following aspects:
- Construction activities, including the location of site compound areas;
 - High tower or mobile cranes;
 - Task lighting towers
 - Security fencing
- 1.75 The redevelopment proposals will include 83 Ha (206 acres) of housing, employment and service centres. This will include:
- A village square
 - Supermarket
 - School/community facilities
 - Health centre/dentist
 - Business Park
 - High and low density housing blocks
 - Road network using traditional form of road pattern
 - Large open space including parkland woodland
 - New tree planting

Construction Stage Impacts

Landscape Impacts

- 1.76 The proposed development will result in a partial loss of some of the key elements and features of the baseline, most significantly being the existing landscape fabric and land cover, i.e. the open and large-scale arable and pasture farmland and associated field boundaries.
- 1.77 The addition of the housing, employment and service centres, extending over such a large area, into the landscape will be seen as a prominent change but given the proximity and extent of Stonehaven itself may not be considered to be uncharacteristic when set within the receiving landscape.
- 1.78 For the study area the assessment of magnitude of change is, in accordance with Table 1.2 assessed as **Medium**. As a consequence, when set against a landscape sensitivity of low, the significance of landscape effect during construction is assessed as **Moderate/minor**.

Visual Impacts

- 1.79 It can be anticipated that during the differing phases of the construction period, temporary visual impacts will be evident as a result of construction operations, including the use of tall cranes, scaffolding and other construction equipment such as task lighting. The location of site compounds and lay down areas should be carefully chosen to minimise visual impacts from sensitive receptors resulting from materials storage, site accommodation etc.
- 1.80 However, due to the landscape character, land uses and receptor types in the study area, together with the continuous nature of the construction operations being planned on the site, the introduction of these construction facilities will be an uncommon feature in the local landscape. The sensitivity of the large majority of visual receptors in closest proximity to the proposed construction activities can be classified as an equal mix of low/medium (people travelling, for example along the A90 or railway line), and high sensitive receptors (residential on the edge of Stonehaven, farmsteads within the surrounding landscape, and footpath users). Consequently, the potential significance of the temporary visual impact during the construction period has been assessed to be no greater than for the completed development, at the start of the operational stage for each viewpoint and general area assessment. The results can be seen in Table 1.8

Operation Stage Impacts

Landscape Impacts

- 1.81 The introduction of the completed residential and commercial development within the existing landscape framework will not be uncharacteristic when set within the existing urban framework formed by the adjacent town of Stonehaven.

- 1.82 The magnitude of change on landscape character was determined to be **medium** during the construction phase and would remain unchanged for this unmitigated, operational stage, since a partial loss of or alteration to one or more key elements, of the baseline will remain. Again these would be prominent but would not be considered to be substantially uncharacteristic when set on the edge of Stonehaven.
- 1.83 Based on medium landscape sensitivity of both the local and wider landscape rather than the site itself, the significance of effect on the landscape character resulting from the proposed development is therefore assessed to be **Moderate/minor**.

Visual Impacts

- 1.84 This section aims to identify the issues relating to the visual effects of the development.
- 1.85 The characteristics of the proposed development that have been considered as part of this assessment are described below. The potential visual impact of the proposed development is assessed from the photographic viewpoints as indicated on Figure 2.
- 1.86 Field investigation (between 28th September 2009 and 3rd October 2009) from the identified preliminary viewpoints was used to assess the actual visibility of the proposed development within the study area, taking into account the screening effect of vegetation and buildings.
- 1.87 During these investigations it was found that the extensive coverage of intervening vegetation combined with the undulating topography (giving a fragmented ZTV) meant that publically available views were limited and infrequent. As such the preliminary viewpoints agreed during the scoping exercise with the council had to be discounted and alternative viewpoints sought. As a result, the visibility study, from individual viewpoints was amended and the report has assessed the visibility of the development on an area by area basis with reference to individual viewpoints were appropriate.
- 1.88 On this basis the visual assessment was divided into the following Areas and Figure 2 illustrates the location and extent of them.
- Stonehaven
 - The A90 (north and south bound)
 - Mainline Railway (north and south bound)
 - Areas north of site
 - Areas east of site
 - Areas south of site
 - Areas west of site

1.89 In addition within these assessed areas of study the supporting, individual viewpoints have also been identified and referenced. While the initial study area was established as a 10km radius around the site, all these final viewpoints and assessed areas are within a 5km radius from the site centre and are summarised in the following Table 1.7.

Table 1.7: Summary of Potential Sensitive Receptors

Viewpoint Assessment Area	Representative Viewpoints	Direction of View	Receptors + Sensitivity	Approximate Distance of Views
Areas to the North	VP1 Glithno	SSW	Residential: High	3.6
	VP2 Cowie picnic spot	SW	Outdoor recreation users: High	2.5
Areas to the East	VP3 Halmyres	NW	Residential or cyclists: High	1.2
	VP4 Stonehaven War Memorial, Black Hill	W	Outdoor recreation users: High	1.8
	VP5 Braehead	W	Residential: High	1.2
	VP6 Dunnottar Parish Church	W	Ramblers: High	0.4
Areas to the South	VP7 Toucks	E	Residential: High	0.6
	VP8 By-way at Middle Toucks	N	Ramblers: High	0.3
Areas to the West	VP9 Fetteresso Castle	SE	Residential: High	1.2
	VP10 Cemetery at Fetteresso Castle	S	Ramblers: High	0.5
	VP11 Edge of Fetteresso Forest	SE	Outdoor recreation users: High	2.9
Stonehaven	From Mill of Forest Road	SW	Residential: High	(at closest point) <0.1km
A90	-	N/S	Road users: Medium	(at closest point) <0.1km
Railway	-	S	Rail users: Medium	(at closest point) <0.1km

- 1.90 Following the site survey and photographic studies it was possible to analyse the potential for visual impact from the viewpoint assessment areas and representative viewpoints. The analysis assesses and quantifies the potential significance of the visual impact on the differing types of sensitive visual receptors within the ZTV.

Viewpoint Analysis

- 1.91 The viewpoint areas have been selected to represent the types of views experienced by a range of sensitive receptors such as those listed in the preceding Table 1.7 and should be read in conjunction with Figure 2 Viewpoint Location.

Visual Assessment from areas to the North

- 1.92 Views from the area north of the development site and representative of views looking southwest. This area includes land contained north of Cowie Water. The ZTV is focused on the ridgeline peaks, primarily on the northern side of Cowie Water, and also further north on the peaks of Curlethney Hill and Meikle Carewe.
- 1.93 The visual containment of the landscape of this area chiefly comprises open rolling ridges, covered in large arable field enclosures. Small deciduous woodlands and small, angular coniferous plantation blocks are a common feature, scattered across the landscape amongst a dispersed network of farmsteads. The settlement of Cowie, a village just north of Stonehaven is located to the southeast of the area on the coastline. The A90 runs past Cowie and up the east of the area following the coastline.
- 1.94 Representative viewpoints from within this assessment area include (with receptor sensitivities in brackets):
- VP1: Glithno: residential (high)
 - VP2: Cowie picnic area: representative of outdoor recreation users (high)
- 1.95 *VP1 Glithno* - the foreground comprises a series of large enclosures of arable farmland, delineated to the east by coniferous forestry, and to the south by deciduous woodland, and by stonewalls along the road edges. The fields continue on slopes gently falling southwards towards the narrow Cowie Water valley, which is screened by the intervening deciduous woodland. The ridgeline on the opposite side of valley is covered by a patchwork of large arable fields, broken up by small to medium blocks of coniferous forestry, and small deciduous woodlands. A scattered settlement pattern is evident across this ridgeline, along with several communication masts, clearly seen, on the ridgeline summit. A small section of Stonehaven and the A90 are also visible along the base of the ridgeline in the east.
- 1.96 Viewed from locations around this viewpoint the proposed development would occupy the fields directly to the west of Stonehaven. Even so, little of the development, at this distance and frequency of screening, would be evident and where it is seen, would be confined to the upper sections of the buildings or their rooftops. This is expected to result in a perceptible change to the existing wider view.

- The proposed development's close proximity to Stonehaven will give the impression that it would be contiguous part of the existing town, and in the wider landscape, this may be missed by the casual observer or receptor. On this basis, the magnitude of visual change from the viewpoint would be **small**.
- 1.97 *VP2 Cowie lay-by and picnic area* - this picnic enclosure, located in a lay-by, is partially screened by dense deciduous vegetation. Much of Stonehaven, forms the immediate middle ground of the overall distant view and would be seen extending to the south until hidden by further dense tree planting. The proposed development is located just to the west of Stonehaven on a ridgeline, just visible above the same tree line, rising to the west. Distinct blocks of coniferous forestry are located on the summit of this ridgeline, emphasising the patchwork of arable fields that appear in their foreground. A communications mast would also be visible on the same summit.
- 1.98 The proposed development site would be partially screened from this position due to the extent and amount of vegetation surrounding the picnic area. The screening effect of the vegetation is expected to decrease during the winter and it could be anticipated that more of the site would be visible. The proposed development's close proximity to Stonehaven would limit views to the more elevated parts of the development and it would also be perceived to be a part of the existing town. This general lack of definition beyond Stonehaven would therefore result in a barely perceptible change to the existing view that may be missed by the casual observer. On this basis, the magnitude of visual change from this location would be **very small**.
- 1.99 *Overall Assessment* - Over much of this northerly area, similar, partial views are available of the proposed development site. Views towards the proposed development are limited by the large amount of intervening vegetation, thus reducing the extent of ZTV. Deciduous woodland and coniferous forestry surrounding Forester's Croft, and mixed woodland along the narrow Cowie Water valley all provide screening effects from such locations. The area also features isolated trees and narrow shelterbelts, which provide smaller, more localised screening effects. The proposed development's close proximity to Stonehaven would have the effect of seeing it as a contiguous part of the existing town, and therefore would result in a barely perceptible change to the existing view, that would often be missed by the casual observer.
- 1.100 In consideration of the representative viewpoints and general indications of visual amenity within the area, the magnitude of visual change, as a whole, is assessed, as worst case, to be **small**.
- 1.101 This magnitude of change, when set against receptors such as residents or ramblers that have high sensitivity the significance of visual effect would be **moderate**.

Visual Assessment from areas to the East

- 1.102 Views from the area east of the development site and representative of views looking to the west. This area includes all land south of Stonehaven and east of the A90. The ZTV is focused on the ridgeline that runs parallel to the coastline, between the peak at Kernoon and the new settlement at Braehead.

- 1.103 The visual landscape of this area chiefly comprises a tight network of farmsteads, narrow roads and narrow, linear tracts of deciduous and coniferous woodland. These features are organised in a geometric pattern around small arable enclosures.
- 1.104 Representative viewpoints from within this assessment area include:
- VP3: Halmyres: representative of residential and cyclists using the national cycle route (high)
 - VP4: Stonehaven War Memorial, Black Hill: representative of ramblers and memorial visitors (high)
 - VP5: Braehead: representative of residential (high)
 - VP6: Dunnottar Parish Church: representative of ramblers (high)
- 1.105 *VP3 Halmyres* – much of the foreground along this road comprises of small grazing paddocks, enclosed by post and wire fencing. A narrow, linear tract of coniferous trees is located along the north western boundary of the fields and is seen as the middle ground, allowing only glimpsed views through and beyond to the north west in the direction of the proposed development site. A topographical ridgeline covered in a patchwork of green and yellow fields indicate the location of the development site, coupled with areas of distant woodland of a small and medium scale and distinguishable through the coniferous trees in the middle ground.
- 1.106 Seen from locations along this road where gaps in the trees are available the proposed development would appear as a small, indistinct area of built development on the lower east side of the distant ridgeline, only partially visible due to the more distant intervening vegetation and folds in the topography.
- 1.107 On the basis that the development would only be glimpsed for short and infrequent periods it would result in a barely perceptible change in the existing view, and would form an inconspicuous minor element in the wider landscape that is likely to be missed, especially by moving receptors. On this basis, the magnitude of visual change would be **very small**.
- 1.108 *VP4 Stonehaven War Memorial, Black Hill* - this viewpoint is located at an elevated position, providing distant panoramic views to the surrounding landscape and sea. The foreground in the west, towards the proposed development site, gently rolls downward, away from the viewpoint towards the west. The landscape is covered in large fields of arable farmland. At the base of the view, a broad band of deciduous woodland sweeps across the valley, surrounding the outlying houses of Stonehaven, visible only as an extended cluster of grey rooftops. Beyond the deciduous woodland, land gently slopes to the ridgeline that forms the horizon. The landscape is a patchwork of green and yellow large-scale arable fields indicating mixed farming uses. Small to medium sized blocks of coniferous forest generally line the summit of the ridge, and define the outline of the fields. Several farmsteads are just visible scattered across the ridgeline, and a communications mast is visible in good conditions, northwest of the viewpoint, again on the ridgeline summit. The recent Braehead development sits in front of the woodland and Stonehaven is visible to the northwest of the viewpoint in the valley beyond the deciduous woodland, appearing as a large built up area.

- 1.109 The coastal path runs close to this viewpoint but at much lower levels and therefore views along this path are seen outside the ZTV.
- 1.110 Seen from locations around this viewpoint the proposed development will be visible in the field of view as an area of built development well below the ridgeline. Only the western most fields of the development site will be visible due to the screening effect of the intervening deciduous woodland that extends across the middle ground. The proposed development's close proximity to Stonehaven will give the general impression that it is already part of the existing town, and in the wider landscape, this may not register with casual observer or receptor.
- 1.111 The development would therefore result in a perceptible change in the existing view, and would form an apparent small element in the wider landscape. On this basis, the magnitude of visual change would be **small**.
- 1.112 *VP5 Braehead* - this viewpoint is located on the lower elevations near Braehead. The foreground comprises of westwards facing large arable fields, which slope downward towards a narrow valley in the middle ground where the A957 is located. A large deciduous woodland is located within this narrow valley beyond the road, creating a dark green backdrop that emphasises the moving vehicles travelling on the road and catches the eye. Beyond the woodland, land rises up as a series of distinct blocks of coniferous forestry with the ridgeline appearing as a continuous belt of this woodland type. A scattered settlement pattern is evident below this ridgeline, along with several communication masts on the ridgeline summit. A further, more distant ridgeline is also apparent and forms the horizon.
- 1.113 Viewed from various locations around this viewpoint the proposed development will be visible as an area of built development on the higher ground toward the ridgeline in the middle ground. Only the western most fields of the site will be visible due to the screening provided by intervening deciduous woodland that is evident in most views.
- 1.114 The A957 and the communications masts form existing detractors at this viewpoint location, but the built development Stonehaven is not visible here. The development would result in a perceptible change in the existing view and would form an apparent small element in the wider landscape that may be missed by the casual observer. On this basis, the magnitude of visual change would be **small**.
- 1.115 *VP6 Dunnottar Parish Church* – The area around this location is a combination of woodland to the east and behind the camera and the more open ground to the west and relating to a foreground comprising of a series of small fields of pastureland, lineated by post and wire fencing, and backed along the western boundary by a line of deciduous trees. A ridgeline is visible to the northwest of the viewpoint in the distance, covered in a patchwork of arable fields and small areas of deciduous woodland, but views towards this ridgeline in the west, where the proposed development site is located, are screened due to the intervening deciduous vegetation.

- 1.116 Seen from locations around this viewpoint and taking into account the loss of screening properties in winter months from the deciduous vegetation, the proposed development would be glimpsed and partial views of rooftops of buildings in the western fields may be visible. These however would not be obvious.
- 1.117 The development would result in a perceptible change in the existing view, and would form a small element in the wider landscape that may be missed by the casual observer. On this basis, the magnitude of visual change would be **small**.
- 1.118 *Overall Assessment* - In consideration of the representative viewpoints and visual assessment area generally the magnitude of visual change, as a whole, is assessed as **small**. The intervening deciduous woodland on the eastern edge of this area effectively screens many views, and will continue to do so, even in the winter months due to its density. In addition, the proposed development's close proximity to Stonehaven means that it would be perceived to be a part of the existing town, and therefore would often result in a barely perceptible change to the existing view, that would often be missed by the casual observer. Set against high sensitive receptors the significance of visual effect would be **moderate**

Visual Assessment from areas to the South

- 1.119 Views from the area south of the development site and representative of views looking north and northeast. This includes all land contained within the enclosure created by the A90 and railway line. The ZTV is focused on the land immediately adjacent to the proposed development site, including the settlements Toucks, Middle Toucks and Glasslaw. The ZTV only extends up to the coniferous forestry that runs between Bardspark and Hillhead of Auquhirie.
- 1.120 Representative viewpoints from within this assessment area include:
- VP7: Toucks: representative of residential (high)
 - VP8: By-way at Middle Toucks: representative of ramblers (high)
- 1.121 *VP7 Toucks* - the viewpoint is located on a quiet classified B road at an elevated position looking east towards the proposed development site. Medium to large-scale arable fields surround the viewpoint, with a large arable field in the foreground of the photographic view. Along the eastern edge of the field, a large farmstead and a short coniferous shelterbelt form the boundary. An area of mixed woodland forms the northern boundary. Beyond this, the views are terminated by a distant ridgeline comprising large scale arable fields and small mixed woodlands. The sea is also visible and forms part of the horizon. Stonehaven is located on the lower sections of this ridgeline.
- 1.122 Seen from locations around this viewpoint, the proposed development site lies just beyond the farmstead and coniferous shelterbelt in the west. The undulations in the landscape suggest that much of the development will be located on the down-slope and therefore out of sight, although the rooftops of the proposed development located within the upper fields may be visible. The proposed development's

- close proximity to Stonehaven will give the impression that it would be contiguous part of the existing town, and in the wider landscape, this may be missed by the casual observer or receptor.
- 1.123 The development would result in a barely perceptible change in the existing view, and would form an inconspicuous minor element in the wider landscape. On this basis, the magnitude of visual change would be **very small**.
- 1.124 *VP8 By-way at Middle Toucks* - the viewpoint is located within a tree-lined by-way, which runs northwards downhill towards the proposed development and represents any views from the elevated by-way. At the time of the field survey undisturbed vegetation would suggest that this by-way is not well used and is well screened for the surrounding landscape. Arable fields in the foreground and in the distance, to the north on a ridgeline, are evident through glimpsed views through the trees.
- 1.125 Seen from locations along the by-way the proposed development would be screened from this viewpoint, and even during the winter months when the screening effects of the deciduous vegetation is reduced, only glimpsed views of the site as a whole would be possible but could be missed since they would not be obvious.
- 1.126 The development would result in a barely perceptible change in the existing view, and would form an inconspicuous minor element in the wider landscape. On this basis, the magnitude of visual change would be **very small**.
- 1.127 *Overall Assessment* - In consideration of the representative viewpoints and visual assessment area generally, the combination of extensive intervening vegetation and undulations in the landscape determine that much of the development will not be visible. Given the extensive coniferous forestry the variation in the extent of the ZTV and actual visual envelope is reduced quite substantially. The proposed development's close proximity to Stonehaven suggests views of the proposed development that are available, would often be seen as a contiguous extension to Stonehaven.. The magnitude of visual change, as a whole, is therefore assessed, as a worst case, **small**. When set against a high sensitive receptor this would result in a **moderate** Significance of Visual Effect.

Visual Assessment from areas to the West

- 1.128 Views from the areas west of the development site represent views looking south and southeast. The assessment area includes all land contained between Cowie Water and the railway line that runs through Stonehaven in an east-west direction. The ZTV is focused on most of the open arable farmland within the area, apart from the topographical undulations surrounding Grains of Fetteresso and the areas covered by Fetteresso Forest. Hill of Trusta, which lies central to Fetteresso Forest, is contained within the ZTV. In consideration of the extensive coniferous forestry these areas are unlikely to experience views of the development due to the screening effects.

- 1.129 The visual landscape of this area chiefly comprises a tight network of farmsteads, narrow roads and narrow, linear tracts of deciduous and coniferous woodland. These features are organised in a geometric style around small arable fields.
- 1.130 Representative viewpoints from within this assessment area include:
- VP9: Fetteresso Castle: representative of residential (high)
 - VP10: Cemetary at Fetteresso Castle: representative of ramblers (high)
 - VP11: Southeastern edge of Fetteresso Forest: representative of outdoor recreation users (high)
- 1.131 *Vp9 Fetteresso Castle* - The general foreground comprises of large arable enclosures defined by post and wire fencing and in the case of the photographic location, transected by 33kv poles and wires. The land slopes downhill to the south east, in the direction of the proposed development site. The small settlement of Fetteresso is located just south of the viewpoint, surrounded by deciduous woodland. Further down slope, smaller arable fields are visible, and at the base of the slope, there is a large belt of deciduous woodland. On the far side of this woodland, the land rises up again to form another ridgeline, with similar properties to the one in the photographic foreground. Only the southern most fields of the proposed development site will be visible. Stonehaven would not be visible due to the intervening deciduous woodland.
- 1.132 Seen from locations around this viewpoint the proposed development site will not be obvious due to the large amount of intervening woodland. If seen, only the rooftops of the buildings in the southern most fields will be evident.
- 1.133 The development would result in a barely perceptible change in the existing view, and would form an inconspicuous minor element in the wider landscape that may be missed by the casual observer. On this basis, the magnitude of visual change would be **very small**.
- 1.134 *VP10 Cemetery at Fetteresso Castle* - this viewpoint is representative of the roads and footpaths near to the cemetery. Views from within the cemetery are screened by a high perimeter stonewall well above eye level. This particular viewpoint is located on an elevated position but views are restricted to direct views southward and towards the proposed development site due to the screening vegetation associated with boundaries and edges of roads etc. At lower levels from the viewpoint, a belt of deciduous woodland is located, and beyond this a ridgeline is evident. This is the proposed location of the development site. The ridgeline is currently covered by a patchwork of large arable fields, broken up by small to medium scale blocks of coniferous forestry, and small deciduous woodlands. The A90 is visible from this location, cutting through the woodlands in the centre, distant ground.
- 1.135 Seen from locations around this viewpoint the proposed development would not be obvious due to the large amount of intervening vegetation, and only the rooftops of the buildings in the southernmost field may be evident.

- 1.136 The development would result in a barely perceptible change in the existing view, and would form an inconspicuous minor element in the wider landscape that may be missed by the casual observer. On this basis, the magnitude of visual change would be **very small**.
- 1.137 *VP11 South eastern edge of Fetteresso Forest* - this viewpoint is located at the eastern edge of the Fetteresso Forest coniferous plantation. This is an elevated location, and wide panoramic, long distance views are available to the surrounding landscape. The land gently undulates downhill to the southeast from the viewpoint, and the foreground comprises of several large arable fields delineated by post and wire fencing. At the base of this slope, deciduous woodland is located, following the length of Carrow Water that creates the valley base. A cluster of properties and a farmstead can be seen located central to the viewpoint in the middle ground on the edge of this deciduous woodland. Beyond the woodland, the ridgeline on the opposite side of valley is covered by a patchwork of large arable fields, fragmented by small to medium scale blocks of coniferous forestry, and small deciduous woodlands. A large section of Stonehaven is visible on the lower slopes of this ridgeline, appearing as a mass of grey rooftops surrounded by woodland. Beyond this woodland is the new housing of Braehead and the coastal edge with the sea creating the far horizon.
- 1.138 Seen from locations around this viewpoint, the proposed development would be visible occupying the fields directly west of Stonehaven. While they would appear as an extension of Stonehaven due to its close proximity, the view of the proposed development will mostly comprise of the area designated for open space landscape framework and to a lesser degree, two storey housing and buildings within the business park.
- 1.139 Given the panoramic views the development would result in a perceptible change in the existing view due to the altered patterns of open green space and woodland belts. It would form an apparent small element in this wider landscape that may be missed by casual observers. On this basis, the magnitude of visual change would be **small**.

Overall Assessment - In consideration of the representative viewpoints and visual assessment area generally the magnitude of visual change, as a whole, is **small**. The widespread intervening vegetation reduces the extent of visibility quite extensively. Where views are available, they would see the development as part of Stonehaven and as a small element of the overall view. When set against the high receptor sensitivity the Significance of Visual Effect would be **moderate**.

Visual Assessment from within Stonehaven

- 1.140 Stonehaven is located directly northeast of the proposed development site. While views from Mill of Forest Road would indicate the worst case, they are partially screened by vegetation when seen from road footpaths. Those views that area available, particularly in the location of the new road bridge crossing would be assessed as a prominent or even dominant change and have a magnitude of change that when set against the high resident sensitivity would give significant visual effects. This would be expected given the close proximity of the development.

- 1.141 The settlement is located on the lower levels than the site as land falls toward town centre and eventually, the sea. Intervening built form and garden vegetation is expected to prevent nearly all views out and towards the development site.
- 1.142 Views from individual private property were not available. However, when seen from the upper parts of the development site looking back toward and across Stonehaven, many windows are evident that suggests that most parts of south and western Stonehaven have the potential for views of the site, particularly from upper, secondary windows.
- 1.143 These views, where available would have a distant rural view over or between intervening buildings. The proposed site would include fields that run up to the ridgeline that forms the skyline along with broad stands of coniferous forest. Parts of the development would be seen against this skyline in places although upper parts of the site are proposed as open space. Where views of the site are currently available between neighbouring buildings or gardens the change to one of a built environment would be noticeable rather than prominent and have a magnitude of change rated as medium. Dwellings further from the urban edge would have diminishing views that correspondingly reduce this magnitude of change.
- 1.144 In summary therefore most property on Mill of Forest Road and Riverside Drive would have a **major** significance of visual effect. Property such as those on Forest Park would begin to have **major/moderate** effects while property in areas away from the urban edge such as Brickfield Road that represents the majority of Stonehaven visual receptors, would have reduced, **moderate** or **minor** effects.

Visual Assessment from the A90

- 1.145 The A90 runs between the settlement of Stonehaven and the proposed development site.
- 1.146 When travelling north along the A90, the proposed development site will come into partial view once the receptor has passed the junction for Hillhead of Glasslaw. Prior to this point, intervening vegetation and topography will have screened views, and even if visible, it would have been at such a distance that no change to the existing view would be appreciated.
- 1.147 Between Hillhead of Glasslaw and Glasslaw, the southern central fields of the development site would be in view, with two storey housing and shelterbelts visible obliquely. Between Glasslaw and the A92 junction, no direct or oblique views would be available. For approximately half a kilometre past the A92 junction, the A90 enters a cutting and no views to the site would be available. For the proceeding quarter of a kilometre, oblique views are available to the lower to middle sections of the proposed development site. The proposed open space and shelterbelts are shown on the development plan in the locations closest to the A90, but housing and the business park also likely to be visible. A lay-by is located within this section of the road. Beyond this this, the A90 enters a second cutting in the road that will screen all views of the site. Leaving this cutting, there is a section up to two hundred metres long where very

oblique views of the proposed wetlands area would be visible. Beyond this point any views of the site would be in a rearward direction and are no longer considered as part of the assessment.

- 1.148 Travelling south along the A90, the potential views of the proposed development site will be available after passing the Kirktown Road junction and at the crest of the hill. On this elevated section of road views are direct and toward the development but are generally restricted to the southern sections of the site. Views are intermittent as the A90 passes down hill, through several short cuttings in the road until the A90 reaches the railway line overhead. Once passed the railway line, the view opens out and oblique views of the whole of the western and central sections of the site will be visible. This includes areas proposed for open green space, shelterbelts, two-storey housing, wetlands areas and the business park. There is also a lay-by located along this section. As the A90 enters another cutting further along the road views are again screened. On passing this cutting, the views toward the development are available although given the traffic speed and distance these would be brief. It is expected that the open green spaces, shelterbelts and mixed use/business park buildings will be visible at this point. Once the road crosses Toucks Burn, a dense belt of woodland screens the A90 as it passes the remaining section of the site, although the mixed use/business park buildings may still be glimpsed.
- 1.149 For receptors travelling both north and south bound, the development would result in a variety of changing views from one that is noticeable travelling south between Glasslaw/A92, at approximately 2.5 kilometres gradually increasing to closer views where the A90 passes adjacent to the site that would be assessed as a prominent change in the view. On this basis, the magnitude of visual change would range from **medium to large**. For road users with a medium sensitivity to change the Significance of Visual Effect would range from **moderate to major/moderate**.

Visual Assessment from the Railway

- 1.150 The railway line runs from the southwest to the northeast, passing through the centre of Stonehaven, and along the northern boundary of the proposed development site.
- 1.151 Views of the proposed development for passengers travelling both north and south would only be available when the train is passing from a railway cutting directly north of the site and from Stonehaven station. The section of railway is elevated so views would be mainly across the rooftops of Stonehaven. This availability of views is also modified by the limitations of carriage window/seat configuration.
- 1.152 No journey on the train, in either direction was undertaken as part of the assessment but it is assumed that views of the proposed development would be available for a 1500m section of the railway. On the basis that train speeds would be slow as it enters or leaves Stonehaven station this would equate to views lasting up to 5 minutes. The proposed development would be visible during this period occupying the fields directly south of the railway line adjacent to Kirktown of Fetteresso. While the proposed development would appear as an extension of Stonehaven due to its close proximity, the change, on the whole would be noticeable although it is expected that directly adjacent to the site views would be prominent.

- 1.153 On the basis of directions of view, short duration of view and its contiguous nature with the existing settlement an assessed magnitude of change, rated as **medium** when set against a medium sensitivity for rail travellers would give a **moderate** significance of effect.

Summary of Visual Impacts and Significance

Table 1.8 Summary of Significance of Effect and Visual Quality

Area	Representative Viewpoints	Receptors + Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Significance of Visual Effect
Areas to the North	VP1 Glithno	Residential: High	Small	<i>Moderate</i>
	VP2 Cowie picnic area	Outdoor recreation users: High	Very Small	<i>Minor</i>
	OVERALL	HIGH	SMALL	MODERATE
Areas to the East	VP3 Halymyres	Residential: High	Very Small	<i>Minor</i>
	VP4 Stonehaven War Memorial, Black Hill	Outdoor recreation users: High	Small	<i>Moderate</i>
	VP5 Braehead	Residential: High	Small	<i>Moderate</i>
	VP6 Dunnottar Parish Church	Ramblers: High	Very Small	<i>Minor</i>
	OVERALL	HIGH	SMALL	MODERATE
Areas to the South	VP7 Toucks	Residential: High	Very Small	<i>Minor</i>
	VP8 By-way at Middle Toucks	Ramblers: High	Very Small	<i>Minor</i>
	OVERALL	HIGH	SMALL	MODERATE
Areas to the West	VP9 Fetteresso Castle	Residential: High	Very Small	<i>Minor</i>
	VP10 Cemetery at Fetteresso Castle	Ramblers: High	Very Small	<i>Minor</i>
	VP11 Edge of Fetteresso Forest	Outdoor recreation users: High	Small	<i>Moderate</i>
	OVERALL	HIGH	SMALL	MODERATE
Stonehaven	-	Residential: High	Large to small	Major to Minor

Area	Representative Viewpoints	Receptors + Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Significance of Visual Effect
A90	-	Road users: Medium	Medium to large	Moderate to Major/moderate
Railway	-	Rail users: Medium	Medium	Moderate

Mitigation Measures

- 1.154 It is proposed to set the development within the strong and the essentially effective landscape framework that currently exists around the vast majority of the site. This framework immediately around the site is already supplemented and reinforced by other deciduous woodland and coniferous forestry blocks, and hedge lines within the local landscape.
- 1.155 The style and character of the landscaping proposed to be implemented as an integral part of the development would be consistent with other high quality developments and will include the planting of large specification trees including semi-mature specimens, native and ornamental trees and shrubs, grass areas, high quality paving materials, and lighting. Existing landscape features such as the shelterbelts will be extended into the site to integrate development with the countryside and provide screening to the new buildings.
- 1.156 The mitigation measures should include the introduction of building materials that reflect the landscape character for this part of Aberdeenshire. The landscape design around to the perimeter of the development should take due regard of the screening requirements of the development and the selection of plant species should take due regard of and enhance the nature conservation interest of the site.
- 1.157 One of the key mitigation features for reinforcing the landscape character will be to undertake active management of the existing woodland surrounding and within the site. The management will include for the limited and selective felling of over mature trees or those in poor condition, woodland thinning and the replanting of a more diverse shrubby under storey. These proposed mitigation measures will assist in rejuvenating the woodland and will improve the outlook towards the proposed residential properties.
- 1.158 Another key landscape element of the mitigation proposals will be to maximise the nature conservation interests of the wetlands in the north eastern corner of the site. As an integral part of the redevelopment proposals, the existing wetlands will be incorporated into the SUDS proposals, with the SUDS basin located here.
- 1.159 The introduction of the SUDS features offers the potential to diversify the variety of ground flora within this field. It is proposed to plant various species of wetland marginal vegetation however, it is not

proposed to include any trees or shrub planting within the wetlands area in order that in the event of a flood, the water flows would not be impeded.

Residual Significance of Effect

- 1.160 The residual impacts are those that are likely to remain after a period of time following mitigation. For the purposes of this study they are assessed at 15 years after scheme completion (to allow the full effects of landscaping to take effect) and take into account the mitigation measures adopted as described.
- 1.161 The most successful mitigation will be the development of a substantial landscape framework to reinforce the existing retained hedges and trees. This additional screening effect will reduce the visibility of the development to form predicted either inconspicuous minor elements within the view or that no part of the development would be appreciated. The reassessment of visual impacts has been taken after this 15-year period following the start of the operational stage. In this time span any tree planting will have grown to over 8m high and any hedge planting, for example, will have now become a dense managed hedgerow.

Landscape Character

- 1.162 With the introduction of new residential and commercial development into this site the introduction of landscape management objectives including the introduction of further indigenous hedgerow species, and woodland blocks, the overall magnitude of character impact is assessed as still being medium since in accordance with Table 13.2 the development would still give rise to a minor loss or alteration to key landscape elements but may not be considered to be substantially uncharacteristic when set against the attributes of this receiving landscape. Assessed against a landscape character that has been determined to have a medium sensitivity, and a magnitude of change assessed as small the Significance of Effect will remain as **minor**. With mitigation changes that are improving the environment the quality of change would be **beneficial**.

Visual Impact

- 1.163 Within a 15-year assessment period;
- The younger, existing trees will have attained greater heights
 - New hedging and vegetation boundaries will be well established and will have been managed at heights that provide more effective screening.
 - Planting to reinforce the existing vegetation will provide denser effective winter screening
 - The tree screening belts and occasional hedge trees will also now be 8+ metres high.

- Materials that form the external envelope and roof of the buildings will have 'weathered' and have more subdued tones.

1.164 These mitigation measures would help limit views of the development and therefore alter and reduce some of the magnitudes of visual change from the established viewpoints.

Viewpoint 1 – Glithno

1.165 Further tree planting around and within the site will reinforce the existing screening effect. By now only a small part of the development would be discernable. The magnitude of change will **negligible**, with Significance of Visual Effect reducing to **negligible** for high sensitivity receptors.

Viewpoint 2 – Cowie Picnic Area

1.166 Further tree planting will reinforce the existing tree screening effect, particularly in the winter months, and it is unlikely that any part of the development would now be seen. Magnitude of change will reduce to **negligible** with Significance of Visual Effect assessed as **negligible**.

Viewpoint 3 – Halmyres

1.167 Further tree planting around and within the site will reinforce the existing screening effect. Less of the development will be seen and would only just be discernable. The magnitude of change will reduce to **negligible**, with Significance of Visual Effect also reducing to **negligible** for residential receptors.

Viewpoint 4 – Stonehaven War Memorial, Black Hill

1.168 Further tree planting around and within the site will reinforce the existing screening effect. Less of the development will be seen and now will be less obvious. The magnitude of change will alter to **very small**, with Significance of Visual Effect remaining as **minor**.

Viewpoint 5 – Braehead

1.169 Increased planting will provide a denser screening effect even in winter months. Only a small part of the development would ever be discernable giving a reduced magnitude of change assessed as **very small**. The resulting Significance of Visual Effect would be **minor** for residential receptors.

Viewpoint 6 – Dunnottar Parish Church

1.170 Further tree planting will reinforce the existing tree screening effect, particularly in the winter months. It is unlikely that any part of the development would now be seen. Magnitude of change will reduce to **negligible** with Significance of Visual Effect assessed as **negligible**.

Viewpoint 7 – Toucks

- 1.171 Further tree planting will reinforce the existing tree screening effect, particularly in the winter months when the development would previously of potentially been visible, and it is unlikely that any part of the development would now be seen. Magnitude of change will reduce to **negligible** with Significance of Visual Effect assessed as **negligible**.

Viewpoint 8 – By-way at Middle Toucks

- 1.172 Further tree planting will reinforce the existing tree screening effect, particularly in the winter months. when the development had previously had the potentially to be visible. It is unlikely that any part of the development would now be seen. Magnitude of change will reduce to **negligible** with Significance of Visual Effect assessed as **negligible**.

Viewpoint 9 – Fetteresso Castle

- 1.173 Increased tree planting will reinforce the existing tree screening effect and it is unlikely that any part of the development would be seen. Magnitude of change will reduce to **negligible** with Significance of Visual Effect assessed as **negligible**.

Viewpoint 10 – Cemetery at Fetteresso Castle

- 1.174 The proposed open space and associated tree planting will reinforce the existing tree screening effect, and this increased screening effect will remain in during winter months. It is assessed that no parts of the development would now be seen. Magnitude of change will reduce to **negligible** with Significance of Visual Effect assessed as **negligible**.

Viewpoint 11 - Edge of Fetteresso Forest

Additional tree planting will reinforce the screening effect of existing trees and woodland, particularly in the winter months. At this stage it is unlikely that any part of the development would now be seen. Magnitude of change will reduce to **negligible** with Significance of Visual Effect assessed as **negligible**.

Visual Assessment from within Stonehaven

- 1.175 The addition of a robust landscape framework will reduce views of the buildings from dwellings within Stonehaven. Any views of the development would be limited to the new bridge and access road and these views would be restricted to dwellings on Mill of Forest Road and Riverside Drive. Views from these locations would have some screening effects provided by the trees and shrubs. Given a reduction in extent of development seen it that would reduce the prominence and would be assessed as one that is now more of a noticeable view. This change is classified as a **medium** change and when set against the few sensitive receptors results in a **Major /moderate** significance of effect.

Visual Assessment from the A90

Further tree planting around and within the site with reinforce the existing screening effect. Less of the development will be seen, perhaps with the exception of the supermarket site, but it may still be perceptible on certain parts of the road. As a worst case, overall, magnitude of change will reduce to **small** with Significance of Visual Effect assessed as **Moderate/minor**.

Visual Assessment from the Railway

- 1.176 Further tree planting around and within the site with reinforce the existing screening effect. Less of the development will be seen but it may still be perceptible. Magnitude of change will reduce to **small** with Significance of Visual Effect assessed as **Moderate/minor**.
- 1.177 Table 1.9 summarises the viewpoints, the re-assessed magnitude of change, and residual Significance of Visual Effect.

Table 1.9 Summary of Residual Significance of Visual Effect compared with pre mitigation for operational stage

Area	Viewpoints	Receptors + Sensitivity	Pre-mitigation		Residual	
			Magnitude of Change	Significance of Visual Effect	Magnitude of Change	Significance of Visual Effect
Areas to the North	VP1 Glithno	Residential: High	Small	Moderate	Negligible	Negligible
	VP2 Cowie picnic spot	Outdoor recreation users: High	Very Small	Minor	Negligible	Negligible
	OVERALL	HIGH	SMALL	MODERATE	NEGLIGIBLE	NEGLIGIBLE
Areas to the East	VP3 Halmyres	Residential: High	Very Small	Minor	Negligible	Negligible
	VP4 Stonehaven War Memorial, Black Hill	Outdoor recreation users: High	Small	Moderate	Very Small	Minor
	VP5 Braehead	Residential: High	Small	Moderate	Very Small	Minor

Area	Viewpoints	Receptors + Sensitivity	Pre-mitigation		Residual	
			Magnitude of Change	Significance of Visual Effect	Magnitude of Change	Significance of Visual Effect
	VP6 Dunnottar Parish Church	Ramblers: High	Small	Minor	Negligible	Negligible
	OVERALL	HIGH	SMALL	MODERATE	VERY SMALL	MINOR
Areas to the South	VP7 Toucks	Residential: High	Very Small	Minor	Negligible	Negligible
	VP8 By-way at Middle Toucks	Ramblers: High	Very Small	Minor	Negligible	Negligible
	OVERALL	HIGH	SMALL	MODERATE	NEGLIGIBLE	NEGLIGIBLE
Areas to the West	VP9 Fetteresso Castle	Residential: High	Very Small	Minor	Negligible	Negligible
	VP10 Cemetery at Fetteresso Castle	Ramblers: High	Very Small	Minor	Negligible	Negligible
	VP11 Edge of Fetteresso Forest	Outdoor recreation users: High	Small	Minor	Negligible	Negligible
	OVERALL	HIGH	SMALL	MODERATE	NEGLIGIBLE	NEGLIGIBLE
Stonehaven	-	Residential: High	Large to Small	Major to Minor	Medium	Major/moderate
A90	-	Road users: Medium	Medium to Large	Moderate to Major	Small	Moderate/minor

Area	Viewpoints	Receptors + Sensitivity	Pre-mitigation		Residual	
			Magnitude of Change	Significance of Visual Effect	Magnitude of Change	Significance of Visual Effect
Railway	-	Rail users: Medium	Medium	Moderate	Small	Moderate/minor

Summary and Statement of Significance

- 1.178 The development site is situated within a predominantly rural area characterised by a large-scale landscape with open rolling ridges, with large fields of arable land and pasture. This is a well-settled landscape with the small town of Stonehaven located along the north eastern boundary of the site, and numerous small villages scattered across the landscape in a dispersed pattern.
- 1.179 Partly defining the site are the major communication routes of the A90 and eastern main railway line.
- 1.180 The wider landscape character around the site is typical of the much wider landscape character type Garvock and Glenerbie. The study area also includes the coastal strip named Kincardine Cliffs, however the characteristics of this area are less evident. The published description of the character also recognises that the landscape is able to absorb some development but the distinct agricultural patterns are the most sensitive element.
- 1.181 The landscape character of the area around the development site displays many of these attributes, particularly the field pattern and frequent areas of woodland and coniferous forest.
- 1.182 An assessment of the overall Landscape Sensitivity that includes landscape quality, value, characteristics and visual sensitivity is assessed as **low**.
- 1.183 The redevelopment proposals for the site will include 83 hectares (206 acres) of housing, employment and service centres. The development will be set in a strong landscape framework that will reinforce many of the landscape elements including woodland and field boundaries.
- 1.184 During construction periods and the operational stage the development will be seen as a prominent change that would be rated in accordance with the assessment tables as having a medium magnitude of change. When set against a low sensitivity the Significance of Landscape Effects would be Moderate/minor.
- 1.185 In terms of visual effects, for both construction and operational stages, the development of the site will only be visible at viewpoints that are located within 3km and are located either at higher elevations or lack substantial vegetation screening. With the development site being adjacent to the existing

settlement boundary it also has the benefit of any change being seen as an extension of the town and would be viewed with Stonehaven occupying the same field of view. Even so, from most areas around the compass point the visibility is assessed as a small change that would have moderate significance of effect. As expected locations that are close to the development such as the western edge of Stonehaven, sections of the A90 and adjacent stretch of railway have increased magnitudes of change that for high sensitive receptors would have major to moderate effects that in planning terms are significant.

- 1.186 The most effective mitigation for this type of development will comprise mainly of tree and shrub screening planting and this has been embodied within the overall development proposals. Substantial planting to boundaries, extensions to the existing woodland, creation of open spaces and inevitable garden planting will reinforce the screening effects, particularly in winter months.
- 1.187 In a reassessment of residual significance the changes in landscape character will not change given the loss of arable fields but increased tree planting that follows the character and general pattern of the area will bring a quality of change that can be considered beneficial.
- 1.188 In terms of visual amenity the planting will improve screening effects and reduce the views of the development. In many cases, particularly at a distance from the site, this would prevent any views and would give negligible effects.
- 1.189 For the closest receptors on Mill of Forest Road and Riverside Drive. Even with a partial screening from new tree and shrub planting and a reduction in the magnitude of change, the proximity of the new bridge crossing and access road will still give rise to residual visual effects that are assessed as significant.
- 1.190 For any other receptors within Stonehaven, in dwellings of the Toucks or travelling on the A90 or railway, close views that are in effect, in the immediate areas around the site, the planting will give a reduction in the magnitude of change and subsequent visual amenity that is no longer assessed as significant in planning terms.

ILLUSTRATIVE PLATES

VP1: Glithno



VP2 Cowie picnic spot



VP3 Halmyres



VP4 Stonehaven War Memorial, Black Hill



VP5 Braehead



VP6 Dunnottar Parish Church



VP7 Toucks



VP8 By-way at Middle Toucks



VP9 Near Fetteresso Castle



VP10 Cemetery at Fetteresso Castle



VP11 Edge of Fetteresso Forest



VP12 Edge of Stonehaven

