
1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report presents the landscape and townscape assessment with respect to the proposed mixed housing development of the site within the Bolfracks Estate referred to as H37 (South of Kenmore Road) in the Perth & Kinross Council (PKC) Local Development Plan on the western edge of the settlement boundary of the market town of Aberfeldy. This report has been prepared by Fearn Macpherson Chartered Architects and forms supporting documentation to the Planning Permission in Principle application. A Landscape Framework for the development site was prepared by Brown Earth Landscapes Ltd which also accompanies the Planning Permission in Principle application.

2.0 RELEVANT PLANNING & STATUTORY CONTEXT

2.1 National Planning Policies and Guidance are relevant factors in determining the over-riding planning and statutory context with reference to the landscape and townscape assessment of the site. The National Planning Framework is the Scottish Government's strategy for national developments and other strategically important development in Scotland. Scottish Planning Policy sets out national planning policies with reference to the preparation of development plans, development design and the determination of planning applications and appeals.

At a regional level, Highland Perthshire is represented within the boundaries of the TAYplan region in the Strategic Development Plan 2012 - 2032 (TAYplan) Approved June 2012. Specific local planning policies and guidance for the site are predominately found within the PKC Local Development Plan Adopted 3 February 2014 (LDP). Aberfeldy is within the Highland Perthshire area of the LDP. In addition, relevant supplementary guidance is available from PKC and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH).

2.2 National Planning Context

The following excerpts from Scotland's Third National Planning Framework (SPF3 - June 2014) may be considered relevant to the proposed development:

2.26 *We do not wish to see development in our rural areas unnecessarily constrained... careful planning is required to manage demand in our most accessible countryside around towns and cities.*

4.4 *... Closer to settlements landscapes have an important role to play in sustaining local distinctiveness and cultural identity, and in supporting health and well-being.*

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- 4.6 *The historic environment is an integral part of our well-being and cultural identity... Our archaeological sites reflect our long history of human settlement.*
- 4.13 *Natural and cultural assets in and around urban areas have a key role to play in supporting sustainable growth, maintaining distinctiveness and promoting quality of life.*

The following excerpts from Scottish Planning Policy (SPP - June 2014) maybe considered relevant to the proposed development:

Paragraph 41. [Distinctive] This is development that complements local features, for example landscapes, topography, ecology, skylines, spaces and scales, street and building forms, and materials to create places with a sense of identity.

Paragraph 70. The impact of new development on the character and amenity of town centres, local centres and high streets will be a material consideration in decision-making. The aim is to recognise and prioritise the importance of town centres and encourage a mix of developments which support their vibrancy, vitality and viability.

Paragraph 75. The planning system should:

- in all rural and island areas promote a pattern of development that is appropriate to the character of the particular rural area and the challenges it faces;*
- encourage rural development that supports prosperous and sustainable communities and businesses whilst protecting and enhancing environmental quality...*

Paragraph 136. The historic environment is a key cultural and economic asset and a source of inspiration that should be seen as integral to creating successful places.

Paragraph 143. Proposals for development within conservation areas and proposals outwith which will impact on its appearance, character or setting, should preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Paragraph 202. The siting and design of development should take account of local landscape character. Development management decisions should take account of potential effects on landscapes and the natural and water environment, including cumulative effects. Developers should seek to minimise adverse impacts through careful planning and design, considering the services that the natural environment is providing and maximising the potential for enhancement.

2.3 Strategic Development Plan (TAYplan)

Highland Perthshire is not identified as a Strategic Development Area within TAYplan. However, the town of Aberfeldy is classified as a Tier 3 settlement which “will accommodate a small share of the region’s development...” In addition, the vision and objectives of TAYplan as a whole includes the following excerpt:

“Promote prosperous and sustainable rural communities that support local services, including the provision of additional housing and related development proportionate to local need, available infrastructure and environmental capacity.” (TAYplan, pp6)

2.4 Perth & Kinross Local Development Plan (LDP)

Principal relevant landscape policies within the LDP are:

- Policy PM1: Placemaking – *Development must contribute positively to the surrounding built and natural environment... The design, density and siting of development should respect the character and amenity of the place, and should create and improve links within and, where practical, beyond the site. Proposals should also incorporate new landscape and planting works appropriate to the local context and the scale and nature of the development.*
- Policy HE1A: Scheduled Monuments - *There is a presumption against development which would have an adverse effect on the integrity of a Scheduled Monument and its setting, unless there are exceptional circumstances.*
- Policy HE4: Gardens and Designed Landscapes - *Gardens and designed landscapes make a significant contribution to the character and quality of the landscape in Perth and Kinross. The Council will seek to manage change in order to protect and enhance the integrity of those sites included on the current Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes.*
- Policy NE2: Forestry, Woodland and Trees – *The Council will support proposals which protect existing trees.*
- Policy NE4: Green Infrastructure – *The Council will require all new development to contribute to the creation, protection, enhancement and management of green infrastructure.*
- Policy ER6: Managing Future Landscape Change to Conserve and Enhance the Diversity and Quality of the Area’s Landscape - *Development and land use should be compatible with the distinctive characteristics and features of Perth & Kinross’s landscapes.*

The LDP has identified and zoned the site for residential use with the following explanation:

“The expansion of Aberfeldy to the west is a logical step from previous housing allocations at Duntaylor which have been developed or have planning permission. The dry-stane dykes running vertically through the agricultural land to the west provide logical stopping points for development, helping to integrate it into the landscape.” (LDP, pp157)

2.5 PKC Supplementary Guidance

PKC have produced Landscape Supplementary Guidance 2015, May 2015. The area of Strath Tay has been designated a ‘Special Landscape Area’.

2.6 Scottish Natural Heritage Guidance

The Tayside Landscape Character Assessment No. 122 (1999) SNH has been used to inform this assessment.

2.7 On 4 December 2015 PKC determined that an Environmental Impact Assessment is not required as part of the Planning Permission process and *“in accordance with the provisions of The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2011 that the development ... is **unlikely** to have significant effects on the environment”*

3.0 ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

3.1 The methodology adopted to undertake the study of the landscape and townscape follows the ‘Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment’ (GLVIA) Third Edition, Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment, 2013. The fundamental purpose of carrying out the assessment described in GLVIA is:

“Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) is a tool used to identify and assess the significance of and the effects of change resulting from development ...” (GLVIA, pp5)

3.2 A desk based review was carried out to establish the landscape and visual baseline by gathering existing information on the site with reference to existing landscape assessments, conservation area assessments and landscape designations. Broadly speaking the landscape and visual baseline seeks to identify the characteristics that form the context for the site. Field studies were carried out resulting in an assessment on the likely significant landscape, townscape and visual effects and

magnitude of change the proposed development is judged to impose. Approaches for mitigation of potential adverse effects were considered.

- 3.3 The wider study area for the assessment has been established as the land lying within a 2km radius from the centre of the development site (see Figure 1). An initial field study on 30th November 2015 was carried out to scope the study area requirements. The area includes the entire Aberfeldy settlement boundary, it contains all of the landscape designations and other sensitivities identified in PKC's EIA Screening Opinion. The study area is representative of the notable physical features of the landscape character area of the Lower Highland Glens containing the floodplain and lower foothills to the north and south. It is also judged to be an appropriate and proportional area to the scale and type of the development. This study extent was discussed and agreed suitable with PKC by telephone on 28 January 2016.
- 3.4 This assessment has been carried out at an indicative masterplan framework stage of design development and will provide supporting documentation to the Planning Permission in Principle application. The design is developed to a level of an indicative masterplan layout for sixty detached and twenty semi-detached plots. It is assumed that, while the detailed design for the plots shall be developed and determined at Full Planning Permission stage, the proposed houses shall be designed in reference to PKC's supplementary design guidance and shall be of architectural quality with an appearance, scale and materiality that is appropriate to the context. In line with the masterplan framework, it is assumed that the existing topography of the site shall be retained, with the development road layout responding to the challenging topography of the site.

The field study and viewpoint locations were selected from visits to the site and publicly accessible roads and routes and have been judged as relevant views/locations to the proposed development.

- 3.5 The GLVIA make a strong distinction between 'landscape' and 'visual' characteristics as follows (Glossary pp155-159):
- *Landscape character: A distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse.*
 - *Visual amenity: The overall pleasantness of views people enjoy of their surroundings, which provides an attractive visual setting or backdrop for the enjoyment of activities of the people living, working, recreating, visiting or travelling through an area.*

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- *Landscape receptors: Defined aspects of the landscape resource that have the potential to be affected by the proposals.*
 - *Visual receptors: Individuals and/or defined groups of people who have the potential to be affected by a proposal.*

This assessment will therefore establish separate, but linked, landscape and visual assessments for the site.

3.6 The GLVIA define 'Townscape' as a category of landscape, the relationship with Aberfeldy makes this category relevant for assessment:

- *Townscape: The character and composition of the built environment including buildings and the relationships between them, the different types of urban open space, including green spaces, and the relationship between buildings and open spaces.*

3.7 Several documents have informed the assessment of the landscape character including The Tayside Landscape Character Assessment No. 122 (1999) SNH, PKC Aberfeldy Conservation Area Appraisal, PKC Core Paths Plan and PKC Landscape Supplementary Guidance.

3.8 ANALYSIS OF SENSITIVITY, MAGNITUDE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF EFFECTS

The assessment of the landscape & townscape and visual effects has been carried out following the analysis of receptor sensitivity, magnitude of change and significance of effects in accordance with recommendations set out in the GLVIA.

Sensitivity

The GLVIA definition for sensitivity is:

- *A term applied to specific receptors, combining judgements of the susceptibility of the receptor to the specific type of change or development proposed and the value related to that receptor.*

Several landscape receptors have been identified and sensitivity assessed based on the following range of possible judgements:

- **HIGH LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY**
A landscape of noteworthy distinctive or unique character which offers limited potential to absorb change or successfully respond to options for proposed mitigation
- **MEDIUM LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY**
A landscape of notable character which offers some potential to absorb change or to respond successfully to options for proposed mitigation
- **LOW LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY**

A landscape of limited character which shall easily absorb change and shall successfully respond to options for proposed mitigation

Visual receptors have been analysed based on the following range of possible judgements:

- HIGH VISUAL SENSITIVITY
Viewpoints frequently visited by receptors with extended opportunities for viewing with significant or private interest in the location such as private home owners.
- MEDIUM VISUAL SENSITIVITY
Viewpoints visited by receptors with moderate interest in the landscape for shorter duration, for example walkers.
- LOW VISUAL SENSITIVITY
Viewpoints visited by receptors with only transitory interest in the landscape and not visited with the express purpose of enjoying the view, for example commuters.

Magnitude of Change

The GLVIA definition for magnitude (of effect) is:

- *A term that combines judgements about the size and scale of the effect, the extent of the area over which it occurs, whether it is reversible or irreversible and whether it is short or long term in its duration.*

Magnitude of change has been assessed based on the following possible judgements categories:

- HIGH LANDSCAPE MAGNITUDE OF CHANGE
Notable change in key landscape features and characteristics
- MEDIUM LANDSCAPE MAGNITUDE OF CHANGE
Moderate change to one or more key landscape feature or characteristic
- LOW LANDSCAPE MAGNITUDE OF CHANGE
Practically indiscernible change to one or more key landscape feature or characteristic
- NEGLIGIBLE LANDSCAPE MAGNITUDE OF CHANGE
No perceptible change to the landscape.

Magnitude of Change in Views and Visual Amenity has been assessed based on the following possible judgement categories:

- HIGH VISUAL MAGNITUDE OF CHANGE
Substantial loss or change to key elements of the character of the view.

- **MEDIUM VISUAL MAGNITUDE OF CHANGE**
Moderate loss or change to one or more key elements of the character of the view.
- **LOW VISUAL MAGNITUDE OF CHANGE**
Limited loss or change to one or more key elements of the character of the view.
- **NEGLIGIBLE VISUAL MAGNITUDE OF CHANGE**
Virtually imperceptible loss or change to one or more key elements of the character of the view.

Significance of Effects

Significance of landscape and visual effect is assessed using the following matrix which combines the judgements of sensitivity and magnitude of change:

		Sensitivity of Receptor		
		High	Medium	Low
Magnitude of Change	High	Major	Major	Moderate
	Medium	Major	Moderate	Moderate/ Minor
	Low	Moderate	Moderate/ Minor	Minor
	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

4.0 EXISTING ENVIRONMENT - BASELINE STUDY

4.1 SITE DESCRIPTION

The site is comprised of an area of agricultural land covering 8.7 hectares. To the west of Aberfeldy, the site lies on the southern slope of the Strath Tay glen with its northern boundary on the A827 that connects Aberfeldy with Kenmore and beyond to Killin connecting with the A85 which continues to the west coast of Scotland. The sloped site rises southward in elevation and ranges from approximately 86m and 130m AOD. The landscape continues to rise to the south of the boundary toward Duntaylor Farm beyond which it climbs to ancient woodland including the Heart of Scotland and further to the Birks of Aberfeldy.

North of the A827, the river Tay flows from west to east. Beyond the river, the flood plain spreads out north for approximately 1km from the development site to the village of Weem which nestles in the lower slopes of the steep northern glen of Weem Hill.

The western and southern boundaries of the development site are contained by agricultural land and farm buildings. To the east the site is bordered by residential development and the area of open field at the south-east boundary is zoned for housing.

A minor farm road dissects the site from the north-east corner traversing the site south-west to access Duntuim farm. A supplementary farm access road and junction is in the process of construction – the new junction is located in the field to the west of the site.

A significant feature of the site is the tree-lined burn that dissects the site from south to north and discharges via a culvert under the A827 into the River Tay.

Aberfeldy shares the same geological structure as other parts of the Highlands in Tayside. The area is dominated by Dalradian and Moinian grits and schists and its topography was formed by glacial processes acting upon the varying underlying geological structure.

4.2 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER - BASELINE

According to The Tayside Landscape Character Assessment, the entire study area lies within 1c Lower Highland Glen character type which is characterised by the following:

- *Lower sections of the principal Highland glens*
 - *Comparatively large-scale landscapes*
 - *Combinations of upland and lowland attributes*
 - *Broad floodplains, often with meandering rivers, interspersed with narrower, gorge-like sections where harder rocks cross the glens*
 - *Farmland on valley floor and slopes*
 - *Substantial and varied woodland cover*
 - *Influence of large estates, castles and Victorian development*
- (pp115)

The study area is predominantly characterised by rural landscape with notable features including the meandering river and broad floodplain which is strongly juxtaposed with the slopes to the north and south which are either agricultural or woodland in nature.

A long history of settlement of the landscape is illustrated by a scattering of ancient monuments, some examples of which are found in the study area but not in immediate vicinity of the development site.

To the east of the site and the study area, the townscape of Aberfeldy is a strong feature which is characterised by the 18th and 19th century expansion of the town including the conservation area and numerous listed buildings. Distinctive for the structure of General Wade's military road and bridge over the river Tay with the intersecting east-west A827, the centre of the town is at the square intersection of these two routes west of the Moness Burn. 20th and 21st century expansion of the settlement boundary has predominantly taken place to the east and west of the town.

To the south of the town the Birks of Aberfeldy, the ancient woodland and Site of Special Scientific Interest rises in a gorge to an impressive waterfall. This feature is largely contained and concealed by the nature of its topography.

To the north of the study area the smaller settlements of Weem and Boltachan comparison and are located at the foot of the northern slopes of the glen.

4.3 TOWNSCAPE & LANDSCAPE DESIGNATIONS AND RESOURCES

The study area has a number of designated landscapes and areas of recognised townscape or landscape value. Various designations and features are represented in figure 2 and relate mostly to the historic character and natural features & resources of Aberfeldy and its locale.

PKC has designated a conservation area within the settlement of Aberfeldy. The conservation area comprises the historic heart of the town including various listed buildings that, together with the remaining built form and open space, contribute to its distinctive historic character.

The Special Landscape Area of Strath Tay extends almost across the entire study area. This is a local PKC landscape designation that dovetails the LDP Policy ER 6 as supplementary guidance.

A large proportion of the Castle Menzies Designed Landscape is located within the study area. While considered significant and distinctive in character as demonstrated by its listing on the Inventory, the fragmentation of the estate means that it does not continue to impose a hugely distinctive impact on the wider landscape.

The Core Paths within the study site have been identified in figure 2 alongside the NCR 7 on-road-cycle route. The national long distance "Rob Roy Way" footpath

which starts in Drymen and finishes in Pitlochry traverses the southern slopes of the glen, continuing on through the Birks of Aberfeldy and then continues west through the town.

4.4 VISUAL BASELINE - VIEWS AND VISIBILITY

The physical constraints of the topography considerably limit the visual connection from the townscape of Aberfeldy. The topography of the wider landscape with the climbing lowland hills to the south, the Strath Tay flood plain and Weem with the cliffs of Weem Rock to the North provides opportunity for visual connection to the development site.

Based on the masterplan framework design and the topography, the visibility of the development site was assessed using the manual approaches and map interpretation described by GLVIA. This involved field study standing at the location of the development and looking out to identify and map land that is visible from this site, thus establishing the land that is visually connected with the site. Survey work involved identifying three exposed locations across the site and capturing panoramic photographs (figure 3).

Based on this method the main areas of visibility connection were identified:

- The immediate glen to the south including sections of core path
- Localised parts of the settlement of Aberfeldy, including the immediate A827, private residences on Urlar Road, Alma Avenue, Duntaylor Avenue and the Beeches
- The Strath Tay flood plain to the North including Weem Meadow
- The northern cliffs of the glen at Weem Rock

4.5 VIEWPOINT SELECTION

Eight viewpoints have been selected from publicly accessible roads and routes. They have been selected as representative of surrounding locations with potential visual connection and a range of visual receptors. The locations for the viewpoints are represented in figure 1: Study Area/ Viewpoint Location and analysis of the effects and annotation of the views has been carried out in detail in section 6.0 of this assessment.

4.6 IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Once complete, with reference to the masterplan framework design, the proposals are expected to have the following impacts:

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- Loss of agricultural landscape
 - Expansion of the townscape
 - Erection of 70 new built structures (60 detached and 10 semi-detached)
 - Formation of new road and linking streets
 - New drainage features including SUDS basin
 - New landscaping including branching east – west tree corridors

These have been judged as the significant impacts in the following analysis of effects on the landscape and townscape character and visual effects across the study area.

The expected duration of construction is 7-8 years on a phased basis. During construction the temporary direct and indirect impacts are expected to have an adverse effect on surrounding residential receptors which will stem from construction and plant:

- Clearance of agricultural land and some vegetation across the site
- Cutting and filling to form designed road gradients and suitable plot access /topsoil strip and regrade
- Roadworks
- Erection of site compounds and heras fencing
- Plant, vehicles and equipment storage
- Excavation for building foundations
- Building construction and landscape/ reinstatement works

5.0 LANDSCAPE AND TOWNSCAPE EFFECTS

5.1 EFFECTS ON LANDSCAPE & TOWNSCAPE CHARACTER

The overall effect of the proposal is considerably limited due to the topography of the landscape and the position of the site within the PKC settlement boundary and adjacent to an existing residential area. This forms a suitable context for expansion of the townscape and it is therefore proposed that the development will introduce appropriate characteristics not out of place in the local landscape. It is also proposed that the scale of change to the agricultural landscape is minor given the considerable scale of the wider open landscape.

Effects on Aberfeldy Townscape

Sensitivity

The townscape of Aberfeldy has a unique character which is influenced by its historic development and striking setting on the valley floor of the lower highlands. Existing

residential development along the western edge of the settlement suggests that the site is suitable for further development. Therefore the suggested landscape sensitivity is judged at MEDIUM to LOW.

Magnitude of Change

In the context of immediate residential areas of Alma Avenue, Duntaylor Avenue and the Beeches, the magnitude of change shall be localised and therefore judged to have a MEDIUM magnitude of change. Within the context of the wider townscape, the proposed development is judged to be of LOW magnitude of change.

Significance of Effects

The proposals shall result in the loss of agricultural landscape and expansion of townscape/ urban landscape which is deemed to have a localised MODERATE significance of effect on the townscape. The detailed design of the development shall be considered to address any of adverse effects that may apply. Across the wider townscape, the development is deemed to have an overall MINOR effect and limited significance.

Effects on the Lower Highland Glens Landscape Character Area

Sensitivity

Considerable urban/ suburban and man-made influences are found within the LCA and particularly within the study area including the settlements of Aberfeldy, Weem, & Boltachan and many other scattered agricultural and residential buildings. The ability of this landscape to accommodate change is considerable and therefore the proposed landscape sensitivity is LOW.

Magnitude of Change

In the context of the wider landscape, the influence of the proposal shall expand the urban development into the open landscape by a relatively limited proportion. The rising elevation of the site means that the effect shall be perceptible from the plains and hills to the north, but it is in keeping with the pattern of existing recent residential development and contained within similar topographical limits. The rising hills to the south beyond the site with agricultural land and ancient woodland shall remain the predominant feature in the landscape. The proposal, on balance, is therefore judged to have a LOW magnitude of change.

Significance of Effects

The distinctive features of the wider LCA shall not be significantly altered and it is proposed that the significance of effect is MINOR.

5.2 EFFECTS ON DESIGNATED LANDSCAPES & RESOURCES

Aberfeldy Conservation Area

While the proposed development site at Duntuim is not within or immediately adjacent to the Aberfeldy Conservation Area boundary, it is within approximately 140m at its nearest point.

Adjoining the conservation area, more recent residential development has spread both east and west from the historic centre.

The low-lying topography of the centre of the conservation area and its built form mean there are limited opportunities for views of the wider townscape beyond. The primary views of the wider rural landscape from the conservation area are concentrated on views north across the Strath from Taybridge Terrace and Taybridge Drive.

Sensitivity

The surrounding residential expansion of Aberfeldy contributes to the setting of the conservation area. It is therefore considered that the conservation area is of MEDIUM sensitivity to the proposed development.

Magnitude of Change

The existing adjoining residential development acts as a buffer between the development site and the conservation area therefore limiting its influence and visibility. The setting of the conservation area is considered to be subject to a NEGLIGIBLE magnitude of change on the basis of the proposed development.

Significance of Effects

While the sensitivity of the conservation area to the expansion of the town is of note, the actual location of the proposed development is NEGLIGIBLE.

Strath Tay - Special Landscape Area

The Strath Tay SLA includes the Tay valley between Loch Tay and Ballinluig, including the area around Aberfeldy, Strath Tay and Grandtully.

Sensitivity

As with the Lower Highland Glens LCA, the SLA is considered to be sufficiently populated with urban/ suburban and man-made influences. Therefore, the proposed changes represents only a LOW sensitivity within the context of the large scale landscape.

Magnitude of Change

The scale of the proposed development in comparison with the context of the SLA is considered to have a LOW magnitude of change.

Significance of Effects

The distinctive features of the wider SLA shall not be significantly altered and it is proposed that the significance of effect is MINOR.

Castle Menzies – Gardens & Designed Landscape

The Castle Menzies Gardens & Designed landscape is a 19th Century designed landscape of parkland, woodland, arboretum and walled garden. It was affected and altered in the 20th century by the fragmentation of the estate, by private housing development and the introduction of commercial forestry. The designed landscape is partially within the study area but, at its nearest point, is some 990m away from the development site. The parkland is set within the floodplain of the Tay and the steep north banks of the glen.

Sensitivity

The distance from the development site considerably limits the potential influence on the designed landscape. The distinctive features and immediate setting of the designed landscape are not considered to have a significant relationship to the development site or to the settlement of Aberfeldy and therefore the sensitivity to change is judged as NEGLIGIBLE.

Magnitude of Change

It is expected that the visibility and influence of the proposed development shall be limited. Where visual connection might occur it is likely to appear as an appropriate and continuous development of the urban form of Aberfeldy within the wider landscape and therefore the magnitude of change is judged as NEGLIGIBLE.

Significance of Effect

The proposed development is considered to have an indirect effect to the designed landscape – its integrity shall not be affected. As such the effects on the designed landscape and the setting of Castle Menzies are considered to be NEGLIGIBLE.

LOCAL CORE PATHS

Surrounding countryside provides extensive opportunities for walkers to experience and enjoy the wider landscape. Core Path AFDY/106 traverses the southern slopes of the glen and is relatively close to the proposed development. On the northern side of the Tay from the site, Core Path DULL/145 follows the northern bank of the river and Weem Meadow and is also within relatively close vicinity of the proposed development site. NCR 7 on-road-cycle-route and Core Paths at Weem (DULL/152 & 153) are some distance from the development site, but do provide long-range views to the south.

Sensitivity

Core Path users are considered to have an intermediate interest in the wider landscape. As such they are considered to have some sensitivity to change in the landscape. However, the adjoining townscape means that the receptors are of MEDIUM sensitivity to the proposed expansion.

Magnitude of Change

All of the routes described are divorced from the development site by open landscape. The surrounding vegetative cover along the river banks shall screen the development to some degree. Where it is visible, it is considered that the development shall appear of an appropriate scale, character and density with the adjoining existing townscape to appear as a natural expansion. Therefore, the subsequent magnitude of change is deemed as NEGLIGIBLE.

Significance of Effect

It is expected that the significance of effect of the development on users of the Core Paths shall not appear as significant - the significance of effect is judged NEGLIGIBLE.

6.0 VISUAL EFFECTS

6.1 VIEWPOINT SELECTION

Significant effects to views and visual amenity are expected to be limited to the immediate vicinity of the existing edge of the settlement of Aberfeldy. Where the significance of effects is considered major or moderate the detailed design development shall be considered and mitigation measures shall be addressed in broad terms in the Outline Planning Design.

Viewpoint 1 – Core Path AFDY/106(Grid Ref NN 84505 48156; Direction from site SW; Distance from site 365m); Main Receptors: residents/ private road users/ recreational walkers

Viewpoint 2 – Urlar Road (Grid Ref NN 85366 48263; Direction from site SE; Distance from site 315m); Main Receptors: residents/ road users/ recreational walkers

Viewpoint 3 – Tay Bridge - General Wade's Bridge (Grid Ref NN 85126 49303; Direction from site NE; Distance from site 515m); Main Receptors: road users/ recreational walkers

Viewpoint 4 – Weem Rock Viewpoint – St David's Well (Grid Ref NN 84091 49998; Direction from site N; Distance from site 1.4km); Main Receptors: recreational walkers

Viewpoint 5 – Castle Menzies (Grid Ref NN 83698 49599; Direction from site N; Distance from site 1.3km); Main Receptors: recreational visitors

Viewpoint 6 – Core Path DULL/145/Weem Meadow (Grid Ref NN 84704 49003; Direction from site N; Distance from site 175m); Main Receptors: recreational walkers

Viewpoint 7 – Alma Avenue – (Grid Ref NN 84932 48719; Direction from site E; Distance from site 60m); Main Receptors: residents

Viewpoint 8 – A827 (Grid Ref NN 84837 48842; Direction from site NE corner; Distance from site approx. 8m); Main Receptors: road users

6.2 PREDICTED VISUAL EFFECTS

The following visual effects of the proposed development are predicted:

VIEWPOINT 1, Core Path AFDY/106 (figure 4)

This viewpoint is located approximately 365metres to the south west of the development site at the nearest point. It is a private access road leading from Urlar Road to Dunksiag and is also part of the Core Path network. It represents views experienced by residents, private road users and recreational walkers to the southern elevated position above the site.

Existing View Sensitivity

The existing view is primarily of open farming landscape to the foreground with the wider valley dropping down into the town of Aberfeldy. Overhead power lines cross the intervening fields. Dry-stane dyke walls divide the fields vertically from south to north. Vegetation partially screens the view toward the development site. Receptor sensitivity to the development in the context of the existing built form of Aberfeldy is considered to be MEDIUM due to the interest of resident users and recreational walkers.

Proposed Magnitude of Change

It is proposed that the development site shall be partially visible. The falling topography of the intervening fields and the screening effect of existing vegetation shall reduce the effect. The expansion of urban streetlighting and domestic lighting will be noticeable, but within the backdrop of the existing townscape. The focus of the view shall be marginally altered in character with expansion of the town and is therefore deemed to be subject to a LOW visual magnitude of change.

Effects on Visual Amenity

It is deemed that the visual effect of the proposed development to this viewpoint shall be MODERATE/MINOR which is not significant in the context of this assessment as it shall be experienced within the context of existing development on the settlement edge.

VIEWPOINT 2, Urlar Road (figure 5)

This viewpoint is also on the Core Path AFDY/106 and is representative of views of the development site from the south east. It taken from Urlar Road where the designation goes from PKC adopted to privately owned and is on the edge of the settlement boundary for Aberfeldy.

Existing View Sensitivity

The existing focus of the view is the wider valley, with long range views to Dull Wood and the other side of the valley. In the foreground, the agricultural fields are the focus with the western edge of the existing built settlement of Aberfeldy nestling in the dipping topography. Receptor sensitivity to the development is considered to be MEDIUM due to the interest of resident users and recreational walkers but in the context of the existing built environment of Aberfeldy.

Proposed Magnitude of Change

It is considered that the upper slopes of the proposed development shall be visible from this viewpoint which again will be an apparent expansion of the townscape. The expansion of urban streetlighting and domestic lighting will be noticeable, but again on the settlement edge. The focus of the view shall be marginally altered in character with expansion of the town and is therefore deemed to be subject to a LOW visual magnitude of change.

Effects on Visual Amenity

It is deemed that the visual effect of the proposed development to this viewpoint shall be MODERATE/ MINOR which is not significant in the context of this assessment as it shall be experienced within the context of existing development on the settlement edge.

VIEWPOINT 3, Tay Bridge (General Wade's Bridge) (figure 6)

Dating from 1733, General Wade's bridge is category A-Listed building and is located approximately 500m from the proposed development site. Forming part of the vast network of roads and bridges constructed for the government following the Jacobite risings of 1715, the Tay Bridge lies on the road built from Crieff to Dalnacardoch via Aberfeldy and Tummel Bridge. Prior to erection of the bridge Aberfeldy was merely a collection of small farm holdings, and it is thought that the development of the town is owed to its construction. Views up and down the river and valley are available to tourists, walkers, vehicles and cyclists alike and it is representative of views from the town to the development site from a significant elevated vantage point on the curtilage of Aberfeldy. Due to the built form and topography of the town it has been considered that other public sites in the settlement boundary do not offer significant visual connection to the site.

Existing View Sensitivity

The predominant feature of the view to the south west is the River Tay with its two wooded islands in the middle. Receptor sensitivity to the development is considered to be LOW given the current coverage of vegetation and the existing presence of built development already incorporated in the character of the view.

Proposed Magnitude of Change

With the exception of its highest point, it is considered that the development shall be virtually imperceptible from the bridge and is deemed to have a LOW visual magnitude of change.

Effects on Visual Amenity

It is considered that the visual effect of the proposed development at this viewpoint shall be MINOR which is insignificant in the context of this assessment.

VIEWPOINT 4, Weem Rock Viewpoint, St David's Well (figure 7)

Within the boundaries for the Castle Menzies Garden & Designed Landscape, Core Path DULL/152 ascends the steep cliff to St David's Well which is situated at the base of a crag beneath an overhang of rock forming a shelter.

Existing View Sensitivity

The existing view offers an elevated position across the glen from which to view the agricultural land of the flood plains and the southern slopes of the glen alongside the townscape of Aberfeldy. Recreational walkers and tourists are the likely visual receptors at this viewpoint and are deemed to have a MEDIUM visual sensitivity with more than a passing interest in the landscape.

Proposed Magnitude of Change

While arguable illustrating the most unobstructed view of the entire development site, it is considered that expansion on the edge of the existing settlement and in the context of the rising southern hills is not incongruous with the character and scale of the existing view. It is therefore considered to have a LOW magnitude of change.

Effect on Visual Amenity

The overall effect on the visual amenity is considered to be MODERATE/ MINOR.

VIEWPOINT 5, CASTLE MENZIES (figure 8)

The A-Listed castle has been associated with the Menzie clan for more than 500 years.

Existing View Sensitivity

The existing view is largely agricultural and screened by large trees. Tourists and recreational visitors to the castle are likely receptors from this viewpoint and are deemed to have a MEDIUM sensitivity.

Proposed Magnitude of Change

The development site is almost completely imperceptible due to the screening provided by trees to the south of the castle and therefore the viewpoint is considered to have a NEGLIGIBLE magnitude of change.

Effect on Visual Amenity

The resultant effect on the visual amenity from this viewpoint is NEGLIGIBLE.

VIEWPOINT 6, Core Path DULL/145 & Weem Meadow (figure 9)

This viewpoint has been selected as a representative view from the northern side of the River Tay. Weem Meadow is positioned between the Core Path and the river and is a Site of Special Scientific Interest recognised to be managed with a traditional hay cropping regime.

Existing View Sensitivity

This Core Path is on the route between Aberfeldy and Kenmore. Recreational walkers using this foot path are considered to have a MEDIUM visual sensitivity.

Proposed Magnitude of Change

The development site location is largely screened from this viewpoint even with the worst case scenario of winter vegetative coverage. It is considered that it shall be possible to see the development, but that it shall be screened and framed by vegetation and therefore is considered to have a LOW magnitude of change.

Effect on Visual Amenity

The resultant effect on visual amenity from this viewpoint is MODERATE/ MINOR.

VIEWPOINT 7, ALMA AVENUE (figure 10)

This viewpoint is in close proximity to the development site to the east and is representative of the views experienced by residential receptors.

Existing View Sensitivity

The existing view comprises a foreground of private garden with the backdrop of rolling agricultural hills. On the edge of the settlement, this viewpoint is taken from within the context of existing residential development and therefore shall be considered of MEDIUM sensitivity to the proposed development.

Proposed Magnitude of Change

The development shall be visible from this location but shall be partially screened by boundary fencing, trees and vegetation. New built structures on the steeper shoulders of the undulating landscape shall be visible, but it is considered to be an appropriate type of development in the context of the existing residential area its character of the wider rural landscape and outlying hills remaining a strong feature. The proposed magnitude of change is therefore considered to be LOW.

Effect on Visual Amenity

The resultant effect on visual amenity from this viewpoint is MODERATE/ MINOR.

VIEWPOINT 8, A827 towards Kenmore (figure 11)

This viewpoint has been selected as representative of road users travelling along the A827 between Aberfeldy and Kenmore. It is adjacent to the development boundary.

Existing View Sensitivity

The majority of visual receptors shall experience the view in this location in passing on the route to Kenmore and the receptor sensitivity is therefore considered to be LOW.

Proposed Magnitude of Change

The development site will change in nature considerably from agricultural fields to a built up residential area. However, the proposed development shall be confluent with an existing established residential area and it is considered that it shall simply be perceived as an extension to the built form one field west of the existing boundary. The magnitude of change is therefore considered as MEDIUM.

Effect on Visual Amenity

Given the nature of the receptor sensitivity and the proposed magnitude of change it is considered that the effect on the visual amenity from the A827 is MODERATE.

7.0 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

A search was carried out using the PKC online Planning PublicAccess Portal on 8 March 2016. The following developments were identified to have the potential to result in cumulative effects alongside the proposed development site:

- 08/01518/FUL Phase 3 Land At Duntaylor Avenue: Erection of 27 dwellinghouses
- 11/01443/FLL Dun Aluinn Hotel: Erection of 4 dwellinghouses
- 12/01299/LBC & 12/01298/FLL Dun Aluinn Hotel: Alterations and extension to former hostel to form training/ conference centre

It is considered that these developments being largely similar in residential nature and bound by equivalent topographical and landscape features will mean that the cumulative impacts of the developments over-and-above that of the proposed Duntuim development site, should they all be constructed, shall be negligible.

The setting of Dun Aluinn house which has commercial use class and is B-Listed has previously been granted planning permission for 4 new dwellinghouses within the immediate curtilage. Given the prominent elevated position of the house in the landscape and its generous plot, it is considered that the proposed residential development site shall not present a significant detrimental impact to its setting.

Other significant allocations under PKC's LDP are Employment Site E10 and Residential Site H37 both at Borlick to the east of the town. Neither site has proposals featured on the PublicAccess Planning Portal on the date of access.

8.0 CONCLUSION/ MITIGATION

The masterplan design was developed in order to propose a scheme that would respond sensitively to the constraints of the site. Several critical design strategies have been implemented as follows:

- Masterplan layout and scale that responds sensitively to the topography of the site and the pattern of the settlement of Aberfeldy
- Development of design that works with the natural features of the site and exploits the existing burn to enhance the existing south/ north tree corridor providing a natural setting for the proposed development, retaining existing trees where possible and connecting the wider green network
- Preserving the grain of the existing agricultural landscape by retaining or replacing as required the stone dyke walls where possible - the design intent is to preserve the narrative of the former agricultural landscape within the developed built landscape

In order to mitigate any adverse effects the following key strategies have been adopted as follows:

- Careful consideration of the layout, scale and built form of the development design to mitigate against potential adverse effect to the localised townscape and immediate receptors
- Consideration of adverse impacts during construction including effects on views and potential loss of valued natural landscape features. The phased implementation of the development shall minimise the impact of construction activities on the landscape character and visual amenity. Trees shall be protected by implementation of a tree protection plan.

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- New tree planting (some of which to be semi-mature size) to branch out from the existing tree corridor east to west across the site providing arteries of wildlife corridor to extend the green network, augment screening across the site and soften the impact of built form.

It is considered, in conclusion that the design process and the mitigation strategies shall adequately address any adverse impacts or intrusions presented by the proposed development. It is proposed that the masterplan framework successfully delivers an outline development that is integrated with both the existing settlement and the natural features of the landscape. Detailed consideration of appropriate architectural qualities of the built form of proposed dwellinghouses within the landscape and townscape shall be considered in the detailed Planning Applications which shall follow on a phased basis.

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