4. Forestry

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4.1. Introduction

4.1.1. This chapter identifies the likely impacts on Forestry receptors associated with the construction and operation of the Proposed Development and provides details of control measures where appropriate. The specific objectives of the chapter are to:

- describe the baseline forest environment;
- identify the potential direct and indirect impacts on forest receptors; and
- describe any mitigation or control measures proposed to address likely impacts.

4.2. Methodology

Information Source

4.2.1. Woodland assessment through desk study specifically included:

- Scottish Forestry Map Viewer, Scottish Forestry (SF) is the Scottish Government agency responsible for forestry policy, support and regulation, the map viewer enables view of what forest management plans or felling approvals are in place or have now expired.
- Datasets including the Native Woodland Survey of Scotland (NWSS) provide a baseline survey of all native woodlands, nearly native woodlands and Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) sites in Scotland showing type, extent and condition of those woods.
- Datasets for Ancient Woodland Inventory (Scotland) (AWI) categorise ancient woods recorded as being of semi-natural origin on either the 1750 Roy maps OR the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey maps of 1860.
- The Land Information Search (LIS) is a map-based tool that allows search for data such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Native Woodland that may fall within the area of interest.

4.3. Limitations and Assumptions

4.3.1. The open data forestry shapefiles have been used to identify the woodlands within the study area. There are minor differences between these, the Ordnance Survey mapping and aerial imagery.

4.3.2. No site walkover was undertaken to verify the current tree cover.

Study Area

4.3.3. The Forestry Study Area is illustrated in **Figure 4.1 Forestry Study Area.**

4.4. Legislation, Planning Policy and Guidance

4.4.1. The key legislation, policy and guidance listed below has been considered in the assessment:

- The Scottish Government's Policy on Control of Woodland Removal (2009) (CoWRP)[1];
- Scottish Government's policy on control of woodland removal: implementation guidance (2019)[2];
- UK Forestry Standard 5th Edition (2023[3]); and
- National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) (2023)[4] (see below);

4.4.2. Policy 6: Trees, woodland and forestry of NPF4 notes that development proposals should not be supported where they would result in:

- any loss of ancient woodlands, ancient and veteran trees, or adverse impact on their ecological condition;
- adverse impacts on native woodlands, hedgerows and individual trees of high biodiversity value or identified for protection in the Forestry and Woodland Strategy;
- fragmenting or severing woodland habitats, unless mitigation measures are identified and implemented; and

[1]Scottish Government's Policy on Control of Woodland Removal available at https://www.forestry.gov.scot/publications/285-the-scottish-government-s-policy-on-control-of-woodland-removal. Accessed on 30/07/2025.
[2] Scottish Government's Policy on Control of Woodland Removal: Implementation Guidance available at https://www.forestry.gov.scot/publications/349-scottish-government-s-policy-on-control-of-woodland-removal-implementation-guidance. Accessed on 30/07/2025

[3]UK Forestry Standard 5th Edition (2023) available at https://www.forestry.gov.scot/sustainable-forestry/ukfs-scotland. Accessed on 30/07/2025
[4]National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) (2023) available at https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-planning-framework-4/. Accessed on 30/07/2025.

- conflict with Restocking Direction, Remedial Notice or Registered Notice to Comply issued by the Scottish Government Forestry Regulator, Scottish Forestry

4.5. Baseline

4.5.1. The Proposed Development lies within a mixed conifer plantation comprising of Scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris*), Sitka spruce (*Picea sitchensis*) and birch (*Betula spp.*) and open ground with occasional understory of Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum)*. Previous small-scale felling or thinning has taken place. The expired Forest Plan included the forest management practices of Low Impact Silvicultural Systems. Clearfelling was not a proposed method of regenerating the woodlands in this location. **Appendix 4.1 Photographic Records** Plates 2, 3 and 4.

4.5.2. The access utilises the existing forest track from the A832 to a point where a new access track would be formed.

4.5.3. The eastern visibility splay to the North of the A832 includes a mix of birch, Scots pine, occasional larch (Larix spp.) and an understory of Rhododendron. This is a narrow strip of trees on an embankment between the open field and the highway. **Appendix 4.1 Photographic Records** Plates 6.and 7.

4.5.4. The western visibility splay, **Appendix 4.1 Photographic Records** Plate 8, to the south of the A832 skirts the edge of mature mixed conifer and broadleaved trees associated with the garden or policy woodlands with some notable specimens with examples in **Appendix 4.1 Photographic Records**, Plates 9 and 10. A tree survey of this area was conducted on 6th May 2025 which is summarised in **Appendix 4.2 Tree Survey.**

4.5.5. Scottish Forestry Map Viewer identifies no current approved Forest Plan. Previous felling licences show thinning/ selective felling for the area of the Proposed Development.

4.5.6. The Proposed Development includes areas of NWSS upland birchwood and native pinewood, although by design these are mainly avoided. The veteran trees are avoided (**Appendix 4.1 Photographic Records** Plate 5).

4.5.7. The existing forest access track and the areas including the visibility splays are listed in the AWI as part of Coille Cean Lochluichart, antiquity 2a ancient (of semi natural origin), ASNO1860. NatureScot guidance to understanding the Scottish Ancient Woodland

Inventory[5] defines ancient woodland in Scotland, as land that is currently wooded and has been continually wooded, at least since 1750. The broad AWI dataset includes open ground, existing tracks and the public highway. The trees within these areas are of mixed antiquity and naturalness.

4.5.8. **Figure 4.2 Forestry Baseline** illustrates the extent of woodland mapped through NFI, AWI and NWSS.

Future Baseline

4.5.9. In the absence of this Proposed Development the plantation would be managed on a commercial forestry basis.

Impact and Features Scoped Out

4.5.10. Based on the baseline characterisation, the following receptors have been scoped out of the subsequent assessment. Natural heritage is detailed in Chapter 6. Ecology and Chapter 7. Ornithology. Forest landscape is covered by Chapter 5: Landscape and Visual.

4.6. Embedded Mitigation

4.6.1. Embedded mitigation through design has avoided the ancient woodlands by utilising the clearances of the existing access track. Native woodlands have been largely avoided in the new track and BESS placement.

4.6.2. The visibility splays and access point to the public highway include the removal of a small area of planted conifer and broadleaved trees on ancient woodlands sites. While the trees are not ancient these sites preserve the integrity of soil ecological processes and associated biodiversity. Accordingly, the clearance and storage of these soils would be described within the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).

4.6.3. Existing forest access tracks are to be used to access the Proposed Development.

4.6.4. Compensatory planting (CP) is accepted to mitigate any proposed permanent woodland loss. CP will follow the CoWRP Implementation Guidance which includes design to meet UKFS.

[5] NatureScot A guide to understanding the Scottish Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) available at https://www.nature.scot/doc/guide-understanding-scottish-ancient-woodland-inventory-awi. Accessed on 30/07/2025.

4.7. Appraisal

Construction Phase

4.7.1. To construct the Proposed Development including the proposed new access route there would be a requirement to fell and remove 2.68 ha of low stocking mixed conifer and birch.

4.1.1. A visibility splay of 4.5 m x 160 m has been selected to balance road safety requirements with the need to minimise environmental impact and the extent of tree felling required (see **Figure 'Visibility Splay**'). Importantly, it allows for the retention of several notable trees, including those identified in the tree survey as high value or of ecological significance (see **Figure 4.3 Forestry Felling**). By limiting the splay to 160 m, the design avoids the removal of mature specimens such as oak and cedar.

4.7.2. This design would require a maximum 0.04 ha west of the existing access, including roadside trees and hedgerow but avoiding the specimen policy trees. To the east, including the double vehicle width access, 0.02 ha felling of mixed conifer and birch would be required.

4.7.3. Table 4.1 shows the total area of woodland that would require felling for the Proposed Development and the visibility splays and illustrates the areas of AWI and NWSS involved. It is noted that AWI and NWSS overlap.

Table 4.1 Felling areas by woodland designation

Felling	Area of woodland (ha)	Includes AWI (ha)	Includes NWSS (ha)
BESS and New Track	2.68	Nil	1.00
Visibility splay W	0.04	0.04	0.04
Visibility splay E	0.02	0.02	0.00
Total	**2.75**	**0.06**	**1.04**

4.7.4. **Figure 4.3 Forestry Felling.**

Operational Phase

4.7.5. No further tree felling would be required.

4.7.6. No felling for management purposes would be undertaken which would be replanted in-situ.

4.8. Mitigation

4.8.1. Compensatory planting would be provided with an equivalent woodland area, on appropriate site types and with at least the equivalent woodland-related net public benefits, in line with the CoWRP Implementation Guidance.

4.8.2. The Highland Council (THC) have a strong preference that compensatory planting takes place in the Highland Region.

Table 4.2 Recommended Mitigation

Potential Impact	Mitigation Measure
Permanent removal of 2.72 ha of mixed conifer and broadleaved trees.	Compensatory planting of equivalent woodland area (at least 2.72 ha) with at least the equivalent woodland-related net public benefits.

Residual Effects

4.8.3. Given that compensatory planting would take place, then in a Scotland wide context there would be no loss of woodland and there would be no residual effect.

4.8.4. With compensatory planting taking place in the Highland Region there would be no loss of woodland to the Region and there would be no residual effect.

4.9. Conclusion

4.9.1. The Proposed Development utilises the existing access tracks however there is a requirement to fell and remove 2.72 ha of mixed conifer and broadleaved woodland for the construction of the Proposed Development.

4.9.2. A tree survey was undertaken for the LEPO1860 at the proposed visibility splays, identifying trees within a maximum splay of 4.5 m x 215 m. A reduced splay of 4.5 m x 160 m would result in less impact on forestry and would avoid notable trees along the western splay.

4.9.3. 0.06 ha AWI antiquity 2a has been identified as the indicative maximum felling for the visibility splays. The total area of NWSS to be removed is 1.04 ha which overlaps with the AWI in the visibility splays.

4.9.4. The Applicant is committed to providing compensatory planting of equivalent woodland area (at least 2.72 ha) with at least the equivalent woodland-related net public benefits