

Agenda Item	6.1
Report No	PLN/031/24

## HIGHLAND COUNCIL

**Committee:** North Planning Applications Committee

**Date:** 16 April 2024

**Report Title:** 23/00069/FUL: Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission Plc  
Land Beside Existing Broadford Substation, Broadford

**Report By:** Area Planning Manager – North

### Purpose / Executive Summary

**Description:** Extension of Broadford Substation including creation of substation platform, substation buildings, SUDS basin, formation of access junction, temporary construction compound, landscaping and other ancillary works

**Ward:** 10 – Eilean A' Cheò

**Development category:** National Development

**Pre-Determination Hearing:** Yes

**Reason referred to Committee:** National Development

All relevant matters have been taken into account when appraising this application. It is considered that the proposal accords with the principles and policies contained within the Development Plan and is acceptable in terms of all other applicable material considerations.

### Recommendation

Members are asked to agree the recommendation to **GRANT** the application as set out in Section 11 of the report.

## 1. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 1.1 The proposal is for the reinforcement and extension of the existing electricity substation at Broadford on Skye. The development would maintain electricity supplies as well as increase the substation's capacity to serve consented and emerging renewable energy projects in Highland. The development comprises:
- A 132kV Gas Insulated Switchgear (GIS) building (44m x 21m x 13m height);
  - A control building (38m x 21m x 5.5m height);
  - Two indoor reactor buildings to house reactive compensation equipment required to facilitate undergrounding of part of the Skye Reinforcement Project (41m x 22m x 12m height);
  - A transformer building to house a 22.5 / 45 Mega Volt Amp (MVA) grid transformer (30m x 20m x 12m height);
  - Two harmonic filter buildings (53m x 31m x 13m height);
  - Substation platform to accommodate the above, along with access for vehicles and staff within the compound. The platform measures 195m x 188m.
  - Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS);
  - Formation of a new access junction off the existing minor road;
  - 2 parking spaces with Electric Vehicle (EV) charge points;
  - Temporary construction compound; and
  - Landscaping and fencing.
- 1.2 The existing substation comprises a 33kV / 132kV switchgear and transformer which is a key asset on the Skye circuit, supplying low distribution connections in Broadford and north to Portree. The development would maintain these supplies with the works being driven to serve the replacement 132kV overhead line Skye Reinforcement Project which is currently pending consideration by Scottish Ministers.
- 1.3 The Skye Reinforcement Project would provide additional capacity on the transmission network for new renewable energy generation. There are consented and future renewable energy projects which would require connection to the national grid arising from the renewable generation policies and the drive to attain net zero. At the time the application was made, the applicant was contracted to provide capacity for an additional 424 Mega Watts (MW) of generation on the Skye circuit by 2027, and a further 57 MW was in the connection application process. The proposed development, alongside the Skye Reinforcement Project, represents a long term approach in relation to planning for future transmission infrastructure requirements serving Skye and the Western Isles.
- 1.4 The substation extension would be served by a new access junction off the existing U4892 Corry Road to the north of the site which connects with the A87 Trunk Road. The existing access is a single track width with passing places, which serves a scattering of existing residential properties at Old Cory, situated 1km to the south west. Whilst the existing substation is served by its own access, the additional new access is required for the extended substation.
- 1.5 A degree of cut and fill will be required to accommodate the development with the substation. Ground works would be required at the proposed site to achieve a level area of approximately 195m by 188m. A landscape plan for the development seeks

to minimise the visual impact of the development, which will become more exposed following the cyclical felling and re-planting of the surrounding area of commercial forestry. The landscaping aims to aid the smooth tie ins of slopes and earthworks, as well as to help filter views of the development, as well as for habitat interest, to contribute towards delivering biodiversity enhancement.

- 1.6 The construction period is anticipated to last 24 months, however, this is based on the proposal for the works to be undertaken 7 days a week. When operational the substation would be unmanned and controlled remotely from the SSEN's centre in Perth.
- 1.7 The proposed development is classed as national development in National Planning Framework 4. In Annex B – National Developments Statement of Need 3 - Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure "supports electricity generation and associated grid infrastructure throughout Scotland, providing employment and opportunities for community benefit, helping to reduce emissions and improve security of supply." National development 3 accords national development status to electricity transmission that includes new and/or replacement upgraded on and offshore high voltage electricity transmission lines, cables and interconnectors of 132kV or more along with new and/or upgraded infrastructure directly supporting on and offshore high voltage electricity lines, cables and interconnectors including converter stations, switching stations and substations.
- 1.8 The applicant utilised the Highland Council's Pre-Application Advice Service for Major Developments (21/03196/PREMAJ). The pre-application response outlined it was likely that the Planning Authority would be in a position to support the proposed development subject to further consideration of the proposal's landscape and visual impact and providing that sufficient screening could be achieved. This was on the basis that appropriate mitigation measures were applied including minimising building heights, along with further detailed consideration of the associated overhead line infrastructure positioning.
- 1.9 The applicant has undertaken statutory pre-application consultation. A Proposal of Application Notices were submitted to Highland Council in September 2021 and July 2022. The PANs provided an outline of the application details and proposed consultation methods, which included a series pre-consultation events which were held in September and October 2021 at multiple community halls, as well as online, and latterly additional public events were held on 8 September 2022 at Broadford Village Hall. The applicant also raised awareness of these events by notifying the host Community Council, contacting local ward members, MSP, MP and placing statutory newspaper adverts.
- 1.10 The application is supported by an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) containing chapters on: Introduction and Background; Project Description; Consideration of Alternatives; EIA Process and Methodology; Scope and Consultation; Planning and Energy Policy Context; Landscape and Visual; Ecology; Ornithology; Soils, Geology and the Water Environment; Cultural Heritage; Transport; Noise; Socio-economic, Recreation and Tourism. The application is also accompanied by a Pre-Application Consultation Report, Planning Statement, Design and Access Statement and Pre-application Consultation (PAC) report.

1.11 EIA Supplementary Environmental Information (SEI) was also submitted during the application's determination. This contains an update to all EIA chapters following the amendments being made to the application. Variations made to the proposed development during the application's determination include:

- The addition of the proposed two harmonic filter buildings to smooth out power flows in the network;
- Resultant increase to the platform size, increasing by 14m in length and 7m in width, with the platform formation level being lowered by 2m;
- A 1m increase in height of the GIS building;
- A reduction in the footprint of the reactor buildings, with a 1m building height increase;
- An updated Outline Drainage Strategy; and
- An updated Woodland Report, additional landscaping and woodland management provisions, including A87 roadside shrub planting to help filter views.

## **2. SITE DESCRIPTION**

2.1 The 7.8ha site is situated 1.1km north west of Broadford on Skye. The site comprises the existing substation which is bound by areas of commercial forestry plantation which would be felled to make way for the development. The site is generally well screened by the surrounding forestry at present, with the site being elevation of between 30m and 20m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD), with the land gently sloping from north to south, with the northern area of the site being at a slightly higher elevation than the adjacent A87 which is at around 27m AOD.

2.2 The nearest noise sensitive receptor has been identified as a residential property at Old Corry located approximately 1km to the south west, with all other properties within Broadford being at least 1.2km from the site.

2.3 The existing substation compound is enclosed by perimeter fencing, with the substation marking the end of the existing steel lattice towers, with all overhead line infrastructure further to the north and west being of wood pole construction. The existing substation does not include any substantial building with the majority of its infrastructure being exposed to the elements.

2.4 The majority of the site sits within the surface water catchment area of the Broadford River located approximately 800m south of the site, generally flowing north east before discharging into the sea at the western extent of Broadford Bay. The very north eastern corner of the site is located within the Allt an t-Sabhail surface water catchment. The Allt an t-Sabhail flows generally eastwards approximately 80m north of the site before discharging into the Allt an Rubha which continues northwards before discharging into the sea at Camas na Sgianadin. Neither catchment is designated as a drinking water protected area. Based on SEPA's indicative flood mapping the site is not at risk of flooding.

- 2.5 The site is not situated within any built heritage designation. Three undesignated heritage assets have been identified within 200m. These related to former medieval/post-medieval settlement and agrarian activity. No prehistoric remains have been identified. Other cultural heritage interests within a wider 3km study area include a Scheduled Monument and listed buildings located within the settlement of Broadford, as well as more remote Scheduled Monument, Old Corry, Cairns (SM 13673), located 0.4km to the south east of the site. This Scheduled Monument is located within a clearing within commercial forestry and views of the proposed development from the burial cairns would be currently screened by commercial forestry. In the absence of the screening afforded by the forestry, the proposed development would be visible in views to the northeast.
- 2.6 The site is not located within any site designated for natural heritage. Designated sites within 5km include:
- Cullins Special Protection Area (SPA), 0.5km west, designated for Golden Eagle;
  - Inner Hebrides and the Minches Special Area of Conservation (SAC), 1.3 km north, designated for Harbour porpoise, with impacts from the proposal being unlikely due to the nature of the development and the intervening distance;
  - Strath Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), 2.2km south west, designated for its habitat with this site not being hydrologically linked to the application site; and
  - Mointeach nan Lochain Dubha SAC and SSSI, 4.5km south east, designated for blanket bog and freshwater habitats, with this site also not being hydrologically linked.
- 2.7 The proposed development would be located on an area of mainly commercial plantation for the substation platform with the temporary construction compound will be located on an area of blanket bog. The site has been subject to habitat and ecological survey, including preliminary bat roost assessment, ornithological survey, along with a review of potential peat management options as part of the applicant's strategy to secure biodiversity enhancement. Surveys showed signs of otter within the vicinity, with no shelters were identified, as well as signs of bats within the existing substation building, with no works planned to modify this existing building. Ornithological surveys showed the site and its immediate surroundings to be unsuitable habitat for golden eagles with no other protected ornithological species having been found, with species of lesser conservation importance being recorded including sparrowhawk and common buzzard.
- 2.8 The northern area of the site falls within The Cullin Hills National Scenic Area (NSA), with its boundary following the existing minor road, with the proposed extended substation platform falling outwith this designation. Other landscape features include the Wild Land Area (WLA) 23: Cullin which overlaps part of the NSA with its closest extend being 1.5km north west of the site. NatureScot's Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) identifies the site as falling within the north western edge of the Landscape Character Type (LCT) 358 – Low Smooth Moorland which wraps around the adjacent more mountainous areas of LCT 367 – Smooth Mountain Range.

2.9 The A87 serves as the main arterial route through Skye and is where most people would experience the development from. Recreational interests in the surrounding area include walking and cycling along and adjacent to the A87, including using Core Path SL03.06 (Broadford to Cmas na Sgianadin), as well as along the existing connecting minor road which links to a core path (Broadford to Corrie-chat-acan SL03.05) which connects to a recreational route to the summit of Beinn na Caillich, located 2.8km to the north west.

### 3. PLANNING HISTORY

3.1	15.11.2023	22/04580/S37 Skye Reinforcement Project - Construct and operate approximately 110 kilometres (km) of new double circuit steel structure 132 kV overhead transmission line and associated infrastructure	THC initially did not raise an objection to the application, however, upon receipt of further environmental information, a subsequent objection was raised and issued to Energy Consents Unit
3.2	09.02.2023	23/00070/FUL Extension of Edinbane Substation including creation of substation platform, substation buildings, SUDS basin, realignment of track, formation of access junction, temporary construction compound, landscaping and other ancillary works	Planning Permission Granted  <i>(Included as it relates to the Skye Reinforcement Project)</i>
3.3	12.07.2022	22/03292/PAN - Extension to existing Broadford substation comprising platform area, indoor switching stations and substation buildings, associated plant and infrastructure, ancillary facilities, laydown area(s) and landscape works	PAN reported to committee for noting
3.4	27.01.2022	21/05843/SCOP - Erection of extension to, and operation of, Broadford Substation comprising erection of new indoor substation and switching station associated ground works and ancillary infrastructure	Scoping Response Issued
3.5	07.09.2021	21/04374/PAN - Broadford Substation Extension comprising platform area, indoor switching stations and substation buildings, associated plant and infrastructure, ancillary facilities, laydown area(s) and landscaping works	PAN reported to committee for noting

## 4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

4.1 Advertised: Unknown Neighbour, Schedule 3 Development and EIA Development  
Date Advertised: 03.11.2023 (EIA, Unknown Neighbour and Schedule 3) and EIA SEI re-advertised on 27.10.2023 in the Edinburgh Gazette and the West Highland Free Press

Representation deadline: 27.11.2023

Timeous representations: 29 Objectors

Late representations: 10 Objectors

4.2 Material considerations raised in objections are generally summarised as follows:

- Speculative submission prior to the Skye Reinforcement Line decision, which may prejudice other applications.
- Lack of an agreed energy and transmission strategy.
- Excess scale of infrastructure not serving local but national energy needs.
- Detrimental landscape and visual impact due to over development / large scale, and sited in the wrong place.
- Detrimental impact on peat and natural habitat.
- Detrimental impact on tourism.
- Increased traffic and vehicle movements / detrimental impact on roads.
- Socio-economic impacts / community benefit.
- Cumulative effects with other planned development.
- Insufficient consultation

4.3 Non-material considerations raised in objections are generally summarised as follows:

- Over-provision of wind farms on Skye and in Highland.
- Developers profit.

## 5. CONSULTATIONS

5.1 **Broadford and Strath Community Council** did not respond to the consultation.

5.2 **Access Officer** does not object to the application. All of the access issues raised at the EIA Scoping stage have been addressed within the draft Outdoor Access Management Plan. The only well used public access route nearby is the public road.

5.3 **Environmental Health: Contaminated Land** do not object to the application. It confirms that the site forms part of a substation, which may have resulted in land contamination issues. It advises that an informative be added on any decision notice stating that in the interests of health and safety, site workers should be informed of the sites previous use, and any issues uncovered during site works reported and dealt with appropriately.

- 5.4 **Development Plans Team** do not object to the application. They note the principle of development is supported by relevant policy and guidance subject to appropriate mitigation measures.
- 5.5 **Ecology Officer** does not object to the application, subject to conditions. These include the provision of site specific protection plans for bats and otter, provision of a Habitat Management Plan (HMP) securing biodiversity enhancement with the vast majority of this having been demonstrated to be delivered within the application site, and they have confidence that the remainder could be delivered in close proximity to the site. Other conditions require the provision of HMP mapping data, provision of a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), appointment of an Environmental Clerk of Works (EnvCoW), and undertaking a pre-constitution site walkover survey.
- 5.6 **Environmental Health** do not object to the application subject to conditions controlling operational noise, construction hours and noise with provision of a Noise Management Plan, dust mitigation and the formation of a Community Liaison Group. The EIAR notes that operational noise has been assessed to BS4142 standards and indicates that the proposed development, operating in normal conditions, will have specific noise levels significantly below background noise. Therefore, a minor and not significant impact is predicted for nearby properties.
- 5.7 **Flood Risk Management Team** do not object to the application.
- 5.8 **Forestry Officer** does not object to the application, subject to conditions requiring a Compensatory Planting Plan requiring the planting of no less than 2ha of the same woodland type being removed. They agree that a legal agreement is required to secure long term woodland retention on adjacent land.
- 5.9 **Historic Environment Team (Archaeology)** do not object to the application. No further mitigation is advised over and above the mitigation embedded in the proposed Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).
- 5.10 **Transport Planning Team** do not object to the application subject to conditions to secure further detail and agreement on matters related to the design of the new accesses on the U4892 Old Corry road including details of hard surfacing and gated access being set back from the public road, with clarification being sought for the need for a secondary access with a preference expressed for a single site access. Further conditions are advised to secure details of a Construction Traffic Management Plan and for all road changes / improvements to the U4892 Corry road including consideration being given to: any changes to the junction with the A87 Trunk Road; widening and strengthening of carriageway and structures below the public road; provision of additional and changes to existing passing places. A Section 96 Wear and Tear Agreement is also required for the U4892 Corry road, which should propose that for the duration of all site preparation and construction works the developer formally takes on the Local Road Authority responsibilities for the operation and maintenance of the affected section of the Corry road.
- 5.11 **Civil Aviation Authority** did not respond to the consultation.



- 5.12 **Highlands and Islands Airports Limited** do not object to the application. It sets out that the development out with their safeguarding consultation zone.
- 5.13 **Historic Environment Scotland** do not object to the application. The proposal does not raise significant issues for their interests.
- 5.14 **Ministry of Defence (Defence Infrastructure Organisation)** do not object to the application.
- 5.15 **National Air Traffic Services Safeguarding (NATS)** do not object to the application. It sets out that the application does not conflict with their safeguarding criteria.
- 5.16 **NatureScot** do not object to the application and consider that the effects of the proposal do not raise natural heritage issues of national interest. Impacts on the Cullins SPA are unlikely and therefore appropriate assessment is not required. That conclusion is based on the development's location being unsuitable hunting habitat, is subject to existing human disturbance, and is distant from all known golden eagle nest sites. No adverse effects on integrity or the objectives of The Cuillin Hills NSA are anticipated. Although areas of wet modified bog (1.04ha) and blanket bog (0.55ha) would be lost, in this case the requirement to site the substation as proposed has been justified. That said, they note alternative locations for the temporary construction compound to avoid or reduce impacts on blanket bog were not set out within the submission.
- 5.17 **Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)** do not object to the application subject to conditions. They are content that the development, including the temporary construction compound area avoids areas of localised deep peat and other carbon rich soils. Conditions are required to secure a finalised Peat Management Plan (PMP), and adherence to an outline CEMP, the EIA Schedule of Mitigation and the General Environmental Management Plan.
- 5.18 **Scottish Forestry** do not object to the application, subject to a condition requiring details of compensatory planting provision, the detail of which is strongly advised to be agreed in consultation with Scottish Forestry.
- 5.19 **Scottish Water** do not object to the application. They note that there is no public water and no waste water infrastructure in the vicinity of the proposed development. It explains that from a review of their records there are no Scottish Water drinking water catchments or water abstraction sources, which are designated as Drinking Water Protected Areas that may be affected.
- 5.20 **Skye and Lochalsh Access Panel** did not respond to the consultation.
- 5.21 **Transport Scotland** do not advise against granting of planning permission subject to conditions to secure a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP), the routing proposed for the transportation of abnormal loads, and details of associated mitigation including signage or temporary traffic control measures.

## **6. DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICY AND OTHER MATERIAL POLICY CONSIDERATIONS**

- 6.1 Appendix 1 of this report provides details of the documents which comprise the adopted Development Plan, including details of pertinent planning policies as well as adopted supplementary guidance, and other material policy considerations which are relevant to the assessment of the application.

## **7. PLANNING APPRAISAL**

- 7.1 Section 25 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. This means that the application requires to be assessed against all policies of the Development Plan relevant to the application, all national and local policy guidance and all other material considerations relevant to the application.

### **Planning Considerations**

The key considerations in this case are:

- a) Development Plan and Other Planning Policy
- b) Planning History
- c) Layout and Design
- d) Landscape and Visual Impact
- e) Construction Impact
- f) Roads, Transport and Access
- g) Noise
- h) Natural Heritage (including Ornithology)
- i) Water, Flood Risk, Drainage and Soils
- j) Built and Cultural Heritage
- k) Economic Impact
- l) Other Material Considerations

### **Development Plan**

- 7.2 The Development Plan comprises National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4), the Highland-wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP), the West Highland and Islands Local Development Plan (WestPlan) and various Supplementary Guidance documents associated with these Local Development Plans.
- 7.3 Appendix 2 of this report provides an assessment of compliance with the Development Plan / Other Planning Policy.
- 7.4 In summary, the principle of development is established in national policy, with the proposed development being of national importance for the delivery of the national Spatial Strategy. NPF4 considers that Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure will assist in the delivery of the Spatial Strategy and Spatial Priorities for the north of Scotland, and that Highland can continue to make a strong contribution toward meeting Scotland's ambition for net zero. Alongside these ambitions, the strategy for Highland aims to protect environmental assets as well as to stimulate investment in natural and engineered solutions to address climate

change. This aim is not new and will clearly require a balancing exercise to be undertaken, which is reflected throughout NPF4.

- 7.5 At the regional level, HwLDP also offers support for transmission infrastructure where this is located, sited and designed to avoid unacceptable significant impacts on the environment. HwLDP Policy 69 continues by explaining that in areas which are sensitive, mitigation may help to address concerns with this policy advocating underground or sub-sea alternatives. In this case, the Skye Reinforcement Project's commitment to underground part of the line further north within The Cullins NSA, has resulted in additional above ground infrastructure requirements at Broadford substation. Providing that the resultant siting, size and scale of the proposed infrastructure at the extended substation is also acceptable, with its impacts on the receiving environment also being suitably mitigated, then the proposal would be capable of according with this key determining policy.

### **Planning History**

- 7.6 The existing substation comprises a 33kV / 132kV switchgear and transformer which is a key asset on the Skye circuit, supplying low distribution connections in Broadford and north to Portree. The development would maintain these supplies with the works being driven to serve the replacement 132kV overhead line Skye Reinforcement Project which is currently pending consideration by Scottish Ministers. Should the Skye Reinforcement Project not receive consent, it is unlikely that the proposal would be built out as currently proposed.
- 7.7 Since the substation was initially built there has been a sustained increase in both consented and proposed renewable energy generation in the Highland area which has potential to push the existing infrastructure on Skye and the rest of the region beyond its existing capacity. The proposed development therefore seeks planning permission to replace and upgrade key existing infrastructure to enable security of supply and deliver enhanced capacity to support existing committed connections, as well as enabling other potential future connections.
- 7.8 In terms of cumulative impacts with other planned or future renewable developments, including their future connections, the applicant took into account all relevant major planning application activity in the vicinity of the site. This informed the cumulative assessment contained within their EIAR. Whilst there has been further recent planning application activity on Skye, it is for those later submissions to take account of the consents and applications before them and consider the need to revisit the cumulative baseline. All such proposals require assessment on their own merits and are rightly subject of individual applications and will where applicable be considered by NPAC in due course. NPF4 makes clear that grid capacity should also not constrain renewable development.
- 7.9 It is also noteworthy that SSE has considerable permitted development rights within operational land and across transmission corridors. It will therefore be important to recognise within any planning permission granted, the site operator intends to undertake the removal of off-site overhead transmission line towers to be replaced by upgraded pylons as part of the Skye Reinforcement Project which is currently pending consideration. To aid assessment of the current planning application and ensure that its cumulative impact is fully assessed, details of these ancillary

proposals have been considered, with care being taken to ensure that any proposed EIAR mitigation is delivered and would not be adversely impacted upon or removed by future permitted development undertakings.

### **Layout, Design and Materials**

- 7.10 The new compound and buildings comprise a considerable extension to the existing substation. Buildings within the extended compound will range in size with the overall building height not exceeding 13m. The proposed buildings comprise steel portal frames with metal cladding and roof in Van Dyke Brown. The style and scale of buildings are functional and retain an element of uniformity across the site, with the buildings being akin to the size and scale of whisky maturation warehousing. The site would be enclosed by a palisade security fence with a height of up to 2.4m. Additionally, stock/deer proof fence would be established to exclude grazing animals and allow landscaping and screen planting to establish. Again, full details of material specification and finishes of fencing could be conditioned.
- 7.11 HwLDP Policy 29 - Design Quality and Place Making requires new development to be designed to make a positive contribution to the architectural and visual quality of the area. Furthermore, development proposals must demonstrate sensitivity and respect towards the local distinctiveness of the landscape, architecture, design and layouts of their proposals. A number of representations raise concerns that the proposal is of a much larger scale than the existing substation and will lead to over development. Whilst significantly extending the existing site the associated buildings and external infrastructure is designed in a manner which reflect traditional industrial development layout with the roofscape of the substation being broken up due to a series of individual building being proposed. Key to the acceptance of this design is the ability for the development to be largely screened from the A87 through a combination of existing woodland retention, long term management and landscape planting proposals.
- 7.12 The site selection process for the substation is detailed in the EIAR (refer to Chapter 3: Consideration of Alternatives). This explains that aims of site selection for the expansion of the substation were to balance the environmental, technical and economic aspects of the project. The main drivers of the extension works are to support the growth of renewable generation and demand capacity increases on the local network of Skye, notably demand at Broadford. Developing the existing site has the benefit of maximising existing infrastructure and maintaining proximity to the existing overhead line network, therefore avoiding the requirement for new infrastructure in alternative locations and minimising the potential environmental and visual / landscape effects over a wider area. The applicant notes that were an alternative location to be identified, an overhead line connection between that location and the existing substation at Broadford would likely be required to facilitate connection with the wider transmission network. Only the project design and layout options that looked to extend the existing substation site were therefore progressed at the optioneering stage for these reasons.
- 7.13 The applicant also undertook a technology options appraisal, which considered both Air-Insulated Switchgear (AIS) and Gas-Insulated Switchgear (GIS) options for the extension. The AIS option, which would have required a far larger land take, was ruled out at an early stage due the sites proximity to the coast necessitating

equipment to be housed indoors. It is expected that GIS buildings will utilise Sulphur Hexafluoride (SF<sub>6</sub>) gas free technology given the harmful effects of greenhouse emissions, and the use of an environmentally friendly alternative could be conditioned.

- 7.14 The land around the existing substation slopes gently from north to south, with the proposed substation platform proposed to be highest across the southern part of the site, being up to 5m above existing ground levels. Preliminary site survey and ground investigations confirmed the presence of deeper peat located the north and it is therefore proposed to extend the substation southwards across areas of predominantly commercial plantation, where peat depths are between 0.2m to 0.9m.

### **Landscape and Visual Impact**

- 7.15 The EIAR and EIA SEI considers both landscape and visual impacts of the proposed development, with photomontages provided from 2 viewpoints (VPs). VP1 is representative of users of the A87 southbound and VP2 is representatives of users of the Old Corry road heading east past the site, both of which have been produced in accordance with the Council's Visualisation Standards. An additional wireframe has also been produced for VP3 for users of the Beinn nan Callaich, 2.84km to the west of the site. The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) is focused on a study area of 3.5km, beyond which the development is considered unlikely to result in any adverse effects. The LVIA also gives consideration to cumulative effects occurring as a result of other proposed electrical infrastructure developments within the study area including the overhead lines associated with the proposed Skye Reinforcement Project. Whilst photomontages provide a useful aid in showing the appearance of the proposed development, they are just one tool used by the Planning Authority in the assessment of landscape and visual impact.
- 7.16 A Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) drawing is also included in the assessment which shows theoretical bare ground visibility. The ZTV identifies that visibility extends beyond the 3.5km study area with visibility being predominantly concentrated over areas of higher ground to the north, south west and south and east, spanning over the settlement of Broadford. This mapping does not account for any intervening woodland, reflecting the worst case scenario should this be felled and not restocked. It is however intended that the existing woodland block located between the existing substation and the A87 would be retained in the medium term and replanted thereafter, as would the commercial forestry block to the south west for a 10 year period until onsite landscape planting establishes, and additional roadside landscape planting is also proposed to help filter views. Other areas of woodland would however need to be felled to facilitate the construction and operation of the substation's connection OHLs, with the wider forestry block planned for re-structuring and restocking in line with the current woodland management plan prepared by Scottish Woodlands.
- 7.17 In terms of landscape setting, the site is situated on lower lying coastal lands, surrounded by gradual sloping, rounded hills managed for forest plantation. The settlement of Broadford to the south straddles either side A87 road and is separated from the site by a dense mature plantation of coniferous forest. To the south, the forest plantations give way to open, moorland slopes which rise into low, craggy hills forming shallow valleys which are characterised by dispersed crofting settlement.

The steep, conical peak of Beinn na Caillich, rises in the south west of the study area, forming the eastern most summit of the Cuillin mountain range and is a distinctive focal point throughout the lower lying moorland and coastal areas which lie to its north and east.

- 7.18 The landscape assessment has assessed the potential impact of the development on the Special Landscape Qualities (SLQs) of The Cullin Hills NSA, which is represented by VP3 Beinn na Caillich. WLA 23: Cullin also covers a similar area to The Cuillin Hills NSA, but slightly more confined to the mountain summits and inland valleys, away from the public roads. The applicant's assessment provides an overview of the numerous Landscape Character Types (LCTs), and also as advised by NatureScot, also considers the historical Skye and Lochalsh Landscape Assessment which provides more detailed breakdown of landscape character. This analysis informed the applicant's identification of a series of seven different Local Landscape Zones (LLZs) which are considered to more closely reflect the scale and character of the study area.
- 7.19 The majority of the NSA within the study area falls within LLZ1 (Steep Sloping Mountain). This comprises the most representative landscape type of the SLQs the NSA, with other LLZs having more of a role of a setting, allowing appreciation of the striking mountain of Beinn na Caillich within the context of the surrounding lower lying moorland and townships. For LLZ1 the applicant explains that the development would result in a minor adverse landscape character effect during construction, reducing to negligible thereafter, with the development forming a relatively small feature within the surrounding low lying context to the mountain (refer to VP3) where the site would be seen in the context of other development and forestry plantation. This is accepted by Planning Officers, with the construction works causing a distraction from the high level 360 degree panoramic views, and once established, the development would be situated low down in the view, reflect the existing pattern of development which follows the coastline, with the development being seen in the same frame of view as other low lying built development in and around Broadford, alongside the A87, with the proposal being located within plantation woodland, and the proposed dark cladded recessive buildings helping to ensure that the development does not appear out of place.
- 7.20 In considering the opposing views, where the development may be seen against the backdrop of the mountain, neither the applicant or Planning Officers have identified any scenarios where the development would affect the setting of Beinn na Caillich, with the exception of certain more localised effects where temporary construction activity, such as the use of cranes, would influence the sense or remoteness with such landscape effects being at worst minor and not significant. This is down to the siting of the development within an area of actively managed forest plantation. Therefore, although the development would lie adjacent to the edge of the NSA, with the construction compound just inside the boundary, this is within an area which does not provide a strong contribution to the setting or appreciation of the NSA, with the development not having any significant impacts on any of the SLQs of this designation. NatureScot are in broad agreement with these findings and advise that the proposal will not have an adverse effect on the integrity of NSA or the objectives of the designation. NatureScot also scoped out the requirement for any Wild Land Assessment to be undertaken, and similarly, localised landscape character impacts

would also not be significant, with the mitigation landscape planting and woodland management provisions of the application limiting impacts to be largely temporary, experienced during the construction and initial operational period.

- 7.21 In respect of visual amenity, the LVIA identifies significant effects to be localised and restricted to a short stretch of the Old Corry road (VP2) in the immediate vicinity of the site. Such effects are regarded by the applicant to be temporary during the construction period only and thereafter would reduce to a level which is not significant, particularly after 10 years once landscape planting establishes. For receptors at locations elsewhere, no other significant effects have been identified owing to the landscape mitigation measures incorporated within the proposal.
- 7.22 In appraising the initial application and these findings, these findings were disputed, and although additional landscape mitigation measures have been secured during the assessment of the application, it is considered that the proposal would result in short term significant visual impacts for users of the A87 southbound (VP1) for a relatively short section of this route, as would be the case in close proximity from the Old Corry road (VP2). It is however acknowledged that for the scale of the proposed development, such visual effects would be experienced for brief intervals are well contained, with the proposal being well separated from any nearby residential properties and recreational interests in the surrounding area.
- 7.23 The key visual concern pertinent to the determination of this application the site's proximity and exposure in views obtained from the A87 both southbound (refer to VP1), but also northbound should any intervening commercial woodland not be effectively managed, with any form of natural screening being more susceptible to change. For this reason, multiple layers of landscape mitigation are now being proposed.
- 7.24 Firstly, the existing roadside block of woodland adjacent to the existing substation is proposed to be retained for long term screening purposes. Its retention, management and eventual replanting, can be controlled by condition. Through the determination of the application, additional areas of roadside gapping up native scrub planting are also proposed for a 300m stretch of the western side of the A87. Closer into the development, a further layer of scrub planting is also proposed along the northern boundary of the Old Corry road, with additional areas of wet woodland scrub and native woodland planting along the eastern area of the substation.
- 7.25 As can be appreciated from VP1, southbound users of the A87 heading towards Broadford currently have relatively open views towards the site for a circa 400m stretch, with more distant intermittent visibility extending for around 1km along this relatively fast flowing section of the trunk road. Visibility is greatest for the more distant northern section of this stretch where VP1 has been taken from, but as you travel closer towards the site, the intervening raised ground and existing roadside vegetation would screen much of the lower areas of the proposed substation buildings on the approach to the Old Corry road junction. There is an existing double wood pole OHL, and steel lattice towers OHL are already present in the southern approach towards the site. These elements would be replaced with the photomontage showing the extended substation alongside the replacement OHL towers. Upon completion of the development, the north and north western substation buildings would be clearly visible with the dark clad substation buildings being

seen against a backdrop of the dark forestry. This backdrop is however set to change with much of the forestry to the rear expected to be felled from 2027 onwards and restocked thereafter, however, the substation would then be seen against the backcloth of the more distant moorland clad hills. Owing to the lack of roadside screening for this short stretch, post construction visual effects are considered by Planning Officers to be significant, however, this is anticipated to be temporary until the proposed landscaping matures in around 10 years time.

- 7.26 To help mitigate this impact further, officers are in dialogue with the applicant over the potential to raise the landform slightly through creation of a planted bund, with use of any potential excess material arising from the construction. The possibility of this is still being investigated and would be confirmed ahead of construction, to help inform the finalised landscaping details to be secured by condition. As land raising, or any bund formation, is not proposed at this stage, this has not factored into the assessment of acceptability of the proposed development as currently presented.
- 7.27 Given the intended felling timescales for the wider commercial woodland to the south of the site potentially coinciding with the completion of the development, further visual mitigation is proposed to be secured for northbound users of the A87. Here the ZTV indicates that bare earth visibility would again extend to around 1km when traveling towards the site in this direction when leaving Broadford. Owing to the intervening woodland no photomontage of this approach has been provided, however, 3D modelling has been produced which has informed the onsite landscaping proposals to the south west of the site where a mix of we woodland scrub and native woodland planting is proposed comprising a wide mix of suggested species. Further areas of roadside scrub retention and gapping up planting are again proposed, with this extending up to and around the A87 layby located south of the site. In addition, a commitment has been made by the applicant to gain effective control over the intervening forestry block located between the application site and the A97 roadside which is proposed to be retained for a 10 year period to provide effective screening of the site whilst onsite landscaping establishes.
- 7.28 This mature intervening forestry block is vital to screen and filter views of the development and therefore its management and retention, for a period of 10 years until onsite landscaping establishes, as well as its future replanting, is proposed to be the subject of a Woodland Management Plan (WMP). As this forestry block is also on land under third party ownership, and is due to be felled anytime from 2027 onwards, the proposed woodland management mitigation must be secured by way of a tri-party Section 75 legal agreement with the affected landowner, the applicant and the Council. The applicant having provided written confirmation of their acceptance to this approach, and work having already been undertaken to prepare this agreement ahead of Members determination of the application. Providing these measures are implemented and adhered to, the visual effects for users of the A87 are not considered unacceptable, with no significant effects occurring northbound, significant adverse effects southbound being brief and experienced in the short term until landscaping planting establishes.
- 7.29 Similar visual effects would also occur for recreational users adjacent Core Path SL03.06 (Broadford to Cmas na Sgianadin), and whilst the development would be visible for a longer period as people travel on foot or by bike, this route also benefits from more mature sections of established vegetation located between the path and



the A87.

- 7.30 In relation to VP2 (Old Corry road) which passes through the application site boundary, this single track road mainly serves a limited number of scattered residential properties (approximately seven cottages) located further in land at Old Corry which is a linear crofting township, and also by recreational users of the outdoors with this road linking with a route to sand from the summit of Beinn na Caillich. The existing forestry plantation foreshortens views, and the existing substation is a distracting feature. Given the lack of separation, effects for road users are considered to be significantly adverse for a 1km stretch in both directions, up to the point where the road starts to drop down into the valley to the south of the site. Such effects are likely to occur for a longer period than suggested by the applicant and are expected to endure until the proposed landscaping matures in 10 years time. Thereafter, impacts would be suitably mitigated, and not significant as much of the platform, perimeter fencing and lower sections of buildings within the substation would be screened until road users are level with the site where the extension would be seen through the existing substation infrastructure.
- 7.31 In terms of impacts on all other recreational routes in the surrounding area, no significant visual impacts would occur and whilst the proposal would feature in views, these would be filtered by plantation woodland with most visibility being from the top of Beinn na Caillich. The walking route to and from this summit, where there would be most visibility, is particularly steep therefore likely to focus walker's attention on the challenge of the ascent / descent, and the summit itself being where most people would stop to take in the wider panoramic view. As previously set out when considering effects on landscape, post construction visual impacts associated with the substation and the OHL in this location would set low down, forming a small element of the view (refer to VP3), with the consistent dark brown clad finish of the cluster of buildings helping to reduce their prominence, with these generally reflecting the patterns and colours in the existing afforested and adjacent moorland landscape. From all other recreational routes in the vicinity, the onsite woodland planting, as well as the progressive felling and planned re-stocking of the surrounding commercial woodland would help filter views of the development, with the only significant impact occurring for a short stretch of the Core Path SL03.06 (Broadford to Cmas na Sgianadin) where the site would be viewed when traveling alongside the A87, with the amenity of this section of the route arguably being more influenced and adversely affected by passing vehicles on the trunk road.
- 7.32 A number of representations raise concerns regarding the landscape and visual impact the proposal will have. Following pre-application discussions and engagement throughout the assessment of the application, the applicant has taken on board a number of suggested mitigation measures, including: maintaining low building heights; reducing the height of the substation platform; providing additional landscape planting to help filtering views and smooth tie in of slopes and earthworks; to provide additional roadside planting, both to the north and south of the site; and to secure long term woodland retention and management. As a result, this ensures that the adverse landscape and visual effects arising from the proposal are suitably contained and are not unacceptable.

## **Construction Impact**

- 7.33 The development of a project of this scale will have temporary impacts including, for example, construction traffic but also construction noise, dust, waste, etc. Such impacts are expected intermittently through the construction period. It is for these reasons that the applicant has a commitment toward a project specific Construction and Environmental Management Document (CEMD) approach, the finalised details of which, following appointment of the project contractor, would require approval of the Planning Authority in consultation relevant consultees. In addition, the applicant has also committed to the appointment of an Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) to oversee the project. This can usefully dovetail with a Planning Monitoring Officer role to monitor compliance with the conditions attached to any consent.
- 7.34 Noise impacts during construction would be minor and not significant. Environmental Health has no objection subject to conditions controlling noise, construction hours, dust mitigation measures along with a Community Liaison Group being set up. Operations, including vehicle movements, will be limited to the hours of 08:00 to 19:00 hours Monday to Friday, and 08:00 to 13:00 hours on Saturdays with no works on Sunday. A dust mitigation scheme is required outlining measures to minimise potential impacts.
- 7.35 Developers must also comply with reasonable operational practices with regard to construction noise so as not to cause nuisance. Section 60 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 sets restrictions in terms of hours of operation, plant and equipment used and noise levels, amongst other factors, which is enforceable via Environmental Health. It is also expected that the developer and contractors would employ the best practicable means to reduce the impact of noise from construction activities at all times.
- 7.36 Timing of deliveries (HGV's and abnormal loads) shall also be agreed through a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) with construction traffic avoiding school travel times and identified community events. In addition to the requirement for submission and agreement on a CEMD, the Council will require the applicant to enter into legal agreements and provide a financial bond with regard to its use of the local road network (a Section 96 Wear and Tear Agreement).
- 7.37 Should the development be granted consent, a condition would require that the existing the setting up of a Community Liaison Group. Given the size and duration of the proposed development there may be disturbance over a prolonged period, not only noise and dust but other issues such as constrained parking and access in proximity to access routes used for recreation. The Community Liaison Group will help to ensure that the Community Council and other stakeholders are kept up to date and consulted before, during and after the construction period.

## **Roads, Transport and Access**

- 7.38 The proposed development will be accessed via the existing U4892 Corry road off the A87 with the site being well served by the Trunk Road. The EIAR provides a Transport Statement (TA). The applicant has reviewed the impacts of construction traffic only. This is appropriate given that ongoing operational impacts would be low, reflective of operational maintenance requirements comprising monthly inspections

via small vehicles and annual maintenance taking approximately one week.

- 7.39 The TA quantifies the predicted construction traffic and how that would change overall traffic levels on surrounding roads proposed for accessing the proposed development. During peak construction activity, the development would generate 20 HGVs and 80 car / light van movements a day. These trips would occur for the short section of the minor access road, and would mostly be experiences along the A87 through Broadford, with HGV trips here expected to increase by 10%.
- 7.40 Additionally, the applicant's cumulative assessment considered the proposed extension to Edinbane substation and the proposed Skye Reinforcement Project as they are closely linked with the proposed development, and it is anticipated they will be constructed in the same time period. In addition, the consented Glen Ullinish Wind Farm has been included as a committed development in the cumulative assessment. The cumulative assessment concluded that the combined traffic flows indicate an increase in traffic flows throughout the road network, however, there would be more than sufficient road capacity to accommodate this, with the A87 at Broadford predicted to have 67.8% spare road capacity with this being greater elsewhere on the network. Whilst there are other wind farms planned on Skye, concurrent impacts have been discounted by the applicant as these planned projects are reliant upon the construction and operation of the Skye Reinforcement Project. It is also the case that the effects of the committed and associated developments being constructed at the same time would be managed through the Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP), which will be particularly important for the transportation of the proposed three Abnormal Indivisible Loads (AILs) being a transformer and two reactors which would be delivered to site vis the A87 from either Kyle of Lochalsh or from the Mowi marine facility on Skye, located to the west of Kylekin.
- 7.41 In relation to the local road network, the Transport Planning Team identified the need to secure design details of all road changes / improvements to the U4892 Corry road, including consideration being given to: any changes to the junction with the A87 Trunk Road; widening and strengthening of carriageway and structures below the public road; provision of additional and changes to existing passing places. These matters could be secured by way of conditions.
- 7.42 The CTMP will be required to set out the proposed management measures that will be implemented to assist with minimising impacts from construction traffic on the local road network, the users of those roads and the communities and facilities that are located along those routes. These measures will be supplementary to, and need to complement, the physical road improvements required to safely accommodate the proposed construction traffic as noted above. To ensure that suitable measures are developed that support the physical improvements being sought the CTMP shall be agreed prior to work commencing on site. The measures set out in any CTMP should be developed using feedback from engagement undertaken with local community groups such as Community Councils, Community Liaison Group etc. Consideration shall be given to the following:
- Avoidance of construction traffic routing past schools during opening and closing times and appropriate traffic speeds through communities located along access routes.
  - Utilise sources of materials and alternative means of transport to limit the

numbers/frequencies of construction vehicles having to use the local public road network wherever possible.

- No convoying of HGV or staff vehicles with drivers asked to resolve by spacing journeys to/from the site.
- Agreed routes to be used by all site staff, contractor, sub-contractor and deliveries, including any abnormal loads.
- Details of how Abnormal Loads journeys will be managed.
- Mitigation measures deterring/preventing construction traffic using non-designated routes to/from the site.
- Collaboration with contractors for other proposals in the surrounding area to effectively integrate the management of their traffic operations to minimise impacts to the local public road network they will be sharing for construction access.
- Products and materials to this development such as aggregate, concrete, staff minibuses if used etc. should mark their vehicles with a unique number identifier on the front, sides and rear of the vehicles and a Broadford substation identifier enabling easy identification in the event of problems arising such as speeding or discourteous driving. This is a well established effective practice across the Highlands. It also helps to avoid issues with traffic from other developments being incorrectly associated with this proposal.
- Set up a single point of contact for local residents to use in the event of problems or concerns with telephone and website details provided as a minimum along with additional consideration of social media as appropriate. Details should be provided to Community Councils for their notice boards/websites.
- Toolbox talks established with all suppliers, contractors, site staff etc. to encourage careful and courteous driving with particular attention to driving through villages and settlements.
- Mitigation measures to prevent mud, dust and other construction related material being brought onto the local public roads and where this has happened, having procedures for quickly identifying and removing such material.

7.43 Transport Planning also note a “Wear and Tear” Agreement (Section 96 of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984) is required. This is to protect the Council from any extraordinary expenses in having to repair local public roads from any damage inflicted by the construction traffic activities of this development that the applicant is not able to repair to the satisfaction of the Council. As with the CTMP, this is supplementary to any physical improvements deemed necessary to make the local public roads safe and usable to all whilst being utilised for construction access purposes. This “Wear and Tear” Agreement should include the U4892 Corry road, which should propose that for the duration of all site preparation and construction works the developer formally takes on the Local Road Authority responsibilities for the operation and maintenance of the affected section of the Corry road.

7.44 Representations have raised concerns regarding the potential impacts on roads. Whilst the development will result in a noticeable increase in vehicle movements, including HGV, on the road network, the proposed mitigation measures outlined above and controlled by conditions are deemed appropriate and will minimise disturbance to road users and surrounding communities. The Council’s Transport

Planning Team and Transport Scotland are generally satisfied with the applicant's assessment of traffic and transport associated with the proposed development subject to the mitigation measures and conditions noted.

- 7.45 In terms of recreational access through and in the immediate vicinity of the site, like most land in Scotland, the site is also subject to the provisions of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. A Draft Outdoor Access Management Plan has been provided which details that public access through the application site would be restricted for only a very short time during the construction period, with every effort being made to ensure access to existing routes and trails would be maintained. A commitment is also made to maintaining access along the existing road for local residents. Highland Council's Access Officer raises no concerns and a finalised recreational Access Management Plan can be prepared in liaison with all affected interested parties and secured by condition.
- 7.46 Subject to securing the aforementioned mitigation measures, the transport and public access related impacts of the proposal are deemed to be acceptable and can be appropriately managed. As such, the proposal has been found to be in accordance with the transportation and developer contributions policies contained within the Development Plan.

### **Noise**

- 7.47 The applicant has recognised the noise nuisance that can arise from operational substations and the need to ensure that this is limited in respect of existing noise sensitive properties. The site is however well separated from nearby properties and the applicant has set out that the closest noise sensitive property, 2 Old Corry Road, located 1km to the south west of the site. The EIAR notes that operational noise has been assessed to BS4142 standards and indicates that the proposed development, operating in normal conditions, will have specific noise levels significantly below background noise. Therefore, a Minor and not significant impact is predicted. Operational noise levels shall not exceed 30dB and could be controlled by condition. It is also expected that the developer and contractors would employ the best practicable means to reduce the impact of noise from construction activities at all times.
- 7.48 In order to ensure the amenity of the existing residents is protected and there is no increase in the existing noise levels, conditions could be attached requiring: a Construction Noise Management Plan, compliance with the mitigation set out within the EIA's noise appraisal, and ongoing compliance monitoring to demonstrate that the noise emitted from the substation has not exceeded the pre-development noise levels at noise sensitive properties.

### **Natural Heritage (including Ornithology)**

- 7.49 There are no natural heritage designations covering the site itself, with the proposal also unlikely to affect any natural heritage designation in the surrounding area, including the nearby Cullins SPA, located 0.5km west and designated for Golden Eagle. NatureScot do not object to the application and have confirmed impacts on the Cullins SPA are unlikely and therefore appropriate assessment is not required. That conclusion is based on the development's location being unsuitable hunting

habitat, is subject to existing human disturbance, and is distant from all known golden eagle nest sites.

- 7.50 The applicant's ecological and ornithological assessments and site surveys have also identified limited evidence of protected species activity. Surveys showed signs of otter within the vicinity, with no shelters / rest areas being identified, as well as signs of bats within the existing substation building, however no works are planned to modify this existing building. Ornithological surveys again showed the site and its immediate surroundings to be unsuitable habitat for golden eagles with no other protected ornithological species having been found. Regardless, good practice management measures have been identified to further avoid and reduce effects. These include the development and implementation of a site-specific CEMP used in conjunction with the applicant's suite of General Environmental Management Plans, Species Protection Plans, along with supervision by a suitably experienced Environmental Clerk of Works (EnvCoW) to undertake pre-construction surveys and oversee the construction works.
- 7.51 The proposed development would be located on an area of mainly commercial plantation for the substation platform. The development would result in the permanent loss of 1.82ha of coniferous plantation woodland, 1.04ha loss of wet modified bog and 0.16ha loss of wet dwarf shrub heath. In addition, there would be permanent loss of 0.55ha of blanket bog to accommodate the temporary construction compound located north of the minor public road. Although areas of irreplaceable habitat (wet modified bog and blanket bog) would be lost, in this case NatureScot consider the requirement to site the substation as proposed has been justified. That said, they note alternative locations for the temporary construction compound to avoid or reduce impacts on blanket bog were not set out within the submission.
- 7.52 In reviewing this matter, the supporting Planning Statement, and EIAR Para 8.6.8, does however explain that the temporary construction compound is proposed to be located on an area of blanket bog with peat depths of up to 0.9m. This relatively small area is however described as lacking the characteristics of undisturbed blanket mire habitat, and shares characteristics of wet dwarf shrub heath, indicating it is transitional between blanket bog and wet heath. This is described by the applicant possibly as a result of past and current management practices (i.e. overgrazing and peat cutting), which as a result has led to a degradation of the condition of the bog in this area. The EIA concludes that the impact of this habitat loss is minor and not significant, particularly given the relative abundance of these habitats. For this area, temporary excavation, storage and reinstatement of cut turves is also proposed, which could be conditioned within the CEMP.
- 7.53 The habitats present across the site have been subject to a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Report. This quantifies the biodiversity impact of the development, predicts the resultant change of biodiversity value, and provides recommendations for biodiversity enhancement (net gain). The assessment followed DEFRA guidance utilising the biodiversity metric with the biodiversity of the site summarised using SSEN Transmission's biodiversity toolkit which uses habitat as a proxy to determine biodiversity impacts. In summary, the losses to non-irreplaceable habitats resulting from the proposed development would be 16.82 biodiversity units (BU). This is proposed to be compensated for through a combination of on and off-site compensation and enhancement measures. Proposed onsite measures include

woodland and scrub planting and associated deer management, provide 14.72 BU.

- 7.54 An additional 3.78 BU is therefore required to be provided to achieve 10% net gain. This is proposed by the applicant to be achieved through the Skye Reinforcement Project: Environmental Compensatory Strategy (July 2023). A comprehensive compensation package is projected within Section 3 of the proposed development (Compensation Plan – Kinloch & Kyleakin Hills SAC Skye for 22/04580/S37) which would provide significant biodiversity gain for all elements of the transmission upgrade (overhead lines and substation sites). It is the applicant's intention to identify an area of peatland compensation specifically within this scheme to assign to Broadford (with the proposed Edinbane substation being dealt with separately).
- 7.55 The Ecology Officer has however advised that given that the Council has objected to the Skye Reinforcement Project, it is recommended that the biodiversity units associated with that proposal should not be accounted for through this project. The Ecology Officer does however point out that the vast majority of the BU required to fulfil NPF4 Policy 3 has been demonstrated to be delivered onsite as part of this application. Therefore, the Council's ecologist has confidence that it will be possible to deliver the full level of required BU within and in close proximity to the site, and a condition can be applied to provide a Habitat Management Plan (HMP) detailing the full biodiversity compensation and enhancement measures. This approach would comply with NPF4 in that "net gain" can be delivered and that biodiversity would be left in a demonstrably better state than without intervention.
- 7.56 The development also involves the loss of commercial woodland within the site with 2.56ha to be removed, 2.02ha of which is to accommodate the footprint of the development. The remaining 0.54ha would be required to be felled for woodland management purposes to secure a windfirm edge, with this area proposed to be replanted with native broadleaf. The applicant has identified potential to deliver up to 1.04ha of new planting within the application site, with areas of wet woodland scrub planting and native woodland being proposed, principally for biodiversity and site landscaping purposes. The Council's Forestry Officer has confirmed that the Control of Woodland Removal policy applies, and that the development complies with HwLDP Policy 52 and NPF Policy 6, subject to agreement being reached over the compensation planting proposed. This can be secured by condition with this specifying that 2ha of compensatory planting, consisting primarily of productive species, shall be planted in Highland, with this plan to be prepared in consultation with Scottish Forestry.
- 7.57 A number of representations raise concerns regarding the impact to natural habitat and on protected species. Based on the supporting information provided within the submission, and the matters raised by internal and external consultees, the proposal is considered to be well sited in terms of natural heritage interests, would not have a detrimental impact on any protected species and would result in biodiversity enhancement. The loss of commercial woodland is also acceptable with compensatory planting to be secured, along with measures to manage the woodland surrounding the site.

## **Water, Flood Risk, Drainage and Soils**

- 7.58 The majority of the site sits within the surface water catchment area of the Broadford River, with the very north eastern corner of the site being located within the Allt an t-Sabhail surface water catchment. Both catchments discharge into the sea to the east and neither are designated as a drinking water protected area. Based on SEPA's indicative flood mapping the site is not at risk of flooding. The EIA has also not identified any licence water abstractions or known sensitive private water supplies in the wider area that would be affected. SuDS measures have been proposed to control and manage runoff shed from the development and an outline drainage design has been prepared.
- 7.59 The Flood Risk Management Team, Environmental Health and SEPA have no concerns in relation to the water environment. Controls including Pollution Prevention Plans and Waste Management Plans, are also expected within a project specific CEMD. Due to the scale of the development SEPA will control pollution prevention measures relating to surface water run-off via a Controlled Activities Regulations (CAR) Construction Site Licence.
- 7.60 In relation to peat, SEPA is generally content that the location of the development and temporary construction compound avoids the areas of localised deep peat and the footprint of the final development site is compact, further minimising impacts on peat and other carbon rich soils. Average peat depths across the extended substation site are 0.67m, giving rise to an estimated volume of peat in the region of 13,000m<sup>3</sup>. The outline peat management plan (PMP) submitted with the application sets out that this will be used for ground reinstatement, excavated, stored and replaced as turves. SEPA highlight that there could be more reinstatement material arising than anticipated, and a finalised PMP is required to be agreed with the Planning Authority in consultation with SEPA.
- 7.61 In relation to wetlands, the proposal would also result in potential loss of habitat types that can be groundwater dependant. That said, the EIA identified areas of potential Ground Water Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems (GWDTE) are unlikely to be groundwater dependant in this specific setting and are sustained by rainfall and water logging of soils, rather than by groundwater. SEPA are therefore content with the proposals for habitat restoration and enhancement outlined on EIA Figure 7.6 (superseded by EIA FEI Figures 4a and 4b), and state that should these details be approved, this will offset any impacts on wetlands. Adherence to this outline plan can be conditioned.

## **Built and Cultural Heritage**

- 7.62 The site is not situated within any built heritage designation and there are limited undesignated heritage assets in the vicinity which relate to former medieval/post-medieval settlement and agrarian activity. No prehistoric remains have been identified. Highland Council's Historic Environment Team (Archaeology) consider the assessment within EIAR provides a comprehensive study of the predicted impacts and is in agreement that a watching brief during construction would not be justified in this case. Standard mitigation embedded in the proposed Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) is therefore supported. This includes



formal arrangements to be put in place for any unforeseen archaeological discoveries made by the construction contractor to be reported to a retained professional archaeological organisation. These arrangements can be secured in the Cultural Heritage Management Plan part of the CEMP condition.

- 7.63 Other cultural heritage interests within a wider 3km study area include a Scheduled Monument and listed buildings located within the settlement of Broadford, as well as more remote Scheduled Monument, Old Corry, Cairns (SM 13673), located 0.4km to the south east of the site. The EIA identifies the development, in combination with the wider Skye Reinforcement Project, would not result in any significant impacts on any listings or scheduled monuments. At worst, there would be a minor impact on the setting of the Old Corry SM. This Scheduled Monument is located within a clearing within commercial forestry and views of the proposed development from the burial cairns would be currently screened by commercial forestry. In the absence of the screening afforded by the forestry, the proposed development would be visible in views to the northeast. The EIA however explains that key views from the burial cairns focused to the south, overlooking the Broadford River, and to the southeast towards Broadford Bay and the coastline would not be affected, and the relationship between the burial cairns and other funerary remains in the Broadford area would be retained. SM's and protection of their setting fall under the remit of Historic Environment Scotland, who have no objection and have confirmed that the proposal does not raise significant issues for their interests.

### **Economic Impact**

- 7.64 The development of grid infrastructure has been identified as a national priority together within investment in renewable energy. The development of substation projects as presented within this application are not only beneficial in strengthening the robustness of the country's grid network, but also result in further job and investment opportunities through the development of associated supply chains. The development is required to facilitate the connection of wind farms/renewable schemes (at various stages in the planning process) to the national grid which will allow the export of electricity generated to consumers. The relationship of the development to the economic and social benefits of renewable energy developments is therefore relevant, in a positive way.
- 7.65 The EIA considers how the proposal might be expected to affect the local economy. The capital cost of the substation works is reported to be in the region of £40 million. During construction, the proposed development is expected to generate 75 Person Years of Employment (PYE's), and a further 161 PYE's across Scotland. The EIA reports that this would equate to £1.55 million in Gross Value Added (GVA) locally (for local contractors), and £3.43 million nationally (for Scottish companies) per annum during the period of construction. Thereafter, post construction, the proposed development is expected to generate 1.5 operational jobs per annum within the Highlands.
- 7.66 It notes that a large proportion of the population of the local area are employed in accommodation and food services as well as art, entertainment and recreation, often attributed to the tourism industry. The applicant suggests that there is no detrimental effect on the tourism industry and these sectors are likely to benefit from expenditure by workers during the construction and development phases and to a lesser extent

during the operation and maintenance phases given the relative lack of visits required once the site is functioning.

- 7.67 The Highlands is experiencing significant construction activity in the transmission network. The approval of the proposed development would have a positive economic impact, particularly during the proposed 2 year construction period. The project could offer investment / opportunities to the local, Highland, and Scottish economy including businesses ranging across construction, haulage, electrical and service sectors. There is also likely to be some adverse effects caused by construction disruption and construction traffic. Representations have raised the economic impact that renewable related energy development may have on tourism more generally. These adverse impacts are most likely to be within the service sector particularly during the construction phase when additional traffic, HGV's and / or abnormal loads are being delivered to site. These will be temporary in nature and managed through the identified mitigation measures. Consideration of impacts on these matters is contained elsewhere in this report.
- 7.68 Scenery and the natural environment within the Highlands are important factors for many visitors when choosing the area as a holiday destination. Any detrimental impact of the proposed development on tourism, whether visually, environmentally or economically should be identified and considered in full. As reported in the landscape and visual section of this report, the proposed development would give rise to localised and short term significant effect for a short length of the Old Corry minor road, and for southbound users of the A87 as well as the adjacent core path, however, such impacts would not be detrimental to the enjoyment of these routes as a whole. Similarly, no significant or unacceptable effects would occur for users of the hills and other recreational routes in the surrounding area. As such, the development is not anticipated to have adverse impact on the local economy, particularly tourism.
- 7.69 In light of NPF4 Policy 11, section c)'s requirement for development proposals to only be supported where they maximise net economic impact, including local and community socio-economic benefits such as employment, associated business and supply chain opportunities, in July 2023 the applicant launched a consultation on plans for their first ever community benefit fund. This is a £10 million fund which will see SSE working with communities across the north of Scotland, including those impacted on Skye, to channel funds into vital local projects. Applications for the community benefit fund are due to open in Summer 2024 and first project funds are expected to be disseminated by Autumn 2024.
- 7.70 Following the Autumn Statement on 22 November 2023, the UK's Department for Energy Security and Net Zero also published its "Response to the consultation on Community Benefits for Electricity Transmission Network Infrastructure". In light of this, the applicant is expecting further community benefit funding opportunities, in the region of £100 million to be available for local projects but is awaiting further guidance from UK Government on how this will be implemented.
- 7.71 Prior to the publication of NPF4, Council policy and practice was for community benefit to be considered separately and outwith the planning application determination process. The effect of introducing NPF4 Policy 11 and, in particular paragraph c) relating to the need for energy development to maximise socio-economic benefits of which community benefit forms a part, means that this is now

material to the determination of an application. Additionally, NPF4 Policy 25 provides support for development that is consistent with local economic priorities and where they contribute to local and/or regional community wealth building strategies. The Highland Council is currently in the process of developing its priorities, along with partners, through the Highland Outcome Improvement Plan and the work on production of a community wealth building strategy that is under way. This work will set a strategic framework along with identifying many of the local priorities and projects to promote and encourage economic activity and retain wealth within the Highland area. The ongoing Local Place Plans initiative will likely identify other opportunities. While many opportunities are likely to be identified locally, there will be a need to consider the opportunities available from a strategic perspective to ensure that communities across all of Highland benefit. Community benefit will be expected to form part of that strategic consideration.

7.72 Given the above and in light of NPF4 Policy 11 section c), material weight can be attributed to the socio-economic benefits of the proposal, as well as community benefit. Such matters could be secured by way of planning conditions which require:

- the applicant to commit to the delivery of the socio-economic benefits of the scheme in line with those set out within the EIAR; and
- the establishment of a Community Benefit Fund, with the Council expectation being that this would comprise of a financial package (or alternative means of provision) to the value of £200,000 per substation, index linked from Q4 2023 using the BCIS All in Tender Price Index, in line with the UK government's consultation response, with the administrative details to be finalised in consultation with the Planning Authority, as and when further information, legislation and regulation requirements become available.

7.73 The recommendation before Members is to include such conditions to maximise the socio-economic benefits of the proposed development, albeit that the applicant has not provided written agreement to such an approach to date.

### **Other Material Considerations**

7.74 Light pollution significantly affects the rural countryside, from disturbing the way animals and plants perceive daytime and night time to making developments visible across wide areas. The substation would not be illuminated at night for normal operation. Floodlights are to be installed but would only be used in the event of a fault during the hours of darkness, during the over-run of planned works or when sensor-activated as security lighting for night-time access. The use of LED lighting to provide a focused area of illumination, with external lighting controlled by PIR sensors and angled in a downwards direction can significantly reduce the effects of light pollution and should be utilised. Full details of the specification of lighting are to be provided and are controlled by condition.

7.75 There are no other material considerations.

### **Non-Material Considerations**

7.76 A number of representations raise concerns that there is an over-provision of wind farms on Skye and in the wider Highland region. Whilst there are various renewable

projects in the wider surrounding area, all such proposals require assessment on their own merits and are rightly subject of individual applications. NPF4 makes clear that grid capacity should also not constrain renewable development. Developer's profit is also not a material consideration.

## **8. Matters to be Secured by Planning Legal Agreement**

- 8.1 A section 75 legal agreement is required to secure roadside planting, as well as to secure the retention and long term management and re-planting of commercial woodland.

## **9. CONCLUSION**

- 9.1 The Scottish Government and the Council each have policies offering support to projects which increase the capacity of the grid network, particularly for strategically important infrastructure which enables significant levels of investment in renewable energy. NPF4 offers strong support for such development, identifying developments of this nature to be of national importance.
- 9.2 Highland has been successful in attracting inward investment in renewables, enabled in part by a significant level of investment in the improvement of the electricity transmission network. This success has led to the Highlands having a good understanding of this type of project and The Highland Council having appropriate policies and guidance to assist in its assessment, and to effectively manage their implementation on the ground.
- 9.3 Statutory and other consultees responding to this application have not raised any fundamental concerns and have no outstanding objections. Some have requested planning conditions to be attached to any grant of planning permission to effectively ensure that their specific interests are secured. The development has however attracted public interest with representations objecting to the proposal. Whilst their concerns have assisted with the assessment of the application and considering the adequacy of the mitigation measures proposed, it is considered that there are no issues that merit the proposal to be re-located, re-configured or refused.
- 9.4 There are clear impacts that might be expected from this development, particularly during its construction. These can be managed through best practice construction management techniques to ensure surrounding interests, particularly road access and the amenity of local communities is safeguarded from the key impacts of the development. The attached planning conditions will strengthen and clarify the plans and supporting environmental information provided by the applicant. The proposal will also be overseen by an appointed Environmental Clerk of Works with any permission requiring regular compliance monitoring and ongoing engagement by means of the Community Liaison Group.
- 9.5 Key to the suitability of the proposed development's location is the ability for this to be largely screened from the A87 roadside by intervening vegetation and woodland. The landscaping provisions within the application have therefore been carefully assessed, with the long term planting and woodland management recommended to be secured by way of legal agreement, which is critical to the acceptability of the proposal. Subject to this being secured, the proposal would not dominate roadside

views, with multiple layers of landscaping to be secured.

- 9.6 Under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017, the Council is required to reach a reasoned conclusion on the environmental impacts of the proposed development. The Council is satisfied that environmental effects of this development can be addressed by way of mitigation. The Council has incorporated the requirement for a schedule of mitigation within the conditions of this permission. Monitoring of construction and operational compliance has been secured through conditions attached below.
- 9.7 The application can be supported in the context of the Development Plan and in particular NPF4 Policy 11 – Energy and HwLDP Policy 69 - Electricity Transmission Infrastructure and the underlying support for renewable energy development which is consented in this area. All relevant matters have been taken into account when appraising this application. It is considered that the proposal accords with the principles and policies contained within the Development Plan and is acceptable in terms of all other applicable material considerations.

## **10. IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 Resource: Not applicable
- 10.2 Legal: Not applicable
- 10.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural): Not applicable
- 10.4 Climate Change/Carbon Clever: The project has the potential to enable the development of renewable energy.
- 10.5 Risk: Not applicable
- 10.6 Gaelic: Not applicable

## **11. RECOMMENDATION**

- 11.1 **Action required before decision issued:** Yes – conclude legal agreement
- 11.2 It is recommended that planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to the conclusion of a legal agreement and the following conditions and reasons:

### **CONDITIONS AND REASONS**

#### **1. Time Limit for the Implementation of Planning Permission**

In accordance with Section 58 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended), the development to which this planning permission relates must commence within FIVE YEARS of the date of this decision notice. If development has not commenced within this period, then this planning permission shall lapse.

**Reason:** In accordance with Section 58 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended).

## 2. **Accordance with the Provisions of the Application**

a) The development shall be constructed and operated in accordance with the provisions of the Application, the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) and Supplementary Environmental Information (SEI), except in so far as amended by the terms of this consent;

and

b) The increased operational land associated with this substation shall be as per the existing and proposed extended fence line boundary, as identified on Fence Layout Proposed Works to be Done, Dwg No. LT91\_BROA1\_0804\_0003 Rev 01, received by the Planning Authority on 17 October 2023, with this being the extent to which the statutory undertaker's permitted development rights apply under the terms of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Order 1992, Class 40, Part (1)(d), (e) and (f).

**Reason:** To identify the extent and terms of the development consent.

## 3. **Elevations, Materials and Finishes**

a) No development shall commence until elevation drawings of the proposed above ground infrastructure, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority, specifying external materials, colours and finishes of all external structures and site fencing with a non-reflective finish to be specified throughout;

and

b) No element of the development shall have any text, sign or logo displayed on any external surface of the facility, save those required by the applicant's safety systems and law under other legislation; and

Thereafter, the development shall be built out in accordance with these approved details and, with reference to part (a) above, the site shall be maintained in the approved colour, free from rust, staining or discolouration.

**Reason:** In the interest of visual amenity.

## 4. **Construction Environment Management Document**

No later than three months prior to the Commencement of the Development, a finalised Construction Environment Management Document (CEMD) shall be submitted for the writing approval of the Planning Authority. The development shall then proceed in accordance with the approved CEMD unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Planning Authority. The CEMD shall be based on the provision of the Environmental Impact Assessment's: Outline CEMP (Appendix 2-4), Schedule of Mitigation (Appendix 2-3) and General Environmental Management Plan (Appendix 2-1), and shall include details of:

a) An updated Schedule of Mitigation (SM) as it relates to construction highlighting mitigation set out within each chapter of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR), within the EIAR Supplementary Environmental Information (SEI), and the conditions of this consent;

b) Processes to control / action changes from the agreed SM;

- c) Construction Environmental Management Plans (CEMPs) for the construction phase, covering:
- i) Habitat and Species Protection, including, but not limited to, the provision of Species Protection Plans for bats and otter;
  - ii) Pollution Prevention and Control, which shall maintain hydrological connectivity of Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems;
  - iii) Dust Management, covering demolition and construction activity, including vehicle movements;
  - iv) Construction Noise and Vibration;
  - v) Temporary Site Lighting;
  - vi) Site Waste Management;
  - vii) Surface and Ground Water Management, including: drainage and sediment management measures; drainage by SUDS to accommodate the 1 in 200 plus an allowance for climate change; mechanisms to ensure that construction will not take place during periods of high flow or high rainfall; and a programme of water quality monitoring;
  - viii) Peat Management Plan;
  - ix) Soil Management, with details of soil placement;
  - x) Public and Private Water Supply Protection Measures, including a programme of water quality monitoring;
  - xi) Cultural Heritage Management Plan, detailing reporting procedures should any unforeseen archaeological discoveries be made;
  - xii) Emergency Response Plans;
  - xiii) Timetable for post construction restoration/reinstatement of the temporary working areas and construction compound;
  - xiv) Phasing plans for the construction; and
  - xv) Other relevant environmental management as may be relevant to the development.
- d) A statement of responsibility to 'stop the job/activity' if a breach or potential breach of mitigation or legislation occurs; and
- e) Methods for monitoring, auditing, reporting, and the communication of environmental management on site and with client, Planning Authority and other relevant parties.

**Reason:** To ensure protection of surrounding environmental interests and general amenity.

## 5. **Construction Noise Management Plan**

No development shall commence until a Construction Noise Management Plan (CNMP) which demonstrates how the developer will ensure the best practicable measures are implemented in order to reduce the impact of construction noise and vibration, is submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. The

CNMP shall include, but is not limited to, the following:

- a) A description of the most significant noise sources in terms of equipment; processes or phases of construction;
- b) The proposed operating hours and the estimated duration of the works for each phase;
- c) A detailed plan showing the location of noise and vibration sources and noise sensitive receptors; and
- d) A description of noise mitigation methods that will be put in place including the proposals for community liaison. The best practice found in BS5228 Code of practice for noise and vibration control on construction and open sites should be followed. Any divergence requires to be justified.

Thereafter the development shall progress in accordance with the approved CNMP with all approved mitigation measures to be in place prior to the commencement of development, or as otherwise agreed in writing by the Planning Authority.

**Reason:** In the interest of safeguarding residential amenity.

## 6. **A Peat Management Plan**

The Plan shall be developed in consultation with SEPA and submitted to and approved in writing by, the Planning Authority. The Peat Management Plan shall draw upon the findings of the Environmental Impact Assessment, Peat Slide Risk Assessment, and consider the findings of any additional ground investigations carried out prior to development commencing and include a management / reinstatement scheme for all peat areas within the application site, including:

- i. Details and plans for all peat and soil stripping and excavation and the storage and proposed use and replacement of peat, topsoil and subsoil; and
- ii. A method statement setting out the measures to protect peat during excavation, storage, handling and reuse.

The Peat Management Plan shall take due consideration of the mineral and slope stability of the site identified in the peat landslide risk assessment and shall have regard to the drainage implications of soil movement and storage. The Plan should be based on the principles of utilising cut peat turves for ground reinstatement.

The Plan shall be implemented as approved.

**Reason:** In the interests of the protection of the habitats identified in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and EIA Supplementary Environmental Information.

## 7. **Environmental Clerk of Works**

1. No development or Site Enabling Works shall commence unless and until the terms of appointment of an independent Environmental Clerk of Works (EnvCoW) by the Company have been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Planning Authority. The terms of appointment shall:
  - a) Impose a duty to monitor compliance with the environmental commitments provided in the EIA Report as well as the following (the EnvCoW works):
    - i. the Pre-Construction Ecological Survey under Condition 20;



- ii. the Construction Environmental Management Document under Condition 4;
  - iii. the Peat Management Plan under Condition 6;
  - iv. the Habitat Management Plan under Condition 19;
  - v. the landscape planting and woodland management under Condition 12;
- b) Require the EnvCoW to report to the nominated construction project manager, developer and Planning Authority any incidences of non-compliance with the EnvCoW works at the earliest practical opportunity;
  - c) Require the EnvCoW to submit a monthly report to the construction project manager, developer and Planning Authority summarising works undertaken on site; and
  - d) Require a statement that the EnvCoW shall be engaged by the Planning Authority but funded by the developer. The EnvCoW shall be appointed on the approved terms throughout the period from Commencement of Development to completion of construction works and post-construction site reinstatement works.

**Reason:** To secure effective and transparent monitoring of and compliance with the environmental mitigation and management measures associated with the Development during the construction, decommissioning, restoration and aftercare phases.

## 8. **Construction Traffic Management Plan**

No development shall commence until a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) to manage all construction traffic with the exception of abnormal indivisible loads, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority, in consultation with the local Roads Authority, and any affected local Community Councils. The CTMP shall be carried out as approved in accordance with the timetable specified within the approved CTMP. The CTMP shall include:

- a) Identification of the routes to site for general construction traffic and details of the number and type of vehicle movements anticipated on these routes during the construction period;
- b) Scheduling and timing of movements, respecting any large public event taking place in the local area which would be unduly affected or disrupted by construction vehicles using the public road network;
- c) Traffic management measures on the routes to site for construction traffic. Measures such as temporary speed limits, suitable temporary signage, road markings and the use of speed activated signs and banksman/escort details should be considered. During the delivery period of construction materials any additional signing or temporary traffic control measures deemed necessary due to the size or length of any loads being delivered or removed must be undertaken by a recognised Quality Assured traffic management consultant, to be approved by Transport Scotland and the Local Roads Authority before delivery commences;
- d) Measures to mitigate the impact of general construction traffic on the Old Corry road;
- e) A procedure for the regular monitoring of road conditions and the implementation

- of any remedial works required during the construction period;
- f) Measures to ensure that all affected public roads are kept free of mud and debris arising from the development;
  - g) The provision of a wear and tear agreement under Section 96 of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 under which the developer will be responsible for the repair of any damage to the local road network attributable to construction related traffic. As part of the agreement, pre-start and post construction road condition surveys must be carried out by the developer to the satisfaction of the Roads Authority. It will also require the submission of an appropriate financial bond acceptable to the Council in respect of the risk of any road reconstruction works;
  - h) Provisions for emergency vehicle access;
  - i) A timetable for implementation of the measures detailed in the CTMP; and
  - j) Identification of a nominated person to whom any road safety issues can be referred and measures for keeping the Community Council informed and dealing with queries and any complaints regarding construction traffic.

**Reason:** In the interests of road safety and to ensure adequate road safety measures are in place including measures to minimise conflict with routes to schools, cyclists and local events.

#### 9. **Abnormal Loads**

No delivery of abnormal indivisible load (AIL) shall be made to site until an Abnormal Indivisible Load Construction Traffic Management Plan (AIL-CTMP) has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Planning Authority, in consultation with the local Roads Authority, Transport Scotland, the Police and all affected Community Councils. The AIL-CTMP shall provide a detailed protocol for the delivery of AILs, including details of their proposed routing on the local and trunk road network, with any accommodation measures required, including the removal and replacement of street furniture, junction widening, and traffic management with these measures to be undertaken by a recognised Quality Assured traffic management consultant. The AIL-CTMP shall be prepared in consultation with all interested parties and thereafter be carried out as approved.

**Reason:** In the interests of road safety and to ensure that abnormal loads access the site in a safe manner.

#### 10. **Access Improvements**

No development shall commence until a plan detailing the extent of proposed improvements to the U4892 Old Corry road, is submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority, in consultation with the local Roads Authority. Unless otherwise agreed, the plan shall provide detailed design specification drawings for:

- a) the formation of any new accesses onto the public road including details of hard surfacing, and gated access being set back from the public road, and provision of suitable visibility splays;
- b) any necessary upgrades to the junction with the A87 Trunk Road to avoid queuing on the A87;
- c) any necessary widening and strengthening of carriageway and structures

- below the public road; and  
d) any necessary additional or amended roadside passing places.

Thereafter, the improvement works shall be implemented either prior to the main construction works commencing on the substation, or within 4 months of the commencement of development, whichever is the sooner.

**Reason:** To ensure the road is enhanced and thereafter maintained to safely accommodate the increased traffic arising from the construction traffic associated with this development and existing road users.

#### 11. **Recreational Access Management Plan**

No development shall commence until an updated Recreational Access Management Plan (RAMP) has been submitted to, and agreed in writing by, the Planning Authority. The updated plan should look to maintain public access during construction of the development, as far as it is practicable and safe to do so, and thereafter enhance public access during the operation of the development. This shall include delivering net improvements to the accessibility of access paths on completion of the development. The plan as agreed shall be implemented in full, unless otherwise approved in writing with the Planning Authority.

**Reason:** In the interests of maintain public access rights and pedestrian safety.

#### 12. **Landscape Planting and Woodland Management**

No development shall commence until a finalised detailed Landscape Plan, maintenance programme and Woodland Management Plan (WMP) have been submitted to and approved by the Planning Authority, with these documents to be prepared based on the principles and provision set out within the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) and Further Environmental Information (FEI), and the associated EIA FEI Landscape Plans Figures 4a and 4b.

Thereafter, the approved details shall be implemented at the earliest possible opportunity, and no later than during the first planting season following completion of substation building's ground enabling works, or as otherwise agreed in writing by the Planning Authority.

**Reason:** In order to safeguard existing vegetation and woodland, ensure that a high standard of landscaping is achieved appropriate to the location of the site and in order to mitigate the visual impacts of the development for users of A87, and the Old Corry road.

#### 13. **Compensatory Woodland Planting**

a) No development, including tree felling, shall commence until a detailed Compensatory Planting Plan, including future maintenance, has been submitted and approved in writing by the Planning Authority, following consultation with Scottish Forestry and the Highland Council's Forestry Officer. The area of planting shall be no less than 2.0 hectares in size, consisting primarily of productive species and located within the Highlands.

b) The Compensatory Planting Plan must be prepared by and thereafter implemented under the supervision of a suitably qualified forestry consultant,

approved by the Planning Authority.

c) The approved Compensatory Planting Plan must be implemented in full within 12 months following the removal of woodland or prior to commencement of development (whichever comes first), or as otherwise agreed with the Planning Authority.

d) The compensatory planting shall be maintained thereafter in accordance with the approved scheme, until established and thereafter shall remain as woodland in perpetuity.

**Reason:** To protect Scotland's woodland resource, in accordance with the Scottish Government's policy on the Control of Woodland Removal.

#### 14. **Biodiversity Net Gain**

No development shall commence until a Biodiversity Enhancement Plan (BEP) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. The BEP must include details of compensation and enhancement measures, to ensure the development results in at least 10% biodiversity net gain. The BEP must include management, maintenance and monitoring strategies of the compensation and enhancement measures, that ensure longevity of the proposals. The approved BEP shall be implemented in full and in accordance with the approved timing, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Planning Authority.

**Reason:** To ensure that the development delivers biodiversity net gain.

#### 15. **Operational Management Plan**

Prior to the energisation of the development, a site Operational Management Plan shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. This plan shall detail:

a) An updated Schedule of Mitigation (SM) as it relates to the operational phase of the development highlighting mitigation set out within each chapter of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and the Supplementary Environmental Information (SEI), as well as the conditions of this consent;

b) Processes to control / action changes from the agreed SM;

c) The Gas Insulated Switchgear (GIS) building(s) utilising Sulphur Hexafluoride (SF6) free technology or an equally suitable environmentally friendly alternative subject to the prior written approval of the Planning Authority; and

d) Landscape management and drainage maintenance.

Thereafter, the OEMP shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details from first commissioning of the development until the cessation of the use of the development, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Planning Authority.

**Reason:** In the interest of environmental amenity, pollution prevention, maintaining water quality, and provision of adequate parking and charging facilities.

#### 16. **Noise Management Plan**

Operations, including vehicle movements, associated with this development, for which noise is audible at the curtilage of any noise-sensitive properties\*, shall only

be permitted between:

- i. 0800 hours and 1900 hours Monday to Friday; and
- ii. 0800 hours and 1300 hours on Saturdays.

Prior to the project commencing, the applicant shall submit, for the written approval of the Council's Environmental Health Service, in Consultation with the Community Liaison Group details of a Noise Management Plan. For the purposes of the Noise Management Plan, where it is proposed to undertake work, which is audible at the curtilage of any noise-sensitive properties, out with the hours Mon-Fri 8am to 7pm; Sat 8am to 1pm

or

Where noise levels during the above periods are likely to exceed 75dB(A) for short term works or 55dB(A) for long term works. Both measurements to be taken as a 1hr LAeq at the curtilage of any noise sensitive receptor. (Generally, long term work is taken to be more than 6 months).

The Construction Noise Management Plan should be carried out in accordance with BS 5228-1:2009 "Code of practice for noise and vibration control on construction and open sites – Part 1: Noise" with details of mitigation measures.

Thereafter the development shall progress in accordance with the approved Construction Noise Management Plan and all approved mitigation measures shall be in place prior to the commencement of operations or as otherwise may be agreed in writing by the Planning Authority.

\*Note: For the purposes of this condition, "noise-sensitive premises" includes, but is not necessarily limited to, any building, structure or other existing or consented development the lawful use of which a) falls within Classes 7 (Hotels & Hostels), 8 (Residential Institutions) or 9 (Houses) of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Scotland) Order 1997 (as amended), or b) is as a flat, static residential caravan.

**Reason:** In the interest of safeguarding residential amenity.

#### 17. **Air Quality Management Plan**

No development shall commence until a dust mitigation scheme (in the form of an Air Quality Management Plan) designed to protect neighbouring properties from dust arising from this project, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority.

Thereafter the development shall progress in accordance with the approved dust suppression scheme (in the form of an Air Quality Management Plan) and all approved mitigation measures shall be in place prior to the commencement of operations or as otherwise may be agreed in writing by the Planning Authority.

**Reason:** In the interest of residential amenity.

#### 18. **Operational Noise Specifications and Monitoring**

1. Noise arising from within the operational land of the substation, hereby permitted, when measured and/or calculated as an Leq, 5min, in the 100Hz one third octave

frequency band must not exceed 30 dB, at noise sensitive premises;

2. The Rating Level of noise arising from the use of plant, machinery or equipment installed or operated within the operational land of the substation, hereby permitted, must not exceed the current background noise levels at noise sensitive premises. The Rating Level should be calculated in accordance with BS 4142: 2014: Methods for rating and assessing industrial and commercial sound; and

3. Within four weeks of operations commencing, at the expense of the applicant, compliance monitoring shall be carried out by a competent person to assess whether the aforementioned noise conditions are being complied with. Within two weeks of the monitoring exercise being carried out a noise assessment report shall be submitted for the written approval of the Planning Authority. The report shall demonstrate that the noise conditions are not being complied with or shall include proposals for further mitigation.

**Reason:** In the interest of safeguarding residential amenity.

#### 19. **Habitat Management Plan**

(1) Prior to the Commencement of the Development, a finalised habitat management plan (HMP), shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority, in consultation with SEPA.

(2) The HMP shall set out proposed habitat management of the site during the period of construction and operation of the site.

(3) The HMP shall include information on how and where any disturbed peat that cannot be used in site reinstatement will be used for peat restoration.

(4) The HMP shall include post construction measures for the most sensitive habitats, peatland restoration proposals, provide enhancement of Annex 1 habitats, habitats for protected species and birds.

(5) The approved HMP will include provision for regular monitoring and review to be undertaken to consider whether amendments are needed to better meet the habitat plan objectives. In particular, the approved habitat management plan will be updated to reflect ground condition surveys undertaken following construction and prior to the date of Final Commissioning and submitted to the Planning Authority for written approval, in consultation with SEPA.

(6) Unless otherwise approved in advance in writing with the Planning Authority, the approved HMP shall be implemented in full.

(7) GIS Shapefiles must be supplied of the compensation and enhancement areas to the Planning Authority prior to the commencement of works.

**Reason:** In the interests of the protection of the habitats identified in the Environmental Impact Assessment and Supplementary Environmental Information.

#### 20. **Pre-Construction Ecological Survey**

A pre-construction survey is required to be undertaken not more than 3 months prior to works commencing and a report of the survey has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Planning Authority. The survey shall cover both the application site and an appropriate buffer from the boundary of application site and

the report of survey shall include mitigation measures where any impact, or potential impact, on protected species or their habitat has been identified. Development and work shall progress in accordance with any mitigation measures contained within the approved report of survey and the timescales contain therein.

**Reason:** To ensure that the site and its environs are surveyed and the development does not have an adverse impact on protected species or habitat.

21. **Lighting**

Prior to the first commissioning of the development, details of any operational external lighting, or any externally visible internal building lighting, shall be submitted to and approved in writing with the Planning Authority. The lighting shall thereafter be constructed and maintained in accordance with the approved details.

**Reason:** In the interests of visual amenity, to minimise light pollution and to ensure the development does not have an adverse impact on nocturnal animals.

22. **Socio-Economic Benefit**

No later than 15 months after the date of final commissioning of the development, a report demonstrating the project has met the minimum socio-economic benefit assumptions provided within the Environmental Impact Assessment, received January 2023, for both the development's construction period and initial 12 month operational period, for both Highland and Scotland, shall be submitted for the written approval of the Planning Authority.

**Reason:** In order to ensure compliance with NPF4 Policy 11c) and to maximise the local socio-economic benefits of the development to the wider local community and Scotland.

23. **Socio-Economic Benefit**

Where the report referred to in Condition 22 shows that projected socio-economic benefit has not achieved the assumptions in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report, received January 2023, it shall include proposed measures to address, and compensate for any shortfall, to ensure that the economic assumptions for the development have been met. In the absence of any alternative actions, the Scheme for Community Benefit, as required by Condition 24, shall be enhanced accordingly to offset any detriment of economic impact.

**Reason:** In order to ensure compliance with NPF4 Policy 11c) and to maximise the local socio-economic benefits of the development to the wider local community.

24. **Scheme for Community Benefit**

Anytime between 3 months to 6 months prior to the final commissioning of the development, details of a Scheme for Community Benefit shall be submitted for the prior written approval of the Planning Authority. This scheme, comprising a developer financial contribution, or alternative means of provision, shall be to the prevailing value required for 132kV or above, substations set by UK Government or the Scottish Government, at the time of the developer applying to satisfy this condition. The scheme shall be used for projects across Highland directly related to supply chain development, business support, including tourism and regeneration projects, skills

and barriers to employment in Highland. The scheme shall be implemented as approved, and administered by The Highland Council, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Planning Authority.

**Reason:** In order to ensure compliance with NPF4 Policy 11c) and to maximise the local socio-economic benefits of the development to the wider local community.

25. **Community Liaison Group**

No development shall commence until a community liaison group is established by the applicant, in collaboration with the Planning Authority and affected local Community Councils.

The group shall act as a forum for the community to be kept informed of project progress and, in particular, should allow advanced dialogue on the provision of all transport related mitigation measures and to keep under review the timing of the delivery of abnormal loads and performance of the Construction Traffic Management Plan.

This should also ensure that local events and tourist seasons are considered and appropriate measures to co-ordinate deliveries and work with these and any other major projects in the area to ensure no conflict between construction traffic and the increased traffic generated by such events / seasons / developments.

The liaison group, or element of any combined liaison group relating to this development, shall be maintained until the construction of the development and all site infrastructure becomes fully operational.

**Reason:** To assist project implementation, ensuring community dialogue and the delivery of appropriate mitigation measures for example to minimise potential hazards to road users, including pedestrians, travelling on the road networks.

26. **Planning Monitoring Officer**

No development shall commence until the Planning Authority has approved in writing the terms of appointment by the applicant of a suitably qualified environmental specialist to assist the Planning Authority in monitoring compliance with the planning permission and conditions attached to this consent. The terms of Planning Monitoring Officer (PMO) appointment shall:

- a) Impose a duty to monitor compliance with the planning permission and conditions attached to this consent;
- b) Require the PMO to submit a report at least every three months to the Planning Authority, or monthly at the further written request of the Planning Authority, summarising works undertaken on site; and
- c) Require the PMO to report to the Planning Authority any incidences of non-compliance with the planning permission and conditions attached to this consent at the earliest practical opportunity.

The PMO shall be appointed on the approved terms throughout the period from the commencement of development to completion of post construction restoration works.

**Reason:** To enable the development to be suitably monitored to ensure compliance



with the consent issued.

## **REASON FOR DECISION**

All relevant matters have been taken into account when appraising this application. It is considered that the proposal accords with the principles and policies contained within the Development Plan and is acceptable in terms of all other applicable material considerations.

## **REASONED CONCLUSION**

The Council is in broad agreement with the findings of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report and Supplementary Environmental Information for the extension of Broadford substation, including the creation of an extended substation platform, substation buildings, SUDS basin, formation of access junction, temporary construction compound, landscaping and other ancillary works. Whilst the proposed development would give rise to some significant visual effects, particularly during the construction period, to receptors using the Old Corry minor road, the A87 and the adjacent Core Path, these are short term and not considered significant longer term. The Highland Council is satisfied that environmental effects of this development can be addressed by way of mitigation. The Council has incorporated the requirement for a schedule of mitigation within the conditions of this permission. Monitoring of construction and operational compliance has been secured through Conditions 7, 15, 18, and 26 of this permission.

Signature: Dafydd Jones  
Designation: Area Planning Manager – North  
Author: Peter Wheelan  
Background Papers: Documents referred to in report and in case file.  
Relevant Plans:

Plan 1 - Location Plan	EIA SEI Fig 1
Plan 2 - Site Layout Plan	EIA SEI Fig 3
Plan 3 - Landscape Plan A	EIA SEI Fig 4a
Plan 4 - Landscape Plan B	EIA SEI Fig 4b
Plan 5 - North Elevation Plan	
Plan 6 - South Elevation Plan	
Plan 7 - West Elevation Plan	
Plan 8 - East Elevation Plan	

## **Appendix 1 – Development Plan and Other Material Policy Considerations**

### **DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

#### **National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4, 2023)**

- A1.1 National Development 3 – Strategic Renewable Electricity generation and Transmission Infrastructure
- 1 - Tackling the Climate and Nature Crises
  - 2 - Climate Mitigation and Adaptation
  - 3 - Biodiversity
  - 4 - Natural Places
  - 5 - Soils
  - 7 - Historic Assets and Places
  - 11 - Energy
  - 20 - Blue and Green Infrastructure
  - 22 - Flood Risk and Water Management
  - 23 - Health and Safety
  - 25 - Community Wealth Building
  - 29 - Rural Development
  - 33 - Minerals

#### **Highland Wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP, 2012)**

- A1.2
- 28 - Sustainable Design
  - 29 - Design Quality and Place-making
  - 30 - Physical Constraints
  - 31 - Developer Contributions
  - 36 - Development in the Wider Countryside
  - 55 - Peat and Soils
  - 56 - Travel
  - 57 - Natural, Built and Cultural Heritage
  - 58 - Protected Species
  - 59 - Other important Species
  - 60 - Other Importance Habitats
  - 61 - Landscape
  - 63 - Water Environment
  - 64 - Flood Risk
  - 65 - Waste Water Treatment
  - 66 - Surface Water Drainage
  - 69 - Electricity Transmission Infrastructure
  - 72 - Pollution
  - 73 - Air Quality
  - 74 - Green Networks
  - 77 - Public Access

#### **West Highlands and Islands Local Development Plan (Westplan, 2019)**

- A1.3 The site is not covered by any specific development allocation or safeguarding notation within the WestPlan. The Vision and Strategy section outlines a number of general

policies that apply to the proposed development including:

2 – Delivering Development

### **Highland Council Supplementary Guidance**

- A1.4
  - Developer Contributions (Nov 2018)
  - Flood Risk and Drainage Impact Assessment (Jan 2013)
  - Green Networks (Jan 2013)
  - Highland Historic Environment Strategy (Jan 2013)
  - Highland's Statutorily Protected Species (Mar 2013)
  - Physical Constraints (Mar 2013)
  - Roads and Transport Guidelines for New Developments (May 2013)
  - Special Landscape Area Citations (June 2011)
  - Standards for Archaeological Work (Mar 2012)
  - Sustainable Design Guide (Jan 2013)

### **OTHER MATERIAL POLICY CONSIDERATIONS**

#### **Other National Policy and Guidance**

- A1.5
  - Scottish Energy Strategy (2017)
  - The Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan (2023)
  - The Onshore Wind Energy Policy Statement (2022)
  - Onshore Wind Sector Deal for Scotland (2023)
  - Historic Environment Policy for Scotland (2019)
  - Scheduled Monuments Consents Policy (2019)
  - Circular 1/2017: Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations (2017)
  - PAN 1/2011 - Planning and Noise (2011)
  - PAN 60 – Planning for Natural Heritage (Jan 2008)
  - Developing with Nature Guidance (NatureScot 2023)
  - Construction Environmental Management Process for Large Scale Projects (2010)
  - Highland Nature Biodiversity Action Plan 2021-2026 (2022).
  - Skye and Lochalsh Biodiversity Action Plan (2003)
  - Community Benefits for Electricity Transmission Network Infrastructure: Government Response, UK Department for Energy and Security and Net Zero (2023)

## Appendix 2 - Compliance with the Development Plan / Other Planning Policy

### National Policy

- A.2.1 National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) forms part of the Development Plan and was adopted in February 2023. NPF4 comprises three distinct parts. Part 1 sets out an overarching spatial strategy for Scotland in the future. Outlining that Scotland is facing unprecedented challenges and that we need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and embrace and deliver radical change so we can tackle and adapt to climate change, restore biodiversity loss, improve health and wellbeing, and build a wellbeing economy while striving to create great places. Therefore, NPF4 sets out that choices need to be made about how we can make sustainable use of our natural assets in a way that benefits communities.
- A.2.2 NPF4 outlines 18 national developments that support the plan's spatial strategy. National developments will be a focus for delivery, as well as exemplars of the Place Principle, placemaking and a Community Wealth Building (CWB) approach to economic development. Six of the national developments support the delivery of sustainable places. Among these is national development number 3 - Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure, which "supports electricity generation and associated grid infrastructure throughout Scotland, providing employment and opportunities for community benefit, helping to reduce emissions and improve security of supply." National development 3 accords national development status to electricity transmission that includes b) New and/or replacement upgraded on and offshore high voltage electricity transmission lines, cables and interconnectors of 132kV or more, and/or c) New and/or upgraded Infrastructure directly supporting on and offshore high voltage electricity lines, cables and interconnectors including converter stations, switching stations and substations. This proposal aligns with parts of both b) and c) and therefore, is classed as a national development, and as such received in principle support.
- A.2.3 The spatial strategy reflects existing legislation by setting out that decision making requires to reflect the long-term public interest. However, in doing so, it is clear that the decision maker must make the right choices about where development should be located, ensuring clarity is provided over the types of infrastructure that need to be provided and the assets that should be protected to ensure they continue to benefit future generations. To that end, the Spatial Priorities support the planning and delivery of sustainable places, which will reduce emissions, restore and better connect biodiversity; create liveable places, where residents can live better, healthier lives; and create productive places, with a greener, fairer, and more inclusive wellbeing economy.
- A.2.4 Part 2 of NPF4 sets out the National Planning Policy which cover three themes: Sustainable Places, Liveable Places, and Productive Places; within which there are a total of 33 policies and many of these consist of distinct sub-policies. These 33 national planning policies form part of the development plan and will be assessed along with the Council's LDP policies for development management decisions. The most relevant policies are outlined below.

- A.2.5 Part 3 provides a series of annexes that provide the rationale for the strategies and policies of NPF4, which outline how the document should be used, and set out how the Scottish Government will implement the strategies and policies contained in the document. With Annex A: 'How to use this document' noting that the policies within Part 2 should be read as a whole and '...it is for the decision maker to determine what weight to attach to policies on a case-by-case basis....' It goes on to state that '...where a policy states that development will be supported, it is in principle, and it is for the decision maker to take into account all other relevant policies....'.
- A.2.6 Many of NPF4's policies are relevant to consideration of the proposal, but attention is particularly drawn here to the following key policies. Policy 1 - Tackling the climate and nature crises aims to encourage, promote and facilitate development that addresses the global climate emergency and nature crisis. It requires 'significant weight' to be given to those crises in decision making.
- A.2.7 Policy 3 - Biodiversity aims to protect biodiversity, reverse biodiversity loss, deliver positive effects and strengthen nature networks. Every development proposal has to maintain or improve biodiversity.
- A.2.8 Policy 4 - Natural Places aims to protect, restore and enhance natural assets making best use of nature-based solutions. Policy 4 section e) requires project design and mitigation to demonstrate how the following various impacts on communities and individual dwellings, including, residential amenity, visual impact, and noise, landscape, visual and cumulative impacts, public access, aviation and defence interests, telecommunications and broadcasting installations, traffic and roads, historic environment, hydrology, water environment and flood risk, trees, biodiversity, decommissioning and site restoration are all addressed.
- A.2.9 Policy 11 - Energy aims to encourage, promote and facilitate all forms of renewable energy development onshore and offshore. This includes energy generation, storage, new and replacement transmission and distribution infrastructure. Section a) notes development proposals for all forms of renewable, low-carbon and zero emissions technologies will be supported, including (ii.) enabling works, such as grid transmission and distribution infrastructure. Section c) confirms development proposals will only be supported where they maximise net economic impact, including local and community socio-economic benefits such as employment, associated business and supply chain opportunities. Section d) requires development proposals that impact on international or national designations to be assessed in relation to Policy 4. In considering these impacts, significant weight will be placed on the contribution of the proposal to renewable energy generation targets and on greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets.
- A.2.10 Policy 25 - Community wealth building aims to encourage, promote and facilitate a new strategic approach to economic development that also provides a practical model for building a wellbeing economy at local, regional and national levels. While NPF4 considers national developments as a focus for delivery, they should also be exemplars of the community wealth building approach to economic development. This is considered further within the Economic Impact section of this report.

## **Highland wide Local Development Plan**

- A.2.11 The principal Highland-wide Local Development Plan policy against which the application requires to be determined is the Policy 69 - Electricity Transmission Infrastructure. This policy offers support for electricity transmission infrastructure, having regard to their level of strategic significance in transmitting electricity from areas of generation to areas of consumption. Such support is subject to the proposals not having an unacceptable significant impact on the environment.
- A.2.12 As the development would provide additional grid capacity for the transmission network and would help to facilitate an increasing proportion of electricity generation from renewable sources, the principle of the development receives support under HwLDP Policy 69 - Electricity Transmission Infrastructure, subject to site selection, design and overcoming any unacceptable significant environmental effects.
- A.2.13 In this regard, the site does not benefit from any positive development allocation and is out with a defined Settlement Development Area (SDA). As such HwLDP Policy 36 Development in the Wider Countryside applies and sets out that all development in the countryside will be determined on the basis of a number of criteria. Pertinent matters to this proposal include siting and design, being compatible with the existing pattern of development, landscape character and capacity, as well as drainage and servicing implications. The main aspect of the development is the proposed new buildings and expanded compound area resulting mainly in the loss of commercial forestry with the management of this surrounding resource being key to the visual integration of the development. The site also does not form part of any natural heritage or, built heritage designation, with only the temporary construction compound areas falling within The Cullins NSA.

## **Area Local Development Plans**

- A.2.14 The West Highland and Islands Local Development Plan (WHILDP) does not contain land allocations related to the proposed development. It confirms the boundaries of Special Landscape Areas. Highland wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP) Policies 28, 57, 61 and 67 seek to safeguard these regionally important landscapes. The impact of this development on landscape is primarily assessed in the Landscape and Visual Impact section of this report.

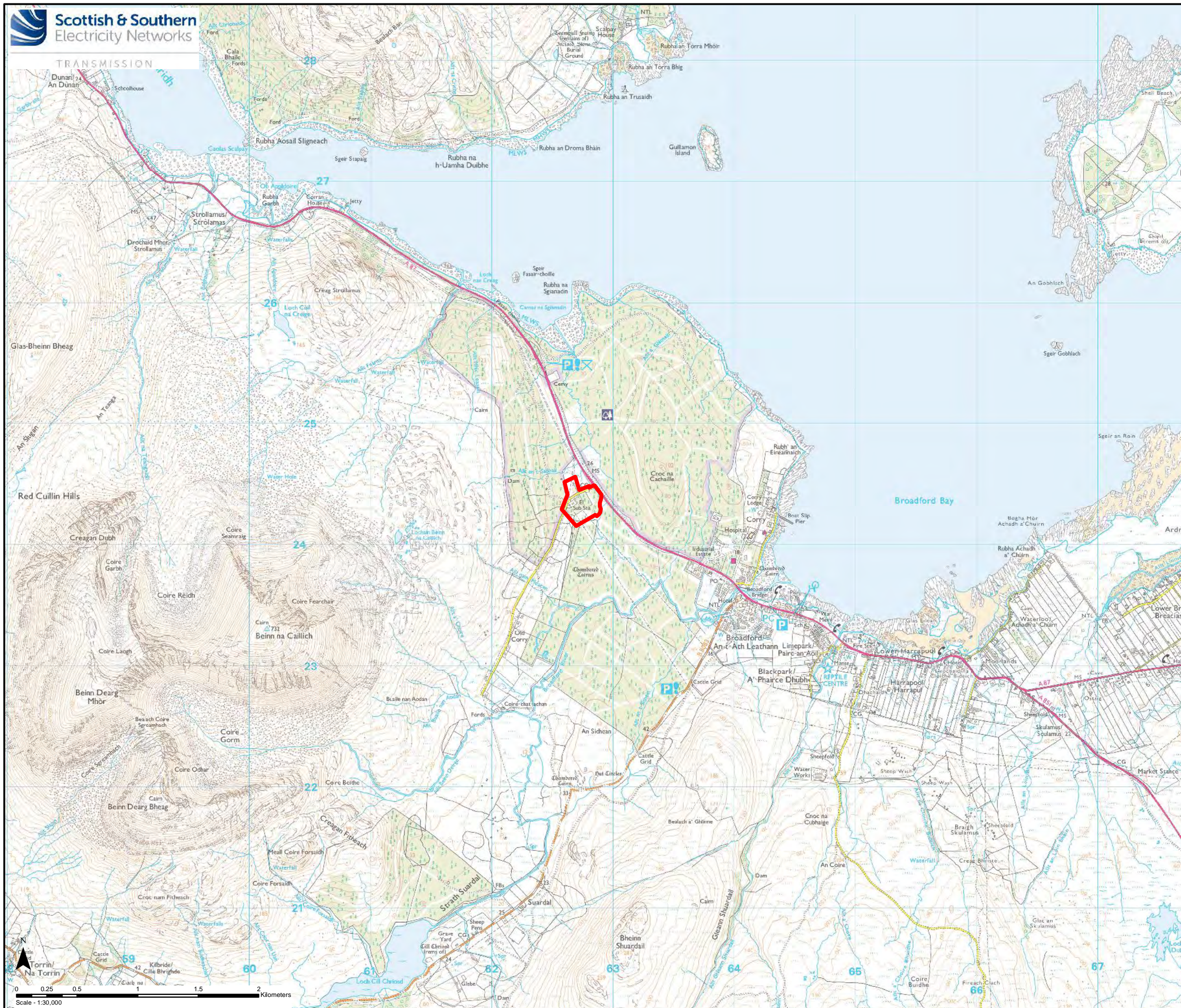
## **Onshore Wind Energy Policy Statement (2022), Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan (2023), and Onshore Wind Sector Deal for Scotland (2023)**

- A.2.15 The Onshore Wind Energy Policy Statement supersedes the previously adopted Onshore Wind Energy Policy Statement which was published in 2017. The document sets out a clear ambition for onshore wind in Scotland and for the first time sets a national target for a minimum level of installed capacity for onshore wind energy being 20 Gigawatts (GW). This is set against a currently installed capacity of 9.4 GW (June 2023). Therefore, a further 10.6 GW of onshore wind requires to be installed to meet the target. It is however acknowledged that targets are not caps. In delivering such a target Scotland would play a significant role in meeting the requirement of 25-30 GW of installed capacity across the UK identified by the

Climate Change Committee.

- A.2.16 Like the previous iteration of the Onshore Wind Energy Policy Statement, the document recognises that balance is required and that no one technology can allow Scotland to reach its net zero targets. The document is clear that in achieving a balance, environmental and economic benefits to Scotland must be maximised. In taking this approach, this echoes Scotland's Third Land Use Strategy. Benefits to rural areas, such as provision of jobs and opportunities to restore and protect natural habitats, are also highlighted in the document.
- A.2.17 The Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan has been published for consultation. Limited weight can however be applied to the document given its draft status. Unsurprisingly, the material on in the document reflects in large part that contained in NPF4 and the Onshore Wind Energy Policy Statement (OWPS) 2022. A fundamental part of the Strategy is expanding the energy generation sector. The draft Strategy specifically addresses energy networks (page 36) and states "significant infrastructure investment in Scotland's transmission system is needed to ameliorate constraints and enable more renewable power to flow to centres of demand." It states that National Grid has identified the requirement for over £21 billion of investment in GB electricity transmission infrastructure to meet 2030 targets and that over half of this investment will involve Scottish transmission owners SPEN and SSEN. Overall, the draft Energy Strategy forms part of the new policy approach alongside the OWPS and NPF4 and confirms the Scottish Government's policy objectives and related targets reaffirming the crucial role that onshore wind and enabling transmission infrastructure will play in response to the climate crisis which is at the heart of all these policies.
- A.2.18 To deliver the ambition for onshore wind, the Onshore Wind Sector Deal for Scotland was introduced in September 2023. The document focuses on necessary high level actions by Government and the Sector to support onshore wind delivery. Jointly, Government and the Sector are committed to working together to ensure a balance is struck between onshore wind and the impacts on land use and the environment. The document looks to expediate decision making and consent implementation to achieve 20 GW of installation by 2030, meaning we should be seeing faster decisions on applications that are already in the system, with more consents being build out.





**Key**

 Proposed Development Area



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Project No: LT91

Project: Broadford Substation Extension  
Additional Information

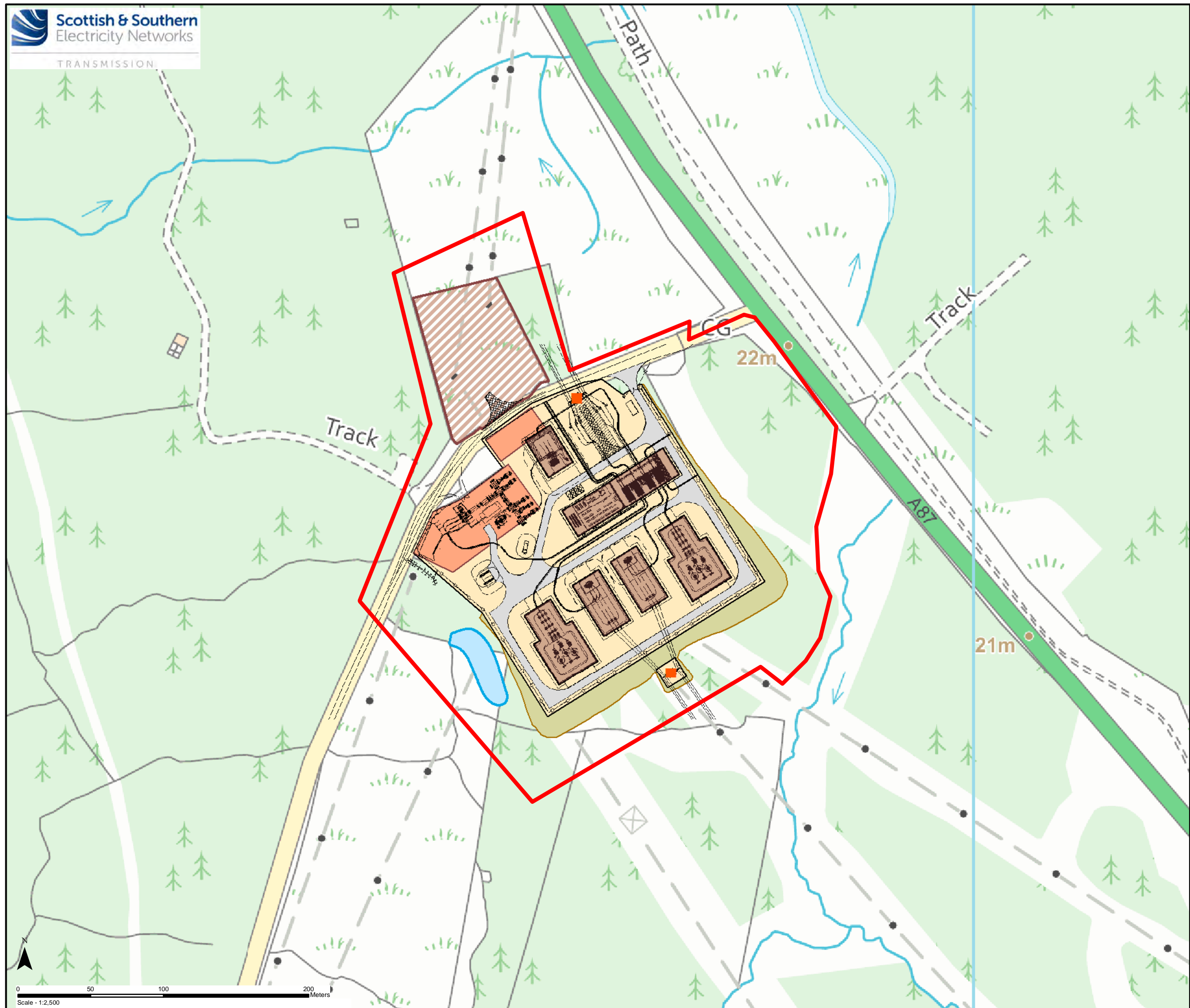
Title: Figure 1 - Location Plan

Drawn by: KM

Date: 10/10/2023

Drawing: 122006-AI-D1-1.0.0





- Key**
- Proposed Development Area
  - Existing Substation Platform
  - Proposed Extension to Substation Platform
  - Proposed Substation Buildings
  - Footprint of Proposed Cut / Fill
  - Temporary Construction Compound
  - Indicative SuDS Pond
  - Proposed Steel Lattice Tower (Separate Application)

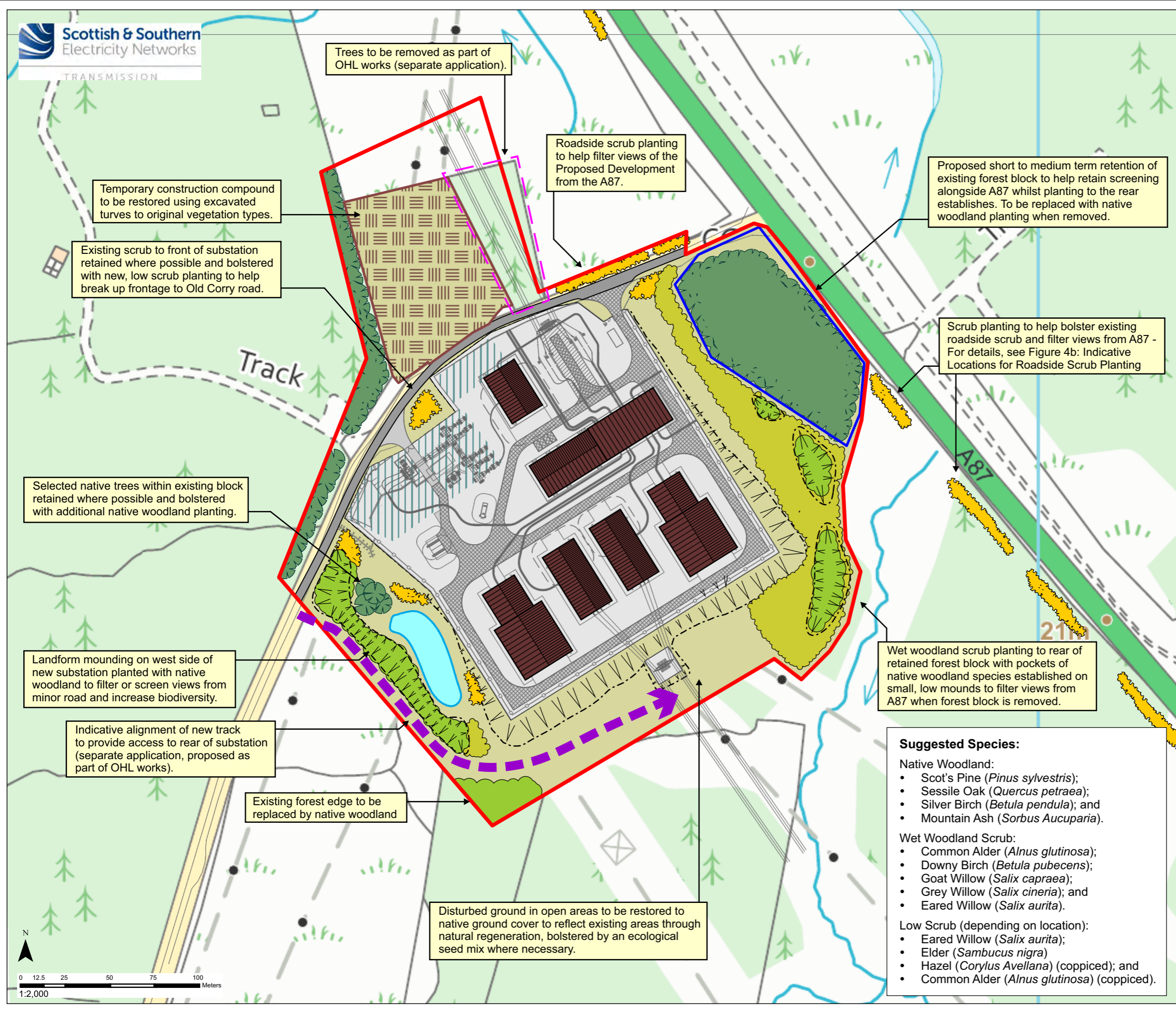
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Project No: LT91  
 Project: Broadford Substation Extension  
 Additional Information

Title: Figure 3 - Revised Development

Drawn by: EM Date: 10/10/2023

Drawing: 122006-AI-D3-1.0.0



Trees to be removed as part of OHL works (separate application).

Roadside scrub planting to help filter views of the Proposed Development from the A87.

Proposed short to medium term retention of existing forest block to help retain screening alongside A87 whilst planting to the rear establishes. To be replaced with native woodland planting when removed.

Temporary construction compound to be restored using excavated turves to original vegetation types.

Existing scrub to front of substation retained where possible and bolstered with new, low scrub planting to help break up frontage to Old Corry road.

Scrub planting to help bolster existing roadside scrub and filter views from A87 - For details, see Figure 4b: Indicative Locations for Roadside Scrub Planting

Selected native trees within existing block retained where possible and bolstered with additional native woodland planting.

Landform mounding on west side of new substation planted with native woodland to filter or screen views from minor road and increase biodiversity.

Wet woodland scrub planting to rear of retained forest block with pockets of native woodland species established on small, low mounds to filter views from A87 when forest block is removed.

Indicative alignment of new track to provide access to rear of substation (separate application, proposed as part of OHL works).

Existing forest edge to be replaced by native woodland

Disturbed ground in open areas to be restored to native ground cover to reflect existing areas through natural regeneration, bolstered by an ecological seed mix where necessary.

- Key**
- Proposed Development Area
  - Proposed Extended Substation Platform
  - Existing Substation Platform
  - Substation Access (existing / proposed)
  - Existing Forest Area Proposed for Short Term Retention, to be Re-planted with Native Woodland Species
  - Forest Area to be Removed as Part of OHL Works (Separate Application)
  - Proposed SuDS Retention Pond
  - Indicative Landform
  - Existing Woodland to be Retained
  - Proposed Low Scrub Planting
  - Proposed Wet Woodland Scrub Planting
  - Proposed Native Woodland Planting
  - Proposed Natural Regeneration or Ecological Seed Mix
  - Proposed Site Compound to be restored to existing vegetation
  - Indicative Alignment of New Access Track (Separate Application)

**Notes:**

All Planting and Reinstatement will be subject to further detailed design and a Long Term Maintenance and Management Plan

All planting areas to be protected by a deer and rabbit proof fence.

For details on proposed roadside scrub planting, see Figure 4b: Indicative Locations for Roadside Scrub Planting

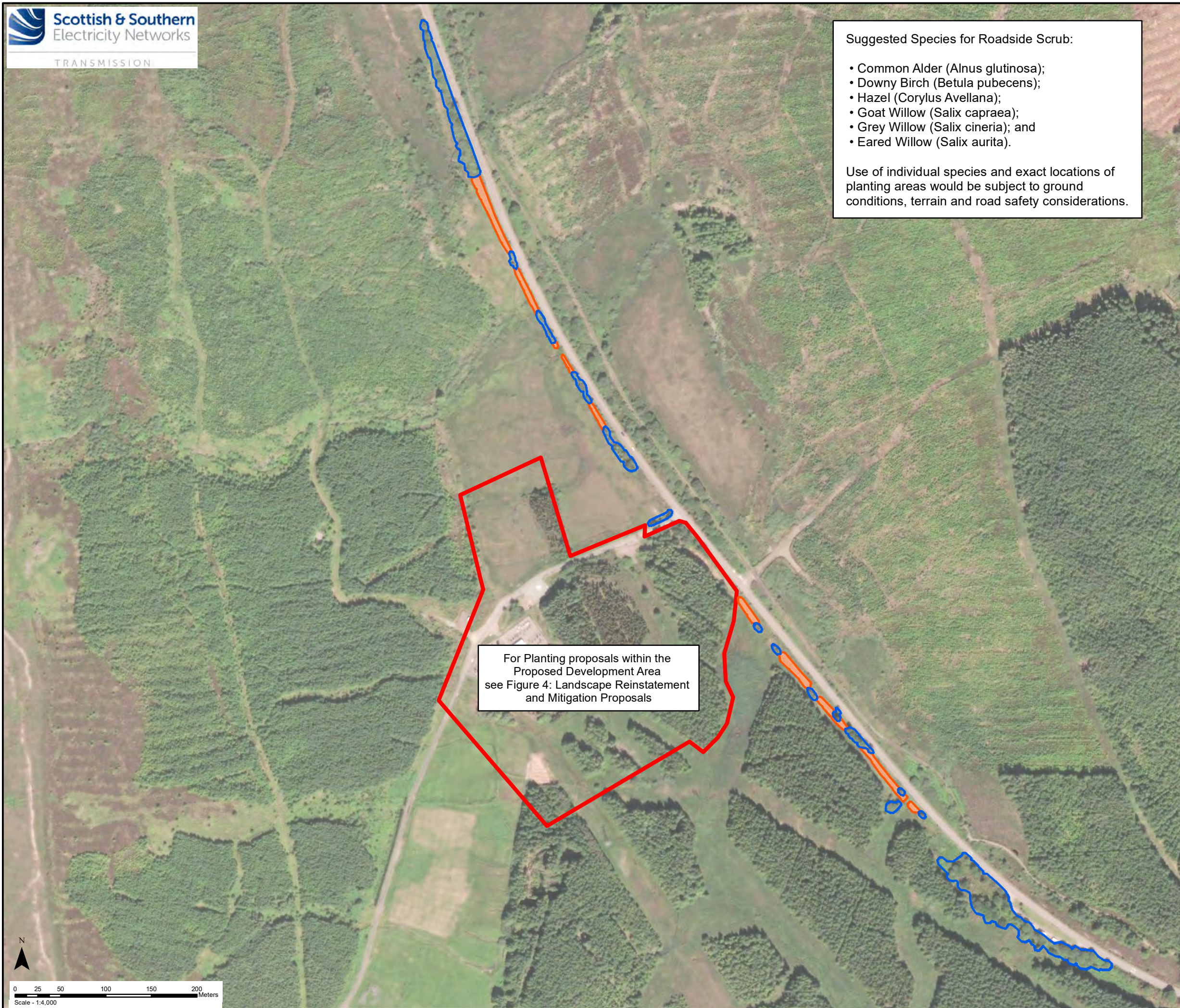
- Suggested Species:**
- Native Woodland:**
- Scot's Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*);
  - Sessile Oak (*Quercus petraea*);
  - Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*); and
  - Mountain Ash (*Sorbus Aucuparia*).
- Wet Woodland Scrub:**
- Common Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*);
  - Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*);
  - Goat Willow (*Salix capraea*);
  - Grey Willow (*Salix cineria*); and
  - Eared Willow (*Salix aurita*).
- Low Scrub (depending on location):**
- Eared Willow (*Salix aurita*);
  - Elder (*Sambucus nigra*)
  - Hazel (*Corylus Avellana*) (coppiced); and
  - Common Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) (coppiced).

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Project No: LT91  
Project: Broadford Substation Extension EIA Report

Title: Figure 4a - Landscape Reinstatement and Mitigation Proposals

Drawn by: EM 10/10/2023  
Drawing: 122006-AI-D4a-1.0.0






**Suggested Species for Roadside Scrub:**

- Common Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*);
- Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*);
- Hazel (*Corylus Avellana*);
- Goat Willow (*Salix capraea*);
- Grey Willow (*Salix cineria*); and
- Eared Willow (*Salix aurita*).

Use of individual species and exact locations of planting areas would be subject to ground conditions, terrain and road safety considerations.

For Planting proposals within the Proposed Development Area see Figure 4: Landscape Reinstatement and Mitigation Proposals

- Key**
-  Proposed Development Area
  -  Existing Roadside Scrub
  -  Proposed Roadside Scrub

For Planting proposals within the Proposed Development Area see Figure 4: Landscape Reinstatement and Mitigation Proposals

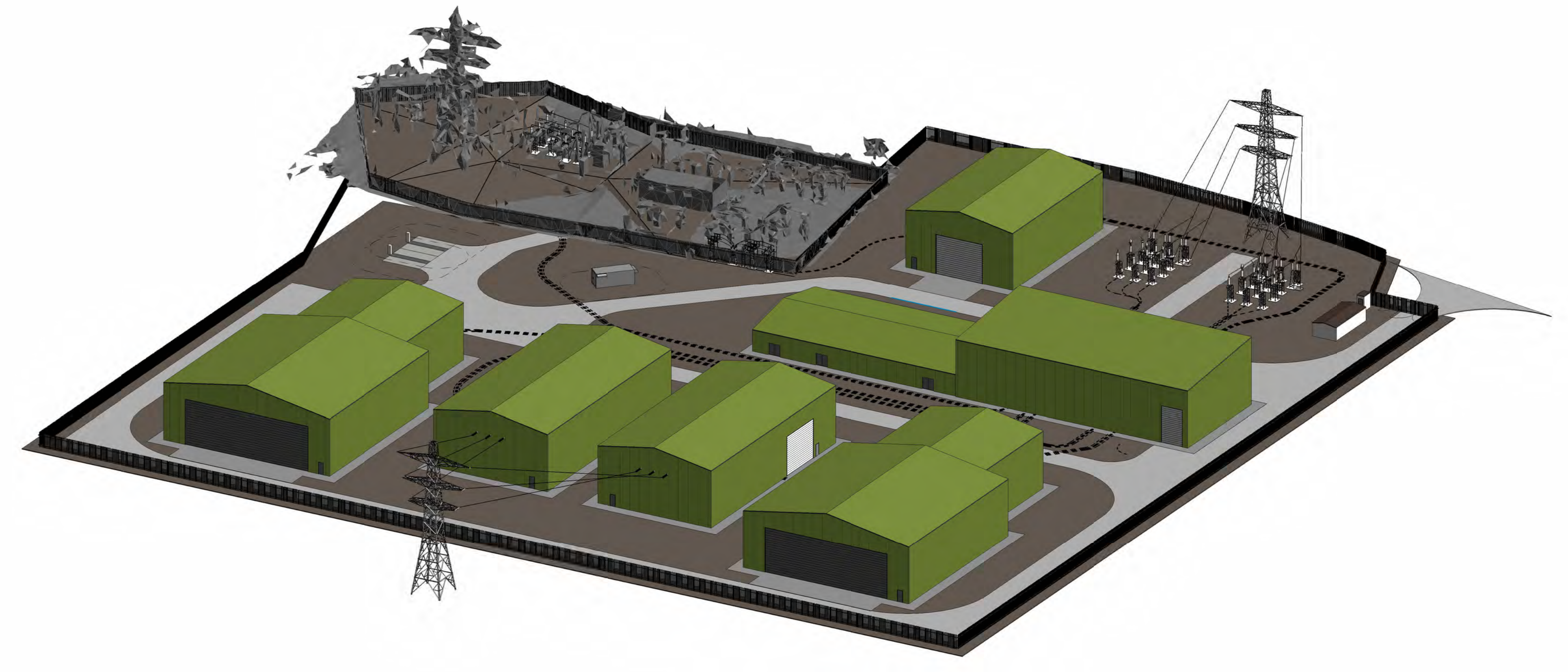
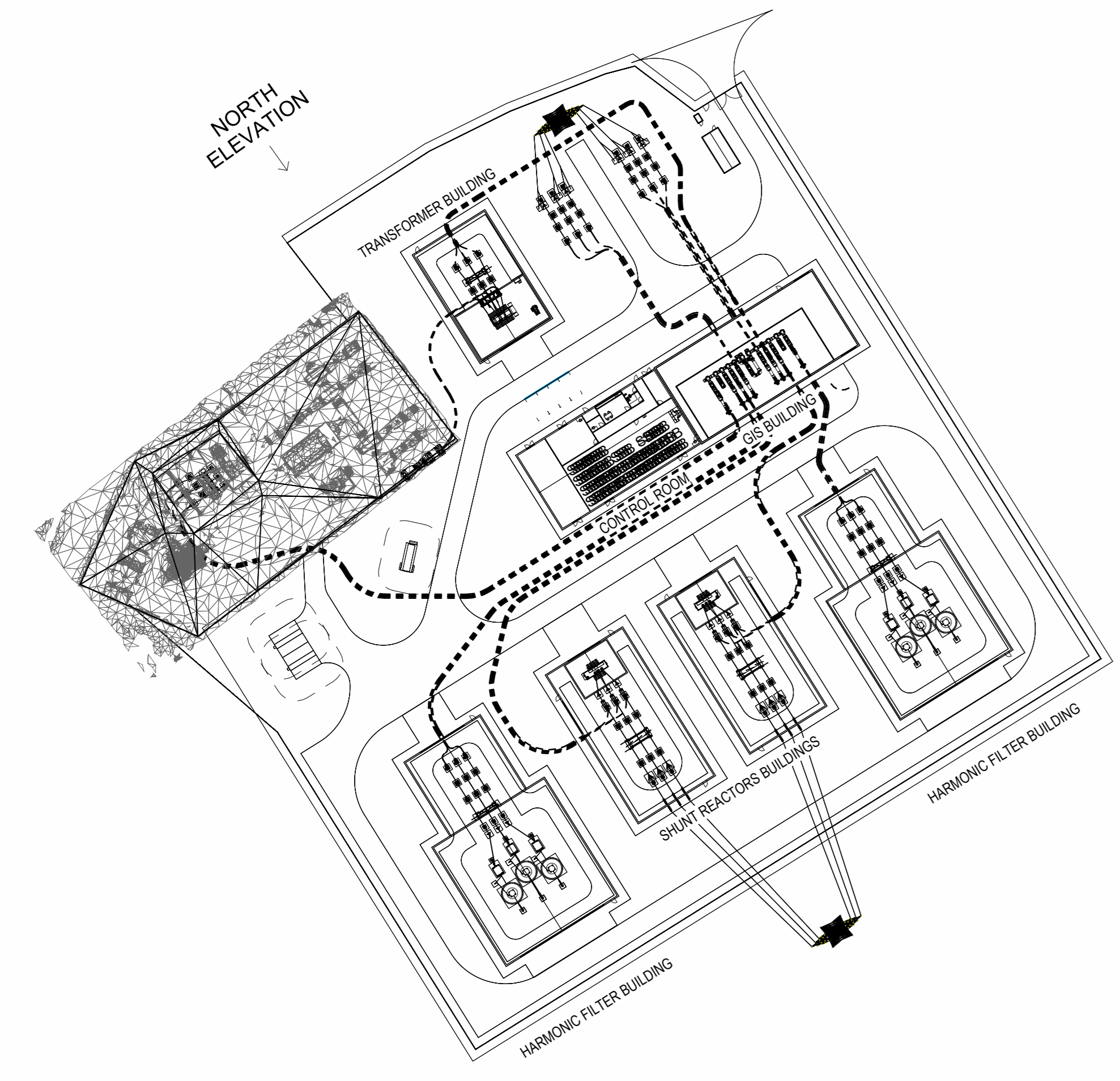
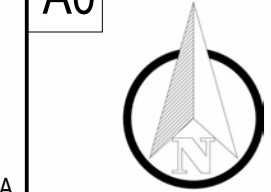
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Project No: LT91  
 Project: Broadford Substation Extension  
 Additional Information

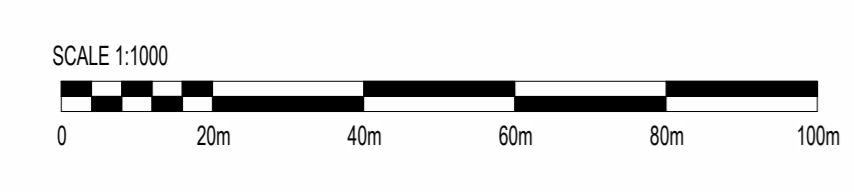
Title: Figure 4b - Indicative Locations for Roadside Scrub Planting

Drawn by: EM Date: 10/10/2023

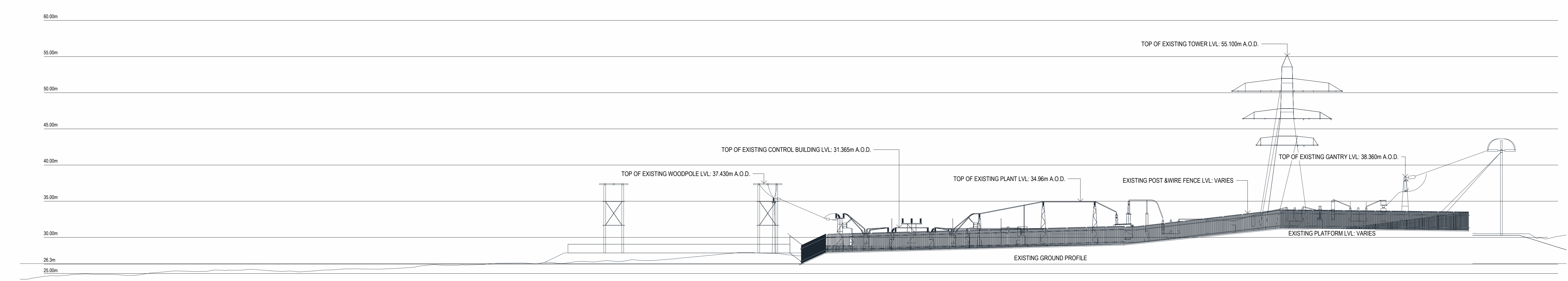
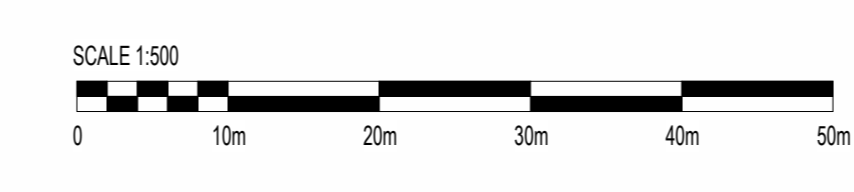
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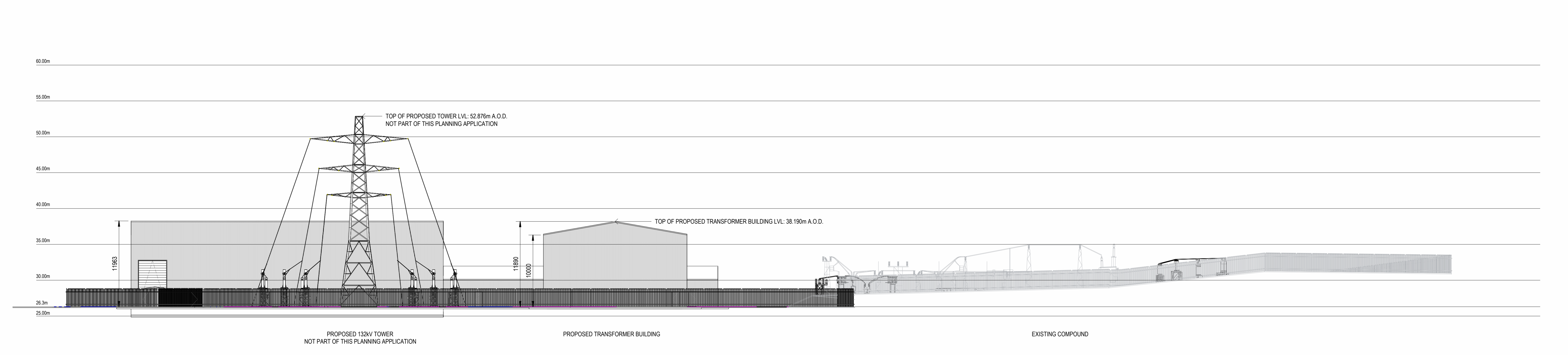
1 GA (NORTH)  
1:1000



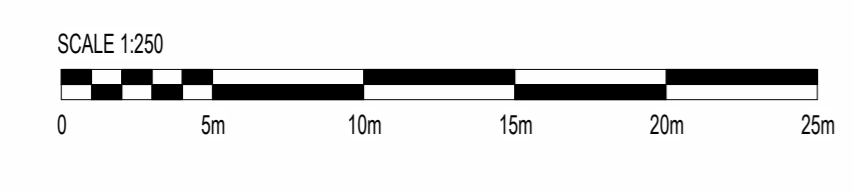
4 3D VIEW (NORTH)



3 NORTH ELEVATION - EXISTING  
1:250



2 NORTH ELEVATION - PROPOSED  
1:250



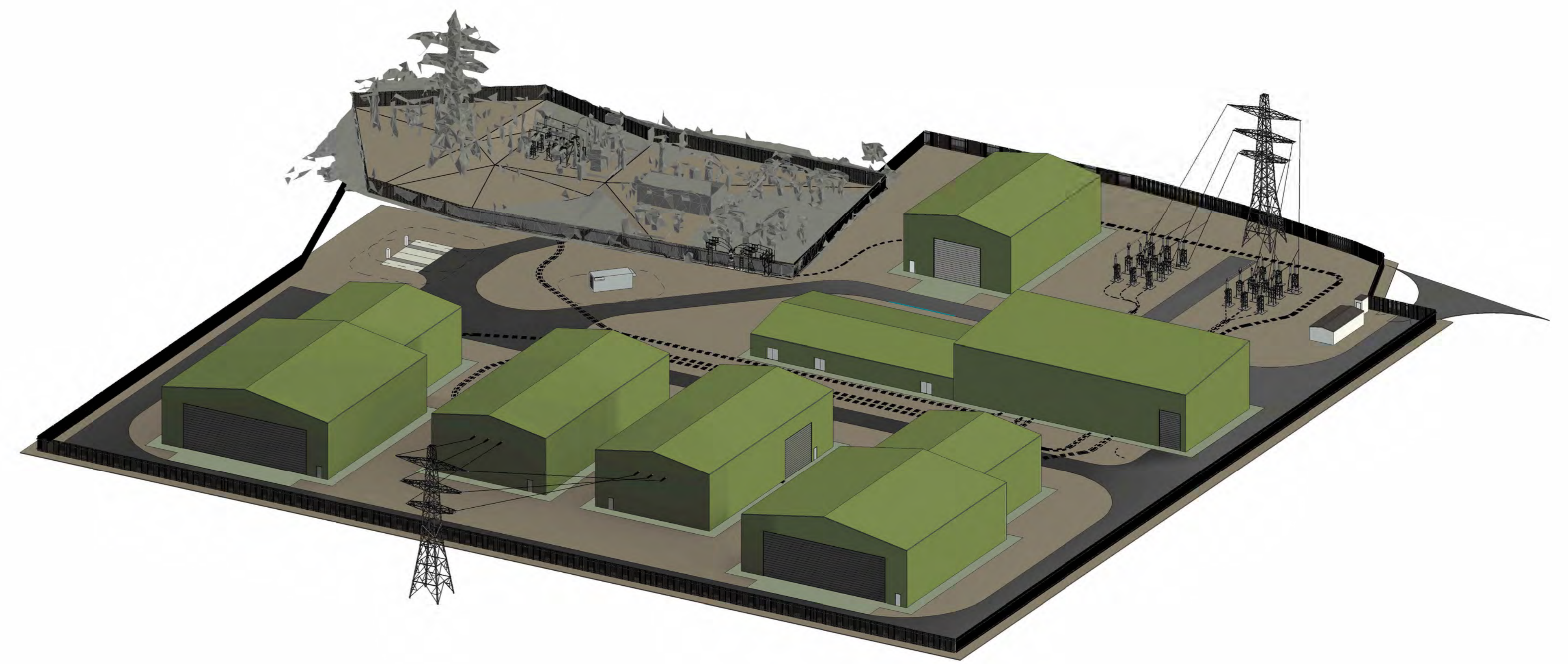
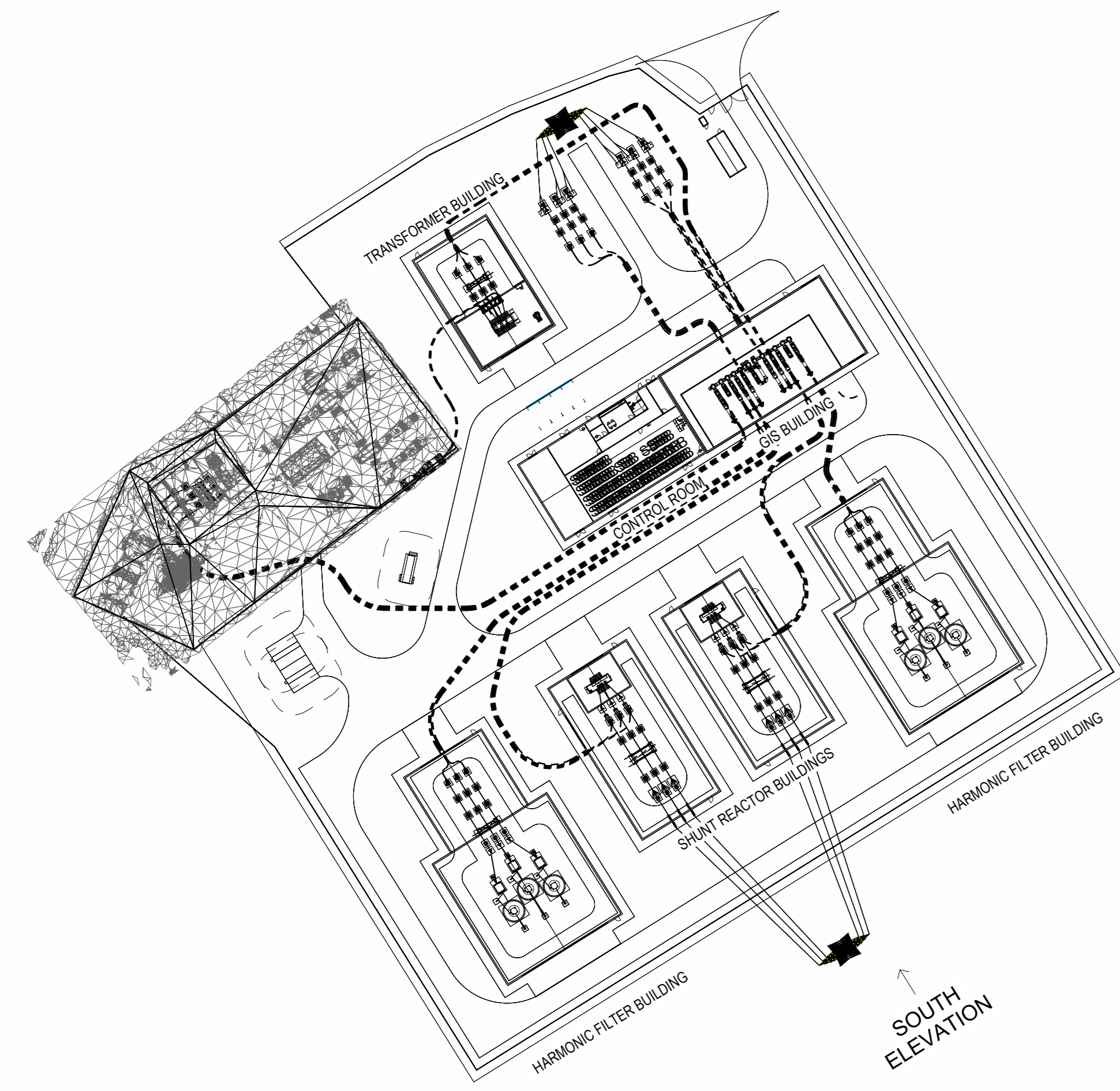
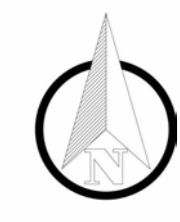
- NOTES:-**
1. ALL DIMENSIONS GIVEN IN MILLIMETRES (MM) U/A.O.
  2. ALL EQUIPMENT SHOWN TO BE FINALISED AND CONFIRMED BY ENGINEERING DESIGN TEAM AND UNTIL DONE SO ALL ASPECTS OF THE SHOWN DESIGN ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE.
  3. ALL PROPOSED STRUCTURES SHOWN IS TYPICAL ARRANGEMENT AND NOT ACCURATE TO REQUIREMENTS.
  4. PROPOSED PLATFORM LEVEL TO BE CONFIRMED UPON FINAL RESULTS OF GROUND INVESTIGATION.
  5. EXISTING AND PROPOSED TREE LINES NOT SHOWN FOR CLARITY.

**LEGEND:**

	EXISTING EQUIPMENT
	PROPOSED EQUIPMENT

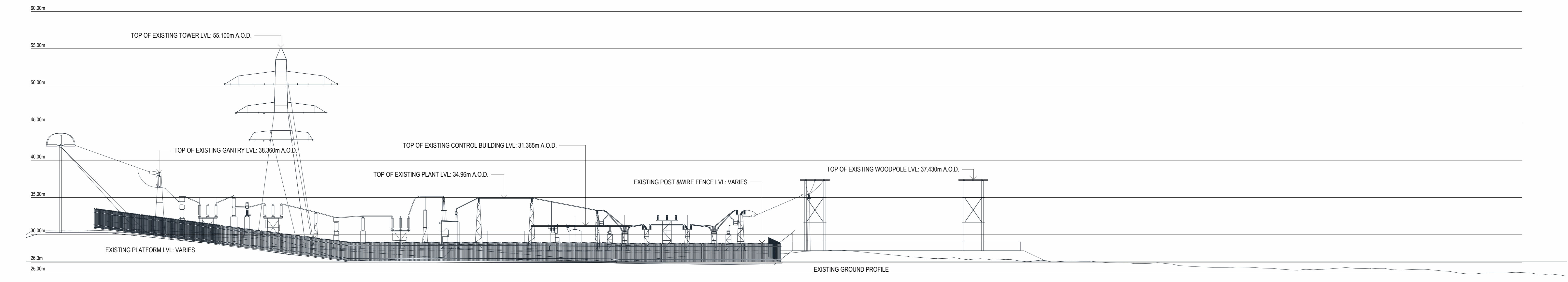
GA	Drawn: JB, Checked: GK, Approved: GA	18/09/23
Rev	Description	Date
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Project Name: SKYE 132kV REINFORCEMENT BROADFORD SUBSTATION Location: BROADFORD		
Drawing Title: PROPOSED NORTH ELEVATION		
Drawing Status: FOR PLANNING	Drawn: JB	
Scale: As indicated	Checked: GK	
Date: 18/09/2023	Approved: GA	
Drawing Sheet Number: BROAT-SSEN-OSL-ZZ-D-E-1002		

PRELIMINARY DESIGN ONLY  
NOT TO BE USED FOR CONSTRUCTION

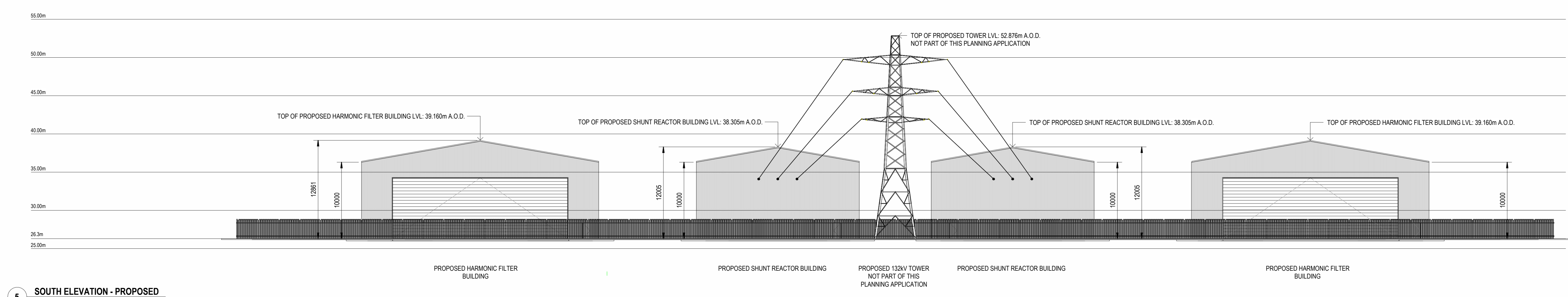


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1:1000  
SCALE 1:1000  
0 20m 40m 60m 80m 100m

4 3D VIEW (SOUTH)  
SCALE 1:500  
0 10m 20m 30m 40m 50m



2 SOUTH ELEVATION - EXISTING  
1:250



5 SOUTH ELEVATION - PROPOSED  
1:250

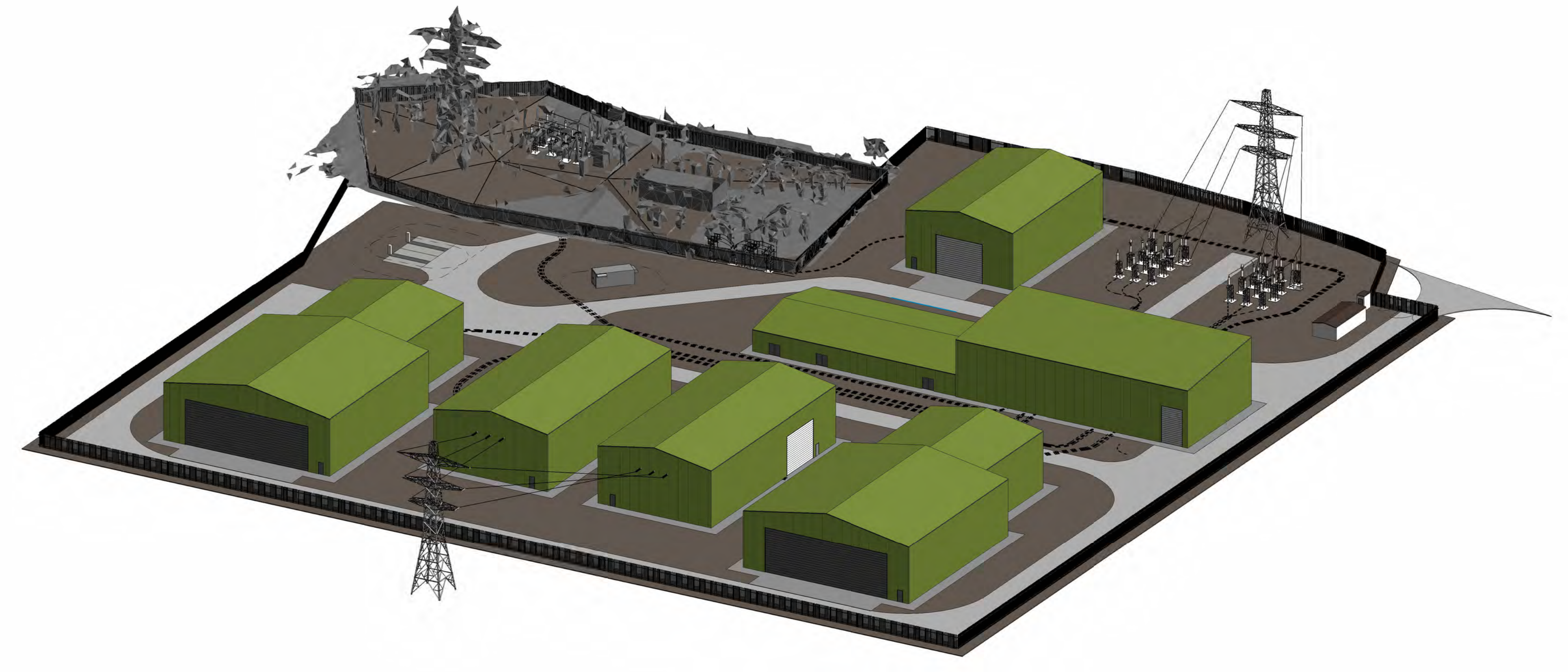
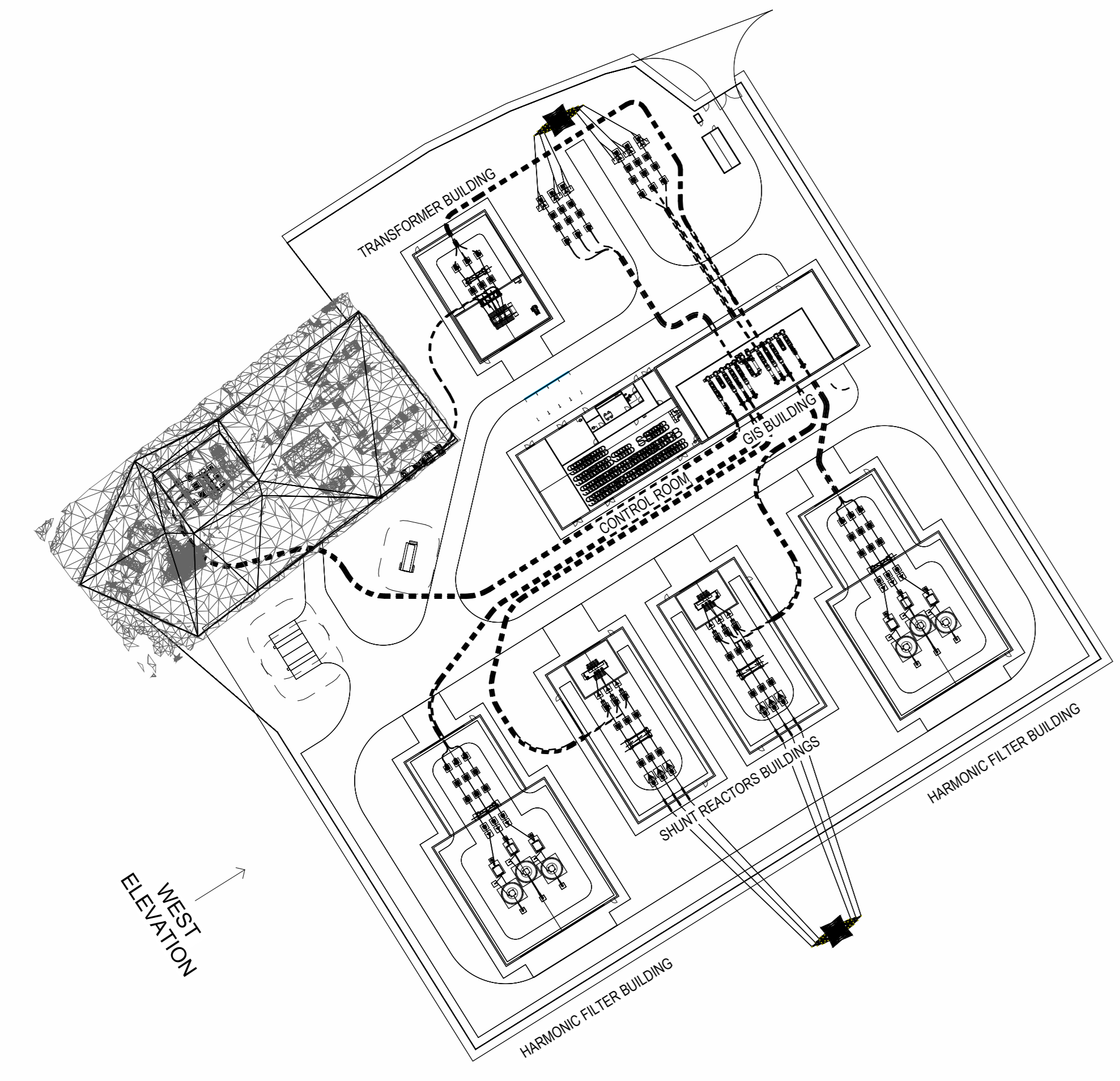
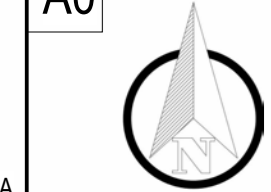
SCALE 1:250  
0 5m 10m 15m 20m 25m

- NOTES:-
1. ALL DIMENSIONS GIVEN IN MILLIMETRES (MM) U.N.C.
  2. ALL EQUIPMENT SHOWN TO BE FINALISED AND CONFIRMED BY ENGINEERING DESIGN TEAM AND UNTIL DONE SO ALL ASPECTS OF THE SHOWN DESIGN ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE.
  3. ALL PROPOSED STRUCTURES SHOWN IS TYPICAL ARRANGEMENT AND NOT ACCURATE TO REQUIREMENTS.
  4. PROPOSED PLATFORM LEVEL TO BE CONFIRMED UPON FINAL RESULTS OF GROUND INVESTIGATION.
  5. EXISTING AND PROPOSED TREE LINES NOT SHOWN FOR CLARITY.

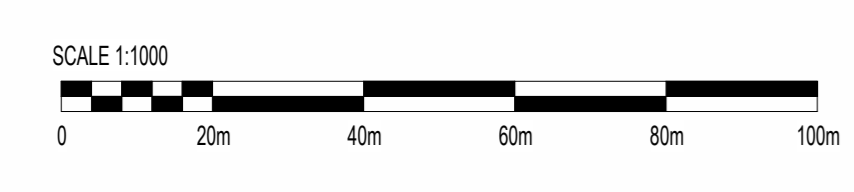
LEGEND:  
 EXISTING EQUIPMENT  
 PROPOSED EQUIPMENT

GA	Drawn: JB, Checked: GK, Approved: GA	18/09/23
Rev	Description	Date
SSE Investment House, 200 Dunkeld Road Perth, PH1 3AQ, UK www.sse.com		
Project Name: SKYE 132kV REINFORCEMENT BROADFORD SUBSTATION Location: BROADFORD		
Drawing Title: PROPOSED SOUTH ELEVATIONS		
Drawing Status:	FOR PLANNING	Drawn: JB
Scale:	As indicated	Checked: GK
Date:	18/09/2023	Approved: GA
Drawing Sheet Number:	BROAT-SSEN-OSL-ZZ-D-E-1003	

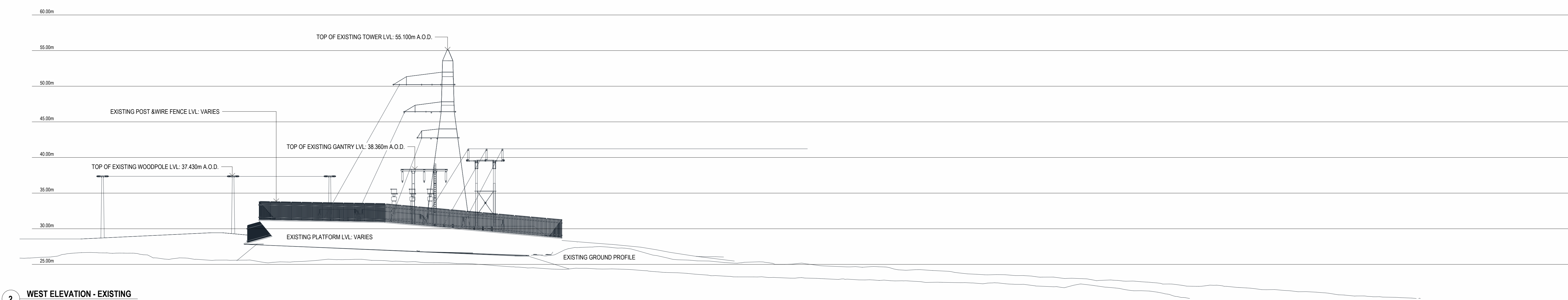
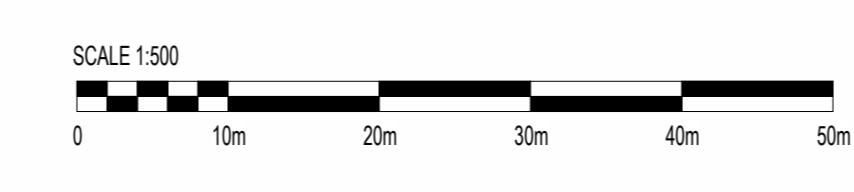
PRELIMINARY DESIGN ONLY  
 NOT TO BE USED FOR CONSTRUCTION



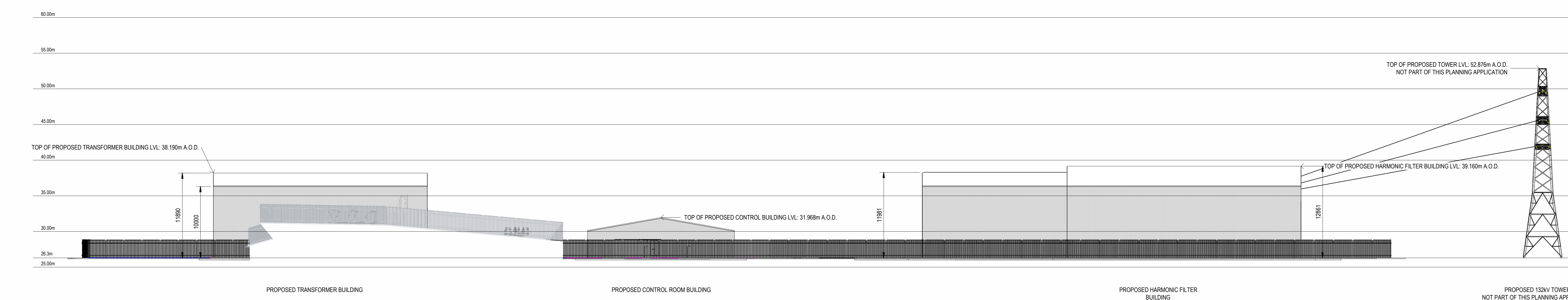
1 GA (WEST)  
1:1000



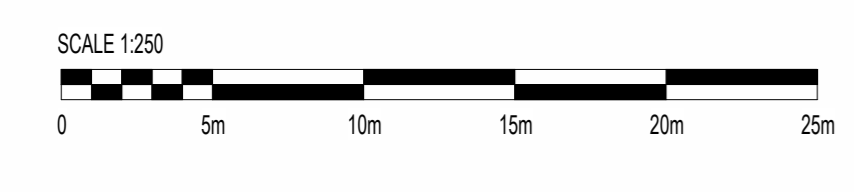
4 3D VIEW (WEST)



2 WEST ELEVATION - EXISTING  
1:250



3 WEST ELEVATION - PROPOSED  
1:250



- NOTES:-
1. ALL DIMENSIONS GIVEN IN MILLIMETRES (MM) U/A.O.D.
  2. ALL EQUIPMENT SHOWN TO BE FINALISED AND CONFIRMED BY ENGINEERING DESIGN TEAM AND UNTIL DONE SO ALL ASPECTS OF THE SHOWN DESIGN ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE.
  3. ALL PROPOSED STRUCTURES SHOWN IS TYPICAL ARRANGEMENT AND NOT ACCURATE TO REQUIREMENTS.
  4. PROPOSED PLATFORM LEVEL TO BE CONFIRMED UPON FINAL RESULTS OF GROUND INVESTIGATION.
  5. EXISTING AND PROPOSED TREE LINES NOT SHOWN FOR CLARITY.

LEGEND:

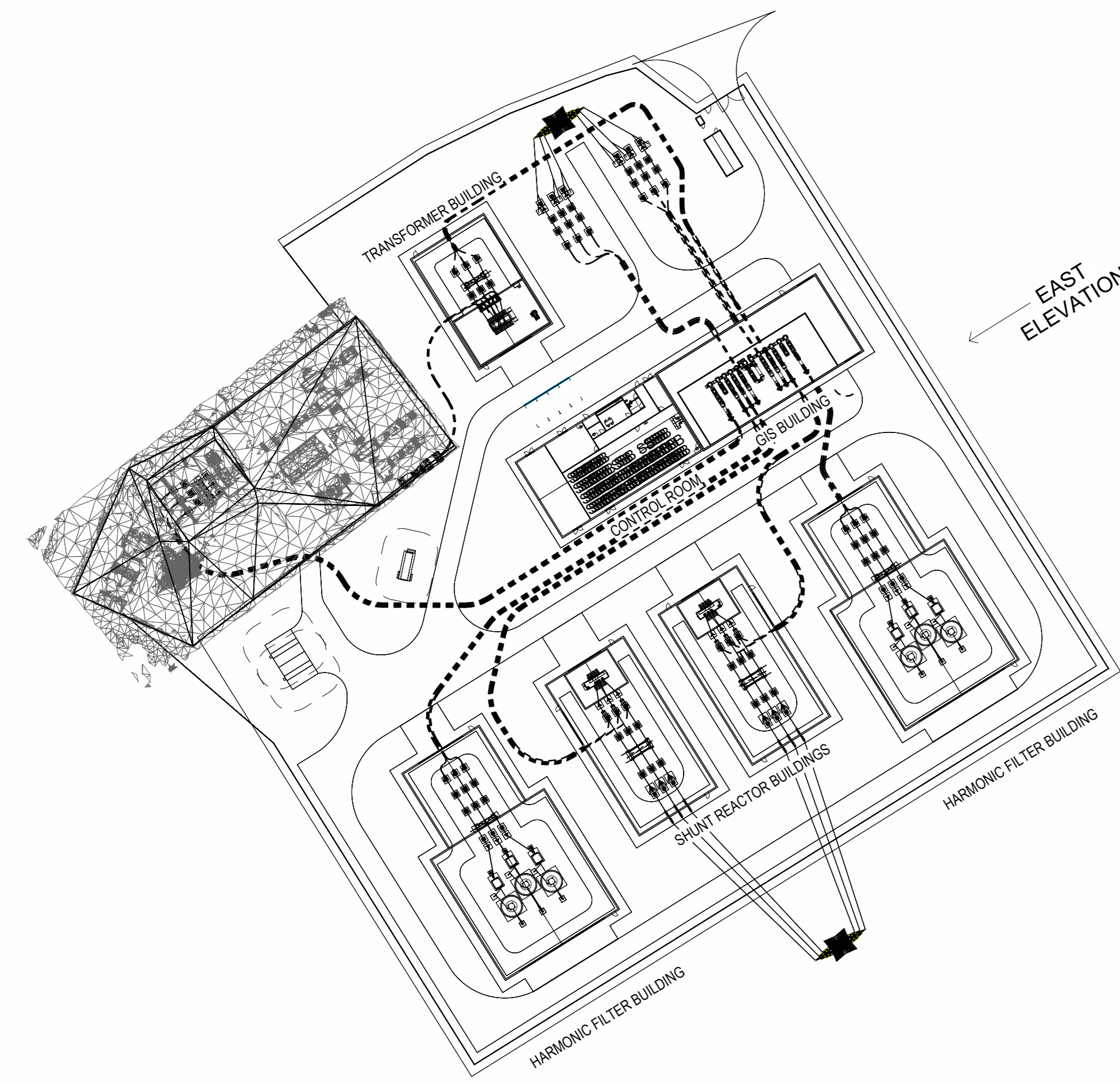
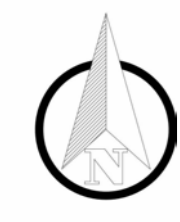
— EXISTING EQUIPMENT

— PROPOSED EQUIPMENT

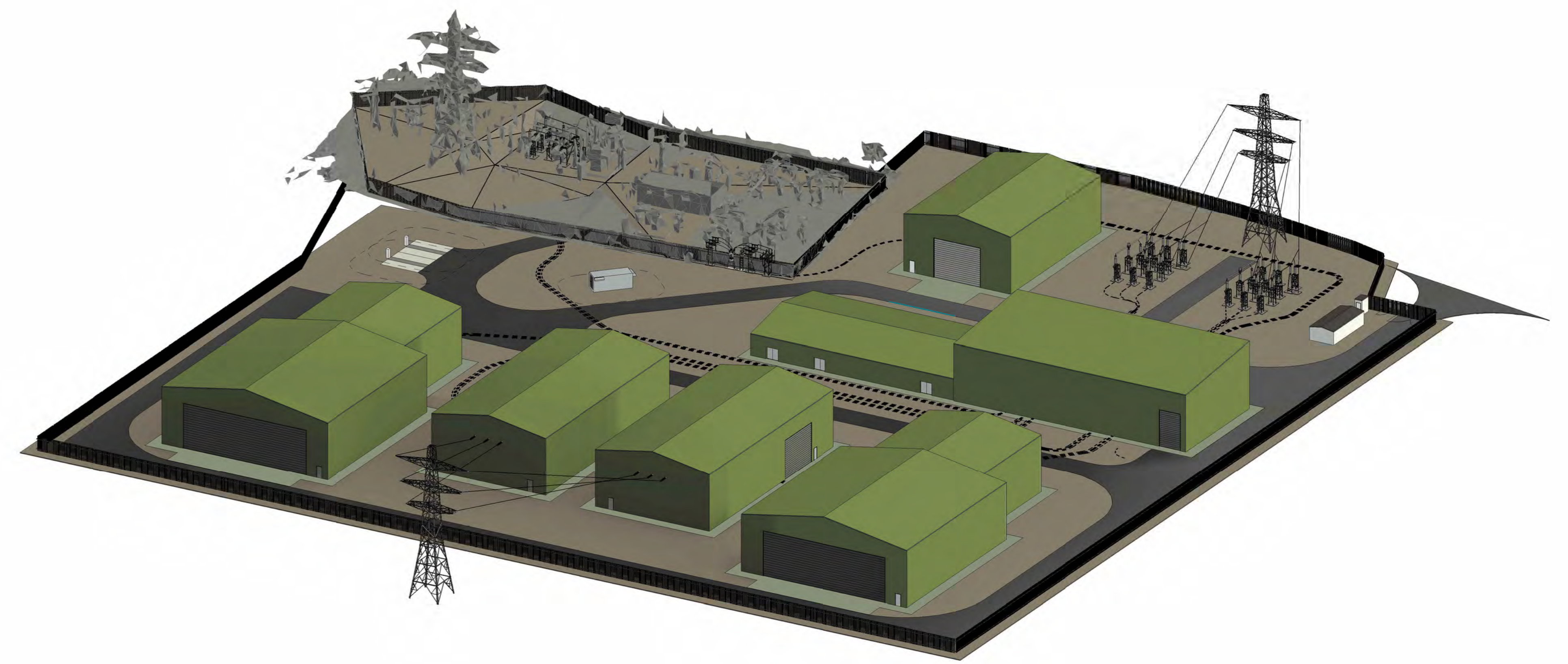
GA	Drawn: JB	Checked: GK	Approved: GA	18/09/23
Rev	Description			Date
SSE Investment House, 200 Dunfield Road Perth, PH1 3AQ, UK www.sse.com				
Project Name: SKYE 132kV REINFORCEMENT BROADFORD SUBSTATION				
Location: BROADFORD				
Drawing Title: PROPOSED WEST ELEVATION				
Drawing Status: FOR PLANNING		Drawn: JB		
Scale: As indicated		Checked: GK		
Date: 18/09/2023		Approved: GA		
Drawing Sheet Number: BROAT-SSEN-OSL-ZZ-D-E-1004				

PRELIMINARY DESIGN ONLY  
NOT TO BE USED FOR CONSTRUCTION

A0

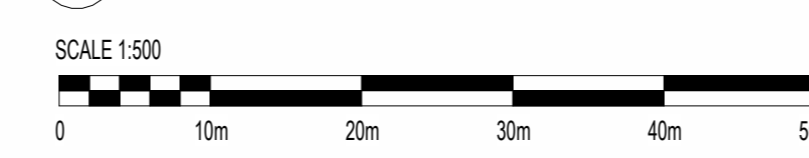
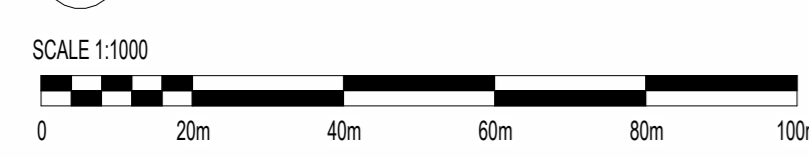


EAST ELEVATION



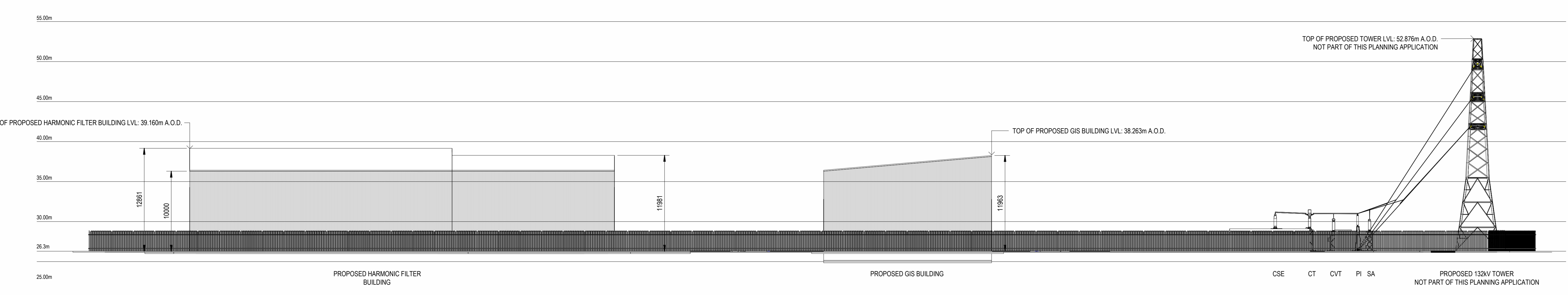
4 3D VIEW (EAST)

1 GA (EAST)



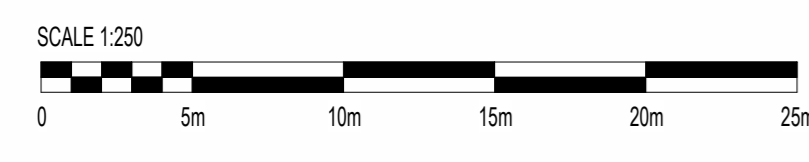
3 EAST ELEVATION - EXISTING

1:250



2 EAST ELEVATION - PROPOSED

1:250



- NOTES:-
1. ALL DIMENSIONS GIVEN IN MILLIMETRES (MM) U.N.C.
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  3. ALL PROPOSED STRUCTURES SHOWN IS TYPICAL ARRANGEMENT AND NOT ACCURATE TO REQUIREMENTS.
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  5. EXISTING AND PROPOSED TREE LINES NOT SHOWN FOR CLARITY.

LEGEND:

— EXISTING EQUIPMENT

— PROPOSED EQUIPMENT

GA	Drawn: JB, Checked: GK, Approved: GA	18/09/23
Rev	Description	Date
SSE Investment House, 200 Dundas Road Perth, PH1 3AQ, UK <a href="http://www.sse.com">www.sse.com</a>		
Project Name: SKYE 132kV REINFORCEMENT BROADFORD SUBSTATION Location: BROADFORD		
Drawing Title: PROPOSED EAST ELEVATION		
Drawing Status:	FOR PLANNING	Drawn: JB
Scale:	As indicated	Checked: GK
Date:	18/09/2023	Approved: GA
Drawing Sheet Number: BROAT-SSEN-OSL-ZZ-D-E-1005		

PRELIMINARY DESIGN ONLY  
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