Cato, Auchtertool

Landscape and Visual Appraisal

April 2026

brindley ASSOCIATES

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For ILI Cato Ltd

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1.0 Introduction and Overview

1.1 Introduction

Brindley Associates Ltd (Brindley), Landscape Architects and Environmental Planners, have been appointed by Logan PM Ltd (hereafter referred to as The Applicant) to prepare a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) for a proposed data centre development. The site, which covers approximately 68.6 hectares (ha) lies on the north-western outskirts of Auchtertool, Fife (see Figure 01). A small exclusion area of approximately 0.25ha lies within the site boundary, straddling the Dronachy Burn to the northwest of Camilla Road (see Figures 01-07).

The Proposed Development site lies entirely within the Fife Council area and is therefore subject to policies within the FIFEplan, the Local Development Plan (LDP) which was adopted in 2017 (Fife Council, 2017).

1.2 The Proposed Development

This appraisal is based upon the Proposed Development as described below, and as shown on the Landscape Development Framework (see Figure 07) prepared by Brindley. The development layout shown has been prepared for a Planning Permission in Principle application; it has been assumed that any further design revisions would be minor and key features pertinent to this appraisal would remain. Key information pertaining to the appraisal of landscape and visual effects includes the location, scale and massing of the proposed structures, and the associated landscape design (see Figure 07).

This appraisal is based on promotion of a data centre development comprising:

- 6 data centre units of variable height up to 35m, but with an identical footprint:
    - The exact building treatments have not been finalised at present, although it is assumed that they will ultimately be clad in matt materials;
- 1 auxiliary building to the south of the Dronachy Burn, with associated access road linking to the B925. This will be a single-storey data centre building, including electrical / cooling plant and office space, comparable to the 6 data centre units above, but up to 12m in height;
- Substation area comprising:
    - 7 transformers; and
    - 2 buildings, up to around 15m in height;
- Ancillary area comprising 2 buildings (potential district heating), up to 12m in height;
- Entrance area comprising 1 building (security lodge) up to 12m in height;
- Parking facilities and internal access roads;
- Ancillary equipment including water and fuel storage tanks, bus stops, cycle shelters, etc;
- Landscaping surrounding the complex, including:
    - 2 SuDS ponds with planting, one to east of the site, and the other northeast of the auxiliary building;
    - A large area of wetland along the western perimeter of the site, encompassing the Dronachy Burn;
    - New areas of tree planting throughout the site (see Section 6.2 for details).

1.3 Purpose of the Assessment

This LVA describes the key components, features and characteristics that contribute to the visual amenity and the quality and perception of the landscape within a 2km study area from the proposed site boundary (see Figure 01). It explores the site's relationship with the surrounding landscape and contains a brief review of relevant planning policy and guidance (see Appendix A).

Furthermore, this report considers the potential implications of the Proposed Development in terms of direct and indirect effects on key landscape designations and routes (see Figure 03) and NatureScot Landscape Character Types (see Figure 04). This LVA also sets out potential landscape mitigation measures to:

- Reduce any potentially adverse effects that may arise as a result of the Proposed Development; and
- Enhance the local landscape, where possible, to help integrate the Proposed Development within its setting and immediate environs.

The purpose of this appraisal is to:

- Describe the key components, features and characteristics that contribute to the landscape character, visual amenity, quality, and perception of the landscape within a 2km radius from the proposed site boundary;
- Identify and evaluate the potential effects of the Proposed Development and associated infrastructure on landscape character, key landscape features and views during the operation of the development;
- Consider the potential implications of the Proposed Development in terms of adverse or beneficial effects on key landscape characteristics and resources, together with the potential effects upon a representative range of visual receptors in the vicinity of the site; and
- Examine how remaining residual landscape or visual effects would influence perception of local character and its implications for wider landscape character and views within the 2km study area.

This appraisal has been prepared with reference to the Third Edition of the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA3) (Landscape Institute in association with the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013) and takes the form of a desk-top study, supported by a site visit undertaken by the Brindley assessment team. The site visit was used to confirm and develop the findings of the report, which has been reviewed by Chartered Landscape Architects employed by Brindley.

There is no requirement for a formal Environmental Statement (ES) to support the Client's application for the approval of matters specified by condition.

The following extract, taken from the GLVIA Statement of Clarification 4 (January 2013), gives guidance on the terminology to be used in non-ES Landscape and Visual Appraisals, such as this:

"In carrying out appraisals the same principles and process as LVIA may be applied but, in doing so, it is not required to establish whether the effects arising are or are not significant given that the exercise is not being undertaken for EIA purposes. The reason is that should a landscape professional apply LVIA principles and processes carrying out an appraisal and then go on to determine that certain effects would likely be significant, given the term 'significant' is enshrined in EIA regulations, such a judgement could trigger the requirement for a formal EIA. The emphasis on likely 'significant effects' in formal LVIA stresses the need for an approach that is proportional to the scale of the project that is being assessed and the nature of its likely effects. The same principle – focussing on a proportional approach – also applies to appraisals of landscape and visual impacts outside the formal requirements of EIA."

In line with current guidance contained in the GLVIA3, singular terms such as 'significant' and 'not significant' have not been used in this appraisal. Brindley considers it useful however to set out the level of residual effect predicted. In this appraisal, landscape effects are assessed to be either 'potentially adverse' or 'potentially beneficial'. The level of effect is assessed through a combination of two considerations – the sensitivity of the landscape / townscape element or view and the magnitude of effect that will result from the Proposed Development. This evaluation is carried out for each landscape receptor appraised in detail in the report. For visual effects, a comparison is made between the nature of existing views and potential changes to those views following the implementation of the Proposed Development, including any mitigating measures outlined within this appraisal.

Visual representations provided as part of this appraisal have been undertaken with reference to the Technical Guidance Note 06/19: Visual representation of development proposals, published by the Landscape Institute (September 2019). A brief description of the guidance implemented as part of this appraisal is outlined in Appendix A.

1.4 Objectives of the Assessment

The key objectives of the assessment are to:

- Establish existing baseline conditions by:
  - Identifying and evaluating the existing landscape within the Proposed Development site and the wider landscape within the study area; and
  - Identifying existing views, visual relationships, and key receptors (based on an analysis of theoretical visibility).
- Identify potential effects by:
  - Identifying the main sources of landscape and visual effects associated with the Proposed Development; and
  - Determining the likely effects on landscape and visual resources and evaluating their potential significance.
- Identify landscape mitigation measures by:
  - Identifying suitable and locally appropriate landscape mitigation measures to avoid or reduce potentially adverse effects. These measures can include mitigation by design (embedded mitigation), and additional mitigation or enhancement measures, such as planting for ecological mitigation and enhancement, or screening of views.
- Determine residual effects and their significance by:
  - Detailing the potential landscape and visual effects through assessment of baseline sensitivities and the predicted magnitude of change; and
  - Determining the significance of residual effects on the landscape and upon visual amenity following implementation of the proposed landscape measures.

1.5 Structure of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

This LVA has been structured as follows:

- Section 2.0 Baseline Conditions;
- Section 3.0 Visibility Analysis;
- Section 4.0 Identification of Receptors for Assessment;
- Section 5.0 Potential Effects;
- Section 6.0 Proposed Mitigation and Enhancement Measures;
- Section 7.0 Assessment of Landscape Effects;
- Section 8.0 Assessment of Visual Effects;
- Section 9.0 Summary and Conclusions; and
- Section 10.0 References.

The contents of this assessment are supported by a number of figures. These are referenced throughout the text and included within the document 'Cato, Auchtertool Landscape and Visual Appraisal – Graphics (February 2026), which accompanies this appraisal.

1.6 Competence

This report has been prepared by Landscape Architects employed by Brindley Associates Ltd (Brindley). It has been reviewed by Suzanne Hyde CMLI, who has over 15 years' experience as a Landscape Architect.

1.7 Desk Study

An appraisal of the baseline landscape and visual characteristics of the site, relevant planning policy relating to the Proposed Development site and of the characteristics of the study area was undertaken via an initial desk study.

1.8 Site Visit

The Brindley assessment team undertook a site visit in May 2025 to provide preliminary information to inform the Client's bid to promote the site as suitable for a data centre development, taking cognisance of the surrounding baseline landscape conditions and views towards and from within the site. During the site visit, Landscape Institute (LI) compliant photography was undertaken from the assessed viewpoint locations.

1.9 Future Baseline

If the Applicant's proposal for allocation of the Proposed Development site for a data centre development were unsuccessful, the site would likely continue to be arable and improved pastoral farmland.

2.0 Baseline Conditions

2.1 Overview

This section provides an overview of the existing baseline conditions, key features and characteristics within the site and wider surrounding landscape of the study area. Informed by desk and field studies, it then identifies landscape and visual receptors that are considered further as part of the LVA.

2.2 The Proposed Development Site

The Proposed Development site lies on the north-western outskirts of Auchtertool, within the Fife Council boundary, which also encompasses the entire 2km study area. The proposal is for 6 data centre units, an auxiliary data centre building, substation area, ancillary structures, parking, access and internal circulation roads, mitigation planting, a SuDS pond and wetland features. The majority of the built elements of the Proposed Development will be situated within the northern portion of the site boundary, with the 6 data centre units being orientated longitudinally parallel to the northern site boundary. The auxiliary building and its associated parking and access road will be located to the south of the Dronachy Burn. Mitigation planting, the SuDS ponds and wetland features will be located both to the north and south of the burn.

The large area of wetland proposed along the western perimeter of the site would mitigate storm events which could affect the Dronachy Burn, and the SuDS ponds to the east of the site would be supported by an additional area of flood management / wetland immediately east of the auxiliary building.

The Cullaloe Hills and Coast Local Landscape Area (LLA) occupies the entire east and south of the study area, with the exception of Auchtertool; the LLA extends east and southwest to the Firth of Forth from the site boundary.

The site slopes downwards from the southwest at around 134m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) to approximately 88m AOD at its eastern edge (See Figure 02).

Many groupings of core paths can be found throughout the study area; the closest is Core Path 496, which traverses the Proposed Development site east-west. Core Path R496 bears northwest and links with the Lochgelly Loch Circuit (Core Path R497).

The B925 would provide the main site access; a single entrance point would be created on the route in the centre of the southern site boundary; this would take the form of two short sections of slip road leading to the B925. The B925 traverses the study area from southwest to east, named Main Street within Auchtertool. An emergency access would also be constructed on Fonthill Avenue / Tulloch Road immediately southeast of the Camilla Battery Storage plant (see Landscape Development Framework, Figure 07). The A92 is a major road which traces the northernmost limits of the study area; Tulloch Road links north to an unnamed minor road which travels parallel to the northern shores of Loch Gelly, connecting to the A92 at Lochgelly Junction. The B9157 also briefly enters the southern portion of the study area around Orrock Quarry.

2.3 Landscape Setting

The study area for this LVA has been taken to be land lying within a 2km radius from the site boundary. The extents of the study area includes:

- The entirety of village of Auchtertool and the smaller contiguous hamlet of Newbigging;
- The majority of the Fife Ethylene Plant and Fife NGL Plant compound;
- The north-western quadrant of Cullaloe Hills and Coast LLA, including a small area of Raith Park and Beveridge Park GDL;
- Loch Gelly and its surrounding wetlands;
- Loch Camilla;
- Numerous electricity generation, storage and transmission facilities, including;
    - Little Raith windfarm (9 turbines at 126m tip height);
    - Clentrie Farm windfarm (3 turbines at 99.5m tip height) to the northeast of the study area;
    - A single operational wind turbine at Powguild Farmhouse (32.6m tip height) to the northeast of Loch Gelly;
    - A single operational wind turbine at Pitkinnie Farmhouse (44m tip height) in the northeast of the study area;
    - A single operational wind turbine at Raith Estate (34.4m tip height) in the south of the study area;
    - Mossmorran Substation;
    - Glenniston Substation and the adjacent Little Raith Battery Storage plant; and
    - Camilla Battery Storage plant.
- Predominantly arable farmland throughout the study area, with the exception of improved pastoral farmland throughout the western quadrant and fragmented areas in the centre and south;
- Several farm steadings dispersed throughout the study area within farmland;
- Limited tracts of Ancient Woodland located throughout the farmland outlined above to the south of the study area, and also Haughbrae / Target Wood, which extends northwest from Raith Park and Beveridge Park GDL to Little Glenniston Farm;
- Several groupings of core paths which crisscross the study area around Loch Gelly and north-south and east around Auchtertool.

Throughout the study area, woodland cover is generally irregular and occurring in many patterns, including:

- Broadleaved woodland along the southern shores of Loch Gelly;
- Plantation woodland extending south from Fife Ethylene Plant and Fife NGL Plant compound to the Bottom Burn;
- Multiple tracts of coniferous and broadleaved woodland between the Dronachy Burn and the Bottom Burn, including around the lower slopes of Castle Hill (131m AOD);
- Multiple elongated stands expanding from smaller tracts of Ancient Woodland, running east-west between the Bottom Burn and Orrock Quarry; and
- Isolated tracts of broadleaved woodland and shrubland within the eastern quadrant of the study area, from around Clentrie Farm to the former Kinuny Quarry.

Raith Park And Beveridge Park GDL covers an area of 393ha to the west of Kirkcaldy, and it lies almost entirely within the Cullaloe Hills and Coast LLA. Approximately 17.5ha of the GDL extend northwest into the study area.

There are also 13 Listed Buildings within the 2km study area, including:

- The Category B Little Raith Farmhouse 375m northwest of the site boundary;
- The Category B Clentrie House to the east;

- A number of buildings within Auchterool, and a cluster of buildings including the Category C Auchtertool Parish Church to the south of the site boundary; and

A cluster of buildings to the southeast of the study area, principally the Category B Balmuto Tower.

The character of the land within the 2km study area can be understood as consisting of three distinct interconnected areas:

- The northern strip, which is characterised by:
    - Loch Gelly and the Lochgelly Burn and Gelly Burn, which flow in and out of the loch, respectively;
    - The A92 road corridor which bounds the area to the north; and
    - The improved pastoral farmland to the west of Loch Gelly, and the arable farmland to the east;
- The central portion, which contains most of the industrial and energy production, transmission and storage elements (bar the electricity transmission cables and pylons, which crisscross the entire study area); and
- The southeast and southern portion, which encompasses Auchtertool / Newbigging settlements and the predominantly arable farmland of the Cullaloe Hills LLA which surrounds them.

3.0 Visibility Analysis

3.1 Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) Findings

The Bareground ZTV for this assessment was produced with development height data of 35m for the data centre halls and 12m for the auxiliary building, which was utilised in ReSoft WindFarm R5 software to create the data required for the 2km study area (see Figure 05). The calculation was based on OS Terrain 5 data.

The ZTV was used to determine the main areas of theoretical visibility and identify suitable viewpoint locations for inclusion within this assessment.

As indicated by the Bareground ZTV (see Figure 05), the Proposed Development has the potential to be theoretically visible from approximately 54.76% of the 2km study area. Every effort has been made to ensure that all of the component parts of the Proposed Development have been assessed correctly for the scale under consideration for each landscape and visual receptor. Theoretical visibility is largely concentrated upon the central and western quadrants of the study area as well as a much more fragmented arc to the south and southeast, including:

- Arable farmland surrounding the Proposed Development site, extending westwards to the Fife Ethylene Plant and Fife NGL Plant compound and a broad strip of improved pastoral farmland to the north and south of it;
- Arable farmland to the northeast of the site boundary, extending beyond Camilla Loch;
- The entirety of the settlements of Auchtertool / Newbigging and arable farmland which lines the B925 along its route;
- Large fragments of arable farmland to the south of the Bottom Burn from around the Templehall Cottages in the southwest to West Balbarton farm in the east; and
- An area of improved pastoral farmland along the A92 northwest of Loch Gelly.

Following this, a Modified ZTV, which took localised woodland and settlement into consideration (as illustrated on OS VectorMap), was prepared in order to better understand: the topography of the site; the relationship between the Proposed Development and its immediate surroundings, and the influence of localised woodland and settlement when modelled at nominal heights of 10m and 8.5m, respectively (see Figure 06).

The ZTVs were then used to determine the main areas of theoretical visibility and identify suitable viewpoint locations for inclusion within this assessment.

Existing woodland substantially modifies the proportion of the study area predicted to experience theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development. When this is factored in, approximately 37.08% of the study area shows theoretical visibility (see Figure 06). The pattern of theoretical visibility predicted is largely concentrated upon the same areas as the bareground scenario, although it is likely to be markedly more fragmented, and a smaller percentage of the Proposed Development is likely to be visible in many cases. Noticeable areas of reduction are as follows:

- The Fife Ethylene Plant and Fife NGL Plant compound and the areas of improved pastoral farmland to the south of it will likely experienced reduced theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development;
- All of the tracts and blocks of woodland throughout the study area will result in extensive fragmentation of the bareground theoretical visibility pattern previously identified; and
- Auchtertool / Newbigging will experience limited visibility of around 25% of the Proposed Development along the northern limits of both settlements.

4.0 Identification of Receptors for Assessment

4.1 Landscape Receptors

Assessment of Landscape Character has been undertaken with reference to NatureScot's Landscape Character Assessment (2019). According to this Landscape Character Assessment, the Proposed Development is straddled across LCT 186: Lowland Hills and Valleys and LCT 185: Pronounced Hills and Crags. As such, these LCTs are both considered to be the 'host' landscape and will be subject to detailed appraisal (see Sections 7.1.4 and 7.1.5). LCT 191: Lowland Loch Basins – Fife is located within the study area and has also been taken forward for detailed appraisal.

In addition to the assessment of landscape character, direct landscape effects upon the Proposed Development site have also been assessed. The Cullaloe Hills and Coast LLA will also be taken forward for detailed appraisal, due to its proximity and likelihood of experiencing theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development:

4.2 Visual Receptors

4.2.1 Settlements

The village of Auchtertool and the smaller hamlet of Newbigging will be assessed as a single settlement; the expansion of the settlements along the B925 has resulted in them becoming contiguous.

4.2.2 Key Transport Routes

Based upon the Bareground and Modified ZTVs (see Figures 05 and 06), the following transport routes will be taken forward as sequential route assessments due to the potential for road receptors to experience visibility towards the Proposed Development site:

- B925 (Main Street within Auchtertool);
- Fonthill Avenue / Tulloch Road; and
- Campbell Place.

4.2.3 Key Recreational Routes

Based upon the Bareground and Modified ZTVs (see Figures 05 and 06), the following recreational routes will be taken forward as sequential route assessments due to the potential for recreational receptors to experience visibility towards the Proposed Development site. These routes have been grouped together logically so as to reduce redundant assessment:

- Core Path 496;
- Core Path 493;
- Core Paths R566/R567;
- Core Paths R491/R494;
- Core Path R497; and
- Core Paths R570/R569/R824.

It was initially proposed to include Core Paths R495/R571 as a conjoined route; however, the pattern of theoretical visibility predicted in the Modified ZTV (see Figure 06) is such that the effects on this route have been assessed via Viewpoints 04 and 07 (see Sections 8.5.4 and 8.5.7). Similarly, Core Path R852 has not been taken forward for further assessment; scrutiny of the Modified ZTV indicated that only the last 260m section of the route which adjoins Campbell Avenue is predicted to experience theoretical visibility of up to 50% of the Proposed Development. As this section lies approximately 400m southwest of Viewpoint 08, it was considered that the assessment of this viewpoint would provide adequate information about the likely effects on this route. Finally, Core Path R575 was initially considered for assessment, but in the course of design iterations and subsequent ZTV productions, it was ultimately excluded from this assessment on the grounds that the Modified ZTV (see Figure 06) indicated that theoretical visibility was unlikely to occur from the route.

4.2.4 Representative Viewpoints within the Study Area

Eight viewpoints have been identified and selected as being representative of the range of visual receptors considered within the study area. The updated locations of the Viewpoints are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1 – Representative Viewpoints for Visual Assessment

Viewpoint No.	Viewpoint Name	Grid Reference	Representative of.
01	Tulloch Road, southeast of Camilla Battery Storage plant	321455, 691351	Road and recreational users
02	B925, southeast of proposed main access	321380, 690659	Road and recreational users
03	Access track to Little Raith Battery Storage plant	321162, 691554	Road users
04	Main Street, Auchtertool	321699, 690722	Recreational users, road users and residents
05	Core Path R493 at Camilla Loch	322205, 691542	Recreational users
06	Core Path R497 at eastern end of Little Raith windfarm	319616, 691514	Road and recreational users
07	Core Path R571 east of Auchtertool	322917, 690703	Road and recreational users
08	Core Path R567 northeast of Bankhead	320454, 689128	Road and recreational users

5.0 Potential Effects

5.1 Introduction

The Proposed Development has the potential to affect landscape resources on the site, local landscape character and existing views within close vicinity to the site. This section identifies key impacts that could result from the Proposed Development.

There are a number of ways in which the Proposed Development might affect the existing landscape and visual characteristics found within the study area. These effects are likely to be either temporary (relating specifically to the construction stage of works), or permanent (incurred upon completion of the development), whilst other effects would reduce over time as proposed landscape mitigation measures mature, and the Proposed Development becomes an integrated part of its surroundings. Listed below are some of the key considerations:

- The scale and form of the proposals and how these relate to the scale and context of existing landscape elements and overall visual character;
- The layout and built form of the proposals and their impact in terms of loss or change in use of landscape elements;

- The extent to which the proposals may intrude into existing views experienced by residents and day-to-day users of the area; and
- The extent to which current users of the landscape, such as local residents or visitors, may be subject to new effects.

5.2 Likely Sources of Effects

5.2.1 Construction Phase

During the construction period, the activities, and temporary features with the potential to cause an effect on landscape and visual amenity may include:

- The excavation and or grading works within the site boundary, particularly within the development area, which will be required for the construction of the data centre halls, the auxiliary building, access roads and the bridge over the Dronachy Burn;
- The loss of approximately 24.4ha of arable land within the development area, within which the felling of limited numbers of trees and the removal of shrubs and scrub cover would be required;
- The excavation of the proposed flood management and wetland areas along the Dronachy Burn; and
- Plant and vehicle movements.

The above actions are considered to have the greatest potential in contributing to physical effects on land within the application site boundary. During the construction phase, there may be intermittent views of specific construction features such as large delivery vehicles on the B925 approaching the site from both directions, including from Auchtertool. These effects, however, would be temporary in duration. The presence of large vehicles moving to and from the application site would not appear out of context given the regular occurrence of large vehicles along the B925, in addition to farm machinery on the surrounding farmland.

Towards completion of the Proposed Development, views would transition more towards those expected following establishment of the proposed landscape mitigation measures.

5.2.2 Potential Effects Upon Completion

The following actions are predicted to arise from the completion of the Proposed Development. These features are considered to have the greatest potential in contributing to long-term physical effects on land within the site boundary, as well as landscape and visual effects within the wider study area:

- An increase in large-scale built form within the locale, in the form of the 6 completed data centre halls and the auxiliary building to the south;
- The modifications to the course of the Dronachy Burn along the western site boundary and to the north and south of the watercourse on the eastern edge of the development area;
- The establishment of the mitigation planting measures (see Section 6.2); and
- The excavation, removal, and regrading of soil.

The Proposed Development is predicted to result in direct effects on landscape resources within an area of arable and pastoral land within the locale of Auchtertool.

It is considered that the level of effects experienced would lessen substantially over time as the mitigation planting measures along the southern and western site boundary of the Proposed Development approach maturity, integrating the proposals into the surroundings.

6.0 Proposed Mitigation and Enhancement Measures

The following section sets out the landscape design principles that helped shape proposals for development on the site and the measures proposed to reduce or mitigate potentially adverse effects. These respond to existing baseline conditions and take account of key local landscape features and characteristics as well as the potential effects of the Proposed Development on views and visual amenity within the study area. For further details relating to mitigation measures relating to the Proposed Development, see the Landscape Development Framework (Figure 07) associated, which accompanies this application.

6.1 Mitigation of Construction Effects

Specific mitigation measures necessary during construction include:

- Ensuring land clearance and occupation is limited to the minimum necessary for the works;
- Ensuring valued landscape features and field boundaries are protected, and fencing used to keep contractors out of areas where damage may result;
- Working compounds are maintained and kept tidy and contained, with mud etc. upon local roads controlled;
- Replacement of any stripped soil is carried out as soon as possible after sections of work are complete;
- New tracks and roads are constructed at the beginning of the construction period, to minimise ground disturbance to surrounding areas;
- Limiting vehicle movement to permitted routes only, so as to avoid soil compaction from vehicles tracking over other undisturbed areas, and consequent impacts on vegetation;
- Public roads and tracks utilised by the Proposed Development to have measures to protect users from construction traffic. This would include warning signs and diversions where necessary;
- Disturbed areas of topsoil or subsoil to be re-graded to blend in with the surrounding landform and stimulate regeneration with native species; and
- Proposed landscape boundary treatment planting implemented during the first phase of the development to allow the vegetation to establish early and optimise screening, where possible.

6.2 Proposed Mitigation and Enhancement Measures to Design

Embedded mitigation measures seek to minimise potentially adverse effects by considering layout, siting and design of the Proposed Development and are as follows (see Landscape Development Framework, Figure 07). The approximate areas of the 43.95ha of the Proposed Development site outwith the development area would be planted in the following ways:

- New areas of meadow:
  - 7.2ha along the southern perimeter; and
  - 2.6ha along the eastern perimeter;
- 10.1ha of retained and enhanced woodland and scrub around the site;
- Multiple areas new tree planting:

  - 1.0ha around the main site entrance;
  - 7.3ha dispersed around the development area along the northern site boundary, along the eastern site boundary and interspersed with retained and enhanced areas of woodland across the central portion of the site;
- 2.5ha of new scrub dispersed throughout the site boundary, mainly to the south and east of the auxiliary building and to the west of the main site entrance
- Three new SuDS elements:
  - A wetland feature along the western site boundary covering 4.7ha;
  - Two smaller SuDS features to the east of the development area on the north and south of the Dronachy Burn, totalling 2.0ha.
- Hedgerow planting throughout the site, particularly along the southern boundary at the main site entrance; and
- Extensive planting of semi-mature trees, which would be concentrated along the western site boundary.

7.0 Assessment of Landscape Effects

This section considers the residual effects of the Proposed Development on local landscape resources and character within the study area. The methodology used in the assessment (see Appendix B) considers the sensitivity of each of the landscape receptors under consideration and the Magnitude of Change that is likely to occur as a result of the Proposed Development during construction and following completion.

To inform the assessment, reference is made to the LCA identified in the National Landscape Character Assessment (NatureScot, 2019) and associated character descriptions.

Assessments were informed by site work and visualisations produced for representative viewpoints across the study area. Key landscape designations and designated routes are shown on Figure 03, whereas the LCA included in the assessment is illustrated for reference on Figure 04.

Consideration of the potential effects of the Proposed Development upon landscape character and resources has involved:

- The evaluation of both direct and indirect effects as a result of loss or modification to existing landscape resources and elements both in the site and the wider landscape which contribute to local character;
- An overview of likely effects on designated landscapes and recreational routes within the study area; and
- Proposed landscape mitigation measures set out to limit potential adverse effects on landscape and visual resources.

The predicted residual effects of the Proposed Development on landscape resources, character and designations assessed as part of this LVA are summarised at the end of the section.

Construction effects are considered to be temporary and therefore generally negligible.

7.1.1 Potential Effects on Landscape Resources within the Site Boundary (Landscape Fabric)

The Proposed Development site comprises an area of farmland to the northwest of the village of Auchtertool in southwest Fife. The site boundary is divided north-south by the Dronachy Burn, which flows east into Auchtertool; the wetland to the northwest of the site drains into the watercourse. The farmland within the site boundary is predominantly arable, although an area to the south of the Dronachy Burn is improved pastoral land.

The Dronachy Burn rises just outwith the study area to the southwest, and it flows eastwards for approximately 9.6km, forming the northern boundary of the Fife Ethylene Plant and Fife NGL Plant. This watercourse forms the south-western site boundary before bisecting as it bears northeast, before winding into Auchtertool. The burn then travels through the Cullaloe Hills and Coast LLA to drain into Raith Lake on the southwestern outskirts of Kirkcaldy.

The development area within the site boundary will cover an area of approximately 24.4ha of arable land, which will be lost by constructing the proposals. The development area is predominantly located to the north of the Dronachy Burn. The 6 data centre units, the larger of the two parking facilities and most of the access roads will be within this area, while the auxiliary building and its smaller parking area will run parallel to the southern banks of the Dronachy Burn, with the two areas connected by a single bridge.

The remaining 43.95ha of the Proposed Development site (with the approximate 0.25ha of the exclusion area removed) will feature a diverse range of mitigation planting, including retained and enhanced woodland, and new tree, meadow and scrub planting. Three SuDS ponds and wetland features will be located both to the north and south of the burn, flanking the main development area. The largest of these areas of wetland would span much of the western site perimeter, providing mitigation from storm events which may occur periodically along the Dronachy Burn. The smaller of the two SuDS ponds to the east of the site would be supported by an additional area of flood management / wetland immediately east of the auxiliary building. Core Path R496 would be re-routed along the Dronachy Burn (see Section 8.3.1).

Tree planting along the northern site boundary will be retained and enhanced; similarly, the species mix of the area of coniferous plantation woodland which straddles the western site boundary will be improved. Extensive tree planting is proposed throughout the site, particularly to the east of the data centre structures. This planting is proposed along the course of the Dronachy Burn amidst areas of existing tree planting which will be retained and enhanced in multiple areas to the south of the auxiliary building and the south-western portion of the site.

Sensitivity

Land within the Proposed Development site boundary is not characterised by built form at present, being arable farmland, although it is abutted by the settlement of Auchtertool to the southeast, Camilla Battery Storage Plant to the northeast and Little Raith and Glenniston substations to the north. Given the proximity of these diverse features, the landscape is considered to be of high / medium susceptibility to changes of the nature proposed.

The landscape is considered to be of medium value; it is comprised of productive arable land with no specific designations.

As such, the landscape is considered to be of medium sensitivity overall to changes of the nature proposed.

The Proposed Development would directly affect landscape resources within the site boundary across all stages of development. This would mainly be evident in the conversion of approximately 24.4ha of arable farmland into a new area of data centres, parking facilities and mitigation planting and wetland / SuDS features.

Magnitude of change

- As a result of the Proposed Development:
  - During the construction phase, a high magnitude of change is predicted; construction works and vehicles will be present in order to perform the necessary deliveries and earth-moving associated with the building of the data centre halls, auxiliary building, internal circulation roads and bridge, as well as planting;

- At year 1, a high magnitude of change is predicted; depending on the phasing of the construction process, the site will likely still be in a state of transformation, and will feature compounds, machinery and some completed units. Mitigation planting measures will as yet not have had time to develop and provide screening; and
- At year 10, a high / medium magnitude of change is predicted; the Proposed Development will be integrated into the site boundary from the north and northwest. Mitigation planting measures will have reached maturity and will provide a degree of screening from the south along the B925. The new areas of flood management and wetland will provide biodiversity and amenity value along the Dronachy Burn.

Predicted Effects

- As a result of the Proposed Development:
  - During the construction phase, major / moderate adverse effects are predicted;
  - At year 1, major / moderate adverse effects are predicted; and
  - At year 10, moderate adverse effects are predicted; the mitigation planting measures are considered likely to partially counterbalance the adverse effects associated with the built elements of the Proposed Development.

7.1.2 Potential Effects on Local Landscape Character

Consideration of the potential effects attributable to the Proposed Development upon localised landscape character has involved:

- The evaluation of direct and indirect effects as a result of loss or modification to existing landscape resources and elements on the site; and
- Proposed landscape mitigation measures set out to limit potential effects on landscape resources.

The proposal to develop the site, which is currently a mixture of predominantly arable farmland with some areas of improved pastoral land, for a new data centre complex is predicted to result in a change to its characteristics and how it would be experienced from the surrounding landscape. The Proposed Development would represent a noticeable increase in industrial built form within the locale, while at the same time introducing a diverse range of new planting and SuDS / wetland features.

The loss of agricultural land for the construction of the data centre units and auxiliary building, as well as internal circulation roads and parking facilities may be perceived as a potential deterioration in local character. The mitigation planting measures proposed would, however, facilitate the integration of the Proposed Development into the locale with minimal alteration of its essential character.

The Proposed Development would result in the loss of approximately 24.4ha of agricultural land to permit the introduction of the proposed data centre halls, auxiliary building, linking bridge, internal circulation roads, parking facilities and ancillary structures. While these would be adverse changes, the remaining land-use change proposed in areas of the site where arable or improved pastoral farmland gives way to new and enhanced structure and shrub planting will provide opportunities for habitat formation and increased biodiversity within the locale.

Additionally, the SuDS / wetland features proposed within the site boundary, particularly the elongated basin along the south-western edge of the site boundary will provide added flood management security to the surrounding area downstream of this point. This is of particular interest, given that there is an area of elongated wetland which drains from Moss Morran just outwith the study area to the southwest, running parallel to the Dronachy Burn and draining into it. In storm events, the additional attenuation capacity of the proposed flood management area will reduce the potential for damage downstream of the Proposed Development.

Extent of predicted visibility

With reference to the Modified ZTV (see Figure 06), it is predicted that the screening effect of built form and existing vegetation will reduce actual theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development drastically within the locale. Theoretical visibility is likely to be limited to the following areas:

- The immediate surroundings of the site, particularly from the north along Fonthill Avenue / Tulloch Road;
- Farmland in a broad strip running east-west across the study area, from Moss Morran to the surroundings of Camilla Loch;
- The north and northeast of the Fife Ethylene Plant and Fife NGL Plant compound and limited areas of improved pastoral land to the south of it;
- Numerous areas within the Cullaloe Hills and Coast LLA:
  - A fragmented arc of arable farmland to the south of the site boundary, from the eastern slopes of Raith Hill to the southern outskirts of Auchtertool; and
  - Fragmented blocks of throughout the southern quadrant of the study area, to the south of the Bottom Burn and between Balmuto Castle estate and Lambert's Mill.

During the construction period, construction machinery and compounds are likely to be visible throughout the areas of the locale outlined above. The Proposed Development would thus result in an increase of industrial built form within the study area. Once mitigation planting measures begin to reach maturity, it is anticipated that theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development will reduce slightly within the immediate surroundings of the Proposed Development.

Sensitivity

Land within the locale is characterised by a diversity of uses, including arable farmland, the small-scale settlement and electricity generation and transmission infrastructure. Given the proximity of these diverse features, the landscape is considered to be of medium / low susceptibility to changes of the nature proposed.

The landscape is considered to be of medium value; the eastern and southern quadrants of the study area fall within the Cullaloe Hills and Coast LLA, while the remainder of the study area is heavily characterised by built form and diverse infrastructure projects, including:

- The Fife Ethylene Plant and Fife NGL Plant to the southwest;
- Little Raith and Clentrie Farm wind farms to the northwest and northeast, respectively;
- Little Raith and Glenniston substations to the north.
- Camilla Battery Storage Plant to the the northeast; and
- The settlement of Auchtertool to the southeast.

As such, the landscape is considered to be of medium sensitivity overall to changes of the nature proposed.

Magnitude of change

- As a result of the Proposed Development:
  - During the construction phase, a high magnitude of change is predicted; demolition machinery, construction works and delivery vehicles will be visible temporarily within the locale;

- At year 1, a high magnitude of change is predicted; depending on the phasing of the construction process, the site will likely still be in a state of transformation, and this will have the potential to affect the character of the locale. Mitigation planting measures will not have had time to develop and provide screening; and
- At year 10, a high / medium magnitude of change is predicted; the Proposed Development will be integrated into the site boundary from the north and northwest. Mitigation planting measures will have reached maturity and will provide a degree of screening from the south along the B925.

Predicted Effects

- As a result of the Proposed Development:
  - During the construction phase, major / moderate adverse effects are predicted;
  - At year 1, major / moderate adverse effects are predicted; and
  - At year 10, moderate adverse effects are predicted on the locale, although some beneficial effects will also be experienced, primarily in the form of flood mitigation, amenity and biodiversity gains along the Dronachy Burn and throughout the site generally. The mitigation planting measures are considered likely to counterbalance some of the adverse effects on landscape character associated with the built elements of the Proposed Development by providing added flood resilience to land east of the site boundary.

7.1.3 Potential Effects on Landscape Character Types

Assessment of Landscape Character Types has been undertaken with reference to NatureScot's National Landscape Character Assessment (2019), including publicly available GIS datasets and associated Landscape Character Type descriptions. Direct quotes from the LCT descriptions have been italicised in quotation marks in the following sections.

7.1.4 LCT 186: Lowland Hills and Valleys

Viewpoint 06 is representative of the LCT (see Figures 13a-13c)

Assessment of Landscape Character has been undertaken with reference to NatureScot's Landscape Character Assessment (2019). According to this Landscape Character Assessment, the western half of the Proposed Development is located within LCT 186: Lowland Hills and Valleys. As such, this LCT is considered to be the 'host' landscape, alongside LCT 185: Pronounced Hills and Crags, and will be subject to detailed appraisal here. LCT 186 represents approximately 770 of the total 2,068ha of the study area. The LCT covers a total area of 37,133ha in four components from the south-western extents of the Fife Council area to the outskirts of Gauldry and St Andrews in the north and northeast, respectively. The Proposed Development is located within the largest component, which runs parallel to the Forth Estuary from the eastern outskirts of Kincardine to encircle Dunfermline and fully or partially encompassing the following settlements:

- Blairhall;
- Saline;
- Oakley, Carnock and Comrie;
- Cairneyhill;
- Crossford (Fife);
- Kingseat (Fife);
- Cowdenbeath, Lochgelly and Lumphinnans;
- Kelty;
- Ballingry, Lochore and Crosshill
- Cardenden and Auchterderran;
- Thornton;
- Kinglassie; and
- Kirkcaldy and Dysart.

The component within which the Proposed Development is set is crisscrossed by a multitude of watercourses; the most major of these being the River Ore, which flows northeast out of Cardenden outwith the LCT to drain into the River Leven on the western outskirts of the village of Windygates. Much of the woodland within this component of the LCT is classified as Ancient Woodland.

The following key characteristics have been attributed to the LCT by NatureScot (2019) and have been refined to those applicable to the LCT represented within the study area (italics indicate direct quotations from NatureScot guidance):

'Key Characteristics

- *Variety and subtlety of landform.*
- *Generally dominated by open, regular farmland patterns of medium scale fields of arable and grasslands.*
- *Variable pattern of post and wire fences and mostly tall hedges with hedgerow trees.*
- *Extensive areas of forestry, shelter planting, roadside planting and policies linked to large estates.*
- *Regular, often linear, pattern of the distribution of steadings and larger settlements and towns, all of which are generally well related to the landscape.*
- *Towns in valleys enclosed by the landform of low hills which form a rural backdrop.*
- *Network of roads often well related to landform.*
- *Dominant linear and point features of forests and tree groups, individual trees or local buildings.*
- *A generally tended, safe, quiet, balanced and calm landscape, but also a busy, random, disturbed and noisy one in the more urban, industrialised areas.*
- *Variety of interrelated middle and long distance views of, from and across the low hills. Meandering rivers and tributary streams flowing northward from the hills.'* (NatureScot, 2019).

There are multiple sections of Core Path within the component of the LCT which enters the study area; these routes link most of the settlements within the LCT, tracing field boundaries and following minor roads throughout.

Extent of predicted visibility

With reference to the Modified ZTV (see Figure 06), it is predicted that the screening effect of built form and existing vegetation will result in the following pattern of theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development within the LCT:

- Arable farmland surrounding the Proposed Development site, extending westwards to the Fife Ethylene Plant and Fife NGL Plant compound and a broad strip of improved pastoral farmland to the north and south of it;
- An area of improved pastoral farmland along the A92 northwest of Loch Gelly.

During the construction period, construction machinery and compounds may be visible from the areas of the LCT outlined above, although this may be indistinguishable from agricultural plant on the surrounding farmland. The Proposed Development would thus result in an increase of industrial built form within the LCT. Once mitigation planting measures begin to reach maturity, it is anticipated that the Proposed Development would be gradually incorporated into the immediate setting of the LCT.

Sensitivity of receptor

The LCT as a whole encompasses an incredibly wide range of features; the three smaller northern components are predominantly characterised by arable farmland and minor settlements or the settings for designed landscapes. The largest component, within which the Proposed Development is partially located, features both arable and improved pastoral farmland. This component is also much more noticeably characterised by small settlements and the urban and peri-urban fringe of larger ones, such as Kirkcaldy and Dysart, Glenrothes and Dunfermline.

The Fife Ethylene Plant and Fife NGL Plant occupy a single large compound within this component of the LCT to the southwest of the site boundary, covering a total area of 91.6ha, most of which is located within the study area. This compound contributes heavily to the industrial character of this component of the LCT. The widespread presence of electricity transmission infrastructure and the 9-turbine Little Raith windfarm to the northwest compound the hybrid agricultural-industrial landscape character of the locale. As such, the wider LCT is considered to be of medium / low susceptibility to changes of the nature proposed. In addition to widespread settlement, the component of the LCT in which the Proposed Development is located also features the Cluny Bond whisky maturation site. This complex of warehouses lies 4.4km northeast of the study area boundary, covering an area of approximately 87ha. Taking these features into consideration, the LCT within the study area is considered to be of overall low susceptibility to changes of the nature proposed.

The value of the component of the LCT within the study area is considered to be medium; it is predominantly farmland punctuated by a diverse range of urban development, industry and electricity transmission features.

Taking into consideration the medium value of the landscape and its low susceptibility to the type of changes proposed, the landscape is considered to be of overall medium / low sensitivity to the type of changes proposed.

Magnitude of change

- As a result of the Proposed Development:
  - During the construction phase:
    - A high magnitude of change is predicted within the site boundary and the LCT within the study area. Extensive earthworks and widespread vehicle and plant movement will temporarily affect the landscape character within the site boundary and immediate locale;
    - A low magnitude of change is predicted within the wider LCT;
  - At year 1:
    - A high magnitude of change is predicted within the LCT in the study area; the data centre complex will begin to emerge and earthworks will be noticeable within the LCT in the study area;
    - A low magnitude of change is predicted within the wider LCT; and
  - At year 10, once mitigation planting measures become established:
    - The magnitude of change on the landscape character of the LCT within the study area is predicted to reduce to medium; and
    - A low magnitude of change is predicted within the wider LCT.

Predicted Effects

- As a result of the Proposed Development:
  - During the construction phase:
    - Moderate, direct adverse effects are predicted within the LCT in the study area;
    - Minor direct adverse effects are predicted within the wider LCT;
  - At year 1:
    - Moderate, direct adverse effects are predicted within the LCT in the study area;
    - Minor direct adverse effects are predicted within the wider LCT;
  - At year 10:
    - Moderate / minor, direct adverse effects are predicted within the LCT in the study area ; and
    - Minor direct adverse effects are predicted within the wider LCT.

7.1.5 LCT 185: Pronounced Hills and Crags

All of the viewpoints bar viewpoint 06 are representative of the LCT (see Figures 08a-12c and 14a-15c).

LCT 185 represents approximately 1,095 of the total 2,068ha of the study area. The LCT covers a total area of 21,344ha in six components dispersed throughout the Fife Council area from the south-western outskirts of St Andrews to the Firth of Forth coast from Kirkcaldy to Dalgety Bay. The LCT overlaps almost entirely with the Cullaloe Hills and Coast LLA (see Section 7.1.7) within the study area; the LCT, however, encompasses Auchtertool, and the Proposed Development boundary is defined by the western perimeter of the LLA. The Proposed Development is located within the second largest component, which runs parallel to the Forth Estuary encompassing the following portions of these settlements:

- The western half of Kirkcaldy;
- The northern outskirts of:
  - Kinghorn;
  - Burntisland; and
  - Aberdour.

The component within which the Proposed Development is set is crisscrossed by a multitude of watercourses, including;

- The Tiel Burn and its tributaries:
  - The Dronachy Burn; and
  - The Bottom Burn;
- The Dour Burn; and
- The Tyrie Burn and its numerous minor tributaries.

Much of the woodland within this component of the LCT is classified as Ancient Woodland, particularly along the course of the Dronachy Burn and throughout the Cullaloe Hills and Coast LLA along the western outskirts of Kirkcaldy.

The following key characteristics have been attributed to the LCT by NatureScot (2019) and have been refined to those applicable to the LCT represented within the study area (italics indicate direct quotations from NatureScot guidance):

'Key Characteristics

- *Conspicuous, pronounced, often distinctive and recognisable hills or hill ranges sometimes protruding high above the lowlands or extending the Upland Hills or Foothills – Fife, so defining the edge of other Landscape Character Types and the extent of views across the lowlands.*
- *Important backdrops to other Landscape Character Types.*
- *Medium to large scale, open, simple landscapes.*
- *Distinctive shapes, silhouettes and skylines, with recognisable shapes, peaks and slopes; the evidence of active natural systems and processes e.g. weathering and erosion; burns, often in gullies or folds or narrow valleys.*

- *Woodlands, steadings and other buildings well-related to landform.*
- *Farm steadings and other individual buildings and structures and the lack of villages or larger settlements.*
- *Evidence of historic human settlement in a range of heritage features including forts, enclosures, field systems, castles and towerhouses.*
- *Presence of numerous small quarries, most now disused and well screened but some large, exposed quarries, either disused or re-opened and extended, that detract from the landscape character.*
- *Combination of steep sided, rugged, open landform and land cover on the hills, and the shallower, smoother, more vegetated and more intensively used lower slopes.*
- *Some extensive views across other Landscape Character Types.'* (NatureScot, 2019).

There are many sections of Core Paths within the component of the LCT which enters the study area; some of these follow minor roads and farm tracks which trace field boundaries, where others are run along the B925 through Auchtertool.

Extent of predicted visibility

With reference to the Modified ZTV (see Figure 06), it is predicted that the screening effect of built form and existing vegetation will result in the following pattern of theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development within the LCT:

- Arable farmland surrounding the Proposed Development site, extending westwards to the southern boundary of the Fife Ethylene Plant and Fife NGL Plant compound and a broad strip of improved pastoral farmland to the south of it;
- Arable farmland to the northeast of the site boundary, extending beyond Camilla Loch;
- The entirety of the settlements of Auchtertool / Newbigging and arable farmland which lines the B925 along its route; and
- Large fragments of arable farmland to the south of the Bottom Burn from around the Templehall Cottages in the southwest to West Balbarton farm in the east.

During the construction period, construction machinery and compounds may be visible from the areas of the LCT outlined above, although this may be indistinguishable from agricultural plant on the surrounding farmland and vehicular activity along the B925 and throughout Auchtertool. The Proposed Development would thus result in an increase of industrial built form within the LCT. Once mitigation planting measures begin to reach maturity, it is anticipated that the Proposed Development would be gradually incorporated into the immediate setting of the LCT, particularly from the immediate surroundings of the southern site boundary.

Sensitivity of receptor

The component of the LCT within which the Proposed Development is partially located features both arable and improved pastoral farmland but is more heavily characterised by industrial activity than others. Orrock Quarry, an operational basalt quarry (Breedon Group, 2026) covers approximately 42ha within the LCT, and is located at the southern extents of the study area.

This component also bounds and overlaps numerous settlements, but within the study area contains only Auchtertool. The Fife Ethylene Plant and Fife NGL Plant occupy a single large compound which runs along the south-western boundary of the LCT within the study area, contributing noticeably to the industrial character of the immediate setting of the Proposed Development. The 3-turbine Clentrie Farm windfarm to the northeast of the LCT within the study area, as well as isolated operational turbines throughout, reinforce the hybrid agricultural-industrial landscape character of the locale. As such, the LCT is considered to be of medium / low susceptibility to changes of the nature proposed.

The value of the component of the LCT within the study area is considered to be high / medium; it is predominantly farmland within the Cullaloe Hills and Coast LLA, punctuated by a diverse range of urban development, industry and electricity transmission features.

Taking into consideration the high / medium value of the landscape and its medium / low susceptibility to the type of changes proposed, the landscape is considered to be of overall medium sensitivity to the type of changes proposed.

Magnitude of change

- As a result of the Proposed Development:
  - During the construction phase:
    - A high magnitude of change is predicted within the site boundary and the LCT within the study area. Extensive earthworks and widespread vehicle and plant movement will temporarily affect the landscape character within the site boundary and immediate locale;
    - A low magnitude of change is predicted within the wider LCT;
  - At year 1:
    - A high magnitude of change is predicted within the LCT in the study area; the data centre complex will begin to emerge and earthworks will be noticeable within the locale;
    - A low magnitude of change is predicted within the wider LCT; and
  - At year 10, once mitigation planting measures become established:
    - The magnitude of change on the landscape character of the LCT in the study area is predicted to reduce to medium; and
    - A low magnitude of change is predicted within the wider LCT.

Predicted Effects

- As a result of the Proposed Development:
  - During the construction phase:
    - Major / moderate, direct adverse effects are predicted within the LCT in the study area;
    - Minor direct adverse effects are predicted within the wider LCT;
  - At year 1:
    - Major / moderate, direct adverse effects are predicted within the LCT in the study area;
    - Minor direct adverse effects are predicted within the wider LCT;
  - At year 10:
    - Moderate, direct adverse effects are predicted within the LCT in the study area; and
    - Minor direct adverse effects are predicted within the wider LCT.

7.1.6 LCT 191: Lowland Loch Basins - Fife

Viewpoint 06 is broadly representative of the LCT (see Figures 13a-13c).

LCT 191 represents approximately 204 of the total 2,068ha of the study area. The LCT covers a total area of 1,626ha in five components dispersed throughout the Fife Council area, with one component located north of Elie and Earlsferry and four clustered to the northwest and north of the Proposed Development. The Proposed Development lies immediately southeast of the single component which falls within the study area; the main feature of this component is Loch Gelly, the wetland along its western shores and the arable farmland which surrounds the 58ha loch.

Much of the woodland within this component of the LCT is located along the southern shores of Loch Gelly and along field boundaries perpendicular to it.

The following key characteristics have been attributed to the LCT by NatureScot (2019) and have been refined to those applicable to the LCT represented within the study area (italics indicate direct quotations from NatureScot guidance):

'Key Characteristics

- *Lochs and their islands and shorelines.*
- *Flat, relatively low-lying landform with strong horizontal lines.*
- *Open, large scale, regular, tended pattern of fields.*
- *Regular distribution of steadings and plantations/tree groups/shelter-belts and small settlements.*
- *Dominance and enclosure of the distinctive upland skylines and slopes.*
- *Diverse, calm, settled and (away from the motorway and main roads) a quiet, calm character.*
- *Presence of wildlife on and around the lochs, and birds overhead in flight'* (NatureScot, 2019).

There are numerous sections of Core Path within the component of the LCT which enters the study area, all of which are related with the shores or immediate setting of Loch Gelly.

Extent of predicted visibility

With reference to the Modified ZTV (see Figure 06), it is predicted that the screening effect of built form and existing vegetation will result in the following pattern of theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development within the LCT:

- Improved pastoral farmland to the west of Loch Gelly, extending northwards to the A92; and
- Wetland and arable farmland along the southern fringes of the LCT, encompassing three of the nine turbines of the Little Raith windfarm.

During the construction period, construction machinery and compounds may be visible from the areas of the LCT outlined above, although this would occur in the context of energy production and distribution infrastructure, as well as the nearby Fife Ethylene Plant and Fife NGL Plant compound.

Sensitivity of receptor

The LCT as a whole encompasses a wide range of features; the component within the study area features the southern periphery of the A92, two of the operational turbines of the Little Raith windfarm, a minor road, high-voltage electricity pylons, all of which are set within arable and improved pastoral farmland.The nearby Fife Ethylene Plant and Fife NGL Plant compound heavily characterises the landscape character of the component of the LCT within the study area. Similarly, the widespread presence of electricity transmission infrastructure and the 9-turbine Little Raith windfarm which is partially located within the LCT inform the hybrid agricultural-industrial landscape character of the immediate setting of the LCT. As such, the LCT is considered to be of medium susceptibility to changes of the nature proposed.

The value of the component of the LCT within the study area is considered to be high / medium; Loch Gelly and its locale are important landscape and recreational features within the area.

Taking into consideration the high / medium value of the landscape and its medium susceptibility to the type of changes proposed, the landscape is considered to be of overall medium sensitivity to the type of changes proposed.

Magnitude of change

- As a result of the Proposed Development:
  - During the construction phase:
    - A high / medium magnitude of change is predictedwithin the LCT in the study area . Construction vehicles and compounds will temporarily modify the character of the southern perimeter of the LCT within the study area; and
    - A low magnitude of change is predicted within the wider LCT;
  - At year 1:
    - A high magnitude of change is predicted within the LCT in the study area; the data centre complex will begin to emerge and the increased presence of built form will adversely alter the setting of Loch Gelly, although from its shores relatively little theoretical visibility is predicted to occur; and
    - A low magnitude of change is predicted within the wider LCT; and
  - At year 10, once mitigation planting measures become established:
    - The magnitude of change on the landscape character of the LCT within the study area is predicted to reduce to medium; and
    - A low magnitude of change is predicted within the wider LCT.

Predicted Effects

- As a result of the Proposed Development:
  - During the construction phase:
    - Moderate, indirect adverse effects are predicted within the LCT in the study area;
    - Minor indirect adverse effects are predicted within the wider LCT;
  - At year 1:
    - Major / moderate, indirect adverse effects are predicted within the LCT in the study area;
    - Minor, indirect adverse effects are predicted within the wider LCT;
  - At year 10:
    - Moderate, indirect adverse effects are predicted within the LCT in the study area; and
    - Minor, indirect adverse effects are predicted within the wider LCT.

7.1.7 Cullaloe Hills and Coast Local Landscape Area (LLA)

Cullaloe Hills and Coast LLA incorporates much of Raith Park and Beveridge Park Garden and Designed Landscape (GDL); approximately 17.5ha of the GDL lies on the eastern edge of the study area. The LLA overlaps almost entirely with LCT 185 within the study area; the designation extends to the outskirts of Auchtertool, and the Proposed Development boundary is defined by the western perimeter of the LLA. The designation covers an area of 6,040ha, of which 899 lie within the study area.

The following key characteristics have been attributed to the LLA in a review of Fife Local Landscape Designations and have been refined to those applicable to the LLA represented within the study area (italics indicate direct quotations from Fife Council guidance):

'Designation statement:

The Cullaloe Hills form an extensive area of rounded interlocking hills and lower rolling farmland. There is some variation across the area with a greater degree of complexity occurring at their core north of Burntisland where craggy outcrops, distinctive

summits and narrow gorge-like valleys occur. Towards the coastal edge the landscape also alters subtly in character with lower, gently rolling coastal hills occurring between Burntisland and Kinghorn and between Aberdour and Burntisland. To the west the policies of Fordell provide an area of strongly wooded character. Low coastal hills are typical of the Fife coast and provide a distinct setting for settlements fringing the Firth of Forth. Steep wooded braes form a distinct scarp slope against the coast between Burntisland and Aberdour and these are also a characteristic landscape feature of Fife.

The Cullaloe Hills and coast provide a variety of scenic qualities. Within the higher core of the hills the landscape is characterised by the steep-sided wooded ridges, small reservoirs, narrow valleys and rugged hill tops, enhanced by coastal views in places. The policy woodlands associated with designed landscapes such as Raith Park and Beveridge Park in the north-east and north-west of this area are of notable scenic value due to their distinct pattern and integrity which enhances the rolling landform, and provide setting to Kirkcaldy. At the coastal edge the steep deciduous wooded slopes of the coastal braes have high scenic value, and the semi natural broadleaved woodland and diverse shoreline provide a strong sense of naturalness.' (Land Use Consultants in association with Carol Anderson and the Small Town and Rural Development Group, 2009).

There are many sections of Core Path within the component of the LLA which enters the study area; many of which follow minor roads and farm tracks which trace field boundaries.

Extent of predicted visibility

With reference to the Modified ZTV (see Figure 06), it is predicted that the screening effect of built form and existing vegetation will result in the following pattern of theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development within the LLA:

- Arable farmland to the northeast of the site boundary, extending beyond Camilla Loch;
- The entirety of the settlements of Auchtertool / Newbigging and arable farmland which lines the B925 along its route; and
- Large fragments of arable farmland to the south of the Bottom Burn from around the Templehall Cottages in the southwest to West Balbarton farm in the east.

During the construction period, construction machinery and compounds may be visible from the areas of the LLA outlined above, although this may be indistinguishable from agricultural plant on the surrounding farmland and vehicular activity along the B925 and throughout Auchtertool. The Proposed Development would thus result in an increase of industrial built form within the LLA. Once mitigation planting measures begin to reach maturity, it is anticipated that the Proposed Development would be gradually incorporated into the immediate setting of the LLA, particularly from the immediate surroundings of the southern site boundary.

Sensitivity of receptor

The LLA encompasses a wide range of features; it is predominantly arable farmland, expanding southwest from Kirkcaldy it contains the following Gardens and Designed Landscapes (GDLs):

- Raith Park and Beveridge Park;
- St Colme; and
- Fordell Castle.

The portion of the LLA which enters the study area features both arable and improved pastoral farmland, but is more heavily characterised by industrial activity than the rest of the designation. Orrock Quarry, an operational basalt quarry (Breedon Group, 2026) covers approximately 42ha within the LLA, and is located at the southern extents of the study area. The Fife Ethylene Plant and Fife NGL Plant occupy a single large compound which runs along the south-western boundary of the LLA within the study area, contributing noticeably to the industrial character of the immediate setting of the Proposed Development. The 3-turbine Clentrie Farm windfarm to the northeast is also largely located within the LLA, and along with other isolated operational turbines throughout, it reinforces the hybrid agricultural-industrial landscape character of the locale. As such, the LLA is considered to be of medium / low susceptibility to changes of the nature proposed.

The value of the portion of the LLA within the study area is considered to be high / medium; it is predominantly farmland punctuated by a diverse range of urban development, industry and surrounding electricity transmission features.

Taking into consideration the high / medium value of the landscape and its medium / low susceptibility to the type of changes proposed, the landscape is considered to be of overall medium sensitivity to the type of changes proposed.

Magnitude of change

- As a result of the Proposed Development:
  - During the construction phase:
    - A high magnitude of change is predicted within the site boundary and within the LLA in the study area. Extensive earthworks and widespread vehicle and plant movement will temporarily affect the landscape character within the site boundary and immediate locale;
    - A low magnitude of change is predicted within the wider LLA;
  - At year 1:
    - A high magnitude of change is predicted within the LLA in the study area; the data centre complex will begin to emerge, and earthworks will be noticeable within the locale;
    - A low magnitude of change is predicted within the wider LLA; and
  - At year 10, once mitigation planting measures become established:
    - The magnitude of change on the landscape character of the LLA within the study area is predicted to reduce to medium; and
    - A low magnitude of change is predicted within the wider LLA.

Predicted Effects

- As a result of the Proposed Development:
  - During the construction phase:
    - Major / moderate, indirect adverse effects are predicted within the LLA in the study area;
    - Minor direct adverse effects are predicted within the wider LLA;
  - At year 1:
    - Major / moderate, indirect adverse effects are predicted within the LLA in the study area ;
    - Minor direct adverse effects are predicted within the wider LLA;
  - At year 10:
    - Moderate, indirect adverse effects are predicted within the LLA in the study area; and
    - Minor direct adverse effects are predicted within the wider LLA.

8.0 Appraisal of Visual Effects

For the purposes of this assessment, all receptors, including residents, road and recreational users are considered to be of varying susceptibility to the type of development proposed. The susceptibility of residents will vary depending on the proximity of dominant features such as industrial or energy production infrastructure. Road and recreational users are

considered to be of varying susceptibility (high, medium or low) dependent on the type of route, their proximity to dominant features such as built form, potential speed of travel and assumed direction of travel. As such, the susceptibility of receptors is stated within each assessment section.

8.1 Settlements

The village of Auchtertool and the smaller contiguous hamlet of Newbigging will be assessed as a single settlement.

8.1.1 Auchtertool / Newbigging

Viewpoints 02 and 04 are representative of views from the settlement (see Figures 09a-09e and 11a-11c).

Auchtertool is a small village located in south-western Fife, between Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath, approximately 6km northwest of the Firth of Forth. The south-western outskirts of Kirkcaldy lie approximately 4.1km from the settlement.

The smaller hamlet of Newbigging forms a part of Auchtertool, as the two settlements have expanded along the B925 to become contiguous. The village is linear in layout for the most part, with façades orientated onto the B925 (Main Street). A considerable portion of the settlement is post-war, with numerous cul-de-sacs branching off Main Street. The settlement is entirely surrounded by arable farmland, with the exception of its western extents, which are bounded by improved pastoral land.

The settlement features three Listed Buildings:

- The Category B-Listed Auchtertool House occupies a wooded plot at the south-western entrance to the village on the B925;
- The Category C-Listed 11 The Maltings and Milton Bank, both of which are located on Main Street.

The settlement is surrounded to the north, east and south by arable farmland within the Cullaloe Hills and Coast LLA (see Section 7.1.7). Existing views from the south of the settlement predominantly comprise panoramic views of arable farmland and occasional blocks of woodland and dense gorse on the surrounding Cullaloe Hills.

Extent of predicted visibility

With reference to the Bareground ZTV (see Figure 05), theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development is predicted to occur throughout the entirety of the settlement. With reference to the Modified ZTV (see Figure 06), it is predicted that the screening effect of built form and existing vegetation will greatly reduce actual theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development within the GDL. Theoretical visibility is likely to be limited to the following areas:

- The northern perimeter of the settlement and residential streets which are orientated broadly perpendicular to the site; and
- The western and south-western outskirts of the settlement.

During the construction period, construction machinery and compounds are unlikely to be visible from the settlement due to the screening effect of intervening topography and woodland. For an indication of probable visibility, see VP04 (Figures 11a-11c).

Once mitigation planting measures along the southern site boundary approach maturity, they will provide additional screening effects which will further reduce visibility of the interior of the Proposed Development.

Sensitivity

It is considered that residents of Auchtertool are of high susceptibility to the type of change proposed; the scale of the Proposed Development is such that where it enters views it would represent a substantial increase in built form within the locale to the northwest of the settlement. The combined area of Auchtertool and Newbigging is approximately 17.2ha; the 6 data centres and the auxiliary building have a combined footprint of approximately 14ha. The data centres are also of a noticeably greater scale than the built form of the settlement; they rise to a maximum height of 35m, where the residences of Auchtertool do not exceed two storeys throughout the settlement. In practice, however, theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development is predicted to be very limited from the settlement and its environs (see Viewpoints 02 and 04, Figures 09a-09e and 11a-11c).

The value of views from the settlement is considered to be high. Outward views from the settlement include some panoramas of the Cullaloe Hills in an arc from the northeast to the south, where built form permits.

The sensitivity of receptors of the settlement to the type of development proposed is therefore considered to be high.

Magnitude of change

- As a result of the Proposed Development:
  - During the construction phase, a low magnitude of change is predicted; construction vehicles are likely to be visible heading to and from the site throughout the settlement;
  - At year 1, a low magnitude of change is predicted; the Proposed Development would result in a slight increase in industrial built form from which may be perceptible from isolated areas of the settlement; and
  - At year 10, a low magnitude of change is predicted; once mitigation planting approaches maturity, the backdrop to the views along the northern perimeter of the settlement will feature an observable increase in scrub and tree cover.

Predicted Effects

- As a result of the Proposed Development:
  - During the construction phase, moderate / minor adverse effects are predicted;
  - At year 1, moderate / minor adverse effects are predicted ; and
  - At year 10, moderate / minor neutral or beneficial effects are predicted.

8.2 Key Transport Routes

8.2.1 B925 (Main Street)

Viewpoints 02 and 04 are representative of views from the route (see Figures 09a-09e and 11a-11c). Viewpoint 07 is also broadly representative of views from the route (see Figures 12a-12c).

The B925 links north-eastern Dunfermline with the centre of Kirkcaldy, running from the Crossgates and Mossgreen Roundabout through the village of Crossgates, traversing the study area west-east and becoming Main Street within the village of Auchtertool. The route then exits the study area, traces the southern boundary of the Raith Park and Beveridge Park GDL, before entering Kirkcaldy from the southwest to terminate on St Clair Street. The route measures 16.5km in length, of which 5km lie within the study area.

Extent of predicted visibility

During the construction stage, visibility of construction machinery and compounds may occur sporadically within close proximity to the southern site boundary, particularly at the proposed site entrance. With reference to the Modified ZTV (see

Figure 06), it is predicted that the screening effect of built form and existing vegetation will result in theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development on two sections of the route approximately 1,475m in length on the western outskirts of the settlement. A further section of theoretical visibility approximately 640m in length is predicted to occur to the west of the study area.

Sensitivity of Receptors

The western half of the route within the study area is characterised by sporadic views of the Fife Ethylene Plant and Fife NGL Plant compound, as well as large farm steadings, electricity production and transmission infrastructure and the settlement of Auchtertool. The central section of the route becomes Main Street within Auchtertool, and as such it is characterised by low-density urban development. Receptors travelling on the route are considered to be of low susceptibility overall to the type of development proposed.

The value of views from the route is considered to be medium; the route features views of ordinary arable and pastoral farmland, a large industrial compound, and some framed views of the surrounding Cullaloe Hills.

The sensitivity of road users of this route to the type of development proposed is thus considered to be medium / low.

Magnitude of change

- As a result of the Proposed Development:
  - During the construction phase, a medium magnitude of change is predicted; construction vehicles and compounds are likely to be visible intermittently from this route in close proximity to the proposed main site entrance. Construction compounds may also be visible from the route throughout various phases;
  - At year 1, a medium magnitude of change is predicted; the Proposed Development would result in an increase in industrial built form from the route; and
  - At year 10, a low magnitude of change is predicted; once mitigation planting measures reach maturity, theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development is predicted to reduce considerably from the route. The section of the route on the western outskirts of Auchtertool will come to be characterised by increased tree, hedgerow, scrub and meadow planting, which is likely to be perceived as an improvement by most road users.

Predicted Effects

- As a result of the Proposed Development:
  - During the construction phase, moderate / minor adverse effects are predicted;
  - At year 1, moderate / minor adverse effects are predicted; and
  - At year 10, minor neutral or beneficial effects are predicted.

8.2.2 Fonthill Avenue / Tulloch Road

Viewpoints 01 and 03 are representative of the view from the route (see Figures 08a-08e and 10a-10e).

The route branches off a minor road which runs parallel to the A92; the junction is approximately 220m northeast of Loch Gelly. The route bears southeast through arable farmland, skirting Glenniston Substation and Little Raith Battery Storage plant to trace the western site boundary. The route terminates at the western end of Auchtertool when it merges onto Main Street. The route measures 2.8km in length, and is entirely contained within the study area.

Extent of predicted visibility

During the construction stage, visibility of construction machinery and compounds may occur sporadically within relatively close proximity to the northern site boundary, commencing around Glenniston Substation and continuing to the outskirts of Auchtertool prior to the entrance to the Camilla Road estate. With reference to the Modified ZTV (see Figure 06), it is predicted that the screening effect of built form and existing vegetation will result in theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development throughout one section of approximately 1,325m in length along the eastern site boundary.

Sensitivity of Receptors

The route is largely characterised by views of arable farmland, crisscrossed by high-voltage electricity pylons; the northern section of the route also features open views across Loch Gelly to the west. Further south on the route, sporadic views of the Fife Ethylene Plant and Fife NGL Plant compound are afforded to the southwest, although Glenniston Substation and the numerous high-voltage electricity pylons within the view are more prominent. Receptors travelling on the route are considered to be of low susceptibility overall to the type of development proposed.

The value of views from the route is considered to be medium; the route features views of ordinary arable and pastoral farmland, a large industrial compound, and some framed views of the surrounding Cullaloe Hills.

The sensitivity of road users of this route to the type of development proposed is thus considered to be medium / low.

Magnitude of change

- As a result of the Proposed Development:
  - During the construction phase, a high magnitude of change is predicted; construction works and machinery will be visible from around Glenniston Substation to the outskirts of Auchtertool;
  - At year 1, a high magnitude of change is predicted; regardless of the construction phasing, the erection of any of the data centre halls or the auxiliary building will be clearly visible from the route from around Glenniston Substation, unless mitigation tree planting measures have begun along the eastern site boundary; and
  - At year 10, a high magnitude of change is predicted; the data centre halls will come to characterise views to the south and southwest from the route when heading towards Auchtertool.

Predicted Effects

- As a result of the Proposed Development, moderate adverse effects are predicted across all stages.

8.2.3 Campbell Place

Viewpoints 02 and 08 are representative of the view from the route (see Figures 09a-09e and 15a-15c).

The route branches south off the B925 on the western outskirts of Auchtertool, and bears southwest between arable farmland, serving two farm steadings enroute before terminating at a junction with Old North Road. The route measures 2.6km in length, and is entirely contained within the study area.

Extent of predicted visibility

During the construction stage, visibility of construction machinery and compounds may occur sporadically within close proximity to the southern site boundary. Upon completion, theoretical visibility of up to 50% of the Proposed Development

is predicted to occur from the majority of the route, with the exception of a section approximately 310m in length to the north and south of the Bottom Burn (see Modified ZTV, Figure 06). In practice, the Proposed Development is only likely to be a more prominent feature on the approach section of the route to the B925.

Sensitivity of Receptors

The route is largely characterised by views of undulating arable farmland and occasional farm steadings and residences. The route is crisscrossed by low-voltage electricity lines, and the southernmost sections of the route feature sporadic views of chimney stacks within the Fife Ethylene Plant and Fife NGL Plant compound, as well as the Little Raith windfarm beyond to the northwest. Clentrie Farm windfarm would also be prominent in views from the route when travelling towards Auchtertool. Receptors travelling on the route are considered to be of low susceptibility overall to the type of development proposed.

The value of views from the route is considered to be medium; the route features views of ordinary arable and pastoral farmland, wind energy infrastructure, sporadic views of a large industrial compound, and some framed views of the surrounding Cullaloe Hills.

The sensitivity of road users of this route to the type of development proposed is thus considered to be medium / low.

Magnitude of change

- As a result of the Proposed Development:
  - During the construction phase, a high magnitude of change is predicted along the final northern section of the route leading to the B925 junction; construction works and machinery will be visible in the proximity of the proposed main site entrance;
  - At year 1, a high / medium magnitude of change is predicted; depending on the construction phasing, the erection of the data centre halls or the auxiliary building will be clearly visible from the final northern section of the route; and
  - At year 10, a medium magnitude of change is predicted; the data centre halls may enter views when heading north, although mitigation planting measures will also result in an overall increase in tree, shrub and hedge cover within northwards views.

Predicted Effects

- As a result of the Proposed Development:
  - During the construction phase, moderate adverse effects are predicted;
  - At year 1, moderate adverse effects are predicted; and
  - At year 10, moderate / minor adverse or neutral effects are predicted.

8.3 Key Recreational Routes

8.3.1 Core Path R496

Viewpoint 01 is representative of the view from the route (see Figures 08a-08e).

Core Path R496 traverses the Proposed Development site east-west at present, before tracing the eastern site boundary to adjoin Core Paths R493 and R495. The majority of the path is yet to be developed however, as is indicated as requiring caution on the Fife Core Paths Online Map.

This Core Path would require rerouting in order for the Proposed Development to be constructed; this is proposed to occur along the course of the Dronachy Burn, which flows west-east across the site. As such, the assessment of effects has assumed that the required rerouting has taken place, and is now based on its new layout along the Dronachy Burn. The current route measures 2.65km in length, and it lies entirely within the study area. Upon rerouting, it will measure approximately 2.7km.

Extent of predicted visibility

During the construction stage, visibility of construction machinery and compounds is predicted to occur throughout the majority of the route, which is logical given the location of the route within the site boundary. With reference to the Modified ZTV (see Figure 06), it is predicted that existing woodland and landform along the route will entirely screen the Proposed Development from view at two points:

- On a section approximately 160m along the eastern edge of the Walton East Strip coniferous plantation woodland on the western site boundary; and
- The final 660m section of the route, from the underpass / embankment to the northwest of the exclusion area to the north-western end of Moray Court within Auchtertool.

Sensitivity of Receptors

Receptors travelling on the route are considered to be of high / medium susceptibility to the type of development proposed; they will be on the route to enjoy the expansive views over the surrounding countryside, particularly the Cullaloe Hills to the south and east. Receptors will however be accustomed to seeing the Fife Ethylene Plant and Fife NGL Plant compound to the southwest from the route, as well as energy production and transmission infrastructure in all directions.

The value of the views along the route are considered to be high / medium; it is an agricultural landscape with expansive views of distant hills and diverse industrial elements. Recreational users are therefore considered to be of high / medium sensitivity to changes of the nature proposed.

Magnitude of change

- As a result of the Proposed Development:
  - During the construction phase, a high magnitude of change is predicted; construction vehicles and compounds are likely to be visible throughout much of the route;
  - At year 1, a high magnitude of change is predicted; the Proposed Development would result in an increase in industrial built form from the route; and
  - At year 10, a high / medium magnitude of change is predicted; once mitigation planting measures approach maturity, new areas of tree and scrub planting, as well as flood management areas, will partially offset the increase in built form from the route.

Predicted Effects

- As a result of the Proposed Development:
  - During the construction phase, major adverse effects are predicted;

- At year 1, major adverse effects are predicted; and
- At year 10, major / moderate adverse effects are predicted.

8.3.2 Core Path R493

Viewpoint 05 is representative of the view from the north-eastern extents of the route (see Figures 12a-12c).

Core Path R493 branches off a farm track which serves the Clentrie Farm windfarm to the northeast of Camilla Loch, and travels along the entire south-eastern shores of the loch before tracing arable and improved pastoral field boundaries, terminating to the southwest on Tulloch Road. The route measures 1km in length, and it lies entirely within the study area.

Extent of predicted visibility

During the construction stage, visibility of construction machinery and compounds is predicted to occur sporadically throughout the majority of the route. Upon completion, theoretical visibility of up to 100% of the Proposed Development is predicted to occur from the majority of the route, with the exception of portions of the south-eastern shores of Camilla Loch, where topography and existing vegetation will afford some screening.

Sensitivity of Receptors

Receptors travelling on the route are considered to be of high / medium susceptibility to the type of development proposed; they will be on the route to enjoy the expansive views over the surrounding countryside, particularly the scenery of Camilla Loch and its environs and the Cullaloe Hills to the south and east. Receptors will however be accustomed to seeing the Fife Ethylene Plant and Fife NGL Plant compound in distant views to the southwest from the route, as well as energy production and transmission infrastructure in all directions.

The value of views from the route is considered to be high; the setting of Camilla Loch is picturesque and views from the route contain relatively little built form to detract from this, with the exception of occasional wind turbines and electricity transmission infrastructure. Recreational receptors are therefore considered to be of high sensitivity to changes of the nature proposed.

Magnitude of change

- As a result of the Proposed Development:
  - During the construction phase, a medium magnitude of change is predicted; construction works and machinery within the development area are likely to be entirely screened by the intervening woodland and topography from the northern section of the route. As recreational users approach the southern extents of the route, machinery and construction activity are likely to be visible throughout the site boundary;
  - At year 1, a medium magnitude of change is predicted; mitigation planting will begin emerging along the eastern site perimeter and will begin to merge with the existing vegetation along the course of the Dronachy Burn; and
  - At year 10, a medium / low magnitude of change is predicted; once mitigation planting approaches maturity, the backdrop to views along this route will feature an observable increase in woodland cover.

Predicted Effects

- As a result of the Proposed Development:
  - During the construction phase, major / moderate adverse effects are predicted on recreational users; and
  - At year 1, major / moderate adverse effects are predicted on recreational users; and
  - At year 10, moderate neutral or beneficial effects are predicted overall on recreational users. While an increase in built form is predicted to occur from this viewpoint, mitigation planting measures will also serve to screen the existing Fife Ethylene Plant and Fife NGL Plant compound along this route.

8.3.3 Core Paths R566/R567

Viewpoints 02, 04 and 08 are representative of views from the route (see Figures 09a-09e, 11a-11c and 14a-14c).

These two core paths are almost entirely contained within the Cullaloe Hills and Coast LLA and have been assessed as a grouping due to the likelihood of the effects upon them being similar, for their proximity to the southern site boundary. The main branch of these two routes is Core Path R567; this route follows Campbell Place from the B925 to slightly beyond its terminus, itself terminating at Templehall Farm to the south of the study area. The two routes measure approximately 4.22km in total, of which approximately 4.06km lie within the study area.

Core Path R566 consists of two sections:

- The western branch (P566/01) links the Auchtertool Parish Church, manse and cemetery complex to the west with Core Path R567. This section is not predicted to experience any theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development. No effects are predicted on this section of the route; and
- The longer eastern branch (P566/02) extends from Core Path R567 around the southern slopes of Castle Hill (131m AOD) to Core Paths R824 / R825 on the southern outskirts of Auchtertool. The first 95m route from Core Path R567 eastwards is predicted to experience theoretical visibility of up to 25% of the Proposed Development. As such, negligible or no effects are predicted on this section of the route.

During the construction stage, visibility of construction machinery and compounds may occur sporadically within close proximity to the southern site boundary along Core Path R567. Upon completion, theoretical visibility of up to 50% of the Proposed Development is predicted to occur from the majority of the route, with the exception of a section approximately 310m in length to the north and south of the Bottom Burn (see Modified ZTV, Figure 06). In practice, the Proposed Development is only likely to be a more prominent feature on the approach section of Core Path R567 to the B925.

Sensitivity of Receptors

The route is largely characterised by views of undulating arable farmland and occasional farm steadings and residences. The route is crisscrossed by low-voltage electricity lines, and the southernmost sections of the route feature sporadic views of chimney stacks within the Fife Ethylene Plant and Fife NGL Plant compound, as well as the Little Raith windfarm beyond to the northwest. Clentrie Farm windfarm are also prominent in views from the route when travelling towards Auchtertool. Receptors travelling on the route are considered to be of medium susceptibility overall to the type of development proposed.

The value of views from the route is considered to be medium; the route features views of ordinary arable and pastoral farmland, wind energy infrastructure, sporadic views of a large industrial compound, and some framed views of the surrounding Cullaloe Hills.

The sensitivity of recreational users of this route to the type of development proposed is thus considered to be medium.

Magnitude of change

- As a result of the Proposed Development:

- During the construction phase, a high magnitude of change is predicted along the final northern section of the route leading to the B925 junction; construction works and machinery will be visible in the proximity of the proposed main site entrance;
- At year 1, a high / medium magnitude of change is predicted; depending on the construction phasing, the erection of the data centre halls or the auxiliary building will be clearly visible from the final northern section of the route; and
- At year 10, a medium magnitude of change is predicted; the data centre halls may enter views when heading north, although mitigation planting measures will also result in an overall increase in tree, shrub and hedge cover within northwards views.

Predicted Effects

- As a result of the Proposed Development:
  - During the construction phase, major / moderate adverse effects are predicted on the final northern section of the route;
  - At year 1, moderate adverse effects are predicted; and
  - At year 10, moderate adverse or neutral effects are predicted, depending on the growth pattern of mitigation planting.

8.3.4 Core Paths R491/R494

Viewpoint 05 is broadly representative of the view from the route (see Figures 12a-12c).

These two core paths have been assessed as a grouping due to the fact that Core Path R494 is a short section which adjoins Core Path R491 northwest of New Cottoun, a residential property. As such, the principal route in consideration is Core Path R491, with Core Path R494 being a minor westward variation on its starting point. The two routes measure approximately 4.82km in total, of which 4.11km lie within the study area. Core Path R491 commences on the B925 east of Auchtertool; the route bears northwest along a track and passes West Cottoun and Clentrie farm, passing in close proximity to the north-eastern shores of Camilla Loch. The route bears north through predominantly arable farmland, linking Little Glenniston and South Dundonald farms, terminating beyond the A92 on the southern outskirts of Cardenden.

During the construction stage, visibility of construction machinery and compounds may occur sporadically along a section of the route to the northeast of Camilla Loch, although this is likely to be largely indistinguishable from agricultural activity within the surrounding arable fields. Upon completion, theoretical visibility of up to 100% of the Proposed Development is predicted to occur from a section of the route approximately 490m in length. This section is predicted to commence northeast of Clentrie farm and terminate south of Knockbothy Wood. For an indication of the actual visibility of the Proposed Development which is likely to occur, see Viewpoint 05 (Figures 12a-12c).

Sensitivity of Receptors

The route is largely characterised by views of minor roads, undulating arable farmland and occasional farm steadings and residences. The central portion of the route paths through Clentrie farm windfarm, and is also crisscrossed by low-voltage electricity lines. Receptors travelling on the route are thus considered to be of medium susceptibility overall to the type of development proposed.

The value of views from the route is considered to be medium; the route features views of ordinary arable and pastoral farmland, wind energy infrastructure, sporadic distant views of a large industrial compound, and framed views of the surrounding Cullaloe Hills.

The sensitivity of recreational users of this route to the type of development proposed is thus considered to be medium.

Magnitude of change

- As a result of the Proposed Development:
  - During the construction phase, a low or negligible magnitude of change is predicted; construction works and machinery within the development area may be visible throughout the section identified, although the effects of this will be diminished by that of agricultural plant within the surrounding arable fields.
  - At year 1, a low magnitude of change is predicted; an increase in built form will occur in views to the southwest from the section identified. Mitigation planting will also begin emerging depending along the eastern site perimeter and will enter views from the route; and
  - At year 10, a medium / low magnitude of change is predicted; once mitigation planting approaches maturity, views from the section identified will feature an observable increase in woodland cover.

Predicted Effects

- As a result of the Proposed Development:
  - During the construction phase, minor adverse or negligible effects are predicted on recreational users;
  - At year 1, minor adverse or neutral effects are predicted on recreational users; and
  - At year 10, moderate / minor adverse or neutral effects are predicted overall on recreational users.

8.3.5 Core Path R497

Viewpoint 06 is representative of the view from the route (see Figures 13a-13c).

Core Path R497 travels from the eastern shores or Loch Gelly southwest along a minor road through the Little Raith windfarm

The route travels from close to the eastern shore of Loch Gelly, where it adjoins Core Path R500, which traces the northern shores of the loch. The route travels south along Tulloch Road, before bearing southwest along a Restricted Local Access Road which serves the Little Raith windfarm and the Easter and Wester Lochhead farm steadings. Little Raith windfarm comprises a cluster of nine turbines located within improved pastoral and arable fields along the route. Core Path R497 terminates approximately 1.17km outwith the study area to the southwest, upon reaching the A909. The route measures 4.92km in length, of which 3.45km lie within the study area.

During the construction stage, visibility of construction machinery and compounds may occur sporadically along a section of the route to the northeast of Camilla Loch, although this is likely to be largely indistinguishable from agricultural activity within the surrounding arable fields. Upon completion, theoretical visibility of up to 100% of the Proposed Development is predicted to occur from a section of the route approximately 490m in length. This section is predicted to commence northeast of Clentrie farm and terminate south of Knockbothy Wood. For an indication of the actual visibility of the Proposed Development which is likely to occur, see Viewpoint 05 (Figures 12a-12c).

Sensitivity of Receptors

Recreational receptors will be on this route to appreciate the views of the landscape surrounding Loch Gelly, and the Cullaloe Hills to the south and southeast. The Fife Ethylene Plant and Fife NGL Plant compound is a dominant feature to the south and southeast throughout much of the route. The Little Raith windfarm also heavily characterises the route, as it passes

within 17m of the base of the closest turbine; the array features nine turbines of 126m to tip height. Road and recreational users are thus considered to be of low susceptibility to changes of the nature proposed; receptors would be accustomed to seeing large-scale energy transmission and production features, as well as industrial elements in views in all directions from this location.

The value of the view is considered to be medium / low; it is an ordinary agricultural landscape with few features of interest, with the exception of distant views of the Firth of Forth. Views are overlaid with an extensive array of high and low-voltage energy transmission cabling and pylons, which depletes their value considerably.

Road and recreational receptors are therefore considered to be of low sensitivity to changes of the nature proposed.

Magnitude of change

- As a result of the Proposed Development:
  - During the construction phase, a high / medium magnitude of change is predicted; cranes and large construction machinery within the development area are likely to be visible throughout all stages from the route;
  - At year 1, a high magnitude of change is predicted; depending on the final construction phasing of the project, all or part of between one and all six of the proposed data centre halls may begin to enter the view. Mitigation planting will begin emerging along the northern and north-western sections of the site perimeter and will begin to merge visually with the existing vegetation along the route; and
  - At year 10, a high magnitude of change is predicted; all six of the proposed data centre halls will enter views from different sections of the route, and the auxiliary building to the south will be sporadically visible beyond them. Once mitigation planting approaches maturity, the westernmost data centre halls will progressively be viewed as set within contiguous woodland stretching southwest across the frame.

Predicted Effects

- As a result of the Proposed Development:
  - During the construction phase, moderate / minor adverse effects are predicted on road and recreational users; and
  - At year 1, moderate adverse effects are predicted on road and recreational users; and
  - At year 10, moderate adverse effects are predicted overall on road and recreational users.

8.3.6 Core Paths R570/R569/R824

Viewpoint 07 is broadly representative of the view from the northern section of Core Path R570 (see Figures 13a-13c).

These three core paths are entirely contained within the Cullaloe Hills and Coast LLA and have been assessed as a grouping due to the fact that Core Path R569 branches off Core Path R570 to the southeast and the Modified ZTV produced for this assessment (see Figure 06) indicates that a comparable pattern of theoretical visibility will occur across both routes. Similarly, Core Path R824, branches off Core Path R569 to the northwest, and can be considered a branch of this route which links it with Auchtertool. These three routes measure a total of 5.49km, of which 4.98km lie within the study area.

Core Path R824 links with Core Path R825 on the southern outskirts of Auchtertool, and bears southeast between arable fields and along the northern perimeter of a block of mixed woodland, where it adjoins Core Path R570 at Gamekeeper's Cottage.

Core Path R569 is comprised of two distinct sections:

- Section P569/01 traverses the southern quadrant of the study area southwest to northeast from Templehall farm, linking a number of other farm steadings and residences, skirting the northern perimeter of the Balmuto Castle estate; and
- Section P569/02 travels from close to the Tiel Burn southeast between arable fields, crosses one of its tributaries to the southwest of Lambert's Mill and exits the study area to terminate at Kilrie farm. Approximately 470m of this section lie outwith the study area.

Core Path R570 is comprised of three distinct sections, all of which are contained within the study area:

- Section P570/01 curves broadly south from the B925 to cross the Bottom Burn / Tiel Burn, before turning southwest;
- Sections P570/02 and P570/03 are conjoined sections which connect with Section P569/01 on the north-eastern perimeter of the Balmuto Castle estate.

During the construction stage, visibility of construction machinery and compounds may occur around the junction between section P569/01 and P570/03, throughout much of section P570/02, and also sporadically along P569/02. This, however, is likely to be largely indistinguishable from agricultural activity within the surrounding arable fields.

Upon completion, theoretical visibility is predicted to occur as follows:

- Up to 75% of the Proposed Development is predicted to occur from a total of approximately 485m of section P569/02;
- Up to 50% of the Proposed Development is predicted to occur from approximately:
  - 490m of section P570/02;
  - A 305m of section P569/01 and P570/03 along the north-eastern edge of the Balmuto Castle estate; and
  - 150m of P569/01 northeast of Linhead farm.
- Marginal visibility of up to 25% of the Proposed Development may occur along the final south-eastern section of Core Path R824, although in practice this is likely to tend towards zero.

In all stages, the Proposed Development would be viewed in conjunction with existing power infrastructure and wind turbines.

Sensitivity of Receptors

Recreational receptors will be on these routes to appreciate the views of the landscape within the Cullaloe Hills and Coast LLA, through which they travel. Views from the routes are predominantly of undulating arable farmland with occasional farm steadings, ruins and blocks of woodland, as well as the peri-urban setting of southern Auchtertool. Recreational users are thus considered to be of high susceptibility to changes of the nature proposed; there is relatively little development in most views from these routes, although energy transmission infrastructure criss-crosses multiple sections.

The value of the views along this route are considered to be high; it is an agricultural landscape with clear views of the Cullaloe Hills and more distant views of the Firth of Forth. Views are partially overlaid with low-voltage electricity lines in many places along the route.

Recreational receptors are therefore considered to be of high sensitivity to changes of the nature proposed.

Magnitude of change

- As a result of the Proposed Development:
  - During the construction phase, a low or negligible magnitude of change is predicted; cranes and large construction machinery within the development area will only be sporadically visible, and are likely to be indistinguishable from agricultural machinery from this distance;
  - At year 1, a low magnitude of change is predicted overall from these routes; depending on the final construction phasing of the project, all or part of between one and all six of the proposed data centre halls may begin to enter views from the sections outlined above, although the multitude of intervening features are likely to decrease their protagonism with views; and
  - At year 10, a low magnitude of change is predicted overall; all six of the proposed data centre halls will enter views from different sections of the routes, and the auxiliary building to the south will be sporadically visible beyond them. Once mitigation planting approaches maturity, the auxiliary building and the lower floors of the data centre halls will progressively be viewed as set within contiguous new and enhanced woodland traversing views east-west.

Predicted Effects

- As a result of the Proposed Development:
  - During the construction phase, moderate / minor adverse or negligible effects are predicted on recreational users; and
  - At year 1, moderate / minor adverse effects are predicted on recreational users; and
  - At year 10, moderate / minor adverse or neutral effects are predicted overall on recreational users; while the Proposed Development would result in an increase in built form within certain views, it would be accompanied by an observable increase in woodland cover.

8.4 Representative Viewpoints

Details for each viewpoint and the refined viewpoint locations, where photography was micro-sited during site visits to ensure 'worst case visibility' of the Proposed Development, are as shown in Table 1 in Section 4.2.4 above and as illustrated on Figures 01, 05 and 06. Panoramic photographs and photomontages are provided to illustrate the existing view from Viewpoints 01-08 (see Figures 08a – 15c) and the likely extent of the Proposed Development within the view.

Effects on views and visual amenity at each viewpoint are described in relation to a development scenario whereby the Proposed Development comprises data centre units up to 35m in height and an auxiliary building of up to 12m in height. It further considers the landscape mitigation measures proposed on Figure 07 and the residual effects of the Proposed Development, assuming implementation of the landscape mitigation strategy.

8.5 Effects on Views from Representative Viewpoints

8.5.1 Viewpoint 01: Tulloch Road, southeast of Camilla Battery Storage plant (see Figures 08a-08e)

This viewpoint is located on an access track on the north-eastern Proposed Development site boundary. The viewpoint is immediately due southeast of the Camilla Battery Storage plant. The photography was taken from the grass verge along the southern perimeter of the road, at an altitude of 126m AOD. Due to the close proximity of the viewpoint location to the Promoted Site, two separate 53.5° planar projection baseline photographs / visualisations have been used to demonstrate the proposed visual changes (see Figure 08a). As such, Viewpoint 01a (see Figures 08b-08c) and Viewpoint 01b (see Figures 08d-08e) are assessed as a single panoramic view and must be referred to as such.

Existing View

The foreground is characterised by the rough gravel track which travels southwest within the site boundary between arable fields; fallow fields extend to the middle distance on either side of the track. A post-and-wire fence bounds the northern edge of the track. To the right of the view, the Camilla Battery Storage plant is set within the field, bounded by a post-and-wire fence and a high metal palisade fence.

To the right of the centre, the remains of some of the walling of Hallyards Castle (Camilla) are prominent features, fenced off at the north-western corner of the field. The castle had a long history, purportedly a hunting seat of Malcolm Canmore, it served the Bishops of Dunkeld and was later destroyed by French troops in 1560 (Wikipedia, 2026). Little Raith windfarm breaches the horizon beyond the ruins of Hallyards Castle, and numerous high-voltage electricity pylons overlap with the turbines. These pylons extend southwest and northeast from Mossmorran Substation, and also radiate in all directions from Glenniston Substation, which is out of view to the northeast. The Hill of Beath (240m AOD) is prominent to the left of Little Raith windfarm.

At the centre of the view, a block of predominantly coniferous woodland straddles the track. Beyond the canopies of these trees numerous chimney stacks and structures within the Fife Ethylene Plant and Fife NGL Plant compound to form the horizon line, alongside the turbine blades and hubs of several operational wind turbines. Deciduous woodland along the course of the Dronachy Burn, and coniferous plantation woodland beyond to the southwest characterise the view to the left of the frame.

Proposed View

The Proposed Development would result in the introduction of an asphalt road surface being introduced to the centre of the view; the new deciduous tree planting along much of the eastern site boundary would gradually emerge and screen the lower storeys of the easternmost data centre hall. The upper floors of the structure would rise above the canopies of the new structure planting, forming a new horizon line, screening all of the features previously outlined from view.

Sensitivity of Receptors

The location of this viewpoint on Core Path R496 would initially indicate that recreational users at this viewpoint are likely to be of high susceptibility to changes of the nature proposed. In order for the Proposed Development to be realised, however, this core path would have to be re-routed along the Dronachy Burn (see Figure 07 Landscape Development Framework). As such, receptors at this viewpoint are likely to be limited to workers and service personnel accessing the data centre compound from Tulloch Road. Workers are considered to be of low susceptibility to changes of the nature proposed, as they will be accustomed to the setting of the Proposed Development.

Road users passing the entrance at this viewpoint are similarly considered to be of low susceptibility to changes of the nature proposed, given the prevalence of energy transmission infrastructure along this section of the route; they will also be focused on navigating the tight bends at this point.

The value of the view is considered to be high / medium; it is an ordinary agricultural landscape with expansive views of distant hills, features of archaeological interest and diverse industrial elements. Road and recreational users are therefore considered to be of medium sensitivity to changes of the nature proposed.

Magnitude of change

- As a result of the Proposed Development:
  - During the construction phase, a high magnitude of change is predicted; construction works and machinery will be visible form the viewpoint across much of the view at all phases;
  - At year 1, a high magnitude of change is predicted; regardless of the construction phasing, the erection of any of the data centre halls or the auxiliary building will be clearly visible from the viewpoint, unless mitigation tree planting measures have begun along the eastern site boundary; and
  - At year 10, a high magnitude of change is predicted; the data centre halls will come to comprise a new horizon line across the width of the frame, bar where mitigation tree planting occupies the foreground and middle distance.

Predicted Effects

- As a result of the Proposed Development:
  - During the construction phase, major / moderate adverse effects are predicted;
  - At year 1, major / moderate adverse effects are predicted.
  - At year 10, major / moderate adverse effects are predicted.

8.5.2 Viewpoint 02: B925, southeast of proposed main access (see Figures 09a-09e)

This viewpoint is located on the B925 at the Campbell Place junction, on the western outskirts of Auchtertool. The photography was taken from the grass verge along the west side of Campbell Place, 8m south of the site boundary, at an altitude of 111m AOD. Due to the close proximity of the viewpoint location to the Promoted Site, two separate 53.5º planar projection baseline photographs / visualisations have been used to demonstrate the proposed visual changes (see Figure 09a). As such, Viewpoint 02a (see Figures 09b-09c) and Viewpoint 02b (see Figures 09d-09e) are assessed as a single panoramic view and must be referred to as such.

Existing View

The foreground is characterised by the road surface of the B925 and the grasses and low flowering shrubs along its northern edge. A large, unfenced arable field spans much of the width of the view to the middle distance; numerous low-voltage electricity pylons traverse it north-south. Some of these pylons breach the horizon line at the centre of the image, overlapping with more distant high-voltage pylons beyond the site to the north and northwest.

The horizon line is formed by a steep ridge which climbs abruptly at the northern extents of the arable field; this ridge travels east-west across the site, parallel to the Dronachy Burn. The ridge features areas of improved pastoral farmland, but is characterised principally by extensive gorse, other flowering shrub cover and occasional small trees.

Proposed View

The Proposed Development would result in the introduction of new hedging along the southern site boundary, which would screen the arable field from view; enhanced planting along the ridge beyond would form a more vegetated horizon line, screening some of the low-voltage pylons from this viewpoint. The upper storeys of the three easternmost data centre halls would partially breach the new treeline, although they would represent a small proportion of the image from this angle.

Sensitivity of Receptors

This viewpoint is located on Core Path R567, which travels along Campbell Place and then east into Auchtertool along the B925. Road users will be travelling at national speed limit, and the Proposed Development will be perpendicular to their direction of travel; while drivers and vehicle occupants are likely to be cognisant of changes in boundary vegetation, they are considered to be of low susceptibility to the changes proposed. Recreational users will be travelling at lower speeds and will have more time to observe the setting; they will, however, also be distracted by traffic moving in both directions along the B925 as they approach from the south. Recreational users are thus considered to be of medium / low susceptibility to changes of the nature proposed.

The value of the view is considered to be medium; it is an ordinary agricultural landscape with limited wider views to the north and no features of specific interest. Road users are therefore considered to be of medium / low sensitivity to changes of the nature proposed, where recreational users are considered to be of medium sensitivity.

Magnitude of change

- As a result of the Proposed Development:
  - During the construction phase, a low magnitude of change is predicted; construction works and machinery within the development area will likely be visible from the viewpoint, albeit seen in conjunction with numerous existing pylons and other overhead transmission lines;
  - At year 1, a medium / low magnitude of change is predicted; depending on the construction phasing, the three easternmost data centre halls may begin to enter the view, although existing vegetation, topography and energy transmission infrastructure will partially screen them;
  - At year 10, a medium / low magnitude of change is predicted; the three easternmost data centre halls will come to comprise a new horizon line amidst substantially increased tree and shrub cover across the width of the frame.

Predicted Effects

- As a result of the Proposed Development:
  - During the construction phase, minor adverse effects are predicted on all receptors;
  - At year 1 and year 10,
    - Minor adverse effects are predicted on road users; and
    - Moderate / minor adverse effects are predicted on recreational users.

8.5.3 Viewpoint 03: Access track to Little Raith Battery Storage plant (see Figures 10a-10e)

This viewpoint is located on the access track to the Little Raith Battery Storage plant, on the western edge of Tulloch Road. The photography was taken from the northern edge of the pastoral field which abuts the northern site boundary, 58m northwest of the site boundary, at an altitude of 142m AOD. Due to the close proximity of the viewpoint location to the Promoted Site, two separate 53.5º planar projection baseline photographs / visualisations have been used to demonstrate the proposed visual changes (see Figure 10a). As such, Viewpoint 03a (see Figures 10b-10c) and Viewpoint 03b (see Figures 10d-10e) are assessed as a single panoramic view and must be referred to as such.

Existing View

The foreground is characterised by gorse scrub and tall ruderal vegetation along the southern perimeter of the Little Raith Battery Storage compound. The field extends to the middle distance, where an over grown hedgerow now containing

mature deciduous trees line the north-eastern portion of the Proposed Development site boundary. An oval enclosure formed of wooden slat fencing sits within the field to the right of the middle distance.

Arable farmland and blocks of coniferous and deciduous woodlands form the horizon line to the southwest beyond the site boundary, which is visible at the centre and to the right of the frame amidst deciduous tree canopies. The Fife Ethylene Plant and Fife NGL Plant compound forms a portion of the horizon line to the extreme right of the frame, and several operational wind turbines breach the skyline beyond Pilkham Hills (189m AOD) to the southwest (two at Chemical Works Mossmorran, and one at both Goathill Quarry and Kirkton Farm) breach the skyline within this portion of the image.

Proposed View

The Proposed Development would result in the introduction of six data centre halls into the view. The two easternmost units are positioned on lower-lying land, and would breach the treeline at the centre of the image. The remaining four data centre halls would form a new horizon line to the right of the view, screening Pilkham Hills and intervening farmland from view, as well as partially screening the Fife Ethylene Plant and Fife NGL Plant compound and all but the blade tips of the previously mentioned wind developments from view. One of the buildings within the substation area to the west of the data centre halls may also be partially visible to the right of the view.

Sensitivity of Receptors

This viewpoint is located on close to Tulloch Road, and no core paths are located nearby; as such, recreational receptors are likely to be relatively few in number at this viewpoint. Road users are considered to be of medium susceptibility to changes of the nature proposed; drivers and vehicles occupants will be cognisant of the increase in built form and the screening of wider views from this viewpoint.

The value of the view is considered to be medium; it is an ordinary agricultural landscape with some wider views, which include wind energy infrastructure and a large industrial complex. Road users are therefore considered to be of medium sensitivity to changes of the nature proposed.

Magnitude of change

- As a result of the Proposed Development:
  - During the construction phase, a high / medium magnitude of change is predicted; construction works and machinery within the development area will be visible from the viewpoint from the centre to the right of the frame;
  - At year 1, a high magnitude of change is predicted; depending on the construction phasing, the data centre halls will begin to enter the view, although existing vegetation, will partially screen the two easternmost halls; and
  - At year 10, a high magnitude of change is predicted; the three easternmost data centre halls will come to comprise a new horizon line from the centre to the right of the frame.

Predicted Effects

- As a result of the Proposed Development:
  - During the construction phase, moderate adverse effects are predicted on road users; and
  - At year 1 and year 10, major / moderate adverse effects are predicted on road users.

8.5.4 Viewpoint 04: Main Street, Auchtertool (see Figures 11a-11c)

This viewpoint is located at the western end of Main Street within Auchtertool, adjacent to the entrance to Milton Park. The photography was taken from the northern pavement of Main Street, 131m east of the site boundary, at an altitude of 103m AOD.

Existing View

The foreground is characterised by the road surface of Fonthill Avenue where it branches off the B925 (Main Street); the south-western edge of the road is bounded by an overgrown stone wall and grassland surrounded by deciduous shrubs. A narrow pavement, low stone walls and boundary vegetation within gardens characterises the north-eastern edge of the route. Foxwell Cottage, a two-storey stone residence, occupies the central portion of the middle distance, and the terracotta tiled roofs and white gable ends of some homes within the Camilla Road estate are framed beyond it.

To the left of Foxwell Cottage, and beyond it to the northwest, mature deciduous tree canopies frame the gorse and hawthorn clad slopes of a steep ridge which travels east-west across the site boundary from north of the Camilla Road estate to the Walton East Clump coniferous plantation woodland. The highest point of this ridge is located just outwith the frame to the left of the centre, screened by tree canopies, and reaches approximately 134m AOD. As such, this relatively dramatic ridge has the effect of screening almost the entirety of the Proposed Development site from this viewpoint.

Proposed View

The Proposed Development would result in the introduction of a combination of retained and enhanced scrub planting across the ridge which is framed at the centre of the image. Upon reaching maturity, the proposed scrub would augment existing gorse and other flowering shrubs along the horizon line, which would complement the vegetation visible at present within and beyond gardens, and also along the south-western edge of Fonthill Avenue. Upon completion, glimpses of the new data centre buildings may be seen breaching the top of the ridge; however these are anticipated to be screened by mitigation planting as it nears maturity.

Sensitivity of Receptors

This viewpoint is located within a small-scale urban setting on the B925 (Main Street) / Core Path R495. Road users will be entering and exiting the village and the Proposed Development will be in their direction of travel when heading west out of the settlement. Residents and recreational users may be heading northwest along the R495 (which follows Fonthill Avenue) or westwards out of the settlement on Core Path R567. Given their proximity to the Proposed Development and the scale of the interventions proposed, all receptors are considered to be of high susceptibility to changes of the nature proposed.

The value of the view is considered to be high / medium; it is a relatively low-density urban landscape with some framed wider views of a vegetated ridge to the northwest. All receptors are therefore considered to be of high sensitivity to changes of the nature proposed.

Magnitude of change

- As a result of the Proposed Development:
  - During the construction phase, a low magnitude of change is predicted; construction works and machinery within the development area will be almost entirely screened by the intervening topography of the ridge at the centre of the frame. Depending on the phasing of mitigation planting measures, some machinery and construction activity may be visible along the ridge within the frame, although this will be temporary and sporadic;

- At year 1, a low magnitude of change is predicted; mitigation planting will begin emerging depending along the ridge within the frame, gradually increasing the density and height of vegetation cover; and
- At year 10, a negligible magnitude of change is predicted; once mitigation planting approaches maturity, the backdrop to the view will feature an observable increase in woodland cover.

Predicted Effects

- As a result of the Proposed Development:
  - During the construction phase, moderate / minor adverse effects are predicted on residents, recreational and road users; and
  - At year 1, moderate / minor adverse effects are predicted on residents, recreational and road users; and
  - At year 10, negligible effects are predicted on residents, recreational and road users; a slight increase in woodland cover may occur from this viewpoint, however this is likely to be perceived as beneficial by most receptors.

8.5.5 Viewpoint 05: Core Path R493 at Camilla Loch (see Figures 12a-12c)

This viewpoint is located on Core Path R493, on the eastern shores of Loch Camilla. The photography was taken from the grassy footpath which traces the eastern and south-eastern edge of the loch, 600m northeast of the site boundary, at an altitude of 110m AOD.

Existing View

The foreground is characterised by the grassland along the north-eastern edge of Camilla Loch and the littoral vegetation within the loch. A steep ridge rises along the entire eastern perimeter of the loch, from close to the water's edge, climbing to form the horizon line at the left of the frame. The ridge is covered in dense gorse and other deciduous shrubs. The surface of the loch comprises the right of the image up to the middle distance, where a distinctive double peak rises above its western shores, the summits and slopes of which are dominated by gorse cover. To the right and left of these minor conjoined summits, the hub and blade tips of several operational wind turbines are visible; a number of the Little Raith windfarm turbines appear to the right, whilst the Chemical Works Mossmorran, Goathill Quarry and Kirkton Farm turbines breach the skyline within the left-hand portion of the frame. Numerous chimney stacks and structures within the Fife Ethylene Plant and Fife NGL Plant compound are visible at the centre of the view.

Proposed View

The Proposed Development would result in an increase in tree cover across the entire centre of the image upon maturity; the entire eastern perimeter of the Proposed Development site would come to feature new, retained and enhanced tree planting. A portion of the easternmost data centre hall would be visible amidst emerging woodland, directly below the northernmost of the two wind turbines within the Chemical Works Mossmorran grouping. The mitigation planting would have the effect of partially screening the Fife Ethylene Plant and Fife NGL Plant compound, resulting in their prominence being decreased from this viewpoint.

Sensitivity of Receptors

Recreational receptors will be at this viewpoint location to appreciate the scenery of Camilla Loch and its environs, and as such are considered to be of high / medium susceptibility to changes of the nature proposed.

The value of the view is considered to be high / medium; the setting of the loch is picturesque views contain little built form to detract from this, bar some vertical elements such as distant industrial towers and wind turbines, which act as local landmarks. Recreational receptors are therefore considered to be of high / medium sensitivity to changes of the nature proposed.

Magnitude of change

- As a result of the Proposed Development:
  - During the construction phase, a low or negligible magnitude of change is predicted; construction works and machinery within the development area are likely to be heavily screened by the intervening woodland and topography at the centre of the frame. Depending on the phasing of mitigation planting measures, some machinery and construction activity may be visible to the left and right of this point, but the effects of this are predicted to be greatly reduced by the intervening distance. Where visible, construction machinery would be seen in the context of existing industrial elements;
  - At year 1, a low magnitude of change is predicted; mitigation planting will begin emerging depending along the eastern site perimeter and will begin to merge with the existing vegetation to the left of the centre; and
  - At year 10, a medium / low magnitude of change is predicted; once mitigation planting approaches maturity, the backdrop to the view will feature an observable increase in woodland cover.

Predicted Effects

- As a result of the Proposed Development:
  - During the construction phase, moderate / minor adverse or negligible effects are predicted on recreational users; and
  - At year 1, moderate / minor adverse effects are predicted on recreational users; and
  - At year 10, moderate neutral or beneficial effects are predicted overall on recreational users. While an increase in built form is predicted to occur from this viewpoint, mitigation planting measures will also serve to screen the existing Fife Ethylene Plant and Fife NGL Plant compound from this viewpoint.

8.5.6 Viewpoint 06: Core Path R497 at eastern end of Little Raith windfarm (see Figures 13a-13c)

This viewpoint is located on Core Path R497, approximately 180m northeast of the easternmost service area for one of the Little Raith windfarm turbines. The photography was taken from the track, 705m northwest of the site boundary, at an altitude of 133m AOD.

Existing View

The foreground is characterised by the smooth gravel surface of the access track / core path and the post-and-wire fence which bounds a large, improved pastoral field which extends to the middle distance. The field contains improved pasture with substantial areas of soft rush, and currently being grazed by sheep; its eastern edge to the left of the frame contains dense stands of gorse.

Two high-voltage electricity lines traverse the view; both run north from Mossmorran Substation, which is located outwith the frame approximately 340m south of the viewpoint location. These lines are borne by large pylons, several of which form the horizon line throughout the width of the frame. Beneath them, a numerous low-voltage electricity poles carry lines northeast between Mossmorran Substation and Glenniston Substation. To the left of the view, a small block of coniferous woodland extends southwards from the track; Little Raith Farm lies beyond to the east and is fully screened by this woodland.

The horizon line to the right of the view is made up of two blocks of coniferous woodland which appear contiguous from this viewpoint but are in fact separate. The Walton East Strip travels along the south-western banks of the Dronachy Burn on

the north-western site boundary; slightly further south the Walton East Clump extends southwest up Raith Hill (169m AOD). The remainder of the horizon line is comprised predominantly of arable farmland extending southwards from Little Raith Farm to the northern boundary of the Proposed Development site. The Firth of Forth occupies the uppermost portion of the horizon line of the view.

Proposed View

The Proposed Development would result in the introduction of four of the six data centre halls and the auxiliary building to the south into the centre of the view. The data centre halls would rise to screen the majority of the Firth of Forth from view, although they would remain noticeably below the surrounding high-voltage electricity pylons which traverse the image.

The data centre halls would be prominent features within the central portion of the image. The retained and enhanced planting along the northern site boundary, and the proposed new tree planting on the north-western site boundary to the south of the Dronachy Burn would create an impression of contiguous woodland from the centre to the right of the frame. Both of the buildings within the substation area to the west of the data centre halls will be visible surrounded by transformer infrastructure at the centre of the view.

Sensitivity of Receptors

Recreational receptors will be at this viewpoint location to appreciate the views out over the surrounding landscape from Core Path R497. Views from this location contain many overlapping layers of electricity transmission infrastructure, and the Fife Ethylene Plant and Fife NGL Plant compound is a dominant feature just outwith the view (approximately 820m south of the viewpoint location). The Little Raith windfarm is also adjacent to the viewpoint location; this array features nine turbines of 126m to tip height. Road and recreational users are thus considered to be of medium / low susceptibility to changes of the nature proposed; receptors would be accustomed to seeing large-scale energy transmission and production features, as well as industrial elements in views in all directions from this location.

The value of the view is considered to be medium; it is an agricultural landscape with distant views of the Firth of Forth and across the Cullaloe Hills and Coast LLA. The view is, however, overlaid with an extensive array of high and low-voltage energy transmission cabling and pylons, which somewhat depletes the value of the view.

Road and recreational receptors are therefore considered to be of medium sensitivity to changes of the nature proposed.

Magnitude of change

- As a result of the Proposed Development:
  - During the construction phase, a medium magnitude of change is predicted; cranes and large construction machinery within the development area are likely to be partially visible throughout all stages;
  - At year 1, a high / medium magnitude of change is predicted; depending on the final construction phasing of the project, all or part of the four data centre halls outlined above may begin to enter the view. Mitigation planting will begin emerging along the northern and north-western sections of the site perimeter and will begin to merge visually with the existing vegetation to the right of the view; and
  - At year 10, a high / medium magnitude of change is predicted; the four westernmost data centre halls and the auxiliary building to the south will come to comprise a new horizon line at the centre of the frame. Once mitigation planting approaches maturity, the westernmost data centre unit will be viewed as set within contiguous woodland stretching southwest across the frame.

Predicted Effects

- As a result of the Proposed Development:
  - During the construction phase, minor adverse effects are predicted on road and recreational users; and
  - At year 1, moderate adverse effects are predicted on road and recreational users; and
  - At year 10, moderate adverse effects are predicted overall on road and recreational users. Due to the widespread presence of industrial and electricity infrastructure within the view, the most likely adverse effect for most recreational users is likely to be the screening of views to the Firth of Forth from this location.

8.5.7 Viewpoint 07: Core Path R571 east of Auchtertool (see Figures 14a-14c)

This viewpoint is located on Core Path R571, just south of the B925 (Boglily Road), approximately 630m east of Auchtertool. The photography was taken from the track, 1,349m east of the site boundary, at an altitude of 87m AOD.

Existing View

The foreground is characterised by gorse and hawthorn scrub along the western edge of Core Path R571; the topography slopes downwards in this direction beyond the vegetation. The middle distance is comprised of arable farmland to the north and south of the B925, which is visible intermittently across the image as it bears northwest into Newbigging (Auchtertool).

An earth bund covered by hawthorn dominated scrub woodland extends northeast from the northern outskirts of Auchtertool to towards New Cottoun cottage which is located just out of the frame. Newbigging is indistinguishable from Auchtertool to the left of the middle distance; the brown and white façades of the one and two-storey units of the settlements extend west along the lower northern slopes of Castle Hill (131m AOD). The hubs, most of the turbine blades and part of the towers of all nine turbines within the Little Raith windfarm breach the ridgeline northwest of Auchtertool, which traverses the Proposed Development site east-west along the Dronachy Burn. To the left of the image, two chimney stacks within the Fife Ethylene Plant and Fife NGL Plant compound breach the ridgeline.

Proposed View

The Proposed Development would result in the introduction of the auxiliary building and varying proportions of the upper storeys of all six of the data centre halls into the centre of the view. The flat roofs of the data centre halls would partially constitute a new horizon line, although the Little Raith windfarm would still constitute the highest elements within the frame. The new and enhanced tree planting across the centre and along the eastern perimeter of the site would substantially increase the proportion of woodland along the ridgeline from this viewpoint. Both the data centre halls and the new tree planting would partially screen the lower sections of all nine of the Little Raith turbines, thereby reducing their prominence within the view.

Sensitivity of Receptors

Recreational receptors will be at this viewpoint location to appreciate the views out over the surrounding landscape from Core Path R571; the elevated position of the viewpoint permits wider views in an arc from the southwest to the northwest, encompassing the site boundary. Views from this location contain settlement, a minor road, energy production and transmission infrastructure and distant partial views of an industrial complex.

Road users on the nearby B925 are thus considered to be of low susceptibility to changes of the nature proposed; drivers and vehicles occupants would be accustomed to seeing a diverse range of human-made features within the predominantly agricultural setting of Auchtertool. Recreational users are likely to pause at this viewpoint to take in the scenery before

continuing into Auchtertool or east towards Kirkcaldy. As such, they are considered to be of medium susceptibility to changes of the nature proposed, as they will be travelling at lower speeds and will have more time to appreciate views.

The value of the view is considered to be medium; it is an ordinary agricultural landscape which features built form and energy development, and has no specific designations.

Road users are therefore considered to be of medium / low sensitivity to changes of the nature proposed, where recreational users are considered to be of medium sensitivity.

Magnitude of change

- As a result of the Proposed Development:
  - During the construction phase, a low magnitude of change is predicted; cranes and large construction machinery within the development area are likely to be partially visible throughout all stages, although existing vegetation and topography will mitigate this to some extent;
  - At year 1, a medium magnitude of change is predicted; depending on the final construction phasing of the project, all or part of all six data centre halls and the upper portion of the auxiliary building may begin to enter the view. Mitigation planting will begin emerging along the southern and western sections of the site perimeter and will begin to merge visually with the existing vegetation across the centre of the view; and
  - At year 10, a medium magnitude of change is predicted; all six of the data centre halls and the upper portion of the auxiliary building to the south will come to comprise a new horizon line at the centre of the frame. Once mitigation planting approaches maturity, the Proposed Development would comprise a more developed ridgeline. The data centre halls and associated mitigation planting would also offset the visual impact of the operational Little Raith windfarm by partially screening the lower portions of the turbines from this viewpoint.

Predicted Effects

- As a result of the Proposed Development:
  - During the construction phase, minor adverse effects are predicted on road and recreational users; and
  - At year 1,
    - Moderate / minor adverse effects are predicted on road users; and
    - Moderate adverse effects are predicted on recreational users;
  - At year 10,
    - Moderate / minor adverse effects are predicted on road users; and
    - Moderate adverse effects are predicted on recreational users.

8.5.8 Viewpoint 08: Core Path R567 northeast of Bankhead (see Figures 15a-15c)

This viewpoint is located on Core Path R567 / Campbell Place, approximately 206m northeast of Bankhead farm steading. The photography was taken from the grass verge along the northern edge of the road, 1,508m southwest of the site boundary, at an altitude of 147m AOD.

Existing View

The foreground is characterised by the road surface of Campbell Place and the dense flowering grasses and hedgerows along its eastern and western edges. The eastern hedgerow rises to the horizon line at the right of the view, and screens much of the lower portion of the right-hand side of the frame.

The Category C-Listed Auchtertool Parish Church is a focal point to the left of the centre of the middle distance, surrounded by dense deciduous woodland on the south-eastern slopes of Raith Hill (169m AOD). The scrub and gorse-dominated pastoral land which climbs to the northeast beyond the Proposed Development site indicates the approximate location of the site, as few other features indicate this from this viewpoint. The three turbines with the Clentrie Farm windfarm are fully visible to the right of the centre of the view, their tower, turbine hubs and blades either fully or partially visible above the Haughbrae / Target Ancient Woodland beyond to the northeast.

The horizon line is characterised by two major summits within the Lomond Hills Regional Park and Lomond Hills Local Landscape Area: East Lomond (448m AOD) rises to prominence slightly to the left of Auchtertool Parish Church, and West Lomond (522m AOD) is noticeably larger at the extreme left-hand side of the image.

Proposed View

The Proposed Development would result in the introduction of portions of the upper storeys of a small number of the proposed data centre halls into the centre of the view. The flat roofs of the data centre halls and their pale cladding would result in them contrasting with intervening woodland which would partially screen them and the bold yellow tones of the gorse on the hillside beyond the site. The increase in built form would be noticeable from this viewpoint, primarily because the settlement of Auchtertool is screened by intervening topography and vegetation from this vantage. The new and enhanced tree planting along the western site boundary and parallel to the Dronachy Burn would result in an observable increase in woodland cover at the centre of the frame. This would serve the dual purpose of creating a more contiguous appearance of woodland within the view, as well as more effectively embedding the proposed data centre halls into the setting.

Sensitivity of Receptors

Recreational receptors will be at this viewpoint location to appreciate the panoramic views out over the surrounding landscape from Core Path R567. Views from this location contain very little settlement, with some wind energy development and glimpses of chimney stacks within the Fife Ethylene Plant and Fife NGL Plant compound to the northwest. Road and recreational users are thus considered to be of high susceptibility to changes of the nature proposed.

The value of the view is considered to be high / medium; it is an agricultural landscape within a LLA which permits wider views to regionally important summits within designated landscapes to the northeast.

Road and recreational users are therefore considered to be of high sensitivity to changes of the nature proposed.

Magnitude of change

- As a result of the Proposed Development:
  - During the construction phase, a low or negligible magnitude of change is predicted; cranes and large construction machinery within the development area may be visible sporadically throughout all stages, although existing vegetation and topography will mitigate this to some extent;
  - At year 1, a low magnitude of change is predicted; depending on the final construction phasing of the project, the upper storeys of a number of the proposed data centre halls may begin to enter the view; and
  - At year 10, a low magnitude of change is predicted; the upper storeys of some of the proposed data centre halls will enter the centre of the view, combined with an observable increase in woodland cover.

Predicted Effects

As a result of the Proposed Development moderate / minor adverse effects are predicted across all stages.

9.0 Summary and Conclusions

The above assessment relates to a proposed data centre development within a site covering an area of approximately 68.6ha on the north-western outskirts of Auchtertool, Fife. The proposals include a development area of 24.4ha, landscape mitigation proposals within the remaining 43.95ha, and a small exclusion area of approximately 0.25ha within the site boundary. The proposed mitigation measures included within the development proposals are outlined in Section 6.0 and are shown on the Landscape Development Framework which accompanies this appraisal (see Figure 07).

The assessment considered likely effects on landscape and visual resources and determined the extent of residual effects following assumed successful implementation of the proposed landscape measures at year 10 of growth.

9.1 Landscape Effects

The assessment of effects on landscape fabric and character found that there would be moderate adverse residual effects on the landscape resources within the site boundary, and moderate neutral residual effects on local landscape character.

Residual effects on LCT 186: Lowland Hills and Valleys were found to be moderate / minor, direct adverse within the study area and minor, direct adverse within the wider LCT. Residual effects on LCT 185: Pronounced Hills and Crags and Cullaloe Hills and Coast LLA were found to be moderate, direct adverse within the study area and minor direct adverse within the wider designations. Residual effects on LCT 191: Lowland Loch Basins – Fife were found to be moderate, indirect adverse within the study area and minor, indirect adverse within the wider LCT.

Residual effects on the Cullaloe Hills and Coast LLA were found to be moderate, indirect and adverse within the study area and minor, indirect and adverse within the wider LLA.

The Proposed Development would result in the loss of approximately 24.4ha of arable farmland within the northern portion of the study area, predominantly north of the Dronachy Burn. The proposed mitigation planting and flood management measures would extend across the entire 43.95ha outwith the development area, with 29.6ha of specific interventions including retained, enhanced and new tree planting, new meadow, scrub and hedge planting, as well as new semi-mature tree planting and three SuDS / flood management areas.

The considered mitigation strategy has been designed to improve and contribute to the local landscape character of the area, whilst also screening or filtering views towards the Proposed Development, providing an attractive, robust, and defensible landscape boundary treatment that increases overall biodiversity value.

Table 2 summarises the assessment of effects on landscape character and resources identified in the foregoing assessment.

Table 2 – Summary of Predicted effects on Landscape Receptors within the Study Area

Name of Receptor	Predicted Effect – Construction stage	Predicted Effect – Year 1	Predicted Effect – Year 10
Landscape resources within the site boundary	Major / moderate adverse	Major / moderate adverse	Moderate adverse
Local landscape character	Major / moderate adverse	Major / moderate adverse	Moderate adverse
LCT 186: Lowland Hills and Valleys	• Moderate, direct adverse within the LCT in the study area; and • Minor direct adverse within the wider LCT	• Moderate, direct adverse within the LCT in the study area; and • Minor direct adverse within the wider LCT	• Moderate / minor, direct adverse within the LCT in the study area; and • Minor direct adverse within the wider LCT
LCT 185: Pronounced Hills and Crags	• Major / moderate, direct adverse within the LCT in the study area; and • Minor direct adverse within the wider LCT	• Major / moderate, direct adverse within the LCT in the study area; and • Minor direct adverse within the wider LCT	• Moderate, direct adverse within the LCT in the study area; and • Minor direct adverse within the wider LCT
LCT 191: Lowland Loch Basins - Fife	• Moderate, indirect adverse within the LCT in the study area; and • Minor indirect adverse within the wider LCT	• Major / moderate, indirect adverse within the LCT in the study area; and • Minor indirect adverse within the wider LCT	• Moderate, indirect adverse within the LCT in the study area; and • Minor, indirect adverse within the wider LCT
Cullaloe Hills and Coast LLA	• Major / moderate, indirect adverse within the LLA in the study area; and Minor indirect adverse within the wider LLA	• Major / moderate, indirect adverse within the LLA in the study area; and Minor indirect adverse within the wider LLA	• Moderate, indirect adverse within the LLA in the study area; and Minor, indirect adverse within the wider LLA

9.2 Visual Effects

Several transport routes with the potential to experience major / moderate effects as a result of the Proposed Development site were assessed. Residual effects upon road users of the B925 were considered to be minor neutral or beneficial. Residual effects on road users of Fonthill Avenue / Tulloch Road were considered to be moderate adverse, whilst those on Campbell Place were found to be moderate / minor adverse or neutral. Six core paths representative of the entire study area were assessed, with only Core Path R496 predicted to experience major / moderate adverse residual effects, as a result of the close proximity of the Proposed Development to the route.

Eight viewpoints were formally assessed, with predominantly moderate adverse residual effects predicted. Auchtertool / Newbigging were assessed as a single settlement, being the only settlements within the study area. Tables 2-4 below summarise the visual effects on the settlements, sequential routes and viewpoints within this appraisal.

Table 2 – Summary of Predicted Residual Effects on Settlements

Name of Route	Predicted Effect – Construction stage	Predicted Effect – Year 1	Predicted Effect – Year 10
Auchtertool / Newbigging	Moderate / minor adverse	Moderate / minor adverse	Moderate / minor neutral or beneficial

Table 3 below summarises the visual effects on each of the sequential routes considered in the foregoing assessment.

Table 3 – Smmary of Predicted Residual Effects on Sequential Routes

Name of Route	Predicted Effect – Construction stage	Predicted Effect – Year 1	Predicted Effect – Year 10
B925 (Main Street)	Moderate / minor adverse	Moderate / minor adverse	Minor neutral or beneficial
Fonthill Avenue / Tulloch Road	Moderate adverse	Moderate adverse	Moderate adverse
Campbell Place	Moderate adverse	Moderate adverse	Moderate / minor adverse or neutral
Core Path R496	Major adverse	Major adverse	Major / moderate adverse
Core Path R493	Major / moderate adverse	Major / moderate adverse	Moderate neutral or beneficial
Core Path R566 / R567	Major / moderate adverse	Moderate adverse	Moderate adverse or neutral
Core Path R491 / R494	Minor adverse or negligible	Minor adverse or neutral	Moderate / minor adverse or neutral
Core Path R497	Moderate / minor adverse	Moderate adverse	Moderate adverse
Core Paths R570/R569/R824	Moderate / minor adverse or negligible	Moderate / minor adverse	Moderate / minor adverse or neutral

Table 4 below summarises the visual effects on each of the representative viewpoints considered in the foregoing assessment.

Table 4 - Summary of Effects on Representative Viewpoints

No.	Viewpoint name	Predicted Effect – Construction stage	Predicted Effect – Year 1	Predicted Effect – Year 10
01	Tulloch Road, southeast of Camilla Battery Storage plant	Major / moderate adverse	Major / moderate adverse	Major / moderate adverse
02	B925, southeast of proposed main access	Minor adverse on road and recreational users	▪ Minor adverse effects on road users; and ▪ Moderate / minor adverse on recreational users	▪ Minor adverse effects on road users; and ▪ Moderate / minor adverse on recreational users
03	Access track to Little Raith Battery Storage plant	Moderate adverse	Major / moderate adverse	Major / moderate adverse
04	Main Street, Auchtertool	Moderate / minor adverse	Moderate / minor adverse	Negligible
05	Core Path R493 at Camilla Loch	Moderate / minor adverse or negligible	Moderate / minor adverse	Moderate neutral or beneficial
06	Core Path R497 at eastern end of Little Raith windfarm	Minor adverse	Moderate adverse	Moderate adverse
07	Core Path R571 east of Auchtertool	Minor adverse on road and recreational users	▪ Moderate / minor adverse on road users; and ▪ Moderate adverse effects on recreational users	▪ Moderate / minor adverse on road users; and Moderate adverse effects on recreational users
08	Core Path R567 northeast of Bankhead	Moderate / minor adverse	Moderate / minor adverse	Moderate / minor adverse

9.3 Conclusion

Moderate adverse residual landscape effects are predicted within the site boundary due to the increase in industrial built form within the development area. Whilst the Proposed Development is likely to cause a change in character to the immediate surrounding area, it is considered to also have the potential to integrate well within the surrounding wider landscape from many locations, particularly given existing industrial elements within the surrounding landscape. The Proposed Development has the potential to contribute beneficially to the local landscape structure through the provision of new tree, meadow, scrub and hedge planting, as well as three new SuDS / wetlands features.

The layout of the Proposed Development has been carefully considered, and iterated to minimise landscape and visual effects. It is therefore our professional opinion that the Proposed Development site is suitable for data centre development, providing the mitigation measures outlined are adhered to.

10.0 References

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Appendix A Legislation, Policy and Guidance

Introduction

This appendix provides a summary of the planning policies relevant to the Proposed Development site and landscape and visual amenity only.

National Planning Context

Fourth National Planning Framework (NPF4)

NPF4 sets out national policies which reflect the Scottish Government's priorities for operation of the planning system and for the development and use of land. The following elements of NPF4 are considered particularly relevant to the Proposed Development in the context of this LVA:

- Part 1 – National Spatial Strategy, which states that "*Planning is a powerful tool for delivering change on the ground in a way which brings together competing interests so that decisions reflect the long-term public interest. Past, present and future challenges mean that we will need to make the right choices about where development should be located. We also need to be clear about the types of infrastructure we will need to build, and the assets that should be protected to ensure they continue to benefit future generations.*

  Spatial principles

  We will plan our future places in line with six overarching spatial principles:

- ***Just transition**. We will empower people to shape their places and ensure the transition to net zero is fair and inclusive.*
- ***Conserving and recycling assets**. We will make productive use of existing buildings, places, infrastructure and services, locking in carbon, minimising waste, and building a circular economy.*
- ***Local living**. We will support local liveability and improve community health and wellbeing by ensuring people can easily access services, greenspace, learning, work and leisure locally.*
- ***Compact urban growth**. We will limit urban expansion so we can optimise the use of land to provide services and resources, including carbon storage, flood risk management, blue and green infrastructure and biodiversity.*
- ***Rebalanced development**. We will target development to create opportunities for communities and investment in areas of past decline, and manage development sustainably in areas of high demand.*
- ***Rural revitalisation**. We will encourage sustainable development in rural areas, recognising the need to grow and support urban and rural communities together.*

These principles will play a key role in delivering on the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and our national outcomes."

NPF4 highlights the need for a collaborative approach to planning and development, where environmental considerations are clearly prioritised:

- Part 1 – National Spatial Strategy, which states that "*Applying these principles in practice. We want our future places to work for everyone. Rather than compromise or trade-offs between environmental, social and economic objectives, this is an integrated strategy to bring together cross-cutting priorities and achieve sustainable development.*

  By applying these spatial principles, our national spatial strategy will support the planning and delivery of:

  - ***sustainable places**, where we reduce emissions, restore and better connect biodiversity;*
  - ***liveable places**, where we can all live better, healthier lives; and*
  - ***productive places**, where we have a greener, fairer and more inclusive wellbeing economy."*

NPF4 expands on many areas previously developed within NPF3, such as the renewable energy sector. As such it is of interest to highlight:

*"**Local Development Plans:***

NPF4 expands on many areas previously developed within NPF3, such as the renewable energy sector. As such it is of interest to highlight:

Regional Planning Context

The study area falls within the South East Scotland regional planning context. However, The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 removes the need for the preparation of Strategic Development Plans. Strategic planning matters are set out in the National Planning Framework 4, which is detailed above and replaces the need for the South East Scotland Strategic Development Plan (SESplan).

Local Planning Context

FIFEPlan (2017)

Fife Council Local Development Plan (LDP) - FIFEPlan

Adopted in 2017, Fife Council Local Development Plan (LDP) - FifePlan (Fife Council, 2017) sets out the intended policies and proposals for land use in the region until 2027. A new LDP is currently being produced by Fife Council.

The following planning policy are considered to be of relevance to the Proposed Development. Reference is made to Scottish Planning Policy, which has since been superseded by NPF4, though in the interim until the new FifePlan is approved the goals outlined below are assumed to be relevant.

'Policy 3 – Infrastructure and Services

Infrastructure Delivery

Development must be designed and implemented in a manner that ensures it delivers the required level of infrastructure and functions in a sustainable manner. Where necessary and appropriate as a direct consequence of the development or as a consequence of cumulative impact of development in the area, development proposals must incorporate measures to ensure that they will be served by adequate infrastructure and services. Such infrastructure and services may include:

1. local transport and safe access routes which link with existing networks, including for walking and cycling, utilising the guidance in Making Fife's Places Supplementary Guidance;

2. foul and surface water drainage, including Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS);

3. measures that implement the waste management hierarchy as defined in the Zero Waste Plan for Scotland including the provision of local recycling facilities;

4. green infrastructure complying with specific green infrastructure and green network requirements contained in the Making Fife's Places Supplementary Guidance and settlement proposals;

5. information communication technology (ICT) and high speed broadband connections;

6. low and zero carbon generating technologies in accordance with Policy 11 Low Carbon Fife; and

7. Measures incorporated in development proposals in accordance with this policy must include a timetable for delivery of the identified infrastructure and services.

Where these infrastructure and services requirements require a maintenance agreement, these will be agreed prior to the commencement of the development.' (Fife Council, 2017).

Other Guidance

NatureScot (formerly Scottish Natural Heritage)

NatureScot is charged with the responsibility of advising the Scottish Government and local authorities on matters relating to natural heritage. NatureScot have developed an online dataset which has been used within this assessment as the most recent iteration of Landscape Character Assessment (LCAs) for Scotland (SNH, 2019).

Visual Representation of Wind Farms (Version 2.2) (NatureScot, 2017)

The guidance includes a comprehensive description of ZTV mapping, including its uses and limitations. It includes guidance on viewpoints and their selection and siting as part of an LVIA. All ZTVs prepared in support of this LVIA have been produced in accordance with this guidance.

Visual representation of development proposals (Landscape Institute, 2019)

This guidance builds on principles outlined within the Third Edition of the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA3) (Landscape Institute in association with the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013) and is aimed at helping landscape architects, planning officers and other stakeholders select a proportionate type of visualisation to meet the circumstances in which they will be used.

Appendix B Assessment Methodology

Introduction

This Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) has been prepared with reference to the Third Edition of the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA3) (Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013).

The purpose of this appraisal is to consider potential changes resulting from the promoted site on landscape character and visual amenity. Although, there is no requirement for a formal Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), this appraisal has been prepared with reference to GLVIA3 (Landscape Institute in association with the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013) and the GLVIA Statement of Clarification 4 (January 2013), which provides guidance on the terminology to be used in non-EIA Landscape and Visual Appraisals, such as:

"In carrying out appraisals the same principles and process as LVIA may be applied but, in doing so, it is not required to establish whether the effects arising are or are not significant given that the exercise is not being undertaken for EIA purposes. The reason is that should a landscape professional apply LVIA principles and processes carrying out an appraisal and then go on to determine that certain effects would likely be significant, given the term 'significant' is enshrined in EIA regulations, such a judgement could trigger the requirement for a formal EIA. The emphasis on likely 'significant effects' in formal LVIA stresses the need for an approach that is proportional to the scale of the project that is being assessed and the nature of its likely effects. The same principle – focussing on a proportional approach – also applies to appraisals of landscape and visual impacts outside the formal requirements of EIA."

In line with the guidance, the terms "significant" and "not significant" are not used. Instead, the landscape assessment considers proposed changes in terms of being "adverse" or "beneficial" on the baseline landscape resource, whilst the visual assessment focusses upon changes resulting from the promoted site on visual amenity.

Assessment Procedures

Landscape assessment and visual impact assessments are separate, though linked, procedures. Assessment of likely effects on the landscape considers the potential for effects on the environmental resource (i.e. the landscape), whereas assessment of likely visual effects considers the potential for inter-related effects on visual receptors.

Landscape effects derive from changes in the physical landscape which may give rise to changes in its character and how this is experienced, including consideration of landscape perception, which may in turn affect the perceived value ascribed to the landscape. Visual effects meanwhile relate to changes that arise in the composition of available views as a result of changes: to the landscape; to people's responses to the changes; and to the overall effects with respect to visual amenity.

The assessments of landscape and visual effects are presented separately within the LVA.

Relevant Terminology

Key terms and definitions used in the assessment, as provided in (GLVIA3), are listed below.

- Direct effects are those directly to the promoted site;
- Indirect effects are those resulting indirectly from the promoted site as a consequence of the direct effects, often occurring away from the site, or as a result of a sequence of interrelationships or a complex pathway. They may be separated by distance or in time from the source of the effects;
- Landscape capacity is the degree to which a particular Landscape Character Type (LCT) or area is able to accommodate change without unacceptable effects on its character. Capacity varies according to the type and nature of the change being imposed, and will reflect both the sensitivity of the landscape resource and its visual sensitivity;
- Landscape character is the distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occurs consistently in a particular type of landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse;
- Landscape quality (or condition) is a measure of the physical state of the landscape. It may include the extent to which typical character is represented in individual areas, the intactness of the landscape from visual, functional, and ecological perspectives and the condition of individual elements;
- Landscape receptors are aspects of the landscape resource that have the potential to be affected by the promoted site;
- Landscape value is the relative value or importance attached to different landscapes by society. A landscape may be valued by different stakeholders for a variety of reasons (often as a basis for designation or recognition), because of its quality, special features including perceptual aspects such as scenic beauty, tranquillity or wildness, cultural associations or other conservation issues;
- Magnitude (of change) combines judgements about the size and scale of the potential effect, the extent of the area over which it occurs, whether it is reversible or irreversible and whether it is short or long term in duration;
- Residual effects are those attributable to the promoted site following assessment of any proposed design mitigation / enhancements;
- Sensitivity is related to the specific receptors' (landscape or visual) vulnerability to change. Sensitivity is assessed by combining judgements of the susceptibility of the receptor to the specific type of change or development proposed and the value related to that receptor. Viewpoint sensitivity depends on the context of the viewpoint, its importance, the current occupation and viewing opportunity of the people and groups of people being considered, and the number of people affected;
- Visual amenity refers to the overall pleasantness of views enjoyed by people of their surroundings or to the visual setting or backdrop to the activities they enjoy whilst living, working, recreating, visiting or travelling through an area; and
- Visual receptors are individuals and / or groups of people who have the potential to be affected by the promoted site.

Key Steps in the Methodology

The key steps in the methodology were as follows:

- Preliminary desk study of the baseline landscape and visual characteristics of the site and the 2km study area, including production of Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) mapping, through the use of computer modelling to visualise the potential visibility pattern;
- Identification of landscape and visual receptors with potential to experience significant effects as a result of the promoted site;
- Selection of viewpoints across the ZTV to best represent the range of views and types of receptors likely to be affected by the promoted site;
- Identification of planning policy of relevance to landscape character and visual amenity;
- Site visit to the promoted site and wider study area to aid assessment of effects upon key receptors;
- Description of the relevant landscape character types present in the study area taking into account: key characteristics and value (including landscape designations); landform; settlement pattern; distinguishing features (such as vegetation and land cover); nature of views available; and setting;
- Production of visualisations of the promoted site from various viewpoints;
- Prediction of likely effects on landscape resources and visual amenity resulting from the promoted site ;
- Identification of measures to mitigate potential impacts attributable to the promoted site;
- Evaluation of magnitude of change upon landscape receptors in the study area with the potential to experience significant effects. Prediction of the magnitude of change in visual amenity as perceived from each viewpoint and identified visual receptors; and

- Evaluation of the residual effects (assuming the identified mitigation measures are adopted) upon identified landscape and visual receptors.

Findings of desk and field-based research, and initial assessment have been fed into the design evolution in order to develop the best possible proposal for the promoted site.

Baseline

Landscape and visual effects are considered against the baseline situation at the time of the assessment, unless otherwise stated.

Assessment of Sensitivity, Magnitude of Change and Level of Effects

The assessment of landscape and visual effects is typically based on three stages:

- Classification of the sensitivity of the landscape and visual receptors to the promoted site;
- Prediction of the magnitude of change in the landscape or the view; and
- Evaluation of the level of landscape and visual effects depending on the sensitivity of the landscape or viewer to change and the magnitude of change resulting from the promoted site.

Sensitivity / Importance of Landscape and Visual Receptors

The sensitivity of a receptor is considered to be a combination of its susceptibility to the type of change proposed and the value attached to the receptor.

The susceptibility of a landscape receptor is judged on the extent to which the landscape can accommodate change without effects upon its key characteristics. Susceptibility varies according to the type of development proposed, including whether it will have direct or indirect effects on the landscape, and the landscape's:

- Individual elements;
- Key characteristics; and
- Inherent quality or condition.

- The proximity of the promoted site has no bearing on the susceptibility of a landscape receptor.

The table below defines landscape susceptibility.

Table 1 - Landscape Receptor Susceptibility

Landscape Receptor Susceptibility	Definition
Very high	Landscape receptors with key characteristics that are very highly vulnerable to the type of development / change proposed. For example, wildland areas where there is no or very little evidence of man. Typically, these are defined by low-scale, naturalistic elements where no or limited human-made features are present. Often, no turbines are present within the landscape. Very high susceptibility is considered where the promoted site may have direct effects upon the landscape.
High	Landscape receptors with key characteristics that are highly vulnerable to the type of development / change proposed. Typically, these landscape receptors are defined by medium to low-scale elements, mostly of a naturalistic nature with some human-made features present. Small-scale, confined and complex landscape are considered more susceptible to change as result of wind farm development. Turbines may be present within the landscape. High susceptibility is considered where the promoted site may have direct effects upon the landscape and / or where the promoted site may have indirect effects on views from the landscape that are noted as a key characteristic.
Medium	Landscape receptors with key characteristics that are of moderate vulnerability to the type of development / change proposed. Typically, these landscape receptors which are defined by medium-scale elements, with a mixture of human-made and naturalistic features. Open and simple landscapes are considered to be less susceptible to change as a result of wind farm development. Turbines may present within the landscape. Medium susceptibility is considered where the promoted site may have indirect effects on views from the landscape that are noted as a key characteristic.
Low	Landscape receptors with key characteristics that are unlikely to be affected by the type of development / change proposed. For example, these landscape receptors will include wind farm landscapes, where turbines or other energy infrastructure form a prominent part of the existing landscape fabric and views. Low susceptibility is considered where the promoted site may have indirect effects on views from the landscape.

The value of a landscape receptor is judged by the importance of the landscape to society, this includes a number of different stakeholders who may use the landscape in different ways. The following factors are used to identify the value of a landscape:

- International, national and local designations protecting a landscape;
- Scenic quality;
- Rarity;
- Representativeness;
- Conservation interest;
- Recreation value;
- Perceptual aspects;
- Associations; and
- Inherent quality or condition.

The table below defines landscape value.

Table 2 - Landscape Value

Landscape value	Definition
Outstanding	Iconic and highly scenic landscape of international or nationally important landscape such as a World Heritage Site. The cultural associations of the landscape receptors are widely recognised in literature or other media.
High	Highly scenic landscape of national or local importance, the cultural associations of which are regularly recognised in art, literature, or other media. Landscape noted for its importance through local authority landscape / townscape assessments or local designation reviews.
Medium	A landscape which may be of value to a local community but has no formal designation. An ordinary or good quality landscape but unlikely to be visited by people to experience the landscape.
Low	A landscape of low quality and / or has been left derelict, this includes industrial estates and busy main roads which may be of minimal local community value and has no formal planning status.

Visual receptors' susceptibility is determined by the amount of change that can be accommodated within a view. Susceptibility of the receptor varies dependent upon:

- The context of the view;
- Its relative importance;
- The duration of the viewing opportunity;
- The number of people potentially affected; and
- Any activity they may be engaged in (e.g. leisure activities, driving, working).

The proximity of the promoted site has no bearing on the susceptibility of a visual receptor.

Susceptibility is described as very high, high, medium or low according to the following criteria.

Table 3 - Visual Susceptibility

Visual Receptor Susceptibility	Definition
Very high	Viewers whose attention or interest is highly focused on their surroundings, typically with a prolonged viewing opportunity, including: • Communities with outstanding views of the highest scenic quality (e.g. towards or within / across nationally designated landscapes); • People engaged in outdoor recreation with outstanding views of the highest scenic quality (for example users of rights of way including national trails and promoted routes with views within, across, or of nationally designated landscapes); and • Visitors to heritage assets or other attractions where views are of the highest scenic quality and an important contributor to experience.
High	Viewers whose attention or interest is focused on their surroundings, typically with a prolonged viewing opportunity including: • Communities where views contribute to the landscape setting enjoyed by residents; • People engaged in outdoor recreation (for example users of rights of way including national trails and promoted routes, whose interest is likely to be focused on the landscape or views from nationally designated landscapes); • Visitors to heritage assets or other attractions where views of the surroundings are an important contributor to experience; and • People travelling on scenic routes and tourist routes, where attention is focused on the surrounding landscape.
Medium	Viewers whose attention or interest is focused on their surroundings to some extent including: • People travelling on local roads, where the speed is reduced and their attention may be focused on the surrounding landscape, but is transitory; and • People at their place of work whose attention is focused on the surroundings and where setting is important to the quality of working life (for example farmers and estate rangers).
Low	Viewers whose attention or interest is less focused on their surroundings, including: • People travelling more rapidly on major roads, or more minor roads (at national speed limit), rail or transport routes (not recognised as scenic routes); • People engaged in outdoor sport or recreation which does not involve or depend upon appreciation of views of the landscape; and • People at their place of work whose attention is not on their surroundings (and where setting is not important to the quality of working life).

The value of a view is judged importance of the receptor to people. This includes views noted for their importance, such viewpoints and locally, nationally and globally designated views. The table below defines the potential value associated with a view.

Table 4 - Value of a view

Value of a view	Definition
Outstanding	Iconic, and highly scenic view, of national or international importance, or a view which is associated with a nationally or internationally designated landscape or heritage asset, the cultural associations of which are widely recognised in art, literature, or other media.
High	Highly scenic view, associated with a landscape or heritage asset of national or regional value, the cultural association of which are regularly recognised in art, literature, or other media. Views associated with local authority designated landscapes or recorded as of importance on long distance walking routes, in Conservation Area Appraisals or local authority landscape / townscape assessments. The value of such views may have been identified as part of the consultation process and through site visits. Elements or features within the view are likely to be in good condition, with few detracting features.
Medium	Although the view may be valuable to the local community, the location has no formal planning status, is in an area of ordinary landscape value or reasonably good landscape value but with detracting elements or features. People are unlikely to visit the viewpoint to experience the view.
Low	View is of an area of low landscape quality that has very few positive characteristics and numerous or dominant detracting features (e.g. industrial estate / busy main road). The view may be of minimal value to the local community and the location has no formal planning status.

The overall sensitivity of a receptor is the culmination of susceptibility and value. The below table sets out the criteria used in this assessment to determine the sensitivity of receptors.

The following table provides a guide for the assessor and is not intended to be prescriptive. It has been included to illustrate how the combination of receptor susceptibility and receptor value can determine receptor sensitivity. The application of professional judgement means there may be some instances where the predicted effect does not align with the grade illustrated below.

Table 5 - Sensitivity of Receptors

Susceptibility of Receptor \ Landscape Value / Value of View	Outstanding	High	Medium / high	Medium	Medium / low	Low
Very high	Very high	Very high / high	High	High	High / medium	High / medium
High	Very high / high	High	High	High/ medium	Medium	Medium
Medium / high	High	High	High / medium	Medium	Medium	Medium
Medium	High	High / medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium / low
Medium / low	High / medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium / low	Low
Low	High / medium	Medium	Medium	Medium / low	Low	Low

As the sensitivity of landscape and visual receptors can vary depending on the correlation of several factors, the determined sensitivity of each receptor is determined by the assessor on a case-by-case basis. As such, intermediate grades such as high/ medium are possible.

Magnitude of Change

The magnitude of change is described as high, medium, low, negligible or none based on the interpretation of various parameters, including:

- Distance: the distance between the receptor and the promoted site. Generally, the greater the distance, the lower the magnitude.
- Extent: the extent of the promoted site which is visible.

- Proportion: the arc of view occupied by the promoted site in proportion to the overall field of view. A panoramic view, where the promoted site takes up a small part of it, would generally experience a lower magnitude than a framed or focussed view, even if the arc of view occupied by the promoted site is similar in both.
- Geographical extent: the extent of geographical area influenced. Generally, a larger area would result in a higher magnitude of change.
- Duration: the duration of the effect. An effect experienced in a single location over an extended period of time is likely to result in a higher magnitude of change than a similar visual effect which is of a short duration, such as a brief view from a road.
- Reversibility: whether change associated with the promoted site could be fully or partially reversed or is irreversible.
- Orientation: the angle of the view in relation to the main receptor orientation, where there is a dominant direction to the vista.
- Context: the elements which provide the setting and context to the promoted site such as other built development.
- Backdrop: the elements which provide the backdrop to the promoted site. Generally, where landform or woodland forms the background to the view, the magnitude of change is lower.

Judgements on the magnitude of change rely, to a great extent, on professional judgement. The magnitude of change is determined on a case-by-case basis with consideration given to the weighting of the variable parameters described above. As a result, intermediate grades such as high/medium are possible.

Table 6 sets out the criteria used in this assessment to determine the magnitude of change.

Table 6: Magnitude of Change.

Magnitude of Change	Landscape	Visual
High	Total loss of or major alteration to key elements/ features/ characteristics of the baseline conditions such that character/composition/attributes of the existing baseline would be fundamentally changed.	Where there are predicted to be substantial changes in the view, which may be visible for a long duration, facing the change, or which may be in stark contrast with the existing view, or obstruction of a substantial part or important elements of views beyond the promoted site.
Medium	Partial loss of or alteration to one or more key elements/ features/ characteristics of the baseline conditions such that character/composition/attributes of the existing baseline would be partially changed.	Where there are predicted to be moderate changes in the view, or visible for a moderate duration, perhaps at a slight angle, where changes may be in contrast with the existing view, or obstruction of a noticeable part or elements of views beyond the promoted site.
Low	Minor loss or alteration to one or more key elements/ features/ characteristics of the baseline conditions. Change arising from the loss/ alteration would be discernible but underlying character/composition of the baseline condition would be similar existing circumstances/ patterns.	Where there are predicted to be slight changes in the view, or visible for a short duration, perhaps at an oblique angle, or which may blend to an extent with the existing view
Negligible	Very minor loss or alteration to one or more key elements/ features/ characteristics of the baseline conditions. Change barely distinguishable – approximating to the 'no change' situation.	Where the change in view is barely visible, or visible for a very short duration, perhaps at an oblique angle, or which may blend with the existing view, usually at some distance from the promoted site.
None	No change.	No change.

Level of Effect

The level of effect is determined by consideration of each effect that has been identified, its magnitude of change, and the sensitivity of the affected receptor. Whilst similar in approach, assessments on the subsequent level of residual effects appraise the resultant effects following the establishment of the proposed design mitigation/ enhancements.

Effects are described as being:

- **Major** – When the promoted site results in changes that substantially affect the character or views of the landscape or the elements therein. For example, a major effect is likely when a receptor of high sensitivity is affected by a high magnitude of change;
- **Moderate** – When the promoted site results in changes that affect, to a lesser degree, the character or views of the landscape or the elements therein. For example, a moderate effect is likely when a receptor of medium sensitivity is affected by a medium magnitude of change;
- **Minor** – When the promoted site results in a slight change that affects the character or views of the landscape or specific elements therein. For example, a minor effect is likely when a receptor of low sensitivity is affected by a low magnitude of change; or
- **Negligible** – When the promoted site results in no or a barely perceptible change, that affects the character or views of the landscape or specific elements therein.

There are gradual transitions between levels of effects, which reflect the complex relationship between the different variables under consideration.

This LVA includes assessments of likely landscape and visual effects as a result of the promoted site during:

- During the construction phase;
- Once the additional landscape mitigation and enhancement measures are well established (assessment of residual effects).

Table 6 - Matrix for Determining the Level of Effects

Magnitude of Change	Sensitivity of Receptor: Very high	High	High / medium	Medium	Medium / low	Low
High	**Major**	**Major**	**Major**	**Major / moderate**	Moderate	Moderate
High / medium	**Major**	**Major**	**Major / moderate**	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate / minor
Medium	**Major**	**Major / moderate**	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate / minor	Minor
Medium / low	**Major / moderate**	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate / minor	Minor	Minor
Low	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate / minor	Minor	Minor	Negligible
Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible
None	None	None	None	None	None	None

This matrix is not used as a prescriptive tool and the methodology and analysis of potential effects at any particular location must take account of professional judgement. Occasionally, analysis may not reflect the effects predicted by the grid; the table is used as a guide only.

Sequential Visual Assessment of Effects upon Routes

Potential sequential or recurring visual effects that occur in views from main vehicular and marked recreational routes, paths and trails are assessed where theoretical visibility of the promoted site is predicted within the study area. Views from routes are however generally restricted to the direction of travel. Potential views are dependent on local circumstances including: extent and type of vegetation; boundary types; and close and mid-distance topography.

The assessment of effects upon routes includes the following, which are undertaken through desk-top study and field work:

- An analysis of views along main vehicular and marked routes;
- An assessment of the existing characteristics of the route; and
- Interrogation of other visualisation tools such as ZTV mapping.

Nature of Effects

Effects can be direct or indirect. Direct effects are generally limited to those parts of the site physically affected by the footprint of the promoted site. Potential indirect effects generally relate to the introduction of elements of the promoted site to the context of the existing landscape and visual baseline.

Effects may be short term/ temporary (i.e. those occurring during construction of the promoted site) or long term/ permanent (i.e. those lasting for the lifetime of the promoted site).

Effects attributable to the promoted site can be regarded as positive/ beneficial or negative/ adverse and in some cases may be considered to be neutral. Generally, changes in the landscape that result in the loss of rural characteristics are generally considered to be negative/ adverse. However, developments of the nature proposed also have the potential to generate beneficial effects such as landscape improvements, mitigation measures or as well-designed elements, which add value to the landscape experience or to the sense of place.

Some may consider the visual effects as positive/ beneficial or negative/ adverse depending upon their predisposition towards landscape, landscape change and their subjective opinion to the type of change proposed.

Assuming a precautionary approach in making an assessment of the 'worst case scenario', this assessment considers all potential effects which would arise from the promoted site to be negative/ adverse, unless specifically identified as being beneficial/ neutral in the assessment. Again, depending on the receptors predisposition, not all people would consider the effects to be negative/ adverse, or that negative/ adverse effects would necessarily be considered unacceptable

Limitations and Assumptions

The assessment has been based on the proposed site layout presented on the Landscape Development Framework (see Figure 07) by Brindley. The LVA has been undertaken with reference to a combination of desk and field study and was informed by Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) mapping and aerial photography in order to determine the scope of the assessment and focus on those receptors with the potential to experience significant effects as a result of the promoted site.

The assessment of landscape and visual effects was undertaken from publicly accessible roads and paths, based upon anticipated views from areas surrounding the promoted site, and with inward views of the study area in order to quantify the theoretical visibility patterns associated with the Proposed Development.

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Cato, Auchtertool

Landscape and Visual Appraisal - Graphics

April 2026

brindley ASSOCIATES

creative • environmental

For ILI Cato Ltd

Contents

Zone of Theoretical Visibility & Visualisation Methodology Statement

Zone of Theoretical Visibility Mapping

Computer modelling has been utilised to illustrate the effects of the proposed development through the production of Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) mapping. ZTV maps indicate those areas of land from which the proposed development might appear as part of a view. As such, they provide a means of identifying potential receptors (landscape and visual) in order for an assessment to be undertaken.

The ZTVs utilised to inform the assessment have been generated in 'WindFarm R5' software produced by ReSoft. In the software, the ZTV has been banded in colour to demonstrate where the proposed development may theoretically be seen from any point in the study area. ZTVs use a 2m observer height to represent a standing viewer, to illustrate the worst-case scenario and to account for minor variations in the terrain data.

The ZTV maps produced have utilised OS Terrain 5 dataset at 5m grid intervals. There are limitations in this theoretical modelling, and these should be borne in mind when viewing and using the ZTV Figures. Firstly, the ZTV shown in Figure 05 illustrates the 'bareground' situation and does not consider the screening effect of vegetation, buildings or other localised features that may prevent or reduce visibility. Figure 06 shows a modified ZTV which considers vegetation and buildings as shown on OS VectorMap mapping, to illustrate the screening qualities of these elements. Further assumptions must be made in relation to the preparation of such ZTVs, however, such as estimations of tree or building height.

Secondly, there may still be small-scale topography discrepancies that could alter actual visibility of the proposed development, either by screening theoretical visibility or revealing parts that are not theoretically visible. Finally, the ZTV map does not consider: the likely orientation of a viewer; the direction and speed of travel; or the angle of view. There is also no allowance for reduced visibility associated with distance, weather or lighting conditions.

Visualisations Introduction

A photomontage is an illustration of a proposed development that is as accurate as is feasibly possible within the limits of the equipment and software used. Although it is never possible to be completely accurate due to minor errors in survey data and photographic distortion, implementation of a robust methodology based on accurate survey and proposal information will result in a negligible degree of error.

It should be borne in mind that the visual character of the proposed development will undoubtedly appear differently when viewed in varying weather and/ or lighting conditions. It should also be noted that photomontages cannot accurately convey a view as experienced on site, however they are accurate visual representations within the limitations of the method. They should therefore be treated as an artist's impression of the proposed development rather than as a true representation. Wireframe representations, in particular, can overemphasise the proposed development, making it appear more prominent than it would in the landscape.

Photography

Viewpoints are locations where visibility of the proposed development is theoretically available and are representative of specific conditions and/ or receptors. They are useful for assessing specific views from sensitive locations and a diverse number of receptor groups, and are selected to be representative of visibility patterns in the study area. They are also useful in illustrating indirect landscape effects. Viewpoints are, by their nature, static representations located in publicly accessible areas such as roads, tracks and footpaths, which in reality tend to be experienced by receptors moving through the landscape together with other views.

The eight representative viewpoints illustrated were selected following a site visit to the proposed development site and surrounding area.

Site photography for the photomontages was undertaken in May 2025 and is representative of the typical weather conditions experienced at this time of year. All viewpoints were micro-sited, on-site, to ensure worst case visibility of the proposed development from the representative location and to avoid foreground objects, where possible.

In line with best practice guidance (Visual Representation of Development Proposals, Technical Guidance Note 06/19 Landscape Institute, September 2019), photography utilised for the preparation of images was taken with a digital SLR camera with full frame (35mm) sensor, using a 50mm focal length prime lens, mounted on a level tripod with levelled panoramic head. The centre of the camera lens was positioned at a height of 1.5m to 1.65m above ground level. All photography was taken in landscape format.

Survey

In the production of Type 3 visualisations, location data is required for camera viewpoints and a number of reference points which are used to accurately match the digital CGI model to the photograph. The reference points are details within the view that are easily identifiable and are commonly features such as terrain, buildings and telegraph poles. Ordnance Survey (OS) grid coordinates of the camera tripod location were obtained using a hand-held GPS unit. As there is a margin of error with hand-held GPS units, viewpoint coordinates were adjusted slightly where required, based on aerial imagery and OS data. OS mapping was used in combination with terrain data and GIS aerial imagery to provide reference points for accurately aligning the digital CGI model and the photograph.

Photography Post-Production

All visualisations shown have a horizontal field of view of 53.5° and are presented in planar projection, to provide binocular scaling in line with LI Visualisation Guidance. Where possible, it was ensured that the entire development was visible within the image whilst providing sufficient landscape and visual context. Some fine-tuning of the photography settings has been used during post-production to reduce distant haze or improve the lighting conditions making the image clearer, however this was kept to a minimum.

In order to produce base photography with a horizontal field of view of 53.5°, several single frame images were 'stitched' together in cylindrical format using PTGui stitching software. To ensure the minimum of optical distortion and parallax error, the following precautions were taken:

- When taking the photography, a tripod with a panoramic head was used. The levelling plate, set between the tripod and the tripod head, ensured that the plane of rotation of the camera was exactly horizontal. This avoids 'stepping' – the result effect of misaligned adjacent frames of photography;
- To eliminate parallax error, a sliding plate on the tripod head was used. This allowed the camera to be positioned so that the nodal point of the lens was positioned over the axis of rotation;
- The photographs were taken in 15° increments, to allow for an overlap of 50% between adjacent frames in the photography stitching software. This means that each panorama is constructed using only the central 50% of each photograph, discarding the areas with the greatest amount of lens distortion;
- The photography stitching software automatically generates control points for aligning the photographs to each other. These control points were refined manually, removing inaccurate points and adding additional ones where necessary to ensure the final image was subject to the minimum level of distortion; and

- The stitched photograph's vanishing point was adjusted to match the camera in the 3D model.

Construction of digital model

Firstly, the OS data was imported into digital modelling software (3DS Max) and used as a reference to accurately locate the proposed development model at OS grid coordinates. The proposed site layout drawing was then imported and used as a reference for the creation of a site model. Proposed roads, grass and structure planting areas were modelled and set on the OS terrain surface.

Massing models of the proposed data centres and office building were received from the project architects and these models were imported and accurately positioned using the site layout drawing and OS terrain 5 as a base. Realistic textures were applied to the site surface, and daylight systems were applied to ensure accurate shading in the CGI renders.

At this stage detailed surface, fencing and footpaths have not been included in the visualisations. Proposed structure planting and internal tree planting has been modelled, based on the site layout drawing, using realistic digital models of locally appropriate species.

Construction of visualisations

Once the model of the development was completed, the viewpoint photography information was imported into the model. A wireframe image with a 53.5° horizontal angle of view, including the OS data, was exported for each viewpoint location. The wireframes were then accurately matched to each photograph using the OS data to determine the scale and position of the wireframe within the photograph. The wireframe was never distorted to fit the photograph. As all the above survey and photography methodology had been undertaken, a good fit between photograph and wireframe was possible by simply scaling and positioning the wireframe, together with some minor rotation of the panoramic photograph to correct slight levelling errors. Illustrations demonstrating how the model has been aligned to the photograph can be made available upon request.

Once the wireframe had been aligned satisfactorily, realistic CGI renders of the model were exported at the calculated image size. These images are based upon viewpoint and camera details recorded during site work and have been rendered to match the time of day and lighting conditions in the photograph to provide a realistic image.

Finally, the photomontage was completed by masking those parts of the CGI image which would be hidden by foreground objects. This aspect of the work was undertaken using Photoshop CC software, with reference made to the digital model in instances where there was any uncertainty regarding which elements of the photograph screen the proposals. The CGI was then further adjusted to ensure proposed materials shown match the surroundings in terms of lighting; however, some photographic elements may be carefully added for enhanced realism for select views.

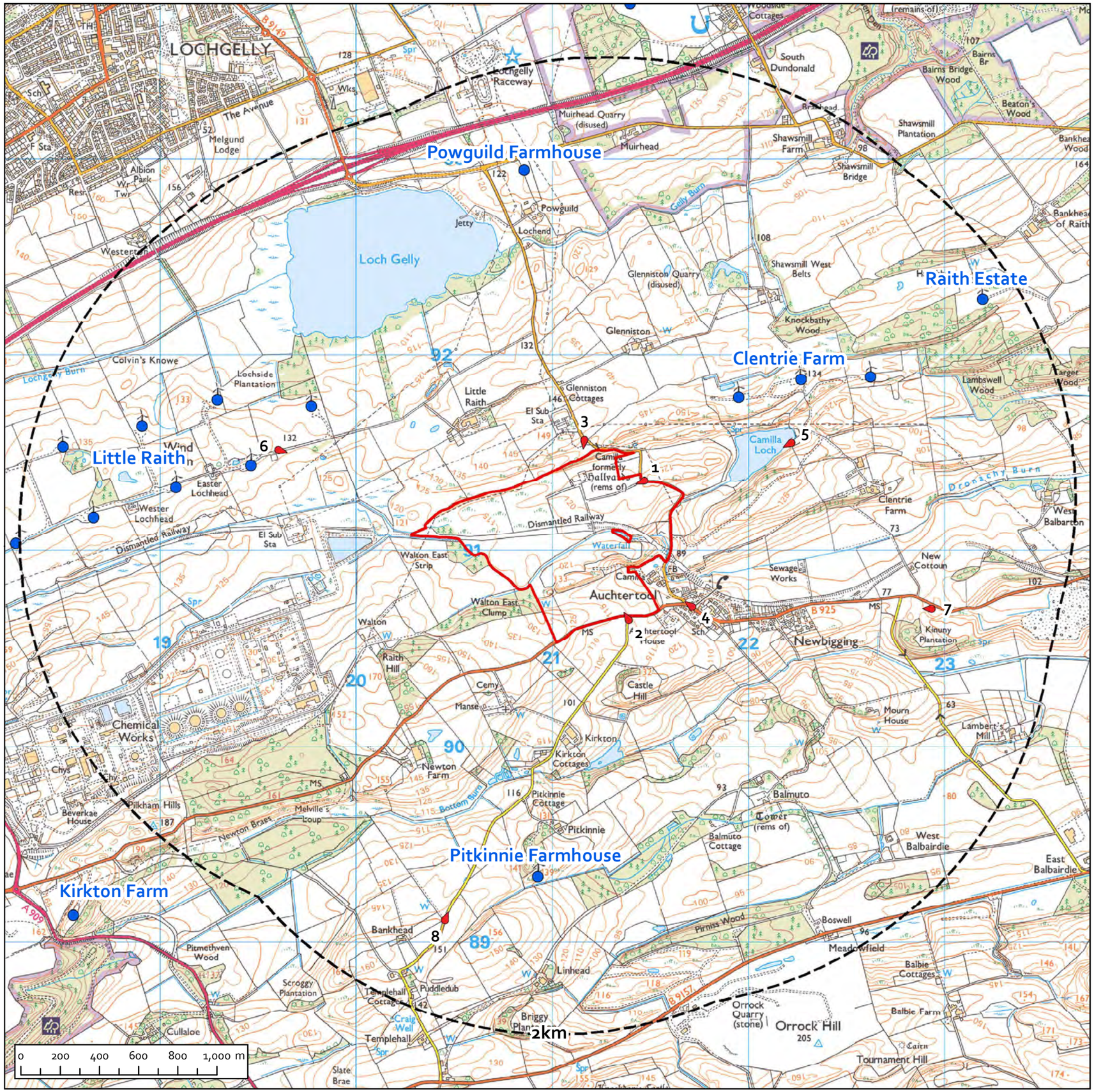
Construction of the visualisations package

Finally, the completed visualisations were converted from cylindrical to planar format using 'WindFarm R5' software produced by ReSoft. All visualisations included in the package comprise panoramic images with a 53.5° horizontal angle of view, utilising planar projection. These images must be viewed at a certain distance and image size, as indicated on each Individual visualisation, in order to obtain an accurate representation of the proposed development within the baseline view. Where possible, visualisations show the proposed development in the centre of the image.

Summary Tables

Photography	Response
Method used to establish the camera location	Hand-held GPS on site, adjusted where required based on aerial photography & OS data
Likely level of accuracy of location	Better than 3m
Coordinate system used	OS Grid
Camera make and model	Canon 6D
Lens make and model	Canon EF 50mm
Panoramic head make and model	Manfrotto panoramic head and leveller
Photography orientation	Landscape
3D Model	**Response**
Source of topographic height data	OS Terrain 5
How have the model and the camera locations been placed in the software?	Hand-held GPS coordinates / GIS aerial mapping
Elements in the view used as target points to check the horizontal alignment	OS Terrain 5
Elements in the view used as target points to check the vertical alignment	OS Terrain 5
3D modelling and rendering software	3DS Max and Vray

External Information Utilised in Preparation of Supporting Photomontages		
Drawing Reference and Title	Drawing Date/ Date Received	Provided By
Cato_MASTER_AH_ISS (Site Layout)	09th February 2026	Logan PM
DCC- Data Centre Cato- Massing Model	09th February 2026	Graeme Nicholls Architects



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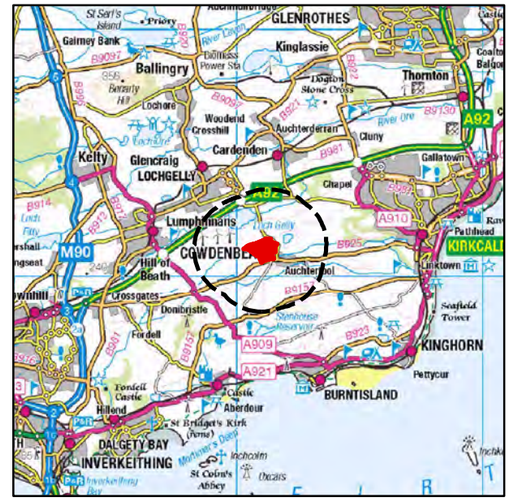
Legend

- Site boundary
- Study area (2km offset from site boundary)
- Viewpoint location
- Existing wind turbine locations

Viewpoint Information

1. Tulloch Road, southeast of Camilla Battery Storage plant (Grid ref. 321455, 691351)
2. B925, southeast of proposed main access (Grid ref. 321380, 690659)
3. Access track to Little Raith Battery Storage plant (Grid ref. 321162, 691554)
4. Main Street, Auchtertool (Grid ref. 321699, 690722)
5. Core Path R493 at Camilla Loch (Grid ref. 322205, 691542)
6. Core Path R497 at eastern end of Little Raith wind farm (Grid ref. 319616, 691514)
7. Core Path R571 east of Auchtertool (Grid ref. 322917, 690703)
8. Core Path R567 northeast of Bankhead (Grid ref. 320454, 689128)

Site Location



Scale: 1:250,000

Project: Cato, Auchtertool	Client: ILI Cato Ltd
Drawing Title: Site Location Plan with Viewpoint Locations and Existing Turbines	
Scale: 1:20,000 @ A3	Date: 01 / 04 / 2026
Figure No: 01	Status: Planning
Drawn by: C Batty	Checked by: R Moore

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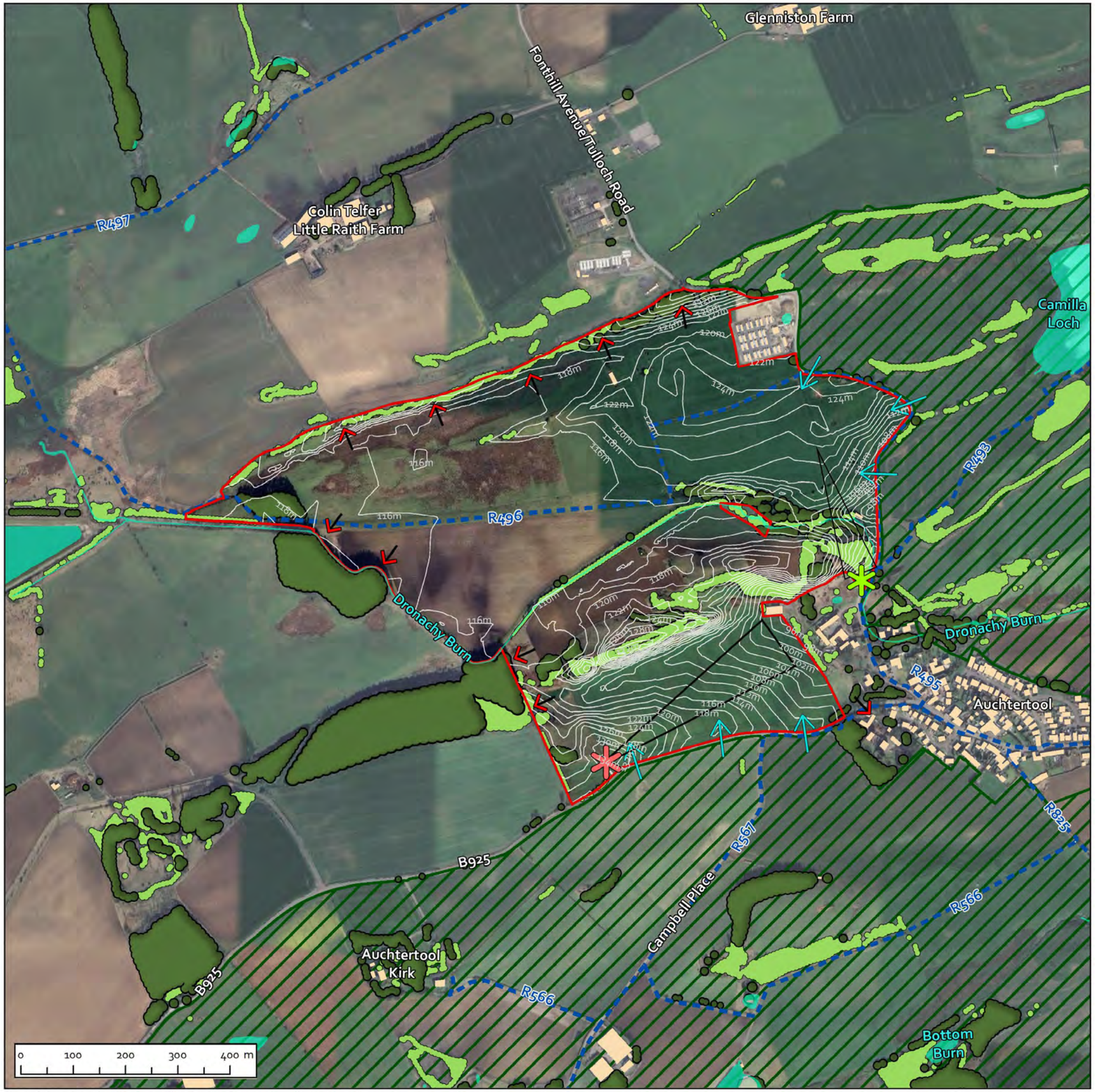
north



Legend

- Site boundary
- Core paths
- Existing woodland and tree cover
- Existing other vegetation
- Existing watercourse
- Existing buildings
- Existing site contours
- Existing site slopes
- Low point of site - 88m
- High point of site - 134m
- Open views into site
- Contained views
- Local landscape area:
  - Cullaloe Hills and Coast

north

Project: Cato, Auchtertool	Client: ILI Cato Ltd
Drawing Title: Site Analysis Plan	
Scale: 1:7,500 @ A3	Date: 01 / 04 / 2026
Figure No: 02	Status: Planning
Drawn by: C Batty	Checked by: R Moore

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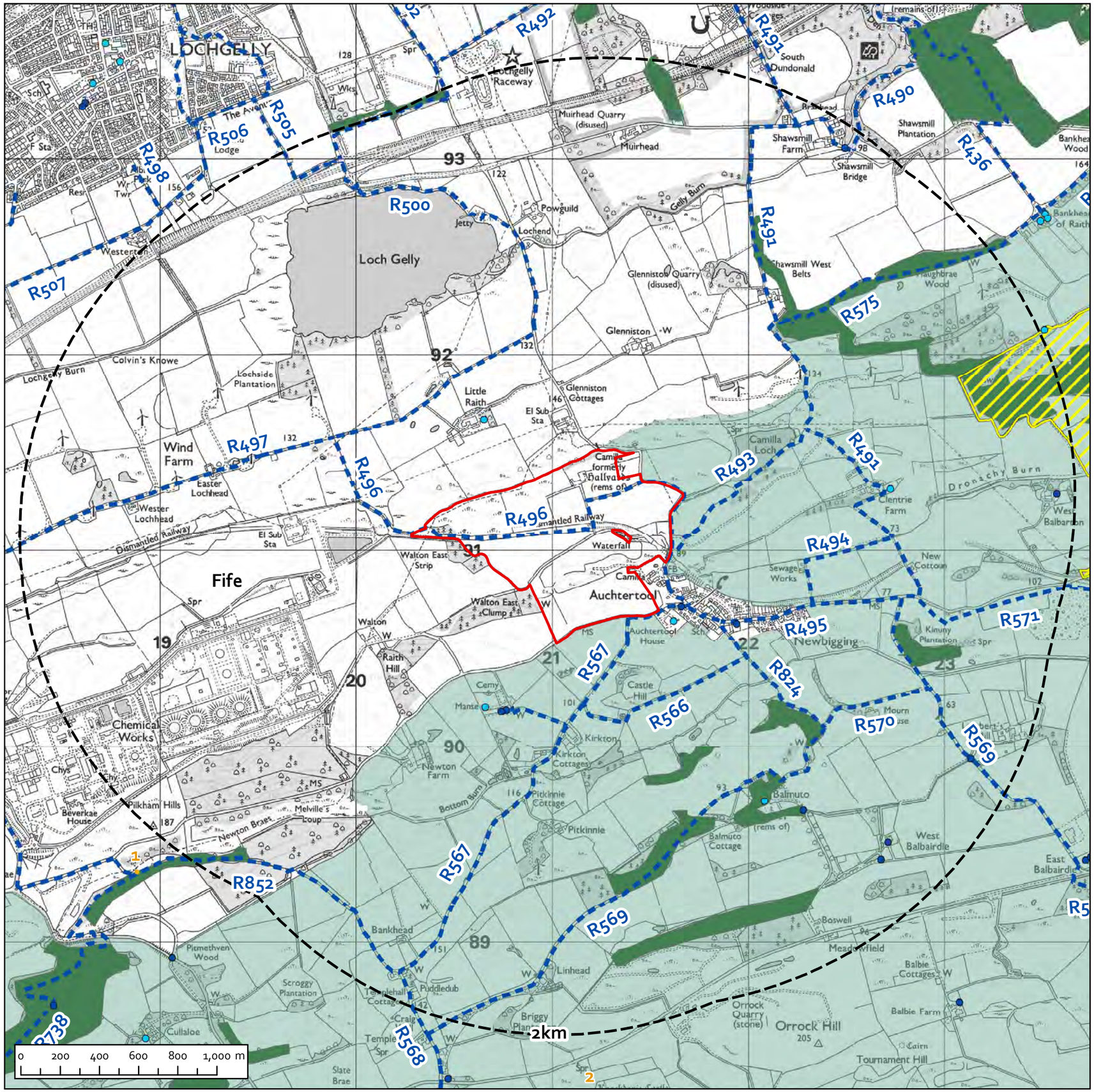

Legend

- Site boundary
- Study area (2km offset from site boundary)

Landscape Designations

- Local landscape areas:
  - Cullaloe Hills and Coast

Cultural Heritage Designations

- Scheduled monuments
  1) Standing Stone, 470m SSE of Beverkae House (outwith study area)
  2) Knockdaivie Castle (outwith study area)
- Gardens and designed landscapes: Raith Park and Beveridge Park

Ecological Designations

- Ancient woodland

Listed Buildings

- Listed buildings - Category B
- Listed buildings - Category C

Designated Routes

- Core path

Project: Cato, Auchtertool	Client: ILI Cato Ltd
Drawing Title: Landscape Designations and Recreational Routes	
Scale: 1:20,000 @ A3	Date: 01 / 04 / 2026
Figure No: 03	Status: Planning
Drawn by: C Batty	Checked by: R Moore

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north