Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

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For: Westport Energy Storage Limited.

Site: Killoch, East Ayrshire, KA18 2QH

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1. Introduction

Background

1.1.1 Arthian Ltd, a Registered Practice of the Landscape Institute, were commissioned by Westport Energy Storage Limited. to undertake a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment of the proposals for a Battery Energy Storage System – BESS ('the Proposed Development') on land at Killoch, East Ayrshire, KA18 2QH ('the Site') to accompany an application for full planning permission.

1.1.2 A site location plan is provided at Figure 1, with a detailed plan of the Proposed Development included in the accompanying planning application.

1.1.3 The Application Site is located on land at Killoch, East Ayrshire, KA18 2QH and covers an overall area of approx. 18.3 hectares (ha), with the actual Proposed Development (compound and track areas) occupying less than 4ha.

1.1.4 Arthian have undertaken the following key tasks:

- A review of the planning documentary context for the Site.
- A desktop study and web search of relevant background documents and maps, including reviews of aerial photographs, LPA publications and other landscape character assessments.
- Collated information about relevant landscape designations, such as National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and those parks and gardens listed on English Heritage's national register.
- A field assessment of local site circumstances including a photographic survey of the character and fabric of the Site and its surroundings, undertaken by a suitably qualified Landscape Consultant in good weather conditions during December 2024; and
- An analysis of the likely landscape and visual effects arising from the proposed scheme, which includes an assessment of the significance of any effects arising, based on their nature (positive or negative), magnitude and the sensitivity of the receiving environment.

The Proposed Development (Description of Development)

1.1.5 The proposed development is expected to include the following components (subject to detailed design):

- 208no battery storage enclosures.
- 26no 2no power conversion systems (PCS) with twin MV skin and apron slab.
- 1no DNO substation building.
- 2no BESS substation buildings.
- 2no auxiliary transformers.
- 2no LV distribution equipment.

- 26no aggregation panel with LV pillar.
- 2no pre-insertion resistor.
- 2no capacitor bank.
- 2no harmonic filter and resistor.
- 6no spares container.
- Temporary construction compound.
- Lighting/CCTV columns; and
- Security/acoustic fencing.

Outline Methodology

1.1.6 This assessment considers the acceptability of the Proposed Development in the location proposed. It is based on an abbreviated data trawl and a field visit to identify the most sensitive landscape and visual receptors and considers their ability to accommodate the change proposed.

1.1.7 This assessment is conducted with regard to the principles set out in:

- Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Edition (The Landscape Institute, 2013) - referred to as the 'GLVIA'.
- An Approach to Landscape Character (Natural England, 2014).
- Landscape Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland (Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage, April 2002).
- Landscape Character Assessment - Technical Information Note 08/2015 (The Landscape Institute, February 2016).
- Visual Representation of Development Proposals - Technical Guidance Note 06/19 (The Landscape Institute, September 2019); and
- Tranquillity - An overview - Technical Information Note 01/2017 (Revised) (The Landscape Institute, March 2017).

1.1.8 The GLVIA document sets out a range of techniques and approaches which practitioners are advised to use when conducting Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments (LVIAs) and Landscape and Visual Appraisals (LVAs). The intent of the GLVIA is to present a general overview of a 'non-prescriptive' methodology for undertaking assessments of developments: "*It is always the primary responsibility of any landscape professional carrying out an assessment to ensure that the approach and methodology adopted are appropriate to the particular circumstances*" (GLVIA, paragraph 1.20).

1.1.9 This assessment accords with the general principles of the GLVIA and is considered appropriately detailed to confidently assess the acceptability of both the principle and details of development in this location.

1.1.10 The assessment is undertaken in the context of the landscape being dynamic, as is made clear within the GLVIA (Para 2.13): "*Landscape is not unchanging. Many different pressures have progressively altered familiar landscapes over time and will continue to do so in the future, creating new landscapes. Today many of these drivers of change arise from the requirements for development to meet the needs of a growing and changing population and economy*." This does not mean that any change is acceptable change, but it also means that change in the landscape is likely and that this should be channelled in a managed direction.

1.1.11 The nature of a landscape and visual assessment requires both objective analysis and subjective professional judgement. Accordingly, the following assessment is in accordance with the principles of the best practice guidance listed above, information and data analysis techniques and subjective professional judgement where necessary and is based on clearly defined terms in line with best practice guidelines. A glossary is contained in Appendix 3 and the methodology and method used is in Appendix 1.

1.1.12 A broad area of search for potential viewpoint locations was carried out using specialist digital terrain modelling and analysis software which was used to calculate where the Site was likely to be visible from, based on a height of 3.5m above the existing ground level within the Site, and assumes a 'bare earth' situation (i.e. not considering any topographical features other than landform). The extent of possible views is shown at Appendix 4 - Figure L3.

1.1.13 As the ZTV's illustrated are based on a bare earth model it should be interpreted as indicative of a worst-case situation, since it covers large tracts of the surrounding landscape where the proposals would in reality be filtered or screened by intervening elements (e.g. woodlands or buildings). The density and thickness of the hedgerows and tree belts surrounding the Site would also prevent or filter views over the winter months to varying degrees, i.e. the degree of screening afforded will be dependent on season.

1.1.14 In this assessment, the initial Study Area extended to 5.0km in all directions from the edge of the Site, to help determine potential visibility and understand the wider sensitivity of the visual receptors and landscape. Accounting for the existing baseline situation, the extent of the initial Study Area was predicted to be the likely maximum distance where the Proposed Development could result in potentially Important, or Significant, landscape and visual effects, given the topography and sensitive receptors.

1.1.15 Fieldwork was undertaken in December 2024 to further understand the potential for Important, or Significant, landscape and visual effects and, following this, the LVIA became more focussed on a smaller area within the Study Area as it was clear that landscape and visual effects would be much more localised than the wider 5km Study Area.

1.1.16 The combination of the fieldwork and desktop review established that the topography of the landscape, sensitive visual receptors, and the Proposed Development would limit likely Important/Significant adverse effects to a maximum of circa 1km from the Site's boundary.

1.1.17 Using professional judgement, Landscape Characteristics have been initially assessed for potential sensitivity to change and a decision made as to whether individual characteristics can be scoped-out of further assessment. Where not scoped-out, assessment of these characteristics is undertaken in further detail, on the basis of the level of effects on these characteristics potentially being a material consideration and presented as part of the assessment. Assessment of effects on Landscape Character

is undertaken separately, considering all landscape characteristics, including those scoped-out of individual assessment.

1.1.18 A full methodology is included within this report at Appendix 1.

2. Baseline Situation - Landscape Aspects

Landscape and Visual Policy

2.1.1 An appreciation of the 'weight' to be attributed to any visual and landscape effects arising from development starts with an understanding of the planning context within which any such development is to be tested for its acceptability.

2.1.2 Strictly, in legal terms, there is no automatic right to a view. However, the enjoyment of a view could be an important part of the residential visual amenity of a location (e.g., a neighbouring property), and its loss might, therefore, have an adverse impact on the residential visual amenity of that property (i.e. an environmental effect on humans). Visual receptors at public locations are generally considered to be of higher sensitivity than visual receptors at private locations, although the effects on numerous private residences may be considered to have an effect on the wider local community, rather than individuals. It should be recognised that the landscape is dynamic, as is made clear within GLVIA3 (Para 2.13):

> *"Landscape is not unchanging. Many different pressures have progressively altered familiar landscapes over time and will continue to do so in the future, creating new landscapes. Today many of these drivers of change arise from the requirements for development to meet the needs of a growing and changing population and economy."*

European Landscape Convention

2.1.3 The UK is a signatory to the Council of Europe's European Landscape Convention (ELC) which promotes landscape protection, management and planning. The UK Government has stated that it considers the UK to be compliant with the ELC's requirements and that the principal requirements of the ELC are already enshrined in the existing suite of national policies and guidance on the assessment of landscape and visual effects.

2.1.4 It is important to recognise that the ELC does not require the preservation of all landscapes although landscape protection is one of the core themes of the convention. Equally important though is the requirement to manage and plan future landscape change.

National Planning Policy - Landscape

2.1.5 An appreciation of the 'weight' to be attributed to any landscape effects arising from development starts with an understanding of the planning context within which any such development is to be tested for its acceptability.

2.1.6 The National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) (adopted February 2023) applies for all developments within Scotland. Part 1 'Sustainable Places' states *"Scotland's future places will be net zero, nature-positive places that are designed to reduce emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change, whilst protecting, recovering and restoring our environment."*

2.1.7 Relevant policies contained within NPF4 are further addressed within the Planning Statement submitted with this application. It is noted that where policy conflict occurs between NPF4 and the East Ayrshire Council Local Development Plan 2 (EALDP2, April 2024), NPF4 takes precedence.

Local Policy - Landscape

2.1.8 The site is located on an area of land that falls under the planning jurisdiction of East Ayrshire Council. The relevant statutory development plan is the East Ayrshire Council Local Development Plan 2 (EALDP2), which was adopted in April 2024.

2.1.9 The Application Site is not covered by any specific landscape policy within the Local Plan. Where relevant, more generic saved policies within the EALDP2 that relate to the Application Site from a landscape perspective and are considered as having some relevance to the Proposed Development and the wider landscape context in which the Application Site is located, are outlined below:

- Policy NE1 – Protecting and Enhancing Landscape and Features
- Policy NE5 – Protection of Areas of Nature Conservation Interest
- Policy NE8 – Trees, Woodland, Forestry and Hedgerows
- Policy NE10 – Protection of Agricultural Land

Policy NE1 – Protecting and Enhancing Landscape and Features

2.1.10 This policy states:

"The protection and enhancement of East Ayrshire's landscape character as identified in the Ayrshire Landscape Character Assessment will be a key consideration in assessing the appropriateness of all development proposals in the rural area. The Council will require that:

i) Development proposals are sited and designed to respect the nature and landscape character of the area and to minimise visual impact. Particular attention will be paid to size, scale, layout, materials, design, finish, lighting, and colour.

ii) Where visual impacts are unavoidable, development proposals should include adequate mitigation measures to minimise adverse impacts on the landscape.

iii) Particular features that contribute to the value, quality and character of the landscape are conserved and enhanced, where applicable or feasible to the development. Development that would result in the loss of valuable landscape features, to such an extent that character and value of the landscape are unacceptably diminished, will not be supported. Such landscape features include:

a. Settings of settlements and buildings within the landscape.

b. Skylines, distinctive landform features, landmark hills, and prominent views.

c. Woodlands, shelter belts, hedgerows, and trees (especially ancient and veteran trees of high nature conservation and landscape value).

d. Field patterns and means of enclosure, such as dry stone dykes.

e. Burns, rivers, lochs, and other water features; and

f. Public rights of way and footpaths.

The Council will not support development that would create unacceptable visual intrusion or irreparable damage to landscape character."

2.1.11 With regards to mitigation, Policy NE1 also states: *"All development which has the potential to have an adverse impact on landscape character and/or landscape features will be required to consider mitigation*

from the outset. Landscape and visual considerations should inform decisions on site layout, architectural design, and landscape design to reduce the potential for significant effects. Proposals should outline how mitigation measures will be incorporated into the design of the development. These will be considered as part of any planning application."

Policy NE5 – Protection of Areas of Nature Conservation Interest

2.1.12 Policy NE5 states *"Development should aim to protect and enhance nature and biodiversity. Positive contributions can be achieved through appropriate siting and design, in order to minimise any adverse impacts on habitats, network connectivity and species; individually or cumulatively."*

Policy NE8 – Trees, Woodland, Forestry and Hedgerows

2.1.13 Policy NE8 states *"Within settlements and rural areas, there will be a presumption against the loss of:*

- *ancient semi-natural woodland and ancient and veteran trees.*
- *native woodland, hedgerows and individual trees of high biodiversity value or identified for protection in the Ayrshire and Arran Forestry and Woodland Strategy; and*
- *trees protected by Tree Preservation Orders*

Proposals which are likely to have an adverse impact on the ecological condition of these assets will not be supported by the Council. Proposals which are likely to result in fragmentation or severance of woodland habitats will not be supported unless appropriate mitigation measures are identified and implemented in line with the mitigation hierarchy."

Policy NE10 – Protection of Agricultural Land

2.1.14 Policy NE10 states *"The Council will seek to ensure that there is no unacceptable and irreversible loss of prime quality and good quality, locally important agricultural land. Prime quality land is defined as land identified in classes 2 and 3.1 on the Macauley Land Capability for Agriculture maps of Scotland. Good quality, locally important agricultural land is defined as land identified in class 3.2 on these maps.*

2.1.15 Development proposals on prime or locally important agricultural land will not be permitted unless it is for one or more of the following purposes:

- *Land allocated for development in this plan (EALDP2)*
- *Small-scale development directly related to a rural and/or agricultural business, including housing to enable essential workers for the business to live on site.*
- *The development of production and processing facilities utilising produce from the land where no other local site is suitable.*
- *Essential infrastructure where there is a specific locational need and no other suitable site.*

- *The generation of energy from renewable sources or the extraction of minerals and there is secure provision for restoration.*

In all the above exceptions, the layout and design of the proposal must minimise the amount of protected land that is required and protect soil that remains in situ from damage, including from compaction and erosion, and must minimise soil sealing."

Landscape Designations

2.1.16 No part of the Application Site lies within or near to a statutory designated landscape.

Registered Battlefields

2.1.17 The Application Site is not located within or adjacent to, a Registered Battlefield, and none are identified within the study area.

Listed Buildings, Scheduled Monuments and Conservation Areas

2.1.18 A formal assessment of the historical setting of these heritage features falls outside the scope of this report and the professional experience of the report author. Irrespective of this, to help ascertain whether there were potential landscape-related effects of the Proposed Development on heritage features the following was determined:

- There are no **Listed Buildings** with the Application Site or adjacent to its boundary.
- Within the wider Study Area, a number of Listed Buildings are identified, the closest being to the northwest at a distance of approx. 1.5km at Trabbochburn.
- A number of Listed Buildings are located to the east within the village of Ochiltree, at a distance of approx. 1.5km.
- The Application Site does not lie within or adjacent in any **Conservation Areas**.' The nearest lies to the east at Ochiltree.

Please refer to the Historic Environment Assessment submitted alongside the planning application for further details on this aspect.

Historic Land-use and Cover

2.1.19 Historically, the land at the Application Site appears to have been under constant agricultural usage, with no form of previous development apparent.

Core Paths and Other Rights of Way

2.1.20 There are no Core Paths or Other Rights of Way that cross the Application Site or run adjacent to any boundary.

2.1.21 In the wider study area, there are several Core Paths that radiate westwards from Ochiltree, a small village that lies to the east of the Application Site. These Core Paths connect with a local road and come within approx. 0.5km of the Application Site's eastern boundary, before continuing south beyond the A70 towards Moss Bridge before turning west and following the bottom of a shallow valley.

2.1.22 A series of other Rights of Way are also found to the east of the Application Site, at a greater distance than the aforementioned Core Paths, and follow loosely parallel to the Core Paths in a westerly direction, but at a higher elevation.

Tree Preservation Orders and Ancient Woodlands

2.1.23 No Tree Preservation Orders (TPO's) are identified within the Application Site or wider study area.

2.1.24 There are a number of woodlands in the wider landscape and study area that are listed within the ancient woodland inventory as being 'ancient woodlands,' the closest being to the immediate south of the Application Site's southern boundary. In reality this area of woodland is largely devoid of any trees to the centre of the identified area, with limited trees on the outer edges only.

Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes.

2.1.25 The Application Site is not located within an Historic Garden or a Designed Landscape. Two are located within the wider study Area:

- The Historic Garden and Designed Landscape of 'Barskimming' is located to the north at a distance of approx. 2.8km at its closet point, and 'Auchinleck' at a distance of approx. 1.67km to the northeast.
- To the west is 'Dumfries House' at a distance of approx. 4.75km and to the south-west, at a distance of approx. 2.85km is the Historic Garden and Designed Landscape of 'Drongan'.

Local Road/Transport Routes

2.1.26 There are no motorways or railway routes within the study area. The nearest arterial road is the A70 at a distance of approx. 240m to the south, connecting Ayr to the west with Cumnock beyond, and interconnecting a number of villages and hamlets. Due to the intervening landscape and topographical changes, there are no views of the Proposed Development from this route.

2.1.27 At a more local level, Creoch Road runs adjacent the Application Sites western boundary for a distance of approx. 0.28km before turning east and running to the south of the woodland adjacent the southern boundary, at a distance of approx. 50m before connecting with the A70. Creach Road extends northwards from the Application Site boundary for a distance of almost 1km, and it is estimated that road users travelling southwards will have varying degrees of visibility of the Proposed Development for a distance of approx. 0.75km.

2.1.28 Creoch Road connects with a local road (unnamed) that crosses from west to east, located on a local area of high ground, and connects towards the village of Ochiltree, with a further local road (unnamed) that turns southwards towards to the A70. It is noted that from these locations, generally at a distance in excess of 0.5km, there are potential occasional views of the Application Site possible.

Water Courses and Water Bodies

2.1.29 The nearest main water course is the Lugar-Water a river course that crosses the study area approx. 1.69km to the northeast of the Application Site.

2.1.30 More local to the Application Site is the Trabboch Burn that forms the northern boundary and runs parallel for a distance for c.100m. To the south, southwest and west are a number of drainage ditches along field boundary lines and several artificial pools of varying sizes.

Ecological Conservation

2.1.31 The Application Site does not contain or overlap any national or international designations for ecological conservation. Within the wider study area are the following:

- Local Nature Conservation Sites of 'Lugar Water and Auchinleck Estate' at a distance of approx. 1.62km to the northeast and 'Burnock Water' to the southeast at a distance of approx. 1.55km;
- The Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSi) of 'Barlosh Moss' lies to the south of the Application Site at a distance of approx. 2.1km.
- A Sensitive Landscape Area lies to the west of the Site and extends to the north and east of the Application Site, at distances of 4km, 2.28km and 1.44km respectively in the vicinity of Ochiltree.

Landscape Character

2.1.32 Landscape and visual appraisal are comprised of a study of two separate but inter-linked components:

- **Landscape character** - which is the physical make up and condition of the landscape itself. Landscape character arises from a distinct, recognisable, and consistent pattern of physical and social elements, aesthetic factors, and perceptual aspects; and
- **Visual amenity** - which is the way in which the Application Site is seen and appreciated; views to and from the Application Site, their direction, character, and sensitivity to change.

2.1.33 This section summarises and reviews relevant published landscape assessments which contribute to a better understanding of the Application Site's landscape character.

2.1.34 This landscape assessment considers the effect of the Proposed Development on the Landscape Character Types (LCT's) covering the application Site and surrounding area. LCT's within the study area, as illustrated in the digital map-based national Landscape Character Assessment published in 2019 by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) (now NatureScot).

2.1.35 The Application Site and majority of the wider study area is located within LCT 66 – Agricultural Lowlands, Ayrshire with LCT 68 – Lowland River Valley, Ayrshire to the northeast at a distance in excess of 2.5km at its closest point.

LCT 66 – Agricultural Lowlands, Ayrshire

2.1.36 LCT 66's landscape character is described as "*... an extensive area of agricultural lowland which occupy much of the Ayrshire Basin. Lying between about 10m and 150m, the area's geology is dominated by coal measures."*

"The landform is surprisingly complex and variable, dissected by many burns and streams draining to incised main river valleys to create an undulating lowland landscape. There is a gentle increase in height from the coastal fringe to the more abrupt transition to upland."

2.1.37 The key characteristics of this LCT are:

- Complex landform, gently increasing in height from the coastal fringe, dissected by many burns and streams draining to incised main river valleys to create an undulating lowland landscape.
- Geology dominated by coal measures, though basalt, sandstones, limestones, millstone grit and volcanic intrusions are also present.
- Generally small to medium scale landscape.
- Landcover is predominantly pastoral, with some arable on lower and better soils.
- Fields often regular in shape and enclosed by beech or hawthorn hedges, with mature hedgerow trees giving the landscape a surprisingly wooded character.
- Settlement pattern historic in origin based upon larger, more self-contained farmsteads set in a hinterland of fields.
- Number of larger towns and villages with historic cores surrounded by more modern development.
- Several major road corridors creating a degree of conflict between the rural character and presence of heavy traffic.
- Dense network of often very rural minor roads.
- Varying landscape character which ranges from very rural to more fragmented and developed landscapes on urban fringes.
- Views tend to be dictated by the local topography and landcover.

2.1.38 The perception of the landscape under this LCT is described as *"The Agricultural Lowlands - Ayrshire provide a simple rural setting to larger settlements like Troon, as well as the foreground to views to the Firth of Clyde and Arran from roads and settlements. This small to medium scale landscape has a diverse landscape character which ranges from very rural areas to a more fragmented landscape where modern development and transport corridors have eroded the character. Views tend to be informed by the local topography and landcover. From certain areas views open up towards the Firth of Clyde and Arran to the west and the Plateau Moorlands often form a simple, flat horizon in longer distance views to the east however, views of the operational Whitelee Wind Farm and its extensions have somewhat complicated this skyline. The southern hills of Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park provide an immediate backdrop to the western part of this Landscape Character Type."*

LCT 68 – Lowland River Valley, Ayrshire.

2.1.39 LCT 68's landscape character is described as "*The Lowland River Valleys - Ayrshire LCT occurs in seven places across Ayrshire, focused to the central inland area. They are centred on the Garnock, Annick, Irvine, Ayr, and Doon together with a number of smaller tributaries of these rivers, which typically flow from east to west through Ayrshire's agricultural lowlands."*

2.1.40 The key characteristics of this LCT are:

- Series of incised, narrow river valleys bounded by steep slopes which cross the agricultural lowlands of Ayrshire.
- Complex skylines formed by small interlocking hills within the southern valleys.

- Boulder clays and coal measures form the most commonly occurring underlying geology.
- Pastoral farming character with hedgerow field boundaries and valley slopes which are frequently wooded with stands of beech and semi-natural woodland.
- Settlement comparatively limited although there are a number of mills sited alongside rivers, often at bridging points.
- Rich woodland of the river valleys often incorporated into designed landscapes.
- Intimate small scale landscapes which often lie hidden within the wider agricultural lowlands.
- Views tend to be enclosed, short distance and focused along the diverse river valley landscape. There are open elevated views over the valleys from settlements and roads sited on upper slopes.

2.1.41 The perception of the landscape under this LCT is described as *"small scale landscapes which, for much of the time, lie hidden within the wider landscape of the undulating Ayrshire lowlands. They often come as a surprise, signalled by a steep twist in the road, and the presence of linear woodlands along the steep valley slopes. Views tend to be enclosed by the surrounding steep slopes and shorter distance, focused up and down the diverse river valley landscape, although there are open elevated views over the valleys from settlements and roads sited on upper slopes."*

2.1.42 The field study work revealed that the Application Site and its immediate context, whilst broadly consistent with the overall characteristics, contain very few of the elements of those key characteristics described above. As such the national character assessment can only provide a broad overview of the wider landscape character.

Local / District Landscape Character Assessment

2.1.43 The landscape assessment considers the effect of the Proposed Development on the Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) covering the Site and the surrounding area.

2.1.44 The landscape character typologies and boundaries used to form the basis of character assessment in this LVIA consider the key characteristics summarised in the July 2016 dated report titled 'East Ayrshire Council State Of The Environment Report Chapter 2 – Landscape And Visual' and is based on the Ayrshire Landscape Character Assessment (ALCA) that was published in 1998.

2.1.45 The ALCA identified 18 rural Landscape Character Types (LCT's) that are present within East Ayrshire, with the Application Site and wider study Area located in AYS7 'Ayrshire Lowlands'. AYS7 is the largest of the 18 LCT's, covering an area of approx. 33205ha or 26.14% of the overall East Ayrshire area.

2.1.46 The 'Ayrshire Lowlands' LCT is described within the ACLA as *"a rich pastoral landscape of undulating hills, meandering rivers and woodlands dotted with small settlements. Most of the East Ayrshire settlements are in the lowland areas, with the largest settlement and administrative centre, Kilmarnock, in the north of the local authority area. The main roads emanating from Kilmarnock include the A77/M77 north to Glasgow and south to Ayr; the A71 west to Irvine and east to Strathaven and the A76 southeast to Dumfries. The A713 between Ayr and Castle Douglas is a designated tourist route. The A70 runs between Edinburgh to Ayr through East Ayrshire*."

2.1.47 The ALCA identifies the key landscape receptors and indicators of change in East Ayrshire and the main agents that are causing change and may cause change in the future. Whilst there are many generic trends that reflect those across Scotland as a whole, the main forces for change in East Ayrshire are mineral/ resource extraction and the harnessing and transmission of renewable energy.

2.1.48 The ACLA does not extend into discussing or determining landscape value of any of the LCT's covered within the assessment.

Landscape Value

2.1.49 Several aspects are relevant to determination of the Site's and Locality's Landscape Value and are described below:

- **Landscape Protection** - No statutory or non-statutory landscape designations apply to the Site.
- **Landscape Condition** - Vegetation along boundaries is variable or absent, degraded in places. Some detracting features.
- **Scenic Quality** - The Site comprises ordinary open agricultural fields, albeit affording medium range views in an arc from the northwest to the northeast. However, scenic quality is influenced by presence of built elements including a number of isolated dwellings and farmsteads.
- **Rarity** - There are no elements within the Site that are considered to be 'rare.'
- **Representativeness** - The agricultural landscape elements including periphery vegetation and local ditches are typical of those in the landscape character area and fairly frequently found and representative of the local landscape.
- **Conservation Interests** - There are limited ecological or heritage / archaeological areas of interest within the Site.
- **Wildness/tranquillity** – Large number of human influences evident locally but more limited at a Site level.
- **Associations** - There are no known associations with the Site.
- **Recreation Value** - There are no Core Paths or other Rights of Way that cross the Application Site.
- **Agricultural Value** - According to the Land Capability Classification for Agriculture (LCCA) Report (by Patrick Stevenson Limited, dated February 2025), the land varies between Class 4 – Division 1 and Class 4 Division 2 – the least favourable land with limited ability for wider agricultural use with use limited to primarily grassland with some ability to produce some forage and cereal crops. some best and most versatile.

2.1.50 The factors contributing have been summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Landscape Value of the Site

Value Level	Protection	Landscape Condition	Scenic Quality	Rarity	Representativeness	Conservation Interests	Tranquillity / Wildness	Associations	Recreational Value	Agricultural Value
Very High										
High										
Medium			✓		✓		✓			
Low	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓
Very Low								✓		

2.1.51 Overall, the characteristics and landscape character of the Site have been assessed as having a **Low – Medium** Value.

2.1.52 Based on fieldwork and the likely nature of discernible effects, the consideration of the Value of the adjacent landscape to the Site focusses on that within 1.5km of the Site. Value of Landscape Character and Characteristics of local area adjacent to the Site:

- **Landscape Protection** - There are no statutory or non-statutory landscape designations apply to the surrounding landscape. Some land to the northeast, at a distance of approx. 1.35km from the Application Site, is identified as a Sensitive Landscape Area, covering land around Auchinleck Old House, extending to the north.
- **Landscape Condition** - The landscape condition of the immediate area is variable, with evidence of hedgerows, ditches, and copse of woodlands, interspersed with degraded or absent boundary features evidencing the intensive large scale agricultural nature of the area. Number of detracting features.
- **Scenic Quality** - The immediate area has variable scenic quality. Whilst views outwards from Site are achieved, human development and influence is evident, including dwellings, farmsteads and the nearby buildings and open areas of despoiled landscape associated with the open cast coal quarry works to the immediate south.
- **Rarity** - Landscape characteristics in the immediate area are common in the wider landscape, with numerous detracting features.
- **Representativeness** - Landscape characteristics and character are an average example of its kind e.g. hedgerows, ditches, small copses/tree cover.
- **Conservation Interests** – Limited designated heritage and ecological conservation interests in close proximity to the Site.

- **Wildness/tranquillity** - Detracted to adjacent open cast coal workings.
- **Associations** - There are no known associations within the wider landscape.
- **Recreation Value** - There are several Core Paths and PRoW within the Study Area and landscape, noting the Proposed Development is considered likely to exert a limited influence over.
- **Agricultural Value** – The aforementioned LCCA Report does not cover the wider landscape, but it is considered likely that it will likely replicate the Site situation, noting that large areas to the south and southwest are spoiled by former coal workings.

Table 2: Landscape Value of the local area adjacent to the Site

Value Level	Protection	Landscape Condition	Scenic Quality	Rarity	Representativeness	Conservation Interests	Tranquillity / Wildness	Associations	Recreational Value	Agricultural Value
Very High										
High										
Medium		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	
Low	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Very Low										

2.1.53 Overall, the characteristics and landscape character of the landscape local to the Site have been assessed as having a **Low-Medium** Value.

3. Baseline Situation - Visual Aspects

Introduction

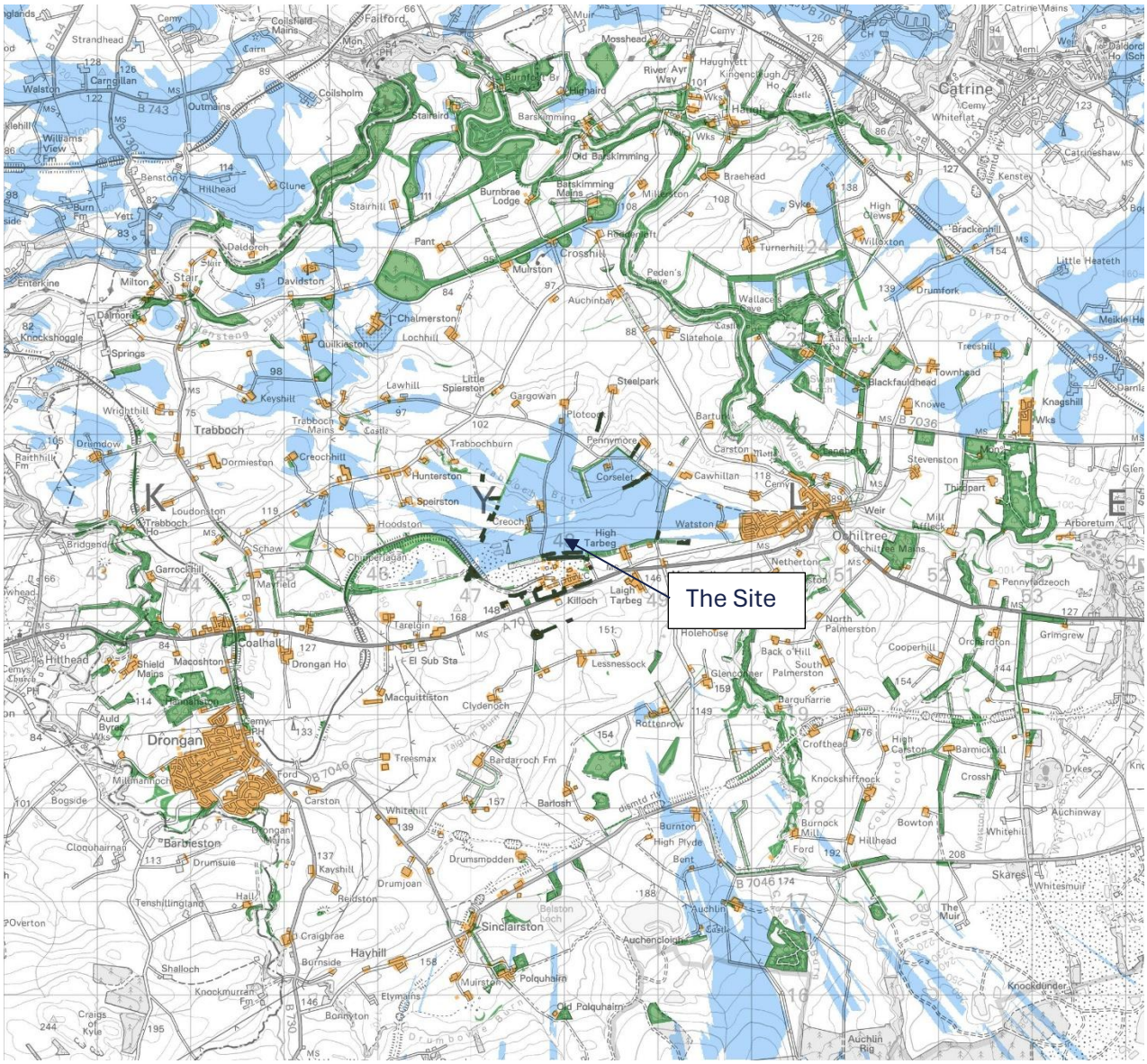
3.1.1 This section describes the views available to and from the Site, their distribution, character, and sensitivity to change. Arthian has assessed the views available to and from the Site by the public through a combination of desk studies and fieldwork.

3.1.2 Strictly, in legal terms, there is no automatic right to a view. However, the enjoyment of a view could be an important part of the residential visual amenity of a location (e.g., a neighbouring property), and its loss might, therefore, have an adverse impact on the residential visual amenity of that property (i.e. an environmental effect on humans). Visual receptors at public locations are generally considered to be of higher sensitivity than visual receptors at private locations, although the effects on numerous private residences may be considered to have an effect on the wider local community, rather than individuals.

Plate 1 Site location, showing Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) – bare earth.

3.1.3 An initial Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) have been produced based on a 'bare-earth' scenario which represents a worse case situation (see Plate 1 and Figure L2). A further ZTV (see Plate 2, Figure L3), has been produced that also illustrates the potential screening effects afforded by existing woodland blocks, modelled at a height of 12m. Lower lying areas of vegetation i.e. hedgerow have not been modelled and it is noted that subtle variation in topography and varying degrees of visibility through field boundary vegetation and roadside plantations will also combine to restrict or vary potential visibility at various times of the year. The produced ZTV's in conjunction with fieldwork undertaken in August 2024, has helped to understand the potential visibility of the proposals and selection of representative viewpoints.

Plate 2 Site location, showing Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) with existing Screening Effects.



Visibility

3.1.4 Based on using the ZTV with the modelled woodland blocks (Plate 2, and Figure L3), visibility covers the immediate areas surrounding the Application Site, extending for a distance of approx. 1km to the east

and north, then at sporadic locations to the west and northwest and northeast. It is noted the A70 road runs along the top of a local ridgeline with the Application Site located on the northern facing slope, no close-range views are noted from the south, with occasional long-range views from the higher ground to the south at distances in excess of 2.5km. The blue colour on the ZTV represents areas where the Proposed Development would be potentially visible from.

3.1.5 Predicted visibility of the proposals is normally greater in winter (when trees and hedgerows have no leaves), this assessment was undertaken in December 2024 when vegetation was absent of any leaf cover, representing the worse-case for visibility, noting during summer months the levels of assessed visibility would be greatly reduced when vegetation is in leaf.

3.1.6 Given project time constraints, no discussions on suitable viewpoint locations for assessment were agreed with the local authority in advance of undertaking the field work. Instead, suitable locations were identified to ensure that all receptors surrounding the Application Site would be represented, and views recorded to enable a review of the potential for views of the Application Site and the Proposed Development. Based on field work, 17 viewpoint locations were visited, from which 10 representative viewpoints have been selected which best represent the range of views available and where the likely most notable effects are predicted to occur. These are described at Table 3, noting the viewpoint numbers are not consecutive but follow the number ordering from the original 17no. locations visited.

Table 3: Representative Viewpoints (VPs)

VP No.	Location	Distance / direction from Application Site to Viewpoint	Rationale
1	Local Road	525m N	Representative of views from local road.
2	Local Road	600m NE	Representative of views from local road in the vicinity of 'Corselet.'
3	Local Road	850m E	Representative of views from local road and views along the valley to the west.
4	Core Path	890m E	Representative of views from the Core Path in close proximity to its junction with the local road.
5	Local Road	0.750m E	Representative of views from local road and views along the valley to the west.
6	Farmstead of 'Watston'	1.29km E	Farmstead with main dwelling and several smaller dwellings / cottages in close proximity. Main elevation orientated southwest to northeast with woodland block to the west, with possibly filtered and oblique views in the general direction of the Application Site. Location is also taken on a Right of Way with more open views possible of the Application Site.
7	Local Road	55m N	Location on the local road where due to limited understorey vegetation and trees only along the outer edges of the adjacent woodland, there are views across the woodland, there are views of the northern boundary of the Application Site.

8	Local Road	<10m W	Location on local road to the immediate west of the Application Site where no boundary vegetation enables open views across the area and wider landscape to the north.
12	Local Road near dwelling of 'Provost Mount.'	815m N	Chosen as a location to illustrate limited visibility from lower lying areas to the south of the Application Site.
13	Public Right of Way	1.5km SE	Elevated location to the south where the Right of Way is identified on the ZTV as having the potential for views of the Application Site and Proposed Development.

Note: All distances are from the location of where the photograph was taken to the Application Site boundary.

3.1.7 These viewpoints are described and assessed in Section 4.3.

3.1.8 Visual barriers present in the immediate landscape include woodland blocks and built development present within settlements. Additionally, more locally, visual barriers noted during fieldwork, such as hedgerows and tree belts will have varying effects on visibility.

3.1.9 Due to the undulating and rolling landscape in which the Application Site is located, in addition to the comparatively limited elevated nature of the Application Site, theoretical visibility is fragmented and primarily restricted to more raised or elevated locations and areas of land to the north, where lower lying land and lower valley areas being largely shown as having limited predicted visibility.

3.1.10 As the Site is on the northern edge of crest of the local landform, with a general fall in direction to the north and the west, this means the majority of the Site cannot be viewed from the south, with limited views from the east. The Proposed Development will therefore only likely influence views from the north and west or immediately adjacent the woodland along the Application Site's southern boundary and to a lesser degree, the east.

ZTV Limitations

3.1.11 The ZTV indicates areas from where it may be possible to secure views to part or parts of the Proposed Development; however, the use of the ZTV needs to be qualified on the following basis:

- There are a number of areas within the illustrated ZTV from where there is potential to view parts of the Proposed Development, but which comprise woodland areas or agricultural land where the general public do not appear to exercise regular access; and
- The ZTV maps do not account for the likely orientation of a viewer - for example when travelling in a vehicle.

3.1.12 The combined effect of these limitations means that the mapped ZTV pattern display tends to over-represent the extent of visibility; both in terms of the land area over which the Proposed Development is visible and also potentially the extent of visibility from a particular viewpoint.

3.1.13 In addition, the accuracy of the ZTVs, which is determined by the resolution (detail) of the landform data itself, has to be considered. The ZTV is generated using OS Terrain 5m data. The resolution of this data cannot accurately represent smaller scale terrain features, which can therefore give rise to inaccuracy

in the predicted visibility on a localised level. This can lead to either underestimation of visibility, e.g., a raised area of ground permitting views over an intervening obstruction - or can lead to overestimation of visibility - such as where a roadside embankment obscures a view. This localised variation can be checked in the field only where access is available.

4. Landscape and Visual Assessment

Assumptions and Limitations

4.1.1 It is assumed that the Application Site would otherwise continue to be used as existing, should permission not be granted, as the 'do nothing' scenario.

4.1.2 The assessment is made against a baseline situation of the following assumptions:

a) The proposed landscaping works are undertaken in the first appropriate period following the construction of the development.

b) It is assumed that the recommended impact avoidance/mitigation measures are able to be implemented through the detailed design process, as there is no reason known at the time of assessment for these not to be incorporated. This includes use of best practice landscaping, construction, planting, and ongoing management /maintenance techniques to promote rapid establishment and increase amenity, biodiversity, and other functions of the residual landscape.

c) The surrounding landscape context remains the same, including the predominant retention of main woodland blocks (both density and heights), boundary hedgerows and trees where present are retained.

4.1.3 There is a requirement for the Application Site to undergo some landform changes to enable the Proposed Development to be implemented, which includes the creation of a 'platform' of level ground located to the southern area of the Application Site, and also the creation of a balancing pond to assist in controlling water run-off. Any materials excavated to enable the development will be used to grade between existing and proposed ground levels, with any surplus materials excavated, including soils, stored locally. Upon restoration, changes in level will be restored to existing ground levels.

4.1.4 The fieldwork was undertaken during daylight hours during December 2024. No access was available to private locations to ascertain actual views from these locations, but where possible and with approval of residential owners, access to the grounds was obtained. Professional judgement has been used to anticipate views based on publicly accessible locations.

4.1.5 The information used for the assessment of cumulative impacts was made using the information available from the Client and Agent for other developments in the locality at the time of the assessment.

Predicted Potential Impacts – Construction Phase Effects

4.1.6 The following actions are predicted to arise from construction of the Proposed Development. These elements are considered to have the greatest potential in contributing to long-term physical effects on land within the Site, as well as potential landscape and visual effects within the wider landscape:

- The displacement of existing land cover primarily comprising areas of agricultural grassland.
- The excavation, temporary removal, and regrading of topsoil or subsoil.
- The construction of the built elements of the Proposed Development; including any activities associated with ground preparation; securement of the construction area; marking out; and any excavation works to facilitate the laying of pipes and cables; and

- Associated construction traffic movements.

Predicted Potential Impacts – Operational Phase Effects

4.1.7 Following construction, the Proposed Development would form a Very Long-term duration (non-permanent) addition to the landscape, comprising the substation, battery storage units, associated ancillary infrastructure and acoustic and security fencing. Additionally, landscaping in the form of hedgerow planting, woodland planting, and additional tree planting (and management of these and retained landscape elements thereafter) would also become evident over the life of the Proposed Development.

4.1.8 Once operational, there would be the need for on-site activities associated with equipment maintenance and servicing; although, it is unlikely that the movement and activities would be readily distinguishable from wider activity in the local area.

Summary of Potential Effects

4.1.9 Table 4 below describes the typical potential landscape and visual effects that can arise from the various phases of works associated with the Proposed Development.

4.1.10 Aspects described in the table does not necessarily mean the impacts and effects would occur, or that they would be adverse. Potential effects on the landscape and visual resource would arise principally from construction, with potential for the level of operational phase effects experienced to lessen over time as the Proposed Development integrates into the surroundings and receptors become accustomed to the change in views, particularly upon establishment of landscape mitigation.

Table 4: Potential Effects

Phase	Element	Potential Effects	Potential Sensitive Receptors
Construction/ Decommissioning	Construction plant. Temporary construction facilities including compound, assembly and storage areas, and vehicle parking area. Construction of built elements including any activities associated with site preparation; securement of the construction site; marking out; and any excavation works to facilitate the laying of cables. Construction of onsite substation, BESS units, roadways, and fencing, including drainage pipes and balancing pond, and fencing. Delivery vehicle movements.	Temporary physical effects on landscape fabric. Any permanent physical effects on landscape fabric (i.e., permanent removal of or changes to trees/ hedgerows/vegetation/ ground cover). This would include changes brought about by the addition of landscape planting mitigation. Temporary effects on landscape character. Temporary effects on views.	Physical landscape elements / features. Landscape character receptors. Visual receptors.
Operation	Substation and BESS units, fencing and ancillary features. Access tracks.	Long-term effects on landscape character. Long-term effects on views. Temporary effects on views.	Landscape character receptors. Visual receptors.

	Vehicle movements and any activities associated with equipment maintenance and servicing.		

4.1.11 Following the end of the operational phase, the built elements of the Proposed Development would be decommissioned, and the land would be returned to agricultural usage. All above ground built elements would be removed from the Site.

4.1.12 Decommissioning is expected to take considerably less time than construction. Evidence of the Proposed Development may remain in close-range views during the post-decommissioning restoration period; with the Site returning to an appearance nearer its original condition over time.

4.1.13 Any mitigation and enhancement planting would remain on-site following decommissioning, with the planting becoming a permanent addition, subject to long-term future agricultural management objectives.

Impact Avoidance and Mitigation Measures

4.1.14 An iterative design and assessment process has been undertaken. Mitigation measures have been integrated prior to finalisation, such that this has been embedded into the proposals, whilst ensuring operational visibility. These measures have been devised to avoid, minimise, or 'compensate' for identified important visual and landscape effects.

4.1.15 The Proposed Development has had the following impact avoidance, reduction and mitigation measures incorporated to minimise adverse landscape and visual effects:

- Siting the development on a northern facing slope, and to the rear of an existing linear woodland, to minimise views from the south.
- Limiting the maximum height of the proposed structures to further limit visibility of the Proposed Development from the wider landscape.
- Retaining existing field boundary hedgerow planting and providing enhancement through the planting of new hedgerows where existing is gapped, and the planting of new hedgerows to the western boundary.
- Utilising existing access points and access tracks to and within the Application Site via existing gateways where possible.
- The setting back of any built development from existing hedgerows or vegetation to the perimeter of the Application Site. This acknowledges the contribution that existing elements provide to the existing landscape character whilst recognising their ability to provide visual screening and facilitating their continued use as a movement corridor for wildlife.

4.1.16 The assessment of effects (landscape and visual) assumes and refers to 'adverse' effects at all times unless specifically stated that the effect is beneficial.

Assessment of Landscape Effects

Effects on Landscape Characteristics (within the Application Site)

4.1.17 The landscape features bordering the Application Site consist of hedgerows to the east and western boundaries [in part], managed by the current landowner. A linear woodland runs immediately adjacent to the southern boundary, and northern boundary is formed by a drainage ditch and peripheral areas of grass to the field boundary margins. There are no areas of vegetation within the Application Site. The vegetation bordering and within the Application Site is typical of the surrounding landscape and are assessed as being of High Susceptibility to change. The Proposed Development includes for the retention of all existing trees and hedgerows to the perimeter of the Application Sites apart from the loss of a small section of hedgerow to the west to account for an emergency access point.

4.1.18 Construction works will result in excavation of existing ground to the centre of the Application Site to form the development plateau, and more localised excavations for the drainage basin and associated buried pipework. Excavated soils will be used to form the plateau with any residual being redistributed across the wider area. The proposed excavations within the site will not have any effect on the more highly valued characteristics i.e. hedgerows and ditches will be protected during construction and operation of the Proposed Development. In addition, the proposed access track to the western boundary will result in a loss of approx. 13m of existing hedgerow.

4.1.19 The primary effects of the Proposed Development on landscape relate to the existing grassland ground cover and minor loss of hedgerow. Given the most highly valued characteristics have been mostly protected, the Landscape Susceptibility of those characteristics subject to adverse change is considered to be **Medium.** Combined with the **Low-Medium** landscape value, the Sensitivity of landscape characteristics are **Low-Medium**, with some scope to replace the lost characteristics with additional grassland, hedgerows, and scrub planting areas across the site.

4.1.20 At a site level, the direct level of effect of the Proposed Development is considered to have a **Medium – Large Magnitude of effect** on the characteristics within the site. This is considered to be a **Moderate** level of adverse effect, for the long-term, when compared to the baseline characteristics of the site.

4.1.21 The prevailing topography and characteristic landform within the Site will be affected by the Proposed Development, though effects will be localised whilst preserving the overall topographic nature of the Site.

4.1.22 Whilst the effect will last for a Very Long-term duration until decommissioning, where it is predicted there will be full reinstatement where feasible to agriculture use, the Proposed Development will also bring about beneficial effects for landscape characteristics, in particular the management, gapping up of, additional planting and new hedgerow and tree planting.

4.1.23 Compared with the existing baseline, hedgerow lengths and tree planting will considerably increase or be improved, and beneficial landscape characteristics will be brought about for the lifetime of the Proposed Development. As planting matures and becomes established, the adverse effects experienced during construction, are likely to become secondary to the beneficial effects on landscape characteristics for the very long-term duration, notably the permanent planting provisions. Overall, by Year 15 and beyond, compared to the existing baseline, the Magnitude of change in relation to new

landscape planting is considered to be **Small**, and at maturity, would be of **Minor level of beneficial effect**.

Effects on Landscape Character (within the Application Site)

4.1.24 The Site does not lie within any nationally or locally designated landscapes, with the character within the Site being considered ordinary and well represented in the wider area. The most highly valued landscape characteristics contributing to character will be retained, protected, and enhanced. The prevalent field pattern will be retained and reinforced through planting. The landscape character of the Site, accounting for all the prevalent characteristic landscape features, is assessed as having a Medium Susceptibility to change to the type of development proposed and when combined with the Low-Medium Landscape Value, it is considered that the resulting Landscape Sensitivity is **Low-Medium** overall.

4.1.25 The Proposed Development would result in a change of the Site's grassland character through the inclusion of the BESS units and ancillary infrastructure. The relatively low-level structures of the BESS container units, whilst clearly modern man-made elements, would not alter the overall landscape framework or structure. The topography of the site on the whole does not change, with localised changes to the main development area required to facilitate the proposals, which will be at odds with the sloping topography of the Application Site. The Proposed Development will partially disrupt some medium-range views from the adjacent local road of the landscape to the northeast, and close-range from the same road to the east.

4.1.26 The scale of the Proposed Development would form a clear recognisable form of development, altering the prevalent character of the Site. Overall, it is considered that the Proposed Development would mask the pre-existing character for a Very Long-term duration rather than replace it, noting the reinstatement potential of the land upon decommissioning.

4.1.27 Given the scale of the Proposed Development within the Application Site, it is considered that the Proposed Development would result in a **Medium Magnitude** of effect as a result of implementation. Overall, this would produce a Moderate level of adverse effect on the landscape character at a site level.

4.1.28 Over the life of the Proposed Development, the level of adverse effect will continue to diminish as existing more highly valued characteristics such as hedgerows are improved and managed and supplemented with substantial additional planting around the periphery of the Site. Upon planting maturity, not only will landscape connectivity be improved but the underlying landscape fabric and structure will be enhanced through reinforcement and reintroduction of characteristic field boundaries.

4.1.29 These measures will further integrate the Proposed Development into the landscape. Throughout the life of development, the level of adverse effect is considered to reduce to a Small-Medium Magnitude of effect, noting the Site would continue to form a moderate scale BESS development. This is considered to be a **Minor-Moderate** adverse level of effect over the very long term at a Site-level.

Effects on landscape character near the Application Site

4.1.30 The characteristics of the local LCT over which the Proposed Development may exert an influence, are that of an undulating and sloping agricultural environment, with pockets of woodland and interspersed hedgerow and tree belt boundaries, which in part has been degraded by a number of open-cast coal mining sites. The presence of a number of isolated farmsteads and individual dwellings, influence the local landscape and its character and amenity.

4.1.31 During and following construction, large scale effects on landscape character would be limited to the Application Site where the Site would change from an agricultural landscape to that of a BESS development.

4.1.32 The levels of effect will diminish with distance from the Application Site reducing rapidly due to the screening or filtering effects of established field boundary vegetation across the landscape, in combination with small woodland blocks and undulating topography.

4.1.33 The following landscape character areas could have the potential to be significantly affected by the Proposed Development:

- LCT 66: Agricultural Lowlands – Ayrshire

4.1.34 The Landscape Sensitivity of the LCT is not described within the assessment or descriptor. When considering the large size of the host LCT, the size of the Application Site, the type and duration of the development and the limited area over which noticeable effects on landscape character would be exerted are considered, the magnitude of adverse effect during construction and the duration of the operational period is assessed to be **Very Small.** Resulting in a **Negligible-Minor** (at worse) level of effect.

Effects on Visual Amenity

4.1.35 The presentation of the assessment of visual effects has focused on representative viewpoints which represent sensitive locations with the potential to be affected to a level which would represent an important planning consideration.

4.1.36 Ten viewpoints have been selected to best represent the range of sensitive viewpoint locations and main effects within the ZTV and are illustrated using photographs in Figures L4 to L13. Other viewpoints were visited and omitted due to having no visibility of the Application Site or Proposed Development, or because they were represented by viewpoints in close proximity.

4.1.37 In addition to the representative viewpoints, four of the locations have been developed into a series of montages, illustrating the baseline view (without development), a photomontage at Year 0 (development and associated mitigating planting in place, and at Year 15 where the mitigation planting has established, and maintained at 2.5m for hedgerows. These photomontages are from Viewpoint 1 (local road to the northwest), Viewpoint 2 (local road near 'Corselet'), Viewpoint 5 (Core Path and local road to the east) and Viewpoint 8 (local road to the west, adjacent the Application Site boundary.

Table 5: Summary Visual Sensitivity of Receptors at Viewpoints (VPs)

VP No.	Location Description	Receptors Represented	Range	Sensitivity
1	Local road to the north of the site where users travelling south are loosely orientated in the general direction of the site.	Road Users	Medium	Medium
2	Local road to the northeast of the site, near 'Corselet' where road users may experience oblique views of the site and where the dwelling at Corselet may experience views from upper floor.	Road Users	Medium	Medium
		Residents		Low-Medium
3	Local road to the northeast of the site, where users could have oblique views of the site.	Road users	Medium	Medium
4	View from Core Path to the east of the site	Walkers, recreational users	Medium	High
5	View from local road and route of Core Path to the east of the site.	Walkers, recreational users	Medium	High
		Road Users		Medium
6	Route of Other Right of Way that follows the trackway access to the nearby dwelling(s) that may experience views from upper floors.	Users of PRoW	Medium	High
		Residents	Medium	Medium
7	Local road to the south of the site where users can experience oblique views through adjacent woodland	Road Users	Close	Medium
8	Local road to the west of the site adjacent to the site boundary where	Road Users	Close	Medium
12	Local road near Provost Mount to the south of the Application Site with a local road orientated in the general direction of the Application Site.	Road Users	Medium	Medium
		Dwelling		High
13	Other Right of Way	Footpath users	Long	High

Individual Visual Effects on Viewpoint 1

4.1.38 Viewpoint 1 (see Figure L4) is taken from a local road that runs to the west of the Application Site, where users travelling southwards will initially experience medium range then close range views of the Proposed Development, noting the elevation position of the selected viewpoint on the rising land to the north. The sensitivity of visual receptors is considered Medium.

4.1.39 The baseline view from this location is aligned with the local road as it rises up to the local ridgeline to the south. The view is across an agricultural landscape, noting fields are predominantly grassland with under pastoral use to lower lying areas. The road is lined with low-level hedgerows and the skyline is occupied by a number of linear woodland groupings. Low voltage powerlines and occasional farmsteads and isolated dwellings are also visible within the view. Overall, the view is across a rural landscape that contains several man-made elements. The Application Site is visible on the rising ground to the left of the view.

4.1.40 The initial change in view will include the excavation and regrading of selected areas of the site to create the development platform, the construction of the access track from the local road, the installation of

the BESS units, associated infrastructure and acoustic fencing that forms the principal areas of the Proposed Development. In addition, the excavation and creation of a balancing pond and below ground drainage connections from the site area to the nearest watercourse will be visible. Noting the position of the main development footprint is located to the southern areas of the Application Site which are relatively level in terms of topography, initially only a minor change in level to the north, the northern areas of the Proposed Development are visible, with the remainder limited from view by the acoustic fence that is being installed. New planting implemented as mitigation to the perimeter of the fence line and within the wider site area will be visible.

4.1.41 The initial change in view will include medium to close-range views of the proposed perimeter acoustic fence and installation of other elements within the Application Site, notable the BESS units and other larger elements of associated infrastructure. The limited vertical height of the proposals within the view, with a wide horizontal effect, the magnitude of change at Year 1 (upon completion) would be **Medium** on the **Medium** sensitivity receptors (road users). The overall level of effect would be **Moderate** adverse, for a Very Long-term duration. These changes in view are illustrated in the visualisations provided at Appendix C.

4.1.42 New planting to the outer perimeter of the fencing and woodland blocks sited around the wider Application Site will progressively establish and screen the proposals, so that at Year 15 views will likely be limited to occasional filtered views of the Proposed Development, reducing the overall level of visual effect to a magnitude of **Small,** with a resulting overall level of effect of **Minor-Moderate.**

Table 6: Visual Effects on Viewpoint 1

Visual Receptor	Sensitivity	Magnitude		Nature and Importance of Effect
Road users	Medium	Upon Completion (at Year 1)	Medium	Moderate adverse
		Year 15 (planting established)	Small	Minor-Moderate adverse

Individual Visual Effects on Viewpoint 2

4.1.43 Viewpoint 2 (see Figure L5) is representative views from the local road network to the north of the Application Site, at a medium distance from the Proposed Development. The sensitivity is considered Medium. This view is also representative of possible views from the dwelling at 'Corselet,' who are considered as being Medium sensitivity receptors.

4.1.44 The baseline view from these locations is oblique to the direction of travel for road users who are transient and travelling west, along an area of high ground to the north of the Application Site. The reduced height of the roadside vegetation enables views over this feature and the shallow valley to the south, where the host field for the Proposed Development is located and is visible due to its position on a northern facing slope. The outlook is across a rural landscape with fields of agricultural grassland, separated by native hedgerows, and the linear woodlands to the south of the Application Site being visible on the skyline. Detractors within the view are overhead power and communications lines and isolated farmsteads.

4.1.45 Initial changes in view will consist of the excavation and levelling of the existing ground levels to construct the development platform, the installation of BESS units, perimeter fencing, associated infrastructure

and new areas of planting, noting these elements are limited in height and do not obscure the woodland and vegetation on the skyline beyond. The balancing pond to the northeastern corner of the site and associated construction of the below ground drainage elements will also be visible. These changes in view are illustrated in the visualisations provided at Appendix C.

4.1.46 With the limited vertical and horizontal extents of the proposals within the view, it is considered that the magnitude of effect at Year 1 (upon completion) would be **Small-Medium** on the identified **Medium** sensitivity receptors. The overall level of effect would be **Minor-Moderate** adverse, for a Very Long-term duration.

4.1.47 The proposed mitigation planting will at Year 15 be reaching full establishment and will reduce the magnitude of visual effect to **Small** at worse, resulting in **Minor adverse** levels of visual effects overall. The remaining glimpse views of perimeter fencing and established planting will be visible in the context of existing vegetation and built elements on the skyline to the south.

Table 7: Visual Effects on Viewpoint 2

Visual Receptor	Sensitivity	Magnitude		Nature and Importance of Effect
Road users	Medium	Upon Completion (at Year 1)	Small-Medium	Minor/Moderate adverse
		Year 15 (planting established)	Small	Minor adverse
Residents at 'Corselet'	Medium	Upon Completion (at Year 1)	Small-Medium	Minor/Moderate adverse
		Year 15 (planting established)	Small	Minor adverse

Individual Visual Effects on Viewpoint 3

4.1.48 Viewpoint 3 (see Figure L6) is from the same local road as Viewpoint 2 but to the east where there are open views down the valley to the west in which the Application Site is located. The sensitivity of road users is considered to be Medium.

4.1.49 The baseline view is looking west from the local road, over a well-managed roadside hedgerow and down the shallow valley, across a landscape that is predominantly agricultural grassland. Occasional farmsteads and low-voltage overhead power lines are visible man-made features within the view. The eastern areas of the Application Site are visible to the left of the view.

4.1.50 The initial change in view will consist of minor changes in topography where the main development platform is to be constructed, the installation of BESS units and associated infrastructure set within the perimeter acoustic fencing, and to a lesser degree the creation of the balancing pond and associated below ground drainage works. Noting the distance from the proposals to the road and associated receptors, the magnitude of effect at Year 1 (upon completion) would be **Small-Medium** on these **Medium** sensitivity receptors, and the overall level of visual effect would be **Moderate adverse** for a Very Long-term duration.

4.1.51 New planting implemented at Year 1 will assist in assimilating the Proposed Development into the views and will be visible in the context of adjacent woodland but noting its position on a northern facing slope i.e. towards the local road network, views will still be possible of the perimeter fencing at Year 15, upon

establishment. The magnitude of effect at Year 15 is considered to reduce to **Very Small**, resulting in a **Minor** level of adverse effect.

Table 2: Visual Effects on Viewpoint 3

Visual Receptor	Sensitivity	Magnitude		Nature and Importance of Effect
Road users	Medium	Upon Completion (at Year 1)	Small-Medium	Moderate adverse
		Year 15 (planting established)	Very Small	Minor adverse

Individual Visual Effects on Viewpoint 4

4.1.52 Viewpoint 4 (see Figure L7) is taken from the Core Path that connects to the local road at a distance of approx. 0.9km to the east of the Application Site. Users of the Core Path are considered to be High sensitivity receptors.

4.1.53 The baseline view from the Core Path is orientated to the southwest across a field of grassland, with the nearby local road extending to the distance, with a linear belt of woodland adjacent. The Application Site is largely obscured from view by roadside hedgerows and the adjacent woodland, noting that there are likely to be filtered views of the Proposed Development from the Core Path during winter months.

4.1.54 The initial change in view will be limited to distant and filtered views of the eastern areas of the Proposed Development and will initially consist of the installation of the BESS units and the perimeter acoustic fence that will screen the internal components of the proposals from view. New planting to the east of the edges of the site will be partially discernible. The magnitude of visual effect is considered to be **Small** at Year 1 (upon completion) on the **High** sensitivity receptors (users of the Core Path). The overall level of effect would be **Moderate adverse**, for a Very Long-term duration.

4.1.55 New hedgerow planting to the eastern boundary to infill gaps within the existing hedgerow, and areas of native scrub and tree planting to the perimeter of the fencing, will further filter views so that at Year 15 when proposed mitigation planting matures, only occasional and distant filtered views will remain of the perimeter fence. The overall magnitude of effect is considered to be **Very Small,** resulting in a **Minor adverse** level of adverse effect at worse.

Table 9: Visual Effects on Viewpoint 4

Visual Receptor	Sensitivity	Magnitude		Nature and Importance of Effect
Users of Core Path	High	Upon Completion (at Year 1)	Small	Moderate adverse
		Year 15 (planting established)	Very Small	Minor adverse

Individual Visual Effects on Viewpoint 5

4.1.56 Viewpoint 5 (see Figure L8) is taken from the same local road that the Core Path as described at Viewpoint 4 connects with, only further west and at a distance of approx. 0.75km from the Application Site. The Core Path follows this local road southwards and users are considered to be both Medium sensitivity (road users) and high sensitivity (Core Path users) receptors.

4.1.57 The baseline view from this location is across the farmed landscape to the west at a position on the local road where the adjacent roadside hedgerows are managed to a low level and views are largely unobstructed. The 4 grassed fields to the east of the Application Site are visible on the rising ground, subdivided by native hedgerows. The woodlands to the south and southeast of the site are visible on the skyline to the left of the view, and low-voltage overhead power lines and occasional farmsteads further to the west are notable visual detractors. Due to changes in topography, the Application Site is not visible but there are likely to be views of the Proposed Development to varying degrees.

4.1.58 The initial changes to the view will include the installation of BESS units and associated infrastructure and perimeter fencing within eastern areas of the Application Site, alongside the implementation of new hedgerows and areas of scrub planting, and all visible in the context of existing overhead power lines. These changes in view are illustrated in the visualisations provided at Appendix C.

4.1.59 The limited vertical height of the proposals within the view, with a narrow horizontal effect, it is considered that the magnitude of effect at Year 1 (upon completion) would be **Small** on the **High** sensitivity receptors (users of the Core Path). The overall level of effect would be **Moderate adverse**, for a Very Long-term duration.

4.1.60 New hedgerow planting to the eastern boundary to infill gaps within the existing hedgerow, and areas of native scrub and tree planting to the perimeter of the fencing, will filter views so that at Year 15 when proposed mitigation planting matures, only occasional filtered will remain. The overall magnitude of effect is considered to be **Very Small,** resulting in a **Minor adverse** level of adverse effect at worse.

Table 10: Visual Effects on Viewpoint 5

Visual Receptor	Sensitivity	Magnitude		Nature and Importance of Effect
Road users	Medium	Upon Completion (at Year 1)	Small	Minor-Moderate adverse
		Year 15 (planting established)	Very Small	Minor adverse
Users of Core Path	High	Upon Completion (at Year 1)	Small	Moderate adverse
		Year 15 (planting established)	Very Small	Minor adverse

Individual Visual Effects on Viewpoint 6

4.1.61 Viewpoint 6 (see Figure L9) is taken from the route of a Public Right of Way (PRoW) that follows the access tracks at the farmstead of 'Watston', at a distance of approx. 1.29km from the Application Site. It is noted that there are possibly three dwellings at this location, with principal elevations to the southwest and northeast, and the possibility of oblique views to the west, further noting a woodland copse to the immediate west of the dwellings is likely to filter the majority of views. Users of the PRoW are considered to be High sensitivity receptors and residents at the dwellings Medium sensitivity receptors with views from upper floors only considered as being likely.

4.1.62 The baseline view is taken from the access track leading to the farmstead, where the location of a field gate and well managed field boundary hedgerows enable views across the rural landscape to the west and wider panoramic views to the southwest. The eastern limit of a linear woodland is visible to the centre of the view, extending west and eventually becomes the woodland to the immediate south of the Site.

4.1.63 This woodland, in addition to the localised topographical changes, limits any views of the Application Site and Proposed Development, noting that the eastern edge of the main site area and some of the BESS units may be discernible alongside a limited length of the perimeter fencing. It is considered that the magnitude of change at Year 1 (upon completion) would be **Small** as a result of the limited visibility and distance from the viewpoint receptors, with the overall level of effect being **Minor-Moderate adverse** at worse, for a Very Long-term duration.

4.1.64 As mitigation planting establishes, the overall level of effect is assessed as reducing to **Very Small**, resulting in a **Minor-Moderate** level of adverse effect.

Table 11: Visual Effects on Viewpoint 6

Visual Receptor	Sensitivity	Magnitude		Nature and Importance of Effect
Users of Other Right of Way	High	Upon Completion (at Year 1)	Small	Moderate adverse
		Year 15 (planting established)	Very Small	Minor adverse
Residents at 'Watston'	Medium	Upon Completion (at Year 1)	Small	Minor-Moderate adverse
		Year 15 (planting established)	Very Small	Negligible-Minor adverse

Individual Visual Effects on Viewpoint 7

4.1.65 Viewpoint 7 (see Figure L10) is taken from the local road to the south of the Application Site at close range, where users can experience views to the north due to limited intervening vegetation, noting this appears on some mapping data as being a woodland. Users of the local road network are considered as being Medium sensitivity receptors.

4.1.66 The baseline view represents views by users of this local road, who will experience views oblique to the direction of travel. The 'woodland' contains a number of trees to the outer perimeter but lacks any trees to the centre or any meaningful understorey planting so there is little to filter views in the direction of the Application Site, whose southern boundary is identified by a localised minor change in topography. The perimeter fencing and boundary vegetation to the open-cast coal mine to the south if visible to the right of view and is a notable visual detractor.

4.1.67 The initial change in view will be limited by the low vertical heights of the individual elements of the Proposed Development, and its location on the northern facing slope of the valley to the north of the local road. It is considered the magnitude of effect at Year 1 (upon completion) would be **Small** due to only the very upper elements of the Proposed Development likely to be visible, resulting in an overall level of effect of **Negligible-Minor adverse.**

4.1.68 As mitigation planting establishes, the overall level of effect is assessed as reducing to **Very Small**, resulting in a Negligible level of adverse effect.

Table 12: Visual Effects on Viewpoint 7

Visual Receptor	Sensitivity	Magnitude		Nature and Importance of Effect
Local Road	Medium	Upon Completion (at Year 1)	Small	Negligible-Minor
		Year 15 (planting established)	Very Small	Negligible

Individual Visual Effects on Viewpoint 8

4.1.69 Viewpoint 8 (see Figure L11) is taken from the local road immediately adjacent the southwestern corner of the Application Site, where there is a gap in boundary vegetation. Users of the local road network are considered to be Medium sensitivity receptors.

4.1.70 The baseline view at this location is orientated to the east and northeast where there are close-range and open views across the western and central areas of the Application Site, enabled by a stretch of boundary that lacks any vegetation and is demarcated by post and wire fencing. Northern and eastern areas of the site are screened from view by the change in topography within the site itself, although views of distant hills to the northeast are possible.

4.1.71 The initial change in view will include views of the newly constructed access track, the installation of individual BESS units and associated infrastructure, and the perimeter acoustic fencing that will screen these individual elements, and views of the wider landscape including the hills to the northeast will be obstructed. New hedgerow planting to the roadside and within the Application Site itself will be visible. These changes in view are illustrated in the visualisations provided at Appendix C.

4.1.72 The magnitude of effect at Year 1 (upon completion) would be **Large** on the **Medium** sensitivity receptors (road users), and the overall level of effect would be **Moderate-Major adverse** for a Very Long-term duration (without mitigation). New hedgerow planting to the roadside and within the Application Site itself will progressively establish, creating a layered effect through the vegetation and helping to screen the proposals so that at Year 15 views will be limited to occasional filtered views, reducing effects overall, with the magnitude of effect considered to be **Small** resulting in a **Minor-Moderate adverse** level of adverse effect.

Table 13: Visual Effects on Viewpoint 8

Visual Receptor	Sensitivity	Magnitude		Nature and Importance of Effect
Local Road	Medium	Upon Completion (at Year 1)	Large	Moderate-Major adverse
		Year 15 (planting established)	Small	Minor-Moderate

Individual Visual Effects on Viewpoint 12

4.1.73 Viewpoint 12 (see Figure L12) is located to the south of the A70 on a local road that runs southwards. The location of the viewpoint is on small hillock where a single dwelling (Provost Mount) is present. Users of the local road network are considered as being Medium sensitivity receptors and residents also as Medium sensitivity visual receptors.

4.1.74 The baseline view from this location follows the alignment of the local road as it heads north towards the A70, passing through the rural landscape, with a number of fields under pastoral use. The overall outlook is rural, with occasional detractors being present, notably the A70. Buildings at the Killoch Disposal Point, elements of the former open-cast coal mine and both overhead power and telecommunications cable routes. The skyline is formed by areas of vegetation and woodlands, interspersed around the aforementioned land-uses, with the woodland to the south and southeast of the Application Site being visible to the right of the view.

4.1.75 The Application Site is not visible within the view due to its location on the northern facing slope of the ridgeline visible in the viewpoint, in conjunction with intervening vegetation and nearby buildings. During summer months, when vegetation is in full leaf, views will be further restricted. Overall, the lack of any predicted visibility means that there are no adverse visual effects on the identified receptors.

Table 14: Visual Effects on Viewpoint 12

Visual Receptor	Sensitivity	Magnitude		Nature and Importance of Effect
Local Road	Medium	Upon Completion (at Year 1)	None	None
		Year 15 (planting established)	None	None
Dwelling at 'Provost Mount'	Medium	Upon Completion (at Year 1)	None	None
		Year 15 (planting established)	None	None

Individual Visual Effects on Viewpoint 13

4.1.76 Viewpoint 13 (see Figure L13) is taken from an Other Right of Way that lies approx. 1.5km to the southeast, on an area of high ground as identified within the ZTV as being possibly able to have views of the Application Site. Users are considered as being High sensitivity receptors from this location.

4.1.77 Similar to Viewpoint 12, this viewpoint is located to the south of the A79 on an area of high ground where there are views across the valley to the north in the general direction of the Application Site. The baseline view is across a rural landscape with few detracting features, although isolated farmsteads, dwellings, and the commercial buildings near the open-cast coal mine are visible on the skyline, alongside a number of vegetation and woodland groupings, including the woodland to the immediate south of the Application Site.

4.1.78 The Application Site is not visible within the view due to its location on the northern facing slope of the ridgeline visible in the viewpoint, in conjunction with intervening vegetation. During summer months, when vegetation is in full leaf, views will be further restricted. Overall, the lack of any predicted visibility means that there are no adverse visual effects on the identified receptors.

Table 15: Visual Effects on Viewpoint 13

Visual Receptor	Sensitivity	Magnitude		Nature and Importance of Effect
Other Right of Way	High	Upon Completion (at Year 1)	None	None
		Year 15 (planting established)	None	None

Summary of Visual Effects

4.1.79 Table 16 summarises the assessment of visual effects of the Proposed Development.

Table 3: Summary of Assessed Visual Impact Significance

VP No.	Receptors Represented	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Effect		Overall level of Effect	
			Upon Completion (at Year 1)	Year 15 (planting established)	Completion	Year 15
1	Road users	Medium	Medium	Small	Moderate adverse	Minor-Moderate adverse (very long term)
2	Road users	Medium	Small-Medium	Small	Minor-Moderate adverse	Minor adverse (very long term)
	Residents at 'Corselet'	Medium	Small-Medium	Small	Minor-Moderate adverse	Minor adverse (very long term)
3	Road users	Medium	Small-Medium	Very Small	Moderate	Minor adverse (very long term)
4	Users of Core Path	High	Small	Very Small	Moderate adverse	Minor adverse (very long term)
5	Road users	Medium	Small	Very Small	Minor-Moderate adverse	Minor adverse (very long term)
	Users of Core Path	High	Small	Very Small	Moderate adverse	Minor adverse (very long term)
6	Users of Other Rights of Way	High	Small	Very Small	Moderate adverse	Minor adverse (very long term)
	Residents at 'Warston'	Medium	Small	Very Small	Minor-Moderate adverse	Negligible – Minor adverse
7	Road Users	Medium	Small	Very Small	Negligible-Minor adverse	Negligible adverse (very long term)
8	Road Users	Medium	Large	Small	Moderate-Major adverse	Minor-Moderate adverse (very long term)
12	Road Users	Medium	None	None	None	None
	Residents at 'Provost Mount'	Medium	None	None	None	None

13	Users of Other Rights of Way	High	None	None	None	None

Other Visual Receptors

4.1.80 Other likely visual receptors within close proximity to the Application Site are as follows:

- The dwelling(s) at 'Creoch,' a farmstead approx. 200m to the northwest of the Application Site. The dwellings are located roadside with no immediate vegetation to screen any views to the east, noting both ground and upper floors will have direct views to the northern areas of the wider site and the likely installation of the required buried drainage and balancing ponds, and oblique views to the main areas of the Proposed Development. Users are considered to be **High** sensitivity given likely views from rooms occupied in daylight hours and from areas within the property curtilage. The magnitude of change is considered at Year 1 to be **Small** as little of the Proposed Development will be clearly visible, resulting in a **Moderate** level of adverse of individual effect.
- The main dwelling at 'Creach' that is located approx. 170m to the west of the Application Site's western boundary. This is a 2-storey building whose primary elevation is orientated to the east, with the potential for views from upper floor windows along the base of the shallow valley and northern areas of the Application Site itself. The access road leading to this property from the local road (assessed at Viewpoint 1 and 8) is flanked by established hedgerows approx. 1.8m in height that combine with the general topography of the area (noting a difference in level of +15m AOD between the dwelling and the Proposed Development) to restrict levels from lower ground floor rooms. Upper floors are considered likely to have oblique views of the Proposed Development, and the sensitivity of these receptors are considered to be **Medium**. Users are likely to experience close-range views of minor elements of the drainage construction within northern areas of the site and possibly a limited extent of the northern edge of the BESS compound, alongside mitigation planting. Users are considered as being **Medium** sensitivity who will experience **Small-Medium** magnitude of change and an overall level of visual effect of **Minor-Moderate adverse.** Proposed levels of visual effect will reduce at mitigation planting establishes.

Cumulative Impacts

4.1.81 Within 5km of the Application Site, it is identified that there are 3no. BESS developments that have planning consent but are not yet under construction:

- Bardarroch, Ochiltree, East Ayrshire, (ref: 23/0604/PP), located 2.5km to the southwest of the Application Site;
- Bardarroch, Ochiltree, East Ayrshire, (ref: 23/0580/PP), located 2.2km to the southwest of the Application Site; and
- Killoch Colliery, East Ayrshire, KA18 2RL (ref: 22/0405/PP) located ot the south of the Proposed Development.

4.1.82 The ECU EIA Screening Opinion received in February 2025 considered the potential for cumulative impacts and noted that "*It is considered unlikely given the low level impacts expected that cumulative*

effects with other existing or approved development are unlikely." No cumulative landscape or visual effects are predicted.

5. Mitigation and Enhancement Measures

Mitigation and Enhancement Measures

5.1.1 Based on our analysis and knowledge of the landscape, visual, and topographic characteristics of the Site, and our review of landscape-related planning policies, the landscape mitigation and enhancement measures have been embedded into the Proposed Development details as part of the iterative design process and have been accounted for above.

5.1.2 These are considered more than sufficient to appropriately integrate the development into the landscape. The details of these measures are outlined on the Landscape Proposals drawing (refer to drawing Fig L14 – 315449-ADW01-Final v3.0).

5.1.3 In summary, the landscape rationale for the proposed measures comprises that the Application Site lies within a rural landscape, with field varying between small to large scale and where agricultural operations have left hedgerows fragmented, and there are a number of linear belts of woodland present. As a result, the Application Site would benefit from hedgerow planting and reinforcement along the boundaries on the higher slopes to assist in visually containing the Proposed Development, further assisted through the incorporation of woodland blocks (both as irregular groupings or as linear elements. In addition to visually containing the development, the addition of woodland and native hedgerows will assist in integrating development and bringing additional amenity and biodiversity value to the local area.

5.1.4 In outline, embedded landscape mitigation and enhancement measures include:

- New hedgerow planting (over 80m in length) along the Application Site's boundaries and infilling of gaps within existing.
- Create an appropriate landscape setting for the Proposed Development.
- Visually integrate the Proposed Development into the established local landscape framework.
- Encourage landscape connectivity.
- Adopting enhanced hedgerow management techniques to allow hedgerows to grow up to a height of 2.5m;
- Specification of a locally appropriate mixed native plant species list to increase biodiversity value.
- Creation of a 5m wide planted buffer of native trees and shrubs to the perimeter of the proposed BESS compound area, replication linear belts of woodland and vegetation present within the wider landscape.
- specifying or applying recessive colour treatments to ancillary features to minimise their visibility in the landscape, where possible.

5.1.5 No additional mitigation measures are considered required over and above those proposed and assessed.

6. Conclusions

6.1 Landscape and Visual Effects

6.1.1 The assessment process combines objective methodology and elements of subjective professional judgement, written in accordance with latest guidance, and has been led and reviewed by a Chartered Landscape Architect. This appraisal was prepared to ascertain the potential landscape and visual effects associated with the construction, operation, then decommissioning of a proposed Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) on land at on land at Killoch, East Ayrshire, KA18 2QH, Scotland.

6.1.2 The Application Site covers an area of approximately 18.3 hectares (ha), of which the Proposed Development occupies approx. 4ha. The Application Site is located on rising ground, on a northern facing slope, within a landscape of low hills and shallow valleys that reduces in levels from the east to the west, towards the coastline. The Application Site comprises a single field of moderate size, with limited boundary vegetation on its lower slopes but becoming more present on higher slopes albeit fragmented in places. An area of woodland part forms the southern boundary, alongside an area of marshland whose perimeter contains a number of trees, but no lower lying areas of vegetation present. At present, the Application Site is a field currently left to grass but has been in the past under arable crop production.

6.1.3 The Application Site is largely surrounded by arable farmland with occasional areas of pasture adjacent the watercourse (the Trabboch Burn), noting at present the adjacent fields are not sown with any crops but left to grass. The surrounding landscape also contains a number of linear woodlands occupying local ridgelines and also extending to the valley floor, alongside hedgerows along local roads. Occasional isolated trees are located along the Trabboch Burn but are not a regular landscape feature.

6.1.4 The area contains a limited number of settlements, with the village of Ochiltree located approx. 1.44km to the east of the Application Site. A number of isolated dwellings and farmsteads are located within the wider landscape, the closest to the Application Site being less that 200m to the west (Creoch) or Corselet on the opposite side of the valley at a distance of approx. 0.42km.

6.1.5 Several overhead power and telecommunications lines cross the Application Site and wider landscape and are an urbanising feature. The nearby Killoch Disposal Point, located within the identifiable area of the former open-cast coal mine and nearby commercial buildings to the south of the Application Site are notable visual detractors.

6.1.6 From outside the site, the Proposed Development is not fully visible in entirety from any one individual location, noting its position on a relatively flat area of land on a ridgeline which obscures views of the southernmost elements of the proposals, due to its height of +165m AOD when compared to other surrounding areas with levels c. 10-15m lower. Localised visual effects quickly reduce with distance due to the low-lying nature of the Proposed Development and becomes increasingly indiscernible with distance or the site becomes increasingly filtered or screened from view by existing vegetation and topographical changes.

6.2 Summary of Effects

6.2.1 The Proposed Development is within a gently rolling landscape that falls from east to west towards the coastline, defined by agricultural land-uses and areas of former mineral workings. Established woodlands on skylines are notable landscape features. The local host Landscape Character Type (LCT) is LCT 66 - 'Agricultural Lowlands – Ayrshire' and is one of the largest in Ayrshire. The landscape character assessment doesn't assign a value to the LCT.

6.2.2 LCT 68 – Lowland River Valleys – Ayrshire lies at a distance of approx. 1.5km at its closest point to the northeast of the Application Site and extends northwards away from the site. Occasional locations are identified on the ZTV as possibly having some visibility but in reality, the undulating topography and extensive tree cover results in no effects being recorded on this LCT.

6.2.3 The scale and characteristics of the 'host' landscape is considered suitable for the type and form of development proposed. To facilitate the construction process of the Proposed Development, areas of agricultural grassland are required to be lost for the duration of the development.

6.2.4 To minimise adverse effects, the Proposed Development has been carefully sited and utilised existing boundary vegetation to incorporate the development into the landscape. The development layout has further worked with existing topography in the site where possible, noting for functionality there will be some limited excavations and ground works to develop a level platform, however ground disturbance will be limited where possible.

6.2.5 Following construction works, it is considered that the Proposed Development could be successfully integrated into the immediate surroundings. The overall characteristic landform within the Application Site i.e. the general fall from north to south, has been respected with only occasional earthworks required, with the remainder of the site respected and preserved.

6.2.6 The highest level of adverse effect is primarily limited to a site level and close range and limited to the agricultural grassland field of the site itself, noting more highly valued characteristics (hedgerows) have been retained with the exception of the new access location on the western boundary where a length of approx. 13m is removed. At Year 1 the adverse effects would be **Moderate** on landscape characteristics and **Medium** on landscape character at the site. Effects would be reduced over time as development becomes integrated into the landscape and landscaping matures. By Year 15 the site level effects are considered to reduce to **Minor** level of adverse effect on landscape character.

6.2.7 Upon decommissioning and accounting for the Very Long-term and permanent nature of the landscape mitigation, there will be a **Minor-Moderate benefit** at the site level.

6.2.8 The effects on the character of the host landscape are limited. Adverse effects at Year 1 will be limited to a Moderate level at the Site boundaries, reducing to a **Negligible** level within 1km of the Site. By Year 15, effects will have reduced to **Negligible-Minor** in close proximity to the Site, noting the Very Long-term benefits achieved through landscaping, particularly post decommissioning.

6.2.9 The highest level of adverse visual effect is experienced by road users where the local road runs parallel and immediately adjacent to the Application Sites western boundary (Viewpoint 8), where **Moderate-Major** adverse effects will be experienced at Year 1, noting views will be transient and oblique to the

direction of travel. These effects will diminish through the incorporation of hedgerow planting along this boundary, as illustrated in the series of verified views (ref: V3D 250209). Further north along the same local road, for users travelling southwards where the road is generally aligned with the site (Viewpoint 1), the level of effect is identified as **Moderate adverse** without mitigation and **Minor** adverse with established mitigation.

6.2.10 From publicly accessible areas, namely Core Paths and Other Rights of Way that have been identified, the highest level of adverse visual effect is **Moderate** adverse at Year 1, noting that this relates to mid-range views from the east of the Application Site. Views are filtered by existing vegetation and likely during summer months to be screened. At Year 15, the established mitigation will reduce the adverse levels of effect to **Minor** at worse.

6.2.11 There are a limited number of dwellings or farmsteads in the wider landscape, including 'Corselet' and 'Warston (Viewpoints 2 and 6 respectively) who are considered likely to experience mid-range views of **Minor-Moderate** adverse levels of effect in the short-term, reducing to **Minor** adverse in the long-term.

6.2.12 Other dwellings in close proximity to the Application Site are located to the west, both known as 'Creoch' with one located roadside and the other set back from the local road. Location, orientation and existing topography and vegetation are considered in their likely outlook and due to these limitations, the level of adverse visual effect is ranging from **Minor-Moderate** to **Moderate** without mitigation.

6.2.13 Overall, from the wider landscape, the location of the Proposed Development on the northern facing slope of a local ridgeline contains views to an arc from west, north and east, with no views possible from the south due to intervening topography and existing vegetation cover (refer to Viewpoints 12 and 13).

6.2.14 The Proposed Development is considered to accord with the landscape aspects of local planning policy. In accordance with Policy NE10 (Protection of Agricultural Land), the Proposed Development is located on land that is not identified as being 'prime quality; Policy NE8 (Trees, Woodland, Forestry and Hedgerows) with the exception of the loss of 13m of hedgerows, the proposals do not affect other landscape features in this policy, noting degraded hedgerows will be reinstated in several areas; Policy NE5 (Protection of Areas of Nature Conservation Interest), the Application Site is not within or overlaps any such areas, and the Proposed development increases the biodiversity of habitats within the Site; and Policy NE1 (Protecting and Enhancing Landscape Features) where the design has been developed to minimise land take and visual impacts, include significant areas of new native planting, and retain views of the skylines, and not affect any woodlands, PRoW's or other key landscape features.

6.2.15 The findings of this assessment evidence that unacceptably adverse landscape and visual effects have been avoided, and green infrastructure is also enhanced at a Site level by ensuring historic field boundaries are both improved and restored where absent, enhancing landscape connectivity across this large open landscape area, between existing landscape features.

6.2.16 In conclusion, the landscape, and visual changes attributable to the Proposed Development are thought to be relatively limited and localised. As a result, it is our professional opinion that the Site has the capacity to accommodate the Proposed Development in landscape and visual terms, without unacceptable effects.

7. References

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Landscape Institute, 2011. Photography and Photomontage in Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Advice Note 01/11). s.l.:s.n.

MAFF, 1988. Agricultural Land Classification of England and Wales - Revised Guidelines and Criteria for Grading the Quality of Agricultural Land. s.l.:s.n.

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Abbreviations/Acronyms:

For the avoidance of confusion, abbreviations used have the meanings given below:

AGL	Above Ground Level
AGLV	Area of Great Landscape Value
AOD	Above Ordnance Datum
AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
AVR	Accurate Visual Representation
c.	Circa
CWS	County Wildlife Site
DEM	Digital Elevation Model
DSM	Digital Surface Model
DTM	Digital Terrain Model
EA	Environment Agency
FOV	Field of View
GIS	Geographical Information System
LCA	Landscape Character Area
LCT	Landscape Character Type
LNR	Local Nature Reserve
LPA	Local Planning Authority
LVA	Landscape and Visual Appraisal
LVIA	Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
LWS	Local Wildlife Site
MPA	Mineral Planning Authority
NCA	National Character Area
NGR	National Grid Reference
NNR	National Nature Reserve
NSA	National Scenic Area
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
NPPG	National Planning Policy Guidance
NRW	Natural Resources Wales
OS	Ordnance Survey
POS	Public Open Space
PDL	Previously Developed Land
RCA	Regional Character Area
RIGS	Regionally Important Geological Site
SAC	Special Conservation Area
SAM	Scheduled Ancient Monument
SEPA	Scottish Environmental Protection Agency
SPP	Scottish Planning Policy
SINC	Site of Importance for Nature Conservation
SLINC	Site of Local Importance for Nature Conservation
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
TAN	Technical Advice Note
TPO	Tree Preservation Order
VEM	Visual Envelope Map
WPA	Waste Planning Authority
ZVI	Zone of Visual Influence
ZTV	Zone of Theoretical Visibility
ZPV	Zone of Primary Visibility
ZSV	Zone of Secondary Visibility

Glossary:

For the avoidance of confusion, the terms used in this report follow the definitions given below:

Landscape	An area, as perceived by people (in relation to past experiences, education etc.), whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors. Landscape may comprise areas of rural land, urban fringe, urban land (townscape), coastal land, the sea (seascape) etc.
Townscape	The character and composition of the built environment including the buildings and the relationships between them, the diverse types of urban open space, including green spaces, and the relationship between buildings and open spaces.
Seascape	Landscapes with views of the coast or seas, and coasts and adjacent marine environments with cultural, historical, and archaeological links with each other.
Landscape Element	A component part of the landscape (e.g. landform, roads, hedges, woods).
Landscape Feature	A prominent eye-catching element (e.g. wooded hilltop or church spire).
Landscape Characteristics	Combinations of elements and experiential characteristics (e.g. noise, smell) that make a particular contribution to a Landscape Character Type.
Landscape Receptor	Defined aspects of the landscape that have the potential to be affected by a Proposed Development.
Landscape Scene	The landscape characteristics discernible from a given viewpoint/location. The visual aspects of this can be illustrated in a static two-dimensional manner in photographs to represent a sample **view** of the landscape scene.
Landscape Character	The distinct recognisable pattern of elements that occurs consistently in a particular landscape and how people perceive this, creating a particular sense of place.
Landscape Character Types	**LCT**s refer to multiple areas of the same character.
Landscape Character Areas	**LCA**s refer to specific geographical locations of a particular character type. These can be described and categorised at different scales depending on criteria used.
Landscape Condition	The strength of expression of landscape character and intactness of constituent characteristic elements from visual, functional, ecological, and cultural perspectives. This is not the same as Scenic Beauty.
Landscape Capacity	The threshold at which change to the landscape resource results in significant change to its landscape character. This is directly related to landscape sensitivity.
Landscape Susceptibility	The ability of a defined landscape receptor (e.g. landscape characteristics) to accommodate the specific Proposed Development without undue negative consequences.
Landscape Value	The desirability of landscape characteristics (including scenic beauty, tranquillity, wildness, cultural associations, conservation interests etc.) and the acceptability of their loss to different stakeholders (i.e. valued for different reasons by different people and on different scales, e.g. local, national).
Landscape Sensitivity	The level of stability, robustness and resilience of landscape receptors and their ability to be replicated based on their quality, condition, and value. Landscape sensitivity is based on a combination of judgements on landscape susceptibility and landscape value.
Landscape Receptor	Landscape element, characteristic or character that would potentially receive/experience an effect.
Visual Receptor	Individuals, special interest groups, a community or population that would potentially experience an effect on their view.

Scenic Beauty / Scenic Quality	Subjective value attributed to the emotional response of an individual to a landscape scene, which, although heavily influenced by intrinsic condition, is also conditioned by an individual's perception (memories, associations, cultural influences, and preference).
Visual Amenity	The subjective value attributed to the degree of pleasure gained from what is seen in a given view (quality of view).
Visual Sensitivity	The estimated level of susceptibility or likely viewer's response to a change in view from a given viewpoint in relation to its context, the existing visual amenity, the activity and expectations of the viewer and the number of viewers affected.
Tranquillity	Subjective experience from being at a location that provides individuals with the space and conditions to relax, achieve mental balance and a sense of distance from stress. **Tranquil areas** are often associated with quiet, remote (or appearing remote), natural, non-developed (non-built) and non-busy areas.
Impacts and Effects	'**Impact**' refers to an action being taken and an '**effect**' is the change resulting from that action. The process of assessing effects arising from development is commonly referred to as 'impact assessment.' 'Impacts' and 'effects' are often used interchangeably.
Significant Effect	Directive 2011/92/EU (The assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment) requires member states to assess the likely **significant effects** of a project (e.g. development) on the environment before determining whether consent should be given. This requirement has been transposed via Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations. This LVIA refers to significance (or level) of effects in the wider sense, to mean positive (beneficial) or negative (adverse) environmental effects that are important (material) considerations in the decision-making process, whether assessed as part of an EIA or otherwise. This is directly related to set criteria and terminology as set out within the assessment process. Significant effects may, on balance with other considerations, be acceptable or unacceptable in overall planning terms.
Site Visibility	The areas within which the subject site can be seen, the amount of site visible and the numbers able to see the subject site.
Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)	Also known as a Zone of Visual Influence (ZVI), Visual Envelope Map (VEM) and Viewshed. This represents the area over which a development can theoretically be seen, based on a DTM. The ZTV usually presents a 'bare ground' scenario - that is, a landscape without screening structures or vegetation. This information is usually presented upon a map base.
Zone of Primary Visibility (ZPV)	The Zone of Primary Visibility (ZPV) represents the geographical area from which the Proposed Development would represent a notable new element in the view and therefore where significant landscape and/or visual effects are likely to occur without further consideration (e.g. secondary mitigation).
Zone of Secondary Visibility (ZSV)	A Zone of Secondary Visibility (ZSV) can be used to represent the geographical area from which the Proposed Development may be visible without being a notable new element in the view or where views are partly restricted or are from greater distances, and therefore where significant landscape and/or visual effects are unlikely to occur after Primary Mitigation measures have been taken into account.
Digital Terrain Model (DTM)	Also known as a digital elevation model (DEM). This is a digital representation of the ground surface (landform or terrain) created by linking co-ordinate points of surveyed elevation values to create a 3D 'model' which computers can use to undertake calculations relating to slope angles, point visibility, flood risk etc.
Digital Surface Model (DSM)	As per a DTM except that it relates to the levels of surfaces above the ground where present (e.g. vegetation or roof levels).
Field of View (FOV)	Term used to describe the height and width of a view as represented by an image. These constitute the horizontal field of view and vertical field of view and are expressed as angles in degrees. Humans have an extreme horizontal field of view of about 200°, but only 6-10° will be in focus at any one time. Thus a viewer moves their eyes and head around to see a view over a wide area.
Enhancement	A measure resulting in a beneficial effect which is not related to any adverse effect.

Mitigation	A measure to avoid, reduce or remedy adverse effects (principally significant effects) caused by the proposed development. These may be defined at Primary and Secondary Mitigation measures.
Primary (1°) Mitigation	Mitigation measures which have either been developed through the iterative design process and which have become integrated or embedded into the project design or are commitments to utilise best practice techniques to avoid or minimise adverse effects (e.g. industry best practice guidance on construction).
Secondary (2°) Mitigation	Mitigation measures that have been designed to address any adverse effects remaining after Primary Mitigation measures have been incorporated into the project design (i.e. residual adverse effects).