

Planning Application for the Installation and Operation of a Battery Energy Storage System
at Holmston Farm, Ayr
Landscape & Visual Appraisal

PREPARED BY PEGASUS GROUP ON BEHALF OF RES LTD. | FEBRUARY 2023 | P22-1768



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) has been prepared on behalf of RES Ltd. by Pegasus Group. It relates to a parcel of land to the east of Ayr and lies in proximity to Ayr substation to the east and Dobbies Garden Centre directly to the south, as shown on Figure 1. This LVA considers the site and its surrounding context in both landscape and visual terms, to assess the potential effects of the proposed Battery Energy Storage System (BESS / the proposed development) upon:

- Landscape features;
- Landscape character; and
- Visual amenity.

1.2 This LVA has been guided by the assessment criteria set out in Appendix 1. It should be noted that all of the landscape and visual effects stated within assessments such as this are considered adverse unless stated otherwise. It should also be noted that all effects are considered direct, long-term and permanent unless otherwise stated.

1.3 The appraisal has been prepared through a desk study analysis of the site and its policy context as well as site visits to gain an appreciation of the landscape and visual context of the site.

1.4 A detailed landscape proposals plan conveys the landscape strategy and is shown by Figure 6. This LVA is based on this detailed landscape proposals plan, which is also produced as a separate plan in support of the planning application.

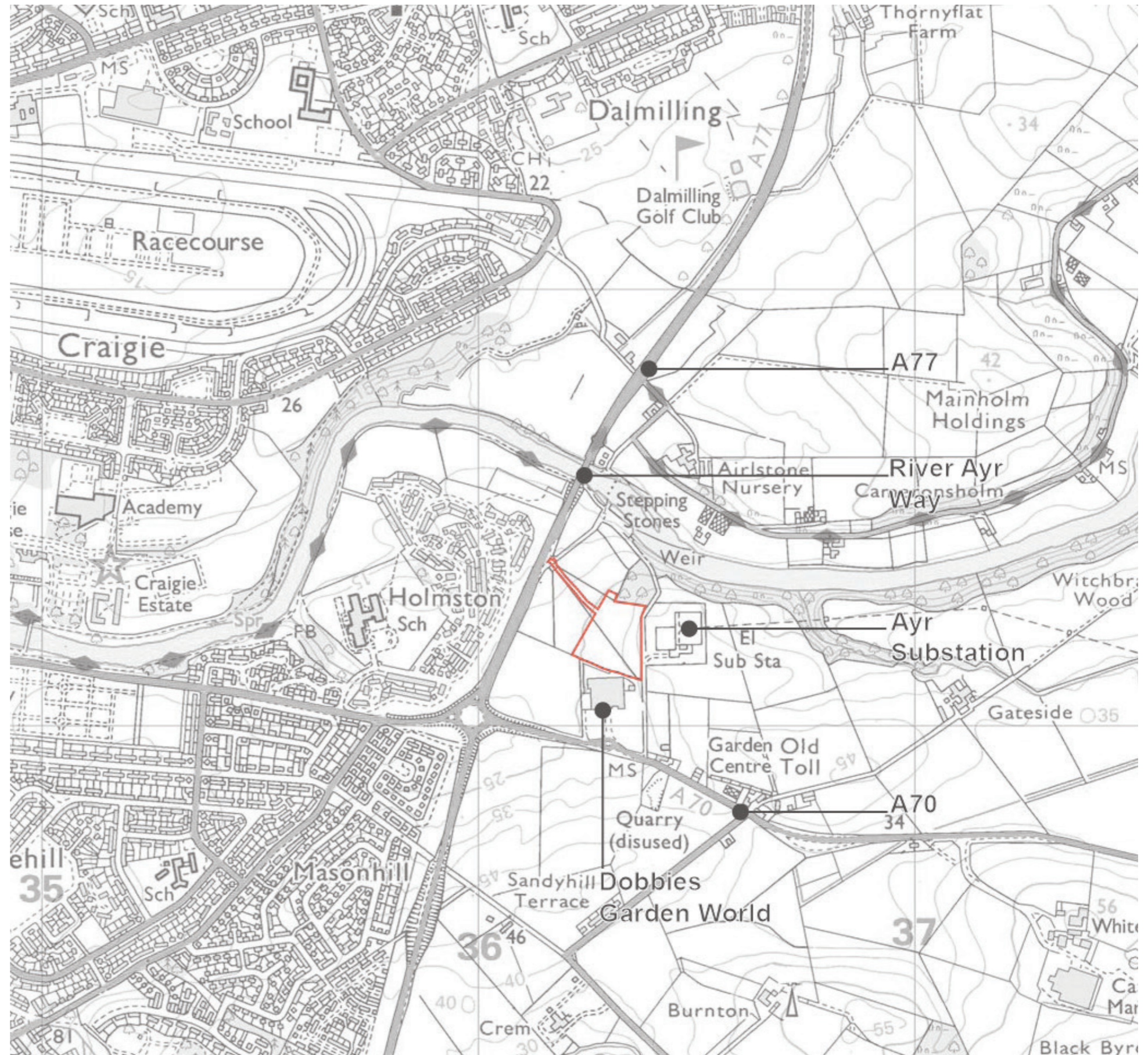


Figure 1: Site Location and Surroundings

2. METHODOLOGY

Published Guidance

2.1 The LVA has been undertaken in accordance with the principles of best practice, as outlined in published guidance documents listed in the reference section of this report, notably the third edition of the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Assessment (GLVIA3), (Landscape Institute and the Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013).

2.2 The methodology and assessment criteria for the assessment have been developed in accordance with the principles established in this best practice document. It should be acknowledged that GLVIA3 establishes guidelines, not a specific methodology. The preface to GLVIA3 states:

“This edition concentrates on principles and processes. It does not provide a detailed or formulaic ‘recipe’ that can be followed in every situation – it remains the responsibility of the professional to ensure that the approach and methodology adopted are appropriate to the task in hand.”

2.3 The approach set out below and in detail in Appendix 1 has therefore been developed specifically for this assessment to ensure that the methodology is fit for purpose.

Distinction between Landscape and Visual Effects

2.4 In accordance with the published guidance, landscape and visual effects were assessed separately, although the procedure for assessing each of these is closely linked. A clear distinction has been drawn between landscape and visual effects as described below:

- Landscape effects relate to the effects of the indicative proposals on the physical and perceptual characteristics of the landscape and its resulting character and quality; and
- Visual effects relate to the effects on specific views experienced by visual receptors and on visual amenity more generally.

Types of Landscape and Visual Impacts Considered and Duration

2.5 The LVA assesses both the permanent effects of the development and the temporary effects associated with its construction.

2.6 Consideration has been given to seasonal variations in the visibility of the development and these are described where necessary.

2.7 Both beneficial and adverse effects are identified in the assessment and reported as appropriate. Where effects are described as ‘neutral’ this is where beneficial effects are deemed to balance the adverse effects. The adverse and beneficial effects are communicated in each case so that

the judgement is clear.

2.8 As part of the proposed development, new planting would be introduced. Newly planted vegetation takes a number of years to mature and average growth rates have been taken into consideration in this assessment. The effectiveness of vegetation would improve over time (both in terms of integrating the development into the surrounding landscape and in providing visual screening) and this needs to be considered appropriately.

2.9 Therefore, permanent landscape and visual impacts of the project are assessed both in the winter of year 1 (the year in which the development is completed) and also in the summer of year 15 (15 years after completion of the development). In this second scenario it is assumed that vegetation planted as part of the development will have established and exhibit a degree of maturity.

Assumptions and Limitations of the Assessment

Assessed Proposal

2.10 The project proposals have been developed iteratively in conjunction with the production of the LVA with the intention of incorporating mitigation into the project from the outset. The effects identified and described as part of this LVA are based on the landscape proposals as shown in Figure 6.

Study Area

2.11 This LVA has focussed on an initial 3km study area. Based on an understanding of visibility gained during site visits and the results of the screened zone of theoretical visibility plan (Figure 9), it was considered that given the context of the landscape and the scale of the proposed development, this was a proportionate study area. However, most landscape and visual receptors are within less than 1km of the site.

Baseline Information

2.12 The baseline landscape resource and visual receptors were identified in part through a desk based study of Ordnance Survey mapping, published landscape character studies, relevant planning policies, interrogation of aerial photography, as well as photographs taken and observations made during a site visit conducted during August 2022.

2.13 Access during site visits was restricted to publicly accessible locations or land within the ownership of the site landowners. No access was possible to private properties and therefore, assumptions have been made regarding the view from private properties. These assumptions have been based on an understanding of the properties and features present within the wider landscape gained during the site visit from publicly accessible locations. Assumptions are guided by professional

experience and judgement.

2.14 Site visits were conducted during sunny conditions with good visibility. It is recognised that site visits were undertaken when vegetation was in leaf, however a worst-case scenario is considered in this LVA, including winter conditions following leaf fall, with potential for increased visibility.

Distances

2.15 Where distances are given in the LVA, these are approximate distances between the nearest part of the site and the nearest receptor in question, unless explicitly stated otherwise.

3. SITE CONTEXT

3.1 The site is located within the administrative boundaries of South Ayrshire Council (SA) and occupies part of a medium scale field with a land use of commercial Christmas trees and naturally regenerating vegetation directly east of Ayr. The Existing Ayr substation lies 80m to the east, Dobbies Garden Centre directly to the south, the A70 0.1km to the south, the A77 directly west and the River Ayr 0.1km to the north.

3.2 The main part of the site is located within the south-eastern part of the irregularly shaped field north of Dobbies Garden centre, west of Ayr substation. The boundaries of the wider field in which the site is located are largely robust. The northern boundary is defined by a mature deciduous tree line and an area of mature deciduous woodland on the north-eastern perimeter. The eastern boundary is formed by mature deciduous trees and hedgerow species. The south-eastern boundary comprises a metal palisade fence (painted green), scrub, and mature deciduous trees which largely contain Dobbies Garden Centre. The south-western boundary is less robust being formed by commercially grown Christmas trees.

3.3 Existing electricity infrastructure includes Ayr substation which has a number of large scale pylons and an associated overhead powerline which extends east across the agricultural landscape east of the site and south of the River Ayr.

3.4 Key recreational routes near to site at their closest points include Core Path SA16 directly east of the site and the River Ayr Way / SA Core Path 3, 0.3km to the north and north-west.

3.5 There are no nationally designated landscapes in proximity to the site. However, the north-eastern corner of the site abuts the locally designated Ayr Valley Local Landscape Area and the site is located within the south-western corner of the South Ayrshire Green Belt

3.6 A photographic record of views toward the site and its local context is provided in Appendix 3 with the photographic locations illustrated in Figure 10.

4. DESIGNATION AND POLICY CONTEXT

4.1 This section provides an overview of the policies and designations of particular relevance to landscape and visual issues. Figures 2 to 5 illustrate relevant designations within the locality of the site.

Landscape Designations

4.2 The site is not covered by any national landscape designations but is located directly south-west of the locally designated Local Landscape Area (LLA) J The Ayr Valley, and is located within the South Ayrshire Green Belt as identified in the South Ayrshire Local Development Plan 2 (LDP2) adopted August 2022. LDP2 Policy: landscape quality, states that for proposals within or affecting LLAs the Council will also consider the guidance contained in the 'statements of importance' and management recommendations of the South Ayrshire Local Landscape Designations Review (2018). The appraisal therefore considers potential effects on LLA J The Ayr Valley formerly the Ayr Valley SA.

4.3 There are three areas of Green Belt designation within South Ayrshire, north between Prestwick and Troon, east between Ayr and Mossblown and a large area south of Ayr. The site occupies a small south-western part of the eastern area of South Ayrshire Green Belt located between Ayr and Mossblown.

4.4 Green Belt is a land use designation rather than one which indicates a valued landscape. Effects on Green Belt do not fall under the remit of this LVA. However, landscape and visual matters such as effects on openness inform Green Belt considerations.

4.5 As the site lies within Green Belt, a separate Green Belt Assessment (Appendix 3) considers the proposed development against relevant national, and local policy.

4.6 Recreational routes are shown on Figure 3. Core Paths in proximity to the site including SA3 and SA16. Local Path: Leglen Wood extends east of Old Toll to the west connecting with then sharing SA16 and SA3 / River Ayr Way. There are no Tree Preservation Orders covering the site. There are no listed buildings, scheduled monuments or conservation areas on or near the site, with those closest illustrated by Figure 4. Cultural assets are a Cultural Heritage concern and are not considered further in this LVA.

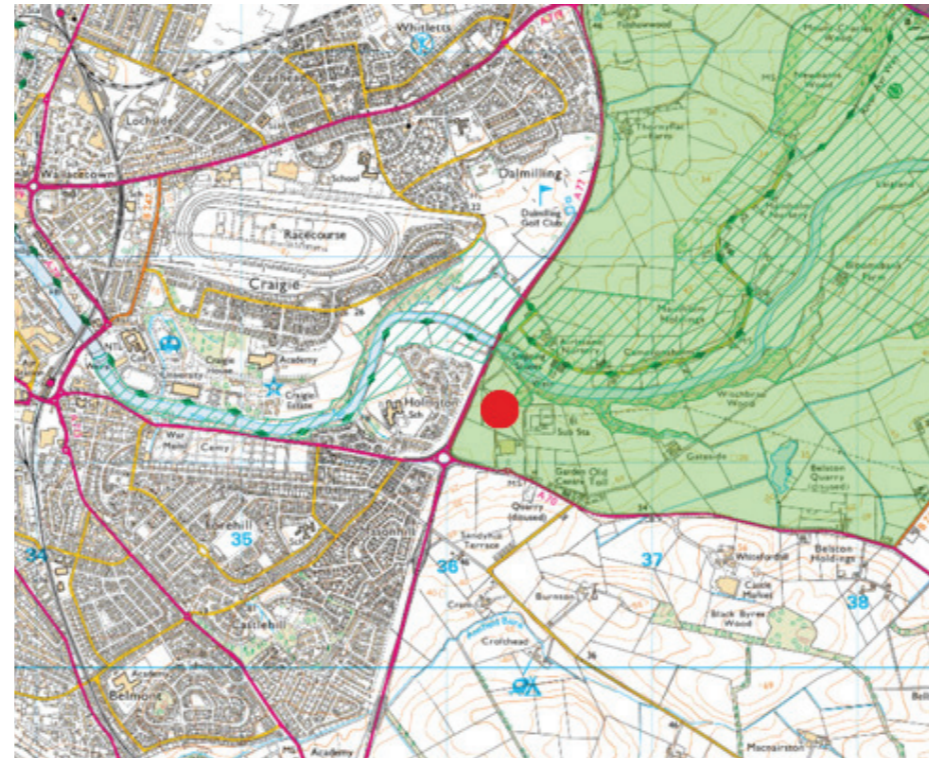


Figure 2: Extract from the South Ayrshire LDP2 interactive mapping (approximate site location shown as red dot). Green hatch indicating the River Ayr Valley LLA and the green wash showing the area of Green Belt east of Ayr

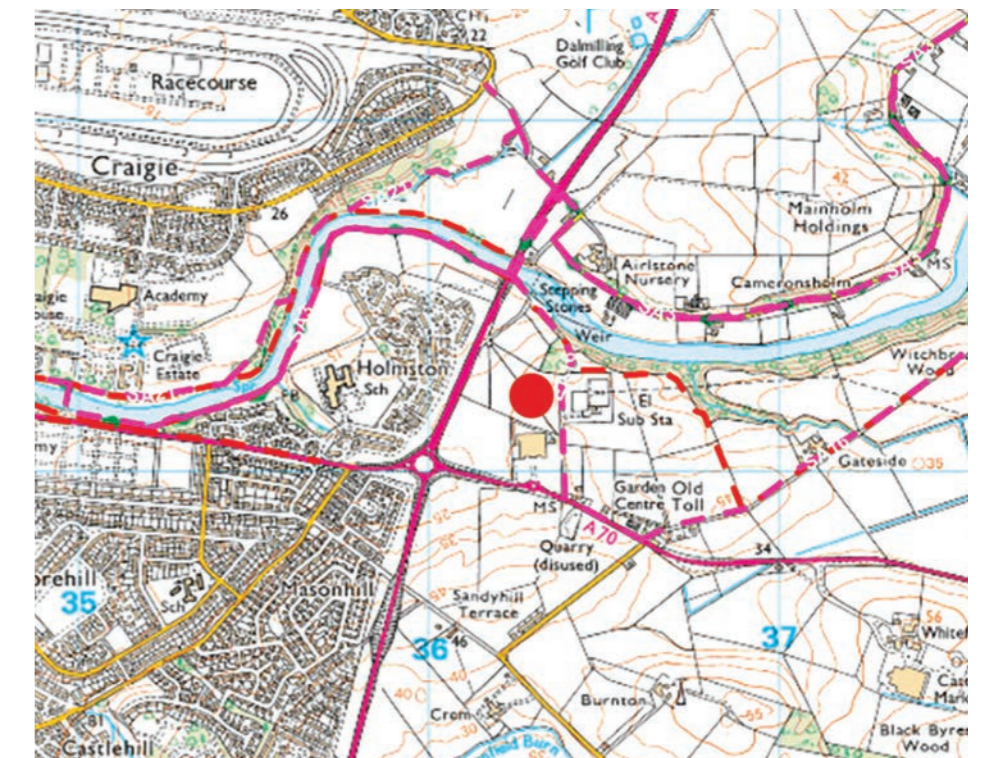


Figure 3: Extract from South Ayrshire LDP2 interactive mapping (approximate site location shown as red line) indicating Core Paths and Local Paths Network

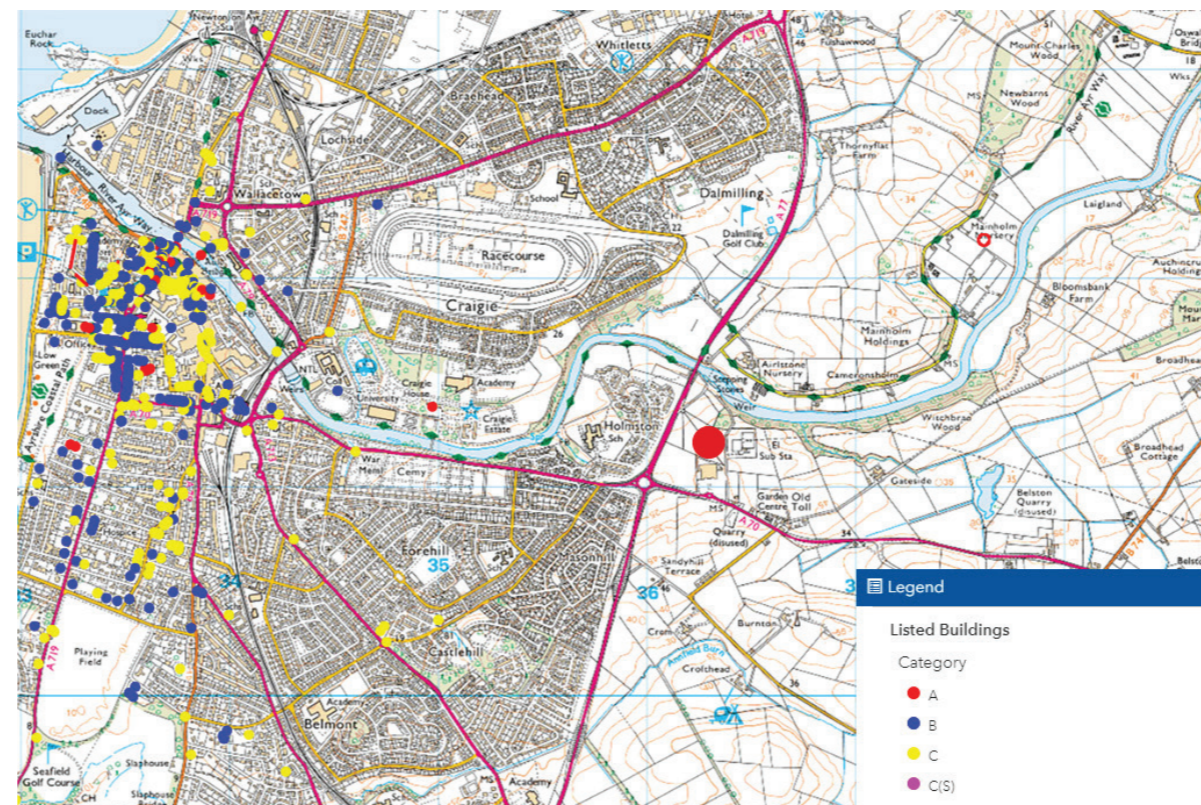


Figure 4: Extract from South Ayrshire LDP2 (approximate site boundary shown as large red dot) indicating listed buildings

Relevant Landscape Planning Policy

National Planning Guidance

- 4.7 The National Planning Framework for Scotland 4 (NPF4) (2023) was adopted 13th February 2023 and replaces NPF3 (2014) and Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) (2014). NPF4 sets out spatial principles, regional priorities, national developments and national planning policy for Scotland.
- 4.8 NPF4 sets out six overarching spatial principles:
- *“Just transition. We will empower people to shape their places and ensure the transition to net zero is fair and inclusive.”*
 - *“Conserving and recycling assets. We will make productive use of existing buildings, places, infrastructure and services, locking in carbon, minimising waste, and building a circular economy.”*
 - *“Local living. We will support local liveability and improve community health and wellbeing by ensuring people can easily access services, greenspace, learning, work and leisure locally.”*
 - *“Compact urban growth. We will limit urban expansion so we can optimise the use of land to provide services and resources,*

including carbon storage, flood risk management, blue and green infrastructure and biodiversity.

- *Rebalanced development. We will target development to create opportunities for communities and investment in areas of past decline, and manage development sustainably in areas of high demand.*

- *Rural revitalisation. We will encourage sustainable development in rural areas, recognising the need to grow and support urban and rural communities together.”*

4.9 By applying these principles NPF4 will support the planning and delivery of:

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

4.10 A full and detailed consideration of the NPF4 policy applicable to the proposed development are provided in the Planning Statement accompanying the planning application.

Local Planning Policy

4.11 The South Ayrshire Local Development Plan 2 (LDP2) was adopted August 2022. LDP2 policies of relevance to the site and the proposed development are considered below and an extract from the LDP2 interactive web map is illustrated in Figure 5.

LDP policy: landscape quality

“South Ayrshire is an area of high environmental quality which makes a significant contribution to the economic, environmental and cultural life of the area. We recognise that South Ayrshire’s landscape and its distinctive local characteristics plays an important part in promoting its development, providing an attractive setting for existing communities and new investment”.

4.12 The Proposed Development would be located on a site which has not been identified for its local distinctiveness. The site is largely contained by robust vegetated boundaries along the northern, eastern, south-eastern and western perimeters of the wider field. The south-eastern boundary is less robust being formed by commercial Christmas tree

planting. Landscape effects are considered in section 6 if this LVA

4.13 The site is located directly south-west of LLA J The Ayr Valley, effects on this locally designated landscape are considered at section 7 within this LVA.

LDP policy: preserving trees

“When assessing proposals for development that might involve loss of, or work to trees, we will consider how much it would affect the local area and will take measures to protect trees, especially those covered by a provisional or confirmed Tree Preservation Order. Ancient and veteran trees of high nature conservation and landscape value will be protected. The planning authority will work with developers to agree a defined root protection area for all retained trees likely to be adversely affected by development. All such root protection areas will be safeguarded by condition throughout the course of development.”

4.14 There are no Tree Preservation Orders within or close to the site. The woodland directly north and existing tree lines on the perimeter of the site would be protected during construction and retained as noted in section 5 within this LVA.

LDP policy: renewable energy

“We will support proposals for generating and using renewable energy in stand-alone locations, and as part of new and existing developments, if they will not have a significant harmful effect on residential amenity, the appearance of the area and its landscape character, biodiversity, historic environment and cultural heritage associations.”

4.15 The Proposed Development would be located in proximity to an area already influenced by Ayr substation and associated infrastructure. Potential effects on landscape and visual receptors are considered at section 5, 6 and 7 within this LVA.

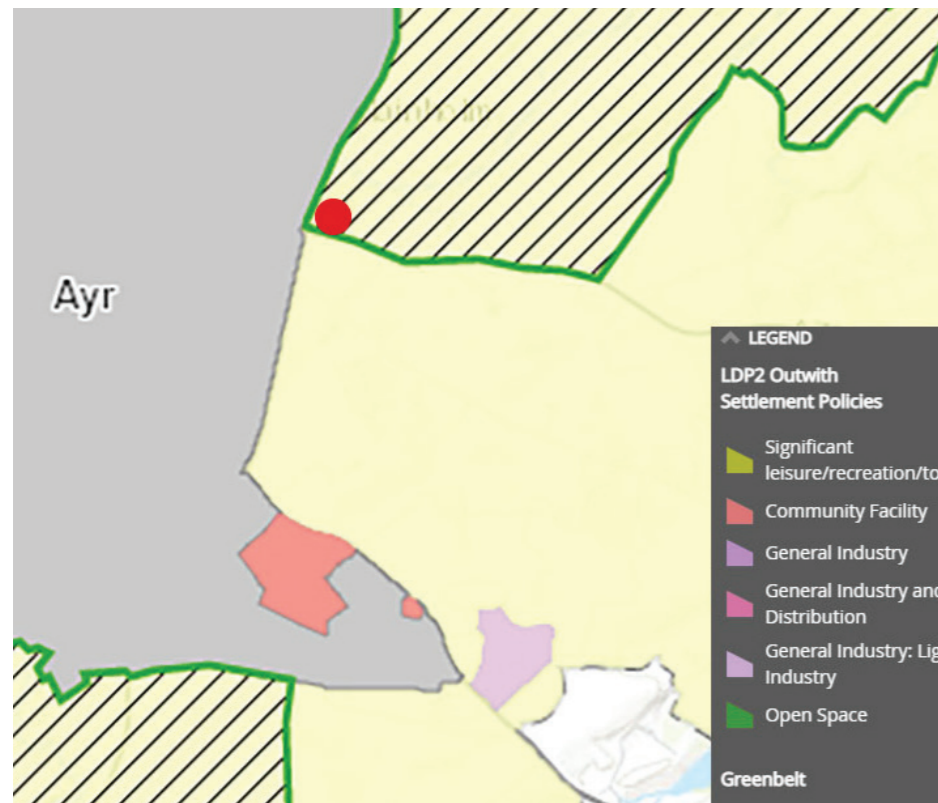


Figure 5: Extract from South Ayrshire LDP2 Interactive web map, grey areas indicate settlement, yellow areas indicate countryside (approximate site boundary shown as large red dot)

5. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

5.1 The proposed development comprises an energy storage facility with associated equipment and infrastructure. The proposed development would consist of the following:

- 36no. battery storage enclosures and associated PCSs and transformers, substation, auxiliary transformer, pre-insertion resistor, harmonic filter and storage container, set within a surfaced compound;
- A surfaced access track from the A77 through the centre of the existing field connecting to the surfaced compound;
- A pole mounted CCTV system, located at strategic points around the compounds;
- An acoustic timber fence up to 3m high;
- Earth bunds to the west of the compound; and
- Attenuation feature to the south-west of the compound.

Mitigation Proposals

5.2 In order to mitigate potential landscape and visual effect, the landscape planting as illustrated at Figure 6, takes account of the identified areas of sensitivity by providing additional planting where required and maintenance notes for existing planting. During construction the existing mature woodland immediately north-east of the site, the mature trees and hedgerow species to the east and south and the tree line which forms the western boundary of the wider field would be retained and protected in accordance with BS 5837:2012.

5.3 The landscape mitigation proposals include the following:

- The battery storage containers are relatively low in terms of height;
- The proposed access would use the existing gated access and improve the existing access across the centre of the site;
- Creation of new native tree and shrub planting on earth bunds to the west of the proposed compound to provide visual enclosure to the development;
- Provision of new native tree and shrub infill planting along the southern boundary;
- Enhancement of other areas surrounding the compound through proposed seed mixes; and
- Ongoing landscape management of planting during the lifetime of the proposed development.

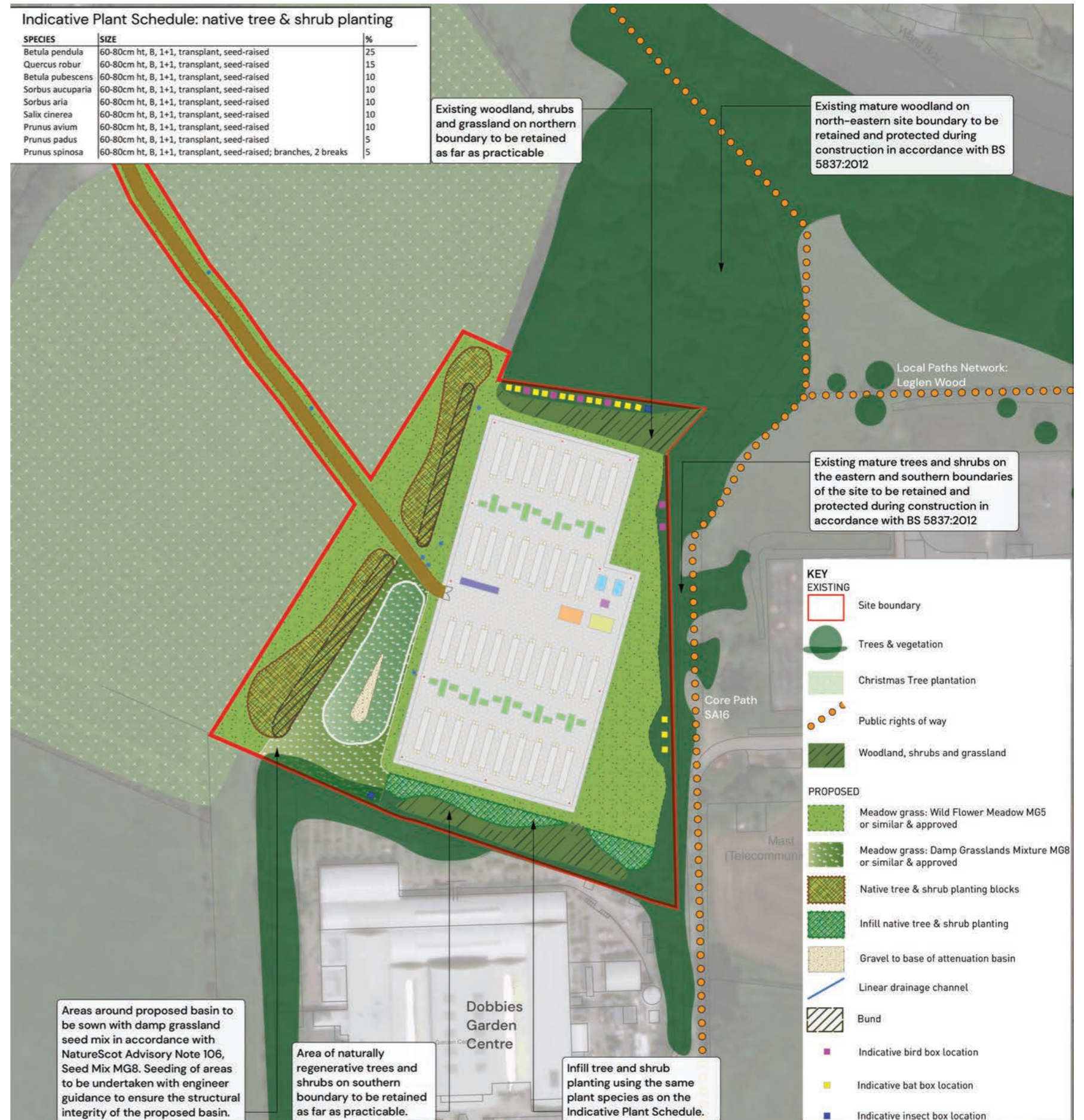


Figure 6: Detailed Landscape Proposals

6. LANDSCAPE BASELINE AND EFFECTS

- 6.1 The assessment of Landscape Effects deals with the changes to the landscape as a resource. Different combinations of the physical, natural and cultural components (including aesthetic, perceptual and experiential aspects) of the landscape and their spatial distribution create the distinctive character of landscapes in different places.
- 6.2 Effects are considered in relation to both landscape features and landscape character during construction, at Year 1 and at Year 15 and beyond. A summary of landscape effects are included in Table 1.

Landscape Features

Landform and Topography

- 6.3 The landform of the wider field of which the site would occupy the south-eastern portion rises gradually from the north-west at approximately 15m AOD to 32m in the south-east. The main part of the site is situated at around 30m AOD.
- 6.4 To the north the landscape is defined by the River Ayr valley with the wooded sides at similar elevations to the lower north-western corner of the site. Landform continues to rise to the west with Ayr substation location located at around 38m AOD. The immediate agricultural landscape to the south and Holmston neighbourhood are around 23m and 16m AOD respectively.
- 6.5 The characteristics of the site are judged to be of medium susceptibility to the type and scale of development proposed. Considering the present site condition, the surrounding landscape and nearby recreational routes, landscape value is judged to be medium. Taking account of the judgements of susceptibility and value, the overall sensitivity of the site is judged to be medium.
- 6.6 There would be some changes to the landform of the site to accommodate foundations of the proposed compounds and their fencing, the access track and other structures, as well as the creation of earth bunds and the attenuation feature. During construction, the magnitude of change is considered to be medium, which would result in **Moderate** adverse level of effect, which would be temporary in nature.
- 6.7 Upon completion, all earthworks works would be completed, with new features either planted or seeded, resulting in a medium to low magnitude of change resulting in a **Moderate** to **Minor** level of effect in the longer term.



Figure 7: Aerial Photograph of site and immediate surroundings

Watercourse and Drainage

- 6.8 There are no watercourses within the site, the River Ayr is located 0.1km to the north outside of the site. Beyond some field drains within the wider field in which the site would occupy a south-eastern portion there are no notable water or drainage features within the site.
- 6.9 Given the lack of water of water and drainage features within and close to the site, the sensitivity of these features is judged to be low to the type of development proposed.
- 6.10 There would be no direct or indirect effects upon the water features in proximity to the site. However, the Proposed Development would create a new attenuation feature, which would be appropriately seeded. A very low beneficial magnitude of change is predicted upon completion of the proposed development, resulting in a **Minor** beneficial long-term effect.

Land Use, Buildings and Infrastructure

- 6.11 The site comprises part of a medium scale irregular field. Commercially grown Christmas trees occupy the majority of the western side of the site with a smaller area of naturally regenerating woodland and scrub to the south-east. There are no existing buildings within the site. The site is generally well contained by the existing vegetated field boundaries. From the higher eastern ares within the site there are some framed and partly screened outward views of the elevated Masonhill and Dalmilling neighbourhoods 0.6km to the south-west and 1.1km to the north-west respectively. The site is influenced by the steel lattice tower within Ayr substation and the communication mast directly south-west of the site. These infrastructure elements are visible across much of the site partly screened and filtered by the woodland and tree line on the north-eastern and eastern site boundaries.
- 6.12 Accounting for the existing land uses and the influence of existing electricity and communications infrastructure susceptibility and landscape value are judged to be medium. Overall sensitivity is judged to be medium.
- 6.13 The introduction of the Proposed Development would result in a change of land use within the south-eastern part of the larger field. This would result in the loss of area of commercially grown Christmas trees and naturally regenerative vegetation and the introduction of a BESS and associated infrastructure. The magnitude of change is judged to be medium during construction and at Year 1 of operation, resulting in a **Moderate** adverse degree of effect.
- 6.14 As landscape mitigation planting matures the Proposed Development would be further integrated within the local landscape by Year 15.

However, accounting for the change in land use the degree of effect would remain **Moderate** and adverse.

Vegetation

- 6.15 The site is contained to the north by an area of mature deciduous woodland, a mature tree line and hedgerow species to the east and south and an established tree line along the western boundary of the wider field in which the site is located. The commercially grown Christmas trees within the site are considered to be of medium susceptibility to change and the naturally regenerating vegetation is considered to be of higher susceptibility. On balance the overall sensitivity of vegetation within the site is considered to be medium.
- 6.16 During construction, the introduction of the proposed development would result in the loss of some vegetation within the footprint and immediately adjacent to the proposals. The existing trees and woodland on the site boundaries would be retained and protected during construction. The magnitude of change to vegetation is judged to be medium. Accounting for the medium sensitivity the degree of effect is judged to be **Moderate** adverse and temporary.
- 6.17 Proposed native tree and shrub planting would be provided along the western boundary of the proposed development as illustrated in Figure 6, to better integrate the proposals with the surrounding area. In addition, infill tree and shrub planting would be introduced along the southern boundary, areas around the proposed development and the proposed basin would be appropriately seeded. A very low beneficial magnitude of change is predicted at Year 1 as planting would not have matured, resulting in a **Minor** beneficial landscape effect in the short term. In the longer term, the proposed vegetation would help integrate the proposed development with its surroundings and bring about a number of localised benefits, resulting in a long-term **Minor** beneficial landscape effect.

Landscape Character

- 6.18 This section provides an overview of the landscape character of the site and its locality. It provides judgment on the sensitivity of the landscape character to the proposed development and the resulting effects which would arise from the development proposals.

National Level Landscape Character

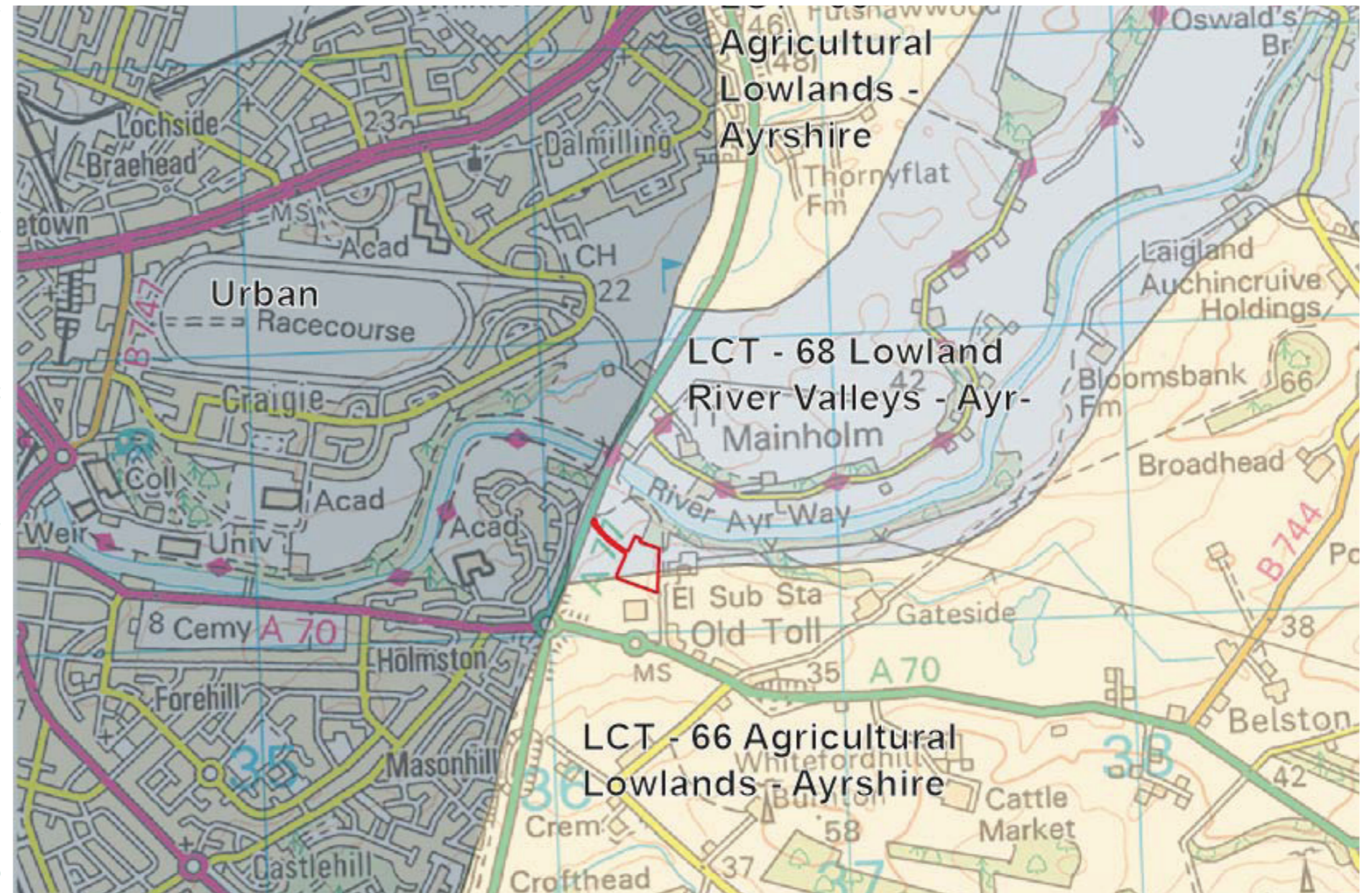
- 6.19 Scotland has a digital map-based national Landscape Character Assessment published in 2019 by NatureScot, showing Landscape Character Types (LCTs) i.e. areas of consistent and recognisable landscape character. This mapping now supersedes those landscape character studies from the 1990s.
- 6.20 The site lies between LCT 66 - Agricultural Lowlands - Ayrshire to the south and LCT 68 - Lowland River Valleys - Ayrshire to the north. LCTs 66 and 68 are illustrated on Figure 8 and considered in turn below.
- 6.21 LCT 66 - Agricultural Lowlands occurs in five areas of Ayrshire, the area in which the southern part of the site is located covers a large area of agricultural landscape approximately between Ayr and Cumnock. Selected key characteristics of LCT 66 relevant to the site and immediate landscape include:
- *“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.*
 - *Generally small to medium scale landscape.*
 - *Fields often regular in shape and enclosed by beech or hawthorn hedges, with mature hedgerow trees giving the landscape a surprisingly wooded character.*
 - *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.*
 - *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.”*
- 6.22 LCT 68 - Lowland River Valleys - Ayrshire occurs in seven areas across Ayrshire, the area in which the northern part of the site is located covers the River Ayr valley. Selected key characteristics of LCT 68 relevant to the site and immediate landscape include:

- “Series of incised, narrow river valleys bounded by steep slopes which cross the agricultural lowlands of Ayrshire.
- Pastoral farming character with hedgerow field boundaries and valley slopes which are frequently wooded with stands of beech and semi-natural woodland.
- Rich woodland of the river valleys often incorporated into designed landscapes.
- Intimate small scale landscapes which often lie hidden within the wider agricultural lowlands
- More intensive farmland is present on softly rolling ground.
- 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.”

Effects upon LCT 66 - Agricultural Lowlands - Ayrshire

- 6.23 The site is located within the northern fringe of the LCT adjacent to the border with LCT 68. Given the land use of commercially grown Christmas trees the site contrasts with the predominate agricultural landscape pattern of the LCT.
- 6.24 The LCT is influenced by main transport routes, settlement and infrastructure, including the southern part of Ayr substation, a number of pylon lines and communications masts and Dobbies Garden Centre. Accounting for the influence of existing elements of electricity infrastructure the susceptibility of the LCT is judged to be medium. There are no landscape designations within the LCT, recreational routes include a network of core paths outside the site on balance landscape value is judged to be medium.
- 6.25 Accounting for landscape susceptibility and value the overall sensitivity balance, the sensitivity of LCT 68 - Agricultural Lowlands is considered to be medium.
- 6.26 Effects on landscape character would be largely contained within the site and its local context. The proposed development would introduce a BESS and associated infrastructure and result in the loss of an area of commercially grown Christmas trees and naturally regenerative vegetation.
- 6.27 Accounting for the size and scale of the proposed development and screening provided by the existing mature vegetated field boundaries to the north, east and south notable landscape effects would be largely

Figure 8: Extract from Nature Scot Landscape Character Types Interactive Map (site shown as red circle)



limited to the site level and would extend to around 0.4km to the south-west at Year 1 of operation before mitigation measures have established, where the existing site boundary is less robust. The proposed development would marginally extend the presence and influence of electricity infrastructure west of Ayr substation within the northern fringe of the LCT.

- 6.28 The proposed development would give rise to a no greater than low magnitude of change upon the wider LCT, resulting in a **Minor** level of landscape effect, which would reduce in the longer-term due to the proposed mitigation planting as it becomes more established by Year 15 of operation.

Effects upon LCT 68 - Lowland River Valleys - Ayrshire

- 6.29 The site is located within the southern fringe of the LCT adjacent to the border with LCT 66. Given the land use of commercially grown Christmas trees the site contrasts with the agricultural and wooded River Ayr valley .
- 6.30 The LCT is influenced by the northern part of Ayr substation, and an associated pylon line. Accounting for the influence of existing elements of electricity infrastructure the susceptibility of the LCT is judged to be medium. Much of the LCT is located with the River Ayr LLA, recreational routes include the River Ayr Way and a number of paths, on balance landscape value is judged to be high.

6.31 Accounting for landscape susceptibility and value the overall sensitivity of LCT 68 - Agricultural Lowlands is Lowland River Valleys - Ayrshire is considered to be medium to high.

6.32 Effects on landscape character would be largely contained within the site and its local context. The proposed development would introduce a BESS and associated infrastructure and result in the loss of an area of commercially grown Christmas trees and naturally regenerative vegetation.

6.33 The proposed Development would directly affect a small southern part of the overall LCT which is already influenced by existing electricity infrastructure Accounting for the size and scale of the proposed development and screening provided by the mature woodland north of the site and the established tree line to the east, visibility of the proposed development experienced from within the LCT would be largely limited to the immediate north-western part of the field in which the proposals would occupy a south-eastern part. A very small part of this LCT would therefore be influenced by the proposed development and would very marginally extend the presence of electricity infrastructure west of Ayr substation.

6.34 The proposed development would give rise to a no greater than low magnitude of change upon the wider LCT. Accounting for landscape sensitivity this would result in a **Minor** level of landscape effect, which would reduce in the longer-term due to the proposed mitigation planting.

Other Landscape Character Types and Townscape Character

6.35 LCT 68 - Lowland River Valleys - Ayrshire is contained by LCT 66 Agricultural Lowlands - Ayrshire directly to the north and south. The urban form of Ayr is located to the west. Accounting for the relatively low heights of the proposed development and screening by immediate and intervening mature field boundary vegetation no notable effects on other neighbouring LCTs or the townscape character of Ayr are anticipated. Therefore no other LCTs nor the townscape character is considered in this LVA.

Effects on Local Landscape Character

Sensitivity of the site

6.36 The current land use of the site is mainly for commercially grown Christmas trees which are largely contained by the mature vegetated boundaries to the north, east, south and west. The site is influenced by nearby Ayr substation, Dobbies Garden Centre, settlement and main roads. Accounting for the existing land use and influences landscape

susceptibility is considered to be low to medium.

6.37 The site is not located within any nationally or locally designated landscapes, although the northern part of the site abuts the River Ayr Valley LLA. There are no recreational routes within the site itself Core Path SA16 lies in close proximity to the north and east. On balance landscape value is considered to be low to medium

6.38 Considering both landscape susceptibility and value the overall sensitivity of the site to the type and scale of development proposed is considered to be low to medium.

Effects on the site

6.39 The proposed development would introduce a new feature into the landscape, which although of limited height and scale and in proximity to similar infrastructure, would incorporate most of the site area and therefore adversely alter the physical and perceptual attributes of the site. Although accounting also for the introduction of the site access the wider extent of the field in which the site would occupy a south-eastern portion would remain largely unaffected.

6.40 The magnitude of change to the site itself during construction and at Year 1 of operation is assessed as medium to high. This would result in a **Moderate** adverse landscape effect on the site.

6.41 The landscape mitigation proposals would provide some enhancements to the scheme, enclosing the proposed development and would have the potential to enhance local landscape character. In the longer-term, the magnitude of change to the site itself would reduce to medium, resulting in a **Moderate** level of effect at Year 15 of operation.

Receptor	Sensitivity	Development Phase	Magnitude of change	Level of Effect
Landscape Features				
Landform and topography	Medium	Construction	Medium	Moderate adverse
		Year 1	Medium to Low	Moderate to Minor adverse
		Year 15	Medium to Low	Moderate to Minor adverse
Water features and drainage	Low	Construction	Negligible	n/a
		Year 1	Very Low	Minor beneficial
		Year 15	Very Low	Minor beneficial
Land use, buildings and infrastructure	Medium	Construction	Medium	Moderate adverse
		Year 1	Medium	Moderate adverse
		Year 15	Medium	Moderate adverse
Vegetation	Low	Construction	Medium	Moderate adverse
		Year 1	Very Low	Minor beneficial adverse
		Year 15	Very Low	Minor beneficial adverse
Landscape Character				
LCT 66 – Agricultural Lowlands - Ayrshire	Medium	Construction	Low	Minor adverse
		Year 1	Low	Minor adverse
		Year 15	Low	Minor adverse
LCT 68 – Lowland River Valleys - Ayrshire	Medium to High	Construction	Low	Minor adverse
		Year 1	Low	Minor adverse
		Year 15	Low	Minor adverse
The site itself	Medium	Construction	Medium to High	Moderate adverse
		Year 1	Medium	Moderate adverse
		Year 15	Medium	Moderate adverse

Table 1: Summary of Landscape Effects

7. VISUAL EFFECTS

Introduction

- 7.1 The appraisal of visual effects considers the potential for changes in views and visual amenity. The aim is to establish the area in which the development may be visible, the different groups of people who may experience views of the development, the places where they will be affected, and the nature of the views and visual amenity (meaning the overall quality and pleasantness to a view).
- 7.2 Effects are considered during construction, at Year 1 and at Year 15 and beyond. New planting takes a number of years to mature and average growth rates have been taken into consideration. The effectiveness of the vegetation both in terms of integrating the development into the surrounding landscape and in providing visual screening would improve over time and needs to be considered appropriately. A summary of visual effects are included in Table 2.
- 7.3 Photography is set out within the photographic record set out in Appendix 3. Viewpoint locations are shown on Figure 10.

Zone of Theoretical Visibility

- 7.4 The Screened Zone of Theoretical Visibility (SZTV, Figure 9) identifies the potential locations from which the development may be visible. The Screened Zone of Theoretical Visibility (SZTV) has been produced using Digital Terrain Modelling (DTM) data. Existing built development (8m tall) and larger blocks of woodland have also been modelled (15m tall) to take account of the screening effect that these would provide. However, the screening effect provided by smaller blocks of woodland, individual trees and hedgerows have not been taken into account, and consequently the actual extent of the area from which the proposed development is visible is likely to be much smaller. Figure 9 also conveys the bare earth scenario, assuming that only the DTM data is used and there are no elements providing screening.
- 7.5 The SZTV has been run at an average height of 3.5m for the elements which form the Proposed Development.

Sensitivity

- 7.6 Residential receptors, users of Core Paths and visitors are considered to be of high visual sensitivity. Users of the local minor road network where the view is not the focus of activity are of medium sensitivity. People using larger A-roads are of low sensitivity.
- 7.7 The approach to sensitivity of visual receptors is set out in Appendix 1.

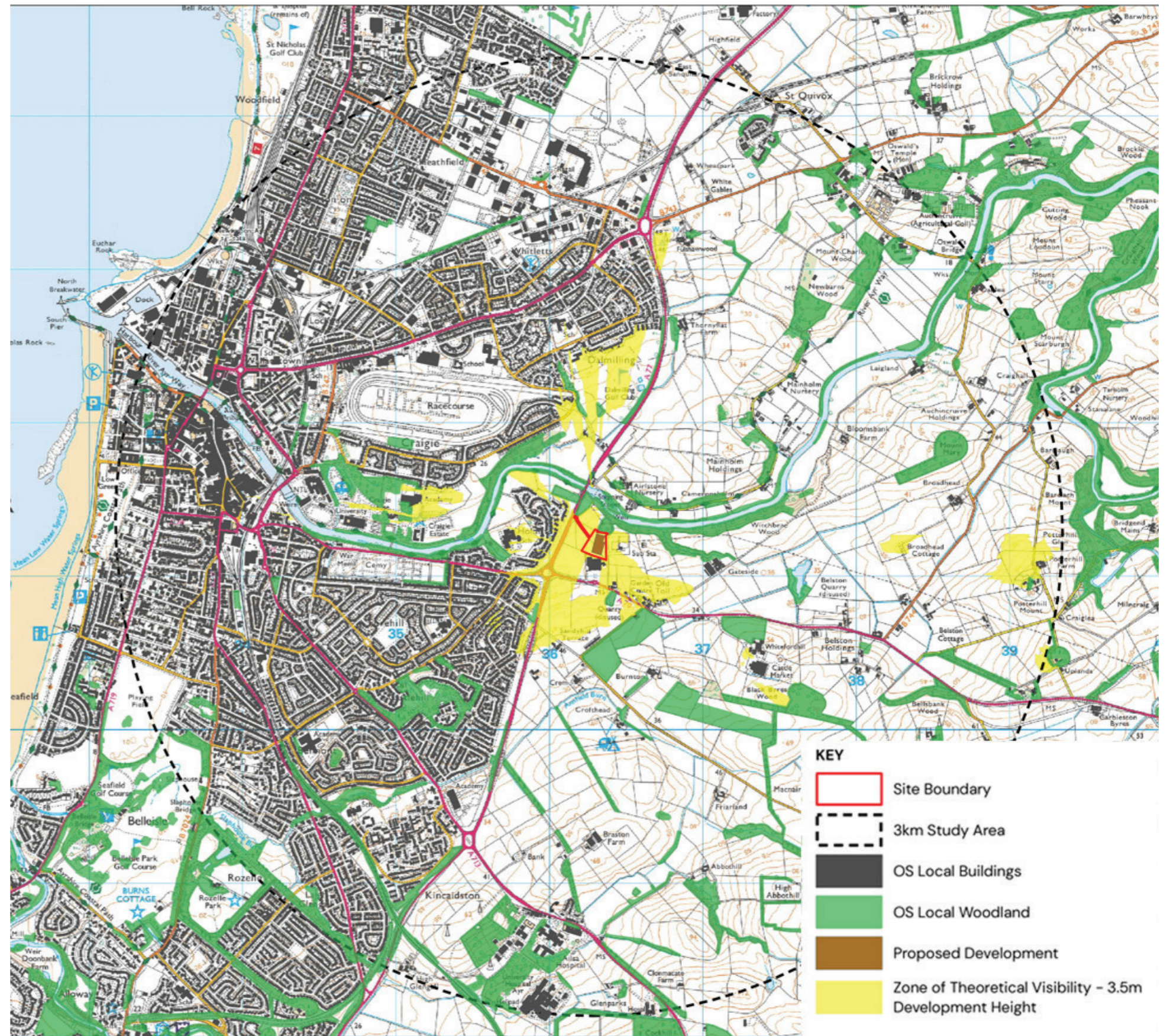


Figure 9: Screened Zone of Theoretical Visibility

Residential Receptors

7.8 The appraisal of residential receptors focuses on residential groups, including nearby neighbourhoods of Ayr and clusters of residential properties. This LVA does not include a separate residential amenity assessment. It is considered that effects resulting from the proposed development would fall below the Residential Visual Amenity Threshold referred to in Landscape Institute TGN 02/2019 as visual effects: “of such nature and / or magnitude that it potentially affects ‘living conditions’ or Residential Amenity”. For the purpose of this assessment, it is assumed as a worst-case, that all nearby properties are permanent residences.

Masonhill

7.9 This residential receptor group comprises the residences within the Masonhill neighbourhood 0.6km south-west of the site which is bound to the north by the A70 and the east by the A77. Representative views from Crofthead Road within Masonhill are shown as Viewpoint 4 in Appendix 3. Existing views of the site are largely limited to the elevated properties on Cloverhill, and Shavin Brae where views looking north-east towards the site are partly screened by vegetation and built form.

7.10 During construction, potential changes to views would be largely limited to activities associated with the access track, the temporary construction compound, the north-western corner of the overall proposed BESS and associated construction vehicle movements. The introduction of much of the northern part of the access track and the south-eastern part of the overall proposed BESS would be largely screened from view by intervening landform and mature vegetation. Construction activities would affect a small portion of the background of available views and would be largely back clothed by the vegetated site boundaries. The magnitude of change is judged to be medium and taking account of the high sensitivity would result in a short-term temporary **Moderate** adverse.

7.11 At Year 1, much of the proposed development would be screened by the mature existing tree line north and west of Dobbies Garden Centre. The north-western corner of the proposed development would be largely screened by the proposed bund and associated tree and shrub planting which would be evident in the background of view. The access track and occasional vehicle movements within the site would be largely screened by the landform and vegetation south and west of the site. A small part of the overall development would be evident in the background of view. The magnitude of change is judged to be medium to low and taking account of the high sensitivity would result in a **Moderate to Minor** adverse.

7.12 At Year 15, once proposed planting has established around the proposed

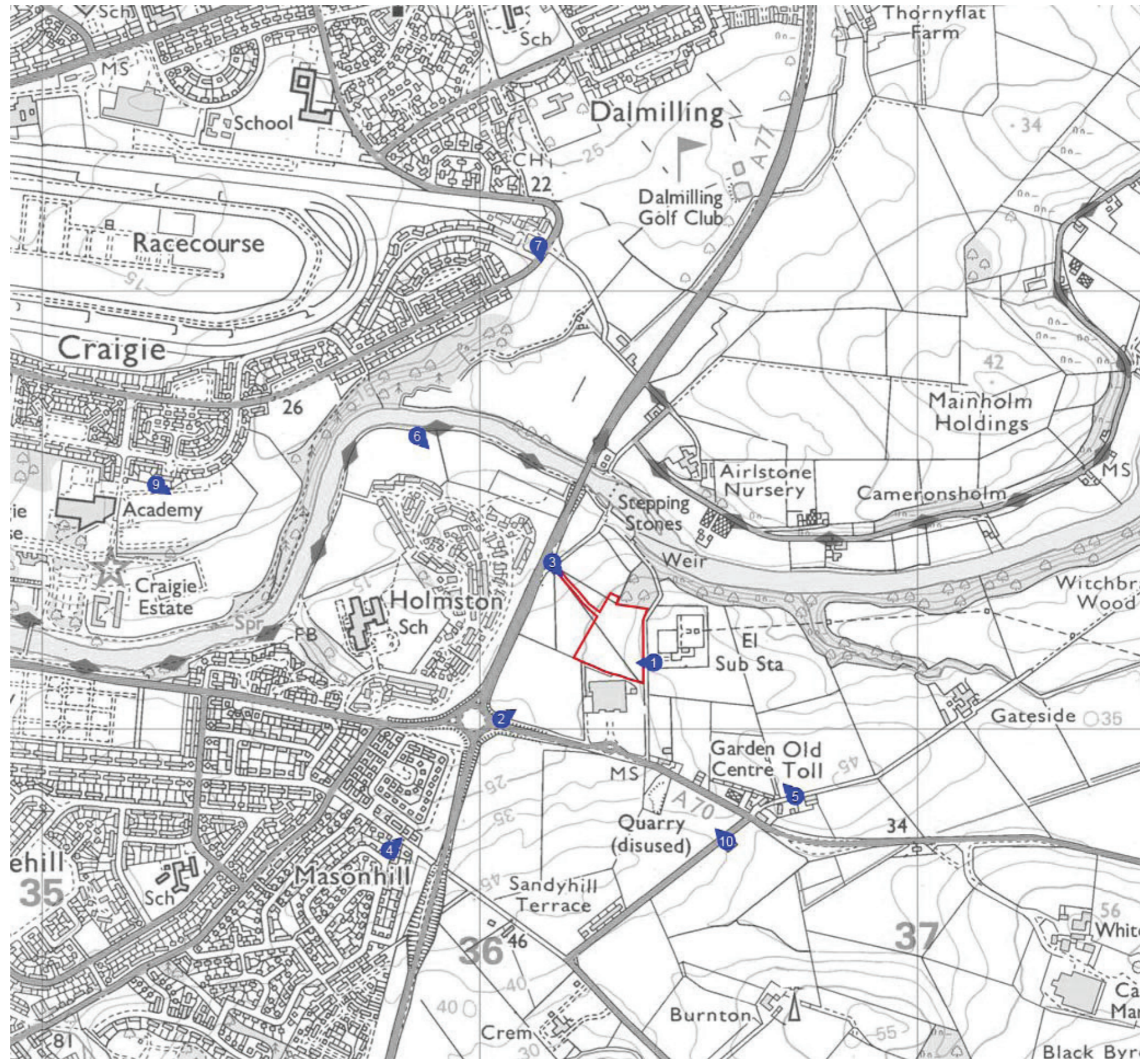


Figure 10: Viewpoint Location Plan

development, views would be largely screened. However, some glimpses maybe possible, particularly in the winter months following leaf fall. A low to very low magnitude of change is predicted at Year 15, with a **Minor** adverse visual effect.

Individual properties and farmsteads north of the site

- 7.13 This residential receptor group includes the properties north of the site and north of the River Ayr, south of the B743 and east of the Craigie and Dalmilling neighbourhoods. The SZTV shows either no or very limited theoretical visibility from these areas. Actual visibility from residences directly north of the River Ayr including those around Airlstone Nursery, Camersonsholm, and Mainholm Holdings would be screened by the intervening mature trees along the River Ayr. From higher elevations including the cluster of properties at Fulshawood approximately 1.8km north of the proposed development, views would be screened by intervening landform and the woodland and tree lines north of the site along the River Ayr. A very low magnitude of change is predicted at construction and Years 1 and 15, resulting in a **Minor** adverse visual effect to **No Effect**.

Craigie and Dalmilling

- 7.14 Representative views are shown as Viewpoints 7, 8 and 9 in Appendix 3.
- 7.15 Craigie and Dalmilling are neighbourhoods on the eastern settlement edge of Ayr located 0.6km and 1.1km to the north-west of the site respectively. The SZTV indicates some theoretical visibility from the south-eastern edges of these neighbourhoods. Actual visibility would be limited to glimpsed relatively distant views through the intervening vegetation from the south-eastern edge of Dalmilling. The majority of views from Craigie would be screened by intervening landform and vegetation east of this neighbourhood. Accounting for the intervening distances and likely screening by vegetation a very low magnitude of change is predicted at construction and Years 1 and 15, resulting in a **Minor** adverse visual effect to **No Effect**.

Holmston

- 7.16 Similar views to those experienced from Holmston are represented by Viewpoint 3 adjacent to the A77 and Viewpoint 6 on the River Ayr Way north of this neighbourhood in Appendix 3.
- 7.17 Holmston is a neighbourhood on the eastern settlement edge of Ayr located 0.1km to the west of the site. The SZTV indicates theoretical visibility from the eastern edge of the neighbourhood. Actual visibility would be limited to glimpsed views through and above the mature tree lines either side of the A77. Glimpsed views would be further reduced

by the proposed mitigation planting as it matures on the western side of the proposed development. Accounting for the screening by intervening vegetation a very low magnitude of change is predicted at construction and Years 1 and 15, resulting in a **Minor** adverse visual effect to **No Effect**.

Old Toll

- 7.18 This residential receptor group is therefore not considered further. Representative views are shown as Viewpoint 5 in Appendix 3.
- 7.19 This group comprises the properties south-east of Dobbies Garden Centre approximately 0.3km to the south-east of the site. The SZTV indicates theoretical visibility from some of the properties within this group. Actual views would be screened by the mature tree line on the eastern site boundary and intervening field boundary vegetation. Accounting for the screening by intervening vegetation a very low magnitude of change is predicted at construction and Years 1 and 15, resulting in a **Minor** adverse visual effect to **No Effect**.

Individual properties and farmsteads south of the A70

- 7.20 This residential receptor group is therefore not considered further. Representative views are shown as Viewpoint 10 in Appendix 3.
- 7.21 This residential receptor group includes the property directly south of Old Toll and Sandyhill Terrace. The SZTV shows very limited theoretical visibility from the property south of Old Toll and no ZTV coverage at Sandhill Terrace. Actual visibility from the residential property south of Old Toll would be screened by the mature tree line on the eastern site boundary and intervening field boundary vegetation. Accounting for the screening by intervening vegetation a very low magnitude of change is predicted at construction and Years 1 and 15, resulting in a **Minor** adverse visual effect to **No Effect**.

Other properties and farmsteads within the study area

- 7.22 No notable visual effects are anticipated on other residential receptors within the study area.

Recreational Receptors

Core Path SA16

- 7.23 Representative views are shown as Viewpoint 1 and 5 in Appendix 3. This Core Path links the River Ayr Way / Core Path SA3 0.2km north-west of the site with Auchincruive, on the eastern fringe of the 3km study area to the east. This route passes along the minor road through Old Toll

directly north of the A77 then runs parallel at a slightly higher elevation to the eastern side of the site before entering woodland within the River Ayr Valley LLA and connecting with the River Ayr Way / Core Path SA3 east of the A77 River Ayr crossing.

- 7.24 For the extent of Core Path SA16 the site is largely screened from view by the mature intervening vegetation along the eastern site boundary. With some very brief glimpsed views directly adjacent to Ayr substation.
- 7.25 The SZTV indicates theoretical visibility from a very short section of this route east of the site up to and east of Old Toll. In reality actual visibility would be almost entirely screened by the mature trees along the eastern site boundary and the intervening field boundary vegetation between the proposed development and Core Path SA16. Some glimpsed views would be experienced through the existing vegetation approximately between the north-eastern boundary of Dobbies Garden Centre and Ayr substation
- 7.26 During construction activities associated with the introduction of the proposed development would be largely screened by the intervening mature vegetation on the eastern site boundary. It is possible that during construction some activities would be glimpsed through the intervening vegetation on the eastern side of the site, approximately between the north-eastern boundary of Dobbies Garden Centre and Ayr substation. The magnitude of change is judged to be low to very low and taking account of the medium sensitivity would result in a short-term temporary **Minor** adverse to **No effect**.
- 7.27 At Years 1 and 15, the proposed development would be screened by the mature vegetation on the eastern boundary of the site and at longer distances by intervening vegetated field boundaries between Core Path SA16 and the proposals. It is possible that during the winter months following leaf fall that the proposed development would become marginally more apparent from a very short section of this route adjacent to the existing substation. The magnitude of change is judged to be low to very low and taking account of the medium sensitivity would result in a **Minor** adverse to **No effect**.

River Ayr Way / Core Path SA3

- 7.28 Representative views are shown as Viewpoint 6 in Appendix 3.
- 7.29 The River Ayr Way is one of Scotland's Great Trails starting at Glenuck Loch and finishing at Ayr. Within the study area this route (shared by Core Path SA3) extends from Auchincruive on the eastern fringe of the 3km study area to Ayr Harbour.

7.30 The SZTV indicates limited theoretical visibility from a section of this route north of Holmston. However, along the full extent of this route within the study area the site is fully screened by the mature woodland on the banks of the River Ayr. A very low magnitude of change is predicted at construction and Years 1 and 15, resulting in a **Minor** adverse visual effect to **No Effect**.

Core Paths north of the River Ayr

7.31 This group of recreational routes includes Core Paths SA20 and SA21 which provide connections between Craigie and the River Ayr Way / Core Path SA3.

7.32 The SZTV indicates limited theoretical visibility of the proposed development along a short section of routes south-east of Craigie. However, along the extent of these routes the site is fully screened by the mature woodland on the banks of the River Ayr. A very low magnitude of change is predicted at construction and Years 1 and 15, resulting in a **Minor** adverse visual effect to **No Effect**.

Local Paths Network: Leglen Wood

7.33 This route provides a local connection between Core Path SA16 north-east of Ayr substation. Along the extent of this route the site is fully screened by the mature tree line and the substation infrastructure east of the site. A very low magnitude of change is predicted at construction and Years 1 and 15, resulting in a **Minor** adverse visual effect to **No Effect**.

Dobbies Garden Centre

7.34 Dobbies Garden Centre is located directly south of the site. Views looking north would be screened by the existing tree line, vegetation and fence on the northern boundary of the garden centre. Notable visual effects on visual receptors visiting and working at Dobbies Garden Centre are considered unlikely. A very low magnitude of change is predicted at construction and Years 1 and 15, resulting in a **Minor** adverse visual effect to **No Effect**.

Other recreational routes and visual receptors within the study area

7.35 No notable visual effects are anticipated on other more distant recreational receptors within the study area.

Road Users

A77

7.36 Representative views are shown as Viewpoint 3 in Appendix 3.

7.37 This is a major road connecting Glasgow and Stranraer, within the study area this road passes directly west of the site, east of the Holmston and Masonhill neighbourhoods. The SZTV shows theoretical visibility from a section of this road to the north and south of the A70 / A77 roundabout. Actual visibility of the site is largely limited to framed views adjacent to the site access and close to and around the A70 / A77 roundabout.

7.38 Construction traffic would use the A77 to access the site, which would enter the field in which the site is located at the existing access. Views of construction activities would be limited to very short sections of the road where the existing access between the mature vegetation on the western field boundary provides a framed view into the site, and from around the A70 / A77 roundabout. Some additional traffic is also likely to be experienced on the road during construction. The magnitude of change is judged to be medium and taking account of the low sensitivity would result in a short-term temporary **Moderate to Minor** adverse level of effect.

7.39 At Year 1, the access track would be complete, views of the proposed development would be briefly direct to oblique and would be limited to the western side of the proposals which would be largely screened by the proposed bund and mitigation planting and back clothed by the line of mature trees east of the BESS. At Year 1 the magnitude of change is judged to be low and taking account of the medium sensitivity would result in a **Minor** adverse level of effect.

7.40 At Year 15, once proposed planting has established on the western side of the proposed development, the majority of views from the road would be screened. The magnitude of change at Year 15 is judged to be low to very low and taking account of the medium sensitivity would result in a **Minor adverse** level of effect to **No Effect**.

A70

7.41 Representative views are shown as Viewpoint 2 in Appendix 3.

7.42 This road connects Ayr and Edinburgh, within the study area the road passes 0.1km south of the site. The SZTV shows theoretical visibility from a section of this road to the east and west of the A70 / A77 roundabout. However, from the majority of this route the site is fully screened by intervening features including field boundary vegetation, woodland, tree lines and built form north of the road. There is some opportunity for brief direct and oblique framed views of the field in which the site is located between the mature trees north of the road at the A70 / A77 roundabout.

7.43 Construction activities would be screened from view from much of this route with some framed and filtered views of works seen in the background

of direct and oblique near and around the A70 / A77 roundabout. The magnitude of change during construction is judged to be medium and taking account of the low sensitivity would result in a short-term temporary **Moderate to Minor** adverse level of effect.

7.44 At Year 1, views of the proposed development would be briefly direct to oblique and would be limited to the western side of the proposals experienced from near the A70 / A77 roundabout which would be largely screened by the proposed bund and mitigation planting and back clothed by the line of mature woodland and trees north and east of the BESS. At Year 1 the magnitude of change is judged to be low and taking account of the medium sensitivity would result in a **Minor** adverse level of effect.

7.45 At Year 15, once proposed planting has established on the western side of the proposed development, the majority of views from the road would be screened. The magnitude of change at Year 15 is judged to be low to very low and taking account of the medium sensitivity would result in a **Minor adverse** level of effect to **No Effect**.

Other roads within the study area

7.46 No notable visual effects are anticipated on other more distant roads routes within the study area. This includes the minor road through Old Toll where the proposed development would be screened from views looking north-west by intervening field boundary vegetation and the mature tree line on the eastern side of the site

Designated Landscapes

LLA J The Ayr Valley

7.47 The South Ayrshire Local Landscape Designations Review (2018) provides a 'Statement of Importance' for LLA J The Ayr Valley and identifies 'Character and Special Qualities'. This locally designated landscape is situated immediately north-east of the site. The 'Reasons for Designation' are described as:

7.48 *"The LLA of the Ayr Valley is a popular and well-used recreational resource. It is readily publicly accessible along both northern and southern sides, via the River Ayr Way and other connecting paths along the valley. The heavily wooded valley is also of wildlife importance along most of its route, with the sandstone cliffs and semi-natural woodland of the Ayr to the south of Failford being of particular note for geological and ecological value, and the dramatic beauty of its gorge landscape. Historical connections with the Covenanters, as well as with both Robert Burns*

(who described the valley as a 'lengthened, tumbling sea') and William Wallace, are recorded at a number of locations along the river. Several estates are sited within the LLA, and their policies and fine buildings add further landscape and historic diversity to this rich and varied lowland valley. Occasional groups of interwar 1930s small-holdings on valley sides are also distinctive built features as are the old stone bridges and railway viaduct that cross the Ayr."

7.49 The SZTV indicates very limited theoretical visibility from a small area of the LLA north of Holmston which also includes a short section of the River Ayr Way. The proposed development would be visible from the edge of the woodland within the LLA directly north-east of the site. However, there are no promoted routes which would provide access to this woodland edge. Beyond the woodland edge actual views of the proposed development from within the LLA would be fully screened by the mature trees and vegetation along the River Ayr and either side of the A77. In terms of effects on landscape character, direct effects on LCT 68 - Lowland River Valleys - Ayrshire which lies within the LLA are identified as a **Minor** adverse at section 6 of this LVA. LVA Viewpoint 6 which represents views experienced from the River Ayr Way north of Holmston within the LLA show that the proposed development would be screened by woodland and mature trees south of the River Ayr and either side of the A77. Section 7 of this LVA identified no notable effects on views experienced from the River Ayr Way.

7.50 The introduction of the proposed development outside the LLA would not directly or indirectly affect reasons for the landscapes designation in that the proposals would not affect the woodland character of the River Ayr valley, related recreational routes nor cultural associations. It is concluded that effects on the LLA J The Ayr Valley would be **Minor** adverse at proximity to the proposed development and **No Effect** across the wider designation.

Receptor	Sensitivity	Development Phase	Magnitude of change	Level of Effect
Residential Receptors				
Masonhill	High	Construction	Medium	Moderate adverse
		Year 1	Medium to Low	Moderate to Minor adverse
		Year 15	Low to Very Low	Minor adverse
Individual properties and farmsteads north of the site	High	Construction	Very Low	Minor adverse to No Effect
		Year 1	Very Low	Minor adverse to No Effect
		Year 15	Very Low	Minor adverse to No Effect
Craigie and Dalmling	High	Construction	Very Low	Minor adverse to No Effect
		Year 1	Very Low	Minor adverse to No Effect
		Year 15	Very Low	Minor adverse to No Effect
Holmston	High	Construction	Very Low	Minor adverse to No Effect
		Year 1	Very Low	Minor adverse to No Effect
		Year 15	Very Low	Minor adverse to No Effect
Old Toll	High	Construction	Very Low	Minor adverse to No Effect
		Year 1	Very Low	Minor adverse to No Effect
		Year 15	Very Low	Minor adverse to No Effect
Individual properties and farmsteads south of the A70	High	Construction	Very Low	Minor adverse to No Effect
		Year 1	Very Low	Minor adverse to No Effect
		Year 15	Very Low	Minor adverse to No Effect

Table 2: Summary of Visual Effects and Effects on Designated Landscapes

Receptor	Sensitivity	Development Phase	Magnitude of change	Level of Effect
Recreational Receptors				
SA16	High	Construction	Low	Minor adverse
		Year 1	Low	Minor adverse
		Year 15	Low	Minor adverse
River Ayr Way / SA3	High	Construction	Very Low	Minor adverse to No Effect
		Year 1	Very Low	Minor adverse to No Effect
		Year 15	Very Low	Minor adverse to No Effect
Core Paths north of the River Ayr	High	Construction	Very Low	Minor adverse to No Effect
		Year 1	Very Low	Minor adverse to No Effect
		Year 15	Very Low	Minor adverse to No Effect
Local Paths Network: Leglen Wood	High	Construction	Very Low	Minor adverse to No Effect
		Year 1	Very Low	Minor adverse to No Effect
		Year 15	Very Low	Minor adverse to No Effect
Road Users				
A77	Low	Construction	Medium	Moderate to Minor adverse
		Year 1	Low	Minor adverse
		Year 15	Low	Minor adverse to No Effect
A70	Low	Construction	Medium	Moderate to Minor adverse
		Year 1	Low	Minor adverse
		Year 15	Low	Minor adverse to No Effect
Designated Landscapes				
LLA J The Ayr Valley	High	Construction	Very Low	Minor adverse to No Effect
		Year 1	Very Low	Minor adverse to No Effect
		Year 15	Very Low	Minor adverse to No Effect

8. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Landscape Features

- 8.1 There would be some changes to the landform of the site to accommodate the proposed development, leading to a **Moderate** temporary adverse levels of effect. However, once the proposals are completed and with new landscape features either planted or seeded, adverse effects would reduce in the longer term.
- 8.2 The proposed development would represent an inevitable change to the current land use from an area of commercially grown Christmas trees and naturally regenerating vegetation to an operational BESS and associated infrastructure albeit in context of nearby infrastructure. A **Moderate** adverse level of effect is predicted in the longer-term, although the surrounding influences and benefits of landscape proposals would provide some local enhancements.
- 8.3 In the long-term, the additional planting in the form of new tree and shrub planting on the western perimeter, infill tree and shrub planting to the south and the introduction of grassland and damp grassland mixes would enhance the landscape structure of the site and would give rise to landscape and biodiversity benefits. The creation of new attenuation feature would also give rise to limited beneficial landscape effects.

Landscape Character

- 8.4 The proposed development would introduce a new feature into the landscape, which although of limited height and scale and adjacent to similar such infrastructure would adversely alter the physical and perceptual attributes of the site. The proposed development would give rise to **Moderate** long-term adverse effects upon the landscape character of the site itself, however, the landscape mitigation proposals would provide some enhancements around peripheral areas.
- 8.5 The site lies between LCT 66 Agricultural Lowlands - Ayrshire (south) and LCT 68 Lowland River Valleys - Ayrshire (north). The proposed development would result in the loss of an area of commercially grown Christmas trees and naturally regenerating vegetation to an operational BESS and associated infrastructure. This would directly affect a very small northern part of LCT 66 Agricultural Lowlands - Ayrshire and a very small southern part of LCT 68 Lowland River Valleys - Ayrshire. .
- 8.6 Given the relatively low heights of the proposed development and screening by the existing mature woodland directly north-east, mature trees to the east and south and proposed mitigation measures including tree and shrub planting along the western boundary effects on LCT 66 and

LCT 68 would be **Minor** adverse long-term. Over time as the proposed planting matures effects would reduce as the proposed development becomes further integrated within the local landscape.

- 8.7 No notable effects on other neighbouring LCTs or the townscape character of Ayr are anticipated.

Visual Receptors

- 8.8 The proposed layout has sought to integrate and minimise potential visual effects through siting the proposed development in close proximity to Ayr Substation, and using the existing vegetated field boundaries and introducing appropriate mitigation measures.
- 8.9 Notable visual effects on local residents arising from the proposed development would be limited to views experienced by some residents within elevated areas of Masonhill 0.6km south-west of the site These receptors would experience a **Moderate** adverse and temporary visual effect during construction. Following construction a **Minor** adverse visual effect is anticipated for operational Year 1 reducing further as mitigation planting matures by Year 15. Visual effects on recreational users on the closest Core Path SA16 directly east of the proposed development would be **Minor** adverse to **No Effect** during construction and operational Years 1 and 15. From very short sections of the A77 directly west of the proposed development and the A70 0.1km south a **Moderate** adverse temporary visual effect would be experienced during construction reducing to **Minor** adverse for operational Year 1 and **Minor** adverse to **No effect** by Year 15.
- 8.10 No notable visual effects are anticipated from other residential, recreational and road user receptors.

Designated Landscapes

- 8.11 The proposed development would be located directly south-west outside the South Ayrshire Local Landscape Area J The Ayr Valley. Given the relatively low heights of the proposed development and screening by existing mature woodland and trees the proposed development would not directly or indirectly affect the woodland character of the River Ayr valley, related recreational routes nor cultural associations and the reasons for the LLAs designation. It is concluded that there would be no notable effect on LLA J The Ayr Valley.

Conclusion

- 8.12 The proposed development would locate a Battery Energy Storage System within the existing field structure of an area of commercially grown Christmas trees and naturally regenerative vegetation west of Ayr substation and directly north of Dobbies Garden Centre. The proposed development would be sited away from the existing mature woodland to the north and north-east, and mature tree lines to the east and south. Mitigation measures would include new native tree and shrub planting along the western perimeter of the site, infill tree and shrub planting to the south and the introduction of appropriate seed mixes.
- 8.13 As the proposed planting matures the proposed development would be further integrated within the local landscape with some additional biodiversity opportunities. Overall the total extent of the landscape and visual effects would be localised and limited in nature.

9. REFERENCES

9.1 The following documents have been consulted during the preparation of this LVA:

- National Planning Framework for Scotland 4 (2023);
- South Ayrshire Local Development Plan (2022);
- Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (3rd edition) - Landscape Institute/ Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013);
- Landscape Institute (June 2013) GLVIA3 Statement of Clarification 1/13, LI;
- Visual Representation of Development Proposals, Technical Guidance Note 06/19, September 2019;
- Residential Visual Amenity Assessment Technical Guidance Note 2/19: and
- NatureScot National Landscape Character Assessment (2019).

APPENDIX 1: ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

INTRODUCTION

This appendix presents the assessment criteria adopted for the appraisal of landscape and visual effects arising from the proposed development.

The primary source of best practice for LVA in the UK is The Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition (GLVIA3) (Landscape Institute and the Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013). The assessment criteria adopted to inform the appraisal of effects has been developed in accordance with the principles established in this best practice document. It should however be acknowledged that GLVIA3 establishes guidelines not a specific methodology. The preface to GLVIA3 states:

“This edition concentrates on principles and processes. It does not provide a detailed or formulaic ‘recipe’ that can be followed in every situation – it remains the responsibility of the professional to ensure that the approach and methodology adopted are appropriate to the task in hand.”

The criteria set out below have therefore been specifically tailored for this appraisal to ensure that the methodology is appropriate and fit for purpose.

The purpose of an LVA when undertaken outside the context of an EIA is to identify and describe the relative level of any landscape and visual effects arising as a result of the proposals. As confirmed in GLVIA3 Statement of Clarification 1/13 (Landscape institute, 10th June 2013) an LVA for development which has been screened as not requiring EIA should avoid concluding whether the effects are significant or not and this is the approach adopted in this LVA.

An LVA must consider both:

- effects on the landscape as a resource in its own right (the landscape effects); and
- effects on specific views and visual amenity more generally (the visual effects).

Therefore, separate criteria are set out below for the assessment of landscape and visual effects.

NATURE (SENSITIVITY) OF LANDSCAPE FEATURES

The nature or sensitivity of an individual landscape feature or element reflects its susceptibility to change and any values associated with it. It is therefore a function of factors such as its quality, rarity, contribution to landscape character, degree to which the particular element can be replaced and cultural associations or designations that apply. A particular feature may be more 'sensitive' in one location than in another often as a result of local values associated with the feature or in relation to its function as a key or distinctive characteristic of that local landscape. Therefore it is not possible to simply place different types of landscape features into sensitivity bands. Where individual landscape features are affected, professional judgement is used as far as possible to give an objective evaluation of its sensitivity. Justification is given for this evaluation where necessary.

The nature or sensitivity of individual landscape features has been described as very high, high, medium, low or very low.

NATURE (SENSITIVITY) OF LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

The nature or sensitivity of landscape character reflects its susceptibility to change and any values associated with it. It is essentially an expression of a landscape's ability to accommodate a particular type of change. It varies depending on the physical and perceptual attributes of the landscape including but not necessarily limited to: scale; degree of openness; landform; existing land cover; landscape pattern and complexity; the extent of human influence in the landscape; the degree of remoteness/wildness; perception of change in the landscape; the importance of landmarks or skylines in the landscape; inter-visibility with and influence on surrounding areas; condition; rarity and scenic quality of the landscape, and any values placed on the landscape including any designations that may apply.

In this appraisal, the nature or sensitivity of landscape character is considered with reference to published landscape character areas/types and where relevant local landscape units as defined in this LVA for the purposes of this study. Information regarding the key characteristics of these local character areas/units has been extrapolated from relevant published studies where possible. Together with on-site appraisal, an assessment of landscape sensitivity to development has been undertaken employing professional judgement for relevant local landscape character areas/types/units.

The nature or sensitivity of landscape character has been described as very high, high, medium, low or very low.

NATURE (SENSITIVITY) OF VISUAL RECEPTORS

The nature or sensitivity of a visual receptor group reflects their susceptibility to change and any values associated with the specific view in question. It varies depending on a number of factors such as the occupation of the viewer, their viewing expectations, duration of view and the angle or direction in which they would see the site. Whilst most views are valued by someone, certain viewpoints are particularly highly valued for either their cultural or historical associations and this can increase the sensitivity of the view. The following criteria are provided for guidance only and are not exclusive:

- Very Low Sensitivity – People engaged in industrial and commercial activities or military activities.
- Low Sensitivity - People at their place of work (e.g. offices); short - medium stay patients at hospital, shoppers; users of trunk/major roads and passengers on commercial railway lines (except where these form part of a recognised and promoted scenic route).
- Medium Sensitivity - Users of public rights of way and minor roads which do not appear to be used primarily for recreational activities or the specific enjoyment of the landscape; recreational activities not specifically focused on the landscape (e.g. football); motel users.
- High Sensitivity – Residents at home; users of long distance or recreational trails and other sign posted walks; users of public rights of way and minor roads which appear to be used for recreational activities or the specific enjoyment of the landscape; users of caravan parks, campsites and 'destination' hotels; tourist attractions with opportunities for views of the landscape (but not specifically focused on a particular vista); slow paced recreational activities which derive part of their pleasure from an appreciation of setting (e.g. bowling, golf); allotments.
- Very High Sensitivity - People at recognised vantage points (often with interpretation boards), people at tourist attractions with a focus on a specific view, visitors to historic features/estates where the setting is important to an appreciation and understanding of cultural value.

It is important to appreciate that it is the visual receptor (i.e. the person) that has a sensitivity and not a property, public right of way or road. Therefore, a large number of people may use a motorway for example but this does not increase the sensitivity of the receptors using it. Conversely, a residential property may only have one person living in it but this does not reduce the sensitivity of that one receptor. The number of receptors affected at any given location may be a planning consideration, but it does not alter the sensitivity of the receptor group.

Where judgements are made about the sensitivity of assessment viewpoints, the sensitivity rating provided is an evaluation of the sensitivity of the receptor group represented by the viewpoint and not a reflection of the number of people who may experience the view.

NATURE (MAGNITUDE) OF EFFECTS – GENERAL NOTE

The following discussion sets out the approach adopted in this LVA in relation to a specific issue arising in GLVIA3 which requires a brief explanation.

Prior to the publication of GLVIA3, LVA practice had evolved over time in tandem with most other environmental disciplines to consider significance principally as a function of two factors, namely: sensitivity of the receptor and magnitude of the effect (the term 'magnitude' being a word most commonly used in LVA and most other environmental disciplines to describe the size or scale of an effect).

Box 3.1 on page 37 of GLVIA3 references a 2011 publication by IEMA entitled 'The State of EIA Practice in the UK' which reiterates the importance of considering not just the scale or size of effect but other factors which combine to define the 'nature of the effect' including factors such as the probability of an effect occurring and the duration, reversibility and spatial extent of the effect.

The flow diagram on page 39 of GLVIA3 now suggests that the magnitude of effect is a function of three factors (the size/scale of the effect, the duration of the effect and the reversibility of the effect).

For clarification, the approach taken in this LVA has been to consider magnitude of effect solely as the scale or size of the effect in the traditional sense of the term 'magnitude'. Having identified the magnitude of effect as defined above the LVA also describes the duration and reversibility of the identified effect before drawing a conclusion on the overall level of effect taking all of these factors into account.

In the context of the above discussion the following criteria have been adopted to describe the magnitude of effects.

NATURE (MAGNITUDE) OF EFFECTS ON LANDSCAPE FEATURES

Professional judgement has been used as appropriate to determine the magnitude of direct physical effects on individual existing landscape features using the following criteria as guidance only:

- Very Low Magnitude of Change - No loss or alteration to existing landscape features;
- Low Magnitude of Change - Minor loss or alteration to part of an existing landscape feature;
- Medium Magnitude of Change - Some loss or alteration to part of an existing landscape feature;
- High Magnitude of Change - Major loss or major alteration to an existing landscape feature;
- Very High Magnitude of Change - Total loss or alteration to an existing landscape feature.

NATURE (MAGNITUDE) OF EFFECTS ON LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

The magnitude of effect on landscape character is influenced by a number of factors including: the extent to which existing landscape features are lost or altered, the introduction of new features and the resulting alteration to the physical and perceptual characteristics of the landscape. Professional judgement has been used as appropriate to determine the magnitude using the following criteria as guidance only. In doing so, it is recognised that usually the landscape components in the immediate surroundings have a much stronger influence on the sense of landscape character than distant features whilst acknowledging the fact that more distant features can have an influence on landscape character as well.

- Very Low Magnitude of Change - No notable loss or alteration to existing landscape features; no notable introduction of new features into the landscape; and negligible change to the key physical and/or perceptual attributes of the landscape.
- Low Magnitude of Change - Minor loss or alteration to existing landscape features; introduction of minor new features into the landscape; or minor alteration to the key physical and/or perceptual attributes of the landscape.
- Medium Magnitude of Change - Some notable loss or alteration to existing landscape features; introduction of some notable new features into the landscape; or some notable change to the key physical and/or perceptual attributes of the landscape.
- High Magnitude of Change - A major loss or alteration to existing landscape features; introduction of major new features into the

landscape; or a major change to the key physical and/or perceptual attributes of the landscape.

- Very High Magnitude of Change - Total loss or alteration to existing landscape features; introduction of dominant new features into the landscape; a very major change to the key physical and/or perceptual attributes of the landscape.

NATURE (MAGNITUDE) OF EFFECTS ON VIEWS AND VISUAL AMENITY

Visual effects are caused by the introduction of new elements into the views of a landscape or the removal of elements from the existing view.

Professional judgement has been used to determine the magnitude of impacts using the following criteria as guidance only:

- Very Low Magnitude of Change - No change or negligible change in views;
- Low Magnitude of Change - Some change in the view that is not prominent but visible to some visual receptors;
- Medium Magnitude of Change - Some change in the view that is clearly notable in the view and forms an easily identifiable component in the view;
- High Magnitude of Change - A major change in the view that is highly prominent and has a strong influence on the overall view.
- Very High Magnitude of Change – A change in the view that has a dominating or overbearing influence on the overall view.

Using this set of criteria, determining levels of magnitude is primarily dependant on how prominent the development would be in the landscape, and what may be judged to flow from that prominence or otherwise.

For clarification, the use of the term 'prominent' relates to how noticeable the features of the development would be. This is affected by how close the viewpoint is to the development but not entirely dependent on this factor. Other modifying factors include: the focus of the view, visual screening and the nature and scale of other landscape features within the view. Rather than specifying crude bands of distance at which the proposed development would be dominant, prominent or incidental to the view etc, the prominence of the proposed development in each view is described in detail for each viewpoint taking all the relevant variables into consideration.

TYPE OF EFFECT

The assessment identifies effects which may be 'beneficial', 'adverse' or 'neutral'. Where effects are described as 'neutral' this is where the beneficial effects are deemed to balance the adverse effects.

DURATION OF EFFECT

For the purposes of this appraisal, the temporal nature of each effect is described as follows:

- Long Term – over 5 years
- Medium Term – between 1 and 5 years
- Short Term – under 1 year

REVERSIBILITY OF EFFECT

The LVA also describes the reversibility of each identified effect using the following terms:

- Permanent – effect is non reversible
- Non-permanent – effect is reversible

LEVEL OF EFFECT

The purpose of an LVA when produced outside the context of an EIA is to identify the relative level of effects on landscape and visual amenity arising from the proposed development. The judgements provided within the LVA may then inform the planning balance to be carried out by the determining authority.

In this LVA, the relative level of the identified landscape and visual effects has been determined by combining judgements regarding the sensitivity of the landscape or view, magnitude of change, duration of effect and the reversibility of the effect. The level of effect is described as Major, Major/Moderate, Moderate, Moderate/Minor or Minor. No Effect may also be recorded as appropriate where the effect is so negligible it is not even noteworthy. In determining the level of residual effects, all mitigation measures are taken into account.

APPENDIX 2: GREEN BELT ASSESSMENT

INTRODUCTION

This Green Belt Assessment has been prepared by Pegasus Group on behalf of RES in support of a planning application for Battery Energy Storage System (the 'proposed development') at Holmston Farm, Ayr.

The proposed development is outlined within the supporting Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) at section 5.

The site is situated within the South Ayrshire Green Belt, located within the South Ayrshire Council (SA) administrative boundaries.

The extent of the site and its location within the Green Belt is shown on Figure 2 within the LVA. This Green Belt Assessment considers the proposed development against relevant national, strategic, local policy and guidance. It examines the site and its contribution to Green Belt objectives and the effect the proposed development would have on relevant Green Belt objectives and policies.

SITE HISTORY

The current land use of the site is for commercially grown Christmas trees. Aerial mapping from prior to 2010 indicates a former apparent agricultural land use across the site. Historical mapping from the 1930's onward indicates 'arable land use including rotation'.

Notable developments within the local landscape which are also located within the immediate South Ayrshire Green Belt include Ayr substation and associated pylon line 80m east of the site and Dobbies Garden Centre directly to the south. Outside of these features the land use is predominantly agricultural.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

The site is described in detail within sections 3, 6 and 7 of the LVA.

SITE CONTEXT WITHIN THE SOUTH AYRSHIRE GREEN BELT

The SA Green Belt covers three areas to the north, east and south of Ayr as follow:

- North-east of Ayr, an area between Prestwick and Troon up to the A78 and wrapping around fields to the north and south of the A78 north of Monkton.
- East of Ayr, the site is located within a small south-western part of this area which is located approximately south of the Great South Western Railway Line between Ayr (west) and Mossblown west extending south to the A70 and south-east to the intersection of the A70 / B744 and Annbank and the River Ayr to the east.
- South of Ayr, an area south of Ayr extending east up to the Great South Western Railway Line, agricultural land north of high point Brown Carrick Hill and south-west to the Ayrshire coastline.

This Green Belt Assessment therefore considers potential effects of the proposed development on the area of SA Green Belt east of Ayr and no other areas of SA Green Belt.

VISUAL CONTAINMENT OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

In views looking south, west and north from within the eastern area of SA Green Belt the proposed development would generally be screened by the existing mature woodland immediately to the north, mature tree lines along the River Ayr, the mature tree line to the east, and Dobbies Garden Centre to the south. Although, there would be some limited opportunity for glimpsed views through the intervening vegetation along a very short section of Core Path SA16 directly east of the site and west of Ayr substation.

The existing commercially grown Christmas trees provides a less robust south-western boundary which before the proposed mitigation measures have established (as described in LVA section 5) would allow some limited views of the western side of the proposed development from localised areas to the south-west. Such areas would include the field within the Green Belt immediately south-west of the proposed development and from very short sections of the A77 and A70 which run parallel to the Green Belt. Some limited elevated views of the proposed development would also be experienced from the Masonhill neighbourhood 0.6km to the south-west, outside of the Green Belt.

As described in the LVA visibility of the proposed development from these areas would reduce as mitigation planting on the western side of the proposals matures. It is considered unlikely that where visible the

proposed development would interact with the skyline formed by the surrounding mature vegetated boundaries around the site.

PLANNING CONTEXT

The National Planning Framework for Scotland 4 (NPF4) (2023) was adopted 13th February 2023 and replaces NPF3 (2014) and Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) (2014). NPF4 sets out spatial principles, regional priorities, national developments and national planning policy for Scotland.

The South Ayrshire Local Development Plan 2 (LDP2), adopted August 2022 forms the statutory development plan for the site. LDP2 defines Green Belt as:

“The areas defined in the development plan where there are strict restrictions on urban growth, often to prevent the loss of a town’s identity, protect the landscape or make sure there are enough recreational facilities”.

This Green Belt Assessment outlines NPF4 and LDP2 Green Belt policy in turn and then considers the proposed development against these policies.

NPF 4 (2023)

National policy for Green Belt in Scotland is set out between NPF4 pages 48 and 49. Green Belt Policy Principles are outlined as:

“Policy Intent:

To encourage, promote and facilitate compact urban growth and use the land around our towns and cities sustainably.

Policy Outcomes:

- *Development is directed to the right locations, urban density is increased and unsustainable growth is prevented.*
- *The character, landscape, natural setting and identity of settlements is protected and enhanced*
- *Nature networks are supported and land is managed to help tackle climate change.”*

NPF 4 page 48 outlines LDP considerations for Green Belt use, location and boundaries as:

“LDPs should consider using green belts, to support their spatial strategy as a settlement management tool to restrict development around towns

and cities.

Green belts will not be necessary for most settlements but may be zoned around settlements where there is a significant danger of unsustainable growth in car-based commuting or suburbanisation of the countryside.

Green belts should be identified or reviewed as part of the preparation of LDPs. Boundary changes may be made to accommodate planned growth, or to extend, or alter the area covered as green belt. Detailed green belt boundaries should be based on evidence and should be clearly identified in plans.”

NPF 4 Green Belts Policy 8 (pages 48 to 49) outlines the types of development which may be appropriate within Green Belt:

“a) Development proposals within a green belt designated within the LDP will only be supported if:

i) they are for:

- *development associated with agriculture, woodland creation, forestry and existing woodland (including community woodlands);*
- *residential accommodation required and designed for a key worker in a primary industry within the immediate vicinity of their place of employment where the presence of a worker is essential to the operation of the enterprise, or retired workers where there is no suitable alternative accommodation available;*
- *horticulture, including market gardening and directly connected retailing, as well as community growing;*
- *outdoor recreation, play and sport or leisure and tourism uses; and developments that provide opportunities for access to the open countryside (including routes for active travel and core paths);*
- *flood risk management (such as development of blue and green infrastructure within a “drainage catchment” to manage/mitigate flood risk and/or drainage issues);essential infrastructure or new cemetery provision;*
- *essential infrastructure or new cemetery provision; minerals operations and renewable energy developments;*
- *minerals operations and renewable energy developments;*

- intensification of established uses, including extensions to an existing building where that is ancillary to the main use;
- the reuse, rehabilitation and conversion of historic environment assets; or
- one-for-one replacements of existing permanent homes.

and

ii) the following requirements are met:

- reasons are provided as to why a green belt location is essential and why it cannot be located on an alternative site outwith the green belt;
- the purpose of the green belt at that location is not undermined;
- the proposal is compatible with the surrounding established countryside and landscape character;
- the proposal has been designed to ensure it is of an appropriate scale, massing and external appearance, and uses materials that minimise visual impact on the green belt as far as possible; and
- there will be no significant long-term impacts on the environmental quality of the green belt.

SOUTH AYRSHIRE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The SA LDP2 was adopted in August 2022 and sets out policies and proposals to guide development. The purpose of the South Ayrshire Green Belt is defined by 'LDP, policy: green belt' which states that:

"We will only support development within the green belt if it is of a high design quality and a suitable scale and form, and it:

- contributes to the economic and environmental sustainability of existing green belt uses;
- is associated with agriculture, including the reuse of historic buildings;
- has horticultural (or directly related) uses;
- has recreational use that needs a green-belt setting;
- is required at the proposed location to provide essential infrastructure; and
- protects, promotes and develops green networks and opportunities for access to the countryside."

This policy also states that:

"If a development would not normally be consistent with green belt policy, we may still consider it to be appropriate either as a national priority or to meet an established need and no other suitable site is available."

ASSESSMENT OF GREEN BELT POLICIES

This section considers the proposed development against Green Belt policies set out in NPF4 pages 48 to 59, and LDP2 policy: green belt.

NPF4 - Development is directed to the right locations, urban density is increased and unsustainable growth is prevented.

NPF4 page 7, second paragraph states that: *"Meeting our climate ambition will require a rapid transformation across all sectors of our economy and society. This means ensuring the right development happens in the right place."*

The proposed change of land use from that of an area of commercially grown Christmas trees and naturally regenerating vegetation to a battery energy storage system would be within the context of Ayr substation 80m east of the site. Although the proposed development would extend electricity infrastructure west of Ayr substation it would be largely contained by the existing robust vegetated site boundaries. This includes the mature woodland to the north, mature tree lines to the east and south, Dobbies Garden Centre also to the south and proposed mitigation measures on the western boundary of the site.

NPF4 - The character, landscape, natural setting and identity of settlements is protected and enhanced

The LVA identified a minor adverse degree of landscape effect on the host landscapes, LCT 66 - Agricultural Lowlands – Ayrshire and LCT 68 - Lowland River Valleys – Ayrshire. From the closest area of settlement at Masonhill 0.6km to the south-west the LVA identified a minor adverse degree of visual effect. In terms of the locally designated LLA J Ayr Valley the LVA identified no notable effects on the special qualities or reasoning for this landscape's designation.

Where partially visible from limited areas to the south-west (the Masonhill neighbourhood, and short sections of the A77 and A70) the proposed development once operational would be largely screened by the proposed mitigation measures along the western boundary. With some limited glimpsed views through the existing mature vegetation on the eastern boundary. In such views the proposed development would be largely back clothed by the mature vegetated boundaries to the north, east, south and west and by the proposed mitigation measures on the western boundary.

The proposed development would not therefore notably adversely affect character, landscape, natural setting or the identity of settlement, nor the existing openness of the eastern area of SA Green Belt. The landscape mitigation proposals shown on the Landscape Masterplan and described in the LVA would provide enhanced biodiversity opportunities through native planting of local provenance and ecological features including bird and bat boxes.

NPF4 - Nature networks are supported and land is managed to help tackle climate change

The proposed development would change the land use to a BESS and associated infrastructure. However, it should be noted that the existing site does not provide any promoted access to open space. The existing mature woodland to the north and the mature trees and vegetation to the east and south would be retained. The proposed mitigation measures would provide some additional biodiversity connectivity.

NPF4 - Policy 8 Development proposals within Green Belt

The main points relevant to the site and the proposed development under category 'a' are:

- *"essential infrastructure or new cemetery provision; and*
- *intensification of established uses, including extensions to an existing building where that is ancillary to the main use."*

The proposed development would comprise a BESS which would provide a balancing function for renewable energy development. Under NPF4 this development type is identified as essential infrastructure. The proposed development would extend the influence of electricity infrastructure west of the existing Ayr substation. The extent of this influence would be contained by the mature vegetated site boundaries and the proposed mitigation measures. The proposed development infrastructure west of the existing Ayr substation.

Accounting for sub category 'ii' *"reasons are provided as to why a green belt location is essential and why it cannot be located on an alternative site outwith the green belt"* are considered in detail within the Planning Statement.

With reference to other points under sub category 'ii' the proposed development would be similar in nature to that of the existing Ayr substation 80m east of the site, albeit of a smaller size and scale. However, unlike the pylon lines associated with the substation which are seen against the skyline the components of the proposed development would be relatively low and largely screened by the existing and proposed mitigation measures.

and mainly back clothed where visible. The proposed development would be compatible with the surrounding landscape given the generally contained nature of the site and the existing influences of Ayr substation, main road network, and settlement.

The proposed development is therefore considered appropriate within green belt accounting for the intensification of established uses and being of suitable scale and form and would not result in any notable longer term affects on the eastern area of SA Green Belt.

South Ayrshire Local Development Plan 2 Policies

In terms of potential development types within the South Ayrshire Green Belt the proposed development complies with the following point stated within LDP policy: greenbelt:

“ Is required at the proposed location to provide essential infrastructure”

The proposed development would be strategically located adjacent to Ayr substation and contained by the existing and proposed vegetated boundaries. On balance given the existing presence of Ayr substation and the likely limited localised nature of effects resulting from the BESS that the proposed development would comply with South Ayrshire Green Belt policy.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The proposed development would introduce a new battery energy storage system within the site which would be of a similar nature and generally smaller in size and scale to that of Ayr substation 80m east of the site. The proposed development would be contained by the mature woodland north of the site, mature tree lines and vegetation to the east and south and by the proposed mitigation measures on the western and southern boundary of the main site.

The visual amenity within the eastern area of South Ayrshire Green Belt would not be materially adversely affected by the proposed development as it would be largely contained from wider views by the existing mature vegetation along the majority of the site boundaries, mitigation measure and intervening vegetation and landform within the wider landscape. The proposed development would not interact with the skyline nor interrupt the views gained from higher elevations south-west of the site outside the South Ayrshire Green Belt at Masonhill.

APPENDIX 3: PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD

Approximate extent of main site area





Approximate extent of main site area



Approximate extent of main site area



Approximate extent of main site area



Approximate extent of main site area

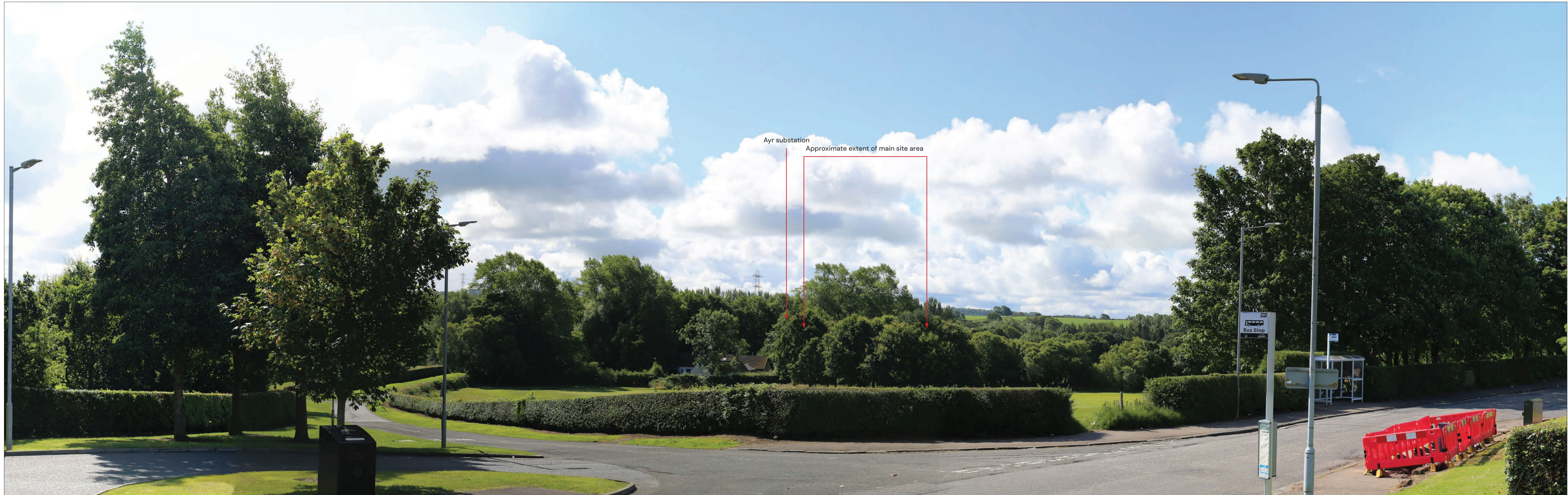
Ayr substation



Ayr substation

Approximate extent of main site area

Holmston



Ayr substation

Approximate extent of main site area

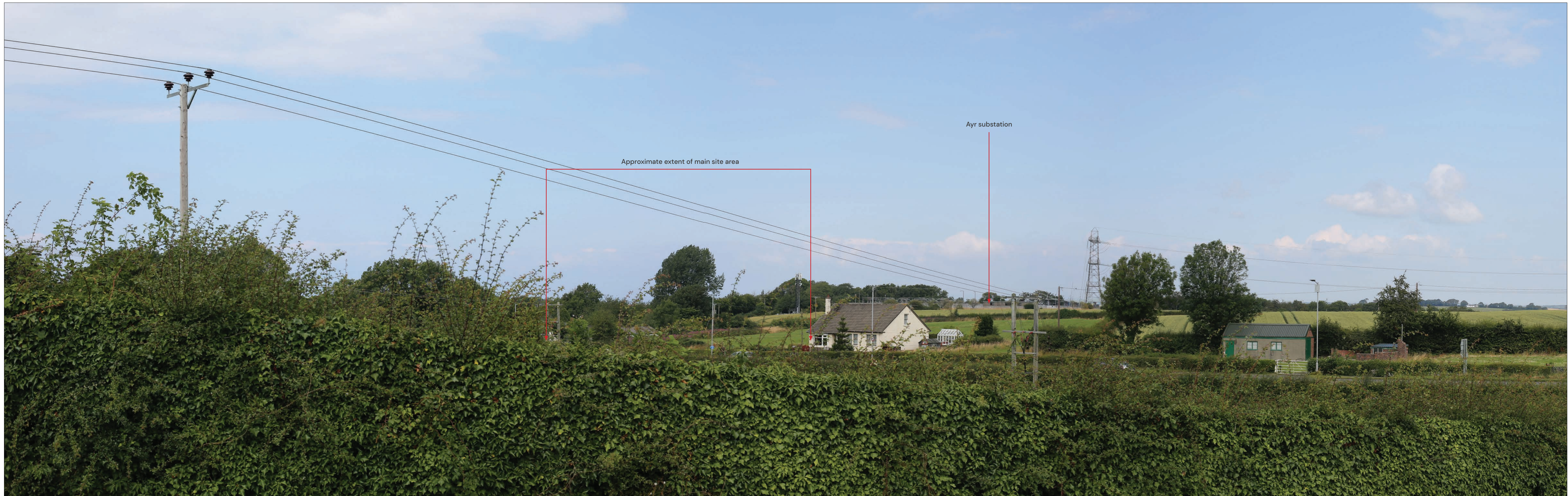


Ayr substation

Approximate extent of
main site area



Approximate extent of main site area



Approximate extent of main site area

Ayr substation



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