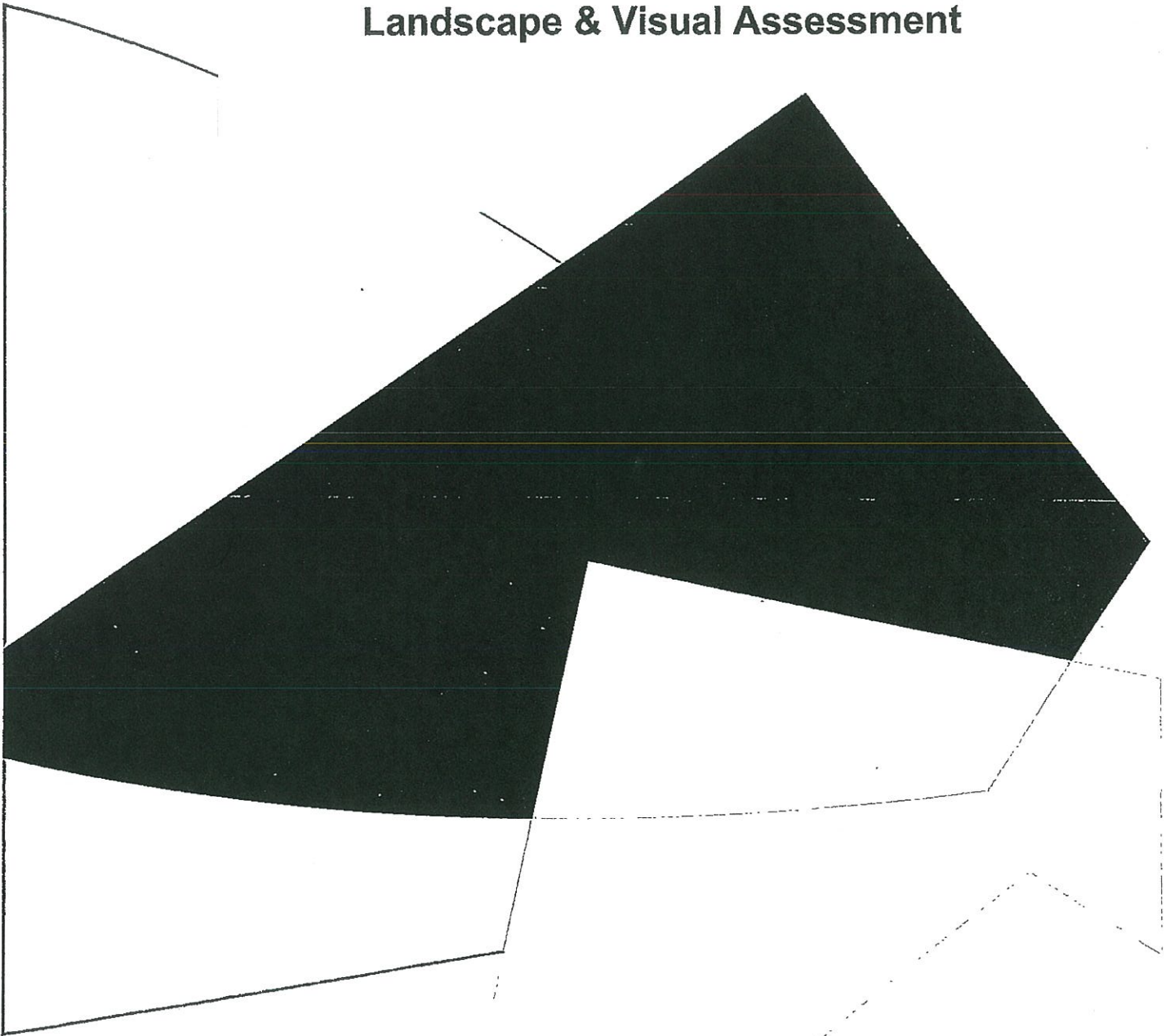


Huntly Flood Alleviation Scheme, Huntly, Aberdeenshire

Landscape & Visual Assessment



Planning Application for Huntly Flood Alleviation Scheme, Huntly, Aberdeenshire

Landscape & Visual Assessment

On behalf of
Aberdeenshire Council

January 2012

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Abbreviations

Ha	Hectare
WFD	Water Framework Directive
FAS	Flood Alleviation Scheme
SEPA	Scottish Environmental Protection Agency
IEMA	Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment
LI	Landscape Institute
SNH	Scottish Natural Heritage
ZTV	Zone of Theoretical Visibility
AOD	Above Ordnance Datum

Glossary

Above Ordnance Datum	A measure of the level of ground based upon the Ordnance Datum, nominally 0 metres, which is the mean level of the sea at Newlyn in Cornwall.
Landform	Combination of slope and elevation producing the shape and form of the land surface
Landscape	An area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors. (Article 1, European Landscape Convention Council of Europe, 2002). The explanatory note expands on this definition as follows: "Landscape" is defined as a zone or area as perceived by local people or visitors, whose visual features and character are the result of the action of natural and/or cultural (that is, human) factors. This definition reflects the idea that landscapes evolve through time, as a result of being acted upon by natural forces and human beings. It also underlines that a landscape forms a whole, whose natural and cultural components are taken together, not separately."
Landscape Character	The distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occurs consistently in a particular type of landscape. (para 7.8, Landscape character assessment guidance for England and Scotland. The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage, 2002).
Landscape Character Area	Unique geographical areas of a particular landscape character type. Landscape character areas take on the names of specific places, such as 'Aberdeen Coastal Strip' and 'Kincardine Cliffs'.
Landscape Character Type	Distinct types of landscape which are generic in character in that they may occur in different parts of the country, but wherever they are they share broadly similar combinations of geology, topography, drainage patterns, vegetation and historical land use and settlement pattern. Names are generic, for example 'moorland slopes and hills', 'open, intensive farmland' and 'high cliffs and sheltered bays'.
Landscape Character Assessment	The process of systematic description, classification and analysis of landscape, in order to identify, describe and understand its character. The scale and detail of the assessment will depend upon the purpose for which it is being undertaken. (para 7.8, Landscape character assessment guidance for England and Scotland. The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage, 2002).
Landscape Elements	The individual components which make up the landscape including, for example, hills, valleys, rivers, woods, trees, hedges, buildings and roads. Because they are physical and visible, they can be measured and quantified and they can be described in an objective way.
Landscape Impacts	The likely effects on landscape character or components due to a development proposal or change in land management. They can therefore affect the way in which the landscape is experienced. Impacts can be positive (beneficial) or negative (detrimental); and can also be cumulative.

Landscape Features	Prominent or eye-catching elements or focal points such as a tree clump on a hill top, a loch; or distinctive topography or land cover.
Landscape Sensitivity	The degree to which the character and qualities of the landscape are affected by specific types of development and land-use change. Sensitivity depends upon the type, nature and magnitude of the proposed change as well as the characteristics of the host landscape. High sensitivity indicates landscapes are vulnerable to the change; low sensitivity that they are more able to accommodate the change and that the key characteristics of that landscape will essentially remain unaltered.
Magnitude	Size, extent, scale and duration of an impact.
Mitigation	Term used to indicate avoidance, remediation or alleviation of adverse impacts.
Receptor	A dwelling, workplace or other building, outdoor space, viewpoint, road or footpath with views which may be changed in character and visual amenity by a proposed development.
Residual Impacts	The environmental impact after the provision of mitigation measures, if any.
Zone of Theoretical Visibility	Area in which a proposed development would theoretically be visible, based on a 'bare-ground' model which takes account of topography but not the screening effects of structures (e.g. buildings), vegetation (e.g. woodlands).

1. Introduction

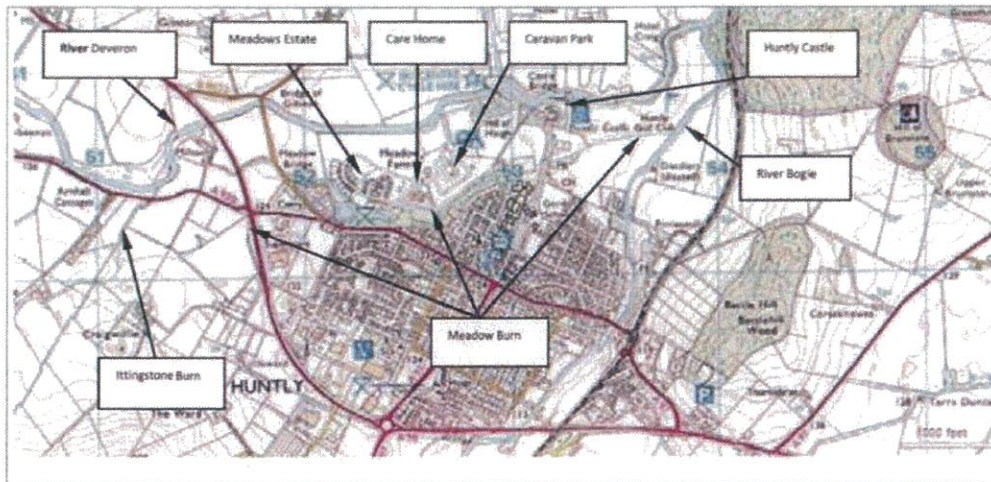
Development Proposals

- 1.1 This Landscape Assessment is submitted to accompany the application for Full Planning Permission for the proposed engineering works for Huntly Flood Alleviation Scheme (FAS). The Proposal is approximately 9.9ha, and as such is deemed a 'major' development under the Town and Country Planning (Hierarchy of Developments) (Scotland) Regulations 2009.
- 1.2 The proposed FAS will be developed under the processes of the Water Environment (Controlled Activities) Regulations 2005 and Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009.
- 1.3 The proposed operations are along sections of the River Deveron, Ittingstone Burn and Meadow Burn, on lands to the north of Huntly. Aberdeenshire Council considers that the operations will substantially reduce flood risk to residential and commercial properties within the area.

Site Context

- 1.4 The proposed site which the application relates to ('the Site') is located on lands north and west of Huntly, Aberdeenshire. Refer to Figure 1 below. The town of Huntly is situated approximately 65 kilometres north-west of Aberdeen on the main A96 Aberdeen to Inverness Trunk Road.
- 1.5 The origins of the town date back to a settlement serving Huntly Castle. The Castle is located to the north of the town centre on the banks of the River Deveron. The River Deveron flows west-east, forming the northern boundary of the town.
- 1.6 The majority of the town is located on high ground to the south of the Castle. However between the town centre and the River Deveron there is a flat low-lying area called "The Meadows". In the more recent past this area has been developed for housing and leisure purposes, (Meadows Housing estate, a care home, a caravan park and the Nordic Ski centre). There are also two special needs housing units located within the estate.
- 1.7 A number of main rivers and burns are confluent in the vicinity of the town. As well as the River Deveron these include the River Bogie, the Ittingstone Burn and the Meadow Burn.
- 1.8 The Ittingstone Burn joins the River Deveron in the Milton area to the west of the town. The River Bogie has its confluence with the River Deveron about 1km downstream of Huntly Castle and the Meadows Burn flows through 'the Meadows' to a confluence with the River Bogie to the north east of the town.
- 1.9 The Meadows has experienced several significant flood events within living memory, and damage has been caused to many residential and commercial properties. The area was flooded in September 1995, April 2000, October and November 2002, and most recently September and November 2009.
- 1.10 The A96(T) and the A920 are also affected by flooding during the most recent events, causing significant disruption to transportation links in the area.
- 1.11 Following the 1995 event, a raised flood defence was built to the north and west of the Meadows Estate. This affords protection against direct inundation from the Deveron. However the flooding mechanisms in the area are complex, with overland flow from the Deveron, the Meadow Burn and from the Ittingstone Burn still posing a significant risk to the Meadows Estate.

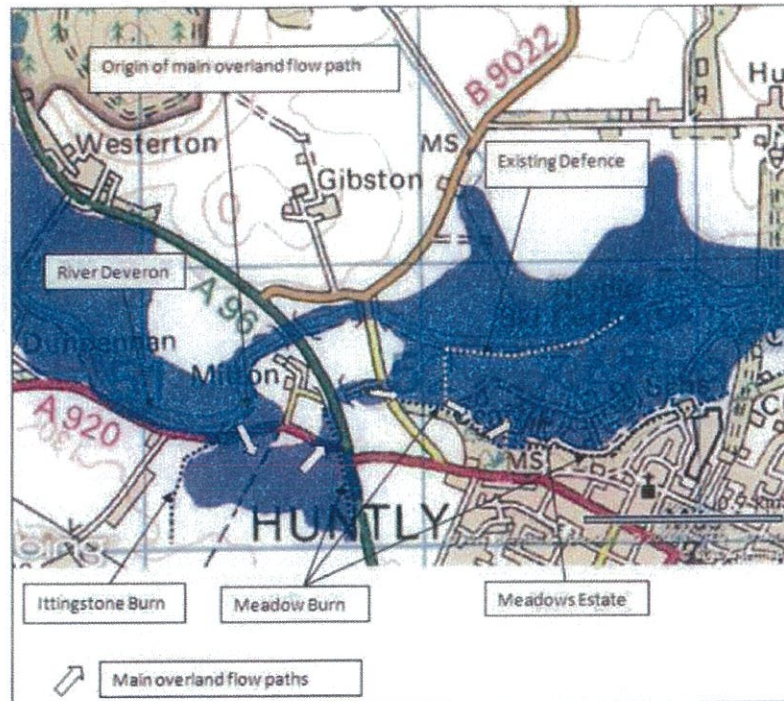
Figure 1 – Location Plan



Need for the Scheme

- 1.12 Despite the construction of raised defences to the north and west of the Meadow Estate, the area is still at risk from overland flow paths which develop from the west. See Figure 2 below.
- 1.13 Flood waters from the River Deveron overtop the banks in the area of Milton Farm. Overland flow paths develop over the A920 and enter the catchment of the Meadow Burn.
- 1.14 Flows in the Meadow Burn are dramatically increased. It has been estimated that during the November 2009 event, the flow in the Burn was 24 cumecs. Without a contribution from the River Deveron we would normally expect a 0.5% (1 in 200) annual chance event in the burn to be in the order of 3 cumecs.
- 1.15 The conveyance available within the channel and existing culverts systems on the Meadow Burn are not even capable of containing the flows generated from within its own catchment.
- 1.16 Flood waters spill from the burn inundating properties within the Meadows Estate, the care home, the special needs units and the caravan Park.
- 1.17 Based on detailed modelling studies carried out by Atkins consultants it has been concluded that the flood risks to the community are as follows:
- Overtopping of the banks of the River Deveron in the area of Milton Farm commences at a 20% (1 in 5) annual chance event;
 - The A920 and the A96(T) are affected by flood events greater than the 20% (1 in 5) annual chance event;
 - Property flooding within the Meadows estate commences at the 10% (1 in 10) annual chance event;
 - The care home and caravan park start to be effected at the 10% (1 in 10) annual chance event; and
 - A total of 50 properties are affected during a 0.5% (1 in 200) annual flood event.

Figure 2 – SEPA Flood Outline



Source: SEPA <http://go.mappoint.net/sepa/>

Design Process

Options Appraisal

1.18 As part of the optioneering undertaken during the design process and in response to comments received from consultees, various flood defence approaches were considered. Furthermore, different forms of construction of the flood defence were considered and other high-level design options. These options included:

- **Sheet piled walls – Dismissed:** Due to cost, environmental concerns on potential impact of construction noise and vibration, hydrological impact of working within the watercourse, impact on ground water flow and aesthetic appearance and in consideration for the Water Framework Directive (WFD) parameters and objectives for Scottish Water bodies (physico-chemistry, biological elements, specific pollutants, hydromorphology).
- **Concrete walls – Dismissed:** Due to cost, environmental concerns on potential water quality impacts due to possible increased sedimentation; ground water flow impacts, aesthetic appearance, and in consideration of the WFD.
- **Storage – Dismissed:** No areas were available and the volume of storage required was not feasible.
- **Retreat – Dismissed:** Economically unviable nor socially feasible, or practical.
- **Earth embankments – Progressed:** The most cost-effective preference of all of the options with the least environmental impact. The simplest method of construction.

Detailed Design

- 1.19 Following on from the preliminary options appraisal, Atkins has progressed the FAS from concept design, by taking into account the environmental, physical, legislative, practical and socio-economic feasibility of various flood alleviation options, to detailed design. We have also taken cognisance of comments received from statutory and non-statutory consultees, and the local community, during the 12 week pre-application consultation period referred to above.
- 1.20 The scheme being taken forward considers the 0.5% annual exceedance probability (1:200 year) event including an allowance for climate change, which was determined through hydraulic modelling developed at concept design stage together with collated topographic information, hydrological modelling of rainfall and available gauging data from SEPA. This has allowed flood levels to be determined for the area.
- 1.21 The works comprise: constructing new raised defences; raising and strengthening existing defences; replacing or increasing the size of existing culverts; creation of local storage areas; associated accommodation works; and, ecological and landscape enhancements.
- 1.22 Atkins proposes to reinforce riverbanks on the right hand side of the Deveron at Arnhall Cottages and to replace the existing Ittingstone Burn flap valve. No further works on the river bank are proposed, nor the construction of any other instream or bankside structures.
- 1.23 With the exception of the replacement flap valve at the Ittingstone Burn culvert, there will be no work directly within any watercourse and no change to the river regime.
- 1.24 The design does not include any perched / hanging structures, nor are there any Irish Pipe Bridges.

Consideration of Environmental Aspects

- 1.25 At the western edge of the scheme adjacent to the A920, two sub options were considered regarding the position of the flood defence.
1. place the embankment on the river bank; or,
 2. set back the defence at Milton Farm.
- Due to WFD compliance the set back option was taken forward.
- 1.26 It has been decided that the flood defence will not be extended past the Hill of Haugh due to constraints associated with the scheduled area of Huntly Castle. Embankments to the north side of Meadow Burn were removed from the Proposal to avoid potential noise and vibration impact and due to potential construction difficulties and possible degradation to the Meadow Burn.
- 1.27 A Screening Opinion under the Environmental Impact Assessment (Scotland) Regulations 1999 (as amended), was provided by Aberdeenshire Council, stating that the Huntly FAS is not considered to be EIA development and, therefore, that an Environmental Statement is not required to be submitted with the planning application.
- 1.28 In respect of this Screening Opinion outcome Atkins has agreed with the Planning Officer at Aberdeenshire Council (Ms. Aude Chaiban) to prepare a number of tailored environmental assessments as appendices to the Supporting Planning Statement, which will accompany the planning application.

2. Appraisal Methodology

Introduction

2.1 This chapter sets out the methodology by which the assessment of landscape and visual amenity has been carried out, the criteria used for the assessment, the landscape characteristics of the study area, and the predicted landscape and visual effects of the development proposals. In particular the following elements are addressed:

- The existing character and visual resources in the area around the Site.
- Existing landscape features.
- The role of landscape planning policies.
- Identification of key visual receptor groups who will be affected by views of the development proposals.
- Evaluation of key landscape and visual impacts associated with the development proposals.
- The identification of appropriate mitigation measures to alleviate adverse impacts upon landscape and visual resources.
- The identification of opportunities to enhance the existing landscape and visual resources.

2.2 It is important to clarify the distinction between landscape and visual effects. The assessment of landscape effects relates to the evaluation of the degree of physical change to components of that landscape, and the consequential change in perceived landscape character. Visual effects are considered to constitute an intrusion into, or change to, an existing view arising from the development. The significance of impacts is assessed by the changes arising from the development to individual receptors' views of the development proposals (e.g. local residents, visitors, employees or motorists passing through the area).

2.3 The key issues relating to the development proposals, from a landscape and visual perspective, include:

- Direct loss of key landscape elements, such as mature trees and areas of established vegetation;
- Changes in views from adjacent visual receptors as a result of the loss of adjacent woodland and vegetation, thereby exposing previously screened views; and,
- Changes in views as a result of the construction of the flood defences, creating elements in the landscape that were previously not present.

Policies and Guidance

2.4 The baseline data for the landscape and visual assessment has been produced by means of a desk study. The landscape and visual impact assessment has been undertaken by a Chartered Landscape Architect in line with the 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (LI and IEMA, 2002).

2.5 The sources of information for the landscape and visual assessment were primarily:

- Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan, August 2009
- Aberdeenshire Local Plan, June 2006
- Proposed Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan March 2011, including Supplementary Guidance Landscape 1 – Landscape Character and Supplementary Guidance Landscape 2 – Valued Views
- Scottish Natural Heritage, Review Series: No.102 South and Central Aberdeenshire: Landscape Character Assessment (1998)

Landscape & Visual Assessment

- Ordnance Survey Map: Explorer Huntly & Cullen, Sheet Number: 425; Scale: 1:25,000
- Aerial photography
- General Arrangement Drawing 5097730/RC/GA-06
- General Arrangement Drawings 5097730/RC/GA-101, 102 and 103 (all revision 0)
- Cross Section Drawing 5097730/RC/GA-104 Rev.0

Study Area

- 2.6 The study area for this appraisal includes the immediate area for the development proposals together with the wider landscape setting. It encompasses all surrounding areas of landscape extending up to 0.5km from the location of the development proposals. Based upon desk top analysis and site surveys, this is considered to be suitable given the scale and nature of the development proposals and the geographical, physical and visual links of the area.
- 2.7 It is considered unlikely that any areas outside the study area would experience significant effects as a consequence of the development proposals.
- 2.8 The study area is shown on Figure A.1, in Appendix A.

Landscape Assessment

- 2.9 For the purposes of this appraisal, the landscape character as assessed and described in the 'Scottish Natural Heritage, Review Series: No.102 South and Central Aberdeenshire: Landscape Character Assessment (1998)' has formed the basis of this assessment.
- 2.10 This character area was given a sensitivity rating and the magnitude of the potential effects of the development proposals noted. From the magnitude of potential effects and sensitivity rating of the landscape, the significance of impact has been determined, as shown in Table 2.1. Tables 2.1 and 2.2 have been adapted from the 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (LI and IEMA, 2002).

Table 2.1 - Definition of Significance of Landscape Impact

Magnitude	Sensitivity		
	Low Relatively insensitive to this type of development	Medium A landscape tolerant of this type of development	High A landscape intolerant of this type of development
High Large change to overall landscape character	Moderate	Moderate-Major	Major
Medium Moderate character change in a localised area	Minor-Moderate	Moderate	Moderate-Major
Low Virtually imperceptible change in landscape components	Minor	Minor-Moderate	Moderate
Negligible Little or no change in any components	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral-Minor

Visual Assessment

- 2.11 The Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) is the area from which the development proposals or part of the development proposals can be viewed either directly or indirectly. The ZTV for the Huntly Flood Prevention Scheme and the potential receptors within it were identified through desk study by studying the topography, built form and vegetation illustrated on maps, and subsequently refined via a site visit by observation, with key receptors sensitivity and magnitude of effects recorded. It should be noted that there will be areas within the ZTV which do not have views of the project (due to vegetation, structures etc.), but it is an approximate guide used to assist in identifying key visual receptors.
- 2.12 Each key receptor has been given a sensitivity rating and the magnitude of the potential effects of construction and operation. From the magnitude and sensitivity of the receptor, the significance of impact is determined, as shown in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2 - Determining Significance of Visual Impacts

Magnitude	Sensitivity		
	Low Commuters, offices, businesses	Medium Includes most roads and public buildings/ open space	High Residential receptors, recreational users
High The proposals form a significant and immediately apparent part of the scene	Moderate	Moderate-Major	Major
Medium The proposals form a recognisable element and may be readily noticed	Minor-Moderate	Moderate	Moderate-Major
Low A minor component of the wider view – awareness of the proposals would not affect the overall quality of the scene	Minor	Minor-Moderate	Moderate
Negligible Only a small part of the proposals is discernible and/or at such a distance that they are scarcely	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral-Minor

Evaluation of Significance

- 2.13 It should be noted that the assessment of magnitude, sensitivity and impacts is an exercise of judgement. The criteria used to grade each factor are stages on a continuum. The final assessment of significance will take all contributory circumstances into account.

Landscape & Visual Assessment

- 2.14 The landscape and visual impact assessment considers the initial opening of the development with immature mitigation planting to the fully operational stage several years on when landscape planting has matured.
- 2.15 The assessment of impacts was undertaken in late summer. Account can be taken for the increase in visibility during winter months when the trees are not in full leaf, however in evaluating impacts, the 'worst case scenario' has been assumed, as good practice requires. This approach also assumes that the completed flood defences will be considered as an adverse impact by comparison to the existing defences and vegetation it supersedes.
- 2.16 For the purposes of this assessment and the identification of key impacts, only impacts of moderate and above are regarded as potentially significant.

3. Baseline Conditions

Planning Policy Context

- 3.1 Although a wider ranging planning and policy review has been conducted (see separate report), the Local Plan was reviewed in more detail with reference to policies affecting landscape-related matters.

Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan 2009

- 3.2 This sets out the strategic objectives for the area. From this document, local plans and development frameworks set out detailed policies based on these objectives.
- 3.3 One of the Plan's key objectives is to protect and improve valued assets and resources, including the built and natural environment and cultural heritage. It identifies biodiversity, wildlife habitats and landscape as a key issue to the quality of the environment, being vulnerable to the effects of new development. As a result, the plan states there is a need to focus on maintaining and improving them, especially where there are plans for development.

Aberdeenshire Local Plan 2006

- 3.4 The Aberdeenshire Local Plan sets out the detailed guidance for new development in Aberdeenshire. The main purpose of the plan is to provide a detailed interpretation of the Structure Plan strategy and policies which are used to make decisions on planning applications.

Specific policies relating to landscape include:

Policy ENV/7 Protected and Other Open Areas in Settlements

- The aim of this policy is to ensure that valuable areas of open space in settlements are not lost to inappropriate development.

Policy ENV/8 Trees and Woodlands

- The aim of this policy is to give protection to trees and woodlands covered by *Tree Preservation Orders* and other important trees and woodlands. In providing the protection, the Council will always have regard for adopted standards (BS 5837:2005).

Proposed Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2011

- 3.5 The Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan provides a strategic context for the Local Development Plan. This sets out the ground rules for the development of land under the land use planning acts. Its main purpose is to set out statements of the policies which will be used for assessing planning applications. In its proposals it also confirms the principle of development on sites across Aberdeenshire.

- 3.6 Specific policies relating to landscape include:

Policy 12 Landscape conservation

- The aim of the policy is to promote protection, management and planning of the landscape, in order to maintain and improve the overall quality of the landscape. This will include improving local and regional identity using the Scottish Natural Heritage Landscape Character Assessments.
- Aberdeenshire Council will plan for and promote the improvement and protection of all landscapes in Aberdeenshire by recognising and using landscape character areas. All the landscapes of Aberdeenshire are valuable assets and vulnerable resources, which are facing various pressures of change. The Landscape Character Area framework is used as a basis for future planning and management policy. The particular opportunities, sensitivities and vulnerabilities of different landscapes will be taken into consideration to make sure that the

implications of development on these are managed in an appropriate and sensitive way. This is set out in the following supplementary guidance:

- SG Landscape 1: Landscape character
- SG Landscape 2: Valued views

3.7 A number of sites within the study area are protected due to their landscape value, including:

- Site P1 – protected to conserve the open space including Cooper Park, the recreation ground and the setting of Huntly Castle;
- Site P2 – protected to conserve the cemetery; and,
- Site P3 and P4 – protected to conserve the landscape buffer.

Topography

3.8 The study area is predominantly flat with the levels fluctuating from approximately 115m AOD to 124m AOD, other than at Gibston in the north of the study area, which rises to 143m AOD.

3.9 The Hill of Haugh represents a distinct knoll within this otherwise gently rolling landform.

Designations

3.10 No landscape designations (e.g. National Park, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Area of Great Landscape Value, Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest), have been identified within the study area.

3.11 It is noted however that 'Site P1' as identified in the Local Plan is protected to conserve the setting of Huntly Castle.

Landscape Character

3.12 Landscape character is defined as 'the distinct recognisable pattern of elements that occurs consistently in a particular type of landscape and how this is perceived by people'. Landscape character assessment is a technique that analyses types of landscapes to develop an understanding of what gives a country or area its character. It classifies and maps areas of a similar character. Scottish Natural Heritage keeps an up to date record of information about national level character assessment and documents produced by local councils which provide more detailed information about local character.

National Level

3.13 At a national level, the study area falls within the Straths and Valleys landscape character type as identified by Scottish Natural Heritage. The key characteristics of this area, and which are relevant to Huntly are:

- It is a diverse landscape character type which includes those landscapes where a river and its valley are the most crucial influence on landscape character.
- It does include the Dee and part of the Don which, although possessing a series of unique characteristics, are unified by their deep valleys and the influence these have both directly on the landscape and on the surrounding land uses. The Deveron and Bogie Straths follow a distinct course between high ridges and outcrops of moorland.

Regional Level

3.14 The Straths and Valleys landscape character type has been further divided by Scottish Natural Heritage into three character areas: Donside; Deeside; and, Deveron and Bogie Straths. The study area is wholly located within the Deveron and Bogie Straths Landscape Character Area.

Deveron and Bogie Straths Landscape Character Area

- 3.15 This character area is described in the Scottish Natural Heritage, Review Series: No.102 South and Central Aberdeenshire: Landscape Character Assessment (1998) as follows.
- 3.16 The courses of the Deveron and Bogie Rivers have been dictated by the complex lithology. The wide valley of the lower Deveron, north of Huntly, and of the Bogie are due to the wide band of soft gabbros that runs north-south between Milltown of Rothiemay and Gartly.
- 3.17 The gabbros lowland is characterised by flat to rolling farmland. The Bogie Strath forms a wide saddle of fields between the high moorland ridges to its east and west; the lower Deveron carves a small gorge through the wide agricultural hinterland. Both exhibit a similar landscape pattern, of fields that drop gently towards the rivers or extend across a wide flood plain, and a loose network of hedges and shelterbelts and small woodland clumps. Farming is mixed but is predominantly pasture. The upper Deveron follows a steeper deeper valley amidst similar wooded farmland.
- 3.18 All of the river banks are lined by intermittent clumps of alder and willow. The Deveron Valley contains more thickly coniferous wooded slopes north west and west of Huntly, although a patchwork of pasture persists within the woodland framework. The landscapes are generally well settled. Roads run alongside the rivers, and houses and villages are concentrated along these. Farm buildings are evenly scattered across the landscape enclosed within pronounced woodland stands.
- 3.19 Although an essentially agricultural landscape, the moorland backdrop to most views within the Deveron and Bogie Strath is a key aspect of the area's character, lending a grand sense of scale.
- 3.20 The key characteristics of this area are:
- Distinct valley form; constricted valleys associated with schists; wide valley north and south of Huntly associated with softer rocks.
 - Mosaic of diverse land uses; rough sheep grazing, hay fields, commercial forestry plantation and deciduous woodland.
 - Neat farmland patchwork on flood plain dominated by pasture with post and wire fencing and hedges.
 - Patches of neglected farmland with broken stone dykes and derelict pasture.
 - Shallow, rocky rivers lined by broadleaf woods amidst well wooded farmland.
 - Conifer-covered knolls standing proud of open Deveron Strath.
 - Dense settlement within valley, associated with road corridors.
 - Farmhouses scattered along straths.
- 3.21 Pressures for infrastructure and settlement are high in this area due to the major communication networks which run along the straths. The landscape is not considered highly sensitive, but local waterside vegetation is vulnerable to loss. Specific pressures and sensitivities are identified as:
- The small scale farmland landscape with a diverse range of land-use is vulnerable to large scale developments or elements which may lead to a homogenisation of landscape character.
 - Riverside trees provide an attractive feature in the straths.
 - Rural character of the valley between settlements is sensitive to encroachment of built development.
 - Settings of estates and large houses are susceptible to neglect or changes in land-use.
- 3.22 Specific guidance for development sympathetic to the landscape character of this area includes:
- Preservation of traditional field boundaries, such as drystone dykes and hedgerows, will enhance the landscape pattern.

Landscape & Visual Assessment

- Local prominent landscape features such as the stands of Scots pine on mounds may be enhanced through management.
- To conserve the setting of large houses and estates and to manage policy woodlands, preservation and management of policy woodlands and stone dykes and replanting of avenues of trees will benefit both the estate and the wider landscape.
- Linear infrastructure should adhere to the landform and use grading to reflect surrounding strath relief in order to successfully integrated into the landscape.
- Woodland within the strath may be enhanced by additional landscape planting and routing new infrastructure away from prominent stands.

Landscape Features

- 3.23 There are a number of features in the study area which form landmarks and contribute towards the local landscape character and local identity.

Vegetation

- 3.24 Vegetation in the study area is relatively varied, reflecting the varied land uses that include urban fringe, recreation, semi-natural and agricultural.
- 3.25 The north west of the study area (north of the B9022 and River Deveron), largely consists of arable farmland. The south west corner of the study area, together with the land north of the River Deveron and east of the B9022 is dominated by pasture.
- 3.26 Woodland within the study area is distributed as follows:
- Belts of semi-natural broadleaf woodland and plantation mixed woodland to the immediate south of the Meadow Burn (Meadow Plantation), at the northern edge of Huntly, with smaller areas associated with Hill of Haugh, Huntly Castle and its approaches from the south;
 - Scattered immature plantation broad-leaved woodland, extending along the northern extent of the Meadows Housing estate, a care home, Caravan Park and playing field, with further scattered areas on the southern banks of the River Deveron in this general vicinity. A narrow belt of immature plantation broad-leaved woodland also extends around the east and south of the Caravan Park; and,
 - Scrub woodland on the northern bank of the Deveron at Ittingstone Pool, west of Milltown and the A96.
- 3.27 Mature broadleaf specimen trees are found in distinct clusters across the study area: to the west of Huntly Castle; south of Hill of Haugh; on either bank of the Deveron north west of the playing field; along the eastern verge of the road linking Deveron Road to the B9022; and, amongst the scrub woodland at Ittingstone Pool.
- 3.28 The remainder of the study area is generally typified by tall ruderals (area between Meadows Housing estate and River Deveron) and amenity grassland associated with Caravan Park and Recreation Ground.
- 3.29 Field boundaries are generally stone dykes or fences, with little evidence of hedgerows in the study area.
- 3.30 There are no areas of designated woodland or trees covered by Tree Preservation Orders located within the study area.

Rivers and Water bodies

- 3.31 The River Deveron runs through the centre of the study area in a broadly east-west direction, and forms the dominant feature in the wider landscape.
- 3.32 The smaller Meadow Burn runs broadly parallel with the Deveron, to the south of the Meadows Housing estate along the northern edge of the Meadow Plantation, before leaving the study area and joining the River Bogie to the east.

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- 3.33 The Burn of Ittingstone runs north east direction from Ittingstone in the south west corner of the study area before joining the River Deveron at Ittingstone Pool.
- 3.34 There are no significant ponds or water bodies in the study area, although there is a wetland area within the Meadow Plantation, to the east of the cemetery.

Settlement

- 3.35 Settlement is concentrated in the south east of the study area, which incorporates the northern part of the town of Huntly. The edge of Huntly is generally defined by Meadow Plantation, although further settlement is located along the northern boundary of this woodland belt in the form of the Meadows Housing estate, Nursing Home and Caravan Park. Huntly Nordic and Outdoor Centre and Huntly Castle are located on the southern bank of the River Deveron, at the eastern edge of the study area.
- 3.36 Further individual properties and farmsteads are evenly scattered throughout the remainder of the study area amongst the surrounding farmland.

Zone of Theoretical Visibility

- 3.37 The zone of theoretical visibility (ZTV) of the development proposals is shown on Figure A.2, in Appendix A.
- 3.38 The ZTV is mainly determined by distance from the development proposals and the screening provided by existing woodland at Meadow Plantation, Hill of Haugh, Huntly Castle and the banks of the River Deveron. The ZTV will be further contained by the plantation woodland situated between the Meadows Housing estate and the River Deveron, and the scrub woodland at Ittingstone Pool.
- 3.39 It is recognised that there may be more distant views of the development proposals from receptors situated outside the study area / ZTV. However, given the nature of the development proposals and the distances involved, it is not considered that any resultant impacts would be significant and as a consequence they have not been considered further in this appraisal.

Visual Receptors

- 3.40 Visual receptors that would potentially experience views of the Proposals were identified during the site visit.
- 3.41 The principal local areas from which the proposed flood defences will be visible include settlements and houses, recreational attractions, and roads and footpaths that lie within a few hundred metres of the site. The development would also be visible from a number of more distant receptors located at the edges of the study area, mainly farms and roads, tracks or footpaths to the north and south west of the development proposals, which are not screened by Meadow Plantation.
- 3.42 5097730/LA/102, in Appendix A illustrates the location of these receptors. The potential receptors and their existing view is summarised below:

Table 3.1 – Visual Receptors

Ref	Receptor Name	Sensitivity	Existing View of Development Proposals site
1	Ittingstone	High	Views from main property largely screened by vegetation. Views available towards Ittingstone development proposals site from outbuildings, over farmland with overhead pylons in foreground.
2	Craigwillie	High	Open, oblique views available towards Ittingstone development proposals site from rear / side of main property and outbuildings over farmland.

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Ref	Receptor Name	Sensitivity	Existing View of Development Proposals site
3	Craigwillie Cottage	High	Views available towards Ittingstone development proposals site from rear / side of main property, partly screened by vegetation around property boundary. Open views available from outbuildings.
4	Poultry Houses	Low	Open, oblique views available towards Ittingstone development proposals site from rear / side of buildings over farmland.
5	Arnhall Cottages	High	Unobstructed views of Ittingstone development proposals site from front of properties.
6	Milltown	High	Oblique, restricted views of Ittingstone development proposals site due to intervening vegetation.
7	Milltown Housing Development	High	Views available from upper floor of properties towards Ittingstone Pool embankments. Ground floor views screened by garden fences.
8	Gibston Cottages / Leybourne / Greenwood	High	Open, views available towards River Deveron development proposals site from 'Greenwood' over farmland. Views from Gibson Cottages and Leybourne screened by immediate garden vegetation or Greenwood property.
9	11-25 & 2-8 Rowan Avenue	High	Views of River Deveron development proposals site from rear of properties and rear gardens, partially screened by immature plantation woodland.
10	7-9 Pine View / 6-11 Sycamore Place	High	Views of River Deveron development proposals site from rear / side of properties and rear gardens, partially screened by immature plantation woodland.
11	The Meadows Nursing Home / Meadow Farm Cottage	High	Oblique views of Burnside Road development proposals, partially screened by immature plantation woodland to perimeter of Caravan Park.
12	Huntly Castle Caravan Park / Meadow Farm	High	Views of River Deveron / Burnside Road / Recreation Ground development proposals sites, partially screened by immature plantation woodland.
13	Recreation Ground	High	Open views of Recreation Ground development proposals site, with sections also partially screened by immature plantation woodland.
14	Cemetery	Medium	Views towards Ittingstone and River Deveron development proposals screened by perimeter wall.
15	A96	Medium	Open views towards Ittingstone development proposals site, across adjacent farmland.
16	A920	Medium	Open views towards Ittingstone development proposals site, immediately adjacent to road.
17	B9022	Medium	Views of River Deveron development proposals site, partially screened by intermittent vegetation on river banks.

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Ref	Receptor Name	Sensitivity	Existing View of Development Proposals site
18	Unnamed road	Medium	Views of River Deveron development proposals site, partially screened by roadside vegetation.
19	Meadow Burn Footpath	High	Intermittent views of Burnside Road development proposals site, partially screened by woodland vegetation as path passes through Meadow Plantation.
20	River Deveron Footpath	High	Varying views, ranging from open to screened, depending on relative location of immature plantation woodland.

4. Potential Impacts

4.1 The key issues relating to the proposed flood defences, from a landscape and visual perspective, include:

- Direct loss of key landscape elements, such as mature trees and areas of established vegetation;
- Changes in views from adjacent visual receptors as a result of the loss of adjacent woodland and vegetation, thereby exposing previously screened views and vice versa; and,
- Changes in views as a result of the construction of the flood defences, creating elements in the landscape that were previously not present.

5. Mitigation Proposals

- 5.1 The landscape and visual effects of the development proposals can be mitigated if the following measures are adopted. These will serve to visually assimilate the development proposals into its context and effectively integrate this within the wider landscape fabric of the area.
- 5.2 Mitigation measures may include planting to soften the visual impacts of the development proposals, or for areas to be allowed to regenerate vegetation naturally. In some locations it may not be possible to significantly mitigate impacts due to the lack of space between the development and receptor.
- 5.3 The philosophy and outline mitigation design principles are based on the objectives of encouraging biodiversity and mitigating ecological, landscape and visual impacts. The following are indicative measures which will require further investigation and development at the detailed design stage.

Embankment design

- 5.4 Earth embankments in flood alleviation schemes are typically grass-seeded and left free of shrub and tree planting to avoid compromising their flood-proof core by roots or burrowing animals. This makes their actual form a critical landscape consideration.
- 5.5 The gradients of the embankments are recommended to be an average of 1 in 3.

Protection of Existing Vegetation

- 5.6 Existing vegetation in the study area plays an important role in both landscape character and limiting the ZTV and resultant visual impacts.
- 5.7 It is essential therefore that the detail design of the development proposals takes account of existing vegetation, and that the associated working areas, temporary site traffic access routes and compounds are sensitively located to minimise the requirement to remove existing vegetation.
- 5.8 Where works are required in close proximity to existing vegetation, it shall be protected in accordance with the recommendations of BS5837:2005 - Trees in relation to construction.

Definition and Demarcation of the Construction Working Area

- 5.9 The key landscape mitigation measure at the construction stage would be the identification and reasonable definition of the required working area for the construction works, temporary site traffic access routes and compounds.
- 5.10 The erection of (temporary) fencing to demarcate the working area, and hoardings around temporary works sites with a limited number of agreed vehicular access points would ensure the extent of physical disturbance was limited to the minimum commensurate with the cost effective construction of the development.

Replacement Planting

- 5.11 Despite following the above recommendations, it is inevitable that some of the existing tree and scrub vegetation will be lost in the construction process.
- 5.12 Any scrub or woodland vegetation removed in order to facilitate the works should be replaced in line with the recommendations in the associated Ecological Appraisal. The study area contains a mosaic of semi-natural habitats, interspersed by agriculture and amenity landscape. The proposals should include vegetation types and species to replace those lost habitats as well as perform a landscape and visual mitigation function. It is envisaged that the location of new planting and seeding together with appropriate Management Proposals will encourage the establishment of a habitat mosaic comparable in type to the existing one.
- 5.13 Strategically located groups of native trees/shrubs will help to enhance the landscape character and screen or reduce the impact of views of the development proposals. This will also enhance

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the site's amenity value and assist the visual assimilation of the site into the surrounding rural landscape. This planting should be undertaken in close proximity to the development proposals, either within current open ground or within existing plantation areas.

- 5.14 In areas that are unsuitable for tree and scrub planting a grassland habitat will be created by seeding of the newly created earthworks slopes. Indigenous seed will be sourced locally to vegetate embankments. Stripping and storing areas of existing topsoil affected by the works and relaying onto the new enhanced embankments is to be carried out as part of the specified works.
- 5.15 Replacement vegetation will be of similar species to that present within the surrounding and adjacent landscape to assist in the assimilation and integration of the development in its wider context.

6. Assessment of Residual Effects

- 6.1 The assessment has considered both the construction and operational effects of the proposed development including those which result in a long-term or permanent change in existing fabric or character after completion of the proposed works. For the purposes of this assessment, construction impacts are considered to be temporary and are associated directly with undertaking the ground and engineering operations required for constructing the development proposals.

Construction

- 6.2 The construction phases of a development can be characterised by different physical elements and activities which vary through time. Landscape and visual impacts associated with the construction phase are likely to include the following:

- Site preparation and ground works;
- Excavation and removal of existing vegetation;
- Formation of site compound, temporary access tracks, site office and storage of materials;
- Temporary lighting;
- Erection of temporary security fences and hoardings; and,
- On and off site construction traffic.

Landscape effects

- 6.3 The site preparation and creation of earth embankments is collectively termed 'construction' for the purposes of this assessment. During construction, the main landscape impacts are likely to arise from the disturbance due to the ground engineering works and the removal of existing vegetation to facilitate access to working areas in order to create the earth embankments.
- 6.4 The permanent removal of vegetation due to the creation of the earth embankments is detailed separately below under Operational Effects.
- 6.5 The landscape impacts are summarised in Table 6.1, and described below.

Removal of Existing Vegetation

- 6.6 The site contains a range of vegetation types, a small proportion of which will need to be removed to facilitate access and provide sufficient working areas. Whilst most compounds, construction access points and routes are assumed to be located within grass / ruderal areas, it is likely that there will be some loss of semi-natural broadleaved woodland of Meadow Plantation (west of 19-25 Rowan Avenue) to construct the embankments along Meadow Burn.
- 6.7 The loss of site vegetation is however expected to be localised and is thus considered to have a minor impact given the scale of the likely removal in the context of vegetation in the wider landscape.

Land Use/Built Form

- 6.8 Storage of materials and site compound location are likely to have a minor impact on the landscape, given the semi-natural / recreational / agricultural farmland characteristics of the study area. Care should be taken on the specific location of these areas in order to reduce the impact, particularly in the retention of existing vegetation.

Traffic Movements as an Effect on Character

- 6.9 The site is well located within the local strategic road network, and has access from the A96, A920 and other minor local roads. Increased site traffic and plant is likely to have a moderate impact on the landscape however, given its existing character semi-natural, residential and recreational uses.

Construction Landscape Effects Summary

- 6.10 Given the site is wholly contained within the 'Deveron and Bogie Straths' Landscape Character Area, this is the only area that is likely to be materially affected by the proposed development. Overall landscape effects during construction are considered to range from neutral to moderate adverse, primarily due to the impact of the formation of site compound/offices and construction traffic movements in a largely pastoral / recreational area.

Visual Effects

- 6.11 Visual effects of the proposed development during construction would be localised and limited in duration (ranging from approximately nine to twelve months) which limits their significance to temporary effects. Views from the receptors are likely to be affected by the introduction of cabins, storage areas, plant and vehicles. A table of visual impacts experienced by the receptors during construction of the proposed development is summarised in Table 6.2 and described below:

Views of construction equipment

- 6.12 As there are no buildings proposed as part of this development, the nature of plant/equipment required would be limited, thus reducing the effect on the views. Impacts are localised and will be limited in duration, therefore their significance is limited. However, their presence is not common within this area or the wider aspect.

Construction Visual Effects Summary

Overall the visual impacts during construction are likely to range from neutral to moderate-major adverse.

Table 6.1 – Landscape Effects during Construction

LCA Components	Description of Impact	Magnitude	Sensitivity	Significance
Land pattern/layout: Neat farmland patchwork dominated by pasture with post and wire fencing and hedges.	Unaffected by construction activity.	Negligible	Medium	Neutral
Vegetation: River banks lined by intermittent clumps of alder and willow, with pasture set within a wider woodland framework.	Minor removal of vegetation to allow construction access and formation of compounds. Minimal disturbance to woodland vegetation.	Low	Medium	Minor / Moderate adverse
Landform: Flat to rolling farmland with a general decrease in elevation towards the river.	Largely unaffected by construction activity – very minor grading in localised areas to create access points / compound areas.	Negligible	Medium	Neutral
Land use/Built form: Essentially an agricultural landscape, with a forestry / moorland backdrop to most views with settlement associated with rivers and transport routes.	Site compound and storage of materials: an uncharacteristic element within this landscape	Low	Medium	Minor / Moderate adverse
	On and Off-site traffic: the access point could be from minor access / residential roads	Medium	Medium	Moderate adverse

Table 6.2 – Visual Effects during Construction

Ref.	Receptor Name	Sensitivity	Existing Views	View During Construction	Magnitude	Significance
1	Ittingstone	High	Views from main property largely screened by vegetation. Views available towards Ittingstone development proposals site from outbuildings, over farmland with overhead pylons in foreground.	Restricted views of the construction site/traffic as part of a wider panorama.	Negligible	Neutral / Minor adverse
2	Craigwillie	High	Open, oblique views available towards Ittingstone development proposals site from rear / side of main property and outbuildings over farmland.	Restricted views of the construction site/traffic as part of a wider panorama.	Negligible	Neutral / Minor adverse
3	Craigwillie Cottage	High	Views available towards Ittingstone development proposals site from rear / side of main property, partly screened by vegetation around property boundary. Open views available from outbuildings.	Restricted views of the construction site/traffic from main property as part of a wider panorama.	Negligible	Neutral / Minor adverse
4	Poultry Houses	Low	Open, oblique views available towards Ittingstone development proposals site from rear / side of buildings over farmland.	Open view of the construction site/traffic from rear / side of property	Medium	Minor / Moderate adverse
5	Arnhall Cottages	High	Unobstructed views of Ittingstone development proposals site from front of properties.	Open view of the construction site/traffic from front of property	Medium	Moderate / Major adverse
6	Milltown	High	Oblique, restricted views of Ittingstone development proposals site due to intervening vegetation.	Restricted view of the construction site/traffic, mostly screened by intervening vegetation.	Low	Moderate adverse
7	Milltown Housing Development	High	Views available from upper floor of properties towards Ittingstone Pool embankments. Ground floor views screened by garden fences.	Views of construction site/traffic in middle distance from upper floors.	Low	Moderate adverse
8	Gibston Cottages / Leybourne /	High	Open, views available towards River Deveron development proposals site from 'Greenwood' over farmland. Views	Restricted views of the construction site/traffic as part of a wider panorama.	Negligible	Neutral / Minor adverse

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Ref.	Receptor Name	Sensitivity	Existing Views	View During Construction	Magnitude	Significance
	Greenwood		from Gibson Cottages and Leybourne screened by immediate garden vegetation or Greenwood property.			
9	11-25 & 2-8 Rowan Avenue	High	Views of River Deveron development proposals site from rear of properties and rear gardens, partially screened by immature plantation woodland.	Partially restricted views of the construction site/traffic from rear gardens, especially nos. 19-25. Glimpses available from nos. 2-8 between properties opposite.	Medium	Moderate / Major adverse
10	7-9 Pine View / 6-11 Sycamore Place	High	Views of River Deveron development proposals site from rear / side of properties and rear gardens, partially screened by immature plantation woodland.	Partially restricted views of the construction site/traffic from rear of properties.	Medium	Moderate / Major adverse
11	The Meadows Nursing Home / Meadow Farm Cottage	High	Oblique views of Burnside Road development proposals, partially screened by immature plantation woodland to perimeter of Caravan Park.	Oblique, partially restricted views of the construction site/traffic from rear of properties.	Low	Moderate adverse
12	Huntly Castle Caravan Park / Meadow Farm	High	Views of River Deveron / Burnside Road / Recreation Ground development proposals sites, partially screened by immature plantation woodland.	Partially restricted views of the construction site/traffic.	Low	Moderate adverse
13	Recreation Ground	High	Open views of Recreation Ground development proposals site, with sections also partially screened by immature plantation woodland.	Open view of the construction site/traffic from playing fields	Medium	Moderate / Major adverse
14	Cemetery	Medium	Views towards Ittingstone and River Deveron development proposals screened by perimeter wall.	Restricted views of the construction site/traffic in middle distance over perimeter wall.	Negligible	Neutral
15	A96	Medium	Open views towards Ittingstone development proposals site, across adjacent farmland.	Unobstructed glimpsed view of the construction site/traffic for short duration	Low	Minor / Moderate adverse
16	A920	Medium	Open views towards Ittingstone development proposals site, immediately	Unobstructed glimpsed view of the construction site/traffic for short	Low	Minor / Moderate

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Ref.	Receptor Name	Sensitivity	Existing Views	View During Construction	Magnitude	Significance
			adjacent to road.	duration		adverse
17	B9022	Medium	Views of River Deveron development proposals site, partially screened by intermittent vegetation on river banks.	Restricted short duration views of the construction site/traffic in middle distance.	Low	Minor / Moderate adverse
18	Unnamed road	Medium	Views of River Deveron development proposals site, partially screened by roadside vegetation.	Restricted short duration views of the construction site/traffic in foreground.	Low	Minor / Moderate adverse
19	Meadow Burn Footpath	High	Intermittent views of Burnside Road development proposals site, partially screened by woodland vegetation as path passes through Meadow Plantation.	Intermittent, heavily screened views of construction site/traffic from some points along the path.	Low	Moderate Adverse
20	River Deveron Footpath	High	Varying views, ranging from open to screened, depending on relative location of immature plantation woodland.	Varying from screened to open, unobstructed view of the construction site/traffic.	Medium	Moderate / Major adverse

Operation

- 6.13 During the operation phase the impacts are likely to include the following:
- Permanent introduction of earth embankments;
 - Permanent loss of existing woodland vegetation in new earth embankment locations and surrounding working area (approximately 2m wide); and,
 - Permanent introduction of replacement tree and woodland planting.

Landscape Effects

- 6.14 This section considers the Landscape effects of the proposed work, with respect to the operational phase, on completion of the construction works. The primary impacts on the landscape during the operational phase of the works are considered to be the permanent loss of woodland vegetation and introduction of new, higher or wider earth embankments. A table of landscape impacts is summarised in Table 6.3, and described below:

Permanent introduction of earth embankments

- 6.15 A series of earth embankments area proposed across the study area, which range in height from approximately 0.1m to 2.3m above existing ground levels.
- 6.16 The flat to rolling landform in this area is a key landscape characteristic, and in essence this will be maintained with minor, localised engineering to create the earth embankments. These will be rounded forms with relatively shallow side slopes to promote integration with the topography of the wider landscape.
- 6.17 This impact is considered to be minor adverse in the short term, reducing to neutral as maturing vegetation further helps to integrate the embankments over time.

Permanent loss of existing woodland vegetation and addition of replacement planting

- 6.18 A proportion of woodland vegetation will be lost in new earth embankment locations as follows:
- Southern edge of plantation woodland area to west of Hill of Haugh;
 - Western edge of plantation woodland area and central section of semi-natural woodland of Meadow Plantation, to west of 19-25 Rowan Avenue;
 - Central section of plantation woodland block between Caravan site and Recreation Ground; and,
 - Southern edge of plantation woodland belt between Burnside Road and Caravan Park.
- 6.19 These losses will be relatively minor in the context of the vegetation present across the study area, and it should be possible to limit the clearance required so that although the total area of vegetation is reduced, the screening provided by these areas is not fully compromised. Mitigation planting, through new planting alongside the earth embankments will also offset any losses where they occur.
- 6.20 The impact is therefore considered to be minor adverse.

Landscape Effects Summary

- 6.21 Overall, the residual landscape effects during operation are considered to result in impacts ranging from neutral to minor-moderate adverse. The operational landscape impact is therefore not significant.

Visual Effects

- 6.22 In this section, assessment is made of the visual impact during the operational phase, after completion of the development proposals. Professional judgement has been used to assess changes in view experienced by these receptors on account of the development proposals. This has been based on a photographic appraisal of the site and inspection of the development proposals.
- 6.23 A series of earth embankments area proposed across the study area, which range in height from 0.1m up to 2.3m above existing ground levels.
- 6.24 Whilst the larger of these are likely to be discernible from a close distance (the embankment alongside the A920 at Ittingstone Pool in particular), generally their appearance and the wider pastoral / woodland backdrop means that they are unlikely to impact on the quality of the majority of views in the study area.
- 6.25 A description of views experienced by the receptors on account of the proposed development are summarised in Table 6.4 below.

Visual Effects Summary

- 6.26 Overall, the residual visual effects during operation are considered to result in a range of impacts from neutral/minor beneficial to moderate adverse.
- 6.27 Only one receptor is expected to be significantly affected by the development proposals, where a lack of space will prevent the replanting of the existing woodland belt to the west of Rowan Avenue resulting in the screening this provides being lost.

Table 6.3 – Summary of Landscape Impacts

LCA Components	Description of impact	Magnitude	Sensitivity	Significance
Land pattern/layout: Neat farmland patchwork dominated by pasture with post and wire fencing and hedges.	Development proposals generally follow existing field boundaries, road and river alignments, thereby general land pattern/layout will not be unaffected.	Negligible	Medium	Neutral
Vegetation: River banks lined by intermittent clumps of alder and willow, with pasture set within a wider woodland framework.	Minimal loss of vegetation generally limited to fringes of immature plantation woodland areas. Replanting cannot be undertaken on earth embankments, but replacement planting will be undertaken in adjacent locations. Loss of some semi-natural broadleaved woodland of Meadow Plantation. Loss will be limited during construction and replacement planting will be undertaken alongside the earth embankments. There shall be little or no disturbance to any significant riverside trees.	Low	Medium	Minor / Moderate adverse
Landform: Flat to rolling farmland with a general decrease in elevation towards the river.	Limited to construction of earth embankments, which should be shaped sensitively to integrate with the rolling landscape.	Low	Medium	Minor / Moderate adverse
Land use/Built form: Essentially an agricultural landscape, with a forestry / moorland backdrop to most views with settlement associated with rivers and transport routes.	No change	Negligible	Medium	Neutral

Table 6.4 – Landscape Effects during Operation

Ref.	Name	Sensitivity	Existing Views	View During Operation	Magnitude	Significance
1	Ittingstone	High	Views from main property largely screened by vegetation. Views available towards Ittingstone development proposals site from outbuildings, over farmland with overhead pylons in foreground.	Restricted views of vegetated earth embankment, which is unlikely to be perceptible as part of a wider panorama.	Negligible	Neutral / Minor adverse
2	Craigwillie	High	Open, oblique views available towards Ittingstone development proposals site from rear / side of main property and outbuildings over farmland.	Restricted views of vegetated earth embankment, which is unlikely to be perceptible as part of a wider panorama.	Negligible	Neutral / Minor adverse
3	Craigwillie Cottage	High	Views available towards Ittingstone development proposals site from rear / side of main property, partly screened by vegetation around property boundary. Open views available from outbuildings.	Restricted views of vegetated earth embankment from main property, which is unlikely to be perceptible as part of a wider panorama.	Negligible	Neutral / Minor adverse
4	Poultry Houses	Low	Open, oblique views available towards Ittingstone development proposals site from rear / side of buildings over farmland.	Open view of vegetated earth embankment from rear / side of property; new embankments marginally higher than existing ground levels (maximum 0.26m).	Negligible	Neutral
5	Amhall Cottages	High	Unobstructed views of Ittingstone development proposals site from front of properties.	Open view of vegetated earth embankment from front of property, the top level of which is set 1.6m below the property thereby having a negligible impact on the view. Oblique view of embankment beyond A920, the top level of which is 0.1m above existing embankment, again resulting in a negligible change in the view.	Negligible	Neutral / Minor adverse
6	Milltown	High	Oblique, restricted views of Ittingstone development proposals site due to intervening vegetation.	Vegetated earth embankment will provide screening of traffic on A920, potentially offering an improvement in the view.	Negligible	Neutral / Minor beneficial

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Ref.	Name	Sensitivity	Existing Views	View During Operation	Magnitude	Significance
7	Miltown Housing Development	High	Views available from upper floor of properties towards Ittingstone Pool embankments. Ground floor views screened by garden fences.	Views of vegetated earth embankment from upper floors, which is unlikely to be perceptible as part of a wider panorama.	Negligible	Neutral / Minor adverse
8	Gibston Cottages / Leybourne / Greenwood	High	Open, views available towards River Deveron development proposals site from 'Greenwood' over farmland. Views from Gibson Cottages and Leybourne screened by immediate garden vegetation or Greenwood property.	Restricted views of vegetated earth embankment, which is unlikely to be perceptible as part of a wider panorama.	Negligible	Neutral / Minor adverse
9	11-25 & 2-8 Rowan Avenue	High	Views of River Deveron development proposals site from rear of properties and rear gardens, partially screened by immature plantation woodland.	Views of earth embankment from upper floor, especially nos. 19-25. Height of bund 0.44m above existing bund, so this is unlikely to be perceptible given angle of view. Bund will require removal of existing plantation vegetation, with little space to replace this screen and the privacy it provides. No view likely from nos. 2-8 due to intervening buildings, fencing etc.	Low	Moderate adverse
10	7-9 Pine View / 6-11 Sycamore Place	High	Views of River Deveron development proposals site from rear / side of properties and rear gardens, partially screened by immature plantation woodland.	Views of the River Deveron earth embankment restricted by intervening plantation woodland.	Negligible	Minor adverse
11	The Meadows Nursing Home / Meadow Farm Cottage	High	Oblique views of Burnside Road development proposals, partially screened by immature plantation woodland to perimeter of Caravan Park.	Views of the Burnside Road earth embankment restricted by intervening plantation woodland.	Negligible	Neutral / Minor adverse
12	Huntly Castle Caravan Park / Meadow Farm	High	Views of River Deveron / Burnside Road / Recreation Ground development proposals sites, partially screened by immature plantation woodland.	Views of the Burnside Road earth embankment partially restricted by intervening plantation woodland.	Negligible	Neutral / Minor adverse

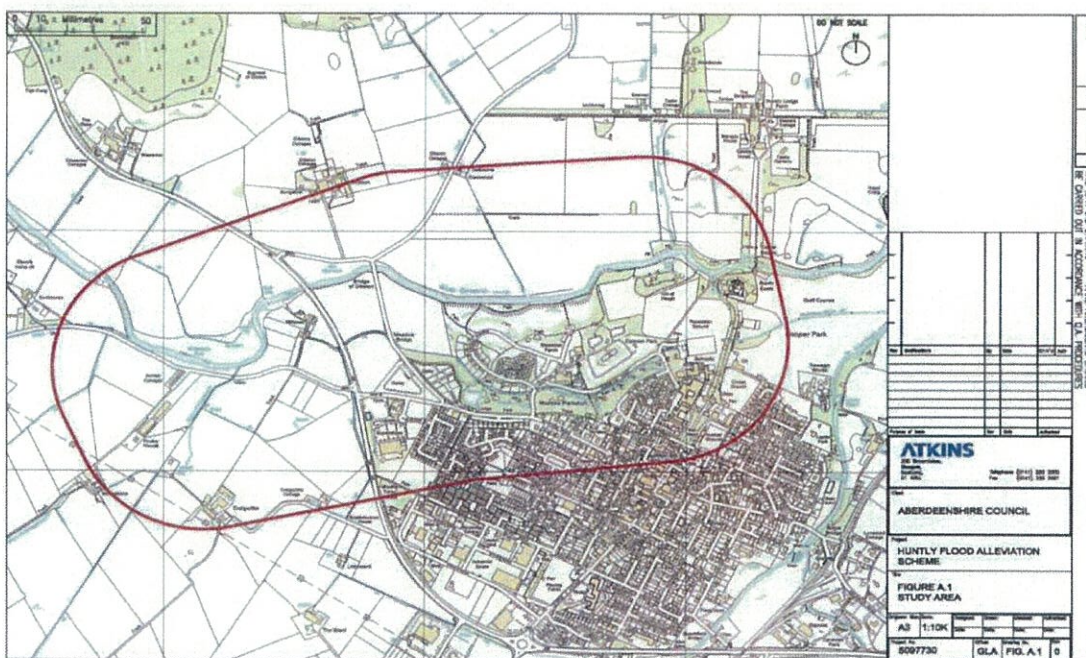
Ref.	Name	Sensitivity	Existing Views	View During Operation	Magnitude	Significance
13	Recreation Ground	High	Open views of Recreation Ground development proposals site, with sections also partially screened by immature plantation woodland.	Open views of vegetated earth embankment running around field, which at 0.44m high will not impact on views and is unlikely to be perceptible as part of wider scene.	Negligible	Neutral / Minor adverse
14	Cemetery	Medium	Views towards Ittingstone and River Deveron development proposals screened by perimeter wall.	No view of development proposals due to perimeter wall.	Negligible	Neutral
15	A96	Medium	Open views towards Ittingstone development proposals site, across adjacent farmland.	Unobstructed glimpsed view of the earth embankment for short duration, which is unlikely to be perceptible as part of wider scene.	Low	Minor / Moderate adverse
16	A920	Medium	Open views towards Ittingstone development proposals site, immediately adjacent to road.	Unobstructed glimpsed view of the earth embankment for short duration, which will interrupt view of river and view beyond.	Low	Minor / Moderate adverse
17	B9022	Medium	Views of River Deveron development proposals site, partially screened by intermittent vegetation on river banks.	Views of the River Deveron earth embankment restricted by intervening plantation woodland.	Negligible	Neutral
18	Unnamed road	Medium	Views of River Deveron development proposals site, partially screened by roadside vegetation.	Views of the River Deveron earth embankment restricted by intervening plantation woodland.	Negligible	Neutral
19	Meadow Burn Footpath	High	Intermittent views of Burnside Road development proposals site, partially screened by woodland vegetation as path passes through Meadow Plantation.	Intermittent, heavily screened views of earth embankment from some points along the path. Embankment up to 0.4m high, therefore views of wider landscape will not be affected.	Negligible	Neutral / Minor adverse
20	River Deveron Footpath	High	Varying views, ranging from open to screened, depending on relative location of immature plantation woodland.	Varying from screened to open, unobstructed view of the earth embankment. Embankment will range from widening of existing bund, to a new earth structure up to 1.07m above existing levels. The impact on views will therefore be negligible.	Negligible	Neutral / Minor adverse

7. Concluding Statement

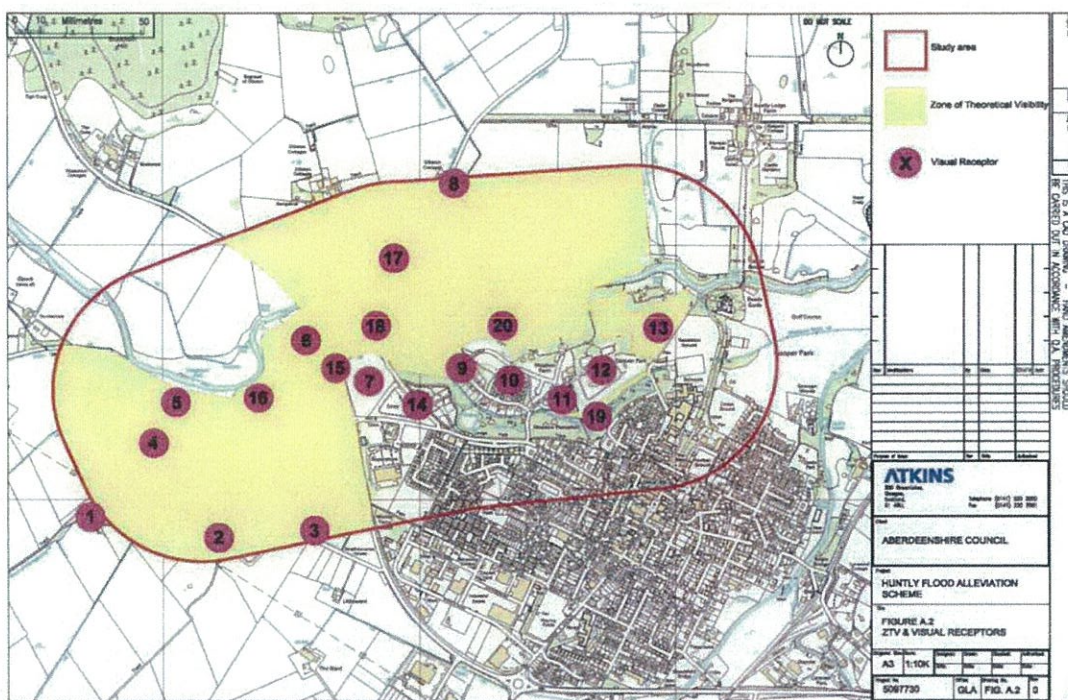
- 7.1 The development proposals Site lies within flat to rolling farmland on the southern banks of the River Deveron beyond the northern edge of Huntly. The site is largely enclosed to the south by the established woodland vegetation of Meadow Plantation.
- 7.2 The Site lies within an area that contains a number of Sites that are protected due to their landscape value, including the recreation ground, the setting of Huntly Castle, the cemetery and landscape buffer areas along the A96. There are no landscape designations covering the study area.
- 7.3 The Site is wholly contained within the Deveron and Bogie Straths Landscape Character Area. The key issues with regards to this Character Area and the development proposals include: local waterside vegetation being vulnerable to loss; preservation of traditional field boundaries, such as drystone dykes and hedgerows, in order to enhance the landscape pattern; infrastructure should adhere to the landform and use grading to reflect surrounding strath relief; and, woodland within the strath may be enhanced by additional landscape planting and routing new infrastructure away from prominent stands.
- 7.4 Due to a combination of existing woodland, mature vegetation and local topography the Site is relatively contained and well screened from the majority of the surrounding land. Within these areas there are relatively few receptors, and for those receptors that have a view of the Site, it forms a relatively insignificant part of an outlook that is largely dominated by long distance views to higher ground to the north.
- 7.5 On the whole, given the low profile nature of the development proposals, the landscape impact is not considered to be significant. The most significant impacts will be experienced during the construction phase of the project, but these will reduce on completion of the works. During operation the overall landscape impact of the development proposals with the proposed mitigation has been assessed to be neutral to minor-moderate adverse.
- 7.6 Similarly, the overall visual impact of the development with the proposed mitigation will be most significant during construction. Again this will reduce during operation of the development proposals to being significant for only one receptor, with ratings of neutral-minor beneficial to moderate adverse.

Appendix A – Figures

A.1 Study Area



A.2 Zone of Theoretical Visibility & Receptors

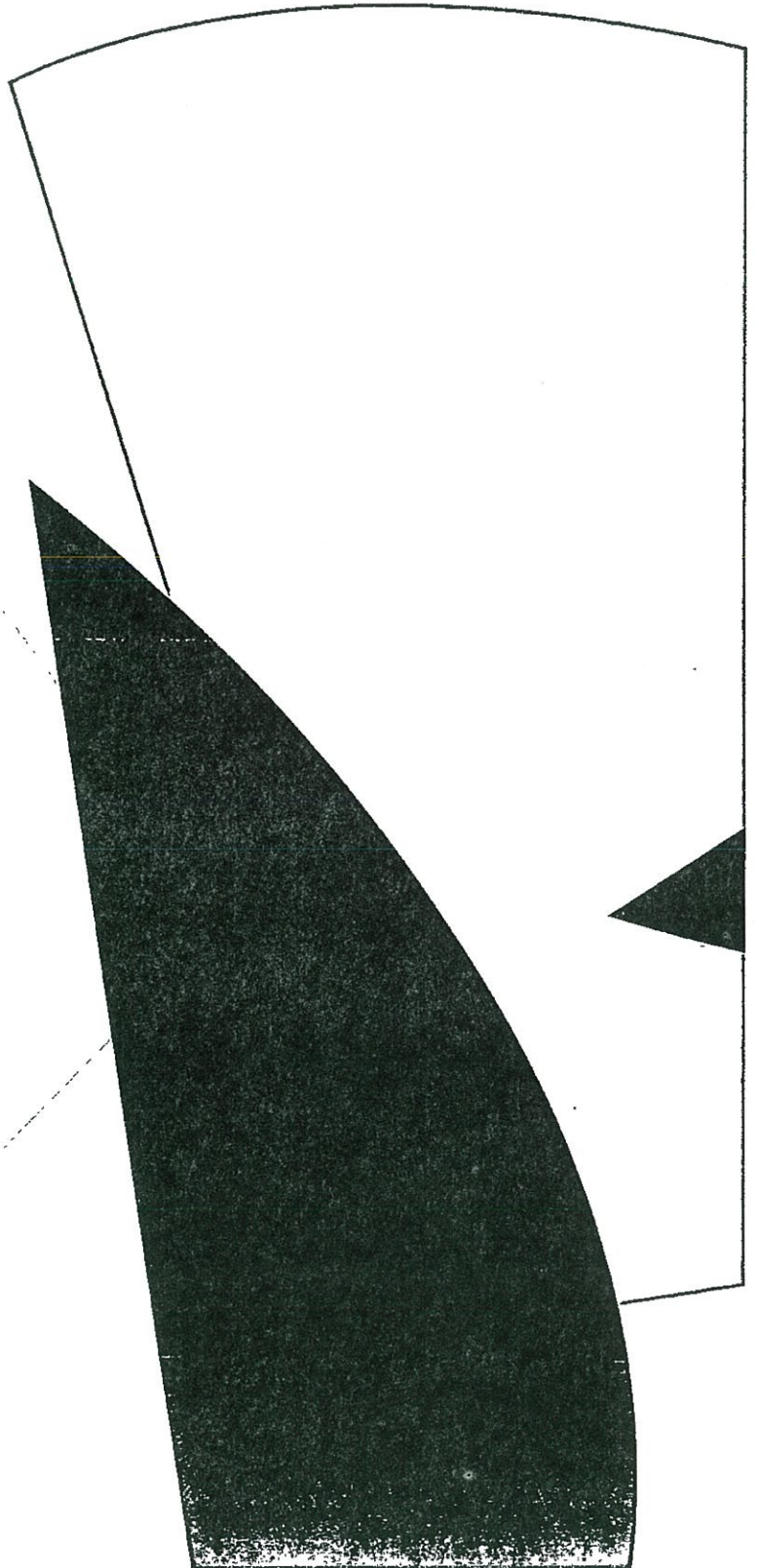


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