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Cramond Weirs

Landscape and Visual Appraisal

FINAL: December 16

Rivers and Fisheries Trusts of Scotland
11 Rutland Square
Edinburgh
EH1 2AS

JBA Project Manager

Amanda Kitchen
South Barn
Broughton Hall
Skipton
North Yorkshire
BD23 3AE

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Contract

This report describes work commissioned by the RAFTS. Alex Craven and Nick Allin of JBA Consulting carried out this work.

Prepared by .....Alex Craven
Assistant Landscape Architect

Reviewed by .....Nick Allin
Senior Landscape Architect

Purpose

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Executive Summary

JBA Consulting was commissioned to undertake a landscape and visual appraisal by River and Fisheries Trusts Scotland (RAFTS), in partnership with Scottish Environment Protection Agency and River Forth Fisheries Trust, in relation to proposed works to Dowie's Mill Weir and Fair-a-Far Weir on the River Almond at Cramond, Edinburgh. This study aims to assess the effects of the proposal on the landscape and visual resource of the area. It should be read alongside a separate Cultural Heritage Assessment, prepared by FAS Heritage. Effects that may be material to the planning process are described as *notable*.

The two weirs are located around 1km apart on the lower reaches of the River Almond in Cramond, approximately 7.5km WNW of Edinburgh city centre. The structures, as well as associated buildings including workers houses, stand as a reminder of historic, small-scale industrial usage of the river from the 17th to 19th century, including early ironworking. Both weirs currently obstruct fish and eel passage by species such as salmon, trout, lamprey and eel. Works will help restore fish passage on the Almond.

The proposals for Fair-a-Far Weir will involve repairs to the weir crest and the replacement of the existing fish pass with a similar but larger structure, faced with locally-sourced materials in a style appropriate to the location.

The works to Dowie's Mill will include removal of the weir that has suffered extensive modern interventions and the introduction of 'pool and riffle' features in the river that will allow fish passage and mimic natural features elsewhere on the lower Almond. The levels of impounded water will be reduced, resulting in a change from an area of relatively still, pooled water to one of more turbulent and varied flow with exposed rocky features, although with the loss of moving water and noise arising from the weir itself. There will also be some reduction of trees and scrub, and changes to minor landscape elements such as fencing.

The two sites are within a deeply incised, narrow river valley with a strong sense of enclosure created by sharply rising wooded banks and rocky outcrops to either side. The river forms a natural boundary between the outskirts of Edinburgh to the east and its rural hinterland to the West. Running alongside is the River Almond Walkway, a popular, much-loved recreational route which continues over the late 15th century Cramond Old Bridge where views of ponded water behind Dowie's Weir are available. Both sites are within a Conservation Area and the setting of a number of listed buildings, including the Grade A Old Bridge. Fair-a-Far Weir itself is Grade B listed. Both also lie within the Area of Outstanding Landscape Quality, as designated through local planning policies. As a consequence, landscape sensitivity is considered to be high. Effects are judged against Landscape Character Area 5, Lower Almond Valley, of the Edinburgh Landscape Character Assessment.

Effects during construction will be short-term and temporary.

Fair-a-Far Weir

The proposals at Fair-a-Far Weir are expected to have a limited impact on landscape character due to the changes being relatively localised and small-scale, within a site that is relatively enclosed in character. The overall effect on LCA 5 is considered to be **slight adverse** during **construction**, **negligible adverse during operation**. Over time, as materials weather, the effect may become **neutral**. **No notable landscape effects are expected**.

Visual effects are relatively restricted due to the enclosed nature of the site. A **moderate adverse** effect may be expected for the River Almond Walkway during construction, due to short-term closure and proximity of the works. Effects during operation for the Walkway are **negligible**. Views of the compound and construction traffic will be available for properties along School Brae, although these are again short term and no views of the site during operation will be available. **No notable visual effects are expected**.

Dowie's Mill Weir

The removal of Dowie's Mill Weir would reduce the influence of historic industrial features in the landscape and the evidential heritage value of the pooled water in favour of a pre-industrial

and more naturalistic character, although some impounded water will remain to protect services. The aesthetic implications of such a change are subjective and it may be argued that this would represent a neutral or even beneficial change in the landscape and visual resource.

During construction, the landscape effect is considered to be **moderate-substantial adverse** which is **notable**, but effects on the wider LCA 5 is considered to be **slight-moderate adverse** at most and **not notable**. This notable effect will, as stated above, be short-term and temporary. During operation, the landscape effects on LCA 5 may **locally be moderate-substantial** which is **notable**, but **overall moderate and not notable**. This effect may initially be adverse but over time potentially neutral or beneficial as vegetation establishes and natural processes soften the new channel features.

Visual effects are generally limited to recreational and residential properties adjacent to the weir. A **moderate-substantial adverse**, **notable** visual effects is expected for the River Almond Walkway (part of the Core Path network) due to changes in visual composition and character of the river. Again, this may arguably be neutral or beneficial over the long term, once vegetation has established and the more naturalistic appearance of the channel becomes accepted. No notable effects are expected for residential receptors, although the loss of pooled water, change in channel character and short-term construction effects may result in moderate adverse effects at most.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

JBA Consulting was commissioned to undertake a landscape and visual appraisal in relation to proposed works at Fair-a-Far Weir and Dowie's Mill Weir, Cramond, West Lothian.

This study aims to assess the effects of the proposal on the landscape and visual resource of the area. It involves desk based research and field work to establish the landscape and visual baseline, identify potential receptors followed by an assessment of likely effects resulting the works.

The report also includes a review of planning and other policy relevant to landscape and visual considerations in the area, which has helped inform the scope of the study and the assessments.

It should be read alongside a separate Cultural Heritage Assessment, prepared by FAS Heritage.

1.2 Description of the development

1.2.1 Location

Fair-a-Far Weir and Dowie's Mill Weir are located in the lower reaches of the River Almond in Cramond, approximately 7.5km WNW of Edinburgh City Centre. Dowie's Mill Weir lies approximately one kilometre upstream of Fair-a-Far.

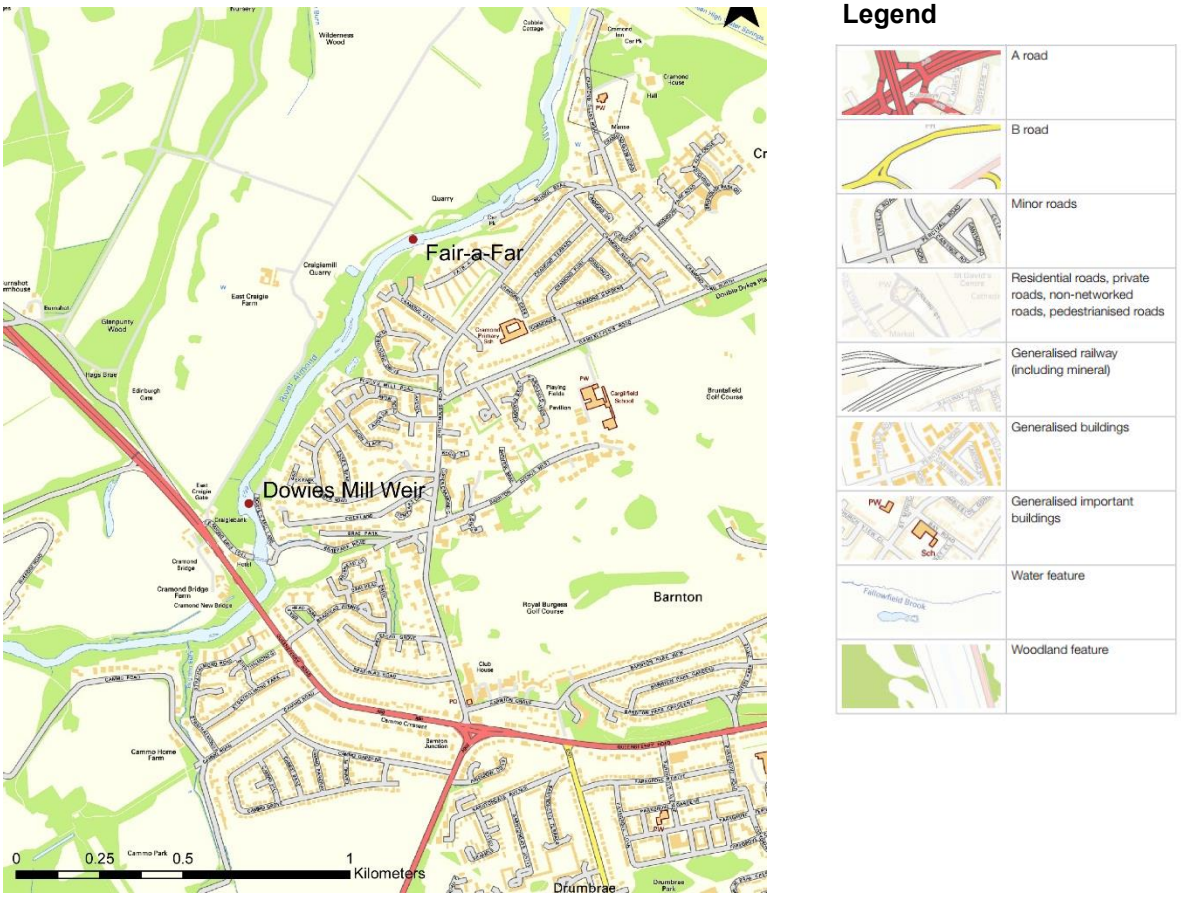

Figure 1-1: Location of Fair-a-Far and Dowie's Mill Weir

1.2.2 Proposed development

The weirs are remnants of industrial activity along the River Almond which currently form significant barriers to fish passage up the river. The existing fish passes do not work as they were intended. The proposals include improvements to Fair-a-far Weir and the associated underperforming fish pass. The preferred option for Dowie's Mill Weir is removal of the weir and replacement with a set of pools and riffles with associated rocky features that will allow fish passage.

1.2.3 Proposed changes to the landscape - Fair-a-Far

Construction phase

During construction the main activity for Fair-a-Far Weir and infrastructure would include:

- Provision of temporary site compound in car park adjacent to Cadell's Row
- Construction of temporary ramp down right-hand bank and vehicular route and associated cofferdams along river bed for access to fish pass and weir crest. Loss of a single tree to allow this.
- Movement of plant, traffic and operatives during construction programme
- Repair of masonry of existing weir structure
- Removal of existing fish pass and construction of replacement Larinier Fish Pass
- Temporary, short-term closures of River Almond Walkway during vehicle movements
- Temporary, short-term closure of existing footpath along the River Almond
- Lifting platform from area immediately to south of weir crest, details to be confirmed

Operational phase

During operation the main activity and infrastructure would include:

- Repaired masonry on weir crest
- New Larinier fish pass of similar size and position as existing

1.2.4 Proposed changes to the landscape - Dowie's Mill Weir

Construction Phase

During construction the main activity for Dowie's Mill Weir and infrastructure would include:

- Provision of temporary site compound adjacent to weir crest
- Movement of plant, traffic and operatives during construction programme
- Temporary works access and haulage route along existing track to east of weir and access to river via to river via existing public footpath to south-east of Cramond Old Brig
- Temporary operation of crane pad and working area for sediment dewatering and material handling
- Temporary operation of pontoon launch area and access over existing weir into channel
- Temporary operation of material handling area
- Partial infilling of right bank adjacent to weir
- Construction of full channel width easement structure
- Phased removal of existing weir structure
- Removal of contaminated sediment build-up from behind weir structure
- Provision of boulders (rip-rap/rock armour) to right bank, upstream of weir
- Planting of 'natural' willow revetments

Operational phase

During operation the main activity and infrastructure would include:

- New pool and riffle fish pass structure spanning full width of channel
- Lowering of the upstream water levels and presence of rip-rap or rock armour to right bank, along with establishment of new planting including willow

2 Methodology

2.1 Introduction

This study aims to assess the effects of the proposal on the landscape and visual resource of the area. Landscape and visual effects, whilst interrelated, will be considered separately in the assessment.

2.1.1 Outline of assessment process

The assessment of landscape and visual effects has been prepared with reference to *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment- 3rd edition* (GLVIA3), published by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment in 2013.

The assessment has involved the following key stages:

- Desk based research to determine the scope of the study
- Desk-based and field research to establish the landscape and visual baseline and identify potential receptors;
- Consideration of potential options and likely landscape and visual effects
- Assessment and reporting of potential effects expected from preferred option.

2.1.2 Assessment methodology

A statement prepared by the Landscape Institute (10th July 2013) in conjunction with the GLVIA3 panel indicated that for non-EIA assessments the term 'significance' should not be used, as this term may trigger the requirement for a formal EIA. This report does not form part of an Environment Impact Assessment (EIA). As a result of this, it **does not establish the *significance* of effects**. However, the scale of effects is evaluated, and where such effects are considered to be of relevance or importance within the planning process, these are described as ***notable***.

In order to determine the scale of effects, two key aspects should be established. These are nature of the landscape or visual receptor likely to be affected, often referred to as its *sensitivity* and the nature of the effect likely to occur, which is often referred to as the *magnitude* of the likely change. The combination of these two results in a judgement of the scale of the effect. Consideration of the scale of the effect then enables a judgement to be made as to whether the effect is notable. This process is described in Section 2.5.

2.1.3 Limitation of the Assessment

The assessment and the prediction of effects during the construction, operation and decommissioning of the development are based on the available background information and supplied drawings of the proposals and involve a degree of informed professional judgement.

The assessment of visual effects on residential receptors is an outline assessment only; it is not a detailed Residential Amenity Assessment.

2.1.4 Timing of Surveys

Surveys and fieldwork were carried out in December 2015 when deciduous trees were bare of leaves. The effects of screening by vegetation were therefore at their lowest. Consideration of seasonal vegetation has been given within the assessment.

2.1.5 Glossary

Some of the terms used within the assessment have a specific meaning. A glossary of these terms is provided in Appendix A. The definitions are based on those provided within GLVIA 3.

2.2 Determining the scope of the study

The scope of the LVIA was defined through desktop research and site observations. Key matters reviewed in determining the scope were:

- The extent of the study area
- Sources of relevant landscape and visual information
- The nature of the possible landscape and visual effects
- The main receptors and any specific viewpoints
- The extent and appropriate level of detail for the baseline studies, to be proportionate to the scale and type of development proposed
- Methods to be used in determining the significance of effects

Given the localised nature of effects, no Zones of Theoretical Visibility (ZTVs) were produced for this report.

2.3 Methodology: landscape impacts

2.3.1 Introduction: landscape impacts

For the purposes of LVIA, the landscape is considered to be a resource in its own right, The European Landscape Convention (2000) provides the following definition of landscape:

> *"Landscape means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors".*

The assessment of landscape impacts considers the impacts the proposed development or change will have on this landscape resource.

Landscape impacts that may arise include a change, loss or addition of elements; features, aesthetic or perceptual aspects that contribute to the distinctiveness or character of the landscape.

2.3.2 Establishing the landscape baseline

To enable the assessment of the impacts of a proposed development or change, the landscape baseline, or starting point must be established. This study may include the following:

Landscape fabric - physical landscape elements present within the landscape such as landform, land cover, boundary features and trees and woodland.

Landscape character - the distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occurs consistently in a particular type of landscape and how this is perceived by people. It reflects particular combinations of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use and human settlement but also encompasses its perceptual and aesthetic qualities. It creates the particular sense of place of different areas of the landscape

Landscape designations - sites with landscape designations are considered in addition to the overall landscape character areas, to enable site specific judgements of impacts on particularly valued sites**.**

2.3.3 Determining landscape sensitivity

The next stage is to determine the sensitivity of the landscape receptors to the type and scale of development proposed.

The sensitivity of a landscape receptor is informed by the *susceptibility* and *value* of the receptor. Susceptibility relates to the ability of the landscape to accommodate the proposed development without undue consequences on the existing baseline or planning policies. **The value** of a landscape receptor is informed by designations, planning policy and documents, the contribution of special (cultural, historic or conservation) contributors or associations, scenic quality, rarity, recreational value and aesthetic, perceptual and experiential qualities.

Landscapes of high value may include those with national or international designations on such as National Parks or World Heritage Sites; they may relate to the setting of features that have high archaeological or heritage significance. Medium value landscapes include areas that are subject to local policy protection, such as Areas of High Landscape Value, or where it is considered that particular features or elements contribute to a greater value than other nearby areas. Low value landscapes are not subject to designation but may be appreciated at a community or local level.

Three levels of sensitivity are recorded:

- **High** sensitivity: A landscape of high value and a particularly distinctive character that is susceptible to relatively small changes of the type proposed.
- **Medium** sensitivity: A landscape of valued characteristics reasonably tolerant of change of the type proposed; and
- **Low** sensitivity: A landscape of relatively low value or importance which is potentially tolerant of substantial change of the type proposed.

The considerations noted above are further informed by general observations regarding the condition and quality of the landscape. These support the overall narrative and judgement of sensitivity. Landscape quality or condition may relate to the level of management, distinctiveness, number of detracting features, pattern, unity, structure, sense of place, function, definition and aesthetic value.

Areas of landscape quality may not necessarily correlate directly with landscape character areas or designated sites as defined by statutory agencies or local planning authorities. Where it is considered that this is the case, mention is made within the description and sensitivity evaluation.

2.3.4 Magnitude of landscape change

Impacts on landscape receptors are assessed in terms of their magnitude of change. This is a combination of the size or scale, geographic extent of the area influenced and the duration and reversibility of the impact.

Size and scale concerns the amount of existing landscape elements that will be lost, the extent to which these represent or contribute to the character of the landscape. It also relates to the degree to which aesthetic or perceptual aspects of the landscape are altered through removal or addition of new features, such as hedge loss or introduction of tall features on skylines.

The **geographical extent** over which landscape impacts are felt is distinct from the size or scale. For example, large scale impacts may be limited to the immediate site area.

The **duration** of the effect relates to the time period during which the changes to the landscape will occur.

The **magnitude of change** is a product of the size/scale, extent and duration of the impacts. This is judged as a four-point scale:

- **High**: Notable and long term change in landscape characteristics over an extensive area ranging to a very intensive, long term change over a more limited area;
- **Medium**: Moderate, short term change over a large area or moderate long term change in localised area;

- **Low**: Slight long term or moderate short term change in landscape components; and
- **No Change/Negligible**: No discernible/virtually imperceptible change to the landscape's resources

Once the landscape sensitivity and magnitude of change are established, it is then possible to determine the effect. This is described in Section 2.5

2.4 Methodology: visual impacts

2.4.1 Introduction

Visual impacts relate to how the development may affect the views available to people and their *visual amenity*. Visual amenity is the visual quality of a site or area as experienced by residents, workers or visitors. Visual *receptors* are people that experience the view. Development can change people's direct experience and perception of the view depending on existing context, the scale, form, colour and texture of the proposals, the nature of the activity associated with the development, and the distance and angle of view. Visual impacts can be experienced through development intruding into existing views experienced by residents and day to day users of the area, and the views of tourists and visitors passing through or visiting the area.

2.4.2 Establishing the visual baseline

Identification of potential visual receptors is informed by desk and field studies in conjunction with consideration of the likely visual influence of the proposed development, to identify places where people might be expected to receive a view of the proposed development.

2.4.3 Visual receptor sensitivity

In order to determine the scale of visual impacts, it is necessary—as with the assessment of landscape impacts—to determine the sensitivity of the receptor. This is achieved through the consideration of the susceptibility of the receptor and the value of the view.

Visual receptor susceptibility is a function of receptor type, location and activity. In assessing visual receptor susceptibility, factors such as the following have been accounted for with a degree of professional judgement:

- Receptor activities – for example, relaxing at home, undertaking leisure, recreational and sporting activities, at work
- Movement/duration – whether receptors are likely to be stationary or moving, which influences how long they will be exposed to the change
- Orientation – of receptors in relation to the development
- Purpose/expectation – of receptors at that location
- Context – the quality of the landscape
- Importance of the view/location – popularity of location as indicated by existence of designations or local value

The **value** of the view that is experienced may relate to associated landscape or planning designations, cultural references or the presence of facilities (car parking, interpretation boards, signage) that may emphasise importance.

In this assessment, sensitivity is judged as a combination of susceptibility and value and is ranked as follows:

- **High** – visitors to promoted or valued viewpoints especially those with panoramic views; visitors to heritage or tourism sites where views are important; viewpoints noted within planning guidance or policy; receptors to public rights of way particular those receiving high numbers of visitors or signposted trails; receptors in residential properties.

- **Medium** – receptors travelling along cycle routes or local roads particularly those in rural areas where speeds are slower.
- **Low** – receptors that are fast-moving (due to speed on roads and motorways) or because they are engaged in an activity not concerned with the landscape or view (such as work or sport).

As with all aspects of the methodology, these definitions are not rigid; where professional judgement has been applied, this would be noted in the narrative.

2.4.4 Visual receptor magnitude of change

The assessment of the magnitude of change on visual receptors follows similar principles to landscape assessment in terms of size or scale, the geographic extent of the area influenced and its duration and reversibility.

The **magnitude of change** is a product of the size/scale, extent and duration of the impacts. These are judged as a four-point scale:

- **High** - where the development causes a very notable (or significant) change in the existing view for a sensitive receptor
- **Medium** - where the development would cause a very noticeable change in the existing view
- **Low** - where the development would cause a noticeable change in the existing view
- **Negligible/No Change** - where the development would cause a barely perceptible change in the existing view

2.5 Assessment of landscape and visual impacts

The second step is to determine the scale of impacts. This is evaluated by combining the sensitivity (or nature) of the landscape or visual receptor and the magnitude (or nature) of change. The following matrix provides an objective rationale for determining the scale of impacts, in order to provide consistency and transparency to the process; however a degree of professional judgement is a key element of the evaluation.

Table 2-1: Scale of impacts matrix

		Sensitivity to change (nature of receptors)		
		Low	*Medium*	*High*
Magnitude of Change resulting from impacts identified	*No Change/ Negligible*	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible
	Low	Slight	Slight - Moderate	Moderate
	Medium	Slight - Moderate	Moderate	Moderate - Substantial
	High	Moderate	Moderate - Substantial	Substantial

The scale of impacts detailed above can be classed as beneficial, neutral or adverse.

Classification of landscape impacts:

Adverse landscape impacts occur when features or key landscape characteristics such as established planting, old buildings or structures which—when considered singularly or collectively—help to define the character of an area are lost, or where new structures out of scale or character with the surroundings are introduced.

- **Substantial adverse landscape impacts** occur where the proposals are at considerable variance with the landform, scale and pattern of the landscape and would be a dominant feature, resulting in considerable reduction in scenic quality and large scale change to the intrinsic landscape character of the area.
- **Moderate adverse landscape impacts** occur where proposals are out of scale with the landscape, or inconsistent with the local pattern and landform and may be locally dominant and/or result in a noticeable reduction in scenic quality and a degree of change to the intrinsic landscape character of the area;
- **Slight adverse landscape impacts** occur where the proposals do not quite fit with the scale, landform or local pattern of the landscape and may be locally intrusive but would result in a minor reduction in scenic quality or change to the intrinsic landscape character of the area.

Neutral landscape impacts *arise when* the change proposed results in no discernible improvement or deterioration to the landscape resource. The proposals sit well within the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape and / or would not result in any discernible reduction in scenic quality or change to the intrinsic landscape character of the area.

Beneficial landscape impacts *occur* where derelict buildings, land or poorly maintained landscape features are repaired, replaced and maintained or where new features are introduced such as new tree planting which helps to define landscape structure where none currently exists. Beneficial landscape impacts can be slight, moderate or substantial.

Classification of visual impacts:

Adverse visual impacts occur *when the proposed development will introduce new, non-characteristic, discordant or intrusive element/s into views.*

- **Substantial adverse visual impacts** occur where the proposed development would cause a considerable deterioration in the existing view or visual amenity.
- **Moderate adverse visual impacts** occur where the proposed development would cause a noticeable deterioration in the existing view or visual amenity.
- **Slight adverse visual impacts** occur where the proposed development would cause a barely perceptible deterioration in the existing view or visual amenity.

Neutral visual impacts occur where the change proposed results in no discernible improvement or deterioration to views or visual amenity.

Beneficial visual impacts *occur when the proposed development would enhance the quality of the receptor's view e.g. by creating a new focal point in a degraded landscape that includes a range of existing detractors.* Beneficial visual impacts can be slight, moderate or substantial.

The scale indicates the importance of the impacts, taking into account the sensitivity (or nature) of the receptor and the magnitude (or nature) of the impact. It is usually rated on the following scale of impact:

- ***Substantial*** indicates an impact that is very important in the planning decision making process.
- ***Moderate - substantial*** indicates an impact that is, in itself, material in the planning decision making process.
- ***Moderate*** indicates a noticeable impact that is not, in itself, material in the planning decision making process.
- ***Slight*** indicates an effect that is trivial in the planning decision making process.

- ***Negligible/No Change*** indicates an effect that is akin to no change and is thus not relevant to the planning decision making process.

Judging the overall importance of the impacts

Impacts may be described as notable in projects that are not subject to EIA. ***Notable*** impacts are defined as those that are moderate-substantial or substantial. However whilst an impact may be significant, it does not necessarily mean that such an effect would be unacceptable. Account is taken of the impact that any mitigation measures—for example planting or landform—may have in terms of minimising potentially detrimental impacts or improving the landscape composition of the area.

3 Landscape Policy

3.1 National Planning Policy

3.1.1 National Planning Framework for Scotland 3 (NPF3)

NPF3 was published in June 2014 and sets the spatial strategy for Scotland's development for the following 20 to 30 years. It includes the Scottish Government's policy commitments on sustainable economic growth and is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. NPF3 includes reference to the importance of green infrastructure and landscape and cultural heritage, with particular emphasis on the need to prioritise environmental enhancement in places where past activity has impacted on landscape. Planning authorities must also take NPF3 into account in the preparation of LDPs.

3.1.2 Scottish Planning Policy (SPP)

SPP is the statement of Scottish Government's policy on nationally important land use planning matters. It sets the core principles, key objectives and intended outcomes of the planning system.

Within the section *Valuing the Historic Environment*, it notes that Planning authorities should *…protect and, where appropriate, seek to enhance garden and designed landscapes included in the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes and designed landscapes of regional or local importance*.

Within the section *A Natural, Resilient Place*, the SPP states that the Planning system should *facilitate positive change while maintaining and enhancing distinctive landscape character [and] protect and enhance ancient semi-natural woodland as an important and irreplaceable resource, together with other native or long-established woods, hedgerows and individual trees with high nature conservation or landscape value*.

The section *Valuing the Natural Environment* lists a number of Policy Principals where the planning system should *…promote protection and improvement of the water environment, including rivers, lochs, estuaries, wetlands, coastal waters and groundwater, in a sustainable and coordinated way; seek benefits for biodiversity from new development where possible, including the restoration of degraded habitats and the avoidance of further fragmentation or isolation of habitats; and support opportunities for enjoying and learning about the natural environment*.

3.2 Local Planning Policy

Preparation of a Local Development Plan (LDP) is a requirement of the Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006. The LDP sets out detailed policies and proposals for the area which, together with supplementary planning guidance, will inform decisions on future development when the council assesses planning applications. The Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 requires that decisions on planning applications should be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The Local Development Plan for the site and the right (east) bank of the River Cramond is the Edinburgh City Local Plan (2010). The area to the left (west) bank lies within the Rural West Lothian Local Plan Alteration (2011).

Both plans will be superceded by a single new Local Development plan that is scheduled to be adopted in 2016.

3.2.1 Edinburgh City Local Plan (2010)

The Edinburgh City Local Plan sets out the Council's policies to guide development in the city and its proposals for specific sites. The Plan covers the whole of the urban area, and part of its rural, Green Belt fringe. It comprises the Local Plan, Proposals Map, Supplementary Guidance and a number of Planning Briefs, Frameworks and Masterplans.

Chapter 3 Design Principles for New Development generally relates to buildings, but **Policy Des 9 - Waterside Development** has relevance and states the following:

> *Development on sites on the coastal edge and development on sites adjoining a watercourse, including the Union Canal, will only be permitted where the proposal:*
>
> *- provides an attractive frontage to the water in question*
>
> *- maintains or provides public access to the water's edge*
>
> *- maintains and enhances the nature conservation or landscape interest of the water body including its margins*

Policy Env 11 Landscape Quality relates to areas defined on the map as Great Landscape Value. It states the following:

> *Planning permission will not be granted for development which would damage or detract from the overall character and appearance of the Areas of Great Landscape Value shown on the Proposals Map, prominent ridges, or other important topographical or landscape features.*

The site is not with an area of Great Landscape Value. The nearest is around 0.6km to the southeast, covering open areas within the Royal Burgess and Bruntsfield Golf Courses.

Policy Env 15 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation states the following:

Development likely to have an adverse impact on the flora, fauna, landscape or geological features of a Local Nature Reserve or a Local Nature Conservation Site will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that:

- *the reasons for allowing the development are sufficient to outweigh the nature conservation interest of the site*
- *the adverse consequences of allowing the development for the value of the site have been minimised and mitigated in an acceptable manner.*

Policy Os 1 - Open Space Protection states the following:

Proposals involving the loss of open space will not be permitted unless it is demonstrated that:

- *there will be no significant impact on the quality or character of the local environment*
- *the open space is a small part of a larger area or of limited amenity or leisure value and there is a significant over-provision of open space serving the immediate area and the loss would not be detrimental to the wider network including its continuity or biodiversity value*
- *there will be a local benefit in allowing the development in terms of either alternative equivalent provision being made or improvement to an existing public park or other open space or*
- *the development is for a community purpose and the benefits to the local community outweigh the loss.*

Policy ENV10 Green Belt states that only the following will be permitted within the designated area:

- *where necessary for the purposes of agriculture, woodland and forestry, horticulture or for a countryside recreational use compatible with an agricultural or natural setting, and provided also that any necessary buildings, structures or hard standing areas are ancillary to the main use, small scale and of high design quality*
- *where the proposal is for the change of use or small scale extension of an existing building, particularly a building of architectural or historic merit, provided that any proposed extension or ancillary development would not be detrimental to the character or appearance of the Green Belt*
- *where related to an existing non-conforming use or building in the Green Belt and provided the proposal is appropriate in type, scale and design to the existing building and not detrimental to the character or appearance of the Green Belt.*

Edinburgh's Green Belt seeks to preserve the areas of countryside around the city. The principal aim of the Green Belt designation is outlined in Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) 21, which states it is intended to:

- *direct planned growth to the most appropriate locations and support regeneration*
- *protect and enhance the character, landscape setting and identity of towns and cities and*
- *protect and give access to open space within and around towns and cities, as part of the wider structure of green space.*

It should be noted that the designation of an area as green belt is not based on any assessment of landscape quality, condition or value based on a detailed methodology, such as that used to identify special landscape areas or particularly sensitive Landscape Character Areas.

Heritage designations

Policies which relate to Conservation Areas, Inventory Gardens & Designated Landscapes, Listed Buildings and Scheduled Ancient Monuments will be covered with the separate cultural heritage assessment.

It is worth noting that the proposal sites are within a Designated Conservation area and although this is not a landscape designation, this designation signifies an area that is likely to be more sensitive to impacts from development and any resultant change in character.

Policy Env 6 Conservation Area - Development therefore has relevance to landscape and states that development within a Conservation Area will be permitted which:

- *preserves or enhances the special character or appearance of the conservation area and is consistent with the relevant conservation area character appraisal*
- *preserves trees, hedges, boundary walls, railings, paving and other features which contribute positively to the character of the area and*
- *demonstrates high standards of design and utilises materials appropriate to the historic environment.*
- *Planning applications should be submitted in a sufficiently detailed form for the visual effect of the development proposal on the character of the area to be assessed.*

3.3 Rural West Edinburgh Local Plan (2011)

In addition to the Edinburgh City Local Plan, the Rural West Edinburgh Local Plan, covers the remainder of the Council's area, generally west of the City Bypass. This includes the left (west) bank of the River Almond and adjacent land.

Policy E4 Environmental Impact states that *all development proposals should fully take into account the likely effects on the environment and include measures necessary to mitigate any adverse effects*.

The site is within the Green Belt. As noted above, this is not a designation based on a measured assessment of landscape quality, character and condition. However, **Policy E5 - Development in Green Belt and Countryside Areas** states the following, inter alia:

> *To protect the landscape quality, rural character and amenity of the Green Belt and Countryside Policy Areas, development in those areas will not be permitted except:*
>
> *… (c) where proposals are for minor extensions and alterations to existing buildings and it can be demonstrated that:*
>
> *- there would be no materially adverse effect on the openness of the area or its landscape quality or character…*

Further to this, **Policy E6 - Design and Amenity Criteria** *for development in the Green Belt and Countryside notes the following, inter alia, although these generally relate to built form (residential or commercial development):*

> *Where acceptable in principle, development proposals in the Green Belt or countryside must meet the following criteria which aim to achieve high standards of design and landscaping and to safeguard local amenity.*

- *the proposed development is sited in a location which will minimise impact on its immediate surroundings and general landscape setting and should, where possible, be closely related to an existing building;*
- *the character and scale of the proposed development should be in keeping with any nearby traditional buildings and should facilitate integration of the development into the rural landscape;*
- *sufficient landscaping is provided to enhance the setting of the development through the creation of a positive landscape framework that is in keeping with the existing landscape character of the area and that accords with the guidance 'Quality of Landscaping in Developments';*
- *boundary treatment is appropriate to the rural setting; and*
- *colours, finishes and materials should be used which blend with the natural environment. Where the proposed development relates to the change of use or conversion/alteration of an existing building, the following additional criteria must be met:*
- *the external character of the existing buildings and their setting are retained in a style appropriate to a rural area;*

The Proposals Map designated a number of areas that are afforded additional policy protection through being of higher landscape quality or condition, including **a** narrow strip along the left (west) bank of the River Almond through the study area. **Policy E8 - Areas of Great Landscape Value and Areas of Outstanding Landscape Quality** states the following:

> *Within the designated Area of Great Landscape Value and Areas of Outstanding Landscape Quality shown on the Proposals Map, the Council will protect and enhance the quality of the landscape. When determining applications for planning permission for development within these areas, a major consideration will be the impact of proposed development on those landscape features which contribute to the quality of the landscape. Development will not be permitted where it would adversely affect the special scenic qualities and integrity of the Area of Great Landscape Value or Areas of Outstanding Landscape Quality. These landscape features include:*
>
> *- the patterns of woodland, fields, hedgerows and trees;*

- the special qualities of rivers and lochs; and

- skylines and hill features, including prominent views.

The scale, siting, design, form, materials and impact of important landscape features are all aspects of a proposal that could have an adverse effect on AGLVs. These considerations will apply to developments to be located either within or affecting the setting of areas designated as AGLVs or AOLQs.

Policy E14 - Designed Landscapes relates to such designated areas, including Dalmeny which is within the study area. This policy states:

Proposed development which would adversely affect Designed Landscapes of national significance or their setting, as defined in the Inventory, will only be permitted where it assists restoration and would not adversely affect the artistic merit, historical, horticultural, arboricultural, archaeological, architectural, nature conservation or scenic value of the landscape. In seeking to secure such restoration, the Council will liaise with Historic Scotland and Scottish Natural Heritage. Where proposed development would adversely affect other designed landscape features that are worthy of retention, including noninventory historic gardens, surviving features of designed landscapes and mature public parks, the development will only be permitted if the adverse effect has been minimised and is outweighed by public benefits arising from the development.

4 Baseline conditions and assessment of effects

This section provides a description of the baseline conditions for the key landscape and visual receptors identified, along with an assessment of the potential effects of the proposed development. Where landscape or visual receptors are expected to have *effects judged unlikely to occur or so insignificant that it is not essential to consider them further* (GLVIA3), these are 'scoped out' of the assessment with reasons given.

4.1 Landscape character: baseline

4.1.1 National – Landscape Character Assessments

Existing published studies relate to the area under consideration. These include one of the 29 regional Landscape Character Assessments coordinated by Scottish National Heritage between 1994 and 1999. **The Lothians Landscape Character Assessment** (no. 91) was prepared by ASH Consulting Group and published in 1998. It describes 26 Landscape Character Areas (LCAs). The sites lie on the boundary between **LCA 26 - Linlithgow / Queensferry Farmlands** to the west and the urban area of Edinburgh to the east, which was not assessed.

The key characteristics of NCA 64 that are particularly relevant to the study area are:

- *Rolling terrain with some prominent igneous outcrops*
- *Significant woodland cover, concentrated mainly within several major private estates*
- *Well maintained hedgerows and field boundaries*

These regional assessments are high-level, strategic studies that cover a comparatively wide area. They would not normally be assessed in relation to a proposal of this scale. It is considered unlikely that the proposed development would have an influence on landscape character at a National Area scale. This study therefore focuses on the local landscape character and assessments described below.

4.1.2 Local – Edinburgh Landscape Character Assessment

The Edinburgh Landscape Character Assessment (ELCA) was produced by Land Use Consultants in 2006 to complement the Lothians Landscape Character Assessment and provide an analysis of landscape character at a more detailed scale.

The study identifies 14 Landscape Character Types (LCT) within the District. The sites are within the **Incised River Valley LCT**. The key characteristics of this are:

- *Steeply incised valley sides above a river bed which is sometimes narrow and occasionally opens out to a broader valley with areas of pasture*
- *There are exposed rock outcrops within the river bed and along the valley side*
- *Woodland is frequently associated with the steep valley sides and a semi-natural character exists in many places*
- *There is a legacy of mills in the valley and weirs along the river*
- *Secluded and intimate character provided by the landform and vegetation which limits views into and out of the character area*
- *Settlement extends to the edge of the incised valley and in places joins to the water's edge*
- *Recreational routes extend along the river side and the area is popular for recreation.*

Within the ELCA each LCT is subdivided into Landscape Character Areas. The sites are within **LCA 5 - Lower Almond Valley**. The attributes of this LCA which are most relevant to the site are:

- *A narrow incised valley with occasional exposed rock faces*
- *The valley is consistently wooded along its length and this accentuates the containment found experienced from the well-used Almond Walkway which is aligned along the southern bank of the river.*
- *There is a rich legacy of industrial features including mills and weirs close to Cramond.*

Immediately adjacent to the west is **LCA 12 - Dalmeny Policies** part of the **Policy Landscape LCT.** It is usually the case that boundaries between LCT are not always readily distinguishable on the ground and there may be a transition zone where features from both adjoining character types are present. In this case the strongly distinctive nature of the Lower Almond Valley and its lack of inter-visibility with surrounding areas means that the boundaries are fairly sharp and well defined and the internal character of the valley does not inform the wider character of the Dalmeny Policies LCAs

4.2 Site character and fabric

Both sites are located within the Lower Almond River Valley, a deeply incised valley with steep sided densely wooded banks. Due to the enclosed nature of the valley the landscape character is considered to be relatively restricted.

4.2.1 Fair-a-Far Weir

Fair-a-Far Weir is located in a particularly narrow section of the valley where prominent rocky outcrops constrict the river and create a strong sense of enclosure, which is further reinforced by areas of dense overhanging woodland to both sides. The ruined Fair-a-Far Mill (which, like the weir, is a Category B Listed Building) is sited immediately adjacent to the north-west. The close relationship between these two elements forms part of the historical narrative of the river, hinting at the industrial usage of the watercourse which was once widespread throughout the valley.

The weir itself is a vertical drop horseshoe structure which curves between a sheer rocky outcrop to the north and a stepped viewing platform to the south, which forms part of the River Almond Walkway. The weir is constructed of sandstone masonry that has been sourced locally

and is visible in nearby outcrops. It appears to be in relatively good condition with only a few blocks missing from the crest. To the northern side there is an inoperable fish pass also constructed of sandstone masonry, although the blockwork is noticeably cruder and in poorer condition.

4.2.2 Dowie's Mill Weir

Dowie's Mill Weir is located on a wide bend in the river 1km upstream from Fair-a-Far. It stretches across the bend in an curved manner between two low areas of bank. The weir is constructed predominantly of concrete with a variety of gradients to the downstream side of the structure.

Upstream of the weir the impounded water creates a relatively tranquil weir pool that stretches back to beyond Cramond Old Bridge—now used only as a footbridge—which dates back to the late 15th or early 16th century and is Category A listed. To the downstream side of the weir is an area of rapids formed where the water flows over rocky outcrops and boulders.

Overlooking the weir to the east are Dowie's Mill Lane Cottages (Category C Listed) situated on the adjacent Dowie's Mill Lane which runs from Braepark Road to the south. Together with the weir and Dowie's Mill House these form part of the historic Dowie's Mill complex. Less than 70m away to the east is the urban fringe of Cramond, which despite its proximity, is obscured by densely-treed areas along the eastern slopes of the valley. To the south the Cramond New Bridge can be seen from the bank close to the weir albeit these are glimpsed views through trees and other vegetation.

The River Almond Walkway runs along the right (east) bank between both weirs. It forms part of the Edinburgh Core Path network (CEC 11). This is a well-used and highly valued route that provides views of the river, woodland and associated heritage features along its length.

The local character of the two sites is fairly typical of the Lower River Almond Valley which is informed by its narrow, deeply incised topography, wooded slopes and occasional rock faces. Visually and perceptually this creates a strong sense of enclosure and visual separation from the urban area of the Edinburgh conurbation immediately to the east and the open farmland of the Dalmeny Estate to the west. Overall the landscape feels more rural than would be expected considering its location on the urban fringe. The presence of the Almond Walkway reinforces the amenity, recreational and visual value of the site.

4.3 Landscape character: assessment of effects

The character of the sites generally accord with the descriptions of the LCA 5 - Lower Almond Valley as defined in the Edinburgh Landscape Character Assessment. It displays some of the key characteristics such as narrow, deeply incised valley, wooded slopes, occasional rock faces, and a legacy of industrial features including mills and weirs.

4.3.1 Fair-a-Far

The elements that make up the Fair-a-Far site (landscape fabric) are considered here to be of high value. It is subject to local policy protection as a public open space and the weir structure itself is also Category B listed and forms part of the setting for the adjacent Category B listed mill remains. It is within a Conservation Area and the left bank is designated as a Designed Landscape and an Area of Outstanding Landscape Quality in Local Policy. The weir is a well visited local attraction which according to anecdotal evidence is highly valued by local residents. Sensitivity is considered to be high.

The fish pass at Fair-a-Far is a more recent addition to the landscape and as such sets a precedent for modern alterations to the weir which are sympathetic to the surrounding character.

The proposed changes to the landscape have been outlined in Section 1.2.3. These changes have the potential to impact upon the landscape fabric by the addition of a new fish pass feature and repairs to the weir crest. During construction the presence of a site compound, increased traffic, diversion of the River Almond Walkway and creation of access features across the weir would result in temporary effects on the landscape fabric, character and amenity.

In the medium-long term the main changes to the fabric would be the presence of the new fish pass. The design of the fish pass will be similar to that already in existence at the site. In addition, over time, the fish pass would weather to match the local stonework and its prominence will be reduced.

There will be the loss of a single tree and the River Almond Walkway will remain unchanged. During construction the remains of Dowie's Mill will be protected by a 5m no-go zone.

During the construction phase the change to the landscape fabric will be localised, temporary and short-term; the effect overall is moderate adverse.

During the operational phase the scale of the change to the landscape fabric of the site is expected to be low and neutral, reducing to negligible over time. The overall effect on the fabric of the site is considered to be moderate, neutral, reducing to negligible over time.

The site character is considered here to be of fairly limited extents due to the limiting effect of enclosed topography and steep wooded slopes, but could be said to stretch up to 500m from the site along the river corridor. Effects reduce with distance, such that these may be negligible within relatively short distances. The pronounced topography of the area is considered to limit the extent of landscape effects, due to restricted perceptual and visual influences. The overall effect on LCA 5 during operation is considered to be **slight adverse during construction, negligible adverse** during operation. Over time, as materials weather, the effect may become neutral.

4.3.2 Dowie's Mill Weir

As with Fair-a-Far the site is within a designated public open space. The weir and weir pool are relatively attractive features and are valued by local residents and visitors. Due to their shared heritage as part of the Dowie's Mill complex, the weir forms part of the setting for the Grade C listed Dowie's Mill Lane Cottages and Dowie's Mill House (listed as 29 Dowie's Mill Lane, Primrose Cottage). The weir pool also plays a part in the setting of the Cramond Old Bridge, a Grade A listed structure and Scheduled Ancient monument. Unlike Fair-a-Far the majority of the weir has suffered structural deterioration and replacement with modern materials; the original fabric is less apparent and it is not listed. However, it has evidential value as a surviving element of the early industrial structures along the river. The elements that make up the wider site character are considered here to be of high value and the site is adjacent to well-used recreational routes. Sensitivity is High.

The proposed changes to the landscape have been outlined in Section 1.2.3. These changes have the potential to impact upon the landscape fabric by replacement of the weir with a full width feature including pools and boulders (riffles) that would allow fish passage. This would lower water levels upstream, narrowing the channel width alongside removal of some shrubs and other vegetation. During construction, the temporary and short-term presence of a compound and working area within woodland to the left bank, accessed along a private track, alongside a temporary material handling area off Cramond Brig Toll, would impact on landscape fabric and character.

In the medium to long term the most prominent change to the fabric would be the replacement of the weir with the pool and riffle fish pass resulting in a move away from a patently man-made structure to one of more naturalistic character. The steep fall in the riverbed presently created by the weir would be spread out over a greater length of river. Upstream of the weir this will result in a partial drop in water level and an extension of the areas of turbulent flow, exposed bed and rocky features.

As with Fair-a-Far the site character is considered here to be of fairly limited extents due to the effect of enclosed topography and steep wooded slopes, but could be said to stretch up to 500m from the site along the river corridor. Effects reduce with distance, such that these may be negligible within relatively short distances. The pronounced topography of the area is considered to limit the extent of landscape effects, due to restricted perceptual and visual influences.

The loss of the weir structure will result in a reduction of some elements that are considered to be positive, such as the noise and movement of water and the extended, impounded water

body. The structure has heritage significance as a relatively long-standing feature that has defined the river at this point and attests to the historical development of industry. However, the removal of what now appears—superficially at least— as an arguably incongruous concrete feature would result in the exposure of more bedrock that will produce more dynamic and naturalistic flow. This could be seen as a positive return to the more naturalistic character of the River Almond Valley.

During the construction phase the change to landscape is expected to be extensive within the site but localised, short-term and temporary. The overall magnitude of change is locally medium, but reducing to negligible beyond the immediate site area. Effects on the immediate area would be **moderate-substantial adverse** which is **notable**, but effects on the wider LCA 5 is considered to be **slight-moderate adverse** at most and not notable.

During the operational phase the works will be permanent; the magnitude of change is locally medium, but reducing to negligible beyond the immediate site area. The effect on LCA 5 may locally be **moderate-substantial** which is **notable**, but overall **moderate and not notable**. This effect may initially be adverse at first but over time considered to be neutral or beneficial as vegetation establishes and natural processes soften the new channel features.

4.3.3 Effect on adjacent LCA

No direct effects are expected from either site for LCA 12 - Dalmeny Policies, which lies immediately north-west of the site. The character of this area is not informed by views down towards into the valley and there would be no inter-visibility between this LCA and the site. The effect is considered to be negligible, reducing to no change over time.

4.4 Landscape designations

4.4.1 Policy OS 1 - Open Space Protection

This policy seeks to protect public open space from loss to inappropriate development. The proposal will not reduce the amount of public open space, nor is it expected that there will be any significant impact on the quality or character of the local environment. The effect on this policy designation is considered to be No Change during operation.

4.4.2 Policy E8 - Area of Outstanding Landscape Quality

This policy seeks to safeguard areas of "outstanding scenic quality and character" from inappropriate development with a focus on retaining and enhancing "features of landscape quality".

The proposal at Fair-a-Far would enhance the weir through repairs to the structure and the replacement of the existing fish pass. Although the proposal at Dowie's Mill Weir would remove an existing feature, this would be through the replacement of a recently altered feature with a more naturalistic river corridor character. Whilst there will be a loss of the pooled water that informs the character of the designation and new channel would appear different, it should arguably exhibit similar levels of landscape quality. Overall the area of landscape quality would be retained and its scenic qualities protected. The overall effect during operation is considered to be moderate, neutral.

5 Visual baseline and assessment of effects

Visual receptors are people that may experience views of the landscape. These may include residents and visitors to settlements, roads, footpaths, trails, visitor facilities or particular viewpoints. ZTV, desktop and site studies have been used to identify the key visual receptors likely to be affected by the proposal.

5.1 Visual qualities of the proposal site

Due to the position of the sites within a densely wooded and narrow steep sided valley, views are limited and often focused by intervening trees and topography in the fore and mid-ground. Rocky outcrops, overhanging trees and the occasional views of houses built on the steep slope of the valley further increase the sense of enclosure. Some more open views are experienced at higher points in the valley such as from Cramond Old Bridge and at elevated points of the River Almond Walkway.

In the immediate vicinity of the sites views are dominated by the River Almond and surrounding woodland as well as structures associated with the industrial heritage of the area.

5.1.1 Fair-a-Far

Within the immediate site area of Fair-a-Far the views are dominated by the weir itself and the surrounding rocky outcrops and cliffs. To the southern side of the site outcrops of sandstone rise up several meters. In places these are colonised by a variety of woodland plants including large ivy-covered trees which project out from bare rock creating a canopy above the Almond walkway. Immediately to north the visual field is filled with a near-vertical face of rock which stretches upwards several meters, providing a home for a myriad of cascading trees and other vegetation. Beyond this the dense woodland and evergreen vegetation growing on steep sides of the valley further enhance the sense of vertical enclosure.

Also notable in the near distance views are the remains of the historic mill building and features associated with the River Almond walkway such as ornamented metal railings, steps, and platforms constructed of robust masonry.

Some longer distance views are experienced down the river itself but these are narrowly focused by surrounding woodland and trees.

5.1.2 Dowie's Mill Weir

Views within the immediate vicinity of Dowie's Mill Weir are restricted by the dense woodland to both sides of the valley. Prominent within the short-range views are the weir itself and associated rapids composed of boulders and bedrock to the downstream side. Waterside trees and Dowie's Mill Lane Cottages are also key elements within the view. Due to screening by trees, longer range views are only experienced looking directly upstream of the weir. Within this view the Cramond Old Bridge together with impounded water above the weir forming an attractive aspect, although this can only be glimpsed through gaps between trees along the eastern bank of the river.

5.2 Settlements and residential receptors

The assessment of visual effects on residential receptors is an outline assessment only; it is not a detailed Residential Amenity Assessment. Assumptions have been made about the types and use of rooms within houses and are based on site-based observations and aerial photography. Without undertaking the assessment from inside each room it is not possible to be certain that the assessment is completely accurate.

5.2.1 Fair-a-Far

The site is located on the outskirts of Cramond. The settlements edge at is closest point to the site is made up mainly of flat blocks, Nos. 2, 4, 6 & 8 Fair-a-Far. Although these are 6 storeys high the proposals would be largely screened from these residences by the steep topography and dense intervening woodland. There may be some views of the fish pass from the upper storeys of the blocks, although the landform and woodland screening may preclude this. To the south of the site Nos. 36, 38 & 40 Cramond Vale are similarly screened by landform and thickly wooded areas on the sides of the valley. The impact on these properties is considered to be **negligible to slight** at most during operation and **negligible** or **No change** during operation.

To the north-west of Fair-a-Far are a number of residences on School Brae, including Caddell's Row Cottages. These overlook the river or are adjacent to the main construction access route and car-park. If the site compound were to be located in the car park there may be some

glimpsed views experienced through intervening woodland planting to the south of the carpark, although this is likely to be minimal whilst the trees are in leaf and short-term. There will be an increase in traffic during this period. Views further upstream towards the weir itself are screened by trees along the right bank of the river. Overall the impact is considered to be **Slight-moderate** during construction and **No Change** during operation.

Views from properties in Cramond situated further within the body of the settlement are not expected to experience any views of the proposal due to landform and therefore the impact is considered to be **no change.**

Similarly properties to the west of the River Almond are not expected to experience views due to landform screening, and impact is considered to be **no change**.

5.2.2 Dowie's Mill Weir

The site includes the section of the River Almond up to Cramond Old Brig in the south and Dowie's Weir in the north. Cramond lies immediately to the east, the closest residences of which are Nos. 17-20 Braepark Road close to the brig and Dowie's Mill Lane Cottages close to the weir. The densely wooded character of the valley at this point provides high levels of screening to nearby buildings.

Construction traffic and the compound area will be situated to the left bank; no vehicles movements are expected along Dowie's Mill Lane and Braepark Road. Effects arising from any lowering of retained water levels may be subjective and dependent on the householder's preferences.

17 Braepark Road appears to be well screened by elements with the vicinity including evergreen garden vegetation. The change to the retained river levels may be apparent from the garden. The effect is considered to be negligible adverse during construction and slight, neutral during operation.

20 Braepark Road will be largely screened by vegetation in the summer months however it will experience views of the proposals when the surrounding trees are not in leaf. Changes in the retained river levels may be visible. The effect is considered to be slight adverse during construction and slight, neutral during operation.

Willowbank, 19 Cramond Brig Toll is subject to screening by evergreen trees close to the property on the left bank. Views of the proposal site are expected to be very limited, although change in river levels may be visible from the garden area. During construction, access will be along a private track adjacent to the property, with a materials handling are within an area of hardstanding opposite the property. As a consequence, this property may experience temporary, short-term increases in traffic and plant movement during the works programme. The effect is considered to be slight-moderate adverse during construction and negligible, neutral during operation.

18 Ewerland has an elevated position overlooking the River Almond. The area of dense woodland on the right bank of the river is expected to completely screen views from the property towards the proposals when the trees are in leaf. Views of the proposals will be experienced through the tress in the winter months. There are several large windows in the property which face south-west towards the river. The effect is considered to be slight adverse during construction and negligible, neutral during operation.

14-21 Dowie's Mill Lane Cottages are situated approximately 10m from the left bank of the river at their closest point. Views from the properties are partially obstructed by deciduous vegetation along the bank, however particularly in the winter months the proposals are likely to be fairly prominent in the views. The effect is considered to be moderate adverse during construction and moderate adverse, neutral or potentially beneficial during operation.

Dowie's Mill House is situated to the east of an area of dense woodland which screens the majority of views from the property of the proposal site. Any views that would be experienced are likely to be glimpsed through tree canopies from the top floor of the residence. The effect is considered to be negligible adverse during construction and neutral during operation.

Properties in the rest of Cramond are not expected to experience any views of the proposal site due to landform screening, and therefore the impact is considered to be **no change**.

5.3 Road and rail routes

5.3.1 Fair-a-Far

School Brae is located 0.32km NE. Impacts are likely to be limited to views of the site compound, which is expected to be located within the car park adjacent to the river. Site traffic will use this route. The road is used by residents and visitors, including those accessing the car park and onward routes along the Walkway. Sensitivity is medium-high. The effect is considered to be moderate adverse during construction and No Change during operation.

No views are expected from any other roads, including Cramond Vale, Fair-a-Far, due to screening by woodland and built form. No effects are expected during construction or operation.

5.3.2 Dowie's Mill Weir

The nearest road route is Dowie's Mill Lane which runs adjacent to the right bank. This is a route which provides dead-end vehicular access to Dowie's Mill Cottages. The road also forms part of the River Almond Walkway and is assessed as such in section 4.4.2.

Braepark Road connects Whitehouse Road, 0.5km east of the site, to Cramond Old Brig, over which vehicular access is prohibited. The road functions as a suburban residential street, the only road connection at its western end being Dowie's Mill Lane. Sensitivity is medium-high. Views of the proposals from the route are likely to be limited to those glimpsed through trees at the far western end by Cramond Old Brig. The effect is considered to be negligible during both construction and operation.

Cramond Brig Toll connects the western end of Cramond Old Brig to the A90. No views are expected of the site, although construction traffic will use this route to access the haul road and a temporary materials handling area will be located to the rear of the Cramond Brig Hotel. Sensitivity is considered to be medium. The effect is considered to be slight-moderate adverse during construction and Negligible during operation.

5.4 Recreational routes and Core Paths

A major recreation route passes by both sites in the form of the River Almond Walkway. This is a well-used route which closely follows the right bank of the River Almond. Cramond Old Bridge is used by 3 Core Paths within the Edinburgh City Council area.

5.4.1 Fair-a-Far

The River Almond Walkway (Core Path CEC11 and also a section of CEC6) passes alongside the site and part of the path would be used during construction for access from the site compound to the main construction works. This is likely to lead to short-term temporary closures for the route. The value of this route is high as it is within a Conservation Area, Area of Outstanding Landscape Quality, Local Biodiversity Site, Green Belt and also bounds the Firth of Forth Special Protection Area and Site of Special Scientific Interest. The sensitivity of this route is also high due to its popularity and the fact that it provides access to a relative natural environment within easy reach of Cramond, as well as providing a link between various historical features.

Impacts during construction will be apparent within the immediate site area, due proximity of works traffic which will affect tranquillity and visual quality, but they will be temporary and short-term. Changes may also involve vegetation loss and exposed, bare areas of soil that may be prominent to slow-moving receptors. The effect is considered to be **moderate adverse** during construction.

During operation the impact views will be limited. The effect is **slight adverse** at most reducing to **negligible neutral** over time.

Other nearby routes include:

- National Cycle Route 76 240m NW which runs from Berwick-upon-Tweed to Edinburgh, Stirling and Kirkcaldy, with the route on both sides of the Forth. This follows the same route through the Dalmeny estate as the John Muir Way.

- National Cycle Route 1, 1.05km SW at its nearest point, which is long distance cycle route connecting Dover and the Shetland Islands - via the east coast of England and Scotland - that also forms the majority of the British section of the North Sea Cycle Route.

Due to the lack of inter-visibility with Fair-a-Far these are not expected to experience any impacts and the impact is considered to be **no change.**

5.4.2 Dowie's Mill Weir

The River Almond Walkway (CEC11 and part of CEC6) runs immediately adjacent to the site along Dowie's Mill Lane. Access along the route will not be affected by the works. Views of the proposals will be partially screened by areas of shrubby vegetation and immature trees. In the winter months this screening effect will be much reduced. Slow-moving pedestrian receptors will be more aware of the changes resulting from the proposals, particularly the different character in the river channel adjacent to Dowie's Mill Lane. As a well-used and highly valued core-path, sensitivity for this route is considered to be high.

During construction the changes will be readily apparent although the compound and access areas will be to the far, left bank. These will be temporary and short-term; as such the magnitude of change is considered to be low and the effect is moderate adverse. During operation, the changes will be permanent. The magnitude of change will be medium and the effect is moderate-substantial. These effects may initially be adverse to the immediacy of the change in visual composition, but may be arguably be neutral or even beneficial in the long-term, due to a reversion to the original, naturalistic character of the river.

Views will also be apparent from the Cramond Old Brig, which is closed to vehicles and forms part of CEC11, CEC6, CEC9 and National Cycle Route 1. Construction traffic will access the site along the approach from the west, within view of the bridge although not directly impacting on the key aspect of the river. The bridge will allow views of the lowered river levels, which may affect the overall character on operation. The effect is considered to be moderate adverse at most, becoming neutral or potentially beneficial.

The route through the Dalmeny estate comprising part of both the National Cycle Route 76 and The John Muir Way to the west of the site, has no inter-visibility with the site due to topography and therefore the impact is considered to be **no change**.

6 Mitigation

In order to reduce landscape and visual impacts described above, there may be opportunities to introduce appropriate features that will be in accordance with published guidance and the context of the surrounding area.

The following should be considered as items that may be proportionate to the overall context of the scheme:

- Avoidance of unnecessary scrub and tree loss, other than in areas where access for machinery is required or spoil must be removed. Existing trees and shrub areas should be protected and demarcated to avoid damage. This particularly applies to the site access track and compound areas for Dowie's Weir.
- Where tree planting and seed mixes are specified, these must be appropriate to the site. Any specifications for planting and seeding should be in consultation with a qualified ecologist and input from a landscape architect. Standard amenity mixes should not be used.

- Consideration should be given to type of stone used in repair of weir crests, fish pass construction and construction of boulder rapids, riffles etc. This should ideally be of a local source or similar to local vernacular types and should be finished to match local existing.
- Lowest-cost treatments to structural features such as balustrading or handrails, such as Kee Klamp, should be avoided. Whilst a high-spec finish is not expected, the landscape architect should be consulted for an appropriate solution.
- Growth of living willow bank erosion controls should be kept in check where necessary to avoid undesirable screening.

7 Appendix A : Glossary

Impact

The action being taken - e.g. the felling of trees or the construction of a new feature.

Effect

The result of an action being taken or the change within an existing view or landscape resulting from the impact e.g. the construction of a feature forming a new and dominant element within a view.

Direct Effect

An effect that is directly attributable to the proposed development.

Indirect Effect

Effects that result indirectly from the proposed project as a consequence of the direct effects, often occurring away from the site, or as a result of a sequence of interrelationships or a complex pathway. They may be separated by distance or time from the source of the effects.

Notable Effects

Effects which are considered material or very important within the planning decision making process.

Landscape

'*Landscape is an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors*' (Council of Europe, 2000)

This definition was adopted by European Landscape Convention and is within GLVIA3 guidance.

Landscape Character

A distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that make one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse.

Landscape Effects

Effects on the landscape as a resource in its own right

Landscape Quality (Condition)

A measure of the physical state of the landscape. It may include the extent to which typical character is represented in individual areas, the intactness of the landscape and the condition of individual elements.

Landscape Receptors

Defined aspects of the landscape resource that have the potential to be affected by a proposal.

Landscape Value

The relative value that is attached to different landscapes by society. A landscape may be valued by different stakeholders for a whole variety of reasons.

Magnitude or nature (of effect)

A term that combines judgments about the size and scale of the effect, the extent of the area over which is occurs, whether it is reversible or irreversible and whether it is short or long term in duration.

Sensitivity or nature (of receptor)

A term applied to specific receptors, combining judgements of the susceptibility of the receptor to the specific type of change or development proposed and the value related to that receptor.

Susceptibility

The ability of a defined landscape or visual receptor to accommodate the specific proposed development without undue negative consequences.

Visual Amenity

The overall pleasantness of the views people enjoy of their surroundings, which provides an attractive visual setting or backdrop for the enjoyment of activities of the people living, working recreating, visiting or travelling through an area.

Visual Effects

How the surroundings of individuals and groups of people may be specifically affected by changes in the content and character of views as a result of the change, loss or addition of elements

Visual Receptors

Individuals and/or defined groups of people who have the potential to be affected by a proposal.

Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)

A digitally produced map, showing areas of land within which a development is theoretically visible.

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Registered Office
South Barn
Broughton Hall
SKIPTON
North Yorkshire
BD23 3AE

t:+44(0)1756 799919
e:info@jbaconsulting.com

Jeremy Benn Associates Ltd
Registered in England 3246693

Visit our website
www.jbaconsulting.com