

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT APPRAISAL SCREENING OPINION
(under the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment)
(Scotland) Regulations 2017)

Address: Land 300 Metres North Of 50 Research Avenue North Riccarton Currie	Applicant/ Agent:  1 Bar Lane York YO1 6JU
Summary Description of Development: Construction of a data centre campus	
Date of Receipt of Screening Request: 19 December 2025	
Application or Pre- Application: Pre-application	
Reference Number (Application/ PAN): 25/05576/SCR	
Sufficient Information to Make Assessment: Yes	

Declaration:

We have screened the proposals and determined that EIA is not required for this submission, for the reasons detailed below.

Signed... (Planning Officer)

Signed(Team Manager)

Date

IDENTIFYING THE DEVELOPMENT:

1. Is the development of a type described in Schedule 1?

NO

Yes – Proceed to declaration EIA is required

No – Proceed to next question.

2. Is the development of a type listed in column 1 of schedule 2 which:

- a) is located wholly or in part on a 'sensitive area' as defined in regulation 2(1) (see paragraph 45;

OR

- b) meets one of the relevant criteria or exceeds one of the relevant thresholds listed in the second column of the table in Schedule 2.

YES

If No, proceed to declaration.

The development is not located wholly or in part on a 'sensitive area' as defined in regulation 2(1).

The development is a 'Schedule 2 Development' as defined under Regulation 2 (1) of The Town and Country (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017. It is classed as an 'Urban development project' under section 10 – Infrastructure projects part b) of the table.

The area of development is 30.5 hectares in total. As this area of development exceeds the 0.5 hectares threshold in column 2 of these regulations, a screening opinion is required in accordance with schedule 3.

Consideration of EIA

3. Is the development likely to have a significant effect on the environment taking into account the following areas?

Selection Criteria for Screening Schedule 2 Development	
In accordance with Schedule 3 of the Regulations the following selection criteria are used to inform the screening opinion:	
Characteristics of development	
1. The characteristics of development must be considered having regard in particular to—	
	<i>Likely significant effects - Yes/ No?</i>
a) the size and design of the whole development;	No The site has proximity to a sensitive area as defined in regulation 2(1) as the Union Canal – a scheduled monument is located immediately north of the site boundary. It is also near other historic designations (Hermiston Conservation Area, listed buildings) and is in locally designated landscape areas (Gogar Special Landscape Area) and the Green Belt. The developments size (eg buildings' height and footprint) would be larger than most buildings in the surrounding area. The design (buildings external appearance) has not been finalised however data centres with their associated infrastructure are generally of a functional design. The site is an open field which contributes positively to the rural character of the Union Canal at this section. In this context, it is considered that the characteristics (size, design) of the development are anticipated to have adverse visual impacts on the scheduled monument. However, the site forms a proportionally small part of the Union Canals' wider setting with large expanse of open fields to the sites' west. Owing to this, it is not anticipated that these characteristics of the development

	would result in a significant environmental effect. Similarly, whilst adverse visual impacts on other landscape and historic designations are anticipated. The extent of impact would be reduced by existing transport infrastructure, the business park and surrounding woodland areas. Adverse effects from its size and design could be reduced through appropriate landscaping, sensitive external materials and lighting to help soften its visual impact. Planning conditions could be imposed to ensure the implementation of these details. The planning application would also allow assessment of these matters through the submission of a Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), Heritage Assessment (HA) and lighting plans.
b) the cumulation with other existing development and/or approved development;	No Planning permission 24/05242/FUL has been granted for a brewery development with associated works on land south of Research Avenue North. A prior notification reference 26/00634/PNT for telecommunications was also determined as permitted development on 2 Research Avenue South. There is also potential development for an energy generating system (EIA screening opinion issued reference 25/00460/SCR) has been issued on land east of Riccarton Mains Road. These developments are unlikely to be read in the context of the application site given they are spatially separated from this site with buildings, infrastructure and topography in between. This is similarly the case for all other existing and approved developments in the sites' vicinity. In this context, no significant cumulative effect on the environment is anticipated.

	Whilst there is potential for cumulative construction impacts (noise, vibration, dust) the site is not in an AQA, and it is spatially separated from other developments which do not suggest significant environmental effects are likely. The impacts from each development can also be appropriately controlled through a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) as necessary through legislation or regulations out with the planning process.
c) the use of natural resources, in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity;	No The development has the potential to use large amounts of water to control the buildings temperature. A closed-loop cooling system is proposed which has limited water consumption compared with other systems. Full details of this can be captured with the planning application. It is anticipated that the data centre development will use a large amount of energy (see Operational Energy Statement & Energy Statement) which would produce subsequent carbon emissions (see Greenhouse Gas Emissions Assessment). As a matter of course, data centre developments are not identified as a Schedule 1 development within the EIA regulations and therefore do not automatically require an EIA on this basis. Scottish Government' NPF4 outlines Green Data Centres as 'likely to have a negligible impact on achieving national greenhouse gas emission reduction targets (dependent on projects nature, direct / indirect effects). The sites' location in Scotland helps support the use of green energy as there is a ready supply of renewable energy and a cooler climate, helping to support data centres with lesser carbon footprints than

	other locations in the UK. It is estimated that the cumulative whole life carbon emissions for the building is potentially a reduction of 63% (operational carbon emissions) given its location in Scotland when compared to the rest of the UK over a 60-year period (addendum report). The data centres' scale (supporting a 200 MW power use) is also not disproportionately large in comparison to proposed or existing data centre developments within the UK. On this basis, it is not considered the developments energy use constitutes a significant environmental effect. The impacts from the energy use can also be reduced through the planning process with incorporation of on-site renewable energy measures through the developments detailed design. Separate consents and agreements will also be required with NESO (National System Operator) SPEN (Scottish Power Energy Networks) regarding Energy. Additionally, any water connections will require consent with Scottish Water. The development also has potential to have impacts on biodiversity. The loss of the sites' arable land may impact on breeding ground for commuting pink footed geese (which form part of the Firth of Forth Special Protection Area (SPA) – a European Site under regulation 2(1)) However, the site is located in an area where there is an abundance of arable land and there is a separation of approximately 7 km to the SPA. Otters associated with the River Tweed Special Area of Conservation (SAC) may also forage or commute across the site as identified in the PEA. Whilst impacts may occur a distance (14.8 km) would be retained to this SAC. The development also retains separate distances to Local Nature Conservation Sites (LNCS) and Ancient Woodlands.
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	Given this spatial context, significant environmental effects on these designations are not considered likely. No significant ecological impacts are identified in the PEA. An Ecological Impact Assessment (including further surveys) will be required with the planning application to assess these matters in detail. Ecological impacts can be reduced through the planning application process with sensitive lighting designs and tree protection measures. Mitigation can also be secured through incorporating specific biodiversity enhancement measures on-site. Soil impacts will occur as the development will be located on 'class 2 – land' (James Hutton Institute); land capable of producing a wide range of crops. Whilst the site area is large, it is located near other fields in this class 2 designation in a primarily agricultural area. In this regard, the development would not significantly impact on the wider availability of this land. The site has some (and is in proximity to) areas with a high likelihood of a surface water flood risk. The use of the sites greenfield land for development may have impacts on flooding however these impacts can be appropriately assessed through a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) and Surface Water Management Plan (SWMP) submitted with the planning application. The site is large and the development layout retains greenspace which can provide opportunity for any mitigation in the form of blue infrastructure, if appropriate.
d) the production of waste;	No The site characteristics as undeveloped greenfield land would not generate excess waste associated with demolition. The buildings' locations are setback from surrounding woodland areas (as detailed

	above) which appears likely to reduce excess waste associated with the removal of vegetation. There is potential for a large extent of excess soil from the stripping of the sites' fields. However, a soil management plan could be imposed by planning condition for details of soil re-use and to minimise excess waste. Other construction waste would be managed through a construction management plan and appropriate waste management regulations. The data centre development is likely to produce a large amount of waste energy from the heat produced (see Energy Statement). Low and zero carbon generating technologies are outlined which would help reduce energy consumption in tandem with the benefits of locating in Scotland as outlined in section 3 (c). Given these factors, it is not considered the developments energy use would constitute a significant environmental effect in EIA terms. The buildings energy performance would also be considered through building standards legislation with compliance demonstrated through a UK approved methodology calculation. The development also includes on-site district heating kiosks for waste heat recovery and options for excess heat re-use would be further explored through the planning process. If necessary, any waste connection agreement could be required prior to the start of the development operating.
e) pollution and nuisances;	No Dust would be generated with impacts on air pollution with carbon emissions

	generated and noise through use of machinery. However, there is nothing specific about the development to suggest significant environmental effects whilst the site is not within a designated Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). Similarly, noise pollution from its operations can be mitigated through the requirement for detail and implementation of noise mitigation measures imposed by planning condition. Other aspects that would contribute to pollution have been assessed through consideration of the use of natural resources (1 c) and production of waste (1 d) sections above.
f) the risk of major accidents and/or disasters relevant to the development concerned, including those caused by climate change, in accordance with scientific knowledge;	No The climate change risk assessment identifies a series of risks associated with the development from climate change. The recommendations to reduce risk can partly be mitigated through the planning process through consideration of blue / green infrastructure where appropriate. Other measures regarding the use of sustainable building design and materials would also be considered through building standards legislation with compliance demonstrated through a UK approved methodology calculation. Whilst recognised high risks from climate change associated with extreme heat is identified in the future the buildings would be required to comply with relevant building standards at the time including assessments of overall fire risk. The risk of extreme heat on landscape / ecology is unlikely to apply solely to this development and would be out with the reasonable control of planning legislation.

g) the risks to human health (for example, due to water contamination or air pollution).	No The development is large and impacts from construction (eg. dust and emissions) would have effects on air pollution. However, the site is not within a designated Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and there is no evidence to suggest that construction impacts would result in an exceedance of acceptable air quality levels. Similarly, whilst there is risk of water contamination the development retains separation distance to the watercourse which should help reduce these risks. These impacts can be appropriately controlled through a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) as necessary through legislation or regulations out with the planning process. Similarly, the characteristics of the development mainly for storage use is anticipated to result in low levels of employment on-site. Anticipated vehicular trips are therefore not anticipated to be significant and can be assessed with submission of a Transport Assessment (TA) with the planning application. The planning application will also be supported by a Coal Mining Risk Assessment and Geo Environmental with Assessment an assessment of soil and ground conditions. No specific impacts have been identified at this stage.
Location of development	
2. The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by development must be considered having regard in particular to—	
	<i>Likely significant effects - Yes/ No?</i>
a) the existing and approved land use;	No.

The sites' existing agricultural land use is part of the open rural character that borders the Union Canal. This landscape setting differs in this more rural context than in the urban area. The change to storage / distribution (class 6) use would have an urbanising effect on the land. However, this land is a proportionally small part of the Union Canals' more rural setting where there is an expanse of open fields to the west. In this context, a significant environmental effect on this scheduled monument is not anticipated.

The urbanising nature of the new land use may also have adverse impacts on the special character and quality of the SLA and the Green Belt. It is likely to change views of the site particularly from the immediate vicinity. However, whilst the development would be visible the site does not form part of an identified protected skyline view. In addition, the developments' level of prominence in wider view is anticipated to be reduced by existing woodland areas. In this context, a significant environmental effect is not likely.

These impacts would also be considered further through the planning application process with submission of a Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA). Adverse impacts from the proposed land use could be reduced with use of sensitive external materials (buildings & hard landscaping) and soft landscaping to reduce the developments' prominence in its landscape setting.

A Heritage Assessment (HA) would also be required with the planning application to assess impacts from the change in land use on all other heritage assets and designations in full.

	The existing land use as an agricultural field is also identified in the Preliminary Ecology Appraisal (PEA) as a suitable grazing habitat for wintering geese, which form part of the Special Protection Area – a European Site under Regulation 2 (1). The approved land use for storage / distribution use (class 6) may therefore have an adverse impact on this SPA by reducing the grazing land available for this species. However, given the site retains approximately 7 km to the SPA and it is located near to an abundance of other suitable arable land a significant environmental effect is not anticipated. This impact would also be considered further through a Habitat Regulations Appraisal (HRA) conducted by the planning authority as part of the planning application. The PEA does not identify any likely significant impacts anticipated regarding nearby local biodiversity designations (LNCAs) or European Sites. Further surveys are recommended, and an Ecological Impact Assessment would be required with the planning application to ensure all ecological impacts are appropriately assessed.
b) the relative abundance, availability, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources (including soil, land, water and biodiversity) in the area and its underground;	No The development will use natural resources (soil, land, water and biodiversity). However, the site is within the Green Belt and near other environmental designations where there is a relative abundance of good quality, natural resources in the area. Given this abundance, the loss of these natural resources from the development would not have a significant impact on the availability of natural resources. <i>*The development will require underground cable connections out with the site. There is a functional interdependence between the development and these works as they will</i>

	be required to establish a grid connection and a source of power for the development to operate. The precise route of this connection is not known therefore the full extent of impacts cannot be assessed. These works (eg. digging of trenches) would result in ground disturbance with potential for land, soil, water, ecology & archaeology impacts). However, some disturbance from utility infrastructure works would not be atypical for such a development, would be temporary in nature and can be appropriately restored / managed through established construction practices. As the intended connection to Currie Substation is in some proximity to the site (approximately 1.7km), with existing development and infrastructure in between these works are anticipated to give rise to localised impacts on natural resources only. Such works will also require separate consent with SP Energy Networks where environmental matters will also be considered. Interactions with water / ecology would be limited in extent and could be appropriately mitigated through standard measures (eg. timing of works and pollution prevention controls). Water connections could also be assessed through the SWMP and FRA and with separate consent required from Scottish Water. *
c) the absorption capacity of the natural environment paying particular attention to the following areas—	
(i) wetlands, riparian areas, river mouths;	Not applicable (N/A) to this site.
(ii) coastal zones and the marine environment;	N/A to this site
(iii) mountain and forest areas;	N/A to this site
(iv) nature reserves and parks;	N/A to this site

(v) European sites and other areas classified or protected under national legislation;	The site is within connectivity distance for pink footed geese that form part of the Firth of Forth Special Protection Area. The Preliminary Ecology Appraisal (PEA) identifies the site as being in proximity to a key feeding area for this species. Arable land is identified as a suitable grazing habitat for wintering geese. The loss of this arable field for the data centre development therefore has a potential impact by removing potential foraging land for pink footed-geese and other bird species. However, whilst the area of land that would be lost is large (approximately 30.5 hectares) it is not considered to be significant when the total area of suitable foraging habitat within 20 km of the SPA is considered, and a significant effect is therefore not likely. The site is also within connectivity distance of the River Tweed Special Area of Conservation (SAC). Otters associated with this SAC may forage or commute across site as identified in the PEA. Associated ecology surveys would be required as part of an Ecological Impact Assessment (EIA) assessed as part of the planning application process. However, given the distance (14.8 km) retained to this SAC a significant environmental effect is not considered likely.
(vi) areas in which there has already been a failure to meet the environmental quality standards, laid down in Union legislation and relevant to the project, or in which it is considered that there is such a failure;	N/A to this site
(vii) densely populated areas;	No. Densely populated areas are not in immediate proximity to the site. The site is out with the LDPs' urban area, and it is within the Green Belt. In this context,

	densely populated areas are separated from the site by agricultural land, major road infrastructure to the north & west (City Bypass) and Riccarton Campus & Business Park to the south. Whilst the developments characteristics are likely to give rise to impacts such as noise, light, air quality & visual these populated areas are suitably separated that no significant effect is likely. Noise Impact Assessment, Air Quality Assessment & Light Impact Assessment will be required through the planning application process to further assess any effects.
(viii) landscapes and sites of historical, cultural or archaeological significance.	No The site is in an area of cultural and historical significance through proximity to a Scheduled Monument – The Union Canal. As outlined elsewhere, significant impacts on this site are not anticipated owing to the overall length of this historic waterway and the developments' setback from the water edge. Similarly, a significant environmental effect on Hermiston Conservation Area and listed buildings are not envisaged given the distance that would be retained from new buildings to these historical designations. Regarding the SLA and the Green Belt whilst adverse impacts may occur, these are anticipated mainly to be localised having regard to the extent of woodland cover around the site. Considering this, a significant effect on the environment is not anticipated. The planning application process will allow consideration of this landscape impact to be assessed in detail through the submission of a Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA). Planning conditions could be imposed for implementation of the development in

	accordance with approved external materials and landscape plans as mitigation measures to limit the developments' prominence in its landscape setting and reduce this potentially adverse effect. The development is also in an area of archaeological significance due to its proximity to the Gogar Burn with potential occupation prehistory. A geophysical survey would be required with the planning application and appropriate mitigation, if necessary, could be secured through planning condition.
Types and characteristics of the potential impact 3. The likely significant effects of the development on the environment must be considered in relation to criteria set out in paragraphs 1 and 2 above, with regard to the impact of the development on the factors specified in regulation 4(2), taking into account—	
	<i>Likely significant effects - Yes/ No?</i>
(a) the magnitude and spatial extent of the impact (for example geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected);	No Given the detached location of the site out with an urban area where no populations are in the immediate vicinity no significant impacts on local populations are anticipated.
(b) the nature of the impact;	No The nature of the impact will be visual as the developments scale, mass and illumination will be visible in short and long views. There will also be a sensory impact as the development and associated infrastructure will create noise and vibration.
(c) the transboundary nature of the impact;	No The development is not in proximity to any country or area boundary. The size, type, location and characteristics of the development are not anticipated to give rise to any significant transboundary effects.

(d) the intensity and complexity of the impact;	No The impact would be intense as it is anticipated the development would operate during day and night-time hours. However, nature of impact (visual, sensory) is not considered particularly complex and would not amount to a significant environmental effect.
(e) the probability of the impact;	No There is a high probability of an impact as the development will be visible, create noise, dust, traffic and use natural resources. However, these impacts are not considered significant owing to the scale, type, location and characteristics of this development.
(f) the expected onset, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact;	No The expected onset of impact is not anticipated to be sudden. The development is large and its construction phase is anticipated to last three years. However, associated impacts from the development and associated works (noise, vibration, dust, traffic for example) are likely to be intermittent and temporary during this period. These construction impacts can be appropriately managed through a construction management plan as required through separate legislation or regulations out with the planning process. There is nothing specific about this development that would rise to a significant environmental effect in this regard. If planning permission was granted this would likely be on a permanent basis therefore associated impacts (eg visual, noise & vibration) would be longer term.

	These impacts would however be reversible should the use cease through an appropriate site restoration. Alternatively, it is anticipated the development would be capable of re-use for other purposes to prevent demolition and the associated energy impacts.
(g) the cumulation of the impact with the impact of other existing and/or approved development;	No Developments in the surrounding area (detailed in section 1 b) are unlikely to be read in the context of the application site as they are spatially separated from this development with buildings, infrastructure and topography in between.
(h) the possibility of effectively reducing the impact.	Climate Change -The use of low and zero carbon generating technology (Air source heat pumps, solar panels) to offset and reduce the impact from the developments energy demand. -The use of a closed loop cooling system to reduce water usage. Details of this can be included with the planning application. -Details for a waste heat recovery plan to reduce climate change impacts from the developments' energy use and associated carbon emissions. If necessary, any waste connection agreement could be required prior to the start of the development operating. -A detailed surface water management plan and flood risk assessment. Likelihood of flooding impacts could be reduced through incorporating blue and green features to help reduce the developments surface water flood risk. -Any ecological impacts through tree loss could be reduced by increasing developments' separation distance to biodiversity designations, sensitive lighting

	and new biodiverse landscaping / enhancement measures. -Likely carbon emissions from vehicular trips could be reduced through provision of appropriate, high quality cycle parking provision and Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging to reduce likelihood of pollution emitting car journeys. Visual -The use of external materials appropriate to the sites' rural context and detailed landscaping plans submitted with the planning application. -Sensitive lighting plans with restrictions on the developments' illuminance. These measures could effectively reduce the developments' visual impact on landscape and historic designations. Soil The appropriate management of soil during the construction phase detailed within a Soil Resource Management Plan to reduce impact on soils from the development. Noise -Implementation of noise mitigation measures recommended in a Noise Impact Assessment (NIA) submitted with the planning application could be imposed by planning condition to ensure noise from the development can appropriately be attenuated without adverse impacts on residential properties.
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Overall Conclusion:
The proposal has been screened in accordance with Schedule 3 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (EIA) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 and no EIA is required.

4. Screening Opinion

On the basis of the information provided and the assessment carried out in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017) and Circular 1/2017 it is concluded that an EIA will not be required for this proposal.

The key points for this opinion are:

- The works are for the construction of a Data Centre campus development.
- They have been assessed against the criteria in schedule 3 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017
- It is not considered that the proposal will have a significant effect on the environment, and an Environmental Statement is not required.
- The site is not located within a sensitive area as defined within the regulations (2)1.
- The sites' location in Scotland supports use of renewable energy which will help reduce the developments carbon footprint.
- Impacts on biodiversity, landscape and historic designations are not likely to be significant and can be assessed through the planning application process.
- Necessary mitigation can be secured in relation to waste heat, sustainability, noise, light, design, flood risk, landscaping and ecology as outlined above.