

**Appendix E**  
**Landscape Masterplan**









**Appendix F**  
**Landscape and Visual Impact Methodology**



# Methodology for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

## INTRODUCTION, SCOPE AND DEFINITIONS

The methodology for assessing landscape and visual effects is based on the following best practice guidance:

- Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition (GLVIA 3), by the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013;
- Landscape Character Assessment – Guidance for England and Scotland (Carys Swanwick/LUC 2002) produced on behalf of the Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage;

This methodology has been prepared for a landscape and visual impact assessment of a development proposal that does not fall within the requirements of The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017. When LVIA does not fall within the EIA Directive and Regulations it is often referred to as an 'Appraisal', which generally follows the same principles as a full LVIA but it does not require site selection and consideration of alternatives, screening or scoping. All other key stages, such as project description/specification, baseline studies and identification and description of effects, are required. GLVIA 3 Table 3.1 identifies those components of the EIA process that are required in a landscape and visual appraisal rather than in a full EIA. These components comprise:

- Project description/specification
- Baseline studies
- Identification and description of effects
- Mitigation
- Appraisal Report

GLVIA3 Para. 1.1 states that "*Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) is a tool used to identify and assess the significance of and the effects of change resulting from development on both the landscape as an environmental resource in its own right and on people's views and visual amenity*".

GLVIA3 Para. 5.1 describes how landscape effects are concerned with "*how the proposal will affect the elements that make up the landscape, the aesthetic and perceptual aspects of the landscape and its distinctive character*".

GLVIA3 Para. 6.1 describes how visual effects are concerned with "*assessing how the surroundings of individuals or groups of people may be specifically affected by changes in the content and character of views as a result of the change or loss of existing elements of the landscape and/or introduction of new elements*".

This assessment deals separately with landscape and visual effects, although the two assessments are linked procedures and cross references may be made to the same features or elements where they are relevant to both assessments.

GLVIA3 Para. 3.21 states that *“Predicting what effects are likely depends upon careful consideration of the different components of the development at different stages of its life cycle, and identification of the receptors that will be affected by them. In LVIA there must be identification of both:*

- *Landscape receptors, including the constituent elements of the landscape, its specific aesthetic or perceptual qualities and the character of the landscape in different areas; and*
- *Visual receptors, that is, the people who will be affected by changes in views or visual amenity at different places.”*

The landscape and visual appraisal considers potential effects at the first year after completion of the development (including implementation of mitigation measures) and at five years after completion. The assessment is carried out on the basis of winter views as the ‘worst case scenario’, although summer views are also described in some cases. Day-time and night-time effects are both assessed.

## **LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL BASELINE**

GLVIA3 Para. 2.2 sets out the definition of the landscape adopted the European Landscape Convention, namely *“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).”*

GLVIA3 Para. 2.5 notes that the definition of landscape applies, among other things, to rural landscapes, seascapes and townscapes.

GLVIA3 Para. 5.3 states that *“Baseline studies for assessing landscape effects require a mix of desk study and field-work to identify and record the character of the landscape and the elements, features and aesthetic and perceptual factors which contribute to it. They should also deal with the value attached to the landscape (see Paragraph 5.19). The methods used should be appropriate to the context into which the development proposal will be introduced and in line with current guidelines and terminology.”*

GLVIA3 Para. 6.24 states that a baseline report should also combine information on:

- *“the type and relative numbers of people (visual receptors) likely to be affected, making clear the activities they are likely to be involved in;*
- *the location, nature and characteristics of the chosen representative, specific and illustrative viewpoints, with details of the visual receptors likely to be affected at each;*
- *the nature, composition and characteristics of the existing views experienced at these viewpoints, including direction of view;*
- *the visual characteristics of the existing views, for example, the nature and extent of the skyline, aspects of visual scale and proportion, especially with respect to any particular horizontal or vertical emphasis, and any key foci;*
- *elements, such as landform, buildings or vegetation, which may interrupt, filter or otherwise influence the views. “*

## LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY

GLVIA3 Para. 5.39 states that “*Landscape receptors need to be assessed firstly in terms of their **sensitivity**, combining judgements of their susceptibility to the type of change or development proposed and the value attached to the landscape.*”

GLVIA3 Para. 5.40 goes on to describe ‘susceptibility to change’ as “*the ability of the landscape receptor (whether it be the overall character or quality/condition of a particular landscape type or area, or an individual element and/or feature, or a particular aesthetic and perceptual aspect) to accommodate the proposed development without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation and/or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies.*”

Factors that will influence professional judgement when assessing the degree to which a particular landscape type or area can accommodate change arising from a particular development, without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation would typically include:

- the value placed on the landscape;
- condition or the physical state of the landscape;
- the nature of existing land uses;
- the pattern and scale of the landscape;
- visual enclosure/openness of views, and distribution of visual receptors;
- the scope for mitigation, which would be in character with the existing landscape the contribution of the receptor to landscape character.
- the degree to which the particular element or characteristic can be replaced or substituted.

Landscape value is the importance attached to a landscape, sometimes expressing national or local consensus, because of its quality, which may include scenic and/or aesthetic qualities and cultural and other conservation associations. In most cases, this is indicated by the presence or absence of a landscape planning designation such as a National Park indicating a landscape of national value. Many local landscape designations have been phased out in favour of the landscape character approach. Undesignated areas of the landscape may also be of local value and indications of this are likely to be present in the form of documented, locally valued, cultural / natural heritage and scenic or aesthetic qualities such as ‘wildness’. Value may also be exhibited in terms of the presence of well-recognised viewing positions or references in art and literature, including for example, tourism literature or specifically promoted views. It should be noted that a landscape of high value may not always equate to areas of high landscape quality and that areas of low landscape value may contain areas of higher landscape quality.

GLVIA3 Para. 5.20 sets out information that will contribute to an understanding of value, including:

- “*Information about areas recognised by statute such as (depending on jurisdiction) National Parks, National Scenic Areas, Areas of Outstanding Beauty;*
- *Information about Heritage Coasts, where relevant;*
- *Local planning documents, which may show the extent of and policies for local planning designations;*
- *Information on the status of individual or groups of features such as, for example, Conservation Areas, listed buildings, Tree Preservation Orders, important hedgerows, cultural heritage elements such as historic landscapes of various forms, archaeological sites of importance and other special historical or cultural heritage sites such as battlefields or historic gardens.*



- *Art and literature, including tourism literature and promotional material such as postcards, which may indicate the value attached to the identity of particular areas (for example ‘Constable Country’ or specially promoted views);*
- *Material on landscapes of local or community interest, such as local green spaces, village greens or allotments.”*

One of the options for assessing the value of landscapes is provided in GLVIA3 Box 5.1, which sets out the following range of factors that can help in the identification of valued landscapes:

- *“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;*
- *Scenic quality: The term used to describe landscapes that appeal primarily to the senses (primarily but not wholly the visual senses);*
- *Rarity: The presence of rare elements or features in the landscape or the presence of a rare Landscape Character Type;*
- *Representativeness: Whether the landscape contains a particular character and/or features or elements, which are considered particularly important examples;*
- *Conservation interests: The presence of features of wildlife, earth science or archaeological or historical and cultural interest can add to the value of a landscape as well as having value in their own right;*
- *Recreation value: Evidence that the landscape is valued for recreational activity where experience of the landscape is important;*
- *Perceptual aspects: A landscape may be valued for its perceptual qualities, notably wildness and/or tranquillity;*
- *Associations: Some landscapes are associated with particular people, such as artists or writers, or events in history that contribute to perceptions of the natural beauty of the area.”*

Table A below provides an indication of the criteria by which the sensitivity of any landscape receptor is determined by combining judgements of the value of the receptor and its susceptibility to the type of change or development proposed, as set out at paragraph 3.26 of the GLVIA 3rd Edition. A degree of professional judgement applies in arriving at the sensitivity for receptors. Wherever sensitivity is judged, the specific combinations of factors that have influenced that judgement are described. The sensitivity of the landscape to a particular development may be assessed as high, medium, low or very low.

**Table A: Levels of Landscape Sensitivity**

<b>Criteria for Landscape Sensitivity Levels</b>	
High	Landscape with important components or of a particularly distinctive character, susceptible to relatively small changes of the type proposed. Typically a recognised landscape resource of strong landscape structure with distinct features worthy of conservation and valued at a national level. May contain occasional detracting features.
Medium	Landscape with relatively ordinary, moderately valued characteristics and positive character that is reasonably tolerant of changes of the type proposed. Has a moderate degree of susceptibility. Value may be expressed through consensus, demonstrable use or non-official publications and may include designation at local level. Some distinctive landscape characteristics but few detracting features.
Low	A relatively unimportant landscape with few features of value or interest and a weak character. Limited sensitivity to disturbance / potentially tolerant of substantial change of the type proposed. Typically of no features worthy of conservation, a weak landscape structure, some evidence of degradation and frequent detracting features.
Very Low	Landscape receptor with very limited sensitivity to disturbance or change in character due to the development proposals. Good potential for substitution or replacement. Absence of distinctive landscape characteristics. Presence of many landscape detractors. Components in very poor condition.

## **ASSESSING LANDSCAPE EFFECTS**

Landscape effects are defined by the Landscape Institute as “*Effects on the landscape as a resource in its own right*” (GLVIA3 Glossary).

Landscape effects are assessed by considering the scale and extent of proposed development, which may include the loss or addition of particular features, changes to landscape quality and changes to landscape character. The main factors to be considered are discussed as follows:

- Changes to landscape elements: the addition of new elements or the removal of existing elements such as buildings, trees, vegetation, and buildings and other elements which may be characteristic of the landscape character type;
- Changes to landscape qualities: degradation or erosion of landscape elements and patterns, and perceptual characteristics, particularly those that form key characteristic elements of landscape character types; and
- Changes to landscape character: landscape character may be affected through the incremental effect on characteristic elements, landscape patterns and qualities (including perceptual characteristics) and the cumulative addition of new features, the magnitude of which is sufficient to alter the overall landscape character type of a particular area;

Examples and further guidance on the evaluation of landscape magnitude of change are provided in Table B below.

**Table B: Magnitude of Landscape Change Levels**

<b>Criteria for Assessing Magnitude of Landscape Change Levels</b>	
High	Total loss of or substantial alteration to key characteristics of the character and/or setting of the character area. Addition of new uncharacteristic features or components that substantially alter character and/or a large part of the setting of the character area. Introduction of irreversible change over a substantial area of an LCA or its setting. Introduction of long term or permanent change uncharacteristic of the area.
Medium	Noticeable change or alteration to one or more key characteristics of the character and/or setting of the character area. Addition of new features or components that form prominent elements of the character and/or setting of the character area, but are largely characteristic of the existing setting. Uncharacteristic changes across only a proportion of the character area or its setting. Introduction of some irreversible changes in parts of a character area or its setting. Introduction of medium to long term uncharacteristic changes and/or permanent changes largely characteristic of the existing setting.
Low	Slight loss or alteration to one or more characteristics of the character and/or setting of the character area. Addition of new features or components that form largely inconspicuous elements of the existing character and/or setting. Introduction of short to medium term uncharacteristic changes and/or long term / permanent changes in a small proportion of a character area or its setting.
Very Low or Negligible	No noticeable change or a change affecting relatively small areas of landscape character where the proposed scheme would largely complement the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape and existing landscape quality would be substantially conserved.

Effective mitigation measures and design may reduce the magnitude of change and the resultant residual effects. Development may have a direct (physical) effect on a landscape as well as an indirect effect which would be perceived from outside a landscape character area.

## **VISUAL SENSITIVITY**

GLVIA3 Para. 6.31 states that *“It is important to remember at the outset that visual receptors are all people. Each visual receptor, meaning the particular person or group of people likely to be affected at a specific viewpoint, should be assessed in terms of both their susceptibility to change in views and visual amenity and also the value attached to particular views.”*

GLVIA3 Para. 6.32 states that *“The susceptibility of different visual receptors to changes in views and visual amenity is mainly a function of:*

- *the occupation or activity of people experiencing the view at particular locations; and*
- *the extent to which their attention or interest may therefore be focused on the views and the visual amenity they experience at particular locations.”*

GLVIA3 Para. 6.37 states that *“Judgements should also be made about the value attached to the views experienced. This should take account of:*



- *recognition of the value attached to particular views, for example in relation to heritage assets or through planning designations;*
- *indicators of the value attached to views by visitors, for example through appearances in guidebooks or on tourist maps, provision of facilities for their enjoyment (such as parking places, sign boards and interpretative material) and references to them in literature or art.....”*

The susceptibility or sensitivity of different visual receptors to change has been assessed in accordance with the definitions and criteria set out in Table C below. The sensitivity classification for any visual receptor in this table may be adjusted through professional judgement to take account of the location, context and importance of the view.

**Table C: Visual Receptor Sensitivity Criteria**

<b>Sensitivity</b>	<b>Visual Receptors</b>
High	Recreational users or tourists whose attention is focussed on the landscape (e.g. visitors to Registered Parks and Gardens and other landscape/heritage destinations, beauty spots, picnic areas or locations for viewing important landscape features, users of the promoted route/long distance paths/PRoW and). Designated, locally designated or protected/advertised views. Users of Public Rights of Way, cycle routes, canal network or access land that involves appreciation of views of the landscape. People engaged in outdoor sport or recreation, which involves appreciation of views of the landscape (e.g. golf).
Medium	People travelling along rural roads and adjacent footpaths/lanes/cycleways/scenic routes through the landscape where their attention is likely to be focussed to a degree on their surroundings. People staying in hotels and healthcare institutions. People walking along residential streets.
Low	Users of commuter trains, motorways, main roads and adjacent footpaths/cycleways where their attention is proportionately less focussed on their surroundings. People engaged in outdoor sport or recreation, which does not involve or depend upon appreciation of views of the landscape (e.g. football or rugby). People at their place of work where views of the surrounding landscape may have some importance (e.g. occupants of offices). People at work and in educational institutions (although users of residential educational institutions will have a higher sensitivity). People walking through urban areas (for example commuters)
Very Low	People at their place of work or other locations where views of the wider landscape have little or no importance (e.g. occupants of some industrial sites or commercial developments). View affected by many landscape detractors and unlikely to be valued.

## **ASSESSING VISUAL EFFECTS**

Visual effects are concerned wholly with the effect of the development on views and the general visual amenity. The visual effects are identified for different receptors (people) who will experience the view at their places of residence, during recreational activities, at work, or when travelling through the area. The visual effects may include the following:

- Visual effect: a change to an existing static view, sequential views, or wider visual amenity as a result of development or the loss of particular landscape elements or features already present in the view.

- Cumulative visual effects: the cumulative or incremental visibility of a proposed development may be added to the existing baseline presence of development to yield a combined effect which may or may not be visually significant.

Visual effects are assessed by considering the sensitivity of the visual receptor and the proposed magnitude of change. The main factors to consider are the activity of the receptor (people) at the viewpoint location, the importance or popularity of the view and / or typical numbers of viewers. Other factors include the location and context of the viewpoint. The visual experience from a tourist destination, for example, could involve either the key views to or from the main attraction, or those from the car-park / service area. Whilst views from car-parks / service areas may still be experienced by receptors of inherently higher sensitivity, these types of views may not be considered of higher value or sensitivity.

The magnitude of visual change is described by reference to the following:

- Scale of Change: The scale of change in the view (including horizontal and vertical Angle of View affected) is determined by the loss or addition of features in the view and changes in the composition and extent of view affected. This can in part be described objectively by reference to numbers of new objects visible and the horizontal / vertical angle;
- Contrast: The degree of contrast or integration of any new features or changes in the landscape, with the existing, or remaining, landscape elements and characteristics in terms of mass, scale, colour, form and texture. Developments which contrast or appear incongruous in terms of colour, scale and form are likely to be more visible and have a higher magnitude of change;
- Distance: The proximity and distance from the development can be provided objectively and often provides a strong indicator of magnitude, subject to any intervening screening of the development by landform, vegetation, or buildings;
- Speed: The speed at which the development may be viewed will affect how long the view is experienced and the likelihood of the development being particularly noticed by people travelling in cars compared to those who may be walking and able to stop and 'take in' a view;
- Angle of View: The angle of view from the main direction of view may be considered in terms of whether the development is experienced directly or more obliquely. Road users are generally more aware of the views in the direction of travel, whilst train passengers are more aware of views perpendicular to their direction of travel. Elevated views are likely to reveal more of the development, whereas low level views are more likely to be screened by intervening built form and vegetation;
- Screening: Development may be wholly or partly screened by landform, vegetation (seasonal) and or buildings. Conversely, open views, particularly from landscapes where this is a characteristic, are likely to experience more of the development;
- Skyline / Background: Whether a development would be viewed against the skyline, or a background landscape, may affect the level of contrast and magnitude, for example, skyline developments may appear more noticeable, particularly where they affect open and uninterrupted horizons; and
- Duration: The duration of the change, whether temporary or long term, intermittent or continuous, seasonal due to periodic management or leaf fall, is a further factor for consideration.

Criteria used to help determine the magnitude of visual change assessment is provided in Table D below.

**Table D Magnitude of Visual Change Levels**

<b>Criteria for Magnitude of Visual Change Levels</b>	
High	Total loss or substantial alteration to key characteristics of the view from a receptor Addition of new features or components that are continuously highly visible across the majority of the view and incongruous with the existing view from a receptor Substantial changes in close proximity to the visual receptor, within the direct frame of view Introduction of long term or permanent change uncharacteristic of the view
Medium	Readily noticeable change or alteration to one or more key characteristics of the view from a receptor Addition of new features or components that may be continuously highly visible across much of the view, but are largely characteristic of the existing view from a receptor Changes a relatively short distance from the receptor, but viewed as one of a series of components in the middle ground of the view Substantial change partially filtered by intervening vegetation and/or built form, or viewed obliquely from the visual receptor Introduction of medium to long term change uncharacteristic of the view and/or permanent changes largely characteristic of the existing view or in a small proportion of the view
Low	Slight loss or alteration to one or more characteristics of the view from a receptor Addition of new features or landscape components that may be continuously or intermittently visible in part of the view, but are largely characteristic of the existing view from a receptor Changes within the background of the view, viewed as one of a series of components in the wider panoramic view from a receptor Change largely filtered by intervening vegetation and/or built form, or viewed obliquely from the visual receptor Introduction of short to medium term change uncharacteristic of the view and/or long term / permanent changes in a small proportion of the view
Very Low or Negligible	No change to, or barely perceptible loss or alteration of inconspicuous characteristics of the view from a receptor. Addition of new features or landscape components that are largely inconspicuous and characteristic of the existing view when viewed from a receptor Changes within the background of the view, viewed as an inconspicuous element within the wider panoramic view from a receptor Change from a visual receptor almost entirely obscured by intervening vegetation and/or built form Short term changes in a small proportion of the view

## **ASSESSMENT OF VIEWS FROM RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES**

Planning law contains a widely understood principle that individuals (i.e. visual receptors at a single residential property) have no 'right to a view', per se, with the outlook or view from a private property (i.e. that available to a residential visual receptor) being a private interest and not therefore protected by the UK planning system. The planning system, however, also recognises situations where a substantial number of people's views could be affected and could be considered to be a matter of public interest.

## **EVALUATING LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS**

The overall significance of landscape and visual effects is determined by the combination of sensitivity and magnitude of change, which is assisted by the use of the matrices in Table E and Table F below to guide the assessment.



**Table E: Evaluation of Visual Effects**

	Visual Sensitivity			
Magnitude Visual Change	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW	VERY LOW
HIGH	Major	Major or Moderate	Moderate	Slight
MEDIUM	Major or Moderate	Moderate	Slight	Slight or Negligible
LOW	Moderate	Slight	Slight or Negligible	Negligible
VERY LOW / NEGLIGIBLE	Slight	Slight or Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

Split decisions will be avoided in cases where the combination of sensitivity and magnitude of change provides options (e.g. major or moderate).

**DEFINITIONS OF LEVELS OF VISUAL SIGNIFICANCE**

The levels of significance may be defined as follows:

**Major Significance** – effects of the development are of greater than local scale and, if adverse, are potential concerns to the project depending upon the relative importance attached to the issue during decision making.

**Moderate Significance** – effects of the development that may be judged to be important at a local scale but are not likely to be key decision-making issues. Nevertheless, the cumulative effect of such issues may lead to an increase in the overall effects on a particular area or on a particular resource.

**Slight Significance** – effects of the development that may be raised as a local issue but which are of low importance in the decision-making process.

**Negligible Significance** - effects of the development that are of such low importance that they are considered not to be important to the decision-making process.

**Table F: Evaluation of Landscape Effects**

	Landscape Sensitivity			
Magnitude of Landscape Change	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW	VERY LOW
HIGH	Major	Major or Moderate	Moderate	Slight
MEDIUM	Major or Moderate	Moderate	Slight	Slight or Negligible
LOW	Moderate	Slight	Slight or Negligible	Negligible
VERY LOW / NEGLIGIBLE	Slight	Slight or Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

Split decisions will be avoided in cases where the combination of sensitivity and magnitude of change provides options (e.g. major or moderate).

## DEFINITIONS OF LEVELS OF LANDSCAPE SIGNIFICANCE

The levels of significance may be defined as follows:

**Major Significance** – effects of the development are of greater than local scale and, if adverse, are potential concerns to the project depending upon the relative importance attached to the issue during decision making.

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**Slight Significance** – effects of the development that may be raised as a local issue but which are of low importance in the decision-making process.

**Negligible Significance** - effects of the development that are of such low importance that they are considered not to be important to the decision-making process.

## TYPES OF LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECT

Landscape and visual effects are also described in terms of their 'type' or 'nature' of effect (whether the effect is permanent or temporary, direct or indirect, positive, neutral or negative) as well as the scale over which the effect would occur. For example, an effect may be locally significant, or significant with respect to a small number of receptors, but not significant when judged in a wider context.

A direct effect, as defined in the GLVIA3 glossary is "*an effect that is directly attributable to the proposed Development*". Indirect effects, as defined in the GLVIA3 glossary, are "*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 in time from the source of the effects.*"

Landscape and visual effects may be positive, neutral, or negative. In landscape terms, a positive effect would require development to add to the landscape quality and character of an area. Neutral landscape effects would include changes that neither add nor detract from the overall quality and character of an area. A negative effect may include the loss of landscape elements such as mature trees and hedgerows. In visual terms, positive or negative effects are less easy to define or quantify and require subjective consideration of a number of aesthetic factors affecting the view, which may be positive, neutral, or negative.

## **THE DEVELOPMENT MASTER PLAN AND LANDSCAPE STRATEGY**

The identification of the baseline landscape and visual conditions and the consideration of potential effects of the proposed development on the landscape and visual character of the site and its wider setting will inform the development master planning exercise (distribution of housing and open space etc.) and the preparation of a landscape strategy for the proposed development. One of the key aims of this landscape strategy is to help ensure that the proposed development is well integrated into (1) the character of the local landscape and (2) the character and amenity of existing views. The landscape strategy is likely to include proposals for mitigating potential landscape and visual effects identified through the landscape/visual survey and appraisal process (reinforcement of peripheral vegetation, supplementary vegetation to conserve the character of the local landscape etc).



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