

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Methodology Summary of Approach and Criteria Tables

The key terms used within assessments are:

- Susceptibility and Value – which contribute to Sensitivity;
- Scale, Geographical Extent, Duration and Reversibility – which contribute to the Magnitude of Change; and
- Importance or Significance (EIA) of Effect – a judgment of the level of significance of effect when Sensitivity and Magnitude are combined.

Sensitivity

Overall Sensitivity lies along a continuum of low to high. The *Value and Susceptibility* of a receptor are both considered understanding its overall sensitivity.

Susceptibility is assessed for both landscape receptors including, landscape character areas, and for visual receptors (people). It indicates the ability of a defined landscape receptor 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."* (GLVIA, 3rd edition, para 5.40) and identifies *"the occupation or activity of people experiencing views at particular locations and the extent to which their attention may be focused on the views and the visual amenity they experience at a particular locations."* (GLVIA, 3rd edition, para 6.32). An example of how Susceptibility can be described at each end of the continuum of low to high is provided in the tables below (**Table 1** and **Table 2**) for both landscape and visual receptors.

Landscape **Value** is *"the relative value that is attached to different landscapes by society"* (GLVIA, 3rd edition, page 157). Box 5.1 (GLVIA 3rd version, page 84) sets out factors to be considered in the identification of valued landscapes. These can be broadly described as: Landscapes recognised and valued for their quality and and/or cultural associations; key characteristics and features as recognised in published landscape character assessments; Landscape constriction and the degree to which the landscape is intact and legible. An example of how Value can be described at each end of the continuum of low to high is provided in the following table 1 for landscape receptors. In visual terms, Value relates to that attached to views experienced by receptors (people). An example of how Value can be described at each end of the continuum of low to high is provided below for visual receptors in the following Table 2.

Magnitude of Change

Overall magnitude of change lies along a continuum of small to large. Together the *Scale, Geographical Extent, and Duration and Reversibility* of effect are all considered in understanding the overall Magnitude of Change.

Scale of effect is assessed for both landscape and visual receptors and identifies the degree of change which would arise from the development. An example of how Scale of effect can be described at each end of the continuum of small to large is provided in the following **Table 3** and **Table 4** for both landscape and visual receptors.

Geographical Extent of effect of is assessed for both landscape and visual receptors and indicates the geographic area over which the effects will be felt. An example of how Geographical Extent can be described at each end of the continuum of small to large is provided in the following **Table 3** and **Table 4** for both landscape and visual receptors.

Duration and Reversibility of effect is assessed for all landscape and visual receptors and identifies the time period over which the change to the receptor would arise as a result of the development. An example of how Duration and Reversibility can be described at each end of the continuum of small to large is provided in the following **Table 3** and **Table 4** for both landscape and visual receptors.

Importance or Significance (EIA) of Effect

Best practice guidelines stipulate that the significance of any landscape related impact should be evaluated, both during the construction works and following completion of the development. The importance or significance (EIA) of any landscape and visual effect is a function of the sensitivity of the affected landscape resources and visual receptors against the magnitude of change that they would experience. As such, the assessment of potential and residual effects can be described as: negligible, minor, moderate, and major. A description is set out in **Table 5**.

The following terms will be used to define residual landscape/townscape effects:

Adverse: the proposed development may result in direct loss of physical landscape/townscape resources, weaken key characteristics or negatively affect the integrity of a landscape/townscape designation; and

Beneficial: the proposed development may replace poor quality elements of the existing landscape/townscape or strengthen existing landscape/townscape characteristics.

The following terms have been used to define residual visual effects:

Adverse: the proposed development reduces visual amenity; and

Beneficial: the visual amenity is improved by the proposed development.

Table.1 Sensitivity of Receptors: Landscape/Townscape Receptors

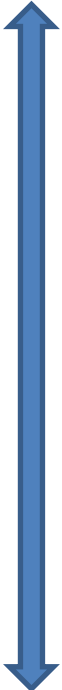
As set out below, the Sensitivity lies along a continuum of low to high. The Value and Susceptibility of a receptor are both considered in understanding its overall Sensitivity.

	Landscape Value			Landscape Susceptibility
	Designations and Conservation Interests/Associations <i>Landscapes recognised and valued for their quality and / or cultural associations / recreational value</i>	Key Characteristics and Features <i>As recognised in published Landscape Character Assessments or policy</i>	Landscape Condition <i>Degree to which the landscape is intact and legible & its scenic quality</i>	<i>The ability of a defined landscape to accommodate the specific proposed development without undue negative consequences</i>
High  Low	National / Regional Importance (e.g. AONB, National Park, Registered Parks and Gardens)	Features which are dominant within the landscape and are fundamental to defining the distinct landscape character of an area. Important characteristics and features recognised as forming intrinsic part of nationally and regionally designated landscapes. Distinctive individual or rare features.	Distinct landscape structure with strong pattern and intact features. Few detractors or uncharacteristic features or elements present.	The landscape is such that changes in terms of the proposed development would be entirely at odds with the character of the local area, related to matters including pattern, grain, use, scale and mass.
	Local importance (e.g. Conservation Areas, Special Landscape Areas / Features)	Locally important and notable features that contribute to the overall character of an area. Features and elements protected by local policy.	Landscape exhibits recognisable structure and characteristic patterns. Some detracting features present.	The proposed development has a degree of consistency with the existing scale, pattern, grain, land use of the prevailing character, although mitigation may be appropriate to enhance assimilation.
	No Designation	Features or elements that are uncharacteristic and detract from the landscape character of an area.	Degraded landscape structure with fragmented pattern and poor legibility of character. Detracting features notable within the landscape.	The proposed development is entirely consistent with the character of the local area, related to matters including pattern, grain, use, scale and mass.

e.g. Medium – Landscape Character Area does not include a designation but includes important characteristics and features that create a distinct landscape structure with strong pattern and intact features. The proposed development has a degree of consistency with the existing scale, pattern, grain, land use of the prevailing character, although mitigation may be appropriate to enhance assimilation.

Table.2 Sensitivity of Receptors: Visual Receptors

As set out below, the Sensitivity lies along a continuum of low to high. The Value and Susceptibility of a receptor are both considered understanding its overall Sensitivity.

	Value (attached to views)	Visual Susceptibility <i>The occupation or activity of people experiencing the view and the extent to which their attention or interest may be focused on the views and their visual amenity at particular locations</i>
High  Low	Recognised national / Important Viewpoints, including those identified within and protected by policy. These viewpoints may be tourist destinations and marked on maps. Designed views, including from within historic landscapes. Users of nationally recognized routes e.g. National Cycle Network, National Trails. Land with public access (i.e. Open Access Land and National Trust Land). Locally important views/ views. Views from within locally designated landscapes e.g. Conservation Areas and local planning policy. Views from local routes identified on maps Permissive routes, not recognised by policy or identified on maps. No designations present	People visiting recognised viewpoints with views towards the development. People using Public Rights of Way and Access Land as part of recreational routes with extensive views towards the development. People using recreational facilities or playing outdoor sports with views of the development but for whom views are not the main focus. Users of Public Rights of Way and Access Land with intermittent views towards the development. People travelling along roads or using transport routes where the focus is not on the views and views of the development are fleeting. People at places of work where attention is not on the views. Users of Public Rights of Way and Access Land where views towards the development are limited to glimpses and are not the main focus of attention.

e.g. Medium - views of the landscape are part of, but not the sole purpose of the receptors activities along local routes.

Table.3 Magnitude of Change: Landscape/Townscape Receptors

As set out below, magnitude of change lies along a continuum of small to large. Together the Scale, Geographical extent, and Duration and Reversibility of effect are all considered in understanding the overall magnitude of change.

	Scale <i>identifies the degree of change which would arise from the development</i>	Geographical Extent <i>of effect indicates the geographic area over which the effects will be felt</i>	Duration and Reversibility <i>of effect identifies the time period over which the change to the receptor would arise as a result of the development.</i>
 Large Small Negligible	Highly noticeable change, affecting most key characteristics and dominating the experience of the Landscape/Townscape; introduction of highly conspicuous new development; and the baseline situation will be fundamentally changed.	Extensive affecting the majority or all the Landscape/Townscape Character Area.	Long-term or permanent, the change is expected to be in place for 10+ years and there may be no intention for it to be reversed or only partially reversed.
	Partial alteration to key elements, features, qualities or characteristics, such that post development the baseline situation will be largely unchanged but noticeable despite discernible differences.	Localised, affecting the site and a proportion of the wider Landscape/Townscape Character Area.	Medium-term, the change is expected to be in place for 5-10 years and the effects may be reversed or partially reversed.
	Minor alteration to few elements, features qualities or characteristics resulting in a barely perceptible change.	Affecting the site and immediate setting only.	Short-term, the change is expected to be in place for 0-5 years and the effects are likely to be reversed.

e.g. Moderate – Highly noticeable change with introduction of highly conspicuous development which will affect the site and a proportion of the character area for a short-term during construction. The effects are likely to be reversed.

Table.4 Magnitude of Change: Visual Receptors

As set out below, magnitude of change lies along a continuum of small to large. Together the Scale, Geographical extent, and Duration and Reversibility of effect are all considered in understanding the overall magnitude of change.

	<i>Scale</i> <i>identifies the degree of change which would arise from the development</i>	<i>Geographical Extent</i> <i>Wide, and/or within close proximity, and/or open views.</i>	<i>Duration and Reversibility</i> <i>identifies the time period over which the change to the receptor would arise as a result of the development.</i>
 Large	Intensive/dominant or major alteration to key elements of the baseline view.	Extensive, open and/or close proximity, and/or direct and/or affecting unscreened views.	Long-term or permanent, the change is expected to be in place for 10+ years and there may be no intention for it to be reversed or only partially reversed.
	Partial/noticeable or minor alteration to key elements of the baseline view.	Framed, and/or contained, and/or medium distance, and/or partially screened views.	Medium-term, the change is expected to be in place for 5-10 years and the effects may be reversed or partially reversed.
	Minor alteration to few elements of the baseline view.	Narrow, and/or fragmented, and/or long distance, and/or heavily screened views.	Short-term, the change is expected to be in place for 0-5 years and the effects are likely to be reversed.
Small			
Negligible			

e.g. Moderate – Intensive and major alteration to key elements of the framed baseline view over a medium distance for a short period of time during construction. The effects are likely to be reversible.

Table.5 Level of Significance of Effect

Landscape/Townscape or visual effects above moderate adverse (i.e. Major) are considered to be significant; all other effects are considered not significant.



Major beneficial:	The development would fit well with the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape and bring substantial enhancements. The development would create a major improvement in views;
Moderate beneficial:	The development would fit well with the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape, maintain and/or enhance the existing landscape character. The development would create a noticeable but improved change in the view;
Minor beneficial:	The development would complement the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape, whilst maintaining the existing character. The development would result in minor improvements to the existing views;
Negligible:	The development would cause very limited changes to the landscape and/or views but creates no significant effects; the development would create neither an adverse or beneficial change to the landscape or visual receptor;
Minor adverse:	The development would cause minor permanent and/or temporary loss or alteration to one or more key elements or features of the landscape, to include the introduction of elements that may not be uncharacteristic of the surrounding landscape. The development would cause limited visual intrusion;
Moderate adverse:	The development would cause substantial permanent loss or alteration to one or more key elements of the landscape, to include the introduction of elements that are prominent but may not be substantially uncharacteristic with the surrounding landscape. The development would be clearly visible and would result in adverse effects upon the landscape;
Major adverse:	The development would irrevocably damage, degrade or badly diminish landscape character features, elements and their setting. The development would be irrevocably visually intrusive and would disrupt fine and valued views both into and across the area.