

Methodology Extract from a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA)
prepared by Anthony Clarkson Landscape Architects LTD
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APPENDIX 1: Methodology

The LVIA methodology is based on the principles outlined in the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Assessment, which is widely accepted as the industry standard, together with the Landscape Character Assessment Guidance prepared by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH). SNH's guidance on the presentation of visual assessment was also referred to as the principal source of guidance on the subject. The LVIA report covers:

- Evaluation of the existing landscape character, designation and visual baseline and based on this, identification of potential landscape and visual receptors within the study area;
- Identification of other developments to be considered in the appraisal of cumulative effects and key factors to be taken into account;
- Evaluation of the sensitivity of potential landscape and visual receptors;
- Evaluation of the magnitude and nature of likely changes resulting from the proposals;
- Conclusion on the overall effects of the proposals on the landscape character and key views within the study area.

Receptors

Landscape receptors are things, those landscape elements, character areas or designations potentially experiencing a change as a result of the proposals.

Visual receptors are contemporary humans, users of the landscape and residents potentially experiencing a change to their views and visual amenity.

Though intrinsically interrelated, landscape character and visual receptors are therefore considered as separate entities.

Landscape character can be defined as the combination of the inherent physical elements – geology, soils, topography, vegetation and land cover, built form, field pattern, water bodies – and perceived elements – time depth or connection to history, tranquillity, scale, texture, coherence – that make an area of land different to the next. Landscape character receptors are therefore the key components that define an area's overall character, or the areas themselves.

Visual appraisal is related to this in that character is part of what defines a view, but the experience of that view is also influenced by subjective personal values and interpretation, weather, distance, time spent exposed to the view etc. A visual impact therefore needs a viewer to perceive it and those viewers are separate visual receptors.

Essentially landscape character exists whether or not it is seen, as do any impacts upon it e.g. if you clear a glade in an area of dense woodland it's character will change regardless of whether it can be viewed from a public path. If there are no points from which the glade can be viewed the clearance cannot result in a visual impact, if there are effects on visual receptors this should be considered.

Sensitivity of Receptors

Landscape Sensitivity

The judgement of landscape sensitivity varies, can be influenced by subjectivity, and is often based on landscape character. A number of studies have been carried out to identify a common definition, the latest being a combined commission from Natural England and Scottish Natural Heritage concentrating principally on the clarification of landscape character sensitivity building on advice in Landscape Character Assessment Guidance Topic Paper 6. The Paper does not attempt to define sensitivity instead noting that judging it requires professional judgement based on whether significant characteristics elements of the landscape, and as a result its amenity value, will be lost as a result of the development.

For this assessment, landscape sensitivity is a reflection of a landscape element, designation or character area's condition, value, and location in relation to the proposed development. Table 1 outlines the parameters used to define categories.

The assessor should always consider a number of the scenarios given in the table to choose the most appropriate sensitivity rating within the given landscape and site context. Designated areas are considered to be of higher sensitivity due to the public perceptions and often cumulative pressures for change attached to them and should never receive a low sensitivity rating.

The overall consideration for a sensitivity rating should be the amount of change that can be accommodated by a given receptor, without it being devalued or unacceptably changed in the long- term, thereby damaging the overall landscape resource. High sensitivity receptors would either be those in pristine condition, where change would be very obvious and distracting, or those that have already been significantly damaged so that further change would result in the receptor being totally devalued in the long-term removing the option for restoration. Medium sensitivity would be mainly associated with average receptors of good condition, with some damage or distraction, but generally still able to accept more change without irreversible damage. Low sensitivity receptors would be for example those in a changing environment, where change is a defining element, those of low quality, where change would lead to improvements or those of good quality and condition, where there is plenty of capacity to accommodate more change without irreversible damage.

It should be noted that the sensitivity criteria in this report do not represent a detailed sensitivity assessment of the landscape resource within the study area. It is a tool for the assessor to allow some judgement on the perceived sensitivity and to incorporate some judgement on this in the impact assessment. If more detailed local sensitivity assessments were available those would be used to inform the assessment in preference to the criteria defined here. However, often such assessments are not available or are proposal specific, and it is considered that the criteria used in this report provide at least some context to the assessment, without increasing the scope of works and survey effort beyond reason to arrive at detailed sensitivity scores for each proposal.

Table 1 - Sensitivity of Potential Landscape Receptors	
Sensitivity	Receptor Category
High	Only minor changes can be accommodated without impact on value and / or loss of character or no more than moderate changes can be compensated by replacement or substitution, for example: Value may be expressed as a national designated area or may be an element that is rare or in pristine condition. Intact historic landscapes with great time depth and no or very limited modern intrusions. Valuable, but damaged landscapes, where further change would result in complete loss of their integrity and quality (in this scenario high sensitivity is based on the assumption that any further change would result in unacceptable long-term damage to a resource, which makes it highly sensitive to further change, although its condition at the point of assessment may not be favourable). The landscape receptor to be assessed has a small area, where the proposal would affect much or all of that area.
Medium	Minor to moderate changes can be accommodated without impact on value and / or loss of character or moderate changes can be reduced or eliminated by replacement or substitution, for example: Value may be expressed through a regional or local designation or element that is in good condition and occurs relatively frequently within the landscape context. Good quality landscapes with preserved integrity, but modern influences apparent. The landscape receptor to be assessed has a medium sized area significantly exceeding that of the proposal area so that any change would not affect the whole landscape receptor.
Low	Moderate to substantial changes can be accommodated without impact on value and / or loss of character or substantial changes can be reduced by replacement or substitution, for example: There is no value defined through designations or clear local use or definition and the receptor does not display specifically valuable properties within the context of the wider landscape area. The landscape receptor is devalued already through character changes etc and restoration is not an option. Proposals would contribute to improvements of the receptor. The receptor is of such a large area that a change would only affect a minor part of that area without any consequence for the remainder of the receptor area and it is not a nationally or regionally designated area. The receptor has plenty of capacity to accommodate change, for example plenty of key elements and features are present so that the loss of a minor percentage would not be significant and can be replaced or visual characteristics can be successfully retained and improved.

Visual Sensitivity

Visual sensitivity is a reflection of a combination of the receptor's type, the context

within which the view is perceived and the importance of the view. Sensitivity is inherent to the receptor and not influenced by weather conditions, distance etc. Factors like prevailing weather, distance and extent of the view are reflected in the magnitude assessment for each receptor. Table 2 outlines the parameters and categories used for this appraisal.

Table 2 - Sensitivity of Potential Visual Receptors by Type	
Sensitivity	Receptor Category
High 	Visitors to nationally designated areas of public and private open space where landscape appreciation is a primary function of their use or where landscape and visual quality is integral to the designation's value e.g. AONBs, Heritage Coasts, National Parks, etc
	Users of PRow - long distance footpaths and routes with direct view of the development for long sections of path.
	Residential communities and private properties with direct views of the development from apparent key living and access areas.
	Visitors to designated areas of historical importance such as SAMs, Conservation Areas and Historic Parks and Gardens where setting is recognised as an integral to the area's importance
Medium 	Visitors to locally designated areas of public and private open space where landscape appreciation is a primary function of their use or where landscape and visual quality is integral to the designation's value e.g. AGLVs, AGHVs, Country Parks etc.
	Users of PRow – national trails, local trails and footpaths with partial or glimpsed views from sections of the path or direct views from short sections of the path
	Residential communities and private properties with partial or glimpsed views of the development from apparent key living and access areas.
	Users of areas of public and private recreational space where landscape is not a primary function of use i.e. sports grounds, golf courses etc.
Low 	Users of PRow associated with highways or local routes the primary function of which is access between two points or users of paths with partial or glimpsed views from short sections of the path.
	Employees
	Road users

Impacts

Landscape impacts are described in the GLVIA by the Landscape Institute (LI) as direct impacts such as changes as a result of the proposed development to the landscape elements within the site or indirect impacts such as changes to key landscape character elements of the study area, the integrity of landscape

designations within the study area or the overall landscape condition of the study area.

Visual impacts are described by the LI as direct impacts on the visual amenity or views available to visual receptors located within publicly accessible areas and residential dwellings resulting from changes to that view as a result of the proposed development such as introduction, removal, obstruction, or modification of elements within the view. The assessment of visual impacts is informed by the use of a series of viewpoints. The viewpoints are selected to provide a comprehensive range of visual receptors, types and angles of view and distances from the development site. If possible they should represent more than one visual receptor category e.g. locating a viewpoint at the junction between a PRoW/cycleway and road would illustrate the view experienced by road users and pedestrians/cyclists at a point where they are more likely to pause and be more aware of their surroundings and view.

Cumulative impacts are described by the LI as those which result from changes as a result of the proposed development in conjunction with other development, of intervisibility of a range of developments or elements of the proposed development, and of actions that occurred in the past, present or foreseeable future.

Magnitude of change

Magnitude of change is a measure of the level of an impact on potential receptors arising from addition, alteration, or removal of baseline resources as a result of the proposed development and is classed as high, medium, low or negligible. The parameters and categories used for this appraisal are outlined in Table 3.

Magnitude is based on professional judgement and determined by a combination of:

- the scale of the change in relation to the proportion of the landscape or view affected by the proposed development and the degree to which it is affected;
- the duration and reversibility of the change.

In addition to nature, scale, and duration of the change, the magnitude of change to visual receptors takes into account the distance of the viewpoint from the proposed development as this will determine visibility of the site, its landscape elements and

proposed structures and the context in which the view is experienced. It is another assessment tool which is evaluated for each project based on site location, context and size, as well as the character and scale of proposals.

Table 3 Landscape and Visual Impact Magnitudes		
Magnitude of Change – landscape		Magnitude of Change –Visual
Total loss of or major alteration to key elements / features / characteristics identified in the baseline study	HIGH ↓	Proposals form a significant and immediately apparent part of the view with often long-term and irreversible changes to its overall character. Often associated with close distance or direct and open views.
Partial loss of or alteration to one or more key elements / features / characteristics identified in the baseline study	MEDIUM ↓	Proposals form a visible and recognisable new element within the overall view which are readily noticed by the observer or receptor. Often associated with middle distance or partial views and often possible to mitigate.
Minor loss of or alteration to one or more key elements / features / characteristics identified in the baseline study	LOW ↓	Proposals constitute a minor component of the wider view, which might be missed by the casual observer or receptor. Often associated with long-distance or glimpsed views or can be short-term, reversible effects.
Very minor, localised, loss of or alteration to one or more key elements / features / characteristics identified in the baseline study	NEGLIGIBLE ↓	Proposals constitute such a minor component of the view as to only be visible when deliberately sought out and not casually perceptible, or are severely restricted so that proposals can be barely perceived. Can be associated with any distance from site, usually middle to long.
No loss or alteration to one or more key elements / features / characteristics of the baseline (pre-development landscape) and / or no introduction of new elements / features / characteristics	NO CHANGE NB: this level is normally scoped out in the baseline and not carried forward to the assessment	No part of the development, or work or activity associated with it, is discernible or they are at such a distance that they are scarcely appreciated

Effects

An effect is the result of an impact at a certain magnitude combined with the sensitivity of a receptor. For example, a moderate magnitude impact on a low sensitivity receptor may be considered differently to such an impact affecting a high sensitivity receptor.

Nature of Effects

Assessment does not assign a beneficial or adverse nature to impacts and effects, but relies on a description of the type and scope of change likely to be experienced (for example addition of prominent element influencing a large extent of the view or addition of minor element only seen in a small part of the overall view).

Degree of Effect

The degree of effect of development on potential landscape and visual receptors is measured as a combination of receptor sensitivity and magnitude of change using the matrix in Table 4 below.

Table 4 - Degree and Significance of Effects				
		Sensitivity		
		High	Medium	Low
Magnitude	High	Substantial	Moderate/Substantial	Moderate
	Medium	Moderate/Substantial	Moderate	Slight
	Low	Moderate	Slight	Negligible
	Negligible	Slight	Negligible	Negligible