

Assessment Methodology for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA)

This LVIA has been undertaken following the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA), 3rd Edition, by Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment.

There are two components of an LVIA which are:

1. Assessment of landscape effects: assessing effects on the landscape as a resource in its own right;
2. Assessment of visual effects: assessing effects on specific views and on the general visual amenity experienced by people.

This report dealt with both and made clear the difference between them.

The initial stage was to identify the baseline landscape and visual conditions. The study area for this LVIA was taken to be upto 5km radius from the site. Perception of the development outside 2km was considered to be imperceptible within the landscape.

Landscape characteristics and Assessment methodology

A desk-based study was undertaken to determine the baseline characteristics of the landscape. This involved assessing:

- Ordnance survey maps of 1:50000 and 1:25000 scales;
- Aerial photography of the site and surrounding area;
- MAGIC website, identifying statutory and non-statutory land based designations, historic designations, and ecological designations (where these are of landscape interest) contributing to evaluating the value of the landscape;
- National and Local Planning policy; and
- National, Regional and Local Landscape Character Assessments.

This identified the constituent elements of the landscape characteristics which were verified during a site visit, to ensure that they were a true representation of the characteristics of the site and surrounding area.

Visual Assessment Methodology

A ZTV was prepared using LIDAR data that used the topographical survey and series of points from the ultimate build height. Viewpoints were identified that provided a range of views and visual amenity from different locations, directions and distances within the visual envelope. These were taken from publicly accessible locations to provide a representation of views, but were not exhaustive.

These were verified with a site visit to the site, and any further locations that were visible from the site, were included within the assessment.

Each viewpoint was photographed following the Technical Guidance Note 06/19 from the Landscape Institute: Visual Representation of Development Proposals (17th September 2019). The Methodology for Verified Views and Photomontages is included within Appendix B.

Assessing the Landscape Effects

The effects on the landscape as a result of the proposed development, required assessment of the sensitivity of the landscape receptor and the magnitude of effect of the proposed development on the existing landscape.

Sensitivity of the landscape receptors

Sensitivity of a landscape receptor was assessed by combining judgements of their susceptibility to the proposed development and the value attached to the landscape. These may vary depending on the element assessed.

The susceptibility to change means the ability of a landscape receptor to accommodate the proposed development without undue consequences to the baseline situation and/or achieving landscape policies/strategies.

Each individual landscape element was assessed on its susceptibility to change, and recorded on a scale of high, medium and low, as below:

High	Landscape elements that are distinctive or have valued features. These areas may be more sensitive to small change.
Medium	Landscape elements that are moderately distinctive with some valued features, but have suffered degradation. These areas may tolerate some change.
Low	Landscape elements that are weak in character and have few or no distinctive features of value. These areas are potentially tolerant of significant change.

The value of the landscape receptor generally reflects the landscape designation and their level of importance as follows:

Very High	Internationally valued landscapes
High	Nationally valued landscapes (National Parks, AONBs)
Medium	Locally Valued Landscapes
Low	Landscapes not nationally or locally designated

However, it was noted that within GLVIA3 it indicates that despite designations it is important to treat each area individually for development and assess the criteria for a valued landscape based on the characteristics and qualities of the landscape within its setting.

Magnitude of change for landscape elements

The effect on the landscape receptor was assessed in terms of the size/scale of development, geographical extent, and the duration and reversibility of the development. Professional judgement has been used to determine the magnitude of effect on landscape character as follows:

Negligible	Very minor alteration to landscape elements, with very small scale, small geographical extent over short or long term period
Low	Minor alteration to landscape elements, with small scale, small geographical extent over a short or long term period
Medium	Partial alteration to landscape elements, with medium scale, medium geographical extent over a short or long term period
High	Major alteration to landscape elements, with large scale, large geographical extent over a short or long term period

Assessing the visual effects

A series of representative viewpoints were used to identify different visual receptors at varying distances and directions based on the results of the desk based assessment. Visual receptors may include people living in the area, people working there, people passing through on road, or other modes of transport, people visiting promoted landscapes, people engaged in recreational activity.

Sensitivity of visual receptors

Sensitivity of visual receptors is assessed in terms of their susceptibility to change in visual amenity, and the value attached to that particular view. Visual receptors most susceptible to change include:

- Residents at home;
- People engaged in outdoor recreation i.e. using public rights of way whose interest is focused on the landscape and on particular views
- Visitors to heritage assets
- Communities where views contribute to the landscape setting enjoyed by residents

Travellers are generally on a moderate susceptibility to change. People engaged in sport and people at their place of work are generally less sensitive to change.

Magnitude of change of visual effects

The effect on the visual receptor was assessed in terms of the size/scale of development, geographical extent, and the duration and reversibility of the development. The criteria is as follows:

Negligible	Negligible change with no notable change in the view
Low	Minimal change in the view, with the proposal not prominent in the view or few visual receptors affected
Medium	Moderate change in the view that is visible within but is not the defining feature in that view
High	Major change in the view, that substantially alters the view with many visual receptors affected.

The overall significance of effect

Significance of effect can generally be followed using the following table:

		Magnitude of Change			
		High	Medium	Low	Negligible
Landscape and visual sensitivity	High	Very substantial	Substantial	Moderate	Negligible
	Medium	Substantial	Moderate	Slight-Moderate	Negligible
	Low	Moderate	Slight-Moderate	Slight	Negligible

This overall significance applies to both landscape and visual effects.