# Appendix 1 Assessment Criteria

## Guidance

The assessment criteria have been developed following guidance within the 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (GLVIA3) 3rd Edition prepared by the Landscape Institute and the Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment in 2013.

The GLVIA3 summarises the key principles and good practice to be considered when undertaking a LVIA and confirms that landscape and visual effects of development are separate but related issues. The guidance states that '*LVIA must deal with and clearly distinguish between the assessment of landscape effects, dealing with changes to the landscape as a resource, and the assessment of visual effects, dealing with changes in views and visual amenity'*. In practice the assessments of landscape effects and visual effects are undertaken separately but as part of an iterative process with the findings of each assessment used to inform the study of the other.

In order to minimise the subjective influence on the assessment the GLVIA3 states that judgements about the effects of development should be "*reasonable and based on clear and transparent methods so that the reasoning applied at different stages can be traced and examined by others. Professional judgements must be based on both training and experience and in general suitably qualified and experienced landscape professionals should carry out landscape and visual impact assessments".*

The LVIA therefor considers the impacts of proposed development and the likelihood and significance of the resulting effect on:

- Landscape receptors – the landscape as a resource comprising:
    - individual landscape elements (geology, soils, landform, drainage and water bodies, land cover, tree cover and vegetation patterns , and human activity such as land use and management, settlement, enclosure and field pattern);
    - the aesthetic and perceptual aspects of the landscape (the scale, complexity, openness, tranquillity, seclusion or wildness, and presence of detracting elements) and
    - the overall landscape character often with key characteristics defined by particular landscape elements or combinations of elements.
- Visual receptors:
    - peoples' views of the landscape from different locations, and
    - visual amenity or the pleasantness of a view.

## Assessment Criteria

The assessment criteria underpin the LVIA and help to establish a transparent, consistent and accountable approach to the assessment based on evidence combined with professional judgement. A key principle of the approach is the use of word scales or descriptive categories to summarise judgements about the criteria which should also be appropriate to the nature, size and location of the proposed development.

Decisions about the significance of an effect are based on the consideration of the sensitivity of the landscape or visual receptor (its value and susceptibility to change) and the magnitude of impact or change brought about by the development (its size and scale, extent, duration and reversibility). The assessment criteria for the consideration of sensitivity, magnitude of change and significance are set out overleaf.

## *Landscape Sensitivity*

Landscape sensitivity is the extent to which a landscape can accept change of a particular type and scale without unacceptable adverse effects on its character. It is related to the value attributed to it, its condition or representation of existing character including its aesthetic and perceptual aspects, and its susceptibility to change or the extent to which defining characteristics could be altered without affecting character. In some instances a landscape with important components may be of a lower sensitivity as a result of its potentially lower susceptibility to change e.g. a variable landform or high levels of tree cover. Conversely, a landscape with few features of interest may be of a higher sensitivity because it is more vulnerable to the introduction of development e.g. a flat landscape or one which is of particular value to local people.

**Table 1 – Landscape Sensitivity Criteria**

| Value | Susceptibility | Sensitivity |
|---|---|---|
| Landscape of **international or national value**, usually statutorily designated for its natural beauty, e.g. National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.<br><br>Usually including very high levels of scenic quality / tranquillity / wildness, high recreational value related to the experience and enjoyment of the landscape, and important or statutorily protected cultural / conservation interests.<br><br>Maintained in **very good condition** with a strong distinctive character often with important and rare components forming key characteristics, and an absence of detracting influences. | **Very high susceptibility** due to very low capacity to accommodate change, no existing characteristic land use or suitable context for the development proposed, and very limited potential for substitution of landscape elements. | **Very High** |
| Landscape of **regional or more than local value**, often valued for its scenic quality and which may be identified in local policy documents for its character and associations, e.g. Registered Park and Garden, Special Landscape Area.<br><br>Often including high levels of scenic quality / tranquillity / wildness, good recreational and amenity value related to the experience and enjoyment of the landscape, and regionally important cultural / conservation / green infrastructure interests.<br><br>Maintained in **good condition** with a recognisable character, sometimes with important and rare components forming key characteristics, and where any discordant elements do not detract from the overall character. | **High susceptibility** due to limited capacity to accommodate change, little existing characteristic land use or suitable context for the proposed development, and limited potential for substitution or enhancement. | **High** |
| Landscape with components of **local value,** importance and local distinctiveness which may have some scenic value and is identified through local designation, e.g. open space, Tree Preservation Order.<br><br>May include some degree of scenic value / tranquillity, local recreational and amenity value and is well-used, and locally important cultural / conservation and green infrastructure interests.<br><br>Maintained in **reasonable condition** where landscape character is evident in key characteristics but possibly including some degraded and / or discordant elements which may influence character. | **Medium susceptibility** due to some capacity to accommodate change, with some existing characteristic land use or context and some potential for substitution or enhancement. | **Medium** |
| Landscape with components of **less than local** / **low value**, importance and rarity with few distinctive or valued characteristics and very limited scenic value, low levels of tranquillity, but of some amenity / recreation / green infrastructure value.<br><br>Maintained in **poor** condition with poorly defined landscape character, often including incongruous and discordant elements which contribute towards defining character. | **Low susceptibility** due to high capacity to accommodate change, with existing landscape context including characteristic land uses and with high potential for substitution or enhancement. | **Low** |
| Landscape with components of **very low value**, importance and rarity, valued characteristics are barely evident and which provides very little scenic, amenity, recreation or green infrastructure value.<br><br>Maintained in **very poor** condition and may show evidence of abuse and intentional damage resulting in a weak and very degraded character where incongruous / discordant elements dominate. | **Very low susceptibility** where the existing landscape may be in need of regeneration / recreation to define a new landscape character. | **Negligible** |

### *Landscape Magnitude of Change*

The magnitude of change to landscape elements and character is determined by the nature and scale of the change (the loss or alteration of existing landscape elements, aesthetic and perceived aspects or key characteristics and the introduction of new elements), its geographical extent (changes restricted to the site or influencing a wider area), duration (short-, medium-, or long-term) and potential to be reversed.

Change can be positive, negative, or neutral.

**Table 2 - Magnitude of Landscape Change Criteria**

| Magnitude | Typical Criteria |
|---|---|
| **Very high** | Substantial and extensive damage to or complete loss of landscape elements, aesthetic and perceptual aspects and key characteristics which define character; introduction of highly unnatural / unattractive features which severely compromise existing character; very large scale degradation in condition and integrity of landscape elements and character.<br><br>Substantial and extensive enhancement or complete restoration / recreation of landscape elements, aesthetic and perceptual aspects, and key characteristics; removal of existing detractors which previously defined character or introduction of new well-designed features; very large scale improvement in condition of landscape elements and greater integrity of landscape character.<br><br>The character of the wider area is greatly altered to the extent that it has been redefined and / or effects may influence the character of adjacent areas at some distance from the development.<br><br>The change is very long term (over15 years) and very unlikely or very difficult to reverse, or permanent. |
| **High** | Large scale damage to or partial loss of landscape elements, aesthetic and perceptual aspects and key characteristics which define character; introduction of new or unnatural / unattractive features which undermine existing character; large scale degradation in condition and integrity of landscape elements and character.<br><br>Large scale enhancement or partial restoration / recreation of landscape elements, aesthetic and perceptual aspects, and key characteristics; removal of existing detractors which previously influenced character or introduction of new well-designed features; large scale improvement in condition of landscape elements and greater integrity of landscape character.<br><br>The character of the wider area may be slightly altered or character within a smaller area is greatly altered; changes may result in some key characteristics becoming more or less influential on overall character affecting peoples' perception of the area, but overall character remains the same; changes are unlikely to affect the character of adjacent areas.<br><br>The change is long term (5-15 years) and unlikely or difficult to reverse. |
| **Medium** | Limited damage to or loss of landscape elements, aesthetic and perceptual aspects and key characteristics which define character; introduction of new or unnatural / unattractive features which may be partially integrated through mitigation; localised degradation in condition but not adversely affecting integrity of landscape elements and character.<br><br>Limited enhancement of landscape elements, aesthetic and perceptual aspects, and key characteristics, removal of existing detractors or introduction of new well-designed features may strengthen character; localised improvement in condition of landscape elements and greater integrity of landscape character.<br><br>Defining key characteristics are unaltered and overall the character of the area is retained; changes are restricted to the immediate character area.<br><br>The change is medium term (18 months to 5 years) and could be reversed if necessary. |
| **Low** | Minor damage, alteration or enhancement of landscape elements, aesthetic and perceptual aspects and key characteristics; successful integration of new or unnatural / unattractive features through mitigation; landscape condition is maintained.<br><br>Defining key characteristics are unaltered and overall the character of the area is retained; changes are very localised.<br><br>The change is short term (6 months to 18 months) and easily reversed. |
| **Negligible** | No or imperceptible alteration of landscape elements, aesthetic or perceptual aspects, or character.<br><br>Changes are very short term (less than 6 months) and very easily or likely to be reversed. |

### *Visual Sensitivity*

The sensitivity of a visual receptor is heavily influenced by the availability, context and composition of views and the value attributed to them, the number of viewers, and their occupation or activity which has a bearing on their viewing expectations and the focus of their activity, and consequently their susceptibility to visual change. As a general guide residential receptors, tourists, users of public rights of way and people at sites designated or recognised for their visual characteristics are considered to have a higher sensitivity to change in their views than people driving or at their place of work.

**Table 3 – Visual Sensitivity Criteria**

| Value | Susceptibility | Sensitivity |
|---|---|---|
| Views from and to **international or national** designated landscapes (NP, AONB) and highly important and rare buildings / features of cultural significance including grounds, where visual amenity is very important and views are very highly valued. | **Very high susceptibility** to change.<br>Visitors where activity is directly associated with the experience and enjoyment of the landscape and there is a very high expectation of scenic quality. | **Very High** |
| Views of **local value** to everyday life from residential properties and within communities where the degree of visual amenity contributes to the satisfaction of living there.<br>Views from and to landscapes of **regional or more than local value**, which may be identified in local policy, on mapping or in literature, e.g. Registered Park and Garden, recognised vistas and designated viewpoints, Green Belt, public right of way (PROW), where visual amenity is important and views are highly valued<br>Views from local and regional tourist routes on A and B class roads. | **High susceptibility** to change.<br>Occupants of residential property inc care homes etc.<br>Visitors to specific landscape destinations and users of PROW, designated trails and open access areas where the focus of activity is on the experience and enjoyment of landscape and there is a high expectation of scenic quality.<br>Users of public and informal open space valued for its visual amenity characteristics, including tourist routes where the expectation of scenic quality may be higher and outdoor locations within the Green Belt. | **High** |
| Views of **local value** where the visual setting complements the use of the location, such as:<br>Churches, schools, hospitals and hotels.<br>Public and informal open space, cemeteries, allotments and golf courses.<br>Lanes, C-class roads and passenger railways with incidental views.<br>Urban residential roads. | **Medium susceptibility** to change.<br>Users of public and civic buildings where the setting enhances the use and enjoyment of the site.<br>Users of public, formal and informal open space and people walking / travelling in the local area on a regular basis or visiting with an expectation of reasonable visual amenity. | **Medium** |
| Views of **less than local / low value** where the visual context is not related to the use of the location, such as:<br>Offices, commercial developments and industrial sites.<br>Outdoor recreational facilities, e.g. outdoor pitches.<br>Main A and B class roads (except as recognised approaches to tourist locations), motorways, and urban non-residential roads. | **Low susceptibility** to change.<br>People at their place of work where setting is not related to the use and enjoyment of the site.<br>Users of outdoor recreational facilities where the focus is on the activity.<br>Travellers on main A and B class roads, motorways and urban non-residential roads, where expectations of visual amenity may be low. | **Low** |
| No views of the proposals. | No users. | **Negligible** |

### *Visual Magnitude of Change*

The magnitude of change to views and visual amenity is determined by the nature and scale of the change (the loss, addition or alterations of features in the view, changes to its composition and the proportion of the view occupied by the development, the degree of contrast or integration with the remaining landscape elements in terms of form, line, colour, texture and scale, and the nature of the view – whether full, partial or glimpsed), its geographical extent (the angle of view, distance to the development, area of visibility), its duration (short-, medium-, or long-term) and potential to be reversed.

Change can be positive, negative, or neutral.

**Table 3 –Magnitude of Visual Change Criteria**

| Magnitude | Typical Criteria |
|---|---|
| **Very high** | Substantial and extensive changes where the loss or addition of components is dominant; the proposals considerably alter the composition of the view and occupy most of the field of view both horizontally and vertically; views of the proposals are full and unrestricted.<br>The proposals are incongruous in terms of form, line, colour, texture and scale contrasting sharply with the surrounding area;<br>Direct views at close range and available over a very extensive area; views of the proposals are unavoidable and are available to many or nearly all viewers.<br>The change is very long term (>15 years) and very unlikely / difficult to reverse, or permanent. |
| **High** | Large scale changes where loss or addition of components is prominent; the proposals greatly alter the composition of the view and occupy approximately half of the field of view either horizontally and vertically or both; views of the proposals are full and unrestricted.<br>The proposals are less incongruous in terms of form, line, colour, texture and scale contrasting to some extent with the surrounding area;<br>Direct views at medium range and oblique views at close range over a large area; views of the proposals are obvious and are available to many or a small majority or viewers.<br>The change is long term (5-15 years) and unlikely / difficult to reverse. |
| **Medium** | Limited changes where loss or addition of components is noticeable; the proposals alter the composition of the view to a limited degree and occupy a limited extent of the field of view either horizontally or vertically; views of the proposals are full or partially restricted or filtered.<br>The proposals are inconsistent in terms of form, line, colour, texture and scale contrasting to a limited extent with the surrounding area;<br>Direct views at long range and oblique views at medium range over a restricted area; views of the proposals are recognisable and are available to some or a large minority or viewers.<br>The change is medium term (18 months -5 years) and could be reversed if necessary. |
| **Low** | Small scale changes where loss or addition of components is barely perceptible; the proposals slightly alter the composition of the view and occupy a very limited extent of the field of view either horizontally or vertically; views of the proposals are largely restricted, filtered or glimpsed.<br>Overall the proposals are consistent in terms of form, line, colour, texture and scale and contrast to a small extent with the surrounding area;<br>Direct views at very long range and oblique views at a long range over a restricted area, views of the proposals are discernible and are available to a few or a small minority or viewers.<br>The change is short term (6 months – 18 months) and easily reversed. |
| **Negligible** | The loss or addition of components is not visible or imperceptible; the proposals minimally alter the composition of the view and occupy a fraction of the horizontal or vertical field of view; if available views of the proposals are restricted, filtered or glimpsed.<br>Overall the proposals are harmonious in terms of form, line, colour, texture and scale and compliment the surrounding area;<br>Proposals are not visible or barely evident due to the effects of viewing angle or screening, or visible at a greater distance yet indistinguishable from their surroundings; very few or no viewers are affected<br>Changes are very short term (less than 6 months) and very easily or likely to be reversed. |

## Determining the Significance of Landscape and Visual Effects

The significance of an effect is derived from the combination of the sensitivity of the landscape or visual receptor and the magnitude of change brought about by the proposals. Residual effects are those which remain after the implementation of agreed mitigation measures, or where there is no feasible mitigation.

The assessment relies upon common sense, experience and reasoned judgement applied systematically and supported by substantiated evidence. In assessing the significance of an effect therefore, an assessor may for example consider changes of a relatively low magnitude to be significant if they relate to a highly sensitive (or "important" or "vulnerable") landscape or visual receptor.

In order to ensure a systematic approach to the assessment the thresholds or combinations of sensitivity and magnitude of impact shown in Table 4 below have been used as a starting point for determining significance. Any deviation from this approach, for example where the further application of professional judgement suggests a different outcome, is identified in the landscape and visual assessment tables and described in the assessment report.

**Table 4 – Significance of Effect**

| Sensitivity / Value | Magnitude of Change | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Negligible | Low | Medium | High | Very high |
| **Very High** | No Change | Slight | Moderate or Large | Large or Substantial | Substantial |
| **High** | No Change | Slight | Slight or Moderate | Moderate or Large | Large or Substantial |
| **Medium** | No Change | No Change or Slight | Slight | Slight or Moderate | Moderate or Large |
| **Low** | No Change | No Change or Slight | No Change or Slight | Slight | Slight or Moderate |
| **Negligible** | No Change | No Change | No Change or Slight | No Change or Slight | Slight |

The application of the matrix leads to the determination of the significance of effect on a five-point scale of Substantial, Large, Moderate, Slight and No Change. Although there is no commonly agreed definition of 'significance' it often relates to an effect, usually adverse, which imposes unacceptable change, although it can also be welcome change which is positive. These terms above can be interpreted using the criteria set out in Table 5 below as a starting point with any deviation from this approach in the assessment report.

**Table 5 - Significance Criteria**

| Significance of Effect | Typical Criteria |
|---|---|
| **Substantial** | The proposals are likely to result in a beneficial or adverse effect due to the complete replacement or long-term / permanent effect upon landscape character and / or visual amenity which are fundamental considerations which are likely to greatly influence the decision-making process. **They are significant effects for the purposes of this LVIA.** |
| **Large** | The proposals are likely to result in adverse or beneficial effects on landscape character and / or visual amenity which are important considerations and are likely to be material in the decision-making process. **They are significant effects for the purposes of this LVIA.** |
| **Moderate** | The proposals are likely to result in beneficial or adverse effects on landscape character and / or visual amenity which may be important, but are not likely to be key decision making factors. The cumulative effects of such issues may become a decision making issue if leading to an increase in the overall adverse effect on landscape character and / or visual amenity. |
| **Slight** | The proposals are likely to result in beneficial or adverse effects on landscape character and / or visual amenity which may be raised as local issues. They are unlikely to be critical in the decision making process, but are important in enhancing the subsequent design of the project. |
| **No Change** | No effects or those that are beneath the levels of perception. |