

APPENDIX A – LANDSCAPE & VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

I. Introduction

- I.1.1. This Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) methodology has at its core the guidance and recommendations made by the 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (3rd Edition) published jointly by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment in March 2013.
- I.1.2. This LVIA methodology addresses landscape effects and visual effects as two separate areas of study.
- I.1.3. Landscape is the term used to apply to areas of land that are being judged in their own right as environmental assets. Visual or visual amenity is the term used to the visual appreciation of an area.
- I.1.4. The LVIA is an objective and systematic way of initially identifying landscape areas and people that will potentially experience a change and then assessing the likely significance of the change arising for the proposed development.
- I.1.5. LVIA is used as a tool to guide decision makers and developers alike to best integrate proposed development into a landscape with the best possible landscape and visual effects.
- I.1.6. LVIA's such as this can be produced as standalone documents or as part of a wider Environmental Impact Assessment.
- I.1.7. This LVIA Methodology was produced in August 2016 and supersedes all previous LVIA Methodologies used by this practice.

2. Terminology

2.1.1. The terminology used in this methodology is the same as that used throughout the LVIA and is explained in the Glossary at the start of the LVIA.

2.1.2. By their nature LVIA's can appear to use similar terms and references which is why this methodology explains as far as reasonably possible what is meant by these terms. The key terms used in this LVIA process are explained below and are based on the GLVIA3 glossary explanation of the same;

Landscape Receptors – defined aspects of the landscape that have the potential to be affected by a proposal;

Visual Receptors – Individuals and/or defined groups of people who have the potential to be affected by a proposal;

Landscape Effects – Effects on the landscape as a resource in its own right;

Visual Effects – Effects on specific views and on the general visual amenity experienced by people;

Landscape Value – The relative value that is attached to different landscapes by society, it is recognised that a landscape may be valued by different people or groups for a variety of reasons; or view.

Visual Value – (Not defined in GLVIA3) but a mark of the overall value attached to a view by society in general. Visual value may be valued by different people or groups for a variety of reasons at different levels.

Susceptibility – the ability of a defined landscape or visual receptor to accommodate the specific proposed development without undue negative consequences.

Sensitivity – a term applied to defined landscape and visual receptors that combines judgements on value and susceptibility to change. It is subsequently used in the assessment of significance of an effect.

Magnitude (of effect) – the term that combines judgements about the size and scale of an identified effect and the extent of the area over which it occurs. It also considers whether the effect is reversible or irreversible for the receptor and whether it is short or long term in duration.

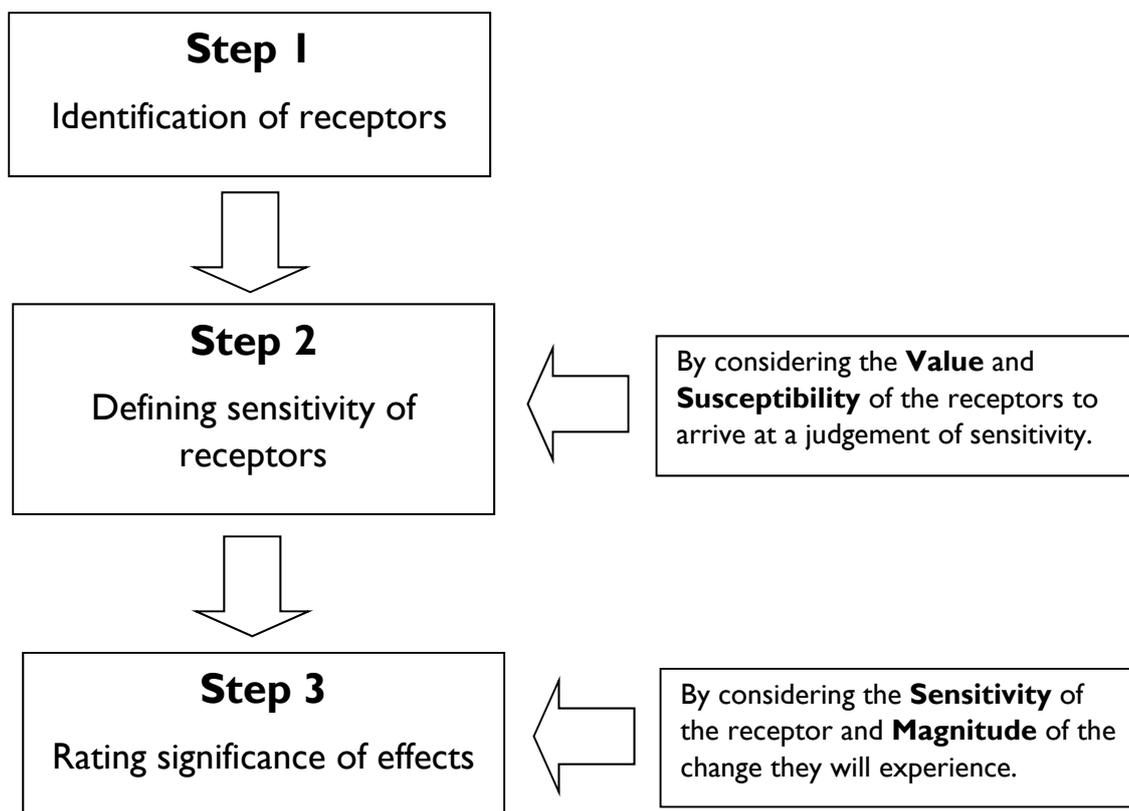
Significance (of effect) – a measure of the importance or gravity of the environmental effect arrived at by considering both sensitivity of the receptor and magnitude of effect.

3. Overview of assessment process

3.1.1. For both the landscape assessment and the visual assessment it is a three step process to arrive at an assessment of the significance of an effect on a receptor.

3.1.2. Appendix A - Figure 1 below represents the process as a flow diagram;

Appendix A – Figure 1



3.1.3. The subsequent sections describe the elements used in this process.

3.1.4. All landscape summary tables and boxes are shaded in green and their visual counterparts in blue.

4. Assessment of landscape effects

4.1. Overview of section contents

- Identification (scoping) of landscape receptors;
- Landscape baseline;
- Landscape value;
- Landscape susceptibility;
- Landscape sensitivity;
- Magnitude of landscape effects; and
- Assessing the significance of landscape effects.

4.2. Identification (scoping) of landscape receptors

4.2.1. The identification of receptors is based on understanding the proposed development.

The nature of the proposed development is considered during the following phases;

- Construction
- Completion but with no mitigation (Year 0); and
- Completion with mitigation.

4.2.2. These three stages accord with typical Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) stages of assessment but can be added to with decommissioning and restoration stages should it be required for the effective assessment of a particular development.

4.2.3. Landscape receptors are typically identified in three ways.

4.2.4. Firstly by considering existing landscape characterisation of an area such as National Character Assessments, county and local authority landscape character assessments. The landscape character assessments are typically identified in a hierarchical fashion working from a national level to the finer grain of local level assessments.

4.2.5. Secondly by identifying any areas subject to a landscape designation e.g. Registered Historic Park or Garden or other form of designation where landscape is critical to the designated asset e.g. a Conservation Area.

4.2.6. Thirdly on an elemental basis by identifying those landscape elements such as trees, hedges, ponds and the like that make up the particular landscape and its aesthetic and perceptual qualities.

4.2.7. The study area i.e. the area used to identify the landscape receptors, is ideally agreed with the competent authority in advance of the assessment. However it is recognised that on occasions a competent authority is not able to give such advice and on these occasions professional judgement is used.

4.2.8. The study area will vary with the size, height and nature of the development. It will include the Site itself, the surrounding landscape as context to the Site and Landscape Character Areas that are likely to be affected directly or indirectly by the proposals.

4.2.9. The study area is formed by casting a line to an appropriate radius around the boundary of the proposed Site. It can also be informed by the use of Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) mapping which defines the theoretical extent of the area from which the development is potentially visible.

4.3. Landscape baseline

4.3.1. The landscape baseline is the description of the existing environmental qualities of the landscape receptors and the landscape as a whole against which any future changes can be measured against or landscape effects predicted and assessed.

4.3.2. The landscape baseline is established by considering both a desk study of existing sources 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.

4.3.3. Landscape Character Assessments is identified by GLVIA3 §5.4 as the key tool for understanding the landscape and should be used for baseline studies.

4.3.4. Existing Landscape Character Assessments should be critically judged for their applicability to the Site and the wider study area.

4.3.5. Typically the landscape baseline will identify and describe the elements that make up the landscape in the study area, including;

Appendix A – Table 1

Physical influences	Land cover	Influences of human activity
Geology	Vegetation	Land use and management
Soils	Tree cover	Settlement character
Landform/Topography	Built form	Building character
Drainage		Field pattern
Water bodies		Means of enclosure

4.3.6. Other forms of more specialist character assessment can apply to a study area and reference should be made to the following if applicable;

- Townscape Character Assessments;
- Seascape Character Assessments; and
- Historic Landscape Character Assessment.

4.4. Landscape value

4.4.1. As part of describing the landscape baseline the value of the potentially affected landscape is established. GLVIA3 at §5.19 defines landscape value as *‘the relative value that is attached to different landscapes by society, bearing in mind that a landscape may be valued by different stakeholders for a whole variety of reasons.’*

4.4.2. This is done an element by element basis within the Landscape Receptor Table.

4.4.3. Value is presented on a three point scale of High, Medium and Low.

4.4.4. Existing landscape designations are a mark of high landscape value and are identified through the desk study. However the lack of an existing landscape designation does not mean a landscape or the elements that combine to form it are without value. Value for designated and undesignated landscapes is assessed during the fieldwork stage. Appendix A – Table 2 below sets down the levels of value assigned to landscapes with different designations.

Appendix A – Table 2 – Value assigned to landscape receptors with designations

Type and Name of designation	Description of designation	Value
International designation World Heritage Site (WHS)	A natural or man-made site or area recognized as being of outstanding international importance and therefore deserving special protection.	High due to their international importance
National landscape designation National Park, Heritage Coasts and The Broads, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).	Areas by virtue of their attractive landscape have national importance and typically benefit from settings of high landscape quality.	High due to their national importance
National heritage designation or registration The setting and extents of Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings and Structures, Registered Historic Parklands and Gardens, Ancient Woodlands	Assets and their settings or curtilage that have cultural or natural links to the landscape.	High due to their national importance

Type and Name of designation	Description of designation	Value
Experiential classified landscapes Identified Dark Sky Areas and CPRE and CPRW areas of high tranquillity and wildness.	Landscape areas that have been mapped and defined for the quality of the experience that they evoke.	High / Medium due to their national and regional importance
Regional landscape designations Special Landscape Area (SLA), Areas of Special County Value (ASCV) and similar titled areas.	Areas designated at a county or local level on the basis of the quality of the landscape to the region or local authority area.	High / Medium due to their regional and local importance
Regional heritage designation Conservation Area / Area of Archaeological Interest	Areas designated at a regional or local level on the basis of the heritage importance including matters of setting and views.	High / Medium due to their regional and local importance
Local landscape designations Public Open Space, Green or Blue Infrastructure, Areas of Local Landscape Importance, Tree Preservation Order and Ancient Hedgerow.	Area designated at a local level to reflect the importance of a landscape, area or features within it at a local level.	High / Medium / Low depending on their assessed importance within the locality.
No formal designation or registration	The lack of a formal designation does not immediately make the value of the landscape or feature low as local importance has to be judged in the assessment of value.	High / Medium / Low depending on their assessed importance within the locality.

4.4.5. Should a landscape receptor be deemed to require further consideration to assess its value then Box 5.1 of GLVIA3 pg 84 is used as the basis of the assessment. This box which is reproduced in its entirety below as Appendix A – Figure 2 is based upon criteria established by the author of GLVIA3 Carys Swanwick and Land Use Consultants dated 2002.

Appendix A – Figure 2 – Criteria for the establishment of Landscape Value

Box 5.1

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 the 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.

Based on Swanwick and Land Use Consultants (2002)

As reproduced from the GLVIA3.

4.5. Landscape susceptibility

4.5.1. Susceptibility is the term used to describe the ability of an identified landscape receptor to accommodate the proposed development without undue consequences to the baseline condition of that individual receptor.

4.5.2. Receptor susceptibility is identified in the Landscape Receptors Table and is applicable to character areas as whole, designated areas or individual characteristics that contribute to the overall landscape. It can also be applicable to particular aesthetic or perceptual aspects.

4.5.3. GLVIA3 at §5.40 also identifies that matters of landscape planning policy and strategies should also be considered with regard to the effects that proposed development may have on them.

4.5.4. Susceptibility of a landscape receptor to change is specific to the type of development being proposed in that particular area to ensure relevancy to the assessment.

4.5.5. Judgements on susceptibility are presented in a three step scale of Low, Medium or High with definitions for each of these grades presented in Appendix A – Table 3 below;

Appendix A – Table 3 – Definitions of landscape susceptibility

Scale	Description of susceptibility
High	Little or no ability to accommodate the proposed development without adverse consequences for the retention of the existing landscape baseline or the delivery of landscape planning policies and strategies.
Medium	Some ability to accommodate the proposed development without adverse consequences for the retention of the existing landscape baseline or the delivery of landscape planning policies and strategies
Low	An ability to accommodate the proposed development without adverse consequences for the retention of the existing landscape baseline or the delivery of landscape planning policies and strategies

4.6. Landscape sensitivity

4.6.1. Landscape sensitivity is derived from combining the judgements on landscape value and landscape susceptibility together. It is itself then carried forward to determine the significance of landscape effects.

4.6.2. Landscape sensitivity is first recorded for each of the landscape receptors in the Landscape Receptor Table. It provides clear rationale for both the existing value and susceptibility to change for the individual landscape receptor. The rationale is a record of why a receptor has been graded in a particular way.

4.6.3. The scale of sensitivity is again graded using a High, Medium and Low ratings. Split grades are possible where a resulting sensitivity may fall between two grade levels.

4.6.4. Appendix A - Table 4 provides descriptive text for each of these grades of landscape sensitivity;

Appendix A – Table 4 – Description of grades of landscape sensitivity

Grade description	Typical indicators of sensitivity
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highly valued for its scenic quality.

Grade description	Typical indicators of sensitivity
<p>A landscape area with a particularly distinctive sense of place and character.</p> <p>Landscape characteristic that makes a highly notable contribution to a landscape area.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly valued for its landscape character. • Low tolerance to the type of proposed development. • Designed landscape of historical importance. • Other strong cultural or heritage associations. • Appreciated as a recreational resource. • Landscape characteristics that cannot be readily replaced. • Landscape in good condition.
<p>Medium</p> <p>A landscape area with some distinctive sense of place and character but not nationally rare.</p> <p>Landscape characteristic that makes a positive contribution to a landscape area.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some scenic quality but also some less scenic elements. • Recognisable landscape character that has value. • Some tolerance to the type of proposed development. • A recognisably area or piece of designed landscape. • Possible cultural or heritage associations. • Some appreciation as a recreational resource. • Landscape characteristics that could be replaced with some effort. • Landscape in reasonable condition.
<p>Low</p> <p>A landscape area with no distinctive sense of place or notable character and not locally rare.</p> <p>Landscape characteristic that makes a contribution to a landscape area.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited or no scenic quality or elements. • Landscape character is ordinary or weak. • Tolerance to the type of proposed development. • Not a recognisable designed landscape. • No known cultural or heritage associations. • No obvious appreciation as a recreational resource. • Landscape characteristics that could be readily replaced. • Landscape in poor condition.

4.6.5. The judgement of landscape sensitivity as explained above is based on consideration of both the landscape receptor’s value and its susceptibility to change arising from the type of development proposed. Appendix A – Table 5 is used as a look-up table to achieve consistency in the definition of sensitivity.

Appendix A – Table 5 – Establishment of landscape sensitivity

Susceptibility to Change

Value	High	Medium / High	Medium	Medium / Low	Low
High	HIGH	HIGH	MEDIUM/ HIGH	MEDIUM	MEDIUM
Medium / High	HIGH	MEDIUM/ HIGH	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	MEDIUM / LOW
Medium	MEDIUM/ HIGH	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	MEDIUM / LOW	MEDIUM / LOW
Medium / Low	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	MEDIUM / LOW	MEDIUM / LOW	LOW
Low	MEDIUM	MEDIUM / LOW	MEDIUM / LOW	LOW	LOW

4.6.6. All the identified landscape receptors are first considered in the Landscape Receptor Table to establish sensitivity. It is only those landscape receptors that are identified as having a Medium, Medium/High or High sensitivity to the development that are carried forward to the assessment stage. However landscape receptors with Medium/Low and Low sensitivity can be carried forward should it be considered appropriate for the assessment after discussion with clients and ideally competent authorities.

4.7. Magnitude of landscape effects

4.7.1. The magnitude of landscape effects is assessed by considering a number of factors before arriving at an informed judgement. The factors are listed below and form the basis of the Landscape Effects Table in the LVIA;

- Size and scale of the proposed development
- Geographical extent of the effect
- Contrast or integration with the existing landscape character
- Duration of the landscape effect
- Reversibility or irreversibility.

4.7.2. The magnitude of landscape effect is considered for the three life stages of construction, on completion but with no mitigation and complete with foreseeable mitigation. This last life stage is typically taken at 15 years after completion to allow landscape mitigation proposals to have established. This period of time can be altered to suit the nature of the project and likely mitigation proposals. Any variations will be stated in the LVIA.

4.7.3. Landscape effects arising from developments can be either beneficial or adverse, permanent or temporary and these are stated within the Landscape Effects Table in the LVIA.

4.7.4. The magnitude of landscape effects is categorised as either Large, Medium, Small or None. Half grades between these categories will be used where the magnitude fits neither category. The narrative description of the magnitude categories is presented in Appendix A – Table 6.

Appendix A – Table 6 – Description of magnitude categories for landscape effects

Large	The Development would result in a substantial alteration to key landscape character or characteristics of the receptor.
Medium	The Development would result in a partial loss of or alteration to key landscape character or characteristics of the receptor.
Small	The Development would result in a minor alteration to landscape character or characteristics of the receptor.
None	The Development would not change the landscape character or characteristics of the receptor.

4.7.5. What is not normally stated in the LVIA is a critique of the architectural appearance of building proposals (should the development include built form) as this is a highly subjective matter. Instead the LVIA assesses the effects based on the scale and massing of the proposals and the resulting effects on the landscape receptors. However where the character or scale of buildings is highly critical to landscape character e.g. co-ordinated estate buildings then comments regarding their appearance may be made.

4.7.6. The size or scale of the magnitude of landscape effects relates to the loss or addition of features to the particular landscape receptor likely to be caused by the development.

The assessment takes into account the following;

- The extent/proportion of the landscape element that is lost or added;
- The contribution of that element to the character of the landscape;
- The revised setting of the landscape or landscape element resulting from the development;
- The degree to which aesthetic or perceptual aspects of the landscape receptor are altered; and
- Whether the effect changes the key characteristics of the landscape, which are critical to its distinctive character.

4.7.7. Geographical extent of landscape effects will vary according to the nature of the proposals but generally will consist of the following;

- Site level of the development itself;
- Landscape setting and context to the site;
- Larger scale of the landscape type or character area in which the site lies; and
- Largest scale of National Character Areas (typically for larger projects only).

4.7.8. Duration of landscape effects are typically classified as short, medium or long-term. For the purposes of this LVIA they accord with GLVIA 3 and are defined below. They can be altered to reflect the particular nature of a project and the alternative durations will be stated;

- Short-term 0 to 5 years
- Medium term 5 to 10 years
- Long term 10 to 25 years
- Permanency is considered anything above 25 years as this can be taken as a change that will last as long as a generation.

4.7.9. Reversibility is different to duration and passes a judgement on whether the landscape effect is reversible or not. The definitions of the various states of reversibility are;

- Fully reversible – landscape be able to be returned to its original condition after mitigation e.g. a rural landscape after installation of pipe routes or removal of wind turbines;
- Partially reversible – mitigation proposals would be able to return the landscape to something approaching its original appearance but changed to a certain degree e.g. the restoration of a quarry will likely have a changed appearance; or
- Irreversible – a permanent change to landscape character that is not foreseeable to be returned to the original landscape character i.e. a new housing area.

4.8. Assessing the significance of landscape effects

4.8.1. The assessment of the significance of landscape effects is derived by combining the judgements of landscape sensitivity and magnitude of effect for each landscape receptor. This is presented in the Landscape Effects Table alongside the judgement of magnitude with a clear narrative of the reasoning behind the assessment.

4.8.2. The significance of landscape effects can be beneficial or adverse, permanent or temporary and will occur at different levels of significance or as named for clarity in the Landscape Effects Table - ratings.

4.8.3. A look-up table is used to achieve consistency when judging the significance rating. This table is only a guide and alterations to the classifications it gives can be made based on professional judgement. Appendix A – Table 7 presents this table.

Appendix A – Table 7 – Significance of landscape effect rating

Magnitude of Effects	Receptor Sensitivity				
	High	Medium / High	Medium	Medium / Low	Low
Large	MAJOR	MAJOR	MAJOR/MODERATE	MODERATE	MODERATE
Medium / Large	MAJOR	MAJOR/MODERATE	MODERATE	MODERATE	MODERATE/MINOR
Medium	MAJOR/MODERATE	MODERATE	MODERATE	MODERATE/MINOR	MINOR
Medium / Small	MODERATE	MODERATE	MODERATE/MINOR	MINOR	MINOR
Small	MODERATE	MODERATE/MINOR	MINOR	MINOR	MINOR
Small / None	MODERATE/MINOR	MINOR	MINOR	MINOR	NEGLIGIBLE
None	NO EFFECT	NO EFFECT	NO EFFECT	NO EFFECT	NO EFFECT

4.8.4. Narrative descriptions of the different ratings of significance are presented below in Appendix A – Table 8 for both beneficial and adverse effects. It also defines what are considered neutral and negligible landscape effects.

Appendix A – Table 8 – Definitions of the significance ratings for landscape effects

Rating	Description of rating
Major beneficial landscape effect	The proposals will result in a large positive change in the key characteristics of the landscape receptor arising from either large scale improvement or introduction of extensive new positive elements to it so as to improve the notably improve its quality and integrity as a landscape receptor. The proposals may also be in full compliance adopted planning objectives for the landscape.
Moderate beneficial landscape effect	The proposals will result in a positive partial change in the key characteristics of the landscape receptor arising from either their partial addition or improvement in quality or introduction of some positive elements to it so as to moderately improve the quality and integrity of the landscape receptor. The proposals may also comply with adopted planning objectives for the landscape.
Minor beneficial landscape effect	The proposals will result in small positive change(s) in the character of the landscape receptor that is noticeable but does not alter its key characteristics. The change will arise from the addition or improvement of a small part of the receptor or through the introduction of some positive landscape elements to it so as to improve its integrity as a landscape receptor in a small way. The proposals may also be partly comply with adopted planning objectives for the landscape.
Neutral landscape effect	A neutral effect is one that has both beneficial and adverse in equal degrees and the two effects cancel each other out leaving a changed landscape receptor but one with equal quality.
Negligible beneficial or adverse effect	A negligible effect is one that may be discernible but is at first not obvious or debatable as to whether it will occur.
No landscape effect	There is no apparent landscape effect on the receptor.
Minor adverse landscape effect	The proposals will result in small negative change(s) in the character of the landscape receptor that is noticeable but does not affect its key characteristics. The change will arise from the loss or reduction of a small part of the receptor or through the introduction of some negative elements to it so as to reduce its integrity as a landscape receptor in a small way. The proposals may also be partly in conflict with adopted planning objectives for the landscape.
Moderate adverse landscape effect	The proposals will result in a partial change in the key characteristics of the landscape receptor arising from either their partial loss, reduction or introduction of some uncharacteristic elements to it so as to moderately reduce or degrade the integrity of the landscape receptor. The proposals may also be partly in conflict with adopted planning objectives for the landscape.
Major adverse landscape effect	The proposals will result in a large negative change in the key characteristics of the landscape receptor arising from either their loss, reduction or introduction of uncharacteristic elements to it so as to destroy it or seriously degrade the integrity of the landscape receptor. The

Rating	Description of rating
	proposals may also be in conflict with adopted planning objectives for the landscape.

5. Assessment of visual effects

5.1. Overview of section contents

5.1.1. Like the landscape assessment the visual assessment follows a very similar process;

- Identification (scoping) of visual receptors;
- Visual baseline;
- Value of views and visual amenity;
- Susceptibility of visual receptors to change;
- Visual sensitivity;
- Selecting viewpoints;
- Magnitude of visual effects; and
- Assessing the significance of visual effects.

5.2. Identification (scoping) of visual receptors

5.2.1. The identification of visual receptors is based on understanding the proposed development. The nature of the proposed development is considered during the following phases;

- Construction
- Completion but with no mitigation (Year 0); and
- Completion with mitigation.

5.2.2. Visual receptors are people who have a potential to see the proposed development and experience a change in the view or general visual amenity of an area. They are typically identified by the following methods.

5.2.3. Firstly by considering aerial photography and maps to identify people who will be able to see the development.

5.2.4. Secondly by attending Site and the areas around the Site looking to see which receptors would be able to see the proposed development.

5.2.5. Thirdly by conducting Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) modelling to identify through computer modelling of topography and visual barriers the theoretical extent of where the development is visible from before checking these possible views on the ground.

ZTV modelling is not conducted for all LVIAs and simpler developments, typically lower in height may not be subject to ZTV modelling.

5.2.6. The same study area is adopted for the visual assessment. However should it be deemed that visual effects extend beyond the range of the study area then these should also be considered for the sake of thoroughness.

5.2.7. In the description of views to a development the following distances apply;

- Local or short-range views – under 0.5km
- Medium or mid-range views – 0.5km – 2km
- Distant or long-range views – over 2km

5.3. Visual baseline

5.3.1. The visual baseline is the description of the existing qualities of the views and visual amenity for the individual visual receptors against which any future changes can be assessed against or visual effects predicted and assessed.

5.3.2. The visual baseline is established by considering both a desk study of existing sources such as landscape character assessments and OS Mapping to identify prominent or promoted views and field work to identify and record the character and extent of the views and the elements, features, aesthetic and perceptual factors which contribute to general visual amenity.

5.4. Value attached to views and visual amenity

5.4.1. As part of describing the visual baseline the value of the potentially affected views and general visual amenity is established. GLVIA3 at §6.37 identifies visual value attached to heritage assets and specific cultural views from paintings and like. However views do not need such cultural association to be considered of value by visual receptors, particularly local residents who will experience a view for longer.

5.4.2. The assessment considers the interest or reason a receptor has in experiencing a view and the value that they can reasonably attach to it.

5.4.3. This is done on a receptor group basis within the Visual Receptor Table with the value attached to views described as either Low, Medium or High.

Appendix A – Table 9 – Value assessment of views and visual amenity

Value	Indicative description
High	Views from and visual amenity associated with viewpoints of regional or national importance, popular visitor attractions where views and visual amenity form a key part of the attraction or route. Inclusion within guidebooks or cultural references such as painting and poetry or as part of heritage character. Views from areas with national designations such as National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty or regional or local landscape designations such as Special Landscape Areas or equivalent.
Medium	Views from and visual amenity associated with viewpoints of district or local importance, local visitor attractions or public open space and routes where views and visual amenity form an integral part of the attraction. Views from regional or local landscape designations such as Special Landscape Areas or equivalent.
Low	Views from and visual amenity associated with every-day locations or routes that do not benefit from any designation or cultural associations.

5.4.4. Value is also considered in terms of whether it is nationally, regionally or locally important. Value can also be increased by inclusion of views in historical or cultural references.

5.4.5. Existing landscape designations are generally a mark of visual value as well but this cannot be assumed and must be backed up by site assessment. Conversely the lack of an existing designation does not mean a view is without value. Value for designated and undesignated views and visual amenity is assessed during the fieldwork stage.

5.5. Susceptibility of visual receptors to change

5.5.1. Susceptibility of visual receptors to change in views and visual amenity is derived by considering two matters;

- the occupation or reason why they are experiencing that view or area; and
- the amount of interest or attention they have in the view and appearance of the area...

5.5.2. Visual receptor susceptibility is identified in the Visual Receptors Table and a rationale given for the judgement.

5.5.3. Judgements on visual susceptibility are presented in a three step scale of Low, Medium or High with definitions for each of these grades presented in Appendix A – Table 9 below;

Appendix A – Table 10 – Definitions of visual susceptibility

Scale	Description of susceptibility
High	<p>Little or no ability to accommodate the change caused by the proposed development without adverse consequences for the receptor groups experiencing the view and/or general visual amenity.</p> <p>Typical receptors being residents at home, outdoor recreation groups whose attention is on the view e.g. walkers, visitors to heritage attractions, public park users, wider communities where setting of an area contributes to general visual amenity, travellers on recognised scenic routes.</p>
Medium	<p>Some ability to accommodate the proposed development with some adverse consequences for the receptor groups experiencing the view and/or general visual amenity.</p> <p>Typical receptors include users of transport routes and areas of outdoor recreation where the view is not the primary focus of attention e.g. sports pitches.</p>
Low	<p>An ability to accommodate the proposed development without notable adverse consequences for the receptor groups experiencing the view and/or general visual amenity.</p> <p>Typical receptor groups include people at work or going about business that is not focussing on views or general visual amenity.</p>

5.6. Visual sensitivity

5.6.1. Visual sensitivity is derived from combining the judgements on value of a view or visual amenity and susceptibility of the visual receptor together. It is itself then carried forward to determine the significance of visual effects by combining it with the magnitude of visual effects.

5.6.2. Visual sensitivity is first recorded for each of the visual receptors in the Visual Receptor Table. It provides clear rationale for both the existing value and receptor susceptibility to change for the individual visual receptor. The rationale is a record of why a visual receptor has been graded in a particular way.

5.6.3. The scale of sensitivity is again graded using a High, Medium and Low ratings. Split grades are possible where a resulting sensitivity may be judged to fall between two grade levels. A look-up table is used to aid consistency but the grading can be modified based on professional judgement.

Appendix A – Table 11 – Establishment of visual sensitivity

Value	Susceptibility to Change				
	High	Medium / High	Medium	Medium / Low	Low
High	HIGH	HIGH	MEDIUM/ HIGH	MEDIUM	MEDIUM
Medium / High	HIGH	MEDIUM/ HIGH	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	MEDIUM / LOW
Medium	MEDIUM/ HIGH	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	MEDIUM / LOW	MEDIUM / LOW
Medium / Low	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	MEDIUM / LOW	MEDIUM / LOW	LOW
Low	MEDIUM	MEDIUM / LOW	MEDIUM / LOW	LOW	LOW

5.6.4. Appendix A - Table 12 provides descriptive text for each of these grades of visual sensitivity;

Appendix A – Table 12 – Description of grades of visual sensitivity

Grade description	Typical indicators of sensitivity
<p>High A highly attractive view or visual amenity area with an obvious attraction and general lack of distracting or negative features.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly valued for its scenic quality. • Low tolerance to the type of proposed development. • Designed landscape of historical importance. • Other strong cultural or heritage associations. • Focus of a recreational resource. • Views and visual amenity that cannot be readily replaced. • Possibly benefitting from a national, regional or local landscape or heritage designation.
<p>Medium An attractive view or visual amenity area with an obvious attraction and general lack of distracting or negative features.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some scenic quality but also some less scenic elements. • Some tolerance to the type of proposed development. • A recognisably area or piece of designed landscape. • Possible cultural or heritage associations. • Some appreciation as a recreational resource. • Views and visual amenity that could be recreated with some effort. • Possibly benefitting from a regional or local landscape or heritage designation.

Grade description	Typical indicators of sensitivity
<p>Low An ordinary view with no differentiating character or an area with no increased visual amenity and general lack of positive visual features.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited or no particular scenic quality or elements. • Tolerance to the type of proposed development. • Not a recognisable designed landscape. • No known cultural or heritage associations. • No obvious appreciation as a recreational resource. • Views and visual amenity that could be readily replaced or recreated. • Unlikely to hold any landscape or heritage designations.

5.6.5. All the identified visual receptors are first considered in the Visual Receptor Table to establish their individual sensitivity. It is only those visual receptors that are identified as having a Medium, Medium/High or High sensitivity to the visual changes brought about by the development that are carried forward to the assessment stage. However visual receptors with Medium/Low and Low sensitivity can be carried forward should it be considered appropriate for the assessment after discussion with clients and ideally competent authorities.

5.7. Viewpoint selection

5.7.1. Viewpoints are selected to illustrate the views and visual amenity experienced by the different visual receptors.

5.7.2. Photography is used to record the views from each of the viewpoints and included in the LVIA or LVA report.

5.7.3. The photography is undertaken in line with the recommendations given in ‘*Landscape Institute Advice Note 01/11 – Photography and photomontage in landscape and visual impact assessment.*’

5.7.4. Viewpoint selection is a critical process and is based on the following considerations;

- Ideally agreed with the competent authority in advance of the visual assessment;
- Typically from publically accessible locations e.g. footpath, public open space or the like;
- It can however be from a private location e.g. to reflect a resident’s experience with the agreement of a client or at the request of a competent authority;

- Viewpoint choice can be informed by Zone of Theoretical Visibility mapping; and
- Objective choices need to be made to best represent a receptor's experience i.e. not behind obvious screening.

5.7.5. Viewpoints selected for inclusion in the LVIA / LVA generally fall into one of three categories as described at §6.19 of the GLVIA3;

1. **Representative viewpoints** – chosen to represent the experience of a receptor group who through their large numbers or extent of view e.g. along the route of a path would make it impractical to present each view.
2. **Specific viewpoints** – from key views say along a transport corridor or those promoted in guidebooks, OS Maps or are important within a public attraction or heritage asset.
3. **Illustrative viewpoints** – Photographs taken to illustrate a specific point say an initial view or lack of a view at certain points.

5.7.6. At times illustrations will be presented to prove a negative i.e. that a development is not visible in a view and does not lead to any visual change.

5.7.7. In selecting the viewpoints the following factors are taken into account;

- Viewing direction and distance – short, medium and long distance;
- The nature of the viewing experience – static views, views along routes, views from settlements;
- The type of view – e.g. framed, glimpsed, panorama, screened, partial; and
- The potential for cumulative views in conjunction with other existing and proposed development.

5.8. Magnitude of visual effects

5.8.1. The magnitude of visual effects is assessed by considering a number of factors before arriving at an informed judgement. The factors are listed below and form the basis of the Visual Effects Table (VET) in the LVIA;

- Size and scale of the change in the view - considering loss or addition of features, changes in composition and consideration of the proportion of the view occupied by the proposed development;
- Geographical extent of the effect – angle of view, distance of the receptor to the development and extent of the area over which the changes would be visible;

- Contrast or integration with the existing visual character – possible areas of consideration include form, scale and mass, lines, height, colour and texture;
- Duration of the visual effect – accord with the duration of landscape affects namely Short-term 0 to 5 years, Medium term 5 to 10 years and Long term 10 to 25 years. Permanency is considered anything above 25 years as this can be taken as a change that will last as long as a generation.
- Reversibility or irreversibility – is applied to the nature of the development. Renewable energy such as wind turbines and solar arrays can be classed as reversible visual effects whereas other forms of development such as housing and industrial uses are considered irreversible and permanent. Some developments such as mining and waste management have reversible effects that lead to a changed visual scene.

5.8.2. The magnitude of visual effect is considered for the three life stages of construction, on completion but with no mitigation and complete with foreseeable mitigation. This last life stage is typically taken at 15 years after completion to allow landscape mitigation proposals to have established. This period of time can be altered to suit the nature of the project and likely mitigation proposals. Any variations will be stated in the LVIA.

5.8.3. Visual effects arising from developments can be either beneficial or adverse, permanent or temporary and these are stated within the Visual Effects Table in the LVIA.

5.8.4. The magnitude of visual effects is categorised as either Large, Medium, Small or None. Half grades between these categories will be used where the magnitude fits neither category. The narrative description of the magnitude categories is presented in Appendix A – Table 13.

Appendix A – Table 13 – Description of magnitude categories for visual effects

Large	The development would result in a substantial alteration to the identified view or visual amenity of an area, largely affect key visual features in the view or introduce new prominent features within the scene or alter the general composition or character of the view.
Medium	The development would result in a partial alteration to the identified view or visual amenity of an area, moderately affect key visual features in the view or introduce new notable features within the scene or alter some part of the composition or character of the view.
Small	The development would result in a minor alteration to the identified view or visual amenity of an area, may affect key visual features in the view or introduce new features within the scene or alter some small part of the composition or character of the view.
None	The development would not change the appearance or characteristics of the view or an area’s visual amenity.

5.8.5. What is not normally stated in the LVIA is a critique of the architectural appearance of building proposals (should the development include built form) as this is a highly subjective matter. Instead the LVIA assesses the effects based on the scale and massing of the proposals and the resulting effects on the visual receptors. However where the character or scale of buildings is highly critical to visual qualities e.g. co-ordinated estate buildings then comments regarding their appearance may be made.

5.9. Assessing the significance of visual effects

5.9.1. The assessment of the significance of visual effects is derived by combining the judgements of visual sensitivity and magnitude of effect for each visual receptor. This is presented in the Visual Effects Table alongside the judgement of magnitude with a clear narrative of the reasoning behind the assessment.

5.9.2. The significance of visual effects can be beneficial or adverse, permanent or temporary and will occur at different levels of significance or as named for clarity in the Visual Effects Table - ratings.

5.9.3. A look-up table is used to achieve consistency when judging the significance rating. This table is only a guide and alterations to the classifications it gives can be made based on professional judgement. Appendix A – Table 14 presents this table. It is the same table as used for assessing the significance of landscape effects

Appendix A – Table 14 – Significance of visual effect rating

Magnitude of Effects	Visual Receptor Sensitivity				
	High	Medium / High	Medium	Medium / Low	Low
Large	MAJOR	MAJOR	MAJOR/ MODERATE	MODERATE	MODERATE
Medium / Large	MAJOR	MAJOR/ MODERATE	MODERATE	MODERATE	MODERATE/ MINOR
Medium	MAJOR/ MODERATE	MODERATE	MODERATE	MODERATE/ MINOR	MINOR
Medium / Small	MODERATE	MODERATE	MODERATE/ MINOR	MINOR	MINOR
Small	MODERATE	MODERATE/ MINOR	MINOR	MINOR	NEGLIGIBLE
Small / None	MODERATE/ MINOR	MINOR	MINOR	NEGLIGIBLE	NEGLIGIBLE

None	NO EFFECT				
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5.9.4. Narrative descriptions of the different ratings of significance are presented below in Appendix A – Table 15 for both beneficial and adverse effects. It also defines what are considered neutral and negligible visual effects.

Appendix A – Table 15 – Narrative descriptions of visual effects

Category of visual effect and corresponding description
Major adverse visual effects
The proposals will result in a total change in the key characteristics of the view or an area’s visual amenity or will introduce elements totally uncharacteristic to the qualities of the scene such as scale, pattern; and/or the proposals will destroy or permanently degrade the qualities of the visual character; and/or the proposals and resulting effects are in large part in conflict with landscape planning objectives and/or result in a substantial or total loss, or alteration of key elements, features or notable characteristics in the view.
Moderate adverse visual effects
The proposals will result in a part change in the key characteristics of the view or an area’s visual amenity or will introduce elements partly uncharacteristic to the qualities of the scene such as scale, pattern and some inappropriate features; and/or the proposals will notably reduce or degrade the integrity of the view or visual amenity; and/or the proposals and resulting effects are in some part in conflict with landscape planning objectives and/or result in a part loss, or alteration of key elements, features or notable characteristics in the view.
Minor adverse visual effects
The proposals will result in some small change in the key characteristics of the view or will introduce elements largely characteristic to the qualities of the existing scene such as massing, scale, pattern and some small inappropriate features; and/or the proposals will marginally reduce or degrade the integrity of view or visual amenity; and/or the proposals and resulting effects are in some small part in conflict with landscape planning objectives and/or result in a small loss, or negative alteration of key elements, features or characteristics in the view.
Negligible adverse visual effects
The proposals will result in a some very small negative change in the key characteristics of the view or will introduce elements characteristic to the qualities of the existing scene such as massing, scale, pattern and features that can be considered inappropriate; and/or the proposals will very slightly reduce or degrade the integrity of view or visual amenity in a barely perceptible way; and/or the proposals and resulting effects are in some very small part in conflict with landscape planning objectives and/or result in a very small loss, or alteration of elements, features or characteristics that is perceivable but not necessarily obvious.
No visual effects

<p>Category of visual effect and corresponding description</p>
<p>The proposals will result in no adverse or positive change in the key characteristics of view or visual amenity nor will it introduce any uncharacteristic elements to the view or visual amenity and/or the proposals will neither reduce or improve the integrity of view or visual amenity in a perceptible way; and/or the proposals and resulting effects neither conflict or contribute with landscape planning objectives and/or result in any alteration of key elements, features or notable characteristics of the view or visual amenity.</p>
<p>Negligible positive visual effects</p>
<p>The proposals will result in a some very small positive change in the key characteristics of the view or visual amenity or will introduce elements characteristic to the qualities of the existing view or visual amenity such as massing, scale, pattern and features that can be considered appropriate; and/or the proposals will very slightly improve or enhance the integrity of visual character in a barely perceptible way; and/or the proposals and resulting effects are in some very small part in compliance with landscape planning objectives and/or result in a very small gain, or positive alteration of key elements, features or notable visual characteristics that is perceivable but not necessarily obvious.</p>
<p>Minor positive visual effects</p>
<p>The proposals will result in a some small change in the key characteristics of the view or visual amenity or will introduce elements largely characteristic to the qualities of the existing view or visual amenity such as massing, scale, pattern and some small appropriate features; and/or the proposals will marginally conserve or enhance the integrity of visual character; and/or the proposals and resulting effects are in some part in compliance with landscape planning objectives and/or result in a small loss, or negative alteration of key visual elements, features or notable characteristics.</p>
<p>Moderate positive visual effects</p>
<p>The proposals will result in a notable beneficial change in the key characteristics of the view or visual amenity or will introduce elements that are largely in keeping with the qualities of the existing view or visual amenity with no inappropriate features; and/or the proposals will notably conserve or enhance the integrity of visual character; and/or the proposals and the resulting effects are largely in compliance with landscape planning objectives and/or result in the retention of key visual elements, features or notable characteristics.</p>
<p>Major positive visual effects</p>
<p>The proposals will result in a wholesale beneficial change in the key characteristics of a view or visual amenity or will introduce elements that notably improve the qualities of the existing view or visual amenity with no inappropriate features; and/or the proposals will notably conserve or enhance the integrity of visual character; and/or the proposals and the resulting effects are totally in compliance with landscape planning objectives and/or result in the retention and improvement of key visual elements, features or notable characteristics.</p>

6. Significance of effect and cumulative effects

6.1. Significance of effect

6.1.1. It is up to the competent authority using the findings of this LVIA to determine what they believe to be 'significant' in terms of what effects should be considered in the overall planning balance.

6.1.2. The LVIA gives a whole series of ratings for the individual receptors rather than stating that an effect is significant in terms of EIA Regulations. This is to avoid any confusion about use of the term 'Significant' in line with Landscape Institute's GLVIA3 Statement of Clarification 1/13.

6.1.3. The conclusions to the LVIA present the various ratings of significance and identifies those that are considered more important for both landscape and visual receptors.

6.1.4. The conclusions also state what effect proposed mitigation measures would have on any adverse landscape and visual effects.

6.2. Cumulative effects

6.2.1. Cumulative landscape and visual effects must be considered in LVIA when it is carried out as part of an EIA. It is a discretionary task for LVIA's that are not subject to EIA.

6.2.2. Both cumulative landscape and visual effects are defined at GLVIA3 §7.2 as those that, *'result from additional changes to the landscape or visual amenity caused by the proposed development in conjunction with other developments (associated with or separate to it), or actions that occurred in the past, present or are likely to occur in the foreseeable future.'*

6.2.3. Cumulative effects are particularly important for large scale renewable energy projects such as wind turbine and solar array erection. The former has specific guidance from Scottish Natural Heritage on the production of cumulative effects assessment.

6.2.4. For the purposes of non-energy projects cumulative assessments are restricted to an identification of other projects, whether similar in development type or not in the vicinity of the site and if agreed with the competent authority across the wider study area.

7. Mitigation

7.1. Definition of mitigation

7.1.1. Mitigation is deemed to be the actions taken to prevent or avoid adverse effects or if they are unavoidable then to correct or ameliorate the adverse effects identified for the various landscape and visual receptors.

7.1.2. It can take many forms but usually includes elements of design, planting, material choices and possibly operational constraints or land remediation at a future date.

7.1.3. Mitigation specifically addresses adverse effects to return a landscape or visual receptor to its baseline condition. It should not be confused with enhancement measures which are actions that seek to improve the landscape resource or visual amenity above its original baseline.

7.2. Categories of mitigation

7.2.1. There are broadly three categories of mitigation.

7.2.2. **Primary or design measures** – that are developed through the design process and have become integrated into the proposals. Such primary measures may be generated by the professionals advising the project or in response to consultation with stakeholders. They typically include general site arrangements, retention of landscape assets such as trees and hedgerows or inclusion of key views onto and from the site.

7.2.3. **Good construction practice** – to keep the development as acceptable as possible during the construction phase but also protect assets such as trees, hedges and ponds so they remain as long-term features in landscape.

7.2.4. **Secondary measures** – those measures that are taken to address any residual adverse effects after the first two categories of mitigation. This could typically include hedge and tree planting or provision of alternative access arrangements.

7.2.5. Mitigation measures can take place on the site in question or off-site if considered to be of greater benefit or more feasible/sustainable to achieve the desired outcome.

When describing mitigation measures an assessment of the duration of time that is required to achieve the desired mitigation effect is given when possible. It is also noted that mitigation works do not always remove adverse effects but may only reduce them.