

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **HDA Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Methodology**

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on behalf of

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## HDA LVIA METHODOLOGY

### 1.1 Guidance

1.1.1 The proposed development is not subject to the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England) Regulations (2011, amended 2015<sup>1</sup>), which implement EC Directive 2011/92/EU.

1.1.2 The methodology used in assessing Landscape and Visual Effects has been developed by HDA from guidance given in the following documents:

- The Landscape Institute with the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, (2013), “*Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*” (third edition) (GLVIA);
- Natural England (October 2014), “*An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment*”; and
- Countryside Agency (now Natural England) and Scottish Natural Heritage (by Carys Swanwick and Land Use Consultants), (April 2002), “*Landscape Character Assessment – Guidance for England and Scotland*”.

1.1.3 The assessment of likely impacts is considered in two separate, but inter-linked parts defined within GLVIA (page 21, para 2.21) as follows:

***Assessment of landscape effects:** assessing effects on landscape as a resource in its own right;*

***Assessment of visual effects:** assessing effects on specific views and on the general visual amenity experienced by people.’*

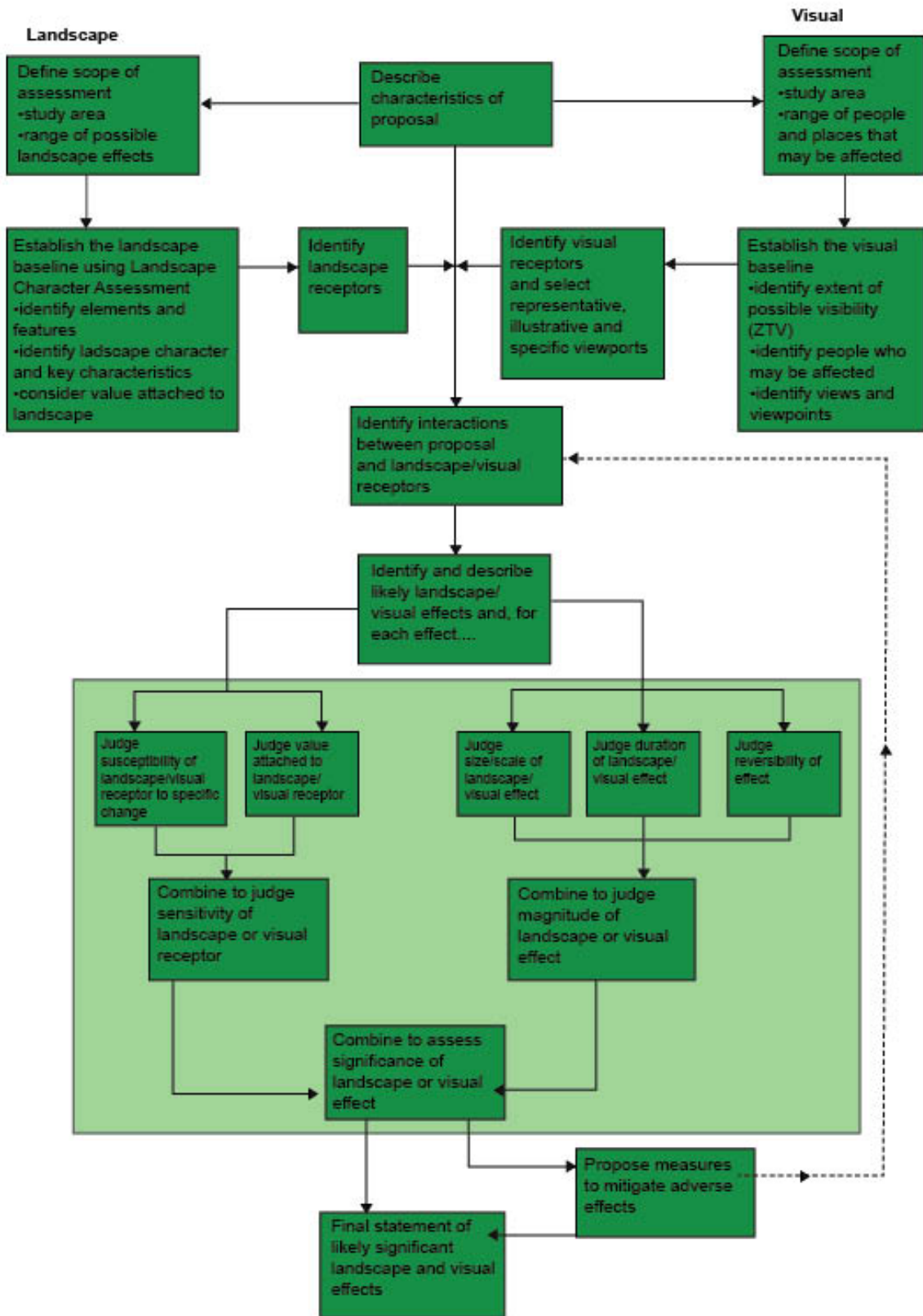
### 1.2 Process

1.2.1 The level of detail included within the assessment is proportionate to the anticipated extent of potential impacts caused by the proposed development and is also likely to vary between a full LVIA chapter and a more concise Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA). For an EIA compliant LVIA, the assessment section of the report (shown as a pale green box in Figure 1), would provide details of the relative judgement on sensitivity, magnitude of change and would provide an assessment on the significance of effects of the development on various features, character areas and views. For a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) of a small development it is likely to cover the key effects but not include any detailed references to judgements on significance.

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<sup>1</sup> Statutory Instrument No 1824, published by the Department for Communities and Local Government

**Figure 1: Steps in assessing landscape and visual effects.**



Referenced from figures 5.1 and 6.1 in GLVIA (Ref.2)

### **1.3 Desk Study**

1.3.1 A desk-study is undertaken to establish the physical components of the local landscape and to identify the boundaries of the study area. The following data sources were consulted:

- Ordnance Survey (OS) maps – (a range from 1:25,000 to 1:1,250) to identify local features relating to topography, field pattern/shape/size, drainage pattern, woodland cover, existing settlement pattern, rights of way network, transport corridors and any important extant historic features.
- Vertical aerial photography – used to supplement the OS information.

1.3.2 This data informs the field survey by providing a basis for mapping landscape features and to indicate the likely visibility of the proposed development.

1.3.3 Topographical analysis is used to identify the extent of potential visibility of the site and the proposed development. The zone of theoretical visibility is identified through mapping, together with potential visual receptors (VRs), for verification by field survey. The VRs include locations with public access within the visual envelope; public rights of way, public open space, key vantage points, roads, etc. together with residential properties and workplaces.

1.3.4 Natural England's National Character Area Profiles, together with local landscape character assessment, provide the landscape character context.

1.3.5 The current landscape planning context for the site is provided by the development plan documents for Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.

### **1.4 Field Survey**

1.4.1 A field survey of the site was carried out in 2007, 2015 2017 and December 2021. This involved walking the site and travelling extensively through the local area, the extent of the study area being identified in the desk-study, to verify any variations in landscape character and the locations of visual receptors. The field survey also served to understand the immediate setting of the proposed development, including the local topography, existing land uses and vegetation structure, position and condition of trees, hedgerows and stream courses.

1.4.2 The site visit was undertaken from publicly accessible viewpoints around the site such as roads and public rights of way and informal paths around the site. Intervisibility analysis (projective mapping) was used to verify the zone of theoretical visibility and to evaluate the extent and nature of views from nearby properties (properties were not visited as part of the study). A working photographic record of the visit was also made.

## **1.5 Establishing the Baseline**

1.5.1 In order to form a comprehensive assessment of the effects of a proposed development, the existing situation, or baseline condition, must be established. The proposed changes resulting from the proposed development can then be identified and described. As described in section 1.1.3, the assessment considers the landscape and visual effects of the proposals.

1.5.2 GLVIA describes the landscape and visual baseline as follows:

- *‘For the landscape baseline the aim is to provide an understanding of the landscape in the area that may be affected – its constituent elements, its character and the way this varies spatially, its geographic extent, its history, its condition, the way the landscape is experienced, and the value attached to it.*
- *For the visual baseline the aim is to establish the area in which the development may be visible, the different groups of people who may experience the views of the development, the places where they will be affected and the nature of the views and visual amenity at those points.’ (Page 32, para 3.15 – Ref 2)*

## **1.6 Landscape Baseline**

1.6.1 For the purposes of assessment, the landscape resource is considered in two ways:

1. Local landscape character variation across the site and Study Area is described and evaluated; and
2. Existing landscape features in and immediately adjacent to the site are identified, quantified and their condition assessed.

1.6.2 The objective of the landscape baseline is first to schedule, describe, and where possible, quantify the landscape resource that potentially could be affected by the proposed development. A judgement is then made as to the Landscape Value of the Study Area.

### **Landscape Sensitivity**

1.6.3 Landscape sensitivity is defined as:

*‘a term applied to specific receptors, combining judgements of the susceptibility of the receptor to the specific type of change or development proposed and the value related to that receptor’ (GLVIA, page 158)*

1.6.4 The susceptibility of the landscape to change is *‘the ability of the landscape receptor to accommodate the proposed development without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation and/or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies’ (GLVIA, page 89, para 5.40)*

1.6.5 The way that landscape responds to or is affected by proposed development is determined in part by the nature of that development. The sensitivity of the landscape will vary depending on the type, form, appearance, extent or scale, duration (temporary or permanent) and phasing of proposed development. Landscape effects are also dependent

upon the ‘degree to which the proposals fit with existing character’ (GLVIA, page 88, para 5.37), or indeed the potential to design-out potential adverse effects. Outline information about the proposed development, such as type and scale, helps inform preliminary judgement about the relative susceptibility of the landscape. However, the final judgement on susceptibility may change from the preliminary assessment as the scheme’s detail design evolves in parallel with EIA (an iterative process). Natural England’s advice note on Assessing Landscape and Visual Sensitivity 2019 provides further advice on identifying susceptibility

1.6.6 Establishing the value attached to landscape receptors would address:

- *‘The value of the Landscape Character Types or Areas that may be affected, based on review of any designations at both national and local levels, and, where there are no designations, judgements based on criteria that can be used to establish landscape value;*
- *The value of individual contributors to landscape character, especially the key characteristics, which may include individual elements of the landscape, particular landscape features, notable aesthetic, perceptual or experiential qualities and combinations of these contributors.’* (GLVIA page 89, para 5.44 – Ref 2)

1.6.7 Paragraph 174 a) of the National Planning Policy Framework<sup>2</sup> gives weight to ‘*protecting and enhancing valued landscapes*’, however no definition of ‘valued landscape’ is given. The Landscape Institute’s Technical Guidance Note (TGN) 02/21 defines a ‘valued landscape’ as “*an area identified as having sufficient landscape qualities to elevate it above other more everyday landscapes*” (paragraph A4.2.11), where it is noted that “*‘everyday’ landscapes may nevertheless have value to people*” (Footnote 44). The TGN states:

*“Where a landscape has a statutory status, it will not be necessary to undertake an assessment based on Box 5.1 of GLVIA3 or the factors identified in Table 1 of this TGN. It may also be unnecessary where a local designation is supported by a strong evidence base. However, where there is little published evidence to support existing local landscape designations, an assessment based upon these factors would be helpful to support planning decision making”* (paragraph A4.2.11).

1.6.8 The following is a summary of the definitions in Table 1 from the TGN which sets out the range of factors that can be considered when identifying landscape value:

- **Natural heritage:** Landscape with clear evidence of ecological, geological, geomorphological, or physiographic interest which contribute positively to the landscape;
- **Cultural heritage:** Landscape with clear evidence of archaeological, historical or cultural interest which contribute positively to the landscape;
- **Landscape condition:** Landscape which is in a good physical state both with regard to individual elements and overall landscape structure;
- **Associations:** Landscape which is connected with notable people, events and the arts;

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<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (July 2021), ‘National Planning Policy Framework’

- **Distinctiveness:** Landscape that has a strong sense of identity;
- **Recreational:** Landscape offering recreational opportunities where experience of landscape is important;
- **Perceptual (Scenic):** Landscape that appeals to the senses, primarily the visual sense;
- **Perceptual (Wildness and tranquillity):** Landscape with a strong perceptual value notably wildness, tranquillity and/or dark skies; and
- **Functional:** Landscape which performs a clearly identifiable and valuable function, particularly in the healthy functioning of the landscape.

### **Landscape Character**

1.6.9 Landscape character areas (areas/types) were identified on plans and published descriptions and trends summarised. Where published documents create a hierarchy of landscape areas, this is stated and the scale most appropriate to the assessment is explained. The landscape characteristics within the site are compared to the character of the wider area.

1.6.10 The assessment focuses on the landscape within which the site/proposed development is located. The character of a neighbouring character unit may be strongly influenced by the adjacent area, within which the site is located. This relationship may be dependent on the scale of assessment (size of landscape units), as well as landscape characteristics that affect intervisibility, e.g., topography, vegetation cover.

### **Landscape Features**

1.6.11 Key landscape features that define site character are identified on plans, together with the tables, which provide information relating to their type, condition, value, and quantification (area/length/number). The potential for impact on each landscape feature is assessed using a combination of their relationship to the site/ proposed development (e.g., within, on or adjacent to site boundary and for those outside the site, the distance from the boundary) and sensitivity.

1.6.12 The landscape value of site landscape features is evaluated using factors in the following checklist:

- Type of landscape feature (e.g., natural or man-made);
- Size/extent (e.g., covers a large or small area; individual or part of a group);
- Condition or quality of landscape feature (intact);
- Maturity (is feature well established or recent);
- Contribution feature makes to landscape character (e.g., distinct and recognisable pattern or limited influence);
- Rarity (rare or widespread in local and/or regional/national context);
- Recognised importance (e.g., designation either nationally or locally);

- Ease with which the feature may be substituted or recreated.

1.6.13 The susceptibility of landscape features is closely allied to the ease with which a feature may be substituted or recreated.

1.6.14 The assessment of landscape features is an integral part of the initial design process and often influences the location of development. The landscape value of features is a contributory factor for the assessment of landscape character, as the assessment of the quality and condition of a landscape is intrinsically linked to its component features.

## 1.7 **Criteria for Evaluation of Sensitivity of Landscape Resource**

1.7.1 The evaluation of overall landscape sensitivity to change is considered to be a product of susceptibility to change and the value of the receptor. The evaluation is an expression of comparative sensitivity based on a five-point scale: Very High, High, Medium, Low and Very Low as follows:

### **Very High:**

- An exemplary part of a nationally recognised landscape, e.g., National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. World Heritage Sites of international importance (if landscape reason for designation);
- Strong landscape structure, characteristic patterns and balanced combination of landform and land-cover;
- Appropriate management with distinctive features worthy of conservation;
- Sense of place (usually tranquil);
- No (or occasional) detracting features;
- Landscape not substitutable.

### **High:**

- Part of a nationally or locally recognised landscape of particularly distinctive character.
- Recognisable landscape structure, characteristic patterns and combinations of landform and land-cover are still evident;
- Appropriate management, but potential scope for improvement;
- Some features worthy of conservation;
- Sense of place;
- No or occasional detracting features;
- Very limited substitutability and susceptible to relatively small changes.

### **Medium:**

- Locally recognised, or landscape of moderately valued characteristics;
- Distinguishable landscape structure, with some characteristic patterns of landform and land-cover;



- Scope to improve management (e.g., of hedgerows);
- Occasional detracting features;
- Landscape resource reasonably tolerant to change.

**Low:**

- Ordinary undesignated countryside;
- Weak landscape structure, without characteristic patterns of landform or land-cover;
- Limited management which is beginning to show signs of degradation;
- Abundance of detracting features;
- A relatively unimportant landscape, the nature of which is potentially tolerant to substantial change.

**Very Low:**

- Degraded to damaged/polluted or derelict landscape structure;
- Single land use dominates;
- Lack of or poor management/maintenance/intervention which has resulted in degradation;
- Presence of disturbed or derelict land requiring treatment;
- Extensive or dominant detracting features.

**1.8 Visual Baseline Methodology**

1.8.1 The visual baseline serves to “*identify the people within an area who will be affected by changes in views and visual amenity – usually referred to as ‘Visual Receptors’*” (VR) (GLVIA, page 106, para 6.13). The baseline should combine information on “*the nature, composition and characteristics of existing views*” (GLVIA, page 111, para 6.24), “*the potential extent to which the site of the proposed development is visible from surrounding areas, the chosen viewpoints, the types of visual receptor affected*” (GLVIA, page 112, para 6.25), and “*their susceptibility to change in views and the value attached to particular views*” (GLVIA, page 113, para 6.31).

1.8.2 The susceptibility of visual receptors (VRs) to changes in views and visual amenity is affected by the type of activity that person or VR is engaged in (to determine the expectations of the viewer), in combination with the extent of the view of the site they experience, which relates to the degree to which the site is visible by a VR from a viewpoint as described in the baseline assessment (adapted from GLVIA, page 113, para 6.32).

1.8.3 All agreed viewpoints (from chosen representative, specific and illustrative viewpoint locations), were visited as part of the field survey and “*the nature, composition and characteristics*” of their existing views noted. Where appropriate, the existence of temporary structures or features in the landscape that vary with the seasons and that may

therefore affect visibility, such as deciduous vegetation, were noted in order to evaluate the worst-case situation in the assessment. The initial appraisal is based on a grading of degrees of visibility, from not visible to fully open in close views. To indicate the degree of visibility of the site from any location, that continuum has been divided into four categories:

- **None:** no view (no part of the site or proposed development is discernible);
- **Glimpse:** only a minor area of the site or proposed development is discernible and/or the view is transient or at such a distance that it is difficult to perceive in the wider view, or sequence of views;
- **Partial:** the site or proposed development forms a relatively small proportion of a wider view. There are open views of part of the site or proposed development such that it is easily visible as part of the wider view;
- **Open:** there are open views of the site or proposed development such that it forms a substantial part (is a dominant element) of the overall view and affects its overall character and visual amenity; or the site or proposed development is the dominant feature of the view, to which other elements become subordinate and where the site/proposed development significantly affects or changes the character of the view.

1.8.4 The value attached to views should also be considered i.e., whether the visual receptor/s being assessed are within a designated landscape, the site forms the setting to a heritage asset or there are particular tourism activities associated with the viewpoint location. The combined susceptibility to change in views/visual amenity and the value attached to particular views within the zone of visual influence of the site/proposed development, is evaluated using a combination of the information in the following checklist:

- *‘The type and relative number of people (visual receptors) likely to be affected, making clear the activities they are likely to be involved in;*
- *The location, nature and characteristics of the chosen representative, specific and illustrative viewpoints, with details of the visual receptors likely to be affected by each;*
- *The nature, composition and characteristics of the existing views experienced at these viewpoints, including the direction of view;*
- *The visual characteristics of the existing views, for example the nature and extent of the skyline, aspects of visual scale and proportion, especially with respect to any particular horizontal or vertical emphasis and any key foci;*
- *Elements, such as landform, buildings or vegetation, which may interrupt, filter or otherwise influence the views.’*

(GLVIA, page 111, para 6.24)

## 1.9 Criteria for Evaluation of Visual Sensitivity

1.9.1 The evaluation of sensitivity, in relation to visual receptors is considered to be a product of susceptibility to change and the value attributed to the view by the visual receptor. It is represented as an expression of comparative sensitivity, based on a five-point scale: Very High, High, Medium, Low and Very Low as follows:

### **Very High:**

- An open view, where the site forms a dominant part of the view, seen from a viewpoint that has a high value (nationally significant), by visual receptors that would be highly susceptible to a change in the view (e.g., walkers/cyclists on rural public rights of way), whose attention or interest is likely to be focused on the landscape. For example, a walker on a national trail within an AONB, where the site forms the foreground to the view and is a characteristic part of a scenic and rural landscape.

### **High:**

- A distant open or partial view of the site from a viewpoint that has a high value (nationally significant), seen by visual receptors that would be highly susceptible to a change in the view, whose attention or interest is likely to be focused on the landscape; for example a walker on a national trail within an AONB, where the site forms a distant part of a wider view and is seen in the context of a foreground which is characteristic and forms part of a scenic and rural landscape;
- An open view of the site from a viewpoint that **either** has a medium scenic value (i.e., is locally appreciated), seen by visual receptors that would be highly susceptible to a change in the view **or** that the viewpoint has a high value (nationally significant) but the visual receptors experiencing the view have a medium susceptibility to change

### **Medium:**

- An open view of the site from a viewpoint that **either** has a low scenic value (i.e. has a number of visual detractors / a degraded landscape character), seen by visual receptors that would have a medium susceptibility to a change in the view **or** that the viewpoint has a medium scenic value (i.e. is locally appreciated) and the visual receptors experiencing the view have a low susceptibility to change (i.e. a major road or an office, where the view is not the focus of people's attention);
- A partial view of the site from a viewpoint with medium value, seen by visual receptors with a medium susceptibility to change;
- A glimpse of the site from a viewpoint that has a high scenic value (nationally significant), seen by a high number of visual receptors and / or visual receptors that would be highly susceptible to a change in the view and whose attention or interest is likely to be focused on the landscape.

### **Low:**

- A partial view of the site from a viewpoint that has **either:**
- a low scenic value, seen by visual receptors that would have a medium susceptibility to a change in the view;
- a medium scenic value and the visual receptors experiencing the view have a low susceptibility to change; **or**
- that the viewpoint has a low scenic value and the visual receptors experiencing the view have a low susceptibility to change;
- A glimpse of the site from a viewpoint with medium value, seen by visual receptors with a medium susceptibility to change;
- No view of the site, but that the viewpoint has a high scenic value and would be seen by a high number of visual receptors and/or visual receptors that would be highly susceptible to a change in the view, whose attention or interest is likely to be focused on the landscape.

### **Very Low:**

- A glimpse of the site from a viewpoint that has **either:**

- a low scenic value, seen by visual receptors that would have a medium susceptibility to a change in the view;
- a medium scenic value and the visual receptors experiencing the view have a low susceptibility to change; **or**
- that the viewpoint has a low scenic value and the visual receptors experiencing the view have a low susceptibility to change;
- No view from a viewpoint with medium value (or lower), seen by visual receptors with a medium susceptibility to change (or lower).

## **1.12 Summary of Landscape/Visual Baseline**

1.12.1 The baseline survey identifies the landscape resource (landscape features and character) and visual receptors (VRs) likely to be affected by the proposed development, and then evaluates the susceptibility, value and combined sensitivity of each to the likely effects of the proposed development.

## **2 Mitigation**

2.1 Mitigation is defined in the Guidelines as:

*‘Measures proposed to prevent/avoid, reduce and where possible remedy (or compensate for) any significant adverse landscape and visual effects...’* (GLVIA, page 57, para 4.21).

2.2 Mitigation proposals are designed to respond to the constraints of the site and mitigate the landscape and visual impacts that arise from the proposed development. The mitigation measures considered fall into two categories: primary and secondary mitigation.

- Primary mitigation – the iterative process of master-planning
- Secondary mitigation – additions or changes to the landscape proposals in order to address predicted residual effects remaining after primary mitigation measures are in place and assuming that standard construction and management practices, to avoid and reduce environmental effects, have been adhered to.

## **3 Assessment of Landscape Effects**

3.1 The landscape impact assessment addresses both direct and indirect impacts of the proposed development. Firstly, the direct effects of the development on the site itself are categorised, through an assessment of the magnitude of change. The magnitude of change is a judgement on the size/scale of effect, including the consistency of the proposed development with the baseline assessment, the extent of the area influenced and the duration and reversibility of the proposed effects. The focus is on the loss or change to identified landscape features within or adjacent to the site, together with the creation of new landscape elements.

3.2 Landscape character: The effects on local landscape character that would result from the proposed development are assessed. The effect on site landscape character directly correlates with the impact on landscape features (extent and duration). The effect on

landscape character in the environs of the site is dependent on a range of factors (sensitivity) and overlaps with the visual assessment because the extent to which the proposed development would be visible from the surrounding countryside may influence neighbouring character areas. Effects on landscape character will also be directly influenced by the type of development proposed and whether it is consistent with existing land-use patterns.

3.3 Changes to landscape features and character may be adverse, beneficial or neutral. The erosion of a feature/character equates to an adverse impact, whilst strengthening of features/characteristics is regarded as beneficial. The substitution of a landscape feature/character area with another that is different but locally appropriate may be assessed as a negligible significance of effect. Refer also to GLVIA, page 88, para 5.37.

3.4 For the purposes of this assessment, 'magnitude of change' on each landscape feature and landscape character area is classified using the categories listed below (Whilst potential effects may be adverse or beneficial, for simplicity, the following definitions use examples of adverse impact, bearing in mind that significant effects on landscape features, in the context of LVIA, usually equate with total or partial loss. Where effects are deemed to be beneficial this will be clearly stated in the assessment text):

**High:**

- Notable change in landscape characteristics over an extensive area;
- The proposals are the dominant feature and there is substantial damage (or major improvement) to key characteristics, features and elements that contribute to landscape, and/or the effects are long term and irreversible;
- Effect on a landscape feature of designated importance that cannot be replaced; total loss of features that would be difficult to replace;
- Loss of, or substantial effect on, existing landscape character and its replacement with characteristics that are atypical of the character area;
- The proposed development is inconsistent with existing land-use patterns.

**Medium:**

- Moderate changes in localised area;
- The proposals form a visible and immediately apparent new feature that results in partial damage to (or addition of) key characteristics, elements and features that contribute to landscape, and/or the effects are medium to long term and largely irreversible;
- Total loss of feature that may be recreated over time; loss of small proportion of a feature that would be difficult to replace (e.g., mature woodland or historic species rich hedgerow);
- A considerable change to landscape character (proposed landscape character appropriate to character area but different from adjoining areas).

**Low:**

- Small change in any components;
- Some measurable change where the proposal constitutes a minor feature in the landscape and results in loss (or addition) of one (or maybe more) key characteristics, and/or the effects are short to medium term or could be irreversible;
- Total loss over sizeable area of a feature that can be recreated relatively easily (e.g., arable farmland); partial loss of feature that may be recreated over time, (e.g., young plantation/hedgerow); very minor loss of feature that would be difficult to recreate (e.g., woodland);
- A noticeable change to landscape character (proposed landscape character similar to existing landscape character of the area).

**Very Low:**

- Virtually imperceptible change of a temporary nature;
- The proposals result in very minor loss (or benefit) to the characteristics, features and elements that contribute to character, and/or effects are likely to be short term or could be reversible;
- Partial loss of feature that can be recreated relatively easily or which would regain its characteristics over time; minor or temporary effect on feature that can accommodate limited removal without noticeable change (e.g., gappy hedgerow);
- A barely perceptible change to landscape character.

3.5 The degree of significance of the landscape effect of the development is a product of sensitivity and magnitude of change.

**4 Assessment of Visual Effects**

4.1 The degree of significance of visual effects are assessed at two levels:

- i. The significance of the effect on each individual VR;
- ii. The overall significance of the visual effects in the context of the zone of visual influence and the range of VRs as a whole.

4.2 Following on from the visual baseline, the degree of visibility of the proposed development from each VR is assessed based on the same four categories: No view; Glimpse; Partial view, Open view. The view as it would be both during construction and operation of the proposed development is described. A direct comparison of the descriptions of the view following development (or during construction) with that of the existing situation, together with degree of visibility, indicates the extent of the change to the view. The relationship between visual intrusion and extent of change to the view is dependent upon the character of the development in the context of the view and whether they are consistent or contrasting.

4.3 The scale or magnitude of visual change has been made with reference to the following:

- *‘The scale of the change in the view with respect to the loss or addition of features in the view and changes in its composition, including the proportion of the view occupied by the proposed development;*
- *The degree of contrast or integration of any new features or changes in the landscape with the existing or remaining landscape elements and characteristics in terms of form, scale and mass, line, height, colour and texture; and*
- *The nature of the view of the proposed development, in terms of the relative amount of time over which it will be experienced and whether views will be full, partial or glimpses.’*

(GLVIA, page 115, para 6.39)

4.4 The geographical extent of a visual effect will vary with different viewpoints and is likely to reflect:

- *‘The angle of view in relation to the main activity of the receptor;*
- *The distance of the viewpoint from the proposed development; and*
- *The extent of the area over which changes would be visible.’*

(GLVIA, page 115, para 6.40)

4.5 The magnitude of change can be classified as follows:

**High:**

- Total loss of, or major alteration to, key elements of the baseline view, and/or introduction of elements considered to be uncharacteristic of the baseline view. The development would occupy most of the view (open or panoramic view) resulting in significant change in the existing view.
- The proposals would cause a significant deterioration/improvement in the view. (If adverse, the proposals would be a dominant and incongruous feature in the view).

**Medium:**

- Partial loss of, or alteration to, (one or more) key elements of the baseline view, and/or introduction of elements that may be prominent but may not necessarily be considered to be substantially uncharacteristic to the baseline view.
- The development may affect a partial view of most of it, or viewers would have a clear view of only a small part of the development. Also refers to distant views in which the site forms a significant proportion of the wider view resulting in a noticeable change in the existing view;
- The proposals would cause a noticeable deterioration/improvement in the view. (If adverse, the proposals would form a visible and recognisable incongruous new element readily noticed by a casual observer. If beneficial, the proposals would form a recognisable improvement that could be noticed by a casual observer.)

**Low:**

- Minor loss of, or alteration to, one or more key elements of the baseline view, and/or introduction of elements that may not be uncharacteristic of the baseline view. Poor or difficult view of the development resulting in a perceptible change in the existing views; and
- The proposals would cause a minor deterioration/improvement in the view. If adverse, the proposals would be a small, incongruous element in the view that could

be missed by a casual observer. If beneficial, the proposals would form a small improvement to the view that could be missed by a casual observer.

**Very Low:**

- Very minor loss of, or alteration to, one or more key elements of the baseline view, and/or introduction of elements that are not characteristic of the baseline view.
- Poor or difficult view of the development resulting in barely perceptible change of a temporary nature. Approximating to the 'no change' situation, where the proposals overall would not form a noticeable deterioration or improvement in the view.

**5 Landscape and Visual Significance**

5.1 The methodology is first to identify the sensitivity of the landscape features, local landscape character or the viewer and then the scale of change. From these the significance of the effects arising from the proposed development are assessed. At its simplest; sensitivity x scale of change = significance of effects but modified by professional judgement. The significance matrix provided below makes the judgements made by the professional assessors transparent so they can be understood easily by any reader of the assessment. The distribution of judgements is not intended to create a symmetrical matrix but reflects a pragmatic approach to determining levels of significance based upon its refinement over many years.

5.2 **Significance matrix for landscape and visual effects**

		<i>Sensitivity of receptor</i>				
		Very High	High	Medium	Low	Very Low
<i>Magnitude of change</i>	High	Major	Substantial	Substantial or Moderate	Moderate	Minor
	Medium	Substantial	Substantial or Moderate	Moderate	Minor	Negligible
	Low	Moderate	Minor	Minor	Negligible	Negligible
	Very Low	Minor	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

**Major significance of effect:** An effect of international/national importance and is important to the decision-making process;

**Substantial significance of effect:** An effect of regional/district significance and could be a key decision-making issue; prominent changes to a sensitive view or substantial change or widespread loss of characteristic features in a sensitive landscape with little capacity for change;

**Moderate significance of effect:** An effect of local significance (i.e., a noticeable change in the view / landscape character in an average, ordinary landscape with some capacity to accommodate development or a smaller change within a more sensitive landscape); and may be a key decision-making issue – for example; in combination, the cumulative impacts of VRs with a moderate significance would be more significant (district significance);



**Minor significance of effect:** An effect of very local significance and unlikely to be of importance to the decision-making process (i.e., small scale or temporary changes to view or to a low sensitivity landscape with capacity to accommodate development);

**Negligible significance of effect:** Minimal effect and not significant to the decision-making process.

5.3 Effects are judged to be 'Significant' if they are assessed as being Substantial effects or higher. The professional judgement of experienced landscape assessors is used throughout the assessment, particularly in those cases where the outcome lies between two levels of assessment, such as Substantial and Moderate. This is reflected in the landscape and visual impact significance matrices.