

APPENDIX 9.2 – Assessment Criteria

The aim of the landscape and visual impact assessment is to identify and evaluate key effects arising from the unauthorised aspects of the development. The assessment combines sensitivity with predicted magnitude of change to establish the significance of residual landscape & visual effects. These are based on pre-defined criteria as set out in Tables 9.1 – 9.5 below.

Table 9.1 Landscape Sensitivity Criteria	
Class	Criteria
High	Landscape characteristics or features with little or no capacity to absorb change without fundamentally altering their present character Landscape designated for its international or national landscape value Outstanding example in the area of well cared for landscape or set of features
High-Medium	Landscape characteristics or features with a low capacity to absorb change without fundamentally altering their present character Landscape designated for regional or county-wide landscape value where the characteristics or qualities that provided the basis for their designation are apparent. Good example in the area of reasonably well cared for landscape or set of features
Medium	Landscape characteristics or features with moderate capacity to absorb change without fundamentally altering their present character Landscape designated for its local landscape value or a regional designated landscape where the characteristics and qualities that led to the designation of the area are less apparent or are partially eroded or an undesignated landscape which may be valued locally – for example an important open space An example of a landscape or a set of features which is neutral or mixed character
Medium-Low	Landscape characteristics or features which are reasonably tolerant of change without detriment to their present character No designation present or of little local value .An example of an un-stimulating landscape or set of features
Low	Landscape characteristics or features which are tolerant of change without detriment to their present character No designation present or of low local value. An example of monotonous unattractive visually conflicting or degraded landscape or set of features
Table 9.2 Visual Sensitivity Criteria	
Class	Criteria
High	Users of outdoor recreational facilities, on recognised national cycling or walking routes or in national designated landscapes Dwellings with views orientated towards the proposed development
High-Medium	Users of outdoor recreational facilities, in locally designated landscapes or on local recreational routes that are well publicised in guide books

	Road and rail users in nationally designated landscapes or on recognised scenic routes, likely to be travelling to enjoy the view
Medium	Users of primary transport road network, orientated towards the Development, likely to be travelling for other purposes than just the view. Dwellings with oblique views of the proposed development.
Medium-Low	People engaged in active outdoor sports or recreation and less likely to focus on the view. Primary transport road network and rail users likely to be travelling to work with oblique views of the Development or users of minor road network.
Low	People engaged in work activities indoors, with limited opportunity for views of the Development. Road users on minor access roads travelling for other purposes than just the view.

Table 9.3 Landscape Magnitude Criteria

Class	Criteria
Very High	Very extensive, highly noticeable change, affecting most key characteristics and dominating the experience of the landscape; and Introduction of highly incongruous development
High	Extensive, noticeable change, affecting many key characteristics and the experience of the landscape; and Introduction of many incongruous elements.
Medium	Noticeable change to a significant proportion of the landscape, affecting some key characteristics and the experience of the landscape; and Introduction of some uncharacteristic elements.
Low	Minor change, affecting some characteristics and the experience of the landscape to an extent; and Introduction of elements that are not uncharacteristic.
Very Low	Little perceptible change.

Table 9.4 Visual Magnitude Criteria

Class	Criteria
Very High	The development would dominate the existing view
High	The development would cause a considerable change to the existing view over a wide area or an intensive change over a limited area.
Medium	The development would cause moderate changes to the existing view over a wide area or noticeable change over a limited area.
Low	The development would cause minor changes to the existing view over a wide area or moderate changes over a limited area.
Very Low	No real change to perception of the view. Weak, not legible, hardly discernible

Table 9.5 Categories of Landscape and Visual Significance of Effect

Degree of significance	Description of Landscape Effect	Description of Visual Effect
Major	Substantial alteration to elements/features of the baseline (pre-development) conditions. Notably affect an area of recognised national landscape quality. Substantial alteration to the character, scale or pattern of the landscape.	Major/substantial alteration to elements/features of the baseline (pre-development) conditions. Where the proposed development would cause a very noticeable alteration in the existing view. This would typically occur where the proposed development closes an existing view of a landscape of regional or national

		importance and the proposed development would dominate the future view.
Major-Moderate	This category is a combination of descriptions of Major listed above and Moderate below. These combinations are discussed within the assessment of each landscape or visual receptor when they occur.	
Moderate	Alteration to elements/features of the baseline conditions. Affects an area of recognised regional landscape quality. Alteration to the character, scale or pattern of the local landscape.	Alteration to one or more elements/features of the baseline conditions such that post development character/attributes of the baseline will be materially changed. This would typically occur where the proposed development closes an existing view of a local landscape and the proposed development would be prominent in the future view.
Moderate-Minor	This category is a combination of descriptions of Moderate listed above and Minor below. These combinations are discussed within the assessment of each landscape or visual receptor when they occur.	
Minor	A minor shift away from baseline conditions. The Development partially changes the character of the site without compromising the overall existing landscape character area.	A minor shift away from baseline conditions. Occur where change arising from the alteration would be discernible but the underlying character / composition / attributes of the baseline condition will be similar to the pre-development. It would also occur where the proposed development newly appears in the view but not as a point of principal focus or where the proposed development is closely located to the viewpoint but seen at an acute angle and at the extremity of the overall view.
Negligible	No or very little change from baseline conditions. Change not material, barely distinguishable or indistinguishable.	Where there is no discernible improvement or deterioration in the existing view.
No Effect	The Development would not affect the landscape receptor	The Development would not affect the view

Example Matrix (Professional judgement applied at every stage of assessment and matrix only used to check consistency.)		Sensitivity				
		High	High - Medium	Medium	Medium - Low	Low
Magnitude	Very High	Major	←→	Major	←→	Mod-major
	High	Major	←→	Mod-major	←→	Moderate
	Medium	Mod-major	←→	Moderate	←→	Minor
	Low	Moderate	←→	Minor	←→	Negligible
	Very Low	Minor	←→	Negligible	←→	Negligible
<p>Intermediate sensitivity ratings (as per the criteria) would lead to a series of effects that lie between those stated above if a matrix was applied to the assessment. Professional judgement should be used to determine the degree of effect. e.g high-medium sensitivity combined with medium magnitude would equate to a Moderate+ effect and a decision needs to be made to determine if this effect is Moderate or Mod-Major.</p> <p>Intermediate magnitude ratings could also be arrived at during the assessment and a similar method should be applied here too.</p> <p>Effects of above Moderate are considered Significant (Dark Grey)</p> <p>Where intermediate effects are arrived at, particular care should be taken at the edges of the significance threshold i.e. between Mod and Mod-Maj (lighter grey) and these effects may require additional explanation as to why the decision was made to judge the effect as either significant or not significant.</p>						

Table 9.6 Example Matrix

The example matrix table above is used to summarise the findings from the criteria tables. By combining sensitively (along the top) with predicted magnitude of change (along the side), a predicted impact / effect is reached. This format is applicable to both landscape impacts and visual impacts.

In addition, to the impacts which sensitivity combined with the magnitude of change generate, there are a number of other factors which should be taken into account when preparing the landscape and visual assessment.

Development is often viewed as permanent and/or perceived to have a negative impact, it is therefore important to emphasise that change created by development can result in beneficial outcomes, and may also be temporary, short-term or indeed reversible.

This assessment also considers both the 'Type' and 'Duration' of the potential impacts. The following terminology has been used where appropriate:

Type of Visual Impacts

- Beneficial - A positive impact will improve or enhance the landscape character or viewpoint.
- Neutral - A neutral impact will neither enhance nor detract from the landscape character or viewpoint.
- Adverse - A negative impact will have an adverse effect on the existing landscape character or viewpoint.

Duration of Impacts

- | | |
|---------------|---------------------------------------|
| ● Temporary | Impacts lasting one year or less |
| ● Short-term | Impacts lasting one to seven years |
| ● Medium-term | Impacts lasting seven to twenty years |
| ● Long-term | Impacts lasting twenty to fifty years |
| ● Permanent | Impacts lasting over fifty years. |