

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT (LVIA) PGLA METHODOLOGY AND ASSESSMENT CRITERIA 2017

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) has been prepared using the PGLA Methodology and Assessment Criteria (2017).
- 1.2. The LVIA has been prepared in accordance with the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition, Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, April 2013, (GLVIA3). The GLVIA3 states that:
- “Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), is a tool used to identify and assess the significance of, and the effects of, change resulting from development on both landscape as an environmental resource in its own right and on people’s views and visual amenity”*
- 1.3. There are two components of LVIA that are described separately. These are:
- *“Assessment of landscape effects; assessing effects on the landscape as a resource in its own right; and*
 - *Assessment of visual effects; assessing effects on specific views and on the general visual amenity experienced by people.”* (GLVIA3 § 2.21)
- 1.4. The GLVIA3 notes that is not intended to be prescriptive, in that it does not provide a detailed ‘recipe’ that can be followed in every situation and it is always the primary responsibility of any landscape professional (the assessor) carrying out an assessment to ensure that the approach and methodology adopted are appropriate to the particular circumstances.
- 1.5. As advised in GLVIA3, the judgements that made in respect of both landscape and visual effects are a combination of an assessment of the sensitivity of the landscape and visual receptors and the magnitude of the landscape or visual effect, alongside professional qualitative judgment which is a very important part of the LVIA process as expressed by GLVIA3.
- Definition of sensitivity: *‘A term applied to specific receptors, combining judgments of the susceptibility of the receptor to the specific type of change or development proposed and the value related to that receptor.’* [GLVIA3]
 - Definition of Landscape Receptors: *‘Defined aspects of the landscape resource that have the potential to be affected by a proposal.’* [GLVIA3]
 - Definition of Visual Receptors: *‘Individuals and/or defined groups of people who have the potential to be affected by a proposal.’* [GLVIA3]
 - Definition of Magnitude (of effect): *‘A term that combines judgments about the size and scale of the effect, the extent of the area over which it occurs, whether it is reversible or irreversible and whether it is short or long term in duration.’* [GLVIA3]
- 1.6. The components of this LVIA include:
- baseline studies;
 - a description of the development and details of the landscape proposals and mitigation measures to be adopted as part of the scheme;
 - an identification and description of effects arising from the development;
 - an assessment of the level of these effects, and whether these are judged to be ‘significant’.

2. ASSESSMENT OF LANDSCAPE EFFECTS

Baseline

- 2.1. The baseline landscape is described by reference to existing Landscape Character Assessments, together with a description of the site and its context. This provides an understanding of the area of the landscape that may be affected.

Landscape Value

- 2.2. Value can apply to a landscape area as a whole, or to the individual elements, features and aesthetic or perceptual dimensions which contribute to the character of the landscape. GLVIA3 advises that:

“A review of existing landscape designations is usually the starting point in understanding value...” GLVIA3 § 5.19

- 2.3. Where there is no clear existing evidence on landscape value, an assessment is made based upon those factors that are generally agreed to influence value as identified in GLVIA3, §5.28, Box 5.1. These are:

- “Landscape quality (condition)
- Scenic quality
- Rarity
- Representativeness
- Conservation interests
- Recreation value
- Perceptual aspects
- Associations”

- 2.4. The assessment uses the following criteria that has been established by PGLA, which is based upon the principles and guidance within GLVIA3.

LANDSCAPE VALUE	DEFINITION
High	Landscape receptors of high importance based upon factors of condition, scenic quality, rarity, representativeness, conservation interest, recreational value, perceptual qualities and associations
Medium	Landscape receptors of medium importance based upon factors of condition, scenic quality, rarity, representativeness, conservation interest, recreational value, perceptual qualities and associations.
Low	Landscape receptors of low importance based upon factors of condition, scenic quality, rarity, representativeness, conservation interest, recreational value, perceptual qualities and associations.

Table 1: Landscape Value

- 2.5. Where it is determined that the assessment falls between or encompasses two of the defined criteria terms, then the judgement may be described, for example, as High-Medium or Medium-Low. This indicates that the assessment lies between the respective definitions or encompasses aspects of both.

Landscape Susceptibility to Change

- 2.6. This means the ability of the landscape receptor (overall character type/ area or individual element/ feature) to accommodate the specific proposals without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline position and/ or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies
- 2.7. The assessment uses the following criteria that has been established by PGLA, which is based upon the principles and guidance within GLVIA3.

LANDSCAPE SUSCEPTIBILITY TO CHANGE	DEFINITION
High	A highly distinctive and cohesive landscape receptor, with positive characteristics and features and no or very few detracting or intrusive elements. Landscape features intact and in very good condition and/ or rare. Limited capacity to accept the type of change/ development proposed.
Medium	A more commonplace landscape receptor, with some positive characteristics and features and some detracting or intrusive elements. Landscape features in moderate condition. Capacity to accept the type of change/ development proposed.
Low	Landscape receptor of mixed character with a lack of coherence and including detracting or intrusive elements. Landscape features that may be in a poor or improving condition and few that could not be replaced. Greater capacity to accept the type of change/ development proposed.

Table 2: Landscape Susceptibility to Change

- 2.8. Where it is determined that the assessment falls between or encompasses two of the defined criteria terms, then the judgement may be described, for example, as High-Medium or Medium-Low. This indicates that the assessment lies between the respective definitions or encompasses aspects of both.

Landscape Sensitivity

- 2.9. Landscape receptors are considered in terms of their sensitivity. This considers the susceptibility of the receptor to the type of change/development that is proposed, and the value attached to these landscape receptors. GLVIA3 states that:

“There can be complex relationships between the value attached to landscape receptors and their susceptibility to change which can be especially important when considering change within or close to valued landscapes. For example, an internationally, nationally or locally designated landscape does not automatically or by definition have a high susceptibility to all types of change.... The type of change or development proposed may not compromise the specific basis for the value attached to the landscape.” GVLIA3 § 5.46

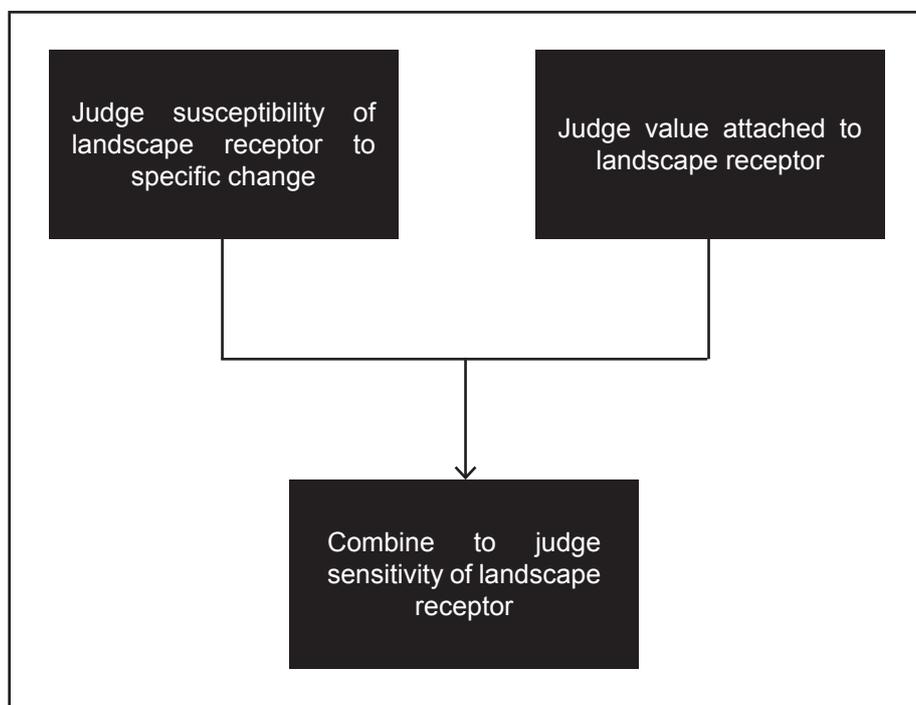


Figure 1: Assessing sensitivity of landscape receptor

Magnitude of Landscape Effects

2.10. The magnitude of landscape effects is the degree of change to the landscape receptor. This considers the size or scale of change, the geographical extent of the area influenced and its duration and reversibility. Duration is usually judged on a simple scale of short term, medium term or long term, although, as noted by GLVIA3, there is no fixed rule on these definitions.

MAGNITUDE OF EFFECT: SCALE OR SIZE OF THE DEGREE OF LANDSCAPE CHANGE	DEFINITION
Major	Total loss of or major alteration to key characteristics / features and, or the introduction of new elements totally uncharacteristic to the receiving landscape. Overall landscape receptor will be fundamentally changed.
Moderate	Partial loss of or alteration to one or more key characteristics / features and the introduction of new elements that would be evident but not necessarily uncharacteristic to the receiving landscape. Overall landscape receptor will be obviously changed.
Minor	Limited loss of, or alteration to one or more key characteristics/ features and the introduction of new elements evident and/ or characteristic to the receiving landscape. Overall landscape receptor will be perceptibly changed.
Imperceptible	Very minor loss of, of alteration to one or more key characteristics/ features and the introduction of new elements characteristic to the receiving landscape. Overall landscape receptor will be minimally changed. No loss or alteration to the key characteristics/ features, representing 'no change'.

Table 3: Magnitude of Effect

REVERSIBILITY	DEFINITION
Irreversible	The development would be permanent and the assessment site could not be returned to its current/ former use.
Reversible	The development could be deconstructed/ demolished and the assessment site could be returned broadly to its current/ historic use (although that may be subject to qualification depending on the nature of the development).

Table 4: Nature of Effect: Reversibility

2.11. The assessment uses the following criteria that has been established by PGLA, and which is based upon the principles and guidance within GLVIA3.

Landscape Effects

2.12. GLVIA3 states that:

“An assessment of landscape effects deals with the effects of change and development on landscape as a resource”. GLVIA § 5.1)

2.13. A range of landscape effects can arise through development. These can include:

- Change or loss of elements, features, aesthetic or perceptual aspects that contribute to the character and distinctiveness of the landscape;
- Addition of new elements that influence character and distinctiveness of the landscape; and
- Combined effects of these changes.

2.14. In terms of size or scale, the judgement takes account of the extent of the existing landscape elements that will be lost or changed, and the degree to which the aesthetic or perceptual aspects or key characteristics of the landscape will be altered by removal or by the addition of new elements.

3. ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL EFFECTS

Baseline

3.1. The baseline visual study includes an understanding of the area in which the proposed development may be visible, the groups of people who may experience views, the viewpoints where they will be affected, and the nature of these views.

3.2. The first stage in the assessment is to identify approximate visibility/visibility mapping. This is either done by a computerised Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV), which is desk study component that treats the world as 'bare earth' (i.e. it does not take into account factors other than terrain that can influence actual visibility, such as buildings, woodland and hedges), or by manual methods using map study and field evaluation to establish whether there is actual visibility.

3.3. A series of viewpoints are included that are representative of views towards the site for surrounding visual receptors. Other views may be included where it helps to support the description and understanding of the site's landscape and visual characteristics.

3.4. It is important to remember that visual receptors are all people. The assessment considers both susceptibility to change in views and visual amenity and the value attached to particular views. GLVIA3 states that:

“The visual receptors most susceptible to change are generally likely to include:

- *“residents at home;*

- *people, whether residents or visitors who engaged in outdoor recreation, including use of public rights of way, whose attention or interest is likely to be focused on the landscape and on particular views;*
- *visitors to heritage assets or other attractions, where views of surroundings are an important contributor to the experience; and*
- *communities where views contribute to the landscape setting enjoyed by residents in the area.” (GLVIA 3 § 6.33)*

3.5. Travellers on road, rail or other transport routes tend to fall into an intermediate category of susceptibility to change, although where travel involves recognised scenic routes awareness of views is likely to be particularly high. GLVIA3 notes that:

“Visual receptors likely to be less sensitive to change include:

- *People engaged in outdoor sport or recreation which does not involve or depend upon appreciation of views of the landscape; and*
- *People at their place of work whose attention may be focused on their work or activity, not on their surroundings and where the setting is not important to the quality of working life ...”*

Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

3.6. Visual sensitivity assesses each visual receptor in terms of their susceptibility to change in views and visual amenity and also the value attached to particular views.

Visual Susceptibility to Change

3.7. 3.7 The susceptibility of different visual receptors to changes in views and visual amenity is mainly a function of the occupation or activity of people experiencing the view at particular locations and, secondly, the extent to which their attention or interest may therefore be focussed on the views and visual amenity they experience.

Value of Views

3.8. The value attached to a view takes account of any recognition attached to a particular view and or any indicators of the value attached to views, for example through guidebooks or defined viewpoints or references in literature or art.

3.9. The assessment uses the following criteria that has been established by PGLA and which is based upon the principles and guidance within GLVIA3.

3.10. Where it is determined that the assessment falls between or encompasses two of the defined criteria terms, then the judgement may be described as, for example, High-Medium or Medium-Low. This indicates that the receptor is assessed to lie between the respective definitions or to encompass aspects of both.

Magnitude of Visual Effects

3.11. Magnitude of Visual Effects evaluates each of the visual effects in terms of its size or scale, the geographical extent of the area influenced and its duration and reversibility. As with landscape effects, the same definitions and criteria apply for the duration of the effect and reversibility.

3.12. The table below sets out the categories and criteria adopted in respect of the Scale or Size, including the degree of contrast of Visual Change.

3.13. The assessment uses the following criteria that has been established by PGLA, and which is based upon the principles and guidance within GLVIA3.

3.14. Where it is determined that the assessment falls between or encompasses two of the defined criteria terms, then the judgement may be described as, for example High-Medium or Medium-Low. This indicates that the effect is assessed to lie between the respective definitions or to encompass aspects of both.

Assessment of Visual Effects

3.15. An assessment of visual effects deals with the area in which the development may be visible and effects of

change on these views to people and their visual amenity. Each of the visual effects is evaluated in terms of its size or scale, the geographical extent of the area influenced and its duration or reversibility.

3.16. In terms of size or scale, the magnitude of visual effects takes account of:

- *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 proportion of the view occupied by the proposed development;*

VISUAL SUSCEPTIBILITY TO CHANGE	DEFINITION
High	Residents at home with primary views from ground floor/garden and upper floors. Public rights of way and footpaths where attention is focussed on the landscape and on particular views. Visitors to heritage assets or other attractions whose attention or interest is likely to be focussed on the landscape and/ or on particular views. Communities where views make an important contribution to the landscape setting enjoyed by residents. Travellers on recognised scenic routes.
Medium	Residents at home with secondary views (primarily from first floor level). Public rights of way and footpaths where attention is not focussed on the landscape and/ or particular views. Travellers on road, rail or other transport with a focus on the landscape.
Low	Users of outdoor recreational facilities where the view is less important to the activities (e.g. sports pitches). Travellers on road, rail or other transport where views are primarily focussed on the transport route. People at their place of work where views of the landscape are not important to the quality of the working life.

Table 5: Visual Susceptibility to Change

VALUE OF VIEWS	DEFINITION
High	A unique or identified view (e.g. shown as such on Ordnance Survey map, guidebook or tourist map) or one noted in literature or art. A view where a heritage asset makes an important contribution to the view.
Medium	A typical and/ or representative view from a particular receptor.
Low	An undistinguished or unremarkable view from a particular receptor.

Table 6: Value of Views

- *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.*
- *The geographical extent of the visual effect in each viewpoint 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 the changes would be visible (GLVIA3 § 6.39-6.40)*

SCALE OR SIZE OF THE DEGREE OF VISUAL CHANGE	DEFINITION
Major	The proposal will result in a large and immediately apparent change in the view, being a dominant and new and/ or incongruous feature in the landscape.
Moderate	The proposal will result in an obvious and recognisable change in the view and will be readily noticed by the viewer.
Minor	The proposal will constitute a minor component of the wider view or a more recognisable component that reflects those apparent in the existing view. Awareness of the proposals will not have a marked effect on the overall nature of the view.
Imperceptible	Only a very small part of the proposal will be discernible and it will have very little or no effect on the nature of the view.

Table 7: Degree of Visual Change

4. OVERALL LEVEL OF LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS

- 4.1. Conclusions on the level of effects, and whether these are adverse or beneficial, are drawn from the separate judgements on the sensitivity of the receptors and the magnitude of the effect, and professional qualitative judgment.
- 4.2. GLVIA3 observes that it is not essential to establish a series of thresholds for different levels of effects, although the distinction between levels can be helpfully defined by using a word scale such as major, moderate, minor and negligible.
- 4.3. The assessment uses the following criteria that has been established by PGLA, and which is based upon the principles and guidance within GLVIA3.
- 4.4. Where it is determined that the assessment falls between or encompasses two of the defined criteria terms, then the judgement may be described as, for example, Major-Moderate or Moderate-Minor. This indicates that the receptor is assessed to lie between the respective definitions or to encompass aspects of both.

5. JUDGING OVERALL SIGNIFICANCE

- 5.1. Through the scoping exercise, it has been determined which environmental aspects are likely to be significantly

affected as a result of the Proposed Development. With regard to significance, the EIA process does not discuss significance in absolute terms, and, instead, the findings are shown through different levels of significance (e.g. major, moderate, minor etc.). Within the EIA process, therefore, the issue is one of degree. Notwithstanding, GLVIA3 Statement of Clarification 1/13 (2013) notes that:

“Concerning ‘significance’, it is for the assessor to define what the assessor considers significant...Depending on the means of judgment and terminology (which should be explicitly set out), effects of varying degrees of change (or levels of change), may be derived. The assessor should then establish (and it is for the assessor to decide and explain) the degree or level of change that is considered to be significant.” (GLVIA Statement of Clarification § 3)

5.2. In accordance with GLVIA3, those degrees of change and effects that are considered to be significant by the assessor, for this LVIA, are judged to be effects that are either Major or Major-Moderate. Where this occurs, this is identified within the LVIA.

Landscape Effects

5.3. In terms of significant landscape effects GLVIA3 advises that:

5.4. *“There are no hard and fast rules about what makes a significant effect, and there cannot be a standard approach since circumstances vary with the location and landscape context and with the type of proposals. At opposite ends of a spectrum it is reasonable to say that:*

- *major loss or irreversible negative effects, over an extensive area, on elements and/*

EFFECT	DEFINITION
Major	An effect that will fundamentally change and be in direct contrast to the existing landscape or views.
Moderate	An effect that will markedly change the existing landscape or views but may retain or incorporate some characteristics/ features currently present.
Minor	An effect that will entail limited or localised change to the existing landscape/ views or will entail more noticeable localised change but including both adverse and beneficial effects and is likely to retain or incorporate some characteristics/ features currently present.
Negligible	An effect that will be discernible yet of very limited change to the existing landscape or views.

Table 8: Level of Effects

or aesthetic and perceptual aspects that are key to the character of nationally valued landscapes are likely to be of the greatest significance;

- *reversible negative effects of short duration, over a restricted are, on elements and/or aesthetic and perceptual aspects that contribute to but are not key characteristics of the character of the landscapes of community value are likely to be of the least significance and may, depending on circumstance, be judged as not significant;*
- *where assessments of significance place landscape effects between these extremes, judgements must be made about whether or not they are significant with full explanations of why these conclusions have been reached.”* (GLVIA3 §5.56)

Visual Effects

5.5. In relation to significant visual effects, GLVIA3 states that:

“There are no hard and fast rules about what makes a significant effect, and there cannot be a standard approach since circumstances vary with the location and context and with the type of proposals. In making a judgment about significance of visual effects the following points should be noted:

- Effects on people who are particularly sensitive to changes in views and visual amenity are more likely to be significant.*
- Effects on people at recognised and important viewpoints or from recognised scenic routes are more likely to be significant.*
- Large-scale changes which introduce new, non-characteristic or discordant or intrusive elements into the view are more likely to be significant than small changes or changes already involving features already present within the view” (GLVIA3 § 6.44)*

