

## Appendix L-1

# Townscape, Landscape and Visual Assessment Criteria

## Assessing the Sensitivity of Townscape / Landscape Receptors to Change

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This study assigns a degree of sensitivity to each townscape / landscape character area identified

The sensitivity of townscape / landscape receptors to change is assessed by combining judgements of their susceptibility to the type of change or development proposed and the value of the townscape / landscape.

### Value

Townscape / landscape value is concerned with the relative Importance and quality/condition that is attached to different townscape / landscapes.

In a policy context the usual basis for recognizing certain important townscape / landscapes is via application of local or national townscape / landscape designations. A townscape / landscape can nonetheless be valued by different communities for many different reasons without any formal designation.

The assessment of townscape / landscape quality (condition) is based on judgements about the physical state of the townscape / landscape and about its intactness from visual, functional and ecological perspectives. It also reflects the state of repair of individual features and elements that make up the character in any one place.

The value of receptors is described in terms of International, Island, Local, Community or limited levels.

### Susceptibility to Change

Susceptibility to change refers to the degree to which a particular townscape / landscape feature or character area is able to accommodate change without significant effects on its components or overall character.

It usually follows that more valued townscape / landscapes have higher susceptibility to change, but this must also be assessed in conjunction with townscape / landscape value to give an overall assessment of sensitivity.

### Determining Sensitivity

Table 1 below summarizes the approach adopted to deriving sensitivity from combinations of value and susceptibility.

**Table 1: Approach to Determining Sensitivity**

		Susceptibility		
		High	Medium	Low
Value	State	Very High	High	Medium
	Local	High	Medium	Low
	Community	Medium	Low	Very Low

The criteria used to define each sensitivity rating are given below at Table 2.

**Table 2: Townscape / Landscape Sensitivity**

Townscape / landscape Sensitivity	Typical Criteria
<b>Very high</b>	Very highly valued townscape / landscapes / landscapes covered by international designation for townscape/landscape value such as World Heritage Sites. Key characteristics of townscape are very vulnerable to change and are unable to accommodate development without significant character change; thresholds for significant change are very low. Development conflicts directly with and would dominate townscape character
<b>High</b>	Highly valued Townscapes / landscapes covered by an island level designation such as those within National Parks or with a wealth of assets of island level significance. Key characteristics of townscape / landscape are vulnerable to change and with some ability to absorb development, but only in limited situations without significant character change; thresholds for significant change are low.
<b>Medium</b>	Townscapes / landscapes covered by a parish or local designation for townscape value such as Conservation Areas or with many locally valued townscape features. Key characteristics of townscape are susceptible to change but development can be absorbed in some situations without significant character change; thresholds for significant change are intermediate.
<b>Low</b>	An undesignated and relatively robust townscape / landscape, possibly with some locally valued features. Key characteristics of townscape / landscape are resilient to change and are able to absorb development in many situations without significant character change; thresholds for significant change are high.
<b>Very low</b>	Significantly eroded townscape / landscapes with no discernible townscape / landscape pattern or characteristics that would be affected by change;

## Assessing the Magnitude of Change to Townscape / Landscape Features

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The assessment compares the constituent parts and overall character of the existing townscape / landscape with that which would result from the construction of the scheme. It verbally quantifies the degree of change in terms of size or scale, geographical extent of the change and its duration and reversibility.

The magnitude of change to the current (baseline) environment depends on a combination of factors:

- The extent to which the constituent characteristics of the townscape / landscape will be lost, gained or changed and the importance of each characteristic to the overall character of the townscape / landscape.
- The degree of contrast or integration of proposed elements with the existing or remaining features or characteristics of the receiving townscape / landscape that may detract from or add to its character;
- The geographical area over which the changes will take place; site specific, immediate site setting, townscape / landscape character area wide, or spanning several distinct character areas.
- The duration and reversibility of effect.

The magnitude of the change to existing townscape / landscape character and features is assessed in accordance with the criteria set out in Table 3. These criteria can be applied to both positive and negative impacts.

**Table 3: Magnitude of Change to the Townscape / Landscape**

<b>Townscape / landscape Impact Magnitude</b>	<b>Typical Criteria</b>
Very high	The proposed development will either cause a large improvement or complete loss of or major alteration to key elements/characteristics over a large area, possibly spanning several character areas. Introducing elements considered entirely uncharacteristic. Effects are likely to be long term and irreversible
High (dominant)	The proposed development will cause either a significant improvement or deterioration of one or more key elements/features/characteristics of the townscape / landscape, typically over much of a character area. Introducing elements that may be considered to be substantially uncharacteristic or which substantially strengthen the townscape / landscape character. Effects are likely to be long or medium term and irreversible or only partly reversible.
Medium (prominent)	A noticeable deterioration or improvement to the characteristic elements of a townscape / landscape, with the development causing a partial change to the perception townscape / landscape character. Change would typically be to the site and its immediate setting, or may influence a small part of the Character area. Change will normally be short to medium term and at least partly reversible.
Low (present)	The proposed development will cause a minor improvement or deterioration to one or more characteristics of the townscape / landscape causing a minor change to the character of the townscape / landscape. Change will be localized and often reversible.
Negligible (No discernible Change)	The development fits with the existing townscape / landscape character or does not change the character or perception of an area. Any slight effects are short term, very localized and often reversible.

## Assessing the Sensitivity of Visual Receptors to Change

The purpose of describing the baseline visual environment is to identify the most important sensitive visual receptors around the site which have views to or across the proposed development. A visual receptor is essentially any person whose visual amenity may be affected as a result of the proposed development.

The sensitivity of visual receptors to change is assessed by combining judgements of their susceptibility to the type of change or development proposed and the value of the views in question.

### Value

Value is derived from evaluation of a receptor's location and context; the relationship of a receptor to planning designations; the existence of documentation and interpretation relating to particular views; and of the receptors popularity or frequency of use.

The value of receptors is described in terms of International, Island, Local, Community or limited levels.

### Susceptibility to Change

The susceptibility of the receptor to changes in views is derived from evaluation of the expectations and occupation or activity of the viewer and the extent to which their attention may be focused on visual amenity.

The sensitivity of visual receptors is assessed using the criteria given below at Table 4.

**Table 4: Visual Receptor Sensitivity**

Visual Receptor Sensitivity	Typical Criteria
Very high	Views from within internationally designated high-quality townscape / landscapes such as World Heritage Sites, and from, or near to public rights of way, where the attractive nature of the environment is the principal factor in the enjoyment of the experience, such as National Trails or Long distance Routes through designated sites. Viewers have a high susceptibility to changes in views.
High	Views from within high quality island level designated townscape / landscapes such as scheduled monuments or Grade 1 listed buildings and their settings. Views from well used public rights of way often known to and used by people from beyond the local area where the attractive nature of the surroundings is a significant factor in the enjoyment of the experience, such as Long Distance Routes or National Cycle Routes). Views from lower floors and gardens of and from some residential properties (typically groups of 10 or more dwellings representing a community of receptors). Viewers have a medium to high susceptibility to changes in views.

Medium	<p>Views from within medium quality, locally designated townscape / landscapes such as Conservation Areas, Listed Places or gardens Grade 2-4 listed buildings and their settings, outdoor sports or recreation (where the view is not a significant factor in the enjoyment of the activity or experience).</p> <p>Views from locally valued public footpaths</p> <p>Views from passenger trains, or people within cars on local roads.</p> <p>Views from lower floors and gardens of some residential properties (typically single or smaller groups of dwellings representing individual receptors).</p> <p>Viewers have a low to moderate susceptibility to changes in views.</p>
Low	<p>Views from within medium-low quality non-designated townscape / landscapes which may be valued on a community level. Views from less well used public rights of way which pass through less attractive townscape / landscapes and are not used specifically for enjoyment of the scenery.</p> <p>Views from or near to motorways, main roads, or business premises.</p> <p>Viewers have a low susceptibility to changes in their views.</p>
Very Low	<p>Views from within degraded and unattractive non-designated townscape / landscapes of little to no value or focus on amenity.</p>

## Assessing the Magnitude of Visual Change

The visual assessment compares the quality of the existing view with that which would result from the construction of the scheme and then verbally quantifies the degree of change.

The magnitude of change to the current (baseline) visual environment depends on a combination of factors:

- The size and scale of change in the view;
- The proximity of the viewpoint to visible elements of the development;
- The extent and composition of the view (e.g. degree of existing screening, partial, glimpsed or unobstructed views, fleeting or constant nature of view);
- The degree of contrast or integration of proposed elements with the existing or remaining features or characteristics of the receiving townscape / landscape that may detract from or add to its amenity;
- The relative direct or oblique angle of the view in relation to the receptor; and
- The duration and reversibility of effect.

The magnitude of change to visual amenity is assessed using the criteria given below at Table 5.

**Table 5: Magnitude of Visual Change**

Visual Impact Magnitude	Typical Criteria
Very high	Total alteration to key features or characteristics of the existing views such that post development, an open and direct existing view will be permanently, irreversibly and completely or almost completely changed by starkly contrasting elements that will occupy a large or very large proportion of the view
High (dominant)	The proposed development will contrast with and visually dominate or intrude upon the view resulting in a considerable improvement or deterioration of the view These changes may be medium or long term and are likely to be irreversible or only partly reversible. New elements will occupy a large proportion of the view
Medium (prominent)	The proposed development will be visually prominent within the view and will result in either a noticeable improvement or deterioration of the view. The change will be moderate in scale, contrast with the view and be medium term permanent and sometimes irreversible or often partly reversible
Low (present)	Minor, often temporary and reversible alterations to the view that are small in scale or do not overtly contrast with the key features or characteristics of the view such that post development the existing view will be largely unchanged despite discernible differences
Negligible (No discernible Change)	Minimal alteration to the key features or characteristics of the existing view such that post development there will be barely discernible changes or no change to the view



## Assessment of Significance

The significance of impacts is assessed using the appropriate national and international quality standards and professional judgement. For clarity and transparency, criteria have been used to attribute levels of significance. Significance is broadly a function of the magnitude of the impact and the sensitivity of receptors. The reversibility and duration of the effect are also important considerations.

For each assessment factor the sensitivity of the effect is combined with magnitude to give an overall score for the significance of the impact as set out in Table 6 and defined in Table 7 overleaf. The approach to the attribution of EIA significance may be summarized as follows:

- Effects categorized as greater than Moderate (i.e. Moderate to Substantial, Substantial and Very Substantial) are considered to be significant in EIA terms (dark blue cells in Table 6);
- Effects categorized as less than Moderate (i.e. Slight to Moderate, Slight, Negligible to Slight and Negligible) are not considered to be significant in EIA terms (unshaded cells in Table 6); and
- Moderate effects may or may not be considered to be significant in EIA terms, based on professional judgement (pale blue cells in Table 6).

**Table 6: Derivation of Effects**

Magnitude of Change	Sensitivity				
	Very High	High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Very High	Very Substantial	Substantial to Very Substantial	Substantial	Moderate to Substantial	Moderate
High	Substantial to Very Substantial	Substantial	Moderate to Substantial	Moderate	Slight to Moderate
Medium	Substantial	Moderate to Substantial	Moderate	Slight to Moderate	Slight
Low	Moderate to Substantial	Moderate	Slight to Moderate	Slight	Negligible to Slight
Very Low	Moderate	Slight to Moderate	Slight	Negligible to Slight	Negligible

**Table 7: Definition of Effects**

<b>Impact Significance Rating</b>	<b>Typical Criteria</b>
<b>Very Substantial</b>	<p>These effects are generally, but not exclusively, associated with sites or features of international or national importance that are likely to experience very damaging or very beneficial changes of high or very high magnitude leading to permanent, irreversible loss or enhancement of resource integrity.</p> <p>The proposed development will cause complete degradation of or a very substantial improvement to the townscape / landscape character/townscape / landscape features/existing views.</p> <p>These effects are key factors in the decision-making process.</p>
<b>Substantial</b>	<p>These effects are generally, but not exclusively, associated with sites or features of national or regional importance that are likely to experience damaging or beneficial changes of medium to very high magnitude leading to long term irreversible loss or enhancement of resource integrity. However, a major change to a site or feature of local importance may also enter this category.</p> <p>The proposed development will cause substantial degradation or enhancement of the townscape / landscape character/townscape / landscape features/existing views.</p> <p>These effects are material factors in the decision-making process.</p>
<b>Moderate</b>	<p>These effects are generally, but not exclusively, associated with sites or features of regional or local importance that are likely to experience damaging or beneficial changes of low to high magnitude, often leading to reversible long or medium term loss or enhancement of resource integrity.</p> <p>The proposed development will cause noticeable degradation or enhancement of the townscape / landscape character/elements/existing views.</p> <p>These adverse effects may be important, but individually are not likely to be key decision-making factors. These effects are important in enhancing the subsequent design of the project. The cumulative effects of such factors may influence decision-making if they lead to an increase in the overall effects on a particular resource or receptor.</p>
<b>Slight</b>	<p>The proposed development will cause degradation or enhancements of low to medium magnitude to townscape / landscape character elements/existing views of local importance.</p> <p>These adverse effects may be raised as local factors.</p> <p>They are unlikely to be critical in the decision-making process, but are used in enhancing the subsequent design of the project.</p>
<b>Negligible</b>	<p>The proposed development will cause barely perceptible degradation or enhancement of the townscape / landscape character/elements/ existing views.</p> <p>Or</p> <p>Beneficial effects balance out adverse effects such that there is no overall beneficial or adverse effect</p>