APPENDIX H1

Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment Methodology and Glossary
1.0 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY & GLOSSARY

1.1 The assessment of landscape and visual effects arising from the proposed development has followed the “Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment” (Second Edition, April 2002) published by The Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment.

1.2 In summary, this states:

- “The baseline information for the assessments, obtained through comprehensive desk and field studies, should include description, classification and analysis of the landscape and visual resource. The assessment process identifies likely landscape and visual effects, establishes their magnitude and the sensitivity of the receptor, and determines the significance of the effects. Mitigation measures – designed to avoid, reduce, remedy or offset negative or adverse effects – are identified, and their likely effectiveness also assessed.”

1.3 In defining landscape and visual effects, the Guidelines state:-

- “Landscape and visual assessments are separate, although linked, procedures. The landscape baseline, its analysis and the assessment of landscape effects all contribute to the baseline for visual assessment studies. The assessment of the potential effects on the landscape is carried out as an effect on an environmental resource, i.e. the landscape. Visual effects are assessed as one of the interrelated effects on population. (2.13).”

- “Landscape effects derive from changes in the physical landscape, which may give rise to changes in its character and how this is experienced. This may in turn affect the perceived value ascribed to the landscape. The description and analysis of effects on a landscape resource relies on the adoption of certain basic principles about the positive (or benefical) and negative (or adverse) effects of change in the landscape. Due to the inherently dynamic nature of the landscape, change arising from a development may not necessarily be significant. (2.14).”

- “Visual effects relate to the changes that arise in the composition of available views as a result of changes to the landscape, to people’s responses to the changes, and to the overall effects with respect to visual amenity. (2.15).”

Addressing baseline studies, the GLVA states at 6.1 and 6.2:-

- “The initial step in any landscape or visual impact assessment is to review the existing landscape and visual resource – that is, the baseline landscape and visual conditions. The data collected will form the basis from which the occurrence, estimation of magnitude and significance of the landscape and visual effects of the development may be identified and assessed.

- The purpose of baseline studies is to record and analyse the existing landscape features, characteristics, the way the landscape is experienced, and the value or importance of the landscape and visual resources in the vicinity of the proposed development. This requires research, classification and analysis of the landscape and visual resources as follows:-

  - Research / survey involves both desk and field studies to assemble basic information.

  - Classification entails sorting landscape into units or groups of distinct and recognisable type and character.
• Analysis involves the detailed examination of the constituent parts of the landscape and visual resources in order to understand how they are made up and experienced. It can also include the process of ascertaining the relative importance of the various aspects of the landscape and visual resource.

1.4 It is important that the Zone of Visual Influence (ZVI) potentially affected by a proposed development is as accurately defined as possible. Paragraph 6.24 of the Guidelines suggests:

• “The area of study for the visual assessment may extend to the whole of the area from which the development is visible (the visual envelope). In practice the extent of the area to be reported on may be limited by agreement with the regulatory authority on the distance from the proposed development within which the view is expected to be of interest or concern.”

1.5 The sensitivity of the landscape and visual resource within the ZVI must then be determined. This is the degree to which the resource affected can accommodate change without detrimental effect. The GLVIA suggests the following criteria in determining the sensitivity of landscape and visual resources:

• “existing land use;
• the pattern and scale of the landscape;
• visual enclosure / openness of views, and distribution of visual receptors;
• the scope for mitigation, which would be in character with the existing landscape;
• the value placed on the landscape”

1.6 The magnitude of change or effect depends upon the scale and nature of the development proposal and its duration. It is important to recognise that change can be either adverse or beneficial.

1.7 Finally, the significance of the effect can be assessed. The GLVIA provide checklists for general guidance as follows:

Landscape

• The loss of mature or diverse landscape elements, or features, is likely to be more significant than the loss of new or uniform / homogenous elements.

• Effects on character areas, which are distinctive or representative, may be more important than the loss of areas in poor condition or degraded character which may, however, present greater opportunities for enhancement.

• The loss of landscape elements, features or characteristics will be given greater weight if they are identified as being of high value or importance. Thus effects on landscape areas or characteristics recognised for their national importance are likely to be of more significance than effects on areas or characteristics of local importance. The test is whether the integrity of the landscape and objectives of designation are compromised or not.

• The sensitivity of the landscape is dependent on both the attributes of the receiving environment and the characteristics and effects of the proposed development and can only be established by carrying out the assessment. However, landscapes with a high value and sensitivity to the type of change proposed are likely to be more seriously affected by development than those with a lower sensitivity.
The test of significance is not directly related to planning policy. However, this may be an important consideration where policies identify commonly held objectives and values.

**Visual**

- Large scale changes which introduce new, discordant or intrusive elements into the view are more likely to be significant than small changes or changes involving features already present within the view.

- Changes in views from recognised and important viewpoints or amenity routes are likely to be more significant than changes affecting other less important paths and routes.

- Changes affecting large numbers of people are generally more significant than those affecting a relatively small group of users. However, in wilderness landscapes the sensitivity of the people who use these areas may be very high and this will be reflected in the significance of the change.

1.9 All stages of the project life-cycle should be addressed: site preparation, construction, operation, decommissioning and restoration.

1.10 Overall assessment of effects takes account of mitigating measures included as an integral part of the scheme design. These measures reduce environmental effects, by avoidance, reduction and compensation. Mitigation includes positive environmental improvements as well as “damage limitation.”
Landscape And Visual Effects Assessment Threshold Criteria

Landscape Effects

1.12 For this assessment the following general criteria applies. A degree of flexibility is required depending upon the nature and context of a particular local landscape character area:-

Landscape Sensitivity

High
Landscape areas with particularly distinctive or positive characters or with valued landscape features. The areas may be sensitive to relatively small changes, and are worthy of conservation.

Medium
Landscape areas with reasonably positive character, but with evidence of alteration or degradation of the character or features. Potentially tolerant of some change, and worthy of enhancement.

Low
Landscape areas with a weak character or relatively few features of value, potentially tolerant of significant change, requiring the restoration of structure.

Magnitude of Landscape Change

High adverse
Total loss of, or major alteration to the key characteristics or features of the landscape area.

Medium adverse
Potential loss of or alteration to the key characteristics or features of the landscape area.

Low adverse
Minor loss of, or alteration to the key characteristics or features of the landscape area.

No change
Very minor alterations to the landscape characteristics or features of the area, which would have an insignificant effect on character.

Low beneficial
Minor improvements to the key characteristics or features that outweigh any adverse landscape effects of the proposal. Removal of minor incongruous features.

Medium beneficial
Notable improvements to the key landscape characteristics or features, or improvements resulting from removal of inappropriate land uses or features.

High beneficial
Major landscape improvements, through the creation of a new landscape structure, and/or the removal of large scale inappropriate features.

1.13 Overall landscape effect is determined by correlating the sensitivity of the landscape resource with the magnitude of landscape change. Professional judgement is used to determine the overall significance of effect based on these two elements.

1.14 Overall effect significance is classified by Substantial, Moderate, Minor or Negligible and the effects can be adverse or beneficial.
Visual Effects

1.15 Once again, flexibility is required when assessing the sensitivity of receptors depending upon their nature and context:

Visual Sensitivity

**High**
Occupiers of residential properties with primary views (encompassing ground floor level views) affected by the development. Communities where the development would affect valued views. Users of outdoor recreational facilities including rights of way where interest may be focused on the landscape.

**Medium**
Properties with secondary views (primarily from first floor level). Users of outdoor recreational facilities where the view is less important to the activities (e.g. sports pitches). Rights of way where landscape is not the significant feature.

**Low**
People at places of work. People travelling through the area in cars, buses or on trains, or people at places of work with limited views potentially affected by the development (e.g. Industrial sites).

Magnitude of Visual Change

**High Adverse**
Where the scheme would cause a significant deterioration in the view, being a dominant and incongruous feature in the scene.

**Medium Adverse**
Where the scheme would cause a noticeable deterioration in the view, or form a visible and recognisable incongruous new element readily noticed by a casual observer.

**Low Adverse**
Where the scheme would cause a minor deterioration in the view, or a small incongruous element in the scene that could be missed by a casual observer.

**No Change**
Where the scheme overall would not form a noticeable deterioration or improvement in the view.

**Low Beneficial**
Where the scheme would cause a minor improvement in the view, or a small improvement to the scene that could be missed by a casual observer.

**Medium Beneficial**
Where the scheme would cause a noticeable improvement in the view or form a recognisable improvement that could be noticed by a casual observer.

**High Beneficial**
Where the scheme would cause a significant improvement in the view.

1.16 Overall visual effect is determined by correlating the sensitivity of the receptor with the magnitude of visual change. Professional judgement is used to determine the overall significance of effect based on these two elements.

1.17 Overall effect significance is classified as Substantial, Moderate, Minor or Negligible, and the effects can be adverse or beneficial.
Visual Effects Schedule

1.18 An assessment of Visual Effects is detailed as an analysis table. Representative photographic viewpoints are enclosed to illustrate support the descriptions.

1.19 Reasoned evaluation of effect is based on the following; Year 1 (short term) with a scenario of complete development and year 1 landscape proposals, the second is based at Year 5 (medium term) when landscape treatment is becoming established and a third at Year 15 (longer term) when landscape treatment has matured.

1.20 Significance of effects for Year 1 is based on a ‘worst case’ scenario of complete development and operation with a newly planted landscape, with minimal migratory benefits. In reality the development would incorporate an advance landscape strategy to encourage planting to establish and take effect at the earliest opportunity.

1.21 Where views are described as “distant” in the assessment of effects or visual effects schedule, these are taken to be broadly in excess of 1 kilometre from the proposed development boundaries.
Glossary

Classification
A process of sorting the landscape into different types using selected criteria but without attaching relative values to the different kinds of landscape.

Constraints map
Map showing the location of important resources and receptors that may form constraints to development.

Cumulative effects
The summation of effects that result from changes caused by a development in conjunction with other past, present or reasonably foreseeable actions.

Element
A component part of the landscape (for example, roads, hedges, woods).

Enhancement
Landscape improvement through restoration, reconstruction or creation.

Environment
Our physical surroundings including air, water and land.

Environmental appraisal
A generic term for the evaluation of the environmental implications of proposals (used by the UK Government in respect of policies and plans).

Landcover
Combinations of land use and vegetation that cover the land surface.

Landform
Combinations of slope and elevation that produce the shape and form of the land.

Landscape
Human perception of the land conditioned by knowledge and identity with a place.

Landscape capacity
The degree to which a particular landscape character type or area is able to accommodate change without unacceptable adverse effects on its character. Capacity is likely to vary according to the type and nature of change being proposed.

Landscape character
The distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occurs consistently in a particular type of landscape, and how this is perceived by people. It reflects particular combinations of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use and human settlement. It creates the particular sense of place of different areas of the landscape.

Landscape character type
A landscape type will have broadly similar patterns of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use, settlement and field pattern discernible in maps and field survey records.

Landscape effects
Change in the elements, characteristics, character and qualities of the landscape as a result of development. These effects can be positive or negative.
**Landscape feature**
A prominent eye-catching element, for example, wooded hilltop or church spire.

**Landscape quality / condition**
Is based on judgements about physical state of the landscape, and about its intactness, from visual, functional, and ecological perspectives. It also reflects the state of repair of individual features and elements which make up the character in any one place.

**Landscape sensitivity**
The extent to which a landscape can accept change of a particular type and scale without unacceptable adverse effects on its character.

**Land use**
The primary use of the land, including both rural and urban activities.

**Magnitude**
A combination of the scale, extent and duration of an effect.

**Mitigation**
Measures, including any process, activity or design to avoid, reduce, remedy or compensate for adverse landscape and visual effects of a development project.

**Visual amenity**
The value of a particular area or view in terms of what is seen.

**Visual effect**
Change in the appearance of the landscape as a result of development. This can be positive (i.e. beneficial or an improvement) or negative (i.e. adverse or a detraction).

**Visual envelope**
Extent of potential visibility to or from a specific area or feature.

**Zone of visual influence**
Area within which a proposed development may have an influence or effect on visual amenity.