

Plot 4200 ARC Oxford

TVIA Appendix A – Methodology

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1389-G508

1389-G508 – TVIA APPENDIX A – METHODOLOGY

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-	Draft	29.01.2024	MR	RG
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METHODOLOGY

1. The appraisal is provided to determine the scope of potential Landscape and Townscape effects arising from the proposed development at Oxford Business Park, Plot 4200. It is also helpful as a design tool in informing the design process as an iterative study. Additional information on conceptual ideas and the design approach will be provided on landscape matters within the planning application with drawings and the Design and Access Statement.
2. GLVIA3 advocates the consideration of landscape and visual effects as separate, but related issues. The landscape is considered in terms of a resource which may have intrinsic value or be appreciated for reasons other than its appearance in a view.
3. The approach taken for assessing the landscape has been to separate the physical features of the Site, the landscape character and other aspects of the landscape use or interest that may be important or sensitive to change. Experiential qualities, tranquillity, scenic beauty, naturalness, or cultural heritage significance will be examined as part of the character or as aspects that add to the value of the locality. Recreational access and permeability issues may be drawn in as other aspects of value. The consideration of importance may be for intrinsic value (i.e. irrespective of public views or appreciation) or because something may contribute to the wider perceptions of character or other aspects of value. Connections to the surrounding town pattern are important in terms of established route ways, patterns of use visual links and how an area may function as a walkable vibrant neighbourhood.
4. The approach for the visual element is to assess the effects on specific views and on the general visual amenity experienced by people. The nature of the visual amenity is recorded at public vantage points and adjacent to residential properties which may have views of the site. This is designed as a process which unravels the visual pattern surrounding the application site, identifying how people experience the application site through a range of representative views.

Landscape and Visual Baseline

5. In terms of baseline studies, the appraisal provides an understanding of the physical landscape and townscape in the area to be affected, constituent elements, character, condition and value. For the purposes of this appraisal these elements will be referred to as Landscape Receptors. For the visual baseline this includes an understanding of the area in which the Proposed Development may be visible, the people who may experience views, and the nature of views, otherwise known as the Visual Receptors.
6. The baseline appraisal is based on a combination of the following:
 - Desktop review - including existing information such as maps and plans, as well as background information relating to landscape classification and character assessments (of particular relevance to this assessment is 'A Character Assessment of Oxford in its Landscape Setting, 2002 with addendum Report 2022), development constraints (tree preservation orders, public rights of way, services etc.), landscape heritage (historic plans and maps) and ecological and cultural heritage assessments.
 - Reference to the Historic Landscape is also considered an important aspect of the process, where available.
 - Site appraisal fieldwork – to establish landscape features and resources, the character, quality and visibility of the site (visual envelope and significant viewpoints into and out of the site); and

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- Identification and initial appraisal of landscape and visual receptors.
 - Judgements are made as to the Susceptibility of the receptor to the type of change arising from the specific proposal; and the Value attached to each receptor. These judgements will enable an understanding of the receptor's Sensitivity to the development proposals which will be quantified at the LVA appraisal stage.
 - Sensitivity and Magnitude of Change are also considered at this initial stage and used to inform the design.
7. Landscape Baseline studies have been structured to cover the following
- Landscape and Townscape Context
 - Physical Description of the Application Site and Environs
 - Geology, topography and drainage
 - Existing vegetation/habitat
 - Land cover/use, and
 - Built or designed environment
 - Established landscape character assessments (Natural England & Planning Authority references and historical characteristics) and
 - Local application site specific character
 - Access and circulation
 - Recreational use
 - Historical and cultural heritage
 - Wildlife interest, and:
 - Social value
8. Visual Baseline studies have been undertaken as follows:
- Desk review – a review of local topography and long-distance sections. Where the initial studies or application site visits suggest the potential to identify the site in distant views, consideration is given to the nature of the development and the intervening landscape to see how significant the proposals might be on these views. An initial Zone of Theoretical Visual Influence was considered to help establish the extent of the initial search area. Within this broad area there are extensive areas of the landscape or townscape where no view is possible due to intervening topography, built development, trees and other features.
 - Site Visits - were undertaken to verify the extent of the Zone of Theoretical Visual Influence suggested by the desktop data appraisal, and site photographs were taken from representative viewpoints. In areas of extensive visibility in low sensitivity settings this may not be an exhaustive catalogue of every one of the possible views, as only those viewpoints which provide sufficiently open views may be relevant to consideration of effects. Views were selected to be representative of views from a variety of locations, including key public locations, public highways, public footpaths, private residential properties and sensitive landscapes; the nature of views – whether they are glimpsed or open; the duration of the view would also be referenced.
9. An exercise was undertaken to determine viewpoints from which the development of the height proposed would be seen from. Initially a view shed mapping diagram was produced, see Appendix A, Figure 01 based on Google Earth Pro using a building height of 21.4m (the assumed rooftop flue height). This assumes no intervening vegetation and the townscape is limited to what is currently modelled 3 dimensionally. Therefore, maps of were studied and fieldwork undertaken to determine the likely visibility in reality.
10. The location of viewpoints was submitted to Planning Officers at Oxford City Council in advance of the appraisal to obtain agreement.

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All views are to be 'verified views', which are computer generated rendered images based on precise photographic locations established using GPS and site survey.

11. An additional number of viewpoints have been used in this assessment to confirm the limits of the visual envelope. All of these views are identified in the appendices by means of location plans and photographs.
12. The representative views identified were then categorised according to the type of viewpoint and the relative sensitivity. Sensitivity of views is based on the existing extent and quality of the view, consideration of the likely sensitivity of potential viewers, the relative number of people affected and the existing condition of the view.
13. Views from residential properties are taken as potentially the most sensitive. While the number of individuals affected in any one property will be low, such views are fixed and are likely to be of definite interest to those affected. The degree of sensitivity of properties may well vary as some may have a limited view while others a more open view from living accommodation or gardens. While individual properties may be sensitive or highly sensitive to proposed changes, the actual number of properties affected overall will be considered.
14. Views from public open spaces, footpaths, historic buildings or important areas of landscape and townscape, including key views from the historic core of Oxford or Conservation Areas, are considered as generally more sensitive than views from main roads or commercial developments. The relative sensitivity of all views identified is based on a judgement that also includes the numbers of people that may be affected and the condition of the existing view.

Appraisal

15. The appraisal stage examines the effects of the development on the landscape and visual amenities following the same aspects as set out in the baseline appraisal.
16. Starting with the physical landscape, the basic quantifiable changes along with the change to any specific features of intrinsic value are noted first. This also explains how the proposals will impact on the fabric of the application site which then may influence character and visual impact.
17. The effects on character are assessed through consideration of the change (both negative and positive) of characteristic features and then the potential changes to the perceptions of the place. Changes to the accessibility, function for recreational use and as a setting for social, natural and cultural heritage are also described and assessed.
18. Visual effects are assessed by determining the degree to which the new development would affect visual receptors; that is the people who would be affected by changes in views or visual amenity at different places. This process is assisted by reference to a digital model where appropriate. For each visual receptor the change is considered against the visual baseline conditions and how effectively the development may be integrated. The scale of change is considered alongside the degree to which proposals may be in or out of context or intrusive or beneficial to the view. These appraisals include a degree of subjective but professional judgement.
19. Visual analysis is presented in the appraisal as a series of selected viewpoints, but of course in reality the visual perception of any development is more of a moving picture. From one block to the next, visibility and perceptions can change, and this has been considered in the evaluation and noted in the text. Experience tells us that within the visual envelope there are few occasions when a proposed development can never be seen; in these instances, we have

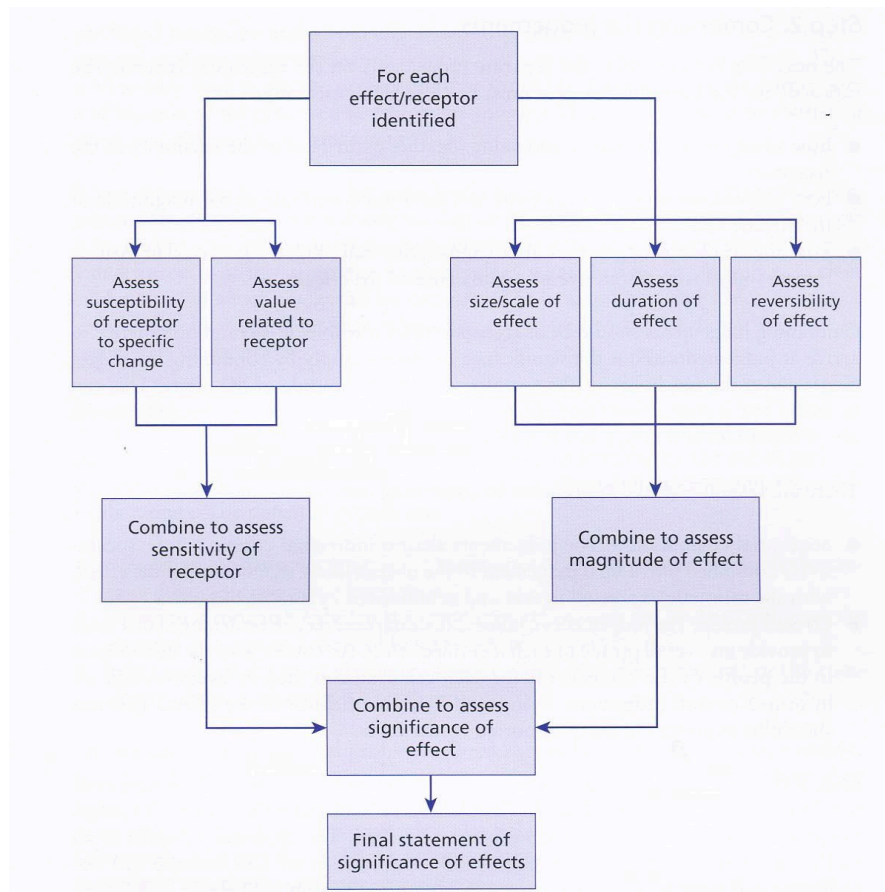
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had to judge the overall effect of views on the receptor and balance the impact of views against scale and sensitivity.

20. The LVIA process covers the effects over time starting from the existing baseline condition, then during construction, at completion and the long-term residual condition. For the long-term assessments are generally made for the condition after 15 years to allow for the benefit of tree planting. With planting for a commercial scheme often including larger (semi mature) tree stock some impacts may be reduced or mitigated by the completion stage. Planting of tree stock at smaller sizes can have horticultural benefits resulting in good establishment growth rates such that by 15 years there is not a substantial difference in height by that stage. For this assessment trees are assumed to be a minimum of 6 – 8 m high at 15 years; where planted at this size to start with the height at year 15 could be up to 1.5 m taller.
21. As well as the narrative description applied within the body of the appraisal, the various appraisals have been collected into summary table form to allow the stages of the appraisal to be followed.

Assessing the Magnitude of Effect and Sensitivity

22. GLVLA3 provides the following tabulated process for assessing the significance of effects and has been used in this appraisal.



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Landscape Sensitivity

23. Landscape sensitivity is determined by consideration of both the **susceptibility** to change and the **value** placed on the landscape resource, as follows:
24. **Susceptibility** of landscape receptors is defined as *“the ability of the landscape receptor ... to accommodate the proposed development without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation”* (LI and IEMA 2013:88-9). Susceptibility is recorded on a scale of:
- High – undue consequences are to be expected
 - Medium – undue consequences may be possible
 - Low – undue consequences are unlikely
25. **Value** of a landscape receptors is attached in a relative scale by society depending on a variety of considerations including international, national or local designations, its contribution to a community of its cultural significance e.g. landscapes reflected through literature, poetry, art etc. Adapting guidance by the LI and IEMA (GLVIA3 2013, 88-90) a landscape value for each receptor is defined by the following scale:
- Internationally/Nationally valued landscape – e.g. World Heritage Sites; National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty etc.”
 - Designated and Locally Valued Landscape – e.g. Areas of Great Landscape Value
 - Undesignated but Locally Valued Landscape – e.g. Landscapes assessed as being of equivalent value to local designations
 - Landscape of Limited Value – degraded landscapes not understood to be valued by local communities
26. The susceptibility and value of landscape receptors are taken together to form a reasonably judged assessment of the sensitivity to change on a scale of Very High to Negligible. Where intermediate ratings are given, e.g. “Medium-Low”, this indicates a sensitivity that is both less than Medium and more than Low, rather than one which varies across the range.
27. The following table provides a process for assessing the susceptibility, value and sensitivity of the landscape resource:

Sensitivity		Definition
<i>Landscape resource value</i>		<i>Landscape resource sensitivity</i>
Very High	Exceptional landscape quality, no or limited potential for substitution. Key elements features well known to the wider public. Little or no tolerance to change.	Nationally/internationally designated/valued landscape, or key elements or features of nationally/internationally designated landscapes. Little or no tolerance to change.
High	Strong/distinctive landscape character; absence of landscape detractors. Low tolerance to change.	Regionally/nationally designated/valued countryside and landscape features. Low tolerance to change.

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Medium	Some distinctive landscape characteristics; few landscape detractors. Medium tolerance to change.	Locally/regionally designated/valued countryside and landscape features. Medium tolerance to change.
Low	Absence of distinctive landscape characteristics; presence of landscape detractors. High tolerance to change.	Undesignated countryside and landscape features. High tolerance to change.
Negligible	Absence of positive landscape characteristics. Significant presence of landscape detractors. High tolerance to change.	Undesignated countryside and landscape features. High tolerance to change.

Visual Sensitivity

28. As with Landscape sensitivity, Visual sensitivity is determined by consideration of both the **susceptibility** to change and the **value** placed on the landscape resource.
29. However, the susceptibility of visual receptors to changes in views and general visual amenity is typically a function of the activity of people experiencing the view and the extent to which their attention is likely to be focused on the view (GLVIA3, Page 113). For example, people using a National Trail are more likely to be susceptible to changes in the view than those employed within a business where the landscape setting may not be the primary focus.
30. Such assumptions, where possible are described for each receptor group. This association between activity and susceptibility to changes in views is, a consideration of the expectations of the visual receptor. Expectations may reasonably be expected to change depending on the recognised value of a specific view of general views within a landscape. As such, it is not so simple to draw out specific levels of susceptibility and value for visual receptors.
31. Instead, the **sensitivity** of visual receptor groups is directly assessed using the following definitions:

Sensitivity		Definition
<i>Visual Resource value</i>		<i>Visual resource sensitivity</i>
Very High	Views of remarkable scenic quality, of and within internationally designated landscapes or key features or elements of nationally designated landscapes that are well known to the wider public. Little or no tolerance to change.	Observers, drawn to a particular view, including those who have travelled from around Britain and overseas to experience the views. Little or no tolerance to change.
High	Views from residential property where views are part of the locational attraction, public rights of way and nationally designated countryside/landscape features with public access and National Trails.	Observers enjoying the view from their homes (<i>where the view is an important part of the location</i>) or pursuing quiet outdoor recreation are more sensitive to visual change. Low tolerance to change.

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	Low tolerance to change.	
Medium	Views from local roads and routes crossing designated countryside/landscape features and 'access land', as well as promoted paths. Medium tolerance to change.	Observers enjoying the view of landscape/townscape from vehicles on quiet/promoted routes are moderately sensitive to visual change. Medium tolerance to change.
Low	Views from work places, main roads and undesignated countryside/landscape features. High tolerance to change.	Observers in vehicles or people involved in frequent or frequently repeated activities are less sensitive to visual change. High tolerance to change.
Negligible	Views from within and of undesignated landscapes with significant presence of landscape detractors. High tolerance to change.	Observers in vehicles or people involved in frequent or frequently repeated activities are less sensitive to visual change. High tolerance to change.

32. The nature of effect on each receptor (**magnitude**) is assessed through an understanding of the **Scale** and **Duration/reversibility** of the effects. These are described in more detail below.

33. **Scale** of effect is a consideration of the degree of change arising from the development either directly to the landscape receptor or to views and the general visual setting for visual receptors. Scale is determined by the following classification:

- **Large** - total or major change of existing landscape elements, features qualities or characteristics. Total or major change of features in the view and major changes in the composition of the view due to a high proportion of the view being occupied by the site;
- **Medium** - partial change of existing landscape elements, features qualities or characteristics. Partial change of features in the view and partial changes in the composition of the view due to a moderate proportion of the view being occupied by the site;
- **Small** - minor change of existing landscape elements, features qualities or characteristics. Minor change of features in the view and minor changes in the composition of the view due to a small proportion of the view being occupied by the site;
- **Negligible** – very minor changes of existing landscape elements, features qualities or characteristics. Very minor change of features in the view and changes in the composition of the view due to a negligible proportion of the view being occupied by the site.
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34. **Duration and reversibility** of effects are linked considerations and are determined by the following scale:

- **Permanent** – the change is expected to be permanent without the intention for it to be reversed;

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- **Long-term** - The change is expected to have effect the receptor for a period of 10-25 years and thereafter will be fully reversed or fully mitigated such that the baseline conditions are restored;
- **Medium-term** - The change is expected to have effect the receptor for a period of 2-10 years and thereafter will be fully reversed or fully mitigated such that the baseline conditions are restored;
- **Short-term** - The change is expected to have effect the receptor for a period of 0-2 years and thereafter will be fully reversed or fully mitigated such that the baseline conditions are restored.

35. The scale and duration/reversibility of effects on receptors are taken together to form an assessment of the **magnitude of change** on a scale of High, Medium, Low, Negligible. Where intermediate ratings are given, e.g. "Medium-Low", this indicates a magnitude of change that is both less than Medium and more than Low, rather than one which varies across the range. The **magnitude** of change is assessed using the following evaluation table

Magnitude	Landscape	Visual
Large	Total loss or addition or/very substantial loss or addition of key elements/features/patterns of the baseline, i.e., pre-development landscape and/or introduction of dominant, uncharacteristic elements with the attributes of the receiving landscape.	Complete or very substantial change in view dominant involving complete or very substantial obstruction of existing view or complete change in character and composition of baseline, e.g., through removal of key elements.
Medium	Partial loss or addition of or moderate alteration to one or more key elements/features/patterns of the baseline, i.e., pre-development landscape and/or introduction of elements that may be prominent, but may not necessarily be substantially uncharacteristic with the attributes of the receiving landscape.	Moderate change in view: which may involve partial obstruction of existing view or partial change in character and composition of baseline, i.e., pre-development view through the introduction of new elements or removal of existing elements. Change may be prominent, but would not substantially alter scale and character of the surroundings and the wider setting. Composition of the views would alter. View character may be partially changed through the introduction of features which, though uncharacteristic, may not necessarily be visually discordant.
Small	Minor loss or addition of or alteration to one or more key elements/features/patterns of the baseline, i.e., pre-development landscape and/or introduction of elements that may not be uncharacteristic with the surrounding landscape.	Minor change in baseline, i.e., pre-development view – change would be distinguishable from the surroundings whilst composition and character would be similar to the pre change circumstances.
Negligible	Very minor loss or addition of or alteration to one or more key	Very slight change in baseline, i.e., pre-development view – change

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	elements/features/patterns of the baseline, i.e., pre-development landscape and/or introduction of elements that are not uncharacteristic with the surrounding landscape approximating to a 'no-change' situation.	barely distinguishable from the surroundings. Composition and character of view substantially unaltered.
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36. The combination of Sensitivity of the receptor to the Magnitude of change is then assessed to reach a conclusion about the overall effect. The reasoning behind the different factors taken into consideration are explained in the accompanying text so that the nature of the conclusion can be understood.
37. In order to provide a level of consistency and transparency to the assessment and allow comparisons to be made between the various landscape and visual receptors, the appraisal of beneficial and adverse effects is based on pre-defined criteria as outlined in the table below

Level of Effect	Description of Landscape Effect	Description of Visual Effect
Major	Considerable change over an extensive area of a highly sensitive landscape, fundamentally affecting the key characteristics and the overall impression of its character.	The development would become a prominent feature and would result in a very noticeable change to an existing highly sensitive and well composed view.
Moderate	Small or noticeable change to a highly sensitive landscape or more intensive change to a landscape of medium or low sensitivity, affecting some key characteristics and the overall impression of its character.	The development would introduce some enhancing or detracting features to an existing highly sensitive and well composed view, or would be prominent within a less well composed and less sensitive view, resulting in a noticeable improvement or deterioration of the existing view.
Minor	Small change to a limited area of landscape of high or medium sensitivity or a more widespread area of a less sensitive landscape, affecting few characteristics without altering the overall impression of its character.	Where the proposed development would form a perceptible but not enhancing or detracting feature within a view of high or medium sensitivity or would be a more prominent feature within a poorly composed view of low sensitivity, resulting in a small improvement or deterioration of the existing view.
Negligible	No discernible improvement or deterioration to the existing landscape character	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.