

Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

Third edition

Landscape Institute and
Institute of Environmental
Management & Assessment

Guidelines for
Landscape
and Visual
Impact
Assessment

Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) can be key to planning decisions by identifying the effects of new developments on views and on the landscape itself.

This fully revised edition of the industry standard work on LVIA presents an authoritative statement of the principles of assessment. Offering detailed advice on the process of assessing the landscape and visual effects of developments and their significance, it also includes a new expanded chapter on cumulative effects and updated guidance on presentation.

Written by professionals for professionals, the third edition of this widely respected text provides an essential tool for landscape practitioners, developers, legal advisors and decision-makers.

Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

Third edition

Landscape Institute and Institute
of Environmental Management
& Assessment

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Foreword

I am delighted that the third edition of GLVIA has now been published, as this updated guidance has been long awaited by those working in the field of LVIA. The new edition is comprehensive and clear, covering the many developments that have taken place in the scope and nature of impact assessment since publication of the second edition. There have been significant changes to the environmental framework within which LVIA is now undertaken, particularly with the UK Government's ratification of the European Landscape Convention, confirming the importance and role of the landscape as used and enjoyed by us all. At the same time, the demands that are put on our landscape to accommodate new development, and to adapt to the changing world environment confirm the need for a strong framework within which the effect of change can be assessed and understood.

The straightforward approach taken in this revised edition emphasises clarity and simplicity in approach, and the importance of sound professional judgement. It also usefully identifies aspects of assessment that are commonly misunderstood or misinterpreted, and advises on approaches to best practice without being prescriptive.

My particular thanks must go to Carys Swanwick, who wrote this edition, to Jeff Stevenson CMLI, Chair of the GLVIA Advisory Panel, and to all involved in producing these guidelines. The guidelines remain the benchmark for landscape and visual assessment.

Sue Illman PLI
President of the Landscape Institute

Preface to the third edition

The third edition of the *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment* has been produced under the joint auspices of the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment (IEMA), as co-authors of the guidance. The third edition supersedes earlier editions, and while aimed primarily at landscape professionals is written in such a way as to provide a flavour for those who are simply interested in the subject, as well as more detailed (but less prescriptive) guidance for the professional engaged in Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments.

The third edition clearly recognises that many different pressures have changed and will continue to change landscapes that are familiar to many, whether at national or local community level, and the landscape professional will be of particular importance in bringing forward measured and responsible assessments to assist decision making.

This new edition takes into account recognition of the European Landscape Convention by the United Kingdom government, and subsequently by the devolved administrations, which raises the profile of this important subject and emphasises the role that landscape can play in our day-to-day lives.

It has been produced to reflect the expanded range of good practice that now exists, and to address some of the questions and uncertainties that have arisen from the second edition. It also gives greater recognition to sustainable development as a concept – something that has come further to the fore through government policy and guidance across the UK. However, while mentioning government policy and guidance (whether at the UK level or through the devolved administrations) the third edition seeks to avoid reflecting a specific point in time, recognising that legislative, statutory and policy contexts change so that guidance that is tied to contexts will quickly become dated and potentially out of step.

A clear objective has been to continue to encourage higher standards in the conduct of Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments – something which the two previous editions of the guidelines, published in 1995 and 2002, have already helped to achieve.

The third edition attempts to be clearer on the use of terminology. The emphasis should be on the identification of likely significant environmental effects, including those that are positive and negative, direct and indirect, long, medium and short term, and reversible and irreversible, as well as cumulative effects. This edition encourages professionals to recognise this and assess accordingly.

The Landscape Institute is the recognised expert and professional body for landscape matters and this edition again acknowledges the holistic perspective that landscape

Preface to the third edition

professionals take and the particularly valuable contribution they can make to Environmental Impact Assessment in general and Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment in particular. As such the third edition stresses that it is important that landscape professionals are able to demonstrate high professional standards and that their work should offer exemplars of good practice. It is to be hoped that this edition will further reinforce the professional's skills base by providing sound, reliable and widely accepted advice, aimed at helping professionals to achieve quality and consistency in their approach to Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment.

This edition concentrates on principles and process. It does not provide a detailed or formulaic 'recipe' that can be followed in every situation – it remains the responsibility of the professional to ensure that the approach and methodology adopted are appropriate to the task in hand. The aim has been to make the advice specific enough to meet the needs of UK practitioners but also to avoid too much detail about specific legislation which will make it of less value elsewhere.

Two areas where there has been considerable discussion and where we feel that we are moving forward are in exploring and providing better advice concerning assessing significance of effect, and in identifying and assessing cumulative effects. In both cases, debate will continue as these subjects evolve.

It is especially important (a) to note the need for proportionality, (b) to focus on likely significant adverse or positive effects, (c) to focus on what is likely to be important to the competent authority's decision and (d) to emphasise the importance of the scoping process in helping to achieve all of these.

As Chair of the GLVIA Advisory Panel which oversaw the production of this edition, I offer the most heartfelt thanks to Professor Carys Swanwick of the University of Sheffield, commissioned as the writer of the text, to Lesley Malone, Head of Knowledge Services at the Landscape Institute who co-ordinated the project, and to Josh Fothergill of IEMA. Carys is to be praised and very warmly congratulated, given the complexity of the task of balancing the sometimes competing needs and wishes of members, practices, government agencies and interested others, along with the views and input of the Advisory Panel. Producing this new edition has been challenging for all concerned but ultimately highly rewarding.

Government agencies have an important role throughout the LVIA process, particularly at the initial scoping stage and also in reviewing the final assessment. This guidance has been prepared following feedback from English Heritage, Natural Resources Wales (formerly the Countryside Council for Wales), Scottish Natural Heritage (Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba), Natural England and the Environment Agency.

Thanks are also due to all those who, whether as individuals or as representatives of organisations or agencies, have contributed, with sometimes widely varying opinions and suggestions, to the evolution of the third edition. This edition could not and therefore will not satisfy every interest and opinion, but the Advisory Panel considers that it moves the subject forward considerably from the second edition. Doubtless debate will continue and new questions and issues will arise as this edition is applied and tested in practice but, after all, that is how progress in a subject is made.

Preface to the third edition

The Landscape Institute and IEMA consider it essential to remember that the third edition is a 'step along the way'. Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, along with Environmental Impact Assessment more generally, evolves and will continue so to do with the role of the professional making professional judgements at the heart of the process.

Jeff Stevenson CMLI
Chair, GLVIA Advisory Panel

Acknowledgements

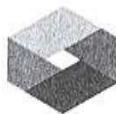
The third edition of the *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment* was prepared by Professor Carys Swanwick guided by the GLVIA Advisory Panel:

- Jeff Stevenson CMLI (Chair)
- Julian Francis CMLI
- Mary O'Connor CMLI
- Mark Turnbull FLI
- Marc van Grieken CMLI

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ENGLISH HERITAGE



**Cyfoeth
Naturiol
Cymru
Natural
Resources
Wales**



**Scottish Natural Heritage
Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba**

All of nature for all of Scotland
Nàdar air fad airson Alba air fad

Part 1

Introduction, scope and context

Chapter 1

Introduction



Chapter overview

- About this guidance
- When is LVIA carried out?
- Impacts, effects and significance
- Who is this guidance for?
- Organisation and structure of the guidance

About this guidance

1.1 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 the landscape as an environmental resource in its own right and on people's views and visual amenity. The Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment (and its predecessor the Institute of Environmental Assessment) have worked together since 1995 to publish guidance on LVIA. Two previous editions of these guidelines, published in 1995 and 2002, have been important in encouraging higher standards in the conduct of LVIA projects.

'Development' is used throughout this book to mean any proposal that results in a change to the landscape and/or visual environment.

1.2 This is the third edition of the guidance and replaces the earlier editions. The new version takes account of changes that have taken place since 2002, in particular:

- changes in the context in which LVIA takes place, including in the legal and regulatory regimes and in associated areas of practice;
- the much greater range of experience of applying LVIA and testing it through Public Inquiries and related legal processes, which has revealed the need for some issues to be clarified and for the guidance to be revised to take account of changing circumstances.

When is LVIA carried out?

1.3 LVIA may be carried out either formally, as part of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), or informally, as a contribution to the 'appraisal' of development proposals and planning applications. Both are important and the broad principles and the core of the approach is similar in each case.

LVIA as part of EIA

LVIA applies to all projects that could require a formal EIA but also includes projects that may be assessed informally. EIA has been formally required in the UK, for certain types of project and/or in certain circumstances, since 1985. It applies not only to projects that require planning permission but also to those subject to other consent procedures like use of agricultural land for intensive agricultural purposes, irrigation and land drainage requirements or reclamation of land from the sea. The various European Union Directives underpinning this requirement have now been consolidated in Directive 2011/92/EU *The assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment*. The objective of the Directive is to ensure that Member States

1.4

adopt all measures necessary to ensure that, before consent is given, projects likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue, *inter alia*, of their nature, size or location are made subject to a requirement for development consent and an assessment with regard to their effects.

(European Commission, 2011)

The Directive and the Regulations that implement it in different countries of the UK specify the types of project and the circumstances in which EIA may be required. In summary, EIA is a way of ensuring that significant environmental effects are taken into account in decision making.

Devolution in the United Kingdom has meant growing emphasis on the individuality of approaches in devolved administrations and their related organisations. The framework within which EIA is carried out therefore consists of:

1.5

- the European Union Directive;
- UK Country Regulations which interpret and implement the Directive individually for England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales;
- guidance documents produced by government departments to assist in implementation, including planning policy guidance and other forms of more specific EIA guidance, including guidance on specific types of change or development;
- specialised guidance produced by government agencies, or professional bodies (such as the Landscape Institute and IEMA), dealing with specific aspects of implementation.

This means, depending on project location, that the landscape professional must be aware of the relevant devolved government/administration's requirements with respect to EIA so far as it is pertinent to Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment.

The EU Directive covering EIA and related matters applies equally to all countries of the UK but is implemented through country Regulations that may be different in each and may also change periodically as they are updated. Each country also has a number of specific Regulations that cover a range of named activities, some of them outside the planning system. Such specific Regulations cover (among other things) electricity supply, transport, fish farming, energy production and transmission, gas and petroleum extraction, water abstraction, forestry, land drainage, agricultural improvements on uncultivated land or semi-natural areas and restructuring of rural land holdings.

1.6

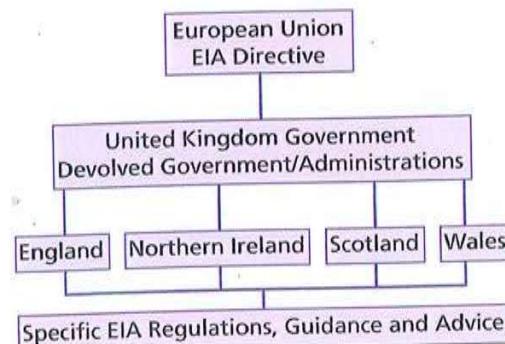


Figure 1.1 The EIA hierarchy

- 1.7 Planning policy guidance also differs across the four countries, as does the specialised guidance that has been issued by government departments and their agencies. The variety of specialist guidance from agencies and others also changes from time to time. Scottish Natural Heritage has been particularly active in producing advice and guidance both on EIA in general and on issues relating to the effects of wind farms in particular.
- 1.8 EIA procedures require a wide range of environmental topics to be investigated. The European Union Directive, the Regulations that apply in the UK and the guidance documents that support them all list these, albeit with slight variations in the wording. The topics can be summarised as:
 - human beings, population;
 - flora and fauna;
 - soil, water, air, climate;
 - landscape;
 - cultural heritage (including architectural and archaeological heritage);
 - material assets.
- 1.9 As well as specifically identifying landscape as a topic to be considered, the Directive and the Regulations also make clear the need to deal with the interrelationship between topics. This raises the issue of how landscape interrelates with matters such as, for example, population, flora and fauna, and cultural heritage. Consequently in the context of EIA, LVIA deals with both effects on the landscape itself and effects on the visual amenity of people, as well as with possible interrelationships of these with other related topics.
- 1.10 This guidance intentionally does not set out to identify or summarise the complex regulatory framework of legislation, Regulations and policy for EIA in general or for more specific aspects of it. To do so would immediately date it as the regulatory framework changes. The websites of relevant government departments and agencies provide the starting point for finding up-to-date information and will usually contain links to other relevant material. Anyone who may be involved in carrying out an LVIA as part of an EIA must ensure that they are fully familiar with the current legislation, Regulations and guidance documents that may be relevant to the specific project or location they are dealing with.

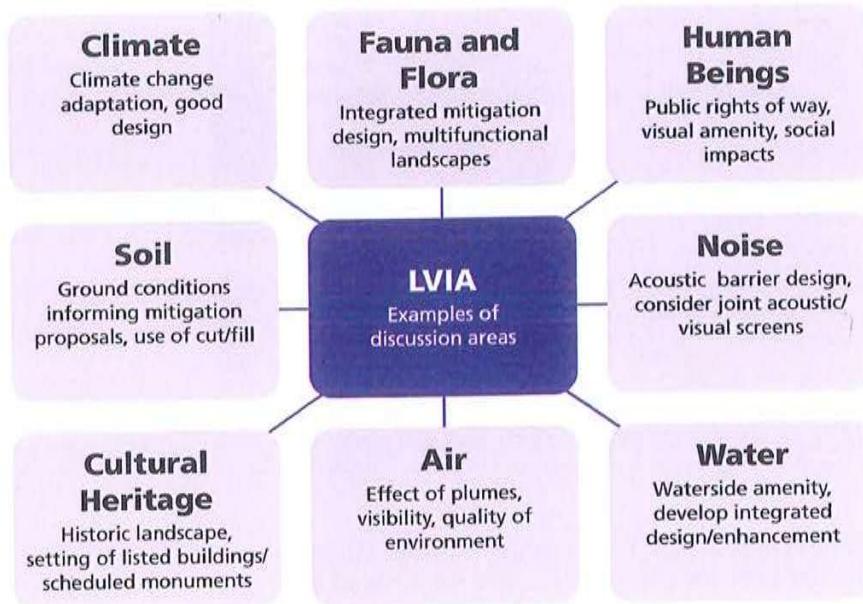


Figure 1.2 Examples of LVIA's relationship with other topics

LVIA in the 'appraisal' of development proposals

The principles and processes of LVIA can also be used to assist in the 'appraisal' of forms of land use change or development that fall outside the requirements of the EIA Directive and Regulations. Applying such an approach in these circumstances can be useful in helping to develop the design of different forms of development or other projects that may bring about change in the landscape and in visual amenity. Reference is sometimes made to the 'appraisal' of landscape and visual effects when such work is carried out outside the requirements of the EIA Directive and Regulations, and Local Planning Authorities may ask for such 'appraisals' where planning applications raise concerns about effects on the landscape and/or visual amenity. While much of this guidance is concerned with formal requirements for EIA and with the role LVIA plays in that process, the methods described will also be useful in such situations.

1.11

LVIA in Strategic Environmental Assessment

It has been widely recognised that project-level EIA alone cannot lead to comprehensive environmental protection or sustainable development. The European Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive 2001/42/EC *The assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment* (European Commission, 2001) is intended to address this and ensure that environmental consequences are addressed at strategic as well as project levels. It applies to certain plans and programmes that are developed by the public sector and by private companies that undertake functions of a public nature under the control or direction of government. This Directive is again transposed into UK law by a series of country-specific Government Regulations.

1.12

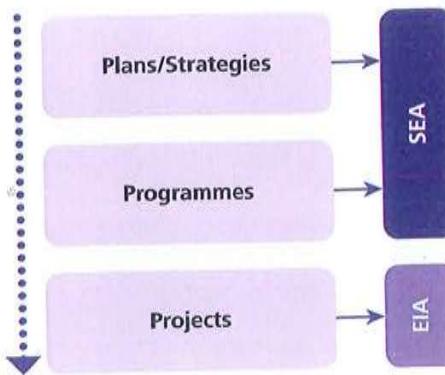


Figure 1.3 Relationship between SEA and EIA

1.13 Government and UK country agency guidance on implementing the SEA Directive and Regulations includes a similar list of environmental topics to the EIA Directive and Regulations, and so includes landscape. The principles of LVIA set out in this guidance are therefore equally applicable to SEA. There is a degree of overlap between the two processes and landscape and visual amenity issues may arise in both. However, as there is no clearly specified project to be assessed in SEA, the approach is more strategic and generic. The SEA process allows the cumulative effects of potential developments to be taken into account at an early stage of planning and alternative strategic approaches to be considered before decisions are taken, all in a way which is transparent. In England there are close relationships between SEA and sustainability appraisals of development plans, which have been carried out in various forms since the 1990s and have become an integral part of spatial planning, covering plans at all levels from national to local. There is a degree of overlap between the two processes and landscape and visual amenity issues may arise in both.

1.14 The approach is generally to judge how far the plan, programme or strategy performs against criteria relating to matters such as:

- conservation and enhancement of landscape character and scenic value;
- protection and enhancement of the landscape everywhere and particularly in designated areas;
- protection and enhancement of diversity and local distinctiveness;
- improvement of the quantity and quality of publicly accessible open space;
- restoration of landscapes degraded as a consequence of past industrial activity.

Impacts, effects and significance

1.15 Terminology can be complex and potentially confusing in this area, particularly in the use of the words 'impact' and 'effect' in LVIA within EIA and SEA. The process is generally known as **impact assessment** but the European Union Directive refers to assessment of the **effects**, which are changes arising from the development that is being

assessed. This guidance generally distinguishes between the 'impact', defined as the action being taken, and the 'effect', defined as the change resulting from that action, and recommends that the terms should be used consistently in this way. The document itself does use both, using 'impact' where this is the term in common usage.

Other guidance and advice has recognised that practitioners may use the terms 'impact' and 'effect' interchangeably while still adhering to the Directive and Regulations.¹ This may also be true of the wider public who become involved in EIA. This guidance urges consistent use of the terms 'impact' and 'effect' in the ways that they are defined above but recognises that there may be circumstances where this is not appropriate, for example where other practitioners involved in an EIA are adopting a different convention. In this case the following principles should apply:

- The terms should be clearly defined at the outset.
- They should be used consistently with the same meaning throughout the assessment.
- 'Impact' should not be used to mean a combination of several effects.

The Directive is clear that the emphasis is on the identification of likely significant environmental effects. This should embrace all types of effect and includes, for example, those that are positive/beneficial and negative/adverse, direct and indirect, and long and short term, as well as cumulative effects. Identifying significant effects stresses the need for an approach that is in proportion to the scale of the project that is being assessed and the nature of its likely effects. Judgement needs to be exercised at all stages in terms of the scale of investigation that is appropriate and proportional. This does not mean that effects should be ignored or their importance minimised but that the assessment should be tailored to the particular circumstances in each case. This applies to 'appraisals' of landscape and visual impacts outside the formal requirements of EIA as well as those that are part of a formal assessment.

Who is this guidance for?

The holistic perspective that landscape professionals take, coupled with the broad scope of their interests as embodied in the Landscape Institute's Royal Charter (Landscape Institute, 2008b) means that they make a particularly valuable contribution to EIA in general and to LVIA in particular, often playing leading or key roles in the multidisciplinary teams who carry out EIAs. It is important that they are able to demonstrate the highest professional standards and that their work should offer exemplars of good practice. While there has been continuous improvement in the standard and content of Environmental Statements – which are the documents resulting from the process of EIA – as experience has grown, there is still a clear need for sound, reliable and widely accepted advice on good practice for all aspects of EIA. Good practice in LVIA is key to this and also applies as much to 'appraisals' carried out informally as to contributions to the 'appraisal' of development proposals and planning applications.

As with the previous editions, this guidance is therefore aimed primarily at practitioners and is designed to help achieve quality and consistency of approach, to raise standards in this important area of professional work and so to ensure that change in the landscape is considered in an effective way that helps to achieve sustainable development

1.16

1.17

1.18

1.19

Part 1 Introduction, scope and context

objectives. The intention is to encourage good practice and achieve greater consistency in the use of terminology and in overall approach.

1.20 The guidance concentrates on principles while also seeking to steer specific approaches where there is a general consensus on methods and techniques. It is not intended to be prescriptive, in that it does not provide a detailed 'recipe' that can be followed in every situation. It is always the primary responsibility of any landscape professional carrying out an assessment to ensure that the approach and methodology adopted are appropriate to the particular circumstances.

1.21 Although aimed mainly at those carrying out LVAs, the guidance should also be of value to others who have an interest in understanding more about the importance of landscape and visual amenity issues, about the role of LVA and about the way that it is carried out. They may include:

- developers, members of professional development project teams and other organisations who own or manage land and may be involved in projects that have the potential to change the landscape and visual amenity;
- other professionals involved in assessing the consequences of change for other aspects of the environment;
- planners and others within local government and the government agencies who may be the recipients of reports on the consequences of change and development and be required to review them;
- politicians, amenity societies and the general public who may be involved in decisions about proposals for change and development;
- those providing education and training in LVA as one of a range of tools and techniques contributing to landscape planning and design;
- students and others wishing to learn about the process of LVA.

1.22 While written primarily in the context of the UK, it is recognised that previous editions of the guidance have also been used in other parts of the world. The aim has been to make the advice specific enough to meet the needs of UK practitioners while at the same time avoiding too much detail about particular legislation which will make it of less value elsewhere.

1.23 If this guidance is used beyond the UK, it will be important to remember that concepts and definitions vary and approaches must be tailored to local circumstances and legislation. There is a focus on the overall approach and methods rather than the specifics of their application in particular places or to particular types of development. More specific guidance may exist for certain types of development, such as roads for example, in which case account will need to be taken of both the general and the specific guidance.

Organisation and structure of the guidance

1.24 Given the different needs of the professional and the wider audiences the guidance is organised in two parts, as follows:

Part 1: Introduction, scope and context is aimed mainly at a wider audience with a more general interest in the topic, although it also contains material of relevance to practitioners. It provides an introduction to LVIA, in the context of some of the changes that have taken place since 2002. It sets the scene but is not concerned with the practicalities of actually carrying out LVIA.

- **Chapter 1: Introduction** – this chapter – gives a brief introduction to LVIA and its relationship with EIA and SEA, introducing some key terms and describing the audience at which the guidance is aimed.
- **Chapter 2: Definitions, scope and context** describes the introduction of the European Landscape Convention, and definitions of landscape, seascape and townscape. It discusses the role of LVIA in dealing with landscape change in the context of sustainable development, the role of professional judgement and the relationship of LVIA to the design process.

Part 2: Principles, processes and presentation is the core of the practical guidance. It sets out fundamental principles and provides guidance on methods, procedures and technical issues.

- **Chapter 3: Principles and overview of processes** outlines the process of LVIA and places it in the context of wider EIA processes. It provides a framework for the later chapters on assessing landscape effects and visual effects by setting out the general approach to the core steps of describing the baseline, identifying the effects and assessing their significance.
- **Chapter 4: The proposed development, design and mitigation** describes what those involved in carrying out LVIA need to know about the development or change that is proposed and discusses the detail of approaches to mitigation, which may become part of the scheme proposals through the iterative design process.
- **Chapter 5: Assessment of landscape effects** describes how the general approach and processes apply when assessing landscape effects.
- **Chapter 6: Assessment of visual effects** describes how the general approach and processes apply when assessing visual effects.
- **Chapter 7: Assessing cumulative landscape and visual effects** describes ways of approaching the issue of cumulative landscape and visual effects.
- **Chapter 8: Presenting information on landscape and visual effects** summarises approaches to presenting material about LVIA whether as a chapter in an Environmental Statement or as a standalone document.

Summary advice on good practice

- LVIA may be carried out either formally, as part of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) or a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), or informally as a contribution to the 'appraisal' of development proposals and planning applications. Both are important and the broad principles and the core of the approach are similar in each case.
- Anyone involved in carrying out an LVIA, whether as part of an EIA or not, must ensure that they are fully familiar with the current legislation, Regulations and guidance documents that may be relevant to the specific case they are dealing with.
- This guidance recognises a clear distinction between the **impact**, as the action being taken, and the **effect**, being the result of that action, and recommends that the terms should be used consistently in this way. 'Impact' should not be used to mean a combination of several effects.
- The emphasis on **likely significant** effects stresses the need for an approach that is proportional to the scale of the project that is being assessed and the nature of its likely effects. This applies to 'appraisals' of landscape and visual impacts outside the formal requirements of EIA as well as those that are part of a formal assessment.

Chapter 2

Definitions, scope and context



Chapter overview

- What does landscape mean?
- The importance of landscape
- Landscape change and sustainable development
- The role of LVIA
- Professional judgement in LVIA

What does landscape mean?

2.1 The UK has signed and ratified the European Landscape Convention (ELC) since 2002, when the last edition of this guidance was published. The recognition that government has thus given to landscape matters raises the profile of this important area and emphasises the role that landscape can play as an integrating framework for many areas of policy. The ELC is designed to achieve improved approaches to the planning, management and protection of landscapes throughout Europe and to put people at the heart of this process.

2.2 The ELC adopts a definition of landscape that is now being widely used in many different situations and is adopted in this guidance: 'Landscape is an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors' (Council of Europe, 2000). This definition reflects the thinking that emerged in the UK in the late 1980s and early 1990s and was summarised in the 2002 guidance on Landscape Character Assessment. The inclusive nature of landscape was captured there in a paragraph stating that:

Landscape is about the relationship between people and place. It provides the setting for our day-to-day lives. The term does not mean just special or designated landscapes and it does not only apply to the countryside. Landscape can mean a small patch of urban wasteland as much as a mountain range, and an urban park as much as an expanse of lowland plain. It results from the way that different components of our environment – both natural (the influences of geology, soils, climate, flora and fauna) and cultural (the historical and current impact of land use, settlement, enclosure and other human interventions) – interact together and are perceived by us. People's perceptions turn land into the concept of landscape.

(Swanwick and Land Use Consultants, 2002: 2)

2.3 This guidance embraces this broad interpretation of what landscape means and uses it throughout. It is not only concerned with landscapes that are recognised as being special or valuable, but is also about the ordinary and the everyday – the landscapes where people live and work, and spend their leisure time. The same approach can be taken in all these different landscape settings, provided that full attention is given to the particular characteristics of each place.

2.4 The importance of the ELC definition is that it moves beyond the idea that landscape is only a matter of aesthetics and visual amenity. Instead it encourages a focus on

2 Definitions, scope and context

landscape as a resource in its own right. It provides an integrated way of conceptualising our surroundings and is increasingly considered to provide a useful spatial framework for thinking about a wide range of environmental, land use and development issues.

The ELC definition of landscape is inclusive. Article 2 of the European Landscape Convention states that

2.5

Subject to the provisions contained in Article 15, this Convention applies to the entire territory of the Parties and covers natural, rural, urban and peri-urban

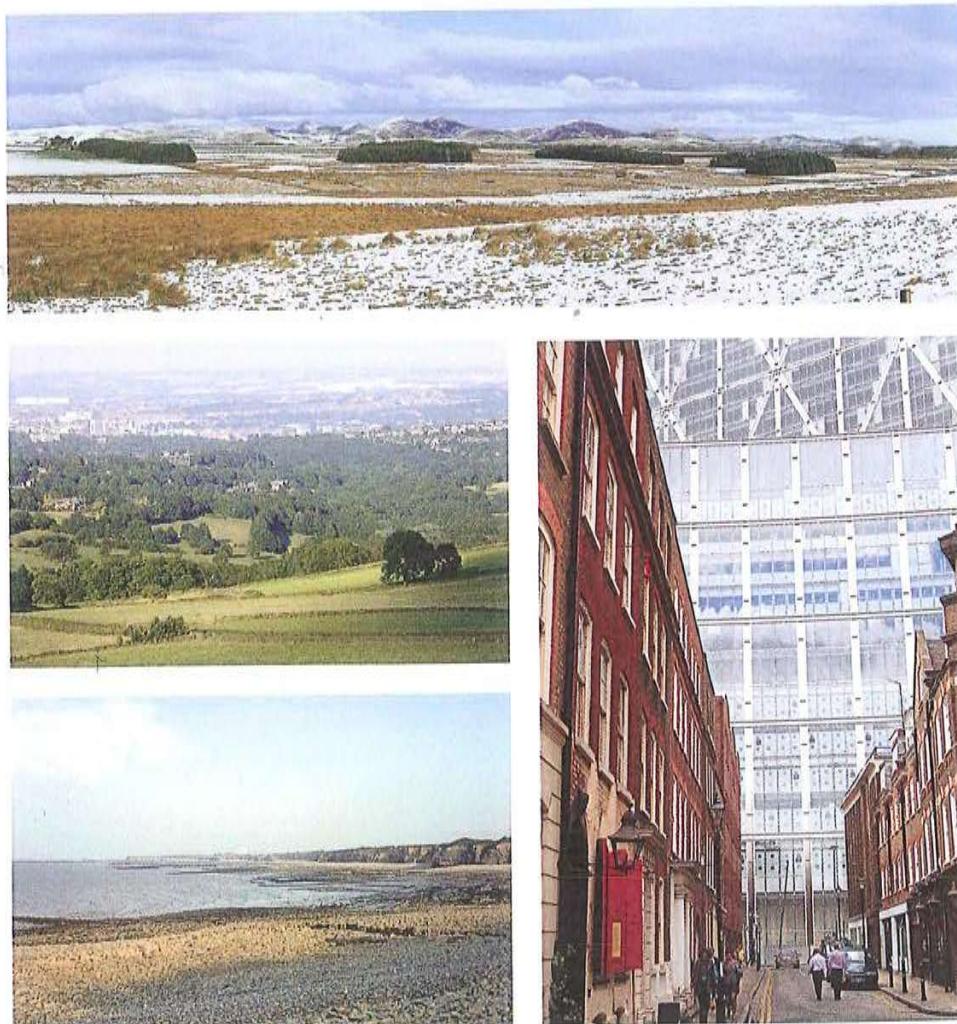


Figure 2.1A-D The European Landscape Convention definition of landscape is inclusive and covers natural, rural, urban and peri-urban areas. It includes land, inland water and marine areas

Part 1 Introduction, scope and context

areas. It includes land, inland water and marine areas. It concerns landscapes that might be considered outstanding as well as everyday or degraded landscapes.

(Council of Europe, 2000)

The definition therefore applies, among other things, to:

- all types of rural landscape, from high mountains and wild countryside to urban fringe farmland (rural landscapes);
- marine and coastal landscapes (seascapes);
- the landscapes of villages, towns and cities (townscapes).

2.6 Rural landscapes have been the main focus of attention for a number of years. Now both townscape and seascapes have also emerged as particular sub-sets of 'landscape' for consideration. This guidance is equally applicable to all forms of landscape and does not separate townscape and seascapes out for special treatment. However, for clarity the following paragraphs define these terms. All LVIA work needs to respond to the particular context in which it takes place. Whether the project is located in a rural, an urban or a marine context, attention will need to be paid to the distinctive character of the area and reference made to any relevant specific guidance.

Chapter 5 sets out how the different forms of landscape are assessed to provide baseline descriptions for LVIA.

Townscape

2.7 'Townscape' refers to areas where the built environment is dominant. Villages, towns and cities often make important contributions as elements in wider-open landscapes but townscape means the landscape within the built-up area, including the buildings, the relationships between them, the different types of urban open spaces, including green spaces, and the relationship between buildings and open spaces. There are important relationships with the historic dimensions of landscape and townscape, since evidence of the way that villages, towns and cities change and develop over time contributes to their current form and character.

Seascape

2.8 The importance of coasts and seascapes as part of our marine environment has increasingly been acknowledged, not least due to the growing pressures being placed upon them by new forms of development, notably aquaculture, offshore wind farms, tidal energy schemes and the development of coastal risk management defences. The definition of landscape from the European Landscape Convention includes seascapes and marine environments. As the UK Marine Policy Statement indicates, 'seascape should be taken as meaning landscapes with views of the coast or seas, and coasts and the adjacent marine environment with cultural, historical and archaeological links with each other' (HM Government, Northern Ireland Executive, Scottish Government and Welsh Assembly Government, 2011: 21).

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Figure 2.2 'Townscape' means the landscape within the built-up area, including the buildings and the relationships between them



Figure 2.3 'Seascape' means landscapes with views of the coast or seas, and coasts and the adjacent marine environment

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2.9 This definition includes the meeting point of land and sea but also encompasses areas beyond the low water mark, and so includes both areas near to the shore and the open sea. Any assessment of the landscape and visual effects of change in marine and coastal environments should carefully consider the relationship between land and sea in coastal areas and also take account of possible requirements to consider the open sea.

Relationship to green infrastructure

2.10 Green infrastructure has come to the fore since the publication of the second edition of this guidance. It refers to networks of green spaces and watercourses and water bodies that connect rural areas, villages, towns and cities. Such networks are increasingly being planned, designed and managed to achieve multiple social, environmental and economic objectives. Green infrastructure is not separate from the landscape but is part of it and operates at what is sometimes referred to as the 'landscape scale'. It is generally concerned with sites and linking networks that are set within the wider context of the surrounding landscape or townscape. LVIA will often need to address the effects of proposed development on green infrastructure as well as the potential the development may offer to enhance it.

The importance of landscape

2.11 As the ELC makes clear, particular attention needs to be given to landscape because of the importance that is attached to it by individuals, communities and public bodies. Landscape is important because it provides:

- a shared resource which is important in its own right as a public good;
- an environment for flora and fauna;
- the setting for day to day lives – for living, working and recreation;
- opportunities for aesthetic enjoyment;
- a sense of place and a sense of history, which in turn can contribute to individual, local, national and European identity;
- continuity with the past through its relative permanence and its role in acting as a cultural record of the past;
- a source of memories and associations, which in turn may contribute to wellbeing;
- inspiration for learning, as well as for art and other forms of creativity.

2.12 In addition landscape provides economic benefits, both directly by providing an essential resource to support livelihoods, especially in agriculture, forestry and other land management activities, and in recreation and tourism, as well as indirectly through its now widely acknowledged benefits for health and wellbeing.

Landscape change and sustainable development

2.13 Landscape is not unchanging. Many different pressures have progressively altered familiar landscapes over time and will continue to do so in the future, creating new landscapes. Today many of these drivers of change arise from the requirement for development to meet the needs of a growing and changing population and economy.

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They include land management, especially farming and forestry, and many forms of development, including (among many others): new housing; commercial developments; new forms of energy generation including wind turbines; new infrastructure such as roads, railways and power lines; and extraction of minerals for a variety of uses.

In the last thirty years there has been growing emphasis on the need to accommodate such change and development in ways that are sustainable. Definitions of sustainable development have been extensively debated but according to the widely accepted definition in the Brundtland report this means 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). It is broadly agreed that it involves finding an appropriate balance between economic, social and environmental matters, and that protecting and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment is an important part of this.

As a technical process LVIA has an important contribution to make to the achievement of sustainable development. It takes place in a context where, over time, landscapes evolve and society's needs and individual and community attitudes change. This can make the professional judgements about the significance of effects identified through LVIA, and whether they are positive or negative, particularly challenging.

Climate change is one of the major factors likely to bring about future change in the landscape, and is widely considered as the most serious long-term threat to the natural environment. The need for climate change mitigation and adaptation is now well established at a policy level in the UK and beyond. There are many different ways in which mitigation and adaptation can be addressed and landscape professionals are directed to the Landscape Institute's policy document on climate change (Landscape Institute, 2008a) when considering such matters. Some climate change mitigation and adaptation projects may in themselves require EIA. Further information on climate change and EIA is available in IEMA guidance (e.g. IEMA, 2010a, 2010b).

There is some emphasis in the UK and elsewhere on appropriate renewable energy development as a means of mitigating climate change. Renewable energy development proposals are subject to the same LVIA process as any other type of development proposal, with the same need for careful siting, design and mitigation, and impartial assessment of the landscape and visual effects. It is for the competent authority to judge the balance of weight between policy considerations and the effects that such proposals may have.

The role of LVIA

LVIA must address both effects on landscape as a resource in its own right and effects on views and visual amenity.

Effects on landscape as a resource

The ELC definition of landscape supports the need to deal with landscape as a resource in its own right. In the UK this particularly reflects the emphasis on landscape character

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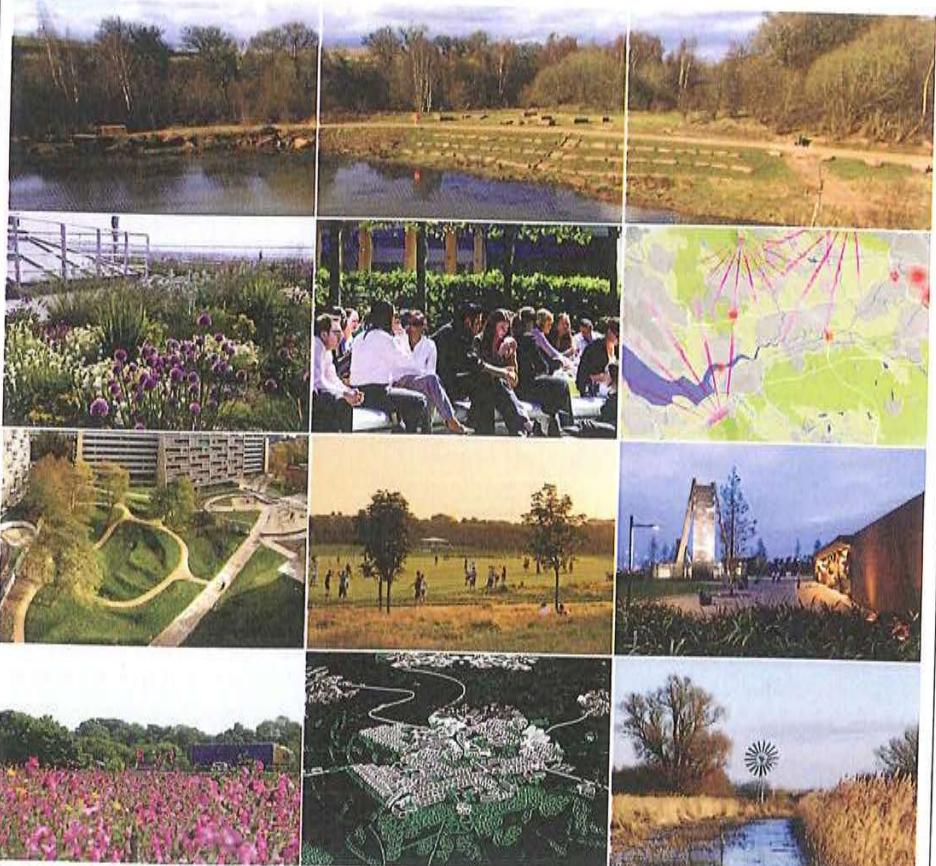
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Green Infrastructure

An integrated approach to land use

Landscape Institute Position Statement



Landscape Institute
Inspiring great places

Figure 2.4 Landscape Institute position statement on green infrastructure

2 Definitions, scope and context

that has developed since the 1980s. Landscape results from the interplay of the physical, natural and cultural components of our surroundings. Different combinations of these elements and their spatial distribution create the distinctive character of landscapes in different places, allowing different landscapes to be mapped, analysed and described. Character is not just about the physical elements and features that make up a landscape, but also embraces the aesthetic, perceptual and experiential aspects of the landscape that make different places distinctive.

Views and visual amenity

When the interrelationship between people ('human beings' or 'population' in the language of the Directive and Regulations) and the landscape is considered, this introduces related but very different considerations, notably the views that people have and their visual amenity – meaning the overall pleasantness of the views they enjoy of their surroundings.

Reflecting this distinction the two components of LVIA are:

2.20

1. **assessment of landscape effects:** assessing effects on the landscape as a resource in its own right;
2. **assessment of visual effects:** assessing effects on specific views and on the general visual amenity experienced by people.

2.21

The distinction between these two aspects is very important but often misunderstood, even by professionals. LVIA must deal with both and should be clear about the difference between them. If a professional assessment does not properly define them or distinguish between them, then other professionals and members of the public are likely to be confused.

2.22

Professional judgement in LVIA

Professional judgement is a very important part of LVIA. While there is some scope for quantitative measurement of some relatively objective matters, for example the number of trees lost to construction of a new mine, much of the assessment must rely on qualitative judgements, for example about what effect the introduction of a new development or land use change may have on visual amenity, or about the significance of change in the character of the landscape and whether it is positive or negative.

2.23

The role of professional judgement is also characteristic of other environmental topics, such as ecology or cultural heritage, especially when it comes to judging how significant a particular change is. In all cases there is a need for the judgements that are made to be reasonable and based on clear and transparent methods so that the reasoning applied at different stages can be traced and examined by others. Professional judgements must be based on both training and experience and in general suitably qualified and experienced landscape professionals should carry out Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments.

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Even with qualified and experienced professionals there can be differences in the judgements made. This may result from using different approaches or different criteria, or

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from variation in judgements based on the same approach and criteria. Ideally, and especially for complex projects, more than one person should be involved in the assessment to provide checks and balances, especially in identifying the likely significant effects. If, for example, the professional judgements made on behalf of different interested parties vary widely it is the decision makers in the competent authority who will ultimately need to weigh up the evidence and reach a conclusion.

2.26 Landscape professionals are likely to be closely involved in the development of the scheme and its design. If they also undertake the LVIA, they must be able to take a sufficiently detached and dispassionate view of the proposals in the final assessment of landscape and visual impact. In carrying out an LVIA the landscape professional must always take an independent stance, and fully and transparently address both the negative and positive effects of a scheme in a way that is accessible and reliable for all parties concerned.

Summary advice on good practice

- LVIA should adopt the broad and inclusive ELC definition of landscape embracing, among other things, seascapes and townscapes as well as all forms of rural landscape.
- LVIA will often need to address the effects of development on green infrastructure and also the potential for enhancing it. Green infrastructure is not a separate consideration from landscape – rather it is part of it and should be treated as such.
- As a technical process LVIA has an important contribution to make to the achievement of sustainable development, including assessment of proposals for mitigation of and adaptation to climate change.
- LVIA must deal with and clearly distinguish between the assessment of landscape effects, dealing with changes to the landscape as a resource, and the assessment of visual effects, dealing with changes in views and visual amenity.
- Professional judgement is a very important part of LVIA. Ideally, and especially for complex projects, more than one person should be involved in the assessment to provide checks and balances, especially in identifying the significant effects likely to influence decisions.