

Appendix B – Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Methodology

Landscape Assessment Criteria

Landscape and Visual Sensitivity Assessment Criteria	
Physical character (including topography and scale) This criterion considers the nature of the landform, including its shape, complexity, and the scale of landscape features, in relation to the likely scale of development. Landscapes with simple, flat or gently rolling landforms generally have greater capacity to absorb change, while more intricate or dramatic topography, such as steep slopes, ridgelines, or narrow valleys tend to be more visually prominent and thus more sensitive to development. The compatibility between the development scale and the underlying landform is key. Larger developments may be more readily accommodated in expansive, open landscapes with simple landform patterns, whereas enclosed or fine-grained landforms can be more easily overwhelmed by large-scale change. On the other hand, smaller developments may be more successfully integrated within these enclosed settings, where natural screening is more readily achievable. The presence of existing landscape features, such as tree groups, hedgerows, or scattered built form also plays a role in influencing how well development can be absorbed into the landscape context.	
High	<i>The landscape has a dramatic landform or distinct landform features that contribute positively to landscape character; the area has a high density of small-scale landscape features and is overlain by a small-scale field pattern.</i>
Moderate-High	<i>The landscape has an undulating landform and some distinct landform features; it is overlain by a mixture of small-scale and larger scale field patterns and a moderate density of small-scale landscape features.</i>
Moderate	<i>The landscape has smooth, gently undulating or featureless landform with uniform large-scale landscape pattern and low density of overlying landscape features.</i>
Low-Moderate	
Low	
Natural character This criterion examines the extent and quality of natural elements within the landscape, including the presence of semi-natural habitats and valued ecological features such as trees, hedgerows, and woodland. Landscapes that contain a high concentration of such features, particularly where they include nationally or internationally designated habitats, are considered to be more sensitive to development. In contrast, areas where natural elements are limited or have been significantly altered by intensive agriculture or urban activity tend to exhibit lower	

sensitivity. The assessment also considers the contribution of these features to wider ecological networks, including their role within the Nature Recovery Network and their connectivity with surrounding habitats.

High	<i>Large areas of the landscape are nationally or internationally designated for their nature conservation interest; there is a frequent occurrence of valued natural features across the landscape</i>
Moderate-High	
Moderate	<i>There are areas of valued semi-natural habitats and features found in parts of the landscape, whilst other parts are intensively farmed or developed.</i>
Low-Moderate	
Low	<i>Much of the landscape is intensively farmed or developed with little seminatural habitat coverage and few valued natural features.</i>

Historic Landscape Character

This criterion considers the degree to which the landscape reflects a sense of historic continuity, often described as having time-depth. It takes into account the Historic Landscape Characteristics and the presence of heritage assets that contribute to the overall character of the area. These may include Conservation Areas, Scheduled Monuments, listed buildings, archaeological sites, and other features identified in landscape character assessments.

Landscapes defined by small, irregular field patterns that have evolved over time are typically more sensitive to new development, particularly when that development introduces modern elements that could disrupt their historic fabric. In comparison, landscapes with large, regular field patterns—often the result of parliamentary enclosure—tend to be more robust and less sensitive to change

High	<i>A landscape with a high density of historic features important to the character of the area and great time depth (i.e. piecemeal enclosure with Landscape and Visual Sensitivity Assessment Criteria irregular boundaries, ridge and furrow)</i>
Moderate-High	
Moderate	<i>A landscape with some visible historic features of importance to character, and a variety of time depths.</i>
Low-Moderate	
Low	<i>A landscape with relatively few historic features important to the character of the area and little time depth (i.e. large intensively farmed fields).</i>

Form, Setting and Identity

This criterion assesses the form, scale, and character of existing development and how any new development would relate to the prevailing settlement pattern and built edge. It considers whether additional development would align with the established layout and structure of the settlement or appear incongruous within the surrounding landscape. Particular attention is given to how the settlement edge interacts with the

landscape, for example whether it is softened by woodland or planting, or presents a more abrupt, exposed boundary.

The assessment also takes into account how the surrounding landscape contributes to the identity and distinctiveness of the settlement. This may include its role in defining views, forming a visual backdrop, or enhancing the settlement's setting through its scenic or character value. It also considers whether the area plays a role in maintaining separation between nearby settlements, where development could erode this gap and contribute to a sense of coalescence.

High	<i>The area provides an attractive backdrop/setting to the settlement, plays an important part in views from the settlement, or forms an important part in the perception of a gap between settlements.</i>
Moderate-High	<i>Development in the assessment area would have a poor relationship with the existing settlement form/pattern and would adversely affect an existing settlement edge (which may be historic or distinctive).</i>
Moderate	<i>The area provides some contribution to the setting of the settlement by providing, or plays some part in views from the settlement, or play a role in the perception of a gap between settlements.</i>
Low-Moderate	<i>Development in the assessment area may be slightly at odds with the settlement form/ pattern and may adversely affect the existing edge to some extent.</i>
Low	<i>The area does not contribute positively to the setting of the settlement or play a separation role. Development in the assessment area would have a good relationship with the existing settlement form/ pattern and could provide the opportunity to improve an existing settlement edge.</i>

Visual Character, Views and Skylines

This criterion evaluates the visual qualities of the landscape, including its level of openness, the degree of enclosure provided by landform or vegetation, and the extent to which the area is visible from surrounding locations. It considers how visually prominent the landscape is and the likelihood that new development would be seen from nearby or more distant viewpoints. Areas that are widely visible or highly exposed within the landscape are generally more sensitive to change than those that are enclosed or screened.

The assessment also takes into account the character and importance of skylines. This includes whether the skyline is undeveloped, visually distinctive, or contains landmark features that contribute to local identity. Development that breaks or competes with these skylines may be more visually intrusive and lead to a loss of landscape character, particularly where historic structures or prominent natural features are part of the existing skyline.

High	<i>The area is enclosed/visually contained and/or has a low degree of visibility from surrounding landscapes and the area does not form a visually distinctive or important undeveloped skyline</i> <i>The area is semi enclosed or has some enclosed and some open areas. It is likely to have some inter-visibility with surrounding landscapes, and may have some visually distinctive or undeveloped skylines within the area.</i> The area is open and/or has a high degree of visibility from surrounding landscapes, and/or the area forms a visually distinctive skyline or an important undeveloped skyline.
Moderate-High	
Moderate	
Low-Moderate	
Low	

Access and Recreation

This criterion considers the extent to which the landscape is accessible and valued for recreational use. It includes the presence of public rights of way, bridleways, areas of open access, and outdoor destinations that support public enjoyment of the landscape. These may support a variety of activities such as walking, cycling, horse riding, or more structured recreational pursuits where the surrounding landscape forms an important part of the experience.

The significance of these features may be indicated by factors such as their designation as long-distance footpaths or national cycle routes, their accessibility from nearby population centres, the presence of land owned or managed by organisations such as the National Trust, or the inclusion of well-visited outdoor attractions identified on Ordnance Survey maps.

High	<i>Landscapes with popular outdoor tourist attractions, country parks, land under National Trust ownership, or a concentration of locally important outdoor attractions with visitor facilities. Presence of well-connected long-distance routes and public rights of way linking popular areas.</i> <i>Well-used landscapes with some access land, footpaths and public rights of way, possibly with long distance recreation routes or presence of land under National Trust ownership.</i> <i>Limited provision of access routes which are likely to be of community importance, e.g. local footpaths, bridleways and limited areas of open access land.</i>
Moderate-High	
Moderate	
Low-Moderate	
Low	

Perceptual and experiential qualities

This criterion considers aspects of how the landscape is experienced, including its rural character, sense of remoteness, and level of tranquility. Areas that retain a strong sense of naturalness or traditional rural land use, with minimal modern human influence, are generally more sensitive to change. The relative absence of built development, noise, movement or artificial lighting contributes to a perception of calm and seclusion.

Landscapes with a peaceful, undisturbed atmosphere, combined with scenic views or dark skies, are particularly susceptible to the introduction of new development. Such development may appear incongruous and diminish the perceptual qualities that contribute to the distinctiveness and value of the landscape.

High	<i>A tranquil or highly rural landscape, lacking strong intrusive elements.</i>
Moderate-High	<i>A landscape of high scenic value with dark skies and a high</i>
Moderate	<i>perceived degree of rural character and naturalness with few modern human influences.</i>
Low-Moderate	<i>A landscape with some sense of rural character, but with some modern elements and human influences.</i>
Low	<i>The area is significantly influenced by development/ human activity, where new development would not be out of character.</i>