196-G109 LTVIA
APPENDIX E - METHODOLOGY FOR ASSESSMENT
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Methodology for Assessment

Approach

The aim of this LTVIA is to establish the following:

- an understanding of the Site and its wider setting, identifying the landscape and visual receptors that would perceive the Proposed Development;
- an analysis of the composition, character, quality and value of receptors to determine their sensitivity to change;
- an assessment of predicted likely effects of the Proposed Development upon landscape character and views and visual amenity;
- compliance of the Proposed Development with relevant policy; and
- the need for any mitigation to reduce, offset or minimise any significant adverse effects.

The methodology is based on current best practice and guidance from the following sources:

- 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment', Landscape Institute (LI) and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA), Third Edition, 2013;
- 'An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment', Natural England, 2014;
- 'Technical Information Note 05/2017: Townscape Character Assessment', LI, revised April 2018; and
- 'Technical Guidance Note 06/19: Visual Representation of Development Proposals', LI, 2019.

The assessment considers two inter-linked issues:

- Landscape effects; the likely effects of the operation of the Proposed Development (i.e. following completion of construction, once in normal use) on the physical, cultural and perceptual characteristics of the Site and the surrounding landscape; and
- Visual effects; the likely effects of the operation of the Proposed Development on views and visual amenity as experienced by visual receptors.

Establishing the baseline

The baseline conditions relevant to the assessment are derived from the following:

- desktop study of the existing environment;
- fieldwork to determine the character of the Site and the surrounding landscape, to inform judgements of susceptibility and value which, in turn, would inform judgements of sensitivity of the landscape to change;
- fieldwork to establish the locations from which there is a degree of visibility towards the Site, presented as description of the key views from the surrounding area, and identification of related visual receptors and determination of their respective sensitivities to change; and
- use of existing descriptions of landscape character using county and local level sources including 'Devon's Landscape Character Assessment', Devon County Council; and the various conservation area appraisals published by Exeter City Council (ECC).

A detailed understanding of the existing environment is gained from desktop study and confirmed by subsequent fieldwork. Text and graphical representation are used to describe:

- topography, land cover, distribution and type of land use and open space;
- development patterns and scale, including age, massing and density of buildings, levels of enclosure, skyline characteristics, building materials and landmark features;
- vegetation patterns and extents;
- statutory and non-statutory designations relevant to the Site and surrounding landscape;
- transport routes, PRoW, long distance trails and other routes to include roads, railways, cycleways, bridleways, footpaths and waterways;
- heritage features including conservation areas, Scheduled Monuments and other historic components of landscape or visual relevance; and
- existing landscape character assessments prepared by authorities including national level character assessment and local level assessment where available.

Landscape baseline

The landscape baseline forms the basis for the identification and description of the changes that may occur to the character of the landscape as a result of the Proposed Development.

Landscape should be understood in terms of:

- its constituent elements;
- its character and the way this varies spatially;
- its geographic extent;
- its history;
- its condition/ quality; and
- the way it is experienced, including the value attached to it.

A receptor is a defined aspect of the landscape that has the potential to be affected by a development. Through a combination of baseline data, including relevant data from published character studies of national and local scales, and Site survey the landscape is classified into units of distinct and broadly homogenous characteristics referred to as Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) or Townscape Character Areas (TCAs).

Visual baseline

The visual baseline establishes the area in which the Site may be visible, the nature of the views and amenity value attributed to the views. Viewpoint locations are established through desk-based research of the existing environment including the Site and surrounding landscape. The desk-based selection of viewpoints are then verified through fieldwork, to confirm or discount visibility towards the Site. The selection of viewpoints was refined through liaison with ECC.

The selected viewpoints are considered as being the best locations for representative views of the Proposed Development. It is recognised that some 'private' views may have more direct views than those selected but by necessity the visual assessment is based on views from external spaces within the public domain and not from inside buildings or private spaces.

A photographic record of each of the viewpoints is presented to illustrate the baseline views. All baseline photographs comprise high resolution images taken with a full frame sensor digital SLR camera with a fixed 50mm lens. The camera location and details of each viewpoint are recorded.

Assumptions and limitations

The visual analysis is based on views from external spaces within the public domain and not from inside buildings or private spaces. However, comment and assessment in relation to views from private spaces is made, where appropriate.

The assessment process aims to be objective and to quantify effects as far as possible. However, it is recognised that subjective judgement is appropriate, if it is based upon training and experience, supported by clear evidence, reasoned argument and informed opinion.

Whilst changes to a view can be factually defined, the evaluation of landscape character and visual effect does require qualitative judgements to be made. The conclusions of this assessment therefore combine systematic observation and measurement with informed professional interpretation.

It is acknowledged that differing visual effects are possible due to seasonality and that the winter view provides clearer prospects where deciduous vegetation intervenes. The assessment considers the winter view (no leaves on the trees) and so depicts the worst case scenario. Commentary on summer views may also be provided, where appropriate.

Assessment

To predict and describe the potential effects on the landscape and visual resource, baseline information is combined with the different components of the Proposed Development during the construction and operational phases, and considers:

- landscape character and resources, including effects on the aesthetic values of the landscape caused by changes in the elements, characteristics, character and qualities;
- designated landscapes, registered parks and gardens, and recreational interests; and
- visual amenity, including effects upon potential viewers and viewing groups caused by changes in the appearance of the landscape as a result of the Proposed Development.

The assessment takes into account the spatial and temporal nature of potential effects as follows:

- direct effects are those imposed on landscape elements on the Site (those that occur within the Site) as a direct result of development, such as the loss of existing trees or other notable vegetation;
- indirect and secondary effects may occur some distance from the Site (outside of the Site, but within the study area) as a consequence of the development occurring, such as the removal of screen vegetation which would allow views in from surrounding areas;
- temporary effects predominantly arise during construction, whereas permanent effects predominantly arise once the scheme has been completed. However, it is recognised that the construction of the Proposed Development may result in both temporary and permanent effects; and
- adverse effects are those that cause detriment to the pre-development situation;
- beneficial effects are those that restore or improve the landscape; and
- neutral effects might change the existing situation, but on balance make the situation neither better nor worse.

Scope of Assessment

Due to the nature of the landform in the surrounding landscape and prior knowledge of the emerging design brief, a geographic region surrounding the Site (i.e. its landscape settng) was selected, and in any case limited to the extent to which visibility of the Site becomes impossible to the naked eye, as tested through fieldwork.

The site survey was carried out at various stages and during various seasons between June 2021 and June 2023. All photography used in the assessment and visualisations was recorded during this period. In general photography during the winter season is used to represent the visual baseline when potential screening from deciduous trees was minimal due to loss of their leaves. However, it has been preferable with some photography to depict the spring view instead owing to the challenges of obtaining a legible photographic record with sufficiently clear atmospheric visibility and light levels during the winter, particularly for very long range views.

Sequentially, the assessment is based on:

- Determination of **sensitivity** to change for identified landscape and visual receptors, combining considerations of **susceptibility** and **value**.
- Identification of the **magnitude** of change.
- Evaluation of the **significance** of effects, combining **sensitivity** and **magnitude**.

Sensitivity to change. This is a combination of judgements about a receptor's susceptibility to change and the value attached to the landscape or views. Table A1 defines sensitivity criteria in terms of susceptibility and value, for transparency, and ratings are ascribed for overall sensitivity.

Susceptibility to change. For landscape receptors this is a qualitative judgement as to the ability of a landscape to accommodate the proposed development without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation and/or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies, refer to Table A1. For visual receptors this is mainly a function of; the occupation or activity of people experiencing the view at particular locations, and the extent to which their attention or interest may therefore be focused on the views and the visual amenity they experience at particular locations, refer to Table A2.

Value attached to landscape. This is the relative value that is attached to a landscape by society. Factors that help in the identification of valued landscapes include; landscape quality and condition, scenic quality, rarity, representativeness, conservation interests, recreational value, perceptual aspects, and associations. Refer to Table A1.

Value attached to views. This is recognition of the value attached to particular views experienced by visual receptors (people). Refer to Table A2.

Magnitude of change. This is understood in terms of; the size or scale of the effect, geographical extent of the area influenced, and its duration and reversibility. The assessment includes consideration of the magnitude of change the Proposed Development would exert on each landscape or visual receptor because of:

- the proximity of the Development to the receptor – generally the magnitude of change reduces with increasing distance as it progressively exerts less influence;
- the extent to which the Development can be seen, and the extent to which landform, woodland, buildings etc. intervene; and
- the visibility of the Development and its resulting effects on character.

The assessment of the magnitude of change upon visual amenity as a direct result of the Proposed Development depends upon several factors including:

- the scale of change in the view with respect to the loss and/or addition of new features;
- the degree of contrast, or integration of/ compatibility with any new features with existing features in the view;
- the duration of the effect (temporary or permanent, intermittent or continuous.
- Temporary effects are considered to be less significant than longer term or permanent effects. Therefore, magnitude is more likely to be higher if the change is long-term or permanent and low if change is short-term or temporary;
- the distance of the receptor from the source of the change;
- the angle of view and presence of intervening vegetation or features;
- the dominance of the Proposed Development feature in the view; and
- seasonal variation.

It is generally assumed that the visual effects of the Proposed Development would reduce as viewing distance increases. However, the magnitude of change at any given distance will vary according to a range of factors. These include the extent of the new buildings and structures that would be visible; their position in the view; the presence of other conspicuous features; and the extent to which views of the Proposed Development would be screened or filtered by intervening landform or by landscape elements such as trees, woodlands, hedgerows, or built structures; and the extent of mitigation planting. Magnitude criteria are described by Table A3.

Significance of effects. This is a combination of the sensitivity of the affected landscape and visual receptor and the magnitude of the change that they would experience. This is assessed both during construction works and following completion of the Proposed Development, in accordance with best practice guidelines. Significance of likely effects are rated in accordance with the matrix described by Table A4. Significance criteria are described by Table A5 including qualification of whether likely effects would be adverse or beneficial.

Table A1. Sensitivity ratings and criteria.for landscape receptors

Sensitivity rating	Sensitivity criteria for landscape receptors	
	Susceptibility of landscape	Value attached to landscape
High	• Landscape where the Proposed Development would be at considerable variance with the local landscape character. • Landscape with limited capability to accommodate change without permanently altering or removing key characteristics and defining elements.	• Internationally (i.e. World Heritage Site) or nationally statutory designated (i.e. Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Registered Park and Garden, Listed Building and Scheduled Monument) recognised landscape of high quality and distinctive or rare character with a large number of features and strong sense of place. • A relatively undisturbed, pristine landscape where changes or disruptions to the existing landscape would be noticeable and difficult to mitigate or restore.
Medium	• Landscape where the Proposed Development would share a degree of consistency with the existing scale, pattern, grain, land use of the prevailing character. • Landscape capable of accommodating the Proposed Development although mitigation may be appropriate to minimise levels of change without affecting the key characteristics and elements.	• Locally designated (i.e. Conservation Area, Local Nature Reserve) / recognised landscape with some distinctive and/ or designated characteristics and features in reasonable condition (e.g. a public/ semi-public open space that is of value to the local community).
Low	• Landscape where the Proposed Development would be consistent with the local landscape character. • Landscape capable of tolerating substantial change / improvement / enhancement.	• Undesignated landscape. • Some local value but low quality or condition. • Few distinctive characteristics, features or elements. • Degraded landscape structure with fragmented pattern and poor legibility of character. • Detracting features notable within the landscape.

Table A2. Sensitivity ratings and criteria.for visual receptors

Sensitivity rating	Sensitivity criteria for visual receptors	
	Susceptibility of visual receptors	Value attached to views
High	• Receptors with a key interest and expectation of enjoying the view (e.g. walkers on promoted routes, visitors to recognised viewpoints). • Residents in homes who have open, uninterrupted views in the direction of the Proposed Development. • Communities where views contribute to the landscape setting enjoyed by residents in the area. • Receptors within a nationally or internationally designated landscape where views and visual amenity are integral to the designation.	• Internationally or nationally statutory designation whereby views and visual amenity are a defining aspect (i.e. World Heritage Site, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Registered Park and Garden). • Designed views, including from within historic landscapes. • Promoted viewpoints e.g. OS defined locations, nationally renowned tourist destinations. • Users of nationally recognised routes e.g. National Cycle Network, National Trails.
Medium	• Visitors at locations where the view is valued but not fundamental to the location or activity (e.g. people in outdoor recreation / activities that do not focus on an appreciation of the landscape). • Residents who have views in the direction of the Proposed Development but where the quality, condition and extent of the existing view is unexceptional. • People travelling on local routes with specific interest in the view but where viewing periods are discontinuous and / or irregular. • Receptors within a locally designated or valued landscape.	• Local designation (i.e. Conservation Area, Local Nature Reserve) or locally recognised landscape where views and visual amenity are a defining aspect. • Locally important views or locally renowned viewpoints.
Low	• People engaged in activities that either distract from the view or require concentration on the foreground, resulting in minimal interest or appreciation of the view (e.g. people at work, motorists travelling not for the specific enjoyment of the scenery or people engaged in sports or recreation where the focus is more on the activity rather than the view). • Receptors at locations where the quality or condition is poor (e.g. industrial areas or derelict land).	• No designations present. • Locations where the existing view is poor, degraded or with notable detracting features.

Table A3. Magnitude ratings and criteria.

Magnitude of change	Magnitude criteria	
	Landscape receptors	Visual receptors
Major	• All / most key characteristics / features / elements of the landscape would be affected within a specific area. • Limited change in landscape characteristics over an extensive geographical area. • The Proposed Development would be completely incompatible or inconsistent with the area and its surroundings.	• Extensive change to baseline view and / or loss of key visual features. • Introduction of anomalous and highly prominent or dominant new elements.
Moderate	• Some key characteristics / features / elements would be affected within a specific area. • Limited change in landscape characteristics over a wider area without compromising the overall integrity of the landscape. • The Proposed Development would introduce some notable elements which would be inconsistent with the existing character which would affect a limited area of the landscape.	• Notable change to baseline view (e.g. partial loss of key visual features). • Introduction of prominent, but essentially localised new features or elements.
Minor	• Very few key characteristics / features / elements would be affected. • The Proposed Development would introduce some elements which would affect a very limited number of key characteristics / features / elements within a localised area of the landscape.	• Minimal change to baseline view (e.g. limited loss of visual features), changes are evident, but not especially prominent and are generally localised.
Negligible	• No discernible change to the key characteristics of the townscape character. Could include a minimal degree of change within a highly localised area of the landscape.	• Barely perceptible change to baseline view and / or very brief exposure to view.

Table A4. Significance of effect matrix.

		Sensitivity		
		High	Medium	Low
Magnitude	Major	Substantial adverse/ beneficial	Substantial adverse/ beneficial	Moderate adverse/ beneficial
	Moderate	Substantial adverse/ beneficial	Moderate adverse/ beneficial	Minor adverse/ beneficial
	Minor	Moderate adverse/ beneficial	Minor adverse/ beneficial	Minor adverse/ beneficial
	Negligible	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral

Table A5. Significance of effects.

Significance	Description of effect	
	Landscape character	Visual amenity
Adverse effect of substantial significance	The Development is at considerable variance with the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape, and / or there is a total or major loss of key characteristics.	The Proposed Development would be visually intrusive and would cause substantial deterioration and / or adverse change in the existing view / general visual amenity of the area.
Adverse effect of moderate significance	The Proposed Development is out of proportion and does not fit with the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape, and / or damages quality, with a loss of key characteristic features.	The Proposed Development would be visually intrusive and would cause noticeable deterioration and / or adverse change in the existing view/ general visual amenity of the area.
Adverse effect of minor significance	The Proposed Development fits within the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape however, there is some loss of quality or characteristic features.	The Proposed Development would cause limited visual intrusion and would cause minor deterioration and / or adverse change in the existing view / general visual amenity of the area.
Neutral	The Proposed Development has no easily discernible effect on landscape character.	The Proposed Development would cause no easily discernible change to visual amenity and key views.
Beneficial effect of minor significance	The Proposed Development would complement the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape, whilst contributing to the existing character.	The Proposed Development would result in minor improvement and / or positive changes to key views / visual amenity of the area.
Beneficial effect of moderate significance	The Proposed Development would fit in well with the scale, landform and existing pattern of the landscape, and maintain and / or enhance the existing landscape character.	The Proposed Development would create a very noticeable improvement and / or positive change in key views / visual amenity of the area.
Beneficial effect of major significance	The Proposed Development would fit in very well with the scale, landform and existing pattern of the landscape, and bring considerable enhancements.	The Proposed Development would create a substantial improvement and enhancement of key views / visual amenity of the area.

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