

Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

Third edition

Landscape Institute and
Institute of Environmental
Management & Assessment

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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.

Glossary

1. supporting services, such as nutrient cycling, oxygen production and soil formation – these underpin the provision of the other ‘service’ categories;
2. provisioning services, such as food, fibre, fuel and water;
3. regulating services, such as climate regulation, water purification and flood protection;
4. cultural services, such as education, recreation, and aesthetic value.

Elements Individual parts which make up the landscape, such as, for example, trees, hedges and buildings.

Enhancement Proposals that seek to improve the landscape resource and the visual amenity of the proposed development site and its wider setting, over and above its baseline condition.

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) The process of gathering environmental information; describing a development; identifying and describing the likely significant environmental effects of the project; defining ways of preventing/avoiding, reducing, or offsetting or compensating for any adverse effects; consulting the general public and specific bodies with responsibilities for the environment; and presenting the results to the competent authority to inform the decision on whether the project should proceed.

Environmental Statement A statement that includes the information that is reasonably required to assess the environmental effects of the development and which the applicant can, having regard in particular to current knowledge and methods of assessment, reasonably be required to compile, but that includes at least the information referred to in the EIA Regulations.

Feature Particularly prominent or eye-catching elements in the landscape, such as tree clumps, church towers or wooded skylines OR a particular aspect of the project proposal.

Geographical Information System (GIS) A system that captures, stores, analyses, manages and presents data linked to location. It links spatial information to a digital database.

Green Infrastructure (GI) Networks of green spaces and watercourses and water bodies that connect rural areas, villages, towns and cities.

Heritage The historic environment and especially valued assets and qualities such as historic buildings and cultural traditions.

Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) and Historic Land-use Assessment (HLA) Historic characterisation is the identification and interpretation of the historic dimension of the present-day landscape or townscape within a given area. HLC is the term used in England and Wales, HLA is the term used in Scotland.

Indirect effects Effects that result indirectly from the proposed project as a consequence of the direct effects, often occurring away from the site, or as a result of a sequence of interrelationships or a complex pathway. They may be separated by distance or in time from the source of the effects.

Iterative design process The process by which project design is amended and improved by successive stages of refinement which respond to growing understanding of environmental issues.

Key characteristics Those combinations of elements which are particularly important