PLOT H, SISTER

Manchester, UK

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Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment

Appendix 7.1: Methodology & Criteria Tables

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01 Methodology

Establishing the Townscape Baseline

There are a range of factors which need to be considered in undertaking a townscape assessment, these include:

- Context of setting in relation to the urban area and the wider landscape;
- Topography in relation to urban form;
- Urban grain, built form and its relationship to historic patterns;
- Heritage assets and their settings;
- Layout and scale of buildings, the density of development and building types;
- Land use patterns both past and present;
- Water bodies and their contribution to the landscape;
- Local vegetation including the nature of green space and tree cover and their relationship to buildings and streets;
- Open space typology and the character and qualities of the public realm; and
- Access and connectivity including streets and footways.

Townscape receptors will be reviewed in terms of:

Value

In relation to its importance to the local community as well as local, county, national or international level designations. Consideration is also made here to the European Landscape Convention (ELC), which the UK has signed and ratified. The ELC refers to landscape being '... 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'. In other words, landscape (or in this case townscape) is not only concerned with those that are recognised as being special or valuable, but also about the ordinary and the everyday and treats the townscape as a resource in its own right.

Susceptibility

The ability of the townscape to accommodate the proposed development without undue consequences on the baseline position and/or the achievement of relevant planning policies and strategies.

Sensitivity to change

This is established by combining judgement on susceptibility and value.

Understanding the value, susceptibility, and the sensitivity to change of the townscape, reflects the extent to which the receiving townscape can accommodate change arising from development. Appendix 1 - Tables 1.1, 1.2, 1.4 and 1.6 provides the criteria applied in this assessment. Townscape value and susceptibility may be considered at varying scales from local to national level

Establishing the Visual Baseline

Eleven viewpoints have been selected to cover a range of distances from the proposed development covering the immediate local environment adjacent to The Site and the wider perspective of the local environment. The positions were selected to represent a range of visual receptors and publicly accessible places from which users may experience a view of the development site.

When establishing the baseline, key factors to consider are the type of view and the likely numbers of viewers (the visual receptors), described as:

- Glimpsed/Filtered/Oblique/Framed/Open Views; and
- Few/Moderate/Many Viewers

Each visual receptor will be reviewed in terms of:

Value

The value attached to views has regard to a number of factors, including: recognition through planning designations or heritage assets; and the popularity of the viewpoint, its appearance in guidebooks, literature or art, on tourist maps and the facilities provided for its enjoyment.

The assessment of the value of views is summarised in Appendix 1 - Table 1.3 Value Attached to Views in terms of High, Medium and Low value. These criteria are provided for guidance only and are not intended to be absolute.

Susceptibility

Susceptibility relates to a person's (the receptor) ability to accommodate the proposed change in the view, mainly a result of:

- The occupation or activity of the viewer at a given location; and
- The extent to which a person's attention or interest may therefore be focussed on a view and the visual amenity experienced at a given view.

The criteria for grading the receptors is summarised in Appendix 1 – Table 1.4 Visual Susceptibility.

Sensitivity

The assessment of receptor sensitivity combines judgements on the susceptibility of the receptor to the specific type of development proposed and the value attributed to that receptor. The starting point for combining these judgements is shown in Appendix 1 - Table 1.6 Receptor Sensitivity Matrix but as highlighted by GLVIA3, "This division is not black and white and in reality, there will be a gradation in susceptibility to change. Each project needs to consider the nature of the groups of people who will be affected and the extent to which their attention is likely to be focussed on views and visual amenity." (Page 114, paragraph. 6.35).

Magnitude and Significance of Townscape Effects

The magnitude is an assessment of the scale, extent and duration of the townscape effects caused by the proposed development. This is assessed on a five-point scale and shown in Appendix 1 - Table 1.7 Townscape Effects - Magnitude.

Determining the magnitude of the townscape effects is based on assessing the following criteria:

- The extent of physical change to key elements or features;
- The extent of the subject area subject to change and the prominence of the proposed development;
- The degree of variance or compatibility between the proposed development and key characteristics of the townscape;
- The degree of change to overall character and image brought about by incremental and combined effects on key characteristics.

The potential significance of the townscape effects is determined by combining the townscape sensitivity and the magnitude of the effect. Appendix 1 - Table 1.9 Significance of Townscape or Visual Effects Matrix shows how these two variables are combined in a matrix to arrive at the significance of the effect. TVIA is not based on quantifiable calculations but to make the process as objective and transparent as possible, we utilise assessment matrices. GLVIA3 does, however, warn of over simplifying the approach and recommends that matrices are accompanied by clear narrative descriptions. For this reason, we sense check the output from assessment tables, apply professional judgement and if necessary, adjust the results. If this scenario occurs an explanation is provided.

Magnitude and Significance of Visual Effects

The magnitude of visual effects may be defined as the scale, extent and duration of the effect caused by a development. The magnitude of the visual effects is based on the following criteria:

- Extent of visibility of the proposed development;
- Proportion of the view occupied by the proposed development, which relates to the distance of the viewpoint from it and the breadth of the existing view;
- Apparent size and prominence taking account of modifying factors in the view likely to reduce or intensify this, for example degree of contrast, framing, scale cues, back grounding and disturbing effects, such as proportional visibility;
- Degree of contrast or integration with the character of existing elements, for example scale, texture, form and design resolution with visual dynamics of the composition, for example stability, cohesion and separation; and
- Angle of view, frequency and duration of sequential views and relative elevation.

The criteria used to judge the magnitude of change to a visual receptor are shown in the Appendix 1 – Table 1.8 Visual Effects - Magnitude.

The potential significance of visual effects is determined by combining the visual sensitivity and the magnitude of the effect. As shown in Appendix 1 - Table 1.9 Significance of Townscape or Visual Effects Matrix, these two variables can be correlated in tabular form to arrive at the significance of the effect. Similar to the assessment of townscape effects, it should be noted that outputs from assessment matrices are sense checked by professional judgement to avoid the process becoming too mechanical and formulaic.

If the proposed development is not visible from a particular viewpoint then it is recorded as no change.

Nature of Effects

Determining the nature of effect sets out whether the impact is beneficial, adverse or neutral can be very subjective and varies according to an individual's responses to a particular development. The criteria for assessing the nature of effect are identified in Appendix 1 – Table 1.10 Nature of Effect. Effects may also be direct or indirect, temporary or permanent. For a development of this nature the effects are considered direct and permanent.

"Significant in EIA terms"

In accordance with EIA Regulations (although this is not an EIA development), a final judgement is made about whether each effect is considered significant or not, both in terms of townscape and visual effects. For the purpose of this assessment, effects that are Moderate or above are considered to be "Significant" in the meaning of the Town and Country Planning (EIA) Regulations 2017 unless otherwise stated and explained.

Cumulative townscape or visual effects occur when additional effects are caused by the proposed development in conjunction with other developments, associated with or separate to it, or actions that occurred in the past, present or are likely to occur in the foreseeable future. Cumulative townscape effects that can impact either on the physical fabric or character of the townscape or any special values attached to it. Cumulative visual effects can be caused by combined visibility, which occurs where the observer is able to see two or more developments from one viewpoint and / or sequential effects when the observer moves to another viewpoint to see another development.

The methodology applied to the assessment of the development is applied to the cumulative assessment and a narrative is similarly provided to explain the judgements made.

02 Criteria Tables: Baseline

02 Criteria Tables: Baseline
Introduction

The tables within this appendix are based on accepted methodologies for townscape character and visual impact assessment contained in the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition (GLVIA), Landscape Institute and the Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013.

The tables set out the criteria and definitions used to assist in assessing the townscape and visual effects and to make the process as transparent as possible. Ultimately, however, the assessment relies on professional judgement and the tables and matrices utilized are a tool to assist in the process.

02 Criteria Tables: Baseline
Townscape Value (Designated)

Table 1.1: Value of DesignatedTownscape

Value	Criteria	Scale of Importance	Typical Examples
Exceptional	High importance and Rarity. No or very limited potential for substitution/mitigation	International, National	Ramsar sites, World Heritage Site, AONB, some Grade I listed buildings recognisable on an international scale
High	High importance and Rarity. Limited potential for substitution/mitigation.	National, Regional, Local	Ramsar sites, National Park, Heritage Coast, Registered Parks and Gardens, SSSI, some Grade 1 and Grade II listed buildings (& their curtilage), familiar on a national scale, some Scheduled Ancient Monuments
Medium	Moderate importance and common. Limited potential for substitution/mitigation.	Regional, Local	Locally designated sites such as Conservation Areas or Country Parks or other protected features such as protected trees or hedgerows. Some Grade II listed buildings. Or, undesignated but value perhaps expressed through non-official publications or demonstrable use
Low	Low importance and very common. Considerable potential for substitution/mitigation	Local	Areas identified as having some redeeming feature or features and possibly identified for improvement.

An assessment of the townscape value and susceptibility of the townscape to change enables the overall sensitivity of the townscape receptors to be determined. This forms the baseline from which the impacts of the proposed development can be assessed.

Townscape Value

This concerns the relative value that is attached to different townscapes (or particular townscape features) by society. Townscapes or their component parts may be valued at community, local, national or international level. Existing townscape designations have been taken as a starting point for the assessment but the value of undesignated townscape must be given due consideration.

02 Criteria Tables: Baseline
Townscape Value (Undesignated)

Table 1.2: Criteria for Assessing the Value of Undesignated Townscapes

Attribute	Criteria
Functional	A building or place should be fit for purpose, designed and delivered in a way that delivers the intended function and achieves value for money in terms of lifetime costs.
Mix of uses	Mix of uses to ensure easy access to facilities and encourage a healthier environment, reducing the need to travel.
Well-designed public space	Functional and attractive hard and soft landscape elements, well orientated and designed routes, inclusion of facilities such as seats and play equipment and public art.
Buildings designed to be adaptable	Flexibility to be able to respond to a range of future needs – how easily buildings change to be adapted for change of use, places that are easy and practical to managed with good access, natural surveillance and hared wearing materials that are easy to repair.
Distinctive character	Consideration of: the local pattern of street blocks and plots; building forms; details and materials; style and vernacular; landform and gardens, parks, trees and plants; and wildlife habitats and microclimates.
Attractive spaces	Consideration of streetscapes, landscapes, buildings and elements within them all, microclimates and views should all be considered.

Whilst the assessment of value is partly based on the planning policy importance of the townscape, other criteria is used to assess townscape value in more detail, including that of undesignated townscape. The criteria set out within Table 1.2 opposite has been taken from the Planning Practices Guidance, which supports the National Planning Policy Framework.

Table 1.4: Value attached to views

Value	Criteria
High	Views from townscape/viewpoints of national importance, or highly popular visitor attractions where the view forms an important part of the experience, or with important cultural associations. Very few detracting elements.
Medium	Views from townscape/viewpoints of regional/district importance or moderately popular visitor attractions where the view forms part of the experience, or with local cultural associations. Limited detracting elements.
Low	Views from townscape/viewpoints with no designations, not particularly popular as a viewpoint and with minimal or no cultural associations. Detracting elements prominent.

The assessment of visual receptors is considered in terms of the value of the existing view, susceptibility to change and overall sensitivity of the receptor. Criteria for making these judgements is set out within Tables 1.4 -1.6

Value of the View

The value attached to views has regard to a number of factors, including: recognition through planning designations or heritage assets; and the popularity of the viewpoint, its appearance in guidebooks, literature or art, on tourist maps and the facilities provided for its enjoyment. The assessment of the value of views is summarised in Table 1.4.

03 Criteria Tables: Assessment

03 Criteria Tables: Assessment
Townscape Susceptibility

Table 1.3: Townscape Susceptibility

Susceptibility	Criteria
High	Little ability to accommodate the proposed development without undue harm. Rare or vulnerable component of townscape character. Limited potential for change without effect on integrity of valued feature. Notable aesthetic/ perceptual qualities or cultural associations that could be adversely affected by the development.
Medium	Some ability to accommodate the proposed development without undue harm. Townscape component or character is sufficiently robust or frequent to accommodate some changes without affecting integrity or notable aesthetic/ perceptual or cultural qualities. Some potential for change without effect on valued townscape feature/ attribute
Low	Substantial ability to accommodate the proposed development without undue harm. Robust or frequent component of the townscape or townscape character. Integrity of any valued aspects of townscape character would be maintained with development in place.
Very Low	Highly robust townscape component or character. Change to townscape character compatible with policy/ objectives.

This means the ability of a townscape receptor to accommodate the proposed development without undue consequence for the baseline position and/ or the achievement of townscape planning policies and strategies. This is assessed using the criteria in Table 1.3 opposite.

03 Criteria Tables: Assessment
Visual Susceptibility

The susceptibility of different types of visual receptor to change in views is mainly a result of; the activity of the viewer at a given location; and the extent to which the person's attention or interest may therefore be focused on a view and the visual amenity experienced at the given location. This is summarized in Table 1.5.

Table 1.5: Visual Susceptibility

Value	Criteria
High	Residents with outlook from main aspect of residential property.; People engaged in outdoor recreation, including users of public rights of way, whose attention is likely to be focussed on the townscape and on particular views; Visitors to heritage assets or other attractions where views of the surroundings are an important part of the experience; Communities where views contribute to the townscape setting enjoyed by residents; and Travellers on scenic routes.
Medium	Travellers on road, rail or other transport routes, where the view is moderately important to the quality of the journey. Residents with compromised visual amenity/ limited outlook. People using public footpaths/cycleways whose main focus is on the journey/commute than visual amenity.
Low	People at their place of work, where the setting is not important to the quality of working life; and Travellers on road, rail or other transport routes, where the view is fleeting and incidental to the journey. People engaged in outdoor sport or recreation, which does not involve appreciation of views

03 Criteria Tables: Assessment

Receptor Sensitivity (Townscape & Visual)

Table 1.6: Receptor Sensitivity Matrix

		Criteria		
		Low	Medium	High
Value	Low	Low	Low/Medium	Medium
	Medium	Low/Medium	Medium	Medium/High
	High	Medium	Medium/High	High

The assessment of receptor sensitivity combines judgements on the susceptibility of the receptor to the specific type of development proposed and the value attributed to that receptor, as shown in Table 1.6.

04

Criteria Tables: Magnitude and Significance

04 CriteriaTables:MagnitudeandSignificance

Townscape Magnitude

The magnitude of change is a term that combines judgements about the size and scale of the effects, the extent of the area over which it occurs, whether it is reversible or irreversible and whether it is of short or long term in duration and is assessed using the criteria identified within Tables 1.7 & 1.8.

Table 1.7: Townscape Effects - Magnitude

Value	Criteria
Substantial	The proposed development proposed scheme would completely change the character and/or appearance of the townscape. Irreparable loss of key townscape characteristics occurs with a major or complete change to features, characteristics and/or townscape condition. The development is highly visible and exerts a comprehensive influence upon townscape character area to the extent that the overall integrity of it is affected and subject to change.
High	The proposed development proposed scheme would cause an obvious change to the character, fabric and quality of the townscape. Damage or loss or irreparable damage to landscape character will result to the townscape area through the loss of key features and a reduction in townscape quality and condition. The development will be highly visible within a comprehensive area of the townscape area with a major influence upon landscape character.
Moderate	The proposed development proposed scheme would cause a noticeable difference to townscape character and/or the fabric and quality of the townscape. Change to key townscape characteristics may occur but may be repairable or offset with by an improvement in townscape condition. The development is present within views from a wider area of the townscape area and is a noticeable feature exerting an influence upon existing townscape character where it is visible.
Minor	The proposed development would cause a barely perceptible impact, and would slightly affect the character, fabric and quality of the townscape. The development is present within views from limited areas of the townscape area and is a minor feature exerting limited influence over existing townscape character.
Negligible	The proposed development is appropriate in its context. It may be difficult to differentiate from its surroundings and would have no discernible impact on the character, fabric and quality of the townscape. There is no loss or damage to townscape character, features or condition.

Table 1.8: Visual Effects - Magnitude

Value	Criteria
Substantial	The Proposed Development would completely change the existing view and would substantially affect receptors and key views. The development is a key feature and/or occupies a major proportion of the field of view. The distance between the receptor and development (relevant to the scale of the development) is short and the majority of the development is visible.
High	The Proposed Development would cause an obvious change to the existing view and would largely impact receptors and key views. The development is an obvious feature within views and occupies a large proportion of the field of view. The distance between the receptor and development is short to medium and a high proportion of the development is visible.
Moderate	The Proposed Development proposed scheme would cause a noticeable difference from the existing view impacting receptors and key views. The development is a noticeable feature and occupies a moderate proportion of the field of view. The distance between the receptor and development is medium with only part of the development visible.
Minor	The Proposed Development would be barely perceptible to receptors and key views. The development is a minor element within views and occupies a small proportion of the field of view. The distance between the receptor and development is medium to far and only a small part of the development is visible.
Negligible	The Proposed Development is appropriate in its context. It may be difficult to differentiate from its surroundings and would have no discernible impact on receptors or key views. The development is a very minor element within views and occupies a very limited proportion of the field of view. The distance between the receptor and development is far and only a very small part of the development is visible.

Table 1.9: Significance of Townscape or Visual Effects Matrix

		Sensitivity		
		Low	Medium	High
Magnitude	Negligible	Negligible/Minor	Minor	Minor/Moderate
	Minor	Minor	Minor/Moderate	Moderate
	Moderate	Minor/Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/Major
	High	Moderate	Moderate/Major	Major
	Substantial	Moderate/Major	Major	Substantial

Table 1.9 combines the judgements previously identified for Sensitivity and Magnitude in order to calculate the Significance for each receptor. The outcome of this table is seen as a guide and not absolute. As noted by GLVIA3 matrices must be accompanied by a clear narrative to sense check the output form such tables.

For the purposes of this assessment, an effect will be considered to be 'significant' if it is classed as either 'moderate' or 'major'. This is summarized in Table 1.9 where 'significant' effects are underlined. Colouring is used to aid legibility of the sliding scale of severity asscoiated with significance. This colouring is also used in the main report and on some supporting illustrations.

04 CriteriaTables:MagnitudeandSignificance

Nature of Effect

Table 1.10: Nature of Effect

Value	Criteria
Beneficial	The proposed development will have a positive impact on the receptor
Neutral	The proposed development will cause no discernible change to the receptor
Adverse	The proposed development will have a negative impact on the receptor

The determination of the nature of effect can be very subjective and varies according to an individual's response to a particular development. Relevant criteria are shown in Table 1.10.

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