

Appendix C

Launceston Housing Evidence Report: Landscape Character Assessment Methodology

Introduction

This Appendix sets out the methodology for the Landscape Character Assessment stage (Step 6) of the Urban Extension Assessment.

Landscape Character Assessment Methodology

Background

This methodology has been developed by the Landscape team of Cornwall Council during Summer 2010 to assess the areas of land or 'cells', which adjoin the key towns of Cornwall for appropriateness for development within the landscape. The work has been commissioned by the Planning Department and forms an important part of the overall Urban Extension Assessment Guide.

The text below concentrates on the approach proposed to undertake step 6 of the guide, the 'Landscape Character Assessment of the Site Areas- site visits and analysis'.
Definitions (referring to the field assessment sheets)

Landscape Description

Shall be an objective factual description of each of the elements, which make up the landscape cell, for example topography and land use. It shall be undertaken whilst in the field and shall be supported with photographs and relevant information from the desk study.

Landscape Value

Will assess the importance of the landscape cell to the community/ society, based on designations (from previous desk analysis), the level of use and whether there are special cultural associations with the landscape. It will look at landscape condition and quality; condition being the intactness of the landscape, the amount of manmade intrusions/ landscape detractors, the cells tranquillity and 'naturalness'.

Overall Landscape Sensitivity

This is a judgement on ability of the landscape to accommodate/ mitigate change and is the combined impact of both Landscape Character Sensitivity and Visual Sensitivity as outlined below:-

Landscape Character Sensitivity

Will assess the cell against the Town Fringe Description (TFD). This TFD has been written specifically for this study to provide a further layer of detailed landscape character information pertinent to each of the major towns to be assessed. This most detailed level of landscape assessment expands the information provided by the Cornwall Landscape Character Assessment 2007*.

In this study each of the cells will be assessed against the TFD to determine what contribution, small or great, it makes towards the town's landscape character. The importance of the cell's character in its landscape context will be determined by whether the character is recognised in a number of attributes, or contributes strongly to one or two of the key attributes as described in the TFD.

*The Cornwall Landscape Character Assessment 2007 describes 40 Landscape Character Areas and 335 Landscape Description Units, which have a recognisable and consistent pattern of landscape elements and features which make one different from another.

Visual Sensitivity

Will assess how easily the cell can be seen within the wider landscape; how many people would be affected; whether these people are residents, those enjoying outdoor recreation, and / or tourists; does the cell contain important views or vistas which would be affected by development; would the development be highly visible, would there be scope to mitigate/ screen development; is mitigation through screening and planting appropriate in the current landscape character.

Overall Landscape Assessment

This is the final assessment of the cell (or sub cells) and will provide a coloured 'rating' of the cell from red through pink to orange, yellow and green. It will analyse Landscape Sensitivity (Landscape Character and Visual Sensitivity combined) with Landscape Value (see above description) to determine whether or not the landscape cell will be able to accommodate change without severe harm/ devaluing of important landscape character. Red indicates calls unsuitable for significant development following the process of landscape assessment; Pink, Orange, and Yellow cover the spectrum between red above, and Green below; Green indicates cells which have the potential for development with appropriate mitigation and subject to a detailed masterplan.

Scoring

Landscape Value

The following describes what criteria should be used to judge the Value of the cell;

- High – The cell/ sub cell has many positive qualities associated with landscape value, e.g. many landscape designations; is seen as important by the community; limited/ no degradation or erosion of features resulting in a mainly intact landscape with limited/ no intrusion. A cell with strong aesthetic and sensory qualities. (Score Cell 5).
- Moderate – The cell/ sub cell has some positive qualities associated with landscape value, e.g. local landscape designations, some degradation or erosion of features resulting in areas of more mixed character and reduced overall value, partly intact landscape with some intrusions. A cell with some aesthetic and sensory qualities (Score Cell 3).
- Low - The cell/ sub cell has limited qualities associated with landscape value, e.g. no landscape designations, few valued features, limited use by the community, mixed character and reduced overall value. A disjointed landscape with intrusions. A cell which lacks/has limited aesthetic and sensory qualities. (Score Cell 1).

Landscape Character Sensitivity

The following describes what criteria should be used to judge the Landscape Character sensitivity of the cell;

- High – The cell/ sub cell in its setting makes a good contribution to the Landscape Character, and many of the attributes, or one key attribute matches very strongly with the Town Fringe Description (TFD).
- Moderate – The cell/ sub cell in its setting makes a reasonable contribution to the Landscape Character, which is reflected in a number of the attributes, or one key attribute matching strongly with the Town Fringe Description (TFD).
- Low – The cell/ sub cell in its setting makes a small/or no contribution to the Landscape Character, and reflects a small part of the Town Fringe Description (TFD).

Visual Sensitivity

The following describes what criteria should be used to judge the visual sensitivity of the cell;

- High – The cell/ sub cell is very visible from the landscape around the site with little potential to mitigate visual impact. It can be seen by a large number of people on a regular basis.

- Moderate – The cell/ sub cell is partially visible with some potential for mitigation. It can be seen by a number of people on an occasional basis.
- Low - The cell/ sub cell is not or only visible from a small number of places with likely potential for mitigation. It can be seen by a limited of people.

Overall Landscape Sensitivity

The following matrix sets out the overall assessment of landscape sensitivity when visual sensitivity and landscape character sensitivity are combined;

Overall Landscape Sensitivity

		Visual Sensitivity		
		High	Moderate	Low
Landscape Character Sensitivity	High	High Sensitivity (5)	Med / High Sensitivity (4)	Moderate Sensitivity (3)
	Moderate	Med / High Sensitivity (4)	Moderate Sensitivity (3)	Med / Low Sensitivity (2)
	Low	Moderate Sensitivity (3)	Med / Low Sensitivity (2)	Low Sensitivity (1)

Landscape’s Ability to Accept Change

The final matrix applies a Value judgement to the Overall Landscape Sensitivity of the cell, to determine whether the landscape has the potential to accept development without significant harm or destruction to the Town Fringe’s Landscape Character.

Landscape’s Ability to Accept Change

		Value		
		High	Med	Low
Overall Landscape Sensitivity	High (5)	10	8	6
	Med / High (4)	9	7	5
	Med (3)	8	6	4
	Med / Low (2)	7	5	3
	Low (1)	6	4	2

Final assessment of cell will be presented as coloured plans rather than actual numbers, as below;

Final Score	(Value + Overall Landscape Sensitivity)	Colour of Cell
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Score 1-2 - Most suitable to accommodate development, subject to mitigation (bright green)

Score 3-4 - Suitable to accommodate development with few constraints, subject to mitigation (dull light green)

Score 5-6 - Suitable to accommodate development with some constraints, subject to mitigation (yellow)

Score 7-8 - Suitable to accommodate development but with numerous constraints, subject to mitigation (orange)

Score 9-10 - Not suitable to accommodate development (with extensive constraints) (red)

Assessment Process Summarised

1 Landscape Character Sensitivity is sensitivity of ecological components plus sensitivity of cultural components

2 Visual Sensitivity is general visibility plus level of significance of population(s)

3 Overall Landscape Sensitivity is landscape character sensitivity (1) plus visual sensitivity (2)

4 Ability of the Landscape to Accept Change is Overall Landscape Sensitivity (3) plus a value judgement.

CELL REFERENCE NUMBER; SHEET NUMBER;		ASSESSOR;	DATE;		
Landscape Survey Information		Landscape Value	Overall Landscape Sensitivity		Landscape's Ability To Accept Change
Landscape Description <i>Record descriptive information for each survey sub heading listed</i>	<i>Landscape Character Area No. Landscape Description Unit No's.</i>	<i>Place a value of H/M/L- see guidance</i>	Landscape Character Sensitivity	Visual Sensitivity	Final Cell Judgement
	<i>Record information for each survey sub heading listed -</i>		<i>Place a value of H/M/L- see guidance</i>	<i>Place a value of H/M/L- see guidance</i>	(Score- 1-10) As per previous matrix
Natural Landscape Features		Score H / M / L	Score H / M / L	Score H / M / L	Landscape Value H / M / L Landscape Overall Sensitivity (score 1-5) Overall Landscape Assessment (score 1-10) One colour for each cell/ sub cell Include notes on the most suitable type of development if this seems relevant Most inappropriate for development- 10 Red Greatest potential for development with mitigation- 2 Green In between scores have potential for some types of development with careful mitigation, further detailed study may be required NB. All development requires mitigation
Topography/ landform	e.g. flat, shallow, steep, uniform, undulating, upland, ridge, plateau				
Vegetation cover/ trees	e.g. trees, moorland, arable, pastoral, bare ground associated with past mining, public open space, scrub				
Field pattern/ boundary type	e.g. Cornish hedge (stone), style, stone type, hedgerow (no stone all vegetation), managed, overgrown, species, uniform across cell or varied?				
Land use	e.g. Arable, pasture, woodland,				
Distinctive landscape/ historic features	e.g. Features in the open not related to a settlement such as monuments, burial sites, 'tree tunnels' creating enclosure along roads				
Water bodies/ courses	e.g. River, lake, reservoir, pond				
Settlement/ Built Features		Score H / M / L	Score H / M / L	Score H / M / L	Landscape Value H / M / L Landscape Overall Sensitivity (score 1-5) Overall Landscape Assessment (score 1-10) One colour for each cell/ sub cell Include notes on the most suitable type of development if this seems relevant Most inappropriate for development- 10 Red Greatest potential for development with mitigation- 2 Green In between scores have potential for some types of development with careful mitigation, further detailed study may be required NB. All development requires mitigation
Settlement type	Urban edge/ hamlet/ clustered farm buildings/ isolated farms/ rural dwelling/ none Intermittent clusters/ linear settlement distribution along roads/ scattered				
Distinctive manmade features	Wind turbines/ power lines/ telephone masts				
Distinctive historic or cultural features	Engine houses/ church tower/ Cornish hedges/ tree tunnels, Listed buildings, SAMs other important features				
Vernacular (use of local materials)	Local stone, building types, hedge styles/ gate posts/ field thresholds				
Transport Pattern		Score H / M / L	Score H / M / L	Score H / M / L	Landscape Value H / M / L Landscape Overall Sensitivity (score 1-5) Overall Landscape Assessment (score 1-10) One colour for each cell/ sub cell Include notes on the most suitable type of development if this seems relevant Most inappropriate for development- 10 Red Greatest potential for development with mitigation- 2 Green In between scores have potential for some types of development with careful mitigation, further detailed study may be required NB. All development requires mitigation
A Road/ B Road/ other					
Railways					
Farm/ Private tracks					
Cycleways					
PROW					
Informal paths					
		For Overall Landscape Sensitivity combine Landscape Character Sensitivity with Visual Sensitivity (see previous matrix) Final score will be between 1 (Low Sensitivity) and 5 (High Sensitivity)			

Visual Prominence		(tick appropriate)	
Open/ long distance (high)			
Intermittent (medium)			
Limited (low)			
Landscape Condition			
Integrity and unity of landscape	Complete/ minor intrusions/		
Aesthetic & Sensory			
Tranquillity (H/ M/ L)	<i>'Calm and undisturbed' or 'the quality of calm experienced in places with mainly natural features and activities, free from disturbance from man-made areas'; consider bird song, level of artificial noise, light pollution</i>		
how is the landscape experienced?	<i>exposure, intimacy, noise, remoteness, rugged, windswept, sheltered enclosed, simple, uncluttered, sculptural, utilitarian, mundane</i>		
Key sources / visual or noise (both within and outside the cell)	<i>Consider wind direction, weather conditions and seasonality, significance/ proximity of source</i>		
Cell to Cell relationship			
What is the key information relating to adjacent cell?			
Photograph numbers			
	<i>From digital camera for filing</i>		
Other Information			