



TN21 VII AND LVIA (LIGHT)

Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan 2

TN21 Visual Impact Illustration (VII) and Simplified Landscape Visual Impact Assessments (LVIA Light) – Technical Note

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1.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1.1 THE POLICY CONEXT THAT REQUIRES VII or LVIA

Sustainable development requires finding an appropriate balance between economic, social and environmental matters, and so protecting and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment is an important part of this. The LDP2 seeks to promote a flexible approach to small scale development in the Countryside, including National Scenic Areas (NSA's) and Local Landscape Areas (LLA's) through Policies 02, 70 and 71 which clarify when the planning authority may require submission of an LVIA.

LVIA is a tool used to identify and evaluate the potential effects of change resulting from proposed development on the character of the landscape as well as on people's views and visual amenity. The emphasis is on the identification of, and degree of, this effect.

Given the need to take a proportionate approach depending on the site characteristics and degree of sensitivities, the need for a VII or LVIA is determined through the submission of a Sustainability Checklist (see Technical Note TN06) which is required for all applications for development, and it is recommended that this be completed at Pre-Application stage and updated as required should a planning application be made.

From the information provided in the Sustainability Checklist, and taking into account the requirements of Policies 02, 70 and 71 of LDP2, the planning authority will conclude one of the following options:

- No further information required in terms of landscape or visual impacts
- Visual Impact Illustrations (VII) are required
- A simplified version of a Landscape and Character Impact Assessment (LVIA Light) is required
- A full Landscape and Character Impact Assessment (LVIA) is required as per the Landscape Institute's guidelines.

Please refer to section 1.2 for further guidance on when each option may be required.

1.2 WHEN IS A VII OR LVIA REQUIRED?

The level of further assessment (if any) that is required will be determined by the Planning Authority through the information provided in the Sustainability Checklist. The below is intended as a basic guide but is not definitive.

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| 1. NO FURTHER INFORMATION REQUIRED IN TERMS OF LANDSCAPE OR VISUAL IMPACTS |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In a settlement area where there is no preliminary evidence that the scale or siting would raise concerns in terms of either the landscape character or visual amenity• In a countryside area however there is no preliminary evidence that the scale or siting would raise concerns in terms of either the landscape character or visual amenity |

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| 2. VISUAL IMPACT ILLUSTRATIONS (VII) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In a countryside area and the landscape character has been sufficiently addressed through the Sustainability Checklist and appended information, raising no concerns in terms of landscape character. However visualisations are required due to one or more of the following:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ The scale of the development○ The development's perceived prominence within a landscape○ Sensitivity of receptors to the development (e.g. historic assets)○ Siting impacting upon a gateway location in the landscape (i.e. where the landscape transitions from one character to another)• In a LLA where there is no preliminary evidence that the scale or siting would raise concerns in terms of the landscape character. However visualisations are required due to the moderate sensitivity of the landscape designation |
| This simplified process should not require to be carried out by a Landscape Architect. |

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| 3. SIMPLIFIED LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT (LVIA LIGHT) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In a LLA due to one or more of the following:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ The scale of the development○ The development's perceived prominence within a landscape○ Sensitivity of receptors to the development (e.g. historic assets)○ Siting impacting upon a gateway location in the landscape (i.e. where the landscape transitions from one character to another)• In an NSA where there is no preliminary evidence that the scale or siting would raise significant concerns. However due to the high sensitivity of the landscape designation an LVIA (Light) is required. |
| This simplified process should not require to be carried out by a Landscape Architect. |

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| 4. FULL LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT (FULL LVIA) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• EIA development• In an NSA due to one or more of the following:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ The scale of the development○ The development's perceived prominence within a landscape○ Sensitivity of receptors to the development (e.g. historic assets)○ Siting impacting upon a gateway location in the landscape (i.e. where the landscape transitions from one character to another) |
| This is defined by the Landscape Institute and forms part of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017. It is expected that a Landscape Architect would be required to carry out this assessment. Refer to GLVIA. |

1.3 THE SCOPE OF THIS TECHNICAL NOTE

This technical note sets out the simplified process required by Argyll and Bute Council for VII and LVIA (Light) (categories 2 and 3 of section 1.2).

The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017, and in particular Schedules 1 and 2, should be referred to determine if an Environmental Assessment may be required, in which case this technical note will not apply. Furthermore, should the planning authority decide that a full LVIA should be provided (category 4 of section 1.2) then the guidance in GLVIA should be followed instead.

1.4 WHO IS THIS GUIDANCE FOR?

This technical note has been written to provide guidance to Planning Officers to assess VII's and LVIA (Light)'s. It can also be used by applicants and agents to understand the scope and content of the process. It is not considered that a Landscape Architect would be required to carry out these simplified Assessments however early discussion with the planning authority is essential to agree the scope and content. **Where the LVIA (Light) is used this should provide clear and objective information to the planning authority and should not come to firm conclusions as this is for the planning authority to determine.**

1.5 UNDERSTANDING LANDSCAPE

Landscape is about the relationship between people and place. The term does not mean just special or designated landscape and does not only apply to the countryside. It results from the way that different components of our environment – both natural and cultural– interact together and are perceived. It includes geological factors, habitats, historical and cultural elements as well as visual qualities.

Landscape is not limited to countryside but also includes:

- Villages and towns where the built environment is dominant, but also includes the relationships between buildings and open spaces (townscapes)
- Marine and coastal landscapes (seascapes)

Examples of key characteristics within each character area might be:

- landform, drainage and water bodies; vegetation and tree cover; human activity such as land management and use, settlements and buildings;
- The context or setting of the urban area and its relationship to the wider landscape;
- The layout, scale and density of buildings
- Settings of listed buildings (see HES guidance)
- Access and connectivity, including streets and footways/pavements;
- water bodies, water courses and other water features;
- The nature and location of vegetation, including the different types of green space and tree cover and their relationships to buildings and streets;
- Coastal features;
- Views to and from the sea;

1.6 UNDERSTANDING “VISUAL AMENITY”

Consideration of the interrelationship between people and the landscape means taking into account the views that people have and their visual amenity. Generally (unless the impact is severe enough to affect amenity), view from a private property is not a material planning consideration. However impacts on views from publically accessible locations and such viewpoints are to be appraised as part of the VII / LVIA (Light).

The acceptability of the visual effect is largely dependent on the activity the viewer is undertaking and the resultant experience. Visual effects are appraised in relation to viewpoints from: properties and settlements; tourist and recreational destinations and transport routes.

These viewpoints should be agreed with the planning authority prior to undertaking the VII / LVIA (Light) as part of the [Pre-Application](#) (through submission of a preliminary version of the Sustainability Checklist)

All identified viewpoints with public access must be visited as part of the field survey and the extent, character and appearance of their views described. Where appropriate, the existence of temporary structures or features in the landscape that vary with the seasons and that may therefore affect visibility, such as deciduous vegetation, should be noted in order to evaluate the worst case situation in the assessment.

1.7 CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

Cumulative effects have been defined in a broad generic sense as *“impacts that result from incremental changes caused by other past, present or reasonably foreseeable actions together with the proposed development”*. Any additional effects caused by the proposed development when considered in conjunction with other proposed developments of the same or different types (cumulative effects) will be considered by the Planning Authority.

1.8 VISUALISATIONS FOR VII / LVIA (Light)

1.8.1 OVERVIEW

Photographs show the baseline conditions; visualisations show the proposed situation; and both combine to simulate the change, for example as photomontages.

“Technical visualisations” are accurate, objective and unbiased. They can take a variety of forms including: annotated photographs, wirelines, photomontages and 3D simulations. Plans and sections are potentially effective ways to communicate to stakeholders, in association with visualisations.

In contrast “illustrative visualisations” convey the essence of what a proposal would look like in context. These do not have to be based on specific viewpoints and could, for example, include a colour perspective.

To maintain a proportionate approach, different types of visualisations may be required, depending on the scale of the project and the sensitivity of the landscape – this must be discussed and agreed with the Planning Authority. Additionally, the number of viewpoints to be illustrated photographically, and how many of these require visualisations, must be considered in conjunction

with the Planning Authority prior to undertaking the VII / LVIA (Light) as part of a [Pre-Application](#) (through submission of a preliminary version of the Sustainability Checklist).

1.8.2 TYPES OF VISUALISATIONS

Baseline Photography must:

- Be sufficiently up-to-date to reflect the current baseline situation
- Include the extent of the site and sufficient context
- Be presented at a size and relative position, on a corresponding sheet, to allow like-for-like comparison with the visualisation
- Be based on good quality imagery, secured in good, clear weather conditions wherever reasonably possible
- Avoid foreground clutter
- If relying on only existing views with no visualisations, clearly identify the extent of the application site in the view

Annotated viewpoint photograph must:

- represent context and outline or extent of development and of key features
- be taken with a 50mm lens (if a FFS camera is used) or a 28 or 35mm lens (if a cropped sensor camera is used)
- use GPS, OS maps or geo-referenced aerial photography for camera/viewpoint location data
- indicate the proposal in the form of sketch / outline / arrows
- use a dedicated viewpoint location plan for viewpoint mapping
- be reproduced at a size which aids clear understanding of the view and context, these simply show the extent of the site within the view, and annotate and key features within the view.

3D wireline / model (non photographic) must:

- represent 3D form of development / context
- show massing, wireline or be textured or rendered
- use a dedicated viewpoint location plan for viewpoint mapping

This covers a range of computer-generated visualisation, generally without a photographic context. Wirelines and other 3D models are particularly suited to graphically describing the development itself. They use basic graphic information to assist in describing a proposed development and its context. Computer models generally do not convey landscape context unless they are extremely sophisticated. Most planning applications should be accompanied by photographs or photomontages, rather than solely relying on these to convey an impression of a development proposal.

Photomontage / photowire must:

- represent appearance, context, form and extent of development
- be taken with a 50mm lens (if a FFS camera is used) or a 28 or 35mm lens (if a cropped sensor camera is used)
- use GPS, OS maps or geo-referenced aerial photography for camera/viewpoint location data
- show massing, wireline or be textured or rendered
- use a dedicated viewpoint location plan for viewpoint mapping

- (If the photomontage / photowire is to be scale verifiable then verifiable data will require to be included)

Site photography forms the basis of the imagery, which is then overlaid by a 3D wireframe, massing or rendered model.

Panoramas

- The Landscape Institute state that *“printed panoramic images are an imperfect way of attempting to recreate the experience of viewing the breath of a scene. Nonetheless, where it is important to communicate the wide-angle nature or context of the view, panoramas are preferable to limiting the view by cropping”*
- In accordance with Landscape Institute guidance wide panoramas on an A3 are too small to provide a representation of the proposed development
- However panorama photos may be provided to support the application *in addition* to the required single images described above

1.8.3 TECHNICAL NOTES

It can be a challenge to achieve acceptable levels of exposure of both a bright sky and a dark landscape. HDR photography combines bracketed images – this can be considered in difficult lighting situations but should never be taken so far as to produce a visible “artistic” effect.

GPS equipped cameras will record the location of the shot in the EXIF data, but typically with only around 5-10m accuracy. Alternatively, if visible fixed references are close to the camera location (eg gates, surface features) referring to aerial photography within a GIS system may provide greater positional accuracy.

OS grid co-ordinates should be recorded where known.

2.0 VII PROCESS

2.1 SETTING OUT THE VII DOCUMENT

This will be a primarily visual document with text used to describe the annotate the maps and images.

Please note that there is a 10MB limit for files uploaded to the planning portal.

2.1.1 INTRODUCTION

This section should set out:

- **The study area and methodology agreed with the planning authority as part of the [Pre-Application](#) process.**
- Practical constraints encountered in carrying out the work and assumptions made, if applicable.

2.1.2 VISUAL BASELINES

The information gathered for this section will come from site visits carried out in order to collect the additional information required to establish the visual baselines. These should be presented as A3 photographs – refer to section 1.8 for guidance.

2.1.3 THE PROJECT

Provide a description of the proposed development for the purpose of the assessment, identifying the main features of the proposals and establishing parameters such as maximum extents of the development. Include an overview of the design development in response to the site context (siting, scale, massing, form, detailing, materials) or refer to the separate Design (and Access) Statement if applicable. Also include description of any alternatives considered. **Please refer to TN06 Sustainability and TN07 Sustainable Buildings for further information.**

In terms of the visualisations, whether these are 3D wirelines / models or photomontages / photowires, they must show how the proposal integrates with the site features. Visualisations must be presented at the same size as the baselines to allow direct comparison.

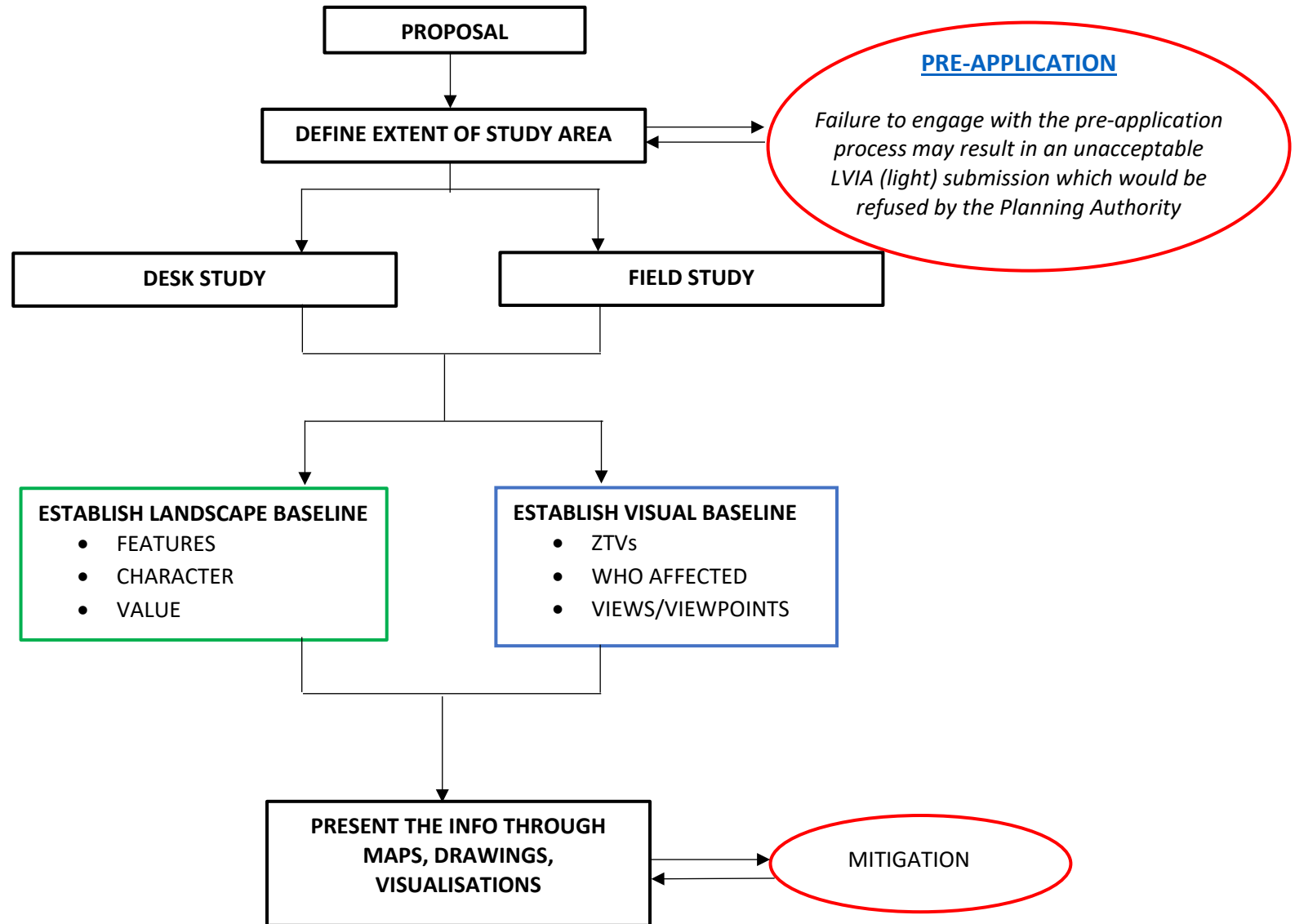
Each drawing should be annotated and the effects and mitigation must be described. Technical information must be labelled on all photographs.

Visualisations should be accompanied by a Technical Methodology. Refer to section 1.9 of this guidance for details of the visualisation types.

2.1.4 MITIGATION / ENHANCEMENT

Explain how the design of the proposals has evolved in order to reflect site characteristics and mitigate identified adverse effects.

3.0 LVIA (LIGHT) PROCESS DIAGRAM



3.1 SETTING OUT THE LVIA (LIGHT) DOCUMENT

The process diagram on the previous page broadly defines the steps of the process for LVIA (Light). This will be a primarily visual document with text used to describe the landscape character as well as the maps and images.

Please note that there is a 10MB limit for files uploaded to the planning portal.

3.1.2 INTRODUCTION

This section should set out:

- Landscape designations and any relevant landscape strategies;
- **The study area and methodology agreed with the planning authority as part of the [Pre-Application](#) process.**
- Practical constraints encountered in carrying out the work and assumptions made, if applicable.

3.1.3 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL BASELINES

The information gathered for this section will come from:

- Desk Study: Sources of background information might include OS maps as well as documents prepared by the planning authority, Historic Environment Scotland, Nature Scot or other special interest groups or organisations. Use should also be made of any existing historic studies in order to provide information on the historic and changing character.
- Field Study: Following the desk study, site visits should be carried out in order to collect the additional information required.

The landscape baselines should be presented through a series of annotated maps and photographs accompanied by text. This may require to consider a wider group of character areas rather than just the immediate area around the site. Character areas may be defined by consideration of the key characteristics set out in section 1.6. As well as the key characteristics, any other sensitive receptors should be identified. Any designations and/or landscape studies should be identified and analysed.

The visual baselines should be presented as A3 photographs – refer to section 1.9 for guidance.

3.1.4 THE PROJECT

Provide a description of the proposed development for the purpose of the assessment, identifying the main features of the proposals and establishing parameters such as maximum extents of the development. Include an overview of the design development in response to the site context (siting, scale, massing, form, detailing, materials) or refer to the separate Design (and Access) Statement if applicable. Also include description of any alternatives considered. **Please refer to TN06 Sustainability and TN07 Sustainable Buildings for further information.**

Changes to the landscape character should be detailed through text and accompanied by maps and photos, directly relating to those included in the baseline assessment where relevant. The

assessment should consider how the proposal will affect the elements that make up the landscape, its aesthetic and perceptual aspects, its distinctive character and the key characteristics that contribute towards this.

In terms of the visualisations, whether these are 3D wirelines / models or photomontages / photowires, they must show how the proposal integrates with the site features. As with the maps, visualisations will typically be presented as two related sheets: baseline photograph and photomontage. Again these should be presented at the same size to allow direct comparison.

Each drawing should be annotated and the effects and mitigation must be described. Technical information must be labelled on all photographs.

Visualisations should be accompanied by a Technical Methodology. Refer to section 1.9 of this guidance for details of the visualisation types.

3.1.5 MITIGATION / ENHANCEMENT

Explain how the design of the proposals has evolved in order to reflect site characteristics and mitigate identified adverse effects.

4.0 FURTHER READING

Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd edition (GLVIA3), Landscape Institute and IEMA

Visual Representations of Development Proposals – Technical Note 06/19, Landscape Institute

5.0 APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - To provide an example of how the Planning Authority expects visualisations to be completed, a site in a countryside zone was selected at random. The use of this site as an example has not and does not prejudice any applications in any way. To provide a contrast and a fuller example of the purpose and merit of visualisations, a further site was selected to demonstrate how the design which was considered to be suitable for the first site, would not work on a different type of site, and a further architectural model was created to then show the difference the house type can make on a sensitive site. The latter site was selected to demonstrate an open landscape site in comparison to the main study, to show the importance of massing and colour. This site is not, and has not been, the subject of any planning application and has been selected only as a demonstration for visual impact. No assessment has been made whether this site would comply with planning policy in any other regard. This sample would also provide the basis for the visualisations for both VII and LVIA (Light).

Appendix 2 – Template for setting out VII. Note that there is no requirement to use this should other software be preferred, however the layout should largely be followed.

Appendix 3 – Template for setting out LVIA (Light). Note that there is no requirement to use this should other software be preferred, however the layout should largely be followed.