

## SWDP 25: Landscape Character



**A. Development proposals and their associated landscaping schemes must demonstrate the following:**

- i. That they take into account the latest Landscape Character Assessment<sup>(52)</sup> and its guidelines; and**
- ii. That they are appropriate to, and integrate with, the character of the landscape setting; and**
- iii. That they conserve, and where appropriate, enhance the primary characteristics defined in character assessments and important features of the Land Cover Parcel, and have taken any available opportunity to enhance the landscape.**

**B. A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA)<sup>(53)</sup> will be required for all major development proposals and for other proposals where they are likely to have a detrimental impact upon:**

52 Worcestershire Landscape Character Assessments:

[http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/info/20014/planning/1006/landscape\\_character\\_assessment](http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/info/20014/planning/1006/landscape_character_assessment)

53 For non-EIA development, a standalone appraisal may be provided as outlined in section 3.2 of the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Third Edition, 2013) published by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment.

- i. A significant landscape attribute;
- ii. An irreplaceable landscape feature; or
- iii. The landscape as a resource.

**The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment should include proposals to protect and conserve key landscape features and attributes and, where appropriate, enhance landscape quality.**

## Reasoned Justification

1. The distinctive landscape of south Worcestershire is an important factor in the relatively high quality of life experienced by most residents. The landscape contributes to much of our decision-making e.g. where people choose to live, work and spend their leisure time. The landscape is also a distinctive heritage asset, which is reflected in a relatively buoyant tourism market within the local economy. To allow inappropriate development would compromise both the general wellbeing and the economic viability of south Worcestershire.
2. Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) is a tool for identifying the patterns and individual combinations of features (such as hedgerows, field shapes, woodland, land use, patterns of settlements and dwellings) that make each type of landscape distinct. The relevant documents and maps are available online<sup>(54)</sup>. This includes the Landscape Character Assessment Supplementary Guidance published by Worcestershire County Council in August 2012.
3. The role of Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) is to address the effects of development, both on landscape as a resource in its own right and on views and visual amenity<sup>(55)</sup>.
4. LVIA may be carried out either as part of a broader EIA, or as a standalone 'appraisal' of the likely landscape and visual effects of the proposed development. The overall principles and the core steps in the process are the same but there are specific and clearly defined procedures in EIA which LVIA must fit within.
5. As part of an EIA, LVIA is normally carried out as a separate theme or topic study. Landscape and visual matters appear as either separate or combined sections of the Environmental Statement, which presents the findings of the EIA. Landscape and visual issues may also make a contribution to other parts of the EIA, such as site selection and consideration of alternatives, and screening.
6. As a standalone 'appraisal' the process is informal and there is more flexibility, but the essence of the approach – specifying the nature of the proposed change or development; describing the existing landscape and the views and visual amenity in the area that may

54 <http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/cms/landscape-character-assessment.aspx>

55 Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Third Edition, 2013) published by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment.

be affected; predicting the effects, although not their likely significance; and considering how those effects might be mitigated – still applies.

7. Visual amenity is regarded as ‘the overall pleasantness of the views people enjoy of their surroundings, which provides an attractive visual setting or backdrop for the enjoyment of activities of the people living, working, recreating, visiting or travelling through an area’.
8. SWDP 23 sets out the overarching policy regarding development affecting the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.