



Value My Land

Maximising Returns for Landowners

Landscape and Visual Impact for Development Land

A Practical Guide for Landowners

How to assess landscape character, visual effects, settlement setting and mitigation before promoting or selling land.



Value My Land

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Landscape and Visual Impact for Development Land

Landscape character and visual effects can be decisive when land is assessed for housing, employment or mixed-use development. A well-located site may still be difficult to promote if development would harm a prominent skyline, sensitive settlement edge, important rural approach or distinctive landscape pattern.

Landscape planning is not simply a judgement about whether countryside looks attractive. It considers landform, field patterns, trees, hedgerows, woodland, historic and cultural features, tranquillity, settlement form and the views experienced by residents, walkers, road users and visitors.

Visibility alone does not make land unsuitable, but prominent or sensitive land may require a smaller, lower and more carefully designed development.

Why should landowners assess landscape and visual effects early?

An early review can prevent a planning strategy, valuation or agreement from relying on an oversized development area, excessive building height or mitigation that cannot realistically integrate the proposal into its surroundings.

- Identify landscape designations, character areas, sensitivity evidence and the role of the land in settlement setting
- Map landform, ridges, skylines, field boundaries, trees, hedgerows, woodland and important open spaces
- Review public viewpoints, rights of way, roads, homes, recreational routes and seasonal visibility
- Test a realistic development envelope, scale, height, density and landscape-led green infrastructure framework
- Understand the appraisal, visualisations, planting, management, cost and time needed for effective mitigation

Where do landscape and visual matters sit in the process?

Site and character review -> field survey and viewpoints -> landscape-led development concept -> site assessment or allocation -> appraisal or LVIA -> detailed design and management -> implementation and establishment

[Read the full online Landscape and Development Land Guide](#)

Why Landscape and Visual Evidence Matters

A site can be sustainable and technically deliverable yet remain unsuitable at the promoted scale if development would appear exposed, extend onto a valued skyline, erode settlement separation or weaken a distinctive rural edge. Landscape evidence should shape the boundary and capacity from the outset.

The planning authority considers effects on the landscape itself and effects on the views experienced by people. National and local designations, the wider countryside, published character assessments, sensitivity studies and the cumulative effect of other development may all be relevant.

Landscape character and visual amenity are different

Landscape effects concern changes to landform, vegetation, field pattern, tranquillity, settlement setting and sense of place. Visual effects concern changes to views experienced by residents, walkers, road users, visitors and other receptors.

Visibility is not the same as unacceptable harm

Most development is visible from somewhere. The assessment considers the sensitivity of the receptor or landscape, the scale and duration of change, the existing context and whether the proposal would form a logical, well-designed part of the settlement.

Mitigation should shape the scheme, not decorate it

The strongest response begins with site selection, a contained development envelope, appropriate heights and retention of established features. New planting, open space, materials, lighting and long-term management should reinforce that strategy, recognising that planting takes time to establish.

A credible strategy combines landscape character, sensitivity, views, settlement form, design, green infrastructure and long-term management.

[Read the Landscape Character Assessment Guidance](#)

Key Landscape and Visual Issues at a Glance

A credible landscape strategy combines character, sensitivity, visibility, settlement form, design, green infrastructure and long-term management - not a perimeter planting belt or a statement that the site is already screened.

Character & Local Distinctiveness Landform, geology, soils, vegetation, land use, field pattern, settlement, history and perceptual qualities combine to create a distinctive sense of place.	Visibility & Visual Receptors Views from rights of way, roads, homes, recreation areas and elevated locations are considered with distance, duration, context and seasonal change.
Landform, Skylines & Settlement Setting Ridges, slopes, valleys, approaches, gateways, gaps and the relationship between built form and countryside can determine where development sits comfortably.	Existing Features & Green Structure Trees, hedgerows, woodland, walls, lanes, watercourses and historic boundaries can provide identity and containment but may also constrain layout and access.
Sensitivity, Value & Designations National and local designations, local value and susceptibility to the particular development type influence the weight and nature of landscape effects.	Cumulative Effects & Night-time Character Other allocations, permissions, infrastructure, lighting and incremental edge growth can combine to change openness, tranquillity and settlement identity.

What information should be assembled?

- **Site boundary, contours, levels, slopes, ridges, valleys, skylines and the relationship with nearby settlement edges**
- **National and local landscape designations, National Character Areas, local character assessments and sensitivity studies**
- **Existing planning permissions, allocations, emerging sites and other proposals that may create cumulative effects**
- **Public rights of way, roads, homes, recreational locations and representative viewpoints at different distances**
- **Trees, hedgerows, woodland, walls, lanes, watercourses, historic field patterns and other landscape features**
- **Proposed use, capacity, building heights, massing, roofscape, earthworks, lighting and likely construction effects**
- **Seasonal photography, visibility, proposed planting, open space, management, phasing and establishment periods**

The early review should establish where development could sit most comfortably, which areas or features should remain undeveloped and whether the realistic capacity is materially lower than the gross acreage suggests.

How a Potential Development Site Is Usually Assessed

The assessment normally develops from strategic character evidence and initial field review into a site-specific appraisal or Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment. The level of detail should increase as the land moves from early promotion through allocation, planning permission and detailed design.

1. **Define the site and landscape context** - Confirm the boundary, landform, settlement relationship, ownership, access, neighbouring uses, landscape features and the wider area from which the proposal may be experienced.
2. **Review policy and published evidence** - Check national and local designations, National Character Areas, local landscape character assessments, sensitivity or capacity studies, settlement-gap policies and relevant planning history.
3. **Establish the landscape and visual baseline** - Undertake desk study and field survey, record character and condition, identify representative viewpoints and visual receptors, and understand seasonal and night-time conditions.
4. **Assess sensitivity and susceptibility to change** - Consider the value attached to the landscape or view and how susceptible it is to the particular type, scale, height and form of development being proposed.
5. **Test the development concept, effects and mitigation** - Refine the envelope, capacity, layout, heights, open space, planting, materials, lighting and phasing, then assess the likely construction, operational and cumulative effects.
6. **Report residual effects and long-term management** - Explain the methodology, judgements, visualisations and mitigation clearly, identify effects that remain after mitigation and set out implementation, establishment, replacement planting and management responsibilities.

The correct development response depends on character, sensitivity, landform, representative views, settlement form, cumulative change and long-term mitigation.

[Read the Landscape Character Assessment Guidance](#)

The Main Landscape and Visual Evidence and Design Checks

Landscape evidence should be proportionate to the scale, location and likely sensitivity of the proposal. A small, well-contained site may need a focused landscape and visual appraisal, while a strategic, elevated or protected-landscape proposal may require a full LVIA, verified visualisations and cumulative assessment.

Landscape Character & Policy Review National and local designations, National Character Areas, local assessments, sensitivity studies, settlement policies and planning history establish the strategic context.	Topographical & Site Survey Contours, slopes, ridges, valleys, vegetation, boundaries, structures, levels and the relationship with adjoining land are recorded accurately for design and assessment.
Landscape and Visual Appraisal A proportionate appraisal can describe the baseline, representative viewpoints, likely effects and design response for smaller or better-contained proposals.	Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment A full LVIA identifies landscape and visual receptors, sensitivity, magnitude and significance, mitigation, cumulative effects and residual effects for larger or sensitive schemes.
Viewpoint Photography & Visualisations Seasonal photography, wirelines, photomontages and, where useful, a Zone of Theoretical Visibility help communicate height, massing and change from agreed viewpoints.	Arboricultural & Hedgerow Assessment Tree quality, root protection, hedgerow importance, removals, access works and protection measures should be understood before the development envelope is fixed.
Landscape-Led Masterplan & Green Infrastructure The layout should respond to landform and settlement character, retain important features and integrate open space, habitat, drainage, routes and structural planting.	Lighting, Management & Long-Term Establishment Lighting limits, species, sizes, soils, phasing, maintenance, replacement planting, stewardship and monitoring affect whether the proposed mitigation will perform over time.

No single drawing or photograph replaces professional judgement. Policy, character evidence, topography, field survey, viewpoint photography, arboricultural information, the masterplan, visualisations, lighting and landscape management should form one consistent case based on the same boundary, capacity and design.

Landscape and Visual Considerations Through the Planning Process

Landscape and visual effects are reconsidered throughout planning. Conclusions can change when the site boundary, scale, building heights, viewpoint evidence, planting framework, cumulative context or local landscape evidence changes.

1. **Initial review** - Check designations, character areas, topography, settlement form, prominent views, rights of way, vegetation and likely areas of higher or lower sensitivity before promotion.
2. **Call for Sites** - Present a realistic boundary and capacity, acknowledge visible or sensitive areas and explain how the site could form a coherent, landscape-led extension rather than relying on future screening.
3. **HELAA or site assessment** - Officers may use broad sensitivity studies and desktop evidence to reduce, defer or reject a site. Site-specific evidence can test whether those assumptions fit the land.
4. **Local Plan work** - Comparative evidence may be needed to address settlement strategy, separation, landscape character, cumulative effects, infrastructure and the relative performance of alternative sites.
5. **Planning application** - Evidence may include an appraisal or LVIA, viewpoint photography, visualisations, tree and hedgerow information, a landscape-led masterplan, lighting and detailed mitigation.
6. **Detailed approvals** - Conditions may require planting plans, species and sizes, soil preparation, levels, boundary treatment, lighting, phasing, landscape management and replacement of failed planting.
7. **Construction and establishment** - Tree and hedgerow protection, earthworks, temporary lighting, compound locations, early planting, inspection, replacement and long-term stewardship preserve the approved strategy.

Evidence becomes more detailed as the site progresses, but the landscape context, development envelope, heights and mitigation framework must remain consistent.

Read: Call for Sites Guide

Read: Local Plan Allocation Guide

Sensitive Sites, Settlement Edges and Landscape Objections

Landscape objections often arise from several connected issues rather than one designation. A site may be exposed on a ridge, visible from important public routes, form part of a valued rural approach, narrow a settlement gap or create cumulative urbanisation when considered with other proposals.

A targeted response should identify the precise concern, the landscape or visual receptor affected and the scale of change being assessed. It should then test whether a smaller envelope, lower heights, revised access, retained features, additional open space or a different design can provide a more defensible solution.

A focused landscape and visual strategy should address:

- The relevant designation, policy, published character evidence, landscape value and key characteristics
- Landform, ridgelines, skylines, slopes, intervisibility, seasonal vegetation and important long or short views
- Settlement form, rural approaches, gateways, separation, historic pattern and the relationship with existing development
- Public viewpoints, rights of way, roads, homes, recreational users and the sensitivity and duration of their experience
- Development envelope, height, massing, roofscape, materials, lighting, access, earthworks and construction effects
- Retained trees and hedgerows, structural planting, open space, green infrastructure, phasing, cumulative effects and management

Do not rely on a perimeter planting belt

New planting can soften and integrate development, but it takes time to establish, may be less effective in winter and cannot always screen elevated buildings or remove harm to character and settlement form. Effective mitigation begins with locating and designing development in the least harmful part of the site.

A landscape concern should be defined precisely and tested against a smaller envelope, better siting, appropriate height, retained features and effective long-term mitigation.

How Landscape and Visual Effects Affect Capacity and Land Value

Landscape and visual evidence can unlock or constrain the development opportunity. A robust landscape-led strategy may support allocation, planning permission and purchaser confidence, while an exposed boundary, excessive height or unresolved effect on settlement character can reduce capacity, delay the programme or prevent development.

The value effect remains site-specific. Landscape sensitivity, designation, landform, visibility, existing features, the realistic development envelope, open-space requirements, planting, earthworks, lighting, cumulative effects, planning risk and long-term management all influence residual value and sale terms.

Landscape sensitivity defines the realistic development envelope

Built development may need to avoid ridges, exposed slopes, important approaches, settlement gaps, historic boundaries and prominent foregrounds. Lower or better-contained land may have greater capacity, while retained land can provide open space, habitat, drainage and a durable green edge that improves placemaking.

Mitigation, open space and long-term management affect the net receipt

Landscape surveys, visualisations, tree protection, earthworks, structural planting, walls, open space, green corridors, lighting controls, stewardship and long-term maintenance can create significant land take, cost and obligations. The sale or promotion strategy should identify who funds and manages those measures and how they affect net proceeds.

The strongest strategy places development in the least sensitive and best-contained parts of the site while creating a durable settlement edge and realistic route to delivery.

Find Out What Your Land May Be Worth

How Value My Land Can Help

Value My Land can undertake a free initial review of the site, planning context and apparent landscape or visual constraints before the owner commits to major technical expenditure, a sale or long-term agreement. We can identify the matters requiring specialist input and ensure that landscape, access, ecology, heritage, drainage, infrastructure, capacity and value are considered together.

Free Landscape & Visual Review We review the site location, planning context, settlement relationship, landform, visibility and published landscape evidence before major expenditure or terms are agreed.	Policy, Character & Viewpoint Review We identify designations, character areas, sensitivity studies, public viewpoints, existing features and the matters likely to influence council assessment.
Landscape-Led Capacity Strategy We help define a realistic envelope, capacity, height, open-space framework and settlement edge that respond to the site rather than gross acreage alone.	Evidence & Consultant Brief We identify whether a focused appraisal, LVIA, visualisations, tree work, topographical survey or other evidence is proportionate and frame the questions it must answer.
Technical Team Management Where evidence is proportionate, we can coordinate landscape architects, surveyors, arboriculturalists, ecologists, designers, heritage consultants and planners as one strategy.	Promotion Route & Next Steps Where appropriate, we can discuss funded promotion and identify the plans, evidence, agreements and independent advice needed before commitment.

Our Promotion Agreement Route

Where appropriate, Value My Land can fund and manage the agreed planning and promotion process at our own cost and risk. This can include appointing and coordinating landscape architects, topographical surveyors, arboriculturalists, ecologists, heritage consultants, designers and planning specialists needed to test the site and support allocation or a planning application.

If the agreed planning outcome is not secured, the promotion costs are written off in accordance with the agreement. Following planning success, the land is normally marketed to competing third-party purchasers. Our remuneration is linked to the sale proceeds achieved, while the landowner retains ownership until sale.

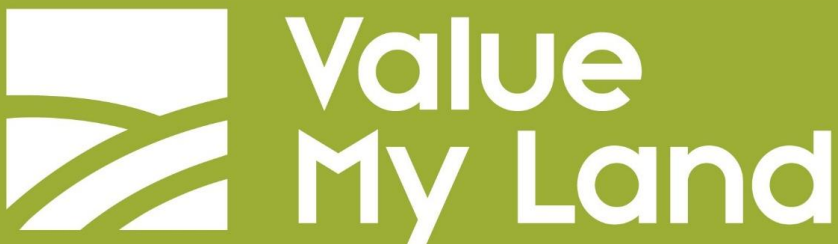
[Request a Free Landscape and Visual Review](#)



Can the Site Accommodate Development Without Unacceptable Landscape Harm?

Send Value My Land the site location, approximate boundary and any plan, photographs, council assessment, character study, sensitivity evidence or consultant advice available. We can provide a free, no-obligation initial review of the development opportunity and identify the landscape, viewpoint, capacity and mitigation issues that should be considered next.

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Delivering Sustainable Development

Further reading: [Landscape and Development Land Guide](#) | [Landscape Character Assessment Guidance](#) | [Call for Sites Guide](#) | [Local Plan Allocation Guide](#)

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