# APPENDIX B: PHASE 2 METHODOLOGY

# 7. Methodology

## 7.1 Reporting units

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7.2 The study was undertaken using the South Oxfordshire Landscape Character Assessment 2003 which identifies local landscape areas within South Oxfordshire. In the first instance the field surveys confirmed that the 2003 local landscape character areas generally reflected physical and visual changes of character within the landscape. As a result these local landscape character areas have been incorporated into the Study. The 2003 South Oxfordshire Landscape Character Assessment was subsequently replaced by the Landscape Character Assessment for the Local Plan in September 2017 after completion of work on this Study. The new South Oxfordshire Landscape Character Assessment does not change the landscape character types from 2003 and does not materially change the findings from 2003 but should be considered in any subsequent landscape and visual assessment of the potential strategic allocations.

7.3 Many of the proposed allocations lie wholly within one local landscape character area and in these cases one report has been produced for the whole of the proposed allocation. However elsewhere the proposed allocation may be subdivided into the one or more local landscape areas to reflect local changes in landscape character.

**Basis of methodology**

7.4 The methodology and assessment criteria used for this assessment are detailed below. Sources of data are identified in Appendix B of this Report. The key texts on which methodology is based are the Scottish Natural Heritage and The Countryside Agency's *Landscape Character Assessment* (2002) and subsequent *Topic Paper 6 Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity* (2006*)* as well as the Landscape Institute / IEMA *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment* (2013) (GLVIA).

7.5 As in current best practice, sensitivity should be assessed against a specific change, and for this study a development scenario based on the proposed allocation for major development including the provision of open space serving the development, as set out in the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011-2033 Final Publication Version October 2017 has been adopted.

7.6 The amount and nature of the change is '*all a question of the interaction between the sensitivity of the landscape, the type and amount of change and the way that the landscape is valued*' (*Topic Paper 6, 2006, p12).* Best practice guidance also recognises that a landscape with a high sensitivity does not automatically mean that landscape cannot accommodate change, but that there are significant landscape and visual constraints on any development.

7.7 Proposals for any development would need to include appropriate, detailed and specialist input into siting, layout and design, and a full landscape and visual impact assessment in accordance with the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Edition 3 should accompany a specific planning application relating to any proposed allocation. Other studies including ecology, archaeology, arboriculture, traffic, soils may also be required to accompany specific proposals.

7.8 Details of the landscape and visual attributes for each potential allocation and an assessment of landscape and visual sensitivity (based on desk top studies and field surveys) are to be found on the Record Sheets in Appendix A. A summary of the landscape susceptibility to change, value and overall landscape sensitivity for each proposed allocation, or sub-areas of each proposed allocation, follows in individual Reports.

**Assessment process**

7.9 The assessment methodology is a staged process. Landscape attributes (Table 4), and visual attributes (Table 3), are considered separately in accordance with the guidance in GLVIA. These attributes are used to identify the **landscape and visual susceptibility to change** (Stages 1 and 2) of the proposed allocation, or its sub-areas, on a scale of 5 levels from low to high as set out under the Matrix 1 and 2 below. Then the landscape and visual sensitivity of the proposed allocation, or its sub-area, are merged to identify the **inherent landscape susceptibility to change** (Stage 3) as set out under Matrix 3 below.

7.10 The Study goes on to classify the **susceptibility to change of the proposed allocation in its wider context** (Stage 4) into five categories. Then in Stage 5 the landscape character sensitivity is combined with the wider sensitivity as set out in Matrix 4 to identify the **overall landscape susceptibility to change** (Stage 5).

7.11 The **landscape value** (Stage 6) of each proposed allocation, or sub-area, is assessed separately on a scale of 5 levels as set out under Table 5 below. Finally the **overall landscape susceptibility to change** is merged with the **landscape value** on a scale of 5 levels to give an assessment of **overall landscape sensitivity** (Stage 7) on a scale of 5 levels as set out under Matrix 5 below. This 'bottom up' process is tested against the five criteria for landscape sensitivity (Stage 7) based on professional judgement and an overall full understanding of the proposed allocations.

**Assessment abbreviations and colour code:**

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **H** | – High Sensitivity | **M/H** | – Medium / High Sensitivity | **M** | – Medium Sensitivity |
| **M/L** | – Medium / Low Sensitivity | **L** | –Low Sensitivity | | |

### Stage 1: Determination of Visual Susceptibility to Change

7.12 This assessment is set out in the Record Sheets and Reports for each proposed allocation, or sub-division.

7.13 The assessment considers the types of **views**, the nature of the **viewers** and the **potential to mitigate** visual impact on the identified viewpoints. The more viewpoints, the more exposed the proposed allocation, the greater the sensitivity of the viewers (based on GLVIA) and the greater difficulties in screen planting to mitigate the impact without harm to the landscape and visual attributes of the proposed allocation, the higher the sensitivity. As a final test all the proposed allocations were reviewed to assess the relative visual sensitivity of the proposed allocations and ensure that professional judgements have been consistent along the way. At this stage each level has been given a score from low = 1 to high = 5 and the scores are added up. Total scores for the proposed allocation, or sub areas, are grouped as shown.

**Matrix 1: Visual sensitivity**

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **General visibility** | L (1) | L/M (2) | M (3) | M/H (4) | H (5) |
| **Population** | L (1) | L/M (2) | M (3) | M/H (4) | H (5) |
| **Mitigation** | L (1) | M/L (2) | M (3) | M/H (4) | H (5) |
| **OVERALL VISUAL SUSCEPTIBILITY TO CHANGE** | **3-4 = low; 5- 7 = Med/low; 8-10 = Med; 11-13 = Med/high; 14-15 = High** | | | | |

**Table 3: Notes on Visual Susceptibility to Change**

| Factor | Higher Susceptibility to Change | Lower Susceptibility to Change |
|---|---|---|
| **General Visibility** | Sequenced and exposed views toward area | Fleeting and limited views |
| | Most of area visible | Little of area visible |
| | Area is a key focus in available wider views | Area is an incidental part of wider views |
| | Area includes prominent and key landmarks | No landmarks present |
| | Important vistas or panoramas in/out of area | Unimportant or no vistas |
| | Prominent skyline | Not part of skyline |
| **Population** | Large extent or range of key sensitive receptors | Lack of sensitive receptors |
| | Large number of people see area | Few can see area |
| | Key view from a sensitive receptor | Views of area are unimportant |
| | Area is part of valued view | Area does not form a part of a valued view |
| | Area in key views to/across/out of town | Not part of setting of settlement view |
| **Mitigation** | Mitigation not very feasible | Mitigation possible |
| | Mitigation would interrupt key views | Would not obscure key views |
| | Mitigation would damage local character | Mitigation would not harm local character |

**Stage 2: Determination of Landscape Susceptibility to Change**

7.14 This assessment is set out in the Record Sheets and Reports for each proposed allocation or sub-division.

7.15 The assessment considers the **natural** physical factors which make up the landscape character of the proposed allocation, the **cultural** and built form aspects and the **perceptual** features. The greater the incidence of landscape interest and diversity, historically important features and cultural associations, and the greater the levels of access and perceptions of tranquillity and strong landscape pattern, the greater the sensitivity. As a final test all the proposed allocations were reviewed to assess the relative landscape sensitivity of the proposed allocations and ensure that professional judgements have been consistent along the way. At this stage each level has been given a score from low = 1 to high = 5 and the scores are added up. Total scores for the proposed allocation, or sub areas, are grouped as shown.

**Matrix 2: Landscape Susceptibility to Change**

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Natural factors** | L (1) | L/M (2) | M (3) | M/H (4) | H (5) |
| **Cultural factors** | L (1) | L/M (2) | M (3) | M/H (4) | H (5) |
| **Perceptual features** | L (1) | M/L (2) | M (3) | M/H (4) | H (5) |
| **OVERALL LANDSCAPE SUSCEPTIBILITY TO CHANGE** | **3-4 = low; 5- 7 = Med/low; 8-10 = Med; 11-13 = Med/high; 14-15 = High** | | | | |

**Table 4: Notes on Landscape Susceptibility to Change**

| Factor | Higher Susceptibility to Change | Lower Susceptibility to Change |
|---|---|---|
| **Natural** | Native woodland | Plantation |
| | Significant tree/groups | Insignificant/young trees |
| | Strong hedgerow structure with hedgerow trees | Weak structure and no trees |
| | Species rich grassland | Arable field |
| | Significant water feature(s) | No water feature(s) |
| | Varied landform and distinctive feature of the area | Uniform landform and lack of topographical features |
| | Pronounced Geology | Lack of geological features |
| | Soils significantly contribute to landscape features | Soils are not an important feature |
| | Complex and vulnerable landcover | Simple robust landcover |
| | Presence of other significant vegetation cover | Absence of other significant vegetation |
| | Presence of valued wildlife habitats | Absence of valued wildlife habitats |
| | Significant wetland habitats and meadows | Poor water logged areas |
| | Presence of common land | No common land |
| | Presence of good heathland | Lost heathland |
| **Cultural** | Distinctive good quality boundary features | Generic or poor boundary features |
| | Evidence of surviving part of an historic landscape | No evidence |
| | Complex historic landscape pattern with good time depth | Simple modern landscape |
| | Evidence of historic park | No evidence |
| | Important to setting or in a Conservation Area | No relationship |
| | Includes a Scheduled Ancient Monument or Important to setting | No relationship |
| | Locally distinctive built form and pattern | Generic built form |
| | Important to setting of a Listed building | No relationship |
| | Distinctive strong settlement pattern | Generic or eroded pattern |
| | Locally significant private gardens | Poorly maintained gardens erode the character |
| | Evidence of visible social cultural associations | Lack of social cultural associations |
| **Perceptual** | Quiet area | Noisy area |
| | Absence of intrusive elements | Intrusive elements present |
| | Dark skies | High levels of light pollution |
| | Open exposed landscape | Enclosed visually contained landscape |
| | Unified landscape with strong landscape pattern | Fragmented/'bitty' or featureless landscape |
| | Well used area or appreciated by the public | Inaccessible by public |
| | Important rights of way | None present |
| | Well used and valued open air recreational facilities | None present |
| | Open access land | None present |

### Stage 3: Determination of the Inherent Landscape Susceptibility to Change

7.16 The landscape sensitivity and visual sensitivity are combined, as shown in Matrix 3, to give the Inherent Landscape Character Sensitivity of the Proposed allocation Area. The results of the assessment are set out in the Reports for each proposed allocation or sub-division.

### Matrix 3: Inherent Landscape Susceptibility to Change

| VISUAL SUSCEPTIBILITY TO CHANGE | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | High | M | M/H | M/H | H | H |
| | Med/High | M/L | M | M/H | M/H | H |
| | Medium | M/L | M/L | M | M/H | M/H |
| | Med/Low | L | M/L | M/L | M | M/H |
| | Low | L | L | M/L | M/L | M |
| | | Low | Med/Low | Medium | Med/High | High |
| | | **LANDSCAPE SUSCEPTIBILITY TO CHANGE** | | | | |

**Stage 4: Determination of Wider Susceptibility to Change – The Contribution of the Potential Strategic Allocation to the Wider Landscape and Settlement Edge Pattern**

7.17 Stages 1 to 3 have led to a comprehensive assessment of the intrinsic landscape sensitivity of the individual allocations. However the sensitivity of each potential strategic development allocation to development is also affected by its importance, and contribution, to the adjacent wider rural landscape. The relative wider sensitivity of each proposed allocation is assessed as follows:

**Low wider susceptibility to change** – The area is not an important part of the adjacent wider landscape

**Medium/Low wider susceptibility to change** – The area shares some of the characteristics of the adjacent wider landscape

**Medium wider susceptibility to change** – The area shares many of the characteristics of the wider landscape, with good physical and visual links to the wider landscape

**Medium/High wider susceptibility to change** – The area has strong physical and visual links to the wider landscape

**High wider susceptibility to change** – The area is an important part of the wider landscape with which it has strong visual and landscape links.

7.18 The results of the assessment are set out in the reports for each proposed allocation or sub-division.

### Stage 5: Determination of Overall Landscape Susceptibility to Change

7.19 The **overall landscape susceptibility to change** is determined by combining the landscape character susceptibility to change with the wider susceptibility to change as shown in Matrix 4. The results of the assessment are set out in the Report Sheets for each proposed allocation or sub-division.

**Matrix 4: Overall landscape susceptibility to change**

| INHERENT LANDSCAPE SUSCEPTIBILITY TO CHANGE | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | High | H | H | M/H | M/H | M |
| | Med/High | H | M/H | M/H | M | M/L |
| | Medium | M/H | M/H | M | M/L | M/L |
| | Med/Low | M/H | M | M | M/L | M/L |
| | Low | M | M | M/L | M/L | L |
| | | High | Med/High | Medium | Med/Low | Low |
| | | **WIDER SUSCEPTIBILITY TO CHANGE** | | | | |

**Stage 6: Determination of Landscape Value**

7.20 The model for this work follows GLVIA 2013.

**Table 5 - LANDSCAPE VALUE CRITERIA**

| Value | Typical criteria | Typical scale | Typical examples |
|---|---|---|---|
| **High** | Very High importance (or quality) and rarity.<br>No or limited potential for substitution | International | World Heritage Area<br>SAC |
| **Medium/high** | High importance (or quality) and rarity.<br>Limited potential for substitution | National | National Park/ AONB<br>SSSI<br>EH Register of Parks and Gardens<br>Grade I and II* listed buildings and their settings<br>National recreational route or area e.g. Thames Path/Open Access |
| **Medium** | Medium importance (or quality) and rarity.<br>Limited potential for substitution | Regional | Setting of AONB / National Park<br>Local landscape designation<br>Landscape value identified in the Local Plan<br>SINC/Conservation Areas and their setting<br>Grade II listed buildings and their setting<br>Local Wildlife areas<br>Regional recreational route/area e.g Chiltern Way |
| **Medium/low** | Local importance (or quality) and rarity.<br>Limited potential for substitution | Local | Undesignated but value expressed through publications such as Neighbourhood Plans or Village Design Statements<br>Local buildings of historic interest and their settings<br>Local recreational facilities of landscape value |
| **Low** | Low importance (or quality) or rarity | | Area of little value and identified for improvement |

**Designations**: The location of the proposed allocation within a designated area, or the presence of a designated area within the proposed allocation, is an important measure of the value society gives to the landscape of the proposed allocation. These include landscape, historic and ecological designations and recreational routes at a national/international level, regional or district level, or at the local level.

**Local Associations**: These are included as far as possible using available data. In addition to the more formal designations above, proposed allocations may sometimes have special scenic value, associations or meanings to the local community and therefore make a contribution to the value of the local landscape. This has been assessed through a review of readily available evidence of community value. Further research may be required as part of any detailed landscape and visual impact assessment.

**Stage 7: Determination of Combined Landscape Sensitivity**

7.21 The Overall Landscape sensitivity reflects the constraints on development within the proposed allocation as a result of its inherent visual and landscape susceptibility to change; its contribution to the wider landscape or the degree of influence from adjacent settlement or urban areas; and the reported value of the landscape. The Overall Landscape Sensitivity is determined by combining the overall landscape susceptibility to change with the landscape value as shown in Matrix 5.

**Matrix 5: OVERALL LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY**

| OVERALL LANDSCAPE SUSCEPTIBILITY TO CHANGE | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | High | M | M/H | H | H | H |
| | Med/High | M/L | M | M/H | H | H |
| | Medium | L | M/L | M | M/H | H |
| | Med/Low | L | L | M/L | M | M/H |
| | Low | L | L | L | M/L | M |
| | | Low | Med/Low | Medium | Med/High | High |
| | | **LANDSCAPE VALUE** | | | | |

7.22 The results from the matrix are subsequently tested against the following classifications for each level of landscape sensitivity, building on classifications used by the authors of this Report for other studies.

**High Sensitivity** – The landscape is of higher sensitivity and of higher value and therefore could not accommodate areas of new development without a significant and adverse impact on the landscape character and visual amenity. Only a very small scale development may be possible, such as on any small areas of brownfield land, providing it retains the important landscape features and their landscape setting of the area and has regard to the setting and form of existing settlement and the character and the sensitivity of adjacent landscape character areas. The area would not be suitable for a strategic development proposed allocation.

**Medium / High Sensitivity** – The landscape is of higher sensitivity but may be of slightly lower value. A low amount of development may therefore be possible, providing it retains the essential character of the area and its important landscape features. It should not result in any

harm to the landscape setting of the area and has regard to the setting and form of existing settlement and the character and the sensitivity of adjacent landscape character areas. The area would not be suitable for a strategic development proposed allocation.

**Medium Sensitivity** - The landscape is of average landscape and visual sensitivity but may have a higher wider sensitivity or lie in a valued landscape category. The area may be able to accommodate new development in some parts of the area, providing it has regard to the setting and form of existing settlement and the character and sensitivity of adjacent landscape character areas. There are landscape and visual constraints and therefore the key landscape and visual characteristics must be retained and enhanced. The area may be suitable for a strategic development proposed allocation subject to some major constraints on the scale and location of development.

**Medium / Low Sensitivity** – The area is not very sensitive and may have a low value but it may still contains sensitive landscape and visual attributes of value in themselves. The area may be suitable for a strategic development area provided the scale and location of the development has regard to the setting and form of existing settlement and the character and the sensitivity of adjacent landscape character areas. Certain landscape and visual features in the proposed allocation may require protection.

**Low Sensitivity** – The proposed allocation is not constrained by sensitive or valued landscape and visual attributes and therefore much of the area may be able to accommodate significant areas of development, providing it has regard to the setting and form of existing settlement and the character and the sensitivity of adjacent landscape character areas. In this case the strategic development may provide opportunities to significantly enhance the landscape quality and diversity of the area.