

10

Landscape and Visual Amenity

10.1

Introduction and Methodology

The landscape and visual impact assessment methodology is based upon several published methodologies with the aim of combining the most appropriate sections from each to suit the requirements of this particular study. The overall method used is based upon the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Assessment Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Assessment.

The impacts on landscape and visual amenity have been appraised quantitatively, by reference to the sensitivity of the existing landscape, the extent of visual change and the proximity of visually sensitive receptors such as houses and recreational sites. The information used in this appraisal was gathered from field surveys and desk studies.

The landscape and visual impact assessment is split into two elements; namely the 'Landscape Character Assessment' and 'Visual Impact Assessment'.

Landscape Character Assessment

Landscape effects are assessed by describing the components of the existing landscape including landscape designations and existing landscape character (in terms of its topography, land use, vegetation, settlement patterns and other features), and the way in which they combine to give the area its local flavour. The importance and susceptibility of the components are evaluated, taking into account any pressures which might lead to change in the foreseeable future. The effects which the proposal would have are described, together with the mitigation proposed and the residual effects. Finally an assessment can be made of the overall effect which the proposal would have on the character and value of the landscape.

Potential impacts on the landscape character relate to changes in landscape elements, features and characteristics. The impacts may relate both to changes in existing features as a result of the proposed development and to the addition of new features. The assessment of landscape character impacts considers how the changes to landscape elements and features interact to change the landscape character. The following criteria for landscape effects are used (LI and IEMA, 2002):

- *Severe adverse.* The proposed scheme would result in effects that are at a complete variance with the landform, scale and pattern of the landscape; would permanently degrade, diminish or destroy the integrity of valued characteristic features, elements and/or their setting; and/or would cause a very high quality landscape to be permanently changed and its quality diminished.
- *Major adverse.* The proposed scheme would result in effects that cannot be fully mitigated and may cumulatively amount to a severe adverse effect; are at a considerable variance to the landscape and degrade the integrity of the landscape; and/or will be substantially damaging to a high quality landscape.
- *Moderate adverse.* The proposed scheme would be out of scale with the landscape or at odds with the local pattern and landform; and/or will leave an adverse impact on a landscape of recognised quality.
- *Minor adverse.* The proposed scheme would not quite fit into the landform and scale of the landscape; and/or affect an area of recognised landscape character.
- *Neutral.* The proposed scheme would complement the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape; and/or maintain existing landscape quality.
- *Minor beneficial.* The proposed scheme has the potential to improve the landscape quality and character; fit in with the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape; and /or enable the restoration of valued characteristic features partially lost through other land uses.
- *Major beneficial.* The proposed scheme would have the potential to fit very well with the landscape character; and/or improve the quality of the landscape through removal of damage caused by existing land uses.

On-site surveys of both existing landscape character and views of the works area (drill rig sites) were made.

Local planning policies associated with landscape character have also been examined and an assessment made of the compatibility with the proposal.

Visual Impact Assessment

To describe the visual baseline, the study identifies the extent and nature of views of the application site from representative viewpoints, the nature and characteristics of the visual amenity and potentially sensitive receptors of visual effects. The extent of visibility of the application site has also been assessed and takes into account local screening from vegetation, fences or buildings.

Significant views of the site from sensitive receptors and principal viewpoints in the locality were photographed.

After establishing the visual baseline, the impacts of the proposals were assessed. Visual impacts relate to changes in views experienced by people in the landscape. The principal visual effects of the proposed scheme fall into the following two categories; the impacts on site character and the visual impact of the works for people living, working or travelling through the area. The extent of the impact is assessed objectively according to the sensitivity of the receptor and the magnitude of the visual effects, taking into account any mitigation measures.

Viewpoints are assessed in the following order of sensitivity:

- *High sensitivity:* private dwellings and gardens where viewers are familiar with the overall scene and are likely to experience the views frequently;
- *Medium-high sensitivity:* public rights of way, country parks and other informal recreational facilities where viewers gain a long view due to a slower speed of passage and where the quality of view is part of the purpose of the visit;
- *Medium-low sensitivity:* commercial premises, public facilities and schools where the viewer may be familiar with the scene but holds it in lower regard than viewers from residential properties and the surroundings are secondary to the purpose of the visit;
- *Low sensitivity:* surrounding road and rail networks where the viewer gains brief glimpses of the view at speed.

The methodology for assessing the visibility of the sites from viewpoints was based on a grading of degrees of visibility, as shown below: -

- *Open view:* a clear view of a significant proportion of the site;
- *Partial view:* a partial view of part of the site;
- *Glimpsed view:* a transient or distant view of part of the site in the context of the wider landscape (this may include oblique views); and
- *No view:* no view or the boundary of the site is difficult to perceive.

The magnitude of the visual effect of the proposals is assessed according to the following scale, summarised from Guidance on the new approach to appraisal (Department for Transport, 1998):

- *Substantial adverse or beneficial impact:* the development would cause a significant deterioration (or improvement) in the existing view;
- *Moderate adverse or beneficial impact:* the development would cause a noticeable deterioration (or improvement) in the existing view;
- *Slight adverse or beneficial impact:* the development would cause a barely perceptible deterioration (or improvement) in the existing view;
- *Neutral:* the development would cause no discernible deterioration or improvement in the existing view.

The overall significance of the visual effect is a function of the values for the sensitivity of the visual receptor and for the magnitude of the visual effect.

10.2

10.2.1

Baseline Conditions

Landscape Designations

(a) New Forest National Park

The New Forest National Park covers the Hampshire side down to Mean Low Water (MLW) and was designated in March 2005. It offers statutory protection to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the park, and is the highest status of protection afforded to landscape and scenic beauty.

The New Forest is a very diverse and complex landscape comprising unenclosed ancient woodland, enclosures, open heaths and lawns, mires and ponds, back-up grazing land, coastal plain landscapes and scattered dwellings and villages (www.nfdc.gov.uk/media). The landscape character comprises intimate woodland, pastoral scenes and exposed heathlands, which has been shaped over the centuries by a unique blend of natural forces and human activity.

(b) Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The Countryside Agency designates Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), with the primary purpose of conserving natural beauty. They indicate areas of nationally important landscape.

A small area of the proposed works on the Gurnard side lie within the Isle of Wight AONB (Figure 10.2), which was designated in 1963. The AONB is characterised by a famous chalk coastline, creeks, salt marsh, mudflats, sandy bays, wooded chines, chalk downland, heathlands and hay meadows.

The AONB Management Plan (Isle of Wight AONB Partnership 2004), which is a statutory document covers the period 2004 to 2009. It characterises the western edge of the Isle of Wight study area into two landscape character types: -

- Northern Coastal Cliffs - characteristically low sloping broken and unstable cliffs, limited permanent development and public access.
- Traditional Enclosed Pasture – land use predominantly pasture, well-preserved dense hedgerows with mature hedgerow oak trees, irregular small fields, narrow enclosed winding lanes, well-wooded with numerous small copses, small scattered farmsteads and settlement patterns predominantly linear.

10.2.2

Landscape Character

Existing Landscape Character Assessments

Under the Countryside Agency's countryside character initiative (<http://www.countryside.gov.uk/cci/> accessed 7 June 2005) the proposed scheme is classified as lying within the Isle of Wight (127) and the New Forest (131) character area. Key characteristics of the character areas are outlined below (some of these features do not lie within the study area): -

- (a) Isle of Wight (127)
- A small-scale island landscape with an intimate feel, varied and distinctive landscape forms, diverse land cover types and sudden, dramatic views of the sea.
 - Intensively farmed arable coastal plain to wooded dairy pasture, from steep Chalk downs to diverse estuarine seascapes and dramatic sea cliffs and stacks.
 - Southern coastal plain constitutes open, intensively managed, arable farmland, large open fields, few trees and relict hedges.
 - Chalk downs characterised by rolling arable lands with remnant unimproved grassland on steeper higher areas. Some remnant heathland/acidic pasture.
 - Northern pastures determined by dairy farming with lush, green, irregular fields bounded by mature hedgerows. Woodland (much of it coppiced) is common. On the north coast, the numerous harbours, creeks, saltmarshes and tidal mudflats are fringed by woodland. Formal estates defined by exotic evergreen planting and Victorian urban sea settlements dominate coast.

- Local limestone and sandstone building materials and differing geologies.

(b) New Forest (131)

- Extensive and complex mosaic of broadleaved and coniferous woodlands, unenclosed woodland pasture, heath, grassland and farmland.
- Grazing ponies and cattle.
- Open and exposed plateaux and small valleys dominated by heath.
- Pockets of farmland and widely dispersed settlements with large isolated dwellings.
- Wood pasture of mature oak woodland, patches of bracken.
- Large woodlands of mature broadleaves and understorey of holly and bracken.
- Fringe areas of farmland with villages. Small fields lined by full hedges, opening out to larger arable fields, with contrasts between the more intimate features of the Avon valley, and the saltmarshes and shingle beaches on the southern coastal plain.

Local landscape character – New Forest

Between Stone Point and Stansore Point, the edge of the Solent on the Hampshire side (Plate 5) is largely undeveloped and comprises a slightly sloping sandy/shingle beach, spit and mudflats.

Plate 5 Intertidal Area at Lepe Country Park



The beach is stabilised by numerous vertical timber groynes, which have fallen into disrepair. At the landward end of the beach lies a footpath, which is backed by a car park to the west and vegetated cliffs (comprising sweeps of yellow gorse) to the east, both of which form part of the Lepe Country Park; a managed large country estate landscape. Several anthropogenic influences interrupt the natural form and character of the coastline including car parks, buildings and various sea defences. The coastline at this location is of a colourful nature with the combination of sand/shingle, sea and vegetation playing an important part in constructing the overall landscape character. The sense of openness is enhanced by views over the Western Solent to the hills/cliffs on the Isle of Wight.

The raised plateau of Lepe Country Park (Plate 6) comprises a large area of improved grassland and numerous isolated pine trees interspersed with tracks, pathways and another car park.

Plate 6 Landscaped Area at Lepe Country Park



The proposed rig site will lie further inland (Figure 2.1 and Plate 3) within a large field currently used for growing potatoes and adjacent to Lepe Road leading to Lepe Country Park. The field is relatively flat in the area of the proposed works and views are constrained on the field's western boundary by a species-poor hedgerow and on its southern boundary by a wire fence supported on timber posts. The field, which lies adjacent to an electric substation and pylon, is open to

the east, where it gently dips in an easterly direction, and where extensive views of the Solent at Stansore Point can be obtained.

Mopley Booster Station lies within a rural area of the New Forest, approximately 4km north of Lepe Country Park.

The site or compound itself, which is surrounded by a high wire security fence comprises green kiosks (which house the pumps), within a small area of improved grassland. Visible sections of the works comprise above ground pipework, lagged pumps and the kiosks.

Areas of improved grassland, isolated trees and a small woodland area surround the site at Mopley.

Local landscape character – Isle of Wight

At West Gurnard, the local landscape character (Plate 7) consists of a rocky sandy shore (Gurnard Bay) backed by a gabion defence, gently sloping vegetated cliff and the Isle of Wight coastal footpath to the west, and a sandy shoreline backed by Gurnard Cliffs to the north-east.

Plate 7 Intertidal Area at West Gurnard



A small boat-yard with moorings and a small fleet of local fishing boats lie in the central section of the coastal frontage at the mouth of the Gurnard Luck stream, adjacent to Gurnard Bridge (Plate 8).

Plate 8 Gurnard Luck Stream



The coastal frontage is overlooked by a small linear shaped settlement running east to west along the shoreline, which comprises a café, ornately decorated and personalised chalets and beach huts on Marsh Road and Solent View Road (some of which date back to the 1800's but have been upgraded and modified to modern standards). The area retains a traditional style of seaside architecture and character interspersed with communal open spaces.

The lowland floodplain to the south of Marsh Road forms part of the well-established marshland at Gurnard Marsh.

The proposed rig site (Plate 4) will be located on arable land, approximately 250m from the shoreline. The site lies adjacent to Rew Street, which forms the eastern boundary, Cliff Farm to the north, Hornhill Copse, a small area of broad-leaved woodland and a pheasant enclosure on the north-western boundary and fields to the west and south. The land comprises a grassy field encompassing a range of elevations and which gently slopes in a northerly direction towards the Solent.

10.2.3

Landscape Planning Context – Policies

Section 5 ‘The Planning Framework’ provides a summary of the planning policies relevant to the scheme. However, the following policies and planning context contained in the Structure and Local Plan specifically relate to the landscape issues associated with the scheme.

The need to protect the environment is emphasised in planning policy guidance notes, including the need to protect the landscape, wildlife habitats and historic features.

(a) Within the **Hampshire Structure Plan**, the relevant ‘landscape conservation’ policies are as follows:

- Policy E6 – Landscape: distinctive landscape character
To ensure that development maintains and enhances areas of distinctive landscape character, local planning policies will pay particular regard to:

- (b) *the need to respect scenic quality, sense of remoteness and historic landscapes;*
- (c) *the sense of place, including the local character of buildings and settlements; and*
- (d) *the setting of settlements;*

in the whole countryside

- Policy E7 – Landscape: Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
*In determining proposals for development within or **adjacent** to Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the conservation of the natural beauty of the landscape will be a major consideration whilst having regard to the economic and social well-being of the area.*

Any development which would have a significant adverse effect on the natural beauty, character and quality of the landscape will not be permitted.

Major industrial or commercial developments will not be permitted unless:

- (i) *there is proven national interest;*
- (ii) *it can be demonstrated that there are no other alternative sites available;*
and

(iii) *the bulk of the buildings, siting, layout, design and materials are in sympathy with the local environment.*

- Policy E8 - *Development should avoid or minimise any adverse effect that proposals would have on woodlands, trees and hedgerows. Where appropriate, proposals should include new woodland, tree and hedgerow planting, and management proposals to conserve and enhance existing features.*

- Policy NF1 – The New Forest

To protect the special character of the New Forest, development, even in accordance with other policies of this Plan, will only be permitted where individually or cumulatively with other existing or proposed development, it will not harm the flora, fauna, geological, archaeological or landscape character of the New Forest and will:

- (i) *help maintain the traditional commoning regime of grazing and management which contributes to the landscape and ecological character of the New Forest; and/ or*
- (ii) *help maintain the social and economic well-being of communities in the New Forest Heritage Area; and/ or*
- (iii) *promote the enjoyment and understanding of the Area by the public.*

Once the boundary of the New Forest Heritage Area has been defined in local plans, it should be regarded as permanent unless there are exceptionally strong reasons for altering it. Any alterations to the boundary should only be undertaken through the local plan process.

(e) Within the **Isle of Wight Unitary Development Plan**, the landscape planning policies of relevance are as follows:

- Policy C1 – Protection of Landscape Character

Planning applications for appropriate development in the countryside must maintain and protect the landscape whether viewed from the land or sea, and should be for the benefit of the rural economy and the people who live there. Development which may be acceptable in the countryside must take account of the landscape character and local distinctiveness of the area.

- Policy C2 – Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Within the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) planning applications will only be approved where they do not have a detrimental impact on the landscape and:
 - a) meet a proven national need where there are no alternative sites; or*
 - b) specifically involve the maintenance or development of agriculture, horticulture or forestry and/or be for the benefit of the local rural economy and the people who live there; or*
 - c) involves the low-key improvement of an area used for informal leisure and recreation; or*
 - d) reduce the impact of, or upgrade an existing development, or*
 - e) are within a defined development envelope.*

10.2.4

Visual Amenity

Visual Receptors

A landscape and visual impact assessment was carried out in late Spring 2005, at which time significant views of the site from sensitive receptors and principal viewpoints in the locality were photographed.

The edge of the study area is difficult to define due to the scale of the proposed scheme, the presence of structures, changes in elevation and vegetation in the local vicinity. Views into both of the drill rig sites are predominantly interrupted by vegetation and trees although visibility can be expected to increase in the winter months as tree foliage diminishes.

Generally, the proposed working area (rig site) at Lepe will only be visible from the road adjacent to the site (which leads to Lepe Country Park – Plate 11) at the point where access will be created.

The proposed working area (rig site) at Gurnard will be visible from residential properties on the eastern boundary of Rew Street (Plate 9). Views from these properties will be partially obscured by the hedgerow, which borders the eastern boundary of Rew Street except those dwellings which lie immediately opposite access into the proposed site.

Principal Views

Viewpoints have been selected and mapped on the following basis.

Significant overview of both working areas (rig sites) from: -

- substantial residential properties in close proximity to the site;
- residential properties at a moderate distance to the site
- principal road corridor; and
- public rights of way.

On the above basis, the following locations were adopted (see Figures 10.1 and 10.2):

Viewpoint 1 – Residential properties in the central section of Rew Street, Gurnard (Plate 9): this viewpoint was taken at the entrance to the drill rig site at West Gurnard in close proximity to residential properties including Hillside, Jamesbridge, Upper Horn properties 1 – 8 and The Causeway.

Plate 9 *View from Rew Street*



Plate 10 *View from northern end of Rew Street*



Viewpoint 2 - Northern end of Rew Street (Plate 10). This viewpoint is representative of views that would be obtained at the northern end of Rew Street/Marsh Road, Gurnard and the location lies in close proximity to the residential properties of Cliff Farm, Springcroft, Marsh Cottage, Crockers, Lower Horn Hill Chalets and Just OK.

Viewpoint 3 - Views from road adjacent to Lepe Country Park (Plate 11): this location lies immediately west of the rig site at Lepe, where vehicle users may have a glimpsed view of the site.

Viewpoint 4 - Lepe Country Park: this viewpoint (Plate 12) is located to the south of the drill rig site in the northern end of Lepe Country Park, where a view is afforded of the site at the electric substation.

Plate 11 Road adjacent to Lepe Country Park

Plate 12 Lepe Country Park (substation)



10.3 10.3.1

Impact Assessment and Mitigation

Construction Impacts: New Forest

Landscape Character

I.1. The presence of machinery (during the construction works) at the drill rig site at Lepe will temporarily impact upon the local landscape character of the New Forest National Park and the construction works will result in the removal of hedgerows that contribute to the irregular pattern of field boundaries. However, the farmland landscape in this area is already disturbed by human activity at the adjacent Southern Electric sub-station and only a small area of improved grassland (approximately 2800m²) will be affected. No land that is characteristic of the New Forest such as unenclosed ancient woodland, open heath, mires and ponds will be affected and affected areas of land will be restored upon completion. The impact of the temporary construction works on the landscape character can therefore be considered as **minor adverse**.

M.1. A tidy site policy will be employed by the contractor and consequently there will be **no significant residual impacts**.

The works will also seek to maintain any existing natural screening around the site boundary, where possible.

I.2. The presence of machinery at Mopley Booster Station during the replacement of the pumps and the construction of a new kiosk to house the pumps will temporarily impact upon the local landscape character of the New Forest. However, as the modifications will be carried out within an existing site compound, the temporary construction works in the New Forest will have **no significant impact** on the landscape character.

M.2. A tidy site policy will be employed by the contractor and the works will seek to maintain any existing natural screening around the site boundary, where possible.

Visual Amenity

I.3. The visual effects of the plant and works at Lepe are temporary in nature, however the temporary changes in view that will be experienced by receptors are assessed in Table 10.1.

Table 10.1 *Change in View at Principal Receptors during Construction Works (Lepe)*

Viewpoint	Sensitivity of Viewpoint	Visibility of Site	Change of View	Significance of Impact
Lepe Road in New Forest	Low -medium	Glimpsed view of drill rig site	Vehicle users and pedestrians would have a glimpsed view of the site on their journey along Lepe Road .	Slight adverse
Lepe Country Park	Medium-high	No view of drill rig site from publicly accessible areas to the south of the substation.	Recreational users within the Park would be unlikely to obtain a view of the works, which would be largely obscured by dense vegetation. Infrequent maintenance operators of the electric sub-station would however have a open view of the works	Neutral

M.3. A tidy site policy will be employed by the contractor during the works and therefore following mitigation, there will be **no significant impact**

on visual amenity afforded by vehicle users and pedestrians on Lepe Road.

- I.4. As the proposed modifications at Mopley Booster Station will lie within the existing compound area, **no significant impacts** on local residents are envisaged although equestrians on the bridleway (a medium-high sensitivity viewpoint) at Mopley Road will have an open view at the entrance into the site. As the proposed modifications will be contained within an existing operational site, equestrians will only experience a **minor adverse visual impact**.
- M.4. A tidy site policy will be employed by the contractor during the works at Mopley and kiosks will be carefully sited to ensure that visual impacts are **negligible** following mitigation.

10.3.2

Construction Impacts: Isle of Wight

Landscape Character

- I.5. The presence of machinery during the construction works will temporarily impact upon the local landscape character of the area, but will not impact upon any landscape designations or a site of particular scenic beauty. Consequently, the temporary construction works in this area will have **no significant impact** on the landscape character.
- M.5. A tidy site policy will be employed by the contractor and the works should also seek to maintain any existing natural screening around the site boundary, where possible.

Visual Amenity

- I.6. The visual effects of the plant and works at Gurnard are temporary in nature, however the temporary changes in view that will be experienced by receptors are assessed in Table 10.2.

Table 10.2 *Change in View at Principal Receptors during Construction Works (Gurnard)*

Viewpoint	Sensitivity of Viewpoint	Visibility of Site	Change of View	Significance of Impact
Residential properties in central section of Rew Street	High	Open/partial view of site entrance	Some properties opposite the entrance into the site would have a direct view of the working area at Gurnard.	Moderate adverse
Northern end of Rew Street/Marsh Road	High	No view of drill rig site	Properties in this area at the northern end of Rew Street are unlikely to be affected by any works within the site.	Neutral
Isle of Wight Coastal Footpath	Medium-high	No view of drill rig site	Recreational users on this public footpath are unlikely to be affected by any works within the site.	Neutral
Residential properties on Lower Church Road	High	No view of drill rig site	These properties would have such a distant view of the works that there would be no discernible deterioration in visual amenity.	Neutral

M.6. A tidy site policy will be employed by the contractor during the works and therefore following mitigation, there will be a **minor adverse impact** on visual amenity afforded by some residents on Rew Street.

10.3.3

Construction Impacts: Marine

Visual Impact

I.7. During the construction period, visual impacts will be experienced by residents and recreational users on the coastal frontage and sea-farers, as a result of the presence of marine vessels associated with the marine connections and jetting of the twin pipeline. These temporary local impacts are very subjective and could be considered as **negligible/slight adverse**.

10.3.4

Operational Impacts

Landscape Character

I.8. As the pipeline will be buried and there will be minimal permanent above ground structures at Lepe and Gurnard, the proposed pipeline will have a **negligible** impact upon the landscape character of the New Forest National Park or Isle of Wight AONB.

At Mopley Booster Station, the construction of a new kiosk to house the pumps will not adversely impact upon the local landscape character of the New Forest as its construction will be located within an existing site compound.

Visual Impact

- I.9. As there will be minimal permanent above ground structures, there would be **negligible** visual impacts on local residents and recreational users.