



The Department of Local Government
and the Environment

The Role of Landscape Character in Development

THE TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1999

DRAFT PLANNING POLICY STATEMENT PPS 2/09

October 2009

Consultation Details

Anyone wishing to make comments on this Draft Planning Policy Statement is asked to do so in writing making clear reference to paragraph numbers. These should be submitted to the Planning Policy Team by **Friday 29th January 2010**.

Comments can be either sent electronically to planningpolicy@dlge.gov.im or by post to

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It should be noted that all comments and information will be made available for public viewing.

1. FOREWORD

Our landscape is beautiful, and, in my estimation, second to none. This beauty is the result of not only high quality, but also enormous variety. We have our dramatic hills, our wooded glens, and our gently undulating lowlands, all contained by a stunning coastline which varies from the sandy beaches of The Ayres to the high cliffs of Maughold, Santon, and Rushen. The character of these very different areas has now been professionally assessed, and, based on this assessment, the Department has prepared a Planning Policy Statement which should assist in conserving, enhancing, and, where appropriate, restoring this character, for the enjoyment of the resident population, our visitors, and our children.

Mr John Shimmin

Minister for Local Government and the Environment

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1** This Planning Policy Statement (PPS) is issued by the Department of Local Government and the Environment under section 3 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1999, and specifies the manner in which the Department intends to deal with planning applications for development which may affect the character or appearance of the Island's landscape. It also explains how landscape issues will be considered in the preparation of the Area Plans.
- 2.2** Our landscape is the result of the action and interaction of both natural and human factors, and is thus not only a reflection of our natural history, but also our cultural, social, and economic history. If this landscape is to be protected and enhanced, and if it is to accommodate successfully new development, there needs to be a proper assessment of its character.
- 2.3** This is acknowledged in the Isle of Man Strategic Plan, in which Environment Policy 2 states that –
“The present system of landscape classification of Areas of High Landscape or Coastal Value and Scenic Significance (AHLV's) as shown on the 1982 Development Plan and subsequent Local and Area Plans will be used as a basis for development control until such time as it is superseded by a landscape classification which will introduce different categories of landscape and policies and guidance for control therein. Within these areas the protection of the character of the landscape will be the most important consideration unless it can be shown that:
(a) the development would not harm the character and quality of the landscape; or
(b) the location for the development is essential.”
- 2.4** In response to this Policy, the Department commissioned a Landscape Character Assessment of the whole Island, which was received and published in 2008. This will serve as a baseline of environmental information to enable a better understanding of our landscape, and will be used not only for development control purposes, but also as part of the evidence base to inform the production of the Area Plans. The full report, which is a lengthy document, is available for inspection at the Department's offices in Murray House, and a CD copy can be made available by arrangement. An Executive Summary and a map of the Landscape Character Areas are on the Department's web-site.
- 2.5** The Assessment identifies 9 different Landscape Character Types within the Island, and 59 separate Landscape Character Areas, each of which falls into one of the nine different Types. The urban areas are excluded from this classification. A copy of the map identifying the Types and Areas is appended to this Statement.
- 2.6** This PPS includes, in section 3, Strategic Guidance to underpin the landscape policies in the Isle of Man Strategic Plan, and, in section 4, Guidance for each of the nine Character Types. Policies which are specific

to a particular Character Area will be included in the appropriate Area Plan in due course.

- 2.7 The classification of Landscape Character Types and Areas now introduced replaces the Areas of High Landscape or Coastal Value and Scenic Significance which are referred to in paragraph 2.3 above.

3 STRATEGIC POLICIES AND GUIDANCE

- 3.1 Our landscapes provide the setting and context for our towns and villages, add very considerably to our quality of life, and contribute significantly to our sense of both national and local identity. Conservation, enhancement, and restoration of the character of the Island's landscape therefore form the basis of the following strategic landscape policy:

The Department, in collaboration with other Government Departments where appropriate, will promote the active conservation, enhancement, and restoration of the Island's landscape character. Development proposals and land management should be informed by, be sympathetic to, and, wherever possible, restore the local landscape context and local character as identified in the Landscape Character Assessment.

The Area Plans will include policies and proposals which accord with this strategic policy.

- 3.2 Development will very often affect landscape character, but need not do so adversely. There follows general guidance on how the more common development issues should be addressed such as to accord with the policy of conserving, enhancing, and restoring the Island's landscape character.

3.3 Housing and Business Development Issues:

- 3.3.1 **Siting:** The character of the wider landscape may be affected by visual intrusion. This will occur where a site is prominent because of limited screening from topography or vegetation, or where the siting and layout of a development conflict with landform or with existing landscape patterns and characteristics. This sort of development should be avoided.
- 3.3.2 **Design:** Development must be properly integrated into the landscape in terms of scale, materials, architectural style, engineering works, and landscaping. Landscape features such as trees, hedgerows, sod banks, and traditional stone walls which are important to landscape character should be retained.
- 3.3.3 **Landscape character in and around settlements:** New development in and around existing settlements may affect their distinctive landscape settings, including key approaches to the settlement, inward and outward views, woodland, trees, river corridors, and open spaces. This will, in turn,

affect the wider landscape. Design, particularly of structure planting, should address these key landscape elements.

3.4 Transport Infrastructure Issues:

3.4.1 New Highways Infrastructure: Adverse landscape impact should be minimised by careful route selection and engineering design, retention of mature landscape features, planting (both on-site and off-site), and sensitive lighting design.

3.4.2 Minor Roadworks: The character of rural roads and lanes is often an important component of local distinctiveness. Minor engineering works, such as junction improvements, traffic calming, road widening, easing of bends, kerbing, lighting, and signage can have an urbanising effect. The design of such works should respect existing landscape character and features, and should avoid introducing new features such as boundary treatments which are alien to the area's character.

3.5 Energy and Telecommunications Issues:

3.5.1 Commercial-scale Wind Turbines: Wind turbines can detract from the special qualities of the landscape. The sensitivity of a particular landscape to wind-energy development can be judged using the following criteria: scale, enclosure, landform, complexity of land-cover and landscape features, man-made influence, skylines and settings, visibility and views, landscape condition, scenic quality, wildness and tranquillity, natural and cultural heritage features, cultural associations, and amenity and recreation.

3.5.2 Other Renewable-energy Proposals: Proposals such as solar panels, micro hydro-electric schemes, and domestic-scale wind turbines are likely to have only limited landscape impacts. They may be acceptable throughout the Island's landscapes, provided they are planned with care, avoid sensitive locations, and do not detract from the surrounding landscape or cause visual intrusion.

3.5.3 Overhead Transmission Lines and Telecommunications Masts: Overhead wires and cables can have an intrusive impact on landscapes, particularly those with high visual sensitivity. Proliferation of telecommunications masts can have the same effect. Sensitive skylines should be avoided, and mast-sharing should be encouraged.

3.6 Minerals Development:

3.6.1 New Minerals Development: The impact of mineral working on the landscape depends heavily on site-selection, design, and the character and quality of restoration.

3.6.2 Restoration: Restoration can enhance landscapes and habitats. Back-filling should be associated with restoration of landform, field patterns, and hedges. New wetlands should be located where they might naturally occur.

3.6.3 Mining and Quarrying Heritage: It should be recognised that some features such as old quarries may have become important components of landscape character, or may offer opportunities to understand and enjoy the Island's geology, history, and industrial heritage.

4 GUIDANCE FOR LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPES

4.1 The nine different Character Types are as follows:-

- (A) Uplands
- (B) Narrow Upland Glens
- (C) Broad Lowland Valleys
- (D) Incised Slopes
- (E) Rugged Coast
- (F) Undulating Lowland Plain
- (G) Smooth Coastal Strip
- (H) Coastal Cliffs
- (J) Islands

For each Type there is set out below guidance in the form of an overall strategy and a number of key planning considerations. Regard will be had to these not only in the determination of planning applications, but also in the formulation of Area Plans.

4.2 Type A: Uplands

The overall strategy for the protection and enhancement of the Uplands Landscape Character Type is to conserve and enhance: the predominantly open and exposed character of the moorland hills and mountain summits; the generally uninterrupted skyline and panoramic views across the lower slopes and plains towards the sea; the strong sense of tranquillity and remoteness; and the distinctive features of cultural heritage and nature conservation interest.

Key landscape planning considerations in relation to the protection and enhancement of this Landscape Character Type are as follows:-

- (a) Housing and business development would be out of place within the predominantly open, exposed, and visually-sensitive Upland landscapes;
- (b) Any buildings which are deemed necessary should avoid exposed or visually-prominent locations, and should reflect local building materials and styles;
- (c) Care should be taken not to compromise the sparsely-settled pattern of isolated, small-scale farmsteads within the Uplands;
- (d) Care should be taken to minimise visual clutter of highways infrastructure and signage on the unenclosed and simple character of rural roads that cross the Uplands;
- (e) Vertical telecommunication masts or structures, or renewable-energy development such as wind turbines, may be out of place within the predominantly open, exposed, and visually-sensitive Upland landscape, and care should be taken to ensure that the location of such development does not dominate the landscape.

4.3 Type B: Narrow Upland Glens

The overall strategy for the protection and enhancement of the Narrow Upland Glens Landscape Character Type is to conserve and enhance: the distinctive well-wooded character of the glens; the distinctive field patterns on lower valley sides, defined by Manx hedgerows with mature trees; the pattern of winding roads, enclosed by sod banks, with small fords and bridges across water courses; the remote, tranquil, and unsettled character; and the various visible cultural heritage features, such as scattered abandoned mines.

Key landscape planning considerations in relation to the protection and enhancement of this Landscape Character Type are as follows:-

- (a) Housing and business development would be out of place on the visually-sensitive upper slopes of the Narrow Upland Glens;
- (b) Care should be taken to ensure that any new development that is deemed necessary reflects local building materials and styles; is of an appropriate scale and relates well to existing buildings; and is well integrated with the surrounding landscape through sensitive siting and appropriate screen planting;
- (c) Linear development along road corridors which extends urban influences into the wider undeveloped countryside should be avoided;
- (d) New tourist or recreation development and related infrastructure, such as car parks and litter bins, should be sensitively designed and “low key” in nature;
- (e) Care should be taken to minimise visual clutter of highways infrastructure and signage on the steep, winding rural roads within Narrow Upland Glens;
- (f) New river crossings should respect the traditional scale and materials of existing historic bridges;
- (g) Vertical telecommunications masts or structures should be avoided on the upper slopes, since they would create visual clutter, affect open skylines, and/or detract from views from Narrow Upland Glens towards adjacent Landscape Character Types.

4.4 Type C: Broad Lowland Valley

The overall strategy for the protection and enhancement of the Broad Lowland Valley Landscape Character Type is to conserve and enhance: the well-treed and enclosed valley bottoms; the enclosed lanes and roads; the distinctive rectilinear field patterns; the pattern of small scattered hill farms on the rising valley sides and nucleated settlements; and the numerous sites of historic and cultural interest.

Key landscape planning considerations in relation to the protection and enhancement of this Landscape Character Type are as follows:-

- (a) Care should be taken to avoid housing and business development that would be prominent on the visually sensitive valley sides and valley floor;
- (b) Loss of settlement identity and distinctiveness should be avoided by ensuring the use of local building styles and materials, and by the careful siting of new buildings to reflect the pattern of isolated small farms on the rising valley sides;

- (c) Linear development along roads from settlements that extends urbanising influences into the wider rural countryside should be avoided;
- (d) Approach routes, key views, and gateways to settlements within adjacent Incised Slopes landscapes should be enhanced;
- (e) Distinctive historic features such as milestones, and historic sites, including Tynwald Hill, should be protected;
- (f) Care should be taken to minimise visual clutter of highways infrastructure and signage on rural roads within these landscapes.

4.5 Type D: Incised Slopes

The overall strategy for the protection and enhancement of the Incised Slopes Landscape Character Type is to conserve and enhance: the remote and rural character; the relatively sparse settlement pattern of traditional hamlets and scattered farm buildings; the network of sunken and enclosed rural roads; and the substantial hedgerows and sod banks dividing irregularly-shaped pastoral fields.

Key landscape planning considerations in relation to the protection and enhancement of this Landscape Character Type are as follows:-

- (a) Care should be taken to ensure that housing and business development does not detract from the distinctive identity and setting of settlements, and avoids coalescence with other settlements within this Landscape Type;
- (b) The design and layout of new housing and business development should include appropriate native structure planting to soften urban edges and enhance the transition to the wider landscape;
- (c) Approach routes, key views, and gateways to settlements within these landscapes should be enhanced;
- (d) Linear development along roads from settlements that extends urbanising influences into the wider countryside should be avoided;
- (e) The use of local vernacular building styles and materials should be encouraged;
- (f) New farm buildings that would compromise the pattern and scale of farmsteads across the undulating Incised Slopes landscapes should be discouraged;
- (g) Care should be taken to minimise loss of hedgerows, sod banks, and other distinctive boundary features along road corridors;
- (h) Tourist-related development, such as camp-sites, should avoid visually prominent locations, particularly those which can be viewed from higher land and those which would extend urbanising influence along the coast;
- (i) Care should be taken to avoid the suburbanisation of river valleys and stream corridors;
- (j) Tall vertical telecommunications masts or structures which detract from the sloping landform or create visual clutter should be avoided.

4.6 Type E: Rugged Coast

The overall strategy for the protection and enhancement of the Rugged Coast Landscape Character Type is to conserve and enhance: the distinctive coastal features (rugged low cliffs, headlands, sandy bays, and

wave-cut platforms); the strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity; its rich pattern of coastal habitats; the open and expansive panoramic seascape views; the numerous sites of archaeological importance; and the landscape settings of the coastal settlements.

Key landscape planning considerations in relation to the protection and enhancement of this Landscape Character Type are as follows:-

- (a) Development should be sensitively designed and located to avoid detracting from the predominantly undeveloped and unspoilt character;
- (b) New development, where deemed essential, along the Rugged Coast landscapes should seek to retain and reinforce local settlement patterns and identities in terms of scale, form, and local vernacular styles and materials;
- (c) Care should be taken to protect open, expansive, panoramic seascape views from visual intrusion through inappropriately sited and designed development;
- (d) The distinctive identity and character of the coastal settlements should be protected, including their intimate relationship with the sandy bays and headlands;
- (e) Historic features and sites, such as the distinctive coastal forts and castles and their landscape settings, should be protected;
- (f) Subject to safety considerations, the use of lighting and signage infrastructure should be minimised to avoid visual clutter;
- (g) Key views and skylines should be protected from vertical telecommunications masts or structures, as well as from other forms of development and clutter, which would detract from the strong sense of openness, uninterrupted skylines, and unbroken panoramic views along the Rugged Coast landscapes.

4.7 Type F: Undulating Lowland Plain

The overall strategy for the protection and enhancement of the Undulating Lowland Plain Landscape Character Type is to conserve and enhance: the relatively strong sense of openness; the ecologically valuable habitats; the network of enclosed minor rural roads; the numerous archaeological sites; and the strong field pattern delineated by a mixture of stone walls and sod banks.

Key landscape planning considerations in relation to the protection and enhancement of this Landscape Character Type are as follows:-

- (a) Housing and business development should seek to retain and reinforce local settlement patterns and identities in terms of scale, form, and the use of local vernacular styles and materials;
- (b) New built development that would substantially harm the valued characteristics of the wider landscape should be avoided;
- (c) Care should be taken to ensure that new farm buildings: are of an appropriate scale; relate to existing farmsteads in terms of form and building materials; and sit comfortably within the wider landscape by avoiding visually sensitive locations;
- (d) Where tourist and recreational development is required, it should be carefully designed to respect local building materials and styles, and

- particular care should be taken to avoid development that would exert a strong urban influence over the surrounding landscape;
- (e) Care should be taken to protect features of cultural heritage such as forts, tumuli, and crosses;
 - (f) The boundaries of airport development should include appropriate native structure planting to soften urban edges and enhance the transition to the wider landscape;
 - (g) Care should be taken to avoid the suburbanisation of river valleys and stream corridors;
 - (h) Care should be taken to avoid the suburbanisation of rural road corridors by minimising signage, lighting, hard kerbing, and loss of roadside hedgerows;
 - (i) New vertical telecommunications masts or structures should be sited such as to ensure that they do not intrude into key views towards adjacent upland and coastal landscapes, and do not create visual clutter along sensitive skylines.

4.8 Type G: Smooth Coastal Strip

The overall strategy for the protection and enhancement of the Smooth Coastal Strip Landscape Character Type is to conserve and enhance: the simple and uncluttered inter-tidal landscape; the strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity; the expansive seascape views dominated by extensive beaches and wide, open skies; and the diverse patchwork of highly sensitive coastal habitats.

Key landscape planning considerations in relation to the protection and enhancement of this Landscape Character Type are as follows:-

- (a) Generally, housing and business development would be out of place within the predominantly visually open and uncluttered landscape of the Smooth Coastal Strip;
- (b) Where built development is permitted, it should be small-scale, and buildings should avoid particularly exposed or visually prominent locations that would intrude into expansive views towards the sea, and should reflect local building materials and styles;
- (c) Care should be taken to minimise urban influences within the undeveloped landscape;
- (d) Sensitive design of coastal defences should be encouraged, such as to minimise adverse effects on the natural profile of the landscape;
- (e) Where tourist and recreational development is required, it should be sensitively designed to respect local building materials and styles, and particular care should be taken to avoid development or infrastructure that would exert a strong urban influence over the surrounding landscape;
- (f) Tall telecommunications development would be out of place within this predominantly open and highly visually sensitive landscape;
- (g) The boundaries of sand and gravel extraction sites should include appropriate native structure planting to enhance the transition to the wider landscape; restoration schemes should be so designed as to strengthen the character of the Smooth Coastal Strip.

4.9 Type H: Coastal Cliffs

The overall strategy for the protection and enhancement of the Coastal Cliffs Landscape Character Type is to conserve and enhance: the distinctive coastal features (steep high cliffs, headlands, stacks, and bays); the open, unsettled, and rugged character; the expansive and dramatic seascape views; the setting of numerous archaeological features and sites; and the distinctive field patterns.

Key landscape planning considerations in relation to this Landscape Character Type are as follows:-

- (a) Generally, housing and business development would be out of place within the predominantly open and undeveloped character of these landscapes;
- (b) Where built development is permitted, it should be small scale, should avoid exposed or visually prominent locations, and should reflect local building materials and styles;
- (c) Distinctive historic features and sites, and their landscape settings, should be safeguarded from inappropriate land-use changes;
- (d) Where tourist and recreational developments are required, care should be taken to avoid exerting a strong urban influence over the surrounding landscape;
- (e) Vertical masts and other structures such as telecommunications development would be out of place within these highly visually sensitive and predominantly open landscapes.

4.10 Type J: Islands

The overall strategy for the protection and enhancement of the Islands Landscape Character Type is to conserve and enhance: the strong sense of wildness, remoteness, and tranquillity; and the patchwork of rich ecological habitats.

Key landscape planning considerations in relation to the protection and enhancement of this Landscape Character Type are as follows:-

- (a) Housing and business development would be out of place within the predominantly open, undeveloped, and remote character of the Islands landscape;
- (b) Any development which is essential should be small scale, should be sited alongside existing structures or buildings, and should use local materials and styles;
- (c) Any new infrastructure should be sensitively designed and “low key” in nature;
- (d) Key views, including long-distance panoramic views across The Sound, should be protected from visual clutter;
- (e) Care should be taken to ensure that access routes to points of interest are sensitively sited and designed;
- (f) Telecommunications development and other tall vertical structures would be out of place within the highly visually sensitive and predominantly rural and remote character of this landscape.