

**LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT OF POTENTIAL SETTLEMENT
GROWTH OPTIONS IDENTIFIED IN THE LANDRAKE WITH ST ERNEY
NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN**



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Introduction

This report has been prepared on behalf of the Landrake with St Erney Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group to assess three sites on the edge of the existing settlement with specific regard to their landscape capacity to accommodate housing growth.

The report provides conclusions on the landscape capacity for each site in accordance with the methodology developed by Cornwall Council contained within the Judging Landscape Capacity: a development management toolkit 2014 (Cornwall Council) which was endorsed by Cornwall Council's Environment Heritage and Planning Portfolio Advisory Committee on 16th October 2014 and is intended to form part of a Landscape Supplementary Planning Document in support of the recently adopted Cornwall Local Plan.

As the author of this document, I have over 17 years planning experience in Cornwall. During that time, I have obtained extensive knowledge of the Cornish natural landscape, including provided the principal planning role for the Cornwall Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Unit over a 2 ½ year period providing a number of assessments of the landscape capacity of proposed developments, including attendance at Planning Appeals. I also attended the Cornwall Local Plan Examination providing specific response to the robustness of supporting evidence base and policy wording with regard to the designated landscape. I additionally provided support to Neighbourhood Planning Groups with regard to their landscape evidence base.

The report follows the principles established within the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd edition 2013 (Landscape Institute) and as outlined above follows the methodology contained within the Judging Landscape Capacity: a development management toolkit 2014 (Cornwall Council).

The Sites for Assessment

The sites/ parcels of land for assessment are identified at Appendix A to this report and have been provided by the Landrake with St Erney Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group.

This assessment is specific to the three land parcels which are summarised below:

Map Ref	Name	Approximate Size in Square metres (SqM)	Number of Dwellings at 35 dwellings per hectare (dph) density	Report Appendix	Photo Appendix
A	West Lane	9100	32	B	C
B	Pound Hill	4400	15	D	E
C	Mera Park	8600	30	F	G

In determining the area to be assessed for each land parcel, a clear landscape boundary for each has been established as well as seeking to ensure that the three land parcels are as comparative as possible in size and quantity of development capacity.

Two of the three land parcels have clearly defined physical boundaries which then directly abuts open countryside and are apparent landscape cells. The one exception is the West Lane site, which due to the fields overall size would be over double the size of either of the other two land parcels subject to assessment, and would additionally accommodate a level of development far beyond the requirements of the NDP. The field does however have a subdivision as a result of a tree line which runs into its centre. Taking the point where this line stops as a landscape marker enables an assessment area of a similar size to the other two sites, and ultimately result in a relative assessment of the three.

The Assessment Methodology

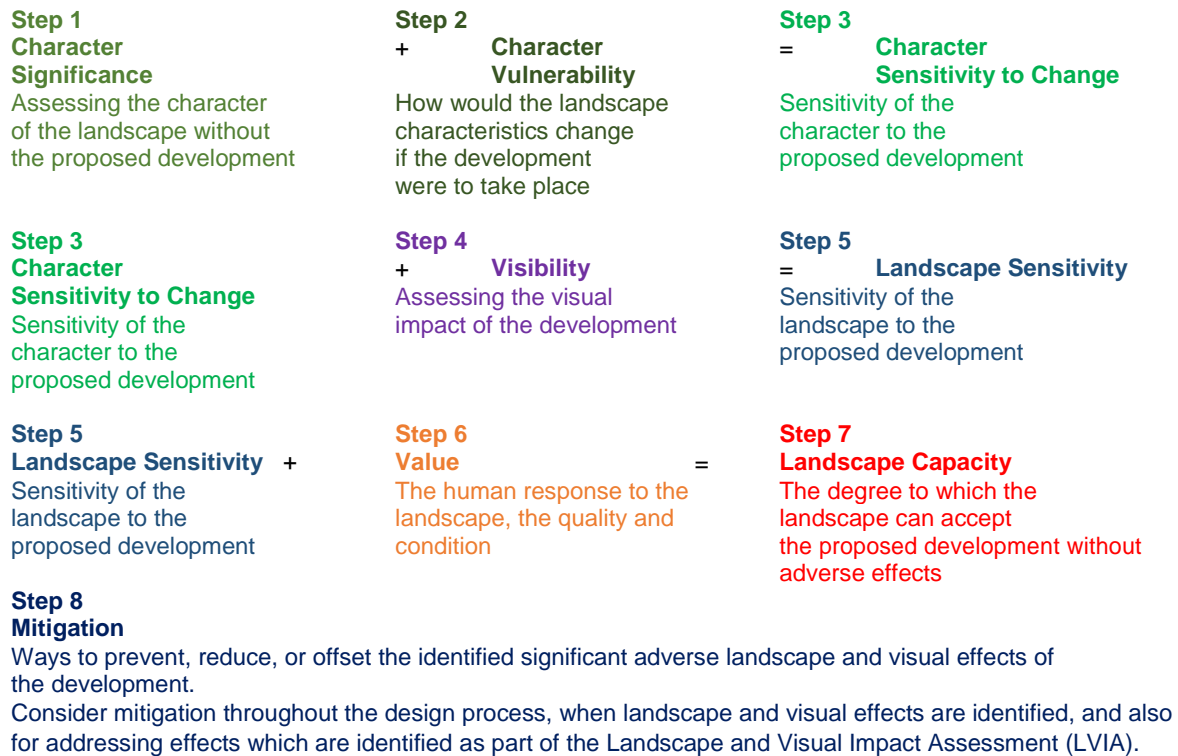
The methodology for assessing the three sites has been agreed with Rob Lacey, Principal Development Officer (Planning Strategy) of Cornwall Council who has been providing direct support to the Landrake with St Erney Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group in the development of their emerging Neighbourhood Development Plan.

The methodology for assessment links directly to the Judging Landscape Capacity: a development management toolkit 2014 (Cornwall Council). The entirety of the toolkit can be found at <https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/cornwalls-landscape/judging-landscape-sensitivity-and-capacity-a-development-management-toolkit/>

The toolkit provides a step by step methodology to identify the landscape capacity of a site and to identify what mitigation measures could be required to address capacity issues that arise.

A summary of the steps contained in the toolkit is outlined overleaf. Each of the three sites have been assessed in detail against the toolkit and are provided as Appendices as highlighted in the table on page 2 of this Report.

Overview of the Methodology Assessment



Assessment Assumptions

In assessing each of the three land parcels no specific schemes are before me. Simply the land is outlined with a defined landscape boundary to enable an comparative landscape cell to be assessed.

In each case a conclusion has been reached as to the likely manner of development proposals to enable an assessment to be made.

Key assumptions for all sites are as follows:

- The land use is residential
- The maximum quantum of development will be around 20 units in line with the housing policies contained within the Landrake with St Erney Neighbourhood Development Plan (25-30 of the remainder of the Plan period with an assumption that a number of these units can be met as infill to the settlement)
- The scale of the development will be two storey and of typical Cornish form, ie pitched roof design.
- Density and siting will be required to follow the manner of surrounding development whilst responding to the context of the site.

A more detailed summary of the assumptions made for each site is contained in the accompanying reports at Appendices B, D and F. For example, the density of

development on site A is suggested as being lower than the other two site due to the nature of the location and surrounding built form.

Assessment Conclusions

The table overleaf provides the conclusions made at each stage of the use of the toolkit for which culminates in the conclusion at Step 7 as to the Landscape Capacity for the land parcel/ site – ie the ability of the landscape to accommodate the development.

Toolkit Step	Site A – West Lane	Site B – Pound Hill	Site C – Mera Park
Step 1 Character significance	N L M H	N L M H	N L M H
	Low	Low	Low
Step 2 Character vulnerability to the type of change	N L M H	N L M H	N L M H
	Moderate	Low	Moderate
Step 1 + Step 2 =	L LM M MH H	L LM M MH H	L LM M MH H
Step 3 Character Sensitivity to change	Low Moderate	Low	Low Moderate
Step 4 Visibility Assessment	L LM M MH H	L LM M MH H	L LM M MH H
	Moderate	Low	Moderate
Step 3 + Step 4 =	L LM M MH H	L LM M MH H	L LM M MH H
Step 5 Landscape Sensitivity	Moderate	Low	Moderate
Step 6 Value Assessment	L LM M MH H	L LM M MH H	L LM M MH H
	Low	Low	Moderate
Step 5 + Step 6 = Step 7 Landscape Capacity	H MH M ML L	H MH M ML L	H MH M ML L
	Moderate High	High	Moderate

Key (as applied against the relevant step assessment):

N – No value; L – Low; LM – Low Moderate; M – Moderate; MH – Moderate High; H – High

Suggested Step 8 Mitigation measures

At each stage of the assessment assumptions have been made as to how the development of each site will be proposed, ie the type of design, the siting, the retention of boundary features.

For each land parcel, these have been listed as mitigation measures at Step 8 in the respective reports. It needs to be highlighted that these are measures to achieve the scoring at Step 7 and are not measures to reduce the conclusion reached at that stage unless specified.

Conclusions and Caution

The report provides conclusions on the landscape capacity of each site to accommodate the development as described.

As highlighted in the table on page 5 of this report, the site with the highest landscape capacity to accommodate the detail detailed is Pound Hill, with West Lane having a moderate high landscape capacity and Mera Park a moderate landscape capacity.

It has to be stressed that these conclusions are specific to landscape capacity. They make no analysis of other matters, such as the willingness of the land owner to the development the site, or other matters that may make the development unsuitable or unviable.

Caution needs to be taken as to the application of these conclusions in the wider planning assessment of development proposals.

Decision and plan making in planning is often a finely balanced appraisal of the issues that arise on a case by case basis. There are often conflicts with one objective of sustainable development against another.

Sustainable development consists of three dimensions: economic, social and environmental. Paragraph 8 of the National Planning Policy Framework explains that these roles should not be undertaken in isolation, because they are mutually dependent.

Where there is a conflict of one dimension with another, a balance relative to applicable weight needs to be drawn. For example, a development could result in environmental harm, if the social and economic benefits outweigh the harm, likewise environmental harm to a designated asset (such as the national designation of the AONB) will predominately outweigh positive local benefits such as providing local houses and/or jobs.

Ultimately each decision is a balance, and is treated on its individual merits. This report provides conclusions against a robust and agreed methodology on the landscape impact, representing a strand of the environmental dimension of sustainable development.