



Planning Scheme Policy 3

Landscape Character Analysis Guidelines

SC6.4 Planning scheme policy 3 - Landscape character analysis guidelines

SC6.4.1 Introduction and Purpose

The Western Downs Landscape Character Analysis (Cardno Chenoweth, 2010) mapped landscape values in the region, including broadscale Landscape Character Types, High Landscape Value (HLV) Areas and Urban Gateways.

HLV Areas are intended to trigger development assessment and/or site-specific investigation (supplemented by Landscape Character Types identified in **Strategic Framework Map 3 – Community Identity and Landscape Character SFM3 -001 to SFM3-004**) to confirm or amend the validity of broadscale landscape evaluation.

The purpose of this planning scheme policy is to identify the level and type of analysis required to protect and enhance important landscape values where triggered by the **Scenic Amenity Overlay Map OM-013** or where for Impact Assessable development (at the discretion of Council).

SC6.4.2 Protection & Enhancement of Landscape Values

The purpose of Planning Scheme Policy 3 – Landscape Character Analysis is to:

- maintain and enhance scenic and landscape values of HLV areas;
- protect and maintain rural character and amenity; and
- maintain and enhance the rural town character and landscape setting of towns

In order to assess the extent to which proposed development is likely to be consistent with the above objectives, the following information is required by Council to accompany development applications where required by **Part 8.2.8.1 Scenic Amenity Overlay Code** or where for Impact Assessable development (at the discretion of Council).

SC6.4.3 Landscape Assessment

SC6.4.3.1 Assessment and Information Required

Development applications will require accompanying documentation of landscape assessment, and/or additional evaluation, according to the mapped category in Table SC6.4.1. Note that more than one map category in Table SC6.4.1 may apply.

Table SC6.4.3 – Landscape assessment requirements

Map Category	Information required	Details
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HLV Areas 	<p>Item 1: Visibility – where can the development be seen from?</p> <p>Item 2: Appearance – what will it look like when seen from significant viewpoints?</p>	<p>Detail 1: Viewshed map, identifying significant viewpoints (scenic roads and lookouts, towns and public parks, National Parks and other sensitive receptors).</p> <p>Detail 2: Photographs, sight line sections including heights of existing screening vegetation, and a map or plan showing the proposed development in relation to ridges, peaks, escarpments, skyline features and watercourses.</p>

Map Category	Information required	Details
	<p>Item 3: Mitigation measures.</p>	<p>Detail 3: Landscape concept and intent plan (minimum scale 1:500, with contours, plant species, spacing and establishment) for screening vegetation or visual integration; plus Vegetation Management Plan for sites where any clearing is proposed.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscape Character Types*: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Forested Uplands; ○ Grazed Uplands; or ○ Forested and Woodland Downs. 	<p>Items 1 - 3, plus:</p> <p>Item 4: Landscape Character analysis - consistency or incongruity with existing character.</p>	<p>Details 1 – 3, plus:</p> <p>Detail 4: Description of existing character of surrounding area, analysis of proposed built form scale and character (including earthworks and landscape) and their contrast or compatibility with existing scale, character and landscape; plus photomontage(s).</p> <p>Note- refer SC6.4.3.2 – Landscape Character Types for Landscape Character Type Descriptions.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban Gateways 	<p>Items 1 - 4, plus:</p> <p>Item 5: Location of proposed development in relation to the visual edges of town and features such as silos.</p>	<p>Details 1 – 4, plus:</p> <p>Detail 5: Assessment of likely impacts e.g. whether it will be perceived as reinforcing, obscuring or blurring distinct town edges and/or frame, as seen from scenic routes.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scenic Routes 	<p>Item 2, where preliminary assessment indicates that development is not visible in any views from a Scenic Route towards a HLV area; OR Items 1 – 4, where development will be visible in views from a Scenic Route towards a HLV area, plus:</p> <p>Item 6: Visual intrusion on views to HLV areas, as seen from scenic routes.</p>	<p>Detail 2, where preliminary assessment indicates that development is not visible in any views from a scenic route towards a HLV area. OR Details 1 – 4 plus:</p> <p>Detail 6: Diagrammatic analysis showing view arcs from scenic route and proportion of view affected.</p>

Map Category	Information required	Details
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscape Character Types*: ○ Forested Uplands; ○ Grazed Uplands; or ○ Forested and Woodland Downs; ○ Open Downs; ○ Water Bodies. 	<p>Item 2, where preliminary assessment indicates that development will be below 15 metres high and screened from the road by existing on-site vegetation.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Items 1 – 4, where built form will be above 15 metres in height or will not be screened by existing on-site vegetation, plus:</p> <p>Item 7: Visibility and scale of built form in relation to topography and rural surroundings, as seen from roads.</p>	<p>Detail 2, where preliminary assessment indicates that development will be below 15 metres high and screened by existing on-site vegetation.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Details 1 – 4, where built form will be above 15 metres in height or will not be screened by existing on-site vegetation, plus:</p> <p>Detail 7: Analysis of built form massing (existing and proposed), its relationship to topography, vegetation and rural setting, and setbacks / buffers, as seen from roads.</p> <p>Note- refer SC6.4.3.2 – Landscape Character Types for Landscape Character Type Descriptions.</p>

* Refer **Strategic Framework Map 3 – Community Identity and Landscape Character** for identification of Landscape Character Types.

SC6.4.3.2 Landscape Character Types

Descriptions of Landscape Character Types as defined in Western Downs Landscape Character Analysis (Cardno Chenoweth, 2010) are provided in Table SC6.4.2.

Table SC6.4.2 – Landscape character types

Character Type	Description
Uplands	Generally, the uplands of the Great Dividing Range, Bunya Mountains National Park and other mountains create the landscape 'frame' and view shed edges, and form the scenic background to most views across the Downs. The rolling plains and wooded hills of the Downs are best appreciated from mountain viewpoints, and then only from places where natural or cleared openings in the forest cover allow views.

<p>Forested Uplands</p>	<p>The forested uplands comprise many different vegetation communities, but in terms of broad landscape character they may be grouped as:</p> <p>(i) Eucalypt & Cypress Forest (95%) A relatively high proportion of uplands remain forested with eucalypt and cypress pine forests, including the large Barakula State Forest in the northwest. Views from the road in these forests are also limited by the vegetation, except along cleared edges. Forested upper slopes and skyline ridges are visible from roads and the surrounding Downs, and form attractive backgrounds to many views over cleared agricultural land; and</p> <p>(ii) Rainforest & Dry Vine Forest (5%) The rainforest areas of the Bunya Mountains National Park in the north-east of the study area (and the neighbouring South Burnett Region) are unique to this region, with the distinctive shapes of tall Bunya Pines emergent above dense rainforest, with occasional grassy patches ('balds'). Other patches of dense forest remaining in the study area are mainly Dry Vine Thickets. Views from the road are limited by the dense shaded forest cover, except in the 'balds' and along cleared edges</p>
<p>Grazed Uplands</p>	<p>Areas where the forest and woodland vegetation has been cleared or thinned for grazing generally occupy hillslopes fringing the forested uplands. The landscape patterns may be broadly grouped as:</p> <p>(i) Woodland/Grassland Mosaic (85%) Where trees and understorey have been thinned for grazing, or where the forest cover is interspersed with small patches and strips of pasture or native grasses, the mosaic landscape is part of the rural pattern; and</p> <p>(ii) Grassland (15%) Clearing for pasture extends into the uplands, mainly on the lower slopes, where grassland and cattle are an important part of the rural landscape and allow more extensive views, often with a backdrop of wooded hills.</p>
<p>Downs</p>	<p>Generally, the flat plains with intensive agriculture, interspersed with undulating low hills with grazing or forest cover, represent the distinctive rural Darling Downs character. Where trees are absent from the land use or from the roadside, long views across the flat landscape are available towards distant features.</p>
<p>Forested & Woodland Downs</p>	<p>Areas where trees form a dominant component of landscape character include:</p> <p>(i) Forest / Woodland / Grassland Mosaic (65%) Mosaic areas include a mixture of grassland and forest in various scales and degrees of thinning, as well as bands and strips or riparian vegetation along rivers and creeks; and</p> <p>(ii) Native Forests & Woodland (35%) The larger tracts of remnant vegetation in State Forests or reserves, or remaining on private rural land, indicate the pre-European landscape of the Darling Downs and also support most of its native biodiversity. These forests and woodlands are diverse in their composition and density, and also contribute significantly to the diversity of landscape character as seen from the road or from elevated viewpoints.</p>

Character Type	Description
Open Downs	<p>Parts of the study area where extensive views are available across flat plains, and where trees and built form are a minor part of the landscape character. These areas include:</p> <p>(i) Cropland with patches/strips of trees (73%) Extensive areas of flat plain used for irrigated cropping typify the distinctive landscape imagery of the Darling Downs, with mountains in the distant background. As seen from the roads, some of these paddocks are fringed by trees, often associated with watercourses or retained / planted as shelterbelts, and this vegetation provides a sense of scale to the seen landscape. Smaller flat areas of irrigated or dryland cropping on alluvial or other good soils, often surrounded by woodland or grassland. also occur throughout the region; and</p> <p>(ii) Grassland (27%) Areas of grassland used for grazing occur on land and soils generally not suitable for cultivation or outside irrigation areas. As with the upland grassland, these are an important part of the rural landscape and allow more extensive views, often with a backdrop of wooded hills.</p>
Waterbodies	The main waterbodies of Lake Broadwater and The Gums Lagoon, and other smaller ponds and dams too small to map at regional scale, provide contrast in the scenery and contribute to landscape diversity.

SC6.4.3.3 Preliminary Assessment

As indicated in Table SC6.4.1 – Landscape Assessment Requirements, the information required by Council to accompany development applications in areas triggered by the Scenic Amenity overlay maps comprises up to five details, depending on the location of development. In some cases (as indicated above), preliminary assessment may indicate whether or not additional investigation and detailed submissions are required, at the discretion of Council.

SC6.4.3.4 Documentation

The information required by Council to accompany applications should include, as a minimum, the following information:

Table SC6.4.3 – Landscape assessment documentation requirements

Responsible author(s)	Credentials of author(s). assessor(s), qualifications & organization
Description of the study area	Location & size of site, brief description of site based on aerial photos, landscape overlay map categories
Development description	A brief description of proposed development, size and scale, setback or buffering, landscaping and intended use.
Preliminary and desktop assessment	Topographic analysis of viewshed and sight line section(s) to verify landscape values and overlay map categories, and indicate whether more detailed investigation is required
Detailed Assessment	Landscape analysis description of site and surrounding landscape context, and project assessment (including mitigation), as per details 1 – 4 above, as triggered by the overlay maps and the Table above, plus details 5. 6 and/or 7 as required; with accompanying Figures and Plates.

Summary of Potential Impacts	Description of the likely impacts of the proposed development on character and visual or scenic amenity values of the site and surrounding lands.
Summary of Mitigation Measures	Measures proposed to avoid or minimise visual intrusion associated with the proposed development, particularly in areas that are where the proposal is inconsistent with the character and/or is visible from scenic routes, towns and lookouts.

References

Cardno Chenoweth (2010) *Western Downs Landscape Character Analysis*. For Western Downs Regional Council through Cardno HRP.