

**THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT ON PORTION 79 OF FARM RUYGTE
VALLY NO.205, SEDGEFIELD, GARDEN ROUTE IN THE WESTERN
CAPE PROVINCE**

VISUAL COMPLIANCE STATEMENT



PREPARED BY:



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TABLES OF CONTENTS	Page
TABLES OF CONTENTS	1
LIST OF FIGURES	1
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	1
1. INTRODUCTION	3
1.1. PROJECT INFORMATION AND SCOPE.....	3
1.2. INFORMATION BASE.....	3
1.3. STUDY AREA.....	4
2. IDENTIFICATION OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS	6
2.1. LANDSCAPE CHARACTER	6
2.2. VISUAL OBSERVATIONS	6
2.3. IDENTIFIED IMPACTS	7
2.4. SITE PHOTOS	8
3. VISUAL COMPLIANCE STATEMENT AND CONCLUSION	10
3.1. VISUAL INFLUENCE.....	10
3.2. EXPECTED VISUAL IMPACT	11
3.3. CONCLUSION	11
GLOSSARY OF TERMS.....	13
REFERENCES	15

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Locality Plan	4
Figure 2: Conceptual Design Plan of Proposed Development.....	5
Figure 3: Architectural Concept Ideas for Proposed Building Design	5
Figure 4: Site Photos	8

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment.
LCA	Landscape Character Assessment.
LT	Landscape Type
VAC	Visual Absorption Capacity
VIA	Visual Impact Assessment.
ZVI	Zone of Visual Influence.

1. INTRODUCTION

Outline Landscape Architects was requested to compile a Visual Compliance Statement for the proposed development on Portion 79 of the Farm Ruygte Vally no. 205, between Knysna and Sedgefield, along the Garden Route in the Western Cape Province.

The Visual Compliance Statement focuses on the potential impact of the physical aspects of the proposed development (i.e., form, scale, and bulk), and their potential impact within the local landscape and receptor context.

Kathrin Hammel, the principal Landscape Architect and Visual Specialist from Outline Landscape Architects undertook this Visual Compliance Statement. She is a registered Professional Landscape Architect at the South African Council of Landscape Architects, SACLAP registration no. 20162 and has been involved as a Visual Impact Specialist since 2009.

1.1. PROJECT INFORMATION AND SCOPE

The **scope of work**, from the conceptual design (Figure 2 & 3) includes:

- Construction of a residential home of 200m² in footprint area.
- Construction of 3 free-standing cottages of 65m² in footprint area.
- A raised boardwalk connecting the cottages and house with the parking area.
- Construction of a shed of 80m² in footprint area.
- Construction of a staff quarter building of 50m² in footprint area
- A gravel road, approximately 3m in width and parking for 3 vehicles.

This **Visual Compliance Statement** will address the following objectives:

- Determination of the extent of the study area.
- Description of the proposed project and the receiving environment.
- Identification of the elements of particular visual value and -quality that could be affected by the proposed project.
- Identification of landscape- and visual receptors in the study area that may be affected by the proposed project and their sensitivity.
- Indication of potential landscape- and visual impacts.

1.2. INFORMATION BASE

- Topographical maps from land surveyor and satellite images from Google Earth.
- Observations made and photographs taken during the site visit on the 7th of January 2025.
- Professional judgement based on experience gained from similar projects.

1.3. STUDY AREA

The study area is located to the west of Knysna and to the south-east of Sedgefield and is approximately 700m in direct distance to the east of Cola Beach. The site is within the Garden Route District Municipality and the Knysna Local Municipality. The site is located south of Lake Pleasant Resort and Groenvlei Lake, on an unspoilt site above the beach (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Locality Plan

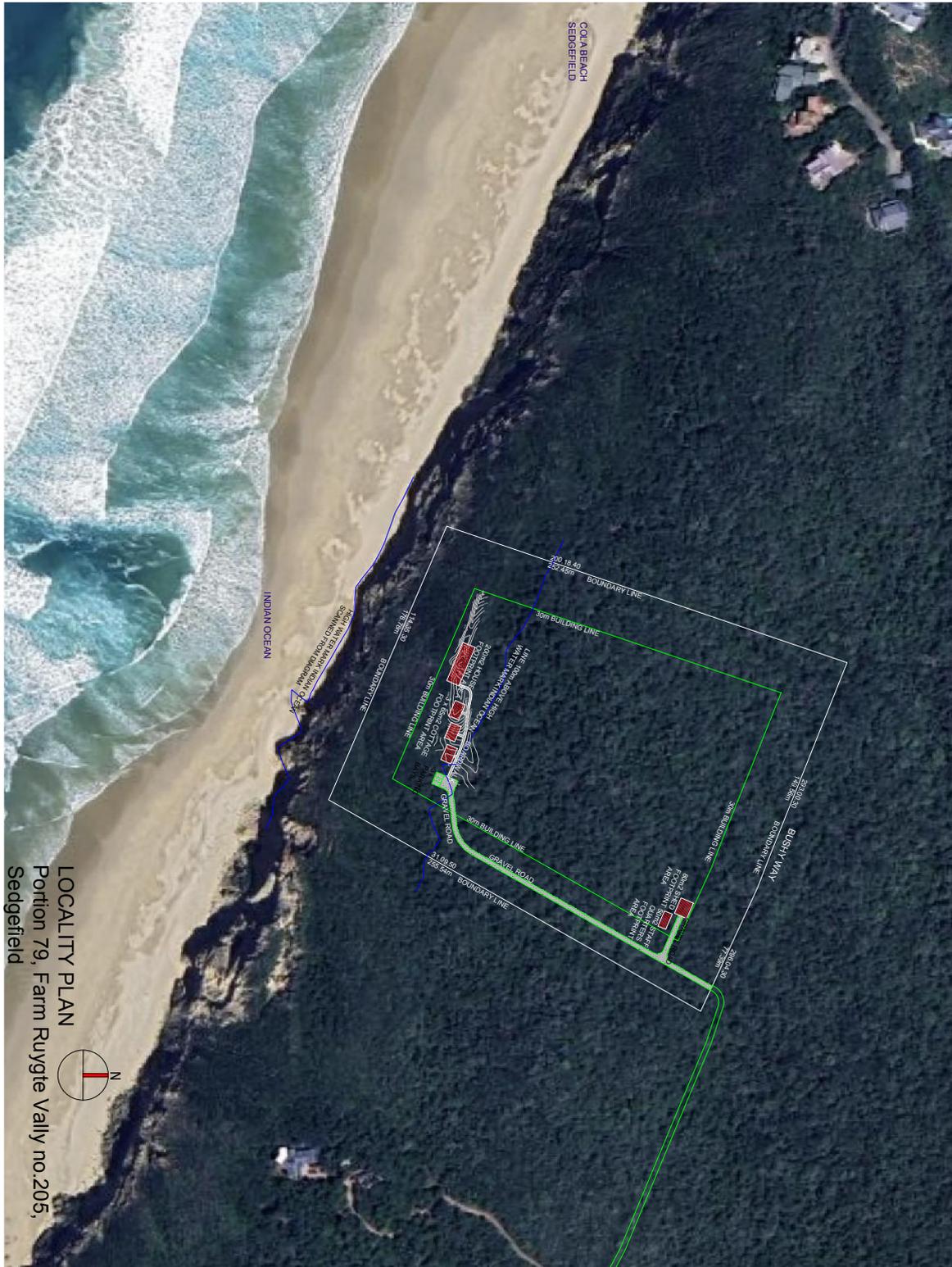


Figure 2: Conceptual Design Plan of the Proposed Development

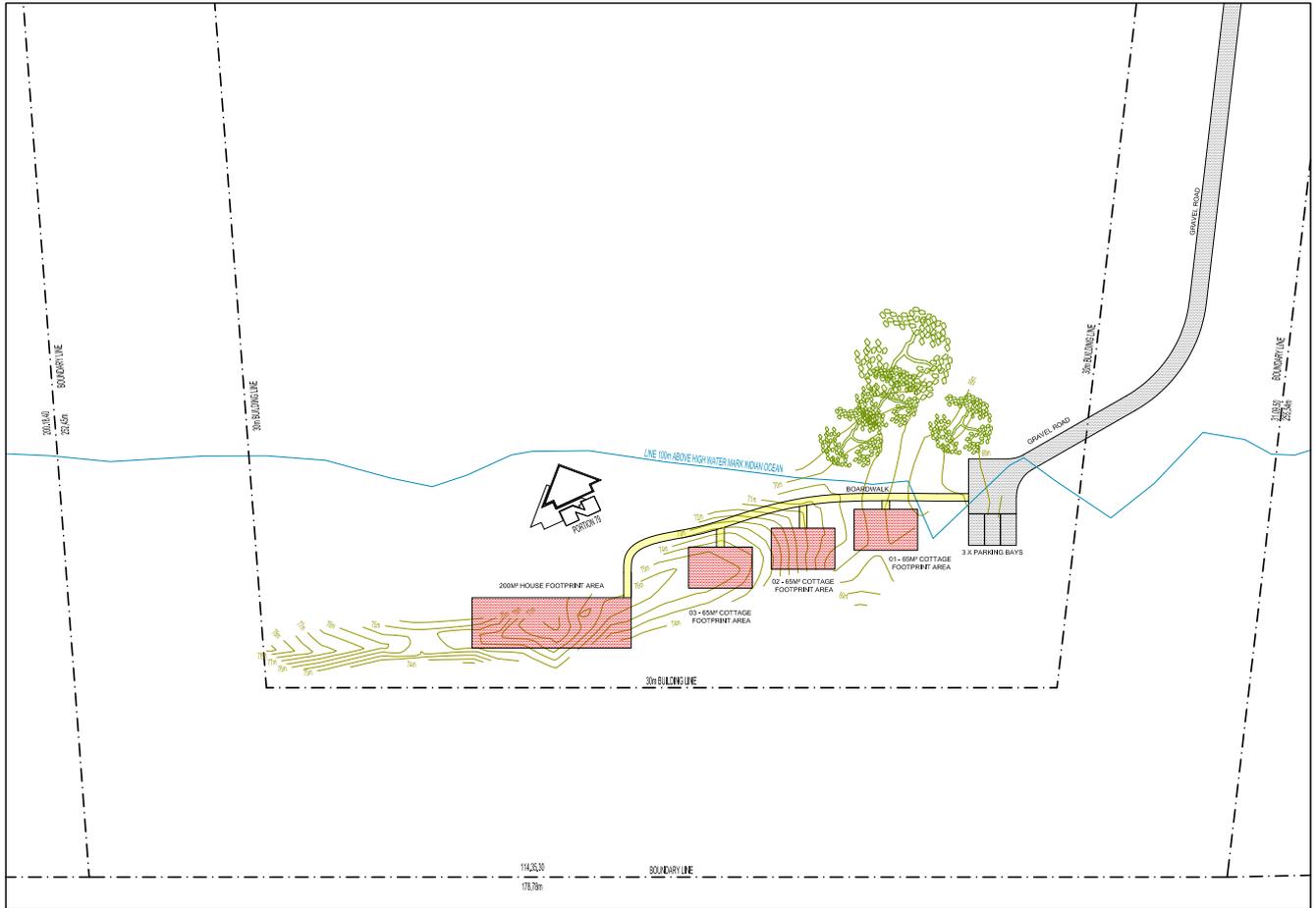


Figure 3: Architectural Concept Ideas for the Proposed Building Designs



2. IDENTIFICATION OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS

2.1. LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

The study area consists primarily of coastal towns and natural fynbos and agricultural landscapes in the inland. Sedgefield is a seaside village along the Garden Route. The prominent thoroughfare road is the N2 connecting Cape Town to Gqeberha.

The study area consists of pockets of un-spoilt natural landscape and long stretches of beaches. The background of the site is the Outeniqua Mountain range. The proposed development will be situated on top of a stabilized coastal dune that allows for beautiful vistas over the ocean and towards Gericke's Point. The property is located on low-sloping areas behind the front dune edge. The site rises to about 70m above sea level.

The area falls within the Fynbos biome. The coastal vegetation consists mainly of coastal shrubs, dune vegetation and small trees. The majority of the site consists of dense, shrubby, thicket vegetation, with large trees close to the highest point of the site.

2.2. VISUAL OBSERVATIONS

The site visit provided essential insights into the visual dynamics of the proposed development onto the landscape.

The site is accessed from Groenvlei Road off the N2. The road passes the Groenvlei Lake and the Lake Pleasant Holiday Resort. A smaller gravel road diverges from the Groenvlei Road, which is a concealed one-way dirt road leading to another residential development on the neighbouring site. A new road will have to be extended and constructed to the proposed development.

The development is proposed on the highest point of the site and is on a cliff approximately 70m above the beach.

From the site visit, it was established that the site is not visible from the N2 and Lake Pleasant Resort due to the higher topography and dense vegetation of the site. The development will also not be visible to viewers on the beach due to the highly elevated and eroded cliffs.

Visual Absorption Capacity (VAC): Visual Absorption Capacity (VAC) signifies the ability of the landscape to accept additional human intervention without serious loss of character and visual quality or value. VAC is founded on the characteristics of the physical environment such as:

- Degree of visual screening:
A degree of visual screening is provided by landforms, vegetation cover and/or structures such as buildings. For example, a high degree of visual screening is present in an area that is mountainous and is covered with a forest compared to an undulating and mundane landscape covered in grass.
- Terrain variability:
Terrain variability reflects the magnitude of topographic elevation and diversity in slope variation. A highly variable terrain will be recognised as one with great elevation differences and a diversity of slope variation creating talus slopes, cliffs and valleys. An undulating landscape with a monotonous and repetitive landform will be an example of a low terrain variability.
- Land cover:
Land cover refers to the perceivable surface of the landscape and the diversity of patterns, colours and textures that are presented by the particular land cover (i.e. urbanised, cultivated, forested, etc.)

A basic rating system is used to evaluate the three VAC parameters. The values are relative and relate to the type of project that is proposed and how it may be absorbed in the landscape (Table 4). A three-value range is used; three (3) being the highest potential to absorb an element in the landscape and one (1) being the lowest potential. The values are counted together and categorised in a high, medium or low VAC rating.

ACTIVITY	VISUAL SCREENING	TERRAIN VARIABILITY	LAND COVER	VAC
Proposed Development	3	3	2	High

The topography of the study area and the moderate height of the vegetation, provides a high VAC.

Visual Intrusion: Visual Intrusion is the nature of an object on the visual quality of the environment resulting in its compatibility (absorbed into the landscape elements) or discord (contrasts of the landscape elements) with the landscape and surrounding land uses.

The proposed development is planned to have a very sensitive design approach. The total site is approximately 5 hectares, and the footprint of the buildings encompass only an area of 525m². Smaller, separate buildings are planned, instead of one large, voluminous building. This allows for breaking of a solid mass and allows for vegetated areas between buildings, providing screening of the development. The building materials are envisioned to be natural materials, with a combination of light steel and glass structures, to easily blend into the natural environment.

2.3. IDENTIFIED IMPACTS

During the site assessment for the proposed development, a few issues were identified that could potentially impact the visual harmony of the environment:

- **Natural Vegetation:** The area is characterised by dense natural vegetation typical of the Fynbos biome which offers visual screening. Existing vegetation should be minimally removed and will be a large mitigating factor to lessen the visual impact of the proposed development. The preservation of as much as possible existing vegetation is important to enhance the site's natural aesthetic appeal.
- **Topography:** The topography of the area is varied, and sloping landscapes surround the site. The elevated topography of the site allows for optimal views over the ocean, but structures should be designed to fit into the landscape to minimise the visual intrusion of the new buildings. Utilising the natural depressions and contours of the land to minimise visibility during construction activities are important and will facilitate quicker recovery, post-construction, that will help reduce the visual footprint of the development.
- **Existing Infrastructure:** There is little existing infrastructure directly surrounding the site; therefore, the area is relatively unspoilt. This emphasises the need for strategic placement and thoughtful design to integrate seamlessly with the existing environment. Special consideration is also required during construction activities so that they do not disrupt the current usage patterns and visual aesthetics of the environment.

By proactively addressing each identified challenge, the project can be tailored to respect the local landscape, ensuring that visual impacts are minimised.

2.4. SITE PHOTOS



Entrance to Lake Pleasant Resort



Groenvlei Road from N2 leading to the site



View towards Groenvlei



Narrow one-track access road towards site



End of existing road, that will be extended to site



View towards site, dense thicket vegetation



Large indigenous trees with dense undergrowth



Large trees near highest point of the site



View towards north from highest point of the site



View across the ocean from highest point



View to the east



View to the west and Gericke's Point



High cliffs, up to 70m on beach below the site.



View towards Cola Beach and Gericke's Point

3. VISUAL COMPLIANCE STATEMENT AND CONCLUSION

This section addresses the visual influence and expected visual impacts of the proposed development.

3.1. VISUAL INFLUENCE

By determining the zone of potential visual influence, it is possible to identify the extent of potential visibility and views which could be affected by the proposed development. Its maximum extent is the radius around an object beyond which the visual impact of its most visible features will be insignificant primarily due to distance.

Possible visual receptors to the development include nearby residents, motorists and tourists.

The nearest residence is approximately 250m to the east. The resident is a neighbour that has similar interests and circumstances.

Cola Beach, a suburb in Sedgfield is 700m to the west. Due to the topography changes and dense vegetation and the proposed design of the development, the development is not expected to have a visual impact on residents of Cola Beach.

The N2 that has the most traffic, and motorists, is 2km to the north from the site. Due to the varied topography and dense vegetation, the proposed development is not anticipated to cause a visual impact on these motorists.

The proposed site is 1km from Groenvlei Road. It is a winding road with interesting viewpoints, such as the Groenvlei Lake and the anticipation of reaching the Groenvlei Beach. Motorists and tourists travelling this road will not be directly exposed to views of the proposed development.

Groenvlei Beach is a local favourite and not a popular tourist destination. It attracts local visitors and fishermen. The beach is approximately 70m below the site and proposed development. The cliffs are highly eroded and form overhangs. Views from the beach upwards towards the proposed development are limited due to the cliff overhangs and a direct visual impact is not anticipated. Viewers are also focused on the ocean and the beach itself.

- **Existing Visual Context:** A thorough review of the area's existing visual context, which comprises natural landscapes and intermittent infrastructural features, has confirmed the project's capacity to harmonise with the regional aesthetic. The strategic environmentally sensitive design of the development will minimise physical visibility, thereby enhancing visual integration and reducing potential disruptions.
- **Visibility and Exposure:** Strategic visual integration involves employing construction strategies that mimic the natural environment and using landscaping to enhance visual buffering. These mitigation measures will ensure harmonious integration of the proposed development into the environment.

3.2. EXPECTED VISUAL IMPACTS

Negative impacts that may arise from the proposed development include:

- **Alteration of Landscape Character:** Although the design should seamlessly be integrated into the landscape, the temporary construction activities and removal of some vegetation, could alter the visual character of the natural views.
- **Dust and Construction Impact:** As with most construction projects, activities are expected to generate dust and debris, which could temporarily affect the local visual environment.
- **Nighttime Lighting:** The use of lighting for security and operational purposes may introduce light pollution. This could impact wildlife and diminish the local community's enjoyment of naturally dark night skies. The selection of lighting solutions that will keep light pollution to a minimum should be taken into consideration during the design phase.

To mitigate the visual impacts identified, the detail design should have mitigation measure in place to reduce visual impacts. These include sensitive site placement of the buildings, natural materials and colours to be used for buildings. A rehabilitation strategy should be put in place where plants that have to be removed due to construction activities, can be salvaged and kept in a nursery. These plants can then be replanted once construction is completed.

Construction management practices should be implemented for effective dust suppression techniques and restricting operations to daylight hours to reduce disturbances. Controlled lighting is carefully designed to minimise light pollution, ensuring minimal disruption to the natural nighttime environment.

All temporary structures and debris should be promptly removed after construction to restore the site's visual integrity, maintaining the visual aesthetic of the landscape.

3.3. CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that the proposed development can be authorised provided it is integrated effectively within the environment with minimal visual intrusions. The use of the land's inherent VAC enhances the project's ability to minimise visual impacts substantially.

The visual impact of the project is minimal, given its scope and nature, and must be continually managed through best practice methods throughout the project's lifecycle.

The report has assessed the existing visual conditions and the project's compatibility with the landscape. The potential visual impacts, while inherently minimal due to the project's environmentally sensitive approach, can be effectively mitigated through careful planning, strategic placement, and conscientious ongoing management.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Aesthetics	The science or philosophy concerned with the quality of sensory experience. (ULI, 1980)
Horizon contour	A line that encircles a development site and that follows ridgelines where the sky forms the backdrop, and no landform is visible as a background. This is essentially the skyline that when followed through the full 360-degree arc as viewed from a representative point on the site defines the visual envelope of the development. This defines the boundary outside which the development would not be visible.
Landscape characterisation/ character	This covers the gathering of information during the desktop study and field survey work relating to the existing elements, features, and extent of the landscape (character). It includes the analysis and evaluation of the above and the supporting illustration and documentary evidence.
Landscape condition	Refers to the state of the landscape of the area making up the site and that of the study area in general. Factors affecting the condition of the landscape can include the level maintenance and management of individual landscape elements such as buildings, woodlands etc and the degree of disturbance of landscape elements by non-characteristics elements such as invasive tree species in grassland or car wrecks in a field.
Landscape impact	Changes to the physical landscape resulting from the development that include the removal of existing landscape elements and features, the addition of new elements associated with the development and altering of existing landscape elements or features in such a way as to have a detrimental effect on the value of the landscape.
Landscape unit	A landscape unit can be interpreted as an “outdoor room” which are enclosed by clearly defined landforms or vegetation. Views within a landscape unit are contained and face inward.
Sense of place	That distinctive quality that makes a particular place memorable to the visitor, which can be interpreted in terms of the visual character of the landscape. A more emotive sense of place is that of local identity and attachment for a place “ <i>which begins as undifferentiated space [and] becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value</i> ” (Tuan 1977) ¹ .
Viewer exposure	The extent to which viewers are exposed to views of the landscape in which the proposed development will be located. Viewer exposure considers the visibility of the site, the viewing conditions, the viewing distance, the number of viewers affected the activity of the viewers (tourists or workers) and the duration of the views.
Viewer sensitivity	The assessment of the receptivity of viewer groups to the visible landscape elements and visual character and their perception of visual quality and value. The sensitivity of viewer groups depends on their activity and awareness within the affected landscape, their preferences, preconceptions and their opinions.
Visual absorption capacity (VAC)	The inherent ability of a landscape to accept change or modification to the landscape character and/or visual character without diminishment of the visual quality or value, or the loss of visual amenity. A high VAC rating implies a high ability to absorb visual impacts while a low VAC implies a low ability to absorb or conceal visual impacts.

¹ Cited in Climate Change and Our 'Sense of Place', <http://www.ucsus.org/greatlakes/glimpactplace.html>

Visual amenity	The notable features such as hills or mountains or distinctive vegetation cover such as forests and fields of colour that can be identified in the landscape and described. Also included are recognised views and viewpoints, vistas, areas of scenic beauty and areas that are protected in part for their visual value.
Visual character	This addresses the viewer response to the landscape elements and the relationship between these elements that can be interpreted in terms of aesthetic characteristics such as pattern, scale, diversity, continuity and dominance.
Visual contour	The outer perimeter of the visual envelope determined from the site of the development. The two-dimensional representation on plan of the horizon contour.
Visual contrast	The degree to which the physical characteristics of the proposed development differ from that of the landscape elements and the visual character. The characteristics affected typically include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volumetric aspects such as size, form, outline and perceived density. • Characteristics associated with balance and proportion such scale, diversity, dominance, continuity. • Surface characteristics such as colour, texture, reflectivity; and • Luminescence or lighting.
Visual envelope	The approximate extent within which the development can be seen. The extent is often limited to a distance from the development within which views of the development are expected to be of concern.
Visual impact	Changes to the visual character of available views resulting from the development that include obstruction of existing views; removal of screening elements thereby exposing viewers to unsightly views; the introduction of new elements into the view shed experienced by visual receptors and intrusion of foreign elements into the view shed of landscape features thereby detracting from the visual amenity of the area.
Visual impact assessment	A specialist study to determine the visual effects of a proposed development on the surrounding environment. The primary goal of this specialist study is to identify potential risk sources resulting from the project that may impact on the visual environment of the study area, and to assess their significance. These impacts include landscape impacts and visual impacts.
Visual quality	An assessment of the aesthetic excellence of the visual resources of an area. This should not be confused with the value of these resources where an area of low visual quality may still be accorded a high value. Typical indicators used to assess visual quality are vividness, intactness and unity. For more descriptive assessments of visual quality attributes such as variety, coherence, uniqueness, harmony, and pattern can be referred to.
Visual receptors	Includes viewer groups such as the local community, residents, workers, the broader public and visitors to the area, as well as public or community areas from which the development is visible. The existing visual amenity enjoyed by the viewers can be considered a visual receptor such that changes to the visual amenity would affect the viewers.
Zone of visual influence	The extent of the area from which the most elevated structures of the proposed development could be seen and may be considered to be of interest (see visual envelope).

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