

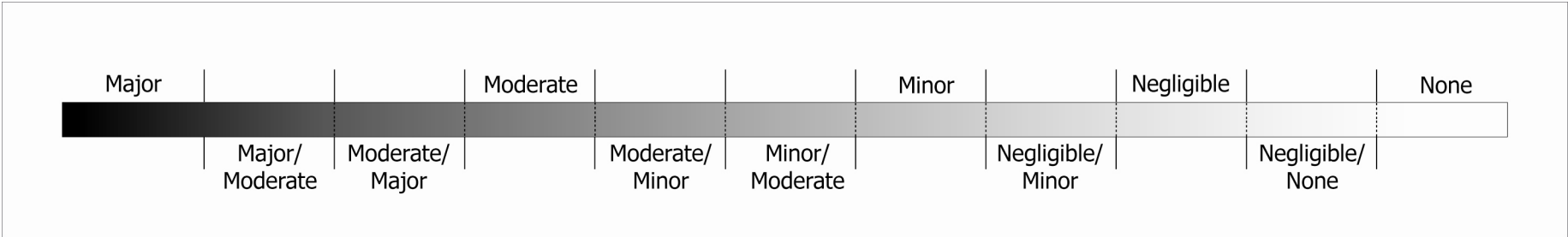
APPENDIX 5.2: SIGNIFICANCE MATRIX AND LANDSCAPE EVALUATION CRITERIA

5.2.1 The significance of potential effect is a product of impact magnitude and receptor sensitivity. The matrix below provides a framework for establishing the degree of significance. The shaded area indicates where the effect would be ‘significant’ in terms of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations 1999.

SIGNIFICANCE MATRIX

Magnitude	Sensitivity		
	High	Medium	Low
Very High	Major	Major/Moderate	Moderate/Major
High	Major/Moderate	Moderate/Major	Moderate
Medium to High	Moderate/Major	Moderate	Moderate/Minor
Medium	Moderate	Moderate/Minor	Minor/Moderate
Low to Medium	Moderate/Minor	Minor/Moderate	Minor
Low	Minor/Moderate	Minor	Negligible/Minor
Very Low	Minor	Negligible/Minor	Negligible
Negligible	Negligible/Minor	Negligible	Negligible/None
None	Negligible/None	Negligible/None	None

Note: Landscape and visual impacts occur across a continuum ranging from maximum to minimum/none. For assessment purposes the significance of effect is classified approximately using a five-point scale of major, moderate, minor, negligible and none. Intermediate effects (those falling in between the main five categories) are measured using two intervals between each main category. For example the interval between major and moderate is divided into major/moderate and moderate/major with the former being slightly greater than the latter. The graphic below illustrates this for the whole spectrum of effects between major and none



LANDSCAPE EVALUATION CRITERIA

5.2.2 The landscape evaluation criteria set out below were developed at a series of focused workshops organised by Natural England over a period of several months during 2010 as part of the process of preparing its recently published guidance regarding on-shore wind energy development – ‘Making Space for Renewable Energy: Assessing On-Shore Wind Energy Development’ (Natural England 2010)

Scale	A large scale landscape, such as extensive rolling uplands or expansive plains, where the turbines are in proportion with the landscape, is likely to have greater capacity for wind energy development than a small scale landscape where turbines can appear to dominate.
Landform	Landform that is smooth and convex, or flat and uniform will generally have greater capacity for wind energy development than dramatic or rugged landform. This is because the former types of landform tend to be less prominent and less distinctive in character.
Landcover	Simple, regular, uncluttered landscapes with sweeping lines and extensive areas of consistent ground cover are likely to have higher capacity for wind energy development than areas with more complex, irregular or intimate landscape patterns (for example ancient, irregular field systems).
Human Influence	A high degree of human influence on the landscape will generally mean that it has greater capacity to accommodate wind energy development. Turbines are likely to be less conspicuous in brownfield or industrial landscapes already affected by built structures such as masts, pylons or chimneys, provided there are no visual conflicts where the structures are seen in close proximity. Commercial forestry also introduces a human influence to upland landscapes and so will generally have higher capacity.
Skylines and Settings	Landscapes that do not form a distinctive backdrop or context tend to have greater capacity for wind energy development than those with strong visual features and focal points such as hilltop monuments, church spires or designed landscape features, which may form important skylines, landmarks or settings for settlements.
Visibility and Views	Landscapes that are visually contained by topography, trees or woodlands and hence have limited inward and outward views will have greater capacity than areas with extensive inward and outward views. Such features may give screening for the lower parts of turbines and for associated access and infrastructure. Extensive close or middle range views from scenic routes, well-known vistas or tourist viewpoints will decrease a landscape's capacity for wind energy development.
Landscape Quality (condition)	Areas where the condition and integrity of landscape patterns, elements and features are relatively good will have less capacity for wind energy development than areas where condition is poor.
Scenic Quality	Scenic quality, that is visual appeal due to important views, visual interest and variety, contrasting landscape patterns, or dramatic topography, will generally decrease the capacity to accommodate wind energy development. Land of high scenic quality occurs within designated landscapes (World Heritage Sites, National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Heritage Coasts) but also elsewhere. The approaches to and settings of areas of high scenic quality will have reduced capacity where there is continuity of landscape character, quality and ecological interests extending outside the designated area.
Wildness and Tranquility	The presence of a relatively wild and/or tranquil character (due to remoteness, freedom from disturbance and factors such as openness and perceived naturalness) will reduce the capacity of a landscape to accommodate wind energy development. The introduction of wind turbines may alter perceptions of wildness and tranquillity, introducing movement, sound and light effects and possibly bringing a more industrial character.
Historic Environment	The presence of sites and areas containing archaeological, historical or built environment features that are highly valued for their historic environment interest will decrease capacity for wind farms, particularly where these features may directly affected by construction works and/or access tracks; or where enjoyment and the ability to interpret these features may be diminished.
Cultural Associations	Specific cultural (i.e. historical, folklore, literary or artistic) associations relating to the landscape may result in decreased capacity for wind energy development if the character or perceptions of the landscape concerned are likely to be significantly degraded.
Amenity and Recreation	Areas offering access to high quality landscapes, memorable places, special experiences and to a range of opportunities for open-air recreation will have less capacity for wind energy development due to potential effects on a site's accessibility and/or on the quality of the recreational experience enjoyed by the public.

Source: Natural England – ‘Assessing the Environmental Capacity for On-Shore Wind Energy Development’ – Consultation Draft (July 2009)