

APPENDIX ES10.1
LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Verified Photomontage Views and Methodology

Cooks Hole Quarry & Thornhaugh Landfill Site

23rd January 2024





Client Augean
Project Cooks Hole Quarry & Thornhaugh
Landfill Site
Drawing Title Viewpoint Location Plan



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Photomontage - Existing Baseline Photograph

View flat at a comfortable arm's length



Photomontage - Proposed Development

View flat at a comfortable arm's length



Photomontage - Existing Baseline Photograph

View flat at a comfortable arm's length



Photomontage - Proposed Development

View flat at a comfortable arm's length

Overview

A verified photomontage is a visual representation of a proposed development that is as accurate as it is possible to be within the limits of the technology used and the available data. Although it is not possible to achieve 100% perfect accuracy due to minor errors in survey work, environmental variables and photographic distortion, the careful implementation of a best practise method will result in only a negligible error.

The photomontage images represent how the proposed development would be perceived from a number of locations surrounding the site. These locations were chosen as the result of a detailed consideration of sensitive viewpoints.

The methods described in this document are based on current best practise and follow recommendations from 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd edition' (GLVIA3), Landscape Institute and IEMA (2013), alongside the Landscape Institute technical guidance note, 'Visual Representation of Development Proposals, (LI 06/19)

Methodology

Photography

During the field study, a photographic record was made to represent the full range of potential views towards the site from available viewpoints within the study area. These locations are mapped, the visual receptor types recorded and viewpoint context described. The methodology ensures that the combination of camera and lens recreates as close as possible what can be seen by the human eye.

Equipment:

The aim of a verified photomontage is to illustrate what a proposed development may look like to a person standing at a specified photographic viewpoint. In order to create this effect, all photographs are taken with a camera and lens combination, resulting in a 'standard' focal length (equivalent to the cone of human vision). A standard focal length is usually considered to be in the range 45mm to 55mm on a traditional 35mm film camera. On digital cameras, where the image sensor is often smaller than the recorded image on traditional film cameras, the focal length of the lens used must compensate for the effective magnification resulting from the smaller sensor.

A Canon 5D Mark IV full frame sensor camera was used for all viewpoints in conjunction with a 50mm prime lens (35mm format equivalent), which is within the 'standard' focal length range. The full frame sensor in the all cameras therefore, results in no magnification. To eliminate the parallax error that occurs when taking panoramic images, a sliding plate on the tripod head was employed allowing the camera to be moved back along the line of sight so that the nodal point of the lens was positioned directly over the axis of rotation.

Image capture: The camera was mounted on a tripod using a panoramic tripod head at 1.6m above ground level to simulate the view at eye level.

The orientation of the camera was adjusted so that the optical axis and the horizontal axis were aligned with the horizon. This is the 'astronomical' horizon as set by a gravity governed bubble level.

Images were captured in the camera's RAW image mode to ensure maximum quality. Camera settings were chosen carefully for each viewpoint; the camera was set to aperture priority mode, a small aperture of f/11 was used and the focus distance selected specifically to render all parts of the scene in focus whilst retaining image quality.

Panoramas were deemed essential to show the significant context of the proposed development and so frames were taken at 15-degree intervals to allow for overlap (discussed below).

Post Production: The panoramas were stitched together using PT Gui Pro specialist panorama creation software, with each photograph being cropped to take only the central portion of each image. These precautions minimise the small amount of optical distortion effect caused by the camera lens. Images were imported as jpeg files and minor tonal and colour adjustments were made which aim to replicate the scene as honestly as possible as it was perceived by the photographer at the time of capture. The stitched cylindrical panorama was then cropped to 90° for use as a baseline 'existing' view.

Survey:

Precise surveying was essential to gain accurate information of the camera and control point positions. GPS readings were taken from the central tripod position that the camera was placed using an Emlid Reach RS2 GNSS Receiver, which achieved a 25mm degree of tolerance.

Control Points:

Control points are surveyed points/objects that can clearly be identified on the photograph. Since they are included in the 3D model, they can be visually matched with the corresponding points on the photograph.

Control points were identified within each photograph of fixed features such as lamp-posts, fences and sign posts and GPS locations were taken. Occasionally if available, control points taken from another viewpoint were also used for even more accurate positioning of the 3D model within the photograph. These control points were then created within the 3D program in the precise positions.

All survey measurements were supplied in CAD format for use in the 3D model.

3D Model

3D models were created and supplied which were then aligned within 3DS Max using the site masterplan to determine the X and Y position. Finished floor levels were then used to accurately position the 3D model vertically AOD (above ordnance datum).

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Camera Matching and Rendering

The process of camera matching (i.e. correctly assembling the perspective views within the 3D program to match those photographs taken on site) needs meticulous attention to detail. The details of the Ordnance Survey co-ordinates for each viewpoint, and the angle of each view were also checked as part of the verification process.

The survey information was added into the 3D model and aligned precisely with the OSGB36 coordinate system. 'Virtual' Cameras (or perspective views) were then created within 3DS Max at each of the viewpoint locations and raised by 1.6m to match the position at eye-level that was achieved during photography.

Any atmospheric conditions experienced at the time of taking the photograph were added to the model. For example, haze or reflected sunlight.

Using the 'Virtual' camera each cylindrical panorama was used as a backdrop and rendered using a V-Ray camera option that mirrors the distortion exhibited in a cylindrical panorama. Adjustments were then made to the 'virtual' camera and the position of the photograph to align the 3D control points with the real-life equivalents shown in each panorama, thus creating a 'photo-matched' viewpoint with the model aligned at the correct scale and angle.

A daylight system was then created within 3DS Max using the geographic location and time zone, then setting the correct time that the viewpoint was captured. This allows for the accurate creation of shadows as at the time of taking the photograph. For viewpoints taken in full cloud, a High Dynamic Range Image (HDRI) was mapped as a 'dome light' within 3DS Max and used as the main light source. An HDRI is an image format that contains a large amount of shadow and highlight information and can be used to illuminate a 3D scene, providing a good representation of conditions on a cloudy day.

Post production

Care was taken in Adobe Photoshop to mask out elements of the 3D model that may be obscured by foreground objects to produce the final visualisations.

Caveats

- i. A photomontage can never be considered as a 100% accurate representation of what would be seen due to the large number of variables affecting the images from the photography to the limitations of the 3D programs. They should be used as an aid to the decision making process.
- ii. All images are presented at A1 width, A4 height and should not be rescaled when printing.

References

All photomontages were created in accordance with recommendations given in the following publications:

Landscape Institute and IEMA (2013) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd edition (GLVIA3).

Landscape Institute:

Note 06/19 - Visual Representation of Development Proposals

Note 07/19 - Visual Representation of Development Proposals: Glossary and Abbreviations

Note 08/19 - Visual Representation of Development Proposals: Camera Auto Settings

Scottish Natural Heritage (2017) Visual representation of windfarms: good practice guidance. ('SNH 2017')

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