

**Landscape Architecture:
Elements of Practice and Areas of
Specialism**

Consultation Draft March 2011

Introduction

The chartered profession of landscape architecture

Landscape architecture is defined in the Landscape Institute’s Charter as embracing “all aspects of the science, planning, design, implementation and management of landscapes and their environment in urban and rural areas.” It includes assessing, conserving, developing, creating and managing landscapes of all types and scales with the aim of ensuring that they are sustainable, aesthetically pleasing, functional, ecologically healthy and, where relevant, able to accommodate the built environment.

Landscape architects undertake a wide range of functions to achieve the above aims, depending on their specific expertise and the context of their work. They draw on their understanding of the arts and sciences relating to the landscape and apply knowledge and principles from ecology, horticulture, design, planning, construction and management. They use intellectual skills, analysis and synthesis to assess and evaluate the landscape and its character, address landscape problems, and take forward projects and achieve solutions that maintain the interests of the landscape and its users.

About this document

The two statements contained in this document, *Elements of practice* (section A), and *Areas of specialism* (section B) are intended to provide a reference point for the profession, by providing a general statement on what is involved in the day to day practice of landscape architecture and describing the main broad areas of expertise in the profession.

Together, the two documents combine to provide a framework of reference for the profession, to inform the LI’s work in a wide range of activities, including promoting careers in the profession, accrediting higher education programmes, and determining the requirements for achieving chartered status.

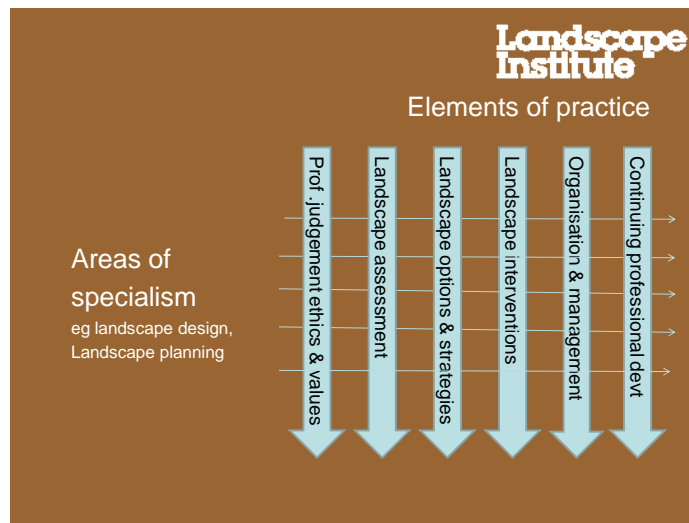


Fig 1 The LI’s professional framework: elements of specialism and aspects of practice

It goes without saying that both the nature of the expertise encompassed by the profession, and the kinds of activity in which landscape architects are involved will change over time. The intention is that this document will be reviewed on a periodic basis, to ensure that it continues to provide an effective reference point for the profession.

Elements of practice (section A)

Elements of practice, describes the main areas of activity involved in the practice of landscape architecture.

Landscape architecture is a diverse profession. Accordingly, not every area of activity undertaken by absolutely every landscape architect will be included in this statement. Equally, there will be some areas which some landscape architects do not undertake in their day to day work (for example, their role might focus on a particular aspect of practice or their organisation may concentrate on providing specific services). Instead, this document provides a broad generic statement on work undertaken in the profession.

The nature of work actually undertaken will also vary depending on the focus or specialism of an individual's practice. For example the type and scope of landscape assessment (element 2) undertaken by a landscape planner may be quite different in nature to those undertaken by a landscape scientist.

The first element *Judgement and ethics*, relates to all aspects of practice and therefore should be seen as applying across all the other elements: judgement and ethics are embedded in all of a landscape architect's work. They are about the very nature of professionalism, and are the context in which all landscape architects activities are undertaken.

Areas of specialism (section B)

The second section, *Areas of specialism*, describes the main distinct areas of specialism or contexts in which landscape architects operate.

Most landscape architects will be able to identify their work and/or their career path as belonging to one (or more) of the five broad areas described, although for many the emphasis of their work will also have developed over time, diversifying or specialising in accordance with their interests, the focus of their organisation or workplace, and the changing contexts of professional practice. These areas are therefore not intended to be exhaustive or to impose rigid boundaries on practitioners' work roles. While five areas have been identified as distinct areas of specialism, there will often be overlaps between them.

Each specialism begins with a general description of the nature of the specialism, before giving an indication of the typical areas of activity it encompasses.

Elements of practice

Element 1: Professional judgement, ethics and values

Introduction to this element

Landscape architects work in complex situations where they need to resolve different interests to achieve the best outcome for the built and natural environment. This involves applying a high standard of judgement and ethical principles to their work, and upholding the standards and values of the profession. The areas that follow apply as appropriate across the five elements of practice.

The element

Landscape architects:

- 1a. **Understand the ethical dimensions to their actions, and their responsibilities as a chartered landscape architect to wider society, handling value-conflicts and ethical dilemmas in a manner which respects the interests of the landscape and all those to whom the landscape matters.**
- 1b. **Act in accordance with the LI's Code of Conduct and Charter, and other standards and codes of practice relevant to their area of practice, acting responsibly in their dealings with the public, employers, clients and colleagues**
- 1c. **Observe all relevant legal requirements and obligations**
This includes those relating to health and safety, employment and contract law, and international agreements.
- 1d. **Understand the wider contexts in which landscape interventions and decisions are made, the implications of these contexts for landscape practice, actions and interventions**
This includes the environmental, social, political, cultural and economic contexts of their work, and the possible impact or implications of interventions and proposals, including decisions to take no action. It also includes
 - acting responsibly in the design, planning, management and policy decisions affecting the health of natural systems
 - Identifying and involving stakeholders in helping to make decisions that affect their lives and future, ensuring that they have appropriate access to relevant information, in an understandable form
- 1e. **Maintain, and constantly seek to develop their professional knowledge in general and in their specific area(s) of practice, ensuring that they understand and take account of current and emerging principles, philosophies and guidelines relevant to the profession and their particular areas of practice and expertise**
Appreciate and consider alternative, valid methods and approaches that are relevant to their practice.
- 1f. **Take responsibility for protecting, conserving and enhancing the natural and built environment within their influence**

This includes

- acting with an awareness of and respect for the ecological, cultural, historic and spiritual contexts of the landscape
- striving to maintain, conserve or re-establish the integrity and diversity of biological systems and their functions,
- using indigenous and compatible materials and plants in the creation of habitat for indigenous species of animals

- 1g. **Develop and specify products, materials, technologies and techniques that conserve resources and foster landscape regeneration**
- 1h. **Recognise the limits of their own understanding and abilities, and practise within them**
- 1i. **Ensure that own work practices and those in wider area of responsibility comply with relevant Health & Safety regulations and guidelines, minimising risk to self and others**
- 1j. **Act as ambassadors for the profession in all their activities, educating and promoting understanding of the value and role of the landscape, landscape approaches and techniques to fellow professionals, stakeholders and the public**

This includes

- seeking opportunities to promote awareness of the profession to the widest possible audience
- encouraging environmentally positive, financially sound and sustainable solutions to land use, development and management opportunities
- shaping decisions, attitudes and values that support public health and welfare, environmental respect, and landscape regeneration
- promoting knowledge and understanding of materials and technology to enhance the appreciation of and resolution of practical landscape issues and problems
- Promoting better understanding of the principles and purposes of natural, biological and physical systems affecting or relating to the landscape

Element 2: Landscape Assessment

Introduction to this element

This element focuses on establishing the requirements of the project and the client brief, and assessing the current condition, value and context of the landscape unit. The specific assessment methodologies that are appropriate will depend on the focus of the landscape architect's work, the brief, and the site context.

The element

Landscape architects:

- 2a. **Identify client requirements**
This includes

- establishing the stakeholders immediate and anticipated future goals, priorities and budgets
 - identifying relevant factors and requirements which might have an impact on the project, including any constraints and risks.
 - identifying any requests or requirements which might not be realistic or appropriate and discussing and agreeing valid alternatives
 - summarising and reflecting back to the client their understanding of the project
- 2b. **Identify user requirements and expectations**
Establishing who will be the users or beneficiaries of the project and their expectations and requirements, challenging expectations which may not be appropriate or realistic and discussing alternatives, and summarising and reflecting back to stakeholders their understanding of their requirements
- 2c. **Assess the significance and context of the landscape unit to be assessed**
Undertaking research to appraise the significance and context of the landscape unit to be assessed, including
- the legislative and planning policy framework pertinent to the site,
 - local perceptions of the landscape and
 - any personal, cultural, historic, spiritual, symbolic or financial significance associated with the landscape unit.
- 2d. **Assess the landscape unit and define the impact of proposed change**
This includes assessing its features/assets, character, value and sensitivity and the ability of the landscape to accommodate change.
- Evaluating and defining the character and visual amenity of the landscape unit and that of the wider landscape context in which it sits, defining its visual envelope and understanding the sensitivity of the receiving environment (i.e. those areas which enjoy views of the site)
 - assessing the physical quality, condition and function of the landscape features and the processes within the landscape unit including landscape, ecological, archaeological and amenity studies
 - assessing and defining the values of the landscape unit taking into account social, economic and environmental issues, including biodiversity value/ecological function, social/community value, and intrinsic landscape aesthetic
- 2e. **Record and report the findings of the assessment**
This may involve verbal, written, software-based and graphic representations appropriate to the context of the assessment and the purpose of their work, selecting the most appropriate method to the task in hand.

Element 3: Landscape Options and Strategies

Introduction to this element

This element concerns the development of detailed proposals or advice based on considering, reviewing and refining options that achieve the most appropriate outcomes within a given context. It builds on the assessment process described in element 1.

The element

Landscape architects:

3a. **Review options, opportunities and constraints involved in making interventions in the landscape unit**

This includes

- identifying risks, resources and benefits associated with different options, and the implications these may have on the potential for a landscape to succeed.
- evaluation of the effects of taking no further action in respect of the landscape unit.

3b. **Identify effective strategies and solutions to meet the client brief and resolve existing and potential conflicts and interests**

This includes

- identifying risks, resources and benefits associated with different options, and the implications these may have on the potential for a landscape to succeed.
- Developing design ideas and strategies which address the client brief

3c. **Communicate proposals or advice, and seek client and stakeholder agreement**

This includes

- presenting plans, designs, advice or strategies as appropriate to the nature of the project
- advising on strategy, best practice, standards and relevant legal requirements and considerations,
- selecting appropriate communications media and methods appropriate to the nature of the proposal and the audience
- anticipating and addressing client questions and concerns and identifying choices and decisions which need to be made by the client

Element 4: Landscape Interventions

Introduction to this element

This element focuses on taking forward a project or activity. Depending on the focus of the landscape architect's work, this could be the implementation of a proposal or design or of a plan for the long-term management or maintenance of a site, or a similar implementation activity.

The element

Landscape architects:

- 4a. **Agree detailed project plan with client**
This includes finalising the work to be taken forward preparing technical documents and plans to realise the project
- 4b. **Identify materials and resources**
This includes identifying materials and products (off the shelf or custom designed, man-made and natural), appropriate techniques, contractors and suppliers, and producing a procurement plan, liaising with clients to ensure these are in accordance with client's requirements and budget. It also includes considering bids and tenders, negotiating and agreeing contractual arrangements with subcontractors
- 4c. **Agree a schedule of work**
This includes producing and agreeing with the client and contractors (as applicable) a detailed schedule of works which is accurate, realistic and achievable, including contingency plans
- 4d. **Identify strategies to engage stakeholders and achieve a positive outcome**
This includes choosing appropriate methods and styles of communication to explain and galvanise support for the action being taken, and acting as an arbiter to resolve conflicts where there are multiple parties with an interest in a place or plan
- 4e. **Agree contractual arrangements for work**
This includes agreeing the basis on which the project will be taken forward and the obligations and responsibilities of each party. This may include selecting appropriate forms of contract, amending contracts to suit work to be undertaken, and drafting non standard forms of contract, seeking legal advice and guidance on implications where required
- 4f. **Monitor and control projects**
This includes monitoring the project against the agreed programme and quality standards for delivery, ensuring that systems are in place to monitor progress, advising contractors, identifying and investigating problems, reporting to clients on progress, and identifying and advising on decisions, which need to be made as the project progresses
- 4g. **Manage project completion and handover**
This includes
 - Defining what information and guidance will be required by those maintaining the site,
 - providing advice on maintenance
 - identifying and arrange for the satisfactory completion of any outstanding work, arranging a handover inspection involving all relevant stakeholders,
 - confirming any stakeholder concerns that need to be addressed,
 - record and agree any required actions,
 - assembling and handing over works, installations and operational documentation in accordance with the contract
- 4h. **Review and evaluate projects and working practices**

Element 5: Organisation and management

Introduction to this element

This element concerns the management of professional practice and the application of appropriate standards. Depending on the landscape architect's responsibilities and working context, it can apply to personal practice or to leading a team, department or practice.

The element

Landscape architects

5a. **Represent and promote services offered by the department, practice or agency**

This includes

- giving professional presentations to clients and others on the expertise and services offered, the scope and purpose of own and organisations role
- demonstrating compliance with standards which may be required as part of the procurement process.

5b. **Ensure that landscape interventions meet recognised standards**

This includes making sure that interventions for which they are responsible meet relevant quality standards and codes of practice

5c. **ensure that adequate and accessible records are maintained**

Records include issued drawing registers, statutory records, records required by relevant organisations or needed for running their business or practice, and any records that an individual practitioner or their colleagues need to work effectively. Recording will use relevant methods and formats including, the use of appropriate technology and software. Records must be physically accessible and intelligible to the people who need access to them. Records must be maintained for an adequate period for their purpose. Appropriate levels of security and confidentiality will be maintained.

5d. **Recommend appropriate sources of further information or technical input where these lie outside their remit or area of expertise**

5e. **Ensure that work practices, and any practices promoted to others, comply with applicable legal and contractual requirements and the LI professional Code of Conduct**

5f. **Adhere to good management practice in dealing with clients, colleagues, contractors, other professionals and members of the public**

This includes maintaining good working relationships, record maintenance and effective and open communication.

Element 6: Continuing professional development (CPD)

Introduction to this element

This element concerns the maintenance and extension of personal professional knowledge and capability through ongoing development and contribution to the profession.

The element

Landscape architects:

- 6a. **Keep themselves informed of changes affecting the profession and broader developments relevant to their work**
This includes networking with fellow professionals and others, attending events and seminars and reading relevant publications
- 6b. **Ensure their practice, knowledge, skills and techniques are up-to-date, at a general level, in relation to their area of practice or expertise, and to the individual projects and tasks that they undertake**
This includes identifying
- personal strengths, abilities and areas for development
 - the knowledge, skills and understanding required, in relation to the current and expected future requirements of the profession and their specific work.
 - learning opportunities to meet identified needs
- and producing a professional development plan
- 6c. **Reflect on and learn from their practice**
This includes, reviewing and reflecting on professional activities and experiences, generating ideas and exploring possibilities to address problems and issues, and seeking opportunities for discussing ideas and experiences with fellow practitioners
- 6d. **Develop their expertise and contribute to the development of the profession**
Landscape architects are proactive in developing their skills, knowledge and understanding relevant to the profession and their own areas of work, disseminating it through informal or formal means and contributing to the development of others. This includes providing training, guidance and instruction and acting as a mentor to others where necessary.

Areas of specialism

Landscape Design

Landscape design is the process of shaping the natural and built environment to create satisfying places for people to live, work and play and environments for plants and animals to thrive.

Landscape architects working in landscape design use their spatial design expertise to develop creative solutions to practical and aesthetic challenges relating to the landscape. Using man-made and natural materials, they design and implement solutions that reflect the identity and qualities of place while meeting the current and future needs of stakeholders in a sustainable and aesthetically coherent way.

Typical activities include

- Producing feasibility studies and site and context appraisals
- Preparing written advice and recommendations
- Coordinating and conducting community engagement and consultation with users/owners/managers other stakeholders
- Developing design solutions and proposals
- Preparing drawings and 3D visualisations to illustrate plans and proposals.
- Preparing detailed designs and working drawings to support tender documentation and site implementation
- Participation in the tendering process, contract administration and site inspections.
- Specifying plants, construction materials and other elements such as street furniture
- Specifying for construction of hard landscapes and the implementation of planting proposals
- Managing projects and contracts
- Providing advice on policy and strategy
- Resource and budget assessment and planning including the preparation of cost estimates
- Contributing to public inquiries and acting as an expert witness

Landscape Management

Landscape Management is the care of land to ensure that landscapes can fulfil needs and aspirations in an effective and sustainable manner for present and future communities of users.

Landscape architects working in landscape management assess the characteristics, history and potential of sites and landscapes and understand the needs of their owners, managers and users. They ensure that landscapes can be effectively maintained and managed over time, preparing management plans and strategies, advising on new developments, designs and plans, and providing management based solutions to site issues

Typical activities include:

- Conducting and coordinating site assessments
- Advising on management and maintenance considerations in respect of new designs and proposals
- Preparing management plans
- Preparing site specific restoration schemes and other management based solutions to site issues
- Preparing area strategy and policy documents for long term landscape management
- Project management, co-ordination of range of professionals, tasks and timetables
- Community engagement and consultation with users/owners/managers other stakeholders
- Resource and budget assessment and planning

- Project management, coordination of and contributions to detailed assessments and studies including,
 - Environmental Impact Assessment and environmental statements
 - Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
 - Landscape audits
- Advising on compliance with relevant policy, legislation, good practice and relevant standards
- Tender preparation and administration, and contract supervision
- Preparation of maintenance schedules
- Contributing to public inquiries and acting as an expert witness

Landscape Planning

Landscape Planning is the development and application of large scale strategies, policies and plans to create successful environments, in both urban and rural settings, for the benefit of current and future generations.

Landscape architects working in landscape planning operate at all contexts and scales, from the international to the local, and on all types of development, advising on or managing proposals for change which may affect the landscape. They assess and resolve environmental, economic and social opportunities and constraints relevant to areas of landscape interest and take these into account in addressing a landscape's potential and capacity to accommodate change.

Typical activities include:

- Preparing and advising on policy and strategy within legal frameworks
- Preparing Green Infrastructure plans and implementation strategies
- Project management, coordination of and contributions to detailed assessments and studies including,
 - Environmental Impact Assessment and environmental statements
 - Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
 - Landscape character surveys, assessment and reports
- Masterplanning for development and regeneration schemes
- Consultation and community/ stakeholder engagement
- Contributing to planning appeals and public enquiries and acting as an expert witness
- Advising on compliance with relevant policy, legislation, good practice and relevant standards
- Managing projects
- Providing advice on policy and strategy
- Contributing to public inquiries and acting as an expert witness

Landscape Science

Landscape science is the application of environmental and ecological expertise in the assessment, analysis and resolution of practical landscape issues, and in the enhancement of the landscape.

Landscape architects working in landscape science focus on research and analysis, planning and strategy in relation to landscape assessment, design of habitats and strategic landscape enhancement. The landscape scientist also provides expert advice on landscape processes, land reclamation and restoration, landscape ecology, habitats and vegetation.

Typical activities include

- Evaluation of significance, effects and proposed amelioration of planning proposals
- Detailed assessments and studies including
 - Ecological risk assessments
 - Phase 1 habitat surveys and ecological assessment
 - Environmental impact assessments
 - Screening and scoping studies
 - Strategic environmental assessment and sustainability appraisals
 - Arboricultural impact assessments
 - Agricultural land capability and soil assessments
 - Groundwater assessment, hydrological assessment and flood risk
 - Pollution analysis and remediation studies
- Conducting landscape and habitat surveys, protected species and other surveys and monitoring,
- Advising on integrated solutions for ecological mitigation and landscape mitigation
- Advising on sustainable landscape reclamation, restoration and sustainable drainage
- Preparing management plans
- Designing and creating habitats and restoration proposals, including translocation of species and planting
- Managing projects and contracts
- Providing advice on policy and strategy
- Contributing to public inquiries and acting as an expert witness

Urban design

Urban design is the process of shaping the physical setting for life in cities, towns and villages. It involves both the art of 'placemaking' and the science of creating urban form which is fit for purpose.

Landscape architects working in urban design apply their expertise to producing design solutions that meet the needs and aspirations of people living in urban environments. They will conduct consultations, carry out urban design studies, appraisals and reviews, develop master plans and design statements, and provide expert advice relating to the planning process. Successful urban design requires a consultative and inclusive approach along with close collaboration with other professionals.

Typical activities include:

- Managing the Urban Design process, including facilitating public and stakeholder engagement, setting briefs for consultants, negotiating and collaborating with other professionals and organising urban design competitions.
- Conducting Urban Design studies and appraisals such as morphology studies, policy reviews, urban/townscape character assessments, public space appraisals, sustainability studies and connectivity studies.
- Preparing Urban Design policy and guidance such as vision statements, Urban Design codes and guides, development briefs, public realm strategies, local or village design statements.
- Masterplanning, including designing the overarching movement/development framework for sites or areas, site specific development layouts, preparation of Design and Access Statements, and preparing delivery documents.
- Providing Urban Design advice such as advising on prospective planning applications, advising on the design aspects of development control and strategic planning, and providing expert witness services at Planning Appeals and Development Plan Inquiries.
- Managing projects
- Providing advice on policy and strategy
- Acting as an advocate for urban design and placemaking
- Contributing to public inquiries and acting as an expert witness

Contributors

Our thanks to the following practitioners who have contributed to the development of the statements of *Elements of Practice* and *Areas of Specialism* described in this document

Irene Shaw CMLI, Head of Design Groundwork West Midlands
Paul Best FLI Principle Landscape Architect Hampshire County Council
Michelle Bolger CMLI, Senior Associate, Liz Lake Associates
Duncan Ecob CMLI Project Director - Urban Design, Devereux Architects
Nick Harrison FLI, Harrison Phair Photography
Martin Hird CMLI, Associate, Terra Firma Landscape Architects
Christine House CMLI, Director, Wardell Armstrong
Sue Illman CMLI, Director, Illman Young
Edwin Knighton CMLI, Head of Landscape Architecture, Leeds Metropolitan University
Dai Lewis CMLI Principle Landscape Consultant, The Environmental Dimension Partnership
Hilary Ludlow CMLI, Managing Director, Landscape Science Consultancy Ltd
Suzanne Mansfield CMLI, Director, FPCR Environment and Design
Cath Neve CMLI Partner, TEP
Helen Neve, CMLI, Director, Land Management Services Ltd
Mike Owen, Managing Partner, Owen Morris
Steve Plumb CMLI freelance consultant in land and environmental management.
Ian Phillips CMLI, Ian Philips
John Stuart-Murray FLI Head of School of Landscape Architecture, Edinburgh College of Art

and to

Dr Stan Lester, Sole Principal, Stan Lester Developments

who has provided advice to Education and Membership Committee during the project