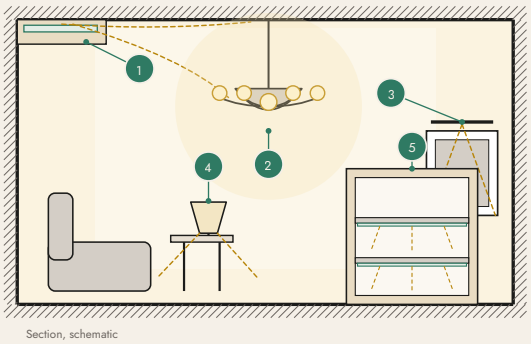
Lighting *layers*: decorative, architectural and accent, with a glossary and brief template

Ambient, task, accent, decorative and architectural lighting defined from CIE and US DOE sources, with paste-in wording for a lighting brief.

AT A GLANCE

Term	What it means (source wording, paraphrased)	Typical fittings	Usually decided by (our reading)
Ambient (general lighting)	CIE: substantially uniform lighting of an area, without provision for special local requirements.	Pendants, chandeliers, wall lights, coves, ceiling downlights	Lighting designer, with the interior designer for decorative pieces
Task (local lighting)	CIE: lighting for a specific visual task, additional to and controlled separately from the general lighting.	Bedside and desk lamps, under-cabinet strips, vanity lights	Interior designer and lighting designer together
Accent	CIE: directional lighting to emphasise a particular object or draw attention to a spot in the field of vision.	Picture lights, adjustable spots	Lighting designer
Decorative (a fitting role)	US DOE roundtable: decorative luminaires such as sconces, pendants, table and standing lamps.	Chandeliers, pendants, wall lights, table lamps	Interior designer; the partner workshop for a bespoke piece
Architectural (a fitting role)	US DOE roundtable: concealed architectural lighting, indirect lighting integrated with architectural elements.	Coves, shelf and joinery strips, concealed linear lighting	Lighting designer with the architect, joiner and M&E engineer
Display lighting (Part L term)	Approved Document L: lighting to highlight displays, or used in spaces for public leisure and entertainment, such as restaurants.	Not a layer: a compliance category	Lighting designer, M&E and building control
Specialist process lighting (Part L term)	Approved Document L: lighting for specialist tasks rather than the space itself; includes art objects with integral lighting such as chandeliers.	Not a layer: a compliance category	As above; see our Part L sheet

Definitions: CIE S 017:2020 e-ILV; US DOE Lighting Designer Roundtable (April 2008); Approved Document L volume 2, 2021 edition. Read on 5 November 2026.



A room in section with five fittings labelled by type and job. Schematic and not to scale. Original drawing by Make Bespoke Studio.

SPECIFICATION WORDING

DEFINITIONS CLAUSE

In this brief 'ambient', 'task' and 'accent' lighting mean general lighting, local lighting and accent lighting as defined in CIE S 017:2020, International Lighting Vocabulary (terms 17-29-007, 17-29-008 and 17-29-023). 'Decorative luminaire' means a luminaire such as a sconce, pendant, table or standing lamp, and 'concealed architectural lighting' means indirect lighting integrated with architectural elements. Where a term is not defined here, [lighting designer] is to define it in writing before the schedule is issued.

LIGHTING BRIEF, PER SPACE

Space [ ]; use [ ]; ceiling height [ ] mm. Ambient light from [ ]; task light from [ ]; accent light on [ ]. Scenes wanted: [arrival / evening / night]. Colour temperature [2700] K [fixed / tuneable]; lowest dimming level [ ] per cent; colour rendering index not less than [90], as the data sheets show. Dimming method: [ ], to be fixed before fittings are ordered.

RESPONSIBILITIES

[Interior designer] sets design intent and finish. [Lighting designer] sets the layer strategy, levels and controls. [Partner workshop] provides shop drawings, declared weight and driver details for bespoke pieces. [M&E engineer] provides the supply and controls. [Structural engineer] approves the fixing. Design information for decorative lighting is [prescriptive / descriptive], as recorded in the Responsibility Matrix.

TERMS USED

General lighting

Substantially uniform lighting of an area without provision for special local requirements: the ambient layer (CIE ILV 17-29-007).

Local lighting

Lighting for a specific visual task, additional to and controlled separately from the general lighting: the task layer (CIE ILV 17-29-008).

Accent lighting

Directional lighting to emphasise a particular object or draw attention to a spot in the field of vision (CIE ILV 17-29-023).

Decorative luminaire

A luminaire such as a sconce, pendant, table or standing lamp, as the US DOE lighting designer roundtable report uses the term.

STANDARDS AND SOURCES

- CIE S 017:2020 ILV: International Lighting Vocabulary, 2nd edition (e-ILV): term numbers as cited; free online.
- US DOE, Lighting Designer Roundtable on Solid-State Lighting (Apr 2008): sections 5.2.1, 5.2.2.
- Los Alamos Sustainable Design Guide, chapter 5 (NREL, 2002): ambient, task, accent in offices and laboratories.
- Approved Document L volume 2, 2021 edition incl. 2023 amendments (England), Appendix A: display lighting p. 85; specialist process lighting p. 89.
- RIBA Plan of Work 2020 Overview: stage names; Responsibility Matrix.

Full guide: https://makebespoke.com/trade/technical/lighting-layers-glossary-and-brief-template. Make Bespoke Studio coordinates manufacture through its partner workshops. Figures are guidance only and your specification governs; some may be superseded, so contact the studio to verify.