

TECHNICAL APPENDIX 5.5: RESIDENTIAL VISUAL AMENITY ASSESSMENT

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 This Appendix presents a Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA) which describes the change in views likely to be experienced by residents within 500 m of the Proposed Development. The RVAA should be read in conjunction with Chapter 5: LVIA (EIAR Volume 2) and Chapter 2: Proposed Development Description (EIAR Volume 2). This appendix is supported by Figure 5.4.1 (EIAR Volume 4).

5.2 Requirement for the Report

5.2.1 The RVAA was undertaken in accordance with the principles contained within the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Edition (GLVIA3)¹ and Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA) Technical Guidance Note 2/19 (LI TGN2/19)². GLVIA3 notes the need for a 'residential amenity assessment' to consider the effects of development on views from private properties (GLVIA3, Page 107, Para. 6.17). This is noted to include an assessment of visual effects, although is separate from LVIA.

5.2.2 LI TGN 2/19 explains that "the purpose of RVAA is to provide an informed, well-reasoned answer to the question: 'is the effect of the development on Residential Visual Amenity of such nature and / or magnitude that it potentially affects 'living conditions' or 'Residential Amenity?'" (LI TGN 2/19, Page 5, Para. 2.1).

5.2.3 The RVAA does not consider other components of residential amenity, or 'living conditions', such as noise or dust, which are considered in Chapter 11: Noise and Chapter 2: Project Description (EIAR Volume 2), respectively.

5.2.4 Findings of significant effects on views or visual amenity from a property do not automatically imply the need for further assessment. However, for properties likely to experience a medium or high magnitude of visual change and which are in proximity to a development, undertaking an RVAA may be appropriate, and the findings of the assessment will be a material consideration in the decision-making process.

5.2.5 The methodology for the RVAA is set out below along with the scope of the assessment. The findings of the assessment are presented in tabular format, and the assessment concludes with a summary of the findings.

5.2.6 RVAA comprises four 'steps' and in situations where all four are engaged this will typically involve some iteration of the third and fourth steps:

- Step 1 – Define Study Area and identify properties to be assessed.
- Step 2 – Evaluate baseline visual amenity of properties.
- Step 3 – Assess change to visual amenity of properties and identify properties requiring further assessment.
- Step 4 – Detailed assessment of individual properties identified in Step 3 as having the greatest magnitude of change such that the Residential Visual Amenity Threshold may be engaged.

¹ Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013, Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition, Abingdon, Routledge

² Landscape Institute, 2019, Residential Amenity Assessment (RVAA) Technical Guidance Note 2/19,

5.3 Step 1: Definition of Study Area

- 5.3.1 The assessment focuses on consideration of the changes in views and visual amenity from all residential properties within approximately 500 m of the Proposed Development.
- 5.3.2 The scope was informed by experience, observations made on-site and an understanding of the Proposed Development. Although there is the potential for significant visual effects to occur for other properties beyond 500 m, such effects are not considered likely to breach the residential visual amenity threshold and therefore have not been considered in this assessment.
- 5.3.3 Residential properties were identified using Ordnance Survey (OS) AddressBase Core data and verified in the field. An additional holiday let/cabin property not listed in the AddressBase Core was identified through an internet search and this has been included in the assessment.
- 5.3.4 Properties, including their curtilage and access drives, with no theoretical visibility have not been considered in the RVAA. Residential properties are included regardless of whether or not they are permanently occupied as dwellings, and whether or not they are financially involved with the Proposed Development, as their current use and ownership may change in the future.
- 5.3.5 Properties that are included in the RVAA are listed at Table 5.5.1. and shown on Figure 5.5.1 (EIAR Volume 4).

Table 5.5.1 Properties included in the RVAA				
Reference/ Name	Approximate Grid Reference	Approximate Distance/	Direction to Proposed Development	Brief Description of Property
RV1 Macs Croft, Macaulay Farm	NB 40154, 32186	260m	165 ⁰	Single storey
RV2 Macaulay Farm Lodge	NB 40152, 32154	230m	160 ⁰	Single storey
RV3 Old Farm House, Macaulay Farm	NB 40117, 32146	235m	150 ⁰	One and ¾ storey
RV4 Macaulay Farm Cabin	NB 4019832152	215m	175 ⁰	Single storey cabin

5.4 Step 2: Evaluation of Baseline Visual Amenity

- 5.4.1 For the purposes of this RVAA, the baseline visual amenity experienced at a property is made up of a combination of the type, nature, extent and quality of views that may be available from the property and its domestic curtilage (e.g., gardens and access drives).
- 5.4.2 OS maps, aerial imagery and Google Streetview were used for desktop research to assist with recording information such as the location of the residential elements of each property, the orientation of the property, and the extent of its curtilage. In considering baseline visual amenity, the following was examined:
- The nature and extent of the available existing views (including main/principal views) from the property and its garden, including the proximity and relationship of the property to surrounding landform, landcover and visual foci; and
 - Views experienced when approaching or departing from the property via its driveway and/or access roads, if applicable.
- 5.4.3 Field surveys were undertaken from publicly accessible locations between September and October 2024. Locations visited were selected to be as representative as feasible of the view from the properties, and views from the wider area were also considered to inform the setting and likely outlook of properties.

5.4.4 The following baseline information was recorded to the extent that this could be observed without entering private property:

- The orientation and likely views from each property (including principal/primary aspects and presence of windows);
- Layout and orientation of the gardens and property curtilage;
- Access location and orientation, and likely views from private or shared driveways or access tracks;
- The nature of existing views from the properties and their gardens, including the proximity and relationship of the properties to surrounding landform, landcover and visual foci and the scenic quality of views; and
- Potential screening provided by local variations in topography, the built environment and vegetation/tree cover within the surrounding landscape.

Table 5.5.2 Description of Baseline	
Reference/Name	Description
RV1 Macs Croft, Macaulay Farm	<p>Orientation: northwest – southeast.</p> <p>The principal view is to the northwest with two ground floor windows and a porch. The garden ground wraps around the northwest and southeast facades and is bounded by post and rail fencing. The access is shared with adjacent properties and the driveway is to the west of the property to the rear of an outbuilding. The rear of the property looks towards outbuildings and agricultural buildings with grazing land in the mid ground with mixed woodland partially screening views to the hills at Arnish. There are views over the wider landscape from the paddock.</p>
RV2 Macaulay Farm Lodge	<p>Orientation: northwest – southeast</p> <p>The principal view is to the southeast (four ground floor windows, one first floor window and sunroom with southeast/northeast/northwest aspect). The northeast façade has a first-floor window. Windows on the southwest façade are unknown. The garden ground wraps around the northeast/southeast/southwest facades and is bounded by a timber post and rail fence. The access is shared with adjacent properties and the driveway is to the rear of the northwest façade. The rear of the property looks southeast over the garden ground and rough grazing towards a band of mixed woodland with moorland vegetation beyond with a skyline formed by the hills at south Arnish. Mixed woodland partially screens views to the south beyond the mid ground.</p>
RV3 Old Farm House, Macaulay Farm	<p>Orientation: northeast – southwest</p> <p>The principal view is to the southwest.</p> <p>Four ground floor windows and three first floor windows on the northeast; two ground floor windows and porch and three first floor windows on the southwest; Two ground floor windows on the northwest; windows on southeast unknown (assume two) The garden lies to the northeast of the property and is bounded by a post and rail fence.</p> <p>The access is shared with adjacent properties and the driveway is to the side of the property adjacent to the A836.</p> <p>The view to the southeast is largely limited to the garden ground due to the screening effect of Macaulay Farm Lodge, scrub vegetation in the garden, a coniferous shelterbelt to the southeast and deciduous trees along the burn to the south.</p>
RV4 Macaulay Farm Cabin	<p>Orientation: north-south.</p> <p>The principal views are to the east and south through a corner window. There is no garden ground but there is a picnic bench to the eastern side of the cabin.</p> <p>The access is shared with adjacent properties and the parking space is to the west of the side of the property.</p> <p>The property looks southeast over rough grazing towards a band of mixed woodland with moorland vegetation beyond with a skyline formed by the hills at south Arnish.</p> <p>Mixed woodland partially screens views to the SE beyond the mid ground.</p>

5.5 Step 3: Assessment of Change to Visual Amenity

Sensitivity of Residential Receptors

- 5.5.1 GLVIA3 advocates an approach which considers the overall sensitivity of visual receptors in terms of susceptibility to change in views and visual amenity and the value attached to particular views. GLVIA3 also states that the visual receptors most susceptible to change are likely to include people at home. Taking account of the purposes of this RVAA, and taking a precautionary approach, all people at their place of private residence, despite the use, frequency of use and ownership of these residences, are considered to be of high sensitivity to changes in their views and visual amenity.

Magnitude of Change to Views and Visual Amenity

- 5.5.2 The likely changes in views and visual amenity as a result of the Proposed Development are considered with reference to the individual wireframes from each property/ property group. A judgement on the magnitude of visual change which would be experienced is made, and the change in views summarised, with reference, as appropriate, to the following factors:
- Scale of the change in the view with respect to the loss or addition of features in the view and changes in its composition, including the proportion of the view occupied by the Proposed Development;
 - Degree of contrast or integration of any new features or changes in the landscape with the existing or remaining landscape elements and characteristics in terms of form, scale and mass, line, height, colour and texture;
 - Angle of view in relation to the main activity of the receptor;
 - Distance of the viewpoint from the Proposed Development; and
 - Extent of the area over which the changes would be visible.
- 5.5.3 The following additional factors are specific to the type of development proposed:
- Type and nature of the available view (e.g. panoramic, framed);
 - Relative size and proximity of the Proposed Development;
 - Position of the Proposed Development in views from the property e.g., whether in the principal/primary outlook from the property;
 - Proportion of the view occupied by the Proposed Development; and
 - Direction (including the aspect) of the view affected.
- 5.5.4 For each property, the evaluation consists of:
- A description of the property and of its location and context;
 - A description of the likely existing available views and visual amenity from the property and its domestic curtilage, including gardens and private or shared access drives; and
 - A description of the likely effect on views and visual amenity resulting from the Proposed Development.
- 5.5.5 Informed by the preparatory desk work and supported by maps and 3D computer generated images, an assessment was undertaken of the magnitude of the likely change in visual amenity that may result from the introduction of the Proposed Development into the view(s) from each property.
- 5.5.6 Magnitude of visual change is expressed on a relative scale, as set out in Table 5.5.3 which highlights the differences between the types of change experienced in views from residential properties examined as part of this RVAA.
- 5.5.7 The existing view from each property is described, and the likely relative magnitude of change (high, medium, low, negligible, no change) arising from the Proposed Development in the same view is determined.
- 5.5.8 The nature of existing and predicted views (open, enclosed, panoramic, focused, framed etc.) affects the relative magnitude of change and is taken into account in reaching that judgement.

Table 5.5.3 Magnitude of Change in views and visual amenity

Magnitude of Change	Description
High	The Proposed Development would be a key/defining feature of the view.
Medium	The Proposed Development would be clearly visible but would not be a key/defining feature of the view.
Low	The Proposed Development would be visible but would be a minor feature of the view.
Negligible	The Proposed Development may be imperceptible as a minor element in the view.
No change	The Proposed Development would not be visible.

5.5.9 Tables 5.5.4 – 5.5.7 describe the sensitivity of each property and the magnitude of change to visual amenity, the scale of the change in the view with respect to the loss or addition of features in the view and changes in its composition, including the proportion of the view occupied by the Proposed Development.

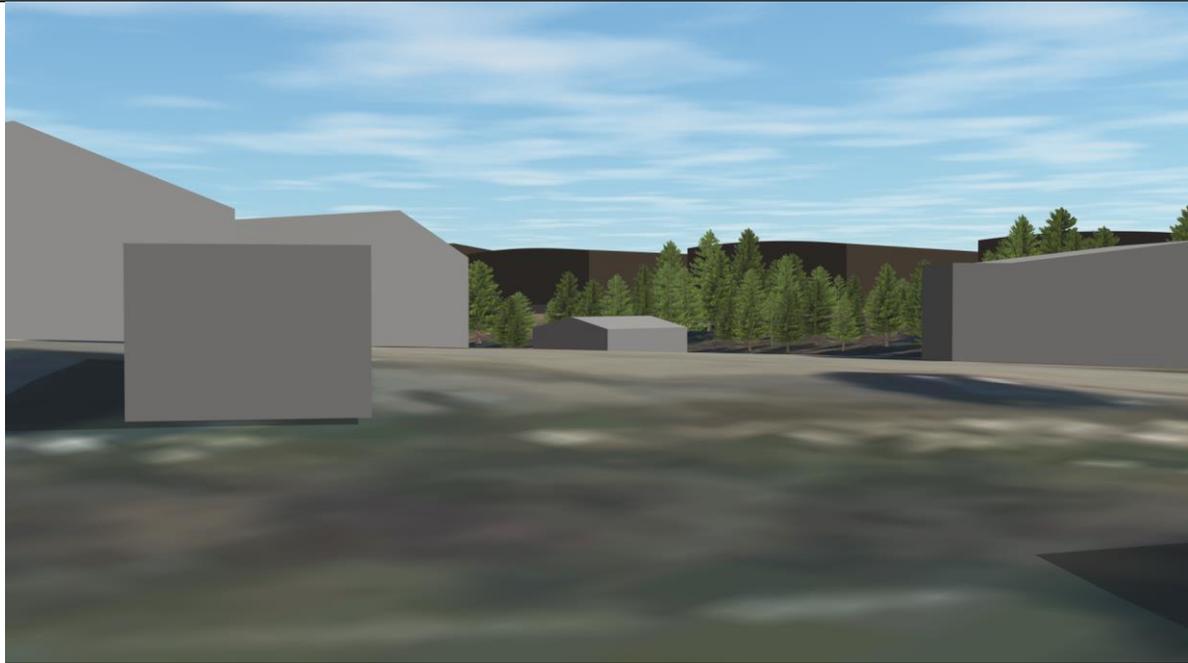
5.5.10 For properties experiencing a magnitude of change of low or barely perceptible, it is considered that there is no potential for 'living conditions' to be affected, and properties predicted to experience these levels change are not taken forward to Step 4.

Table 5.5.4 Magnitude of Change to Visual Amenity: RV1 Macs Croft, Macaulay Farm



Existing view from the garden to the southeast of the house

Table 5.5.4 Magnitude of Change to Visual Amenity: RV1 Macs Croft, Macaulay Farm



Proposed view from the garden to the southeast of the house

Views from the northwest, northeast and southwest facing windows and driveway

There would be no change to the views obtained from the northwest, northeast or southwest facing windows.

Magnitude of Change: None

View from the southeast side of the property

It is unlikely that there would be clear views of the Proposed Development from within the property. Views from the rear windows are curtailed by the presence of the outbuilding to the southwest and further screened by other outbuildings.

Magnitude of Change: Low

View from the garden to the southeast of the property

The Proposed Development would introduce a group of large-scale buildings into the view to the south east.

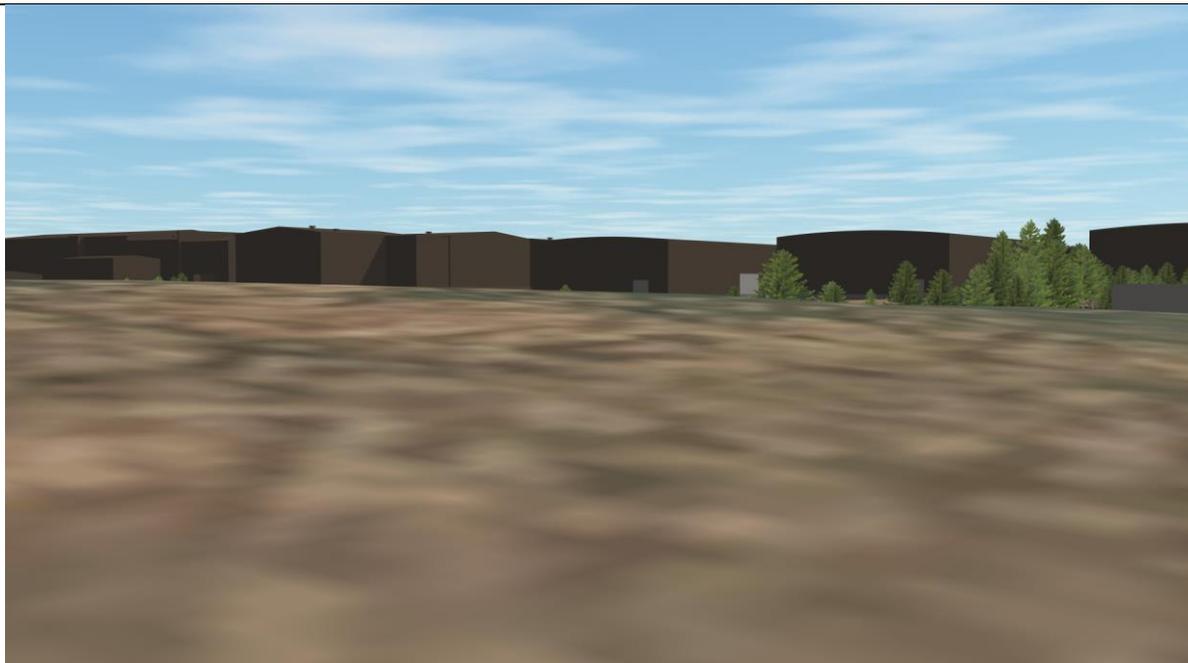
Views of these would be partially blocked by outbuildings and existing trees. The Proposed Development would block views to the wider landscape.

Magnitude of Change: Medium

Table 5.5.4 Magnitude of Change to Visual Amenity: RV1 Macs Croft, Macaulay Farm



Existing view from the paddock to the north of the house



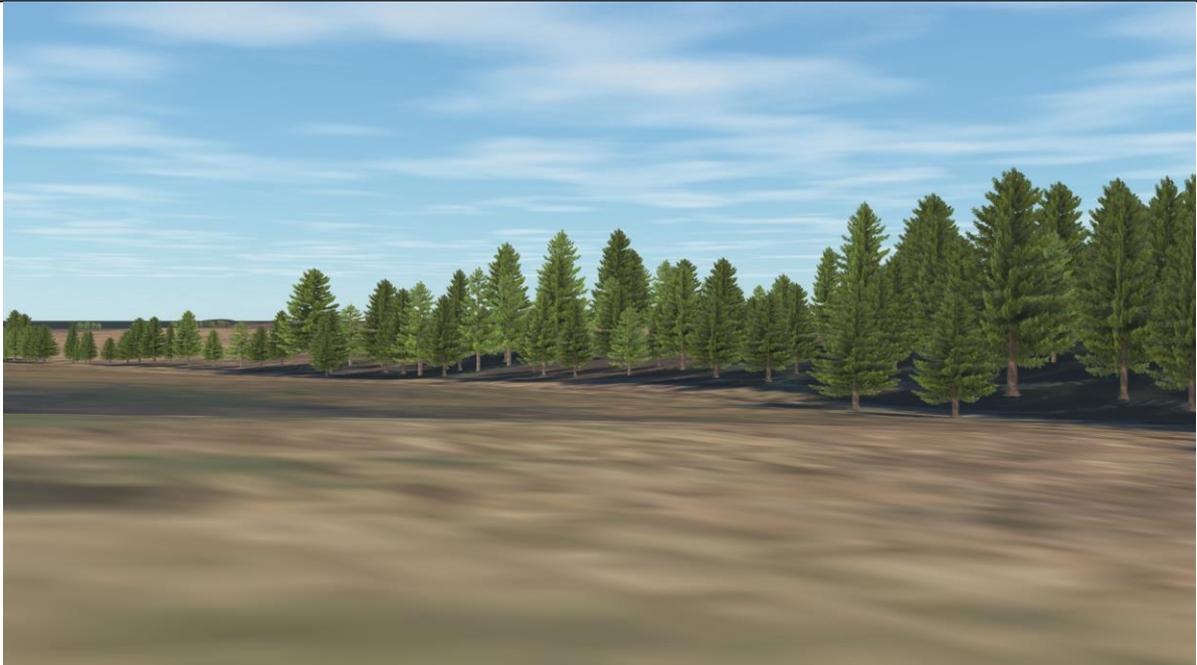
Proposed view from the paddock to the north of the house

View from the paddock to the north of the house

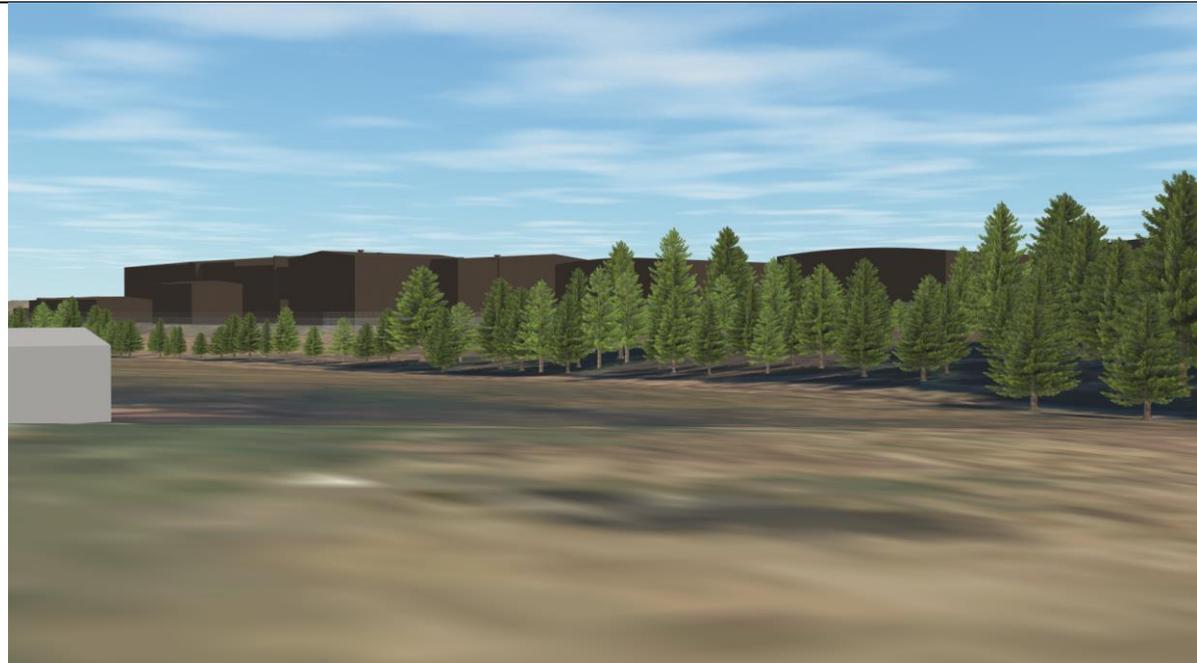
The Proposed Development would introduce a group of large-scale buildings into the view to the southeast. Three would be minimal screening by existing trees. The Proposed Development would block views to the wider landscape.

Magnitude of Change: High

Table 5.5.5 Magnitude of Change to Visual Amenity: RV2 Macaulay Farm Lodge



Existing view from the southeast façade and garden ground

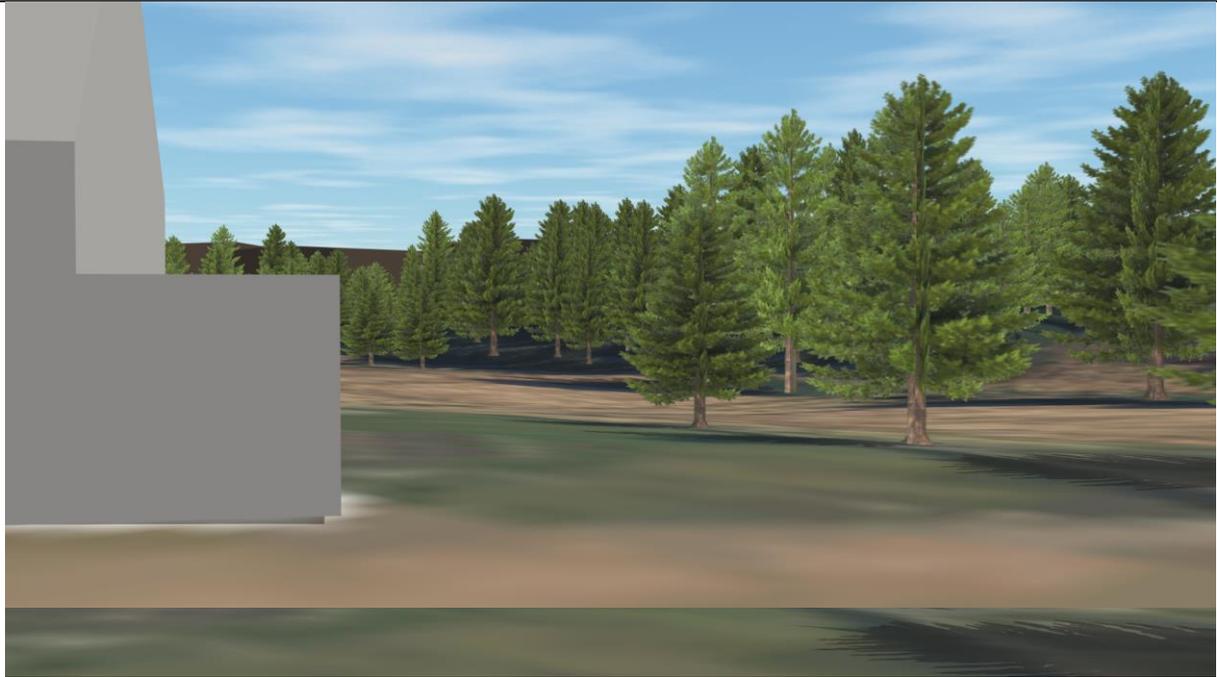


Proposed view from the southeast façade and garden ground

Views from the northwest facing windows, first floor northwest facing window and driveway
 There would be no change to the views obtained from the northwest, northeast or southwest facing windows.
 Magnitude of Change: None

Views from the southeast facing windows, including sun room and garden ground
 The Proposed Development would introduce a group of large scale buildings into the view. They would be partially screened by existing trees but would block the view to the wider landscape and would be a dominant feature of the view.
 Magnitude of Change: High

Table 5.5.6 Magnitude of Change to Visual Amenity: RV3 Old Farmhouse, Macaulay Farm



Existing view from the southwest façade and garden

Proposed view from the southwest façade and garden

Views from the northwest and northeast facing windows and driveway

There would be no change to the views obtained from the northwest, northeast or southwest facing windows.

Magnitude of Change: None

Views from the southwest facing windows

The Proposed Development would introduce a group of large scale buildings which would be substantially screened by existing woodland and garden vegetation.

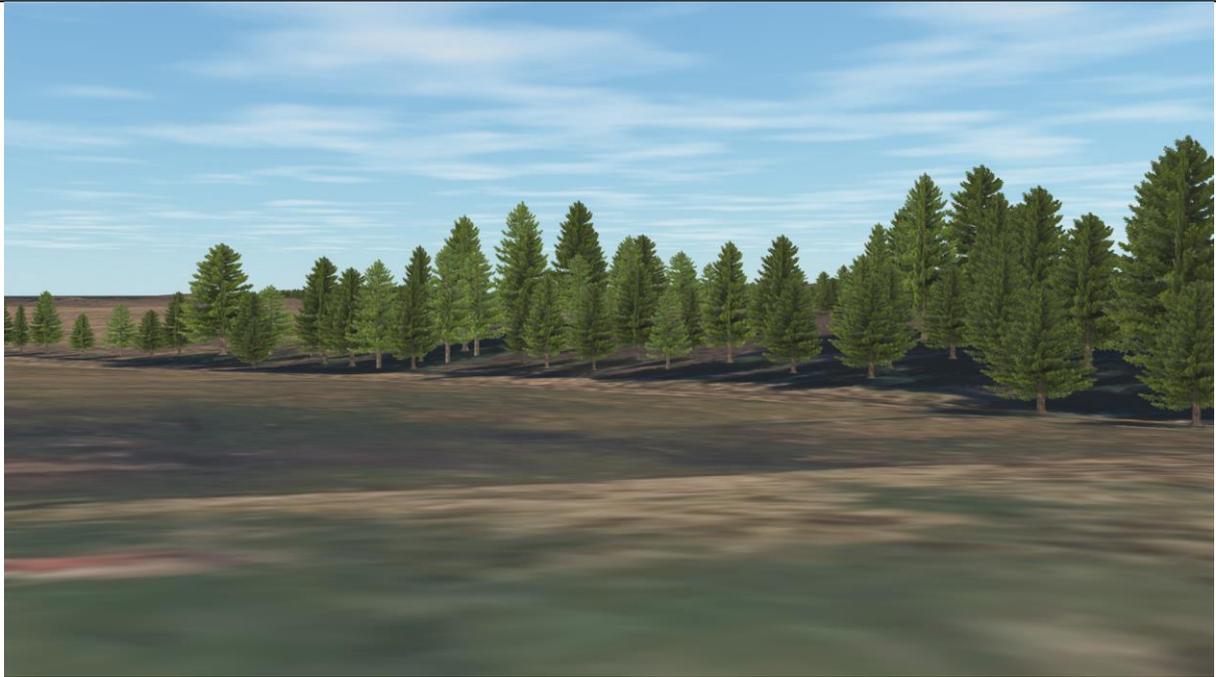
Magnitude of Change: Low

Views from the southeast façade and garden

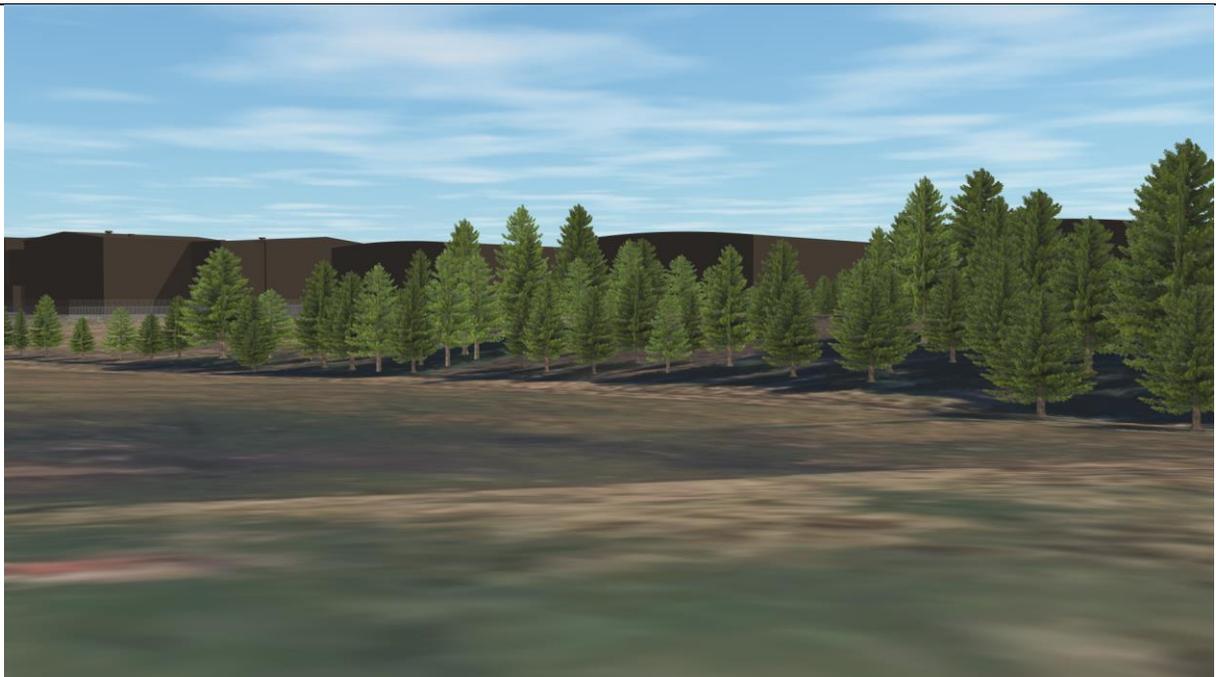
Views would be similar to those seen from the southeast façade and garden of Macaulay Farm Lodge.

Magnitude of Change: High

Table 5.5.7 Magnitude of Change to Visual Amenity: RV4 Macaulay Farm Cabin



Existing view from the cabin corner window



Proposed view from the cabin corner window

View from the south and east facing corner window and picnic table to the east of the cabin

The Proposed Development would introduce a group of large scale buildings into the view. They would be partially screened by existing trees but would block the view to the wider landscape and would be a dominant feature of the view.

Magnitude of Change: High

5.6 Step 4: Detailed Assessment of Relevant Properties

- 5.6.1 The RVAA looks at the range of views likely to be available from the house and its curtilage and considers potential effects on these and whether the Residential Visual Amenity Threshold would be breached for the property as a whole.
- 5.6.2 While there is no detailed guidance on how to determine the Residential Visual Amenity Threshold, LI TGN 2/19 recommends terminology and descriptors that have previously been used. Planning decisions quoted in LI TGN 2/19 use terms such as 'overwhelming', 'oppressive', 'overbearing' and 'unavoidable'. Professional judgement is used to determine whether the Proposed Development would give rise to such effects in each case.
- 5.6.3 Unlike Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), a judgement on the 'significance' of effects is not determined for RVAA and instead a judgement is made on whether the Residential Visual Amenity Threshold is likely to be breached

RV1 Macs Croft, Macaulay Farm

- 5.6.4 The principal views to the northwest and southeast would not be affected by the Proposed Development. Views from windows on the northeast and southwest would be unaffected. There would be partially blocked and framed views of the Proposed Development from parts of the garden ground close to the house which look out over outbuildings and agricultural sheds. There would be open views of the Proposed Development from the paddock and the Proposed Development would block views to the wider landscape. The Proposed Development would be seen at a distance of approximately 260 m. Taking the foregoing into account and the availability of other views to the northeast, over the paddock, and to the northwest from the front of the house, it is considered that the Proposed Development is unlikely to have an overbearing effect and would not result in the RVAA threshold being breached for this property.

RV2 Macaulay Farm Lodge

- 5.6.5 The windows on the northwest façade, the upper window on the northeast façade and the driveway would be unaffected by the Proposed Development.
- 5.6.6 The principal views from windows on the southeast façade, the sunroom on the northeast façade and the garden ground would have views of the Proposed Development looking to the southeast. The Proposed Development would be partially screened by existing trees but would block the views between tree groups to the open countryside. The Proposed Development would be approximately 230 m distant and is unlikely to result in an overbearing effect on this property or a breach in the RVAA threshold.

RV3 Old Farmhouse, Macaulay Farm

- 5.6.7 The principal views from windows of the northeast over the main part of the garden ground would be unaffected by the Proposed Development. The principal views from windows on the southwest over the garden ground would have no view of the buildings within the Proposed Development. Views in a north-westerly direction would be unaffected. There would be partially screened views of the Proposed Development from the southeastern façade and from the garden area south of the Property at a distance of approximately 235 m. On this basis, it is considered that the Proposed Development is unlikely to have an overbearing effect on this property and that the RVAA threshold would not be breached.

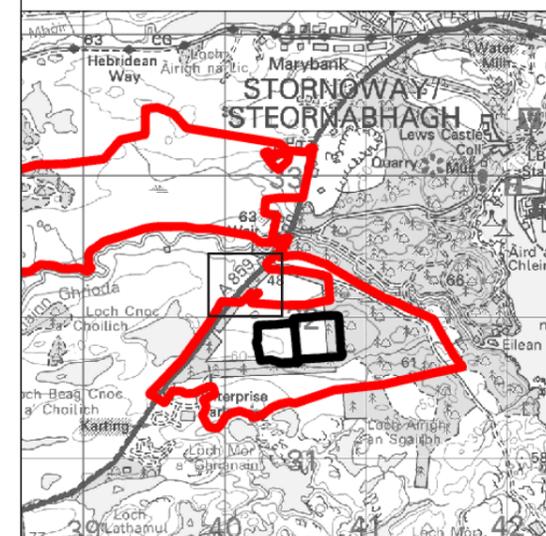
RV4 Macaulay Farm Cabin

- 5.6.8 This property only has a corner window facing southeast and an outdoor space comprising a picnic table to the east of the cabin. Views from the window and the outdoor space would be in the direction of the Proposed Development which would block existing views to open countryside to the southeast. The Proposed Development would be a defining feature of the view but at approximately 235 m distant it is unlikely to have an overbearing effect on this property and that the RVAA threshold would not be breached.



Legend

- Site boundary
- RV1 Macs Croft, Macaulay Farm
- RV2 Macaulay Farm Lodge
- RV3 Old Farm House, Macaulay Farm
- RV4 Macaulay Farm Cabin



Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of HMSO.
 Crown copyright and database right 2024 all rights reserved.
 Ordnance Survey Licence number 0100022432.

Project No: LT000014
 Project: Lewis Hub (AC Substation and HVDC Converter Station)

Title:
 Location of Residential Visual Amenity Assessment Properties

Drawn by: AM Date: 27.01.25

Drawing: A5.5.1.