APPENDIX 5.1 RESIDENTIAL VISUAL AMENITY ASSESSMENT

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RESIDENTIAL VISUAL AMENITY ASSESSMENT

5.1 Introduction

A Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA) was requested by DfI Planning in their response, dated November 2020, to the EIA Screening Determination Request submitted in January 2020.

The RVAA is a distinct and separate assessment process from the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA). As noted in the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA) Third Edition (2013) at paragraph 6.17 (pages 107-109) which states:

"Effects of development on private property are frequently dealt with mainly through 'residential amenity assessments'. These are separate from LVIA although visual effects assessment may sometimes be carried out as part of a residential amenity assessment, in which case this will supplement and form part of the normal LVIA for a project. Some of the principles set out here for dealing with visual effects may help in such assessments but there are specific requirements in residential amenity assessment."

The purpose of an 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"* (Landscape Institutes Technical Guidance Note 2/19). In this guidance this is referred to as the Residential Visual Amenity Threshold.

An assessment of the potential effects on the visual component of residential amenity goes beyond the assessment of effects on views and visual amenity normally carried out as part of the LVIA assessment process. The RVAA assesses a property in more detail including the orientation of the property, garden grounds and access. The RVAA assessment is required to understand if any of the predicted effects on views or visual amenity have the potential to affect the visual component of residential amenity such that living at that property will become unpleasant or undesirable.

Assessing this requires as far as possible, an objective, transparent approach but is ultimately a matter of judgement. It should be noted that the visual component of residential amenity is influenced by factors other than visual amenity, such as noise. Accordingly, this RVAA only addresses the visual component of residential amenity and the Proposed Development.

5.2 Methodology

The methodology and approach to the RVAA assessment contained within this Appendix has been carried out in accordance with best practice guidance described in the following documents:

- Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition (The Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment, 2013) (GLVIA3); and
- Technical Guidance Note 2/19 Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (The Landscape Institute, 2019).

The RVAA undertaken within this Appendix follows the approach identified in the Landscape Institutes Technical Guidance Note 2/19 and the following defined approach:

- 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.

5.2.1 Identification of Study Area

Technical Guidance Note 2/19 Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (The Landscape Institute, 2019) notes that there are no standard criteria for defining the RVAA study area, nor the scope for the RVAA which should be determined on a case by case basis taking both the type and scale of proposed development, as well as the landscape and visual context, into account.

As such the study area used within the LVIA was further reviewed and refined to include individual and clusters of properties that lie within 500m of the Proposed Development corridor (refer Volume II; Figure 1.15a. to Figure 1.15s). The 500m study area was considered appropriate for the initial assessment of potential visual impacts on residential properties given the nature and scale of the Proposed Development when viewed within the existing landscape and visual context. It is noted that LI TGN 2/19, at paragraph 4.7 indicates that properties falling within an area of 100 – 150m from an overhead transmission line should be considered, however it was considered that the 500m study area was more appropriate for this RVAA assessment given the designated landscapes through which it traverses and associated visual outlook from properties that lie within such designated areas.

5.2.2 Evaluation of Visual baseline amenity at identified properties

An assessment of the likely visual effects was undertaken by evaluating and assessing the predicted changes in the visual resource because of the Proposed Development. This assessment followed the methodology described in Section 5.3 of the LVIA and was carried out through a combination of desk-based study which included review of up to date aerial photography, analysis of the ZTV for the Proposed Development and, where appropriate followed by site survey works. This approach ensured that dwellings were assessed in terms of primary and secondary views , orientation of the dwelling and likely visibility from amenity (garden) spaces.

The initial RVAA review identified 213 individual properties and clusters of properties within the 500m study area.

For the purposes of the assessment, receptors at residential properties are judged to be of a high sensitivity to the type of development proposed (in line with Section 5.3 of the LVIA). Findings from the initial assessment, in relation to predicted visual effects arising during the operational phase, are identified on Volume II; Figure 1.15a to Figure 1.15s and summarised in the following table.

Appendix Table 5.1 - Summary of Predicted Residential Effects

Viewer Sensitivity	Magnitude of Impact	Significance of Effect	Number of Properties
High	No Change	None	120
High	Negligible	Minor	72
High	Small	Minor to Moderate	21
High	Medium	Moderate to Major	0
High	Large	Major to Substantial	0

All the properties predicted to experience minor to moderate visual effect lie within close proximity to the Proposed Development (within 200m approx.).

Views from properties beyond 500m are restricted due to the nature of the surrounding topography combined with existing vegetation and no significant visual impacts will occur due to the low visibility of the Proposed Development in such views.

5.2.3 Assessment of change to visual amenity at properties and identification of properties requiring further assessment.

A more detailed assessment of the 21 properties identified from the initial RVAA assessment and those predicted to experience minor to moderate visual effects as a result of the Proposed Development have been assessed

further in relation to existing views and elements within views that may affect visual amenity. These properties were further assessed, and the findings are presented within Appendix A Table 5.2.

Appendix A Table 5.2 - Summary of RVAA Assessment at Identified Properties

Identifier	Receptor Sensitivity	Existing Residential Visual Amenity including visibility of factors which may affect visibility of the Proposed Development from the receptor location	Magnitude of Change – Operational Phase	Significance of Visual Effect
49		Single storey dwelling with frontage orientated south towards Curlyhill Road. Northern, eastern, and western views partially screened by existing timber board boundary fencing and coniferous hedgerow planting which partially screen views towards the Proposed Development.	Proposed Development partially screened in views by intervening boundary treatments. Upper portions of the Proposed Development visible in generally expansive views at mid distance. Visible portions of the Proposed Development read in combination with existing timber poles and overhead lines and viewed as a minor change to the visual baseline. Small.	Minor to moderate, assessed as not significant. Visible upper portions of the Proposed Development viewed as a minor change to the existing visual baseline.
50	High	Residential property identified at this location, though unclear from survey works whether this is habitable / habited. Northern views blocked by farm buildings in proximity, which together with existing vegetation on northern boundary screens views towards the Proposed Development.	Proposed Development screened in northern views. Partially visible in eastern views, filtered by existing boundary vegetation. Visible portions of the Proposed Development read in combination with existing timber poles and overhead lines and viewed as a minor change to the visual baseline. Small.	Minor to moderate, assessed as not significant as views towards Proposed Development screened or filtered by existing buildings and vegetation.
51	High	Single storey dwelling with frontage orientated north, towards Curlyhill Road. Western views blocked by adjacent farm buildings, whilst eastern and northern views contain visibility of timber poles and overhead lines at a variety of distances within available views. Western views also restricted by elevated lands and field boundary hedgerows at mid distance. Northern views are generally focused in nature along the	Visible portions of the Proposed Development in northern views read in combination with existing overhead lines, though poles partially screened by field boundary hedgerows, which will aid integration and reduce visibility. Visible portions of the Proposed Development viewed as a minor change to the visual baseline, though character and composition of view remains.	Minor to moderate, assessed as not significant as visible elements viewed as a minor change to the existing visual baseline.

		existing overhead line due to field boundary hedgerows and maturing vegetation.	Small.	
52	High	Single storey dwelling with frontage orientated north-west, towards Curlyhill Road. Property occupies a slightly elevated position, with northern views partially screened by garden trees and tall hedgerow vegetation. Views south and east from property not available due to close landform (slopes) associated with the development pad. Northern views contain visibility of timber poles carrying overhead lines adjacent to Curlyhill Road at close proximity, and also at mid distance at lower elevation than the property.	Visible portions of the Proposed Development in northern views read in combination with existing overhead lines, though poles partially screened by field boundary hedgerows, which will aid integration and reduce visibility. Visible portions of the Proposed Development viewed, at mid distance as a minor change to the visual baseline, though character and composition of view remains. Small.	Minor to moderate, assessed as not significant as visible portions of the Proposed Development viewed at mid distance and judged to be a minor alteration to the existing visual baseline.
53	High	Single storey dwelling with views to north and west partially screened by existing field boundary vegetation, including trees at close proximity. Northern and western views contain visibility of overhead lines on timber poles, whilst northern views also contain distant visibility of operational turbines.	Visible portions of the Proposed Development would be read in combination with existing overhead lines, though poles partially screened by field boundary hedgerows and trees at lower elevation. Visible portions of the Proposed Development viewed at mid distance as a minor change to the visual baseline, across a small portion of the overall available view though character and composition of view remains. Small.	Minor to moderate, assessed as not significant as visible portions of the Proposed Development viewed in a small portion of the overall available view.
54	High	Cluster of two residential properties set at different elevations. Western property is a single storey property, at higher elevation with frontage orientated south-east. Lower elevation property to immediate east is a two storey property with frontage also orientated south-east. Eastern views are partially restricted in nature by screening effects field boundary hedgerows with trees and roadside vegetation associated with Hollyhill Road. Timber poles and overhead lines are visible in northern views.	Visible portions of the Proposed Development partially screened by intervening field boundary hedgerows with trees, which partially screen lower portions of timber poles. Upper portions of the Proposed Development will be visible in southern views above and amongst existing vegetation. Visible portions of the Proposed Development viewed, at mid distance as a minor change to the visual baseline, though generally viewed below horizons with character and composition of view remaining. Small.	Minor to moderate, assessed as not significant as visible portions of the Proposed Development viewed at mid distance and judged to be a minor alteration to the existing visual baseline.

61	High	Two storey residential property, with frontage orientated south. Noted that there are no windows present on the western gable of the property. View's south are filtered by vegetation adjacent to garden boundary, whilst views to the north are screened by coniferous hedgerow and farm outbuilding associated with adjacent property. Eastern views are screened by farm outbuildings immediately adjacent. Western views from curtilage areas include views of timber poles and overhead lines at close proximity and are partially screened by roadside vegetation which includes trees.	Visible portions of the Proposed Development will be seen to the west in combination with other existing timber poles and overhead lines, with visible portions generally viewed below distant horizon lines on lower elevation land. Visible portions of the Proposed Development viewed, at mid distance as a minor change to the visual baseline, with character and composition of view remaining. Small.	Minor to moderate, assessed as not significant as visible portions of the Proposed Development viewed at mid distance and judged to be a minor alteration to the existing visual baseline.
62	High	Cluster of two, single storey properties with frontages orientated generally west, towards Koram Road. Western, expansive panoramic views contain visibility of timber poles and overhead lines at close proximity, adjacent to Koram Road. Eastern views partially screened and restricted by rising lands and large scale farm buildings to rear of properties. Western views also partially screened by roadside vegetation.	Proposed Development will be visible across a large portion of the expansive view in combination with existing timber poles and overhead lines. Visible elements generally viewed below distant horizons and viewed as a minor change to the visual baseline. Small.	Minor to moderate, assessed as not significant as visible elements seen well below horizons, aiding integration and viewed as a minor addition to the visual baseline.
69	High	Former residential property identified at this location, though unclear from survey works whether this is habited or habitable. Views from this location are significantly screened by existing mature trees on northern, southern, eastern and western boundaries. South western views, were gaps in vegetation permit, contain visibility of the operational wind turbines at Owenreagh wind farm which are visible on elevated horizons at mid distance.	Proposed Development will largely be screened by existing mature vegetation to property boundaries such that visible elements will be viewed as a minor change to the visual baseline, with operational turbines remaining the main visual draw in southern views. Visible elements generally viewed within gaps in vegetation will be seen below horizons and viewed as a minor change to the visual baseline. Small.	Minor to moderate, assessed as not significant as visible portions of the Proposed Development only seen in gaps within existing vegetation and viewed as a minor alteration to the visual baseline.
80	High	Single storey residential property with frontage orientated generally east. Southern views partially screened by existing coniferous shelterbelt planting	Upper portions of the Proposed Development visible above and beyond boundary vegetation to the south. Visible portions become screened	Minor to moderate, assessed as not significant as visible portions of the Proposed Development only

		immediately adjacent. Eastern views from property location partially restricted by intervening vegetation and contains views of timber poles carrying overhead lines at mid distance in views.	within eastern views due to increased vegetation cover, though will be locally visible at relatively close distance where gaps in vegetation allow southern views. Visible elements viewed as a minor change to the visual baseline. Small.	seen in gaps within existing vegetation and viewed as a minor alteration to the visual baseline.
84	High	Single storey dwelling with frontage of property orientated west, towards Glencoppagh Road. Western views partially restricted by roadside and garden boundary vegetation whilst eastern views screened by woodland planting on elevated slopes. Southern views restricted by coniferous hedgerow planting which limits views. Northern views partially restricted by garden boundary vegetation. Western and southern views contain visibility of upper portions of existing timber poles and overhead lines adjacent to Glencoppagh Road.	Upper portions of the Proposed Development will be visible at mid distance in southern views, above existing coniferous hedgerow. Elements visible at distance on southwestern horizons will be difficult to perceive, whilst elements at closer distance will be perceived as a minor change to the view, Small.	Minor to moderate, assessed as not significant as visible portions of the Proposed Development seen as a minor change to the existing view.
85	High	Single storey dwelling with frontage orientated west, towards Glencoppagh Road. Western views are primarily open and expansive in nature and contain visibility of existing timber poles adjacent to the road network. Northern views from the property are also open and expansive in nature, containing visibility of timber poles at close proximity. Eastern views screened by shelterbelt planting along the property boundary and rising lands beyond. Views to the south are partially restricted by localised topographical changes at the property boundary.	Visible elements of the Proposed Development will be viewed in western and southwestern views from the property which are generally open and expansive in nature. Visible elements of the Proposed Development will be generally viewed below horizons and form a minor change to the overall view available. Small.	Minor to moderate, assessed as not significant as visible elements seen well below horizons, aiding integration and viewed as a minor addition to the visual baseline.
98	High	Single storey dwelling with frontage orientated west. Eastern views partially screened by garden boundary vegetation and garage block. Existing views contain visibility of timber poles and overhead lines. Northern views generally more open in nature and contain visibility of timber poles and overhead lines at close	Visible elements of the Proposed Development will be viewed in western and north-western views from the property which are generally open and expansive in nature. Visible elements of the Proposed Development will be generally	Minor to moderate, assessed as not significant as visible elements seen well below horizons, aiding integration and viewed as a minor addition to the visual baseline.

		distance. Southern and western views are partially screened by tall hedgerow vegetation.	viewed below horizons and form a minor change to the overall view available. Small.	
99	High	Single storey dwelling with frontage orientated south towards Glenelly Road. Southern views are generally open in nature, becoming restricted by existing field boundary hedgerows with trees. Views north are restricted in nature by topographical changes at proximity. Western views are partially restricted by trees forming the boundary of the field to the west. Eastern views are partially restricted by landform.	Visible elements of the Proposed Development will be viewed in south western and western portions at close distance, often in combination with existing timber poles and overhead lines. Visible elements of the Proposed Development will be generally viewed below horizons and form a minor change to the overall view available. Small.	Minor to moderate, assessed as not significant as visible elements seen well below horizons, aiding integration and viewed as a minor addition to the visual baseline.
106	High	New two storey dwelling with frontage orientated generally east. Views to the west and north are partially screened by timber board fencing and internal level changes to the western side of the property. Views to the east are generally open and panoramic in nature, though do contain visibility of timber poles at close proximity. Western views, whilst partially restricted in nature also contain visibility of timber poles and overhead lines which become screened by roadside vegetation which includes mature trees.	Visible elements of the Proposed Development will be viewed in western views, partially screened at lower levels by vertical timber board boundary fencing. Visible elements of the Proposed Development will be generally viewed as a minor change to the overall view available. Small.	Minor to moderate, assessed as not significant as only upper portions of timber poles will be visible in available views at mid distance.
109	High	Two storey dwelling with frontage oriented north towards the Glenelly Road. Northern views are partially restricted by roadside vegetation associated with the Glenelly Road, which also contains visibility of timber poles and overhead lines at close proximity and at mid distance across the valley. Western views are screened by close built form, whilst eastern views are more open and panoramic in nature. Southern views, whilst open in nature are partially restricted by rising lands.	Visible elements of the Proposed Development will be seen in eastern and northern views, partially screened on lower elevation ground by existing vegetation cover. Visible elements will be seen below distant horizon lines in northern views and against a well vegetated backdrop in eastern views. Visible elements of the Proposed Development will form a minor change to the overall view available. Small.	Minor to moderate, assessed as not significant as visible elements will be seen below distant horizon lines in northern views and against a well vegetated backdrop in eastern views where they will be perceived as a minor change to the overall available view.

113	High	Two storey dwelling with frontage oriented south towards the Meenadoo Road. Northern views and eastern views are partially restricted by shelterbelt woodland associated with northern garden boundary. Southern views contain visibility of timber poles and overhead lines at close proximity and at mid distance.	Visible elements of the Proposed Development will be seen in northern and western views, partially screened at lower elevation by existing vegetation cover. Visible elements will be seen above horizon lines in northern views though generally perceived against the upland vegetated backdrop. Visible elements of the Proposed Development will form a minor change to the overall view available. Small.	Minor to moderate, assessed as not significant as visible elements in northern views set against a well strong upland backdrop where they will be perceived as a minor change to the overall available view
114	High	Residential property not identified at this location, Unclear from survey works whether there is a habitable dwelling due to large scale farm buildings occupying the site. Southern views generally open and expansive in nature with timber poles and overhead lines difficult to perceive. Lower elevation portions of the view well vegetated and partially screen lands beyond.	Proposed Development partially screened in southern views, particularly at lower elevation in mid distance and distant portions of the view. Visible portions of the Proposed Development read in combination with existing coniferous planting and viewed as a minor change to the overall expansive visual baseline. Small.	Minor to moderate, assessed as not significant as views towards the Proposed Development are screened or filtered by existing buildings and vegetation with visible elements of the Proposed Development viewed as a minor addition within an expansive view.
132	High	Two storey dwelling with frontage orientated west, with open and expansive views available. Southern views and western views contain visibility of timber poles at mid distance adjacent to Drumlea Road.	Visible elements of the Proposed Development will be seen at close proximity in northern and eastern views above horizons. Visible elements will form a minor addition to the overall view, with character and composition remaining largely unaltered. Small.	Minor to moderate, assessed as not significant as visible portions of the Proposed Development are a minor addition to the overall available view.
133	High	Two storey dwelling with frontage orientated west towards Drumlea Road. Views from the property are screened by garden boundary vegetation to the north, east and south whilst roadside vegetation to the south, associated with Drumlea Road, screens western views. Western and eastern views contain visibility of timber poles and overhead lines.	Visible elements of the Proposed Development will be perceived beyond and above intervening field boundary vegetation in eastern and northern views, though seen at relatively close distance. Visible elements will form a minor addition to the overall view, with character and composition remaining largely unaltered.	Minor to moderate, assessed as not significant as visible elements will form a minor addition to the overall view, with the baseline character and composition of the view remaining largely unaltered.

			Small.	
135	High	New dwelling located on elevated land to east of Drumlea Road. Property orientated west, with more open, panoramic views available. Western views also contain visibility of timber poles with overhead lines at lower elevation. Southern views partially screened by field boundary vegetation which includes trees. More open views apparent to north and east.	Visible elements of the Proposed Development will be seen beyond and above intervening field boundary vegetation in eastern and northern views, though seen at relatively close distance. Visible elements will be an addition to the overall view, with character and composition remaining largely unaltered. Small.	Minor to moderate, assessed as not significant as visible elements will form a minor addition to the overall view, with the baseline character and composition of the view remaining largely unaltered.

5.3 Conclusions

This RVAA, undertaken as part of the overall assessment of the Proposed Development, has initially considered the predicted effects of the Proposed Development on the residential visual amenity of properties within 500m of the Proposed Development (refer Volume II; Figure 1.15a to Figure 1.15s) which has assessed over 200 individual properties and clusters of properties.

Of the 213 individual properties and clusters of properties identified and assessed against the ZTV associated with the Proposed Development, 120 are predicted to experience no change in view, 72 are predicted to experience a minor change in view and 21 are predicted to experience a minor to moderate alteration to views, with all predicted effects judged to be not significant. Of the properties within the 500m RVAA study area assessed initially, 21 locations have been predicted to experience minor to moderate effects as a result of the Proposed Development. These locations underwent further analysis and assessment with the assessment concluding that no significant effects are predicted for any of these properties assessed as visible portions of the Proposed Development will be viewed as a minor addition or alteration to the existing visual amenity available from the property.

Whilst visible elements of the Proposed Development would give rise to effects in conjunction with other infrastructure elements such as operational wind turbines, timber poles carrying overhead lines or transmission masts, it is judged that the Proposed Development would not significantly impact on existing residential amenity.