

A. Appendix A8.5: Residential Visual Amenity

A.1 Introduction

Background

A.1.1 This Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA) has been prepared by Stephenson Halliday in accordance with Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 2/19: Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (15 March 2019). The Technical Guidance Note (TGN) identifies that:

“The purpose of carrying out a Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA) is to form a judgement, to assist decision makers, on whether a proposed development is likely to change the visual amenity of a residential property to such an extent that it becomes a matter of ‘Residential Amenity’.”

A.1.2 It further notes that:

“Changes in views and visual amenity are considered in the planning process. In respect of private views and visual amenity, it is widely known that, no one has ‘a right to a view.’ ...

A.1.3 It is not uncommon for significant adverse effects on views and visual amenity to be experienced by people at their place of residence as a result of introducing a new development into the landscape. In itself this does not necessarily cause particular planning concern. However, there are situations where the effect on the outlook / visual amenity of a residential property is so great that it is not generally considered to be in the public interest to permit such conditions to occur where they did not exist before.”

A.1.4 This assessment considers only what the resident may see from a property. Views or ‘visual amenity’ are just one component of residential amenity and the two should not be confused. The latter is a planning matter and may also include aspects such as noise, air quality, traffic, etc., in addition to residential visual amenity. RVAA does not consider or provide information on other aspects of residential amenity and it is for decision makers to weigh all these aspects, and documents/assessments relating to them, in determining the acceptability of a proposal.

A.1.5 This assessment, and the process of RVAA, seeks to identify where effects on residential visual amenity are of such a nature or magnitude that they may need to be considered in the overall balance of ‘Residential Amenity’ or ‘Living Conditions’. The point at which this happens is referred to as the Residential Visual Amenity Threshold.

A.2 Approach

A.2.1 TGN 2/19 advocates a four step process to RVAA with the first three falling broadly within the scope of LVIA where the magnitude and significance of visual effects is assessed.

A.2.2 The fourth step involves a further assessment of the change to visual amenity of individual properties identified as “having the greatest magnitude of change” and identifying whether the RVA threshold is reached.

Methodology

Study Area and Initial Assessment

A.2.3 There are no standard criteria for defining the RVAA study area and this is determined on a case by case basis. The guidance note identifies that for lower profile structures and developments a preliminary study area of 50-250m radius may be appropriate to begin identifying properties for inclusion within RVAA. In this case, a study area of 250m has been used.

A.2.4 Within the RVAA study area all residential properties are identified. An initial appraisal is undertaken to identify those properties likely to experience the greatest effects, therefore requiring further detailed assessment, and those where effects would be less and unlikely to approach the RVA threshold. This process may draw on the findings of the LVIA as a starting point and is supplemented by other tools including ZTV maps, wireframes and field work.

Further Detailed Assessment

A.2.5 For those properties that have been identified at the initial stage as requiring further detailed assessment the process follows the following key stages:

- Evaluation of baseline visual amenity;
- Assessment of likely change to the visual amenity of properties; and
- Forming the RVAA judgement.

A.2.6 Properties are usually assessed individually but may be considered in groups where there outlook or views are essentially the same; for example a row of houses that all share an open outlook towards the site. Where properties are grouped for assessment this will be clearly identified and reasons for grouping described.

Baseline Visual Amenity

A.2.7 The existing baseline visual amenity is described for each property and is informed by desk study and field work. Site visits to all individual properties included within the detailed assessment are undertaken where access can be agreed with property owners. Where access is not possible this step is informed by visits to nearby publicly accessible areas. Visual amenity is described ‘in the round’ and considers both views from the dwelling itself, the domestic curtilage and views experienced when arriving or leaving the property.

A.2.8 It has been noted where the owners of a dwelling have a financial involvement in the project, however all properties have been treated equally in terms of the potential effects upon residential visual amenity.

Likely Change to Visual Amenity

The change to baseline views and visual amenity as a result of the proposed development is described for each property and a judgement on the magnitude of effects likely to be experienced is provided. This may involve consideration of the following factors:

- Distance between the property and proposed development and their relative locations (e.g. up/down hill)

- Nature of available views (e.g. panoramic, enclosed) and the effect of daily or seasonal variations
- Direction of view or aspect of property affected
- Extent to which the proposed development may be visible from various parts of the property (e.g. dwelling, rooms, access, garden)
- Scale of change to views, including the proportion of view occupied by the proposed development
- Compositional changes (e.g. loss/addition of landscape features such as woodland)
- Contrast or integration of new features with the existing views
- Duration and nature of changes (e.g. temporary/permanent, intermittent/continuous)

Mitigation opportunities

This stage may be supported by a range of visual aids as required including maps, ZTV studies, photography and visualisations. The choice of visual aids is determined on a case by case basis and may be informed by consultation. In line with best practice guidance the type of visualisation should be proportionate to the nature of the proposed development and assessment stage.

RVAA Judgement

This final stage is concerned with identifying “*whether the predicted effects on visual amenity and views at the property are such that it has reached the Residential Visual Amenity Threshold, therefore potentially becoming a matter of Residential Amenity*”. This is the key concern of RVAA and judgements on the RVA threshold are set out clearly and unambiguously.

Cumulative

RVAA is undertaken against the baseline, as described in the accompanying LVIA. As stated in the TGN, future cumulative visual effects are not assessed within the RVAA, as the focus of the RVAA is on the existing visual amenity.

In this case the consented developments of xx are also included, as this forms the future baseline of the LVIA and may have a notable influence on the RVAA.

This assessment also considers the effects of forestry removal as much of the existing forestry within the RVAA study area is likely to be felled in the short to medium term or during the lifetime of the proposed development.

Distances/Directions

Where distances and directions are given within the assessment, these are distances between the nearest part of the property (including the domestic curtilage) and the nearest turbine , unless explicitly stated otherwise. Distances given are rounded to the nearest 10m to account for the level of accuracy available in techniques used to measure (usually based on aerial photography within a GIS).

A.3 Assessment

Introduction

A.3.1 Figure 8.1 identifies 4 properties located within 250m of the development site.

Initial Assessment

A.3.2 An initial assessment has been undertaken in order to identify those properties with the highest magnitude of change where there is potential for the RVA threshold to be reached. This is supported by the Landscape Context Figure 8.1, ZTV in Figure 8.5, viewpoint photosheets and site visits. Where it is identified that effects at properties have the potential to reach the RVA threshold this is identified and further detailed assessment would be provided on individual property assessment sheets in the following section. The initial assessment is provided in Table A.1.

Table A.1 Initial Assessment

Property	Distance	Comments	Magnitude of Change	Level of Effect
Greenplains	c.110m W	Single storey property with some established tree vegetation along garden curtilage. Only the upper most parts of the westernmost panels would be visible in Year 1, before hedgerows grow to 4m and the nearest panels are screened Long term. Panels on rising ground to the north would be visible Long term, filtered by intervening vegetation.	Moderate/ Slight	Moderate
Nash Villa	c.130m SW	Property surrounded by mature garden tree and shrub vegetation. Due to this and intervening landform there would be little to no views to the north and east of the proposed development.	N/A	N/A
The Crane	c.190m S	Property located south of the A477. Intervening landform and roadside vegetation would screen views of the proposed site.	Negligible	Negligible

Little Mayeston	c.200m N	Intervening landform would restrict visibility to some panels in the westernmost field, which would be visible, filtered through established localised garden vegetation and intervening mature field boundary tree vegetation, (as illustrated by Viewpoint 3). The proposal would be largely screened in summer months.	Slight/ Negligible	Minor

A.3.3 In summary, further detailed assessment is not required as none of the properties would experience Substantial magnitude effects and none would reach the RVA threshold.