

Appendix 7.2 Residential Visual Amenity Assessment

Introduction

- 1. In accordance with the third edition of ‘Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment’ (GLVIA3), the LVIA (EIA Report Chapter 7) assesses the visual impact of the Proposed Development on public views and public visual amenity. This Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA) goes a stage beyond the LVIA by assessing the visual impact of the Proposed Development on residential visual amenity and has been prepared in accordance with Technical Guidance Note 2/19 ‘Residential Visual Amenity Assessment’ (Landscape Institute, 2019). This guidance sets out the steps to be followed when undertaking an RVAA and highlights how it should be informed by the principles and processes of GLVIA3. The purpose of the RVAA is to identify those properties where the effect of the Proposed Development leads to the ‘Residential Visual Amenity Threshold’ being reached or, in other words, where the effect is of such a nature and/or magnitude that it potentially affects living conditions. In relation to a wind farm development, this may occur as a result of the wind turbines giving rise to an ‘overbearing’ or ‘overwhelming’ magnitude of effect.
- 2. This assessment is carried out largely on-site in order to observe and assess baseline factors such as the orientation of the property, the baseline views that may be gained, screening by vegetation and so on.
- 3. This RVAA assesses the likely effects of the Proposed Development on the visual component of residential amenity relating to individual properties within a localised study area. The term ‘residential amenity’ refers to the living conditions at a house, including its gardens and domestic curtilage, which are commonly interpreted to include visual amenity, noise amenity and other factors such as shadow flicker. In an RVAA, only the visual amenity aspect of residential amenity is addressed.
- 4. The purpose of the RVAA is to inform the planning process, as noted in guidance (Landscape Institute, 2019).

“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.”

Approach

- 5. The approach to RVAA is based on four steps, as set out in guidance (Landscape Institute, 2019):
 - Step 1: Definition of the study area and scope of the assessment, informed by the description of the Proposed Development, defining the study area extent and scope of the assessment with respect to the properties to be included.
 - Step 2: Evaluation of baseline visual amenity at properties to be included, having regard to the landscape and visual context and the potential influence of the Proposed Development.
 - Step 3: Assessment of likely change to visual amenity of included properties in accordance with GLVIA3 principles and processes.
 - Step 4: Further assessment of predicted change to the visual amenity of properties where a judgement in relation to the Residential Visual Amenity Threshold is required.

Step 1

- 6. Step 1 involves defining the extent of the study area and establishing the scope of the assessment. In respect of defining the extent of the study area, Technical Guidance gives the following advice (Paragraphs 4.6 and 4.7):

“Over the last few years a large number of RVAAs have been prepared, especially relating to wind energy proposals. Local Planning Authorities (LPA) have frequently requested ‘study areas’ of up to 3 or even 5 km. The logic for these (exceptionally) large study areas was based on certain findings of LVIAs which identified significant visual effects from ‘settlements’ or from clusters of residential properties within this range. This fails to recognise that RVAA is a stage beyond LVIA. Consequently, many RVAAs, including those of windfarms with large turbines (150m and taller), have included disproportionately extensive study areas incorporating too many properties. This appears to largely be based on the misconception that if a significant effect has been identified in the LVIA adjacent to a property at 2.5 km it will also potentially lead to reaching the Residential Visual Amenity Threshold.

When assessing relatively conspicuous structures such as wind turbines, and depending on local landscape characteristics, a preliminary study area of approximately 1.5 to 2 km radius may initially be appropriate in order to begin identifying properties to include in a RVAA...”

- 7. In line with this guidance, the study area for the Proposed Development has been drawn out to the larger 2 km radius (measured from the Proposed Development turbines), as shown on Figure A7.2.1. All residential properties within the 2 km study areas have been identified using AddressBase data and are also mapped on Figure A7.2.1. This includes residential properties that have potential to be occupied as dwelling houses or as holiday accommodation.

Step 2

- 8. Step 2 involves carrying out an evaluation of the baseline visual amenity at the properties through a combination of desk study and field work. The key considerations of this evaluation are set out in the Technical Guidance as follows:

“The nature and extent of all potentially available existing views from the property and its garden/ domestic curtilage, including the proximity and relationship of the property to surrounding landform/ landcover and visual foci. This may include primary/main views from the property or domestic curtilage as well as secondary/peripheral views; and...Views as experienced when arriving or leaving the property, for example from private driveways/access tracks.”

- 9. There are six properties within the 2 km radius study area for the Proposed Development of which four are shown on the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) to gain theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development, while two are shown to gain no theoretical visibility. RVAA sheets have been prepared for the four properties that do gain theoretical visibility, each incorporating an OS map and aerial photograph of the property that shows the viewshed towards the Proposed Development, and a description of baseline views. Wireline views that illustrate the theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development from the properties that are included within the 2 km radius study area are presented in Figures A7.2.2, A7.2.3, A7.2.4 and A7.2.5.

Step 3

- 10. Step 3 involves an assessment of the likely change to the visual amenity of properties by applying the process of assessment described in GLVIA3, in which the sensitivity of the receptor is combined with the magnitude of change that will arise as a result of the Proposed Development to determine whether the effect will be significant or not significant. The aim of Step 3 is to identify those properties with potential to reach Residential Visual Amenity Threshold and therefore require further assessment in Step 4. This will generally only occur where a high magnitude of change is assessed for a property, as the threshold reflects those effects that are at the extreme where they may become overwhelming or overbearing. The key considerations of this assessment are set out in the Technical Guidance as follows:

- ‘Distance of property from the proposed development having regard to its size/scale and location relative to the property (e.g. on higher or lower ground);
- Type and nature of the available views (e.g. panoramic, open, framed, enclosed, focused etc.) and how they may be affected, having regard to seasonal and diurnal variations;
- Direction of view / aspect of property affected, having regard to both the main/primary and peripheral/ secondary views from the property;
- Extent to which development/landscape changes would be visible from the property (or parts of) having regard to views from principal rooms, the domestic curtilage (i.e. garden) and the private access route, taking into account seasonal and diurnal variations;
- Scale of change in views having regard to such factors as the loss or addition of features and compositional changes including the proportion of view occupied by the development, taking account of seasonal and diurnal variations;
- Degree of contrast or integration of new features or changes in the landscape compared to the existing situation in terms of form, scale and mass, line, height, colour and texture, having regard to seasonal and diurnal variations;
- Duration and nature of the changes, whether temporary or permanent, intermittent or continuous, reversible or irreversible etc.; and

- *Mitigation opportunities - consider implications of both embedded and potential further mitigation.'*

11. The significance of the effect on residential visual amenity experienced at each property is dependent on the factors considered in the sensitivity and the magnitude of change resulting from the Proposed Development. These judgements on sensitivity and magnitude are combined to arrive at an overall assessment as to whether the Proposed Development will have an effect on residential visual amenity that is significant or not significant.
12. It is assumed that all occupiers of residential properties included in the RVAA will have a high sensitivity.
13. The assessment process - the evaluation of magnitude of change and the significance of the effect - is described on the RVAA sheets in this Appendix. Where properties are assessed as having a high magnitude of change, a Step 4 assessment is required to determine whether or not the Residential Visual Amenity Threshold has been reached.

Step 4

14. Step 4 of the RVAA is described as follows in Technical Guidance (paragraphs 4.17 to 4.20):

“The final step of RVAA involves a more detailed examination of the predicted effects on the visual amenity at those properties identified for further assessment in the previous step.

There is an important distinction between this concluding step of RVAA and the preceding one. In Step 3 the assessor has reached a conclusion with respect to magnitude and (EIA) significance of visual effect, and the change in visual amenity at the property. In this final step, and only for those properties where the largest magnitude of effect has been identified, a further judgement is required. This concluding judgement should advise the decision maker 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 judgement should be explained in narrative setting out why the effects are considered to reach the Residential Visual Amenity Threshold. Equally, judgements should explain why the threshold has not been reached.

The Residential Visual Amenity Threshold judgement should be communicated in a coherent manner, using text with clear descriptions, employing terminology which is commonly understood and descriptors which may have previously been used. Assessors should ensure that their judgements are unambiguous and have a clear, rational conclusion. Some examples of descriptions and descriptors that might be used include: ‘blocking the only available view from a property’, or ‘overwhelming views in all directions’; and ‘unpleasantly encroaching’ or being ‘inescapably dominant from the property’. It may also be useful to employ bespoke graphics such as annotated aerial photographs and wireframe visualisations to aid this further assessment in Step 4.

The key point regarding Step 4 is that the judgement required in this final, concluding step goes beyond the assessment undertaken in Step 3 which is restricted to judging the magnitude and significance of visual effect, typically as a supplement to the accompanying LVIA.”

15. The Step 4 assessment is included on the RVAA sheets for each of the relevant properties. Where this RVAA identifies any properties at the threshold in Step 4, this does not imply an unacceptable effect, as any finding of acceptability requires to be undertaken as part of the wider planning balance. The ‘threshold’ acts to identify those properties where a predicted change to visual amenity is of such magnitude that it should be weighed in the planning balance, along with other EIA effects.

Approach to Financially Involved Properties

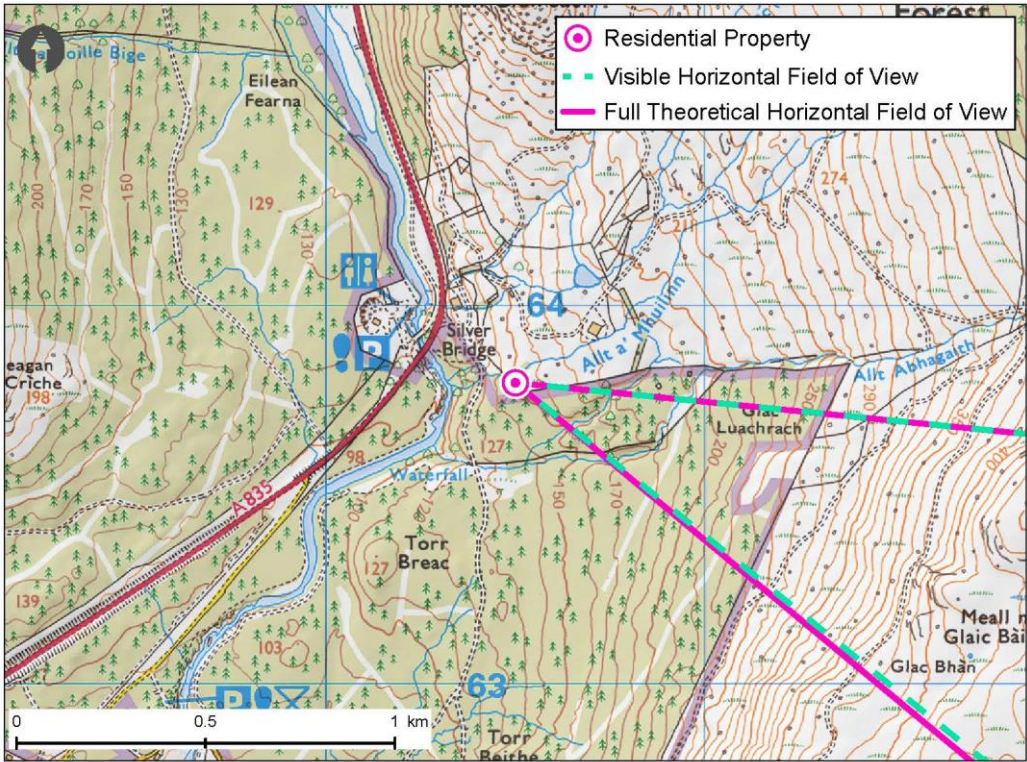
16. With regard to properties that are financially involved, it is relevant to consider the position of the Scottish Ministers in relation to wind farms where there are financially involved properties.
17. In the case of the proposed Harelaw Wind Farm, which was issued by the Scottish Government in September 2013, the Scottish Ministers accepted the recommendation of the Reporter and refused the application for consent which involved a development of some 39 wind turbines. The Reporter in the Harelaw case stated with regard to financially involved properties, at paragraph 8.51, that she had “*disregarded properties which have a financial involvement, as I consider residents in those properties would be willing to suffer a diminution in their residential amenity because of the financial benefit they would gain*”.
18. At Birneyknowe section 36 Inquiry in 2018, the Reporter found the following: “*The Environmental Statement finds that the overall effect on both of these properties is substantial to severe, and significant, but not so adverse as to result in either house becoming an unsatisfactory place to live. That statement aside, I would I think have registered very significant concerns about the impacts on the amenity of these houses had they not been financially involved.*

Regardless of the views from individual windows, the wind farm would be a constant and dominant presence for the occupants of these properties. However, given their financial involvement, I do not take the view that such impacts add anything to the case against consenting this application.”

19. At the Green Burn Appeal in 2018, Reporter Andrew Sikes made the following assessment: “*All of the proposed turbines would be visible from the Corb, given its elevated moorland setting, in addition to those of the operational Drumderg Wind Farm and the consented single Corb Bridge turbine, which is to be erected at the property. However, as I note above, the Corb has a financial involvement in the proposed development which serves to assuage its significant visual effects.*”
20. These decisions illustrate the approach the Reporters have taken in terms of the weight to be placed on financially involved properties in terms of residential amenity. This approach, whereby financially involved properties are afforded a higher tolerance of impact when compared with non-financially involved properties, has been reflected in a number of Appeal and Inquiry Decisions in Scotland.
21. In this RVAA, a financially involved property has been identified. The method of assessment for financially involved properties is identical to that taken for non-financially involved properties, with any differentiation being reserved for the planning balance judgment.

Property 1: Tigh Fiodha Larder Wireline view shown on A7.2.2 *this property is also owned by the landowner and is a holiday let.		
Location of property: approximately 260 m to the east of the A835 at Silverbridge.	Property description: detached 1.5 storey timber lodge with short term let residential accommodation on the upper level and agricultural uses on the lower level.	Grid reference: 240500, 863797 Distance from nearest turbine: 1.70 km (T6)
Step 2: Baseline Visual Amenity The main orientation of views is north-east and south-west with large windows/balconies on these elevations, on the upper floor. A rooflight faces north-west. From the windows/balconies there are long, open and scenic views to the north-east and south-west, across hills and woodland, with some filtering by trees in the foreground. To the north-east, Little Wyvis is prominent on the elevated skyline, with Beinn a Ghuilbein seen to its southwest. Views from the parking area and outside areas are less open but attractive and also gain an outlook towards the hills, especially from the north-east end of the building.		
Step 3: Assessment of Residential (Visual) Amenity Effects <ul style="list-style-type: none">Magnitude of change: high-mediumSignificance of effect: major and significant visual effect The wireline shows theoretical visibility of three turbines in the Proposed Development, two as hubs and one as a blade, with the nearest turbine 1.70 km away. Lower towers are all screened by landform. The Proposed Development will affect approximately 37° of the view. The Proposed Development lies to the south-east of the property and might be seen peripherally in views from within the property at its north-eastern elevation. There will be clear views from the north-eastern balcony, with some filtering of visibility by foreground pine trees. There might also be oblique visibility from the south-western balcony. Views from the ground level outside curtilage of the property will be more limited due to the reduced elevation, but visibility is likely to be gained from around the eastern end of the building.		
Step 4: Residential Visual Amenity Threshold Assessment Step 4 involves making a judgement as to whether the predicted effects on visual amenity and views at the property are such that it has reached the Residential Visual Amenity Threshold, as described in the introduction. This property does not have potential to reach the Residential Visual Amenity Threshold due to the high-medium magnitude of change on the view (a high magnitude of change is required to trigger potential for the Residential Visual Amenity Threshold to be reached).		

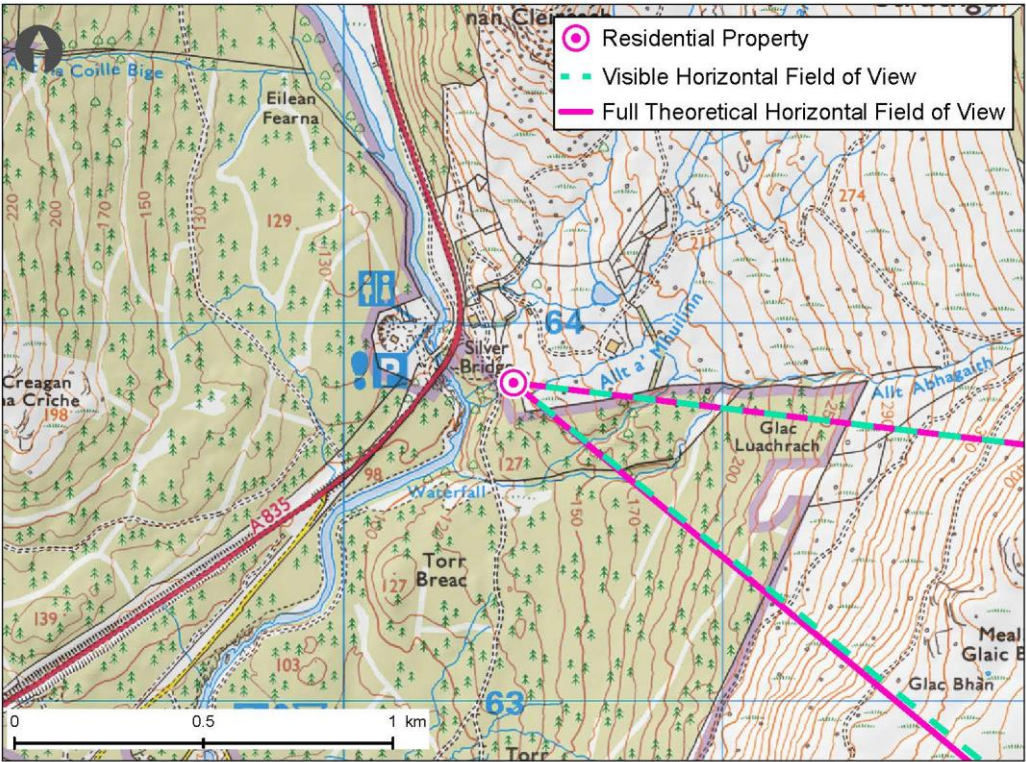
Property 1: Tigh Fiodha Larder



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Property 2: Tigh Fiodha Wireline view shown on A7.2.3 *this property is financially involved with the Proposed Development		
Location of property: approximately 180 m to the east of the A835 at Silverbridge.	Property description: detached timber lodge, permanent residence.	Grid reference: 240447, 863843 Distance from nearest turbine: 1.76 km
Step 2: Baseline Visual Amenity The property is orientated north-south and has long views across the hill landscape to the south from windows in the southern elevation. There is a timber deck to the south as well as a parking area and the door access into the property. Attractive views are also gained to the west. Land rises steeply to the east of the property, foreshortening views in this direction. Woodland surrounds the house, and views to the north, east and west are likely to be screened/filtered by woodland, while the southern aspect is more open. Southwards views from the parking area and deck also gain a relatively open outlook. The access to the house is wooded.		
Step 3: Assessment of Residential (Visual) Amenity Effects <ul style="list-style-type: none">Magnitude of change: medium-lowSignificance of effect: moderate and not significant visual effect The wireline shows theoretical visibility of three turbines in the Proposed Development, one as a hub (with no tower visible) and two as blade tips, with the nearest turbine 1.76 km away. Towers are all screened by landform. The Proposed Development will theoretically affect approximately 33° of the view. The Proposed Development lies to the south-east of the property. The rising ground and woodland that encloses the house to the east is likely to screen visibility in angled views from within the southern elevation of the house, and from the decking and parking area outside. Brief glimpses through woodland may be gained from outside, especially in winter. Views from within the eastern elevation of the house are unlikely to gain visibility due to the rising ground and woodland, and views on the approach to the house are likely to be screened by woodland.		
Step 4: Residential Visual Amenity Threshold Assessment Step 4 involves making a judgement as to whether the predicted effects on visual amenity and views at the property are such that it has reached the Residential Visual Amenity Threshold, as described in the introduction. This property does not have potential to reach the Residential Visual Amenity Threshold due to the medium-low magnitude of change on the view (a high magnitude of change is required to trigger potential for the Residential Visual Amenity Threshold to be reached).		

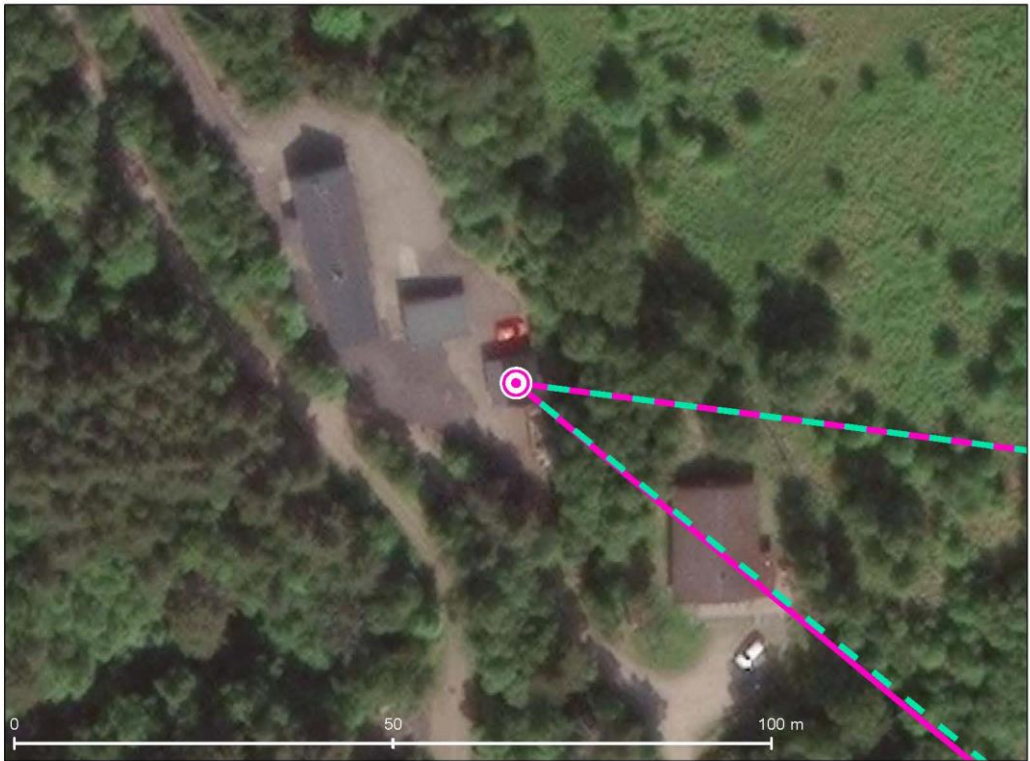
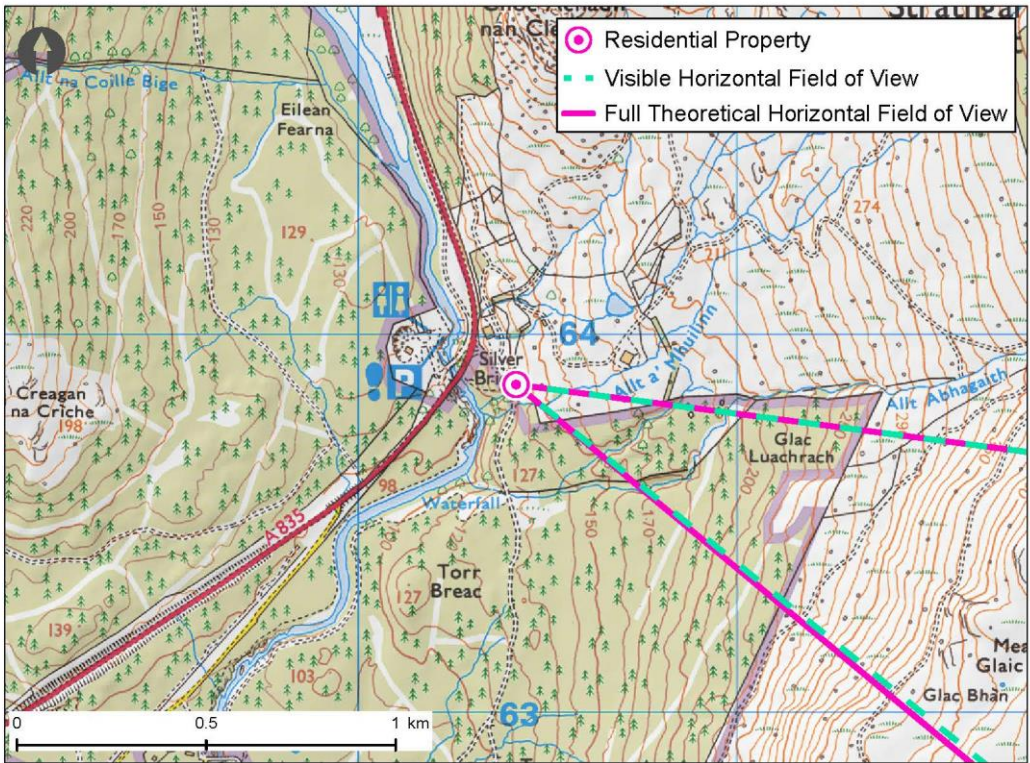
Property 2: Tigh Fiodha



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Property 3: Little Wyvis Lodge Wireline view shown on A7.2.4		
Location of property: approximately 140 m to the east of the A835 at Silverbridge.	Property description: detached single storey timber lodge used for short term let residential accommodation.	Grid reference: 240417, 863869 Distance from nearest turbine: 1.80 km
Step 2: Baseline Visual Amenity The property faces west and has its main view in this direction, with large windows and a veranda. The view to the west is across hard standing towards woodland. There is one further small window in the north elevation. Land rises steeply to the east of the property, foreshortening the views in this direction that are gained from outside areas. Property 4 (Silverbridge Lodge) lies to the north-west of this property and can be seen in views from the western elevation and the veranda. Property 2 (Tigh Fiodha) lies in an elevated position to the south-east. The southern end of the veranda is enclosed, precluding visibility in this direction. Woodland surrounds the property, and views in all directions are screened/filtered by trees, as is the access to the property.		
Step 3: Assessment of Residential (Visual) Amenity Effects <ul style="list-style-type: none">Magnitude of change: lowSignificance of effect: moderate-minor and not significant visual effect The wireline shows theoretical visibility of three turbines in the Proposed Development, one as a hub (with no tower visible) and two as blade tips, with the nearest turbine 1.80 km away. Towers are all screened by landform. The Proposed Development will theoretically affect approximately 33° of the view. The Proposed Development lies to the south-east of the property. There will be no visibility from within the property as the windows are in the western and northern elevations. Visibility from external areas is likely to be screened by the rising ground and woodland that encloses the house to the east, with Property 2 (Tigh Fhioda) also screening part of the view. There will be no visibility from the veranda due to its orientation and the enclosure of the southern end of the veranda. Brief glimpses of the Proposed Development might be gained on the approach to the property.		
Step 4: Residential Visual Amenity Threshold Assessment Step 4 involves making a judgement as to whether the predicted effects on visual amenity and views at the property are such that it has reached the Residential Visual Amenity Threshold, as described in the introduction. This property does not have potential to reach the Residential Visual Amenity Threshold due to the low magnitude of change on the view (a high magnitude of change is required to trigger potential for the Residential Visual Amenity Threshold to be reached).		

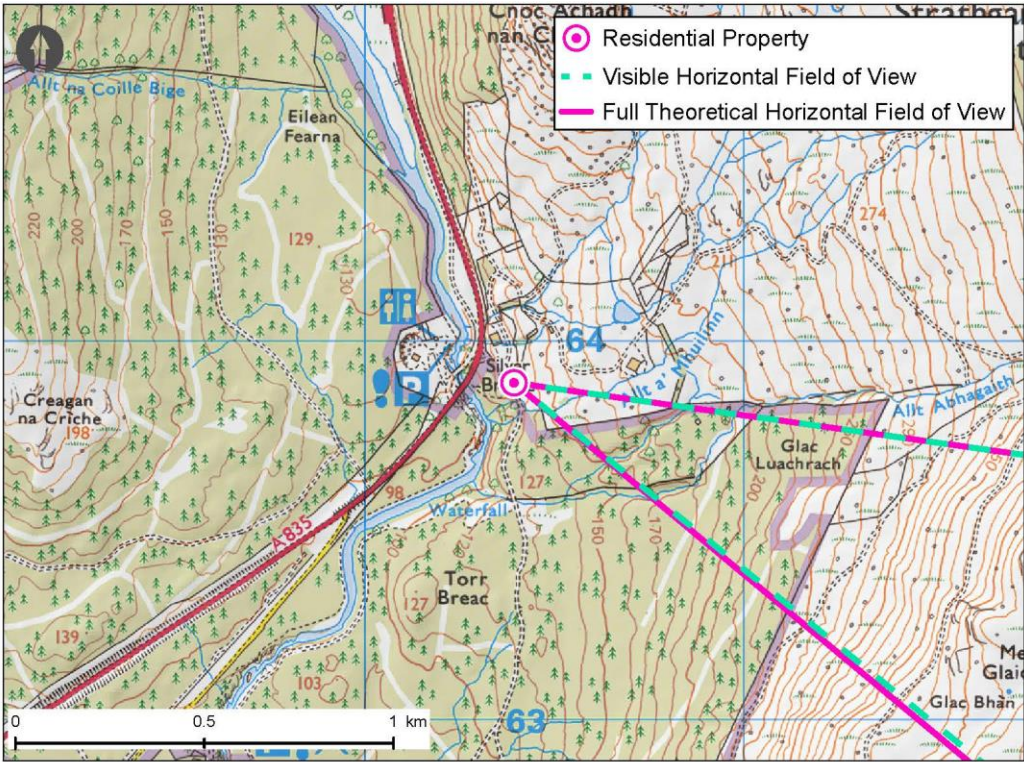
Property 3: Little Wyvis Lodge



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Property 4: Silverbridge Lodge Wireline view shown on A7.2.5		
Location of property: approximately 110 m to the east of the A835 at Silverbridge.	Property description: detached two storey house with single storey extension; used for short term let residential accommodation.	Grid reference: 240392, 863891 Distance from nearest turbine: 1.84 km
Step 2: Baseline Visual Amenity The property is orientated north-north-west/south-south-east and has windows in all elevations. An outbuilding lies to the east, and Property 3 (Little Wyvis Lodge) is to the south-east. Land rises to the east of the property, beyond Property 3, foreshortening views in this direction. There is a seating area to the north. Woodland surrounds the house, and views in all directions are likely to be screened/filtered by woodland. The northern/western aspects are likely to be the most open as landform, woodland and other buildings screen/filter views in other directions.		
Step 3: Assessment of Residential (Visual) Amenity Effects <ul style="list-style-type: none">Magnitude of change: medium-lowSignificance of effect: moderate and not significant visual effect The wireline shows theoretical visibility of three turbines in the Proposed Development, two as hubs and one as a blade, with the nearest turbine 1.84 km away. Lower towers are all screened by landform. The Proposed Development will affect approximately 34° of the view. The Proposed Development lies to the south-east of the property. The rising ground and woodland that encloses the house to the east is likely to screen visibility from within the house, although there may be some visibility from the upper floor of the eastern elevation, which has several windows. The upper floor of the southern elevation has one window. Visibility from these upper windows would be limited by woodland and rising landform, as well as by Property 2 (Tigh Fioda), and would be at an angle to the main direction of views. Visibility from the outdoor seating area will be screened/filtered by woodland, landform and other buildings. Brief glimpses through woodland may be gained from other outside areas, especially in winter and on the approach to the house.		
Step 4: Residential Visual Amenity Threshold Assessment Step 4 involves making a judgement as to whether the predicted effects on visual amenity and views at the property are such that it has reached the Residential Visual Amenity Threshold, as described in the introduction. This property does not have potential to reach the Residential Visual Amenity Threshold due to the medium-low magnitude of change on the view (a high magnitude of change is required to trigger potential for the Residential Visual Amenity Threshold to be reached).		

Property 4: Silverbridge Lodge



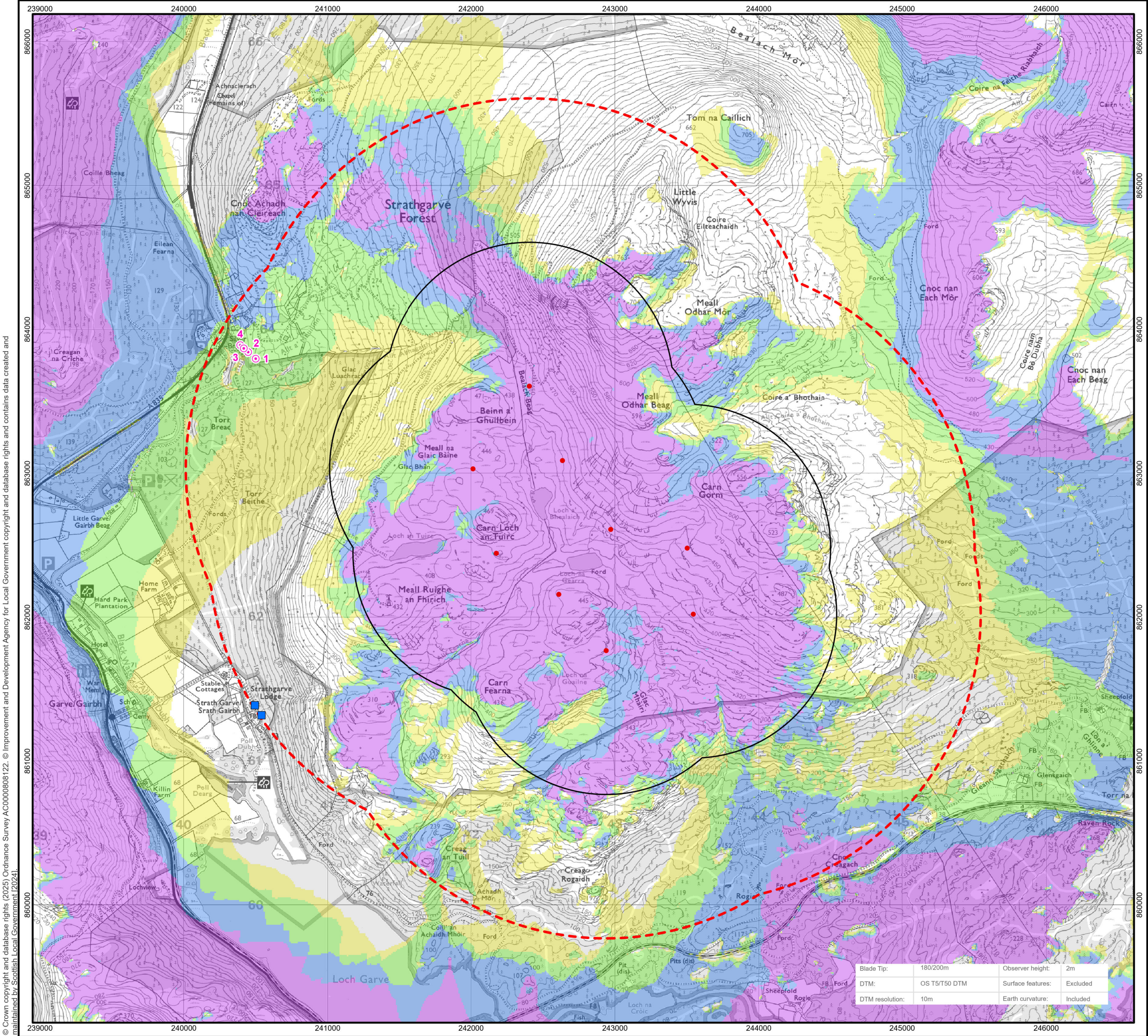
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RVAA Summary and Conclusions

22. The RVAA sheets in this Appendix detail the assessments for the four properties that have been evaluated through this assessment, and Table 7.2.1 below provides a summary of the results of the assessment. The RVAA indicates that one of the four properties included is likely to experience a major and **significant** visual effect as a result of the Proposed Development. This is Property 1 (Tigh Fiodha Larder), which has a high-medium magnitude of change on residential visual amenity. This property is also owned by the landowner and is a holiday let..
23. The remaining three properties will have a low (Property 3 (Little Wyvis Lodge)) or medium-low (Property 2 (Tigh Fiodha) and Property 4 (Silverbridge Lodge)) magnitude of change on residential visual amenity, and a moderate-minor or moderate and **not significant** effect. A moderate effect can be assessed as significant or not significant, and in this case the effect on Property 3 and Property 4 is assessed to be not significant due to the limited theoretical and actual visibility of the Proposed Development that is likely to be gained due to screening by landform, woodland and other buildings.
24. In line with the Landscape Institute's guidance on RVAA, the finding that none of the four properties would reach the Residential Visual Amenity Threshold is recorded as a matter for the wider planning balance. As stipulated in the guidance, no conclusions on the acceptability of these visual effects is drawn within the RVAA.

Table 0.2.1 – Summary of Assessment Results

Property	Magnitude of Change	Significance of Effect	Residential Visual Amenity Threshold
1. Tigh Fiodha Larder	High-medium	Significant	Not reached
2. Tigh Fiodha	Medium-low	Not Significant	Not reached
3. Little Wyvis Lodge	Low	Not Significant	Not reached
4. Silverbridge Lodge	Medium-low	Not Significant	Not reached






- Proposed Turbine Location
- 1km Radius
- 2km Study Area
- Residential Properties Within 2km With No Theoretical Visibility
- Residential Property Within 2km With Theoretical Visibility
 - 1. Tigh Fiodha Larder
 - 2. Tigh Fiodha
 - 3. Little Wyvis
 - 4. Silverbridge Lodge

Blade Tip Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)

Number of Blade Tips Theoretically Visible

- 1 - 2
- 3 - 4
- 5 - 6
- 7 - 9

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Produced By: GG	Version: 2
Checked By: AW	Date: 03/04/2025

Figure A7.2.1

ZTV with Properties

Carn Fearna Wind Farm

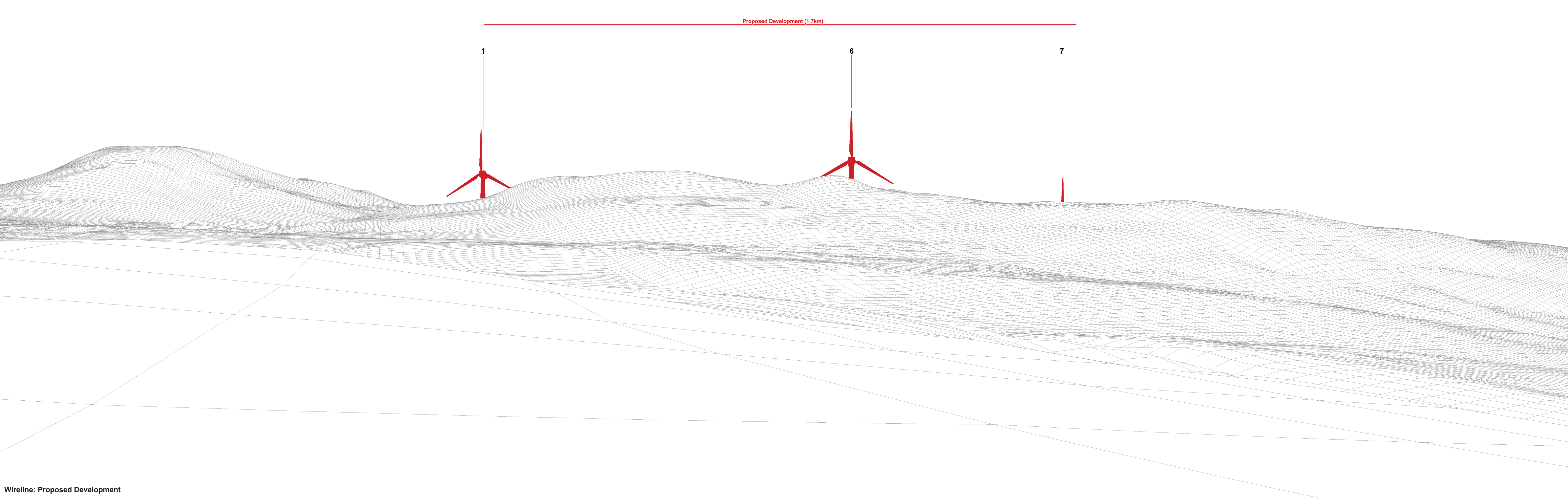
Residential Visual Amenity Assessment

Environmental Impact Assessment Report

Blade Tip:	180/200m	Observer height:	2m
DTM:	OS T5/T50 DTM	Surface features:	Excluded
DTM resolution:	10m	Earth curvature:	Included

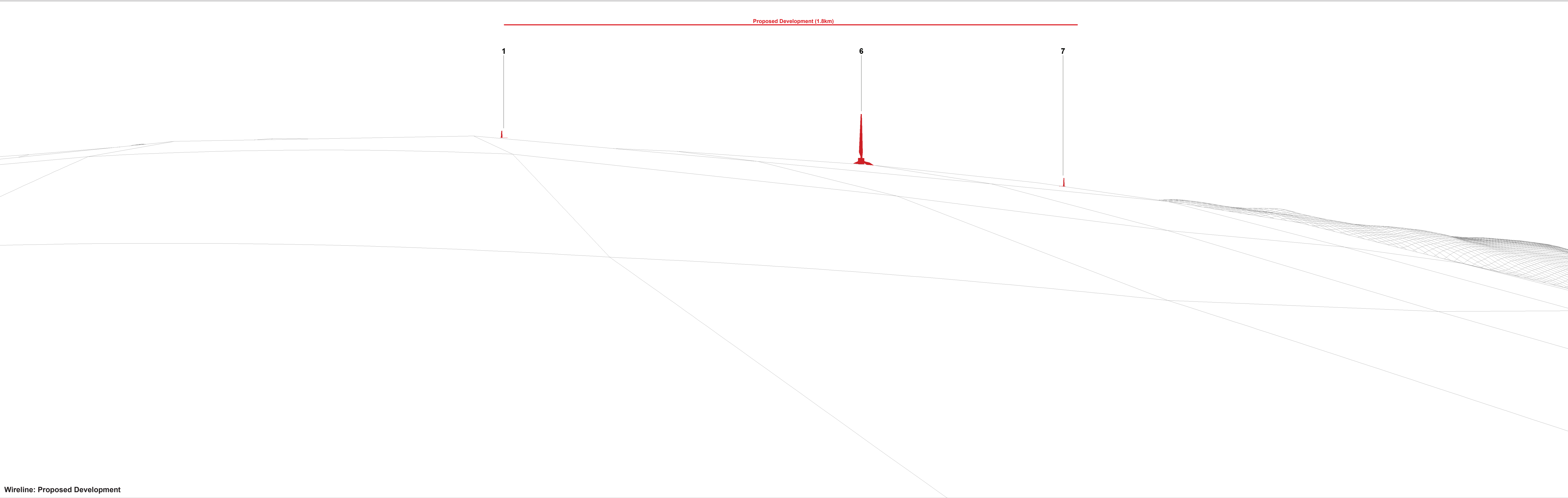
Contents

Figure A7.2.2	Residential Property 1:	Tigh Fiodha Larder
Figure A7.2.3	Residential Property 2:	Tigh Fiodha
Figure A7.2.4	Residential Property 3:	Little Wyvis Lodge
Figure A7.2.5	Residential Property 4:	Silverbridge Lodge



Wireline: Proposed Development

OS reference:	240500 E 863797 N	Horizontal field of view:	90° (cylindrical projection)
Eye level:	151.7 mAOB	Principal distance:	522 mm
Direction of view:	113°	Paper size:	841 x 297 mm (half A1)
Nearest turbine:	1.70 km	Correct printed image size:	820 x 260 mm

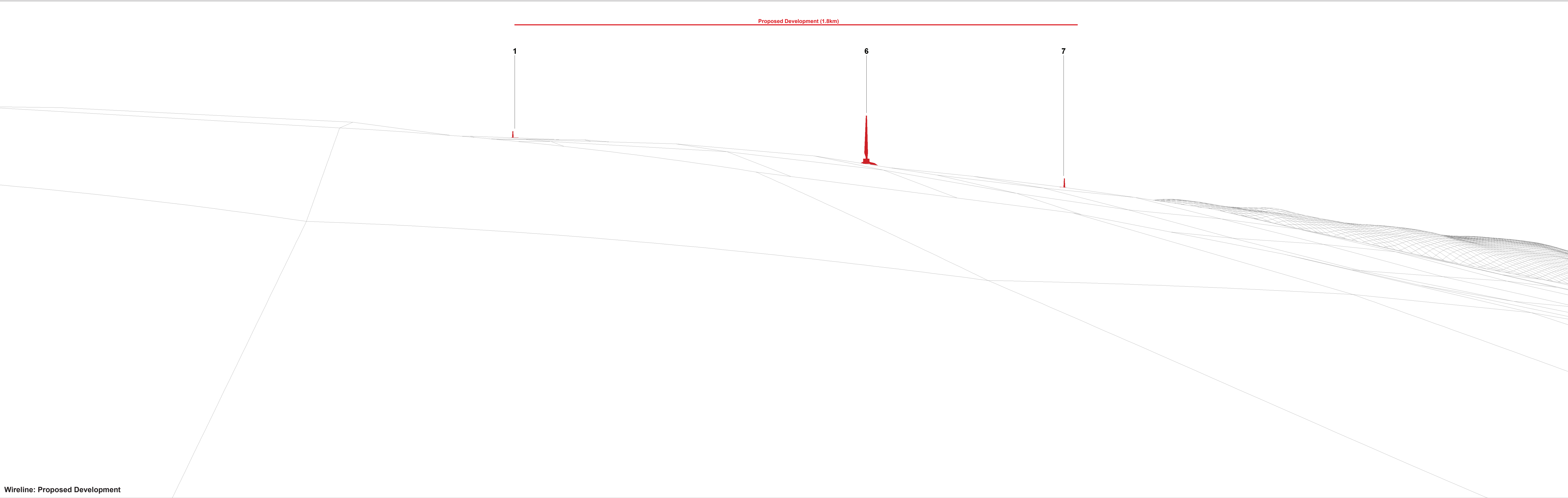


OS reference: 240447 E 863843 N
Eye level: 137.8 mAOD
Direction of view: 113°
Nearest turbine: 1.76 km

Horizontal field of view: 90° (cylindrical projection)
Principal distance: 522 mm
Paper size: 841 x 297 mm (half A1)
Correct printed image size: 820 x 260 mm

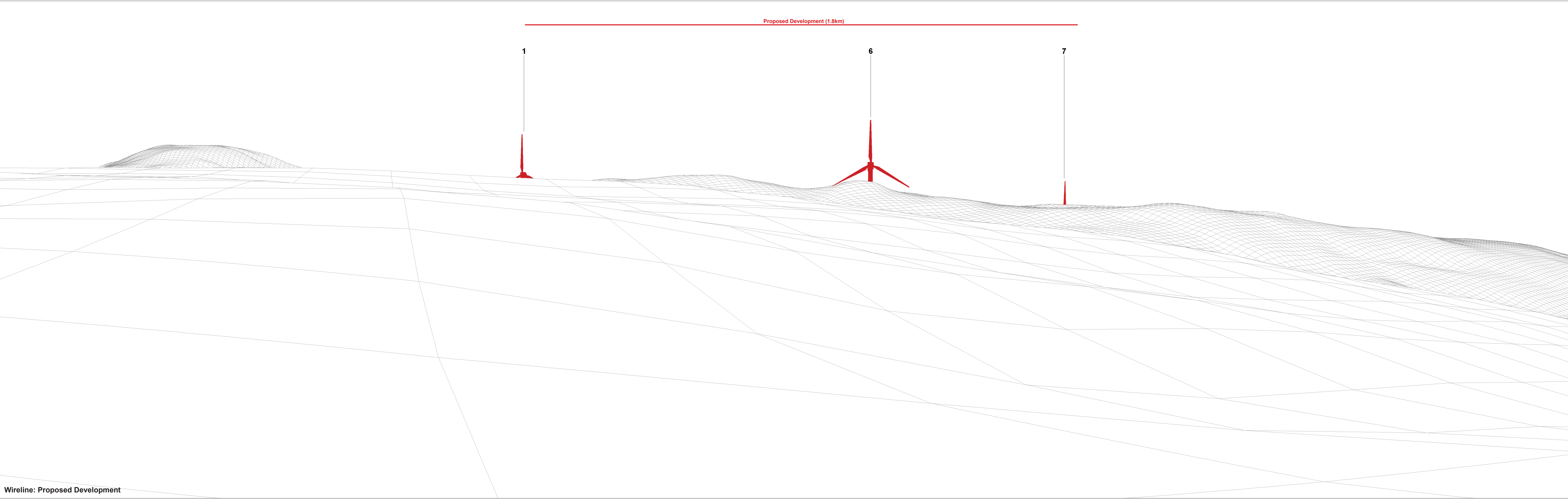
Figure A7.2.3
Residential Property 2: Tigh Fiodha
Carn Fearna Wind Farm

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OS reference: 240417 E 863869 N
Eye level: 130.1 mAOD
Direction of view: 113°
Nearest turbine: 1.80 km

Horizontal field of view: 90° (cylindrical projection)
Principal distance: 522 mm
Paper size: 841 x 297 mm (half A1)
Correct printed image size: 820 x 260 mm



Wireline: Proposed Development

OS reference:	240392 E 863891 N	Horizontal field of view:	90° (cylindrical projection)
Eye level:	128.8 mAOD	Principal distance:	522 mm
Direction of view:	113°	Paper size:	841 x 297 mm (half A1)
Nearest turbine:	1.84 km	Correct printed image size:	820 x 260 mm