



WIND TURBINE DEVELOPMENTS

A Guidance Note for Applicants and Agents

The government requires that local authorities have a positive strategy to promote energy from renewable and low carbon sources. Wind power has an important role to play in this strategy, and wind turbine developments of all scales can provide a valuable contribution to cutting green house gas emissions and mitigating the effects of climate change.

1. Purpose of this guidance

This guidance note aims to promote consistent decision making throughout the pre application and planning submission processes. It is not formal supplementary planning guidance [SPD].

It is applicable to all scales of potential wind turbine development in Huntingdonshire, and seeks to clarify what information will be required by the Planning Authority with a view to speeding up the relevant processes and providing quicker responses and decisions.

2. Policy background

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that Local Planning Authorities should design their policies to maximise renewable and low carbon energy development, while ensuring that adverse impacts are addressed satisfactorily, including cumulative landscape and visual impacts. Further national policy is found in the National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure EN-3, The Overarching Statement for Energy Infrastructure EN-1, and the PPS 22 Companion Guide.

There will be a relevant local policy in the new Huntingdonshire Local Plan, and important supplementary planning guidance will be

contained in the SPD “Landscape Sensitivity to Wind Turbine Development,” to be adopted in early 2013.

3. Scale of Wind Turbines

For the purposes of this guidance note -

- Small scale wind turbines are classed as those with an overall height to blade tip of 30 metres or less.
- Medium scale turbines are classed as those greater than 30m but no more than 80 metres overall height to blade tip.
- Large scale turbines are classed as those over 80 metres overall height to blade tip.



4. Screening and Scoping

Wind turbines are projects that are listed under Section 2 of the Town and Country Planning [Environmental Impact Assessment] Regulations 2011. A project may require Environmental Impact Assessment [EIA] if the development involves more than 2 turbines or the hub height of any turbine exceeds 15 metres, or if the proposal lies within a “sensitive area” as defined by the Regulations. If any of these conditions apply the LPA must provide a Screening Opinion advising the applicant whether or not an EIA is required. It is likely that large scale turbines will need an EIA.

The applicant may also request a Scoping Opinion from the LPA which will advise on the issues and information to be included in an Environmental Statement.

NB Even if the LPA deems that an EIA is not required it may still require that certain relevant issues are addressed in a Statement which must accompany a planning application.

5. Pre Application Advice and Planning Applications

Early discussions with Huntingdonshire District Council Planning Services are encouraged and pre application advice for potential development is available at 3 levels. Details can be found at www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/Planning then following the links to “Pre Application Advice” on the left of the page; there is a charge for this service, but please note that Wind Turbine Developments are not covered by the different classes of development listed in the HDC general guidance on Pre App Advice. Charges will be available on request and will depend on the scale of the proposed development and the completeness of the information submitted by the applicant.

Applicants are expected to provide as much information as possible in order to facilitate a more detailed and considered response from the planning authority following a request for

Pre Application Advice, a Screening Opinion or a Scoping Opinion. This, in turn, will enable applicants to assess the risks associated with the proposal, and submit a more complete and better quality planning submission leading to a quicker decision.

Pre Application Advice will not be available until the information listed below has been provided. Planning Applications will require a similar level of detail plus additional information as noted in the relevant sections.

[a] Air Traffic and Radar

Turbines may represent a risk of collision with low flying aircraft and/or interfere with radar operations. At both the Pre Application and Planning Submission stages applicants must satisfy the LPA that they have satisfactorily addressed any concerns held by the MoD or the National Air Traffic Services [NATS]. For more information see the Renewable UK website – <http://www.bwea.com/aviation>

[b] General Information

Details of the following should be presented at both the Pre Application and Planning Submission stages -

- Number of turbines
- Exact location of turbine(s)
- Hub height, rotor diameter and overall height to blade tip of proposed turbines
- Type and colour of turbines, including rated power output (per turbine)
- Appearance of turbines (photographic evidence)
- Altitude of site in metres

[c] Landscape and Visual Information

At the Pre Application stage this should include details of:-

- Any property within 1km of the proposed turbine(s) – this radius may increase for planning submission.
- Rights of way within 1km of the proposed turbine(s) – this radius may increase for planning submission.
- Other existing, consented or applied for wind turbine developments within 10km of the proposed turbine(s) – this radius may increase for planning submissions.
- Photos of site showing the existing conditions – additional photos and photomontages showing the proposal may be required for the planning submission to help assess the base line landscape and visual character. Potential impacts on landscape and visual character may be an important factor in determining an application. A list of proposed photo viewpoints [submitted

by the applicant] may be required prior to pre application advice, then liaison with the LPA will establish an agreed list to be used as part of the planning submission. Normally photomontages will only be needed for medium and large scale developments, but each case will be treated on its merits.

[d] Impact on Cultural Heritage Assets

A heritage asset is a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance because of its heritage interest, and so meriting consideration in planning decisions.

Heritage assets include designated heritage assets [A World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area designated under the relevant legislation] and assets identified by the local planning authority [including local listing].



At the Pre Application stage all applicants should consult the Historic Environment Record [<http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway/chr>] and provide details of the heritage assets in the area.

In determining a Planning Application, the LPA will require an applicant to identify and describe the significance of any heritage assets affected by the proposal, and assess the impacts on these assets - this may require specialist advice.

The significance of all assets within prescribed areas should be provided as follows -

- Small scale turbines [up to 30m height] - all assets within a 2km radius of the turbines.
- Medium scale turbines [from 30m to 80m height] - all assets within a 5km radius.
- Large scale turbines [over 80m] – because of their height these turbine developments may require the submission of an EIA. Even when an EIA is not deemed necessary the LPA may still require a detailed assessment of cultural heritage assets. This applies to all assets within a 5km radius, and for any grade 1 or II* listed buildings or registered parks and gardens the relevant radius is increased to 10 km.

The information provided should also include the following details -

- The impact of the turbine on the heritage asset itself - its physical impact.
- The impact of the turbine on the setting of the heritage asset - its indirect impact.

As a general guide the size of the turbine and the elevation of the site will directly affect the impact.

The level of detail provided should be proportionate to the assets' importance, with more information being provided for grade 1 and II* assets and scheduled monuments. Each case will be considered on its merits and pre application discussions with relevant officers are

encouraged in order that the applicant is made aware of the type and extent of information needed to accompany a planning application.

Issues including intervisibility, visual dominance, reversibility, vistas and sight lines will be relevant, and colour photomontages of vistas to and from these assets may need to be provided.

English Heritage have produced guidance on these issues, especially their publications "Wind Energy and the Historic Environment" and "The Setting of Heritage Assets," both of which can be viewed via their website <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk>



[e] Ecology and Nature Conservation

At the Pre Application stage information should be provided to enable the LPA to assess potential impacts on protected species and habitats. Sites designated for their nature

conservation value that are within 5km of the site must be listed. At the Planning Application stage this radius may increase for large scale schemes.

Planning Applications must also detail any loss of habitat, and potential mitigation and opportunities for habitat creation must be identified.

More detailed guidance on wind farm development and nature conservation was produced by RSPB/WWF/English Nature/BWEA in March 2001 and is available to download from the Natural England website - <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/84054>

[f] Shadow flicker and Noise

Advice must be sought from the Council's Environmental Health Officers on the nature and extent of information required at Pre Application and Planning Submission stages.

[g] Hydrology

Any potential impacts on water courses, water bodies and land drainage must be indicated at the Pre Application stage and full details of any such impacts must be clearly set out in the Planning Application.

[h] Highways

At the Pre Application stage the applicant must demonstrate to the LPA that he has considered all relevant highway issues re delivery, construction, traffic movements, temporary alterations to roads etc. Cambridgeshire CC Highways and the Highways Agency may be consulted at the Planning Submission stage. For larger scale projects requiring EIAs this consultation will begin at the Scoping stage.

[i] Ancillary Development

Potential ancillary development must be indicated at the Pre Application stage. Full details of any ancillary development must be provided with a Planning Application. This could include access tracks, control buildings, hard standing areas and temporary working areas, and other development associated with construction and operation of the turbine(s).

[j] Grid Connection

The connection to the National Grid forms an integral part of any renewable energy project, and should be considered together with the construction and operation of the turbines. Underground connections will be preferred, and information outlining the most likely route and method of connection must be submitted at the Pre Application stage with full details included in the Planning Submission.

[k] Energy Statement

Although not needed at the Pre Application stage the applicant should provide an Energy Statement as part of the Planning Application and include details of the proposed overall energy output and an explanation of why the turbine is needed – for instance it could serve a farming operation, a small business and/or provide energy to feed into the National Grid.

[l] Community Involvement

Details of any completed or proposed consultations with the local community should be presented as part of the Pre Application process and the Planning Submission.



[m] Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

This will not be required at the Pre Application stage.

Planning Applications for medium and large scale turbines will require an assessment of the potential landscape and visual impacts; small scale turbines are less likely to require such an assessment, but decisions will be made on a case by case basis. To assist in this assessment medium and large scale turbine proposals will need to be accompanied by a map showing the Zone of Theoretical Visibility [ZTV] to a minimum distance of 10 km radius, although this distance will generally increase with the size and number of turbines. It is unlikely that small scale turbines will need a ZTV map but again each case will be considered on its merits.

The Supplementary Planning Document “Landscape Sensitivity to Wind Turbine Development” includes guidance on the form and siting of all such developments. This guidance -

- Provides information on the relative sensitivity and capacity of the district’s landscapes in relation to wind turbines

- Indicates criteria that need to be taken into account when considering specific proposals of this type, and
- Provides guidance on potential mitigation measures where appropriate

Planning Applications must clearly explain how this guidance and the more site specific criteria have been addressed and how they have informed the detail of the proposal.

An assessment of cumulative landscape and visual effects may also be required.

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment is best carried out by qualified professionals (usually Chartered Landscape Architects) and should comply with best practice guidance or successor documents. Currently this is provided by the “Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment”, Landscape Institute / IEMA, 2nd edition 2002, however a revised 3rd edition is due to be published in March 2013.

[n] Decommissioning

Planning consents for wind turbine developments may have conditions added requiring land restoration after a fixed period. An agreed restoration scheme will need approval by the LPA.

Further Advice

If you have any enquiries or need further advice please contact Planning Services.

Planning Services

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