

DARLINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE DATE: 6th April 2011

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APPLICATION REF. NO:	11/00074/FUL
STATUTORY DECISION DATE:	7th April 2011
WARD/PARISH:	Sadberge and Whessoe
LOCATION:	Newton Grange Farm, Sadberge
DESCRIPTION:	20 metre high wind turbine
APPLICANT:	Mr A Mackenzie

APPLICATION AND SITE DESCRIPTION

The proposal is to install one Proven 35-2 wind turbine on a 15.08 metre tower in a field on Newton Grange Farm, Sadberge. The total height will be some 20 metres to rotor tip.

The purpose of the project is to generate electricity from a renewable source – thereby reducing carbon dioxide emissions – and earn a financial return from the electricity itself and the Clean Energy Cashback Scheme. Electricity generated by the wind turbine will be used on Newton Grange Farm, with the excess being exported to the grid.

The wind turbine will reduce carbon dioxide emissions by approximately 16 tonnes per year.

The turbine will be located about 235 metres north east of Newton Grange farm on a flat area on top of a gentle slope.

PLANNING HISTORY

There is no planning history associated with this site.

PLANNING POLICY BACKGROUND

Relevant Government Guidance

PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development

PPS1 Supplement: Planning and Climate Change

PPS22: Renewable Energy

PPS22 Companion Guide: Planning for Renewable Energy

Relevant Local Plan Policies

- E1 Principles of Environmental Protection
- E2 Development Limits
- E26 Energy from Renewable Sources
- E48 Noise Generating/Polluting Development
- E49 Noise Sensitive Development

RESPONSES FROM CONSULTATION AND PUBLICITY

There are no local residents living in close proximity to the site, however three residents from the Dale/Abbey Road area (about one kilometre to the west) have objected raising the following issues:

- Visual intrusion into a rural area
- Introduction of industrial features into the landscape.
- Precedent will be set for other similar structures

Northumbrian Water – Requests conditions as there is a trunk main in the vicinity of the site.

Durham Tees Valley Airport – The height of the proposed turbine is marginally above the consultation threshold of 15 metres. At the time of drafting no response has been received to our consultation.

Environmental Health – No objections – suggests conditions.

Countryside Officer - It is the opinion of the Parks and Countryside Team that the development will not be of significant impact with regards to the two main factors of concern that are relevant to this development, held within the team's remit. namely,

1- The visual impact of the turbine is significant, given its isolation in the middle of a field and lack of competing features in close proximity. However, given its small dimensions, this prominence is counterbalanced by a low level of impact in relation to the wider environment and hence the overall impact is viewed as low.

2- The impact on wildlife is also viewed as low. The small dimensions of the turbine as well as its locational distance from other features, namely natural features such as hedgerows and trees and non natural features such as the fairly extensive farm building allows this judgement to be made without any surveys being carried out. The concern would be if the turbine lay on a path that connected an obvious foraging area and the farm buildings where protected species may reside, in which case, a risk assessment may be necessary but with the relatively small size of the device, any risk of harming protected species is viewed as low.

Parish Council – Support the proposal.

CPRE – Object on the following grounds :

- May set precedent for other similar isolated turbines in prominent locations.

- Will be visually intrusive – not close to other farm structures to reduce its impact.

PLANNING ISSUES

When considering wind turbine planning applications, more usually for the larger scale 100 metre high turbines, a number of issues are raised as being important such as noise, shadow flicker, aircraft radar interference etc. For the smaller almost domestic scale turbine such as is now proposed, the main planning issue will be one of visual impact and in turn whether the development accords with planning policy.

PPS1 states that the development of renewable energy should be promoted and encouraged. It clearly states that the wider environmental and economic benefits of all renewable energy applications, either directly or indirectly, are material considerations that should be given significant weight in determining whether proposals should be granted planning permission.

In environmental and economic terms, this application has the potential to generate 32,400kW of renewable electricity per year. Electricity generated by the turbine will be used by Newton Grange Farm with the excess being exported to the grid. It also has the potential to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by approx 16 tonnes a year.

The key 'saved' Local Plan policy E26 states that renewable energy proposals will be encouraged and permitted where there is no material adverse impact upon landscape, wildlife and amenity.

The application is for one turbine on a 15.08m tower with a 9.8m rotor diameter; it will have a maximum blade tip height of approx 20m. It is the overall impact of the turbine upon an area of undulating arable farmland that must be considered

The applicant has undertaken a landscape and visual impact assessment and acknowledges that the wind turbine will be a noticeable feature in the landscape but states that it will not dominate the view neither will it appear out of scale in the landscape. In terms of visual impact, reflecting the local topography, the turbines would be widely visible from the financially involved Newton Grange Farm but will also be visible from various local viewpoints. Given the size and scale of the turbine cumulative impact is not considered to be an issue.

While there is an acknowledged landscape and visual impact, it is not considered to be significant. However, the PPS22 Practice Guide is quite clear; landscape and visual effects are only one consideration to be taken into account in assessing a planning application, these must be considered alongside the wider environmental, economic and social benefits that may arise from renewable energy projects.

In summary it is considered that the proposal will not harm the amenities of local residents because of its distance from non financially involved dwellings. In addition, because of the limited scale of the proposed development, it is considered that visual impact of the wind turbine on the character of this particular locality will be limited and not sufficient so as to warrant a refusal of planning permission.

Other issues that may be considered relevant, such as impact on wildlife and noise nuisance are not considered to be a material consideration in this instance due to the isolated location of the proposed turbine and its limited size.

SECTION 17 OF THE CRIME AND DISORDER ACT 1998

The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in its area. It is not considered that the contents of this report have any such effect.

RECOMMENDATION

Subject to no objections being received from Durham Tees Airport, permission be granted with the following conditions :

1. A3 – Time limit
2. B5 – In accordance with plans
3. Development shall not commence until a detailed scheme for the accurate location, protection of and access to its apparatus during and after construction of the development hereby approved has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason – To protect the trunk water main apparatus in the vicinity.

SUGGESTED SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR GRANTING PLANNING PERMISSION

The decision to grant planning permission has been taken having regard to the policies and proposals in the Borough of Darlington Local Plan set out above, and to all relevant material considerations, including Supplementary Planning Guidance: