

**CONSTRUCTION OF WINDFARM COMPRISING OF 10 TURBINES AND
ASSOCIATED SUBSTATION AND 70 METRE HIGH ANEMOMETRY MAST PLUS
NEW ACCESS ROADS, AT ELSTOB LANE MORDON CO. DURHAM.**

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To inform Members of the above recently submitted planning application within Durham County Council's area of jurisdiction and to invite comments thereon bearing in mind similar proposals that are likely to be submitted to this Council in the near future in the Barmpton and Newbiggin areas.

Summary

2. The Local Planning Authority are being invited to comment on the planning application referred to above – known as the “A1 Wind Farm” which lies just over one kilometre north of Darlington's northern boundary.
3. When considering wind farm planning applications there can be many issues to address such as noise, shadow flicker or effects on aircraft radar, however in this instance, as a neighbouring Authority we are only considering policy issues and any implications there may be on our Borough as a result of the proposals.
4. In the context of the above a recently completed document prepared by Arup on behalf of the North East Assembly relating to wind farm impacts on the landscape is relevant. In addition there are considered to be visual impacts on a number of villages and individual residences within Darlington Borough and these are highlighted in the Main Report below.

Recommendations

5. that Members note the content of this report and request that Durham County Council require the applicants to provide full and detailed photomontages of the views of the proposed development as seen from the village of Sadberge.
6. that Durham County Council should take into account the recommendations of the recently completed Ove Arup study in respect of the scale of the proposed development.

Richard Alty
Assistant Chief Executive (Regeneration)

Background Papers

Ove Arup Study – Potential of the East Durham and Tees Plan Wind Resource Areas.

Adrian Hobbs : Extension 2083

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

7. A planning application for the erection of 10 wind turbines and associated buildings together with an anemometry mast and access roads was submitted to Durham County Council in early May 2009.

The proposal in detail comprises :

Ten 3-bladed wind turbines with a hub height of 80 metres above ground level and a maximum blade tip height of 121metres. Each turbine will have a generating capacity of 2 – 2.5 megawatts.

Some 8 km of access tracks to be constructed or upgraded together with underground cables, a substation and an anemometry mast some 70 metres high.

8. The Regional Spatial Strategy for the North East (RSS) sets out the broad development strategy for the region for the period 2004 to 2021. The renewable energy provision target for 2010 for County Durham is likely to be exceeded in the near future, and this current application if approved will add to that excess provision. However the applicants point out that the targets can be exceeded and the additional capacity contribute towards the 2020 target of 20% of energy being provided by renewable resources.
9. In August 2008 Ove Arup consultants completed a study to assess the potential of the East Durham Limestone and Tees Plain wind resource areas to accommodate further wind turbine development.
10. This study concerned itself only with the visual impacts of wind turbines on the landscape, taking into account existing planning policy in the region in relation to wind turbine development, the character of the various landscapes in the study area and the cumulative effects of a variety of wind turbine development scenarios.
11. The study area was divided into a number of landscape zones in order that their landscape sensitivity could be assessed in terms of what – if any – further wind turbine development could be accommodated without unacceptable visual harm being caused to the environment. Zones 23 and 24 were included within Darlington Borough's boundary and these bordered on to zones 14 and 19 within County Durham, parts of which include the A1 Wind Farm proposal .
12. Whereas some zones – particularly on the East Coast – were considered to be at capacity in terms of further wind turbine development, others, including those specifically referred to above, were considered to have limited suitability for wind turbines. In both zones 14 and 19 the landscape was assigned a medium to medium – high landscape sensitivity capable of accommodating no more than 4 turbines each. The A1 planning application is for 10 wind turbines.
13. Members may wish to consider referring to this document in formulating a response to the current planning application consultation.
14. The proposed development will be seen from a wide variety of viewpoints and the applicants have submitted photo montages of potential views of the proposed A1 turbines together with those of existing and proposed turbines elsewhere in the locality.

15. These montages show a “before” and “after” visualisation of the potential visual impact of the wind turbines when viewed from sensitive viewpoints such as main roads, public footpaths and villages.
16. Most of the viewpoints are from within Durham, but three are within Darlington Borough at Sadberge, Brafferton and Great Stainton.
17. The Brafferton and Great Stainton visualisations show the likely impact of the proposed A1 Wind Farm. The Parish Councils of these villages have been consulted by Durham County Council and will comment independently on the planning application.
18. It is considered however that the Sadberge visualisation should include the cumulative effects of five and possibly six other existing and proposed windfarms and whilst a computer generated “wireline” shows these, there is no photo montage provided.
19. It is considered that this is an important omission from the submitted documents and should be provided in order that the residents and Parish Council of Sadberge can be fully informed about the likely impact of the developments proposed.
20. Other issues that may effect residents such as noise, shadow flicker and effects on airport or Ministry of Defence radar will be addressed by the determining Authority, in this case Durham County Council. However, Darlington Borough Council, as a consultee, is able to raise issues it considers important in relation to impacts upon its residents and landscape character, in the context of existing regional and local planning policies.

Recommendation

21. that Members note the content of this report and request that Durham County Council require the applicants to provide full and detailed photomontages of the views of the proposed development as seen from the village of Sadberge.
22. that Durham County Council should take into account the recommendations of the recently completed Ove Arup study in respect of the scale of the proposed development.

