

**SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT: WIND POWER  
(Report by Planning Policy Manager)**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This report informs Cabinet of the consultation on the Draft Supplementary Planning Document on Wind Power, and seeks Cabinet's decision on adoption of this document as a Supplementary Planning Document.

**2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 There has been growing interest in wind turbine development in Huntingdonshire. In addition to the existing turbines at Wood Green Animal Shelter and Ramsey a scheme involving twelve turbines has been granted permission at Tick Fen (north-east of Warboys), and enquiries relating to several other locations have been received.
- 2.2 National policy on this issue is set out in PPS22 'Renewable Energy'. This encourages local planning authorities to respond positively to renewable energy projects where the technology is viable and the environmental and other impacts can be addressed satisfactorily. It suggests that authorities should formulate key criteria against which proposals may be assessed, and appropriate considerations are set out in the Council's emerging Core Strategy DPD, as well as the draft Regional Spatial Strategy and the adopted Structure Plan.
- 2.3 Inevitably, landscape and visual effects are a key issue where wind turbines are proposed. PPS22 acknowledges this, and makes the obvious point that "the impact of turbines on the landscape will vary according to the size and number of turbines and the type of landscape involved". In this context Land Use Consultants were commissioned last year to provide the Council with advice on the relative sensitivity of the district's landscapes in relation to this form of development.
- 2.4 Their report – 'Wind Turbine Development in Huntingdonshire' – has been used as the basis for a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on this topic, a copy of which is appended. Provision for the SPD was made in the Council's Local Development Scheme, which was endorsed by the Government in April this year. In September Cabinet approved a draft of this document for public consultation.

**3. THE SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT**

- 3.1 SPDs form part of the suite of new documents that local planning authorities may prepare as a result of the planning reforms introduced last year. Their purpose is to expand upon the policies contained in Development Plan Documents (such as this Council's emerging Core Strategy DPD).

- 3.2 The production of SPDs involves more rigorous procedures than those employed for Supplementary Planning Guidance prepared under the previous system. In particular a sustainability appraisal is required as part of the process to help gauge any potentially significant environmental, social and economic effects. A sustainability appraisal of the SPD was also approved by Cabinet for consultation in September.
- 3.3 The SPD contains chapters on each of the landscape character areas identified previously in the Huntingdonshire Landscape & Townscape Assessment, as well as providing guidance on the particular visual considerations that arise at the edge of urban areas. It provides an indication of the capacity of each area to accommodate different scales of turbine development, and also points to particular issues and mitigation opportunities that should be taken into account in each area.
- 3.4 It should be noted that the SPD provides a starting-point for the consideration of proposals, not an absolute indication of what may or may not be acceptable in specific locations. Every site is unique, and turbine proposals will need to be supported by a detailed assessment of their potential impact as part of the application process.
- 3.5 Nonetheless, the SPD does indicate clearly that some parts of the district are more sensitive than others, and importantly it explains both the reasons why and the ways in which this sensitivity varies depending upon the potential scale of development. The sustainability appraisal confirms that producing guidance on this topic is beneficial in addressing overall environmental, social and economic objectives, and in particular in addressing the tension that arises between the need to harness renewable energy and the importance of conserving valued landscapes.
- 3.6 A public consultation on the SPD and its accompanying Sustainability Appraisal took place between the 17 October and 28 November. Sixty three representations were received relating to the SPD. Thirteen of these were in support, nine were objections and forty one were observations. Ten representations were received relating to the Sustainability Appraisal. Nine of these were observations and one was an objection. The representations made and the responses to these are attached as appendix 1.
- 3.7 The main issues raised in relation to the SPD and the suggested responses are as follows:
- Concern that the SPD was identifying areas for wind turbine development. The response given to this was that the SPD does not identify areas for wind turbine development it just sets out the capacity of landscapes to accommodate this type of development and provides guidance on the location of wind turbines and that proposals for wind turbines will be assessed on a site-specific basis.
  - Wind turbine developments are not viable. The response given to this was that the document does not debate the merit of wind turbine development and has been produced from the starting point that applications for this type of development will continue to come forward within the district.
  - Other factors should be included within the SPD, for example distance to bridleways/rights of way or impact on nature conservation sites. These have not been included in the SPD as the

SPD deals purely with landscape character, other factors will be dealt with by other policies in the LDF.

3.8 The main issue raised in relation to the Sustainability Appraisal and the suggested response is as follows:

- Production of the SPD would have a more negative effect on objectives relating to landscape character and habitats and species than not producing the SPD. This option would be more sustainable. This is not the case as guidance contained in the SPD will help steer applications for this type of development towards those areas which have the capacity to accommodate them without a negative impact on landscape character. The detailed guidance on siting will also reduce the risk of damage to habitats and species. Producing the SPD will therefore have a more positive effect on the objectives relating to landscape and habitats and species than not producing the SPD.

3.9 Amendments have been made to the SPD and Sustainability Appraisal and final versions of these documents are appended.

#### **4. RECOMMENDATION**

Cabinet is recommended to approve the adoption of the SPD.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 (Cambridgeshire County Council & Peterborough City Council, 2003)

East of England Plan (Draft RSS14) (East of England Regional Assembly, 2004)

Huntingdonshire Core Strategy: Preferred Options Report (HDC, 2005)

Huntingdonshire Landscape & Townscape Assessment (HDC, 2004)

Planning Policy Statement 22: Renewable Energy (ODPM, 2004)

Wind Turbine Development in Huntingdonshire: Final Report (Land Use Consultants, 2005)

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