
Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being)

Report of the meeting held on 15th January 2013

Matters for Information

**39. LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY TO WIND TURBINE DEVELOPMENT
DRAFT REVISION OF THE WIND POWER SUPPLEMENTARY
PLANNING DOCUMENT (SPD) 2006**

The Panel has been provided with an opportunity to comment on the draft revision of the Wind Power SPD, which was originally adopted in February 2006. A presentation has been delivered to Members outlining the background to the SPD and various developments which have occurred since 2006, which include the introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in early 2012 and the identification of inconsistencies between the Land Use Consultants' report commissioned in 2005 and the original Wind Power SPD. The Government's position on Wind Power has not changed. It supports such developments and encourages local authorities to adopt the same stance.

The SPD does not include the setting of limits on the proximity of Wind Turbine developments to dwellings. It is the Government's view that this is not a matter of landscape sensitivity and that instead it should be addressed through the completion of a Residential Amenity Assessment. Each application received is considered on a case by case basis.

The Panel has expressed concerns over the impact of cumulative developments upon the District and the effect this will have on the appearance of the District. It is the Panel's view that a limit on numbers should be set to prevent wind turbines being constructed within close proximity to one another. The Panel supports the Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning and Housing's suggestion that the draft revised SPD is strengthened in this respect.

Having noted that the Ouse Valley area's landscape has a high capacity to accommodate single turbines, clarification has been received that the guidance is intended to encourage developers to consider existing infrastructure when determining the location of the turbines. The Panel requested that this matter is reconsidered and clarified.

With regard to the revised group sizes that are proposed, it is the Panel's view that the SPD should not specify an upper limit for large groups of wind turbines. It is considered that 24 turbines in a single application is too large a development for an area such as Huntingdonshire. This would not be an acceptable policy for the Council to adopt in light of the District's profile. The Panel has been acquainted with an example of a site that the Council considered could accommodate three turbines but the developer applied to put four turbines on the site and the application succeeded at appeal. It has been argued that if the Council specifies an upper limit, it would provide developers with an indication of the level of development for which they could expect to receive approval and, as with the example, they would seek to exceed it. Instead, it is argued that the Council should take the same approach for the proximity of wind turbine developments to dwellings; that is, each application received should be considered on a case-by-case basis following an assessment as part of the Environmental Statement.

The Panel generally supports the draft revised SPD and has asked for their comments to be conveyed to the Head of Planning and Housing Strategy.

40. SPEED REDUCTION INITIATIVE - HILTON

Representatives of Speedwatch and Hilton Parish Council have addressed the Panel on a speed reduction initiative in Hilton. It has previously been agreed with the Head of Operations that speed reduction stickers can be displayed on wheeled bins in the village. Wheeled bins are the property of the District Council and whilst the Council is reluctant to allow any stickers on bins, the current position is that this will be re-considered following the trial in Hilton.

The Panel has been advised that strong evidence exists to support the scheme, including that obtained from other local authorities including Warwickshire and Mid Bedfordshire. The Police have also expressed their support for it.

Under the scheme, stickers are only visible on the day of waste collections and residents are encouraged not to leave their bins out on the roadside. A best practice guide has been developed and issued to all residents involved in the scheme. Stickers are only deployed in known speeding hotspot areas of towns and villages.

The Panel's endorsement of the initiative has been sought. Specifically, the Panel has been asked to support the display of stickers on wheelie bins, approve the stickers' format and design and also to fund them in the future. The current stock of speed reduction stickers is funded through a donation received from a local firm. Residents can purchase a packet of 6 stickers at a cost of £5 from Speedwatch.

The Panel has asked for a report outlining the terms and the potential benefits of the speed reduction initiative in Hilton to be submitted to a future Panel meeting. The Panel has also indicated their wish to

discuss the matter with the Executive Councillor for Environment and the Head of Operations.

41. DRAINAGE

The Panel has received an update on drainage problems experienced in Yaxley and on recent flooding events within the District. Members have noted the Council's interventions in resolving the problems experienced within Yaxley, which includes the removal of fats, oils and greases from the pumping station and of silt that had built up in surface water sewers and works to clear a flow path through the balancing pond. Anglian Water has also placed both foul and surface water sewers on planned preventative maintenance programmes, with survey works being undertaken on the sewer running between Stilton and Main Street, Yaxley in order further to reduce the risk of sewer flooding. Discussions are ongoing with the County Council with regard to the establishment of a Surface Water Management Plan in Yaxley. No reports of flooding within the village have been received by the Council in November and December 2012.

Councillor Mrs A Rees of Yaxley Parish Council has informed the Panel that there has been some flooding in the West End area of Yaxley, but that when it has been reported Anglian Water has immediately attended to it.

An update on the recent flooding events within the District has then been delivered. River flooding from the Nene has caused flooding of a number of houses in the northern parts of the District and the Ouse has caused problems in Brampton. Around 2,500-3,000 sandbags have been delivered to affected areas. Surface water flooding is a particular concern in Stilton. These problems have arisen as a result of a lack of maintenance of ditches. The District Council is currently working with the County Council to prevent such incidents from occurring in the future. Consideration had been given at the time to opening emergency rest centres on Christmas Eve; however this has not been necessary.

The Panel has requested a further update on drainage and a report on Emergency Planning, including the Council's use of sandbags, to be submitted to a future meeting.

42. CHARGING FOR A SECOND GREEN BIN – CALL IN

The Panel has been acquainted with the Cabinet's decision relating to the call-in for charging for second green bins. The Cabinet has reiterated that the proposal will continue to be considered with all the Council's options for savings as part of the Medium Term Plan process.

Other Matters of Interest

43. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ENVIRONMENTAL WELL-BEING) - PROGRESS

The Panel has reviewed its programme of studies and noted details of its forthcoming work programme up to the end of the current Municipal Year.

44. WORK PLAN STUDIES

The Panel has received details of the studies being undertaken by the other Overview and Scrutiny Panels.

45. NOTICE OF EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The Panel has been acquainted with the current Notice of Executive Decisions.

46. SCRUTINY

The Panel has considered the latest edition of the Decision Digest and in doing so, has requested clarification from the Head of Customer Services on whether the charges affecting the empty homes premium, as reported under the Technical Reform of Council Tax item, will be levied upon those houses which have already been empty for a period of two years when they come into effect.

D Harty
Chairman