

COMT	24th June 2013
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY (ENVIRONMENTAL WELLBEING)	9th July 2013
DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PANEL	15th July 2013
CABINET	18th July 2013

**LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY TO WIND TURBINE DEVELOPMENT
DRAFT REVISED SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT**

Report by Planning Service Manager (Policy)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.2 The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet's approval for the 'Landscape Sensitivity to Wind Turbine Development Supplementary Planning Document' and the endorsement of supporting technical evidence.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The 'Wind Power Supplementary Planning Document' (Wind Power SPD) was adopted by the Council in 2006. It has since been used as part of the local policy basis for determining wind turbine planning applications, and also as part of the Council's policy defence at related appeals and public inquiries.

2.2 Changes in circumstance since then, which include new national policy guidance, experience gained by the Council in handling wind turbine planning applications, and learning from the experiences of other authorities, have made it appropriate to update the Wind Power SPD

2.3 A new 'Landscape Sensitivity to Wind Turbine Development Supplementary Planning Document' (Landscape Sensitivity to Wind Turbine Development SPD – attached as Appendix A) has been prepared to update, clarify, and replace the Wind Power SPD. This takes into account:

- The publication of new national policy guidance within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- The development of the technical methodological approach to assessing the landscape sensitivity to wind turbine development that has taken place since 2005.
- The need for guidance on the siting and design of smaller scale wind turbines.
- A need to clarify the evidence base that underpins the documents.

2.4 It is important to note that the new Landscape Sensitivity to Wind Turbine Development SPD does not, and was never intended, to change the main conclusions of the Wind Power SPD (2006), which remain valid. The intention was to produce an up to date, consistent, and usable document that is NPPF compliant.

- 2.5 Both the existing and new Supplementary Planning Documents are primarily concerned with guiding the location of wind turbine development with reference to the key characteristics of the District's component Landscape Character Areas. Both assume, for policy purposes, a nil wind farm scenario as a starting point.

3. THE CONSULTATION RESPONSE

- 3.1 The draft Landscape Sensitivity to Wind Turbine Development SPD was subject to a six week consultation between 16th November 2012 and 4th January 2013. Presentations on the draft document were given to Full Council (on 19th December 2012) and to Development Management Panel (on 17th December 2012).

- 3.2 Over 350 responses were received from a wide range of consultees, including members of the public, local pressure groups, council members, Parish Councils, other Local Planning Authorities, several Non-Governmental Organisations, planning consultants, and national and international renewable energy companies.

- 3.3 The Statement of Consultation, attached as Appendix B, focuses on presenting a consistent Council response to the themes and issues raised during the consultation, rather than individual consultee responses. The most common consultation responses focussed on the following issues:

- Cumulative impacts of wind turbines, and the lack of assessment of the current situation with regard to operational and consented turbine developments.
- Health issues, especially those associated with noise.
- Differing impacts associated with wind turbine development of varying sizes and scales.
- The establishment of a minimum distance between wind turbines and residential properties.

- 3.4 Each consultation response has been considered and minor clarifications have been made to the draft Landscape Sensitivity to Wind Turbine Development SPD, or in the preparation of additional supporting evidence. However, it is not intended to take forward a policy stance on establishing a minimum distance between wind turbines and residential properties.

4. CUMULATIVE IMPACT OF WIND TURBINES

- 4.1 Both the NPPF and Companion Guide to Planning Policy Statement 22 'Planning for Renewable Energy' (which remains extant) confirm that a local planning authority's renewable energy strategy needs to address cumulative landscape and visual impacts of renewable developments.

- 4.2 To address this, and the concerns raised by consultation respondents about cumulative impacts of wind turbine developments, the Council commissioned a study entitled 'Cumulative Landscape and Visual Impacts of Wind Turbines in Huntingdonshire' as a further piece of technical evidence to assess the current situation as of 1st May 2013 (attached as Appendix C). This study has detailed all operational and consented wind turbine developments in the district, and also those awaiting determination.

- 4.3 The study considers the current cumulative effects of wind turbines in the district, and offers guidance on the capacity of local landscapes to accommodate further wind turbine development. It is intended that its analysis will be used in the consideration of potential cumulative impacts resulting from new wind energy proposals. The evidence it presents will support Huntingdonshire District Council's emerging Local Plan policies, as well as the Landscape Sensitivity to Wind Turbine Development SPD.
- 4.4 It is envisaged that the new Landscape Sensitivity to Wind Turbine Development SPD, along with the Cumulative Landscape and Visual Impacts of Wind Turbines in Huntingdonshire study, are likely to be fully compliant with the forthcoming new national planning guidance on wind turbine development, which will follow on from the Ministerial Statement on 'Local Planning and Onshore Wind' issued on 6th June 2013.

5. RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 That Cabinet adopts the 'Landscape Sensitivity to Wind Turbine Development Supplementary Planning Document', with the making of any minor amendments prior to publication being delegated to the Assistant Director, Environment, Growth and Planning after consultation with the Executive Member for Planning and Housing Strategy.
- 5.2 That Cabinet notes the Statement of Consultation and endorses the officer responses to the issues raised during the consultation on the draft Landscape Sensitivity to Wind Turbine Development Supplementary Planning Document.
- 5.3 That Cabinet endorses the Cumulative Landscape and Visual Impacts of Wind Turbines in Huntingdonshire study as technical evidence that supports the Council's policy approach to renewable energy developments.

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