

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: “Wind Energy Development in Huntingdonshire 2014”
Supplementary Planning Document

Meeting/Date: COMT – June 2nd 2014
Development Management Panel– June 16th 2014
Overview and Scrutiny {Env Well Being} – June 17th 2014
Cabinet – June 19th 2014

Executive Portfolio: Doug Dew, Executive Councillor for Planning
and Housing Strategy.

Report by: Head of Development

Ward(s) affected: All

Executive Summary:

The current Supplementary Planning Document [SPD] “Wind Power” was adopted in 2006. Since that time there have been major changes in national and local planning policy, and the granting of various permissions and the related construction of many turbines of all sizes throughout the district. The current SPD is now considered to be out of date.

A revised SPD is necessary to better support the Council’s case at Public Inquiries and in the general course of the development management process.

Recommendation(s):

That the Development Management Panel, and Overview and Scrutiny Panel [Environmental Well Being] endorses the proposed “Wind Energy Development in Huntingdonshire 2014” Supplementary Planning Document and recommends that it should be adopted by Cabinet.

That Cabinet adopts the proposed “Wind Energy Development in Huntingdonshire 2014” Supplementary Planning Document, with any minor amendments prior to publication being delegated to the Head of Development in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning and Housing Strategy.

That Cabinet, in making that decision, notes the comments from the Statement of Consultation and endorses the officer responses to the issues raised.

1. WHAT IS THIS REPORT ABOUT/PURPOSE?

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet's approval for the 'Wind Energy Development in Huntingdonshire 2014' Supplementary Planning Document', (**Appendix A** – please note that this will be circulated separately) which was subject to public consultation between 28th March 2014 and 9th May 2014.

2. WHY IS THIS REPORT NECESSARY/BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The updated 'Wind Energy Development in Huntingdonshire 2014' Supplementary Planning Document' will replace the existing 'Wind Power Supplementary Planning Document', which was adopted in 2006. The draft SPD consists of 2 parts.

- 2.2 Part 1 of the new Supplementary Planning Document updates the 2006 version with regard to:

- Reflecting the publication of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the recent on line Planning Practice Guidance on Renewable and Low Carbon Energy;
- Acknowledging the development of the methodological approach to assessing the landscape sensitivity to wind turbine development that has taken place since 2005;
- Recognising and resolving certain inconsistencies that have been identified between the SPD and "Wind Turbine Development in Huntingdonshire" (2005), the study undertaken by Land Use Consultants that underpinned the SPD; and
- Acknowledging the need for guidance on the siting and design of smaller turbines.

- 2.3 Part 2 of the draft SPD was produced in response to member concerns about the lack of information on current cumulative impacts. It gives an assessment of the current cumulative impacts of operational and consented wind turbine developments, and guidance on assessment of future turbine proposals. Both the National Planning Policy Framework [NPPF] and the recent on line Planning Practice Guidance on Renewable and Low Carbon Energy confirm that cumulative landscape and visual impacts need to be addressed satisfactorily as part of any Local Planning Authority renewables strategy.

- 2.4 It is important to note that the new Supplementary Planning Document does not, and was never intended to change the main conclusions of the 2006 Supplementary Planning Document with regard to the capacity of local landscapes to accommodate wind turbine development. These conclusions, though amended in the draft SPD, remain substantially valid. The intention was to produce a more up to date, coherent, and usable document that is compliant with the NPPF and other current planning policy. The SPD will be used to inform and support Council decisions with regard to proposed wind turbine developments. It will be used at all stages in the development management process, including Public Inquiries.

- 2.5 Both the existing and new Supplementary Planning Documents are primarily concerned with guiding the location of turbine development by reference to the key characteristics of the District's component Landscape Character Areas. Turbine proposals will have to respond to all the guidance criteria contained in the draft SPD, and not consider certain aspects in isolation.

3. THE CONSULTATION RESPONSE

- 3.1 The new Supplementary Planning Document was subject to a six week consultation period, between 28th March 2014 and 9th May 2014. A presentation on the consultation draft Supplementary Planning Document was given to members on April 29th and to the Executive Leader's Strategy Group on May 27th 2014.
- 3.2 Over 180 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 Due to the large number of responses the Statement of Consultation, attached as **Appendix B**, is based around the issues raised, rather than individual consultee responses. The relevant HDC Consultation Portal Identification Numbers are listed for each topic discussed, and then the Council's considered response is given to the particular issue.
- 3.4 Among the range of comments raised the most common responses focussed on the following issues:
- Omission of guidance on other issues relevant to turbine development.
 - The need for better clarity in relating the 2 parts of the SPD to each other.
 - How previous inconsistencies have been dealt with in the draft SPD.
- 3.5 These and other concerns expressed by respondents have been fully considered and, where appropriate, they will be responded to in the form of amendments to the new Supplementary Planning Document.

4. WHAT ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN/TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- 4.1 The draft SPD will be taken to Development Management Panel and Overview and Scrutiny Panel [Environmental Well Being] prior to being presented to Cabinet for adoption on June 19th.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The updating of our local policy position will give more coherent, consistent and robust support to the Council's position with regard to wind energy development in the district. The adoption of the draft SPD will give it additional weight at Public Inquiries and throughout the development management process.

- 6.2 The production, public participation and potential adoption of this draft SPD have complied with relevant regulations and provisions as set out in the Town and Country [Local Planning] [England] Regulations 2012 as amended, being the applicable regulations for the process.

7. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

- 7.1 If adopted, the proposed SPD will enhance our local planning policy and lend better support to the Council's case at any future Public Inquiries, and assist in the general course of the development management process when considering wind turbine proposals.

Adoption by Cabinet in June 2014 would give the SPD additional appropriate weight in respect of the ongoing appeal process and the forthcoming Public Inquiry concerning the proposed wind farm at Bicton, north of Kimbolton.

8. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

Appendix A: Draft SPD 'Wind Energy Development in Huntingdonshire 2014'
Appendix B: Revised Statement of Consultation

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

CONTACT OFFICER:

**ENQUIRIES ABOUT THIS REPORT TO PAUL BLAND, PLANNING SERVICE
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