

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR (PLANNING AND COMMUNITY STRATEGY)
TO THE DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE
6 NOVEMBER 2006

Proposed Small-Scale Wind Turbine, Meadowlands, 3 High Street, Stanford in the Vale
Application No. STA/8763/4

1.0 **Introduction and Report Summary**

- 1.1 Complaints have been received about a decision made under delegated authority to permit a small-scale wind turbine in a field adjacent to Stanford in the Vale. Some local residents were not notified of the application and so did not have the opportunity to voice their objections.
- 1.2 This report considers the proposal, the reasons why planning permission was granted, and the objections which have been received since permission was granted. Committee is requested to review the decision.
- 1.3 The Contact Officer for this report is Mike Gilbert, Development Control Manager (Tel. 01235 547681).

2.0 **Recommendation**

- 2.1 *It is recommended that Committee agrees with the decision made to grant planning permission.*

3.0 **Relationship with the Council's Vision**

- 3.1 The content of this report is in line with aims A and E of the Council's Vision Statement.

4.0 **Background**

- 4.1 On 29 June 2006, a planning application was received to erect a small-scale wind turbine in the field behind 3 High Street, Stanford in the Vale. Details of the application are attached at **Appendix 1**. The turbine measures 12 metres high to the hub and 14.5 metres high to the tip of the blade. It would be sited 52 metres away from the closest dwelling, 25 Horsecroft, as shown on the plan at **Appendix 2**. Public footpath 7, Green Lane, lies 55 metres to the south-west of the proposed turbine.
- 4.2 No objections to the proposal were received, and permission was granted under delegated authority on 22 August 2006. A copy of the decision notice is at **Appendix 3**.
- 4.3 Since planning permission was granted it has been brought to the Council's attention that a number of local residents were not aware of the submission of the planning application as the properties along Horsecroft were not notified.
- 4.4 According to the Council's Statement of Community Involvement, the Council is required to notify those properties which adjoin an application site, although for larger proposals notification letters may be sent out more widely. In this particular case, 25 Horsecroft adjoins the field where the wind turbine has been permitted and so should have been notified of the application. The other properties along Horsecroft and along Chapel Road are noticeably further away and do not adjoin the field in question – as such, it is not considered that they should necessarily have been notified.

4.5 Since planning permission was granted, 3 letters, 1 e-mail and a petition signed by 29 residents of the properties along Horsecroft and Chapel Road have been received. The grounds of objection can be summarised as follows:

1. Lack of neighbour notification.
2. Visual impact.
3. Noise disturbance – there is a lack of confidence in Condition 2 imposed on the planning permission as the company manufacturing the turbine will be carrying out the necessary noise survey.
4. The turbine manufacturer’s website says: “A small wind turbine should be located at least 50m from the nearest neighbour, and ideally at least 75m-100m.”
5. The turbine is too large for domestic use – it is a commercial venture and is intended to make a profit.
6. Possible harm to barn owls and other wildlife.
7. Local land drainage problems may make the turbine unstable and unsafe.
8. Depreciation of property values.
9. Possible lightning strike.

4.6 In the light of the mistake not to notify 25 Horsecroft, and the objections which have now been received, Committee is requested to review the decision to grant planning permission.

5.0 **Planning Issues**

5.1 PPS22, “Renewable Energy”, encourages renewable energy developments. It says: “Increased development of renewable energy resources is vital to facilitating the delivery of the commitments on both climate change and renewable energy.” And:

“The wider environmental and economic benefits of all proposals for renewable energy projects, whatever their scale, are material considerations that should be given significant weight in determining whether proposals should be granted planning permission”.

5.2 Policy EG1 of the adopted Structure Plan encourages renewable energy developments, subject to considering their impact on the environment, local communities and traffic generation, and their wider environmental and economic benefits.

5.3 Policy CF10 of the adopted Local Plan enables developments which produce renewable energy on a commercial basis, provided the countryside, the amenity of the local residents and visitors to the countryside, and protected areas are not adversely affected.

5.4 Within this enabling policy context, the 2 principal planning issues raised by the current proposal are considered to be visual impact and noise.

5.5 The application site does not lie within the North Wessex Down AONB, the North Vale Area of High Landscape Value, a conservation area, or a Site of Special Scientific Interest. In addition, the landscape around the site is relatively flat, and is characterised by numerous mature trees. Within this setting, your Officers do not consider that the proposed wind turbine, particularly given its slender design, would have a harmful visual impact on the local landscape. In addition, a row of mature trees to the rear of 25 Horsecroft will help to screen any private views of the wind turbine from that property.

5.6 Regarding noise impact, the only dwelling which may be affected is 25 Horsecroft, which lies 52 metres south of the location, of the proposed turbine. This was a matter considered carefully by Council’s Senior Environmental Health Officer. The noise report accompanying the application (Appendix 1) explains how this type of wind turbine has been designed to minimise both mechanical and aerodynamic noise. The report says that, as a general rule and where possible, the proposed type of turbine should be sited 50 metres or more away from dwellings.

- 5.7 In the light of this report, the Senior EHO considered the proposal was likely to be acceptable from a noise point of view. However, to avoid any doubt, he requested the imposition of Condition 2 on the planning permission (see **Appendix 3**).
- 5.8 For the above reasons, the decision was made under delegated authority to grant planning permission.
- 5.9 Neighbouring residents have raised a number of other objections. There is no evidence, however to support the concerns about the impact of the turbine on local wildlife. In addition, the possible commercial use of the turbine, the structural stability of the turbine, possible lightning strike, and any impact on property values are not material planning considerations.
- 5.10 Committee, therefore, is recommended to agree with the decision to grant planning permission. If Committee does not agree and considers that planning permission should have been refused, Section 97 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 enables local planning authorities to revoke or modify a planning permission. Such a revocation order needs to be confirmed by the Secretary of State, and the Council would be liable to pay the applicant any compensation for expenditure already incurred or for any other loss or damage directly attributable to the revocation order.

RODGER HOOD
DEPUTY DIRECTOR (PLANNING AND COMMUNITY STRATEGY)

TIM SADLER
STRATEGIC DIRECTOR

Background Papers: Planning application STA/8763/4