

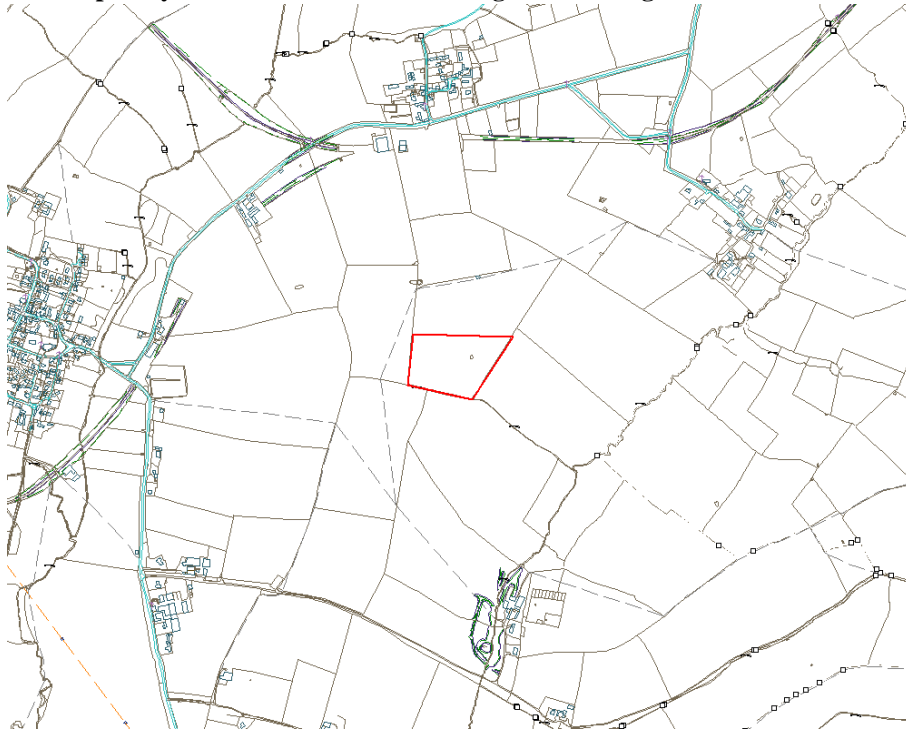
Reference: 13/00037/FUL

Date submitted: 30.01.13

Applicant: Mr S Milburn - Wind Energy Direct Limited

Location: Field No 4700 Waltham Lane Wycomb

Proposal: Temporary installation of a 60 metre high meteorological mast.



Proposal :-

This application proposes the erection of a 60 metre high wind monitoring mast for a temporary period up to 3 years. The main pole is 150mm – 220mm diameter steel tube with a galvanised finish. Guy wires are galvanised steel wire rope. There is a short section of galvanised chain joining the guy wires to five anchors placed up to 42m from the base of the mast. Mounted at various heights on the mast are a number of instruments which measure wind speed and direction. The site is located in open countryside between Chadwell and Scalford

The Application is to be considered by Committee due to the number of representations received.

Relevant History:-

None

Planning Policies:-

Melton Local Plan (saved policies):

Policy OS2 - does not allow for development outside the town and village envelopes shown on the proposals map except for development essential to the operational requirements of agriculture and forestry, small scale development for employment, recreation and tourism and development

essential to the operational requirements of a public service authority, statutory undertaker or licensed telecommunications operator.

Melton LDF (Submission) Core Strategy: accepts the need for renewable energy to be sited in particular locations and will look favourably on proposals for renewable energy.

National Planning Policy Framework: The NPPF was published on 27th March 2012 and replaced the previous collection of PPS. It introduces a ‘presumption in favour of sustainable development’ meaning:

- approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay; and
- where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date, granting permission unless:
 - any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole; or
 - specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted.

The NPPF offers direction on the relative weight of the content in comparison to existing Local Plan policy and advises that whilst the NPPF does not automatically render older policies obsolete, where they are in conflict the NPPF should prevail. It also offers advice on the weight to be given to ‘emerging’ policy (i.e. the LDF) depending on its stage of preparation, extent of unresolved (disputed) issues and compatibility with the NPPF.

The NPPF introduces three dimensions to the term ‘sustainable development’: Economic, Social and Environmental.

an economic role – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;

a social role – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community’s needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being; and

an environmental role – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.

It also establishes 12 planning principles against which proposals should be judged. Relevant to this application and appeal are:

- Not simply to be about scrutiny, but instead be a creative exercise in finding ways to enhance and improve the places in which people live their lives;
- Support the transition to a low carbon future.....by encouraging the development of renewable energy;
- take account of the different roles and character of different areas, promoting the vitality of our main urban areas, protecting the Green Belts around them, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities within it;

- always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings;
- Contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution.....

On specific issues relevant to this application it advises:

Climate Change

Planning plays a key role in helping shape places to secure radical reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, minimising vulnerability and providing resilience to the impacts of climate change, and supporting the delivery of renewable and low carbon energy associated infrastructure. This is central to the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. (Paragraph 93)

Paragraph 97 states that to increase the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy, local planning authorities should recognise the responsibility on all communities to contribute energy generation from renewable or low carbon sources. The footnote to Paragraph 97 draws particular attention for the need, in assessing the likely impacts of potential wind energy development when identifying suitable areas, and in determining planning applications for such development, for planning authorities to follow the approach set out in the National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (read with the relevant sections of the Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy Infrastructure, including that on aviation impacts). Through its links to EN-1 the Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy, requires that having regard to siting, operational and other relevant constraints the aim should be to minimise harm to the landscape, providing reasonable mitigation where possible and appropriate.

Paragraph 98 states that when determining planning applications, local planning authorities should;

- Not require developments to demonstrate overall need for renewable or low carbon energy.
- Approve the application (unless material considerations indicate otherwise) if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable.

Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

- Protecting and enhancing valued landscapes
- Apply great weight to the protection of designated landscapes and scenic areas (e.g. National Parks)
- Avoid noise giving rise to significant adverse impacts
- Minimise other impacts on health and quality of life through conditions
- Identify and protect areas of tranquillity.

Consultations:-

Consultation reply	Assessment of Head of Regulatory Services
<p>Highway Authority – No observations</p> <p>Public Rights of Way – Public Footpath F22 is a sufficient distance from the proposed mast, within a neighbouring field and will not be affected by the installation or maintenance arrangements.</p>	<p>Noted, it is not considered that the proposed mast would have a detrimental impact on highway safety.</p>
<p>Scalford Parish Council – Object</p> <p>The mast will intrude unfavourably on the countryside, visually detracting from the open countryside</p>	<p>The mast will have an overall height of 60 metres and supported by 5 guy wires anchored to the ground. It will be in situ for up to 2 years and will assist in collecting wind data to inform an</p>

	<p>application currently being considered at Cosher Farm for a single turbine. The reason given for siting the test mast in a different location to the turbine location was for economic reasons as the land is in use for crop farming and the mast would interfere with the operation.</p> <p>It is not considered that a refusal could be upheld on the mast having a harmful impact upon the landscape. The mast will be tall and slender and it is not considered that it will have a demonstrable harmful impact due to its short term installation, full reversibility and slender design.</p>
Ecology: No comments to make	Noted.
<p>MOD: No safeguarding objection subject to conditions requiring the applicant to notify the department of:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Precise Location of development • Date of commencement of construction • Date of completion of construction • The height above ground level of the tallest structure • The maximum extension height of any construction equipment • Details of aviation warning lighting fitted to the structure(s) 	Noted.

Representations:

A site notice was posted in three locations along public rights of way. As a result 10 letters of objection have been received to date.

Representation	Assessment of Head of Regulatory Services
<p>Visual Impact upon the Countryside</p> <p>Any massive structure of an industrial scale will blight the landscape, spoil our daily enjoyment of local walks</p> <p>Absolutely ruin the visual amenities around the historic Market Town of Melton</p> <p>Unacceptable visual impact on residences in Wycomb, Chadwell and Scalford.</p> <p>The area is currently peaceful pasture land and the temporary structure would be visible from many of the surrounding villages.</p>	<p>The mast will have a height of 60 metres but will be tall and slender. It will be in situ for up to 2 years and will be removed and land restored. There is no doubt that it will be visually intrusive in the landscape but it is not considered to be so demonstrable or significantly harmful to warrant a refusal. The mast will be static and the benefits derived from its siting outweigh (for a temporary period) the harm caused to the countryside.</p>
<p>Other Matters:-</p> <p>Will pave the way for yet another turbine in the area.</p>	<p>The data collected by the mast will be of assistance in the processing of information in connection with the application for a wind turbine, at Cosher Farm (13/00058/FUL) the development provides useful data to assist in meeting energy targets for the UK.</p>

<p>If the mast is to collect data for Cosher Farm's turbine why is it not being installed on that land?</p> <p>Question the validity of the collection of such information from such a mast. 2 years seems to be a long time to be gathering meteorological evidence for a turbine that has already had its planning application submitted!</p> <p>Will devalue property prices</p> <p>As has been proven in 2012, there are substantial objections to the erection of wind turbines in the local area and therefore any measuring or monitoring of the wind is surely at odds with this local concern?</p> <p>Government are still investigating the efficiency of turbines as they are far from carbon neutral and only seem to work half the time and until their findings are concluded, further developments should be halted.</p> <p>Airspace around here is constantly used by RAF training flights so surely any further high structures would be unwanted obstacles?</p>	<p>The mast cannot be installed on the land associated with the desired location due to crop farming .</p> <p>Two years will allow sufficient data to be collected which will inform on the specific turbine to be used. There is no requirement for applicants to gather data prior to submission of a turbine however should the application be successful at Cosher Farm and they wish to install a different turbine to that applied for a fresh application will be required with appropriate noise surveys relevant to the specific turbine.</p> <p>Planning is to protect the public interest and cannot safeguard a private interest. House prices are not a genuine material consideration when considering planning proposals.</p> <p>Each application is to be adjudged on its own merits. This proposal seeks installation of a test mast to collect wind data it is not therefore an application for a turbine.</p> <p>The Council has a duty to consider all planning applications submitted and cannot be prejudiced to certain types of proposal because they are not 'favoured'</p> <p>No objections have been received from the MOD subject to confirmed siting of the mast and aviation warning lights.</p>
---	--

Other material considerations (not raised through consultation or representation)

Consideration	Assessment of Head of Regulatory Services
<p>Application of Development Plan and other planning policy.</p> <p>Policy OS2 provides a general presumption against development in the open countryside except for development essential to the operational requirements of agriculture and forestry, small scale development for employment, recreation and tourism and development essential to the operational requirements of a public service authority, statutory undertaker or licensed telecommunications operator.</p>	<p>The site is located in the open countryside and in terms of the principle and policy in question it is considered that the proposal must satisfy the policies contained within policy OS2 of the Melton Local Plan, the Core Strategy and NPPF Paragraph 215 of the NPPF advises that out of date plans and the policies contained within can still attract considerable weight, dependant on the consistency with the NPPF. Policy OS2 is a 'countryside protection' policy and is considered to be strongly consistent with the NPPF and therefore retains weight</p> <p>The proposal does not fall within one of the exceptions under policy OS2 of the adopted Melton Local Plan, however the Core Strategy (Submission) does look favourably on proposals for</p>

	<p>renewable energy. It is also necessary to consider wider policy issues. The NPPF states that development of renewable energy resources is vital to facilitating the delivery of the Government's commitments on both climate change and renewable energy. Positive planning which facilitates renewable energy developments can contribute to the Government's sustainable development strategy. It is considered that the siting, design and scale of monitoring mast proposed is acceptable and accordingly the application is considered to meet the objectives of the NPPF</p>
<p>Impact on the character of the area:</p>	<p>The proposed mast will be 60m high and will be constructed of galvanised steel tube sections with galvanised guy wire extending to a diameter of 42 metres. The colour of the mast would therefore blend into the skyline for some of the year. The mast has no foundations; there is a small base plate at the bottom of the mast which rests on the top of the ground. The guy wires are attached to the ground in 5 places via steel anchor points which are buried just below the ground and can be easily removed at the end of the data monitoring program.</p> <p>The mast would be a temporary feature and there would be no long terms impacts following its removal. It is therefore considered that the monitoring mast will not be sufficiently detrimental to the character and appearance of the open countryside to warrant refusal.</p>
<p>Impact on neighbouring properties:</p>	<p>There are no properties in the immediate vicinity of the site and the nearest properties are approximately 0.7 km away at the nearby village of Chadwell. The application is solely for the monitoring mast at this stage and there would be negligible noise created. It is therefore not considered that a loss of amenity will arise.</p>
<p>Access:</p>	<p>The proposal utilises the existing access and tracks off Wycombe Lane. The applicant advises that set up and installation requires no heavy equipment and construction traffic will be limited to a light four wheel drive vehicle and trailer. The erection of the mast should take no longer than two days, and decommissioning should take no longer than one day. The mast only requires access for installation and removal although it will be inspected at regular intervals. The Highway Authority have no objections to the proposal.</p>

Conclusion

It is considered that good environmental and energy conservation methods should be encouraged and balanced against the conservation of the open countryside. Although the wind monitoring mast is an unusual feature it is not considered to adversely affect the character and appearance of the area or the residential amenities of surrounding dwellings. The mast will collect wind data to inform the final design for a proposed turbine currently being considered under planning application 13/00058/FUL, it does not automatically pave the way for a turbine in this location which would require separate consent. Accordingly the application is recommended for approval.

RECOMMENDATION:- Permit subject to the following conditions:-

- 1 The development shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.
- 2 The mast hereby permitted shall be removed from the site and the land restored to its former condition on or before 25 April 2015; in accordance with a scheme of work to be agreed by the Local Planning Authority, unless in the meantime a further application has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.

Reasons :-

- 1 To comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
- 2 The mast is only for a temporary basis and is not a structure that the Authority would wish to see retained on a permanent basis.

Officer to contact: **Mrs Denise Knipe**

15th April 2013