

DCNE0009/1841/F - PROPOSED ERECTION OF 15 METRE WIND TURBINE AND ASSOCIATED WORKS. AT LEADON COURT, FROMES HILL, LEDBURY, HEREFORDSHIRE, HR8 1HT

For: MR MORGAN, MORGAN FARMING PARTNERSHIP, LEADON COURT, FROMES HILL, NR LEDBURY, HEREFORDSHIRE, HR8 1HT

Date Received: 25 August 2009 Ward: Frome Grid Ref: 368191,246784
Expiry Date: 20 October 2009

Local Members: Cllr Morgan

1. Site Description and Proposal

- 1.1 The application site relates to part of Leadon Court that is situated on the eastern side of Fromes Hill north of the A4103.
- 1.2 The proposal involves the erection of a wind turbine that would have a ground to hub height of 15 metres and a blade length of 4.82 metres giving a total height of some 19.82 metres. The mast would be a galvanised steel/silver in colour and the blades a matt black. The rated output of the turbine is 15kW and it is likely to generate 30,000 kWh per year. The Community Sustainable Energy Programme puts a standard useful life expectancy of 20 years on such small wind turbines.
- 1.3 The proposed location of the wind turbine is approximately 250 metres north of the A4103 road and 100 metres east of the road leading from the A4103 to Halmonds Frome. Access to the site is via a private track heading from Leadon Court in a north westerly direction towards the site.
- 1.4 The site is located at approximately 180 metres AOD (Above Ordnance Datum), on land rising from east to west. The highest point is 193 metres AOD approximately 490 metres west of the site. To the north-west of the site is Halmonds Frome. The land falls away to the north-east of the site towards Eavesbatch where it reaches a low point in the River Leadon valley before rising to 172 metres AOD near Ashen Coppice , approximately 1.8 kilometres north-east of the site. Immediately south of the site the land falls to 176 metres AOD in the residential area known as Uplands, before rising to 181 metres AOD approximately 590 metres south of the site. The landform towards the east and south-east of the site falls away towards the River Leadon before rising to 146 metres AOD at Beacon Hill, approximately 2.3 kilometres distant from the site.
- 1.5 The nearest residential properties are at Uplands, with the closest house at number six approximately 89 metres away. The rear garden boundary of number 6 Uplands

would be some 69 metres distant. Further, to the west of the site is a property known as 'Greenfields' whilst slightly north of that is 'Homestead'.

- 1.6 In the Herefordshire Council's Landscape Character Assessment the area is designated as 'Timber Plateau Farmlands'.
- 1.7 There is a similar wind turbine at Garway Primary School if Members wish to view a similar development, prior to this meeting.

2. Policies

2.1 Central Government Advice

Planning Policy Statement 1 – 'Delivering Sustainable Development'
Planning Policy Statement 7 – 'Sustainable Development in Rural Areas'
Planning Policy Statement 22 'Renewable Energy'
Planning for Renewable Energy – A Companion Guide to PPS22

2.2 Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan 2007

S1	–	Sustainable Development
S2	–	Development requirements
S7	–	Natural and historic heritage
DR1	–	Design
DR2	–	Land use and activity
DR4	–	Environment
DR13	–	Noise
LA2	–	Landscape Character and areas least resilient to change
NC1	–	Biodiversity and Development
NC2	–	Sites of International Importance
NC3	–	Sites of National Importance
NC4	–	Sites of Local Importance
NC5	–	European and Nationally Protected Species
NC6	–	Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitats and Species
NC7	–	Compensation for Loss of Biodiversity
NC8	–	Habitat Creation, Restoration and Enhancement
NC9	–	Management of Features of the Landscape Important for Fauna and Flora
CF4	–	Renewable Energy

3. Planning History

None.

4. Consultation Summary

Statutory Consultations

- 4.1 Ministry of Defence (Defence Estates) – No objection
- 4.2 The Joint Radio Company Limited on behalf of UK Fuel & Power Industry has no objection to the proposal. They assess potential interference with radio systems operated by utility companies in support of their regulatory operational requirements.

Internal Council Advice

- 4.3 The Environmental Health Section who has been consulted primarily on the issue of noise state:-

“Having looked at the accompanying noise emission report with this application, it indicates that the maximum noise level at high wind from the base of the turbine would be SPL (Sound Pressure Level) 48 dBa at the nearest dwelling. At low wind speed this is reduced to SPL 31 dBa this indicates that there would be no significant effect to residence when comparing to expected background noise levels at differing wind speeds.

Therefore I have no objections to this proposal.”

- 4.4 Transportation: - No objection

- 4.5 The Planning Ecologist has no objections to the proposal subject to an appropriate condition and informatives.

5. Representations

- 5.1 The written views of the bishops Frome Parish Council have not been received. However, a verbal conversation with the Planning Officer suggests that the Parish Council has no objection although they draw attention to opposition from local residents.

- 5.2 The occupiers of five dwellings in the vicinity object on the following summarised grounds:-

- Undue visual impact;
- Impact of undue noise levels upon health;
- Shadow flicker impact;
- Impact upon ecology;
- The location of the proposed wind turbine distant from the applicant's own property is inappropriate;
- Depreciation of property values; and
- Concern as to further wind turbines in the future.

- 5.3 The applicant has explained the purpose of the development as follows:-

“The Morgan Farming Partnership undertook an energy audit as part of the RE:think energy grant scheme and this calculated that the annual electricity usage on site was 85,000 kWh. This means that all output from the turbine will be used within the business for general farm operations and power for the light industrial units which the business rents out to local businesses. There would be little, if any, domestic usage for the wind turbine power. There may be periods at night where any excess electricity is exported to the national grid but this would make up a very small percentage of the annual figures due to the high demand by the on site usage.

From our wind monitoring sessions and standard data available for the site grid reference, we estimate the average wind speed over the course of one year to be 5 - 5.5m/s at 15m above ground level. It is very tricky to accurately predict the wind speeds unless year round monitoring takes place but we have extrapolated this data from our results.

- 5.4 The answer to the second question about whether the turbine cuts out at 20m/s is that this particular Proven design has a patented counter measure to limit the turbine

output at high speeds but does not cut out. I have checked with the turbine installer who confirms that the blades of the Proven turbine have a special furling mechanism so when speeds of in excess of 20m/s are reached; the blades turn inwards to protect the blades and reduce the output of the turbine. The turbine does not generate any extra power above 20m/s as the blades are slowed by the limiting mechanism and so also will not generate any extra noise.”

- 5.5 The full text of these letters can be inspected at Planning Services, Garrick House, Widemarsh Street, Hereford and prior to the Committee meeting.

6. Officer's Appraisal

- 6.1 The Central Government approach to such renewable energy developments is made clear in the introduction to Planning Policy Statement 22 that states:-

“The Government's energy policy, including its policy on renewable energy, is set out in the Energy White Paper. This aims to put the UK on a path to cut its carbon dioxide emissions by some 60% by 2050, with real progress by 2020, and to maintain reliable and competitive energy supplies. The development of renewable energy, alongside improvements in energy efficiency and the development of combined heat and power, will make a vital contribution to these aims. The Government has already set a target to generate 10% of UK electricity from renewable energy sources by 2010. The White Paper set out the Government's aspiration to double that figure to 20% by 2020, and suggests that still more renewable energy will be needed beyond that date. The White Paper sets out policies to stimulate the development of new technologies to provide the basis for continuing growth of renewables in the longer term, to assist the UK renewables industry to become competitive in home and export markets and in doing so, provide employment.

Increased 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 all four elements of the Government's sustainable development strategy:-

- social progress which recognises the needs of everyone – by contributing to the nation's energy needs, ensuring all homes are adequately and affordably heated; and providing new sources of energy in remote areas;
- effective protection of the environment – by reductions in emissions of greenhouse gases and thereby reducing the potential for the environment to be affected by climate change;
- prudent use of natural resources – by reducing the nation's reliance on ever-diminishing supplies of fossil fuels; and,
- maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment – through the creation of jobs directly related to renewable energy developments, but also in the development of new technologies. In rural areas, renewable energy projects have the potential to play an increasingly important role in the diversification of rural economies.”

- 6.2 These objectives are reflected in policy CF4 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan that generally supports the provision of renewable energy developments. It is considered that this wider strategic picture needs to be fully

recognised as does the individual contribution of each such development, however small, as each development makes a positive contribution to that wider objective.

- 6.3 Nevertheless, each renewable energy development needs to be carefully considered, as they should not be accepted at any environmental cost. In the remainder of this report each of the environmental impacts will be addressed.

Visual impact

- 6.4 Due to the undulating nature of the landscape, mature hedgerows and trees, views of the site are restricted at both close and long range distances. Views from the road leading to Halmonds Frome are screened by the roadside hedgerow and trees. Properties located to the east and north of the site are also screened by vegetation. Views from the public highway within the residential development at Uplands are screened by terraced buildings and intervening trees, vegetation and overhead wires. Standing on the site views of the housing within Uplands are screened by trees and hedgerows. The copse to the north screens views from the north and north-east. Views from Leadon Court and the track to the site would be broken by intervening buildings, trees and hedgerows. There is a view from the path immediately north of the site where there is a gap in the hedgerow to access the field, but this view would only be brief. Part of the A4103 is visible in the distance to the east but traffic travelling the road would only have a glimpse view of the site in the context of the surrounding landscape with trees and hedgerows. There are distant views from the site to the Malvern Hills, but at distances of approximately 8 to 10 kilometres, views of the site in the context of the surrounding landscape would be insignificant.
- 6.5 It is considered that the proposed wind turbine would not have a significant visual impact on the landscape, in the context of restricted viewpoints, existing trees in the vicinity, and the fact that it is located on the highest point in the area. Also, to the north-east of the site on higher ground is an existing telecommunications mast which has a greater visual impact than the proposed wind turbine would have.

Noise

- 6.6 As above, the Environmental Health Section has no objection to the proposed development. They are satisfied that the proposed wind turbine would not create a level of noise that would harm the amenities of the occupiers of dwellings in the vicinity. It is not considered that the occupiers of properties in the vicinity would suffer any sleep disturbance and the Environmental Health Section is satisfied that World Health Organisation guidance on this matter would be satisfied. Indeed it is considered that the wind turbine would barely be audible from any dwellings in the vicinity.

Shadow Flicker

- 6.7 Given that only one turbine is proposed, that the closest neighbouring properties are to the south-west, the distance to the closest residential property and the limited height of the wind turbine, it is considered that the matter of shadow-flicker would not create any problem in this case.

Ecology

- 6.8 There is knowledge of a bat roost in the area and there was concern at the pre-application stage as to the applicant's initial proposal to site the mast in close proximity to a hedgerow that may be being used as a foraging corridor. Negotiations secured the re-siting of the mast some 60 metres distant from that hedgerow thus

overcoming the concern. There remains a lack of evidence as to the impact of wind turbines upon bats and birds and it is for that reason that a monitoring condition is recommended.

Other matters

- 6.9 It must be stressed that the proposed location of the wind turbine has not been driven by any desire of the applicant to site the turbine away from his own house. The location has been determined by wind speed tests and choosing the optimum location with regard wind speeds. Indeed the location of the wind turbine distant from the applicant's dwelling increases cabling costs.
- 6.10 As Members will be aware the impact of developments upon property values is not a planning consideration.
- 6.11 Any future proposal for further wind turbines would require the benefit of planning permission and would be considered on its individual merits. There is no reason to believe that the applicant has any intention to propose such future developments.

Conclusion

- 6.12 In conclusion, the principle of the proposed development is acceptable and its environmental impact is considered to be acceptable.

RECOMMENDATION

That planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:

- 1 A01 Time limit for commencement (full permission)
- 2 An annual report detailing any bat or bird fatalities associated with the domestic wind turbine hereby permitted shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority for a period of three years after the installation of the wind turbine. Monthly checks shall be made from 1st May to 31st October in each calendar year as a minimum and the report shall include dates, times, location and condition (dead or injured, and type of injury where identified) of all bats and birds found within a 5 metre radius of the domestic wind turbines.

The landowner shall afford access at all reasonable times to any ecologist nominated by the Local Planning Authority for monitoring purposes, between May and September each calendar year for a period of 3 years from completion of installation.

Reason: To provide information on bats and birds affected by domestic wind turbines to Herefordshire council for research purposes, in the interests of biodiversity and to meet the requirements of PPS9 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation and the NERC Act 2006. To comply with Herefordshire Council's UDP Policies NC5 and NC6 in relation to Nature conservation and Biodiversity and to meet the requirements of PPS9 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation and the NERC Act 2006.

- 3 The wind turbine hereby permitted shall be removed from the land within six months of it no longer being required for harnessing wind energy or no longer fulfilling its purpose due to it having reached the end of its useful life.

Reason: To safeguard the open countryside from structures that no longer have a useful function / purpose.

INFORMATIVES:

N15 Reason(s) for the Grant of Planning Permission

N11A Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) - Birds

N11B Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) & Cons (Nat. HaB Bats)

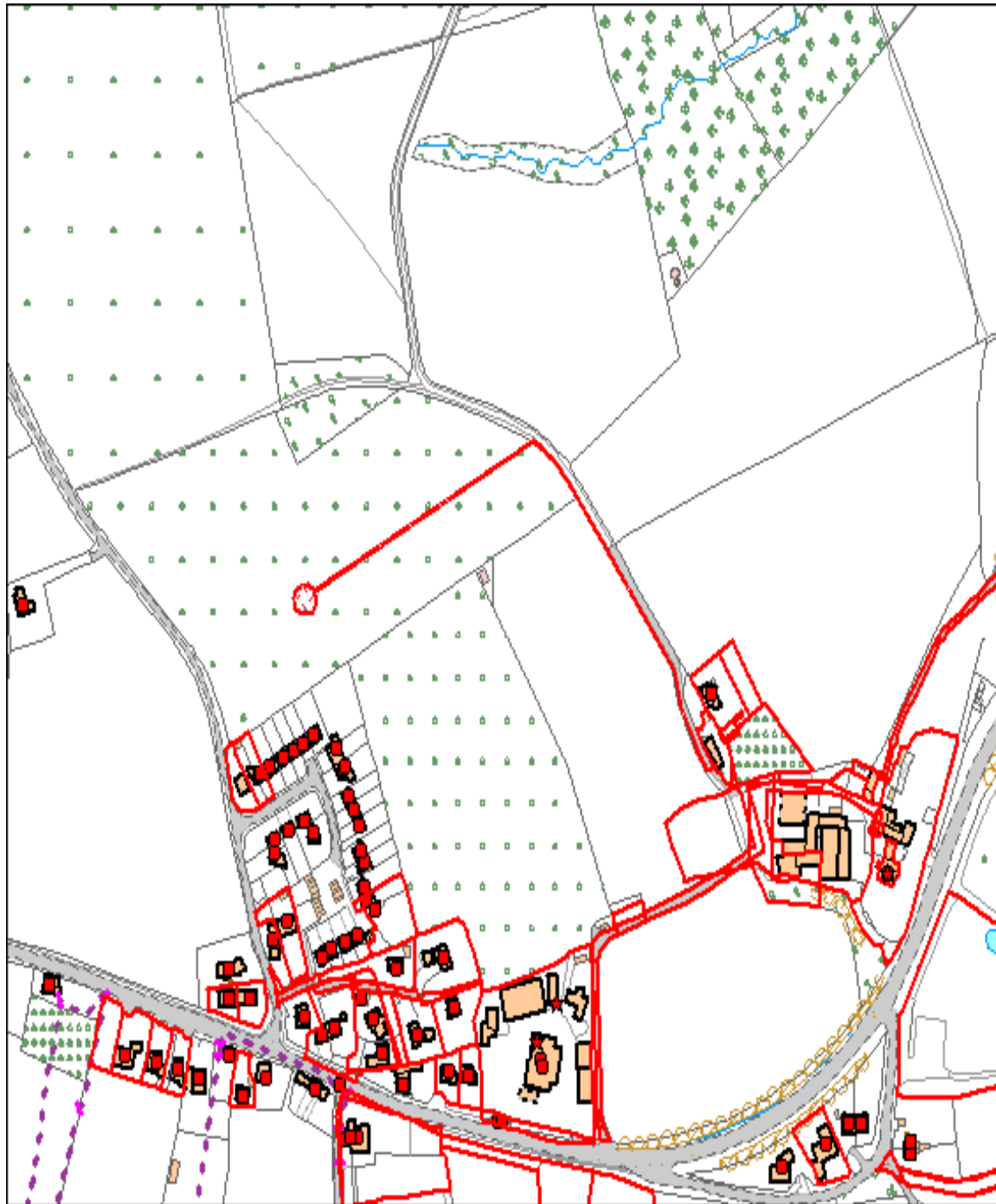
Decision:

Notes:

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Background Papers

Internal departmental consultation replies.



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SITE ADDRESS : LEADON COURT, FROMES HILL, LEDBURY, HEREFORDSHIRE, HR8 1HT

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