

DRAFT PLANNING POLICY STATEMENT (PPS) 22: RENEWABLE ENERGY

Report By: Chief Forward Planning Officer

Wards Affected

Countywide

Purpose

To inform the Committee of the proposals contained in PPS22 on Renewable Energy, and recommend a response to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) to the Cabinet Member (Environment).

Financial Implications

None identified.

Introduction

1. The increased development of renewable energy resources is vital to facilitating the delivery of the Government's commitments on both climate change and renewable energy. Ambitious targets for renewable energy generation and reductions in greenhouse emissions were outlined in the Energy White Paper in February 2003. The ODPM says there is now a need for a clearer focus on assisting the UK to meet national and international targets for the reduction of emissions of greenhouse gases, including the goal to cut the UK's carbon dioxide emissions by some 60% by 2050, with 'real progress' by 2020.
2. The ODPM, in close consultation with the Department for Trade and Industry (DTI), the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and other relevant Government departments, has carried out a review of PPG22. On 5th November 2003 the Government issued, for consultation, a planning guidance document entitled PPS22, which sets out the Government's planning policy for renewable energy projects. It is intended that the final version of PPS22 will replace the existing PPG22 that was first issued in February 1993.
3. Responses from local authorities to draft PPS22 are required to be sent to the ODPM by 30th January 2004. Due to this timescale, an officer response has been prepared and submitted subject to Committee and Cabinet member approval.

Summary of Draft PPS22

4. The aims and content of the new policy guidance in PPS22 shows the Government's level of concern about the damage that traditional energy sources can have on the environment and the consequential problems of global warming and acid rain.
5. The new draft planning policy statement clearly sets out positive planning policies, which will facilitate renewable energy development and contribute to the

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Government's sustainable development strategy. PPS22 is designed to bring order and clarity to the planning process so that decisions can be informed by unambiguous, criteria-based policies.

6. Due to the need for clearer and more concise statements of Government policy, PPS22 does not include technical advice or good practice guidance. The intention is to publish separately a companion guide containing the technical details of what was originally in the annexes of PPG22. The guide will also include evidence of good practice from both developers and local planning authorities and should be published alongside the final version of PPS22.

Key Principles

- Regional planning bodies and local planning authorities should accommodate renewable energy developments and their plans should contain criteria based policies designed to 'promote and encourage' rather than restrict the development of renewable energy resources. There will be no place for planning policies that rule out or place constraints on the development of renewable energy technologies.
 - Regional renewable energy targets should be introduced in regional plans as minimum targets to be monitored and increased if and when they are met.
 - When assessing proposals for renewable energy, the wider environmental and economic benefits are material considerations that should be given significant weight in determining whether proposals should be granted planning permission.
 - Planning authorities should foster community involvement in renewable energy projects and seek to promote knowledge of and greater acceptance by the public of prospective renewable energy developments that are appropriately located.
 - Locational considerations have been clarified for sites in the following designated areas:
7. *International and national designations*: developers will need to demonstrate that there are overriding social, economic or environmental reasons for development, which are over and above any potential adverse effect on the integrity of such sites. Planning authorities should introduce criteria based policies, which set out the circumstances in which particular types and sizes of renewable energy developments will be acceptable in nationally designated areas.
 8. *Green Belts*: renewable energy projects will need to be carefully considered on green belt land, but will not be excluded if developers can demonstrate that the wider environmental benefits outweigh any harm by reason of appropriateness.
 9. *Buffer Zones and Local Designations*: buffer zones around existing designations should not be introduced in regional or development plans. Nor should local designations be used in themselves to refuse planning permission.
 10. *Other locational considerations*: Planning authorities should not apply a sequential approach to development, as there are a range of other considerations and constraints to renewable energy development outside of the land use planning system.

Analysis of Implications

11. The draft PPS22 encourages local planning authorities to promote and encourage renewable energy projects, not restrict them. In addition, wider social and environmental considerations are identified as material considerations to be given significant weight in determining planning applications. Development plans should not place excessive constraints on the development of renewable energy projects and Government reserves the right to intervene in such situations. This positive approach is welcomed in view of the need to tackle the problems posed by global climate change.
12. PPS22 advises that the visual impacts of wind turbine developments will vary according to the location and landscape setting. However, it states that this impact may be mitigated through appropriate siting, layout, design, landscaping or colour, depending on the size and type of development proposed. It is considered, in the specific case of wind turbines, to be unrealistic to expect more than minimal mitigation of the impacts on visual amenity through careful siting, design or landscaping due to the nature of these forms of development. Therefore, although the overall approach of considering the wider benefits as well as the potential impacts of renewable energy projects is welcomed, the difficulty of effectively mitigating the visual effects of wind turbines on the landscape should be recognised.
13. Due to the timing of the consultation draft of PPS22, it has been possible to make relevant revisions to draft UDP policy CF4 and the preceding justification paragraphs. These changes reflect the Government's more positive strategic approach to planning for renewable energy, whilst continuing to protect the countryside and were considered by the UDP Working Group in December 2003.
14. The criteria-based approach advocated for development plans (rather than identifying 'areas of search' or buffer zones around sensitive locations where development should be restricted), should avoid the situation where assumptions made in development plans about suitable locations for renewables, are quickly overtaken by innovations in renewable energy generation technology. Additional guidance on good practice in development plans and renewable energy development would be useful and it is hoped that the forthcoming technical papers to PPS22 will include this.
15. The intention of the Government to produce a Companion Guide to PPS22 is welcomed, however, it is considered that it would have been more useful to have been able to comment on both the PPS and the Companion Guide at the same time.

RECOMMENDATIONS

THAT the Cabinet Member (Environment) be recommended that the Committee broadly welcomes the proposals in Draft PPS22 and looks forward to the publication of the Companion Guide, but that the issue of the effective mitigation of visual impacts of wind turbine developments (as discussed in paragraph 12) should be raised in a consultation response to the ODPM.