

MEETING:	PLANNING COMMITTEE
DATE:	14 APRIL 2010
TITLE OF REPORT:	<p>DMNE/100235/F - ERECTION OF 11 KW MASTED WIND TURBINE AT LEADON COURT, FROMES HILL, HEREFORDSHIRE, HR8 1HT</p> <p>For: Mr Morgan Per Mr Julian Morgan, Leadon Court, Fromes Hill, Herefordshire, HR8 1HT</p>

Date Received: 3 February 2010 **Ward: Frome**

Grid Ref: 368458,246639

Expiry Date: 12 April 2010

Local Members: Councillor PM Morgan

1. Site Description and Proposal

- 1.1 The application site relates to part of Leadon Court that is situated on the northern 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 18.3 metres and a blade length of 6.7 metres giving a total height of some 25 metres. There would only be two blades. The mast would be a galvanised steel/silver in colour and the blades a pale grey colour. The rated output of the turbine is 11kW and it is likely to generate 30,000 kWh per year.
- 1.3 This proposal is a substitution for a wind turbine previously permitted under permission DCNE/0009/1841/F. That turbine had a hub height of 15 metres with three blades each with a length of 4.82 metres giving a total height of some 19.82 metres. However, it became apparent to the applicant late last year that this turbine was no longer available for sale and even if it were, the applicant had become aware of some significant technical issues. It became apparent that some 160 such turbines had been recalled after installation due to a problem with the blade hinges. As a result these turbines are no longer for sale until the problem has been resolved.
- 1.4 The proposed wind turbine under consideration is in the same location as that previously permitted and is in effect a substitute.
- 1.5 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.
- 1.6 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 Evesbatch 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

Further information on the subject of this report is available from Mr R Close on 01432 261803

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.

1.7 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'.

1.8 In the Herefordshire Council's Landscape Character Assessment the area is designated as 'Timber Plateau Farmlands'.

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
NC3	-	Sites of National Importance
NC4	-	Sites of Local Importance
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

3.1 DCNE0009/1841/F – Proposed erection of 15 metre wind turbine and associated works. Approved with conditions on 23 October 2009.

4. Consultation Summary

Statutory Consultations

4.1 None

Internal Council Advice

- 4.2 The views of the Environmental Health Section are awaited.
- 4.3 Transportation: No objection
- 4.4 The Planning Ecologist has no objections to the proposal subject to an appropriate condition and informatives.

5. Representations

- 5.1 The Bishops Frome Parish Council state:-

“As it is very similar to the previously approved DCNE2009/1841/F, with no change to the location, and only slight changes to the height of the turbine, Councillors had no objections. They have noted that the new turbine will probably be quieter than the one originally proposed”.

- 5.2 The Ministry of Defence has no objection to the proposed development.

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

“The Morgan Farming Partnership farms 316 acres in East Herefordshire, near the Worcestershire border. The farm is a mixture of grass, top fruit, arable fields and woodland that undulates with a height above sea level ranging from 110m to 180m. The main enterprises are arable, sheep, blackcurrants and cider fruit. There are a variety of agricultural buildings on site including animal housing, farm workshops and stores.

The business also operates a commercial letting enterprise with 5 commercial/light industrial units (total 3344 m²) and a traditional building let out for workshop facilities.

The business has chosen to undertake this project because they wish to minimise their reliance on fossil fuels and conventional electricity. They have researched a number of technologies and having analysed their business energy usage have chosen to install a photo voltaic array and wind turbine. These technologies will contribute a large proportion of the electrical energy used on site and form the basis of a renewable demonstration site complementing biomass and solar thermal technology that are already pre-installed.

The business currently uses up to 80,000kWh of electricity each year and is actively committed to reducing the amount it uses from the National Grid through the installation of this turbine and other renewable measures.

The turbine is predicted to generate 30,000kWh of green electricity for the business each year, which the business will not need to import from the National Grid. Due to the constant site demand, all of the turbine's output will be used on site to maximum benefit. This is equivalent to a saving of 12.9 tonnes of carbon dioxide every year that the turbine is operational.

Project Objectives:

- To reduce the businesses overhead spend on electricity by at least 25% by 2011
- To generate 30% of the businesses electricity demand from on site renewable sources in the financial year 2010-2011
- To lower the carbon footprint of the business and save 12 tonnes of CO₂ in the financial year 2010-2011
- To provide a demonstration site for renewable technology and welcome 5 visitor groups in the financial year 2010-2011

Project Outcomes:

- Increased knowledge of renewable energy within the business and the business tenants
- Secure electrical energy supply for the business
- Greater awareness and promotion of commercial solar and wind generation technology in North/East Herefordshire”

5.4 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 The views of the Environmental Health Section upon the issue of noise are awaited. The recommendation reflects this.

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.

Conclusion

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

RECOMMENDATION

Subject to no objections being received from the Environmental Health Section on the issue of noise the Head of Planning and Transportation be delegated powers to grant full planning permission subject to the following conditions:-

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 1 May to 31 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:

- 1 N15 Reason(s) for the Grant of PP/LBC/CAC**
- 2 N11A Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) - Birds**
- 3 N11B Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) & Cons (Nat. Hab Bat)**

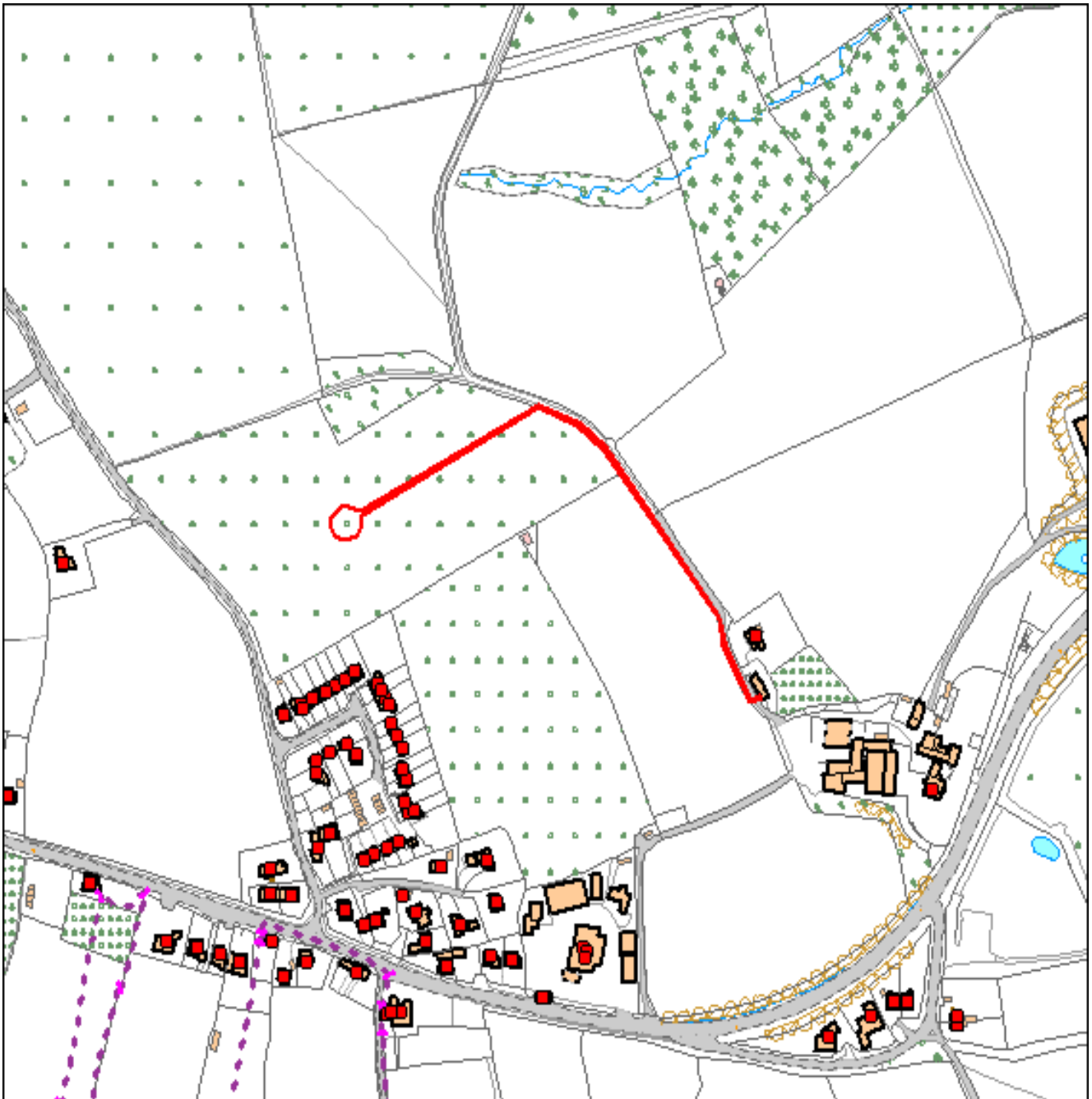
Decision:

Notes:

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Background Papers

Internal departmental consultation replies.



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APPLICATION NO: DMNE/100235/F

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

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