

APPENDIX

COPY OF REPORT TO PLANNING COMMITTEE 18/4/2008

2. FULL APPLICATION – ERECTION OF 9.7M HIGH WIND TURBINE, WHITE EDGE LODGE, LONGSHAW ESTATE, LONGSHAW (NP/DDD/0108/0041, P.754, 18.02.08, 2643 7988/KW)

APPLICANT: NATIONAL TRUST

White Edge Lodge is situated in an isolated and prominent position on White Edge Moor, which is part of the National Trust's Longshaw Estate. The Lodge is a grade II listed structure is a prominent feature in the moorland landscape situated about 880m northwest of The Grouse Inn. The property is presently used as a holiday-let. The site is within the Eastern Peak District Moors Site Of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Peak District Moors (South Pennine Moor Phase 1) Special Protection Area (SPA); and South Pennine moors Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The site lies within the Natural Zone.

Proposal

Erection of a 9.7m high wind turbine 90 north west of The Lodge.

Key issues

The landscape impact of the proposed wind turbine on the character of the surrounding landscape.

Consultations

Highway Authority - No objections, subject to details of construction, maintenance and access being submitted and agreed.

District Council – No reply to date.

Parish Council – Recommend refusal The Peak District was created to preserve the natural beauty of the landscape. A 12m wind turbine will be a very prominent feature at this location in a wild, natural landscape; it would be totally alien and an intrusion into the wide open moorland. Despite the claims of the applicant, the turbine would be clearly visible from many viewpoints in an area of Open Access land, which is widely used by hundreds of walkers. Whilst the use of alternative sustainable energy sources are supported, the proposed turbine would require large capital expenditure and maintenance costs for relatively small savings in the cost of a single holiday let and is not justifiable. There are more sustainable energy systems, such as geothermal, which are not obtrusive and provide a constant source of energy without backup. The proposal would be contrary to the National Park's landscape protection policies.

Natural England – The application site lies within the Eastern Peak District Moors Site of Special Scientific Interest, which also forms part of the SAC and SPA sites of international importance. Although there will inevitably be some localised disturbance to the habitats around White Edge Lodge during construction and some permanent loss of the acid grassland habitat at the actual site of installation, it is noted that the location of the wind turbine has been selected specifically to avoid special areas of ecological interest. It is therefore not considered that any of these impacts are significant. For a wind turbine of this size it is not considered that there are likely to be any significant impacts on the bird interests of the designated sites. Natural England therefore has no objection in principle to the proposed development, subject to conditions being attached to minimise the disturbance and pollution of the moorland habitat.

Friends of the Peak District (FPD) – The proposed 9m wind turbine is located within open access land to the west of White edge Lodge, which is popular with visitors, particularly walkers who use

the bridleways past the lodge beneath White Edge Moor. Following a site visit, FPD do not believe the turbine will be visible from the A625 (as it will be screened by woodland to the north) or the footpath along White Edge (as walkers are prevented from approaching the edge and looking down on the site by fencing). It will be visible from the bridleway which passes the lodge and from the footpath from Lady Cross to Nether Padley as it descends east from White Edge towards the A625. The turbine will also be noticeable from longer distances across the Derwent Valley, these impacts are however reduced significantly by distance and the moorland backdrop which the turbine will be set against. Due to their proximity to and the unscreened views of the turbine, the users of the bridleways and public footpath past White Edge Lodge will be the main visual receptors and FPD consider the impacts upon their enjoyment of the landscape to be the main concern.

Measured against these visual impacts are the wider environmental benefits that this application will have and whether alternative renewable energy technologies, which are less visually intrusive, could be used. Other alternatives, such as an underground electricity supply have been discounted due to the cost and the existing diesel generator is expensive to run and is inefficient. Other alternatives, such as solar or hydroelectric are not possible; therefore, a wind turbine is the only option. Policy LU4 states that renewable energy sources will be permitted provided that the development can be accommodated without harm to the valued characteristics or other established uses of the area. Whilst it is impossible to reduce all harm such proposals have, the turbine is screened by trees when viewed from the north and does not skyline when viewed from the south and east (except when close by). FPD therefore considers the visual harm reduced to an acceptable level. Whilst the turbine will have a detrimental impact on the visual amenity of walkers who use the bridleways and footpath past the lodge, FPD considers these impacts are outweighed by the wider environmental benefits achieved through the reduction of carbon dioxide emissions. FPD therefore support this application.

Letter of Representation

A letter of objection has been received on the basis of adverse visual impact in an area of open and semi-wild moorland. The perceived benefits do not outweigh this negative impact. The estimated savings in carbon dioxide emissions are not justified and are too insignificant to contribute towards reducing the causes and effects of climate change. There must be ways for the National Trust to raise awareness of 'climate change' issues without erecting a wind turbine in such a sensitive and visible location. It is not clear how this scheme can fulfil the Renewables Obligation as claimed by the applicant. In respect of visibility, the applicant seems to have only considered local visibility. This turbine would also be highly visible from hills on the other side of Hope Valley such as Eyam Moor. The turbine would severely impact on the exceptional wide open views across to White and Froggatt Edges. The application should be rejected so that people can continue to experience the open spaces of the gritstone moors and find solace and refuge as quoted in the application submission.

Main Policies

Relevant Regional Spatial Strategy 8 policies include: Policies 10, 11 and 30 in the draft RSS 8

Relevant Structure Plan policies include: GS1, C1, C6, C17

Relevant Local Plan policies include: LC4, LU4

Applicant's Supporting Statement / Site Survey Report

This states that White Edge lodge is now used by the National Trust as a self-catering holiday let. This isolated property has no connection to mains services and burns oil for cooking, space heating and electricity generation. A wood burning stove also heats the main living room. The trust is having to spend ever increasing sums on oil and estimates that fuel bills for this property are approximately 6 times the UK average for a property of this size, which is clearly not

sustainable. The proposed wind turbine will reduce the consumption of oil providing a reduction in the property's environmental and carbon footprint within a moorland site that is being managed for carbon storage.

The National Trust have adopted the 'Energy Hierarchy' set out in both the Adopted and Draft Regional Spatial Strategy. Accordingly, over recent years, the Trust have taken the opportunity to improve insulation and draft proofing at the Lodge, within the constraints of the listed status of the building. The Trust have also provided information to users of the holiday-let to minimise their energy use during their stay and educate and influence visitors to improve energy efficiency when they return home. The next step in the hierarchy is to use renewable energy.

Following a review of the poor performance existing diesel-powered electricity generator, the Trust has focused on the provision of a wind turbine. This would be a sustainable facility for future occupants. The resultant reduction in diesel oil use is calculated to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide by up to 13,750kg per year. The existing electricity generator would remain in place to provide a backup electricity supply. The trust states that the provision of the wind turbine is consistent with Planning Policy Statements PPS1 and PPS 22, The East Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy and the Authority's Structure and Local Plans and its Supplementary Guidance for Energy Renewables and Conservation.

Alternative renewable energy sources have been considered but have been discounted either due to their impact upon the character and appearance of the Lodge in respect of solar panels or photovoltaics. Hydro-electricity generation is not possible as there is no available watercourse. A ground source heat pump is more appropriate to provide space heating via under floor heating, however retro-fitting under floor heating in a listed building is not considered to be viable or appropriate in a Grade II listed building. There is also no requirement for biomass as the Lodge already utilises a wood burning stove. The Trust states that the erection of the wind turbine is therefore the preferred option and will;

- Reduce reliance upon non-renewable (oil based) energy supplies
- Reduce carbon emissions, and thereby contribute towards reducing the causes and effects of climate change
- Avoid unnecessary energy losses through the use of the existing inefficient generator
- Raise the awareness and knowledge of occupants and passers by to the opportunities for using renewable energy and reducing the effects of climate change
- Leading by example, the move towards increased renewable energy generation and fulfilling Renewables Obligations

The proposed turbine is a single propeller type (3-Blade) turbine mounted on a 9.7m high pole mast. The diameter of the blades is 5.5m. The turbine is to be located within the moor about 90m northwest of the Lodge and close to a siver birch tree and a larch, both of which are between 6-7m high. The site survey report states that this position has been chosen to achieve optimum wind velocities, as it located away from the shielding effects of the Lodge and surrounding trees, but also uses the two established trees to reduce the visual impact of the turbine. A cable trench will be laid across the moorland from the turbine to the battery bank situated in the generator building. Whilst it is acknowledged that this will have a localised effect upon the SSSI/SPA habitat, these will be minimised by the use of sensitive construction techniques. The location of the turbine has also been specifically selected to avoid archaeological remains and features of ecological interest.

In respect of the landscape impact issues, the Trust states that no additional landscaping is to be undertaken to mitigate the impact of the mast as this would compromise its efficiency. Planting of trees in this exposed moorland situation would, in any case, be inappropriate. The accompanying landscape assessment states that the turbine will not be visible from any buildings other than White Edge Lodge. It will be visible, however, within the open moor landscape except where it is screened (to the north, west and east) by the Lodge, or woodland blocks. Similarly, the Lodge and the woodland blocks will provide a backdrop to the wind turbine (when viewed

from the south). The assessment concludes that views of the turbine across the open moor will be transient in nature and restricted to those individuals moving through the landscape on the bridleway or footpath. It states that the proposed location of the turbine will not be visible from the nearest roads (the A625 or the B6054). Photographic montages have been submitted to demonstrate the anticipated view from the bridleway. The assessment considers that these demonstrate that the impacts upon users of the bridleway and footpath to be only slightly adverse, and furthermore they would be only transient.

Comment

Policy Considerations

General strategic Policy GS1 of the Structure Plan states that all development will be controlled so that the valued characteristics of the Peak national park can be conserved now and for future generations. To achieve this, development will not normally be permitted where it is incompatible with the policies in the development plan, or it is incompatible with the twin statutory National Park purposes of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National park and promoting its public enjoyment, or with the Authority's further statutory duty to have regard to the well-being of local communities. Where there is an irreconcilable conflict between these aims, the conservation of the National Park will normally take precedence.

The site is within the Natural Zone where the structure Plan Policy C1 states that development will not be permitted in the gritstone moors other than in exceptional circumstances. Policy LC1 of the Local Plan (Conserving and managing the Natural Zone) states that the exceptional circumstances in which development is permissible in the Natural Zone are those in which a suitable, more acceptable location cannot be found elsewhere and it is essential in the national interest or the management of the Natural Zone; or for the conservation and enhancement of the National Park's valued characteristics. Furthermore, development that would serve only to make land management or access easier will not be regarded as essential.

In respect of renewable energy generation, the Authority's Structure (C17) and Local Plan policies (LC4 & LU4) state that this is permitted, provided that they are of a small scale and can be accommodated without harm to the valued characteristics or other established uses of the area. Furthermore, such installations will normally be permitted provided that they do not detract from the appearance of the landscape, or the building being served.

In this case, the Trust consider that the wind turbine will reduce their overall carbon footprint and consequently contribute to their long-term management of the moorland and restoration of the moorland vegetation. Your officer's consider, however, that the installation of the wind turbine would not in itself contribute significantly to the wider management of the moorland and would not amount to the exceptional circumstances referred to in policy C1. It would, therefore, be contrary to this policy.

Landscape Impact Considerations

Officer's consider that the proposed wind turbine would have a significant and adverse impact upon the surroundings to warrant refusal of the application on landscape grounds. The proposed turbine is 9.7m high to the hub with a blade diameter of 5.5m. It is situated in an exposed position on the moorland equidistant between the Lodge and the adjacent tree plantation to the northwest. The tree plantation does help to screen views of the wind turbine from the adjacent roads to the north and west; however, it will be visible from the B6054 in the vicinity of the Grouse Inn, 900m to the southwest. It is from the network of public footpaths that cross White Edge Moor, however, that the wind turbine will be particularly prominent. This is a popular area for walkers, and the footpaths approach White Edge Lodge from all directions, the nearest of these passing within 60m of the wind turbine site. Whilst views of the turbine from these footpaths are sometimes mitigated by the framing effect of the tree plantation beyond, there are several viewpoints where the turbine would be seen against the skyline and would intrude upon

views to the wider landscape beyond. The wind turbine would also be in view for long periods when approaching on the footpaths to the southwest and it is considered that the movement of the blades will detract from the user's appreciation of the wild moorland landscape. Given the exposed moorland setting, your officer's consider that even a relatively small wind turbine such as this would cause serious landscape intrusion that render it contrary to policies GS1 and C1 of the Structure Plan and policy LC1 of the Local Plan. Whilst there is some noise intrusion from the diesel powered generator within the vicinity of White Lodge itself, this is for a relatively short area close to the Lodge itself and in your officer's view is less intrusive than the impact of the wind turbine which can be seen from much more distant viewpoints.

Although the aims and objectives of the applicants in respect seeking to reduce their carbon footprint and also to educate visitors in the use of energy efficient renewables is acknowledged, it is not considered that these outweigh the strong policy and landscape objections raised by the proposal.

Conclusion

In conclusion, your officer's consider that the resultant landscape impact would seriously detract from the character of the surrounding landscape to such an extent that it would outweigh the local benefits and the wider benefits of sustainable renewable energy generation advanced in support of the application. Consequently the proposal is incompatible with Structure and Local Plan Policies C1, C17, LC4, LU4 and consequently the Authority's General Strategic Policy GS1. The proposal is therefore recommended for refusal.

Energy Conservation Measures

The obvious sustainability gains in energy terms are clear in this case but have to be weighed carefully against the landscape impacts which have been considered in detail above.

Human Rights

Any human rights issues have been considered and addressed in the preparation of this report.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the application be REFUSED for the following reasons:

- 1. Landscape grounds, contrary to policies GS1, C2, C17, LC4 and LU4, prominent structure, which would spoil the landscape character of the surrounding area.**
- 2. Contrary to policies C1 and LC1 as proposal does not amount to exceptional circumstances required for the conservation or management of the Natural Zone.**

List of Background Papers (not previously published)

Nil