
6. FULL APPLICATION – ERECTION OF ONE 50KW WIND TURBINE, 24.6M TO CENTRE OF HUB AND BASE TO BLADE TIP HEIGHT OF 34.2M AND ANCILLARY BUILDING AT SLIPPER LOW FARM, ALDWARK. (NP/DDD/0614/0661 422003/356836 P.5299 SPW/18/08/2014).

APPLICANT: PHILIP HARDY

Site and Surroundings

Slipper Low Farm is a working farm located in the open countryside approximately one kilometre to the west of Aldwark. The site for the turbine is approximately 150-200m to the north east of the main group of farm buildings, and would be sited on higher ground above the farmstead as the land slopes up to the north east. The group of farm buildings take a linear form following the road.

The site is relatively close to Minning Low Hill which is approximately 1.3km to the north west of the site. Minning Low Hill has a scheduled ancient monument (Minning Low) at its summit. The hill is an important feature within the landscape, recognisable easily as a circle of trees, at the summit of the hill, with larger trees at its centre.

The immediate landscape setting of the site is also intersected by public rights of way, including routes that lead from close to Slipperlow Farm and onto the High Peak Trail. On this route there is also a link via a concessionary footpath onto Minning Low Hill which provides access to the Scheduled Ancient Monument. A footpath also runs along the access road to Tithe Farm and then onto Aldwark. Tithe Farm is a grade 2 listed building, comprising a farm house and range of traditional barns, which lies on lower ground within approximately 465m from the site.

Proposal

A single wind turbine is proposed in the field to the north east of Slipper Low Farm, approximately 200m to the north east of the farm house, and approximately 150m away from the nearest farm building. The turbine would have a base to blade tip height of 34.2m and the centre of hub height would be 24.6m relative to the adjacent ground levels.

The submitted plans show that the turbine would be a horizontal axis turbine with 3 blades, each blade measuring approximately 9.6m in length (blade tip to centre of hub), whilst the area swept by the blades would have a diameter of approximately 19.2m. The submitted plans show that the tower for the turbine would be approximately 2m wide at the base and would diminish in width to approximately 0.7m wide. The external finish for the wind turbine, including the tower and blades, would be a light grey colour (RAL 7035).

An ancillary building and concrete base are also required for the turbine. The building would be a control cabinet finished in a dark green colour, sited next to the proposed turbine, measuring 2.25m high with a footprint measuring approximately 2.01m x 1.25m. The submitted plans also show the detail of the connection to the grid. The concrete base for the turbine would measure 6m x 6m. The grid connection for the turbine would be underground, running back to the farm buildings; the trench required for this is 25cm wide.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the application be REFUSED for the following reasons:

1. **By virtue of its size, scale and its siting, the proposed development would have a significant adverse visual impact on its landscape setting and would significantly harm the scenic beauty and other valued characteristics of the National Park. The proposed wind turbine would also detract from the setting of a grade II listed building and the setting of a scheduled ancient monument. Therefore, the proposals are contrary to Core Strategy policies GSP1, GSP3, CC2, L1 and L3, Local Plan policies LC4 and LU4 contrary to guidance in the Authority’s adopted Supplementary Planning Document Climate Change and Sustainable Building and the Landscape Strategy and Action Plan, and contrary to national planning policies in the National Planning Policy Framework and government guidance in the associated Planning Practice Guidance.**
2. **By virtue of the adverse impact of the turbine on the outlook of the nearest neighbouring residential properties, the proposed development would harm the living conditions of these properties and unacceptably detract from their quiet enjoyment contrary to Core Strategy policy GSP3, Local Plan policy LC4 and national planning policies in the National Planning Policy Framework.**
3. **In this case, any environmental, economic and social benefits of approving the proposed development would be outweighed by the harm to the valued characteristics of the National Park identified above, and the adverse impacts of the proposed turbine cannot be made acceptable. Therefore, any approval would be contrary to the principles of sustainable development set out in Core Strategy policy GSP1 and national planning policies in the National Planning Policy Framework.**

Key Issues

- whether the proposed wind turbine can be accommodated without adversely affecting the landscape character and the valued characteristics of the local area.

History

The applicant’s agent sought pre-application advice on the current development proposals prior to any formal submission. Based on the details submitted with this initial enquiry, officers considered that installation of an Endurance E-3120 (50kW) wind turbine (24.6m hub height, 19.2m diameter rotor, total height to blade tip 34.2m) would have a significant impact on the surrounding landscape.

A formal screening opinion was also requested for the current proposals earlier this year and the Authority determined that an Environmental Statement was not required to support the application. The Authority’s screening opinion identified the potential landscape and visual impact of the proposed turbine, and concluded that the associated impact of the turbine on the setting of nearby heritage assets would be significant.

There is an extensive planning history held on file by the Authority for Slipper Low Farm, including planning permissions sought and obtained for a farm worker’s dwelling and various livestock buildings over a period of more than 30 years.

Consultation:

External Consultees

Brassington Parish Council – Support the application as renewable energy is important and that farming should be encouraged as it looks after the countryside; supporting the farmers will

enable them to retain a viable business.

Derbyshire County Council (Highway Authority) – Concern expressed that highway modifications may be required to facilitate delivery of the turbine and that there are no details included with the submitted application.

Derbyshire Dales District Council – No response to date.

English Heritage – No objection to the proposed turbine because they consider its modest height will not cause undue harm to the significance of Minning Low through development in its setting or the relationship it has with other adjacent prehistoric scheduled monuments.

MOD – No objection

NATS – No objection on air space safeguarding grounds.

Internal Consultees

National Park Authority (Senior Archaeologist) Recommends that the application be refused on the following grounds:

Minning Low is a well-known and iconic monument within the Peak District which can be seen from many viewpoints. To an extent, the setting of this monument has already been compromised by the plethora of large turbines which have been developed within, and on the edge of, this part of the National Park. The current proposals would exacerbate the harmful impact of the existing turbines on the setting of the Scheduled Ancient Monument taking into account the turbines (existing and proposed) would be very noticeable on the approach to the site from the west, and the trees which screen views of the site and the existing turbines from other viewpoints are gradually being thinned as part of a National Park woodland management scheme.

National Park Authority (Conservation Officer) - Recommends that the application be refused on the following grounds:

If the wind turbine is constructed in the proposed location, to the south-east of Tithe Farm, it will have a detrimental impact on the setting of the listed building. The proposed location for the turbine is at a much higher ground level than Tithe Farmhouse and the strong vertical emphasis of the turbine would make it an especially prominent and visually intrusive development within the setting of the designated heritage asset especially when seen from public vantage points to the north of the site.

National Park Authority (Ecology) – No objections because a bat survey is not required for this application as it is 50m away from features and there are no further ecological issues to consider in this case.

National Park Authority (Landscape Architect) – Recommends that the application be refused on the following grounds:

The turbine, located on a hill above the farm, will dominate the farm and the associated domestic buildings; it will be seen in isolation from the buildings and existing trees and is completely out of scale with its surroundings. Existing trees will have limited screening effect from specific local viewpoints. The turbine will also be clearly visible from Minning Low and will have a substantial impact on the setting of the scheduled ancient monument, noting that there are currently proposals to thin the surrounding woodland and open up viewpoints from Minning Low.

The submitted application indicates the clear possibility that the turbines will be seen from a large

section of the National Park from a large number of viewpoints. Despite the presence of other turbines within the local area, from many view points the proposed turbine would actually be seen in isolation.

From many of these viewpoints from which the proposed Slipper Low farm turbine would be seen it will not include any other wind turbines within the visual framework. In these respects, the turbine will be situated within the Limestone Plateau Pastures Landscape Character type and is in a rolling upland plateau with long distance views. There are few vertical elements within the area, mainly confined to power lines and telecommunication masts. It is important to note that although they are visible, the eye is not drawn to them as they are not moving unlike a turbine blade, which attracts visual attention.

In summary, the Authority's landscape architect concludes that the turbine will introduce an unacceptable adverse feature within this area of the National Park and that proposed mitigation is very limited visually to a small area and will not reduce the impact of the turbine on the wider landscape view. Moreover, the turbine will be seen from areas outside of the National Park boundary and would have a substantial visual impact from these viewpoints adversely affecting the setting of the National Park.

Representations:

At the time of writing this report, the following representations made on behalf of organisations with an interest in the current application has been received by the Authority.

Derbyshire Green Party – Support the scheme

The Derbyshire Green Party states that the harm that has been identified by the proposed wind turbine is subjective and without evidence, and greater weight should be given to the social and economic benefits than to the landscape change, whether deemed harmful or not.

Friends of the Peak District – Recommend refusal

Having visited the site and surrounding area to judge the impact on the landscape, and accepting that there are environmental and socio-economic benefits of the scheme, the Friends of the Peak District do not find that these outweigh the significant landscape impact given the exposed ridge top location for the turbine. As such it is recommended that the permission be refused.

National Trust – Objects to the scheme

The National Trust considers that the information submitted with the planning application provides evidence of far-reaching landscape and visual impacts due to the location of the turbine high on the limestone plateau. These impacts will extend across a substantial area within the National Park and also outside of the Park boundary to the south where the whole turbine may be visible across a large area. This clearly contradicts the assertion at page 24 of the Design and Access Statement that 'visual impacts will be mainly localised'. The cumulative impacts are also particularly pertinent.

Other Representations - The following representations have been received from households, farmers and other individuals with an interest in the current application. At the time of writing, there have been 30 representations made in support of the current application. The points raised in support of the current proposals in these representations include:

- wind turbines are a natural progression of farming looking after the landscape;
- will support the economics of the farm helping it to remain a viable business;

- harvesting the wind is a valuable extra crop for the farm;
- the renewable energy will help to offset the farm's carbon footprint;
- precedent has already been set by allowing the 4 large wind turbines outside the National Park at Carsington Pastures;
- there will be minimal impact in the vicinity from this proposal;
- important to produce wind energy for the sustainability of the electricity supply; and
- wind turbines are better than nuclear energy.

A further 20 representations raising objections to the current proposals had been received by the Authority. These representations raise the following issues:

- the applicant has clearly ignored PDNPA pre application advice that this turbine would be in an unacceptable location;
- the proposal is contrary to the National Park Authority's Core Strategy and Climate Change and Sustainable Building SPD as well as National Planning Practice Guidance for renewable energy which states 'the need for renewables does not automatically override environmental protections';
- harm to the local economy because of adverse impact on tourism; visitors who come to the area for the stillness and tranquillity which it provides for them will be deterred from visiting;
- the turbine, by virtue of its incongruous design in the context of the particular landscape character and setting, height, rotor diameter (19.2m), movement and elevated position, would be a harmful, prominent and dominant feature; a new turbine at Slipper Low Farm is not acceptable and could not be made so by mitigation because of the impact and harm to the landscape and the cumulative effects of a new turbine on the setting of Minning Low;
- detrimental effect on Scheduled Ancient Monuments in the area including Minning Low and Listed Buildings; the proposal will have a negative effect on the historical and archaeological features of the area; the site is close (approx. 5km radius) to 43 designated Scheduled Ancient Monuments (cultural and heritage assets) including the outstanding Neolithic Minning Low (1.2km) where at least four pre-historic burial chambers exist. In a local context Minning Low is just as important as Stonehenge and there is public access via a concessionary public footpath, the hill is a viewpoint and landmark for miles around and the proposed turbine site would be visible from and be seen in the context of Minning Low;
- concern expressed that photomontages do not provide an accurate view of the impact of a turbine as the turbine is a moving feature, and because the photomontages are limited in their numbers; all the photo montages show the turbine skylining it will dominate the area;
- the scheme is in direct contradiction with Peak Park SPD CCSB section 9.7 as the landscape character type 'Limestone Plateau Pastures' of the 'White Peak' is highly sensitive to all scales of wind turbines, so this type of renewable energy technology is not

advisable in this landscape character type;

- these fully engineered industrial structures are alien in the protected landscape of the National Park and their movement considerably worsens their impact and they significantly harm the scenic beauty of the National Park; large industrial structures like this should not be allowed in or around the protected Landscape of the Peak District; due to its structure, size and form this proposal will be an incongruous structure in the landscape, having no correlation with any natural feature whilst the moving blades will attract the eye, making the turbine the initial focus, thereby detracting from the natural landscape and its historical features;
- detrimental effect on the landscape around Dovedale, Thorpe Pastures National Trust Nature Reserve, area around Hartington and Wolfscote Dale;
- the extent of the public consultation carried out by the planning agent prior to submission of the application is inadequate under the S61W of the planning act 1990 because the impact of the wind turbine will be far wider than the immediate parish and only the local vicinity has been consulted with regards to the application.
- the turbine costs around £300k and will attract feed in tariffs of over £1.2million, as such, if the planning authority sanction this they are thus sanctioning a £1.5million project at the cost of the people through electricity energy bills; objection in principle to collecting the Feed in Tariffs as these drive up wider energy prices;
- the carbon benefits of the proposed scheme are challenged as these are based on traditionally fuelled power stations;
- the proposal would result in harm to social, economic and community factors, there would be an increase in electricity bills (due to subsidies having to be paid out) causing fuel poverty; increase in carbon emissions due to power station becoming inefficient; lack of job creation; negative impact on tourist based businesses;
- the proposal is not sustainable development;
- adverse impact on the setting of the Peak District National Park both from within and outside the park boundary;
- over-saturation and cumulative impacts, there are already 4 x 100m high turbines at Carsington Pastures, 2 x 100m high turbines consented at Ryder Point, 1 x 100m high turbine consented at Viaton (sibelco), 2 x turbines at Parwich and a single, smaller installation at Hoe Grange;
- there are further proposals for 5 x 102m high turbines at Griffie Grange;
- the proposal in such an elevated position would have the effect of joining up the Carsington and Parwich wind turbines, and would give the impression that a significant portion of the Southern end of the Peak District National Park is a wind farm;
- could set a precedent, making it easier for more turbines in the future;
- light flicker and the moving of the blades and flashing takes away from the peace and tranquillity of that landscape, is disturbing, distressing and creates cognitive functioning difficulties making the area inaccessible for persons with a medical condition and/or disability;

- the turbines at 34.2m base to tip, is out of scale with the dairy sheds which are reported to be 3.5 and 8.4m tall;
- the applicants stated £1200 a month electricity bill does not take account of the returns that they get for from the sale of their milk nor does it address way in which the farm could reduce its energy use;
- Lack of consideration for alternatives, there are opportunities for solar panels (photo voltaics) on the roof of modern agricultural buildings; with so many agricultural building on site it is surprising that the applicant is seeking planning permission for wind energy when there is so much opportunity for solar panels on the roofs of the existing buildings at the farm;
- the heating and hot water requirements could easily be addressed by other means of renewable source, for example, ground source heat pumps; and
- an alternative 'Solar Energy' has been written off by the applicant as it is stated to be expensive and complex but it is neither of these things and has come down 60% in price in recent years.
- the destruction of the stillness and tranquillity of the landscape in this area will have a severe detrimental impact on the health and amenity of the writer's daughter who suffers with ME/CFS and for many other people who visit and live in this outstanding and beautiful landscape;
- inadequate information to ascertain if noise from the turbine would be harmful to public health and further concern expressed about the impact of infrasound, that is sound that is below the frequency range of human hearing and the application offers no protection against Wind Turbine Syndrome;

Main Policies

National Planning Policy Framework ('the Framework')

At paragraph 17, the Framework says core land-use planning principles should underpin both plan-making and decision-taking, and sets out 12 core planning principles. One of these 12 core planning principles encourages local planning authorities to support delivery of renewable resources through the planning system. Accordingly, at paragraph 98, the Framework says when determining planning applications for renewable energy development, local planning authorities should approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

In this case, the Framework makes it clear that the fact that the turbine would be located within a National Park is a highly relevant material consideration in terms of national planning policies. For example, paragraph 115 in the Framework states that great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks along with the conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage.

In terms of wildlife interests, paragraph 109 of the Framework says, amongst other things, the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by: protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, and minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government's commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity. In terms of cultural heritage, one of the twelve core planning principles in the Framework requires local planning authorities to conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations.

This guidance on renewable energy development in the Framework is also supported by the more recently published Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). The section on renewable and low carbon energy in this guidance reaffirms that the need for renewable energy does not automatically override environmental protections, or the need to conserve and enhance landscape, wildlife and cultural heritage especially within a National Park.

The government's Planning Practice Guidance closely reflects the thrust of the following Development Plan policies, which are the most relevant to the current application, and are generally considered to be consistent with the above guidance in the Framework because they support the take up of renewable energy development where its impacts would be acceptable.

Key Policies

Relevant Core Strategy policies: CC2

Relevant Local Plan policies: LU4

These policies relate directly to renewable energy development in the National Park and the recently adopted *Climate Change and Sustainable Building* Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) offers further guidance on the application of these policies. The guidance in this SPD and the provisions of policies CC2 and LU4 are also supported by a wider range of design and conservation policies in the Development Plan listed below:

Wider Policy Context

Relevant Core Strategy policies include: DS1, GSP1, GSP2, GSP3, GSP4, L1, L2 and L3.

Relevant Local Plan policies include: LC4, LC6, LC15, LC16 and LC17.

The Authority's Landscape Strategy and Action Plan (adopted in 2009) gives further guidance on the landscape conservation objectives within the National Park, which policy L1 seeks to achieve. The landscape conservation objectives set out in the Authority's Landscape Strategy and Action Plan should therefore guide the assessment of development proposals that are likely to affect the landscape character of the National Park.

Assessment

Policy Framework

Policies in the Development Plan and in the Framework are generally consistent because both are supportive - in principle - of low carbon and renewable energy development in the National Park provided that it can be accommodated without adversely affecting landscape character, cultural heritage assets, other valued characteristics or other established uses of the area as set out in Core Strategy policy CC2 and Local Plan policy LU4.

Within Development Plan policies there is a presumption in favour of the conservation of the landscape character, biodiversity and cultural heritage of the National Park, the FRAMEWORK confirms that great weight should be given to conserving the landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks and makes a presumption in favour of the conservation of heritage assets and wildlife interests in accordance with the provisions of Core Strategy policies GSP1, GSP3, L1, L2 and L3 and Local Plan policies LC4, LC6 and LC17.

Planning Practice Guidance published recently by the government confirms that the need for renewable energy does not automatically override environmental protections and great care should be taken to ensure that heritage assets and National Parks are conserved. In short, the desire to encourage the take up and delivery of renewable energy development does not override the conservation purposes of the National Park. Therefore, the key issue in the determination of this application is considered to be whether the proposed turbine would conserve the landscape character, cultural heritage assets or other valued characteristics of the National Park including its biodiversity.

Policy Guidance on Renewable Energy Development

The Authority's adopted Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for *Climate Change and Sustainable Building* was adopted after public consultation in March 2013 and should therefore be given substantial weight in the determination of the current application. The Authority's SPD offers advice on renewable energies, including wind turbines. It explains that wind turbines are the most challenging of all types of low carbon and renewable energy to accommodate in the National Park landscape. Therefore, the SPD promotes a 'Landscape First' approach to choosing a site for a wind turbine.

In these respects, Landscape Sensitivity Assessment has been carried out which is appended to the SPD and provides guidelines on the sensitivity of different landscape character types to various scale of wind turbines. As established in the Landscape Strategy and Action Plan the site is within the landscape character area of the 'White Peak', within the landscape character type of 'Limestone Plateau Pastures'. The SPD says that the first step to take in assessing wind turbine proposals is to identify whether the landscape type has opportunities for this type of renewable energy development, and could accommodate the scale of the turbine being proposed with reference to the Landscape Sensitivity Assessment.

With reference to the Landscape Sensitivity Assessment, the wind turbine proposed in the current application is a medium sized turbine, but it would be located in a landscape highly sensitive to all scales of wind turbines because of its open character, strong historic field patterns, lack of settlement and development, and long views to the surrounding uplands and valued archaeological and historic features. Moreover, the SPD says that a turbine that breaks the ridgeline of a hill when viewed from a distance will have significant impacts, and goes on to say wind turbines that would be seen on the skyline should be avoided.

The Authority's Landscape Strategy and Action Plan gives further guidance on wind turbine development and the application of the "landscape first" approach promoted by the Authority's 'Climate Change and Sustainable Building' SPD.

Landscape Strategy and Action Plan

The Authority's Landscape Strategy and Action Plan was adopted in 2009 following public consultation and therefore it is important to give significant weight to the degree to which the development proposals would achieve landscape conservation objectives in this document when determining the current application.

The Authority's Landscape Strategy and Action Plan was adopted in 2009 after public consultation and, therefore, should also be given significant weight in the determination of the current application. This document illustrates that the application site is located within the landscape character area of the 'White Peak' and specifically within the landscape character type of 'Limestone Plateau Pastures'. This is a planned agricultural landscape, derived from the enclosure of former commons around and beyond older settled core of the village farmlands. The Landscape Strategy and Action Plan says that in general developing small-scale renewable energy for local needs is not a priority but may be considered in some locations.

For example, when discussing the issues of changes to the landscape arising from the demand for renewable energy development, the Landscape Strategy and Action Plan says that: *"there is an increasing national demand for renewable energy schemes, particularly wind power. In additions there is increasing potential for solar and water power, and other renewable sources. Inappropriate wind generation projects could adversely impact on landscape character, the setting of historic features and landscapes, amenity value and tranquillity."*

With reference to the SPD and the Landscape Sensitivity Assessment the specific guidance for the 'Limestone Plateau Pastures' is that this landscape is highly sensitive to all scales of wind turbine, because of its open character, strong historic field patterns, lack of settlement and development, and long views to the surrounding uplands and valued archaeological and historic features and lack of modern development. Some of the landscape attributes of 'Limestone Plateau Pastures' that are particularly sensitive to wind turbines are:

- the gently rolling, plateau landform;
- strong and distinctive field pattern;
- open character with little tree cover and wide views, including to the surrounding uplands; and
- the presence of important archaeological features including prehistoric monuments, dewponds, lead mining and mill heritage remains.

Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that the character of the landscape at the application site is highly sensitive to change, and that the turbine, by virtue of its size and scale, may be difficult to accommodate in its proposed location.

Landscape and Visual Impact

In this case, the submitted details, including the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) and the photomontages, help to illustrate the potential landscape and visual impact of the proposed turbine. The submitted ZTV identifies where the proposed turbine is likely to be seen from and suggests that the turbine would not only be open to view throughout the immediate landscape setting of Slipper Low Farm, but also across a significant area of the National Park, together with a range of viewpoints from outside the National Park boundary.

The visual impact of the proposed turbine would therefore be significant. This is primarily because of the siting, and size and scale of the proposed turbine. The proposed turbine is 34.2m tall (from base to blade tip) with a blade diameter of 19.2m and would be sited 200m away from the main group of buildings, on higher ground. It would also be a medium scale turbine in a landscape character type that is highly sensitive to all scales of wind turbine, and therefore, the turbine is not of a size or scale that would be readily assimilated into the surrounding landscape.

The submitted photomontages include a variety of vantage points at various ranges and the turbine would break the skyline when seen from each of these viewpoints, which would serve to increase its potential visual impact. According to the submitted photomontages, the turbine would be seen on the skyline from various locations including Bonsall Lane, Elton Common, Longcliffe, Minning Low, and Stanton Moor. Notably, the proposed turbine would be seen in the context of the existing large wind turbines at Carsington Pastures and of Minning Low from various vantage points. The proposed turbine would also be seen in the context of the existing wind turbines at Carsington Pastures from Minning Low itself.

In these respects, the information submitted with this application including the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment does not properly address the cumulative impact of the turbine proposed in this application and the existing turbines at Carsington Pasture on the setting of Minning Low or the wider landscape setting of Slipper Low Farm. The information submitted with this application also fails to address the impact of this turbine in connection with other existing turbines such as the two similar turbines at Hill Top Farm, Parwich, or the consented turbines at Ryder Point and the 'Viaton' site, or the turbines proposed at Griffie Grange.

Officers therefore consider that the submitted application underplays the significance of the potential cumulative visual impact of various turbines apparently grouped together in this part of the National Park from a wide range of vantage points, or the successive impacts of seeing turbines in isolation from different viewpoints within and without the National Park. For example, different medium and large scale turbines, including the turbine proposed in this application, would be seen together or in isolation at various points when moving along the High Peak Trail, walking the footpath network in and around this area of the National Park, or simply driving through the National Park.

The potential cumulative and successive impacts of seeing various turbines in this part of the National Park would seriously detract from the landscape character of this part of the National Park and have an especially harmful impact on the quiet enjoyment of the scenic beauty of the surrounding landscape. Officers are also concerned that if turbines were increasingly to become part of the established landscape character of the 'White Peak' then clearly future proposals could become increasingly difficult to resist as turbines could become an 'accepted' feature of the landscape in the same way large modern farm buildings are now accepted – in principle - across the National Park. It is noted that some landscape and visual impact assessments are already referring to the acceptability of wind turbines in landscapes characterised by the presence of existing wind turbines.

In addition to these concerns, the proposed turbine would have a harmful impact in its own right. By virtue of its siting in an elevated location away from the existing group of buildings at Slipper Low Farm, the proposed turbine would be an especially prominent, isolated, and therefore visually intrusive development that would break the skyline and detract from the tranquillity of the surrounding landscape, and the quiet enjoyment of the local area. The potential visual impact of the turbine would be exacerbated its size and scale and by the motion of the blades, which would make the turbine even more noticeable in a landscape that is sensitive to change.

The proposed turbine would detract from the scenic beauty of the Limestone Plateau Pastures and would increase the physical presence of turbines across a wider area of the White Peak than is already influenced by the presence of the large turbines at Carsington Pastures, or the medium sized turbines at Hill Top Farm, Parwich. In these respects, the proposals would not meet the requirements of Core Strategy policies GSP1, GSP3, L1, and CC2 or Local Plan Policies LC4 and LU4 and the proposals would conflict with the Authority's adopted guidance in the SPD on Climate Change and the Landscape Strategy and Action Plan because the turbine would detract from the valued characteristics of the National Park landscape.

Moreover, the proposed turbine will be sited on much higher ground than the nearby Grade II listed Tithe Farm, and the turbine would have a significant impact on the setting of this listed building. The strong vertical emphasis of the turbine, combined with the movement of its blades, would make it an especially prominent and visually intrusive development within the setting of the designated heritage asset especially when seen from public vantage points to the north of the site. The turbine would also adversely affect the setting of the scheduled ancient monument at Minning Low.

Minning Low is an iconic feature in the landscape recognisable by the ring of perimeter trees and larger trees at its centre. This site is open to view from many surrounding vantage points. The proposed turbine would adversely affect this heritage asset because it would be a visually intrusive and an overtly engineered feature within the setting of the monument that would diminish an appreciation and understanding of its significance. Therefore, the proposals also conflict with the specific criteria of policies GSP1 and L3 in the Core Strategy and national planning policies in the Framework that seek to promote and encourage development that would conserve and enhance the cultural heritage of the National Park.

It is acknowledged that English Heritage do not necessarily support this view but the impact of the proposed turbine at Slipper Low on the scheduled ancient monument has been subject to further scrutiny by the Authority's landscape architect.

The Authority's landscape architect reiterates that the associated trees and wood at Minning low forms an important landscape visual feature that can be identified and seen over a wide area. The management of the trees on Minning Low in the long term is to maintain a recognisable characteristic landscape feature of trees whilst restoring views from the scheduled ancient monument to other surrounding archaeological features. The Authority's landscape architect considers that this aim has already been compromised by the turbines at Carsington and Parwich whereby sections of wood will need to be retained to screen these turbines from views from Minning Low and maintain the special qualities of the scheduled ancient monument.

The Authority's landscape architect goes on to say when standing on the eastern side of the monument outside of the group of trees on Minning Low, the turbines at Carsington and Parwich can be clearly seen. The proposed turbine at Slipper low will extend the visual area that turbines can be seen from this viewpoint. In addition the distance from the viewpoint to the proposed turbine and the turbines at Carsington would have the effect of both the existing and proposed turbines appearing to be of a similar size and scale. Therefore, officers consider that a contrary view to English Heritage is justified in this case because the proposed turbine would have a substantial and adverse visual impact in its own right alongside a harmful cumulative impact on the special qualities of an exceptionally rich archaeological landscape that has significant historic interest.

In this case, there are no other obvious alternative sites in the locality that could better accommodate a wind turbine of this scale, nor is it possible to mitigate the impact of the turbine by other means such as planting, which would be an alien feature in its own right in this landscape setting. Equally, whereas a planning condition could mitigate the potential for the turbine to disturb ground features on the application site itself, the proposed colour for the turbine, or any grading or other alternative colour schemes, would not significantly reduce the visual impact of the turbine.

Therefore, taking into account policies in the Development Plan, the Authority's adopted planning guidance and government guidance in the Framework and the supporting Planning Practice Guidance For Renewable And Low Carbon Energy, the current application warrants refusal of planning permission on landscape and visual impact grounds because the impacts of the turbine are unacceptable, and cannot be made acceptable.

Ecology

Whilst the landscape and visual impact of the proposed turbine would be significant, the Authority's Ecologist has confirmed the turbine would not have a substantial impact on any nature conservation interest. In particular, the turbine is sited far enough away from the nearest boundary treatments to avoid any potential impact on local bat populations, and there are no records of any priority bird species using the local area as habitat.

Amenity

Amenity issues have been raised in representations, including potential hazards to the public through infrasound, and there are some concerns that the noise arising from 'blade swish' would disturb the tranquillity of the local area. However, the certification provided with the application indicates that noise levels associated with the turbine would be within recognised and acceptable limits, and the turbine would be far enough away from the nearest neighbouring residential properties to avoid noise levels associated with the turbine disturbing the quiet enjoyment of these properties.

Shadow flicker has also been raised as a concern in the representations and this can occur up to 10x the blade diameter away from the site to receptors that are 130 degrees either side of north relative to the turbine. It is generally only an issue in buildings, and not usually an issue in the open air. In this case the blade diameter is 19.2m so that means that properties within 192m of the site could be at risk if they are within the affected zone. There are no dwellings within this zone, so this is not a significant issue in the determination of this application.

Nonetheless, it is considered that the amenities of the nearest neighbouring properties at Tithe Farm, including the Grade 2 listed farm house, the outbuildings which are being converted to dwellings, and a bungalow, would be at risk of substantial harm from the turbine by virtue of disturbance from its visual impact. In this case, it is considered that by virtue of the scale, siting and movement of the turbines blades, the proposal would have an adverse impact on the on the residential amenities of this group of dwellings.

The proposed turbine would be a dominant, obtrusive feature adversely affecting the outlook from these properties including their gardens. These impacts would be exacerbated by the movement of the blades, which would draw the eye to the turbine. Therefore, the turbine would substantially detract from the quiet enjoyment of these properties and adversely affect the living conditions of the current and future occupants of the dwellings, contrary to Local Plan policy LC4, policy GSP3 of the Core Strategy and specific government guidance in the Framework, which are only permissive of development where it would not detract from the residential amenities of properties likely to be affected by the development proposals.

Benefits

Whilst the above report sets out the substantive reasons for refusal of the current application on landscape and amenity grounds, the Framework states very clearly that applications for renewable or low carbon development should be approved if the impact of the development is acceptable, or can be made acceptable, and also requires the Authority to weigh the harm of the proposal against its public benefits.

CC2(C) says that the social, economic and environmental benefits of renewable energy development will not be taking into account where the proposals would compromise the valued characteristics of the National Park. The current proposals, as set out in the above sections of the reports, would significantly compromise the valued characteristics of the National Park. Nonetheless, the provisions of the Framework constitute relevant planning considerations that must be addressed in the determination of the current application.

In this case, it is said that the turbine will produce electricity for the farm which will help to support the existing farming enterprise. At the average wind speed of 7.7m/s the turbine will generate approximately 33kw. This will produce approximately 250,000kWh of electricity per annum. The difficulties dairy farms face is said to be well documented, without necessarily giving specific examples of the farm's current viability. Notwithstanding this, it is also recognised that any renewable energy projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions and in this case. In comparison to the energy exported from the grid, the turbine would replace 111 tonnes of carbon dioxide annually. The scheme would therefore provide some benefits to the financially involved farm (i.e. Slipper Low Farm) and some wider benefits to the environment.

However, in the first instance, the government's recently published Planning Practice Guidance reaffirms that, depending on their scale, design and prominence, a wind turbine within the setting of a heritage asset may cause substantial harm to the significance of the asset. The Planning Practice Guidance also reaffirms that the need for renewable energy does not automatically override environmental protections, or the need to conserve and enhance landscape, wildlife and cultural heritage especially within a National Park. This stance was also supported in a recent decision (APP/M9496/A/12/2179436). This appeal involved the erection of a wind turbine to support what was reported to be the largest dairy farm in the Peak District at Hill Top Farm, Parwich. The appeal was dismissed.

Notably, at paragraph 33 in the appeal decision, the Inspector explains that in balancing the impact of the scheme on the National Park against the benefits of the scheme in supporting the viability of the farm, there was an inescapable fact that the site is in the Peak District National Park where it is the statutory duty to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the landscape. The proposed turbine would not have done this; it would have caused significant harm to the natural beauty of the landscape. The Inspector reasoned that in such a situation, greater priority must be given to conserving the natural beauty of the landscape.

Similarly, officers consider that the reported economic benefits of the proposed turbine towards the maintenance and viability of Slipperlow Farm, and the associated benefits of providing renewable energy development, do not outweigh the significant harm to the landscape character and scenic beauty of the National Park landscape that would result from the turbine. In these respects, the proposals do not constitute sustainable development anticipated by policy GSP1 of the Core Strategy or the Framework, taken as a whole and read in conjunction with Planning Practice Guidance. This is because the benefits of allowing the turbine would be far outweighed by the unacceptable adverse impacts associated with the proposals.

Other Considerations

As noted immediately above, it is acknowledged by officers that even small-scale renewable energy developments can contribute to reducing dependency on non-renewable energy and contribute to reducing household bills, or the viability of rural enterprises. There are, however, alternative less damaging options available to the applicants, given that a turbine is not the only way to reduce energy costs.

In this case, there are many potential roof slopes on the large complex of modern buildings at Slipper Low Farm, including south west and south east facing roof slopes. Placing solar panels on the roofs of these buildings should not be ruled out as an alternative to the proposed wind turbine because this approach could enable the site to produce renewable energy without harming the scenic beauty of the National Park landscape. However, the applicant has chosen to pursue wind energy primarily because the energy generated will be needed day and night, especially at times in the early morning when the milking parlour operates.

Clearly, when it is dark, solar panels would not be producing energy, but it should be noted that

there is an increasing uptake of solar panels amongst the farming community and a growing body of evidence that demonstrates solar panels can meet the energy requirements of large dairy farms, and other large-scale energy consumers. Equally, the turbines would not generate electricity when low wind speeds do not turn the blades.

In these respects, an essential need for the proposed turbine to meet the farm's energy requirements has not been demonstrated. Therefore, the submitted application fails to demonstrate that the private or public benefits of granting permission for the proposed turbine would offset or outweigh the harmful impacts associated with this turbine that would be sited in a landscape of exceptional value, which the nation has chosen to safeguard because of its scenic beauty.

Conclusion

It is therefore concluded that there are no other material considerations that would otherwise indicate that the potential benefits of allowing the scheme would outweigh, or offset the harm arising from the substantial adverse impacts arising from any approval of the current application. In these respects, the proposed development cannot be considered to constitute sustainable development that might otherwise be promoted and encouraged by GSP1 and the Framework

In this case, the proposed development would have a significant adverse visual impact on its landscape setting, it would harm the scenic beauty of the National Park, and it would detract the setting of nearby heritage assets by virtue of its size, scale and siting. The turbine would cause additional harm to the valued characteristics of the National Park by detracting from the tranquillity of the area and harming the living conditions of the occupants of the nearest neighbouring residential properties.

The current application is therefore considered to be contrary to Core Strategy policies GSP1, GSP3, L1, L3, and CC2 and Local Plan policies LC4 and LU4, contrary to guidance in the Authority's adopted SPD on Climate Change and Sustainable Building and the Authority's Landscape Strategy and Action Plan, and contrary to national planning policies in the Framework and government guidance in the associated Planning Practice Guidance.

Accordingly, the current application is recommended for refusal.

Human Rights

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

List of Background Papers (not previously published)

Nil