

## COCKFIELD - BUTTONS GREEN FARM, BUTTONS GREEN

Erection of 9 metre high wind turbine.

Applicant: Mr & Mrs Ackroyd-Cooper

Case Officer: Deborah Board

BACKGROUND

This application was deferred at the committee of 21<sup>st</sup> June 2006 to allow a panel of members to visit the site on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2006 to assess the visual impact of the proposal.

The application was originally submitted for a 15 metre turbine. In response to concerns raised by the Parish Council and neighbouring residents the applicant has agreed to reduce the proposal to a 9m installation and it is this proposal that is before members for consideration.

Members attention was drawn also to the Hadleigh turbine located at Beaumont School as a useful point of comparison for assessing this proposal. The HoES on noise within the observations make a comparison to this installation and a comparison in terms of height data is offered here to further assist members.

	<b>Application Proposal</b>	<b>Hadleigh School Turbine</b>
<i>Type</i>	Proven WT6000 – 6kW	Proven WT6000- 6kW
<i>Height</i>	9m Tower	9m Tower
<i>Blade Diameter</i>	5.5m rotor	5.6m rotor
<i>Maximum Thrust</i>	10 000 Newtons	10 000 Newtons
<i>Running Speed</i>	200rpm	200rpm

SITE

1. The application site is part of Buttons Green Farm. The main dwelling (Grade II Listed) is located to the north east area of the site and is surrounded by a group of farm buildings. Hedges mark the site boundaries and within the site there is a run of tall poplar trees. There are no significant changes in level.

PROPOSAL

2. The application proposal seeks full planning permission for the erection of a 9m high wind turbine 3 metres from the south boundary and 60 metres from the west boundary of the site, as detailed on the site location plan dated 7<sup>th</sup> April 2006. The diameter of the rotor would be 5.5m, giving an overall height of about 12m.

HISTORY

3. B/05/02121/FUL - Conversion and alterations to single-storey building to form 2 no. holiday units, Approved, 10.04.2006.

4. B/04/01187/LBC – Application for Listed Building Consent - Retention of insertion of 1 no. replacement window on rear elevation; reinstatement of 2 no. mullion windows on front elevation; reinstatement of 1 no. mullion window on side elevation. Approved, 20.08.2004.
5. B/04/00610/LBC - Application for Listed Building Consent - Replacement of render. Approved, 03.06.2004.

## POLICY

### **Suffolk Structure Plan 2001**

ENV4 (Countryside)

ENV10 (Renewable Energy)

**Babergh Local Plan, Alteration No.2 (2006)** *the policy references below relate to the adopted version of the Local Plan - the policy numbers in some cases differ from those in the second deposit draft. Where this is the case, the previous reference number is given in brackets*

HS04 (Protecting the Countryside)

CN01 (Design Standards)

CR01 (Landscape Quality)

CN05 (CN09) (Listed Buildings)

CN06 (CN10) (Listed Buildings)

EN09 (EN01) (Conservation of Energy)

EN10 (EN03) (Renewable Energy)

*\* please note that details or extracts of policies are no longer included in reports - see page 4 of these papers.*

### **Relevant Government Guidance**

PPS22 (Renewable Energy) provides advice and guidance for local authorities when considering proposals for development for renewable energy provision. The key points are:

- Issues of landscape and visual impact should be addressed at the scheme-specific level. Cumulative impacts should also be assessed and mitigated at this level;
- Local planning authorities should recognise that the landscape and visual effects will only be one consideration to be taken into account in assessing planning applications, and that these must be considered alongside the wider environmental, economic and social benefits that arise from renewable energy projects;
- Applications should be determined with reference to criteria-based regional and local plan policies and supplementary planning documents where applicable;
- By comparison with most applications, there is likely to be an increased level of public interest in renewables schemes. This makes community involvement essential if the public is to be kept informed about the proposals.

6. In determining a planning application, planning authorities must assess the case for each project put forward by a developer and come to an objective view on:
  - The extent to which the project is in conformity with the development plan, in particular relevant criteria-based policies and any 'broad area' policies in RSS;
  - The extent to which the reasons for any area based designations may be compromised;
  - The extent of any positive or negative impacts, and the means by which they may be mitigated, if negative; and,
  - The contribution towards meeting the regional target, but recognising that a small contribution cannot be in itself a reason for refusal of permission.
7. PPS7 (Sustainable Development in Rural Areas) - This sets out the government's objectives for development in the Countryside.
8. PPG15 (Planning and the Historic Environment) - (PPG15) was issued in September 1994 and remains the main document for Government advice and guidance to Local Planning Authorities on the operation of the planning system in relation to the historic environment.

## OBSERVATIONS

### **Original Plans**

9. PC – reservations on the visual impact of a 15m construction as proposed in the open countryside and close to listed buildings. The parish council would prefer a 9 metre construction. Members of the public were also present at the meeting and raised issues of visual impact and the need to control access and noise.
10. There have been three neighbour representations received with the main points being, in summary:
  - Detrimental to listed property;
  - Turbine would be highly visible;
  - The structure cannot be concealed;
  - The proposal will be noisy.
11. HoES - Having looked at the noise assessment submitted with the application I am satisfied that the proposed wind turbine will not cause a statutory nuisance and will not have a detrimental effect on the amenity of any neighbouring residential property. I am supportive of the proposed development given that it is a move towards locally generated renewable energy that is a key feature of strategies to combat global warming and encourage environmental sustainability.
12. The HoES has also provided an assessment of the existing turbine at the Beaumont School at Hadleigh for comparison and to assist members consideration of the application proposals as follows:
  - The site was visited at 12.25pm on Tues 20/6/06;
  - Subjective assessment was that noise from wind turbine (5KW Proven Turbine) at Beaumont School was not audible at the roadside outside the nearest residential property (66 Aldham Road, Hadleigh IP7 6BS);

- The most noticeable contributions to background noise were leaves rustling on trees in landscaped area in front of school and distant traffic noise from bypass. Wind speed at time of measurement was 11mph. The following 1min Leq measurements were taken:
  - At roadside adjacent to 66 Aldham Road (60m from turbine) - **41.1** dBA;
  - At boundary of school closest to turbine (8m from base) - **46.2** dBA;
- Technically, noise levels reduce by 6dB for every doubling of distance i.e. at 16m from the turbine the noise would reduce to 40dBA, 32m - 34dBA etc. Therefore once you are more than about 25-30m away from the turbine its noise is indistinguishable from general background noise levels in a rural area (approx 35dB);
- For comparison some other measurements of familiar noises are provided to illustrate the relative noise of the turbine:
  - 2m away from a VW Golf Tdi - engine running at idle = **59.6** dBA;
  - Background noise at roadside at junction between Lady lane (B1070) and bypass (A1071) = **59.2** dBA;
  - Background noise within Babergh Council rear car park (no vehicle movements, just noise from leaves rustling on trees & birdsong) = **46.9** dBA;
  - Inside lobby adj to rear door of Babergh Offices (noise from air conditioning vent) - **57.4** dBA.
- Because the decibel scale is logarithmic a 6dB increase represents is a doubling of a sources subjective loudness. As such the noise level inside the rear lobby is 4 times as loud as that produced by the turbine (measured at 8m from mast)
- Whilst the noise from turbines is obviously variable dependent on windspeed it is suggested that a mature tree makes more noise just from leaves rustling than this type of wind turbine.
- For a turbine of this scale (i.e 5KW) noise is never likely to be a material consideration with respect to planning policy and they can safely be sited very close (10-20m) to noise sensitive residential properties without causing nuisance.

### **Amended Plans**

13. PC - To be reported.

### ASSESSMENT

14. The main issues to consider are:

- The provision of the structure for renewable energy balanced against the impact on the landscape;
- The impact of the proposal on the setting of the Listed Building; and
- Relationship to adjoining dwellings.

15. PPS22, policy ENV10 of the Structure Plan and policies EN09 and EN10 of the Babergh Local Plan support proposals for the provision of renewable energy development subject to there being no material conflict with residential amenity or the protection of the environment. Policies within the Structure Plan and also the Babergh Local Plan seek to protect the countryside for its own sake from development that would materially harm the landscape character. All new development should be essential in the countryside.

16. The location of the proposed turbine is proposed to serve the residential dwelling and previously approved holiday lets (ref B/05/02121/FUL) at Buttons Green Farm. In this regard it would have to be located in the countryside in this location in order to serve this dwelling. Therefore it is necessary to assess whether this is the least intrusive position within the site. The site proposed is as close to boundaries/landscape feature that would mitigate its impact as is possible. When viewed from the north the group of building would be read before the proposal and landscaping beyond. The primary views of the proposal would be from the south with views from east/west being blurred by the existing tree screen. Overall it is considered that the impact of the structure within the landscape would not be significant enough to demonstrate harm, in particular as the structure would be no more intrusive than the telegraph pole located to the south of the site boundary.
17. In terms of relationship to and impact of the proposal on the Listed Building the siting proposed is most appropriate and would not impact on primary views to and from and of this building in the landscape.
18. The proposal is at least 150m from other dwellings in the locality. Neighbour objections refer to noise from the proposal. Information submitted with the application seeks to demonstrate that the proposal would be acceptable in this regard. Noise issues are primarily a matter for alternative legislation and given the material submitted it is considered that to refuse permission on this ground would be untenable.

#### REASONS FOR APPROVAL

The proposed wind turbine is not considered to have a significant detrimental impact on the visual amenity of the area, given its size and position in relative isolation in a well screened site. The noise impact has been assessed and it is not considered that the turbine will give rise to any adverse noise impact. The proposal is not considered to reduce the level of amenity enjoyed by neighbouring occupants so as to justify refusal of planning permission. The proposal is considered to be in accordance with policies ENV10, ENV4, HS04, HS17, CR01 and CN01, CN05, CN06, EN09 and EN10 of the Development Plan.

#### RECOMMENDATION

Grant Planning Permission.

#### DECISION

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