

Area West Committee – 15th June 2011

Consultation by West Dorset District Council on the proposed installation of a single 50kW wind turbine at Seaborough Manor Farm, Seaborough, Beaminster, DT8 3QY – Reference 11/01835/OLAC

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Purpose of the Report

To inform members of the application for a 50kW wind turbine in West Dorset and to seek any consultation response which the Committee wish to make to the neighbouring planning authority. A formal consultation has been received from West Dorset District Council with a response initially required by 21st May 2011, this has been extended to 14th June 2011 to allow a Parish Council response and they have been advised that our response will be after 15th June. The application reference number is 1/D/11/000596 and the full application can be viewed on West Dorset's website (<http://www.dorsetforyou.com/planningapplications>). The plans can also be viewed on the SSDC website by inserting the consultation reference 11/01835/OLAC but the additional/supporting statements are only available on the West Dorset website.

Recommendation

That members comment on the application for a 50kW wind turbine at Seaborough Manor Farm, Seaborough, Beaminster DT8 3QY. Members' comments will be included within the District Council's consultation response.

Background

An application has been made to West Dorset District Council to install a single 50kW wind turbine at Seaborough Manor Farm, Seaborough, Beaminster. The site is located 3kms due south of Crewkerne town centre within the Dorset AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) and the administrative area of West Dorset District Council. The proposed site will be on a shoulder of land running east-west, 1.4 kms to the east of the village of Seaborough. The application has been submitted by a local farmer and the application documents indicate that the power produced by the turbine would be used by the dairy unit at Manor Farm in Seaborough with any excess being sold back to the grid.

Proposal

The application seeks planning permission to erect a 50kW wind turbine that would be 34.2 metres high from ground to tip of the blade (24.6 m from ground to hub). The proposal includes for the provision of a small electrical cabinet underneath the turbine. Electrical cabling would be underground to connect into the existing farm buildings. The application includes supporting statements with regard to landscape impact, noise generation etc.

Comment

The main planning considerations are the impact of the proposal upon this protected landscape. The application has been considered by the Landscape Officer (SSDC), who has made the following comments:-

'Whilst a 24.6 metre hub height (34.2 metre toe-to-tip) turbine in this location will appear somewhat incongruous relative to its clearly rural context, I consider it to be of a scale that the local landscape has a capacity to accommodate. The location on a raised spur of ground to the southwest of Mosterton Down, will endow the turbine some prominence within its setting, and when viewed from the vantage points to the north and northwest (i.e., within South Somerset) it will have a capacity to draw the eye, particularly when the blades are moving. However, the scale of the turbine is not so great as to make it a dominant feature beyond a 1.0 km (approx) distance, and as a singular object there is no conflict of size or movement as can occur when other similar structures are to be seen in the vicinity. Hence I would not judge landscape impact as being adverse, and mindful of the weight of policy in favour of renewables, raise no landscape issues in relation to this proposal.'

The Government's policy regarding renewable energy is to increase the supply of electricity from renewable sources of power such as wind, sun, tides and waves. The objective is to reduce the UK's reliance on coal and gas, the use of which release pollutants into the atmosphere that are the main contributing factor to climate change. On the 16th February 2005 the Kyoto Protocol, a legally binding agreement committing the UK to reducing the release of pollutants, came into force. In order to help achieve this Protocol's objectives, UK Government energy policy requires 10% of all electricity produced to come from renewable sources by 2010, 20% by 2020 with the aim of rising to 40% by 2050. As well as a legally binding target of at least an 80% reduction in CO2 emissions by 2050, the Act also set a reduction target of 26% by 2020. Additionally, in November 2008 the UK introduced the Climate Change Act, which set targets for the reduction in carbon dioxide emissions.

This application has resulted in a significant number of representations to WDDC from local residents (over 100 responses at the last count, the majority opposing the application with a number of petitions submitted) although there is not yet any response from the Dorset AONB.

Financial Implications

None.

Corporate Priority Implications

Although the proposal is not within South Somerset members attention is drawn to Theme 2 of the Corporate Plan: *'Enhance the environment, address and adapt to climate change'*.

Carbon Emissions and Adapting to Climate Change

This item is fundamentally linked to these issues.

Equality and Diversity Implications

None.

Background Papers: Consultation papers.