

Delegated or Committee Planning Application Report and Report of handling as required by Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations 2013 relative to applications for Planning Permission or Planning Permission in Principle

Reference No: 15/02060/PP

Planning Hierarchy: Local

Applicant: Colintrave and Glendaruel Development Trust

Proposal: Erection of Two Wind Turbines (Measuring Up to 60 metres to Hub and Up to 86.5 metres to Blade Tip) with Ancillary Electrical Buildings, Areas of Hardstanding and Formation of Vehicular Access

Site Address: Land at Cruach Nam Mult, Stronafian Forest, Glendaruel

SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT NO.5

(A) INTRODUCTION

The attention of Members is drawn to the decision made at the pre-determination hearing on 15th June 2016 to continue consideration of the application to a future meeting of the Planning, Protective Services and Licensing Committee to allow for Members to look at the possibility of a competent motion to support approval of the proposal.

Since the hearing, a representation has been received from Mr Harry Andrews, Auchenbreck House, Glendaruel (letter dated 11th July 2016). Mr Andrews draws attention to the recommendation of the Ministry of Defence that "aviation safety lighting" should be installed to both wind turbines should permission ultimately be granted. He has investigated this requirement and has discovered that lighting guidance was issued by the Low Flying Operations Squadron in November 2014. This guidance states that the onshore lighting requirement for these turbines will be a flashing red light on each turbine nacelle, at one second frequency, with each flash lasting 100-500msec and to be seen horizontally in all directions.

Mr Andrews makes the following three points:

- Assessment of the proposed lighting based upon comparable turbine placements is negated as this is a new kind of lighting not employed either by the Civil Aviation Authority around airports or by the Ministry of Defence around its aerodromes. He points out that the lighting is designed to attract attention and so will be correspondingly harder to ignore;

- The lighting status of surrounding turbines is irrelevant and, if a development is re-submitted for further planning, lighting may be added as a condition when it was previously not requested. In this particular case, Mr Andrews makes the point that the absence of lighting on the Cruach Mhor wind turbines should not set a precedent for not insisting on lighting for the two turbines currently being considered. He opines that all future wind turbines proposed in Glendaruel will need to have flashing red lights and this could also possibly include Cruach Mhor if further permission is sought;
- He considers that the methodology employed in the assessment of the current application is inadequate to address the visual impact of this aspect of the proposal, which relies on the size and context of the turbines and their positions, not the salient enhancing features they will be required to have, which are entirely at odds with the means and desires for the contemplation of a scene.

Comment:

Whilst the comments of Mr Andrews are noted, they do not materially affect the previously-expressed concerns of the Planning Department that led to the recommendation of refusal on the basis of unacceptable landscape and visual impacts. It will be for Members to consider whether to attach a condition requiring the installation of aviation safety lighting should they ultimately decide to approve the application.

(B) RECOMMENDATION:

The further representation detailed above does not materially affect the Department's original recommendation of refusal on the grounds set out below.

Author of Report: Steven Gove

Date: 21st July 2016

Reviewing Officer: David Love

Date: 21st July 2016

Angus Gilmour
Head of Planning & Regulatory Services

REASONS FOR REFUSAL RELATIVE TO APPLICATION: 15/02060/PP

1. The proposed wind turbines, inclusive of the means of access required, would be located on land at Cruach Nam Mult, which lies to the north of Stronafian Forest in Glendaruel. The site is within the '*Steep Ridgeland and Mountains*' Landscape Character Type as defined in the '*Argyll & Bute Landscape Wind Energy Capacity Study 2012*' which is intended to guide the Planning Authority on the acceptability of further wind turbine developments in the landscape. The proposal would occupy a prominent location within a sensitive and highly valued landscape character type which has been accorded regional status by being designated as an Area of Panoramic Quality in the Council's adopted Local Development Plan. The site is also located only 1.4 kilometres to the north of, and would affect the landscape setting of, the Kyles of Bute National Scenic Area which is of national significance on the basis of its outstanding scenic interest.

The Landscape Capacity Study concludes that there is no scope to accommodate larger typologies (i.e. between 80 metres and 130 metres to blade tip) within this landscape without significant effects occurring on a number of key sensitivity criteria. It is considered that the proposed two wind turbines would impinge inappropriately on the highly sensitive landscapes of both the Area of Panoramic Quality and the Kyles of Bute National Scenic Area which have the least capacity to accommodate the effects of wind farm development due to their valued semi-natural character, high inter-visibility and open views, undeveloped skyline, sense of remoteness and tranquility, scale, complexity and their diverse and highly scenic composition.

In particular, the skyline at the northern boundary of the National Scenic Area is perceived as semi-natural and is currently not noticeably affected by built structures. The wind turbines would change this important landscape characteristic due to their location on the defining 'ridge', their prominence, scale, colour and movement. The proposal would create a new, large scale focus on the horizon which would detract from the existing composition and the focus of the Kyles and from the dramatic scenery and setting of the National Scenic Area.

The foregoing environmental considerations are of such magnitude that they cannot be reasonably offset by the projected direct or indirect local economic or community benefits which a development of this scale could deliver, or the modest contribution it could make towards the achievement of climate change related commitments.

The proposal would have a significant adverse impact on Landscape Character and would degrade designated scenic assets contrary to:

- Scottish Planning Policy;
- Scottish Government's Specific Advice Sheet on Onshore Wind Farms;
- Policies LDP STRAT 1 – Sustainable Development; LDP DM 1 – Development within the Development Management Zones; LDP 3 – Supporting the Protection, Conservation and Enhancement of our Environment; LDP 5 – Supporting the Sustainable Growth of Our Economy; LDP 6 – Supporting the Sustainable Growth of Renewables; LDP 9 – Development Setting, Layout and Design; and LDP 10 – Maximising our Resources and Reducing Our Consumption of the '*Argyll & Bute Local Development Plan*' (2015);

- Supplementary Guidance SG LDP ENV 12 – Development Impact on National Scenic Areas and SG LDP ENV 13 – Development Impact on Areas of Panoramic Quality of the ‘Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan’ (2015);
- Draft LDP SG – Renewables (February 2016)
- Argyll and Bute Landscape Wind Energy Capacity Study’ (2012);
- ‘Guidance on Siting and Designing Windfarms in the Landscape’ Scottish Natural Heritage (2014).

2 The proposal is prominently sited on a ridge providing the immediate setting to the northern end of the National Scenic Area in circumstances where the submitted Zone of Theoretical Visibility indicates the proposal will potentially be visible from a considerable part of the Kyles of Bute National Scenic Area. The proposal will significantly intrude on the defining skyline which encircles and visually contains the Loch Riddon/Ruel area and the northern end of the Kyles of Bute and would intrude onto a ridge that forms an important defining horizon in many of the area’s panoramic views.

The turbines will impinge on views from a range of key viewpoints on the shores including scattered settlement and key routes, and also from the water, popular for recreation. These effects would be greatest within 10 kilometres of the proposal site, which includes much of the shores and waters of the northern part of the National Scenic Area. In this area, the loch shore is accessible, settlement is scattered, and visitors to the area enjoy the scenic composition and recreational experience both onshore and offshore. The proposed turbines would intrude into, and detract from, key views and panoramas of importance to visitors and residents including loch edge locations, water based views from the head of the Kyles of Bute and Loch Riddon, views from parts of routes including the A8003 and A886/B886, the Cowal Way Long Distance Route, and NCR 75, along with views from elevated locations including Creag Dubh, the key National Trust viewpoint (layby off the A8003).

The proposal would give rise to significant visual effects upon visual receptors experiencing key views contrary to:

- Scottish Planning Policy;
- Scottish Government’s Specific Advice Sheet on Onshore Wind Farms;
- Policies LDP STRAT 1 – Sustainable Development; LDP DM 1 – Development within the Development Management Zones; LDP 3 – Supporting the Protection, Conservation and Enhancement of our Environment; LDP 5 – Supporting the Sustainable Growth of Our Economy; LDP 6 – Supporting the Sustainable Growth of Renewables; LDP 9 – Development Setting, Layout and Design; and LDP 10 – Maximising our Resources and Reducing Our Consumption of the ‘Argyll & Bute Local Development Plan’ (2015);
- Supplementary Guidance SG LDP ENV 12 – Development Impact on National Scenic Areas and SG LDP ENV 13 – Development Impact on Areas of Panoramic Quality of the ‘Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan’ (2015);
- Draft LDP SG – Renewables (February 2016)
- Argyll and Bute Landscape Wind Energy Capacity Study’ (2012);
- ‘Guidance on Siting and Designing Windfarms in the Landscape’ Scottish Natural Heritage (2014).

3. The proposal will involve the conveyance of abnormal loads along the B836, a route which is potentially sub-standard in width and alignment. The applicant has not submitted sufficient details to enable the planning authority to conclude that this access route can support the size of vehicles required for the delivery and erection of turbine components. A fully detailed transport management plan has not been submitted with the application and, therefore, it is not known how these loads will impact on the road infrastructure, what if any improvements will be required, if any third party land will be necessary for these works, and if so the availability of such land. In the absence of any satisfactory information being advanced for the risk presented to the route by the type of traffic associated with the proposal, the development does not benefit from an identified satisfactory means of access for either construction or for decommissioning purposes.

On the basis of the foregoing, the proposal would be contrary to Policy LDP 11 – Improving our Connectivity and Infrastructure and Supplementary Guidance SG LDP TRAN 4 – New and Existing, Public Roads and Private Access Regimes of the Argyll & Bute Local Development Plan 2015.