

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: Colintraive 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.2

(A) INTRODUCTION

The attention of Members is drawn to the decision made at the Planning, Protective Services and Licensing Committee on 18th May 2016 to hold a pre-determination hearing in respect of the above proposal.

On 6th June 2016, the Department received an e-mail from Mr Ernest Chambers of 3 Langbank Rise, Kilmacolm which advised that he had read the original Committee report and was disappointed to note that his objection had not been recorded within it. This objection was submitted by Mr Chambers on 9th March 2016.

Upon investigation, it was discovered that there had been a technical error in the system with the consequence that, whilst Mr Chambers had received an acknowledgement of his comments, the existence of the objection was not readily apparent when the report was being composed.

A communication was sent to Mr Chambers on 7th June 2016 which apologised for the omission and which confirmed that his comments would be reported to Members. His comments can be summarised as follows:

Mr Chambers is a keen sailor who enjoys sailing throughout the waters of Argyll and Bute. He considers that the variety of scenery available and the quality the environment of the area provides for sailing is amongst the most attractive in the United Kingdom.

He appreciates that it is important for sailors to support the local economy as far as is possible so as to support the maintenance of this unique environment. Consequently,

there have been a significant number of yachts (including his own) that have transferred to Portavadie during recent months from Clyde mainland marinas.

He believes that the turbines as proposed will be very intrusive on the skyline of the area and the erection of the turbines as proposed will be very detrimental to the sailing environment as viewed from the neighbouring waters.

He states that it is important that the elected members of Argyll and Bute Council recognise the important part sailing plays in the economy of the area and the significant detrimental impact erection of these turbines will have on the quality of sailing available in the area.

Comment: As Members may recall, the original report to the Committee specifically referred to the impact of the proposal upon water based views. It acknowledged that the Loch Riddon/ Ruel area and the Kyles of Bute area are very popular for recreational sailing and sea kayaking with anchorages at Caladh Harbour, Salthouse and Ormidale (Craig Lodge) and sailing schools nearby.

The report contended that the proposal would appear prominent on the skyline of hills which provide the wider setting to these seascapes. This would be experienced by, for example: recreational water users on the narrow channels at the head of the Kyles of Bute and Loch Riddon/ Ruel where the coast is highly visible and views are strongly contained and channelled by the steep-sided hill slopes.

It is regrettable that the representation from Mr Chambers was not recorded in the original report. As can be seen from the above, the Department shares his opinion on the adverse impact that the proposal would have upon water users in this highly sensitive landscape and his comments reinforce the recommendation of refusal.

(B) RECOMMENDATION:

The representation detailed above does not alter the original recommendation, namely that, having due regard to the Development Plan and all other material considerations, planning permission be refused for the reasons outlined in this report.

Author of Report: Steven Gove

Date: 8th June 2016

Reviewing Officer: David Love

Date: 8th June 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 would be 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. In order to render the proposal acceptable from a road safety perspective, the existing sealed surface at the junction of the existing forestry access and the B836 public road needs to be extended by 2 linear metres with maintenance will be required to ensure that the junction remains surfaced in an acceptable form to prevent debris being deposited onto the public road. In addition, visibility splays at the junction of 2.4m by 75.0m are required to be provided and maintained free of obstructions above 1.05 metres from the level of the carriageway. The land necessary to achieve the above works and enable ongoing maintenance is not within the boundaries of the application site and no evidence has been submitted to the Planning Authority that would indicate that the agreement of the landowner has been obtained to any legal agreement to secure the necessary provision on third party land.

In addition to the above, 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.

Having regard to all of the above, 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.