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 2008 relative to applications for Planning Permission or Planning Permission in Principle

Reference No: 12/02281/PP
Planning Hierarchy: Local Development
Applicant: Intelligent Land Investments Ltd
Proposal: Erection of wind turbine (225kW, 45.9m height to tip) with temporary access track and substation
Site Address: High Ugadale, Campbeltown

DECISION ROUTE

(i) Local Government Scotland Act 1973

(A) THE APPLICATION

(i) Development Requiring Express Planning Permission

• Erection of wind turbine (45.9m to blade tip);
• Formation of temporary access;
• Erection of substation.

(ii) Other specified operations

• Connection to 33kv overhead line.

(B) RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the application is refused for the reasons stated below.

(C) HISTORY:

11/02094/PP - Erection of 225kw wind turbine (46.9 metres high to blade tip) and formation of temporary access track - Withdrawn

(D) CONSULTATIONS:

Area Roads Manager
Report dated 12/11/12
The Area Roads Manager requests that the decision is deferred as the proposed access point is outwith the site boundary and that the applicant has not provided sufficient detail as to the access route and how the turbine and associated plant will be transport to the site without damaging any road structures specifically Smerby Bridge, Ardnacross Bridge and Altnabeist Bridge. Problems with the bridges involve swept paths and ability to take the necessary loads.

Comment: The applicants have been asked to provide information to satisfy the Roads Engineers concerns about delivery access to the site, and in particular the implications for structures along the route. They have not provided the necessary details to date.

Scottish Natural Heritage
Letter dated 15/11/12
SNH raised no concerns about the application but did raise concerns over quality of the submission. The applicant has not provided methodology of the ecology walkover nor did they provide particularly quality landscape visual information. However, SNH have indicated that they agree with the findings of the ecological survey work and have suggested that further Black Grouse work be undertaken prior to the commencement of works.

Public Protection Unit
Memo dated 30/10/12
The nearest noise sensitive receptor is 990m away from the proposed turbine. The 35dB noise limit will be met at 420m. Therefore there are no objections.

NATS Safeguarding
Email dated 26/10/12
No objection.

Glasgow Prestwick Airport
Email dated 29/10/12
No objection.

Historic Scotland
Letter dated 01/11/12
Confirm that there will be no significant adverse effect on nearby listed buildings and scheduled monuments.

West of Scotland Archaeology Service (WoSAS)
Letter dated 23/11/12
No objection subject to a condition for a watching brief.

(E) PUBLICITY:

The proposal has been advertised in terms of Regulation 20, closing date 23/11/12.

(F) REPRESENTATIONS:

Twelve letters of objection have been received from:

Mr Jonathan Hooper, Ugadale Cottage, East Coast, Campbeltown (23/11/12)
Mr William Crossan, Gowanbank, Kilkerran Road, Campbeltown (27/11/12)
Mr William Cowan, Oatfield House, Campbeltown, PA28 6PH (22/11/12)
Mr John Cowan, Oatfield House, Campbeltown, PA28 6PH (22/11/12)
Ms Lesley Cowan, Oatfield House, Campbeltown, PA28 6PH (22/11/12)
Ms Emma Rawson, Belhaven Hill School, Dunbar, EH42 1NN (22/11/12)
Mr George Cowan, Oatfield House, Campbeltown, PA28 6PH (22/11/12)
Dr Mairi Cowan, Oatfield House, Campbeltown, PA28 6PH (22/11/12)
Mr Alastair Robertson, Drumblade, Huntly, AB54 6ER (05/01/13)
Mr Alasdair Pace, 16 Allen Close, Shaw, Oldham, OL2 7BT (08/01/13)
Mrs Michele Seddon, Kilmaluag Cottage, Glenbarr, Tarbert (10/12/12)
Mr John Seddon, Kilmaluag Cottage, Glenbarr, Tarbert (10/12/12)

Summary of issues raised:

- Impact on the environment.

  Comment: Environmental concerns have been assessed against relevant development plan policies. SNH and the Council’s Public Protection Unit have not raised any objection or strong concerns. The environmental impacts are thoroughly assessed below.

- Wind energy is inefficient.

  Comment: It is the Scottish Government’s policy to encourage a range of renewable energy technologies, including wind energy. The efficiency, or otherwise, of these technologies is not a material planning consideration.

- Visual impact.

  Comment: The turbine has been assessed against the Council’s approved Landscape Wind Energy Capacity Study and visual consequences have been assessed in the light of photomontages produced by the applicants. Further assessment on landscape and visual impacts is provided below.

- The applicant has submitted a number of applications across Argyll.

  Comment: This is not a material planning consideration.

- Impact on local bat population due to proximity to trees.

  Comment: The applicant has submitted a habitat survey in support of the application and SNH has agreed with the findings.

- High levels of subsidies to support turbines.

  Comment: This is not a material planning consideration.

- The applicant should be listed as the agent.

  Comment: Intelligent Land Investments Ltd are the applicants and the Waterman Group is the agent. This is separate from the issue of land ownership. An individual can apply for planning permission on land they do not own subject to issuing the relevant owner notification certification.
(G) **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

Has the application been the subject of:

(i) Environmental Statement: No
(ii) An appropriate assessment under the Conservation (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1994: No
(iii) A design or design/access statement: No
(iv) A report on the impact of the proposed development e.g. retail impact, transport impact, noise impact, flood risk, drainage impact etc: No

____________________________________________________________________________

(H) **PLANNING OBLIGATIONS**

(i) Is a Section 75 agreement required: No

____________________________________________________________________________

(I) Has a Direction been issued by Scottish Ministers in terms of Regulation 30, 31 or 32: No

____________________________________________________________________________

(J) Section 25 of the Act; Development Plan and any other material considerations over and above those listed above which have been taken into account in the assessment of the application

(i) List of all Development Plan Policy considerations taken into account in assessment of the application.

‘Argyll and Bute Structure Plan’ 2002

STRAT DC 4 – Development in Rural Opportunity Areas
STRAT DC 8 – Landscape and Development Control
STRAT RE 1 – Wind Farm/Wind Turbine Development
STRAT SI 1 – Sustainable Development
STRAT RE 1 – Wind Farm/Wind Turbine Development

‘Argyll and Bute Local Plan’ 2009

LP ENV 1 – Impact on the General Environment
LP ENV 2 – Impact on Biodiversity
LP ENV 6 – Impact on Habitats and Species
LP ENV 9 - Development Impact on National Scenic Areas
LP ENV 10 – Development Impact on Areas of Panoramic Quality
LP BAD 1 – Bad Neighbour Development
LP TRAN 4 – New and Existing Public Roads and Private Access Regimes
LP REN 1 – Wind Farms and Wind Turbines

(ii) List of all other material planning considerations taken into account in
the assessment of the application, having due regard to Annex A of Circular 4/2009.

The Town & Country Planning Act (Scotland) 1997
The Planning etc. (Scotland) Act, 2006
SPP, Scottish Planning Policy, 2010
Argyll and Bute Landscape Wind Energy Capacity Study, 2012
Scottish Government Advice Note on Onshore Wind Turbines 2012

(K) Is the proposal a Schedule 2 Development not requiring an Environmental Impact Assessment:  Yes

The Council has previously issued a Screening Opinion under Regulation 5 of the Environmental Impact (Scotland) Regulations 2011 to the effect that the development is not such as to require the submission of an Environmental Impact Assessment in support of any planning application.

(L) Has the application been the subject of statutory pre-application consultation (PAC):  No

(M) Has a sustainability check list been submitted:  No

(N) Does the Council have an interest in the site:  No

(O) Requirement for a hearing:

As the representation received is overwhelmingly against the proposal, if Members are minded to refuse permission in line with the recommendation, then a pre-determination hearing is unnecessary.

In the event that Members were minded to approve the application, officers would advise that the low volume of representation does not necessitate a pre-determination hearing. Whilst twelve representations might be considered to be a relatively high number within a rural area it is noted that of the letters which have been received do not relate to a significant portion of the local population as only one is from the immediate locality of the development site, a further nine relate to residents of the wider Kintyre peninsula and the remaining two from further afield within the UK.

(P) Assessment and summary of determining issues and material considerations

The application site is located at High Ugadale, Kintyre just south of Saddell. The site is surrounded in part by mature woodland and the land rises up towards a plateau to the west and falls sharply down to the east. The B842 is to the east of the site. The site forms part of an agricultural holding and is on agricultural land. The proposal is for the erection of a 1 No. 45.9m high (blade tip) wind turbine with a generating capacity of 225kw to provide electricity to be exported to the national grid. The turbine is 32.2m to the hub with a rotor diameter of 27m. A small substation is also proposed.
The proposal is located within a Rural Area Opportunity (ROA) development control zone delineated by the ‘Argyll and Bute Local Plan’ 2009. It is subject to the effect of Policy LP REN1 which relates to turbines where the purpose of the development is to generate electricity to feed into the grid, rather than electricity to be predominantly consumed locally. This policy sets out criteria against which applications are to be assessed. The nearest third party sensitive receptor is over 900m away.

The site lies within landscape character type 20 (Rocky Mosaic) as identified by the Council’s Landscape Wind Energy Capacity Study (WECS) with type 6 (Upland Forest Moor Mosaic) directly to the west. At 45.9m the turbine proposal is at the upper end of the small-medium typology (35 – 50m). The study considers that landscape sensitivity is High/Medium for the small-medium typology in this particular landscape character type with very limited opportunities for development, there are however better prospects for the small typology (20 – 35m) turbines. Whilst the current proposal is located well back from the coastal edge and close to the point of transition to upland character the turbine would be viewed within the context of a more complex landform and small walled improved pastures close to settlement (which provide a positive contrast with the extensive forestry). This more complex landform of interlocking hills and slopes forms a backdrop to the settled coastal landscape provides the backdrop to the settled coastal landscape and features prominently in views from roads and settlement. The turbine is to be located in an open in-bye field which is a Key Environmental Feature. This open in-bye-field is important to the setting and character of the rocky mosaic landscape character area.

The small scale nature of this contained, undulating landscape would make a turbine of the height proposed appear incongruous in scale, and where, notwithstanding its restricted visibility, it presence would produce a dominating effect on the small scale landscape features that characterise this particular area.

The turbine will have a significant presence in the landscape given it is considerably larger than other landscape features. It would provide an unwelcome focal point when travelling north along the B842, albeit over a short distance. Whilst travelling south there is an unfortunate view of the turbine hub which would appear overly large and incongruous over the tree line. Although the site is relatively well contained and there potential for an appropriately scaled and sited wind turbine, the model proposed is disproportionate to the character of its surroundings and would impinge upon intimate nature of this particular section of the landscape.

Access will be taken from the B842 with some improvements to land within the holding of the donor property. However, the Area Roads Manager has deferred decision given that the applicant has not provided sufficient information on the proposed transport arrangements for delivering the turbine parts and plant without damaging the public road. The applicants have been requested to provide a delivery route assessment but have failed to do so.

There have been 12 objections from third parties which are detailed below.

It is recommended that the application is refused given the negative impact the proposed turbine would have on the landscape. The turbine will provide an unfortunate focal point of disproportionate scale in a relatively complex and intimate area in terms of landscape character. The application is not consistent with the provisions of the adopted Local Plan specifically policies LP ENV 1, LP ENV 19 and LP REN 1. Nor is it consistent with the provisions of the approved Landscape Wind Energy Capacity Study (WECS).
Is the proposal consistent with the Development Plan: Yes

Reasons why planning permission should be refused

1. The proposal is to site a 45.9m high wind turbine within a relatively complex and intimate landscape type which the ‘Argyll & Bute Landscape Wind Energy Capacity Study’ considers to have ‘high – medium’ landscape sensitivity to the ‘small-medium’ typology assessed in the study. The LWECs identifies that small-medium typology turbines of between 35m and 50m will be difficult to assimilate in areas of smaller scale landform, with smaller scale patterns of land use, as they are likely to exert visual influence over wider landscape settings. The scale of the turbine proposed is at the upper end of this typology and would produce a focal point disproportionate to the scale of the landscape by virtue of its height, its rotor diameter and the motion of the blades. Development on this scale would detract from the landscape character of its immediate surroundings and its presence would impact adversely on the scenic qualities of the wider landscape designated as ‘Area of Panoramic Quality’. The foregoing environmental considerations are of such magnitude that they cannot be reasonably offset by the projected direct or indirect benefits which a development of this scale would make to the achievement of climate change related commitments. Having due regard to the above, it is considered that this proposal would have a significant adverse impact on landscape character, and would exert an unwelcome and inappropriate visual presence in the landscape as experienced by users of the B842, and would degrade designated scenic assets within the wider ‘Area of Panoramic Quality’. It is therefore inconsistent with the provisions of the Scottish Planning Policy and Scottish Government’s Specific Advice Sheet on Onshore Wind Farms; Policies STRAT SI 1: Sustainable Development; Policy STRAT DC 8: Landscape & Development Control; Policy STRAT RE 1: Wind Farm/Wind Turbine Development of the ‘Argyll & Bute Structure Plan’ (approved 2002), to Policy LP ENV 1: Development Impact on the General Environment; LP ENV 10: Development Impact on Areas of Panoramic Quality; LP ENV 19 Development Setting, Layout and Design (including Appendix A Sustainable Siting and Design Principles) and LP REN 1 Wind Farms and Wind Turbines; of the ‘Argyll & Bute Local Plan’ (2009); and the ‘Argyll & Bute Landscape Wind Energy Capacity Study’ (2012).

2. The proposal will involve the conveyance of abnormal loads along the B842 a route which is sub-standard in width and alignment. The road infrastructure along this route is also subject to known deficiencies, including structural condition of the Smerby, Ardnacross and Altnbeist Bridges and it does not lend itself to movements of abnormal loads. In view of the geometry of the road, which does not lend itself to the swept path of large vehicles, there is the prospect of serious damage to these structures occasioned by collision as a result of the transportation of abnormal loads or the weight of construction vehicles, which would present a serious threat to continued accessibility by road, as the failure of either of these structures would be likely to precipitate closure of the route with the consequent isolation of Peninver, Saddell and Carradale from Campbeltown.

In the absence of any satisfactory mitigation being advanced for the risk presented to the route by the type of traffic associated with the proposal, the development does not benefit form an identified satisfactory means of access for either construction or for decommissioning purposes, contrary to the provisions of Policies LP TRAN 4: New and Existing, Public Roads and Private Access Regimes and LP TRAN 5: Off-Site Highway Improvements of the Argyll & Bute Local Plan.
(S) Reasoned justification for a departure to the provisions of the Development Plan
N/A

(T) Need for notification to Scottish Ministers or Historic Scotland: No

Author of Report: David Love Date: 2nd May 2013
Reviewing Officer: Peter Bain Date: 2nd May 2013

Angus Gilmour
Head of Planning and Regulatory Services
1. The proposal is to site a 45.9m high wind turbine within a relatively complex and intimate landscape type which the 'Argyll & Bute Landscape Wind Energy Capacity Study' considers to have 'high – medium' landscape sensitivity to the 'small-medium' typology assessed in the study. The LWECS identifies that small-medium typology turbines of between 35m and 50m will be difficult to assimilate in areas of smaller scale landform, with smaller scale patterns of land use, as they are likely to exert visual influence over wider landscape settings. The scale of the turbine proposed is at the upper end of this typology and would produce a focal point disproportionate to the scale of the landscape by virtue of its height, its rotor diameter and the motion of the blades. Development on this scale would detract from the landscape character of its immediate surroundings and its presence would impact adversely on the scenic qualities of the wider landscape designated as ‘Area of Panoramic Quality’. The foregoing environmental considerations are of such magnitude that they cannot be reasonably offset by the projected direct or indirect benefits which a development of this scale would make to the achievement of climate change related commitments. Having due regard to the above, it is considered that this proposal would have a significant adverse impact on landscape character, and would exert an unwelcome and inappropriate visual presence in the landscape as experienced by users of the B842, and would degrade designated scenic assets within the wider ‘Area of Panoramic Quality’. It is therefore inconsistent with the provisions of the Scottish Planning Policy and Scottish Government’s Specific Advice Sheet on Onshore Wind Farms; Policies STRAT SI 1: Sustainable Development; Policy STRAT DC 8: Landscape & Development Control; Policy STRAT RE 1: Wind Farm/Wind Turbine Development of the ‘Argyll & Bute Structure Plan’ (approved 2002), to Policy LP ENV 1: Development Impact on the General Environment; LP ENV 10: Development Impact on Areas of Panoramic Quality; LP ENV 19 Development Setting, Layout and Design (including Appendix A Sustainable Siting and Design Principles) and LP REN 1 Wind Farms and Wind Turbines; of the ‘Argyll & Bute Local Plan’ (2009); and the ‘Argyll & Bute Landscape Wind Energy Capacity Study’ (2012).

2. The proposal will involve the conveyance of abnormal loads along the B842 a route which is sub-standard in width and alignment. The road infrastructure along this route is also subject to known deficiencies, including structural condition of the Smerby, Ardnacross and Altnbeist Bridges and it does not lend itself to movements of abnormal loads. In view of the geometry of the road, which does not lend itself to the swept path of large vehicles, there is the prospect of serious damage to these structures occasioned by collision as a result of the transportation of abnormal loads or the weight of construction vehicles, which would present a serious threat to continued accessibility by road, as the failure of either of these structures would be likely to precipitate closure of the route with the consequent isolation of Peninver, Saddell and Carradale from Campbeltown.

In the absence of any satisfactory mitigation being advanced for the risk presented to the route by the type of traffic associated with the proposal, the development does not benefit form an identified satisfactory means of access for either construction or for decommissioning purposes, contrary to the provisions of Policies LP TRAN 4: New and Existing, Public Roads and Private Access Regimes and LP TRAN 5: Off-Site Highway Improvements of the Argyll & Bute Local Plan.
APPENDIX A – RELATIVE TO APPLICATION NUMBER: 12/02281/PP

PLANNING LAND USE AND POLICY ASSESSMENT

A. Settlement Strategy

The proposal is for the erection of a 1 x 45.9m (blade tip) wind turbine with a generating capacity of 225kw to provide electricity to be exported to the national grid, rather than being predominantly consumed on the farm holding within which it is to be situated.

The proposal is located within a Rural Area Opportunity (ROA) development control zone as per the Argyll and Bute Local Plan 2009. Policy LP REN1 allows for the erection of wind turbines subject to assessment criteria being satisfied. This is assessed in detail below in section ‘H’.

The ROA has been subject to a Landscape Capacity Study (LCS) and is referenced under map SK18. The steading known as High Ugadale has been identified as potentially suitable for housing development. This wind turbine would sit close to this site some 400m to the north. It should be noted that the planning authority has not received a submission for the development of High Ugadale, however this potential, in landscape capacity terms at least, is acknowledged within the LCS.

The steading and the extant planning permission are both outwith the noise and shadow flicker impact zones of the turbine therefore would not be be sterilised by the development of this turbine, although the turbine proposed would exert visual influence over this location.

B. Location, Nature and Design of Proposed Development

The turbine is 32.2m to the hub with a rotor diameter of 27m. A small 7m x 3m x 2.5m substation is also proposed. The proposal is located some 360m north west of an existing farm cluster at High Ugadale (these are currently unoccupied but within the same land holding as the application site) and approximately 2km south of the settlement of Saddell. The site lies centrally within a substantial, open field the boundaries of which are enclosed by coniferous woodland with the exception of to the south-west, with a backdrop of rising land to the north and west. The B842 is located 550m to the east of the site. The land slopes upward from the B842 toward the west. For contextual reference it should be noted that the proposed turbine is located on the 100m contour, the existing grouping of buildings at High Ugadale sit between the 70 and 80m contours and the B842 runs along the 50m contour as it passes the site. The site forms part of an agricultural holding and is on agricultural land.

The nearest third party sensitive receptor is over 900m away to the north-east known as The Old Sheep Fank which received planning permission in 2006 (reference 06/00821/DET). This property has a direct outlook across the site and toward an additional turbine further south at Ugadale, providing a cumulative visual impact across both turbines. This is the only property thus affected. A further property with a direct view of the turbine is approximately 1km from the site to the south. The rear of this property will look directly up towards the turbine site.

The proposed access track would run from High Ugadale Farm to the turbine and would be 5m wide. The applicant has stated that this can be grassed over at the request of the land owner or planning authority post-construction. The applicant has requested a micrositing allowance of 10m.
C. Natural Environment

The turbine is located to the north-west of the farm buildings on rising land. There is a strip of coniferous trees which mask the base of the turbine tower from some views. This tree belt extends to almost all the way round the turbine site south, east and north east. These trees are within the same ownership as the turbine so there is potential to control the long-term retention of these trees, however they would be felled in due course as part of the cycle of felling and replanting. Further substantial coniferous plantation is located behind the turbine to the north and west. In the event that these trees were to be felled within the lifespan of the turbine (25-years) then the turbine would skyline from views from the road.

The turbine is located centrally within an existing agricultural field. Farmland in this area is generally used for grazing. A more appropriate position for any turbine would be to the edge of a field which limits the impact of the turbine on the operation of the farm and provides a less intrusive development in terms of visual impact. Given the proposed location out in the middle of the field, the access track would break across an undeveloped open area providing a significant visual impact on the slope in its own right.

G. Landscape Character

All proposals are assessed against Local Plan policy LP ENV1, in this instance in terms of landscape impact. According to the Council’s Landscape Wind Energy Capacity Study (WECS) the site lies within landscape character type 20 (Rocky Mosaic) with type 6 (Upland Forest Moor Mosaic) lying directly to the west. The rocky mosaic landscape character is accorded ‘high-medium’ sensitivity for small-medium scale turbines. The site is set back from the coastal area and is within an area of transition with the upland forest moor mosaic. The WECS does state that areas of transition with adjacent character types can prove less sensitive to turbine development. However, in this instance having regard to the scale of the landscape the turbine model proposed is simply too large for the location proposed.

The guidance for siting of small-medium turbines within Chapter 7 of the WECS sets out that “These turbines are larger than most buildings found in rural areas. They therefore should be sited where they can more readily be accommodated by landform scale, and avoid overshadowing or dominating smaller elements in the landscape, including small and complex landforms, small fields and any settlements”. “These turbines are likely to be more difficult to accommodate in landscapes of intimate or complex topography associated with irregular outcrops and rocky knolls, along the floor or cultivated land in narrow glens, close to the small scale indented coast, along the settled coast, or where small landscape scale is created by small fields, diverse land use and complex or diverse settlement patterns.” “This size of turbine is likely to be more readily accommodated in medium scale landscapes or the periphery of larger scale upland landscapes where they are more likely to fit with the landscape if they are sited to clearly relate to a specific land form. Turbines of this size could be accommodated on low hills or ridgelines which provide the immediate backdrop to the farmed areas, especially if they, too, are back-dropped by larger hills or more sweeping plateau.”

In relation to the Rocky Mosaic landscape character area, the WECS sets out that “this character type usually follows an irregular narrow coastal or loch edge. The rolling landform of the landscape provides strong containment and the presence of small woodlands, fields and settlement reinforces its predominantly small scale. These loch shores and fringes make an important contribution to the wider scenic context, forming
an intricately patterned band between the foreground of sea or loch and backed by simple and more expansive upland landscapes." In summary, the WECS cautions that the narrow width and small scale nature of landscape features and settlement within this landscape type are such that even smaller turbines could dominate its extent and adversely impact upon the perception of scale. Opportunities within this landscape type for small/medium typology turbines (35-50m) is identified to be where there is a more gradual transition with adjacent upland character areas which is less pronounced with a simpler landform and land cover able to accommodate turbine development with minimal impact on more sensitive settled loch and coastal edges.

Whilst the current proposal is located well back from the coastal edge and close to the point of transition to upland character the turbine would be viewed within the context of a more complex landform and small walled improved pastures close to settlement (which provide a positive contrast with the extensive forestry). This more complex landform of interlocking hills and slopes forms a backdrop to the settled coastal landscape provides the backdrop to the settled coastal landscape and features prominently in views from roads and settlement. The turbine is to be located in an open in-bye field which is a Key Environmental Feature. This open in-bye-field is important to the setting and character of the rocky mosaic landscape character area.

The small scale nature of this contained, undulating landscape would make a turbine of the height proposed appear incongruous in scale, and where, notwithstanding its restricted visibility, it presence would produce a dominating effect on the small scale landscape features that characterise this particular area.

The submitted ZTV demonstrates that this is a relatively well contained site, but from locations where the turbine would be visible it will result in a significant impact on the landscape, especially across longer views from the properties to the north east, south and the extant planning permission to the north east and short sections of the B842 public highway. Assessment of the submitted photomontages indicates that the proposal at 49.5m is for a turbine that is at the wrong end of the ‘small-medium’ scale. Given the proposed location out in the middle of the field, the access track would break across an undeveloped open area providing a significant visual impact on the slope in its own right. It is the assessment of officers that capacity in this particular landscape setting is restricted to a smaller scale turbine sited at the lower field edge, where it would be less elevated and more in scale with the landscape, and where it would also benefit from a visual association with the existing grouping of buildings at High Ugadale Farm.

The applicant has augmented the original submission with additional photomontages, however these have proven both unreliable in terms of both scale and position of the proposed development within the landscape. Indeed the most recent submission shows a turbine situated at the top of the field adjacent the tree line - this would be a material change to the existing application as it would be outwith the application site boundary. If the applicant wishes to pursue such an alternative site then a fresh application would be required.

There is an extant planning permission some 500m to the east of the site (reference 10/01322/PPP). This site will not be affected by noise or shadow flicker but it is worth noting that they will have a direct view of the turbine. The steading at High Ugadale is not easily noticed when travelling along the main road but on the approach to the steading the turbine will appear too far away to be properly associated with the steading and out of proportion. This element of the proposed siting of the turbine is not consistent with chapter 7 of the Council’s Landscape Wind Energy Capacity Study.
H. Renewable Energy Policy

The proposal is intended to sell the generated electricity to the national grid. Therefore the principle policy is adopted Local Plan policy LP REN1 which requires proposals to be assessed against the following criteria. In addition to this they must also be consistent with all other relevant development plan policies.

- Communities, settlements and their settings

  The proposal is not adjacent to or within a settlement and will have little or no impact on the setting of Peninver given the topography and distance involved. Given the undulations of the road network it is unlikely that there will be significant long distance views and certainly none from the nearest settlement of Saddell which are limited given the undulating intervening topography. It should however be recognised that the proposal will be readily open to view and impact upon the visual amenity of a small number of existing dwellinghouses within the immediate locality of Ugadale.

- Areas and interests of nature conservation significant including local biodiversity, ecology and the water environment.

  The turbine will not impact adversely on ecology or sites designated for ecological reasons as confirmed by SNH in their consultation response. However, concern has been raised over the possibility of impact on Black Grouse and further pre-construction work would be required in that regard.

- Landscape and townscape character, scenic quality and visual and general amenity.

  Landscape and visual impacts are two of the primary determining factors in this case – specifically the scale and siting of the proposed turbine is considered to be contrary to the recommendations of the WECS and will result in an adverse impact upon landscape quality/visual amenity.

- Core paths, rights of way, or other important access routes.

  The proposal will not infringe on any existing rights of way or pathways. Impact on the roads infrastructure is assessed below.

- Sites of historic or archaeological interest and their setting.

  The proposal is not near any Listed Buildings or Scheduled Ancient Monuments as confirmed by Historic Scotland. WoSAS has asked for a watching brief planning condition to ensure the recording of any archaeological remains which may be present within the site.

- Telecommunications, transmitting and receiving systems.

  There has been no objection from consultees to this aspect of the proposal.

- Important tourist facilities, attractions or routes.

  The proposal is not adjacent to or near any tourist facilities but would be of significance in terms of users of the B842.
• Stability of peat deposits.

_The proposal will not significantly impact on soils given the small area of ground disturbance for this single turbine._

Considering the above, and the further assessment below, the proposal is not consistent with Policy LP REN1.

I. Road Network, Parking and Associated Transport Matters.

The applicant has an agreement in place with the landowner to develop the turbine and therefore make use of the existing access. The applicant intends to use the road network including the private access track from the B842 to High Ugadale Farm and then to create a new track to the site. The submitted details indicate use of the B842 between Campbeltown and the development site.

The Area Roads Manager has deferred his recommendation on the basis that the applicant has not provided sufficient information relating to the transportation of turbine parts and plant to the site without damaging the public road. The public road is narrow and delivery of the turbine parts and crane would need to negotiate three bridges where the swept path and weight restrictions are currently raising concerns. These are:

• The Smerby Bridge which has high wing walls which retain the road. The walls are of a significant age and there are concerns that the load would damage this bridge;

• The Ardnacross Bridge where the swept path is very tight on the south of the bridge between walls. The Area Roads Manager is not confident that the accuracy of the OS map is suitable for the swept path analysis provided by the applicant. A survey should be carried out on this bridge for the avoidance of doubt. In addition where the overhang is above a drain the bank actually rises from the road. This may be an issue and needs to be assessed by the applicant;

• The Altnabeist Bridge where the carriageway widths between parapets is 3.25m, which is 0.136m less than the width of the vehicles required to provide all the necessary plant and components. Again this demonstrates a lack of accuracy in the applicants’ submission and would indicate that the proposed access route is not feasible.

Further information has been requested from the applicant to demonstrate the suitability of the proposed access route to accommodate development traffic; however the applicant contends that access is achievable and has requested that demonstration of this be subject of a suspensive condition in the event that planning permission were to be granted. Officers have confirmed that such an approach would not be appropriate given that some of the solutions proposed may require planning permission in their own right or may not be achievable without causing irreparable damage to the public highway. Provision of access is a fundamental requirement of the development and as such the Planning Authority should not consider granting planning permission in a situation where these requirements are not reasonably capable of being met.

J. Infrastructure

A sub-station is to be located to the south of turbine measuring 3m x 7m x 2.5m with a flat roof. This building will be fairly small but its positioning is likely to result in views
form some locations of an alien building in the landscape from Ugadale Point and the main road travelling north. There has been no mention of a borrow pit in the application, which in any event would require to be the subject of a separate application.

K. Conclusion

The applicant has previously been advised that this visually contained location would appear to have some potential to accommodate appropriately scaled and sited wind turbine development successfully. However, such advice was based upon limited information which did not allow a detailed assessment of the landscape and visual impact of a turbine of the scale now proposed. The application has not been accompanied by graphics of sufficient quality so as to enable ready assessment. The applicant has submitted several sets of photomontages. However, each has not been consistent with other sets of information. For example, the most recent set of submitted visuals show the turbine to be located at the top of the agricultural field, which does not accord with the application site plan, which shows the turbine to be in the middle of the field. Those photomontages which do show the turbine in the middle of the field do not appear to be consistent with the ZTV, which shows a far more visually contained turbine than the visuals. With this in mind, the quality of the application makes it unreliable to rely upon the graphics alone, so officers have reached their own conclusions based upon an appreciation of the site and its surroundings on the ground, supplemented by those elements of the applicants’ documentation which appear credible. If we take those photomontages that tie in with the site plan, then those views from the south looking north (particularly photomontage 1) demonstrate a significant structure that is disproportionate to the character of the relatively small rolling part of this landscape character type. Views from the north looking south demonstrate a visible hub from the road which is out of context with the small scale hills and forestry. The conclusion has been that the turbine is inappropriately sited and is of a scale which impinges upon its landscape setting to the detriment of landscape character.