

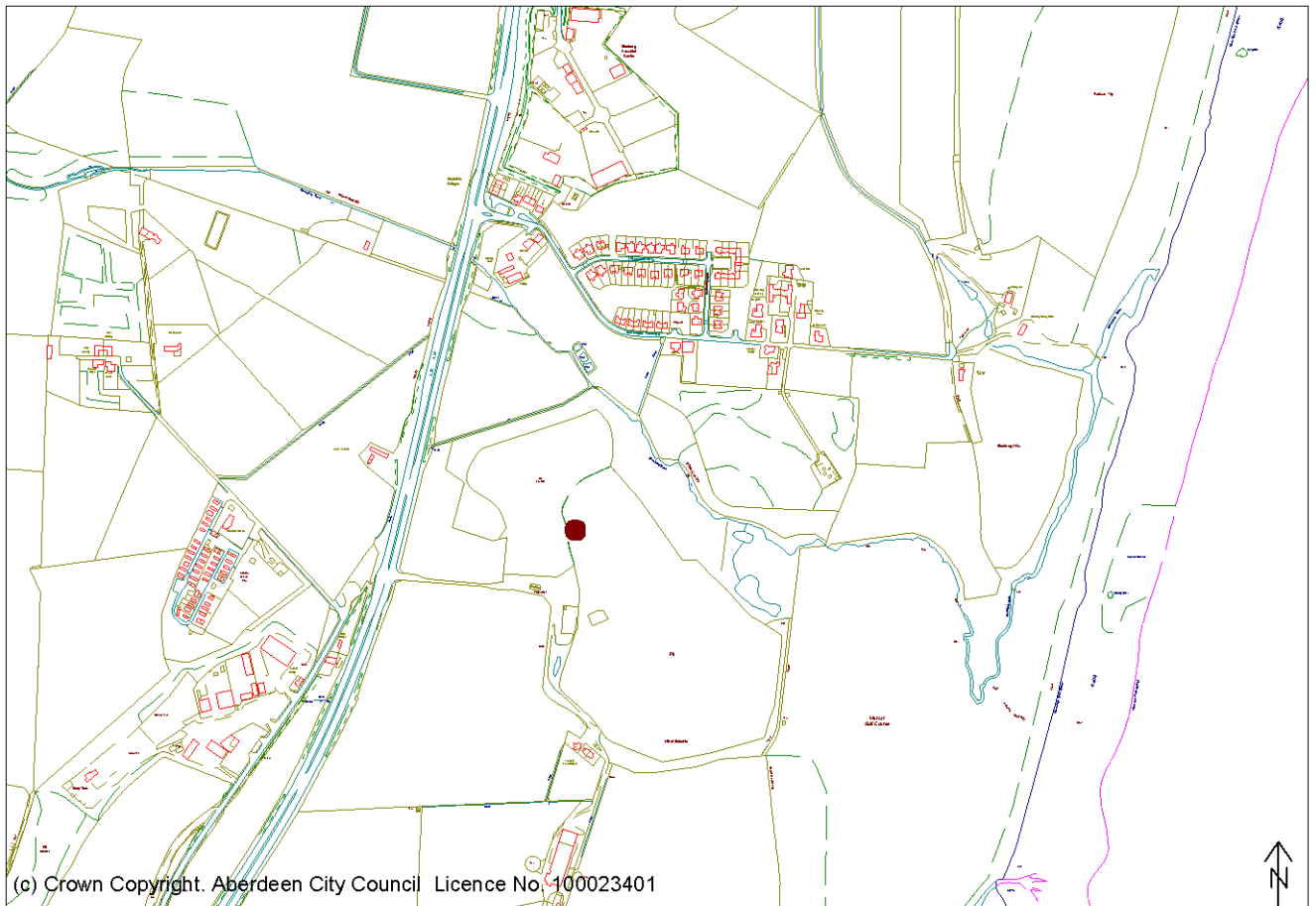
TARBOTHILL LANDFILL SITE, BRIDGE OF DON

ERECTION OF A 11KW TWIN BLADED WIND TURBINE (18 METRE HIGH MAST, OVERALL HEIGHT 24.8 METRES TO BLADE TIP)

For: FCC Environment (UK) Ltd

Application Ref. : P120970
Application Date : 13/07/2012
Officer : Robert Forbes
Ward: Bridge of Don (M Jaffrey/J Reynolds/S Stuart/W Young)

Advert : Section 34 -Proj. Pub.
Concern
Advertised on : 25/07/2012
Committee Date : 27 September 2012
Community Council : No response received



RECOMMENDATION: Refuse

DESCRIPTION

This site comprises part of the former landfill site about 3km north of the edge of Bridge of Don. It is located within open country to the east of and elevated above the A90 trunk road. Approximately 300m to the north of the site lies the edge of the settlement of Blackdog within Aberdeenshire. At its closest point the site is about 240m from the A90. The closest residential property lies at North Tarbothill about 300m to the west north west of the site. There is a network of tracks within the former landfill providing access to monitoring points within it via an access track from the A90.

HISTORY

A screening opinion request was submitted by the agent in June 2012 and it was determined that a formal assessment under the EIA regulations was not required in this case. The former landfill at Tarbothill which the proposal is located within is no longer actively used for waste disposal but there is ongoing leachate and gas management infrastructure there.

PROPOSAL

This is an application for full planning permission to erect a single 11kw wind turbine and undertake associated development. The turbine would have an overall height to the blade tips of about 25m above ground level. The 2 blade rotor would have a diameter of 13m. The supporting tower would be of a square section open lattice steel grid design, narrowing towards the top of the structure. It would be coloured pale grey / off-white. It would be mounted on a buried concrete pad foundation and would be operated in association with the use of the landfill site.

A supporting planning statement and noise impact assessment has been provided in support of the proposal.

REASON FOR REFERRAL TO SUB-COMMITTEE

The proposal required advertisement as a project of public concern and in excess of 5 objections have been received.

CONSULTATIONS

MoD- The proposal would cause unacceptable interference with the MOD radar installation at Buchan so that the RAF would be unable to provide a full air surveillance service in the area of the proposed wind turbine;

BAA – No safeguarding objection;

NATS - No safeguarding objection;

CAA – No objection;

ROADS SECTION – No observations;

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH – No objection but request submission of a detailed site specific noise assessment;

COMMUNITY COUNCIL – No response received;

REPRESENTATIONS

A total of 11 letters of objection have been received, primarily from local residents, including residents of Aberdeenshire and a letter from Belhelvie Community Council within Aberdeenshire.

The concerns identified are visual / landscape impact (e.g. turbine height / visibility); adverse impact on residential amenity (e.g. noise/ vibration / shadow flicker / human health) due to proximity to housing; impact on public safety; adverse effect on air safety / MoD radar; adverse impact on the landfill site / creation of pollution; adverse effect on views from private houses and cumulative impact. Some of the objectors cite no specific reasons for their concerns but suggest that the development be located elsewhere.

PLANNING POLICY

The key priority of the Scottish Government is sustainable economic growth. The Scottish Government's support for the principle of developing renewable energy supplies is now well established. Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) sets a target for 50% of Scotland's electricity to be generated from renewable sources by 2020. This does not prevent the installation of capacity for renewable generation above this figure. Paragraphs 187 to 191 of SPP relate to wind farms, and state that planning authorities should support the development of wind farms in locations where the technology can operate efficiently and environmental and cumulative impacts can be satisfactorily addressed. Topic specific advice regarding onshore wind turbines was produced by the Scottish Government in March 2011 and is of particular relevance in identifying relevant issues.

Paragraphs 159 – 164 of SPP regarding green belts is also relevant. It states that:-

“The purpose of green belt designation in the development plan as part of the settlement strategy for an area is to:-

- direct planned growth to the most appropriate locations and support regeneration,
- protect and enhance the quality, character, landscape setting and identity of towns and cities, and
- protect and give access to open space within and around towns and cities.

Certain types and scales of development may be appropriate within a green belt, particularly where it will support diversification of the rural economy.

The sustainable development and climate change objective within the approved structure plan has a target that the city region's electricity needs be met from renewable resources by 2020.

The site lies within the green belt as defined in the adopted local plan of 2012. Policy NE2 (Green Belt) states that :-

“No development will be permitted in the green belt for purposes other than those essential for agriculture, woodland and forestry, recreational uses compatible with an agricultural or natural setting, mineral extraction or restoration or landscape renewal. The following exception applies to this policy:-

1. Proposals for development associated with existing activities in the green belt will be permitted but only if all of the following criteria are met:-
 - a) the development is within the boundary of the existing activity.
 - b) the development is small-scale.
 - c) the intensity of activity is not significantly increased.
 - d) any proposed built construction is ancillary to what exists.

Other local plan policies of relevance include policy NE8 (Natural Heritage), D6 (Landscape), BI4 (Aberdeen Airport), and R8 (Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Development).

The Council's Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) regarding Wind Turbine Development in Aberdeen City (November 2011) is of particular relevance. This identifies areas of constraint for the development of wind turbines with regard to a number of factors. The site lies within an area of constraint for wind turbine development as identified by the Council's draft SPG so that turbines will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that the proposed development offers exceptional benefits and that these outweigh any adverse environmental impacts.

The guidance produced by SNH regarding "Assessing the impact of small scale wind energy proposals on the natural heritage" (March 2012) is also relevant.

EVALUATION

This application requires to be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless outweighed by other material considerations. The development plan consists of the approved structure plan and the adopted local plan. Other material considerations include Scottish Government planning policy (SPP) and related advice and the Council's emerging SPG.

Policy

Although Scottish Government and local planning policy and guidance both support the development of wind energy in principle, this is subject to consideration against a range of criteria. The proposal is considered to be compliant with policy NE2 (Green Belt) as it is development associated with the existing activity and the relevant policy criteria are met.

The Scottish Government's support for the principle of developing renewable energy supplies is now well established. SPP sets a target for 50% of Scotland's electricity to be generated from renewable sources by 2020. This does not prevent the installation of capacity for renewable generation above this figure. The proposal would contribute to achievement of this target and the more specific and ambitious target within the Structure Plan. It is also consistent with the objective of local plan policy R8 which encourages the development of renewable energy development in principle. However, given the unresolved objection from the MoD it is noted that the proposal would cause unacceptable interference with the MoD radar at Buchan so that the RAF would be unable to provide a full air surveillance service in the area of the proposed wind turbine. No mitigation

measures or technical solutions have been identified or are proposed by the applicant to address this issue. The proposal therefore conflicts with part 1 of policy R8 within the Adopted Local Plan of 2012 and no overriding material considerations which justify setting aside this policy have been identified in this case. As there are no objections in relation to civil air safety concerns, there is no conflict with local plan policy B14.

Although the site lies within an area of constraint for wind turbine development as identified by the Council's draft SPG, given that this guidance has not yet been subject to public consultation, the weight which can be afforded to it as a material consideration in determining this application is limited.

Landscape / Visual Impact

It is noted that the turbine lies in open countryside between the A90 and the coast and would be prominent from that main approach road to the city from the north. The supporting visual impact information provided by the applicant is considered to be somewhat lacking in terms of its quality and extent. It can be concluded that the proposed turbine would have a degree of visual impact on the surrounding countryside and public roads. Furthermore, the lattice design of the supporting mast gives the proposed development a somewhat utilitarian appearance compared to more elegant monopole turbine designs. However, given this Council's and Aberdeenshire Council's long term aspirations for development of the coastal strip to the north of Aberdeen, as evidenced by support for the Energetica Corridor promoted by ACSEF, and given that the wider landscape in the area has been adversely affected to a significant extent by historic quarrying and landfilling and other industrial activities, it is considered that the degree of landscape and visual impact of the proposed development does not in itself warrant refusal and the proposal is not significantly contrary to local plan policy D6. Furthermore, as there are no comparable proposals of similar scale within the surrounding area, cumulative impact is not considered to be a particular problem in this instance. The impact of the turbine on private views from houses is not a material planning consideration.

Residential Amenity / Safety

Although the Council's environmental health officers have requested a site specific noise assessment, given the distance between the site and nearby residential property and the proximity of a dual carriageway which carries a high volume of motor vehicles at high speeds to such houses it is considered that any noise generated by the proposed turbine is unlikely to give rise to insurmountable impact on residential amenity and such impact could be addressed by the use of suspensive conditions.

As the closest houses are in excess of 300m from the turbine, (i.e approximately 23 times the rotor diameter) shadow flicker is considered unlikely to be a significant problem in this case as Scottish Government guidance is that this is unlikely to be problematic beyond 10 times the rotor diameter (i.e. 130 metres in this case).

It is considered that the concern regarding impact on the operation of the landfill and associated leachate management are matters primarily for the owner of the site and can be addressed by separate environmental controls outside the scope of planning legislation. The Council's Environmental Health officers have no objection in relation to possible disturbance to the landfill / release of gas. The Council's roads officers have no objection to the proposal in relation to road / traffic safety matters. Therefore it can be concluded that the concerns regarding the possible impact of the development on human health do not warrant refusal of the development.

RECOMMENDATION

Refuse

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

The proposal would cause unacceptable interference with the MOD radar at Buchan so that the RAF would be unable to provide a full air surveillance service in the area of the proposed wind turbine and no mitigation measures or technical solutions have been identified or are proposed by the applicant. The proposal therefore conflicts with policy R8 within the Adopted Local Plan of 2012 and no overriding material considerations which justify setting aside this policy have been identified in this case.

Dr Margaret Bochel

Head of Planning and Sustainable Development.