Variation of Condition 3 of Planning Permission 2008/0784, 70m Wind Monitoring Mast, land adjacent to Sheephouse Farm.

This application seeks amendment of condition 3 of extant planning permission 2008/0784, which permits the erection of a 70m wind monitoring mast. Condition 3 restricts the monitoring period of the mast to a temporary period of 3 months. The application seeks an amendment of the condition in order to allow a more extensive monitoring period for a total of 12 months.

Planning permission was granted on 19th May 2008 for the erection of a 70m wind monitoring mast with planning condition 3 allowing monitoring for 3 months after installation of the mast. As stated in the supporting statement (see below), the application requested permission for a period of three months which led to condition 3 stating:

"The permission hereby permitted shall be limited for a period of 3 months from the date of erection of the anemometer and by the end of this period the mast shall be removed and the site restored to a condition suitable for agriculture"

After initial review and further research of the data collected on site thus far, a further period of validation is required. This would give a broader understanding of on-site meteorological conditions over a further range of seasons and will allow a greater depth of knowledge of the wind resource available. The data collected during this 12 months monitoring period would feed into the final site design to maximise the utilisation of available renewable energy resource at the proposed Sheephouse Heights Wind Farm.

The monitoring equipment was installed on 18th September, considered as the start date for the monitoring period. As such, this application seeks amendment of condition 3 to allow monitoring until the 18th September 2009.

The original supporting statement for the mast application is provided below for information.

Supporting Statement submitted on 02/05/2008 for planning application reference 2008/0784

Introduction

This application seeks planning permission for the erection of a 70 metre high wind monitoring mast on land adjacent to Sheephouse Farm, Mortimer Road, Penistone for a period of three months.

The wind information currently available for the site shows that the site has a good wind resource for commercial wind energy development, which is why the applicant has decided to progress with this site.

The proposal would enable detailed data about the wind regime to be collected to help determine the final selection of the most appropriate wind turbine model for the site.

Paragraph 32, Technical Annex 7 of the Companion Guide to PPS22 'Planning for Renewable Energy' advises that temporary anemometer masts are needed to assess whether a particular site will harness wind power satisfactorily.

No design and access statement has been submitted with this planning application as the proposed development is a temporary engineering operation.

The Proposal

The proposal is to erect a 70m high wind monitoring mast for a temporary period of three months.

The mast will be constructed in steel sections and would be approximately 150 – 300mm in diameter depending on the model used. The mast would be supported by guy wires that would be secured into the ground via anchor points. The mast would support meteorological equipment, a power source and a small transmitter to access the data remotely. The mast would incorporate a lighting rod at the top.

During operation the meteorological information from the mast would be gathered either remotely or by a single light vehicle visiting the site to download data, check battery power etc. Such a visit would be an infrequent occurrence.

A typical 70m high wind monitoring mast is set out in elevation and plan in **Figure 2** and **Figure 3.**

Installation

The installation of the mast is a very minor engineering operation that would be undertaken over one or two days. The only reason this period would be extended is if unforeseen inclement weather was to disrupt the process.

The installation would typically involve a single long wheelbase 4x4 vehicle with trailer excavator carrying four installation personnel and equipment including the mast in 5m lengths, a hydraulic winch, excavator, hand tools, cable and lifting rope.

The installation vehicle is designed to access sites located at distance from the public highway as the type of mast proposed is used on a variety of sites throughout the UK, including wilderness areas like the Scottish Highlands.
The proposed site can be accessed from either Cranberry Road to the North or Mortimer Road to the West. Both options are considered to be straightforward access.

Vehicle movements would be kept to an absolute minimum and would likely entail the vehicle arriving and leaving the site each day and possibly making a small number of trips during the day if the installation personnel require purchasing refreshments etc.

Decommissioning of the mast would be a similar minor operation to the installation.

National Planning Policy

PPS22 Renewable Energy was issued in September 2004 and its Companion Guide followed in December 2004. PPS22 sets out the Government's planning policy framework for renewable energy and the Companion Guide presents practical advice on the preparation and implementation of policy. Together they provide an up to date framework, which will guide the rapid growth in the development of renewable energy now being experienced across England.

Despite being a development proposal in its own right, the temporary wind monitoring mast proposed forms an important element of a proposed renewable energy development and should be considered in this light.

The key principles of PPS22, are outlined in paragraph 1 of the Statement. The overarching principles are listed below.

i) *Renewable energy developments should be capable of being accommodated throughout England in locations where the technology is viable and environmental, economic, and social impacts can be addressed satisfactorily.*

ii) Regional spatial strategies and local development documents should contain policies designed to promote and encourage, rather that restrict, the development of renewable energy resources. Regional planning bodies and local planning authorities should recognise the full range of renewable energy sources, their differing characteristics, locational requirements and the potential for exploiting them subject to appropriate environmental safeguards.

iii) *At local level, planning authorities should set out the criteria that will be applied in assessing applications for planning permission for renewable energy projects. Planning policies that rule out or place constraints on the development of all, or specific types of, renewable energy technologies should not be included in regional spatial strategies or local development documents without sufficient reasoned justification. The Government may intervene in the plan making process where it considers that the constraints being proposed by local authorities are too great or have been poorly justified.*

iv) *The wider environmental and economic benefits of all proposals for renewable energy projects, whatever their scale, are material considerations that should be given significant weight in determining whether proposals should be granted planning permission.*

The PPS22 Companion Guide contains a Technical Annex on wind energy. Paragraphs 29-34 contain information on Wind Resource and paragraph 32 states that:

"Assessing whether a particular site will harness wind power satisfactorily entails using historical data and information derived from anemometers placed on site. Anemometer masts are normally required on a site for at least 12 months; the longer measurements are taken the better predictions will be. The measurements from the anemometers help to determine whether or not a candidate site is suitable and, if it is, the measurements help determine the best position for the wind turbines within the site's boundary. The masts should be as approximately as tall as the hub height of the planned turbine."

Local Plan and Green Belt:

This proposal for a wind monitoring mast at Sheephouse Farm should be assessed against the relevant policies in the Barnsley Unitary Development Plan (UDP), particularly **Policy ES12** relating to Wind Energy developments. Policy **ES12** is considered to be the most material UDP policy to the consideration of the Sheephouse Farm proposal.

UDP Policy **ES12** states that proposals for wind energy developments will be assessed having regard to, amongst other things, the effect on the landscape and visual amenity, impact on residential amenity, access issues, impact on wildlife, ecology and archaeology and the effect on agricultural land use.

The supporting text to this policy recognises that Barnsley, and particularly the western half of the Borough on the fringe of the Peak District National Park, have sufficiently high annual mean wind speeds to make the establishment of wind turbines viable.

It goes on to state that, in principle elevated rural areas may be acceptable for wind power developments, provided that the harm to the environment has been carefully examined and minimised.

Policies GS7, GS8 and GS9 outline the Council's policy on development in the Green Belt, in which the site is located.

UDP Policy GS7 stipulates that:
"Without prejudice and subject to the application of policies GS8…..development within the Green Belt will not be permitted unless it maintains the openness of, and does not conflict with the purposes of including land in the Green Belt."

UDP Policy GS8 states that, unless in very special circumstances approval will only be given for development within the Green Belt for: -

- Agriculture or Forestry
- Essential facilities for outdoor sport or outdoor recreation, for cemeteries, or other uses of land which preserve the openness of the Green Belt and which do not conflict with the purposes for including land in it.
- The replacement of existing dwellings

Policy GS9 states that
"Development within the Green Belt, or conspicuous from it, should not by reason of its siting, materials or design, result in significant harm to the visual amenity of the Green Belt"

Renewable energy and ancillary development is not specifically referenced in Policy GS8 as permissible in the Green Belt. It follows that the proposal for Sheephouse Farm wind monitoring mast will be required to demonstrate "very special circumstances" to adhere to this policy.

National Planning Policy PPS22 on renewable energy development in the Green Belt has paragraph 13 stating that:

"elements of renewable energy projects will comprise inappropriate development which may impact on the openness of the Green Belt. Careful consideration will therefore need to be given to the visual impact of projects, and developers will need to demonstrate very special circumstances that clearly outweigh any harm by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm if projects are to proceed. Such very special circumstances may include the wider environmental benefits associated with the increased production of energy from renewable sources."

The proposal is an important element of a renewable energy development and should be considered in light of the above. In addition, it is demonstrated in the following section 'Relevant Appeal Decisions' that proposals for wind monitoring masts within the Green Belt are perfectly acceptable due to their temporary nature and their slim design.

Relevant Appeal Decisions

Of particular note are three appeal decisions, the first being for a 60m wind monitoring mast at Hangman Stone Road, Marr, Doncaster (Ref: APP/F4410/A/06/2022170). In that case the mast was located within Green Belt and the inspector concluded that whilst such a proposal would amount to inappropriate development that would, by definition, be harmful to the greenbelt other material planning considerations outweighed any harm to the Green Belt. Of specific note the Inspector stated that '*the degree of harm, particularly to the character and appearance of the area, is significantly reduced by the temporary nature of the proposal*'. In addition, weight was given to the wider environmental and economic benefits of renewable energy projects with the Inspector concluding that '*the harm identified above is outweighed by the wider environmental and economic benefits associated with investigating the potential of the site to generate power from harnessing the wind*'.

The second appeal was for a 60m wind monitoring mast at Land at Hockley Farm, Hockley Lane, Bradwell-on-Sea, Essex (APP/X1545/A/06/2017191/NWF). In this case the Inspector noted that '*the proposed pole and its wire rope guys would be clearly seen in the immediate surrounding*'. However, '*its slimness would make it considerably less conspicuous than the pylons. Bearing in mind the temporary period proposed, I do not consider that any undue additional harm would be caused to this protected landscape. And, of course, its quality would still be there when the proposal had completed its job and had been removed from the site.*'

The third and most recent appeal decision (APP/Q2908/A/06/2023261) was for a 47m high monitoring mast on moorland at Edlingham, Northumberland. The Inspector noted that the mast would *'be very tall and situated on relatively high*

ground within what is designated in the Alnwick Local Plan as an Area of High Landscape Value….While tall, their lattice construction means that they are, in fact, relatively inconspicuous. Indeed, if one did not know where exactly they were, they might not be immediately noticeable. Both are painted alternatively red and white in several segments. The white segments seemed barely visible against a cloudy sky. The red segments made the masts more obvious but, because of the lattice construction, I did not find them unduly obtrusive'.

In this case the wind monitoring mast, which is located within a Green Belt, would be of a slender design with guy ropes that would cause little obstruction or intrusion within the landscape or have any detrimental impact on the character of the area in terms of its scale or design. The mast would not be coloured and the area under the mast would remain as arable land. It should also be noted that the proposed mast would only be in situ for a temporary period of three months.

However, notwithstanding any nominal impact from the positioning of the wind monitoring mast within the landscape it is considered that the wider environmental and economic benefits of the proposal towards reaching renewable energy targets should be given significant weight in determining whether planning permission should be granted for the development.

Conclusion

The proposal is a minor engineering operation that would be in place for a temporary period. The location in which the monitoring mast is located is in the Green Belt which is demonstrated as being an acceptable location for such a proposal. The proposed wind monitoring mast is a slender structure and as a result of its tubular design and slim guy wires, is highly permeable i.e. it would not block any views towards it but rather allow views through it. This considerably lessens the effect the proposed development will have on existing views across the site. The small size of the equipment to be mounted on the mast means that it does not require a bulky structure to support it, unlike many other mast designs.

The proposal would be in accordance with both national and development plan policy with any perceived harm caused by the proposal outweighed by the wider environmental and economic benefits of renewable energy development, of which the wind monitoring mast proposal is the initial stage.