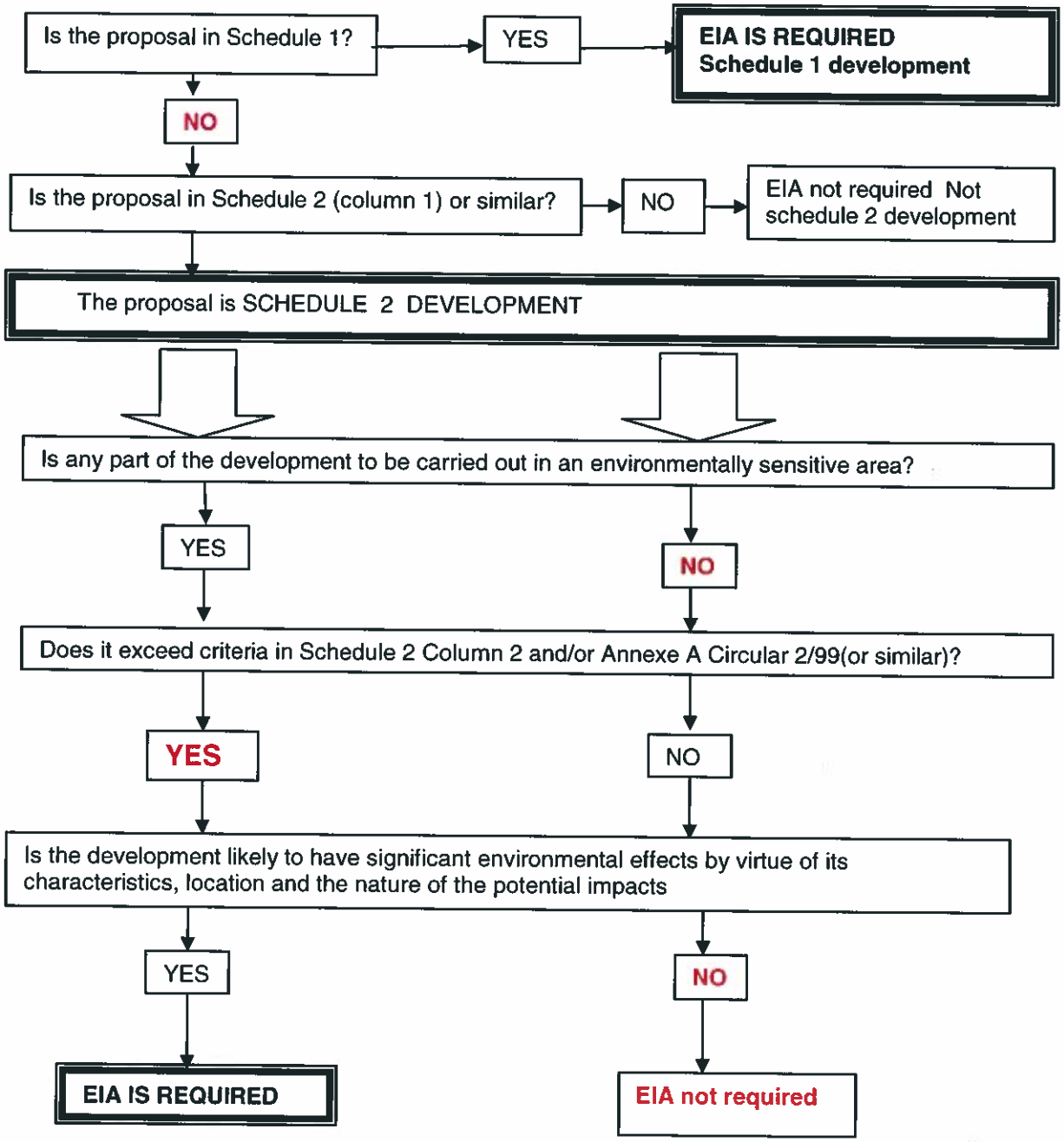
BARNSLEY
Metropolitan Borough Council

Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011

Screening Opinion

APPLICATION No:2012/0288
LOCATION: Ringstone Hill Farm, Brierley
Proposal: Erection of 1no wind turbine with a hub height of 45m.

A copy of the screening opinion must be placed on the Part 1 Register



SELECTION CRITERIA FOR SCREENING SCHEDULE 2 DEVELOPMENT AS SET OUT IN SCHEDULE 3 OF THE REGULATIONS AND CIRCULAR 2/99

Planning and Transportation Service
Development Control Section
PO BOX 604, S70 9FE
Tel: (01226) 770770 Fax: (01226) 772599

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Characteristics of the development

Does the development ie within a sensitive area as defined by Regulation 2(1)

Size of the development.
Does it exceed thresholds in schedule 2 column 2?

Does it exceed guidance thresholds in Annex a of Circular 02/99

Yes it exceeds criteria in schedule 2 para 3 (i) and (ii)

The cumulation with other development.
Will the proposal be undertaken in conjunction with other Development?
Will there be any cumulative impact?

Proposal is associated with a farming enterprise although detached from the farmstead.

Use of natural resources.
Will any natural resources be lost?
If so, will the loss be significant?

No

Production of waste.
Will the proposal generate waste?
Will this be significant in terms of impact on the site?
Will this be significant in terms of off-site impacts?

Limited waste based on excavation of foundations

Pollution and nuisances;
Will the proposal cause any pollution/nuisance?
Will it be short term(eg during construction)?
Will it be medium term (eg for the first 12 months of use)?
Will it be longer term?
Are the impacts significant?

Short term nuisance during construction. Some noise will be generated in operation but impact is not considered to be significant due to distance from receptors

Risk of Accidents
Is there higher than average risk of accidents during construction?
Is there higher than average risk of accidents during operation?

No

Location of development

The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by development

Existing land use
Does the site have an existing landuse, if yes, what is it?

Agricultural land located within the Green Belt.

Is there an abundance of natural resources in the area?
Are they of high quality?
Do they have regenerative qualities?

No.

Can the environment absorb the proposal having regard to wetlands, (coastal zones (not in Barnsley), forests, nature reserves, parks, protected areas, densely populated areas and historic/archaeological areas)?

No statutorily or locally protected areas on the site or adjacent although the site does lie within the Green Belt.

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Characteristics of the potential impact

The potential significant effects of development must be considered in relation to criteria set t under paragraphs 1 and 2 above, and having regard in particular to:

Extent of the impact How far will the impacts extend beyond the site? What size of population will be affected?	Local impacts only. Mainly visual impacts, potential noise.
Transfrontier impact Any impacts beyond national boundary? If so, what are they?	No
Magnitude and complexity of the impact Are impacts of greater scale/complexity than other applications? If so what are they?	Impacts are not considered to be significantly complex.
Probability of the impacts Are the impacts likely to occur (100%)? Less likely to occur (50%)? Limited chance (25%)? Which impacts are unlikely to occur and why?	n/a
Duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact. Will impacts last beyond construction phase? Will the impacts be frequent? Which impacts are reversible? Which impacts are irreversible?	Turbines likely to be temporary therefore visual effects reversible.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Screening Opinion

Having examined Schedule 1 of The Town and Country Planning Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 2011, the proposal clearly does not fall within any of the descriptions of development.

Interpreting Schedule 2 widely, the proposal falls under description of development (column 1) 3 (i) Installations for the harnessing of wind power for energy production (wind farms)

No part of the proposed development is located wholly or in part in a sensitive area as defined in regulation 2(1).

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Conclusion

The site lies within the Green Belt on the adopted Barnsley Unitary Development. The area is characterised by agricultural land, hedgerows and woodlands. There are no listed buildings within the immediate vicinity of the site. A Public Right Of Way lies adjacent to the site and the Barnsley Boundary Walk lies approximately 190m to the east. Brierley Meadows Candidate Natural Heritage Site lies approximately 870m to the west. Howell Wood which lies within Doncaster is approximately 850m to the south east, although it is not a Registered Park and Garden but, rather, a local country park in the Doncaster Unitary Development Plan. Hallsteads moated site lies some 1000m to the south and is a scheduled monument within the meaning of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979.

Having examined Schedule 1 of The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 2011, the proposal clearly does not fall within any of the descriptions of development.

The proposal does fall however under description of development 3i (column 1), 'Installations for the harnessing of wind power for energy production (wind farms)' of Schedule 2. No part of the proposed development however, is located wholly or in part in a sensitive area as defined in regulation 2(1) (which includes scheduled ancient monuments). Whilst the proposed development does not involve the installation of more than two turbines, the hub height of 45m significantly exceeds the applicable threshold (15m) in column 2 of Schedule 2. The proposed development therefore is Schedule 2 development and potentially requires an EIA.

The question is therefore, is the proposed development likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue of its characteristics, location and the nature of the potential impacts? Government guidance in Circular 02/99: Environmental Impact Assessment, states that, in general, EIA will be needed for Schedule 2 developments in three main types of case:

a) For major developments which are of more than local importance;
b) For projects with unusually complex and potentially hazardous environmental effects; and
c) For developments which are proposed for particularly environmentally sensitive or vulnerable locations.

For wind farms, Circular 02/99 (Annex A) advises that the likelihood of significant effects will generally depend upon the scale of the development, and its visual impact, as well as potential noise impacts. EIA is more likely to

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be required for commercial developments of five or more turbines, or more than 5MW of new generating capacity. However, it should not be presumed that developments falling below these thresholds could never give rise to significant effects, especially where the development is in an environmentally sensitive location.

The Circular notes that the relationship between a proposed development and its location is a crucial consideration. For any given development proposal, the more environmentally sensitive the location, the more likely it is that the effects will be significant and will require EIA. Furthermore, in certain cases other statutory and non-statutory designations which are not included in the definition of 'sensitive areas', but which are nonetheless environmentally sensitive, may also be relevant in determining whether EIA is required. Where relevant, Local Biodiversity Action Plans will be of assistance in determining the sensitivity of a location.

The Circular at paragraphs 45 and 46 states respectively that 'in general, each application (or request for an opinion) should be considered for EIA on its own merits. The development should be judged on the basis of what is proposed by the developer. However, in judging whether the effects of a development are likely to be significant, local planning authorities should always have regard to the possible cumulative effect with any existing or approved development. There are occasions where the existence of other development may be particularly relevant in determining whether significant effects are likely, or even where more than one application for development should be considered together to determine whether or not EIA is required.

With regard to the characteristics of the development, with a blade tip height of 67m and a hub height of 45m (compared to a blade tip height of 54m and hub height of 35m for the existing Royd Moor turbines within Barnsley Borough) its scale cannot be particularly described as small and is likely to have significant visual on the locality including users of the Barnsley Boundary Walk and local footpaths and potentially over a considerably larger area, even though it comprises a single turbine. In introducing a new feature into the area, the turbine is also likely to have an adverse impact on local landscape character.

Vehicular movements associated with the proposed development may also be significant and may include concrete for the turbine and crane pad foundations, aggregate for the access track and the delivery of plant and equipment for any temporary site construction compound as well as the turbine parts. The EIA for the Blackstone Edge Wind Farm for example indicated that the installation of a construction compound would result in 88 HGV movements. The delivery of concrete and aggregate would require 384

and 416 vehicular movements respectively. Vehicular movements for a worst case month would be 394 and there would be at least 3 days on which vehicular movements would rise to 128 per day. Whilst this is for a 3 turbine wind farm, it does provide some indication of the potential level of vehicular movements. However, the turbine in this case is considerably smaller and vehicular movements are therefore likely to be less and short term and only a few local residents are likely to be affected but not significantly.

Whilst mechanical and aerodynamic noise impacts are likely and whilst consideration should also be given to the potential impact on health due to infrasound and aerodynamic modulation in any planning application, it is considered, bearing in mind that the area is sparsely populated and that only one turbine is proposed, that the noise impact is unlikely to be significant and confined to the immediate area.

Overall therefore, other than its visual impact, the development on its own could be considered to be mainly of local importance only.

There is the potential of course for cumulative impacts with any other existing, consented or applied for wind turbines within the area of the proposed development, particularly in respect of visual, noise, highways and ecology effects. These impacts would likely to be significant and long term (25 years). Temporary cumulative impacts would also be likely during the construction period in terms of vehicular movements (concrete deliveries for foundations, delivery of aggregates for access tracks, delivery of the turbine parts etc) and other amenity impacts in respect of general noise and disturbance. However, informal enquiries with adjacent local authorities (Wakefield and Doncaster Councils) have not revealed any known existing, consented or proposed turbines within close proximity of the site. There is an existing wind farm at Marr in Doncaster (over 10km to the south east). It is considered therefore, that there will not be significant cumulative impacts at the present time.

Whilst the proposal would generate some waste (i.e. from foundation excavation), this is unlikely to be removed from the site as it is normal for it to be used for backfilling and the remainder stored for the future restoration of the site. The development is also unlikely to generate any form of pollution other than noise.

It is considered that there is no higher risk than average of accidents during construction and operations. Modern turbines are understood to be a safe technology. There has been no example of injury to a member of the public. Blade failure is most unlikely since many are composite structures with no bolts or other separate components and most turbines undergo test certification procedures which must conform to guidelines laid down by the International Electro-technical Commission. Furthermore, the build up of ice on turbine blades is unlikely to present problems on the majority of sites in England. For ice to build up, particular weather conditions are required, that in England occur for less than one day per year.

However, whilst there may not be any particularly hazardous effects of wind turbine development in respect of potential accidents, there may be complex effects in respect of visual impact, noise, vehicular movements, ecology, culture and archaeology, telecommunications etc and potentially serious hazardous effects in respect of aviation (radar, flight paths etc.). These complex and hazardous effects are only likely to be significant however for a larger scale development or in a cumulative situation. As noted above, the development is small scale and there are no known wind turbines existing, consented or proposed close to the site.

In terms of location, as previously noted, the site is not in a sensitive area as defined in regulation 2(1). The site in general lies in open countryside (Green Belt) where agricultural uses predominate. It lies less than 1km from the nearest Natural Heritage Site and 1km from Hallsteads moated Scheduled Ancient Monument which does come under the definition of a sensitive area. However, the scale of development and the relationship with the nearest sensitive areas is considered to be sufficient so as not to comprise significant environmental effects. The site is also approximately 850m to the north west of Howell Wood which is a local country park within Doncaster. It could, therefore, be classed as a sensitive use and hosts an array of biodiversity and is an important local recreational facility. However, the proposed turbine would not have a significant adverse effect on Howell Wood. Overall, the proposed development is not considered to have adverse cultural and biodiversity impacts.

Planning Policy Guidance 2: Green Belts makes it clear that the most important attribute of Green Belts is their openness. They help to protect the countryside, be it in agricultural, forestry or other use. There is a general presumption against inappropriate development within them and such development should not be approved, except in very special circumstances and is by definition harmful. Very special circumstances will not exist unless

the harm is clearly outweighed by other considerations. Furthermore the visual amenities of the Green Belt should not be injured by proposals for development. Proposals might be visually detrimental by reason of their siting, materials or design.

It is considered that being in Green Belt the proposed development would affect openness and that it therefore constitutes inappropriate development. It also has the potential to injure the visual amenities of the Green Belt and very special circumstances will need to be demonstrated..

In view of the above and in summary, it is considered that:

- The proposal is relatively small scale and other than its visual impact is of local importance only; there being no identified cumulative impacts at present. Circular 02/99 categorically states that EIA is more likely to be required for commercial developments of 5 or more turbines, or more than 5MW of new generating capacity. The proposed development falls well short of these thresholds.
- There are not considered to be any significant environmental effects given the relationship between the turbine and its height and location in relation to the nearest sensitive areas.
- As a further result of the scale of the development and there being no identified cumulative impacts at present, the project is neither significantly complex nor significantly hazardous.

The site lies in Green Belt (a vulnerable location) but does not lie in close proximity of any heritage features or within a sensitive area. Therefore, an EIA is not considered to be required in this instance.

It is considered that the application **will not** have significant environmental impacts within the meaning set out in The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment)(England and Wales) Regulations 2011 for the following reasons:

Reasons:

1 **Characteristics**

Given the scale of the turbine and the distance from Marr Wind Farm in Doncaster, cumulative impact is not considered to be significant.

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The proposals are not of unusual nature or type and the site is not unusually contaminated or of challenging landform. It is considered that there is no higher risk than average of accidents during construction and operations.

2 **Location**

In terms of location, as previously noted, the site is not in a sensitive area as defined in regulation 2(1).

Therefore, it is considered that the local environment can absorb the proposal.

3 **Scale of Impacts**

The impact of the proposed development is likely to be limited to the local area. The impacts are not considered to be unduly complex or of a significant scale following the construction period.

The proposal is unlikely to have significant effects on the environment and an EIA **is not** therefore required.

OFFICER SIGNATURE M Wardle **DATE** 15/03/2012

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Tel: (01226) 770770 Fax: (01226) 772599