

The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment)(England and Wales) Regulations 2011.

Screening Opinion

Planning Proposal – Erection of a single wind turbine, 50m to hub and 76m to tip.

Land South West of Ingfield Farm, High Lane, Ingbirchworth, Penistone, Sheffield, S36 7GG

1. 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.
2. 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). Whilst the proposed development does not involve the installation of more than two turbines, the blade tip height of 76m significantly exceeds the applicable threshold (15m hub) in column 2 of Schedule 2. The proposed development therefore is Schedule 2 development and potentially requires an EIA.
3. 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 developments which are proposed for particularly environmentally sensitive or vulnerable locations; and
 - c) For projects with unusually complex and potentially hazardous environmental effects.

With regard to the characteristics of the development, with a hub height of 50m (compared to a hub height of 35m – Royd Moor turbines) its scale cannot be particularly described as small and is likely to have significant visual impact, even though it comprises a single turbine. However, other than its visual impact, the development on its own could be considered to be mainly of local importance only.

Circular 02/99: Environmental impact assessment, 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' and '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'.

There is an existing wind farm (Royd Moor – 13 turbines – 54m to blade tip) within 1.1km to the south west. There are two recently constructed wind farms (Blackstone Edge – 3 turbines – 101m to blade tip, and Spicer Hill – 3 turbines – 95m to blade tip) along the same ridge line as Royd Moor wind farm. There is a further wind farm (Hazlehead – 101m to blade tip) located approximately 4km to the west. There is no doubt that this turbine would be seen in combination with existing turbines in the locality and therefore, there are clear cumulative visual impacts. Whilst the turbine does not appear to be part of the same 'wind farm' ridgeline, it would nevertheless be close enough to the existing turbines so as to be seen in context. The turbine would appear to be part of, yet out of kilter with the existing wind farms in the background. Therefore, there is the potential for significant cumulative visual impacts and potential for the appearance of the linear nature of the existing wind farms on the ridgeline to be extended and altered.

There is potential for localised highway impacts during the construction period in terms of vehicular movements (concrete deliveries for foundations, delivery of aggregates for access track, delivery of the turbine parts etc) and other amenity impacts in respect of general noise and disturbance.

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 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. 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.

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.

There are no SSSI's within immediate proximity of the site. The relationship between the site and the ecological site is not considered to comprise significant environmental effects and is of local interest only. The nearest Listed Buildings are situated approximately 500m to the north west. These buildings include the Grade II* listed Ingfield Barn which is located approximately 500m from the site, along with a number of other listed buildings which are generally located at a similar distance. In addition, the listed buildings sit within Ingbirchworth Conservation Area and there are a number of dwellings and buildings which are located towards the edge of the Conservation Area which generally face the site. There is likely to be an impact on these local heritage assets but the impact is considered to be of no more than local importance.

The impact of the proposed development, particularly taken cumulatively with the other existing/approved turbines in the area is likely to extend well beyond the site, especially in terms of visual intrusion, potential ecological/cultural impacts and noise and as such will affect a significant population. The potential impacts are likely to be complex and of a significant scale and some will continue beyond the construction period. The capacity of the natural environment to absorb the development over and above the existing/approved developments is in question.

In consideration of all of the above, particularly the cumulative visual aspects, the proposal overall is likely to have significant effects on the environment and an EIA is therefore required.

Signed – 
Dated - 16/01/2013

