



Banks Developments

Property. Energy. Waste.

HAZLEHEAD WIND FARM

ALTERNATIVE ACCESS PLANNING APPLICATION

DECEMBER 2008

Development With Care



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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Planning consent was granted for the erection of No 3 wind turbines and associated infrastructure on a former spoil heap adjacent to the Hepworths pipe factory at Crow Edge, Flint Lane (Barnsley MBC permission reference : 2006/1575) on 20th June 2007. The planning application for the proposed wind turbines was accompanied by a comprehensive Environmental Statement (ES). The terms of the planning consent require work to commence on site before 20 June 2010. The consent will last for a period of 25 years from the energisation of the wind turbines.
- 1.2 The land occupied by the three turbines and their associated infrastructure i.e. access tracks, crane pads and control building, lies predominantly within the extent of the Hazlehead Reclamation Scheme granted planning consent by Barnsley MBC in 2002 (Barnsley MBC permission Ref : B/99/0780/PR). The reclamation scheme will take place in two distinct stages, involving the extraction of minerals and the formation of an engineered void, followed by the disposal of waste in the void to achieve full reclamation of the spoil heap. It is proposed that these works will take place over a 9 year period, falling within the permitted life of the wind farm. Works associated with the formation of the landfill void have commenced onsite.
- 1.3 The layout of the proposed wind turbines and associated infrastructure took into account the presence of the land reclamation scheme and the interaction between the wind turbines and the land reclamation scheme was examined fully in the ES. At the time of submission and consideration of the wind turbine development it was assumed that the infilling stage of the land reclamation scheme would have commenced such that insofar as there is any interaction between the two consented developments, the wind turbine development would effectively "follow on" from the infilling and land reclamation works.

2. THE PROPOSAL

- 2.1 It is now unlikely that the infilling operations will have progressed far enough to allow the access track linking turbines T1 and T2 to be built in its consented position. As a consequence, consent is now being sought for the construction of an alternative access track linking turbines T1 and T2. The route of the alternative access track is shown on drawing HJB/574/PA25. At its western end the alternative access track will join with the consented access track in the vicinity of turbine T2, in the east the alternative track will join with the consented location for the crane pad adjacent to turbine T1. The alternative track will be built to the same specification as the consented track, as per drawing HJB/574/PA26.
- 2.2 The alternative access track will be used to allow construction of wind turbine T1 within the timescale originally envisaged in the consent for the wind farm. Thereafter, the access track will remain in place until it is required to be removed to allow the consented land filling and land reclamation operations to be completed. To ensure access to turbine T1 is maintained an access track will be constructed as per the consent for the wind turbines (see drawing HJB/574/PA03 of permission ref 2006/1575).

3. ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

- 3.1 The environmental effects of the proposed alternative access are considered in detail below. Where appropriate reference is made to the comprehensive environmental information which accompanied the planning application for the wind turbine development. While it is recognised that a section of the proposed alternative access lies outside the permitted extent of the wind turbine development it is the case that the majority of baseline studies undertaken as part of the EIA process which accompanied that wind turbine development did include the land over which the proposed alternative access will pass.

BIODIVERSITY AND CONSERVATION

- 3.2 The route of the proposed alternative access track crosses land identified as acid grassland in the baseline assessment (see drawing HJB/574/PA15 and chapter 7 of the ES). The route does not cross any national, regional or local ecological designations, and although noted in the ES which accompanied the wind turbine development as acid grassland, the land crossed by the proposed access track is predominantly bare ground. The ES noted that none of the plant species recorded in the area surveyed are nationally rare and none of the habitats recorded are of particular merit. The proposed access track will not therefore have any substantive effects on biodiversity and conservation interests.

AVIAN EFFECTS (INCLUDING BATS)

- 3.3 The construction of the proposed alternative access track will not require the removal of any trees or bushes. The ES which accompanied the wind turbine development noted that the spoil heap provides relatively poor habitats for breeding birds. The ES also noted that woodland fringing the southern boundary of the spoil heap was providing a habitat for bats. The proposed access track will have no effect on this habitat.

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL

- 3.4 As noted above, the proposed access track will cross land which forms part of a larger spoil heap associated with the presence of the adjoining industrial use. The proposed track will not be visible from outside the extent of the spoil heap. The visual effect of the proposed development is considered to be negligible.

CULTURAL HERITAGE (INCLUDING ARCHAEOLOGY)

- 3.5 The proposed access track will cross land previously disturbed by mineral extraction and disposal. The full extent of the spoil heap and adjoining land were assessed as part of the baseline assessment of the archaeological and cultural heritage interests in the ES which accompanied the wind turbine development. The findings of the assessment noted that while the possibility must remain that construction works may result in previously unknown archaeological deposits being disturbed, the likelihood of important archaeology being present was low. The assessment further noted that the presence of the spoil heap (a relatively recent development in archaeological terms), would ensure that any archaeology of interest will

be unaffected by the development of the wind turbines and associated infrastructure on the surface. It is highly unlikely the proposed access track will have any archaeological or cultural heritage effects.

HYDROLOGY AND DRAINAGE

- 3.6 The spoil heap is situated in an area designated as Flood Zone 1, putting it at low risk of flooding. The proposed access track will not cross or pass within 50 metres of any of the surface water bodies within and adjacent to the spoil heap. The proposed access track has the potential to alter surface water flow paths over the heap. The ES which accompanied the wind turbine development noted that the majority of surface water run-off from the spoil heap flows towards Town Brook or Crow Edge Slack and as such, will not be interrupted by the proposed access track. Insofar as there may be any localised effects, the proposed track will incorporate diagonal cross drains at appropriate intervals to minimise any impact on surface water flow. The route has also been chosen to ensure it does not run perpendicular to onsite contours, thereby minimising the potential for the track to become the preferential route for surface water flow.

4. PLANNING POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 The proposed development is associated with, and will facilitate the development of a renewable energy development for which there is strong planning policy support at national, regional and local level. As with the consented wind turbine development, the proposed access track lies within the Green Belt as defined in the Barnsley Unitary Development Plan. Policy GS7 of the UDP reflects national policy advice in PPG2 and expects new development in the Green Belt to maintain openness and not to conflict with the main purposes of including land within the Green Belt. Policy GS9 goes on to deal with visual amenity within the Green Belt and states that development within the Green Belt or conspicuous from it should not result in significant harm to visual amenity.
- 4.2 The proposed development, the construction of a new access track, constitutes engineering operations. Paragraph 3.12 of PPG2 notes that engineering operations are inappropriate development in the Green Belt unless they maintain openness and accord with the aims of including land in the Green Belt. In this instance, the proposed development will have no material effect on the openness of the area. The land over which the proposed access track will cross forms part of the former spoil heap which is the subject of a separate planning consent for land reclamation. Although lying within the Green Belt, it is clear the principle of disturbing the surface of this land has already been considered and established when the consent for the land reclamation works was granted. Whereas parts of the former spoil heap have begun to re-vegetate, The area of land crossed by the proposed access track comprises predominantly bare ground. By virtue of its scale, nature and effect, it is not considered that the proposed development could constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The proposed development is minor in nature and is sought for a temporary period of time. The development is required in order to facilitate the speedy delivery of a renewable energy development for which there is strong planning policy support at all levels. The proposed access track will not have any substantive on site effects, the land in question forming part of a spoil heap for which extant consent exists for major land reclamation works. The proposal constitutes appropriate development in the Green Belt as defined in PP2 and meets the UDP policy requirements.

PLANS & DRAWINGS

HJB/574/PA24

Location Plan

HJB/574/PA25

Alternative Access

HJB/574/PA26

Cross Section & Detail of Access Track(s)