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Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership

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13/01475/SCR | Screening Opinion for Wind Turbine Generator (34.3m high to blade tip) | Land At Pennerley Hill Farm Shropshire

The AONB Partnership is in general supportive of the promotion and implementation of a policy of renewable energy, however this must be in balance with the very high quality of the Shropshire Hills AONB landscape. Paragraph 115 of the 2012 National Planning Policy Framework states that; "Great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in.....Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty.

In relation to wind turbines Policy 35 of the current, 2009-2014 Shropshire Hills AONB Management Plan states that the positioning of turbines should "*take account of factors including landscape character and visual amenity...*". Guidelines with this Policy recommend that one or two turbines up to 12m to blade tip and within 100m of existing buildings are likely to be considered acceptable, while turbines in excess of 25m to vertical blade tip or closely grouped turbines are not likely to be acceptable within the AONB. The proposed turbine has a maximum rotor tip height of 35m which exceeds the maximum guideline by 10m. Each application for wind turbine construction must however be assessed at the planning stage as an individual case, taking into account the particular aspects of the proposal and its location. The proposed site at 336290,299000 lies in a highly sensitive part of the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and has the potential for significant negative impact upon the landscape character and visual amenity in this locality. The proposed location on the western flank of the Stiperstones hill range lies in close proximity to a strategic viewing point, the 'Shropshire Way' long distance footpath, two bridleways and four scheduled ancient monuments.

A full planning application should include a comprehensive landscape and visual impact assessment to inform the decision process. Such an assessment should be based on good practice guidelines such as those produced jointly by the Landscape Institute/Institute of Environmental Assessment 2002. Landscape character assessment (LCA) provides a sound basis for guiding, informing and understanding the potential impact of any proposed development at a landscape scale.

Wind turbines by the nature of their positional requirements are often exposed and isolated within a landscape in order to maximise wind energy. In sensitive landscapes, designated for quality and visual amenity, this creates a conflict. In this case it seems clear that there is considerable potential for such a negative influence upon the character and visual amenity of an extremely high quality area of rural landscape within the Shropshire Hills AONB. The AONB Partnership is prepared to advise at a scoping stage but reserves the right to comment at the planning stage. The imposition of highly visible wind turbines within the AONB is not generally favoured by the AONB Partnership and it urges the consideration of other alternative technologies such as solar photovoltaic cell arrays where appropriate.

G Barratt, Planning & Landscape Officer
On behalf of the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership