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Scoping Request for proposed turbine at SO59270,90480 Ruthall Farm WV16 6 TN

Dear Michelle,

Thank you for consulting the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership in respect to the above proposed development. The AONB Partnership is 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 (currently under review) 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. 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 SO59270,90480 lies within the eastern boundary of the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and is likely to have a negative impact upon the landscape character and visual amenity in this locality. In view of the sensitive nature of this protected landscape any formal 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 20022. Landscape character assessment (LCA) provides a sound basis for guiding, informing and understanding the ability of any location to accommodate change, and to make positive proposals for conserving, enhancing or regenerating character, as detailed proposals are developed.

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 potential for such a negative influence upon the character and visual amenity of a 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