

Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership

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Your Ref: FUL10/00357
Our Ref: gb_040310_SC Mainstone turbine obj

4 March 2010

Dear Julie

Application no 10/00357 15m wind turbine, Mainstone Farm

Further to our telephone conversation of yesterday afternoon I would like to confirm that the AONB partnership does object to the positioning of this turbine at the proposed location, near to the rounded summit of Edenhope Hill at a height of c. 415m OD.

While the AONB Partnership is supportive of the promotion and implementation of a policy of renewable energy, based on a range of sustainability criteria, this is tempered by visual and landscape aspects.

Policy 35 of the 2009-2014 Shropshire Hills AONB Management Plan states that the siting of turbines should, "take account of factors including landscape character and visual amenity...". Policy 36, position 10 states that, 'The partnership does not support.... turbines sited further than 100m from buildings'. Paragraph 212 of Planning Policy Statement 7 states that "the conservation of the natural beauty of the landscape (in AONBs)...should be given great weight in regard to planning decisions and Section 25 of the CROW Act of 2000 requires regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of the AONB.

In this case it is considered that the position of the proposed turbine close to the summit of an exposed hilltop, some 1500m distant from the nearest building and from the structure for which it is designed to provide power, creates a negative visual impact. A visit to the site confirms that this is particularly true when the site is viewed from the upland to the west. The open nature of this upland, with a backdrop of the Stretton Hills makes any introduced structure both visible and potentially highly intrusive.

The close proximity to the linear earthwork of Offas Dyke SAM which crosses the summit of the hill at this location is also a cause for concern. Although EH have accepted the re-positioned site, there is still concern in regard to the negative effect that construction of a turbine at this position will have on the visual setting of this major historical monument. It is proposed that the power-line from the turbine will pass through an existing service culvert beneath the SAM earthwork at c. SO2628,8790, to the SE of the turbine site. Clarification is required in regard to exactly what level of disturbance will be created. EH have asked for an observer to be present to ensure this can be achieved without disturbance. Approach to and from the culvert by the service cable is also a cause for concern passing through an archaeologically sensitive area which would require re-excavation for the whole length of the service cable run, again some 1,500m.

Although not mentioned in the application it is usual for the masts of turbines of this size to be mounted upon a substantial concrete base estimated at c.16.43 cu metres in size with a secondary plinth 2.7m in size to support the winch used to raise and lower the mast for maintenance. There will therefore presumably be a need to excavate a substantial foundation to accommodate these plinths. The proximity to the Offa's Dyke SAM, suggests the need for an archaeological watching brief to be carried out within the construction process.

The turbine is proposed to supply electric power to a substantial modern agricultural building to the SE in the Mainstone Farm complex, separate planning application 10/00354/FUL . The building will have a substantial area of exposed roof. An alternative would be to incorporate a range of photovoltaic cells in the roof structure to generate the electric for the building. Though initially more expensive it is likely to be more efficient and would remove the need for the wind turbine so limiting the visual impact to one location only and removing the visual and possible below ground impacts on the Offa's Dyke SAM.

Please feel free to contact me at any time if you think that I can be of any further assistance.

Best Regards

Glynn Barratt
Planning & Landscape Officer
Shropshire Hills AONB