

Wind Energy Update

Planning Policy Portfolio Support Group

2nd December 2013

1. Background

The Council resolved on 13th December 2012: *“In view of the increasing number of planning applications for wind turbines in the Forest of Dean district, this Council should adopt a specific Wind Turbine Planning Policy”*.

2. Work of the Planning Policy Portfolio Holders Support Group (PPPSG)

Over the last year the PPPSG has reviewed the current planning policy for wind energy development and considered whether it should recommend any district wind energy policy. The PPPSG discussed wind energy development on four occasions including at a meeting open to the public in January 2013.

Initially the group PPPSG considered that some interim planning guidance (not policy) would be useful to guide the Council and applicants. This could be followed by policy within the Allocations Development Plan Document (ADPD) currently in preparation.

An initial draft of the interim guidance was produced earlier in the year. In June 2013 the Government signalled that it intended to bring forward planning practice guidance on the matter ‘shortly’. The PPPSG therefore considered it was prudent to review the initial draft of the local guidance when the new Government guidance was published.

3. National Guidance

On the 31st July 2013 **‘Planning practice guidance for renewable and low carbon energy’** (NPPG) was published by the Department for Communities and Local Government.

The Government has also **signalled a proposed change in in legislation** which would require developers of wind turbines over 15m in height to consult the local community before submitting a formal planning application.

4. Conclusion

New national guidance, which is afforded significant weight in planning decisions, has come forward since the initial Council resolution in December last year. Further changes to the way wind energy development is progressed through the planning system are also proposed by the Government.

This new national guidance combined with the CSP1, Landscape Character Assessment and the Councils Adopted Landscape SPD are considered to form comprehensive guidance and policy background to enable the assessment of specific proposals.

It is also considered that the production of local guidance (of lesser planning weight than national guidance) will add little to the national policy and may well be seen as to conflict with national guidance.

5.Recommendation

To inform Council that the PPPSG has reviewed planning policy for wind energy development and that since the resolution in December 2012 there have been significant changes in national planning policy with regards to this form of development.

In light of this It is now considered that existing national and local policies are sufficient and that further specific local policy may only confuse the policy approach or be held to be in conflict with the national guidance.