

Name of Applicant Type of Certificate	Proposal	Map/Plan Policy	Plan Ref. Expiry Date
Mrs. J. McMinn 'A'	Proposed new wind turbine - Calcot Hill Farm, Calcot Hill, Romsley DY9 9RX	GBLPA	10/0130-JT 22.04.2010

**RECOMMENDATION:** that permission be **REFUSED**.

### Consultations

Worcestershire Highways Consulted: 09.03.2010. Response awaited.

Environmental Health Consulted: 30.03.2010. Response awaited.

Engineers / Drainage Consulted: 09.03.2010. Response awaited.

Climate Change Manager Consulted: 09.03.2010. Response awaited.

Natural England Consulted: 09.03.2010. Response received: 31.03.2010.

The application site is close to the Sling Gravel Pits (SSSI). Based on the information provided, Natural England has no objection to the proposed development subject to the proposal being carried out in strict accordance with the details of the application. The proposal will not have a significant effect on the interest features of the SSSI.

Worcestershire Wildlife Trust Consulted: 09.03.2010. Response received: 31.03.2010.

No objection to the application. The site is close to Great Farley Wood SWS but the proposals are unlikely to have an adverse effect on the features for which the site was selected. Similarly, bearing in mind its scale and location the turbine is not considered likely to have a significant effect on protected species (primarily birds and bats) and accordingly we do not wish to object to the application.

The Council is urged to ensure that the development proceeds in accurate accordance with the submitted plans - there is concern that if the turbine were to be located any closer to the field trees or nearby hedges it would affect any bats and nesting birds.

Romsley Parish Council Consulted: 09.03.2010. Response received: 31.03.2010.

Objects to the application. Comments as follows:

- Although the two access drives are private, public footpaths and bridleways run throughout.
- Cannot see the need for the scale of turbine proposed given that it would create more power than required.
- Concerns over aesthetic impact. A turbine of such scale would have a huge negative impact on the immediate area, as well as the wider environment.

- Appreciates the need for alternative sources of energy and the provision of renewable energy but feel that the application does not take into account direct detrimental impact on people using the public footpaths and bridleways as well as farm and property owners in the area.

Belbroughton  
Parish Council

Comments received: 31.03.2010.

Objects to the application. Comments as follows:

- Although the proposed turbine would be outside the parish boundary it would be visible from much of the parish and would have a very significant visual impact.
- Moreover, there would be a loss of amenity since the proposed site is in a small area of country park which serves not just the surrounding villages but the nearby conurbations - the site is at the junction of two major footpaths and a bridle path and would have a disproportionate effect because of the popularity of these paths. There could also be a detrimental impact on use of the bridle path by horses and riders since many horses would be too timid to approach the turbine.
- In addition, the Council considers that insufficient information is provided with this application to enable a proper assessment of its impact. For example, an independent noise survey should be provided at varying distances and angles from the turbine. So too should an independent wildlife impact assessment. A number of assertions are made in the application based on the manufacturer's claims for the turbine but without any evidence to support these.
- Finally, the Parish Council supports the comments made by Dodford with Grafton Parish Council in relation to the recent application for wind turbines in their parish (ref. 09/1003-JT). Many similar applications are likely to be received in future and it would be unwise to set precedents for poor designs and locations and poorly justified installations. These applications should not be decided on an ad hoc basis but should be evaluated against consistent criteria set out in an agreed local policy. This application should be refused until such a local policy has been discussed and agreed.

[Officer's note: the last point is addressed in the officer's report on application 09/1003-JT, which is also before the April Planning Committee.]

The Joint Radio  
Company Ltd

Consulted: 09.03.2010. Response received: 17.03.2010.

JRC analyses proposals for wind farms on behalf of the UK fuel and power industries. This is to assess their potential to interfere with radio systems operated by utility companies in support of their regulatory operational requirements. JRC does not foresee any potential problems based on known interference scenarios and the data provided. However, if any details of the wind farm change, particularly the disposition or scale of any turbine(s), it will be necessary to re-evaluate the proposal.

National Grid- Transco Consulted: 22.12.2009. No response received.  
Publicity Site Notice posted: 23.03.2010; expires: 13.04.2010.  
Press Notice (Bromsgrove Standard): published 01.04.2010; expires 15.04.2010.  
9 notification letters have been sent to properties within a 500 metre radius of the site.  
At the time of writing no objections have been received.

### The site and its surroundings

The application relates to land at Calcot Hill Farm, Romsley located to the north of Munches Lane. The site is accessed by a private drive. The site is remote in a predominantly rural area with little development. The site is designated Green Belt Land, and is also within the Clent Landscape Protection Area. Although much of the area is heavily wooded, the site itself has a relatively open aspect.

The nearest residential properties to the site are at Munches Lane near to the entrance to the site, approximately 450 metres from the application site. Properties at Shut Mill Lane to the north east also fall within a 500 metre radius of the site. The next nearest settlement comprises properties at the north end of Woodfield Lane, approximately 550 metres south east of the application site.

### Proposal

The application seeks planning permission for a wind generator turbine, with a height of 15 metres to the top of the mast and three rotor blades of 5.570 metres diameter, giving a total height of 17.79 metres.

The installed capacity of the turbine would be 6kW. According to the manufacturer's details this would give an annual output of approximately 7,000 to 10,000 kWh per year. The applicant intends that the turbine would be used to 'reduce demand from the electricity provider and generate electricity on site to serve the farm and associated outbuildings'.

Based on the 4,100 kWh/y figure for domestic consumption given in the PPS22 Companion Guide, the turbine would generate energy equivalent to the yearly needs of 2-2.5 households. The Council's Climate Change Manager advises that average household consumption of electricity is around 3,300 kWh/y, which would mean that the proposal would generate energy equivalent to up to 3 homes a year.

The applicant has advised that the anticipated wind speed in this location is at least 5.9 metres per second (m/s) at a height of 10 metres above ground level and 6.1 metres at 15 metres, which is considered suitable for the operation of a turbine.

The application has been considered by the Planning Committee Councillor Mrs. M. A. Sherrey JP, ward councillor for Furlongs ward. The following reasons are given:

- Visual impact on a large surrounding area. The development will be visible for many miles as it would be in a very elevated position within the Clent and Walton Hills.
- There are residential properties close to the site.
- The site maybe within a Conservation Area. [Officer's note: the site is not within a designated Conservation Area, but is subject to a Landscape Protection designation as is noted above.]

### Relevant Planning History

No recent relevant planning history relates to the site.

### Relevant Policies

WMSS	QE1, EN1, EN2, Draft Policy SR1c
WCSP	CTC.1, CTC.2, CTC.7, D.38, D.39, EN.2, SD.2
BDLP	C1, C4, C31, C32, DS1, DS2, DS13, ES1, ES6, S19
Others	PPS1, PPG2, PPS22, Planning for Renewable Energy: A Companion Guide to PPS22, ETSU-R-97 Assessment and Rating of Noise from Wind Farms, Draft Planning Policy Statement: Planning for a Low Carbon Future in a Changing Climate

### Notes

It is considered that the main issues in determining the application are:

- the appropriateness of the development in the Green Belt;
- if the development is considered inappropriate, whether any very special circumstances exist to justify the harm caused;
- the impact on the landscape and visual amenity, and areas of ecological or historic significance;
- the impact on surrounding residents and properties, including noise issues; and
- the compatibility of the proposals with farm diversification policies.

### Appropriateness in context of Green Belt policy

Policy D.39 of the County Structure Plan states that there will be a presumption against allowing inappropriate development in the Green Belt, reflecting the advice contained in national planning guidance PPG2: Green Belts. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt. policy D.38 of the Structure Plan and policy DS2 of the Local Plan are in general accordance with PPG2 in resisting development in the Green Belt unless proposals fall within a defined list of appropriate development.

Para. 13 of PPS22: Renewable Energy states that:

*"when located in the Green Belt, elements of many renewable energy projects will comprise inappropriate development, which may impact on the openness of the Green Belt. Careful consideration will therefore need to be given to the visual impact of projects, and developers will need to demonstrate very special circumstances that clearly outweigh any harm by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm if projects are to proceed.*

*Such very special circumstances may include the wider environmental benefits associated with increased production of energy from renewable sources."*

The development would not be defined as 'appropriate' in the context, and is therefore inappropriate, and harmful by definition.

#### Harm to the Green Belt and environmental benefits

Inappropriate development is by definition harmful to the Green Belt, and may only be approved where very special circumstances can be demonstrated that outweigh any harm caused as a result of the proposals.

The turbine would be of slender construction, but would have a height of almost 18 metres to the full extent of the rotor blades. This is significantly smaller than the type of equipment used by commercial wind farm operators which may have a height up to 120 metres, and also shorter than the two proposed at Woodcote Green currently under consideration by the Council (ref: 09/1003-JT) which would have a height of 30 metres pole height with blades of 12 metres, giving a total height of 42 metres when the rotation of the blade is at its fullest extent.

However, the turbines would be significantly taller than any structure in the immediate vicinity and for some distance beyond and would also be highly visible, given the elevated and open nature of the site. The proposals are therefore considered to have a material impact on the openness of the Green Belt.

According to paragraph 1.5 of PPG2, the purposes of including land in the Green Belt include checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas, preventing neighbouring towns from merging into one another, and assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. Although the proposals would not contribute significantly to urban sprawl or the merger of any settlements, it is considered that the turbine would add a modern feature to a rural landscape, and would therefore not 'safeguard the countryside from encroachment'.

#### Environmental benefits

The applicant has not explicitly put forward any very special circumstances in order to justify the proposals in the context of Green Belt policy. However, the applicant does state that 'the proposal seeks to utilize the natural resource of wind energy, meet and contribute positively to National Government policy for renewable' and to adhere to PPS22: Renewable Energy and PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development.

PPS22 confirms that the environmental benefits associated with the increased production of energy from renewable sources are potential very special circumstances in determining Green Belt applications. The need to increase energy efficiency and to derive a greater proportion of the energy used from renewable, sustainable sources, and to reduce carbon emissions, is well enshrined in national policies.

Any contribution to meeting national, regional and local targets for increased renewable energy generation is welcomed, and national guidance, in the form of PPS 22 and the Draft PPS Planning for a Low Carbon Future in a Changing Climate, advises against the

rejection of planning applications for small scale renewable energy projects simply because the level of output, or number of buildings supplied, is small.

However, these facts must be weighed against the presumption against inappropriate development in the Green Belt, the harm caused to the Green Belt, and any other policy and material considerations. In the view of officers, the scale of energy to be generated would not be sufficient to outweigh the harm caused to the Green Belt in this sensitive location as a result of the proposals.

### Wind turbine policy

Structure Plan policy EN.2 supports the provision of individual wind turbines or small clusters where they:

- do not cause unacceptable harm to the surrounding environment, in particular sensitive landscapes;
- do not cause unacceptable harm to nature conservation interests;
- do not result in excessive noise pollution; and
- are acceptable in relation to other policies in the Structure Plan.

These matters are discussed in turn below.

### Landscape impact

Paragraph 3.15 of PPG 2 states that the visual amenities of the Green Belt should not be injured by proposals for development within or conspicuous from the Green Belt which might be visually detrimental by reason of their siting, materials or design.

The site is located in the Clent Hills / Walton Hill Landscape Protection Area (LPA). Paragraph 15 of PPS22 states that local landscape designations should not be used in themselves to refuse planning permission for renewable energy developments, and that applications in such areas should be assessed against criteria based policies set out in local development documents. Paragraph 20 acknowledges that, of all renewable technologies, wind turbines are likely to have the greatest visual and landscape effects. However, it advises that in assessing planning applications, local authorities should recognise that the impact of turbines on the landscape will vary according to the size and number of turbines and the type of landscape involved, and that these impacts may be temporary if conditions are attached to planning permissions which require the future decommissioning of turbines.

Structure Plan policy CTC.1 sets out criteria for the assessment of proposals relating to landscape. The implications of such development will be assessed having regard to the degree to which they would:

- be appropriate to, and integrate with, the landscape character of the area;
- safeguard or strengthen the features and patterns that contribute to the landscape character and local distinctiveness of the area with particular attention being paid to existing buildings, other manmade features and seminatural vegetation; and
- relate to the sensitivity of the particular landscape, and location, and to accommodate change.

Policy CTC.2 states that proposals should demonstrate that they will not have an adverse effect on skylines and hill features, including prominent views of such features. Where development will have a significant adverse impact they will not normally be allowed.

Local Plan Policy C4 states that development will not be permitted where it would have a materially detrimental effect on the landscape, in particular within LPAs. When assessing the effect on the landscape, special attention will be given to:

- prominent slopes or major ridge lines;
- woodland and hedgerows including ancient areas;
- water features where these are an important component in the landscape.

The proposed turbine would be located in an elevated position, in an open area of the farm and would introduce a feature wholly alien to the landscape character of this area, which is predominantly rural, with very little urbanised development of any sort. The area is considered sensitive and poorly able to accommodate landscape change. The turbine is likely to be visible from several public vantage points, including local footpaths and the main A491 Stourbridge Road.

The applicant has submitted no information to demonstrate the impact that may be caused to the landscape or how it might be mitigated. However, officers are of the view that the turbine would be highly visible in the local area and, in the absence of evidence to the contrary from the applicant, therefore conclude that the turbine would be unacceptable in landscape impact terms.

### Ecology

It is noted that both Natural England and the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust have not objected to the proposals. It is therefore considered that the development would be unlikely to adversely affect the biodiversity assets of the surrounding area, or the nearby Sling Gravel Pits SSSI and Great Farley Wood SWS.

### Impact on residential amenity

At the time of writing the Environmental Health Officer's comments are awaited. However, given the small scale of the proposal and the separation distances between the site and nearby residential properties, it is considered unlikely that any residential property would suffer undue noise pollution as a result of the proposals.

For similar reasons, shadow flicker to residential properties would also be unlikely to occur.

### Highways

The views of Worcestershire County Highways are also awaited at the time of writing.

### Farm diversification

Structure Plan policy CTC.7 states that any development on agricultural land should not prejudice the viability of farming operations on the remaining agricultural land. Local Plan policy C31 supports farm diversification schemes where proposals are of an appropriate scale, can be accommodated within a rural location without detriment to the environment and are consistent with Green Belt Policy. Policy C32 sets out the criteria against which such applications will be judged, including impact on high quality agricultural land, landscape impact, cumulative effect with other activities, and the minimisation of visual impact. It is considered that the proposal is consistent with these policies in allowing an agricultural holding to further diversify its business activity.

### Conclusion

It has been determined that on balance the proposals would represent inappropriate development in the Green Belt, would not preserve the openness of the Green Belt, and would not be wholly consistent with the aims of including land in the Green Belt. The proposals are therefore considered inappropriate development in the Green Belt and such development is by definition harmful.

The benefits of the increased production of renewable energy and the diversification of, and support for, the rural economy have been weighed against that harm caused. However, officers have concluded that these do not amount to the very special circumstances required to outweigh the harm.

Furthermore, because of the site's sensitive landscape location, it has been concluded that insufficient evidence to show the landscape impact of the proposals has been submitted by the application, and that in the absence of such information, the proposals would have a harmful impact on the landscape of the local area.

**RECOMMENDATION:** that permission be **REFUSED** for the following reason:

The application site falls within Green Belt as designated by the Bromsgrove District Local Plan. The proposals are considered to represent inappropriate development in the Green Belt, which is considered to be harmful by definition. The applicant has not satisfactorily demonstrated that very special circumstances exist sufficient to outweigh the harm caused to the Green Belt. Furthermore, given the site's location within a designated Landscape Protection Area and in an elevated position visible from a significant distance, the applicant has not demonstrated the acceptability of the proposals in the context of the local landscape. In the absence of such evidence, the Council concludes that the proposal would have an unacceptable impact on the local landscape. The proposal is therefore contrary to policies CTC.1, CTC.2, D.39 and SD.2 of the Worcestershire County Structure Plan, policies C1, C4, DS2 and DS13 of the Bromsgrove District Local Plan, and the provisions of PPG2 and PPS22.