

Name of Applicant Type of Certificate	Proposal	Map/Plan Policy	Plan Ref. Expiry Date
Mr. and Mrs. P. Hughes 'A'	Erection of a 10kw vertical axis wind turbine less than 10.7 metres high - 54 High House Drive, Lickey, B45 8ET	GB	10/0810-DK 19.10.2010

Councillor Doyle has requested that this application is dealt with by Planning Committee, rather than being dealt with under delegated powers

RECOMMENDATION: that permission be **REFUSED**.

Consultations

Lickey and Blackwell PC	Consulted 02.09.2010. No response to date.
Worcestershire Highways	Consulted: 02.09.2010. No response to date.
Environmental Health	Consulted: 02.09.2010. No response to date.
Climate Change Renewable Energy Officer	Consulted 02.09.2010. No response to date.
The Joint Radio Company Ltd.	Consulted: 21.09.2010. No response to date.
Natural England	Consulted 21.09.2010. No response to date.
Worcestershire Wildlife Trust	Consulted 21.09.2010. No response to date.
National Grid-Transo	Consulted: 21.09.2009. No response to date.
NATS (Civil Aviation Authority)	Consulted: 21.12.2009. No response to date.
Publicity	Site Notice posted 02.09.2010; expires 23.09.2010. 2 responses received to date summarized as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Objection: Increased Noise, Light flicker, Visual effect in area of outstanding landscape value. ▪ The proposal is unsuited to a residential area. The power generated would be greatly in excess of the requirements for a residential property.

The site and its surroundings

The application site lies to the NW of High House Farm at the end of High House Drive. The dwelling is a large detached three storey original farmhouse and there the curtilage and surrounding land is being used as a mixed smallholding. There are no immediately

adjoining properties and there is a converted annex at the north end of the farmhouse. The site forms part of a landscape protection area.

Proposal

The application seeks planning permission for a wind generator turbine, with an overall height of 10.7m. The type of turbine proposed is called a vertical axis wind turbine. This is a different design from many turbines with a pole 5.5m high and concentric blades a further 5.2m in height. There will also be a concrete foundation with hidden cabling. The pole of the turbine will be of galvanized metal and the standard blades will be of a white/light grey colour. It is understood that the proposal will provide the electricity for High House Farm.

Relevant Planning History

There is no relevant planning history.

Relevant Policies

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.

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 visual amenity of the landscape protection area;
- the impact on surrounding residents and properties including noise issues; and
- the compatibility of the proposals with farm diversification policies.

Green Belt

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.

Very Special Circumstances

Such 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.

I note that the turbine would be in a fixed position but would have a height of almost 11m. High House Farm is located in an elevated position with the land falling away to the north and west. The turbine 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 from the north. I note the screening by the trees to the south of the site but these are deciduous and the effect is seasonal. The proposals are therefore considered to have a material impact on the openness of the Green Belt.

According to Para. 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'.

In terms of very special circumstances, these have been requested from the applicant and Members will be updated on this matter.

A contribution towards meeting national, regional and local targets for increased renewable energy generation are 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 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. It is noted that this turbine would only serve High House Farm and the harm caused to the openness and visual amenity of the Green Belt is not outweighed.

Wind turbine policy

Policy EN.2 of the Worcestershire County Structure Plan 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.

Landscape impact

Worcestershire County 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 perspective of the applicant is that the design of the proposal is in keeping with its surroundings and the colours will match that of the sky. I consider that the scale and design of the proposal would be detrimental to the character of the landscape protection area. In particular the design of the rotor blades would be an incongruent feature in the landscape. I note the presence of large mature trees which shield the proposal from High House Drive. However, this effect is seasonal and would not outweigh the overall harm to the landscape. In terms of ecology, the views of Natural England and Worcestershire Wildlife Trust are awaited.

Residential Amenity

The applicant has presented a Noise Assessment Statement. The views of the Environmental Health Officer are awaited and Members will be updated on this matter. The representations received from local residents in terms of the impact on amenity should be noted.

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. I note that High House Farm operates as a smallholding and Members must consider whether eligibility of the proposal under policies supporting farm diversification outweighs other negative impacts.

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. Inappropriate development in the Green Belt 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. The fallback position in terms of permitted development for microgeneration equipment is noted. However, this does not extend to turbines and Members should note that the siting of the proposal does not fall within what is considered to be the residential curtilage.

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

The proposals are considered to represent inappropriate development in the Green Belt, which is considered to be harmful by definition. The applicant has not demonstrated that very special circumstances exist sufficient to outweigh the harm caused to the Green Belt. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies D.39 and SD.2 of the Worcestershire County Structure Plan 2001, Policies, DS2 and DS13 of the Bromsgrove District Local Plan 2004, and the provisions of PPG2 and PPS22.

The development would have a detrimental impact on a designated Landscape Protection Area by virtue of its design and position. The proposal is thereby contrary to policies CTC.1, CTC.2 and EN2 of the Worcestershire County Structure Plan 2001, policies C1, C4 and DS13 of the Bromsgrove District Local Plan 2004.