

**PLANNING COMMITTEE
MEETING - 22nd March 2000
Agenda Item: 2**

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990
TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (GENERAL PERMITTED
DEVELOPMENT PROCEDURE) ORDER 1995 - TO DATE
PLANNING AND COMPENSATION ACT 1991
TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ADVERT REGULATIONS 1994
PLANNING (LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS)
ACT 1990**

APPLICATIONS FOR PERMISSION FOR DEVELOPMENT

These are reports and recommendations by Officers for consideration and resolution by the County Planning Authority.

All the applications in respect of the proposals specified in this report will be available for inspection by the Members of the Committee prior to and during the meeting at which the said applications will be considered.

The Background Papers relating to each application, including forms, plans, relevant correspondence, Development Plan and guidance documents are available for public inspection during normal office hours

REPORT BY HEAD OF PLANNING SERVICES

CONSULTATION BY CONWY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

**REVISED SUBMISSION FOR PROPOSED WIND FARM
DEVELOPMENT AT MOEL LLYN/MOEL RHIWLOG,
DENBIGH MOORS, NEAR PENTREFOELAS**

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The report seeks the Committee's observations on a planning application submitted to Conwy County Borough Council in December 1999 on which Denbighshire have been consulted as the neighbouring County Council. The location of the site is shown on the plan at the back of this report.
- 1.2 The recently approved scheme of delegation of decisions permits the Head of Planning Services to submit observations on such proposals without reference to the Committee. However, following contact with the Local Member for the area nearest the application site, and in view of the fact that a report on the previous wind farm application was presented to the Committee in July 1998, it is considered appropriate to report to members on this amended proposal.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The application is a revised submission to Conwy by National Wind Power, following that Authority's refusal to grant permission in June 1999 for a 28 turbine wind turbine development on land to the north and south west of Llyn Alwen, some 4 kilometres north of Pentrefoelas. The application being dealt with by Conwy is now for a total of 26 turbines.
- 2.2 The 28 turbines proposed previously would each have had 3 rotor blades, 64 metres in diameter, on 60 metre high steel towers, i.e. an effective total height in the order of 92 metres.
- 2.3 In response to the 1998 consultation by Conwy, the Denbighshire Planning Committee resolved to offer no objections on grounds of potential impact on land use or other amenities of residents of Denbighshire, but to express concern at the potential visual impact of the turbines on the local landscape and the National Park, the tourist industry and the Mynydd Hiraethog Site of Special Scientific Interest.
- 2.4 The reason for the refusal of permission by Conwy in June 1999 was based on the scale of the development in close proximity to the Snowdonia National Park being detrimental to the enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park, and the construction of turbines and access tracks having an unacceptable impact on the quality of the landscape and natural conservation interests of a Site of Special Scientific Interest.
- 2.5 National Wind Power have lodged an appeal against Conwy's refusal to grant permission to the previous application, which will result in a public enquiry unless overtaken by the decision on the amended application.

- 2.6 Members may be aware that Denbighshire presently has an undetermined application for a 33 turbine wind farm development at Tir Mostyn / Foel Goch, Nantglyn, which is still under consideration. The Tir Mostyn site is approximately 9km to the east of the Moel Llyn site. It is not anticipated that the Tir Mostyn application will be reported to the Committee until May 2000 at the earliest.

3. THE CURRENT APPLICATION

- 3.1 The application now before Conwy is for a total of 26 wind turbines, each with 3 bladed rotors, 64 metres in diameter, on 50 metre high steel towers. The main changes from the previous application are that:

- ◆ The two most prominent wind turbines have been removed.
- ◆ The overall height of each wind turbine has been reduced by 10 metres (33ft.) to reduce the visibility of the wind farm.
- ◆ Facilities for tourists will be provided with parking at the site and information at Pentrefoelas village.
- ◆ Although this will be subject to separate consent, the option for an overhead line connection to the Manweb electricity system at Llansannan has been removed.

The application site remains the same as shown on the previous submission refused by Conwy.

- 3.2 The application is accompanied by a Non Technical Summary, and three separate technical documents incorporating an Environmental Statement, Technical Appendices, and Figures and Plans. These contain considerable information on issues such as impact on the landscape, ecology, hydrology, ornithology, noise, archaeology, TV, microwave and radio interference and public safety. The conclusions of the submission that the proposed wind farm would have some local environmental impact, but that these effects have been identified and examined with a view to avoidance and mitigation, and an environmentally acceptable wind farm can be constructed.

- 3.3 A copy of the application and attached documents are available for inspection prior to the meeting of the planning committee.

4. RELEVANT PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 Applications for wind farm developments raise basic issues of principle and detailed specific land use considerations.

- 4.2 There is strong support for the principle of developing renewable energy sources which make use of natural resources. The support is based on the premise that there are prospects for such technology being economically attractive and environmentally acceptable. I believe it would be inappropriate for the County Council to oppose the Pentrefoelas Wind Farm proposals purely in terms of the **principle** of providing this type of renewable energy.

- 4.3 There is no guidance from wind energy policies in the main documents forming the operative development plan for the part of Denbighshire County nearest the site (the Glyndwr District Local Plan and the Clwyd County Council Structure Plan : First Alteration).

4.4 There are a number of other planning policy/guidance documents to which only limited weight can be attached. The Second Alteration to the Structure Plan contains a policy encouraging renewable energy proposals where they are compatible with other Structure Plan Policies, and a policy in favour of wind power proposals subject to due consideration of the impact on the locality. Glyndwr produced an interim policy on renewable energy in September 1994 in the form of a Supplementary Guidance Note in Wind Energy. The Draft Denbighshire Unitary Development Plan and associated Supplementary Planning Guidance document echo support in principle for development that generates or captures energy from

naturally sustainable sources, as far as is compatible with other plan policies, and subject to no unacceptable effect on the environmental quality of a locality.

4.5 From the documents submitted, the specific land use considerations applying at Moel Llyn/Moel Rhiwlog which have to be balanced against the 'national' interests which presume in favour of a wind farm development appear to be:

1. Visual impact (including ancillary equipment, roadways and shadow flicker)
2. Noise impact
3. Radio / TV / electromagnetic interference
4. Ecological impact (including impact on SSSI's)
5. Ornithological impact
6. Archaeological impact
7. Highway impact

5. COMMENTS ON THE PROPOSALS AS THEY IMPACT ON DENBIGHSHIRE

5.1 The application is accompanied by a very thorough Environmental Assessment and non-technical summary. The documents contain a vast amount of information on the specific land use considerations outlined in 4.5. Particular attention is paid to mitigation measures and safeguards.

5.2 Visual Impact

The visual impact of the turbines is a main consideration. The proposed turbines are reduced in size from the previous submission, but are still large (approximately 82 metres from ground level to the tip of a rotor blade when vertical), and prominence would be emphasised by the movement of the blades which can cause a localised shadow flicker. The site would be particularly visible from the A543 Denbigh - Pentrefoelas road, from where the light grey turbines would clearly be seen against the spectacular distant backdrop of Snowdonia. The visual impact on the extensive and unspoiled upland of Denbigh Moor and on the National Park would be significant from this and other viewpoints. The nature of the land form and the presence of Clocaenog Forest to the east of the A543 may limit the immediate physical impact of the turbines to the east, and in reality the development is only likely to be visible at distance and as part of a panorama towards Snowdonia from high ground in Denbighshire (Clwydian Range / Berwyn Mountains). The Technical Assessment does not extend its visual analysis of the proposals to these areas.

5.3 Noise Impact

The technical summary points to noise levels being within acceptable limits set in DTI guidelines. The development seems unlikely to lead to noise having an adverse effect on properties in Denbighshire.

5.4 Radio / TV / Electrical Interference

The submission indicates a possibility of localised TV reception problems but undertakes to investigate the extent and to undertake remedial action if necessary.

5.5 **Ecological Impact**

The proposals appear to have been detailed to minimise the ecological impact and include for a Land Management Agreement to fund the future management of the Moor including habitat enhancements. This would be of limited relevance to land in Denbighshire. The impact on the SSSI, however, would need to be carefully assessed by Conwy as the development could clearly have a significant effect on the interests its designation seek to protect.

5.6 **Ornithological Impact**

The Environmental Statement concludes that the site is of only limited value to wintering and migrating birds, and that bird populations are unlikely to be affected by disturbance or the low risk of collision with turbines.

5.7 **Archaeological Impact**

Whilst there are no scheduled Ancient Monuments on the site, there are a number of archaeological sites in this part of Mynydd Hiraethog. The evaluation indicates the proposals have been designed to minimise impact on archaeology and historic landscape, and provision would be made for monitoring by an archaeologist during the construction phase. The elimination of one of the turbines appears to negate the requirement for specific mitigation measures designed to protect the archaeological site in its vicinity. As no part of the site is within Denbighshire, there are clearly no archaeological implications for the County from the application.

5.8 **Highway Impact**

Heavy construction traffic would be routed south of the site along the A543 to the A5 at Pentrefoelas. The A543 towards Denbigh is not intended as a route for heavy traffic, and this would avoid any potential problems in the Denbigh area.

6. **CONCLUSION**

6.1 There is a national commitment to renewable energy, and the acceptability of individual schemes is dependent on the weighing of a number of environmental impacts.

6.2 There is specific protection given to Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty / National Parks from intrusive development affecting their character, which places greater pressures for development of Wind Farms on areas like the Denbigh Moors, where there is no national landscape designation and physical conditions are suited to wind turbines.

6.3 Whilst the visual impact of the turbines at the Moel Llyn site is likely to be significant from publicity accessible viewpoints along the A543 near to the Denbighshire boundary, and the turbines may be visible from a small number of private properties to the east, the development is not likely to impact adversely on the landscape interests of Denbighshire, as it will only be viewed from distant high ground. The scale of the scheme and the size of the turbines is, however, likely to have a significant visual impact in the locality of the site and on the National Park. This could impact in turn on the tourist industry.

6.4 There are no obvious adverse highway implications on Denbighshire, provided heavy construction traffic is routed as proposed to the A5 and not along the A543 through Denbigh.

6.5 Many of the potential environmental effects of the proposals would have only localised impact and there are mitigation measures proposed and controls exercisable through planning conditions and legal obligations which reduce the grounds for objection. There is, however, a question over the potential impact on the SSSI which would justify concerns if the relevant interests could not be safeguarded.

7. RECOMMENDATION

That Denbighshire County Council as neighbouring local planning authority consider:

- (1) The proposed wind farm would not impact adversely on the land use, amenities, or interests of residents of Denbighshire, and offer no objections from this perspective.
- (2) The visual impact of the turbines could have an adverse effect on the local landscape and on the National Park, including the tourist industry, and concerns are expressed at the potential impact on the Mynydd Hiraethog SSSI.

A REPORT BY THE HEAD OF PLANNING SERVICES

DATE OF SITE VISITS

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise Members of the likely date of any Site Visits requested by the Planning Committee.

2. DATE OF THE SITE VISITS

- 2.1 In consultation with Legal and Administration, it has been decided that **Monday 3rd April 2000** is most suitable. This date has been provisionally booked.
- 2.2 You are advised, therefore that any site visits arranged today will take place **on Monday 3rd April 2000 (morning - times to be advised).**

3. MEMBERSHIP OF THE SITE VISIT PANEL

- 3.1 This will depend on Political Balance and will include the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee Councillors F.D. Jones and R. Hughes together with the relevant Local Member(s)
Three (3) further Independent Councillors
Three (3) further Labour Group Members
Two (2) Councillors from the Plaid Cymru Group
One (1) Conservative Councillor
One (1) Member of the Democratic Alliance of Wales Group

4. RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 That Members agree to the Site Visits being held on the morning of **Monday 3rd April 2000**