

Report To: Planning Committee

Date of Meeting: 16th September 2015

**Lead Member / Officer: Cllr David Smith, Public Realm
Angela Loftus, Strategic Planning & Housing Manager**

Report Author: Catrin E Roberts, Planning Officer

Title: Renewable Energy Supplementary Planning Guidance – Consultation draft

1. What is the report about?

1.1. This report introduces the draft Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) document on renewable energy. It is accompanied by the draft main document, Appendix I, and the screening document for the Equality Impact Assessment, Appendix II.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

2.1. To seek Members' approval to undertake consultation on the draft Supplementary Development Guidance with statutory bodies and members of the public.

3. What are the recommendations?

3.1. That Members agree the draft Supplementary Planning Guidance on renewable energy as a basis for public consultation.

4. Report details

4.1. The Council's SPG notes are not part of the adopted development plan. The Welsh Government (WG) has confirmed that following public consultation and subsequent Local Planning Authority (LPA) approval, SPGs can be treated as a material planning consideration when LPAs, Planning Inspectors and the Welsh Government determine planning applications and appeals.

4.2. The SPG supplements the following LDP policies; RD1: promotes sustainable development, VOE 10: promotes the use of renewable energy technologies and VOE 9: a guide for on-shore wind energy technology.

4.3. The draft document outlines the national and local policy context for renewable energy technologies, landscape protection and agricultural land protection. It offers guidance if planning permission is required with regard to small renewable energy technology installations. When permission is required the SPG guides on key planning considerations in determining an application. The focus is on clarifying the requirements for considering onshore wind

developments and solar arrays developments. Both technologies are of prevalence within the County and north Wales in general.

- 4.4. With regard to landscape protection, the Council undertook a joint study with Conwy County Borough Council to assess the sensitivity and capacity of the County's landscape to wind turbine developments. This document has been in use by officers in guiding applicants and considering planning applications however needs formal status through public consultation.
- 4.5. With regard to agricultural land, the document clarifies the requirement for the thorough assessment of agricultural land grade prior to submitting applications for solar arrays.
- 4.6. The public consultation period would be a minimum of 8 weeks and is anticipated to start in October 2015. Previous interested parties, groups and industries, plus all City, Town and Community Councils would be contacted to inform them of the consultation. Copies of the document would be made available at all County libraries and one stop shops. Two (2) drop-in sessions (north/south of the County) will be scheduled as requested by the Lead Member. The results of the consultation will be reported back to Planning Committee with a final SPG for adoption.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

- 5.1. The SPG does not directly contribute to the corporate priorities. Indirectly, supporting renewable energy installations could keep vulnerable people in rural areas in sustainable heat/energy and not in fuel poverty.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

- 6.1. Agreeing the SPG for consultation is not anticipated to create any additional cost.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) undertaken on the decision? The completed EqIA template should be attached as an appendix to the report.

- 7.1 The proposal is to carry out consultation on guidance. The SPG does not set policy but provides further guidance on LDP policies RD1, VOE 9 and VOE 10. An EqIA is not considered necessary for this decision. The LDP underwent a full EqIA prior to adoption. A completed EqIA template is attached to this report as Appendix II.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

- 8.1 No formal consultation has been carried out, but internal consultation has been carried out with officers in the Development Management Team, Public Protection Section and Highways & Environmental Services.

8.2 Member input on the content of the SPG has also been provided through the LDP Members Steering Group. The SPG was originally intended to concentrate on onshore wind turbine technology only. Members' input into changing the SPG to incorporate other renewable energy technologies was sought in April 2015. The final draft was agreed with amendments at the July meeting. Members helped shape the rural economy paragraph and key considerations with regard to solar farm proposals.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

9.1 Any costs associated with the guidance should be contained within existing budgets and therefore there are no obvious financial implications contained in the report.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

10.1 In the absence of up-to-date guidance there is a risk the Council will be unable to effectively operate the LDP policies

11. Power to make the Decision

11.1 Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act (2004).