

Report To: Planning Committee

Date of Meeting: 17 October 2012

Lead Officer: Angela Loftus

Report Author: Denise Shaw

Title: Authorisation to consult on the draft Wind Energy Development Interim Planning Guidance Document

1. What is the report about?

1.1 To agree the draft Wind Energy Development Interim Planning Guidance as a basis for consultation and agree the scope of consultation. A copy of the document is attached as Appendix 1.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

2.1 To seek authorisation to consult upon the draft Wind Energy Development Interim Planning Guidance.

3. What are the Recommendations?

3.1 To approve the attached draft Interim Planning Guidance for focussed consultation for an 8 week period commencing in November 2012.

4. Report details.

4.1 Denbighshire has a significant expanse of rural upland areas which have an abundant wind resource. The Clocaenog Forest has been designated as one of seven Wales-wide Strategic Search Areas (SSAs) and the Welsh Government's approach is to limit the development of large scale wind farms to within Strategic Search Areas, which have been independently and empirically assessed to be the most suitable areas for wind energy development. However, Welsh Government planning policy does not set out spatial limitations for wind energy development under 5 megawatts (MW); developments under 5MW are applicable to all parts of Wales subject to the assessment of localised impacts.

4.2 Denbighshire County Council have committed to produce a Wind Energy Supplementary Planning Guidance Note (SPG) following the adoption of the Denbighshire Local Development Plan (LDP), which is in advanced stage of its production.

4.3 The Council is in the process of compiling the evidence base to inform the production of the Wind Energy SPG and Welsh Government funding has been secured to enable the Council to undertake a wind energy landscape sensitivity assessment.

4.4 However, in light of the increasing number of planning applications, Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Opinion requests and pre-application enquiries submitted to the Council for individual and clusters of wind turbine developments of varying scales across the county, it is necessary to introduce interim planning guidance in advance of the

production and adoption of a Wind Energy SPG to provide clarification and guidance to applicants, Officers and Members.

4.5 The purpose of the Interim Planning Guidance is to:

- Provide guidance on the planning requirements for wind turbine developments.
- Clarify the guidelines the Council will apply when assessing planning applications for wind turbine developments which have been put forward as farm diversification or community driven energy schemes.
- Clarify the Council's approach to Community Benefit Schemes.

4.6 It is envisaged that the consultation period would last 8 weeks, beginning approximately in early November and ending in early January. It is proposed that the consultation process would include Members, Town and Community Councils relevant consultees such as representatives of the renewable energy industry, farming bodies, local environmental organisations, community groups and members of the public. All documents would be available to view in the Council's Offices in Caledfryn, Denbigh and County Hall, Ruthin, public libraries and on the Denbighshire County Council website. A press notice will be issued in local papers and an article encouraging comments will also be posted on the Council's website. Following the consultation exercise, a summary of all consultation responses and any proposed amendments to the Wind Energy Development Interim Planning Guidance will be reported back to Planning Committee in the new year.

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

5.1 Draft Corporate Priorities 2012-17. The IPG would positively contribute to the following proposed corporate priorities:

- *Modernising the Council to deliver efficiencies and improve services for our customers:*
The IPG will provide greater clarity to applicants and better inform planning decisions.

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

6.1 In past experience, the publication of a Public Notice in local newspapers costs approximately £700.

6.2 All other remaining costs (officer hours, printing, etc) will be met within existing departmental budgets and costs may be recovered from the Welsh Government Planning Improvement Fund 2012/13 allocation.

7. What consultations have been carried out?

7.2 No formal consultation has been carried out on the proposals set out above. General discussion with Members was held at a training session on 12 September 2012

8. Chief Finance Officer Statement

8.1. As noted, costs will be met within existing budgets.

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

9.1 The aim of the Interim Planning Guidance is to clarify the planning requirements for wind turbine planning applications and to establish clear guidelines against which proposals for farm diversification and community driven energy schemes are assessed in advance of

the production and adoption of a Wind Energy Supplementary Planning Guidance note (SPG).

9.2 Without clear guidance in place, there is a risk that insufficient information is provided with planning applications, which may lead to delays in the determination of planning applications. There would also be no consistent basis against which the farm diversification merits and material community benefits of proposals can be assessed, which could impinge on the Council's ability to make consistent planning decisions.

10. Power to make the Decision

10.1 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

APPENDIX 1:

PLEASE SEE ATTACHED 'WIND ENERGY DEVELOPMENT INTERIM PLANNING GUIDANCE (CONSULTATION DRAFT)'