

Planning Committee

A meeting of Planning Committee was held on Friday, 24th October, 2008.

Present: Cllr Roy Rix (Chairman), Cllr Jim Beall, Cllr Mrs Jennie Beaumont, Cllr John Gardner, Cllr Robert Gibson, Cllr David Harrington, Cllr Miss Tina Large, Cllr Colin Leckonby (vice-Cllr Hilary Aggio), Cllr Bill Noble, Cllr Ross Patterson, Cllr Mrs Maureen Rigg, Cllr Andrew Sherris (vice-Cllr Philip Broughton).

Officers: M. Chicken, A. Glossop, B. Jackson, R. McGuckin, P. Shovlin, C. Snowdon, C. Straughan (DNS), J. Butcher, M. Jones (LD).

Also in attendance: Applicant and members of the public.

Apologies: Cllr Hilary Aggio, Cllr Phillip Broughton, Cllr Paul Kirton, Cllr Steve Walmsley

P 103/08 **Declarations of Interest**

Cllr Beaumont declared a personal/non prejudicial interest due to knowing members of the public in attendance through her ward work, being the Cabinet member for Environment, and being a member of Kirklevington & Castle Leavington Parish Council. Cllr Mrs Beaumont noted that she took no part in the discussion when Hilton Parish Council considered the application.

Cllr Harrington declared a personal/non prejudicial interest due to being an employee of Middlesbrough Council, which was mentioned on page five of the report, however he did not have a connection with the Planning Department.

Cllr Rix declared a personal/non prejudicial interest due to being a members of the Ramblers Society.

P 104/08 **08/2372/EIS** **Land North And South Of Hilton Seamer Road** **East Of Hilton**

Erection of 3 no. wind turbines together with associated crane pads, access tracks, site compound, ancillary works and meteorological mast and control building

Consideration was given to an application that sought permission for the erection of 3 wind turbines, together with the associated development of crane pads, access tracks, site compounds, meteorological mast, control building, accesses and other ancillary development.

Each turbine consisted of a main support tower and three blades and was specified as having a maximum blade tip height of 125m. Whilst a specific turbine model had not been specified, it was not envisaged that this would differ from the generic appearance as detailed. Each turbine would have a foundation and crane hard standing area. The meteorological mast was specified as having a maximum height of 80m and would be erected to monitor the performance of the wind farm. Underground electrical cabling and communications cables would connect each turbine to a control building, which would in turn connect to the National Grid.

A total of 216 representations of support had been received and 367 of objection. Objections to the scheme related mainly to visual impact, safety, amenity, and economic and environmental reasons. The letters of support received consider that wind was a clean, free local resource which should be utilised, that the local impacts would be outweighed by the wider environmental benefits, that wind power needs to be fully supported to combat global warming and climate change and that they were an attractive addition to the scenery and could act as a tourist attraction. Comments further considered that there was a need to protect the needs of future generations whilst Britain needed to be able to generate energy without relying on imports from other countries and that the proposal would be beneficial to farm diversification and the local economy generating contracts for the local area

No objections had been received from consultees with responsibility for air traffic safety, Ornithology, archaeology and cultural heritage, microwave links and power lines.

The Head of Technical Services considered that there was insufficient information submitted to fully understand and assess the impact of construction vehicle movements on the surrounding highway network and on its associated features.

Natural England considered that there was insufficient information submitted to clearly demonstrate that there would be no adverse impacts on species especially protected by law.

An update report was tabled raising additional comments received, including five additional letters of objection and one additional letter of support.

The applicant was in attendance and addressed the Committee. The applicant outlined the background of his company, noting that they were involved in eight projects in differing stages of development, and how the proposed site was identified. He noted the report on the site that was carried out over a 14 month period and included consideration of local wildlife and consultation with local agency's and residents. The amount of energy that would be produced was also discussed.

There were 10 members of the public that addressed the committee opposed to the proposal. One member of the public had requested to give a PowerPoint presentation, and the Chair allowed this. The objections raised by the speakers included issues regarding Health & Safety and risk assessments; topple distance and shadow flicker that may be caused and the effect of this particularly to the nearby road; ecology issues including the possible affects on the bat population; the Regional Energy Strategy and how its requirements were being met by other developments in the area; and the landscape of the area and how there was the possibility of changing this from a rural to urban landscape and subsequent issues.

Two members of the public addressed the committee in favour of the proposal, noting that government policies were in favour of renewable energy and the House of Lords were urging the increase of development of renewable energy. The speakers noted that there had been no accidents locally with windfarms, and that while it may affect some of the wildlife living in the area, it would create

an environment for different species.

M. Chicken clarified several issues raised by the speakers, noting in particular that some of the developments mentioned as contributing to the Regional Energy Strategy were not classified as renewable energy e.g. burning waste.

Members raised concerns with the impact of the proposal on traffic in the area. Concerns were also raised regarding the effect on hedgerows, although it was noted that these would be reinstated with hedgerows that were of the same species. Members therefore considered that there had been insufficient information submitted in respect to construction traffic arrangements and in respect to the impact of the scheme on protected species and consequently the precise impacts and potential mitigation of impacts could not be fully considered. As such the proposed development was considered to be contrary to the guidance of the requirements of ODPM Circular 06/05 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation, PPS 9 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation and Policy GP1 of the Stockton on Tees Local Plan which required adequate consideration of impacts to be made prior to determination of the application.

RESOLVED that planning application 08/2372/EIS Land North and South Of Hilton Seamer Road East of Hilton be refused for the following reasons:

1. The Local Planning Authority is of the opinion that insufficient information had been submitted to demonstrate that the adverse effects on the surrounding highway network, its associated features and the village of Hilton could be acceptably mitigated, thereby being contrary to Policy GP1 of the adopted Stockton on Tees Local Plan.
2. The Local Planning Authority is of the opinion that the proposed development site lay within close proximity to areas which may currently be used as wildlife habitats and due to their form and nature, it was considered there was insufficient information submitted in order to demonstrate whether or not the development would have an adverse affect on species especially protected by law and as such adequate mitigation could not be determined. The proposed development was therefore considered to be contrary to the requirements of ODPM Circular 06/05 Biodiversity and Geographical Conservation - Statutory Obligations and Their Impact Within the Planning System, PPS 9 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation and Policy GP1 of the adopted Stockton on Tees Local Plan which required adequate consideration of impacts on protected species to be made.