

AYRSHIRE JOINT PLANNING STEERING GROUP
30th APRIL 2009

Wind Farm Supplementary Planning Guidance 2009

PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 To seek agreement for the Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan non statutory Supplementary Planning Guidance on Wind Farm Development to be passed to Councils for their individual approval.

BACKGROUND

- 2 Planning authorities are encouraged to support the development of wind farms where technology can operate efficiently and where environmental and cumulative impacts can be effectively addressed. The Scottish Government has requested that councils provide up to date planning frameworks for wind farms. Although up to date approved policies are contained within the Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan (Policies ECON 6 & ECON 7) it has been agreed that supplementary planning guidance should be prepared. The Guidance is intended to provide developers with greater clarity on which areas are likely to be acceptable and also indicate which areas it is not in terms of structure plan policies. The Guidance is also intended to assist in the preparation of the future local development plans that will be developed at a more detailed level and covers wind farms of all capacities.

SCOPE

- 3 The submitted supplementary policy statements are not intended to provide guidance on site specific issues associated with developments, off shore wind energy development, micro generation schemes or other renewable energy development or energy conservation. It does however apply to all new schemes, to extensions or repowering of existing schemes. The guidance is to be applied to all wind farm development including proposals over 50MW which are determined by the Scottish Government through the Energy Consents Unit under the Electricity Act 1989.
- 4 The Guidance is divided into two sections: Spatial Framework and Visual and Landscape considerations. To support the written content of the Guidance a web mapping facility has been prepared to illustrate the constraints and their spatial extent <http://gis.south-ayrshire.gov.uk/mapsAJPUWindFarm/>

CONTENT

Spatial Framework

- 5 The process and content of SPG is heavily prescribed by national planning advice contained within ANNEX 2 to PAN 45. This guidance requires spatial frameworks to be developed which;
 - Identify areas that require significant protection from wind farm development; this includes areas which have national and international natural heritage value, greenbelts and areas where the cumulative impact of wind farms limit further development. (Illustrated by Map1 in the Guidance)
 - Areas with potential constraints (illustrated by Map2 & Map 3) and where proposals will be considered on their individual merits against policy criteria. and
 - Areas within which appropriate proposals are likely to be supported subject to the detailed consideration (Map 4)
- 6 In addition to the above, Government advice requires Planning Authorities to take into account cumulative impact and to afford areas significant protection if it is felt an acceptable threshold has been reached. The Guidance has sought to incorporate this advice by minimizing the impact of large scale wind farms through the designation of a 30km buffer around the areas of search identified. By establishing a clear boundary and visual separation from other grouping of wind farms the intent is to minimize the perception of wind farmed landscapes covering large parts of Ayrshire. In addition to safeguarding landscape and visual interest this buffer mitigates the effects windfarms have on aviation. In addition in the light of recent consents covering the Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park significant protection is given to this landscape in the areas outside the EU designated Special Protection Area.

Visual & Landscape Issues

- 7 The diversity of the landscape is seen as a major asset in economic development, tourism, leisure and recreation as well as a source of pride and pleasure to residents. This diversity in character was analyzed by Land Use Consultants in 1998 and incorporated into the “Ayrshire Landscape Assessment”. Within this document planning and management guidelines included advice on the acceptability of tall structures and wind farms within the landscape character types. These character types were reviewed against a series of criteria which sought to define the sensitivity of these landscapes to change. In these defined areas of sensitive landscape character protection and enhancement of the landscape is recognized as a priority.
- 8 Further advice was also prepared by Land Use Consultants in 2004 and this considered the cumulative effect of meeting future national targets. Importantly this advice showed that this could be partially mitigated by a planned approach which concentrated development on a small number of large schemes. The above advice as it relates to wind farm

development has been summarised within the schedules and maps contained in the Appendix to the Guidance and is intended to be used as a basis for the consideration of the suitability of wind farm and wind turbine locations to the landscape.

Web Map Facility

9. Because of the large amounts of data needed to analyse constraints on developing wind farms the information is difficult to portray in a printed text. A web map facility to support the Guidance has therefore been developed showing clearly the areas of opportunity and constraint. It also illustrates current wind farm development and those in the planning process. It will be maintained as a live facility on the Steering Group web site and will be updated on a regular basis in the light of changing circumstance. It has a temporary access via <http://gis.south-ayrshire.gov.uk/mapsAJPUWindFarm/>

CONCLUSION

10. It is important to note the Supplementary Planning Guidance does not in any way change or alter policy within the Joint Structure Plan. Work in producing the guidance has confirmed the validity of the Areas of Search, identifies within these areas opportunity for future development and confirms and clearly defines areas which will be afforded significant protection from large scale wind farms. The Guidance does clarify how current policy is defined and is more explicit than previous technical working notes on what generally will and will not be acceptable. This relates in part specifically to the cumulative impact of wind farm development in order to provide further advice on Policy ECON 7 (D).

RECOMMENDATION

11. The Steering Group are asked to agree the finalised Supplementary Planning Guidance on Wind Farms, to pass the document for formal approval by the three Councils and thereafter to display the both the text and the supporting data on the Steering Group web site.

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