

SG Rural Development 2: Wind farms and large wind turbines

We will approve wind energy development, subject to other policies, if it is located, sited, and designed in accordance with the following criteria. The applicant must demonstrate that:

- 1) the proposal will not compromise public health or safety; AND**
- 2) the proposal will be set back from roads and railways to a distance greater than the height of the turbine(s) proposed; AND**
- 3) no part of the development will give rise to electro-magnetic interference to communications installations (including radar or air traffic control systems of either the National Air Traffic Services (NATS) or the Ministry of Defence (MoD)); or will adversely affect the quality of radio or TV reception; or will have a detrimental impact on the safeguarding zones for airports, airfields or airstrips (either licensed or unlicensed), aircraft flight paths, or MoD low-flying areas; AND**
- 4) the proposal will not have a significant adverse effect on the amenity of dwelling houses; AND**
- 5) the proposal will not have a significant adverse effect on tourism or recreation interests, including users of any Core Path or other established public access for walking, cycling or horse riding; AND**
- 6) assessment of the proposal has taken into consideration the cumulative impacts of neighbouring wind turbines and wind farm development previously granted consent. At least these cumulative impacts should include potential impacts on landscape, local amenity, and natural heritage**

In all cases, if consent is granted, we will impose appropriate conditions (along with a legal agreement under Section 75, where necessary), relating to the removal of the turbine(s) and associated equipment, and to the restoration of the site, whenever the consent expires or the project ceases to operate for a specific period.

Reasoned Justification

The aim of this policy is to encourage the sensitive development of wind energy facilities.

Assessment of any application will also require to consider visual and landscape impacts, natural heritage and the historic environment, and the potential impact on the local economy within the context of other policies in the plan. Impacts on sensitive species, including geese and birds of prey, are significant issues that regularly need to be addressed in relation to proposed wind energy developments.

As more landowners are expressing an interest in diversifying into wind energy, it is necessary to have a policy that facilitates development, while ensuring the protection of the local landscape and its character, of nature conservation interests and of general amenity. Wind energy development can range from a single “domestic” turbine to a commercial wind farm with many wind turbines. Individual domestic wind turbines (those designed to serve the needs of one household without significant energy export) are not subject to this policy.

Wind energy developments can interfere with broadcast communications and signals, depending on their location and design. Therefore, it is important that developers consult with the local emergency services, local authority, gas and electricity companies, the Office of Communications, airport authorities, Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and the MoD at the earliest possible stage. The Planning Authority will take into account the views of the relevant communications operators, CAA and the MoD, when determining a planning application for any wind energy development.

The proposal must be sited to minimise adverse impact on the safety and amenity of any regularly occupied buildings and the grounds that they occupy with regard to ice throw in winter conditions, shadow flicker, shadow throw, visual intrusion or the likely effect of noise generation. It is anticipated that, taking into account all of these factors, development should be not less than 10 rotor diameters from the nearest dwelling. The actual desirable separation distance will be dependent on a range of factors, including topography, safety issues, noise, shadow-flicker, shadow-throw and the size of the turbines. The distance of at least 10 rotor diameters specified is in accordance with good practice identified in PAN 45 to minimise shadow flicker.

In the case of noise, a reasonable standard to protect residential amenity should be applied: information about thresholds can be found in PAN45. However, thresholds could be varied, depending on the specific, local circumstances, for instance, where the occupier of a property has some financial interest in the wind farm or turbine. The onus will be placed on developers to show that the impacts of their development have been minimised and are also within the thresholds stated in PAN45.

Wind energy developers should demonstrate the capacity of the site for the proposed wind energy development through design and layout that is appropriate to the landscape character and scale of topography of the location. Wind energy proposals should not have the potential to be experienced as dominant or overbearing in relation to the site’s scale of topography or the intrinsic sensitivity of the location. With this caveat Aberdeenshire Council places no specific limit on the size of turbine that could be erected.

Associated infrastructure should also be taken into account when considering wind farm development: this may include grid connections, service buildings, borrow pits and access tracks. It may be possible to re-route paths in consultation with the community and at the developer’s expense.

Wind energy proposals in urban areas are likely to raise similar issues, and this policy should be applied to any wind energy element of any application in urban areas.

Within the policy a “neighbouring” wind energy proposal is one that could be seen from any part of the site, at ground level or otherwise as advised by the Planning Authority.

We have been unable to identify any areas which could accommodate wind farms greater than 20Mw, but this does not mean to say that windfarms of this scale could not be considered. Proposals for large windfarms will also be considered within the context of this policy.

Further Planning Advice is provided on wind energy developments: *Use of wind energy in Aberdeenshire: Part 1 - Wind energy guidance for developers*; and *Part 2 - Wind energy guidance for assessing developments*.