



Penderfyniad ar yr Apêl

Ymweliad â safle a wnaed ar 08/01/13

gan **A D Poulter BA BArch RIBA**

Arolygydd a benodir gan Weinidogion Cymru

Dyddiad: 30/01/13

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 08/01/13

by **A D Poulter BA BArch RIBA**

an Inspector appointed by the Welsh Ministers

Date: 30/01/13

Appeal Ref: APP/H6955/A/12/2182171

Site address: Springhill Farm, Selattyn, Oswestry, ST10 7NZ.

The Welsh Ministers have transferred the authority to decide this appeal to me as the appointed Inspector.

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr David Wills / Quiet Revolution Limited against the decision of Wrexham County Borough Council.
 - The application Ref GLY P/2012/0216, dated 8 March 2012, was refused by notice dated 30 July 2012.
 - The development proposed is 5 x 5kW horizontal axis wind turbines of up to 25 metres.
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Decision

1. I dismiss the appeal.

Main Issue

2. This is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

3. In accordance with the Design and Access Statement that accompanied the application, the proposal is for the erection and operation of 5 horizontal axis wind turbines, each with a maximum rated capacity of 5kW, for a duration of 25 years. The 'candidate' turbines would have a hub height of about 18m, and a rotor diameter of about 7m, giving a maximum height to blade tip of about 21.5m. The proposed layout was amended during the course of the application being considered by the Council. I have considered the appeal on the basis of the amended layout as all interested persons have had the opportunity of commenting on it, and the Council has considered the application on this basis. In accordance with the amended scheme the proposed turbines would be situated within an area of sloping grazing land above and to the north of Springhill Farm.
4. The development plan for the area is the *Wrexham Unitary Development Plan 1996-2011* (UDP, 2005). The most relevant of the policies that I have been referred to are policies PS12, EC5, PS2 and GDP1. Policy PS12 supports proposals for the generation of renewable energy provided that the wider environmental benefits are not outweighed by any detrimental impacts. Policy EC5 gives priority to the conservation and enhancement of the landscape within Special Landscape Areas (SLAs). Strategic Policies include Policy PS2, which requires that development must not materially detrimentally affect countryside, landscape/townscape character, open space or the

quality of the natural environment. General development principles include Policy GDP1, criterion (a) of which seeks to ensure that development would accord with the character of the site and would make a positive contribution to the appearance of the nearby locality.

5. The site is within a designated SLA, and outside any of the Strategic Search Areas (SSAs) shown on the maps contained in *Technical Advice Note 8: Planning for Renewable Energy*. In accordance with a series of Local Planning Guidance Notes based on LANDMAP data, it is within landscape character area 2 & 3, known as the Berwyn Foothills and Ceiriog Forest, and close to character area 4 – the Ceiriog Valley. The boundaries between character areas are transitional rather than precise, though my observations of the immediate surroundings of the site accord more with the key visual characteristics of character area 2 & 3. Nevertheless, both character areas have a sense of tranquillity and remoteness from urban areas, and are strongly rural.
6. The proposed turbines would be tall, clearly man-made structures that would be functional in appearance and unrelated to the purposes of agriculture. They would be remote from, and not in keeping with any other large man-made structures in the area. Because of their elevation and exposed location they would be prominent, and the eye would be drawn to them by the movement of the rotor blades. I consider for these reasons that the proposed development would be significantly harmful to the rural character of the area, to its tranquillity and sense of remoteness, and thus to the character of the SLA. As it would not conserve or enhance the SLA it would not accord with the priorities set by UDP Policy EC5. It would also conflict with the aims and guidelines set out in the overall management strategy for the above character areas, which include the objectives of ensuring that any new development would be integrated within the landscape and the avoidance of visually intrusive development which is not in keeping with the area.
7. The proposed turbines would produce energy from renewable resources that would be used locally or exported to the grid, thus helping to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to meet national commitments relating to renewable energy targets. However, the amount of electricity generated would be very small in relation to the national need. On the other hand, the degree of harm to the designated SLA would be significant, and the harm would be experienced by very many people over the lifetime of the proposed development. On balance I consider that the wider environmental benefits would be clearly outweighed by the detrimental impacts. I therefore conclude that the proposed development would also conflict with UDP Policy PS12. As it would detrimentally affect countryside, would not accord with the character of the site, and would not make a positive contribution to the appearance of the nearby locality there would also be conflict with UDP Policies PS2 and GDP1. I conclude that the proposal would conflict with the development plan as a whole.
8. Turning to national planning policy, in accordance with paragraph 12.9.9 of *Planning Policy Wales* (PPW, Edition 5, November 2012), development plan policies should encourage renewable energy projects of the proposed scale, and clearly set out the local criteria against which such proposals will be evaluated. UDP Policy PS12 is generally consistent with that policy. As advised at paragraph 2.13 of TAN8, outside the SSAs there is a balance to be struck between the desirability of renewable energy and landscape protection. I have concluded that the environmental and economic benefits of renewable energy generation would not outweigh the harm that would arise to the landscape in this instance. For these reasons, I find nothing in national

planning policy or guidance that would lead me to determine the appeal other than in accordance with the development plan.

9. I have taken into account all other matters that have been raised, including the support for the proposal from some local residents. I acknowledge that the proposed development would be sited away from hedgerows and woodland to protect wildlife. However, I do not consider that the harm that I have identified could be overcome by the use of planning conditions, and I find nothing to turn me from the conclusion that the appeal should be dismissed.

A D Poulter

INSPECTOR