

Draft Supplementary Guidance 33

Wind Farms & other Wind Turbines





Draft Supplementary Guidance 33

Wind Farms and other Wind Turbines

The purpose of this SG is to provide:

- definitions of terms used in the policy;
- further planning policy guidance relative to the location, scale, detailed siting and design of wind farms, smaller wind turbine installations and single turbines;
- technical requirements for consultation for turbine proposals – particularly those specific to the Plan area; and
- links to other sources of advice on issues relevant to potential environmental impacts from the construction and operation of turbines

Policy

Local Development Plan - Wind turbines locational policy:

Proposals for the installation of wind turbines will be considered in relation to:

1. national planning policy and guidance current at the time of determination of applications (or for responding to Electricity Act consultations);
2. current locational and design guidance issued by SNH;
3. Stirling Council's identified 'Areas of Significant Protection' and 'Areas of Search' (for each size class of turbine) as adopted in March 2011; and
4. the findings of the 'Stirling landscape sensitivity and capacity' study as adopted in March 2008 . Conservation of the character and quality of the Plan area's landscapes is a primary consideration.





Developments will be permitted if they are of a scale, layout and nature such that adverse environmental impacts, including cumulative impacts, are avoided or minimised to the satisfaction of the planning authority.

Policy interpretation & definitions

Turbine size and permitted development:

For the avoidance of doubt this policy applies to all scales of wind turbine development and is not limited to developments with a potential installed capacity of greater than 20 mW.

References to turbine size should be interpreted as follows:

Overall height = tower/mounting height plus height to apex of swept 'blade' area. e.g. A turbine with a tower/hub height of 55 metres and blades 25 metres long, is an '80 metre turbine'. The turbine size classes used here are:

Micro Generating capacity up to 50kW

Small < 25m

Medium 25.1 – 50m

Medium - Large 50.1 – 80m

Large 80.1 - 110m

Very Large >110m

The term 'wind farm' is used below to denote 'groups of large or very large (>80 metres) turbines'. Clusters means up to 3 turbines of 80m or less in height.



The siting and design guidance will also be the basis of planning advice, if sought, relative to permitted developments (micro-generation only; power output below 50kW). The terms of the revision of the GPDO in 2010 to include micro-generation equipment still means that most free-standing wind turbines will require either prior notification to the Planning Authority or planning permission. Prior notification enables the Planning authority to approve the ‘size and design’ of the turbine and to determine ‘whether the prior approval of the authority will be required in respect of the siting and external appearance of the proposed wind turbine’. In order to take advantage of permitted development rights, micro-generation must be for ‘domestic purposes’ and the turbine located ‘within the curtilage of a dwelling’.

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) requirements:

Large wind farms and some smaller scale development proposals will require to be supported by Environmental Impact Assessment. Any development containing at least two turbines or any turbine of at least 15m as measured from the ground to the turbine hub may require EIA. In most cases proposals for single turbines will not require EIA, whatever the turbine size, but the Council will always wish to see (as evidenced by supporting documents) that an appropriate level of investigation has been carried out relative to site-specific environmental issues. Even quite small turbines may impact upon, for instance, historic heritage (e.g. the setting of a Listed Building) or biodiversity (e.g. bat feeding areas).

Policy interpretation:

“... the development of wind farms [should be supported] in locations where the technology can operate efficiently and environmental and cumulative impacts can be satisfactorily addressed” (Scottish Planning Policy, 2010). The national planning policy and guidance referred to in paragraph (1) of the policy are the SPP (2010) and the on-line advice that replaced PAN45 in February 2011.



Considerations relevant to paragraph (2) will include the SNH - published map of Scotland (<http://www.snh.gov.uk/docs/C208975.pdf>) showing strategic areas zoned according to their general environmental sensitivity to the impacts associated with wind farm development. The Plan area falls mainly within Zone 2 (Medium Sensitivity), with some of the undesignated lowlands being (Zone 1 – Low Sensitivity) and Flanders Moss and the National Park fringes Zone 3 (High Sensitivity). The agency's written guidance is augmented from time to time. The other principal references currently are:

Renewable energy and the natural heritage (SNH rev. 2010)

<http://www.snh.gov.uk/docs/C272217.pdf>

Strategic Locational Guidance for Onshore Wind Farms in respect of the Natural Heritage (SNH rev. 2009) <http://www.snh.gov.uk/docs/A247182.pdf>

Siting and Designing Wind Farms in the Landscape (SNH rev. 2009)

<http://www.snh.gov.uk/docs/A247182.pdf>

Managing Change in the Historic Environment: Setting (Historic Scotland 2010)

<http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/setting-2.pdf>

The Council has identified Areas of Significant Protection and Areas of Search (paragraph (3) of the policy) using the methodology formerly set out in prescriptive detail in PAN45 Annex 2 (superseded - and now summarised in the on-line advice). The method was varied by the Council in order to accommodate the cumulative impacts recommendations emerging from the Landscape Study (Findings adopted by the Council in March 2008); these are the basis for the Areas of Significant Protection around the Braes of Doune and Earlsburn wind farms.

Because of their means of identification the above Areas of Significant Protection



relate specifically to large turbine wind farms.

The Area of Significant Protection covering Glen Lochay is an absolute judgement based on the prevalence of protective environmental designations in that area. It is therefore considered relevant to all turbine sizes.

The Areas of Search relate to specified size classes of turbine, again as identified in the Landscape Study. Scale is one of the key characteristics of Stirling's landscapes in terms of its capacity to absorb new development without loss of character and quality. Mapping of areas exhibiting landscape constraints and sensitivities in the Study led by sieving to the Areas of Search. This guidance draws attention to the further, non-landscape based constraints that may limit opportunities to site turbines even within the Areas of Search.

The development of a third large-turbine wind farm at Craigengelt and the approval of an extension to the Earlsburn wind farm have further limited the capacity of the Stirling landscape to accommodate additional wind farm development.

[Insert maps of Areas of Significant Protection and Areas of Search – from website]

All proposals, whether located within the identified Areas of Search with some scope for development, in landscape terms, or not, will be assessed on their merits.

In assessing whether proposed developments “are of a scale, layout and nature such that adverse environmental impacts, including cumulative impacts, are avoided or minimised” the Council will consider the following:

- Is the landscape character and scale capable of accommodating the scale and type of development proposed – alone or in conjunction with other existing or proposed wind turbines?



The landscape of the Council area possesses distinctive characteristics of high quality. In relation to visual impact and the maintenance of the key characteristics and quality of the landscape, the capacity of the plan area to accommodate additional large and very large wind turbines (80 – 110 metres, and >110 metres) is considered to be severely limited; for medium-large turbines (50 – 80 metres) the capacity is considered to be very localised. For medium turbines (25 – 50 metres) the capacity is more significant. ‘Areas of Search’ for each size category are shown on Policy Map 2. [Check Map numbers]

In ‘Areas of Search’ there may still be visual and landscape sensitivities (and ecological and other constraints) that need to be addressed through appropriate location, scale and design of proposals.

The maps that have been used to create the ‘areas of search’ for each size class of turbine are Figures 12 – 14 in the Study report (see

http://www.stirling.gov.uk/turbine_report_figures_reduced.pdf). These in turn are a summary of Figures 5(a-d) – 8. The text explaining these constraints and their effects upon the capacity to accommodate wind turbines is in the following sections of the report:

3a – Landscape scale (pp 29 – 33)

3b – Distinctive hill edges (pp 34 – 37)

3c – Iconic landscape features (pp 37 – 40)

3d – Impacts of existing and consented windfarms (pp 40 - 44)

Additionally, the report identifies areas with sensitivities to turbine developments for



three reasons:

3e – Areas of landscape character incompatible with existing and consented windfarm sites (pp 44 – 46)

3f – Landscape pattern (pp 46 – 49)

3g – Area valued for sense of remoteness while being easily accessed from an urban centre (pp 50 – 53)

(see http://www.stirling.gov.uk/turbine_report_reduced_part_1-6.pdf).

Landscape character types found in the Plan area are described in the Study according to their sensitivity to windfarm development. They are mapped as Figure 16 of the report (see http://www.stirling.gov.uk/turbine_report_figures_reduced.pdf) and Section 3(ii) of the report sets out in detail the key landscape characteristics of each type (see http://www.stirling.gov.uk/turbine_report_reduced_part_2.pdf). Guidance is then provided on how these Character types might accommodate certain scales and types of wind farm development “where capacity exists”. This means within the ‘areas of search’, but the whole Plan area is within one or other of the Character types and so guidance can be found for any site within the Council area.

Appendix 10 of the report provides a ‘Checklist for assessment of windfarm proposals within [the] Stirling Area landscape’ http://www.stirling.gov.uk/turbine_report_appendices.pdf .

The location, scale and design of all wind farm proposals, and proposals for individual turbines or small clusters in the medium – very large size classes (>25m turbines) will also be assessed in relation to wind turbines that are established, approved or the subject of valid undetermined applications (including those located within neighbouring Planning Authority areas).



New proposals will not normally be acceptable where they would result in a significant adverse effect upon amenity, including features of landscape, wildlife conservation and/or historic heritage value, by reason of cumulative visual or ecological impact.

In particular, wind turbines proposed or likely to be perceived as extensions to existing wind farms will not be permitted if of significantly different colour, size and/or proportions (tower height to blade length ratio; nacelle design) to the existing turbines, or if laid out according to a discordant design concept.

For reasons of cumulative impact, discrete wind farms will not be supported within the Areas of Significant Protection around existing wind farms. Sensitive designed additions to these existing wind farms may be acceptable.

- Are landscape, wildlife and habitats of international and national importance likely to be significantly adversely impacted?
- Is historic heritage of national importance likely to be significantly adversely impacted?
- Will construction and operation have the potential to adversely impact upon the water environment (including water supply catchments)?
- Can aviation and telecommunication operational interests be protected?
- Can significant detrimental effects upon nearby residential areas be avoided?

Applicants must take into account:

- technical criteria established through national planning policy and guidance
- all relevant environmental protection policies in the Development Plan (or applied by other agencies, such as SEPA)

Micro and Small – Medium turbines:





Proposals for micro-generation wind turbines and other wind turbines with an overall height of 25m or less will be supported in principle anywhere in the Plan area.

Individual proposals will be assessed in terms of their local setting. They will normally be approved where it can be demonstrated that any adverse impacts (including cumulative impacts) are minimised by careful siting and design and there are no unacceptable impacts on the reasonable amenities of neighbouring residents. The impact of small, and in some situations medium, turbines may, depending on their location, be reduced by choice of appropriate colour finishes. Matt finishes are preferred in all cases.

Particular care will be required when considering the installation of micro – generation equipment in relation to the historic environment - see Policy 32 and Managing Change in the Historic Environment: Micro-renewables (Historic Scotland 2010) <http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/microrenewables.pdf>

Multiple installations outwith urban areas will only be permitted where there are judged to be no significant adverse visual, landscape or biodiversity impacts or other cumulative impacts.

Landscape Impact Assessment Guidelines for Small – Medium Turbines and ‘Clusters’

This part of the Supplementary Guidance only applies to landscape and visual considerations for proposals/applications that are not supported by an EIA.

1. Basic information relevant to the proposal and its assessment to be provided, at minimum:

a. Details of the height, design and colour of chosen turbine – or the short list of models under consideration.

Further Information

Please contact:

Economy, Planning and Regulation
Planning Services
Stirling Council
Viewforth
Stirling
FK8 2ET

Telephone: 01786 442515

E-mail: planning@stirling.gov.uk

If you need help or this information
supplied in an alternative format
please call 0845 277 700.



