

Code No. and Date Received	Name and Address of Applicant	Description and Location of Proposed Development
15/0316/FULL 18.05.2015	G2 Energy Renewable Developments Limited Mr P Hill 25 Osier Way Olney Office Park Olney Buckinghamshire MK46 5FP	Erect a single wind turbine, with a maximum blade tip height of 77m, along with accompanying access track, crane hardstanding, substation and temporary construction compound Groesfaen Farm Groes-Faen Terrace Bargoed CF81 9GH

APPLICATION TYPE: Full Application

SITE AND DEVELOPMENT

Location: The application site is located approximately 1.09km south-east of Deri and 2.21km North West of Aberbargoed.

Site description: The application site is located in a rural area comprising agricultural farmland that forms part of the landholding of Groesfaen Farm. The proposed development is located to the north of the buildings of Groesfaen Farm and the wind turbine would be located in a large pasture field with the access track in adjacent fields. The site is presently used for grazing.

The wider area is characterised by large areas of agricultural farmland that includes a scattering of individual residential properties and village settlements. The nearest residential property (not including Groesfaen Farmhouse) is located 562m northwest of the proposed development. There is no other residential property situated within 650m of the turbine location.

Development: Full planning consent is sought for the erection of a single wind turbine, with a maximum blade tip height of 77m, along with accompanying access track, crane hardstanding, substation and temporary construction compound. The proposed development comprises the installation of an EWT Direct Wind 54 500kW turbine. The turbine has a hub height of 50m; a rotor diameter of 54m; and, a maximum tip height of 77m. The wind turbine is made up of the following components, which will be individually transported and assembled on-site using a mobile crane:

- Rotor blades x 3
- Tubular tower
- Rotor hub (holds the blades in position as they turn)
- Nacelle (cover housing for the generating components of the turbine).

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The turbine will require buried concrete foundations measuring approximately 12m in diameter and 1.5m in depth with a tapering cross section. The foundations will be laid at sufficient depth to ensure the top of the foundation is flush with the surrounding ground level. All imported material will be inert and will be from a local batching plant. The turbine is proposed to be coloured light grey with a semi-matt finish to reduce their contrast with the background sky and to minimise reflections. It will be uniform in colour and will not contain any company logo or advertisements. The rated power of the turbine at a speed of 10 metres/second (m/s) is 500kW. The turbine would begin generation at 3.0 m/s and would cut-out at 25 m/s when wind speeds would be too high for safe generation. The wind turbine has a design life of 23 years. The wind turbine is expected to generate renewable electricity sufficient to power a minimum of 550 homes.

A hardcore crane standing will also be required to construct the turbine. This will measure 20m by 35m and will be located adjacent to the wind turbine. The hardstanding will remain in place for the life of the project to accommodate cranes that may be needed for major repairs. Access to the wind turbine site will be via an upgrade of the pre-existing access track for Groesfaen Farm for 524 metres and new access tracks totalling 654 metres. Both new and upgraded tracks will need to be 4.0 m wide and run through the landholding. This will comprise of crushed gravel or stone; no concrete or tarmac will be laid.

A small external substation building (approximately 3m x 6m) will be located adjacent to the wind turbine. This will house high voltage switchgear, transformer and metering equipment and will be built on a slab foundation of 0.6m depth. A temporary construction compound will be needed during construction. Construction is planned to take no more than 12 weeks. The turbine is a temporary structure and will be dismantled and removed from the site at the end of the operational period. The site will then be restored to its former condition. There will be no remnants of the wind turbine structure. Photographic records of the site will be taken immediately before construction work commences and the site will be restored to the same condition after the end of the operational period.

PLANNING HISTORY

5/5/90/0297 - Construct garage & parking area for commercial vehicles and erect 3 dwellings & new access road - Refused 28.06.90.

5/5/92/0470 - Construct new haulage depot, access roads and three dwellings - Refused 28.10.92.

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5/5/93/0640 - Erect new haulage depot and one dwelling. Refused - 18.11.93.

P/02/0745 - Retain steel clad building and pallet storage area - Refused
12.09.02.

P/02/1235 - Retain steel clad building and pallet storage area. Granted 06.12.02.

POLICY

Site Allocation

Local Development Plan: The site lies in the open countryside beyond a settlement boundary, it is not allocated for any specific use).

Policies

Local Development Plan: SP1 (Development Strategy), SP5 (Settlement Boundaries), SP8 (Minerals Protection), SP10 (Conservation of Natural Heritage), CW2 (Amenity), CW3 (Highways), CW4 (Natural Heritage Protection), CW15 (General Locational Constraints), CW19 (Locational Constraints - Rural Development and Diversification), CW22 (Locational Constraints - Minerals).

National Policy: Technical Advice Note 8: Planning for Renewable Energy, July 2005. Planning Policy Wales (Edition 7), Nov 2014.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Did the application have to be screened for an EIA? - Yes.

Was an EIA required? - No.

COAL MINING LEGACY

Is the site within an area where there are mining legacy issues? - No.

CONSULTATION

Transportation Engineering Manager - No objection subject to conditions.

Head Of Public Protection - No objection subject to conditions.

Senior Engineer (Land Drainage) - No objection subject to the submission of a drainage scheme.

Countryside And Landscape Services - Raises objection to the application on the basis of the impact of the proposal in the Gelligaer Common Registered Landscape of Special Historic Interest.

Rights Of Way Officer - Provides advice to be conveyed to the developer.

Minerals Officer - No objection.

Principal Valuer - No objection.

Police Architectural Liaison Officer - No objection.

National Air Traffic Services - No objection.

Ministry Of Defence - No objection.

Dwr Cymru - No objection.

Wales & West Utilities - No objection.

British Telecom - No objection.

Natural Resources Wales - Raises objection to the application on the basis of the impact of the proposal on the Gelligaer Common Registered Landscape of Special Historic Interest.

Glam/Gwent Archaeological Trust - No objection subject to a condition requiring archaeological mitigation.

Joint Radio Company Limited - No objection.

Public Health Wales - No objections raised.

Darran Valley Community Council - No objection.

ADVERTISEMENT

Extent of advertisement: The application was advertised by means of a site notice and neighbour letters.

Response: None.

Summary of observations: None.

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SECTION 17 CRIME AND DISORDER ACT

What is the likely effect of the determination of this application on the need for the Local Planning Authority to do all it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in its area? None.

EU HABITATS DIRECTIVE

Does the development affect any protected wildlife species? Based on current evidence, this is unlikely to be a significant issue in this case, but an advisory note will be attached to the consent and sent to the applicant as a precautionary measure.

Is this development Community Infrastructure Levy liable? No.

ANALYSIS

Policies: The application has been considered in accordance with national guidance, local plan policy and supplementary planning guidance. The main points to consider in the determination of this application are in respect of the landscape, ecological and highways impacts of the scheme.

Landscape Impact

The location of the proposed turbine on this ridge between the Rhymney and Darren Valleys, detached from the recently approved and erected turbines above New Tredegar, Pen y Fan Ganol (Manmoel) and Oakdale will extend the impact of such development over a wider area of the borough to the detriment of the character of the landscape. On the opposite side of the Darran Valley is the historic landscape associated with Gelligaer Common. The proposed turbine will be clearly visible from that landscape, and due to its proximity, will have an adverse impact on the context and therefore character of the area. Welsh Office Circular 61/96 - Planning and the Historic Environment, advises that in determining planning applications the registered park and garden should be taken into account particularly where the proposed development is of a sufficient scale to have more than a local impact on historic landscape.

The LDP allocates the common as a special landscape area (NH1.2) and it is described in the appendix to the Plan as an important and increasingly rare upland landscape within South East Wales. Policy CW4 states that development proposals that affect locally designated natural heritage features, will only be permitted where they conserve and where appropriate enhance the distinctive or characteristic features of the SLA.

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The Council's Landscape Architect has offered the following comments.

"Of particular concern is the potential indirect effect of the proposal upon the Historic aspect area Cynon HL831 Gelligaer Common, which is also the Gelligaer Common Landscape recorded on the 'Register of Landscapes of Special Historic Interest in Wales' compiled by CADW. This landscape is referred to as an area of unenclosed common, which is largely identical to that depicted on the OS 1st edition map with little evidence of encroachment by industrial extractive activity or modern forestry plantation. The proposed turbine would be located on the adjacent ridgeline, within 2km of the eastern boundary of the Historic Landscape Area, over looked and clearly visible from the area. I believe the indirect effect upon this outstanding landscape could be 'major adverse'."

He has also stated that the impact of the turbine from a number of viewpoints and sensitive receptors throughout the area would be 'major adverse' rather than 'minor adverse' as suggested by the developer.

In conclusion the Landscape Architect states: -

"Site of the proposed Groesfaen Turbine is not within a Special Landscape Area or a Visually Important Local Landscape as identified within the Local Development Plan. It is however within a pastoral landscape, of small to medium sized fields, enclosed by a strong linear pattern of dry-stone wall boundaries. The introduction of a tall vertical element, and movement into this landscape would I believe be at variance to its present character.

The proposed turbine would I believe be a visually prominent and at times a dominant vertical element in potential views from a number of properties and the Rhymney Valley Ridgeway Walk, open access areas and roads on the Cefn y Brithdir Ridge and Gelligaer Common.

I believe the presence of the proposed turbine within 2 km of the eastern proposed turbine will have a significant adverse effect upon the setting of the 'Gelligaer Common Landscape of Special Historic Interest in Wales'.

I believe there is the potential for a significant adverse cumulative impact with this proposed turbine and the existing operational, consented and in planning turbines within the 12 km cumulative study area to the east of the application site. I would therefore recommend that the application be considered for refusal."

Natural Resources Wales have also raised concerns with regard to the impact of the proposal on the historic landscape.

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Concerns about the impact of the scheme must be balanced against the need for renewable energy. In that regard the UK is subject to the requirements of the EU Renewable Energy Directive, which includes a UK target of 15% of energy from renewable sources by 2020. This includes both heat and electricity, and is seen as a minimum and a starting point from which the proportion should rise. At present in terms of electricity, there are 8 wind turbines and 3 solar farms in the county borough. These make a significant contribution. The 2 turbines at Oakdale for example generate as much electricity as the 1,834 domestic PV systems in the county borough. The amount of electricity generated in the county borough is around 12% of the predicted amount likely to be used in 2020. In terms of heat however, the figure is less than 1%. It is envisaged that a further target above the 15% aim is likely to be set soon as it is an initial target on the road to the 80% reduction in carbon emissions required by the EU. Even if Caerphilly borough exceeds the target of 15% before 2020 it will be expected to push on further and provide more. Consequently the landscape impacts of this turbine have to be assessed against this backdrop of a shortfall in the energy production within the county borough to meet predicted needs. On balance it is considered that the need to provide renewable energy outweighs the harm that the proposal would have on the landscape character and visual amenity of the historic landscape and as such the proposal is acceptable in planning terms."

Impact on Ecology and Wildlife

A Baseline Ecological Survey and Bird Surveys were carried out on this site. The findings of those surveys have been considered by Natural Resources Wales and the Council's Ecologists and no objections have been raised. On that basis it is not felt that the proposal would have a detrimental impact on ecology or wildlife.

Distance to Nearest Dwelling.

Annex D to TAN 8 does suggest that a 500m separation distance between a turbine and any residential property should be used in order to avoid unacceptable noise impacts. However, it also suggests that when applied in a rigid manner this can lead to conservative results and as such flexibility is advised. In that regard a noise survey has been submitted with the application which indicates that the noise levels at the nearest properties are acceptable within established guidelines. In that regard it is not considered that a 500m separation distance is required in this instance.

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Highways Impacts

A Transport Management Plan has been submitted with the application and this has been assessed by the Transportation Engineering Services Manager. He is satisfied that the turbine can be transported safely to the site without having any detrimental impacts on the highway network, subject to the imposition of suitably worded conditions.

Comments from consultees: Addressed above.

Comments from public: None.

Other material considerations: None.

RECOMMENDATION that Permission be GRANTED

This permission is subject to the following condition(s)

- 01) The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of five years from the date of this permission.
REASON: To comply with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
- 02) The level of noise from the wind turbine (hereby approved) measured at the nearest noise sensitive properties shall not exceed 35dB(A) (LA90, 10 mins) up to wind speeds of 10m/s at 10m height when calculated in accordance with the attached Guidance Notes, or such other guidance as may be agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.
REASON: In the interest of the amenity of noise sensitive properties.
- 03) During the course of the investigation required by Condition 04, should the wind turbine or turbines be identified as operating above the parameters specified in Condition 02, the wind turbines will be modified, limited or shut down as required to ensure compliance with this condition. These measures shall be applied until such time as maintenance or repair is undertaken sufficient to reduce the absolute noise level of the operating turbines to within the parameters specified.
REASON: In the interest of the amenity of noise sensitive properties.

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- 04) Within 21 days from the receipt of a written request from the Local Planning Authority and following a noise complaint to the Local Planning Authority from the occupant of a dwelling which lawfully exists or has planning permission at the date of this consent, the wind turbine operator shall, at the operator's expense, engage an independent consultant approved by the Local Planning Authority to assess the level of noise emissions from the wind turbines at the complainant's property following the procedures described in the attached Guidance Notes or such other guidance as may be agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The independent consultant's assessment and conclusions regarding the said noise complaint, including all calculations, audio recordings and the raw data upon which those assessments and conclusions are based, shall be submitted for the approval of the Local Planning Authority within 2 months of the date of the written request, unless otherwise extended in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The assessment recommendations as may be approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority shall be implemented and carried out within a set timescale agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.
REASON: In the interest of the amenity of noise sensitive properties.
- 05) Following the commission of the wind turbine hereby approved, the power generation, the wind speed and direction data, shall be continuously logged in accordance with a method that shall have been agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority and such data shall be retained for a period of not less than 24 months and it shall be provided to the Local Planning Authority at its written request within 14 days of such request.
REASON: To monitor the wind turbine use and provide information to the Local Planning Authority to retain effective control.
- 06) Deliveries and construction works associated with the wind turbine hereby approved shall not take place outside the hours of 0700 and 1900 hours Mondays to Fridays, 0900 and 1600 hours Saturdays and not at all on Sundays and Public Holidays, unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.
REASON: In the interest of residential amenity.
- 07) Prior to the commissioning of the wind turbine hereby approved they shall have been fitted with a control system that automatically shuts down the turbines during times when shadow flicker occurs, in accordance with a scheme of control that shall have been agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority and the turbines shall be operated in accordance with the agreed scheme unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.
REASON: To control flicker in the interest of amenity of nearby flicker sensitive properties.

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- 08) Where any species listed under Schedules 2 or 4 of The Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations 1994 is present on the site (or other identified part) in respect of which this permission is hereby granted, no works of site clearance, demolition or construction shall take place in pursuance of this permission unless a licence to disturb any such species has been granted in accordance with the aforementioned Regulations and a copy thereof has been produced to the Local Planning Authority.
REASON: To ensure adequate protection to protected species.
- 09) Prior to the commencement of the development hereby approved a nature conservation and landscape management plan shall be prepared and submitted to the Local Planning Authority for its agreement. The agreed plan shall be complied with during and after the completion of the development hereby approved.
REASON: To ensure adequate protection to protected species.
- 10) Notwithstanding the submitted details there shall be no movements of Abnormal Indivisible Loads to or from the site until after a revised Traffic Management Plan (TMP) has been submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The TMP shall indicate full consultation and approval with neighbouring Authorities which the loads pass through and consultation and approval with the Welsh Government. The TMP shall provide evidence that the necessary permits have been given by the South Wales Police Liaison Transport Officer who co-ordinates the safe passage of abnormal vehicles and shall also include full details of the hauliers indemnity insurance for approval. Details of any highway improvements required to the highway network with Caerphilly County Borough Council shall also be provided for approval by the Local Planning Authority and be completed prior to the delivery of the loads. The development shall proceed in accordance with the TMP following approval in writing by the Local Planning Authority.
REASON: In the interests of highway safety.
- 11) The wind turbine, tower and ancillary equipment shall be removed from the site and the land restored to its former condition upon cessation of the use in accordance with details to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The cessation of the use shall be defined as the wind turbine becoming inoperative for a continuous period of six months.
REASON: In the interests of visual amenity.

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- 12) The demolition or site/vegetation clearance associated with the development hereby approved shall not take place during the breeding season for birds, from March to August inclusive in any given year, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.
REASON: To ensure that breeding birds are protected. All British birds, their nests and eggs (with certain limited exceptions) are protected by law under Section 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.
- 13) Details of land drainage shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority before the works commence and shall be carried out in accordance with the agreed details before the development is brought into use.
REASON: In the interests of highway safety.
- 14) All walls and fences removed as part of the development shall be re-instated in accordance with a scheme which shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to any works commencing on site.
REASON: In the interests of the landscape character and visual amenity of the area.
- 15) Prior to the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby approved details of the materials to be used, in electronic or printed format shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.
REASON: In the interests of the visual amenity of the area.
- 16) The wind turbine and tower hereby approved together with the ground equipment and plant shall be removed from the application site, either before the end of 25 years from the date of commencement of the development hereby approved or within six months upon their becoming no longer operationally active in the generation of electricity, whichever is the earlier.
REASON: In order to define the extent of the permission hereby granted.
- 17) No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.
REASON: To identify and record any features of archaeological interest discovered during the works, in order to mitigate the impact of the works on the archaeological resource.

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Advisory Note(s)

The following policy(ies) of the Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan up to 2021 - Adopted November 2010 is/are relevant to the conditions of this permission: CW2, CW3 and CW4.

