



REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 8TH DECEMBER 2015

**SUBJECT: PLANNING GUIDANCE FOR SMALLER SCALE WIND TURBINE
DEVELOPMENT /CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH LANDSCAPE
SENSITIVITY AND CAPACITY STUDY**

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR - COMMUNITIES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update members on technical work undertaken in respect of supplementary planning guidance for wind turbines.
- 1.2 To inform members of the public consultation exercise undertaken in respect of the following:
 - 1 Supplementary Planning Guidance for Smaller Scale Wind Turbine Development;
 - 2 Caerphilly County Borough Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study.
- 1.3 To outline to members the representations made in respect of this Supplementary Planning Guidance during the six week public consultation exercise held in August /October 2015.
- 1.4 To consider the recommendations contained within this report in respect of the guidance and make any necessary recommendations to Cabinet and thereafter Council.
- 1.5 To recommend to Cabinet and thereafter Council that the guidance be approved as formal Supplementary Planning Guidance to the Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan up to 2021.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 This study was commissioned by Blaenau Gwent Council on behalf of an informal group of Heads of the Valleys Local Planning Authorities, including Caerphilly County Borough Council. This was in response to concern over the significant number of applications for single or multiple wind turbines being received in the area. Landscape Officers felt that there was insufficient guidance for local authorities or developers to allow consistent assessment of the potential impacts of these smaller scale developments.
- 2.2 In response to this, Blaenau Gwent (the leading authority in this study) commissioned Gillespie's LLP to undertake work on behalf of the Heads of the Valleys Authorities. This informed the guidance which has been prepared in two parts as follows:
 - 1 Supplementary Planning Guidance for Smaller Scale Wind Turbine Development; and

2 Caerphilly County Borough Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study.

2.3 Both parts have been subject to formal public consultation between November 2014 and October 2015. Representations received during these consultation periods are outlined in the consultation reports.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

3.1 The Single Integrated Plan **Caerphilly Delivers** has been prepared by the LSB and represents a determined commitment by all partners to accelerate change, strengthen partnership working, multi-agency collaboration, and accountability for delivery.

3.2 **Caerphilly Delivers** has been developed based on 4 key principles of:

- Sustainable development where we promote social justice and equality of opportunity and enhance the natural and cultural environment and respect its limits
- Equalities and Welsh language where we all promote and mainstream equalities and the Welsh language in accordance with our legislative requirements and strategic equality objectives.
- Early intervention and prevention goals with the aim of either preventing matters from getting worse or occurring in the first place, by identifying those in greatest need from their vulnerability, their risk of becoming vulnerable or from otherwise becoming disadvantaged.
- Community cohesion where people from different backgrounds enjoy similar life opportunities, understand their rights and responsibilities and trust one another and are trusting of local institutions to act fairly.

3.3 The Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan up to 2021 (LDP) is the statutory framework for the development and use of land within the County Borough. It provides the policy framework for the development and conservation needs of the County Borough and is used by the Council to guide and control development.

3.4 Policy SP10 of the LDP seeks to 'protect, conserve, enhance and manage the natural heritage of the County Borough in the consideration of all proposals within both the rural and built environments'. When approved this Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) will build upon this policy.

4. THE REPORT

Policy Context

4.1 Planning Guidance on Wind Turbines is contained in Planning Policy Wales and Technical Advice Note 8 (TAN 8) Planning for Renewable Energy (2005). TAN 8 states that '*Onshore wind power offers the greatest potential for increase in the generation of electricity from renewable energy in the short to medium term*' and that following extensive studies, large scale onshore wind turbines (over 25MW) should be concentrated into particular areas defined as 'Strategic Search Areas' (SSA's), and that 'most areas outside SSAs should remain free of large wind power schemes'. There is no SSA's designated within Caerphilly County Borough.

Background

4.2 Caerphilly County Borough Council, along with neighbouring authorities in the Heads of the Valleys Area, have received a high number of applications for wind turbines in recent years. Concerns are raised over the cumulative impact that a high number of wind turbines could potentially have on the landscape and there is an identified need to provide consistent guidance for local authorities and developers, to ensure that the potential impacts of these

smaller scale developments on landscape is adequately controlled.

- 4.3 In response to this, Blaenau Gwent (the leading authority in this study) commissioned Gillespie's LLP to undertake work on behalf of the Heads of the Valleys Authorities. This informed the guidance which has been prepared in two parts as follows:
- 1 Supplementary Planning Guidance for Smaller Scale Wind Turbine Development; and
 - 2 Caerphilly County Borough Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study
- 4.4 Part 1 of the Guidance was prepared in 2014 for the sub region and sets out the technical requirements for applicants as follows:
- Minimum requirements for submission of a request for an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening Opinion;
 - A methodology to be employed for EIA Screening; and
 - Minimum requirements and standards of information to be submitted as part of a Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) for both EIA and non-EIA applications.
- 4.5 Part 1 was subject to public consultation for a 6 week period between 7th of November and 19th of December 2014. Over a hundred different organisations were consulted including all Welsh Local Planning Authorities, Statutory Bodies, National organisations and Planning & Landscape Consultants. A copy of the consultation report is attached at Appendix 1.
- 4.6 There was a low response rate, with only ten responses received. There was however a good cross section of environmental organisations, industry representatives and local authorities that responded. Seven of the respondents that completed the questionnaire agreed that guidance is required to ensure that landscape and visual impacts of wind turbines are addressed in a consistent manner. Generally, most agreed with the typologies proposed, the size of the study area, the minimum requirements for submission of an EIA screening, the methodology, the approach to cumulative effects and search distances and the cumulative threshold for other infrastructure. All seven agreed with the minimum requirements of information to be provided for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment. Most agreed with the use of LANDMAP as part of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment.
- 4.7 Part 2 of the Guidance, namely Caerphilly County Borough Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study is split into 6 sections:
- Section 1: sets out the background and policy context for the study
Section 2: Identifies the methodology used in the study
Section 3: sets out the study area, landscape types and the units proposed
Section 4: includes the landscape sensitivity and capacity funding for each landscape unit (incorporating the landscape units from the HOV study and the rest of Caerphilly study)
Section 5: covers general locational guidance
Section 6: includes supporting maps and figures.
- 4.8 Part 2 of the Guidance separates the county borough into sixteen landscape units. For each unit there is:
- A map;
 - An assessment of each LANDMAP criteria;
 - An Assessment of the value of the landscape;
 - A summary of the sensitivity to the wind turbine categories;
 - Landscape capacity and guidance for siting of wind turbines.

- 4.9 Part 2 of the Guidance has also been subject of public consultation. The Heads of the Valleys Area formed part of the original consultation in November 2014, whilst the remainder of Caerphilly was consulted on separately in August/October 2015. Over one hundred different organisations were consulted including all Welsh Local Planning Authorities, Statutory Bodies, National organisations and Planning & Landscape Consultants. A copy of the consultation report for Part 2 is attached at Appendix 2 and Appendix 3.
- 4.10 Although there was a low response rate in November 2014 (Appendix 2), with only 8 responses, there was a good cross section of environmental organisations, industry representatives and local authorities. All respondents agreed that a common methodology for undertaking Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity studies would be helpful. Not surprisingly there was disagreement on the proposed categories, definition of sensitivity, and the criteria for assessing landscape and visual susceptibility. All these comments have been taken into account and the document amended where appropriate.
- 4.11 A total of 4 responses were received during the consultation undertaken in August/October 2015 (Appendix 3). One representor raised an objection to the landscape units identified in Gelligaer and the information contained in LANDMAP. However, as individual wind turbine applications would still need to complete a Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), and given that the LANDMAP data is set and managed by NRW, it is deemed that no changes to the study are required. The remaining responses were comments seeking greater clarification in respect of policy input.
- 4.12 Subject to consideration by elected members, the Guidance once approved will be adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance to the Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan up to 2021.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Stakeholder engagement has been undertaken in line with the Agreed DA, which has full regard for the Citizens Engagement Strategy and the Equalities Strategy of the Council.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no new financial implications.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 None

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 All comments received have been incorporated in the report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 To consider the representations received as part of the consultations undertaken in regards to and to recommend the minor amendments proposed in Appendix 3 with regards to:
- 1 Supplementary Planning Guidance for Smaller Scale Wind Turbine Development;
 - 2 Caerphilly County Borough Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study.

- 9.2 To recommend to Cabinet and thereafter Council that the guidance be approved as formal Supplementary Planning Guidance to the Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan up to 2021.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 In order to provide consistency with adjoining local authorities on technical guidance to wind turbine development.
- 10.2 In order for the guidance note to be used in all planning applications and planning matters, where relevant.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 Part 6 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- 11.2 Town and Country Planning (Local Development Plan)(Wales) Regulations 2005.

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Background Papers:

- 1 Supplementary Planning Guidance for Smaller Scale Wind Turbine Development;
- 2 Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study

Appendices:

- Appendix 1: Consultation Report: Planning Guidance for Smaller Scale Wind Turbine Development: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
- Appendix 2: Consultation Report: Heads of the Valleys Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study'
- Appendix 3: Consultation Report: Caerphilly County Borough Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study'