Application Number: ADC/0524/08 Recommendation - APPROVE

Site: **Tesco, Holmbush Centre, Upper Shoreham Road Shoreham-by-Sea BN43 6TD**

Proposal: **2 micro wind turbines (10.6m high) within car park (for 15 year period)**

The Application

The application is for the installation of two micro wind turbines within the Tesco car park. It is part of a national programme being carried out by Tesco to reduce their carbon footprint and to increase the amount of electricity produced by the store through renewable sources. The energy produced will be fed directly into the store.

The turbines have a capacity of 6 kiloWatts and have an innovative design, comprising a vertical rotor with six vertical aerofoils or blades mounted on a steel column. The maximum height of each turbine to the top of the rotor is 10.6m and the rotor itself is 4.4m high and 3.3m wide. They will be coloured white and installed within the car park in two separate locations both on the north side of and close to the roadway running east-west across the middle of the Tesco car park. The first site is directly to the north west of the exit slipway on the west side of the car park; the second is more centrally placed within the site to the west of the disabled parking bays.

The proposals will involve the loss of two parking spaces per turbine (4 spaces in total).

Consultations and Representations

West Sussex County Council: The County Transport Planning Officer advises that an objection over the loss of four parking spaces could not be sustained.

Adur District Council: The Environmental Health Officer has no objection. He has discussed the proposal with Environmental Health Officers in other Districts where turbines have already been installed in similar locations to this site and they state that no noise problems have been encountered since their installation.

South Downs Joint Committee: The Planning Officer advises that he has no objections to the proposals in terms of their impact on the AONB but suggests that a light grey colour for the turbines would be a less intrusive colour than white. He comments that the turbines would be visible from Southwick Hill against the backdrop of the built-up area whereas seen from the built-up area they would be visible against both the Downs which are generally quite dark in colour and the pale skyline. Light grey is suggested as a compromise that would blend with the sky but not stand out so starkly against the land and buildings.

Third Parties: 10 letters have been received.

9 are objections from the residents of No's 31, 32, 33 & 34 Hawkins Road; No.3 Holmbush Close; and No's 3, 13(2 letters) and an unidentified property in Bay Tree Close, raising the following issues:-

- continuous noise pollution;
- tall and unsightly structures that will be prominent, obtrusive and detrimental visual impact from surrounding houses, and cause loss of view;
- positioned too close to houses;
- loss of parking spaces leading to further congestion;
- unlikely to make a big difference in terms of green energy and there are better ways of reducing carbon footprint, eg. solar panels, LPG-fuelled lorries;
- construction work to install turbines may disturb residents;
- electro-magnetic interference will affect TV reception;
- they may be used for advertising;
- existing noise from Tesco is already intolerable;
- danger to wildlife;
- loss of property value (NB. not of itself a valid planning consideration

1 letter of support has been received from No.48 Hawkins Road.

(NB. the resident of 3 Bay Tree Close has requested to speak at the Committee meeting)

Relevant Planning Policies and Guidance

Adopted West Sussex Structure Plan 2001-2016 (WSCC 2005) (saved policies): LOC1, CH1-2, ERA1, DEV1, DEV5
Adopted Adur District Local Plan 1993-2006 (ADC 1996) (saved policies): AG1, AC2-3
Supplement to PPS1: Planning and Climate Change (DCLG 2007)
PPS22 'Renewable Energy' (ODPM 2004) and Companion Guide (ODPM 2004)
PPG24 'Planning and Noise' (DoE 1994)
Draft South East Plan Core Document 2006-26 (SEERA 2006)

Planning Assessment

Policies

The site, which consists of an existing superstore and car park built in 1992, lies within the 'built-up' area defined in the Local Plan but is not identified for any particular use or development. It lies within the Sussex Downs AONB boundary designated in 1966 but the boundary has become outdated as a result of the construction of the by-pass and superstores and the site is not proposed for inclusion within the proposed South Downs National Park.

Relevant policies of the Structure Plan generally encourage making the best use of land providing the impact on the character of the area and the environment is acceptable (LOC1, CH1, ERA1). CH2 states that Local Plans should include policies to ensure that in and adjoining the AONB development does not detract from its natural beauty, distinctive character and tranquil nature (the relevant Local Plan policies being AC2-3).
DEV1 states that development should not be permitted unless its scale and appearance are of high quality taking into account the need to, amongst other things, integrate with and where possible enhance adjoining land uses; have regard to context including site characteristics, townscape/streetscape, views into and out of the site; ensure energy efficiency; and meet the needs of service providers.

Policy DEV4 requires development to meet the travel needs it generates and DEV5 includes a requirement to ensure the level of parking is compatible with the need to avoid environmental or safety problems.

The supplement to PPS1 recognises the urgent need for action on climate change. Both PPS1 and PPS22 state that the wider environmental and economic benefits of all proposals for renewable energy projects, whatever their scale, are material planning considerations that should be given significant weight in determining whether proposals should be granted planning permission. Planning authorities are advised not to require applicants for energy development to demonstrate either the overall need for renewable energy and its distribution, nor question the energy justification for why a proposal for such development must be sited in a particular location.

PPS22 positively encourages local planning authorities to support small scale renewable energy schemes such as wind turbines. In Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty permission should only be granted where it can be demonstrated that the objectives of designation of the area will not be compromised by the development. Small scale developments, such as that currently proposed, should be permitted provided that there is no significant environmental detriment to the area concerned.

The Companion Guide to PPS22 states that small and medium scale wind projects can be included within urban sites particularly in cases where the power can be dedicated to on-site use.

The draft South East Plan sets a regional target of producing 620MW of electricity from renewable sources by 2010 and 1130MW by 2020. Sub-regionally, the target for East and West Sussex is 57MW by 2010 and 68MW by 2016. Both Counties are currently falling well short of these targets.

Visual amenity

The proposed turbines will be sited within the extensive car park where there is already a multitude of vertical lamp columns, as well as other man-made objects such as signage.

The proposed turbines would be 10.6m high, which is approximately the same height as the gable-fronted entrance to the superstore building. While they will clearly stand out within the site, and from some views outside the site, it is not considered that they would be unacceptably harmful in their visual effect. Unlike most wind turbines, they will not have such a major visual impact as the more usual horizontal axis turbines which are very much taller because of their extremely wide rotor blades and which can be visually distracting. The current proposals are much smaller although there is some concern that their more stub-like design has relatively unattractive appearance, lacking the elegance of the more typical rotor-blade wind turbine design.

From the AONB to the north, the turbines would be seen within the setting of the urbanised car park and built-up area and would not be a particularly harmful visual intrusion. Looking towards the AONB from the site and the area to the south, the Tesco/Holmbush Centre building would remain the dominant feature with Southwick Hill beyond. It is not considered that the turbines would be overly obtrusive.

The South Downs Joint Committee has suggested that the colour of the turbines is changed to a pale grey colour to reduce their visual impact. However, it is not considered,

for the reasons stated in the previous paragraph, that the turbines will appear as unduly stark features and a white colour is not considered unacceptable in this location. Unless very pale, grey could appear rather drab.

The Government positively encourages local planning authorities to approve renewable energy developments unless the harm arising can be demonstrated to outweigh the economic and environmental benefits of such development. It is not considered that any visual harm in the present case would be of such significance as to justify refusal.

Residential amenity

The turbines would be some considerable distance from the nearest residential properties (Bay Tree Close 80m to the south west, Hawkins Road 190m to the south east, Hawkins Crescent 200m to the east). While visible from the rear of a number of dwellings, at the distances involved, and with other car park paraphernalia also visible, the visual impact of the turbines upon local residents is not considered to be harmful.

With regard to noise concerns, the turbines will have a decibel level of a maximum of 78dB(A). This level complies with the recommended noise levels as set out in 'The Assessment and Rating of Noise from Wind Farms' (ETSU-R-97). It is worth noting that the companion guide to PPS22 states that "noise levels from turbines are generally low and, under most operating conditions, it is likely that turbine noise would be completely masked by wind-generated background noise." This particular site is separated from the nearest dwellings in Bay Tree Close by a wide slip road onto and from the A27 and there is background noise from traffic on the A27 which is likely to be more noticeable than noise from the turbines at the distance involved.

The Council's Environmental Health Officer has discussed the impact of the turbines with other Environmental Health Officers in Districts where the turbines have been installed in similar locations and, taking this into account, has no objection on noise grounds.

The turbines themselves would be delivered to the site on the back of two HGVs and would be assembled and erected within one day, thereby minimising any disruption and disturbance to local residents and shoppers.

The issue of electromagnetic interference with TV reception has been raised. However, the Companion Guide to PPS22 states that "provided careful attention is paid to siting, wind turbines should not cause any significant problems" and advises that the nature of the interference depends on the size of the structure relative to the wave-length. At only 10.6m high, these turbines are not high enough at the distances involved from neighbouring dwellings to cause any interference.

Access and Parking

The proposal will result in the loss of four parking spaces. Each turbine requires a concrete foundation and will have a protective barrier in the form of a low rail around the outside to protect it from vehicle-related damage. The County Transport Planning Officer has considered the proposal and, although querying why the turbines could not be sited within existing landscaped areas instead, he does not consider that the loss of 4 spaces is sufficient justification to refuse the application.

The applicants have stated that they did consider siting the turbines within the landscaping but this was ruled out because of the limited size of such areas. The locations identified in the application for the proposed turbines are considered by the applicants to be the optimum having weighed up factors such as wind exposure and turbulence caused by existing planting and structures.

It is not considered that the loss of 4 spaces will result in serious parking problems at the site in the future. Recent congestion at the Holmbush Centre has been caused by a combination of the pre-Christmas rush and the temporary loss of a number of spaces as a result of Tesco's unauthorised temporary marquees. These were due to have been removed by the end of the year.

Other issues

Comments that the turbines are too small to make an effective energy impact are noted. However, Government advice in PPS22 is that small-scale projects can provide a limited but valuable contribution to overall outputs of renewable energy and to meeting energy needs both locally and nationally. It goes on to state that "Planning authorities should not therefore reject planning applications simply because the level of output is small."

With regard to the impact on wildlife, the PPS22 Companion Guide states that bird species and their habitats are rarely affected by wind turbine developments. Bird strikes can occur but this more commonly affects much taller turbines within areas populated by a high concentration of particular species or where sited on a migration route. This site is located on the edge but within an urban area where there are no known protected species in close proximity that are likely to be adversely affected by these relatively low level turbines.

Recommendation

APPROVE for reason that:-

The proposed development is within the built-up area and would help meet national and regional renewable energy targets and reduce carbon emissions in accordance with advice in PPS22 and its Companion Guide without harming the Sussex Downs AONB landscape or causing unacceptable detriment to the amenities of nearby residential areas or the environment generally. The resultant reduction in the number of car parking spaces is too small to have any effect on accessibility to the site or highway safety. It would consequently not conflict with the relevant policies of the Adur District Local Plan (AG1, AC2-3) and the West Sussex Structure Plan 2001-16 (LOC1, CH1-2, ERA1, DEV1, DEV5)

Subject to:-

1. C1Ci (Standard time limit)
2. The turbines hereby approved shall at all times be finished in white or such other colour as submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA, and no form of advertisement shall at any time be displayed on the turbines.

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