

## **Planning Guidance Statement on Wind Turbines**

(Reviewed 2018)

National Planning Policy in relation to on-shore wind energy is currently very restrictive and prescriptive. It was first set out in a Ministerial Statement in June 2015, expanded on in National Planning Practice Guidance, and is proposed to be carried forward into the revised NPPF expected later in 2018. In summary, national policy is that “a proposed wind energy development involving one or more wind turbines should not be considered acceptable unless it is in an area identified as suitable for wind energy development in the development plan; and, following consultation, it can be demonstrated that the planning impacts identified by the affected local community have been fully addressed and the proposal has their backing.”

Since few if any local authorities have yet identified such suitable areas within local plans, applications currently will be rare; instead, Society involvement may first arise at the Local Plan policy-setting stage. This Planning Guidance Statement seeks to cover both of these stages, namely the identification of suitable areas, and commenting on specific proposals.

Society policy is to oppose wind turbines located within or clearly visible from the AONB, or located within the Green Belt. Therefore, areas to which these criteria apply should not be supported for identification as suitable areas for such development within Local Plans; and any applications that do come forward should be objected to outright.

Outside of these areas, the Society position on the identification of suitable areas, and on specific applications, should take into account the following.

The Society's remit is limited to considering the aesthetic impact of wind turbines on the character of the Chilterns and its settlements, so the main consideration being visual impact.

In the identification of suitable areas, relevant factors include:

- location in relation to topography
- degree of concealment in short and long-distance views
- general openness of landscape

In relation to specific applications, relevant factors include:

- size of installation (height and blade diameter)
- colour
- other aspects of design (e.g. fan-blades versus propellers, any modifications which contribute to character)
- location in relation to topography
- any associated infrastructure (e.g. access tracks, equipment cabins)
- degree of concealment in short and long-distance views
- landscaping
- presence of other structures nearby
- general openness of landscape

Detailed modifications to a proposal can significantly affect the degree of impact, and in some cases make an otherwise unacceptable proposal acceptable. PFOs should therefore pay close attention to these issues.

It is outside the remit of the Society to oppose installations solely because of any doubts about the value in general of renewable energy in reducing emissions. However, there may be situations where it is legitimate to include greater efficiency as a supporting factor in suggesting a preferred alternative siting or design, e.g. a single larger turbine rather than a series of smaller ones.