

Hemyock Parish Council
Planning Meeting - Planning Application 12/00456/FULL
Highlands Farm, Hemyock - Erection of 1 50kw wind turbine
held in the Parish Hall at 7.30pm on 17th May 2012

Subject	Action
<p>1. Present Mrs H Stallard (Chairman), Mr I McCulloch (Vice-Chairman), Mr R Brooke, Mr R Calcraft, Mr S Clist, Mr L Povah, Mrs L Clist, Mr R Hart, Mr J Edwards, Mr F Rosamond (District Councillor), Mrs D Evans (Parish Clerk), Tristan Tonks (agent for applicant), Thea Billeter (MDDC Case Officer), Jenny Clifford (MDDC Planning Manager), Gordon McGovern (Environmental Health Officer), Lisa Turner (AONB Planning Officer) and approximately 50 members of the public.</p> <p>Apologies Mr S Major</p>	<p>All to note</p>
<p>2. Introduction Mrs Stallard welcomed everyone and explained that there would be a brief introduction from Tristan Tonks (agent for the applicant) followed by an explanation of the planning process from Thea Billeter (Case officer MDDC). Lisa Turner (Planning Officer AONB) would then explain how the AONB are consulted on the application. Members of the public would then be given 2 minutes each to put their questions/queries/comments through the chairman and responses would be given where appropriate. The Chairman asked that the comments be factual, rather than based on hearsay or conjecture.</p>	
<p>3. Tristan Tonks Mr Tonks explained he represents a company called Energy Descent and was agent for the applicant. He explained the company completes a full site survey before it goes ahead with any planning application and is aware of all of the restraints/risks of a particular site. The proposed 'Endurance' wind turbine is the smallest turbine they use, as they believe smaller ones are ineffective.</p>	
<p>4. Thea Billeter (Case Officer MDDC) Thea Billeter explained the planning process, from application received, through consultation and to decision. She mentioned MDDC's statutory obligations and the documents which guide them in their decision making (Local Plan, National Planning Policy Framework). Mrs Billeter confirmed that Frank Rosamond (District Councillor) had called the application to be decided by full committee in the event that the Planning Officer approved the application. She went on to explain what occurs at a site visit and that they do take into account evidence of inaccurate information contained in any planning application.</p>	
<p>5. Lisa Turner (AONB Planning Officer) Lisa Turner explained her role in the planning consultation process. The AONB seeks to ensure any application conserves and enhances the area and its views carry great weight in the decision making process. Consideration is given to heritage, trees, villages, field patterns etc., landscape management consultants may advise on certain aspects. The AONB will judge what, if any, the impact of any proposal would have on the special qualities of the Blackdown Hills. In 2010 the AONB commissioned a report concerning renewable energy (including solar energy and wind turbines) and this report helps guide the decision making process.</p>	
<p>6. Gordon McGovern (Environmental Health Officer) Gordon McGovern, Environmental Health Officer, explained that he has been consulted on this planning application. Environmental Health use national guideline</p>	

(F297 Document) to determine the noise impact of wind turbines. Mr McGovern confirmed that he has recommended this application but with a noise condition. In the event that a turbine is installed, any complaint of excess noise will be investigated and calibrated equipment used to measure noise levels. If the noise from a turbine exceeds the permitted level then an enforcement notice will be served and the turbine will have to be switched off.

7. Questions from the Public

Below is a summary of the comments made:-

- The Design & Access Statement does not cover the impact of the noise in enough detail, especially with regard to the nearest neighbours
- Given the size of the proposed turbine, it should be classed as an industrial development as it generates enough energy for 47 homes
- Telecommunications have not been consulted about flicker, interference etc. MDDC agreed to consult with telecommunications.
- Will this turbine, if approved, set a precedent? (MDDC confirmed each case is assessed on its own merits, there is no cap on how many in an area but they would look at cumulative effect)
- In less than 3 years coal fired stations will be under pressure to close down due to emissions, generating energy locally is the most effective way of generating energy,
- Visual impact needs to be more accurately depicted on the photo montages included in the planning application. Hemyock Parish Council will ask the Planning Officers to look specifically at the visual impact from several critical viewpoints i.e. Culm Davy, Culmstock Beacon, Penn Cross, Withy Lane.
- The balloon installed on site does not give a true representation of the size of the proposed turbine.
- This development would cost £250,000 and generate an income of £62,000 per annum. Investors would not be local, the landowner will receive some financial benefit, while residents in the immediate area will see house prices drop by 10% (MDDC clarified that financial details are not relevant to the planning process in this case. The guidance for energy development does not require an applicant to demonstrate the need for the energy)
- Wind speed calculations were challenged ref their accuracy
- CPRE (Campaign to Protect Rural England) has confirmed its opposition to the scheme.
- Questions were asked concerning durability and safety (Tristan Tonks confirmed a 25 year lifespan and a record of less than 1% catastrophic events)
- Upgrading from single phase to 3 phase electricity will mean the existing poles are not strong enough and will need replacing.
- The power will be exported elsewhere, so no local benefit (Tristan Tonks confirmed there is currently no mechanism to use the energy generated locally)
- The proposed turbine is not sympathetic to the area and is not right for an AONB.
- When taking into account impact of the noise, it is important to take into account the tranquillity of the area.
- The proposed turbine would be a blot on the landscape
- Can the applicant not consider alternative forms of renewable energy?

MDDC

HPC

In order to gauge opinion, a show of hands at the meeting confirmed that 3 people were for and 43 were against this application.

8. What Next?

1. MDDC confirmed that members of the public need to send their comments, in writing, to MDDC by 24th May.
2. Hemyock Parish Council will visit the site and have a meeting 8pm Thursday 24th May at the Parish Hall to decide its feedback to MDDC.

Signed.....*Date*.....