Allerdale Borough Council
Planning Department

Appeal Decisions

Appeal Reference: APP/G0908/A/12/2174364
Planning Reference: 2/2012/0051
Proposed Development: Erection of a single turbine with a maximum blade tip height of 61m and associated infrastructure
Appeal Site: Land at Harrington parks farm, Coppershill, Harrington, Workington
Applicant: Windberry energy operations
Type of Appeal: Written representations
Date of Committee: 13th March 2012
Officers’ Recommendation: Recommend approval
Development Panel Decision: Refused on grounds of the turbine representing a prominent and incongruous feature in the landscape which would be oppressive and harmful to the visual amenity of nearby residents
Inspector’s Decision: Appeal allowed

Appeal decision details
The inspector confirmed that in his opinion the development was not EIA development. The inspector advises that on the day prior to his site visit an appeal decision was allowed for the erection of an 80m wind turbine at Goose green farm, Lowca (APP/Z0923/A/12/2169010) approx 2km south of the site (within Copeland).

The Inspector referred to; the details of the turbine, characteristics of the site, proximity to settlements and the nearest individual dwellings. He also observed the existing wind farm (7 turbines) at Lowca and a line of pylons to the west of the site.

The inspector also refers to the list of existing turbines around the perimeter of Workington including Winscales, Siddick/Oldside, Voridian, Flimby, Lowca and the dismissed appeal decision at Broughton Lodge decision.

The Inspector outlines the turbine is within the Ridge and valley landscape (type 5a) which generally has the moderate capacity to accommodate wind turbines (3-5) or exceptionally a large group (6-9). The inspector describes the site as a “working” landscape accommodating in places turbines, pylons, masts roads, railways farm sheds and remnants of mineral buildings. The guidance suggests that the greatest potential for
turbines would be on the flatter plains or broad ridges where large turbine group could relate to the medium to large scale of the landform without dominating the views. On this basis the inspector considers this guidance suggests this is a suitable site.

Weight was also attached to the proximity of the site to the existing windfarm at Lowca which alongside other man made features lessened the impact of the proposal. It was considered not to be incongruous to the local landform.

Therefore overall, although evident, the inspector considered the turbine would not be so prominent or incongruous as to significantly alter the character of the landscape, especially as combined with the Lowca appeal decision it would exceed a group of 6-9 turbines.

The Inspector refers to the 40 turbines within 10km of the site and the councils concerns on the saturation of turbines in the area. He considers the installation of one fairly modest turbine would not transform the landscape into a wind farm landscape and would only be 15m higher in level than the other existing turbines and would visually merge with the group. The distribution of the turbines around the town lessens their cumulative impact with separation distances between them. He agrees that it will appear divorced from some views, but would not fill a gap between existing turbines. Closer views along the A597 would be would have intervening buildings. He concluded that there will be no significant exacerbation of cumulative effects which would be “limited and fleeting”.

In terms of visual impact the inspector refers to 5 dwellings within 504-840m of the site which are the nearest sensitive receptors.:

The nearest dwelling Foxpit would experience no significant impact.
The views from park House farmhouse and west Ghyll end farmhouse would be screened by farm buildings.
The terraced houses next to Harrington parks farm would be orientated away from the turbine obscuring any views.
Jubilee house’s view, 740m to the east of the turbine, will be partially screened by the landform topography. With the background of a transmission line, the size of the turbine and the separation distance will ameliorate it potential dominance.
The views from the properties at High close would have the backdrop of the existing turbines at Lowca and would be viewed as part of a group.

The inspector refers to the NPPF and its endorsement of the provision of renewable energy and current policy targets.
The inspector gave reference to the national planning policy framework endorsement to increase the provisions of renewable energy and the current renewable energy targets. Although acknowledging the extent to which Allerdale is contributing to the target and its capacity implications for future schemes, the fundamental test relates to the planning policy that apply to the site” The test entails a balance between the national and local endorsed imperative to increase the provision of energy from renewable sources and the significance of any adverse impacts identified"
The inspector considers the proposal complies with ETSU-R-97 noise levels, shadow flicker, aviation safety, tv reception, highway safety, heritage asset, ecological and topple distance guidance (subject to planning conditions).

Conclusion
The Inspector concluded that the turbine would not seriously affect the visual amenity of residents in the locality or exacerbate cumulative effects which would be limited and fleeting.
The turbine would not be so prominent or incongruous as to affect the character of the landscape and when combined with the Lowca windfarm would not exceed the guidance criteria in the SPD.
The limited damage would not outweigh the benefits under local and national policies for renewable development.

Officer comments on the appeal decision.
The inspector attached significant weight the landscape character classification and the capacity guidance specified in the County Councils “Wind energy in Cumbria” supplementary planning document.
The scale of the visual harm was lessened due to both the proximity of the proposal to the existing windfarm at Lowca i.e seen as an extension of an existing windfarm rather than a separate entity and the various man made development in the urban fringe.
A detailed assessment was undertaken of the nearest properties affected but by virtue of their separation distance, landform, topography and orientation were considered of little weight.