

Consultation Response by Haddenham Parish to East Cambridgeshire Council's Draft Supplementary Planning Document on Renewable Energy Proposals

This response is on behalf of Haddenham Parish Council and deals with large scale wind farm applications. It is appreciated that the SPD is focused on larger 'stand alone' renewable energy schemes, which will include wind farms, solar farms and biomass plants. This response is solely about commercial scale wind farms, which are the concern of HPC, who do not have the knowledge to comment on solar farms or biomass plants. Section numbers in the draft SPD are given alongside our comments.

1. Overall Purpose

The purpose of the SPD is stated as providing people with a better understanding of how planning applications for renewable energy proposals may be assessed by the Council. It is targeted at developers, local communities, Parish Councils and landowners.

Planning applications for large scale wind farms are complicated and technical assessments. The main concerns for local people who may be affected are:

* effective consultation in the development at the earliest possible time so that their comments may be taken into account in the final design and layout.

* that a comprehensive environmental impact assessment is carried out so that the decision makers have a factual, comprehensive and objective assessment on which to make their decisions. In a number of areas such as visualisations and ecology there is a vested interest for developers to under-estimate the potential impact and then claim a non significant outcome. This leads to arguments about the methodology employed in the Environmental Statement accompanying the application and the representativeness of the assessment and the conclusions drawn from it rather than all concerned accepting the content and concentrating on the conclusions.

The issue with this draft SPD that it does not include sufficient detail to provide developers or local residents and groups with any clearer indication of what ECDC is looking for from any planning application. It is a general statement of the process that will be gone through and as such is generally well known and understood, certainly by developers and Parish Councils who deal regularly with planning applications.

The following sections identify additional information that should be expected in any wind farm application and will put some 'meat' on the bones of the draft policy.

2. Overview of Renewable Energy

Section 2.2 talks about the benefits of renewable energy but there is no counter balance of the harm that it can cause. Why is it a one-sided balance?

Thus for example an environmental benefit is creating new habitats for rare species whereas renewable energy schemes can destroy habitats.

An economic benefit is stated as cheaper fuel bills whereas renewable energy is responsible for increasing fuel bills.

Tourism benefit is more likely to be a tourism disbenefit.

Community pride is more likely to be communities split and divided.

We would suggest either removing Section 2.2 or making it balanced and factually correct.

There is already government support for renewable energy so why, rather than this