AFFPUDDLE AND TURNERSPUDDLE PARISH COUNCIL

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FAO Mr David Hodges
Development Services Manager
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19th July 2014

Dear Mr Hodges

Re: Application ref: WD/D/14/000885

The Affpuddle and Turnerspuddle Parish Council objects to this proposal for the reasons given below.

1. Effects on landscape and the local economy

The character and scale of this development would severely damage the present considerable landscape value of the area, affecting views over long distances with potentially major consequences for Dorset's valuable tourist industry. Serious visual intrusion into the Piddle Valley Conservation Area and an AONB would result.

Special to the area is the Thomas Hardy connection with locations and views from his works being degraded should the development proceed. There is relevant precedent here with Bradford council having turned down turbine plans for Bronte moorlands because of their detrimental impact on literary heritage.

Some landscapes are not seriously damaged by this type of development, particularly where there is a long history of industrialisation. This landscape is not one of them. In its present form it is very highly valued by both locals and visitors, as evidenced by the responses to this planning proposal. Should the proposal go ahead, the resultant landscape degradation would encourage and facilitate further developments of this type and others along an East/West corridor. There is potential for a huge impact on quality of life of those living nearby and those who are regular visitors. Views from a major route through Dorset could begin to induce feelings in potential visitors of this being somewhere to get through quickly on the way to somewhere more pleasant.

2. Direct effects on wellbeing.

A recent peer reviewed American study published in the journal "Noise and Health" demonstrated robustly that a range of health problems are associated with living in proximity to large wind turbines. These are thought to be mediated by low frequency sound and to occur at least up to 1500 metres from turbines. (Nissenbaum , Aramini and Hanning 2012). Bakker et al (2012) found a stronger association of wind farm development with disturbed sleep and psychological distress in rural communities compared with noisier areas.

Farboud (2013) in the journal of laryngology and otology found that infrasound affected ear physiology (a possible causal mechanism for the various symptoms reported.) Shepherd et al 2011 showed health impacts in people living less than 2km from wind farms. ETSU–R-97 does not set out to preserve neighbourhood amenity but to give a reasonable degree of protection to neighbours while not being unduly restrictive of wind farm development. In this country there has been a move towards higher minimum buffer distances for large turbines. Wiltshire and Lincolnshire have made the change. It is already the case in Scotland and continental neighbours. 2 kilometres is typical in these areas. In view of this we would tend to favour a precautionary approach for turbines of this scale with at least 2km separation from dwellings. A number of properties would not meet this requirement with the proposal under consideration.

3. Effects on local property values as an indicator of landscape, amenity and quality of life impacts as perceived by potential property purchasers.

It is evident that the surrounding landscape and hence the amenity and overall quality of life associated with particular properties directly influence what potential purchasers will pay for them in a free market. The impact of wind farms or even the threat of them can, via this mechanism, have major effects on offer prices where properties exist in attractive rural areas. A very good example of this effect is in evidence at Weatherby House in this Parish. Here, a property in an attractive setting has been on the market for months with repeated offer price reductions as initially keen potential purchasers lose interest when informed of the wind farm proposal which would be visible from the property at 1.5 km to the nearest turbine and the “stacking” effect created from all five. Hence as well as impacting the economy of Dorset, via impacts on tourism, there are direct effects via the above mechanism. UK Governments facing elections know all too well the “feel good factor” associated with rising house values and how it leads to higher spending by occupants. Falling house values lead to the opposite effect.

That the property value effect is mediated by the above mechanism finds support from research findings.

A piece of research carried out by Gibbons at LSE in 2013 found that if a wind farm was visible from a nearby property there was an average decrease in price of 5% to 6% and up to 15%. This applied to 2km distance falling to an average 1% at 14 km**. Visibility was key**. Some other studies which have not taken account of this have found no significant difference.

In Denmark wind farms have to pay compensation for this impact.

The fullest account of this effect needs to be taken into consideration for this particular proposal.

4. Effects on wildlife

Both birds and bats are known to suffer mortality as a result of coming close to or striking moving turbine blades. The question is whether populations will be impacted by the proposal under consideration. Native bats are protected by the Habitats Directive and Natural England (NE) has assigned turbine mortality relative risk levels for bat populations based on existing knowledge. The Developers collected data demonstrates activity by seven bat species in the area of the proposal. Their consultants (Atmos) consider there to be no significant risk to most of the bat species populations, but not in the case of the two Nyctalus species particularly the large Noctule (an NE high population risk species) which can travel many kms to feed, and feeds at height and away from features such as hedges for much of the time. This species has been found to be susceptible to turbine induced mortality on the continent. 51 Noctule records were collected over 62 nights at the one “at height” recorder and they were recorded at all but one of the ground level fixed monitoring sites in 2012.It was decided by Atmos that a significant effect, but one of low magnitude on local population

status, was likely. It is clear that necessarily, a high degree of professional judgement goes into arriving at these conclusions from the data collected. In their guidance on this issue (2012) NE make it clear that they are currently unable to say whether populations of bats in the UK are at risk from onshore turbines because of the inadequate evidence base. The large (> 1ft wingspan) Noctules have already declined significantly and are a UK BAP species. As a precaution NE have asked for a bat mortality study in the first full summer of operation if the development goes ahead. This reflects the accepted shortcomings of the available methodologies for population impact assessment.

For birds there is much evidence that raptors (hawks, owls, falcons, kites buzzards etc) and migrating water birds are particularly vulnerable to turbine mortality. Goshawk, hen harrier and peregrine are species of conservation concern which have been recorded close to the site. Collision risk modelling was not carried out, for those observed in the turbine areas, as at risk flight activity was too low to allow meaningful predictions. RSPB do not consider the site a significant risk to bird populations.
Two species have featured in our wildlife newsletter this winter which are returning to the area after long absences due to persecution. Both are large attractive birds. The red kite is one of the most frequent collision fatalities in a European review of wind farm bird fatality and the crane was found by Moorhead and Epstein (1985) to be particularly susceptible to collision with wind turbines. Should we be increasing the hazard for these species recovering from declines which we imposed in the past?
We would favour an extremely precautionary approach in this area.

5. Miscellaneous concerns

In addition, we are concerned about potential road safety issues arising from distraction of drivers' attention on nearby roads, the apical red light requirement likely to be imposed by MOD and the light pollution which would result, and the impact of increased heavy construction traffic on local roads which are already inadequate. We believe that real potential for adverse impacts on TV reception exists with the possibility of costly remedial solutions falling on householders.

6. Summary

We are very much in favour of greenhouse gas levels being controlled but we believe that the proposed way of contributing to this is not justifiable because of its likely impact on landscape, amenity and quality of life, the overall economy of Dorset, and risks to wildlife. The likely losses massively outweigh any possible gains in this case.
It does not constitute sustainable development and should not be allowed to proceed.

Yours sincerely

Lindsay Hole
Parish Clerk