

SMALL WIND EXERCISE

You are a planning officer at Blossomville Borough Council, and have just been received a planning application from Mr and Mrs Smith to install 2 no. 11kW turbines at Mayflower farm.

Local Planning Authority:

Blossomville Borough Council is a small rural authority in Northern England. Blossomville is the principle market town, and there are two other towns in the Borough together with numerous rural villages.

The Applicant:

Mayflower Farm is a diversified small farm with 2 holiday lets onsite in a converted barn. Mr and Mrs Smith's energy bills have risen significantly due to increased energy costs. To address this, they have decided to take advantage of the Government's feed in tariff and install onsite renewable energy equipment to offset their onsite electricity consumption and reduce the carbon footprint of the business.

Mayflower Farm is in a relatively windy site, and after an initial energy audit, they have decided that wind energy would be the best option, and 2 micro-turbines in the 10-15kW range should offset their onsite electricity use.

After researching the turbines available in this range, they have decided to opt for the Gaia 11kW, as they have been informed that it performs well at lower wind speeds compared to similar sized turbines.

The Agent:

Mr and Mrs Smith have appointed Windy McWindy Ltd, a local wind turbine installer, to install the turbines. Mr McWindy will also be handling the planning application on behalf of the Smiths. This is the first time Mr McWindy has acted as an agent.

Site description:

Mayflower Farm is on the outskirts of Petal village; Petal Hall, a Grade II Listed building is situated on the edge of the village. The local landscape is undulating hills and the nearest residential property is 200m away. The turbines will be sited approx. 50m away from the farm house in an adjoining field. The field is 1ha plot which is bounded by hedgerows. There is a small civil airport 30miles away. (Please refer to the map attached).

The Planning Application:

The local Council does not have a Renewable Energy SPD, nor is there any guidance or information available on the Council's website.

The Council charges a £250 fee for pre-application discussions; Mr McWindy has agreed a fixed fee with the Smiths, and hasn't budgeted for pre-application fees.

Instead, Mr McWindy has opted to submit the application without pre-application advice.

He has submitted the application online via the Planning Portal and has followed the validation checklist to the letter; all plans and ownership certificates have been submitted together with a Design and Access Statement and the correct fee. The agent has also submitted the turbine brochure and datasheet as supporting information.

The application is processed by the planning admin team. All core documents have been submitted, therefore the application is validated. Once it has been validated, it is assigned to a case officer. Planning applications are assigned to officers depending on existing caseload (i.e. smallest in-tray gets it).

The Design and Access Statement:

The Design and Access Statement contains basic information regarding the design of the turbines and the proposed onsite access arrangements and the following technical information:

Proposal: Installation of 2 no. 11kW Gaia wind turbines at Mayflower Farm, Petal Village on the outskirts of Blossomville

Gaia Wind 133 (11kW) Turbine

- Output: 11 kW peak
- Blade No: 2
- Hub Height: 18m
- Blade Diameter: 13m
- Tip Height: 24.5m
- www.gaia-wind.co.uk

Average electricity consumption at Mayflower Farm: approx. 70,000kWh per annum

Wind speed: According to the DECC Windspeed Database, the annual mean wind speed of site is 5.2m/s at 10 metres above ground level.

Expected annual output: The proposed hub height is to be 18 metres above ground level, therefore, based on the performance data for the specified turbine, each turbine is estimated to generate around 35,000kWh (units of electricity) per annum.

Therefore the estimated annual energy generation for 2 Gaia 11kW turbines is 70,000kWh, equivalent to a years electricity consumption by the applicant.

Carbon savings: 70,000kWh of renewable electricity will save carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions from grid electricity equating to around 38 tonnes per annum

(DEFRA CO₂ conversion factor kgCO_{2e}/kWh = 0.544 / 1 metric tonne = 1000kg)

Grid connection: There is a 3 phase supply onsite, and they have already received a grid connection offer from the Distributed Network Operation (DNO) which they will accept once they have secured planning permission.

Planning policy:

The Blossomville Local Plan adopted in 2005 is the relevant DPD for the area.

The proposals map shows that Mayflower Farm is in open countryside and within a non-statutory local landscape designation.

The relevant policies are as follows:

Policy RE1: Renewable Energy

Proposals for the generation of energy from renewable sources will be supported provided that the wider environmental benefits are not outweighed by any detrimental impacts of the proposed development (including any electricity transmission facilities needed) on the landscape, public safety, and the local environment.

Policy LA2: Local Landscape Areas

In Local Landscape Areas, priority will be given to the conservation and enhancement of the landscape. Development will be required to conform to a high standard of design and landscaping, and special attention will be paid to minimising its visual impact both from nearby and distant viewpoints.

Task:

In your groups, discuss:

Part 1

- What are the key planning considerations associated with this proposal?
- What guidance would you refer to help you determine the application?
- What additional supporting information would you request, proportional to the scale of the development?
- Who are the key consultees?
- What type of consultation responses would you expect to receive from the local community and how do you determine which are material planning considerations?
- Which other internal officers would provide comments to help you assess the application?
- What decision would you recommend?

Part 2

- What could the Council do to improve the quality of renewable energy planning application it receives?
- How could the Council's internal procedures be improved?

Site Map:

