

F.A.O. Paul Sexton
Development Control
South Cambridgeshire District Council
Cambourne Business Park
Cambourne
Cambridge
CB23 6EA

Louise Roberts MRTPI



15th March 2012

Dear Mr Sexton

Re. S/2564/11 – Installation of one 330kW wind turbine (53.7m to tip), access track and crane hardstanding at Castle Farm, Hatley Road, Gamlingay

I write with regards to the above application in response to the representations received from various members of the public and some consultees. I am aware that some concerns have been raised regarding this scheme and I will respond directly to those concerns within this letter, taking each topic in turn. GCT Ltd. will also respond to you regarding other matters relating to this application which should be read in conjunction with this response.

1.0 Landscape and Visual Impact

Several points of clarification have been sought relating to landscape and visual impact issues.

1.1 Consultation with Central Bedfordshire Council

Central Bedfordshire Council's landscape officer was consulted at an early stage in the preparation of this application. A ZTV map out to a 10km radius showing the theoretical visibility of the turbine was sent to CBC with suggested viewpoints for the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment on 2nd September 2011. Paul Sexton, the case officer for this application, also contacted the CBC landscape officer around the same time. No response to this consultation was received.

1.2 Consultation with Cockayne Hatley

In response to an enquiry via the project website, Mike Brettle of GCT Ltd dropped off back copies of the Gamlingay Gazette with turbine info and details of the Gazette website to the occupier of Woodview, Cockayne Hatley. The occupier was advised that he was welcome to raise any concerns with GCT however no comments were received.

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In response to letters of objection from Cockayne Hatley containing some fundamental misunderstandings, Mike Brettle of GCT Ltd leafleted the whole village reassuring villagers that there would be no adverse affects and giving full contact details for them to get in touch for more information. This was done on 26th February 2012.

1.3 Imagery

As detailed in the LVIA, all imagery for this assessment has been undertaken in line with guidelines set out by Scottish Natural Heritage. In the absence of English guidance on this subject, the SNH methodology is used as standard across the wind turbine planning industry. It is acknowledged that the methodology of the LVIA does not specifically state that the images should be printed out at A3 in colour. However, the paper copies of the application supplied to SCDC and made available to the public have been printed in the correct format.

1.4 Views from Cockayne Hatley

It is acknowledged that some concerns have been raised regarding the impact of the turbine on Cockayne Hatley. The issue of consultation for this area has been dealt with in 1.1 and 1.2 above. Prior to the preparation of the planning application, careful consideration was given to the locations from which the photographs for the LVIA should be taken. Although the ZTV shows that there is potential visibility from Cockayne Hatley, it was decided that the proximity and height of Potton Wood would entirely screen the turbine from view in this direction and there would be little benefit in producing a photomontage from this location.

With regards to visibility, GCT Ltd. has produced three CAD plans which demonstrate the line of sight from points within the village. These show that the topography of the landscape is such that when combined with the height of Potton Wood, it is not possible to see the turbine from the church, Village Farm or Home Farm. These plans have been provided separately by Chris Smith of GCT Ltd.

1.5 Residential Views

Within the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment submitted in support of this application, reference was made to the houses on Chapelfield with 'main windows' in the direction of the wind turbine. In the methodology section of the LVIA, 'high sensitivity' was attributed to those residential properties with 'principal views' of the turbine. To clarify, 'principal views' is interpreted to mean uninterrupted views from a property window where the turbine can be seen in its entirety without the need to change the angle of view in order to see the turbine. It is appreciated that several of the houses on this estate will experience views of the turbine from property windows at both ground and first floor if the viewer is looking specifically in the direction of the turbine. However, due to the orientation of the majority of these properties, views

will at oblique angles and it remains the case that there are only a very small number of properties that have 'principal views' of the turbine from this area.

A desk-top assessment has been undertaken to assess the level of visibility of the turbine from the closest residential properties. The list is not exhaustive, but includes the closest properties on Hatley and Station Roads, and properties on Chapelfield, since these are the properties most likely to experience views and have expressed concern during the consultation process.

G means views from ground floor windows are likely

U means views from the upper floor windows are likely

Property	Distance to turbine	Possible views
Castle Farm	550m	U,G (landowner property)
4 Hatley Road	800m	Possible G and U
6 Hatley Road	800m	Possible G and u
102 Station Road	800m	Possible G and U
3 Chapelfields	1.2km	G,U
5 Chapelfields	1.2km	G,U
46 Chapelfields	1.2km	G,U
48 Chapelfields	1.2km	G,U
49 Chapelfields	1.2km	G,U
50 Chapelfields	1.2km	U only
51 Chapelfields	1.2km	U only
52 Chapelfields	1.2km	G,U
54 Chapelfields	1.2km	U only
56 Chapelfields	1.2km	U only
58 Chapelfields	1.2km	U only

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60 Chapelfields	1.2km	U only
61 Chapelfields	1.2km	G only

It is acknowledged that several of the properties in the above table will experience some views of the turbine, albeit these views are not considered to be 'principal' views in most instances as described earlier. The fact that some properties will experience views of the turbine does not in itself equate to a demonstrably harmful impact. At 1.2km away, views of the turbine where visible will not be dominant or overbearing and it is not considered that the impact on any of the properties is significant. As with the effect on landscape character, the issue of visual amenity is subjective and differs depending on the individual opinion of the viewer. Whilst it is appreciated that some people do not like the appearance of wind turbines, it is reasonable to say that many people do like to look at them and consider them to be a positive and attractive addition to the landscape.

It should be noted that no property has the 'right to a view' and that the original assessment of the impact on residential amenity for properties in Gamlingay as being of slight magnitude of change with an overall minor effect is still considered accurate.

Although there will be an impact on the outlooks of some properties, it is considered that any impact is outweighed by the positive benefits associated with this scheme. Furthermore it is noted that no property has a 'right to a view.' This is supported by a recent appeal decision which granted planning permission for two large scale wind turbines at Pilling, near Preston (APP/U2370/A/10/2129772)¹, the Inspector stated that:

*"It needs to be appreciated that reducing carbon emissions is not just something on a Government wish-list. There are statutory obligations to produce substantial reductions in greenhouse gas emissions over a very short period....This is an enormous commitment and it is clear that, whether we like them or not, wind turbines are going to become an increasingly familiar site....I would expect the majority of on-shore wind turbines to be located in the countryside and would expect that the size of the turbines will be maximised wherever possible. The inescapable truth is that turbines will have to go somewhere. Our most precious landscapes, such as National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.... have a high degree of protection, so sites with no such designation are preferable. The scale of the provision of on-shore wind energy projects that is required by 2020 is such that all parts of the country where wind conditions are suitable should be expected to make some contribution towards the overall requirements. **In our densely populated country, it is inevitable that wind turbines will be constructed close to where people live"**.*

¹ Appeal Decision APP/U2370/A/10/2129772 Land at Orchard End Farm, South of New Lane, Eagland Hill
<http://www.pcs.planningportal.gov.uk/pcsportal/fscdav/READONLY?OBJ=COO.2036.300.12.2640810&NAME=/2129772%20CORRECTED%20DECISION.pdf>

2.0 Landscape Designation

The application site is not within any identified landscape designation either at a local or national level and is therefore identified as open countryside. The application site has been incorrectly identified as Green Belt in more than one public response letter.

3.0 Precedent

Gamlingay Community Turbine Ltd has only ever intended to install one single turbine. There are no plans for any further wind turbines by this organisation. Each planning application must be treated on its own merits by the local planning authority. Any concerns relating to precedent are unfounded and are not considered to be a material planning consideration.

4.0 Conservation and Listed Buildings

4.1 Conservation Area Map

It is noted that some concerns have been raised that the Environmental Appraisal document does not contain the full map of the Gamlingay Conservation Area. The copy of the map used in the application is taken directly from that produced by SCDC. The assessment of the conservation area carried out in the Environmental Appraisal takes into the account the whole conservation area, despite the fact that the map included misses a small portion of the total area of the designation.

4.2 Impact on Listed Buildings

There are several listed buildings in the Gamlingay area. The Cultural Heritage chapter of the Environmental Appraisal assessed the impact of the turbine on the buildings which SCDC considered had the potential to be impacted. This chapter was prepared in consultation with SCDC, full details of which can be found in the Environmental Appraisal. It is acknowledged that some of the neighbour objections have raised concerns regarding the impact of the turbine on other listed buildings in the area. In order to address these concerns, the following information has been collected:

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Figure 1: View from the Emplins towards the turbine location

The above photograph shows the view from the Emplins in the direction of the turbine. The location and size of the turbine is shown in front of the trees in the photograph but in reality the trees will mask the view of the turbine from this location. The proposed turbine site is 1.3km from the nearest part of the Emplins property. This photograph shows that even in winter when the tree screening is at a minimum, there will be no impact on views from this listed building. The appearance and character of the building will not be affected and there will be no impact on the setting of the building.



Figure 2: View from Almhouse Chapel (Grade 2* Listed)

The above photograph shows the view from Almhouse Chapel in the direction of the turbine. The location and size of the turbine is again shown in front of the house for ease. It is clear from this photograph that views of the turbine will be completely masked from Church Street by the building itself. With regards to the principal view of this building from Church Street, the character and appearance of Almhouse Chapel and its setting remain unaffected by the turbine installation.



Figure 3: Maypole House (Grade 2 Listed).

The above photograph shows the view from Maypole House in the direction of the wind turbine. Due to the presence of intervening buildings, the character, appearance and setting of Maypole House remain unchanged by the turbine. Views towards the turbine site are totally masked by the properties on the south side of Church Street. There will be no impact on the character, appearance or setting of this listed building.

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Figure 4: View from the Village College towards the turbine

The above photograph shows the view from the Village College towards the turbine site. The size and position are shown in front of the trees but in reality the turbine will be masked by the screening these trees provide. It will be possible to experience glimpses of the turbine through the trees during the winter months and there will be certain places from the playing field where the view to the turbine is less obscured by trees but it will always be behind some trees across the whole college site. The football goals will appear taller than the turbine when viewed from the school buildings. It is noted that visibility of the turbine does not in itself equate to a demonstrably harmful impact. Furthermore, from this distance, the turbine will appear as small in scale and will not dominate views from this location. It is considered that any impact on character, appearance and setting will be negligible.



Figure 5: View from the Baptist Church front gates towards the turbine site

The above photograph shows the view in the direction of the turbine from the front gates of the Baptist Church in Gamlingay. The turbine will be totally masked by the properties to the east of Honey Hill. It should be noted that the photos submitted by two residents from Chapelfields that are looking down the road into Chapelfields are wrongly described as viewed towards the turbine site. It is not possible to view the turbine from the Baptist Church. Views from the church and the character, appearance and setting of the church are therefore not harmed by this installation.

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Figure 6: View from the Manor House towards the turbine

The photograph above shows the view from the Manor House towards the turbine site. The turbine will be totally masked by the dense tree line to the south of Station Road. This listed building was assessed in the cultural heritage chapter of the Environmental Statement and it was concluded that the impact on character, appearance and setting is minor. The extension to KMG's factory at Station Road Industrial Estate will also be in line with this view between the trees and the turbine site, as will the residential development planned for the field between the trees and the industrial estate. Overall, it is considered that there will be no impact on the Manor House.

5.0 Wind Turbines (Minimum Distance from Residential Premises) Bill (HL)

This is a Private Member's Bill introduced in the House of Lords. To clarify, Private Members Bill's are Public Bills introduced by MPs and Lords who are not government ministers. Like other Public Bills, Private Member's Bills can be introduced in either House and must go through the same set stages. However, as less time is allocated to these Bills, they are less likely to proceed through all stages.

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This particular Bill has had its first and second reading in the House of Lords (the second reading took place in June 2011). The next stage, Committee Stage, at which the Bill is examined line by line, is yet to be scheduled. In order for this Bill to become law, there are potentially three further stages which the Bill must pass through in the House of Lords, and a further five stages in the House of Commons. Since the contents of this Bill affectively flies in the face of current government policy on renewable installations – which are clear that renewable energy should be incorporated wherever possible – it is unlikely that this Bill will be passed in its current form.

Since this Bill is still in its very early stages, it cannot and should not be used as a material consideration in the determination of this planning application.

6.0 South Cambridgeshire District Council Resolution of Wind Farms (2011)

This resolution does not relate to single wind turbines and is therefore not relevant to this application.

7.0 House Prices

There is no evidence to suggest that house prices will be adversely affected by the installation of a wind turbine in the vicinity. Furthermore, this topic is not a material consideration and should not be used by the LPA in the determination of this application.

8.0 Planning Policy and current Government thinking

PPS22 - Renewable Energy is the national planning policy document for renewables in England. This policy document clearly sets out that renewable energy should be installed wherever possible, and that the social, economic and environmental impacts of a proposal are important material considerations. Ambitious renewable energy targets which the government is committed to achieving will only be realised if renewable energy schemes such as this are embraced.

9.0 Health and Safety Concerns

There is no evidence to suggest that wind turbines cause adverse health impacts. The turbine has been sited so as to ensure that there will be negligible impacts with regards to noise and shadow flicker – and certainly any affects are well within recommended limits.

With regards to health and safety it is acknowledged that there have been isolated incidents where turbine failure has occurred. However, it should be noted that these incidents are rare. When compared with other electricity generating technologies, wind turbines are acknowledged as being one of the safest forms. The turbine has been sited to comply with current guidance on safe siting practice which recommends that wind

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turbines should be sited tip height plus 10% from all highways and public rights of way – which is 59.07m in this instance. These distances are easily met by this scheme.

If SCDC requires further clarification on any points within this letter, or on any other matters regarding this application, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

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