

North York Moors National Park Authority

Scarborough Borough Council (South) Parish: Staintondale	App Num. NYM/2011/0865/FL
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Proposal: **Erection of a 50 kW wind turbine (maximum height to blade tip 34.2 metres)
(revised scheme to NYM/2011/0566/FL)**

Location: **Grange Farm, Staintondale**

Applicant: **Mr Mathew Else, c/o Agent**

Agent: **ES Renewables Ltd, fao: Mr Robert Dixon, Woodend Creative Workspace,
The Crescent, Scarborough, North Yorkshire, YO11 2PW**

Date for Decision: **02 March 2012**

Grid Ref: **SE 498909 499715**

Director of Planning's Recommendation

Refusal for the following reason:

1. The proposed wind turbine by reason of its height, design and visually prominent location would constitute a visually obtrusive structure in the open countryside which would be seriously harmful to the character and appearance of this part of the National Park. As such the proposal would be contrary to NYM Core Policy D which seeks to ensure that renewable energy installations are of a location, scale and design appropriate to the locality and to NYM Core Policy A which seeks to ensure that new development conserves and enhances and does not harm the Park's special qualities.

Consultations

Parish - No objections.

Highways - No objections.

Environmental Health Officer -

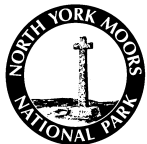
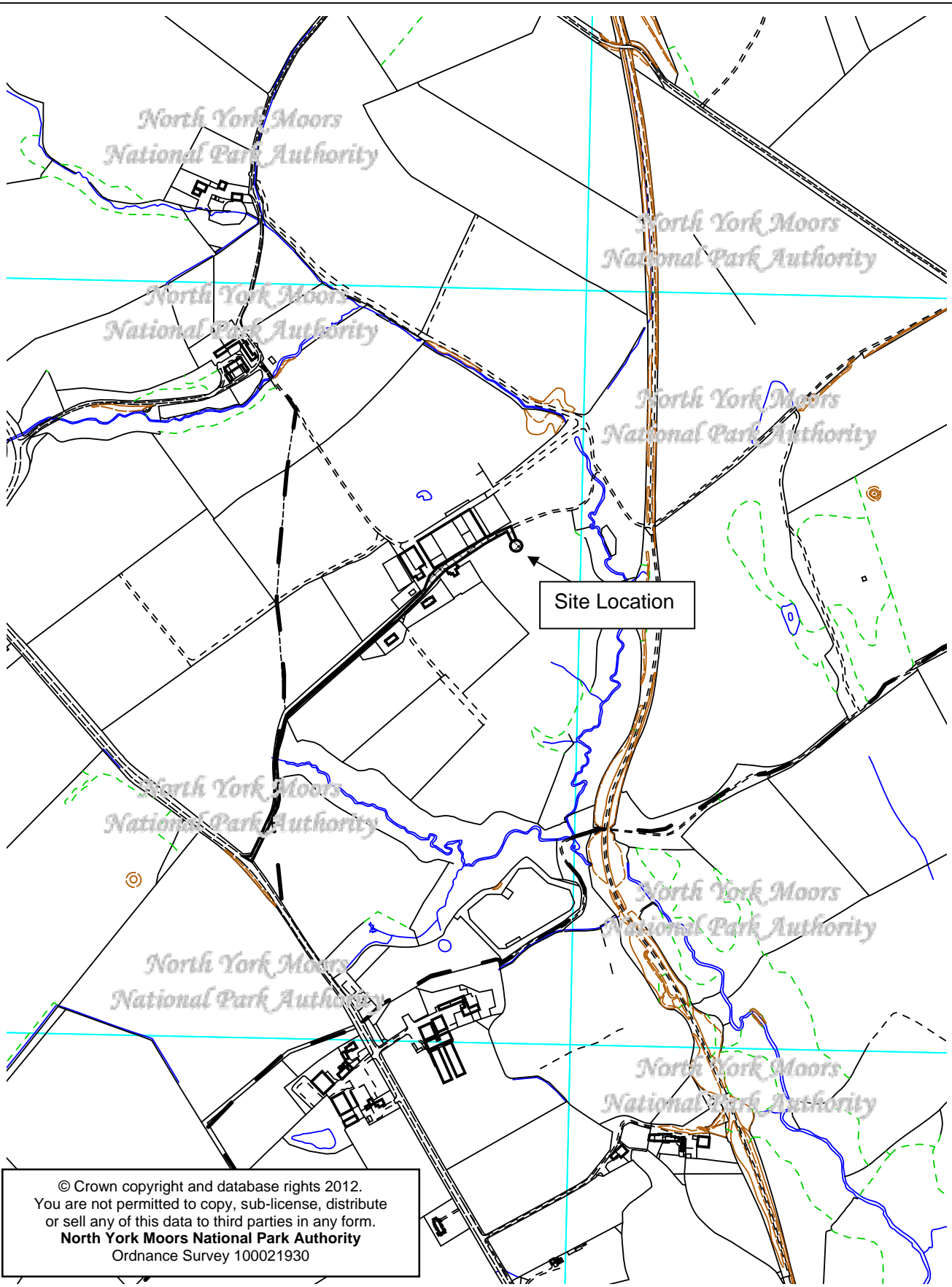
NERL Safeguarding - No safeguarding objection.

ARQIVA (responsible for providing BBC and ITV transmission network) - No objections.

Ministry of Defence - No objections.

Site Notice Expiry Date - 3 February 2012.

Others - John Cook, Burgate Farm, Harwood Dale - Support the planning application as dairy farms are large users of electricity, not only for the milking machines but for water heating (required for plant sterilisation), for refrigeration (to cool the milk to 4 degrees max.) and increasingly, slurry handling and treatment. Electricity costs are thus a large budget item and many dairy farmers are installing wind turbines in the knowledge that they are future-proofing their businesses from rising energy costs. Farmers who cannot install turbines risk becoming uncompetitive with farmers who are able to install turbines.



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John Cook, Burgate Farm, Harwood Dale (continued)

The land provides a living for a farmer and it is appropriate that the land should also provide the energy. The Government is rightly committed to 'green sustainable energy' and I hope that the National Park Authority feels able to allow Matthew and his family to 'do their bit' for the environment.

Mr W L Scaife, Silton Grange, Nether Silton, Thirsk - As a farmer, and former dairy farmer, I would urge you to think favourably on the above planning matter. Dairy farming requires a tireless dedication from all involved and the financial drain in this current turbulent financial climate is huge. The possibility for wind energy must surely be seen as a welcome investment for all.

Energy costs are increasing at a daunting rate for everyone, but the rate for dairy farms must be overwhelming. As a recently retired dairy farmer I can say at firsthand how hard it is to balance the books with all costs inflating whilst the milk price is either stagnant or reducing in real terms. I am sure that Mr Else will not have taken the decision lightly to invest in both the future of his business but also in the future of our planet.

Sharon Agar, Geo Agar Agricultural Engineers, Church Road Farm, Ravenscar - As a responsible company for the environment and countryside, we would be in full support for Grange Farm to generate renewable power using a wind turbine. This will be a sustainable commodity for future generations. In my opinion, along with solar panels this is ours and our future generation's legacy.

The proposed site of the wind turbine along with the appropriate screening will allow the turbine to blend within the terrain and countryside. As the site is over 350 metres from the old railway line it would not present any issues for the frequent users of the line for example walkers, horse riders and cyclists.

Background

Grange Farm is a long established farmstead located within the loose knit community of Staintondale. The farmstead comprises a farmhouse and agricultural workers dwellings and a number of substantial modern agricultural buildings and various hardsurfaced areas, some raised above ground level. The farm is situated within a dip in the landscape with mature trees on the rising land to the north east. However, although in a dip, the site is visually prominent from rising land to the south west, north and north east and from Public Rights of Way (particularly the old railway line to the east). The maximum height of the farm buildings appears to be no more than approximately 7 metres, with the new agricultural workers dwelling measuring approximately 9 metres to the ridge.

Members will recall that planning permission was refused towards the end of last year for the installation of an un-guyed single pole mounted wind turbine with a maximum height to blade tip of 34.2 metres on a 24 metres high tower with a maximum radius of blade area of 9.6 metres. It was proposed that this mast would be situated approximately 60 metres to the north west of the farmstead on agricultural land. The turbine proposed was rated at 50 kW, about five times the output of the recent spate of on-farm wind turbines.

This application was refused for the following reason:

"The proposed wind turbine by reason of its height, nature and siting in an isolated location in open countryside would constitute a visually obtrusive structure in the open countryside which would be seriously harmful to the character and appearance of this part of the National Park. As such the proposal would be contrary to NYM Core Policy D which seeks to ensure that renewable energy installations are of a location, scale and design appropriate to the locality and to NYM Core Policy A which seeks to ensure that new development conserves and enhances and does not harm the Park's special qualities."

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Background (continued)

That application followed the refusal of an earlier application in 2009 for an 18 metre high turbine, situated proximately 60 metres to the east of the farmstead on agricultural land.

A further revised application has now been submitted and it is again proposed to install a 50 kW wind turbine, with a maximum height to blade tip of 34.2 metres on a free standing 24 metres high galvanised white tower with a maximum radius of blade area of 9.6 metres.

It is now proposed to site the turbine 60 metres north east of the farm's agricultural buildings. The turbine would be sited on land which is at a lower level than the buildings and there is also an area of woodland to the south of the site.

The applicant's agent has submitted a detailed statement in support of the application, in brief it states:

The turbine will serve a large organic family farm which has large and extremely expensive energy consumption. The turbine will enable the farm to become self sufficient in terms of its electricity supply. Employing four full time and two part time workers, Grange Farm has to ensure that it benefits in any way possible to maintain profitability and reduce overheads to remain competitive in the market place.

The applicant has submitted letters of support for the proposal from A Cooper, Kine Rigg Farm, Staintondale; Anthony White, Bent Rigg Farm, Ravenscar and Jo Speed, Technical Extension Officer, Dairy Co, Agricultural and Horticulture Development Board.

Main Issues

The key issue is considered to be whether the height, design and position of the wind turbine in this prominent location represents a scale of development which can be satisfactorily assimilated in the landscape of this part of the National Park so that it does not harm the landscape character or special qualities of the area and if not whether there are material circumstances to outweigh the harm.

The relevant NYM Local Development Framework policies are Core Policy A (Delivering National Park Purposes and Sustainable Development) and Core Policy D (Climate Change) together with Planning Policy Statement 22 (Renewable Energy).

Policy Context

Core Policy A of the NYM Local Development Framework is concerned with delivering National Park purposes. This is achieved, in part, by limiting the scale of development and level of activity to that which would not have an unacceptable impact on the wider landscape or the quiet enjoyment peace and tranquillity of the Park, nor detract from the quality of life of local residents or the experience of visitors.

Core Policy D of the NYM Local Development Framework is concerned with climate change. The policy states that the Authority is supportive of addressing the causes of climate change and with regard to renewable energy sources, states these should be of appropriate location, scale and design for the locality.

Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 22 states the Government's commitment to support appropriate renewable energy developments. In National Parks, the guidance states that renewable energy projects should only be permitted where they would not compromise the objectives of landscape designation and it envisages that small scale projects which are not harmful could be acceptable.

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Proposed Height of the Turbine in Relation to Supplementary Planning Document

Members will be aware that in order to provide applicants with good quality advice on how to resolve the potential conflicts between landscape conservation in a National Park and promote renewable energy generation, the Authority has produced and adopted, following public consultation, a Supplementary Planning Document on renewable energy. In respect of wind turbines, the guide advises that turbines should be close to and visually related to existing buildings and the height should be proportionate to the nearest buildings and no more than 50 percent higher than the closest building and little further than 50 metres from the building/curtilage and not be unduly prominent in the landscape even if height and locational criteria are met.

In this case, the submitted plans show the tallest agricultural buildings to be the feed bins. However, these are not in place and there appears to be no planning permission for them. Consequently with the dwelling being the highest building at 9 metres, a turbine might be acceptable at 4.5 metres higher than the ridge of the building, which if account is taken of the drop in ground levels, to the proposed base of the turbine, would suggest that a turbine measuring 23.1 metres might be acceptable. The proposed turbine would measure 34.2 metres which is 11.1 metres higher than might accord with the Supplementary Planning Document. This proposal would conflict with the Supplementary Planning Document due to its significant height.

Impact on Landscape and Public Rights of Way

As a result of the height and design of the wind turbine, Officers consider that the turbine would have a significant impact on the character and appearance of this part of the National Park. The turbine would be located some 60 metres from the nearest building, in very open and undulating land, which slopes steeply to the west. The result would be a very prominent man-made feature in this otherwise uninterrupted skyline of this attractive landscape. There is also a Public Right of Way which runs to the west of the site and the site is also prominent from views travelling by car on the Staintondale Road and also on Bent Rigg Road that rises up to the west. Visitors to the area would have their attention drawn to and be able to clearly see the turbine and its eye catching kinetic movement and Officers consider that the imposing structure, which, due to its height, would be poor related in proportions to any other buildings, would have a negative effect on the appearance and therefore enjoyment of this part of the National Park.

Other Considerations

The applicant has explained that the reason for seeking a 50 kW wind turbine is to meet all the requirements of the farming operation on site. He has declined to investigate a part wind part solar PV approach. However, what makes the site a good operational site also serves to exacerbate the visual impact of the proposal.

Officers have assessed the likely impact of this proposal from a wide area around the site and after detailed consideration, Officers consider that the turbine would be visually prominent from a number of vantage points and would result in an unduly obtrusive and alien feature in this open landscape.

Furthermore, any approval would undermine the efforts to date on dozens of other wind turbines where a sensitive balance between size/scale/location of wind turbine and landscape impact has been achieved.

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Material Considerations

National Parks are protected by law for future generations because of their natural beauty and for the opportunities they offer for recreation. They are designated under the provisions of The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, 1949 and have two statutory purposes:

1. To conserve and enhance their natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage.
2. To promote opportunities for the public understanding and enjoyment of these special qualities.

Policies and decisions that could have an impact upon National Parks have to take these two purposes into consideration.

It is notable that within the last year the Government has issued its long awaited micro-wind permitted development provisions for dwellings. In the original document it was proposed to allow single wind turbines to be erected within National Parks subject to caveats without planning permission. It now states that the majority public view was against such a position and wind turbines within National Parks will now need planning permission to help balance renewable energy issues with landscape protection issues.

Recommendation

It is not considered that the proposal can be satisfactorily accommodated within the landscape without resulting in an unacceptable adverse visual impact on the character and appearance of this quiet part of the National Park or having a significant adverse impact on the quiet enjoyment, peace and tranquillity of the Park. The proposal would therefore conflict with National Park purposes, Planning Policy Statement 22 and Core Policies A and D of the NYM Local Development Framework and as such, refusal is recommended.