

Welsh Newton & Llanrothal Group Parish Council

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Mr. Carl Brace
Herefordshire Council Planning Services
PO Box 230
Hereford
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Reference application No 150460 Gwenherrion Farm Welsh Newton
NP25 5RR Proposed installation of a wind turbine with a tower hub height of up
to 24.8m and a blade tip length height of up to 36.6m including associated works.

Dear Mr. Brace,

The Parish Council considered this application at their meeting held on
the 12th March 2015

Resolved:- **Unanimously not to support the application**

The Parish Council also make the following comments as a basis of their
objection

Visual Impact

It is disappointing that, despite a request from the Parish Council, the applicant refused to erect a marker so that local people are better able to assess the potential visual impact of the turbine. The photographs supplied are insufficient to make a judgement and although supplementary views from the West were requested by a parish councillor who attended the exhibition none were forthcoming.

“the proposed development, due to its scale, will affect both landscape character and visual amenity receptors and their views during construction, operation and decommissioning.” - Design and Access Statement

The evidence submitted does not satisfy the Parish Council that the visual impact will be acceptable in what is otherwise a relatively unspoilt intimate rolling landscape. The introduction of an alien industrial feature of the scale and mass of the proposed turbine will detract from the landscape quality and the visual amenity of the area.

Local Opposition and Planning Policy

Whilst there is a principle of supporting renewable technology within the NPPF and local plans there is also an increasing acknowledgement of the balance that needs to



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be struck between renewable energy needs and the environmental impact of such schemes. Additionally, as argued by John Bercow MP at the Dorcas Lane enquiry, there is a drift of policy to take greater note of local opposition. According to the ministerial statement local voices must be listened to and, one assumes, given weight in the decision making process. At the date of the Parish Council meeting 52 letters of objection had been published on the Herefordshire Council website – this is a high number for such a rural area and therefore the Parish Council feels duty bound to reflect local opposition.

Environmental Issues

The ecology survey conducted on behalf of the applicant took place on a single sunny day in October. The presence, or otherwise, of bats was determined by looking at trees close to the site through binoculars. It does not seem to be a very thorough methodology. Interestingly we note that on the planning decision notice for barn conversions on Gwenherrion Farm in 2006 (DCSE2006/0138) there is a reference to an ecology survey conducted in 2005; as a result of this survey (specifically paras 4.8 – 4.19) recommendations were made regarding mitigation, habitat enhancement and monitoring of bats and other species which would suggest that there are indeed bats in the area which may not have been apparent on the sunny day in October when the current survey was conducted. Ironically in the context of an application for 'green energy', the ecology survey seems to conclude that the environment in the area of the turbine is already so degraded, ponds silted up, eutrophication, intensively managed hedgerows, loss of headland etc. that there is very little wildlife left to worry about; however local observation tells a somewhat different story with buzzards, owls and bats being regularly seen in the locality.

The cost to local wildlife habitat and populations is an important point in this context since, in policy terms, it must weigh in the balance against the general 'green energy' agenda

- the need for renewable energy does not automatically override environmental protections and the planning concerns of local communities

Eric Pickles' written statement to Parliament June 2013

Community Engagement.

The same ministerial statement also places great emphasis on community engagement which should be timely and of quality. The applicant's 'community engagement' took the form of an exhibition about a turbine smaller than the one which is the subject of the application. It was, as with the Dorcas Lane application, a sales platform rather than a consultation. The Parish Council requested to see the raw data gathered so that the methodology could be examined but the data has not been forthcoming therefore the conclusions reached by Aeolus energy cannot be verified. This, we feel, falls short of the 'quality consultation' that should be provided.

Access.

The highway access described in the Design and Access statement is only the last few yards of a journey. What is not clear is how the turbine will get to this point. The turning from the A466 is very tight and the war memorial situated on the corner is often damaged by chicken lorries and beet lorries unable to make the angle without mounting the kerb. The verge opposite is also often driven over and still bears the scars of the last lorry that had to use it to make the turn. There is no mention of these issues in the application which simply states that the site will be accessed from 'the South' – that is not possible, there is no road to the South. It is not clear how the local journey will be achieved in its entirety without causing massive damage to roadside verges etc.

Rural Enterprise/farm diversification

Whilst the Parish Council broadly supports rural enterprise and farm diversification it is felt that the scant details supplied within the application fail to make the business case for the turbine. The need for 3x3kw water heaters and lights does not, on the face of it, justify a 100kw turbine and the argument regarding the sustainability of the goat business therefore lacks substance. It ought to be possible to generate sufficient energy through less intrusive renewable sources to meet the needs of the goat business.

Yours Sincerely

M Walker

Malcolm Walker
Clerk to Welsh Newton & Llanrothal Group Parish Council