

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2013-2014

**DEVELOPMENT CONTROL
COMMITTEE
15 MAY 2014**

**REPORT OF:
SERVICE DIRECTOR
PLANNING**

	Agenda Item No. 9
<p>APPLICATION NO: 14/0253 - ERECTION OF SINGLE 225 KW WIND TURBINE (UP TO 65.3M BLADE TIP HEIGHT) WITH ASSOCIATED HARD STANDING AREA, SUBSTATION/ TRANSFORMER AND BOUNDARY FENCING, LAND ADJOINING UNIT 3 PENGARNDU INDUSTRIAL ESTATE DOWLAIS TOP MERTHYR TYDFIL, - OBSERVATIONS REQUESTED BY ADJACENT PLANNING AUTHORITY: MERTHYR TYDFIL COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL</p>	

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To give this Authority's observations on the planning application which is to be determined by Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council.

2. RECOMMENDATION

To forward the observations of this Authority to Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council.

3. APPLICATION DETAILS

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council has requested the observations of the Council, as neighbouring local planning authority, on a planning application proposal for the erection of a single wind turbine on land adjoining Unit 3 Pengarnddu Industrial Estate, Dowlias Top, Merthyr. The proposed wind turbine is a Norwin 29-stall-225kW High Yield direct drive turbine with a hub height of 50 metres and maximum blade height of 65.3 metres, and would be accompanied by associating development of a hard standing area, substation/transformer and boundary fencing.

The proposed wind turbine is to be sited on existing vacant land adjoining and owned by The Carpet and Bed Company which is located on the Pengarnddu Industrial Estate. The company currently employs 15 staff from the local area. Apart from the benefits to the business itself, the proposed development will also dramatically reduce

the company's carbon footprint and make a significant contribution to the Welsh Government's targets for future energy production from renewable sources.

The site is exposed to the prevailing south-westerly winds. Generating energy from wind is a proven technology and in the opinion of the applicant is the only realistic sustainable option for the site in the context of its location, the business' energy demands, the natural wind speeds and regularity, and the limited winter sun. To satisfy peak demands, and to secure sufficient spare capacity to satisfy the energy needs of any future potential additional electrically operated plant and machinery, the need to install a turbine producing a minimum of 225kW is the option being advised to the applicant.

The application project is not considered EIA development nevertheless is accompanied by supporting studies, reports and impact assessments, covering landscape and visual impacts, ecology, transportation, heritage, shadow flicker, mining, noise, and cultural, historic and geological landscapes.

SITE APPRAISAL

The application site is located within a reclaimed industrial area that includes recent commercial, retail and light industrial uses. The area forms part of the characteristic industrial landscape that is typical of Merthyr Tydfil and the surrounding valleys, where a distinctive character and heritage has been shaped over time by dynamic industrial processes.

The Pengarnddu Industrial Estate lies on the fringes of uplands which border the Brecon Beacons National Park, within a transitional landscape that bridges those upland moorland landscapes of the National Park and the industrial valleys which cut north – south from the foothills of the National Park.

The wider landscape is dominated by contrasting elements, including large-scale infrastructure and industrial uses, pylons lines and masts, open cast workings and tips. These complex elements are in contrast to the expansive uplands of the National Park and valley ridgelines.

The turbine site lies within the north-eastern extents of the settlement of Merthyr Tydfil, which is sat within the broad basin that forms the confluence of the Taf Fawr and Taf Fechan. Other key settlements nearby include Aberdare, Rhymney and Tredegar. Hillside villages and hamlets are also scattered along valley sides and ridges.

The application study area is crossed by a number of infrastructure transport links, which cut across valley floors and link the valley heads. Topography within the study area is distinctive and varied – the northern half of the study area being elevated and dramatically mountainous within the National Park. The Vaynor Uplands prominently overlook Merthyr Tydfil, forming a distinctive topographical

feature in many views. A common and prominent reference point within many views from within Merthyr Tydfil and the surrounding landscape are the mounds of tipped material at the open cast workings on the eastern fringe of Merthyr Tydfil. This is a highly visible component of the landscape, and is a distinctive element within views – as well as framing and obscuring views from some locations to the south east of the proposed site.

Topography elsewhere within the study area is shaped by valley landforms – including the Cynon, Taff, Rhymney and Sirhowy river valleys, which define the southern half of the study area. Resultant landform is lower lying and distinctively complex, divided by a series of valleys and undulating ridgelines.

Transition in land cover across the study area creates a number of landscape types, which range from exposed upland moorland and incised woodland valleys to more varied mosaic pasture and grazing, scarp slopes and valley sides and a series of linked communities within the south of the study area.

PLANNING HISTORY

Planning history records will be held by Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council.

PUBLICITY

Publicity of the application will have been undertaken by Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council.

CONSULTATION

Consultations on the application will have been undertaken by Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council.

POLICY CONTEXT

The planning policy framework is the adopted Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Local Development Plan and Planning Policy Wales.

REASONS FOR REACHING THE RECOMMENDATION

The principle of the development and other material planning considerations fall to Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council to assess in its determination of the application. However, from a Rhondda Cynon Taf perspective the chief consideration is the visual impact of the development and in particular whether it has any such impacts on the County Borough.

The proposal is for a comparatively large wind turbine situated within an industrial estate located in an elevated position at the northern edge of the urban area of Merthyr Tydfil. The nearest key settlement to the application located in Rhondda Cynon Taf is Aberdare and that is

situated in the floor of the upper Cynon Valley where views of the turbine would be obscured by the intervening hillside. Indeed, none of the illustrated viewpoints in the study area of the landscape and visual appraisal that accompanies the application are taken from within Rhondda Cynon Taf, though The Zone of Theoretical Visual impact shows that limited areas of the highest ground along the eastern ridge of the Cynon Valley would afford any views of the turbine. This ridge, which is some 6.5 km (4 miles) from the location of the proposed turbine, is designated as the Cynon Valley Northern Slopes Special Landscape Area in the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan (Policy NSA 25.5). The SLA has been designated to protect the area of fine landscape quality with the County Borough.

It is considered that the distance between the SLA and the turbine site, plus the character of the intervening landscapes together with tree cover, would limit both the visibility of the turbine and reduce its effects on the landscape in Rhondda Cynon Taf to a considerable extent. The submitted Landscape and Visual Appraisal concludes that magnitude of the effects of the turbine on Landscape Zone 2 (which includes the eastern ridge of Cynon Valley and the lower Taff Valley) are of a low order, and the significance of the effects of the turbine, both as a stand alone project and in combination with nearby consented and existing wind energy projects, would be minor or not significant.

As a consequence it is concluded that there would be insignificant cross-boundary visual impact from the proposed wind turbine, and therefore it is recommended that no objection is offered.

RECOMMENDATION

Raise No Objection.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

as amended by

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE

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OFFICER TO CONTACT

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**MR P BRISTOW
(Tel. No. 01443 494763)**

See Relevant Application File

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