
Report To:	The Planning Board	Date:	5 January 2011
Report By:	Head of Regeneration and Planning	Report No:	10/0282/IC Plan 1/11
			Local Application Development
Contact Officer:	David Ashman	Contact No:	01475 712416
Subject:	Installation of wind turbine at Field at Kellybank Cottage, Kelly Road, Wemyss Bay		

SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site is within a field associated with Kelly Bank Cottage at Kelly Road, Wemyss Bay. It is located approximately 170 metres to the north of Kelly Bank Cottage and forms part of a grazing field. The cottage sits in a remote location to the east of the Kelly Bank Caravan Park.

PROPOSAL

The applicant seeks planning permission to erect a 15 metres high turbine. The radius of the blades is 4.8 metres, giving a total height from ground level of 19.8 metres. The turbine will be constructed of galvanised steel and has a life expectancy of 20 years. The power output is expected to be 10 kilowatts.

The application site is approximately 60 metres below the top of the nearest hill.

LOCAL PLAN POLICIES

Local Plan Policy DS8 - Green Belt

There is a presumption against development in the designated Green Belt, as identified on the Proposals Map. Proposals will only be considered favourably in exceptional or mitigating circumstances and where the criteria for development in Policy DS10 for the 'Countryside' can be satisfied.

Local Plan Policy DS10 - Countryside

Development within the countryside (including the Green Belt) will be permitted only where it can be supported with reference to the following criteria:

- (a) it is required for the purposes of agriculture and forestry;
- (b) it is a recreation, leisure or tourism proposal which is appropriate for the countryside and contributes to the social and economic development of the area;

- (c) there is a specific locational requirement for the use and it cannot be accommodated on an alternative site;
- (d) it entails appropriate re-use of vacant buildings which it would be desirable to retain for their historic or architectural character; or
- (e) it forms part of an establishment or institution standing in extensive grounds; and
- (f) it does not adversely impact on the landscape character;
- (g) it does not adversely impact on the natural heritage resource;
- (h) it does not adversely affect the visual amenity of the area and is capable of satisfactory mitigation;
- (i) there is a need for additional land for development purposes, provided it takes account of the requirements of the Structure Plan; and
- (j) it complies with other relevant Local Plan policies.

Local Plan Policy DS11 - Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park

Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park will be safeguarded by having regard to Local Plan policies DS8 and/ or DS10 and in accordance with the Planning Practice Advice Notes Nos. 5 and 6, under Policy DC1.

Local Plan Policy HR1 - Designated Environmental Resources and Built Heritage

Development that would adversely affect, directly or indirectly, the natural or built heritage resources listed in Schedule 9.1 and where indicated, on the Proposals Map, will not normally be permitted.

Having regard to the designation of the environmental resource and built heritage, exceptions will only be made where:

- (a) Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) will not be compromised;
- (b) visual amenity and townscape will not be compromised;
- (c) no other site, identified in the Local Plan as suitable, is available;
- (d) the social and economic benefits of the scheme outweigh the total or partial loss of the environmental resource;
- (e) the developer has demonstrated that the impact of the development on the environment will be minimised; and
- (f) the loss can be compensated by habitat creation/site enhancement elsewhere, and where there are satisfactory arrangements to achieve this.

Local Plan Policy HR5 - West Renfrew Hills Scenic Area

Proposals for development in the West Renfrew Hills Scenic Area will only be approved where their scale, siting and design reflects and respects the sensitivity of the area.

Local Plan Policy UT6 - Renewable Energy Infrastructure

In assessing proposals for renewable energy infrastructure, Inverclyde Council, as Planning Authority, will have regard to the impact on:

- (a) the natural environment and built heritage of the locality;
- (b) the landscape, particularly when viewed from major transport corridors;
- (c) residential amenity;
- (d) tourism and leisure resources, particularly if within the Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park; and
- (e) the operation of aircraft and telecommunications equipment.

CONSULTATIONS

National Air Traffic Safety - No objections.

Scottish Natural Heritage - The planning authority has to consider the possibility of landscape impacts of the turbine. With respect to the adjacent SPA, the proposal will not impact upon it. The proposal will not have an adverse impact on the hen harrier population.

Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park Authority – The proposed turbine is not regarded as having an adverse impact upon the Park. No objections.

PUBLICITY

The application was advertised in the Greenock Telegraph on 10th September 2010 as it is contrary to the development plan.

SITE NOTICES

The nature of the proposal did not require a site notice.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The application was the subject of neighbour notification and press advertisement. No representations were received.

ASSESSMENT

The material considerations in determination of this application are the Local Plan, the Scottish Planning Policy, the Glasgow and the Clyde Valley Landscape Character Assessment and the supporting information provided by the applicant.

The application site is located within Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park under policy DS11. This part of the Park is also associated with policy DS8 as Green Belt. The Park is safeguarded by policy DS11 with policy DS8 expressing a presumption against development. The policy refers to favourable consideration of proposals only in exceptional or mitigating circumstances and where the criteria within policy DS11 can be satisfied. In this respect there is an overlap with the criteria set by policy UT6. It has therefore firstly to be determined if there are exceptional or mitigating circumstances supporting the development.

The promotion of renewable energy projects accords with national planning policy which supports sustainable development with a particular emphasis, in energy production, of clean renewable energy. The Scottish Government is also supportive of rural enterprises and diversification of the rural economy. The proposed turbine will provide a source of renewable energy to the applicant with surplus electricity being fed back into the national grid.

The proposal is not required specifically for agriculture, although due to the potential for supplementary income generation it may be regarded as a development supportive of the viability of existing agricultural operations. There is no specific locational requirement as such as the turbine could be located elsewhere with the electricity generated being fed in by cable. The locational need in more general terms, however, is for a rural setting as discussed above.

In terms of impact on landscape character and visual amenity, any turbine will have an adverse impact as a large built feature in the landscape. Impact is assessed by the number and relative positions of visual receptors. Being located at Kelly Bank, it is in a remote location, hence the number of visual receptors is limited to those persons living in close proximity and drivers/pedestrians approaching Kelly Bank. It is largely not visible from the Kelly Bank Caravan

Park. It will be viewable from some parts of Skelmorlie, Wemyss Bay and from more distant views across the Firth of Clyde.

The height and positioning of the turbine helps to mitigate visual impact. Compared to other similar proposals, this turbine, at 15 metres high, is relatively small. I also note that it is not located at the top of a hill but 60 metres below the summit. As there are no other turbines within view, cumulative impact is not an issue. I consider that from across the Firth, the turbine will hardly, if at all, be noticed and will therefore have only a minor visual impact. From Skelmorlie and Wemyss Bay the turbine will largely be viewed against the back drop of the hill to the rear. On this basis I would again consider the impact to be minor. The visual impact from the applicant's house, the adjoining two residences and drivers along Kelly Road will be the greatest of any visual receptors. From these locations the turbine will appear, due to the angle of view, to be on the brow of the hill. As such, the turbine will be more visible and, due to the movement of the blades, will draw the attention more than in distant views. I nevertheless consider that the relatively low height of the turbine, combined with the fact that it will be at least approximately 170 metres distant from these receptor points, will reduce the level of impact to moderate. I am also aware that single power turbines such as the one proposed are becoming a common feature within rural locations and are not unexpected developments for receptors to encounter. Therefore, although the turbine will adversely impact on the landscape character and visual amenity of the area, the level of impact is regarded as acceptable.

On the matter of impact on the natural heritage resource, I do not consider this to be an issue.

I therefore consider that the proposed development is an acceptable departure from policies DS8 and DS10.

The location of the site within the West Renfrew Hills Scenic Area, under policy HR5, accords a further level of protection to the landscape. The Scenic Area is categorised as Rugged Moorland Hills in the Glasgow and the Clyde Valley Landscape Character Assessment. Although a "natural" landscape area, its character has been influenced over time by man's influence on the landscape from commercial plantations and the formation of reservoirs to the erection of electricity infrastructure, typified by the pylons and overhead wires. It therefore has a partly developed appearance to it typified by the existing electrical infrastructure and, in this context, I consider that a singular wind turbine will not appear to be insensitive. I therefore consider that the proposal accords with policy HR5. It follows that it is acceptable in relation to policy HR1 as the Schedule to the policy includes the Green Belt, the Regional Park and the West Renfrew Hills Scenic Area.

With respect to policy UT6, and specifically those elements not already assessed, the site will largely not be seen from the main transport corridor (A78) and has no implications for residential amenity (particularly in respect of noise and shadow flicker, the latter as the turbine is far to the north of existing houses). A development of this scale and as sited will not impact on tourism and leisure. Finally, I note that NATS has no objections to the proposal and it can therefore be assumed that there are no aircraft safety concerns. Interference with telecommunications equipment is not a material planning consideration as it is controlled under other legislation. The latter is normally only a potential issue with large scale wind farms.

Overall, with respect to Local Plan policy I conclude that the proposal is a departure but one that I regard as acceptable.

Turning to the remaining other material consideration, I note SNH have considered the implications for the adjacent Special Protection Area and, in particular, the Hen Harrier population therein. They consider that the turbine poses no adverse implications in terms of bird strike and, therefore, have no objection to the proposal.

Hence there are no material considerations suggesting that planning permission should not be granted. The proposal is a small contribution to sustainable development, particularly in respect of

renewable energy provision. It is also an acceptable contribution to the diversification of the rural economy. On this basis it is recommended that planning permission be granted.

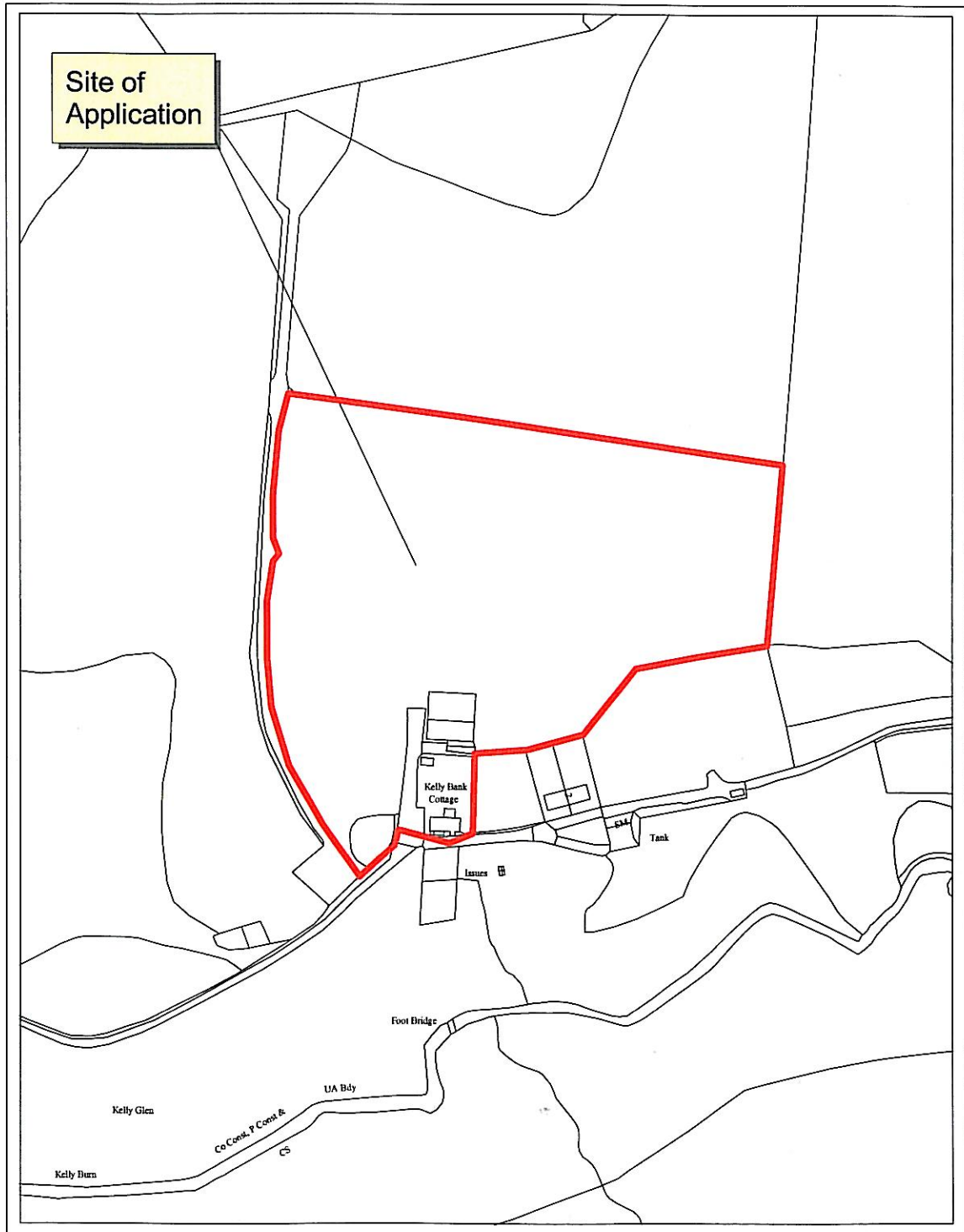
RECOMMENDATION

That the application be granted.

Stuart Jamieson
Head of Regeneration and Planning

BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Application form and plans.
2. Applicant's supporting information.
3. Inverclyde Local Plan.
4. The Scottish Planning Policy.
5. The Glasgow and the Clyde Valley Landscape Character Assessment.
6. Consultation replies.



Drawing No. 10/0282/IC Kellybank Cottage, Wemyss Bay.

Drawn by: JML

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