



Angela Smith MP  
House of Commons  
London  
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30<sup>th</sup> October 2008

Mathew Woodward  
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S70 2TN

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**Ref: Planning Application 2008/0838 Erection of 5 Wind Turbines  
Sheephouse Heights**

Dear Mathew,

In my capacity as the local Member of Parliament for Sheffield Hillsborough I would like to record my objections to the above planning application. While I accept I am not a statutory consultee on planning issues and the application is not within the bounds of my constituency, I do feel that because of my constituents will be affected by this application; my constituents' and my own views should be recorded.

First, let me make it clear I am not opposed, per se, to wind generation. I believe like many people wind generation must and should contribute to the country's overall energy mix. However, I believe it is important that local views and considerations are taken into account when planning these developments. Like any other development there will be areas where it is right and proper to construct such a facility and in others where it will not be. I believe we need to make sure that all views are considered and the right locations are developed for what are essentially industrial facilities.

**The General area around the proposed Site**

As I am sure you are aware Sheffield Hillsborough constituency shares a border with the boundary of Barnsley Borough Council. In the north west of my constituency this border runs approximately in line with the A616. To the South and west of this road lies the Peak National Park.

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Within this area of my constituency there are two conservation areas, namely, Bolsterstone and Midhopstones. Both are recognised for their outstanding beauty and local importance.

The area around Penistone is already recognised as a location for wind energy with a number of sites already being used for wind generation, with others currently going through the planning process or recently granted and due to be constructed.

### **The Application**

My understanding is that this application relates to the erection of five 15MW wind turbines, each 125m high. These would be placed on or near the ridge top at Sheephouse Heights, otherwise known as Hunshelf Bank. Also contained within the application is the construction of various access routes and site entrances along with the necessary connections to the YEDL grid.

### **Objections by Other Public Bodies**

Both Sheffield City Council and the Peak District National Park have already objected to these proposals. So too has Stocksbridge Town Council on the grounds of the site being within a green belt area, the height of the turbines being too large and the loss of amenity for Stocksbridge residents.

It is my understanding that the Peak National Park have objected on the grounds that under the 1996 Environment Act they are required to protect the landscape character and they feel the development of wind turbines on this scale, in this area, will impact negatively on the National Park.

### **Planning Policies**

I consider the main planning considerations applicable to this development are PPS22, PPG 2 and Policy ES12 of the Barnsley Unitary Plan. ES12 states that proposals for wind energy development will be considered acceptable subject to there being no unacceptable impacts in terms of:

- The individual and cumulative effect on the landscape and visual amenity of the area;
- Residential amenity, with particular regard to outlook, noise and shadow flicker;

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- Access and highway safety; and
- Agricultural land use

PPS 22 forms the main planning statement for wind energy and states that while local landscape and local nature conservation designations should not be used in themselves to refuse planning permission for renewable energy developments, planning applications in such areas should be assessed against criteria based policies set out in local development documents, hence the use ES12 of the Barnsley Unitary Plan.

Also applicable to this proposal is I believe PPG2, which states that developments in green belt areas will comprise inappropriate development, if they impact on the openness of the green belt. I believe careful consideration will need to be given to the visual impact of project, and the developer will need to demonstrate very special circumstances that clearly outweigh any harm by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm if projects are to proceed.

Finally the potential impact of renewable energy projects on areas close to their boundaries should be a material consideration and be taken into account in determining planning applications.

### **My objections to Application 2008/0838 Erection of 5 Wind Turbines Sheephouse Heights**

#### 1. Closeness to the Peak National Park

My first objection to this application is with regards to the impact on the Peak National Park

To the south west of the proposed development, at a distance, approximately 1.5 miles lays the Peak District National Park. As noted above, the Peak Park Authority has already objected and I too would like to raise my objections on these grounds. I do not agree with 'nei' conclusions that the proposed development will not have a significant impact on the National Park. I believe the visual impact upon the National Park Landscape will be intrusive as the proposal is so close to the boundary.

The turbines would if this application is approved be prominent over a wide area of moorland and moorland fringe much prized for its remote 'wilderness' feeling. From many vantage points the static visual impact would be further compounded and exacerbated by the movement of the blades themselves, an

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effect often underestimated. Consequently, I consider that given the National Park's sensitivity to landscape change the introduction of a wind farm so close

to its boundaries would cause significant harm to its special characteristics. The National Park and especially its hinterland come under enormous pressure for development from the surrounding conurbations. The Park's valued characteristics are treasured by local communities both inside and outside the Park, the Nation as a whole and by many international visitors. Loss or erosion of this key feature would also have economic and social consequences to local businesses and communities. Conservation of the Park's special landscape character is, I believe of vital importance which I consider is not outweighed by the applicant's supporting case for the turbines which is weak and does not amount to an exceptional or other special overriding circumstance, in my opinion.

## 2. Conservation Areas

While it is true that no Sites Special Scientific Significance (SSI), Special Protection Areas (SPA's) or Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) close to the proposed site in the Barnsley administrative area, this is not the case on the Sheffield side of the border. Within ½ mile of the proposed site lies the village of Midhopestones. The area around Midhopestones is classed as a conservation area. I do not believe the applicants have taken this into account.

The Environmental Statement (ES) produced for this application recognises a 'major' and 'significant' effect on viewpoint from the conservation area. The viewpoint described, in the ES is taken from quite a high point in the Conservation area, but even so, it clearly demonstrates that the turbines will be visually prominent.

As stated in the Conservation Area Appraisal (October 2007), one of the features that justifies Midhopestones' designation as a Conservation Area is the open rural character and the setting of terraces on sloping land within a sheltered valley above the River Porter, with extensive views eastwards and westwards along that valley.

I feel the proposals will have a detrimental impact on this setting and the extensive views from the higher and open parts of the Conservation Area.

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It will also be possible to see clear views of the proposed turbines from the Bolsterstone Conservation Area, which lies approximately 2.5 miles from the

proposed location. I feel in both cases the loss of visual amenity outweighs any special circumstances for constructing a facility on this scale.

Visual impact is a legitimate concern and indeed is recognized as such in the government's planning guidance to local authorities. One particular guidance document, PPG15 is particularly relevant to the Sheepphouse Heights application. It points out that the impact of proposed developments outside a conservation area on its setting, or on views into or out of the area, is a material consideration which should be taken into account by the local planning authority when considering the proposal.

### 3. Cumulative Impact

Using ES12 of the Barnsley Unitary Plan I would like to challenge the notion that there will not be cumulative impact, both in the immediate area and the surrounding area.

ES12 states that proposals for wind energy development will be considered acceptable subject to there being no unacceptable impacts in terms of the individual and cumulative effect on the landscape and visual amenity of the area. I am not convinced in the case of this proposal this has been clearly demonstrated. In the immediate area the construction of 5 of the largest wind turbines in the country will in my opinion have a cumulative impact locally both visually and on the landscape. Further, the area around Penistone already has a number of wind farms with more in the pipeline; I believe this additional proposal will have a significant cumulative impact across the whole of west Barnsley.

### 4. Highway Safety

The proposed site at Sheepphouse Heights sits to the north of the A616. This section of the A616 has had a chequered history. Because of the high ratio of fatal crashes, safety cameras were installed 6 years ago. I fear that the well-recognised flicker phenomenon of wind turbines could have an effect on this busy trunk road connecting the M1 to Manchester. Again ES12 recognises highway safety as a concern when appraising wind turbine planning applications and I believe this should be taken on board by the planning authority.

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5. Green Belt

PPG2 states that developments in green belt areas will comprise inappropriate development, if they impact on the openness of the green belt. I

believe this to be the case of the proposal for Sheephouse Heights. The area is presently characterised as rural agricultural land with a small amount of forestry plantation. I believe the construction of 5 large turbines will inevitably alter the nature of the area for the worse. Therefore, using PPG2, I believe this development will be inappropriate. It will also be necessary for access roads to be constructed within the green belt, again I do not feel these would be an appropriate development with in the green belt

6. Construction affects

It is my understanding that during the construction phase of the proposal almost 40,000 tons of materials will need to be taken on site. Roads will have to be constructed off small country lanes along with a temporary storage compound. I believe the movement of large amounts of heavy equipment will have a negative impact on the surrounding road system, which on the whole is rural in nature being made up of small country lanes.

I ask the Barnsley Borough Council planning authority to carefully consider these points and respond in the only way I believe is appropriate and reject this particular application.

Yours sincerely

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