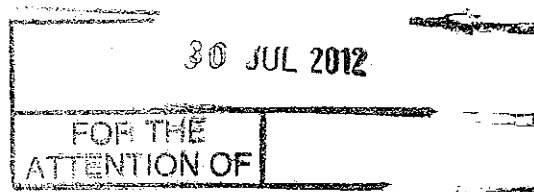


Graeme Thorpe**From:** Brereton, Steven [Steven.Brereton@lancashire.gov.uk]**Sent:** 27 July 2012 17:20**To:** Graeme Thorpe**Cc:** Lorimer, Elliott; Kelsall, Kathryn (NE)**Subject:** Application Responses - 3/2012/0526

Hi Graeme

At the moment I am having to comment on an unprecedented number of renewable energy planning applications in the Forest of Bowland AONB. Consequently I cannot provide as detailed comments on landscape and visual impacts as I normally would do. The following then is a necessarily brief summary of the findings of my assessment of the applicant's submitted documentation and the likely landscape and visual impacts arising from the proposed wind turbine at Laneside Farm, Pendleton:

a) Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

Of great significance for this application is the location of the proposed wind turbine, which would be in the nationally important Forest of Bowland AONB. According to Natural England, *"Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) are areas of high scenic quality that have statutory protection in order to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of their landscapes"*. AONB landscapes are regarded as generally having high levels of landscape sensitivity to development and the highest status in national planning policy. This is recognised in Policy 115 of the National Planning Policy Framework which confirms, *"Great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty"*.

b) Applicant's Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA)

The applicant has submitted a comprehensive package of information in support of the application. There are however some weaknesses in the LVIA, the principal being:

- No figures for the viewing distance and image height of the photomontages has been provided. This information is essential to ensure that the photomontages are used correctly.
- Details of the methodology used for creating the ZTVs (this should have been provided in Appendix C according to the LVIA) and the photomontages has not been provided.
- An incorrect assumption has been made regarding the *Landscape Sensitivity to Wind Energy Development in Lancashire (2005)* study. The applicant's view that *"this study was aimed at turbines of a larger scale than the one proposed in this application"* is not entirely correct. The assessment of the sensitivity of Lancashire's landscape character areas to wind energy development in the study is relevant for all scales of development. Consequently it is not appropriate for the applicant to reduce the landscape's sensitivity to a lower level than that given in this study simply because the proposed wind turbine is of a smaller scale than those listed in the section of the study which identifies what may be an appropriate scale of wind energy development for each landscape character area.
- Table 9 should have provided the coordinates of other wind energy

developments within the 10km study area.

- There is no ZTV map showing cumulative impacts of the proposed wind turbine with other operational and consented wind energy developments. A useful map has been provided which shows the ZTV of the proposed turbine and the wind energy developments identified in Table 9, but this is no substitute for cumulative ZTV mapping. Consideration of cumulative impacts is important in determining the acceptability in landscape terms of the proposed wind turbine.
- The photograph used for the photomontage from viewpoint 2 is too blurred.

The absence of a cumulative impacts ZTV MAP is a particular concern as this key document helps to provide decision makers with a thorough understanding of the nature of likely landscape and visual effects. Consequently in the absence of this information I am unable to make a firm judgement on the cumulative impacts of the proposed wind turbine with other operational and consented wind energy development.

c) Landscape Characteristics and Landscape Sensitivity

The prominent application site is situated on the north western facing slope of Pendle Hill within a **Moorland Fringe** Landscape Character Type and the **Pendleton** Landscape Character Area (ref. *Forest of Bowland AONB Landscape Character Assessment, September 2009*, Lancashire County Council). Some of the key characteristics of these open, textured transitional moorland fringe landscapes e.g. dry stone walls which create strong patterns, improved pastures, elevation above 200m, disused quarries, dramatic open views, belts and patches of woodland and a network of cloughs and sykes are well represented at the site and wider landscape. Pendleton landscape character area is also significant as it provides the setting to Pendle Hill and is the foreground landscape seen within many views to the area from surrounding landscapes to the north.

Situated within the nationally important Forest of Bowland AONB, Pendle Hill is one of Lancashire's most striking and prominent landmarks. Of particular interest is Pendle Hill's extraordinary cultural landscape being associated with the infamous 17th century Pendle witch trials, the foundation of the Quaker movement and even pioneering 17th century experiments into the relationship between air pressure and altitude. Pendle Hill is also the site of an ancient Bronze Age burial ground. Whilst arguably more of a ridge than a hill, Pendle Hill nevertheless provides spectacular views of the Forest of Bowland, the Southern Pennines and coastal areas such as Morecambe Bay. In addition Pendle Hill dominates the skyline to the east of Clitheroe and is a prominent landmark in views from Burnley and much of the M65 corridor. The surrounding area's extensive network of roads and footpaths have excellent intervisibility with Pendle Hill. Not surprisingly, Pendle Hill is a well known tourist spot being popular for many activities including walking, mountain biking, natural history, gliding and paragliding and local history interpretation. Collectively the landscape characteristics and recreational opportunities, which are facilitated by the extensive road and footpath network, afford Pendle Hill and the wider landscape considerable landscape amenity.

The area's landscape tranquillity is generally moderate to high (ref. Campaign for the Protection of England landscape tranquillity mapping) although these levels do decline over a relatively short distance in a westerly direction towards Clitheroe.

The *Forest of Bowland AONB Landscape Character Assessment, September 2009* confirms that the Moorland Fringe has:

- **high** cultural and historic sensitivity

- **high** visual sensitivity
- **high** landscape character sensitivity
- **limited to moderate** capacity to accommodate change without compromising key characteristics

The *Landscape Sensitivity to Wind Energy Development in Lancashire* study considers the area that the application site is within to have a **moderate – high** level of sensitivity although it should be noted that there is good intervisibility between an area of **high** sensitivity which is just 818m to the east. Having assessed the landscape at a more local level I consider that the finding of the County wide study i.e. **moderate – high** level of landscape sensitivity to wind energy development is also appropriate for the site and surrounds.

The site's prominent hillside location and limited tree cover in the wider landscape would ensure that the proposed wind turbine was theoretically visible over a wide area that included the western edge of Pendle Hill, Pendleton Moor, Pendleton, Clitheroe, Worston, Downham and even as far as Easington Fell and Longridge Fell.

d) Landscape and Visual Impacts of the Proposed Wind Turbine

As indicated above, the application site and surrounds are not of the highest sensitivity to wind energy development which suggests that there is some capacity for wind energy development. However, I do not consider that the site has sufficient landscape capacity for the proposed wind turbine. Clearly the location well below the skyline, complete lack of visibility from all areas to the east of Pendle Hill, the backcloth provided by Pendle Hill, the presence of some man influenced detractors such as quarries, relatively large landscape scale and large height differential between the valley floor and the summit of Pendle Hill and its smooth landform all suggest some capacity for wind energy development. However set against this is the high scenic quality, absence of tall vertical industrial structures, the prominent undeveloped skyline of Pendle Hill, visibility of the site from over a wide area, **moderate – high** levels of landscape tranquillity, the importance of the moorland fringe in providing much of the setting to Pendle Hill, relatively complex landcover of isolated farmsteads, fields, hedgerows, copses and winding lanes, large scale panoramic views over the Ribble Valley and the Bowland Fells, limited landscape condition issues, the presence of listed buildings and the historic designed landscape at Little Mearley Hall, the significant cultural associations of Pendle Hill, the opportunities for open-air recreation which are greatly enhanced by the high quality landscape and the extensive footpath network (which connects Clitheroe with the regionally important long distance trail, the Pendle Way) and of course, location within a nationally important AONB. All these factors indicate that whilst there is some capacity for wind energy development, anything greater than micro scale e.g. turbines with an approximate blade tip height of 20m, would likely compromise key landscape characteristics.

Whilst the proposed wind turbine would be of a 'small' scale (ref. *Forest of Bowland AONB Renewable Energy Position Statement*), a blade tip height of 27m or almost 89 feet means that it would be a notable and prominent industrial structure that was visible from over a wide area. The impacts would be most pronounced at distances of up to approximately 1.5km; this tranquil rural area would likely see landscape character impacts of **moderate** significance. The clough woodland, hedgerows and hedgerow trees in the area would mitigate some of the proposed wind turbine's likely landscape and visual impacts but, the overall effect would be limited by the prominent hillside location and the scale of the proposed turbine. The surrounding vegetation would also act as scale comparators emphasising the height of the turbine and its obvious industrial rather than domestic scale. This effect would be most pronounced in near views where the turbine would be a

substantial incongruous industrial structure in the moorland fringe landscape. Beyond 1.5km, the landscape and visual impacts would be less significant, particularly where sufficient view filtering was provided by vegetation. However vegetation in the lowland areas is quite dispersed and patchy so in some locations where intervisibility – aided by the topography – with the turbine was good the mitigating effect would be greatly reduced. Overall, landscape character impacts beyond 1.5km would likely be of **minor – moderate** significance.

In views into and out of the AONB, the proposed wind turbine would likely have visual impacts of **moderate** significance with the most noticeable effects being localised to areas up to 1.5km from the application site. Trees and hedgerows within the vicinity of the residences that would be closest to the proposed wind turbine would likely mitigate the most significant impacts on views from their windows and gardens. However the mitigating effects of this vegetation would be less pronounced for residents moving between these properties on foot or by vehicle. More distant views would see impacts of **minor – moderate** significance due to the mitigating effects of distance and in some places the view filtering effects of vegetation. The impacts on views from Clitheroe would only be of **minor** significance due to the distance from the proposed turbine and of course the screening provided by the numerous buildings.

Since minimal construction works would be involved in the installation of the proposed wind turbine and there would be no new access track the likely effects on landscape fabric would be of **minor** significance.

There would likely be impacts of **minor – moderate** significance on the setting and character of the Forest of Bowland AONB due to the scale of the proposed wind turbine, its visibility from the footpath network and the limited mitigating effects of vegetation. In addition – and this is significant – the wind turbine, at least in part, would be visible from close to the **highly sensitive** summit of Pendle Hill.

Regarding cultural assets there would be impacts of **moderate** significance on the setting of nearby listed buildings and impacts of **minor – moderate** significance on the setting of Worston and Pendleton Conservation Areas.

As highlighted above, the applicant has provided an incomplete assessment i.e. no ZTV mapping, of the proposed wind turbine's cumulative impacts with consented and operational wind energy development. In the absence of this key information, I cannot undertake a full assessment of likely cumulative impacts or make final judgements on the acceptability of the scheme proposals in landscape terms. Even though cumulative ZTV mapping has not been provided, as evidenced by my comments above, it does seem highly likely that my final judgement on acceptability of landscape and visual impacts will not be a positive and supportive one.

I recommend that the applicant provides cumulative ZTV mapping so that I can complete my assessment of landscape and visual impacts.

I hope you find these comments helpful. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you wish to discuss any matter further.

Regards

Steve

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