

**BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE**

**16<sup>th</sup> October 2014**

**REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR – COMMUNITIES**

**Draft Renewables in the Landscape Supplementary Planning Guidance  
(SPG)**

**1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To consider the 'Renewables in the Landscape Supplementary Planning Guidance' document and approve its content for the purposes of public consultation. (Appendix 1).

**2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Plan / Other Corporate Priorities**

- 2.1 The Bridgend Local Development Plan (LDP) is one of the high level strategies which must be prepared and approved for the County Borough. The LDP should express, in appropriate land-use terms those community priorities (expressed in the Community Strategy and its successor, the Single Integrated Partnership Plan) that relate to the development and use of land provided they are in conformity with national and international policy.
- 2.2 A key objective of the adopted LDP is to promote renewable energy generation to meet targets contained in UK and Welsh energy strategies whilst having a minimal impact on the environment and local communities.

**3. Background**

- 3.1 The adopted Bridgend Local Development Plan (LDP) includes policies which are aimed at promoting renewable energy development in the County Borough. These policies are an acknowledgement that the County Borough has a role to play in meeting renewable energy generation targets contained in the UK and Welsh energy strategies and policies.
- 3.2 This 'drive' for increased energy generation through renewable sources has also been reflected in a rapid increase in the number of planning applications for wind and solar energy developments in the County Borough.

3.3 The adopted LDP also has policies which are targeted at maintaining and enhancing the County Borough's natural assets, including its rich and varied landscape. In this respect it was considered that a detailed analysis of the County Borough's landscape should be undertaken and on the 12<sup>th</sup> December 2013 Development Control Committee noted the production of the draft Landscape Character Assessment as evidence base to support emerging SPG. This Landscape Character Assessment has been used to inform the production of the SPG attached as Appendix 1 as the basis to assess the potential sensitivity to different scale of wind and solar energy development on the landscape.

3.4 The draft document attached at Appendix 1 will assist the Local Planning Authority in the determination of planning applications for wind and solar farm developments and supplement policies contained within the LDP, providing detailed guidance and supporting information, particularly to the following policies:-

SP2:	Sustainable Pace Making Principles
PLA4:	Climate Change and Peak Oil
SP8:	Renewable Energy
ENV3:	Special Landscape Areas
ENV4:	Local/Regional Nature Conservation Sites
ENV5:	Green Infrastructure
ENV6:	Nature Conservation
ENV18:	Renewable Energy Developments

3.5 The SPG forms one of a suite of Green Infrastructure related Supplementary Planning Guidance which seek to address the perceived 'conflict' between development and the natural environment.

#### **4. Current Situation**

4.1 The **Renewables in the Landscape SPG** (Appendix 1) includes an assessment of the sensitivity of the County Borough's landscapes to different scales of wind and solar photovoltaic energy developments. It also includes general guidance for developers to follow when planning and designing schemes, as well as specific information tailored to each of Bridgend's 15 Landscape Character Areas to reflect local variations in landscape character.

4.2 For wind energy developments, further planning guidance on whether proposals require Environmental Impact Assessments and Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) requirements will be provided in a regional study produced by Gillespies LLP for the Heads of the Valleys Landscape Officers and Planners<sup>1</sup>. This guidance document will be available shortly and users of the Renewables in the Landscape

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<sup>1</sup> Gillespies LLP (June 2014) *Planning Guidance for Wind Turbine Development: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Requirements*. Prepared for the Heads of the Valleys Landscape Officers and Planners with support from the South Wales Landscape Liaison Group.

SPG are encouraged to refer to this study, which has been the subject of consultation on a regional basis, for more detailed information on planning applications for wind turbines specifically. The SPG includes some cross-references to the regional study where relevant.

- 4.3 To further assist in the assessment of wind energy developments, BCBC officers have also been assisting in the development of a regional database which holds up-to-date information on all existing and proposed wind turbine developments in South East Wales. This information will allow developers and the Local Planning Authority to consider the cumulative impact of wind turbines on the landscape, including those in other Local Planning Authority areas which may be visible from the County Borough. This database can be accessed via the following link:

<http://editor.giscloud.com/rest/1/maps/258632/render.iframe?bound=-518243.05177349225,6642683.506094942,-221055.88580073044,6857930.177745998&toolbar=true&popups=true&layerlist=true>

- 4.4 The SPG and regional study will provide a consistent approach to the assessment of planning applications for wind turbines/farms and solar farms in the context of the surrounding landscape. It will also provide developers with information and guidance which will allow them to identify the most appropriate locations for renewable energy development and what information will be required by the Local Planning Authority to determine the application.

## 5. Next Steps

- 5.1 The draft SPG has been the subject of internal consultation and agreement. Approval is now being sought to consult formally with other interested parties, outside bodies and the public on the content of the draft SPG.
- 5.2 This SPG is the second in a suite of 'Green Infrastructure' led SPG's which has been reported to Development Control Committee and which will collectively contribute to driving forward this important agenda in Bridgend. In this regard the Council is also in the process of developing further work which will build upon the work already undertaken. These elements of work include:
- I. **A Landscape Design Guide: A Green Infrastructure Approach** – This will provide practical advice and solutions on how to manage changes in the landscape which respond to and enhance its distinctive character, and work with other design considerations.
  - II. **A Review of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP)** - This will spatially set out the prime habitats and species within BCBC, based on the landscape character areas aimed at promoting eco-connectivity.

The LBAP will also identify evidence gaps for further research and opportunities to draw down funding and community participation.

III. **A Green Infrastructure online-tool** - This will provide an interactive online resource that will attract and engage the following target audiences on issues relating to green infrastructure, countryside management and biodiversity, these are:-

- School children engaged in relevant studies;
- Members of the public with an interest in/enquiries about Countryside Management/Biodiversity issues who are seeking information;
- Members of the public looking for volunteering opportunities relating to Countryside management and biodiversity;
- Members of the public and developers engaged in planning processes.

5.3 These other projects will be reported to development Control Committee in due course.

## **6. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules**

6.1 The draft SPG expands upon the existing land-use planning policy framework contained within the Local Development Plan giving the public and developers certainty in the Council's expectations in relation to renewable energy developments in the County Borough.

## **7. Equality Impact Assessment.**

7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment Screening has been undertaken and the proposed recommendations are unlikely to have an impact on equality issues.

## **8. Financial Implications**

8.1 None.

## **9. Recommendations**

9.1 That the Development Control Committee:

- (1) approves the draft Renewables in the Landscape SPG (**Appendix 1**) as the basis for public consultation; and
- (2) authorises officers to make appropriate arrangements for public consultation; and awaits a further report on the outcome of the consultation process.

**Mark Shephard**  
**Corporate Director – Communities**

**16<sup>th</sup> October 2014**

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**Background documents**

Draft Renewables in the Landscape SPG