

PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT

19 December 2017

CHAIRMAN: Cllr Dennis Smith



SUBJECT:

Supplementary Planning Document for Solar Photovoltaic (PV) Developments in the Landscape – and

Assessment of the Landscape Sensitivity to Onshore Wind Energy Developments in Teignbridge District

RECOMMENDATION:

The Committee is recommended to approve:

- **The draft Supplementary Planning Document for Solar Photovoltaic (PV) Developments in the Landscape be approved for public consultation – and**
- **The Assessment of the Landscape Sensitivity to Onshore Wind Energy Developments in Teignbridge District as part of the evidence base to support the review of the Teignbridge Local Plan**

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1. To ensure a consistent approach is applied in the consideration of planning decisions relating to renewable energy developments that affect the landscape.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. Teignbridge District Council's planning service is responsible for the development of planning policy and the determination of planning applications for renewable energy proposals up to 49.9MW.
- 2.2. The Teignbridge Local Plan 2013-33 includes policies that aim to encourage renewable energy (S6 Resilience and S7 Carbon Emission Targets) and also includes policies that aim to protect and enhance the area's landscape (EN2A Landscape Protection and Enhancement; S2 Quality Development; S22 Countryside; and EN2 Undeveloped Coast).
- 2.3. In response to a lack of detailed advice against which to assess landscape impacts, the Council commissioned an assessment of landscape sensitivity to onshore wind turbine and solar PV development in Teignbridge District, with a view to its adoption as an SPD. The assessment is similar to, and in parallel with, adopted landscape sensitivity assessments for other Councils in the region, including Cornwall, Torridge and Mid Devon and has used a consistent methodology to produce findings that have a parity over the region.

2.4. Subsequently, a House of Commons Written Statement on wind energy (HCWS42) made on 18 June 2015 set out that when planning applications for wind energy sites for more than one turbine are being considered Local Authorities should only grant permission if the development site is identified as suitable in a Local or Neighbourhood Plan and where following consultation it could be demonstrated that the planning impacts identified by local communities have been fully addressed. In light of this Written Statement it was decided that the assessment should be progressed as follows:

- “Assessment of Solar Photovoltaic (PV) Developments in the Landscape – Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)”
- “Assessment of the Landscape Sensitivity to Onshore Wind Energy Developments in Teignbridge District” - to be used as evidence only.

The two assessments are now complete and are attached as Appendix 1 and Appendix 2. Summaries of these documents are set out below.

2.5. Both reports have been screened for Environmental Assessment. The screening concludes that Environmental Assessment under the provisions of the 2004 Regulations is not required. The reports are attached as:

- Appendix 3. SEA Screening for Assessment of Solar Photovoltaic (PV) Developments in the Landscape – Supplementary Planning Document (SPD); and
- Appendix 4. SEA Screening for Assessment of the Landscape Sensitivity to Onshore Wind Energy Developments in Teignbridge District

DESCRIPTION

Assessment of Solar Photovoltaic (PV) Developments in the Landscape – Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

2.6. The assessment looks at the sensitivity of the landscape to Solar PV developments, of differing sizes, including:

- Very Small developments, <1ha;
- Small developments, 1-5ha;
- Medium developments, 5-10ha;
- Large developments, 10-15ha; and
- Very Large developments, 15-20ha.

2.7. The assessment findings are arrived at by considering criteria such as: landform; sense of openness/enclosure; field pattern and scale; land cover; perceptual qualities; historic landscape character; and scenic and special qualities. Landscape Character Types (LCTs) form the unit through which the landscape is assessed.

2.8. Sensitivity levels and definitions are shown in the table below.

Sensitivity Level	Definition
High (H)	The key characteristics and qualities of the landscape are highly sensitive to change from solar PV development.
Moderate-High (M-H)	The key characteristics and qualities of the landscape are sensitive to change from solar PV development.
Moderate (M)	Some of the key characteristics and qualities of the landscape are sensitive to change from solar PV development.
Low-Moderate (L-M)	Few of the key characteristics and qualities of the landscape are sensitive to change from solar PV development.
Low (L)	Key characteristics and qualities of the landscape are robust and are less likely to be adversely affected by solar PV development.

- 2.9. The sensitivity assessment concludes that:
- large parts of the district have low to moderate sensitivity to very small and small PV developments;
 - the whole of the district has a moderate high to high sensitivity to large and very large PV developments; and
 - the landscapes most sensitive to PV development include the coast, estuaries, and flanks to high ground.
- 2.10. The overall findings are illustrated in the maps within the document at Appendix 1.
- 2.11. In addition to the assessment of landscape sensitivity to PV development, guidance is given on:
- PV development in each of the district's Landscape Character Types (LCT) and situations where a LCT is found in different Devon Landscape Character Areas (LCA);
 - evidence on the type and size of development that has already been permitted, and how new development should relate to this;
 - dealing with cumulative development; and
 - a step by step user guide, to help developers shape proposals and assist decision makers in making planning decisions.

Assessment of the Landscape Sensitivity to Onshore Wind Energy Developments in Teignbridge District

- 2.12. The assessment has looked at the sensitivity of the Teignbridge landscape to turbines of different sizes, including:
- Very Small turbine, 15-25m;
 - Small turbine, 26-50m;
 - Medium turbine, 51-75m;
 - Large turbine, 76-110m; and
 - Very Large turbine, 110-150m.
- 2.13. The assessment considered criteria such as: landform and scale; land cover and presence of human scale features; tracks and transport pattern; skylines; perceptual qualities; historic landscape character; and scenic and special qualities.

2.14. Sensitivity levels and definitions are shown in the table below.

Sensitivity Level	Definition
High (H)	The key characteristics and qualities of the landscape are highly sensitive to change from wind energy development.
Moderate-High (M-H)	The key characteristics and qualities of the landscape are sensitive to change from wind energy development.
Moderate (M)	Some of the key characteristics and qualities of the landscape are sensitive to change from wind energy development.
Low-Moderate (L-M)	Few of the key characteristics and qualities of the landscape are sensitive to change from wind energy development.
Low (L)	Key characteristics and qualities of the landscape are robust and are less likely to be adversely affected by wind energy development.

- 2.15. The assessment concludes that, in relation to the requirements of wind energy development, the Teignbridge landscape is a relatively small scale landscape, highly rural, frequently strongly undulating and intricate; with relatively small scale of features, such as historic buildings, church towers, small-scale medieval fields divided by hedgebanks, windblown trees and woodland; and a landscape of frequently narrow, sunken lanes bordered by Devon hedges, characteristic features that constrain the delivery of large scale turbines to development sites.
- 2.16. The results show that large parts of the Teignbridge landscape have a low, low-moderate or moderate sensitivity to very small and small turbines, however the majority of the district is judged to have a high sensitivity to medium, large and very large turbines.
- 2.17. The overall findings are illustrated in the maps below within the document at Appendix 2.

3. SCREENING AND SCOPING FOR STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT ASSESSMENT

- 3.1. The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 require that a Strategic Environmental Assessment is undertaken for a plan or programme that is (a) “required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions”, and (b) “sets the framework for future development consent”.
- 3.2. Teignbridge District Council considers, firstly, that both the Assessment of Solar Photovoltaic (PV) Developments in the Landscape – (SPD) and the Assessment of the Landscape Sensitivity to Onshore Wind Energy Developments in Teignbridge District are not required by any of the provisions mentioned above; and secondly, that the framework for decisions on planning applications is provided by the Local Plan Policies (S6 Resilience, S7 Carbon Emission Targets, EN2A Landscape Protection and Enhancement, S2 Quality Development, S22 Countryside, and EN2 Undeveloped Coast) which have been subject to environmental assessment. The Assessments will provide guidance on the implementation of those Policies. It is therefore considered that Strategic Environmental Assessment under the

provisions of the 2004 Regulations is not required.

- 3.3. However, it is seen as prudent to prepare a screening statement, (Appendices 3 and 4) and invite Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency to comment.
- 3.4. The consultation period will allow anyone disagreeing with Teignbridge District Council's screening opinions given above to state this and provide the reasons for their view.

4. POLICY DOCUMENTS

Teignbridge Local Plan 2013-2033

S6 (Resilience)

S7 (Carbon Emission Targets)

EN2A (Landscape Protection and Enhancement)

S2 (Quality Development)

S22 (Countryside)

EN2 (Undeveloped Coast)

5. CONSULTEES

This is a technical guidance note for developers, their consultants and Local Planning Authority Officers. Following approval by the committee, the reports will be made available for public consultation.

6. APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Assessment of Solar Photovoltaic (PV) Developments in the Landscape –
Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) **FULL REPORT**

Appendix 2

Assessment of the Landscape Sensitivity to Onshore Wind Energy Developments in
Teignbridge District **FULL REPORT**

Appendix 3

SEA Screening Assessment of Solar Photovoltaic (PV) Developments in the
Landscape – Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

Appendix 4

SEA Screening Assessment of the Landscape Sensitivity to Onshore Wind Energy
Developments in Teignbridge District