

Consultation Statement

Wind Turbines Supplementary Planning Document and Emerging Policy: Wind Turbines Planning Applications

This consultation statement sets out the consultation undertaken in the preparation of the Wind Turbines Supplementary Planning Document and Emerging Policy.

During the preparation of the Wind Turbines Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and Emerging Policy, the Development Plans Team undertook internal consultation with key departments.

The preparation of the SPD and Emerging Policy were also considered at Development Control Committee meetings in June and October 2011, Cabinet meetings in December 2011 and January 2012 and by Parish Councils during June – August 2011.

As a result of the resolution made at the Cabinet meeting in January 2012, a draft of the SPD and Emerging Policy were consulted on for a period of 8 weeks ending in March 2012. A number of comments were received during this consultation period and following a Members' Workshop, where the consultation responses were considered, some minor changes were made to the SPD and Emerging Policy document.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

A Screening Report was produced and sent to statutory bodies to assess the requirement for a Strategic Environmental Assessment of the draft SPD. Assessment showed that SEA was required, so a Scoping Report was produced and sent to the statutory bodies. Comments received at the scoping stage were incorporated and the Scoping Report amended. Following consultation, it was decided to undertake a full Sustainability Appraisal of the SPD. A full Sustainability Appraisal, incorporating the requirements for Strategic Environmental Assessment, was carried out and made available at the meetings of the Cabinet on 20 December 2011 and 17 January 2012.

The Sustainability Appraisal was also made available alongside the Draft SPD for an eight week period of consultation between 2 February and 28 March 2012. Significant changes were not made to the SPD following consultation, meaning no further sustainability appraisal work was carried out.

Regulation 17 Consultation

The draft SPD was subject to the following consultation arrangements: -

a) The Draft SPD and supporting documents paper (Evidence Paper, Sustainability Appraisal, SPD Matters and Consultation Statement) were made available for inspection:

- at Milton Keynes Council, Civic Offices, 1 Saxon Gate East, Central Milton Keynes, MK9 3EJ
- at all libraries in the Borough. Library locations and opening hours are available at http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/library_services/DisplayArticle.asp?ID=21971
- on the Council's website: www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/wind-turbines

b) An advertisement was placed in local newspaper 'MK News' stating where a copy of the documents could be obtained and when and where the documents could be inspected.

c) A covering letter or email was sent to consultees on the Limehouse consultation database, notifying them of the publication of the draft SPD and Emerging Policy.

The following groups were contacted directly:

- Specific Consultation Bodies
- General Consultation Bodies with an interest in the draft SPD

d) To ensure all stakeholders had an opportunity to comment a period of 8 weeks consultation was allowed for the SPD. The consultation ran from Thursday 2 February to Wednesday 28 March 2012.

Consideration of Representations

All comments were reported to the Council for consideration and, following a Members' Workshop, the SPD and Emerging Policy were amended where necessary. A summary of the representations received during the consultation is set out below.

Comments generally in support of the SPD

	Health and safety
1	A recent British Medical Journal article claims that the health impacts of wind farms on local communities are real, and a matter for concern, and that the effects may extend beyond a 2km range. It also argues that the noise limits in current UK legislation, and especially the government's ETSU-R-97, may be set too high. This indicates that the proposed SPD is a sensible action for the Council to take to protect residents' health. Impacts of health are generally related to sleep disturbance through AM noise (known as Wind Turbine Syndrome). There could be considerable compensation costs if turbines are permitted and have health impacts.
2	Health and safety is imperative. Technical failure could result in disastrous consequences, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An accident on the motorway due to the proposed location of the Salcey Forest wind farm - Accidents on roads where horse riders have had to stop using bridleways. Ice could also be thrown off of the blades. There have also been problems with foundations or structure failure which have caused turbines to fall over.
3	Document does not contain mention of the out-of-court settlement paid in 2011 to a family living at 1050m from a turbine. Officers should have pointed this out, because of the financial and reputational risk MKC will be running by allowing a situation where similar harm (ie similar to the harm alleged by the plaintiff) could occur to MK residents. <p>As a result of a High Court decision a wind farm developer in Lincolnshire paid damages and paid for a replacement farm for a farm owner who suffered health impacts as a result of the wind farm.</p> Residents living 870m away from the Petsoe wind farm have, and continue to, suffer the impacts.
4	British Pipeline Agency (BPA) operates high pressure fuel lines within MK. Wind turbines have the potential to pose a risk to human health, if the pipeline should be hit by a damaged wind turbine. Recommend a separation zone of 1.5 times turbine height to managed pipelines.
5	Onus should be on developers to prove that turbines are safe.
6	The effect of large wind turbines remains unknown, so large separation distances are

	required. If it is found that the effects are not as serious as currently believed then the distances could be decreased.
	Wind turbines' role in tackling climate change and their contribution to renewable energy targets
7	Turbines make a very small contribution to the fight against climate change.
8	Wind turbines are inefficient and in many cases are kept turning using power from the National Grid. The whole case for onshore wind farms looks little more than symbolic and a handy source of subsidised income for the energy companies. They are frequently stopped and should be located off shore. Wind turbines are expensive, have a limited life and are destructive to the environment. No business case has been established for wind turbines. Public funds have been used, which equates to theft; the only winners are land owners, the wind industry and Cranfield University.
9	The new Localism Bill must be used and implemented in the way it is intended in that "National Targets" should NOT be used as an excuse to allow developments that are NOT of national importance.
10	Object to this line of argument that space has to be found somewhere in the Borough for massive turbines, irrespective of any damage that these might do to nearby residents. It is perfectly legitimate to arrive at a policy where, in the light of the biggest unpopulated space in the borough, there is some upper limit on the size of the biggest turbine that can be built in that size of space.
11	There are numerous other ways in which the Council could increase the green credentials of Milton Keynes and help meet government targets on CO2 including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solar fields • Tidal power • Energy efficient buildings • Solar power etc
12	The distances should be based on scientific evidence rather than reasoning about the number of wind farms that could be accommodated.
13	Wind energy should only be considered if all other options have been considered for other renewable energy options
	Landscape, wildlife, visual impact
14	Ruining the enjoyment of what little part of the countryside the public has access to is not justified.
15	Turbines should be put in places where they do not affect landscape, wildlife, or human inhabitants
16	The SPD does not go far enough to protect the countryside and woodlands. The impacts of wind turbines will force people outside of the Borough due to loss of amenity value. Turbines are a blot on the landscape.
17	The visual impact of turbines should be given high priority.
18	Distances from land containing livestock and areas of wildlife protection should be considered in addition to distances from buildings and bridleways.
	Additional comments on distances
20	The SPD should take flood risk operations into account, which can involve the use of heavy plant / excavator operations, when considering separation distances relative to any board maintained watercourse. Possibly the rules applied to Public Highways could be considered.
21	Smaller turbines should be easier to permit than large turbines
22	Distances should be a minimum and should ideally be greater due to the growing and compelling expert evidence of health and safety problems which can only be mitigated by increasing distance from turbines
23	Distances should apply to all properties and villages, regardless of which authority area they fall within, in order to prevent developers from exploiting weaker policies in neighbouring authorities.
24	SPD should make it clear that the distances will be kept under review as evidence emerges in respect of adverse impact

25	Distances should apply to dwellings rather than settlements. The policy should apply equally to all residents regardless of where they live. Failure to do so could result in the failure of the Council to properly discharge its duty of care.
26	The minimum distance should be greater for groups on wind turbines as their combined impact would be greater.
27	The separation distances should take account of turbulence on ground temperatures due to potential impacts on amenity and crop production.
28	A requirement for written agreement should extend to all the owners of properties within the area likely to be affected by noise and visual nuisance. This distance should be calculated on the basis of known noise and visual nuisance for turbines of particular heights.
29	The policy should stipulate that these distances are a minimum and that the planning inspector should be required to consider whether, in each case, these distances offer adequate protection.
30	Wind turbines should be sited at a sufficient distance to prevent noise and visual disturbance, as well as the devaluation of properties.
31	The British Horse Society guidelines are insufficient to protect horses from the effects of shadow flicker. Turbines of 125m should be at least 1km away from bridleways.
Finances / costs	
32	All proposed wind turbine developments should be required to submit independently audited financial information to demonstrate the economic viability of the project and the likely period of time over which there will likely be a return on investment.
33	MK Council has spent - and is spending - time and money on flood defences for Stoke Goldington. The concrete and 'works' needed to support the wind farm would completely negate this and, once again, homes would not be safe from flooding.
34	Turbines lower house prices
Other comments	
35	General overall support for the SPD as drafted
36	New guideline will protect Swan's Way and tourism generated by it in the area.
37	Consultation on issues such as wind farms needs to be as wide as possible due to the adverse impact affecting people often many mile from any proposed site
38	There should be a standard condition with any planning permission that if unexpected and unacceptable AM noise results due to particular site conditions, that limits on hours of operation may be required.
39	Current government guidance is out of date and does not account for the height of the latest turbines which can be in excess of 200m.
40	Human rights should be considered. Citizens are entitled to free use of the countryside in a safe manner.
41	There should be community benefits associated with wind turbine developments.
42	MKC should be in contact with AVDC as the area is submerged in applications seeking to get "facts on the ground".
43	Clarification is required over the need for neighbours to agree in writing to turbines of 25m or less in height. The requirement should extend to all owners of properties within the area, likely to be affected by noise and visual nuisance.
44	Some minor changes to the wording are proposed in rep WT15
45	Concern over the lack of proper acknowledgement of previous policies / precedents regarding distance between dwellings and turbines.

Comments generally not in support of the SPD

Process	
46	There is a separation distance within the Local Plan policy and any change to that policy ought to be undertaken via the development plan process where it can be examined, rather than through SPD

47	No statutory basis for separation distances
Conformity	
48	SPD is contrary to national guidance as set out in the NPPF and PPS22 companion guide
49	<p>SPD does not contribute to Governments targets and aims set out in a range of documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NPPF • UK Renewable Energy Strategy (2009) • UK Low Carbon Transition Plan (2009) • The Renewable Energy Review (May 2011) • UK Renewable Energy Roadmap (July 2011) • 2009 European Renewable Energy Directive <p>The message coming out central government is that onshore wind should be encouraged as part of a diverse mix of energy technologies and each local planning authority should positively plan for and make a contribution towards this target where circumstances permit. In order for targets to be met wind farms will have to be appropriately sited and accepted in settled parts of rural England.</p>
50	<p>SPD is contrary to council's own documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low Carbon Living Strategy 2010 • Carbon Action Plan (2010) • Core Strategy (2010) <p>(MKC) is also a signatory to the Nottingham Declaration on climate change and the EU Covenant of Mayors that includes a commitment to cut carbon emissions by at least 20% by 2020.</p>
51	When determining applications the presumption in favour of sustainable development should be applied and applications should be approved if impacts are, or can be made, acceptable.
52	National Policy Statements on energy can be a material consideration in the determination of wind turbine planning applications.
Emerging policy approach	
53	EIA is appropriate place to determine impacts. The Environmental Impact Assessment is designed to assess any potentially significant impacts.
54	<p>Other guidance and standards are sufficient and use of these is the proper way in which to determine planning applications which is fully endorsed by Government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PPS22 • EN3 • ETSU-R-97.
55	<p>Distance alone should not be the determining factor in whether a proposal is acceptable. The SPD takes no account of any other constraints over and above residential and recreational amenity or other factors that influence acceptability in visual terms</p> <p>A criteria based approach is more appropriate and applications should be considered objectively, on a case by case basis considering for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topography • Neighbouring Infrastructure • Surrounding uses • Number of turbines • Ecology • Topography • historical factors • flood risk

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • groundwater quality/quantity • contamination • heritage assets • bats • safety (wind turbine fires) • The height and spread • The proportion of the view that would be occupied • Whether the turbines would be visible from the main living room windows or from the garden • Whether the view of the turbines would be oblique or direct • What extent the view would be obstructed by vegetation, landform or other built structures. • The number of turbines
56	The approach adopted by Milton Keynes is too inflexible. It does not give applicants the ability to demonstrate acceptability in the standoff areas. It does not consider at all the suitability of the remaining areas left in the borough outwith these zones.
57	The SPD is too restrictive
58	Clause (f) identifies that there are no standoff requirements for turbines that do not exceed 25 metres. However, this does not take into account the variations in noise between different turbines types and the implications of site topography and / or features for the noise environment.
59	There should be no distances from bridleways – not aware of any case where turbines have been of detriment to equestrian interests. Horses and wind turbines have existed happily together for many years.
60	Page 14 e). The measurement of a wind turbine being from the ground will cause problems for turbines mounted on a roof e.g. a tower block. The policy should make it clear roof top turbines less than 25m are not effected. e.g. Mellish Court, the Hub, xScape, The Gables etc.
61	<p>The fall distance of the turbine plus a small safety margin should be enough for bridleways.</p> <p>The SPD points out that the inspector for the Nunn Wood appeal makes the following point: “there appears to be no clear rationale” for the latest distance promoted by the British Horse Society.</p>
62	<p>The Exception provision test is flawed. Proposing a minimum setback to ensure that in the councils mind the dwelling continues to be a reasonable place to live. But then offer the current occupier of the dwelling the opportunity to counter the policy thus removing a policy reason for refusal.</p> <p>What happens when the current occupier leaves and a new occupier moves in who is not happy with the turbine? What if the current occupier changes his/her mind once the turbine is built? Revoke the planning permission or tell the occupier to put up with the harm? What stops the developer buying off the occupiers, who then up and leave with the wind fall (excuse the pun). Surely as a council you have a duty to determine what is an acceptable level of harm, not leave this to the whim of individuals in the community.</p> <p>It would be far better to have a robust planning policy framework that ensured that environmentally acceptable proposals are consented and operated.</p>
63	Do not support the statement that says there is no minimum separation for units under 25m. This seems illogical. It would be much more logical to say that linear extrapolation also works downwards, for units under 25m tall.
64	Measuring from settlements would give a wider 'area of search' for wind farm developers to identify opportunities

65	The policy should be based on the height of the tower, not the height to the tip. There are many reasons for this, including the fact that it is ambiguous and inconsistent with the definition of large wind turbines in the SPD itself. The current definition of a large wind turbine should be maintained.
66	Distances should be from settlements rather than dwellings.
67	In general, restrictions on wind turbines should be reduced or eliminated. Footpaths should be closed in icy conditions rather than wind turbines turned off.
68	Blade icing can be dealt with by condition, and a standard list of conditions could be added to the SPD to satisfy this potential concern.
69	There is no separation for footpaths, it is generally accepted that turbines should not oversail a footpath.
	Lack of evidence
70	<p>No evidence base supporting the distances in the SPD in relation to turbine height, these have been drawn up in an arbitrary and illogical manner</p> <p>The SPD seems to have been based on a spurious Private Members' Bill which does not form part of Government policy, together with a trawl of planning decisions which will vary in their issues and planning merits. This does not form a sound way of producing a policy.</p>
71	<p>There is no clear methodology or rationale for the draft policy and much of the supporting text is partially researched and not clearly presented - much of it has no place in the SPD.</p> <p>The document as written does not offer clear guidance or advice to applicants or the local community on issues relevant to wind farm spatial planning and site selection, nor does it provide sound and defensible support for the proposed amendment to existing local plan policy</p> <p>The SPD is not based on technical evidence, cannot be justified and is, therefore, open to legal challenge through the courts or through the appeal process. There is no evidence to show whether the distances are either sufficient or insufficient.</p>
72	The SPD imposes an arbitrary buffer based on the premise that Northern Ireland and Scotland have such buffers. However, their buffers are based on visual separation which is a subjective matter, unlike noise which has an established and proven assessment methodology.
73	<p>The premise for this review is stated as "the size of wind turbines has increased significantly since the publication of local and national policy". The statement is not backed up with any data. Wind turbines of 1.3MW to 2MW were common during the period 2003-2006 and were the type the existing policy should have considered.</p> <p>Given the above the premise for the review is flawed. The review has accepted the argument of the critics without evidence.</p> <p>Where is the evidence that wind turbines have increased in scale. The scale of current proposals would have been foreseeable when policy D5 was written, so why is there a need for a change in the policy now?</p>
74	In the examples of other local authorities' SPD it is clear that they encourage rather than enforce separation distances.
75	EAM is rare and there is little agreement amongst experts on causes, or means of identifying or quantifying it. Quite innocuous events, such as bird song, can be recorded as EAM by the monitoring equipment.
76	Based on the majority of appeal decisions, it is clear that it would not be lawful to impose AM noise conditions. It would not be necessary, precise or reasonable.
77	Appeal decisions do not support the distances chosen and in one case, an inspector allowed a turbine which was approximately 500m from the nearest dwelling.

78	The limited focus of the SPD significantly diminishes its credibility and its usefulness both in guiding development to appropriate locations and in respect of informed planning decisions
79	There is a need for wind turbines in order to help tackle climate change, reduce fossil fuel consumption and to protect the environment for our children and grandchildren. Climate change is a greater priority than tightening restrictions on wind turbines and the views from houses. The Council must follow through with its commitment to “drive forward the effort to reduce carbon emissions”. Wind turbines do not have the negative impacts of fossil or nuclear fuel.
80	PPS22 Companion Guide indicates that wind turbines are considerably quieter than traffic on grid roads. It is, therefore, unclear why MKC is considering the imposition of restrictions based on noise, but is allowing housing developments which fronts directly onto grid roads.
81	The SPD makes the assumption that bigger turbines are noisier but advances in technology mean that they are actually quieter.
82	Information on health impacts comes largely from a non-peer reviewed book which has been disregarded by the NHS. Research has shown that there is no such thing as Wind Turbine Syndrome and the possibility of any serious medical effects have been ruled out.
83	The document is not fit for purpose and a more positive approach is required. A report by consultants appointed by the Council confirms this.
84	The national policy section of the SPD should be strengthened given that regional targets are being removed.
85	No explanation has been given as to why additional protection is needed,
86	The safety risk associated with wind turbines is considered to be well below other societal risks such as traffic accidents. The SPD is misleading in relation to safety. There is no record of any member of the public being killed or seriously injured by wind turbines.
	Other
87	Will miss out on opportunities to benefit from the investment that the onshore wind sector brings
88	Consistency and coordination is required between MKC and neighbouring authorities. should MKC's policy be more restrictive than those of its neighbours, it may result in developers choosing what they believe to be more amenable authorities for their projects, regardless of the relevant suitability of potential sites.
89	MKC has a duty to cooperate with its neighbours regarding projects with cross-boundary implications, as stipulated in the draft National Policy Planning Framework. Not only can wind farms impact more than just their host authority, discrepancies between authorities' policies can distort market forces regarding site selection, as discussed in the previous paragraph.
90	Safety should be the only limiting factor.
91	SPD will lead to time and money being spent defending planning decisions made against an ineffective and unsound policy framework at inquiry
92	If this SPD were to be adopted it would make Milton Keynes the only Local Authority to have separation distances as a statutory requirement
93	Contrary to the human rights of the majority of the borough
94	Wind farms are preferable to traditional power stations and wind farms are in offensive.
95	The SPD would preclude development of a wind turbine on the Open University Campus.
96	It should be for the developer to demonstrate that noise will not be a significant factor.
97	Disagree with the SPD as it would result in a ban on wind turbines as any land left would be unsuitable due to its proximity to the airport or the motorway.
98	Where appropriate, suitably worded planning conditions can be used to ensure that the proposal is acceptable and protects residential amenity from any potential impacts.

99	The wider economic and environmental benefits are material considerations that should be given significant weight.
100	Renewable energy has other benefits including job creation, energy security, stabilising of energy prices and other local benefits.
101	Rep WT233 proposes many changes to the SPD – see rep for details.

Alternative approaches

	Alternative approaches
102	Assess separation distances as a function of turbine rated power. A minimum distance should be at least 20 times the swept diameter of the turbine blades. Alternatively, there could be a set back distance of 1km per 1 mega watt of rated power output. The minimum distances for footpaths and bridleways should be twice the height of the turbine to the blade tip.
103	Support for EU Directive distance of 1.2km.
104	The policy should be flexible meaning distances can be scaled down for smaller turbines and scaled up for larger turbines.
105	the distance from dwellings should be at least 5km
106	the distance from dwellings should be 2km
107	Distances should be no less than 1km. Distances from bridleways and footpaths are of little importance.
108	A distance of 600m-700m for residential amenity, and no distances for footpaths and bridleways.
109	The 350m distance should be increased to 500m and the 1000m distance should be increased to 1500m and the distances calculated pro rata based on those.
110	The separation distance from any occupied building residential or commercial (occupied for more than 8hours per 24hour period) should be 12Xrotor diameter so for an 80m rotor=960m for a ninety=1080m for a 100m=1200 anything under 5m (small scale generation should be exempt)
111	preferred a 600m separation distance for turbines 25m high, and 1250m for 100m high turbines, pro rata between, but recognise that based, on current subsidy, and current appeals, this is likely to be overturned on appeal until both evidence and Government policy is more robust.
112	Should adopt the same distance as Europe e.g. 3 Kilometres
113	Maintain the element of proportionality. Start the approach for turbines of 100m in height. The policy D5 distance should be retained for all wind turbines up to 100m in height., with a 150m turbine requiring approximately 800m separation distance. The revised calculation would be: Separation distance = 350m + 11 x (height of tower) Overall a distance of 700m from settlements would be appropriate (a compromise between options and 6 in the cabinet report).
114	The existing 350m policy should be retained until a more reasonable policy, that does not ban all wind turbines, has been developed.
115	The distance should be 500m from settlements.
116	Alternative approach: planning guides should set down a minimum distance to local residents of 1 kilometre . Where wind turbines are proposed near to well used footpaths and especially bridleways, then a minimum distance must be at least 800 metres .
117	Recommend that the separation distances should be increased by 5-10%, this does NOT "prevent wind turbines being built anywhere in MK", it merely puts an upper limit on the size that can be built: if you accept the argument that the separation distances should be increased 10%, you just have to build a turbine that's 10% smaller
118	Should set the same distance as Scotland, 2km

119	0-25m no restriction 25-80m as the current 350m (given much higher wind turbines were available at the time of the policy being set). Above 80m 350m + 15m per every 1m in height. This would result in a large turbine such as a 2.75MV 125m high turbine needing to be set away from residential building by 1025m and make the new super tall turbines such as tallest in the world Fuhrländer Wind Turbine Laasow at 205m impossible to build within MK.
120	The distance for footpaths is not well defined. The distance should be twice the height of the turbine as they could fall down a slope.

Members Wind Turbines Workshop 19 April 2012

On the 19 April 2012, the consultation responses were considered at a Wind Turbines workshop held with elected members. The workshop focused on the responses received and the issues raised through the consultation. All issues raised were considered at the workshop and a number of minor changes were made to the SPD as a result. In addition to other minor wording changes, these were the main changes made:

- Addition of text to reflect publication of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- Deletion of text relating to Planning Policy Statements (PPSs)
- Addition of text in the introductory wording of the Emerging Policy to include wind turbines that form part of a wider development
- Point b of the Emerging Policy's 'Exceptions' was amended to include the occupiers of properties, in addition to the owners.
- An additional sentence was added to point 6 of the Emerging Policy, requiring that, in the event of an accident, wind turbines be stopped at the request of the Emergency Services.
- An additional requirement was added of a separation distance 1.5 times the height of the turbine from high pressure fuel lines was added to the Emerging Policy wording.

Adoption

'The Wind Turbines Supplementary Planning Document and Emerging Policy: Wind Turbines Planning Applications' was formally adopted on 24 July 2012.

Further information is available from: www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/wind-turbines.