

Subject:	Wind Energy Applications Supplementary Validation Policy	Status:	For Publication
Report to:	Cabinet	Date:	
Report of:	Director of Business	Portfolio Holder:	Operational Services and Development Control
Key Decision:	<input type="checkbox"/> Forward Plan <input type="checkbox"/>	General Exception <input type="checkbox"/>	Special Urgency <input type="checkbox"/>
Community Impact Assessment:	Required:	Yes	Attached: Yes
Biodiversity Impact Assessment	Required:	No	Attached: No
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1.	RECOMMENDATION(S)		
1.1	To adopt the Wind Energy Applications Supplementary Validation Policy for Development Control use.		
1.2	That all future minor amendments to the policy to be delegated to the Director of Business in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.		

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 To brief members on the intended purpose of the Wind Energy Applications Supplementary Validation Policy, and seek authorisation from Cabinet for its adoption for Development Control use, and for all future minor amendments to the policy to be delegated to the Director of Business in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

3. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 3.1 The matters discussed in this report impact directly on the following corporate priorities:
- *A clean and green Rossendale* – creating a better environment for all.
 - *A healthy and successful Rossendale* – supporting vibrant communities and a strong economy.
 - *Responsive and value for money local services* – responding to and meeting the different needs of customers and improving the cost effectiveness of services.

4. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 All the issues raised and the recommendation(s) in this report involve risk considerations as set out below.
- 4.2 Risks for the Council associated with adopting the Wind Energy Applications Supplementary Validation Policy include:
- The possibility that applicants will be discouraged from investing in wind energy schemes within the Borough by the perception that the guidance is too restrictive, or adds costs. This risk could be mitigated by providing appropriate advice and taking a pragmatic approach with applicants.
 - Possible additional resource implications on the Planning Department in the short term, in terms of needing to explain the new guidance to potential applicants for planning permission.

- 4.3 Risks for the Council associated with not adopting the Wind Energy Applications Supplementary Validation Policy include:
- The possibility that a lack of guidance for applicants will continue to lead to submission of planning applications which do not provide adequate information on proposed wind energy schemes, resulting in resource implications for Planning Officers in obtaining additional information from applicants. The time involved in obtaining additional information may mean that deadlines for determinations are not met or applications are withdrawn or refused on the grounds of inadequate information.
 - Planning applications for wind energy schemes will not properly address visual impact, noise, siting, cumulative impact or other considerations.
 - Uncertainty in the planning process in terms of information requirements to support planning applications for wind energy schemes, leading to appeals against planning decisions and associated costs for the Council.

5. **BACKGROUND AND OPTIONS**

- 5.1 The policy context for the proposed Wind Energy Applications Supplementary Validation Policy is provided by national, regional and local policy documents. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that local planning authorities should recognise the responsibility on all communities to contribute to energy generation from renewable or low carbon sources.
- 5.2 Paragraph 14 of the NPPF sets out the presumption in favour of sustainable development – requiring that development proposals which accord with the development plan should be approved without delay, and where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out of date, permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.
- 5.3 In order to make a proper assessment of such benefits, and any potential adverse impacts of wind energy development, it is vital that planning applications for such schemes are comprehensive in terms of the information they provide.
- 5.4 The Council’s Core Strategy contains two policies (Policies 19 and 20) which support the development of all types of renewable energy within the borough, including wind turbines, provided that they can demonstrate that:
- They do not have a significant visual, noise, odour or other impact on local residents and sensitive users.
 - They do not adversely impact key land resources, areas of ecological, geological or geomorphological value, cultural heritage or biodiversity assets.
 - They do not have a significant impact (either alone or cumulatively) on the character and value of the natural or urban landscape.
 - Their contribution to carbon emissions reduction and other community benefits outweigh other considerations.
 - They do not have an unacceptable harmful impact on a wide range of historic and cultural assets.
 - They do not have an unacceptable impact on neighbouring properties or communications infrastructure.

- 5.5 Again, in order for the Council's planning officers to properly assess wind energy schemes against the requirements of Core Strategy policy, it is necessary for planning applications to provide all the necessary information (with the level of information required being proportional to the scale of the proposed scheme, so as not to place undue burden on smaller scale schemes).
- 5.6 The Supplementary Validation Policy provides guidance on exactly what type and level of information is required, to assist applicants when putting together planning applications, and provide clarity to prospective applicants in order that they can budget for the various surveys and reports which may be required to support their planning application for wind energy development.
- 5.7 The Supplementary Validation Policy will apply for development control purposes from the date of adoption by Cabinet, for all wind energy applications received from this date.

COMMENTS FROM STATUTORY OFFICERS:

6. SECTION 151 OFFICER

- 6.1 There are no material financial matters arising from the report.

7. MONITORING OFFICER

- 7.1 No objection, subject to Management Team approval.

8. HEAD OF PEOPLE AND POLICY (ON BEHALF OF THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE)

- 8.1 There are no specific human resource implications.

9. CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

- 9.1 In addition to the Statutory Officer consultees, Council Officers in Development Control and Forward Planning, and Planning Officers from several neighbouring authorities have been consulted on the draft Supplementary Validation Policy.

10. CONCLUSION

- 10.1 The Council receives a relatively high number of planning applications for wind energy schemes, and as the costs of such schemes falls it is anticipated that the number of applications will continue to increase. National government subsidies in the form of the Feed-In-Tariff will continue to provide financial incentives for individuals to invest in wind energy schemes.
- 10.2 The Borough's topography combined with its high wind resource, and lack of statutory landscape protection (i.e. not a National Park or designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) makes it a particularly attractive location for the generation of renewable energy from wind.
- 10.3 The recently adopted Core Strategy policies provide guidance for development control decisions on wind energy. However, there is a need to provide a clear and transparent set of guidelines to applicants regarding the types and level of information required for Council planning officers to determine applications in line with national guidance and the Core Strategy.

10.4 The Supplementary Validation Policy will provide this information, and facilitate more effective and customer-focused pre-application discussions, leading to the submission of higher quality planning applications. It should be noted that the Supplementary Validation Policy is targeted primarily at smaller scale / individual wind turbine applications and developers, rather than the larger commercial scale operations (e.g. Scout Moor Wind Farm).

Appendices	
Appendix A	Wind Energy Applications Supplementary Validation Policy