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Our Ref: HWLDP-EX1:8
Your Ref: LDP-270-3
Date: 7 September, 2011

Dear Ms Smith,

HIGHLAND WIDE LOCAL PLAN - REQUEST FOR FURTHER INFORMATION – ISSUE 37 WIDER COUNTRYSIDE

In reference to the reporters request for further information regarding the above issue the Council offer the following response; The Council has retained the wording of the original request questions to provide context with the Councils response following below.

Question 1. In its response to representations, the council makes a distinction between large scale onshore renewable energy proposals and smaller scale proposals, e.g. community led. The reporter considers that potential developers are entitled to greater certainty over which regime their proposals would fall under. The council is therefore invited to submit appropriate criteria for that purpose.

Question 2. The council's response states that large scale proposals would be primarily assessed against issue 68 Renewable Energy Developments. To the extent to which such proposals would be assessed against the terms of issue 37, the reporter seeks clarification as to how, for example, wind farms would be able to demonstrate that they were "sympathetic to existing patterns of development in the area". The same question would, of course, also apply to smaller proposals, which the council would assess against issue 37.

Council response;

Questions 1. & 2.

The Council has prepared and consulted on draft supplementary guidance in relation to onshore wind energy, further work developing this guidance will include provision of guidance specifically on small scale wind turbines. Other renewables proposals will be assessed under Policy 68 Renewable Energy Developments and Policy 69 "Community" Renewable Energy Developments regardless of the scale of development.

Renewables proposals will also need to be considered against other relevant plan policies e.g. Policy 62 Landscape and Policy 58 Natural, Built and Cultural Heritage.

The Council consider that the response in the Schedule 4 in relation to considering renewables proposals against Policy 37 Wider Countryside is no longer appropriate.

Question 3. Issue 37 does not apply to the hinterland around towns areas. How does the council propose to assess renewable energy proposals which fall within those hinterland areas?

Council response;

Question 3.

Policy 37 Wider Countryside policy is intended to provide the policy basis for the consideration of all types of development whereas the Housing in the Countryside policy deals only with housing proposals within the hinterland area. This intention is expressed in para. 19.9.4. Therefore the reference in the first sentence of the policy is incorrect and the words "*and outwith hinterland around towns,*" should be omitted to correctly reflect the intention of the policy.

To further clarify this issue the insertion of a further sentence before the last paragraph, "*Housing proposals within the hinterland around towns will be determined in accordance with Policy 36 Housing in the Countryside and the Housing in the Countryside and Siting and Design Supplementary Guidance.*"

The existing wording of the final paragraph of Policy 37 states that renewable energy development proposals will be assessed against the Renewable Energy policies of the Plan. It may be beneficial to clarify and simplify the current statement by replacing the final paragraph with, "*Renewable Energy development proposals will be assessed against Policy 68 Renewable Energy Developments and Policy 69 "Community" Renewable Energy Developments.*"

Question 4. In its response to representations, the council acknowledges that proposals will be assessed on their social and economic benefits to the community and local in addition to the criteria listed in the policy. Would it therefore be appropriate to include this criterion within the issue?

Council response;

Question 4.

Given the responses to Questions 1. to 3. above; the relevant policies for the consideration of social and economic benefits are Policy 68 Renewable Energy Developments and Policy 69 "Community" Renewable Energy Developments The requirement to assess renewable energy proposals against social and economic benefits are already stated in these policies.

I trust this response meets the requirement set out in the original request.

Yours sincerely

Brian MacKenzie
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