



Saving the world one village at a time...

Gamlingay Environmental Action Group

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3 February 2012

Re: Planning Application S/2564/11: Gamlingay Community Wind Turbine

I am writing with the response of Gamlingay Environmental Action Group (GEAG) to Planning Application S/2564/11: the Gamlingay Community Wind Turbine. GEAG is an active local group with a current membership of 90 Gamlingay residents. We work with local organisations and individuals to raise awareness of environmental issues, to support sustainable development, and to protect local and global environments. We are an independent group, and are not affiliated to any other organisation.

GEAG welcomes the proposal for a community wind turbine, and we urge the council to support this application. Our reasons are as follows:

1. Local Context

The Cambridgeshire County Council Climate Change and Environment Strategy includes a commitment to 'increase the amount of renewable energy produced and used in the County'. The South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) *Climate Change Action Assessment: 2011-2013* states that 'The District Council recognises the scientific evidence that our climate is being dangerously altered by our actions. This is man-made climate change. The Council also recognises that we can and must do something about it'. In addition, as the Council's website notes, 'as a signatory to the Nottingham Declaration the Council is committed to taking positive actions in terms of both climate change mitigation and adaptation.' SCDC is responsible for promoting sustainable energy through the Sustainable Parish Energy Partnership (SPEP) which aims to support 'local activities and projects that will directly contribute to reducing energy bills and tackling climate change'. Gamlingay Parish Council (GPC) is a member of SPEP. Taken together, the county, district, and parish councils have a clear commitment to support projects that tackle climate change.

The proposed Gamlingay Community Wind Turbine will help local government to achieve all these aims and aspirations. It is a low-impact and highly sustainable development that will increase the amount of electricity generated locally. This makes the local community more resilient to future energy supply difficulties as well

as substantially reducing carbon emissions from the parish and the district. Wind turbines divert very little if any land away from food production (unlike many biofuel crops), sustainably support local business, and allow for the diversification of land use at an uncertain time for agriculture. These are positive outcomes for the local environment and the local economy, and will help to create a more sustainable and more resilient community.

The Gamlingay Community Wind Turbine Company have pledged to donate 10% of their net income to the local community. Gamlingay is currently an under-resourced community with significant pockets of rural deprivation. In the current economic climate, creative local schemes to maximise investment into the community should be encouraged, both as intrinsically good for local communities and as a way of supplementing local authority funding. The Gamlingay Community Wind Turbine will provide an important income stream for the community, and deliver measurable improvements for local residents.

The turbine itself is likely to have minimal impact on the local environment. The proposed site is arable land with no special ecological value and is not a designated SSSI. The turbine is located sufficiently distant from woods, hedges, ditches, and other features used by animals that impacts on fauna will be minimal. There will be no impact on flora whatsoever. The visual impact of a turbine in this context is slight, since the area is not a designated AONB and is a well-established working landscape with many structures visible. These include electricity pylons, grain silos, a water tower, radio and microwave antennae, a crane, and the Sandy Heath transmitter mast. A small turbine such as that proposed will fit naturally into this working landscape.

Likewise, the turbine is likely to have no significant physical impact in the village. It is clear that the turbine will not be audible in any inhabited area and that, because of the location of the turbine relative to the village, the effect of shadow flicker will be comparatively very low. The turbine is far enough from any habitation that any conceivable catastrophic failure would be extremely unlikely to affect people or property. The turbine might occasionally be seen, but it will not be heard, felt, or otherwise noticed by the inhabitants of Gamlingay.

2. National Context

The Climate Change Act 2008 set legally binding emission reduction targets of a 34% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, from 1990 levels, by 2020 as a first step on the path towards the long-term goal of cutting emissions by 80% by 2050. To meet these targets, national and local government will have to adopt all possible measures to cut energy consumption and increase renewable generation. As an established technology, wind turbines are a vital part of the energy mix that will be required in the coming years. In addition, shortages of fossil fuels in the coming years will mean that, to be secure and to meet the needs of households and industry, the nation will have to dramatically increase the quantity of electricity generated from renewables.

The first key principle of Planning Policy Statement 22: Renewable Energy (2004) is that 'Renewable energy developments should be capable of being accommodated throughout England in locations where the technology is viable and environmental, economic, and social impacts can be addressed satisfactorily.' There is widespread support for the turbine in Gamlingay, meaning that there are few negative social impacts, while the income that will flow into the community will provide many positive social impacts, making the village an ideal site to accommodate a renewable energy development. The application also shows that the technology is viable and that there are no significant environmental impacts. In addition, Key Principle 4 of PPS22 states that 'the wider environmental and economic benefits of all proposals for renewable energy

projects, whatever their scale, are material considerations that should be given significant weight in determining whether proposals should be granted planning permission.' In this case, as well as the wider benefits to the environment caused by the reduction in carbon emissions, there are also wider economic benefits in that the turbine will create an income stream supporting local community projects, support and help to diversify local farming, and support local jobs in farming, turbine maintenance, and community work.

3. Global Context

Fossil fuel reserves are currently being depleted. Renewable forms of energy generation will be needed globally to tackle this shortfall if we are to avoid a major energy crisis. In addition, few, if any, serious scientists now doubt that human emissions of CO₂ are contributing to global warming, and this has been formally accepted by both SCDC and GPC. There is widespread agreement among scientists and governments that very substantial cuts in CO₂ emissions are needed if we are to avoid dangerous climate change. No single initiative will deliver these cuts or provide the energy that we need for the future. Instead, a range of options, including generation of electricity from renewable sources such as wind, will be needed. The Gamlingay Community Wind Turbine proposal is a small contribution to solving that larger global problem.

For all the reasons above, GEAG very warmly welcomes Planning Application S/2564/11, and urges both the District and the Parish Council to support it.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Brycchan Carey
Co-ordinator, Gamlingay Environmental Action Group.