

**ELECTRICITY ACT 1989 (SECTION 36 AND SCHEDULE 8)
TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 (SECTION 90)
THE ELECTRICITY GENERATING STATIONS AND OVERHEAD LINES (INQUIRIES
PROCEDURE) (ENGLAND AND WALES) RULES 2007**

**PUBLIC INQUIRY TO CONSIDER SECTION 36 ELECTRICITY ACT 1989 APPLICATION BY
STEADINGS WIND FARM LIMITED FOR CONSENT AND DEEMED PLANNING
PERMISSION TO CONSTRUCT AND OPERATE A WIND FARM AT KIRKWHELPINGTON,
NORTHUMBERLAND (KNOWN AS STEADINGS)**

SUMMARY

PROOF OF EVIDENCE OF

COLIN GOODRUM BSc(Hons) DipLA MLI

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS

ON BEHALF OF STEADINGS WIND FARM LIMITED

BERR REFERENCE: GDBC/001/00278C

TYNEDALE COUNCIL REFERENCE: 20060540

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNCIL REFERENCE: 06/00023/CPC

3 DECEMBER 2007 FOR INQUIRY COMMENCING 15 JANUARY 2008

Summary and Conclusion

1.1 Professional Qualifications

1.1.1 My name is Colin Goodrum. I am a landscape architect and I have a Bachelor of Science Honours Degree in Physical Geography with Agriculture and a Diploma in Landscape Architecture. I was elected as a Member of the Landscape Institute in 1984. I am a partner of LDA Design.

1.2 Brief and Background

1.2.1 In August 2007 I was instructed by Banks Ltd to prepare expert evidence in support of the application for this Appeal. Prior to that, I have had no involvement in the project. Relevant material includes all of the submitted ES material.

1.2.2 I provide within my evidence a full review of the landscape and visual effects of the current scheme. Inevitably different landscape professionals do not always agree on each and every judgement made in assessing a given project. I do not dissent from the overall assessment made in the Steading's ES material but where I take a different view on a particular aspect I identify and explain the difference from the submitted assessments, and make reference to the Ironside Farrar reviews of the submitted documents where appropriate. As I was not responsible for the preparation of the submitted documents, and my opinion differs slightly from these in some respects, I indicate this where necessary within my full proof of evidence. I also re-present the visual material (in appendix 5 to my evidence – document SWFL3.4), to meet the newly published standards for the presentation of visualisations ("Visual Representation of Wind farms: Good Practice Guidance", SNH, 2006 [CD133]), and to correct the minor inconsistencies referred to by Ironside Farrar, where relevant.

1.2.3 The Ironside Farrar review [CD10] of the LVIA submitted in the SEI states that the scheme is a 'large size proposal', which view I note is in conflict with the definition used in the RSS (i.e. 20-25 turbines is deemed a Medium scale development). CD10 reviews the proposal against the findings of 'Wind farm Development and Landscape Capacity Studies: Knowesgate and Harwood Forest' (Ove Arup and Partners for North East Regional Assembly, June 2006), [CD104]. CD10 notes that the amendments remove turbines from areas identified as being unsuitable for wind farm development, leading to all of the scheme being situated within areas identified within that study as having capacity for wind farm development. It also notes that the amendments would reduce cumulative effects and improve visual cohesion by amending the scheme to three rather than four clusters.

1.2.4 My evidence considers the effects on the "setting" of the National Park. Whilst the concept of 'setting' in respect of listed buildings and other heritage features is well-

established, the notion that a landscape designation has a setting is not. The implication would be that the National Park needs an area of 'sympathetic' surrounding landscape in order for its importance to be properly appreciated. There is no support for the idea of a 'setting' within the legislation and guidance relating to national parks and this is not a matter borne in mind when drawing up National Park boundaries (areas are either suitable to fall within the designation or not). It would therefore appear that the idea of a 'setting' to the National Park is being used as a way of establishing a 'buffer zone' contrary to the direction of paragraph 14 of PPS22.

1.2.5 My evidence reviews national, regional and local planning policy relevant to my evidence. I also review the various landscape character studies which exist, some of which also deal with landscape capacity.

1.2.6 Of the four studies discussed, only the Regional studies [CD142 and CD143] and the map of 'areas of least constraint' (included in my appendix 1.2) within that have any formal standing, having been endorsed at the Examinations In Public of both the Structure Plan and the RSS. These identify the Knowesgate area as being suitable to accommodate 20-25 turbines. The Knowesgate area study [CD104] and Tynedale LCA are independent specialist reports. Both of these reports recommend a cautious approach to the siting of wind farm development based on the premise that landscape character should not be permitted to change significantly. My evidence discusses this assumption, analyses the studies, and highlights the inconsistencies in the Knowesgate area study.

1.3 Suitability of Site

1.3.1 The Steadings site lies within an area identified within the emerging North East of England RSS [CD44] as being suitable for a medium-scale wind farm (20-25 turbines) on the basis of the regional assessment of landscape sensitivity [CD143] and the renewable energy strategy [CD142]. It thus satisfies RPG1 [CD34] policy EN3 that proposals be located in "*an appropriate location in relation to the local and wider landscape*". The location of the proposal within this '*area of least constraint*' also satisfies Structure Plan policy M5 which reiterates the suitability of the identified area for medium scale wind farm development.

1.4 Landscape Setting and Character

1.4.1 The site lies to the eastern side of a broad sandstone ridge and is located within a transitional landscape between the exposed heather moors and crags of the hilltops to the north and west, and the settled, undulating, well-wooded lowland farmlands to the east.

- 1.4.2 The Northumberland National Park lies 9km to the west, coinciding with the Upland Forests and Moorland and Rolling Uplands landscape character areas. The North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) lies 18km to the southwest, as shown on my plan 2587/01 Appendix 2.

1.5 Rights of Way

- 1.5.1 The Pennine Way and Hadrian's Wall Path national trails pass through the 30km radius study area but do not closely approach the site, being 10-11km from the site at their nearest. The Pennine and Hadrian's National Cycle Routes also pass through the study area with their nearest approaches to the site being 7km and 12km respectively. Other long distance routes within the study area include St Oswald's Way (a walking route) and the Reivers (regional) cycle route. These two routes approach the site quite closely (within 1km). Plan 2587/01 in my Appendix 2 illustrates these routes.
- 1.5.2 There are also a number of local routes (6 footpaths, 2 bridleways and 2 routes with public access) as well as an area of land with open access either within or immediately adjacent to the site.

1.6 Assessment of Effects

- 1.6.1 Both the Regulations and planning policy at all levels require a full assessment of landscape and visual impacts. These have been provided both within the submitted documents and within my evidence. Thus the requirements of PPS1, PPS22, policies 33 and 41 of the emerging RSS and policies M2 and M4 of the Structure Plan are satisfied in this respect.
- 1.6.2 My evidence reviews in some detail matters of methodology and the basis of my assessment and judgements, including my assessment of the nature of the effects on landscape and views in terms of whether that effect is positive or adverse. The latter is complex, reflecting the acknowledged polarity of views which individuals hold regarding the effects of wind turbines on the landscape and views. I give my view as a professional landscape architect, but I fully accept some other landscape architects will have a different view. Indeed, members of the public will also hold different views. This polarity cannot be ignored in the decision making process – it is the subject of a significant body of research into public perceptions as reviewed by Mr Provan, and to a lesser extent by me.

Landscape Character

- 1.6.3 The only landscape receptor to experience significant (Moderate or greater) effects would be the Upland Fringe Farming character area in which the site lies (though the other three areas of this character type would not be affected). This modest level of effects is in keeping with policy NE1 of the Tynedale LDF Core Strategy [CD2.6] which

requires the protection, through management of *“the relationship between development and the natural environment”*, of the character and quality of the landscape.

Landscape Designations

- 1.6.4 Neither the North Pennines AONB or the Northumberland National Park would experience significant effects. The *“true sense of tranquillity and a distinct character”* identified as criteria for the designation of the National Park would not be affected by the Slight/Negligible visual effects on a small number viewpoints within the National Park arising from the Steadings proposal. Thus the proposal satisfies policy requiring the protection of these nationally designated areas from effects that would undermine their reasons for designation.

Visual Effects

- 1.6.5 Viewpoints within 4km of the site would experience significant (Moderate or greater) effects. Effects would decrease to Slight beyond 5km and beyond 12km the visual effects would generally be No Change. In my opinion, visual effects would be either Neutral or positive in nature from 50% of the assessed viewpoints.
- 1.6.6 Significant visual effects would be experienced by residents living within the settlements of Thockrington, Great Bavington and Knowesgate, and those living in properties within 1km of the turbines. None of the properties would experience effects sufficient to render them ‘unliveable’.
- 1.6.7 The footpath and bridleway network in the vicinity of the site would experience localised significant visual effects, including St Oswald’s Way National Trail and the Reivers Way Regional Cycle Route which pass within 2km of the turbines. However, not all users of these routes will find these views to be adverse, and some may welcome them as a positive addition to their route.
- 1.6.8 Whilst these impacts would not satisfy the requirements of policy EN2 of the Tynedale LDF Core Strategy, the requirement that there be *“no significant adverse impact”* on *“the character or appearance of the landscape”*, this requirement appears over-restrictive in the context of wind farm development.

Cumulative Effects

- 1.6.9 At the time of writing my cumulative assessment work is incomplete. An assessment will be provided as a supplementary proof in due course.

Conclusion

- 1.6.10 Thus, at this stage, based on my evidence, it is my opinion that the landscape and visual effects of the Steadings wind farm proposal are acceptable and the landscape is able to

accommodate the proposal. I therefore respectfully suggest there are no landscape or visual reasons why the Steadings scheme should not be permitted.