

HEREFORDSHIRE CORE STRATEGY EXAMINATION

INSPECTOR'S NOTE

2 July 2015

The Secretary of State for the Department of Communities and Local Government published a Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) on 18 June 2015. The WMS set out new considerations to be applied to proposed wind energy development. Subject to a transitional period the considerations took effect from the date of issue (18 June 2015).

The WMS indicated that when determining applications for wind energy development involving one or more wind turbines, local planning authorities should only grant permissions if:

- the proposed development site is in an area identified as suitable for wind energy development in a Local or Neighbourhood Plan; and
- following consultation, it can be demonstrated that the proposal reflects the planning concerns of affected local communities and therefore has their backing.

The WMS is supported by a number of consequential changes to the renewable and low carbon energy section of national planning practice guidance, including paragraph 5. This makes clear the need to identify suitable areas, and that if sites have not been allocated in a Local or neighbourhood plan application they will not be approved.

One of the tests of soundness for the examination of the Herefordshire Core Strategy (CS) is consistency with National Policy. CS policy SD2 supports development proposals that seek to deliver renewable and low carbon energy in line with the UK Renewable Energy Strategy (or national equivalent). I note that the Strategy includes direct references to the positive role wind turbines can play. Therefore, it is implicit in the wording of the policy that, subject to criteria, planning applications for wind turbines would be supported. The criteria set out in policy SD2 relate to environmental factors and energy efficiency, and make no reference to the matters referred to by the Secretary of State. There are no areas identified in the plan as suitable for wind energy development.

For these reasons, I have come to the conclusion that policy SD2 (and the accompanying text) is not sound.

Any alterations to address the matter would constitute a Main Modification (MM) to the plan and I would be grateful for your views in the first instance about the wording of a suitable modification and whether it would be appropriate to carry out a Sustainability Appraisal of the main modification and publish it for consultation.

I would appreciate your initial comments on this matter within 14 days, perhaps setting out options for ensuring that the CS is consistent with National Policy.

Christine Thorby