

SITE VISIT REPORT: MONDAY 20 November 2023

Committee Members: Alderman, Boyle, Coyle, Scott, Stewart, S McKillop (Vice Chair) and; Councillors Anderson, C Archibald, Hunter, Kennedy, McGurk, McMullan (Chair), Peacock, Nicholl, Storey, Wallace and Watton

LA01/2019/0922/F- Lands Opp entrance to 59 Magheramore Road, Dungiven BT47 4SW in the townlands of Carnanbane and Magheramore Approx 4km south of Dungiven

Proposed by Ald Boyle, Seconded by Cllr Stewart

App Type: Full Application

Proposal: Construction of a Wind Farm (with a generating capacity of between 21.6 MW and 24 MW) comprising up to 6no Wind Turbine (Max of 149.9m to blade tip with a max rotor diameter of 112m and max hub height of 94m) and associated infrastructure including external electricity transformers, crane hardstandings, underground cabling, control building, substation compound, energy storage area, (up to 5 MW hours), newly created site entrance (Opp 59 Magheramore Road), New and upgraded on-site access tracks, turning heads and all other associated ancillary works. During construction and commissioning there will be a number of temporary works including enabling works compound and construction compound with car parking, temporary parts of crane hardstanding, welfare facilities and off site road widening into 3rd party lands on the Banagher, Carnanbane and Magheramore Roads

Present: Ald Boyle, Coyle, Stewart and Cllrs Archibald, Hunter and Watton
Officials S Mathers, G Doherty

Officials from HED A Gault, C Ward

Apologies: None

Comments:

Site visit commenced at entrance to Banagher Old Church at Carabane Road.

S Mathers outlined that the proposal was for a wind farm comprising 6 wind turbines with a tip height of 149m. G Doherty pointed out the location of the site. S Mathers advised that the specific reason for requesting the site visit related to the setting of the State Care and Scheduled monuments.

S Mathers outlined that the proposal was considered unacceptable given the unacceptable adverse impact on visual amenity and landscape character in the Sperrins AONB in addition to an unacceptable adverse impact on the integrity of the setting of Banagher Old Church State Care Monument and upon two Scheduled monuments. A member asked whether Glenconway Windfarm (visible to west) was within the AONB. S Mathers advised it was not.

S Mathers welcomed A Gault and C Ward from Historic Environment Division and invited them to explain their position.

A Gault stated that Banagher Old Church was one of 190 state care monuments in Northern Ireland. He stated location is on the Sperrins Heritage Trail. Site has both experiential aspects and scenic qualities. Site is marked by tourism signs. Building is from 12 Century and deliberately sited on a hill to be prominent. It is a medieval Parish Church, predating the Anglo-Norman invasion. The wind farm site forms an important backdrop to the Church. Arrival to the site is important. The scale, dominance and movement of the proposed wind farm would adversely detract from the setting of the monument. He stated the importance of the setting to the east side (application site side), given that the west side is more developed.

Moving into the Church, A Gault pointed out the Romanesque window and how the windfarm would be viewed from same. Members looked out this window.

Moving outside the Church, to the graveyard, A Gault pointed out how visible the proposed windfarm would be. G Doherty showed the photomontage of the proposal from this viewpoint. A Gault pointed out the location of the tombs on the hillside and advised that the proposal would have an unacceptable adverse impact on them. A Member asked if the setting of historic monuments had been raised before for windfarm proposals in the Borough. S Mathers advised of the issue on the setting of the Armoyle Round Tower in the Armoyle Windfarm proposal but that ultimately this specific reason was not accepted by the PAC on appeal. S Mathers added that the impact in this case is more severe, relative to that in the Armoyle case.

Moving down to the steps into the Church grounds, S Mathers advised that the proposal had an unacceptable impact on visual amenity and landscape character on the Sperrins AONB, viewed principally on the A6/ Foregleng Road from Londonderry towards Dungiven and from the A6 Glenshane Road towards Dun given. He showed the relevant photomontages of these views. S Mathers added that as this is the primary route between the two principal cities in Northern Ireland, there is a particularly high public interest given the number of receptors. S Mathers added that the critical views are not a snapshot, but rather are sustained over long distances. One member commented that the

windfarm would be visible along much of the A6 from Drumahoe (east edge of Londonderry). S Mathers added that the critical view on approach to Dungiven along the Legavallon/ Garvagh Road was also significant where the windfarm would curiously appear to sit on top of Dungiven and appear oppressive.

S Mathers asked if Members wished to view the site from some of the other critical view points or whether they were content to consider the photomontages and images provided in the presentation. Members advised that viewing the site from other critical view points was not necessary.