

2 About the Site and the Proposal

**STOP WOODLANE WIND FARM ACTION GROUP
OBJECTION DOCUMENT**

**SECTION 2
ABOUT THE SITE AND THE PROPOSAL**

Site Description

- 2.1 The proposed site is arable farmland in an attractive and unspoilt part of the Aire valley. The land is low-lying and often has standing water which is home to migratory birds in winter. While the Aire valley is industrial, particularly 5 to 10 km to the west of the site, this part of the Aire valley is rural in nature. There is a combination of features which make the area a haven for wildlife. The Applicant's own ecology survey found 42 species and their list is far from complete. The rich wildlife is due to a combination of geographic features within the site and adjoining the site. These include Ancient Woodland, ponds, running water and lines of hedgerow which include some larger trees.
- 2.2 The southern and eastern boundaries of the site both adjoin the Green Belt. About 1 km further south is the River Aire and a floodplain which provides a riverside habitat and a barrier to mammal species.
- 2.3 The northern edge of the site is a man-made drainage channel which flows from west to east. Near the centre of the northern edge of the site the channel is met by another channel coming from the east, and the two then merge to form Mearley Drain which flows south towards the river Aire. The name drain in this context is somewhat misleading. It is a man-made channel with clear flowing water which is home to small fish and supports a population of herons, moorhens and mallard. Kingfisher have been seen in the vicinity of Gateforth Wood. Water vole are resident in the banks and at night the channels are the hunting ground for owls and bats.
- 2.4 There are few fences or man-made structures between fields, so the outlook is very open with long-distance views. There are small woodland areas and occasional rows of Lombardy poplars which can be seen from many miles away. Just to the north of the site there is Hambleton Hough which at nearly 50 metres high is the highest natural feature for many miles. The land rising to Hambleton Hough includes Gateforth Hall, a Grade 2* listed building, which is surrounded by its old estate. This estate includes Gateforth Wood which reaches south to the boundary of the proposed wind farm site.
- 2.5 People living in the area are proud of the neighbourhood and this is apparent from the high standard of maintenance of the villages and their community areas such as village greens and children's playgrounds. This pride also extends to the owners of local woodland where renewal is underway to support bio-diversity and to restore Ancient Woodland which had been damaged by coniferous planting. The success of this is perfectly demonstrated by rare species of birds taking up residence.
- 2.6 The presence of so many small groups of trees and the woodlands area makes for a pleasing open landscape. The only man-made objects which slightly detract from this are the pylons and the power stations. While the area is noted for the Selby coalfield and other mining activity this is not evident in this landscape due to the care and attention taken in planning, design and

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development of the coalfield, which is now closed. The only mining taking place is at Kellingley Colliery, which has extensive coal reserves under the proposed site. Even so the mine is visible from few places.

- 2.7 The largest man-made features are the power stations, but these are spaced at 10 km intervals which reduces their impact. The Green Belt between them has been very effective in protecting the landscape, so the impact of the power stations has been contained.

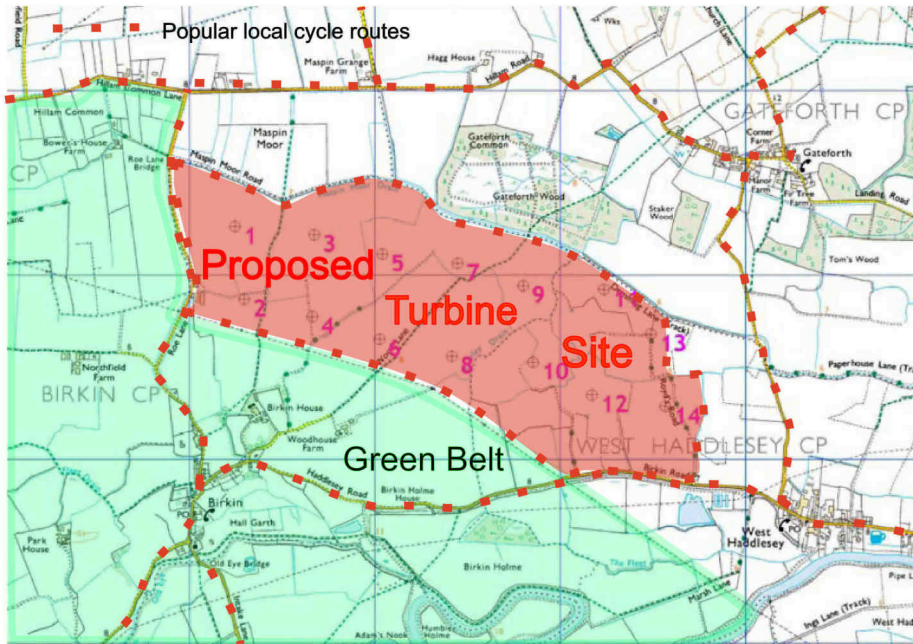


Fig. 2.1 Map of the site showing Green Belt and cycle routes popular with villagers

- 2.8 The site is roughly rectangular in an east-west direction and it has a road all around at an average distance of about half a kilometre. At some places the road is the boundary to the site and at its furthest the site is 1 km from the road. At three corners of the road around the site there are villages with homes within 1 km of the nearest turbine. At the fourth corner and all along Hillam Common Lane there are scattered dwellings, all of which face south to the turbines, which are at less than 800 metres from many of the dwellings. The road around the site is very popular with local cyclists and families because it makes an enjoyable circular tour.
- 2.9 Overall this is a rural area with prime agricultural land, including historic arable small fields in a patchwork, with many individual owners. Many fields are owned by farming families with a long history in the area.

The Proposal

- 2.10 The proposal is to build a series of industrial structures stretching for over 2.5 km across this land. Two rows of wind turbines over 400 feet high. From a distance the impression would be of one structure. The three villages at the corners of the site would lose their individual identities and take on the common identity of "village by the wind turbines". Unlike the power stations in

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the area this proposal is a sprawling development which would take up a large swathe of land. Equally, unlike the power stations it would generate a relatively small amount of power which would also be intermittent. This area of the county has low rainfall and low average wind speeds, which is recognised in ENV6 of the Selby Local Plan.

- 2.11 In complete contrast to the development of the Selby coalfield which, when completed, was barely visible because of the time and effort taken to conceal it, the wind turbines will be visible from most places in the area and as far away as the North Yorkshire Moors which are 45 miles distant.
- 2.12 Brief details of the proposal, with emphasis on the resources which would be used in its construction, are as follows:
- 2.12.1 14 no. wind turbines – each 80 metres to hub with 45 blades – overall height 125 metres. Taller than cooling towers at 115metres.
 - 2.12.2 Each one will be erected on a concrete base utilising 40 tonnes of steel and 720 tonnes of concrete. In total 10,000 tonnes of concrete will be required for these bases.
 - 2.12.3 Each base will be surrounded by a hard standing made of 1 metre deep crushed rock and slightly raised for use by the crane required to erect the turbine.
 - 2.12.4 There will also be a meteorological mast and an electricity substation, each of which will require a concrete base.
 - 2.12.5 Concrete may be brought in by lorry or it may be made on-site with a batch plant; the Applicant has not yet specified a preference but has not included space for a batch plant and storage of materials in the application.
 - 2.12.6 The site will have a network of “tracks” built to carry 100 tonne loads across the site. In total 28,000 sq metres of ground will be excavated to a depth of at least 1 metre and replaced by crushed rock. The excavated fertile soil will be removed from the site, and transported elsewhere for disposal.
 - 2.12.7 The network of “tracks” will cross the drainage dykes at 7 places. Four of these crossings will be at new locations and so the crossing will be completely new; the other three already exist and the Applicant says they will be “upgraded”. If the existing crossings cannot carry the 100 ton loads they will need to be rebuilt completely.
 - 2.12.8 According to the Applicant the network of new “tracks” will be a total of 6477 metres long and 5 metres wide – nearly twice as wide as smaller local roads.
 - 2.12.9 The site is 23.4 hectares, and 5.75 hectares of this will be removed from agricultural use.

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- 2.12.10 An electricity substation will be placed on the site and a connection made to the grid by underground cable. The connection to the grid has not yet been agreed so the route of the trench required to make the connection is not yet specified. While the connection has been assessed on the basis of underground cables this is not the confirmed design. To reduce cost the Applicant may apply for an overhead cable to connect to the grid.
- 2.12.11 In addition to this on-site work, Lowfield Lane will be widened from its present 2.7 metres to 5 metres for its whole length of 0.8 km. This will require land take from adjacent fields and loss of wildlife habitat along the lane which is a well known wildlife corridor.
- 2.12.12 There will also be a construction compound to be built for the 10 month construction period and this will be located by the Viner's Station on Roe Lane.
- 2.12.13 The Applicant is not yet sure of the design for the foundations for the turbines and so has not yet confirmed that piling will not be required. We are aware that at Lissett wind farm piling was required. Each turbine base was built on top of 30 piles driven 25 metres or more into the ground. If piling is required it should be already known and is a material consideration for local residents. Driving 420 piles 25 metres into the ground is more than the noise of a combine harvester and takes a lot longer than the harvest.
- 2.12.14 The Applicant is aware that this is a Zone 3 flood risk area and accordingly the Applicant has decided to raise the level of the substation and electrical connections in the turbines to 9.54 metres AOD and set up emergency evacuation plans for construction staff. The villages of Birkin and West Haddlesey are in the same Zone 3 risk area. There is no mention in the application of the possible impact on local residents.
- 2.12.15 The Applicant seems to have minimal knowledge of the area. There is no mains sewerage available on Roe Lane, or anywhere else in Birkin, so we are not sure why the Applicant makes the suggestion that the site compound will use such disposal.
- 2.12.16 The turbines are described by the Applicant as only temporary structures, since planning permission is being sought for a 25 year period. This is a generation, and can hardly be considered temporary.

The Bigger Picture

- 2.13 The proposal is large in its physical impact but small in its power-generating capacity; it is even smaller in its predicted output. The Applicant suggests it will have a load factor of 31%, which is close to the national average for wind farms. The average wind farm is in a higher and more westerly location where wind resource is likely to be greater, so we would question the figure, which we believe to be very optimistic.

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- 2.14 At 31% the average output would be less than 11MW, but when the wind speed is less than a steady 9 mph the total output would be zero. This output must be set against the other generating capacity in the area and the ability to generate power on demand. The proposed waste food digesting plant may have a smaller capacity but it is an on demand generating capacity.
- 2.15 The application should be examined in the context of the bigger picture as presented in the “The Yorkshire and Humberside Plan – May 2008”.
- 2.16 An important consideration in this area is the availability of agricultural land which can support the plans for bio-mass power generation. It is more cost effective to use locally produced bio-mass than it is to transport such materials a long distance. This has been incorporated into ENV7 of the Yorkshire and Humber Plan – Plans for Agricultural Land, which shows most of the area to be high (with none of it less than moderate) in its classification for growing bio-mass. The project would remove 5.75 hectares of arable land from productive use, which is growing grain, oilseed rape and other valuable crops on rotation. Straw by-product from crops could be used for bio-mass, or more specialised crops could be grown. To grow these would maintain the land for future generations in agricultural use and provide local employment in agriculture. It would also maximise the support for the local bio-mass generating plants by producing fuel locally. The bio-mass plant will provide local employment as well as a substantial amount of power.
- 2.17 **Altogether the bio-mass plant will be a ‘win-win’ strategy for the area and much preferable to the ‘lose-lose’ which the application for the wind turbines would create – loss of land, serious visual impact and no local jobs.**

The application for the construction of wind turbines should be rejected