

Planning Application : Upper Smerral, Latheronwheel

Proposal Description Application for the construction of a wind farm containing 4 wind turbines, advertised as 80 metres to tip, and turbine foundations, crane hardstandings, site access, substation and switchgear compound, on-site access tracks, temporary construction compound/laydown area at Upper Smerral, Latheronwheel.

Planning Application Reference 10/03501/FUL

Deadline for Objections **8 October 2010**

Use the following form to submit an objection

Objection form

Name (Required in capitals)

Address (Required)

Town (Required)

Postcode (Required)

Planning Application Consent to construct and operate a wind farm at Upper Smerral, Latheronwheel

Planning Application ref: 10/03501/FUL

Please enter your concerns and reasons for objecting in your own words in the text box below. This will ensure that your objection is recognised and counted as an individual objection

Reasons for Objecting

Please select as many of the items listed below which you consider are also relevant to your objection.

Planning Policies

- The proposal is contrary to Policy G1 of the Highland Structure Plan as it is severely detrimental to the local residents.
- The proposal is contrary to Policy G2 given the impact it will have on the local landscape, habitat, species, scenery and cultural heritage. The siting is not sensitive to the local environment and will be detrimental to the safety of residents, being too close to houses.
- The proposal is contrary to Policy G3; it will have significant adverse effects.
- The proposal is contrary to Policy E2; it will have significant visual and noise impact and unacceptable cumulative effect in view of other local windfarms (Causeymire, Buolfreich and potentially Dunbeath).
- The proposal is contrary to Policy L4; it will destroy the character of the landscape.
- The proposal is contrary to Policy T6; it will be visible from the main tourist route into Caithness and in combination with Causeymire, Buolfreich and Dunbeath will turn a once beautiful area into an industrial landscape.

Access

- The turbines are to be transported from Invergordon, a considerable distance which will cause much disruption to traffic on the A9 particularly through small towns and the Berriedale Braes.
- The local roads proposed for transporting the turbines are single track and will need to be checked by Transerve for fitness to carry such heavy loads.

Safety

- A precautionary approach should be adopted in respect of turbines close to dwellings, close to roads (turbine 1), or places of work such as the consented Egg Farm (200/300m).

Noise

- Local residents are already suffering noise from Buolfreich windfarm and this can only be increased by the addition of these 4 turbines so close to homes and particularly for those living between the two developments. A full noise assessment has not been completed for this proposal but data from the Buolfreich windfarm has been used instead. This is completely unacceptable.

Cumulative Effect

- This windfarm is very close to the existing windfarms at Buolfreich and Causeymire plus the proposed windfarm at Dunbeath. The cumulative effect will be unacceptable.
- Buolfreich Windfarm have themselves objected to this application on the grounds that it will divert wind from their own turbines thus reducing their efficiency. The construction of the windfarm at Upper Smerral would therefore be counter-productive.

Residential Amenity

- The turbines are too close to houses which already suffer from the Buolfruch windfarm. Guidance is for a 2KM setback but some houses are only 600/700m from turbines. Shebster was refused by the Reporter because he judged it would be unacceptable to have two windfarms in such close proximity to the affected houses.
- It has been confirmed that television reception will be affected in the area.

Landscape and Visual Amenity

- The introduction of another windfarm into this outstanding beautiful area is unacceptable. The Environmental Statement visualisations are of such poor photographic quality that it is impossible to use them as a reliable means of assessment. The developers should be required to re-submit and re-advertise.

Geology , Hydrology and Hydrogeology

- No tests appear to have been carried out to establish peat depth despite this site being wet heath so likely to be mostly peat of varying depths. Windfarms should not be built on peat which has taken thousands of years to form and cannot be replaced.

Ecology

- There is no proper ecological assessment, the excuse being that the land use is changing. Until an assessment can be carried out on the conditions which will exist prior to construction of the turbines then the changes to these conditions affected by the turbines cannot be assessed. This application is premature.
- The Ecology section of the Environmental Statement is unacceptable in that it is full of references to further surveys still to be done or incomplete. This should be re-submitted when all surveys have been carried out to the satisfaction of the regulatory bodies, e.g. SNH who have requested further surveys. RSPB appear not to have been consulted.
- Signs of occupation by a number of protected species are mentioned in the ES including otter, wild cat, water vole, bat, brown and mountain hare
- Local residents report regularly seeing hen harrier, lapwing, curlew, oyster catcher, buzzard, kestrel, red kite and many other small native birds. Geese fly through this area.
- This application is premature as the conditions which will exist prior to construction cannot be determined at this time.

Tourism

- Visitors come to Caithness for its wide open skies, wildlife and unspoilt wilderness. They will not return when they find it has one huge industrial site after another.

Archaeology

- There are 15 scheduled monuments within 2KM so the effect of these 4 turbines will be of high significance.

- It is contrary to policy PAN 42 - landscape setting. The turbines being on top of a hill will have a greater detrimental effect on the setting of monuments (15 of which are Scheduled Monuments)

Please acknowledge receipt of this objection in writing

*Please complete the form and send it by letter post to **The Director of Planning and Development, Highland Council, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness IV3 5NX.***

Thank you for taking the time to register your concerns about the proposed windfarm.