

DARLINGTON LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK CORE STRATEGY EXAMINATION

POLICY CS3 PROMOTING RENEWABLE ENERGY: AREAS OF LEAST CONSTRAINT METHODOLOGY STATEMENT

Prepared by Darlington Borough Council, 3 February 2011

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This statement sets out the process and methodology underpinning the justification to exclude areas of least constraint for wind energy generation from Policy CS3.
- 1.2 This statement has been prepared as a result of the public hearing session of the Examination to inform the consideration of Matter 2.3.

2. Process

- 2.1 The Council considers that the Core Strategy is in broad conformity with SD076¹. SD076 Policy 41 identifies broad areas of least constraint for wind energy generation in Darlington in the East Durham Limestone Area and also at the Tees Plain, both with potential for medium scale wind energy development. It also states that small wind farms in urban areas and on the urban/rural fringe should be supported in the Tees Valley. Policy 41 goes on to say that the identification of broad areas of least constraint does not preclude proposals being considered in other areas.
- 2.2 The broad areas of least constraint were established at a regional level and were defined as 'a broad area without precise boundaries where wind energy development may be considered appropriate'. The Council consider that identifying a corresponding area for the areas identified in Policy 41 would therefore not translate easily to a local level.
- 2.3 CD021² included in Figure 3.1 an area of least constraint for wind farm development in the north east part of the Borough although this was not identified in Policy CS4 (Promoting Renewable Energy). Figure 3.1 in CD022³ identified a similar area as an area of least constraint.
- 2.4 Following consultation on CD022 representors stated that the area of least constraint identified in Figure 3.1 (and its predecessor) was in fact the study area for the ARUP studies^{4 5} (SD019 and SD020). These reports assessed the potential of the East Durham Limestone and Tees Plain wind resource areas to accommodate wind energy from a visual and landscape impact perspective. It only included the north eastern corner of the Borough and identified a smaller

¹ The North East of England Plan Regional Spatial Strategy to 2021

² Core Strategy: Preferred Options, 2008

³ Core Strategy: Revised Preferred Options, 2010

⁴ Wind Farm Development and Landscape Capacity Study, East Durham Limestone and Tees Plain Report, 2008

⁵ Wind Farm Development and Landscape Capacity Study, East Durham Limestone and Tees Plain Addendum Report 2009

area within it as a least impact area in landscape and visual terms only. However this is not the same as an area of least constraint. The Council accepted that both figures had been mistakenly defined as an area of least constraint.

- 2.5 In response to CD021, Banks Renewables indicated that ‘there was not enough evidence in the Core Strategy to suggest that the principle of promoting renewable energy generation has been fully investigated across the district’. The Council agreed and commissioned Entec to undertake SD080⁶ to help identify broad strategic locations with the potential for renewable and low carbon energy in the Borough.
- 2.6 For wind energy, the purpose at a strategic level was to help address the criteria in RSS Policy 41 and identify areas that have the capacity to accommodate all types of wind energy. This includes large scale, medium scale and small scale turbines.
- 2.7 A strategic assessment of wind speeds and a high level desk based appraisal of technical and environmental constraints was undertaken including:
 - Statutory environmental designations;
 - Sensitive noise receptors;
 - Existing infrastructure;
 - Microwave links.
- 2.8 Based on this assessment, three potential areas of search were identified (see Appendix 1) in the north east, north west and south of the Borough where the potential to develop wind energy at a large, medium or small scale could be considered further subject to the criteria in RSS Policy 38 and through the detailed EIA process required at the planning application stage to reflect:
 - Landscape and visual impacts;
 - Impacts on local aviation;
 - Regulatory bodies concerns;
 - Results of community consultation.
- 2.9 Following the consultation on CD022, the Council commissioned SD018⁷ to help address concerns raised on policy CS3. It identified a significant accessible wind resource in Darlington and at a strategic level stated that because there is little variation in wind speeds across the Borough, it is likely to be a viable technology across the Borough.
- 2.10 SD018 reappraised the technical and environmental constraints to consider:
 - Nationally designated environmental sites;
 - Locally designated environmental sites;
 - Noise;
 - Wind speed;
 - Existing infrastructure;
 - Topographical features;
 - Airports;

⁶ Decentralised and Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Report, 2009

⁷ Update to Decentralised and Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Report, 2010

- MoD sites;
- Radar;
- Microwave links.

- 2.11 Landscape and visual sensitivity impacts and capacity were not considered at this strategic level, so a detailed assessment of these issues only exists for a small part of the Borough (SD019, SD020). SD018 recognises that this is an issue that will need to be addressed by developers at the detailed planning application stage.
- 2.12 SD018 Figure 3.4 (Appendix 2) shows in white the up to date accessible wind resource areas with the strategic potential to accommodate wind turbine development. While the extent and locations of the accessible wind resource in Figure 3.4 broadly reflect the potential areas of least constraint in CD022 Figure 3.2, Figure 3.4 clearly identifies other accessible wind resource areas which also have potential to deliver large, medium or small scale wind energy development.
- 2.13 Based on this credible evidence, the Council concluded it would be misleading to only identify broad areas of least constraint based on Figure 3.4 as this could divert potential investors away from locations that may also be feasible and viable and have the potential to deliver a range of wind energy development types, contrary to the Council's stated intentions to do all it can to support initiatives that contribute to national climate change targets in CD001 para 3.3.1 and at a sub regional level (to meet the targets to reduce carbon emissions by 20% by 2020 to meet the targets in the Tees Valley Climate Change Strategy, 2010 p31). Therefore areas of least constraint were removed from policy CS3 in CD001⁸.
- 2.14 This approach is also entirely consistent with SD052⁹ (para 19-20, p14) which states that the Council should '*consider identifying suitable areas for renewable and low-carbon energy sources, and supporting infrastructure, where this would help secure the development of such sources, but in doing so take care to avoid stifling innovation including by rejecting proposals solely because they are outside areas identified for energy generation*'.
- 2.15 It would be for the developer to undertake a more detailed analysis of local conditions to determine whether a particular site is appropriate for the wind energy. The areas in grey on Figure 3.4 are identified constraints, but not all constraints will prevent a wind energy development from proceeding. It is possible, depending on locally specific conditions, to mitigate many constraints appropriately. This is a matter for consideration at the detailed planning application stage.
- 2.16 Overall policy CS3 proposes a positive approach to the consideration of wind energy development in the Borough. With the evidence available the most consistent, effective and robust approach is that each wind energy development application would be considered on its merits against the criteria of CS3.

⁸ Darlington Local Development Framework Core Strategy Publication Draft

⁹ Planning Policy Statement: Planning and Climate Change Supplement to PPS1

3. Response to Proposed Change By Banks Renewables

3.1 In response to CD001, the respondent identified two issues that needed addressing:

- The inclusion of an area of search in the north east of the Borough;
- The introduction of a target for electricity generation.

3.2 The respondent suggested alternative wording (in italics) to policy CS3:

The development of renewable energy schemes, including micro-generation, together with any ancillary buildings and infrastructure, will be supported and considered in the context of sustainable development and climate change.

The Council will aim to enable renewable energy infrastructure sufficient to provide 153 GW hours per annum of electricity. In order to facilitate this, an Area of Search for wind generation has been designated in the North east of the Borough. Significant weight will be given to the wider environmental, economic and social benefits arising from renewable energy schemes whilst considering the anticipated effects, individually and cumulatively, upon:

- (a) the surrounding natural, built and cultural landscape and townscape including buildings, features, habitats and species of national and local importance; and/or
- (b) residential amenity including visual intrusion, air, dust, noise, odour, traffic generation, recreation and access; and/or
- (c) the operation of air traffic and radar systems.

Appropriate mitigation and/or compensation measures and monitoring to address any effects identified and considered will be required prior to any development proceeding.

In addition the Area of Search should be shown on a plan or within the Key Diagram.

Council's Response: Area of Search in the North East of the Borough

3.3 Policy CS3 is a strategic planning policy promoting all types of renewable energy in the Borough. Given this, it would be inappropriate to include the form of proposed wording in this part of CS3 as it specifically relates to wind energy development. So the Council has considered the issue of including an area of search within the wider policy.

3.4 While the proposed change may support wind energy development in the north east of the Borough, the Council considers this is misleading and does not accurately reflect the identified potential resource in SD018 that exists for all types of wind energy in Darlington, which CS3 is intending to promote.

3.5 Planning permission has been approved for wind energy development in the north west of the Borough subject to s106 agreement (07/00253/FUL) which clearly shows that there is potential outside the North East for some form of wind energy. Furthermore the respondent stated in response to CD022 that 'there is no justification for leaving out areas between the north east area and the western

area which suggests that there is potential for wind energy outside the north east location'. To identify a broad area of least constraint only for the north east could discourage other opportunities which are feasible and viable elsewhere, contrary to national and regional planning policy.

- 3.6 Given the above the Council are unable to support the representor's suggested proposed change to include an area of search in the north east of the Borough in policy CS3.

4. Electricity Generation Target

- 4.1 The Council acknowledges the contribution that renewable energy can make to the Borough's electricity needs in the long term. However CS3 is a strategic renewable energy policy and must also consider how renewable energy can help reduce carbon emissions from heat as well as electricity. With no equivalent target for heat available in the Council's evidence base it would be unjustified to include a target in CS3 for electricity needs only.

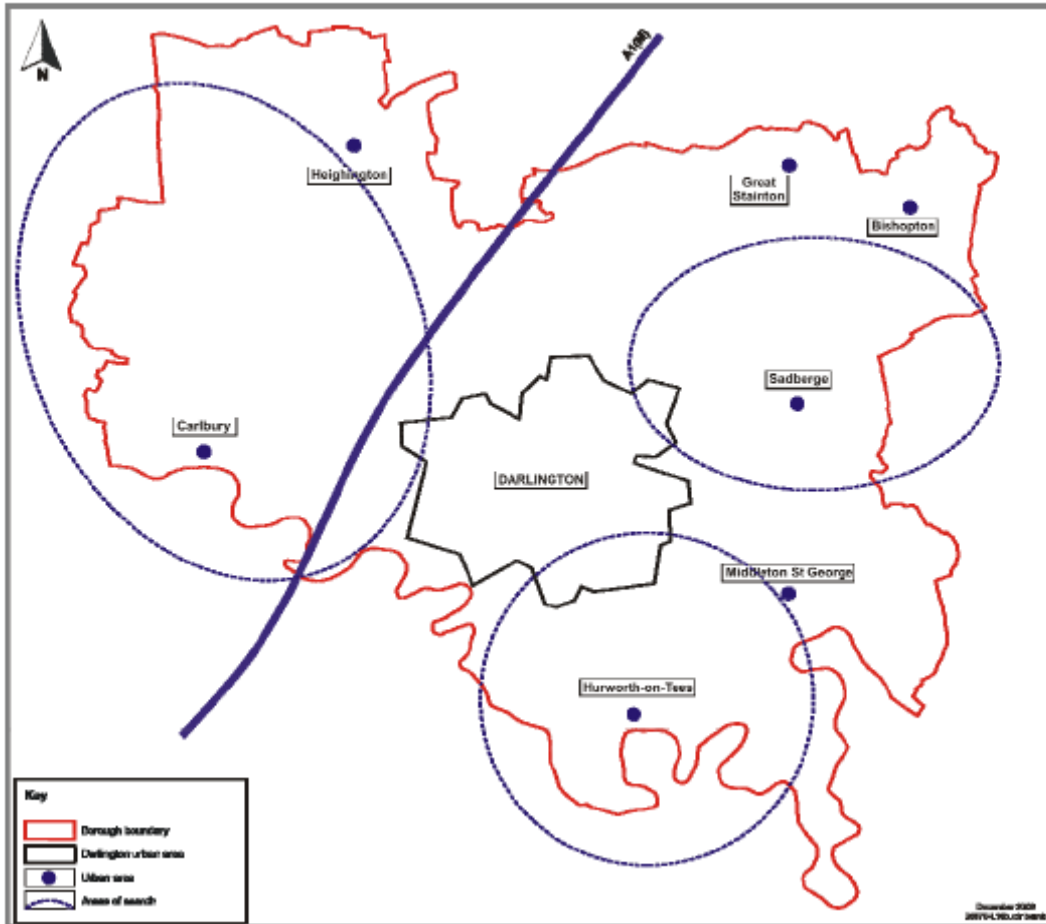
- 4.2 However in point 4 of their representation, the representor states that they would like to 'introduce a target to meet 30% of electricity needs from renewable resources by 2020' in line with national policy.

- 4.3 In light of the above the Council propose a change to paragraph 3.3.1 to read 'achieving 15% of the UK's energy from renewable sources by 2020 and *to help contribute to meeting 30% of the UK's electricity needs from renewables resources by 2020.*' The Council consider that this addresses the representors concerns and highlights the importance of the national target.

End

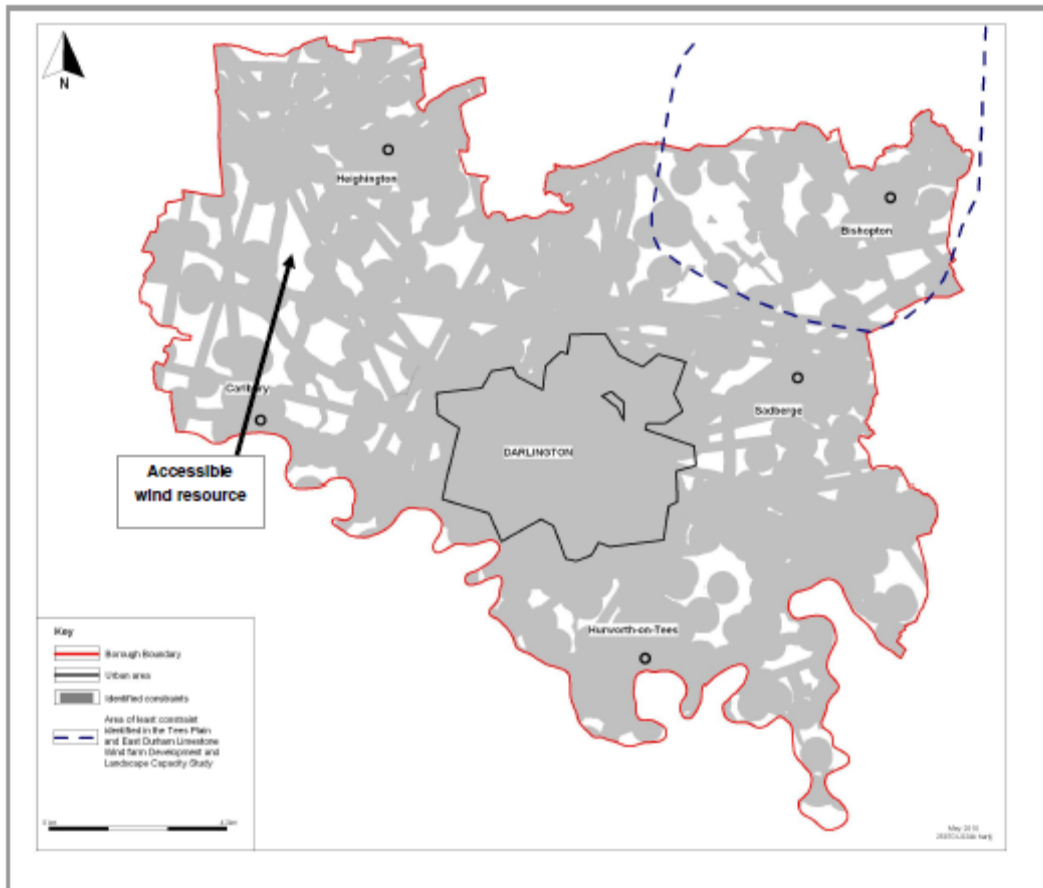
APPENDIX 1: SD080, p30

Figure 3.4 Overview of Renewable Resource Areas for Wind



APPENDIX 2: SD018, p20

Figure 3.4 Accessible Wind Resource Based on Technical and Environmental Constraints



Notes:

- Identified constraints include those identified in Box 2 and set out in Figures E1 and E2 presented in Appendix E.
- Findings relate to Darlington Borough only, not neighbouring authority areas.
- See main text for details on how the accessible wind resource should be interpreted (section 3.3.2).