

Oxford Road, Horspath – wind energy newsletter

November 2010

Site-redesign

Following discussions with Oxford City Council, we have agreed on a site re-design, which was officially signed off by the Council earlier this month. It does not significantly affect the project or have any adverse effects on our environmental and technical studies to date.

The Council were asked by BMW to move the site option area originally designated for Partnerships for Renewables' potential wind energy development. This is because BMW want the option to expand their plant in the future and if the turbine were to be erected in the location agreed initially (next to the existing plant) BMW say this could hinder any expansion opportunities.

BMW is already a major employer within the area and the Council felt that it was important to ensure the company had the option to expand (taking into consideration the potential employment opportunities associated with expansion). It was felt this was of key importance in the current climate, where job creation is of particular economic significance.

This means that the area we are considering for the turbine location has moved, but it is still within the same boundary. The new site area is shaded in blue below:

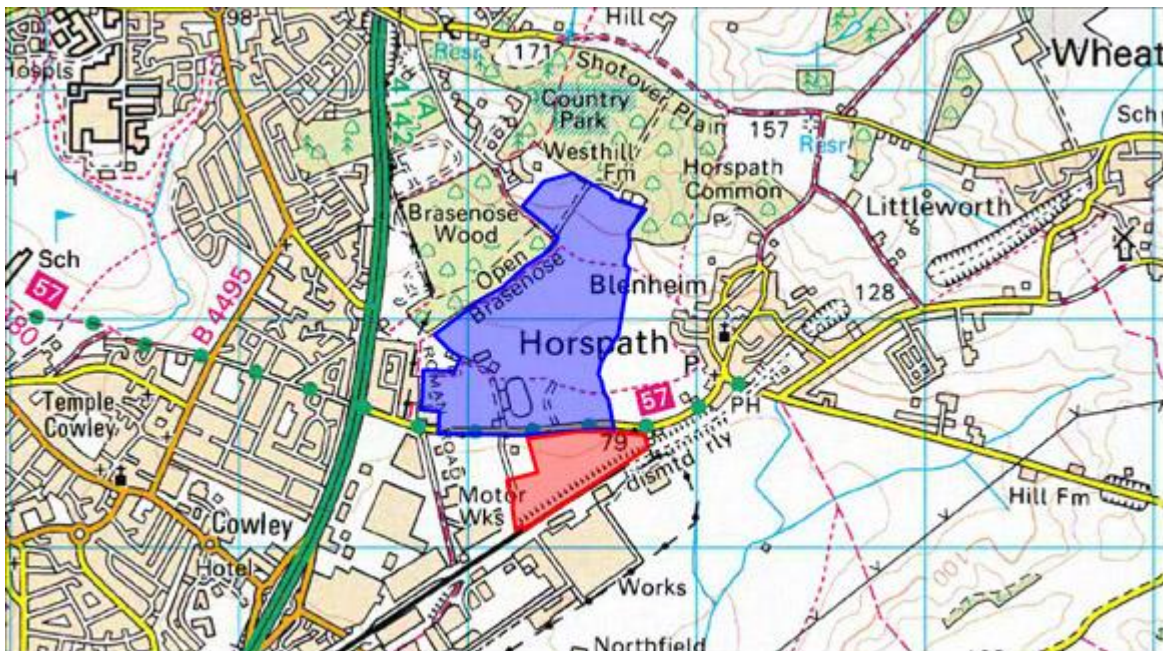


Wind data

We are currently preparing a planning application for a temporary monitoring mast (a tall, thin 70 metre high structure) to be erected at the Oxford Road site, to gather wind data. We have been asked to submit some landscape and visual images with the application and we are producing those this month. We hope to have this submitted to Oxford City Council by the end of November. It usually takes around 8 weeks to determine, so if all goes well we hope the monitoring mast will be in-situ by February 2011.

In the meantime, we have been monitoring wind levels using equipment attached to the floodlights at Horspath athletics track. While not being as accurate as the monitoring mast, this is giving us data to inform our investigations into whether the wind speeds are high enough to make the project viable.

The area highlighted in red is the site we are investigating:



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Aviation and radar

Those of you following project progress will know that we have had to suspend our work on the other piece of Oxford City Council land we were investigating for wind energy potential at Cutteslowe Park. This is due to radar issues and objections from the MoD. Cutteslowe Park was in the direct line of sight from RAF Brize Norton and we felt it was unlikely we'd be able to resolve the objection.

The Oxford Road site also has a radar objection, but having consulted our aviation specialists, we are advised our chances of finding a resolution to the issues with this site are much higher. They have also advised that our chances of coming to a resolution for one site are much higher than if we are proposing two separate turbine sites. For these reasons we are only proceeding with the Oxford Road site.

Ornithology and ecology



We began ornithology studies at the Oxford Road site in Spring 2009 and we have continued with these through 2010. This has involved liaising with statutory consultee Natural England to ensure our studies are suitably robust. We are all comfortable that the species of birds living and migrating in the area can exist alongside a wind turbine.

Independent consultants have been undertaking bat studies around the site since July and we

have just received the final report. The bat surveys found two bat species - both pipistrelles - which largely forage around the site edges. With this in mind we will ensure we comply with the report recommendations that the turbine be located at least 50m from the boundary hedges. This would also comply with Natural England guidance.

Noise

Some of you that came along to our latest community surgery are particularly concerned about noise. We want to reassure you that well-designed and well sited modern wind turbines are quiet enough to cause no disturbance to people living only a few hundred metres away from them.

There are very strict guidelines in place to ensure that any noise from wind turbines doesn't have an adverse affect on nearby residents. These guidelines, The Assessment and Rating of Noise from Wind Farms, were developed in 1996 by ETSU for the DTI. In 2007 the Department for Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (DBERR) confirmed that Local Planning Authorities should continue using the ETSU guidelines and not consent proposals which breach the stated noise limits. The Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) website provides a detailed overview on onshore wind turbines and noise www.decc.gov.uk

A noise study is included as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment submitted as part of the planning application. This study identifies the nearest and most sensitive dwellings and uses accurate technical data to measure background noise and predict any potential impact on this.

Planning conditions

Planning conditions can be set as part of any planning approval and these are in place to protect communities if the realities of the development do not meet those predicted in the application. We are confident that noise will not be an issue, but as reassurance a noise condition would mean this that if levels exceeded those predicted we would have to address these and arrange mitigation where appropriate. This may include 'feathering the blades' at certain times to slow the blades and reduce sound.

Wind farm visit

We ran two wind farm visits for interested Oxford residents in September. Thanks to all those who came along. The feedback we got was that all found it very interesting and informative seeing and hearing operating wind turbines close up. There was also the opportunity to learn more about the technical side of how wind energy works and how much electricity is produced. Everyone agreed that the wind farm visit was a useful form of community engagement.

Our aim in organising the wind farm visits was to allow participants to make up their own mind about the noise and visual impact associated with wind turbines. There is so much information available about wind farms – both positive and negative, with such a wide range of stances, that we feel the best way for people to draw their own conclusions is to take them there and let them make up their own minds.



Contact us

If you have any queries or would like to comment on the Oxford Road site you can contact the team by phoning 0800 731 7395 or emailing PfR@communityrelations.co.uk. There is more information on the project at www.pfr.co.uk/horspath