

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 21**

**Application Number: F/YR12/0595/F**

**Minor**

**Parish/Ward: March/March West**

**Date Received: 14 August 2012**

**Expiry Date: 28 September 2012**

**Applicant: Mr. M. Mottram**

**Agent: Mosscliff Environmental Ltd. Miss Goodfield**

**Proposal: Erection of a 36.4m high (hub height) 50 kw wind turbine and control unit**

**Location: Land South of Willow Farm 405, Whittlesey Road, March**

**Site Area/Density: 293 sq metres**

**Reason before Committee: This proposal is before the Planning Committee as the recommendation is contrary to the views of March Town Council and in the wider interest.**

**1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY/RECOMMENDATION**

The proposed wind turbine has an overall height of 46 metres and is similar in design to a turbine which has been erected at Staffurths Bridge Farm to the south of the proposal. In planning policy terms the proposal is considered to accord with national regional and local planning policy in contributing to the need for renewable energy without adversely affecting, noise, access, visual impact, cumulative effect or noise in relation to the site. The RSPB is concerned that the application is not supported by any ecological impact assessment that seeks to identify the level of collision risk the proposal may pose to vulnerable and sensitive ornithological species. In addition, no auto-tracking information has been submitted to indicate whether or not temporary works are necessary to the public highway in order to gain a satisfactory access to the site. For these latter reasons the application is recommended for refusal.

**2. HISTORY**

Of relevance to this proposal is:-

<b>2.1 F/YR11/0794/F</b>	Erection of 1 x 36.4 metre high (hub height) wind turbine – Staffurths Bridge Farm	Granted 19 December 2011
<b>F/YR/09/0272/F</b>	Erection of 9 x 67 metre high (hub height) wind turbines and met mast - Land north of Floods Ferry Farm	Refused on 04/01/2010
<b>F/YR/09/0392/F</b>	Erection of 3 no wind turbines (max height 100 m to blade tip) Land North Of Burnthouse Farm	Allowed on appeal
<b>F/YR09/0562/F</b>	Erection of 5 wind turbines (110m to blade tip) Boardinghouse Farm, Knights End Road, March	Allowed on appeal 06 July 2011

<b>F/YR07/0585/SCO</b>	Wind Farm Screening Opinion	Further details required
<b>F/YR/06/0594/F</b>	Erection of 2 no wind turbines (max height 100 m to blade tip) Ransonmoor Farm	Granted – 23 February 2007
<b>F/YR/03/0990</b>	Erection of 3 no wind turbines (max height 100 m to blade tip) Ransonmoor Farm	Granted – 25 April 2005
<b>F/YR12/0207/F</b>	Erection of 1 no Turbine - Land North of Floods Ferry Farm, March	Refused – August 2012

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### 3. **PLANNING POLICIES**

#### 3.1 **National Planning Policy Framework:**

Paragraph 2: Planning law requires that application for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan.

Paragraph 14: Presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Paragraph 93: Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change.

Paragraph 109: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment.

Paragraph 98: Need for renewable energy and acceptable impacts.

#### 3.2 **Draft Fenland Core Strategy July 2012:**

CS12: Responding to climate change and managing the risk of flooding in Fenland.

CS14: Delivering and Protecting High Quality Environments across the District.

#### 3.3 **Fenland District Wide Local Plan:**

EMP1: Proposals will normally be favoured for new, or the extension or expansion of existing firms ... outside DABs the expansion of existing firms will only be permitted where certain criteria are satisfied.

E1: To resist development likely to detract from the Fenland landscape. New development should meet certain criteria.

E8: Proposals for new development should: allow for protection of site features, be of a design compatible with their surroundings, have regard to amenities of adjoining properties and provide adequate access.

E20: To resist any development which by its nature gives rise to unacceptable levels of noise, nuisance and other environmental pollution.

E3: To retain existing trees and hedgerows. To impose, where appropriate, conditions on planning applications requiring landscaping and tree planting schemes. To request the submission of a landscaping scheme with planning applications on visually important sites.

#### 3.4 **East of England Plan:**

SS1: seeks to bring about sustainable development

ENG2: The development of new facilities for renewable power generation should be supported with the aim that by 2010 10% of the region's energy, and by 2020 - 17%, should come from renewable sources (excluding energy from offshore wind)

ENV2: Planning Authorities should protect and enhance the diversity and local distinctiveness of countryside character by developing area-wide strategies and landscape character assessments to ensure development respects/enhances local landscape character.

The ENV3: Ensure that new development minimises damage to biodiversity.

Policy ENV4: Ensures that the landscape, historic and wildlife value of farmland is increased whilst responding to issues such as climate change.

ENG1: Carbon dioxide emissions and energy performance.

SS1: Achieving sustainable development.

### 3.5 The Fenland Wind Turbine Development Policy Guidance June 2009 (WTDPG)

Details contained under assessment section.

## 4. CONSULTATIONS

- |     |  |   |
|-----|--|---|
| 4.1 | <b><i>March Town Council:</i></b>            | Recommend refusal – inappropriate development for this area   |
| 4.2 | <b><i>CCC Crime Prevention</i></b>           | No objections   |
| 4.3 | <b><i>Local Highway Authority (CCC):</i></b> | Auto – track details for the turbine delivery vehicle are required for the following locations along the delivery route.<br>- A141 Peas Hill roundabout for the right hand turn into Whittlesey Road.<br>- Whittlesey Road for the sharp bends located at the entrance to School Farm and Trumans Farm.<br>- Whittlesey Road for the access in to Willow Farm itself.<br>Should the auto-tracking information indicate that temporary works are necessary to the highway in these locations in order to facilitate the safe passage of the delivery vehicle then any such works shall be agreed on site with the Area Maintenance Engineer. These temporary works will then be undertaken by the applicant under an appropriate highways agreement. |
| 4.4 | <b><i>Natural England</i></b>                | No objections made but advice offered   |
| 4.5 | <b><i>Middle Level Commissioners</i></b>     | Will be commenting but no update received   |

- |      |  |   |
|------|--|---|
| 4.6  | <b>CAA</b>                                       | No objections made but advice offered   |
| 4.7  | <b><i>Environment Agency</i></b>                 | No objections made but advice offered   |
| 4.8  | <b><i>RSPB</i></b>                               | The RSPB is aware that Bewick's and whooper swans, as well as other sensitive species (lapwing and golden plover and raptors including the Annex 1 species marsh harrier) have been recorded using the area in the vicinity of the proposal site in the winter months in recent years. We are therefore concerned that the planning application is not supported by any ecological impact assessment that seeks to identify the level of collision risk the proposal may pose to these species. We recommend that such an assessment is conducted and is informed by ornithological surveys carried out on behalf of the applicant by suitably qualified independent professionals, to be conducted over a minimum of one winter following the relevant guidance, with the assessment seeking to confirm whether the proposal will contribute to cumulative collision risk to species that are designated features of the Nene and Ouse Washes SPAs, as well as other sensitive species (e.g. marsh harrier), and if so, to quantify this risk, and to identify appropriate mitigation as relevant. |
| 4.9  | <b><i>Chatteris Airfield</i></b>                 | No Objections   |
| 4.10 | <b><i>NERL Safeguarding Office</i></b>           | No conflict with safeguarding criteria  |
| 4.11 | <b><i>Anglian Water</i></b>                      | No concerns from a ground water perspective   |
| 4.12 | <b><i>Local residents/interested parties</i></b> | None received at time of report writing   |

## 5. **SITE DESCRIPTION**

- 5.1 The site is situated on agricultural land approximately 250 metres to the south of Willow Farm. The nearest adjacent properties are at a distance to the east (School Farm and Trumans Farm) and the west (Australia Farm). The locality is open and flat in character. A recent approved turbine of a similar design to the proposal has been erected at Staffurths Bridge Farm to the south of the proposed turbine.

## 6. PLANNING ASSESSMENT

### 6.1 Nature of Application

The application seeks full planning permission for the erection of a 3 bladed wind turbine assembly with an overall height of 46 metres to the top blade tip. The turbine will be used to generate electricity to reduce the farms reliance on fossil fuels, energy bills and carbon emission. Access will be via the existing farm access roadway which serves Willow Farm.

The following key issues have been considered;

- Site history
- Principle and policy implications
- Visual Impact
- Landscape Impact/Cumulative Visual Impact
- Biodiversity
- Design
- Access

#### ***Site History***

As noted above Planning Permission has been previously granted for turbine of similar design to the proposal at Staffurths Bridge Farm to the south of the proposed turbine and more recently planning permission was refused for a similar turbine at Floods Ferry Farm.

#### ***Principle and Policy Implications***

The proposal has been considered in line with National Guidance, in the form of the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Development Plan Policy in the form of the Fenland District-Wide Local Plan, 1993, the East of England Plan and also the new Fenland Communities Development Plan Draft Core Strategy; these are listed in the relevant section of this report.

The Government has set a target of generating 20% of the UK's electricity by 2020 and also aims for the UK to be on a path to cut its carbon dioxide emissions by 60% by 2050, as well as maintaining reliable and competitive energy supplies. The development of renewable energy is considered to form a key part of meeting this target which has led to the view that renewable energy schemes should be supported where they do not result in other adverse impact upon the area that outweigh the renewable energy benefits. This application is for the erection of a wind turbine and associated infrastructure. Wind turbines are a sustainable and efficient source of renewable energy and therefore comply, in principle, with the provisions of the NPPF and emerging Core Strategy.

#### The Fenland Wind Turbine Development Policy Guidance June 2009 (WTDPG)

This document provides local guidance in relation to wind turbine development. It is recognised that there is a need to ensure that future development is in balance with the local landscape and the population that lives within it. As a result the Wind Turbine Development Policy Guidance (WTDPG) was produced by landscape consultants for FDC in April 2008. The WTDPG has been

adopted as supplementary planning guidance by the Council. The WTDPG sets down a number of landscape character types and then sets out criteria for evaluating the sensitivity of each type.

Section 6 sets out the criteria for assessing planning applications based on:

- *Landscape character*
- *Landscape capacity*
- *Visual impacts*
- *Cumulative landscape impacts*
- *Cumulative visual impacts*
- *Biodiversity considerations*
- *Heritage considerations*
- *Recreation and transport routes*
- *Mitigation*
- *Guidance on Form and Siting*

Where wind turbine development is considered appropriate in the light of the above criteria, consideration should be given to the guidance in terms of how the form and siting of turbine(s) should relate to the characteristics of the landscape type in which it is to be situated. Under the above guidance the proposed site is situated within the following designations:

- 1 *“The Fens” landscape character area which has a medium - high landscape capacity for groups of 17+,*
- 2 *A high landscape capacity for single turbines*
- 3 *A high landscape capacity for small turbine groups (2-5),*
- 4 *A high landscape capacity for small/medium turbine groups (6-10),*
- 5 *A medium-high landscape capacity for medium turbine groups (12-16),*
- 6 *A medium-high landscape capacity for large turbine groups (17+),*
- 7 *Within the 5km conspicuous zones for existing turbines,*
- 8 *Within the 2km ‘prominent’ zone for existing and proposed turbines.*

In terms of landscape capacity within the Drained Fenland character type the WTDPG advises that the “cumulative impact of wind turbine development needs to be carefully considered”.

In terms of visual impact the WTDPG advises that:

- *Proposals within 400m of a settlement are highly unlikely to be considered acceptable in visual amenity terms.*
- *There should be no shadow flicker for any residential properties or on A or B roads.*
- *Proposals within 2km of a settlement should be carefully considered as turbines are likely to be highly prominent features*
- *Turbines should be set back a minimum distance of 200m from public footpath). The WTDPG advises that for National Trails this should be 3 times the distance of the overall height of the turbine.*
- *Residential properties and users of recreational routes/facilities are likely to be considered more sensitive as receptors.*

*In terms of cumulative landscape impact the WTDPG advises that there is a danger that excessive development of wind turbines in any landscape would at some point result in such material change as to unbalance and overpower the existing key characteristics of the landscape. To prevent this it advises that within the Drained Fenland character type not more than 25% of the area should be within 2km of a turbine development (prominent zone) and not more than 75% within 5km (conspicuous zone).*

- Proposals for new wind turbine development, detached from existing turbine sites by more than 500m but within 4km of existing turbine developments are unlikely to be acceptable in visual terms. In some circumstances a distance greater than 500m is required.*
- Proposals for new development within 10km of existing turbine developments need to be carefully considered.*
- Settlements of more than 10 dwellings should not have wind turbines in more than 90° of their field of view from public or residential viewpoints within or around the settlements from a distance of 10km from the settlement.*
- No more than 25% of the length of A and B roads and railways should be within 2km of wind turbines (prominent zone) and no more than 75% of its length being within 5km of turbines (conspicuous zone)*
- Turbines within 4km of each other are likely to demonstrate a significant cumulative impact from a number of locations and are less likely to be considered acceptable in visual/landscape terms, unless they form a relatively modest extension to an existing turbine development.*

### **Visual Impact**

The proposed turbine is less than half the size of the existing and proposed turbines at Ransonmoor and Burnthouse Farms. The nearest residential property is situated at a distance of approximately 250m from the application site. The turbine would be visible in the immediate locality but is less dominant in that setting than the larger turbines at Ransonmoor and Burnthouse Farms. Taking into account the impact of the turbine in both short and long distance views, it is considered to be, on balance, acceptable.

### **Landscape Impact/Cumulative Visual Impact**

The site is not located within any national or locally designated landscape areas. However, it is important to consider the impact of the turbine on the overall appearance of the Fenland landscape in terms of cumulative visual impact and the proximity of existing and proposed turbines. In this case the turbine is of a smaller scale than the larger wind farms to the south and it is considered, on balance, that adverse cumulative visual impact will not occur.

### **Biodiversity**

RSPB is aware that Bewick's and whooper swans, as well as other sensitive species (lapwing and golden plover and raptors including the Annex 1 species marsh harrier) have been recorded using the area in the vicinity of the proposal site in the winter months in recent years. They are concerned that the planning application is not supported by any ecological impact assessment and wish to assess the level of collision risk the proposal may pose to these species. In the

absence of an assessment to confirm whether or not the proposal will contribute to cumulative collision risk to species that are designated features of the Nene and Ouse Washes SPAs, as well as other sensitive species (e.g. marsh harrier), planning consent should not be granted.

### ***Design***

Shadow flicker created by the turning of the turbine blades at certain times of day should also be considered. In terms of this proposal the impact is considered to be minimal as the nearest property is over 250m from the turbine. It is unlikely that there will be noise impact from the turbine.

### **Access**

Access into the site will be via the existing farm track at Willow Farm. However, no auto-track details for the turbine delivery vehicle have been submitted for the following locations along the delivery route.

- A141 Peas Hill roundabout for the right hand turn into Whittlesey Road.
- Whittlesey Road for the sharp bends located at the entrance to School Farm and Trumans Farm.
- Whittlesey Road for the access in to Willow Farm itself.

In the absence of auto-tracking information indicating whether or not temporary works are necessary to the highway in these locations in order to facilitate the safe passage of the delivery vehicle, planning consent should not be granted.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

- 7.1 The proposed wind turbine has an overall height of 46 metres and is similar in design to a turbine which has been erected at Staffurths Bridge Farm to the south of the proposal. In planning policy terms the proposal is considered to accord with national regional and local planning policy in contributing to the need for renewable energy without adversely affecting, visual impact, cumulative effect or noise in relation to the site. The RSPB is concerned that the application is not supported by any ecological impact assessment that seeks to identify the level of collision risk the proposal may pose to vulnerable and sensitive ornithological species. In addition, no auto-tracking information has been submitted to indicate whether or not temporary works are necessary to the public highway in order to gain a satisfactory access to the site. For these latter reasons the application is recommended for refusal.

## **8 RECOMMENDATION**

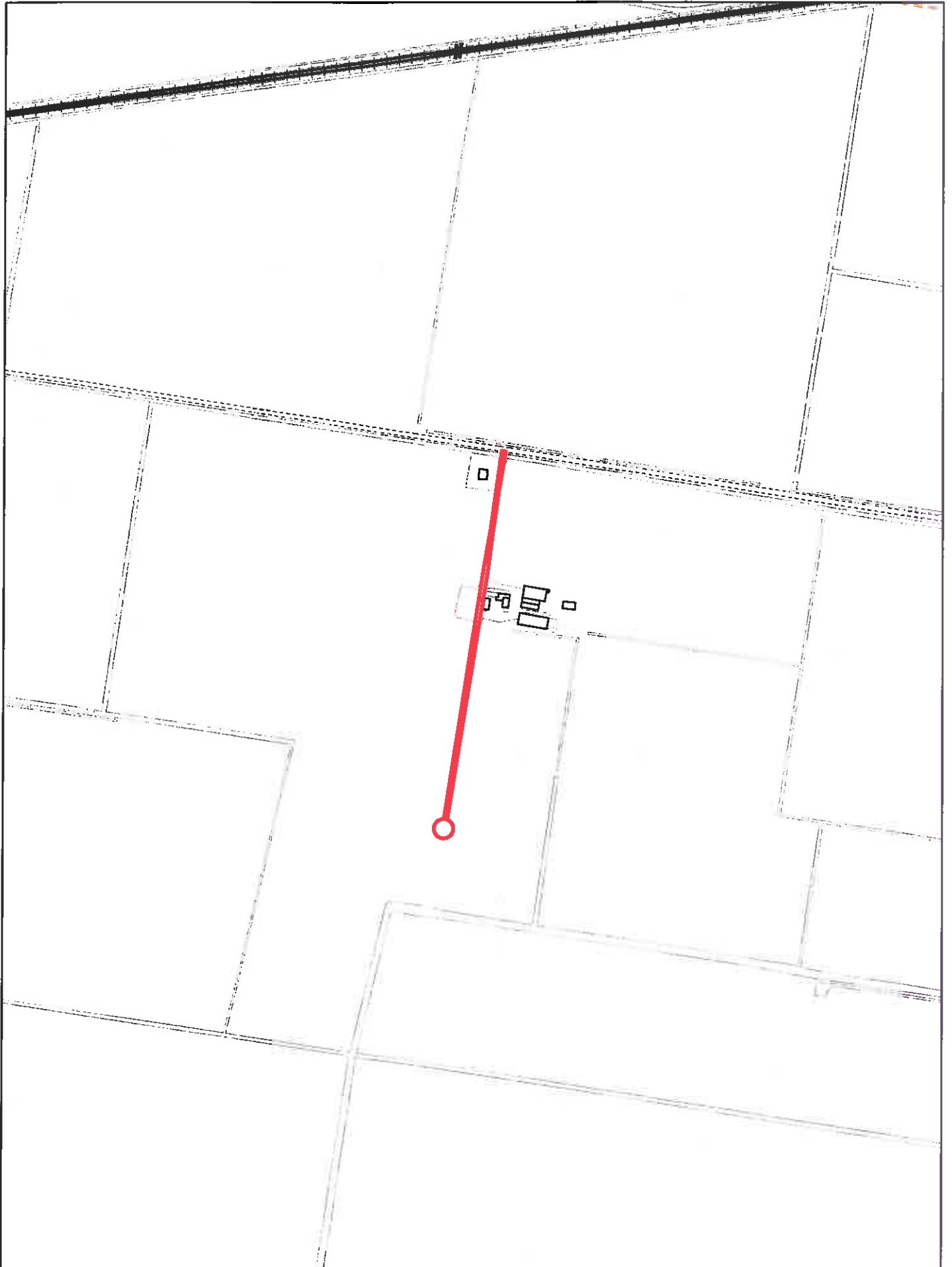
**Refuse Planning Permission the following reasons:-**

**1 The proposal is contrary to Section 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework in that it is not supported by an ecological impact assessment that should identify the level of collision risk the proposal may pose to vulnerable and sensitive ornithological species.**

**2 No auto-tracking information has been submitted to indicate whether or not temporary works are necessary to the public highway in order to gain a satisfactory access to the site – accordingly the scheme is**



**considered contrary to Policy E8 of the Fenland District Wide Local Plan.**



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F/YR12/0595/F

Scale = 1:5,000



# Location Plan - Willow Farm

Scale: 1:2,500

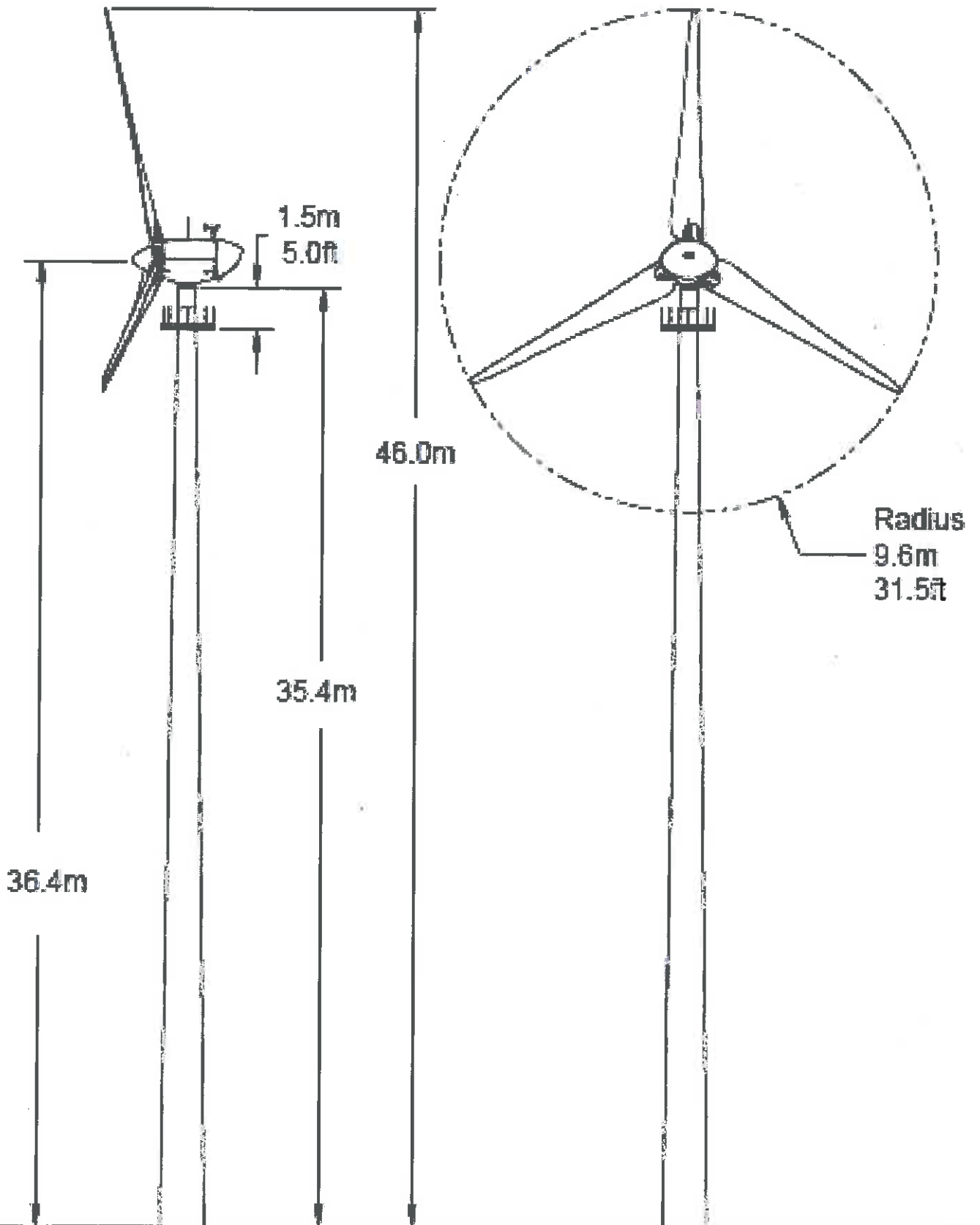
Proposed Turbine Location: 536552/296454



70 35 0 70 Meters



# Endurance E-3120 36m Scaled Elevation Drawing



Scale 1:200 at A4