

Application Number: F/YR12/0594/F

Minor

Parish/Ward: March

Date Received: 2 August 2012

Expiry Date: 27 September 2012

Applicant: Mr M Mottram

Agent: Miss R Goodfield, Mosscliff Environmental Ltd

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

Location: Land North West of Potash Farm, Whittlesey Road, March

Site Area/Density: 290 sq metres

Reason before Committee: This proposal is before the Planning Committee as it is in the wider interest.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY/RECOMMENDATION

The proposed wind turbine has an overall height of 46 metres. The proposal is considered to accord with national regional and local planning policy in contributing to the need for renewable energy. However, the application is not supported by adequate biodiversity information to enable a full consideration of the application and 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. In the absence of such detail the application is recommended for refusal. Furthermore the proposal is considered unacceptable in visual terms given its prominence and isolated position.

2. HISTORY

Of relevance to this proposal is:-

- | | | | | | |
|-----|---------------|---|------------------|----|------|
| 2.1 | F/YR12/0418/F | Erection of an extension to rear and addition of cladding to enclose open storage area of existing agricultural building – Potash Farm. | Granted | 17 | July |
| 2.2 | F/YR12/0341/O | Erection of an agricultural dwelling and office store – Land SE of Potash Farm. | Decision pending | | |

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.

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 | <i>Town Council:</i> | Recommend refusal. Inappropriate development for this area. |
| 4.2 | <i>Natural England</i> | The application is not likely to result in significant impacts on statutory designated sites, landscapes or species. Provide their standing advice for bats. |

| | | |
|------|--|---|
| 4.3 | <i>Chatteris Airfield</i> | No objection due to the distance of this site from the airfield. |
| 4.4 | <i>NATS</i> | The proposed development does not conflict with the safeguarding criteria and therefore no safeguarding objection. |
| 4.5 | <i>Countryside Access Team</i> | There are no Public Rights of Way within the fall over height and no bridleways within 200m. Therefore no objections. |
| 4.6 | <i>CCC Police Architectural Liaison Officer</i> | The height of the turbines should have no detrimental impact on the operation of the emergency services air operations unit. The only risk is of cable theft therefore all cables should be buried a minimum of 1.8 metres below ground. No objections to the granting of permission. |
| 4.7 | <i>CCC Archaeology</i> | No archaeological requirements and no objections. |
| 4.8 | <i>Civil Aviation Authority</i> | CAA requirement for all structures of 91.4m or more to be charted on aeronautical charts. |
| 4.9 | <i>Environment Agency</i> | No objections but provide advisory comments for the applicant. |
| 4.10 | <i>Anglian Water</i> | No concerns from a groundwater perspective. |
| 4.11 | <i>Network Rail</i> | No observations to make. |
| 4.12 | <i>CCC Highways</i> | Further information needs to be submitted in relation to the vehicles that will be delivering the turbines and the route and auto-tracking details. |
| 4.13 | <i>MOD</i> | No objections. |
| 4.14 | <i>RSPB</i> | Concerned that the application is not supported by an ecological impact assessment that seeks to identify the level of collision risk the proposal may pose to sensitive species. |
| 4.15 | <i>FDC Environmental Protection</i> | Recommend that conditions relating to day time and night time noise, remedial action and monitoring be attached to any permission given. |

- 4.16 **Joint Radio Company Ltd** JRC do not foresee any potential problems based on known interference scenarios.
- 4.17 **Local residents/interested parties** 7 letters of objection received relating to:
- Incorrect biodiversity findings. Barn owls and bats are present around the site.
 - Adverse impacts on other species.
 - Lack of proof that wind turbines produce sufficient power to justify their cost.
 - Concern over other larger developments in the area than they were allowed for their property.
 - Overdevelopment.
 - Proposal does not comply with the BWEA Best Practice Guide in terms of proximity to dwellings.
 - Concern over Wind Turbine Syndrome.
 - Concerns over noise impacts and unacceptable levels of noise.
 - Concerns over vibrations.
 - Concerns over environmental hazards, such as light flicker, turbines catching fire, ice throw or loss of blades.
 - Proximity to overhead cables.
 - Adverse visual impacts.
 - Impacts on property value.
 - There are no mains sewers in the area therefore the surface water run-off cannot be discharged in this way.
 - Concerns over highway safety on an already hazardous stretch of road.
 - Detriment to local rural tourism.

5. **SITE DESCRIPTION**

- 5.1 The site is situated on an area of agricultural land to the west of the main settlement of March and to the South of Westry. Some isolated dwellings sit to the North, South, East and West of the site. A railway line runs approximately 38 metres to the North of the proposed location. The site is relatively flat and open and adjoining sites consist predominantly of agricultural land.

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 a hub height of 36.4 metres and an overall height of 46 metres to blade tip. The turbine will be used to generate electricity to reduce the farms reliance on fossil fuels, energy bills and carbon emission. The application includes a control box to be sited adjacent to the turbine.

The following key issues have been considered;

- Principle and policy implications

- Visual Impact/Landscape Impact
- Biodiversity
- Design
- Access.

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, schemes should then be considered 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 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/ Landscape Impact

The site is not located within any national or locally designated landscape areas. The nearest residential property is situated at a distance of approximately 280 metres from the application site. The turbine would be highly visible in the immediate locality and is in an isolated position and within 2km of a settlement where turbine proposals should be carefully considered as they are likely to be highly prominent features. It is, therefore, important to consider the impact of the turbine on the overall appearance of the Fenland landscape in terms of visual impact and landscape impact. In this instance, given the proposed siting of the turbine and the general open characteristic of the surrounding area, it is considered that the proposal would have a dominant visual impact on the surrounding area. The turbine would be highly visible in the immediate locality and is in an isolated position and within 2km of a settlement and as such, in this instance, it is considered that the proposal would be unacceptable in visual terms.

Biodiversity

The biodiversity checklist indicates that no surveys have been undertaken for protected species yet in the Supporting Planning Statement it is stated that following a thorough desk top study including a site walk-over there were no evidence of protected species in the area. It is of concern that the planning application is not supported by a proper biodiversity assessment. In the absence of such an assessment planning consent should not be granted, in line with the response from the RSPB as summarised at the beginning of this report.

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 given the proximity of the nearest property. It is unlikely that there will be noise impact from the turbine.

Access

Access to the site would be via Whittlesey Road and the existing access to Potash Farm. The Supporting Planning Statement includes a chapter on Traffic and Transport indicating the vehicle types and routes for the proposal. The Local Highways Authority have assessed this information and their response is summarised earlier in this report. An auto-track template for the vehicles along the route needs to be provided in order to establish whether any temporary widening or removal of street furniture is required. In the absence of this information indicating whether or not temporary works are necessary to the highway in order to facilitate the safe passage of the delivery vehicle, planning consent should not be granted.

7. CONCLUSION

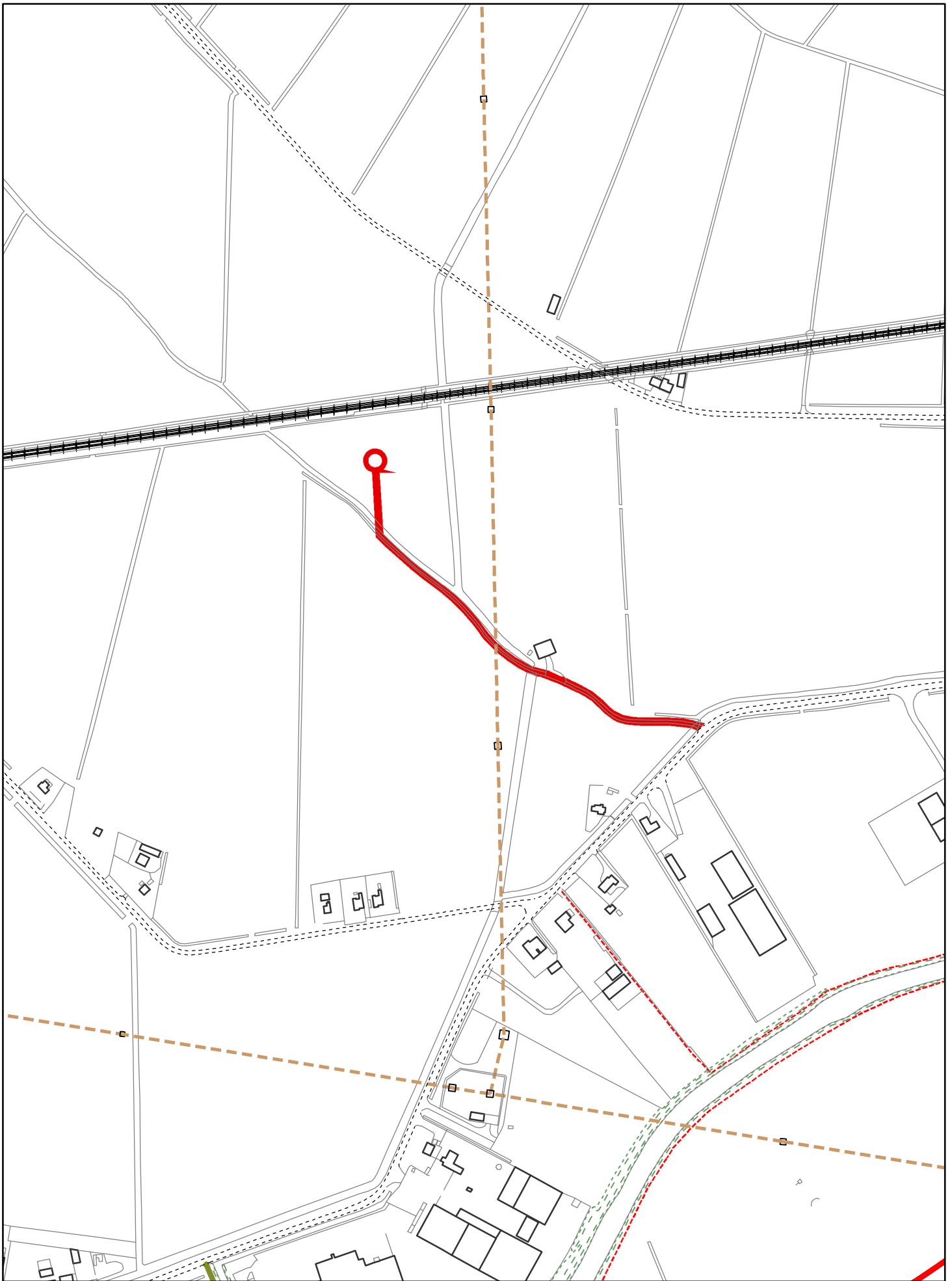
- 7.1 The proposed wind turbine has an overall height of 46 metres. The proposal is considered to accord with national regional and local planning policy in contributing to the need for renewable energy. However, the application is not supported by adequate biodiversity information to enable a full consideration of the application, 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 application is

recommended for refusal.

8 RECOMMENDATION

Refuse Planning Permission the following reasons:-

- 1. The application is not supported by an adequate biodiversity survey in order to assess whether or not there is evidence of protected species in the area and is, therefore, contrary to Section 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework**
- 2. No auto-tracking information has been submitted for a suitable route to indicate whether or not temporary works are necessary to the public highway in order to gain a satisfactory access to the site for construction proposes – accordingly the scheme is considered contrary to Policy E8 of the Fenland District Wide Local Plan.**
- 3. The proposal would result in an adverse visual impact on the surrounding area and nearby residential properties by virtue of the overall height and location of the turbine. As such the proposal is contrary to Policies CS14 of the Fenland Communities Development Plan, Core Strategy Further Consultation Draft July 2012, and E1 of the Fenland District-Wide Local Plan.**



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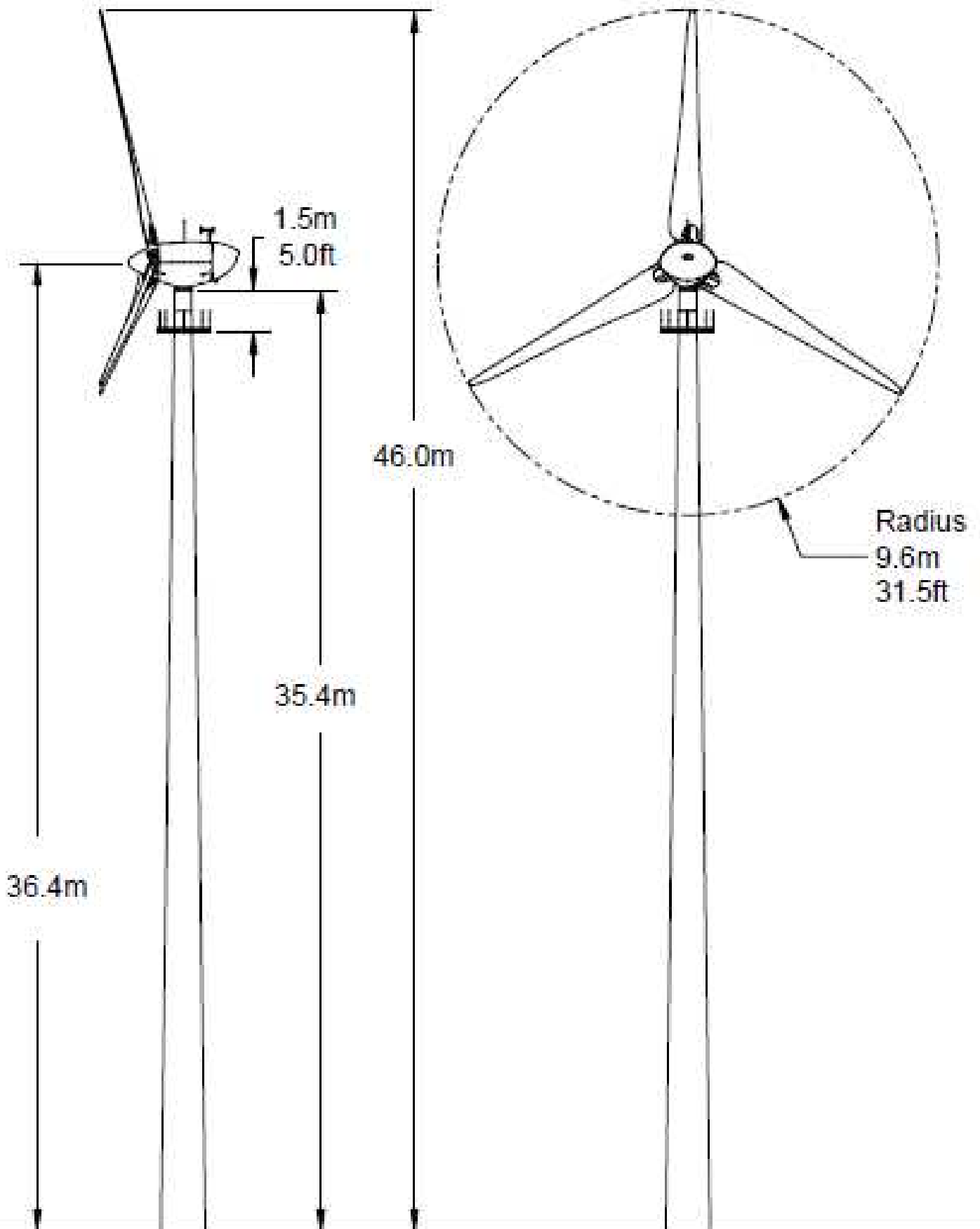
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Scale = 1:5,000



Endurance E-3120 36m Scaled Elevation Drawing



Scale 1:200 at A4