

Chapter 5: Planning Policy Context

5.1	Executive Summary	5-1
5.2	Legislative Framework	5-1
5.3	National Planning Policy.....	5-2
5.4	Regional and Local Planning Policy	5-5
5.5	Supplementary Planning Guidance and Other Policy Documents.....	5-11
5.6	Energy Policy, Guidance and Advice	5-17
5.7	Summary of Relevant Planning Policy, Guidance and Advice.....	5-21
5.8	References.....	5-21

THIS PAGE IS INTENTIONALLY BLANK

5 Planning Policy Context

5.1 Executive Summary

- 5.1.1 This Chapter identifies the relevant planning policy considerations for the Development, including reference to national, regional and local policies as well as other material considerations.
- 5.1.2 It is important to note that the Chapter does not include an assessment of the Development's compliance with planning policy. This is addressed in a separate Planning Statement accompanying the application for consent.

5.2 Legislative Framework

- 5.2.1 The existing Gordonbush Wind Farm is comprised of 35 turbines with an electrical output of 70MW. The Development is for an extension to the existing wind farm of an additional 16 turbines with an electrical output of up to 56MW. The cumulative electrical output would be approximately 126MW from a total of 51 turbines.
- 5.2.2 The Development requires consent under Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 as the capacity of the extended generating station exceeds the permitted capacity of 50MW. The application for Section 36 consent also seeks deemed planning permission for the additional turbines under section 57 (2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 as amended.
- 5.2.3 The design iteration process has been informed by current and emerging planning, economic and energy policy and legislative frameworks.
- 5.2.4 The Scottish Government influences the planning system through legislation, White Papers, the National Planning Framework, Scottish Planning Policy (SPP), Circulars, Planning Advice Notes (PANs), approval of strategic planning documents and through powers to call in planning applications.
- 5.2.5 The Development Plan system forms the basis on which decisions about development and future land use are made, and effectively incorporates national and strategic policies within a local framework. The Development Plan system has been modernised as a result of the Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006.
- 5.2.6 The Development Plan system for Scotland requires the four largest city regions to prepare Strategic Development Plans (SDPs) and local authorities to prepare Local Development Plans (LDPs). For those authorities outside the city regions the LDPs will set out the area's strategic priorities and must be replaced every five years. LDPs should be concise, map-based documents focusing on specific proposals for a time horizon of a minimum of 10 years (where they are also covered by a Strategic Development Plan) or 20 years (outwith Strategic Development Plan areas). To enable the LDP to remain concise, they will be accompanied by a suite of supplementary guidance which will provide detailed policy and advice.
- 5.2.7 This Chapter sets out planning policy and guidance of relevance to the Development.

5.3 National Planning Policy

National Planning Framework 3 (NPF3) (June 2014)

- 5.3.1 The National Planning Framework 3 (NPF3) was published by the Scottish Government on 23rd June 2014. This framework sets out a long term vision for the development of Scotland, with a focus on supporting sustainable economic growth and the transition to a low carbon economy. NPF3, which has replaced NPF2 (2009) is a statutory document that informs development and investment decisions of the Scottish Government and guides Scotland's spatial development over the next 20 to 30 years. The central vision is set out over four key aspects; a successful, sustainable place; a low carbon place; a natural, resilient place; and a connected place. Paragraph 1.3 explains that the spatial strategy of the framework supports this vision by identifying *'where there will be opportunities for growth and regeneration, investment in the low carbon economy, environmental enhancement and improved connections across the country.'*
- 5.3.2 In setting out strategic development priorities to support the Scottish Government's central purpose of promoting sustainable economic growth, the NPF3 seeks to encourage a greener Scotland. A key aim of the framework is that *'Natural and cultural assets are respected, they are improving in condition and represent a sustainable economic, environmental and social resource for the nation. Our environment and infrastructure have become more resilient to the impacts of climate change'* (Paragraph 1.2).
- 5.3.3 NPF3 is committed to achieving a low carbon place and seeks to achieve at least an 80% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. Additionally, NPF3 aims to reduce the total final energy demand by 12% by 2020. Within this, the target is for 30% of overall energy demand (heat, transport and electricity) to be from renewables by 2020, including generating the equivalent of at least 100% of gross electricity consumption from renewables, with an interim target of 50% by 2015.
- 5.3.4 Paragraph 3.23 of NPF3 states the Scottish Government's position that *'Onshore wind will continue to make a significant contribution to diversification of energy supplies'*, but notes the role of SPP in setting out the approach in preparing spatial frameworks which will guide wind farm development to appropriate locations. It also states the Scottish Government's position that wind farms should be avoided in National Parks and National Scenic Areas. In line with reduction of social and spatial inequalities in Scotland, NPF3 aims to achieve at least 500MW of renewable energy in community and local ownership by 2020 and work to secure greater benefits from commercial-scale developments.

Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) (June 2014)

- 5.3.5 The latest Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) was published in June 2014 and sits alongside other documents such as Creating Places (Scottish Government, 2013), Designing Streets (Scottish Government, 2010), Planning Circulars and the aforementioned NPF3 as national land use planning guidance in Scotland. The current SPP replaces both the previous SPP (2010) document and Designing Places (2001). It directs the form and content of Development Plans, and is a material consideration in the assessment of planning applications. SPP sets out the core values and vision of planning and highlights the same four planning outcomes as NPF3. The outcomes are consistent across the NPF3 and SPP and focus on creating a place which is sustainable, low carbon, natural, resilient and more connected. The SPP sets out the two principal policies; Sustainability and Placemaking and

then outlines various subject policies. The relevant subject policies contained in the consolidated SPP are listed in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Scottish Planning Policy

Subject	SPP Paragraph	Summary
Sustainability	Paragraph 24 - 35	<p>The SPP's central purpose is to focus government and public services on creating a more successful country through increasing sustainable economic growth. This can be achieved through the planning system by supporting economically, environmentally and socially sustainable places and responding to economic issues, challenges and opportunities.</p> <p>SPP states that policies and decisions should be guided by a number of key principles. These include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supporting delivery of energy infrastructure; • supporting climate change mitigation and adaptation including taking account of flood risk activity; • protecting, enhancing and promoting access to cultural heritage, including the historic environment; • protecting, enhancing and promoting access to natural heritage, including green infrastructure, landscape and the wider environment; and • avoiding over-development, protecting the amenity of new and existing development and considering the implications of development for water, air and soil quality.
Placemaking	Paragraph 36 -57	<p>Placemaking is a creative, collaborative process that includes design, development, renewal or regeneration of our urban or rural built environments. Planning should take every opportunity to create high quality places by taking a design-led approach through the joint consideration of the relationships between higher quality places. Placemaking is supported through, amongst others, optimising the use of existing resources, using land within or adjacent to settlements for a mix of uses, developing brownfield land and locating development where investment in growth or improvement would have most benefit.</p>
Promoting Rural Development	Paragraph 74 - 91	<p>Aims to promote a pattern of development that is appropriate to the character of the particular rural area and the challenges it faces. Encourages development in all rural areas that supports prosperous and sustainable communities whilst protecting and enhancing environmental quality. Supports an integrated approach to coastal planning.</p>
Valuing the Historic Environment	Paragraph 135 - 151	<p>Recognises that the historic environment is a key cultural and economic asset which planning has an important role to play in maintaining and enhancing the distinctive and high-quality, irreplaceable historic places. Planning authorities should safeguard designated and non-designated historic environments including individual assets such as scheduled monuments and archaeological resources; related settings and the wider cultural landscape. The Government's Scottish Historic Environment Policy (SHEP) and the Managing Change in the Historic Environment guidance note series, both published by Historic Scotland, should also be taken into account for development.</p>
Delivering Heat and Electricity	Paragraph 152 - 174	<p>Sets out the Scottish Ministers' commitment to increasing the amount of electricity generated from renewable sources. The targets for 2020 are: for 30% of overall energy demand from renewable sources; 11% of heat demand from renewable sources; and the equivalent of 100% of electricity demand from renewable</p>

Subject	SPP Paragraph	Summary
		sources by 2020. SPP paragraphs 161 – 166 which relate specifically to onshore wind developments are discussed in more detail in paragraph 5.3.10 of this chapter.
Valuing the Natural Environment	Paragraph 193 - 218	Indicates that planning authorities should conserve and enhance international, national and locally designated sites and protected species, taking account of the need to maintain healthy ecosystems and work with the natural processes which provide important services to communities. Plans should address potential effects of development on the natural environment and authorities should apply the precautionary principle where the effects of a proposed development on nationally or internationally significant landscape or natural heritage resources are uncertain but there is sound evidence indicating that significant irreversible damage could occur.
Flood Risk and Drainage	Paragraph 254 - 268	Sets out a precautionary approach to flood risk from all sources by safeguarding flood storage and conveying capacity. Planning authorities are required to take into account probability of flooding and associated risks when determining planning applications and preparing development plans, and developers should take flood risk into account prior to committing to development.
Promoting Sustainable Transport and Active Travel	Paragraph 269 - 291	Sets out the planning policy on sustainable transport to optimise the use of existing infrastructure and reduce the need to travel, by providing safe and convenient opportunities for walking, cycling and travel by public transport. Development plans and development management decisions should also take account of the implications of development proposals on traffic, patterns of travel and road safety.

- 5.3.6 The SPP places the need to tackle climate change as a key outcome, with Outcome 2 (a low carbon place) stating *‘By seizing opportunities to encourage mitigation and adaptation measures, planning can support the transformational change required to meet emission reduction targets and influence climate change’* (Paragraph 19).
- 5.3.7 The SPP contains thematic policy on renewable energy and sets out the Scottish Ministers' commitment to increasing the amount of electricity generated from renewable sources. It reiterates the Scottish Government's target for 2020 as 30% of overall energy demand and 11% of Scotland's heat demand to be generated by renewable resources, with hydro-electric and onshore wind power expected to remain the main sources of renewable energy supply. Paragraph 155 of the SPP states that development plans should seek to ensure that an area's full potential for renewable energy is achieved, giving due regard to relevant environmental, community and cumulative impact considerations. Paragraph 156 states that strategic development plans should support national priorities and address cross-boundary issues.
- 5.3.8 The SPP states that when granting planning permission, planning authorities should include conditions for decommissioning developments and site restoration, as well as ensuring that sufficient finance is set aside to enable restoration obligations to be met and that Section 75 agreements are considered (paragraph 169). Section 75 agreements relate to conditions for use and development of land under planning legislation.
- 5.3.9 In terms of onshore wind, paragraphs 161 to 166 note that planning authorities should generally set out in the Development Plan a spatial framework identifying those areas that

are likely to be most appropriate for onshore wind farms as a guide for developers and support the development of wind farms in locations where technology can operate efficiently. To provide guidance on appropriate locations, a spatial framework table (Table 1) is included in the SPP which sets out three groups; Group 1 contains areas where wind farms will not be accepted, i.e. National Parks and National Scenic Areas; Group 2 lists areas of significant protection where it should be demonstrated that effects can be overcome by siting, design or mitigation, and include international and national designated areas, other national mapped interests (e.g. wild land) and areas of separation from communities to limit visual impact; and Group 3 areas (all other areas) where wind farms are likely to be acceptable subject to detailed consideration against identified policy criteria.

- 5.3.10 SPP advises that planning authorities should consider a variety of potential constraints to wind farm development. These include the historic environment, landscape designations, tourism and recreation, effects on the community, aviation and defence interests and impact on broadcasting installations. SPP instructs that both strategic and local development planning authorities, working together where required, should identify where there is strategic capacity for wind farms, and areas with the greatest potential for wind development, considering cross-boundary constraints and opportunities.
- 5.3.11 The SPP states that existing and approved grid capacity should be maximised, however, in areas already used for renewable energy generation, grid capacity should not be used as a reason to constrain the areas identified for wind farm development or decisions on individual applications for wind farms.
- 5.3.12 SPP also advises that cumulative impacts should be satisfactorily addressed. Development plans should set out criteria for deciding wind farm applications, including extensions. Existing wind farms, those which have permission and valid applications for wind farms which have not been determined, should be taken into account when considering cumulative effects.

5.4 Regional and Local Planning Policy

Introduction

- 5.4.1 The Highland Council area is not part of a City Region and therefore is not covered by a Strategic Development Plan. It is therefore the Council's responsibility to incorporate its Strategic Priorities and Policies within the Local Development Plan (LDP) process. In response to the introduction of the new development plan system in 2006, the Council opted to maintain an overview document, The Highland Wide Local Development Plan (HWLDP), covering the entire council area. The HWLDP (adopted on 5th April 2012) updates and replaces parts of the Highland Structure Plan as well as parts of the existing Local Plans. It provides a strategic vision and covers strategic and framework policy issues.
- 5.4.2 The Scottish Government passed a Special Order, the Town and Country Planning (Continuation in force of Local Plans) (Highland) (Scotland) Order 2012 because the HWLDP does not replace the Local Plans in their entirety. The Order came into effect on the 1st April 2012 and will allow the continuation of certain provisions within the adopted Local Plans alongside the adopted HWLDP. Those provisions that have been from the previous iterations of the relevant local plans are contained within Appendix 7 of the HWLDP.

- 5.4.3 Within the HWLDP, three local area LDPs will address in more detail local policy and spatial issues. The Development will be located within the Caithness and Sutherland LDP area. The Main Issues Report (MIR) for the Caithness and Sutherland LDP (CaSPlan), which is the first stage of preparation of the LDP, was published for consultation on 30th October 2014. Furthermore, a recent Additional Sites and Issues consultation period began on 13th March 2015. Both consultations are now ended. The current programme anticipates the CaSPlan being adopted in 2017. In addition to the suite of LDPs, The Highland Council has also published Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) of relevance to the Development. The key guidance in these documents is discussed in Sections 5.5.1 to 5.5.10 of this chapter.
- 5.4.4 Table 5.2 sets out the key documents that comprise the current Development Plan and associated guidance.

Table 5.2: Highland Development Plan and Other Policy Documents

Plan	Status	Date
Highland Wide Local Development Plan	Adopted	April 2012
Sutherland Local Plan (saved provisions only)	Adopted	June 2010
Highland Renewable Energy Strategy and Planning Guidelines (under partial review)	Adopted	May 2006
Supplementary Guidance: Sustainable Design Guide	Adopted	January 2013
Interim Supplementary Guidance: Onshore Wind Energy	Approved	March 2012
Visualisation Standards for Wind Energy Developments	Approved	March 2015
Construction Environmental Management Process for Large Scale Projects	Published Guidance	August 2010
Highland's Statutorily Protected Species: Supplementary Guidance	Adopted	March 2013
Trees, Woodland and Development: Interim Supplementary Guidance	Adopted	January 2013
Special Landscape Area Citations (formerly known as AGLVs) – Background paper to Proposed Highland Wide Local Plan	Finalised	June 2011
Flood Risk and Drainage Impact Assessment SPG	Adopted	January 2013
Physical Constraints: Supplementary Guidance	Adopted	March 2013
The Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan (CaSPlan) Main Issues Report	Published for Consultation	October 2014

Highland Wide Local Development Plan (HWLDP) (2012)

- 5.4.5 The HWLDP adopted by The Highland Council in 2012 sets out the overarching vision statement, spatial strategy and general planning policies for the whole of The Highland Council area. It replaces the Highland Structure Plan (2001) and all of its policies, recommendations and proposals. The HWLDP also supersedes the General Policies of Area Local Plans covering the whole Highland Council area, including the Sutherland Local Plan (Adopted 2010); those elements that remain in force are listed in Appendix 7 of the HWLDP.
- 5.4.6 The vision of the HWLDP is to develop the Highland area as one of the leading regions in Europe, creating sustainable communities with a balanced population growth and economic development across the area. In land use planning terms this means that the

environment will be safeguarded by ensuring that development of renewable energy resources are managed effectively with clear guidance on where renewable energy should and should not be located.

5.4.7 The HWLDP devolves details of how the land can be used into 3 area plans which, when adopted, will replace all other local plans. The site for the Development is situated within the Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan (CaSPlan) area. During the plan period the HWLDP seeks to diversify the economy of the area. The HWLDP Vision and Spatial Strategy for the Caithness and Sutherland area states that by 2030 the area will:

- be a regenerating place with a network of strong communities;
- be a competitive place connected to the global economy;
- be a connected and accessible place;
- be a place of outstanding heritage: safe in the custody of local people;
- be a centre of excellence for energy and engineering;
- have become an international centre of excellence for marine renewables;
- have a high quality tourist industry; and
- have a more diverse economy.

5.4.8 In terms of renewable energy developments the HWLDP states that the Highland area has great potential for renewable energy production, contributing towards meeting ambitious targets set internationally, nationally and regionally. Paragraph 22.1.8 explains that the Council will expect renewable energy developments to benefit the local community, and will seek to enter into agreements with developers for environmental and socio-economic purposes.

5.4.9 Table 5.3 sets out the HWLDP policies of relevance to this Development.

Table 5.3: Highland Wide Local Development Plan Policies

Policy	Description
Policy 28 – Sustainable Design	<p>This policy states that the Council will support developments which promote and enhance the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the people of Highland. The Policy states that proposed developments will be assessed on the extent to which they meet a range of sustainability indicators including whether the development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is compatible with public service provision (water and sewerage, drainage, roads, schools, electricity); • is accessible by public transport, cycling and walking as well as the car; • maximises energy efficiency in terms of location, layout and design; • is affected by physical constraints described in Physical Constraints on Development: Supplementary Guidance; • makes use of brownfield sites, existing buildings and recycled materials; • demonstrates that the generation of waste has been minimised during the construction and operational phases; • effects on individual and community residential amenity; • effects on non-renewable resources such as mineral deposits of potential commercial value, prime agricultural land or approved routes for road and rail links; effects on the

Policy	Description
	<p>following resources, including pollution and discharges, particularly within designated area: habitats, species, landscape, scenery, freshwater systems, marine systems, cultural heritage and air quality;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrates sensitive siting and high quality design in keeping with local character and historic and natural environment and in making use of appropriate materials; and contributes to the economic and social development of the community.
Policy 30 – Physical Constraints	This policy states that developers must consider whether their proposals would be located within areas of constraints as set out in the SPG: Physical Constraints. Where a proposed development is affected by any of the constraints detailed within the guidance, developers must demonstrate compatibility with the constraint or outline appropriate mitigation.
Policy 36 – Development in the Wider Countryside	Renewable energy proposals will be assessed against the Renewable Energy Policies, the non-statutory Highland Renewable Energy Strategy and where appropriate the Onshore Wind energy supplementary guidance document.
Policy 51 – Trees and Development	This Trees and Development policy states that the Council will support development that promotes significant protection to existing hedges, trees and woodland on and around development sites.
Policy 52 – Principle of Development in Woodland	This policy states that the Council will maintain a presumption in favour of protecting woodland resources and development proposals will only be supported where they offer clear and significant public benefit. The Council will consider major developments against their socio economic impact on the forestry industry within the locality, the economic maturity of the woodland, and the opportunity for the proposals to coexist with forestry operations.
Policy 53 - Minerals	This policy states that the Council will support borrow pits which are near to or on the site of the associated development if it can be demonstrated that they are the most suitable source of material, are time limited and appropriate environmental safeguards are in place for the workings and the reclamation.
Policy 55 – Peat and Soils	Development proposals should demonstrate how they have avoided unnecessary disturbance, degradation or erosion of peat and soils. Where development on peat is unavoidable the council may ask for a peat-land management plan which should clearly state how effects have been minimised and mitigated.
Policy 56 - Travel	This policy requires that development proposals are accompanied by a statement which will enable the Council to consider the likely on and off site transport implications of the development.
Policy 57 – Natural, Built and Cultural Heritage	<p>This policy sets out the test against which all development which affects natural, cultural and built heritage features must be assessed. All development proposals will be assessed taking into account the level of importance and nature of heritage features, the nature and scale of development, and any impact of the feature and its setting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For features of local/regional importance developments will be allowed if it can be shown that the development will not have an unacceptable impact on amenity and heritage resources. • For features of national importance we will allow developments that can be shown not to compromise the amenity and heritage resource. Any significant adverse effects must be outweighed by social or economic benefits of national importance. It must also be shown that the development will support communities in fragile areas who are having difficulties in keeping their population and services. • For features of international importance developments likely to have a significant effect on a site either alone or in combination with other plans or projects will be subject to an appropriate assessment. Where a priority habitat or species would be affected development will only be allowed for reasons of overriding public interest. Appendix 6.2 of the proposed plan groups features under the headings international, national and local/regional.
Policy 58 – Protected	This policy sets out that where the development may affect a protected species, surveys will need to be carried out and mitigation plan may need to be prepared to avoid any effects on

Policy	Description
Species	the species from the development. Generally, development that is likely to have an adverse effect individually or cumulatively will normally only be allowed where there is no satisfactory alternative, the development is required for the preservation of public health or other reasons of overriding public interest and the development will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species concerned.
Policy 59 – Other Important Species	<p>This policy concerns other important species and states that development proposals should avoid adverse effects, individually and/or cumulatively on the following categories of species, if not protected by other legislation or by nature conservation site designations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • species listed in Annexes II and V of the EC Habitats Directive; • priority species listed in the UK and Local Biodiversity Action Plans; • species included on the Scottish Biodiversity List; and • conditions and agreements will be used to ensure detrimental effects on these species are avoided.
Policy 60 – Other Important Habitats and Article 10 Features	<p>This policy seeks to safeguard other important habitats such as landscape features that provide ‘stepping stones’ for the movement of flora and fauna. The Council will have regard to these features where they are not protected by designations. Habitats that may be affected individually and/or cumulatively:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • habitats listed in Annex I of the EC Habitats Directive; • habitats of priority and protected bird species (see Glossary); • priority habitats listed in the UK and Local Biodiversity Action Plans; and • habitats of principal importance included on the Scottish Biodiversity List. <p>Conditions and agreements will be used to ensure detrimental effects on these habitats are avoided. Suitable mitigation measures must be put in place where reasons for a development clearly outweigh the desirability of retaining these important habitats.</p>
Policy 61 - Landscape	This policy states that development proposals should relate to the landscape characteristics and special qualities of the area in which it is proposed also taking into account cumulative effects where these occur. Landscape Character Assessments and the Council’s Supplementary Guidance on Sustainable Design should be taken into account, in addition to relevant capacity studies, design guides and Supplementary Guidance.
Policy 63 – Water Environment	This policy relates to the water environment and states that proposals that will not compromise the objectives of the Water Framework Directive will be supported. The Council will also take into account the River Basin Management Plan for the Scotland River Basin District and associated Area Management Plans.
Policy 64 – Flood Risk	The flood risk policy states that development proposals should avoid areas that are susceptible to flooding and promote sustainable flood management. A Flood Risk Assessment or other suitable information demonstrating compliance with SPP may be required for development that is at risk of flooding.
Policy 66 – Surface Water Drainage	This policy states that all proposed development must be drained by Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) as per guidance contained within the SuDS Manual (CIRIA C697), the Sewers for Scotland Manual 2 nd Edition and PAN 69: Planning and Building Standards Advice on Flooding paragraphs 23 and 24 should be taken into account.
Policy 67 – Renewable Energy Developments	<p>Renewable Energy Developments should be related to the source and resources needed for their operation. The Council will consider the contribution of the proposed development towards meeting generation targets and any positive or negative effects it is likely to have on the local and national economy.</p> <p>The Council will support proposals where it is satisfied that they are located, sited and designed that they will not be significantly detrimental, individually or cumulatively with other developments. The Council will also have regard to any significant effects on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural, built and cultural heritage features. • Species and habitats. • Public health and safety.

Policy	Description
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual impact. • Community amenity. • Safety and amenity of regularly occupied buildings. • Ground and surface water. • Airport, defence or emergency service operations. • Communications, including radio and TV. • Amenity of users of any Core Path or established public access. • Tourism, recreation and film industry interests. • Land and water based traffic and transport interests. <p>The Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance has replaced parts of the Highland Renewable Energy Strategy and developers should refer to this guidance.</p>
Policy 72 - Pollution	This policy relates to pollution including noise and states that proposals will only be approved where a detailed assessment is provided and mitigation measures are identified to reduce the impact. Independent monitoring may be required. Major developments are expected to follow a project environmental management process.
Policy 77 – Public Access	Where a development proposal affects a Core Path or affects wider access rights the Council may require the developer to submit an Access Plan, to ensure that access is maintained and is no less attractive and safe to use.
Policy 78 – Long Distance Routes	This policy states that the Council will safeguard and seek to enhance long distance routes and their settings.

Sutherland Local Plan (June 2010)

5.4.10 The general policies contained within the Sutherland Local Plan (SLP) were superseded when the HWLDP was adopted. As noted previously the Scottish Government passed the Town and Country Planning (Continuation in force of Local Plans) (Highland) (Scotland) Order 2012 to allow the continuation of certain provisions within the SLP. The site allocations, settlement development areas not covered by the HWLDP and site specific policies have been retained until these can be replaced by one of three Area Plans, including the CaSPlan. The retention of parts of the SLP allows the Council to retain in force a set of land allocations and some local policies/proposals to help facilitate and manage development across the authority area. Appendix 7 of the HWLDP contains the schedule listing those provisions that are continued in force.

5.4.11 The SLP has no specific policies relating to wind farms, the site or the locality of the proposed Development. As noted above, the general policies contained within the SLP were superseded by the adoption of the HWLDP and as a result the SLP is not directly relevant to the Development. The Sutherland Local Plan was retained “*in force*” until it is eventually replaced by The Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan (CaSPlan) expected in 2016.

Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan

5.4.12 The CaSPlan is the second of the area Local Development Plans to be published by The Highland Council under the modernised planning system. Once formally adopted it will act as an area plan and replace the Caithness Local Plan and Sutherland Local Plan and will be used to guide decisions on planning applications, including the Development. The CaSPlan will focus on directly delivering the Scottish Government’s aim for LDPs to reflect the views

and aspirations of the communities they serve. Each of the plan's four outcomes (Employment; Growing Communities; Connectivity and Transport; and, Environment and Heritage) have been taken from the Highland Community Planning Partnership's Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) and brought forward in the Main Issues Report (MIR) stage to reflect the priorities identified by all sectors of the community in Caithness and Sutherland.

- 5.4.13 A call for sites was carried out for the proposed CaSPlan between August and October 2013. This informed the preparation of the MIR which was published for consultation between October 2014 and February 2015.
- 5.4.14 CaSPlan will, when adopted (projected to be summer of 2017), sit alongside the two other area plans (Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan and West Highlands and Islands Local Development Plan) and the existing HWLDP (including Supplementary Guidance) and form The Highland Council's Development Plan.

5.5 Supplementary Planning Guidance and Other Policy Documents

Interim Supplementary Guidance: Onshore Wind Energy (March 2012)

- 5.5.1 The Interim Supplementary Guidance: Onshore Wind Energy (ISGOWE) was approved by The Highland Council in March 2012 and represents primary guidance for the location of large wind farms within the Highland Council boundary. Although not adopted as part of the development plan the document supplements the HWLDP and is used when dealing with applications for development (although it should be noted that this guidance pre-dates the more recent guidance on spatial frameworks for onshore wind provided in SPP 2014). The guidance sets out the spatial framework for onshore wind energy developments and develops further detail on guidance provided in policy 67 (Renewable Energy Developments) of the HWLDP. The ISGOWE is a material consideration since the main principles have been established in the 'parent' policy 67 of the HWLDP that was adopted by Highland Council in April 2012.
- 5.5.2 The ISGOWE states that the Council expects that further onshore wind energy developments will be required to meet UK and Scottish Government targets. Paragraph 2.3 of the ISGOWE states that the spatial framework does not prevent large wind energy developments in any part of Highland provided the constraints have been assessed and considered.
- 5.5.3 In the process of preparing the guidance The Highland Council has assessed and identified areas of the Highlands that require significant protection (stage 1), areas with potential constraints (stage 2) and finally identified areas of search (stage 3). As noted above however, this spatial framework is not consistent with the more recently published guidance in SPP 2014 (see paragraph 5.3.10). The ISGOWE guidance provides advice on assessing the degree and significance of impact from the wind farm on features, for example, landscape and visual interests, the natural environment and tourism and recreation interests.
- 5.5.4 Wind energy development categories and capacity criteria are set out in paragraph 2.6 of ISGOWE state that developments with a capacity of over 100MW, turbines over 100 metres (m) to hub and/or 140m to tip and groupings of 45 turbines or more will be classed as very large developments. The Development is a proposed extension to an existing wind farm and the combined capacity exceeds 100MW. As such the Development is categorised

as a very large development when combined with Gordonbush Wind Farm, although it remains under the 'large development' threshold in terms of the number (16) and the height (maximum up to 130 m to tip) of the turbines in the development.

5.5.5 The site of the Development is entirely located within Stage 3 - Areas of Search. Areas of search are described in the ISGOWE as follows:

'These are the areas within which appropriate proposals are likely to be supported subject to detailed consideration against the Highland-wide Local Development Plan, in particular policies 57 and 67 and the Development Guidelines section of this interim guidance.'

5.5.6 Paragraph 2.8 of the ISGOWE notes that development outwith a safeguarded area could impact on the area and will require assessment in the context of the HWLDP and Development Guidelines in the ISGOWE. The site is located within the Area of Search and it is concluded that the Development is not located in an area that has been identified to require significant protection or an area that has been identified as having potential constraints.

5.5.7 Paragraph 2.10 of the ISGOWE states that the Council will continue to work on the identification of areas which require significant protection due to cumulative effect of existing and consented wind farms, however, to date this guidance has not been published and as such the site of the Development has not been specifically identified by the Council as being at risk of significant cumulative effects.

5.5.8 The development guidelines provide a fuller interpretation and amplify the Council's policy regarding wind energy proposals as set out in Policy 67 of the HWLDP and the 11 criteria listed in that policy. The guidelines apply to all onshore wind energy developments regardless of whether they are located within or outwith the Areas of Search. Paragraph 2.16 underlines the potential for effects to occur even if the development is outwith the boundary of any designated feature or interest. The development guidelines cover the following topics:

- *Natural, Built and Cultural Heritage;*
- *Other Species and Habitat Interests;*
- *Landscape and Visual Impact;*
- *Amenity at Sensitive Locations;*
- *Safety and Amenity of Individuals and Individual Properties;*
- *The Water Environment;*
- *Safety of Airport, Defence and Emergency Service Operations;*
- *The Operational Efficiency of Other Communications;*
- *The Quantity and Quality of Public Access;*
- *Other Tourism and Recreation Interests; and*
- *Traffic and Transport Interests.*

5.5.9 Supplementing the Development Guidelines, which provides further interpretation of development plan policy, the ISGOWE also provides some additional considerations which will need to be taken into account in the determination of any wind energy developments, the key relevant issues include:

- Design and Layout of Wind Farms: the guidance provides some advice in terms of the number, position and height of turbines relative to separation distances, development footprint, operational efficiency, mitigating cumulative effects as a result of access track and other infrastructure required. Paragraph 2.74 states that *'it can be helpful for developers to illustrate and explain the steps taken in developing the design and layout of their project, for example how it has responded through design iterations to any issues that have been identified through that process'*. The design iteration process has been described in Appendix 3.1: Design Statement of this ES.
- Forestry: the guidance recognises that there is a trend toward targeting commercial forestry plantations for wind farm developments due to the lack of conservation designations and benefits from existing infrastructure. However, this may result in a substantial loss of commercial woodland. The Scottish Government's Scottish Forestry Strategy (2006) targets an increase of forest cover from 17% to 25% by 2050, therefore woodland loss should be minimised. The Council has produced additional guidance which is discussed below (see paragraph 5.5.18).
- Peat: where development is proposed on peat-land relevant information should be provided with regard to the whole life carbon balance of a development.
- Electricity Transmission Cables and Lines and Gas Transmission Underground Pipelines: An appropriate distance is required beyond the immediate way-leave to safeguard existing infrastructure in terms of operation and maintenance.
- Effects of other proposed developments on existing or consented wind farms: Potential effects of the Development on existing and consented wind farm developments must be considered to avoid conflict.
- Site restoration: The Council will seek assurance that the landowners of a proposed wind farm site can access funds to restore their land at the end of the operational life of the development. The requirement for any financial guarantees will be included (bonds/LoCs) and will be secured through conditions to the consent.
- Mitigation: Developers should ensure that suitable mitigation will be available throughout the lifetime of the development.

Onshore Wind Energy: Supplementary Guidance (2015)

5.5.10 The ISGOWE is in the process of being reviewed. Initial consultation on key issues and a Consultation Paper was approved by The Highland Council on the 18th February 2015. The paper, which sets out the main issues and options for revising the Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance, was then published for public consultation between 16th March and 11th May 2015. The outcome of this consultation will inform draft Supplementary Guidance expected to be published for consultation later this year.

Visualisation Standards for Wind Energy Developments (May 2013, updated March 2015)

5.5.11 The Visualisation Standards for Wind Energy Developments was first introduced in draft form in June 2009 to inform the Council's decision making process and help provide clarity

to public and community opinion. The standards set out in the document apply to all wind energy developments irrespective of the size or number of turbines proposed and while they have been produced principally for wind energy developments they are applicable to all submissions.

Highland Renewable Energy Strategy and Planning Guidelines (May 2006)

- 5.5.12 The Highland Renewable Energy Strategy and Planning Guidelines provide guidance for both developers and the Council on the development, evaluation and implementation of renewable energy systems. It was adopted by the Council in 2006, but was partially superseded by the ISGOWE (which itself is now under review) (refer to paragraphs 5.5.1 – 5.5.10 of this chapter). The document provides a vision for renewable energy development in the Highlands and details preferred development areas, development targets and the planning process and requirements for all new projects. Section 4.3 in particular provides specific guidance on planning requirements for onshore wind farms.

Supplementary Guidance: Sustainable Design Guide (January 2013)

- 5.5.13 This Sustainable Design Guide has been developed to accompany the HWLDP and requires that all developments should:

- *conserve and enhance the character of the Highland area;*
- *use resources efficiently;*
- *minimise the environmental impact of development; and*
- *enhance the viability of Highland communities.*

- 5.5.14 This document provides guidance on what designing for sustainability means in the Highland context and highlights opportunities for developers to add value to their projects by taking account of the way that the economic, environmental and social effects of development interact over the short and long term. The Guide states that all developments must comply with the greenhouse gas emissions requirements of the Sustainable Design Guide.

Supplementary Guidance: Highland's Statutorily Protected Species (March 2013)

- 5.5.15 The Highland's Statutorily Protected Species: Supplementary Guidance provides additional information to the HWLDP and provides advice on conservation legislation, the protocol for dealing with protected species and planning applications with European protected species issues. The guidance reflects the policy advice given in Scottish Planning Policy (SPP). The SPG states that if followed, the principles for furthering the conservation of biodiversity on development sites will minimise the effect on protected species when observing the following:

- **Avoid** - *damage to existing habitats from the development.*
- **Mitigate** - *take measures to reduce any adverse effects on habitats and species arising from the development.*
- **Compensate** - *if neither avoidance nor mitigation is possible. Offset any residual adverse effects, either on- or off-site. (in this context offset means to recreate the habitat that is lost).*

- **Restore** - habitat management beyond any existing requirement for mitigation/compensation.

Supplementary Guidance: Physical Constraints (March 2013)

- 5.5.16 The draft supplementary guidance on physical constraints applies to all development across Highland. It will be adopted as supplementary guidance to the HWLDP.
- 5.5.17 The guidance has been prepared to provide developers with up to date mapping of physical constraints to development within Highland. In order to protect human health and safety, the guidance outlines that, where proposals are affected by any of the constraints, developers will be required to demonstrate compatibility with the constraint or propose appropriate mitigation measures. Physical constraints on development listed within the guidance include, for example, railway lines, major oil and gas pipelines and areas of excessive slope. The guidance provides additional detail to Policy 30 of the HWLDP.

Trees, Woodland and Development: Interim Supplementary Guidance (January 2013)

- 5.5.18 The guidance contained within this document sets out key considerations to be taken into account regarding the value of trees and woodlands. The guidance has been adopted as Statutory Guidance to the HWLDP. The guidance reflects and provides additional detail on advice given in Policies 51 and 52 of the HWLDP. The guidance states that developers should assess the value of any trees or woodland on a local, national and international level. While greatest protection will be given to features of international and national importance, for locally/regionally important features development may be allowed where it does not have an unacceptable impact on amenity and heritage values.
- 5.5.19 Following the assessment it may be necessary to develop a Tree Planting and Landscape Plan and a Maintenance or Management Programme. Where development necessitates the removal of tree or woodland it is expected that compensatory planting will be provided.
- 5.5.20 Section 3 sets out criteria and levels of acceptability for development within woodlands whereby developments designed to co-exist with existing woodland are considered to be of medium acceptability. The guidance goes on to state that;
- ‘the Highland Council has a strong presumption in favour of protecting its woodland resource. Development proposals within existing woodland will only be supported on a suitable site where the development and the woodland will co-exist to provide mutual benefits, and where a clear and significant public benefit can be demonstrated.’*
- 5.5.21 Section 4.2.1 specifically refers to wind farm and renewables development, stating that wind farms are one of the most significant causes of woodland removal in Scotland. To help mitigate against the loss of woodland, developers should investigate opportunities for wind farms to co-exist with woodland providing mutual benefits such as improvements to the public road infrastructure to facilitate the extraction of timber. The cumulative impact of adjacent wind farms will be considered when assessing applications.
- 5.5.22 In addition, Section 3.2.1 states that the Council recognises that a balance needs to be achieved between the Scottish Forestry Strategy’s aspiration to increase forest cover from

17% to 25% of Scotland's land area with the Scottish Ministers target of generating 80% of Scotland's electricity from renewable resources by 2020. Wind farms are one of the most significant causes of woodland removal because many of the opportunities and constraints influencing the locations of wind farms are similar to those influencing the location of productive woodlands. The development of a wind farm and the associated road infrastructure may also be able to accommodate transportation of timber from previously inaccessible areas thus providing an opportunity for these two interests to co-exist.

Special Landscape Area Citations – Background Paper to the HWLDP (June 2011)

- 5.5.23 This Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas (AHSLA) was undertaken to support the interpretation of policy within the HWLDP. It reviews the existing local landscape designations within the Council area, known as Areas of Great Landscape Value, AGLV (now known as Special Landscape Areas; SLAs). It provides a brief citation for each area which summarises its key landscape and visual characteristics, the special qualities for which it is valued, its key sensitivities to landscape change, and possible measures for its enhancement.

Flood Risk and Drainage Impact Assessment SPG (January 2013)

- 5.5.24 This new adopted guidance aims to aid developers when considering development in relation to flooding issues. The SPG notes developers should provide sufficient information to demonstrate that proposals will not increase flood risk and where there are already flooding issues within a catchment, demonstrate net betterment. The SPG also sets out aspects to be considered and included in a Flood Risk Assessment.

Construction Environmental Management Process for Large Scale Projects (August 2010)

- 5.5.25 Guidance has been prepared to set out a robust Project Environmental Management Process (PEMP) for large scale projects, including EIA. The key purpose of the guidance is to;
- *offer ideas for adopting an approach to construction environmental management, consistent with the requirements of regulatory authorities, to improve project delivery;*
 - *Highlight the benefits of following a defined 'Project Environmental Management Process' (PEMP) throughout the lifecycle of the project;*
 - *Provide clarity to the individual processes involved in PEMP's with specific detail on requirements within the construction stage of a project;*
 - *Highlight key responsibilities placed on developers and statutory agencies associated with environmental management and common requirements imposed through the planning process; and*
 - *Help recognise timescales involved, including pre and post construction.*

The Highland Council Community Benefit Policy and Guidance Note "Community Benefit in relation to Renewable Energy Proposals" (2013)

- 5.5.26 This policy and guidance note was published by The Highland Council in 2013. It is separate from the development plan supplementary guidance and sets out guidance on management of goodwill contributions offered by developers of renewable energy

proposals. It is clearly explained that such contributions are not an expectation or a requirement of gaining planning permission. The Highland Council's policy is to seek funding or in-kind contribution of not less than £5,000 per installed Megawatt, that will annually appreciate in line with the UK Retail Price Index. The policy and guidance explains that this benefit will be available to communities across Highland, as well as local neighbouring communities. The Highland Council decides on the allocation of benefits with consideration of proximity, visual impact, and number of residences affected. It recommends community benefit negotiations to take place as early as possible in parallel with the planning process.

- 5.5.27 Currently the Applicant pays into the Scottish Hydro Gordonbush Community Fund to support developments in the areas covered by the Community Councils of Brora, Golspie, Helmsdale and Rogart. A further breakdown of the socio-economics, including developer contributions, can be found in Chapter 14: Land Use, Socio-Economics and Tourism.

5.6 Energy Policy, Guidance and Advice

Energy Act (December 2013)

- 5.6.1 Following agreement by both the House of Commons and House of Lords, the Energy Bill received Royal Assent on 18th December 2013. The Act establishes a legislative framework for delivering secure, affordable and low carbon energy throughout the UK.

UK Renewable Energy Roadmap (July 2011)

- 5.6.2 The Government published the UK Renewable Energy Roadmap on 27th July 2011 setting out a comprehensive action plan to accelerate the UK's deployment and use of renewable energy. The aim of the Roadmap is to achieve the 2020 target set out in the EC Roadmap and the National Renewable Energy Action Plan (NREAP), while driving down the cost of renewable energy over time. The actions set out in the Roadmap seeks to exploit the UK's renewable resources, contribute towards energy needs, provide opportunities for jobs and wealth creation and contribute to efforts to reduce emissions of harmful greenhouse gases.
- 5.6.3 In terms of onshore wind development the Roadmap aims to:
- *Provide long term certainty for investors through electricity market reform and transition from the Renewables Obligation.*
 - *Reform the planning system to ensure it supports economic growth and gives communities a greater stake in development.*
 - *Co-fund the development of technical solutions to overcome wind farm interference with aviation radar and broker roll-out plans.*
 - *Upgrade onshore transmission capacity and ensure that developers secure timely and cost-effective access to the network and put in place a process to monitor delivery (page 6).*
- 5.6.4 The Roadmap has been updated twice since July 2011, in December 2012 and November 2013. The purpose of the updates is to provide analysis on further achievements and changes that have taken place since it was first published in 2011. Changes include

updates to energy demand projections, renewable energy deployment to 2020, and technology cost projections.

UK Renewable Energy Strategy (July 2009)

- 5.6.5 The UK Renewable Energy Strategy (2009) (UKRES) sets out ways in which the UK will meet the legal target of 15% of our energy coming from renewable sources by 2020. In addition, it describes the strategy for how the UK's emissions of carbon dioxide will be reduced by over 750 million tonnes between now and 2030.
- 5.6.6 Paragraph 1.1 of the Strategy indicates that the UK needs a radical increase in the use of renewable energy in order to decarbonise energy production in the UK, ensure safe and secure energy supplies, spread costs fairly and exploit the associated economic opportunities. The Government estimates that achieving the 15% renewable energy target will reduce overall fossil fuel demand by around 10% and gas imports by 20-30% (paragraph 1.7).
- 5.6.7 Box 1.2 of the Strategy indicates that wind power is currently one of the most developed and cost-effective renewable electricity technologies. Paragraph 2.18 suggests that by 2020 about 30% or more of all our electricity could come from renewable sources. The majority of this figure is expected to come from wind power, through the deployment of more onshore and offshore wind turbines.
- 5.6.8 Paragraph 2.36 identifies interim targets to achieve shares for renewables in the energy mix. These include 4% in 2011-12, 5.4% in 2013-14, 7.5% in 2015-2016 and 10.2% in 2017-2018.

UK Low Carbon Transition Plan, (July 2009)

- 5.6.9 In addition to the UKRES, the UK Government published the UK Low Carbon Transition Plan, a White Paper published in July 2009. It sets out how the greenhouse gas emission cuts will be delivered. It also seeks to ensure that the UK will obtain 40% of electricity from low carbon sources by 2020 with policies that require electricity suppliers to substantially increase the amount of energy produced from renewable sources. The White Paper sets out how five year 'carbon budgets' will reduce emissions by 80% by 2050 and how these budgets will be met.

The Renewables Statement of Need (July 2006)

- 5.6.10 The Renewables Statement of Need (2006) is set out within Annex D of the Energy Review 2006: The Energy Challenge. The Statement indicates that the Government remains committed to the important role renewables have to play in helping meet the UK's energy policy goals. New individual renewable energy projects provide benefits shared by all communities both through reduced emissions and reliability in energy supplies. The Statement indicates that this is a material consideration which should be taken into account when considering renewable energy proposals. The national benefits, benefits to society and benefits to the wider economy as a whole are identified as significant. The Statement indicates that this must be reflected in the weight given to these considerations. Decision-makers should ensure that relevant issues are addressed in decision making, but also that renewable energy planning applications are dealt with expeditiously.

- 5.6.11 The Statement also identifies the potential for cumulative effects resulting from increased levels of renewables provision. The Statement indicates that cumulative effects will not necessarily be unacceptable or incapable of reduction through mitigation measures.

Renewables Action Plan (RAP) 2009

- 5.6.12 The Scottish Government published the Renewables Action Plan (RAP) to drive the development of renewable energy. The aim of the plan was to establish Scotland as a UK and EU leader in the renewable field. It set out what needs to happen and by when in order to meet the Scottish Government's renewable energy targets. The Action Plan was first published in July 2009 and has been updated in February 2010, August 2010, February 2011 and March 2011.

- 5.6.13 Within its main principles the RAP recognises that:

- *Scotland's low carbon energy has the potential to provide enormous opportunities for sustainable economic growth, coupled with the creation and retention of more wealth in Scotland; and*
- *Investment in renewables and clean coal and gas can achieve a security of energy supply.*

- 5.6.14 The Scottish Government's objective was to provide unambiguous backing for the renewables energy sector. This commitment has been reiterated through the recent increase in renewable energy targets.

2020 Route Map for Renewable Energy in Scotland (June 2011)

- 5.6.15 In June 2011 the Scottish Government published the 2020 Route Map for Renewable Energy in Scotland. This is an update and extension to the Scottish Renewable Action Plan 2009 and reflects the new target to meet an equivalent of 100% demand for electricity (with an interim target of 31% by 2011) and at least 30% of overall energy (heat, transport and electricity) demand from renewable energy by 2020 (page 4). The benefits that renewable energy could provide to Scotland (paragraph 1.1.1) include:

- *up to 40,000 jobs and £30b investment to the Scottish economy;*
- *significant displacement and reduction in carbon emission;*
- *a strengthening of future energy security through the harnessing of sustainable indigenous resources; and*
- *a transformational opportunity for local ownership and benefits.*

- 5.6.16 With regard to onshore wind, the Route Map identifies the objectives in respect of energy consents and planning and records the actions to be taken to meet them.

Government Economic Strategy (September 2011)

- 5.6.17 The Scottish Government recognises that Scotland has the potential to be a world leader in renewable energy. This potential was first embedded in the Government Economic Strategy (GES) that was published in 2007 and following the Scottish Government elections in May 2011 and in response to the global economic downturn this Strategy was updated in September 2011.

- 5.6.18 The updated Strategy sets a new strategic priority: Transition to a Low Carbon Economy. The document recognises that a low carbon economy has delivered significant investment to Scotland and it has the potential to attract substantial additional investment to the economy. The GES is discussed in more detail in ES Chapter 14 (Land Use, Socio-economic and Recreation) Section 11.4.9 and 11.4.10.

Electricity Generation Policy Statement (June 2013)

- 5.6.19 The Scottish Government published an initial draft Electricity Generation Policy Statement (EGPS) in November 2010. A final version of the EGPS was published in June 2013 setting out the path to meeting the Scottish Government target of delivering the equivalent of at least 100% of gross electricity consumption from renewables by 2020. It demonstrates how Scotland currently generates electricity, and the changes needed to meet Scottish Government targets and deliver a low carbon generating mix. The EGPS states that: *Achieving the 100% target will require Scottish installed generation capacity to almost double over the 10 year period to 2020 – with wind (offshore and onshore) playing a critical role. This growth rate represents a major challenge, but is consistent with the trajectories identified in our Renewables Routemap and the Blue Seas – Green Energy report.*
- 5.6.20 The EGPS reiterates the Scottish Government policy that, alongside actions to reduce demand for energy, a rapid expansion of renewable electricity across Scotland will be required.
- 5.6.21 Online advice is provided for a range of renewable energy technologies. The Onshore Wind Online Advice (May 2014) is relevant to the Development.

Onshore Wind Turbines Online Advice (May 2014)

- 5.6.22 The Onshore Wind Turbines Online Advice replaces the revoked PAN 45 Renewable Energy Technologies and provides advice to planning authorities on typical planning considerations and technical information relating to onshore wind turbine developments. A table sets out how local authorities should approach proposals and applications for wind farm developments. The document explains some of the technical terms commonly used in wind farm developments and it sets out typical planning considerations in determining planning applications for onshore wind turbines. Issues highlighted include:
- *‘landscape impact;*
 - *impacts on wildlife and habitat, ecosystems and biodiversity;*
 - *buffer zones;*
 - *impacts on communities, shadow flicker, noise, electromagnetic interference to communication systems, ice throw;*
 - *separation distances;*
 - *aviation matters;*
 - *military aviation and other defence matters;*
 - *historic environment impacts;*
 - *road traffic impacts;*
 - *cumulative impacts;*

- *construction impacts; and*
- *decommissioning.*

5.7 Summary of Relevant Planning Policy, Guidance and Advice

5.7.1 Table 5.4 lists Planning Advice Notes (PANs) and other planning guidance of relevance to the development which have been taken into account for this application.

Table 5.4: Other Relevant Planning Policy Guidance and Advice

The Importance of Design
PAN 68: Design Statements (2003)
Engaging with Local Communities
PAN 3/2010: Community Engagement
Renewable Energy and Wind Energy
Specific Advice Sheet: Process for Preparing Spatial Frameworks for Wind Farms (2011)
Specific Advice Sheet: Onshore wind turbines (2011)
Landscape and Visual Effects
PAN 60: Planning for Natural Heritage (2000)
Ecology (including Ornithology where applicable)
PAN 51: Planning, Environmental Protection and Regulation (revised 2006)
PAN 60: Planning for Natural Heritage (2000)
Traffic, Access and Transport
PAN 75: Planning for Transport (2005)
Archaeology and Cultural Heritage
PAN 2/2011: Planning and Archaeology (2011)
Noise
PAN 01/2011: Planning and Noise (2011)
Technical Advice Note (TAN): Assessment of Noise (2011)
Hydrology and Ground Conditions
PAN 51: Planning, Environmental Protection and Regulation (revised 2006)
PAN 61: Planning and Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (2001)
PAN 79: Water and Drainage (2006)
Other Issues (including Telecommunications and Air Quality)
PAN 51: Planning, Environmental Protection and Regulation (revised 2006)
PAN 62: Radio Telecommunications (2001)
Assessment of Development
PAN 1/2013: Environmental Impact Assessment
Guide to EIA Regulations 2011 – Easy read guide (2011)

5.8 References

Department of Energy and Climate Change (2009). The UK Low Carbon Transition Plan, National Strategy for climate and energy, HM Government.

Department of Energy and Climate Change (2009). The UK Renewable Energy Strategy. HM Government.

Department of Trade and Industry (2006). The Energy Review 2006: The Energy Challenge. Annex D: The Renewables Statement of Need. HM Government.

Department of Energy and Climate Change (2011). UK Renewable Energy Roadmap, DECC.

Electricity Act (1989). www.legislation.gov.uk

Energy Bill, (2013). HM Government,

Scottish Executive (2000). Planning Advice Note 60: Planning for Natural Heritage. Scottish Executive. <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/planning/publications/pans>

Scottish Executive (2001). Planning Advice Note 61: Planning and Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems. Scottish Executive. <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/planning/publications/pans>

Scottish Executive (2001). Planning Advice Note 62: Radio Telecommunications. Scottish Executive. <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/planning/publications/pans>

Scottish Executive (2003). Planning Advice Note 68: Design Statements. Scottish Executive. <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/planning/publications/pans>

Scottish Executive (2005). Planning Advice Note 75 Planning for Transport. Scottish Executive. <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/planning/publications/pans>

Scottish Executive (2006). Planning Advice Note 79: Water and Drainage. Scottish Executive. <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/planning/publications/pans>

Scottish Executive (2006). Planning Advice Note 51: (revised 2006) Planning, Environmental Protection and Regulation. Scottish Executive. <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/planning/publications/pans>

Scottish Executive (2006). The Scottish Forestry Strategy, Forestry Commission Scotland.

Scottish Government (2010). PAN 3/2010: Community Engagement, Scottish Government. <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/planning/publications/pans>

Scottish Government (2011). PAN 2/2011 Planning and Archaeology. <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/planning/publications/pans>

Scottish Government (2011). Renewables Action Plan, Scottish Government.

Scottish Government (2011). 2020 Routemap for Renewable Energy in Scotland. OPSI, Edinburgh.

Scottish Government (2011). Technical Advice Note (TAN): Assessment of Noise (2011), Scottish Government.

Scottish Government (2011). Government Economic Strategy, September 2011, Scottish Government.

Scottish Government (2011). Guide to EIA Regulations 2011 – Easy read guide, Scottish Government.

Scottish Government (2013). Planning Advice Note 1/2013: Environmental Impact Assessment, Scottish Government.

Scottish Government (2013). Electricity Generation Policy Statement, Scottish Government.

Scottish Government (2014). Onshore Wind Turbines Specific Advice Sheet, Scottish Government.

Scottish Government (2014). National Planning Framework for Scotland 3. Scottish Government.

Scottish Government (2014). Scottish Planning Policy. Scottish Government.

The Highland Council (2006). Highland Renewable Energy Strategy and Planning Guidelines (under partial review), adopted May 2006.

The Highland Council (2010). Construction Environmental Management Process for Large Scale Projects (August 2010)

The Highland Council (2010). Sutherland Local Plan, (adopted April 2010).

The Highland Council (2011). Interim Supplementary Guidance: Onshore Wind Energy (Approved March 2012).

The Highland Council, (2011) Special Landscape Area Citations (formerly know as AGLVs) – The Highland Council, Background paper to Proposed Highland Wide Local Plan, finalised (June 2011).

The Highland Council (2012). Highland Wide Local Development Plan (adopted 5 April 2012).

The Highland Council (2014). Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan – Main Issues Report – (October 2014).

The Highland Council (2013). Supplementary Guidance: Physical Constraints (March 2013).

The Highland Council (2013). Flood Risk and Drainage Impact Assessment SPG (Adopted January 2013).

The Highland Council (2013). Visualisation Standards for Wind Energy Developments (May 2013, Updated March 2015)

The Highland Council (2013). Highland's Statutorily Protected Species: Supplementary Guidance: (Adopted March 2013).

The Highland Council (2013), Supplementary Guidance: Sustainable Design Guide (approved January 2013).

The Highland Council (2013), Trees, Woodland and Development Interim Supplementary Guidance (Adopted January 2013).

The Highland Council (2013), Guidance on the application of The Highland Council Community Benefit Policy for Communities and for Developers.

The Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 as amended. www.legislation.gov.uk

The Town and Country Planning (Continuation in force of Local Plans) (Highland) (Scotland) Order 2012

The Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006. Office of Public Sector Information (OPSI). <http://www.opsi.gov.uk>.