North Tyneside Local Plan

Supporting Statement 7:

Renewable Energy and Low Carbon Technology

North Tyneside Council

June 2016

Contents

1. Introduction and Background

1.1. The North Tyneside Local Plan (NTLP) has been submitted to the Secretary of State. It will now be formally examined by an independent Inspector to assess whether it has been prepared in accordance with the legal and procedural requirements as set out by the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 ("2012 Regulations") and whether the Plan is "sound" - namely in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (2012).

1.2. This Supporting Statement provides a broad overview of how the Council has addressed Renewable Energy and Low Carbon Technology and specifically how we have considered the Ministerial Statement, June 2015, in relation to wind turbines.

2. Planning Policy Framework

2.1. National planning policy adopts a positive stance to renewable energy and requires local authorities to reflect and promote this in their plan-making and decision-taking.

2.2. **National Planning Policy Framework**

2.3. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in March 2012 and places sustainable development at the heart of the planning system. The NPPF establishes twelve principles of sustainable development that should underpin plan-making and decision-taking, and the encouragement of renewable energy and climate change mitigation falls within one of these key principles.

2.4. Chapter 10 of the NPPF sets out the national planning policy direction on climate change and states that planning plays a key role in supporting the delivery of renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure (para 93).

2.5. The NPPF recognises the challenge faced in meeting renewable energy and climate change targets and requires local planning authorities to recognise the responsibility

on all communities to contribute to energy from renewable or low carbon sources. It requires local planning authorities to have a positive strategy to promote energy from renewable and low carbon sources. It requires local policies to maximise renewable and low carbon energy development while ensuring that adverse impacts are addressed satisfactorily (for example cumulative landscape and visual impacts). It also encourages local authorities to identify suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy development where it would help secure its development.

2.6. Paragraph 97 of NPPF: *To help increase the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy, local planning authorities should recognise the responsibility on all communities to contribute to energy generation from renewable or low carbon sources. They should:*

- *Have a positive strategy to promote energy from renewable and low carbon sources;*
- *Design their policies to maximise renewable and low carbon energy development while ensuring that adverse impacts are addressed satisfactorily, including cumulative landscape and visual impacts;*
- *Consider identifying suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy sources, and supporting infrastructure, where this would help secure the development of such sources;*
- *Support community-led initiatives for renewable and low carbon energy, including developments outside such areas being taken forward through neighbourhood planning; and*
- *Identify opportunities where development can draw its energy supply from decentralised, renewable or low carbon energy supply systems and for co-locating potential heat customers and suppliers.*

2.7. **Online Planning Practice Guidance**

2.8. In March 2014 the Government published its new web based planning guidance, and with regards to renewable energy the online guidance replaced the 2013 DCLG publication ‘Planning Practice Guidance for Renewable and Low Carbon Energy’.

2.9. The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) stresses the important role of the planning system in the delivery of new renewable and low carbon energy infrastructure in locations where the local environmental impact is acceptable. It encourages local planning authorities to develop positive strategies to promote the delivery of renewable energy through their Local Plans, but also stresses that the responsibility to increase renewable energy generation does not automatically override environmental protections and the planning concerns of local communities.

2.10. The PPG offers support for clear criteria based policies for renewable energy in Local Plans and stated that the following factors should be taken into account in developing Local Plan policies:

- Cumulative impacts, particularly on landscape and local amenity;
- Local topography;
- Heritage assets and their setting;
- The increased sensitivity of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty;
- The importance of protecting local amenity.

2.11. With regards buffer zones/separation distances the PPG states that: *"Local planning authorities should not rule out otherwise acceptable renewable energy developments through inflexible rules on buffer zones or separation distances. Other than when dealing with set back distances for safety, distance of itself does not necessarily determine whether the impact of a proposal is unacceptable. Distance plays a part, but so does the local context including factors such as topography, the local environment and near-by land uses. This is why it is important to think about in what circumstances proposals are likely to be acceptable and plan on this basis."*

2.12. Following the Ministerial Statement on 18th June 2015 changes were made to the planning practice guidance to give local people the final say on wind farm applications. The guidance states that local planning authorities should only grant planning permission for wind turbines if the development is in an area identified as suitable for wind energy development in a Local Plan, and if following consultation it can be

demonstrated that the planning impacts identified by affected local communities have been fully addressed and therefore the proposal has their backing.

2.13. The Ministerial Statement and resultant changes to the PPG are a consideration in decision making and policy writing, but do not represent a national policy change to wind energy development.

2.14. In summary, policy direction contained in the NPPF and PPG is explicit in its support for renewable and low carbon energy and expects local planning authorities to adopt positive approaches in their Local Plans. This is therefore a key consideration in the development of renewable energy and low carbon technology policy for the North Tyneside Local Plan, as in order to be found sound the plan must be positively prepared and consistent with the NPPF.

2.15. **Local**

2.16. Reflecting current national planning policy, the approach to renewable and low carbon energy in North Tyneside is to provide a positive policy framework recognising that it can make a valuable contribution to slowing down climate change, meeting energy needs and improving energy security.

2.17. North Tyneside Council Draft Local Plan Policy DM7.6

2.18. *Renewable Energy and Low-Carbon Technologies*

2.19. *The Council will encourage the local production of energy from renewable and low carbon sources to help to reduce carbon emissions. The Council will also encourage and support community energy schemes that reduce, manage and generate energy to bring benefits to the local community.*

2.20. *Where planning permission is required, proposals for development involving the provision of renewable and/or low carbon technologies, including micro-generation*

technologies, will be supported and encouraged except where the proposal would have unacceptable adverse effects that are not outweighed by the local and wider environmental, economic, social and other considerations of the development.

2.21. *Commercial scale renewable energy generation projects will be supported in locations where other policies of the Plan can be satisfied. Developments of this type should be supported by a comprehensive assessment of their impact. When considering applications, regard will be given to the wider benefits of providing the energy from renewable sources as well as the potential effects at the local scale.*

2.22. The Local Plan does not identify specific locations for renewable energy developments. North Tyneside has the potential to provide renewable energy from a number of sources, such as solar and anaerobic digestion. Some of these technologies can be installed through existing permitted development rights. Where planning permission is required, the council will positively consider schemes that adequately consider, identify and where necessary mitigate any negative impacts. These may include landscape character and design impacts. The Local Plan's evidence base relating to landscape and townscape character along with national guidance can help to inform the impact assessment of specific renewable and low carbon technologies.

2.23. An overarching policy on renewable and low carbon energy development is proposed which is applicable to the consideration of all proposals for renewable and low carbon energy development. Proposals will be supported if applicants are able to demonstrate that the effects on the environment and local communities are acceptable and will be assessed in the context of the other policies in the plan, including those relating to the landscape and the natural, built and historic environment. The policy seeks to protect those environmental and cultural assets that are important to North Tyneside, its communities, economy and visitors. The matters in the policy will be applicable to all proposals but the level of information required in support of a planning application will be proportional to the scale of the proposal, its location and its potential effects.

3. Consideration of Locations for Renewable Technology

3.1. The NPPF advises Local Planning Authorities to consider identifying suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy sources. North Tyneside has a range of energy resources, particularly small-scale projects which can make a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions. There is however, a limit to the scale of renewable energy development that can be accommodated across North Tyneside in general and in some local areas in particular, without being significantly visually or environmentally detrimental or adversely affecting the amenity of residents.

3.2. The borough of North Tyneside embraces a unique combination of contrasting urban, rural, coastal and riverside environments. North Tyneside is predominately urban in nature with the exception of a large corridor of open space to the north of the borough which is designated as Green Belt.

3.3. Within the borough are several landscapes that are of particular note which are described further in the Local Plan. As part of the evidence base there is also a Landscape and Townscape Character Description (2014) which looks at character areas across the Borough potential impacts of proposed development and growth on existing landscape character.

3.4. Physical, economic and environmental constraints are likely to make large parts of the North Tyneside unsuited for many forms of renewable energy. The constraints include the following:

- The footprints of internationally and nationally designated sites along the coast including the Northumbria Coast Ramsar, Northumbria Coast Special Protection Area and the Northumberland Shore Sites of Special Scientific Interest. There are also 7 statutory designated Local Nature Reserves together with 22 non-statutory designated Local Wildlife Sites across the borough. Renewable energy schemes may have visual or environmental impacts on these marine and coastal environments and on the seascape character.

- Sensitive heritage assets across the borough such as World Heritage Sites, Historic parks and Gardens, Listed Buildings and Scheduled Ancient Monuments.

- Within the urban area the lack of open space and the safety separation distances for some renewable energy development is a constraint next to existing housing, A-roads, railway lines and electricity pylons.

- The open space to north of the borough is Green Belt. When located in the Green Belt, elements of many renewable energy projects will comprise inappropriate development where they compromise the openness of the Green Belt or would be visually detrimental. In such cases very special circumstances would need to be demonstrated.

- Some renewable technologies, such as wind turbines, are likely to be to be limited due to potential adverse effects on the safety of aviation operations and navigational systems.

3.5. Other potential constraints have also been considered such as Safeguarded Meteorological Sites. Consultation has been undertaken with the MET office to determine if there is any meteorological sites consultation that fall within a 20km consultation zone of North Tyneside. Wind turbines within this zone could impact on the quality of the data received from this radar which is used by weather forecasters and hydrological forecast models. The nearest radar is High Moorside, however this falls outside of the 20km consultation zone of North Tyneside and therefore does not currently need consideration.

3.6. The pattern of constraints in North Tyneside is such that there are few opportunities for medium to large scale renewable energy. The Council continue to consider the potential low carbon and renewable technologies that can be developed within the borough. A heat mapping study of the North Tyneside has been undertaken to identify potentially useful heating, cooling and power demand loads and potentially useful heat

supply opportunities. This concluded that current patterns of residential areas are unlikely to act as an anchor to kick-start a district heating network, however there may be opportunities to take advantage of the close geographic groupings of high demand non-residential consumers. There are already examples of small scale Combined Heat and Power (CHP) schemes in the borough such as in the Lakeside Centre Leisure Centre in Killingworth. More detailed options in relation to similar schemes continue to be explored.

3.7. Scoping work was also carried out to look at Windspeeds across the borough. Early indications showed that there was potential wind energy capacity, but this is significantly constrained by its landscape and visual sensitivities. Unacceptable harmful impacts rule out significant opportunities for wind turbines although there may be some opportunities for small to medium scale wind turbines. Broad areas are considered in further detail in the next Section of the Background Paper.

3.8. There are future opportunities for generation of renewable energy, such as heat networks, in the Local Plan Strategic Sites of Killingworth Moor and Murton Gap. Identified and viable opportunities within these areas will be included in more detailed masterplans as they are developed.

3.9. As technology develops and the requirements of renewable energy advances there may be future opportunities over the Plan period. This will be continued to monitored and explored.

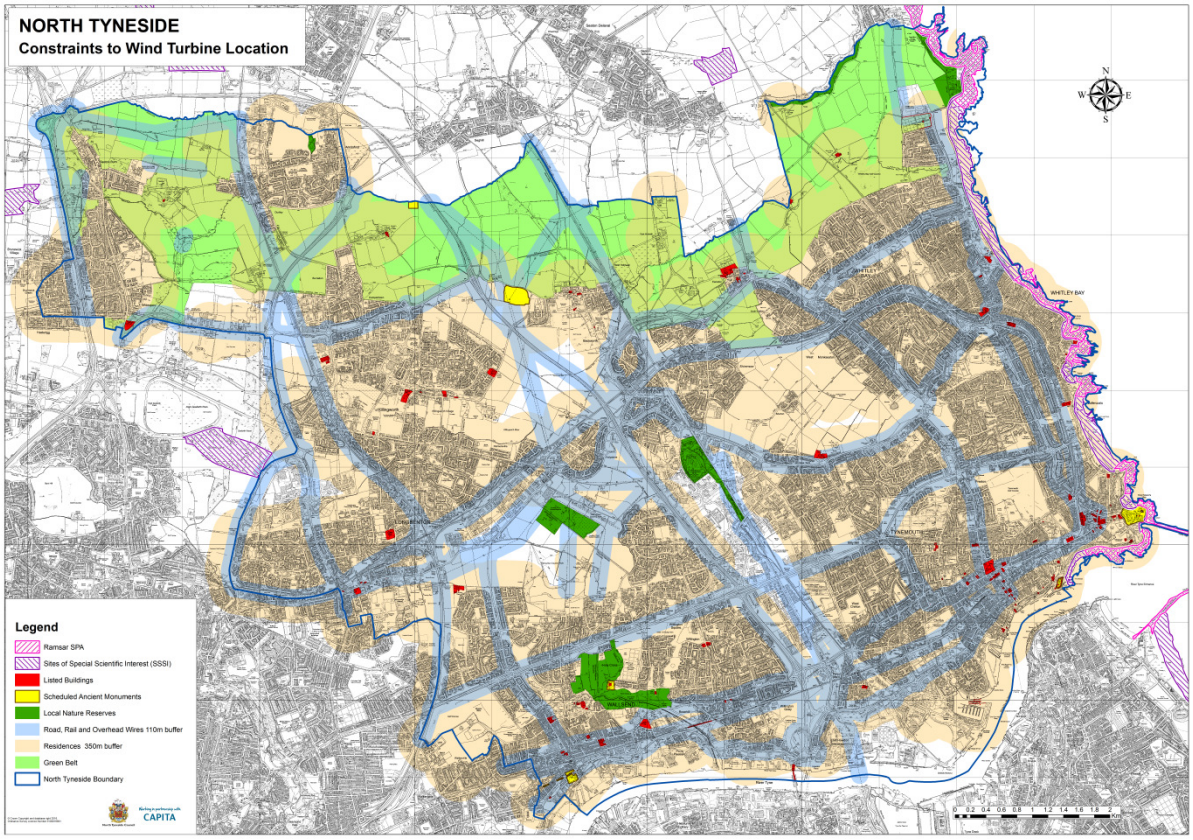
3.10. Perhaps the biggest opportunity for renewable energy and low carbon technology in North Tyneside is for renewable industries along the riverside. The riverside is an area of economic growth and is well placed to take advantage of significant inward investment opportunities around renewable energy low carbon manufacturing industries. The riverside area is actively promoted to the renewable and low carbon energy, advanced manufacturing and offshore sectors. This provides an opportunity to deliver the Local Plan strategic objectives of addressing climate change and managing natural resources.

4. Consideration of the Ministerial Statement, June 2015

4.1. The Local Plan policy approach has considered the Ministerial Statement from June 2015 in relation to wind turbines. In light of the Ministerial Statement in relation to wind turbines in June 2015 and the amendments to the National Planning Practice Guidance, the Council has considered broad areas in the borough which may be suitable for wind energy. The physical, economic and environmental constraints have been mapped across the borough to identify areas of least constraint. The constraints include:

- The footprints of internationally and nationally designated sites including:
  - The Northumbria Coast Ramsar
  - Northumbria Coast Special Protection Area
  - Northumberland Shore Sites of Special Scientific Interest.
  - The 7 Local Nature Reserves together
- Heritage assets across the borough such as World Heritage Sites, Historic Parks and Gardens, Listed Buildings and Scheduled Ancient Monuments.
- Residential housing - including a 350 meter buffer around it.
- A-roads, railway and metro lines and electricity pylons – including a 110 meter buffer around them
- The whole of the Green Belt to the north of the Borough

4.2. There are further constraints posed by Newcastle International Airport aerodrome safeguard area which covers the whole of North Tyneside, however areas are not able to be shown on the plan which would be acceptable to the Airport. The aerodrome safeguard area does not mean that the Airport would object to all turbines but all proposals should have early consultation with the airport to identify potential adverse effects on the safety of aviation operations and navigational systems.



4.3. The broad areas identified on the plan give greater certainty to the areas where the principle of wind energy development is generally appropriate. The identification of these areas does not imply that planning permission should be granted and any proposals should demonstrate investigatory work to justify specific sites as well as having support in principle from the Airport.

5. Community Led Renewable Energy Initiatives

5.1. The NPPF sets out that Local Planning Authorities should support community-led initiatives for renewable and low carbon energy. In North Tyneside there are no Community Led Renewable Energy Initiatives and the Council is yet to be approached with any local community energy projects. However, in the future community initiatives could play an increasingly important role and should be encouraged as a way of providing positive local benefit from renewable energy development.

5.2. The Local Plan policy DM7.6 encourages and supports community energy schemes that reduce, manage and generate energy to bring benefits to the local community.

The Council's Low Carbon Plan, approved by Cabinet in March 2016, also commits to support local community energy projects through providing relevant advice, energy data and signposting. Support will be provided to community initiatives by the Council's Planning Team and the Sustainability Team.

6. Conclusion

6.1. National planning policy requires Local Plans to contain positive strategies for promoting renewable energy. North Tyneside Local Plan does not identify any suitable areas for renewable energy and low carbon technology although this has been considered as part of this background paper. Instead the Local Plan sets a positive framework for the development of renewable energy across the borough reflecting both national planning policy and local evidence. The proposed Local Plan policy DM7.6 sets out a criteria based approach to encourage acceptable proposals to come forward. This addresses each proposal on its merits, and works in conjunction with other local plan polices to ensure that any impacts are, or can be made acceptable. The policy has been developed to address all scales of renewable energy and ensures impacts are considered.

7. Supporting Documents

- National Planning Policy Framework, 2012
- Planning Policy Guidance: Renewable and low carbon energy, Updated 2015
- Ministerial Statement: Wind Farms, 2015
- North East Regional Renewable Energy Strategy, 2005
- North Tyneside: A Landscape and Townscape Character Description, 2014
- North Tyneside Sustainable Energy Action Plan, 2020
- North Tyneside Low Carbon Plan, 2016
- North Tyneside Annual Greenhouse Gas Report, 2015
- North Tyneside Climate change strategy, 2010
- North Tyneside Carbon Management Strategy, 2010

- North Tyneside Heat Mapping Report, 2015