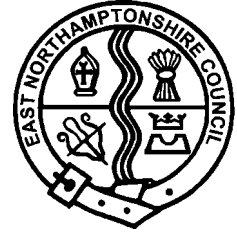


# East Northamptonshire Council

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## Adopted Scoping Opinion

<b>Please ask for</b>	<b>Direct Dial</b>	<b>Our Ref.</b>	<b>Your Ref.</b>	<b>Date:</b>
James Croucher	(01832) 742240 (01832) 742138	EN/06/00838/QRV		16 June 2006

To: Phillips Planning Services, 7 Kingsway, Bedford, **MK42 9BA**

**Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (As Amended).**

**Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment)(England and Wales) Regulations 1999 (Statutory Instrument 1999/293)(as amended)**

### **ADOPTED SCOPING OPINION**

On 12<sup>th</sup> April 2006 East Northamptonshire Council received your request for us to provide you with a Scoping Opinion under the above Regulations. The Council has consulted a number of bodies and has considered the information which you have provided; you should note that it refers specifically to the area of the site which falls within East Northamptonshire and that different policies will apply to the area of the site which falls within Bedfordshire. You should also note that any proposal for a biomass power station on this site would fall outside the legal jurisdiction of East Northamptonshire Council as the local planning authority for determination, with the determining authority instead being the relevant Minerals and Waste Local Planning Authority (Northamptonshire County Council).

This letter sets out East Northamptonshire Council's Adopted Scoping Opinion on the following development proposal and has today been placed on the authority's Public Register in accordance with the Regulations.

#### **Renewable Energy development at former RAF Chelveston, Northamptonshire**

The proposal outlined and set out in more detail in the supporting information involves a windfarm development comprising of approximately 17no. three-bladed horizontal-axis wind turbines; each turbine would have a maximum height of 125m to blade tip, composed of a maximum hub height of 80m and a maximum rotor blade diameter of 90m. Output from each turbine would not exceed 3MW.

Also proposed is a biomass energy recovery and composting unit, designed to recover the energy from liquid and solid organic biomass. Two new buildings (each not exceeding 5000sqm floor area) are proposed, as well as storage and processing tanks.

Two dwellings are proposed at the site access points. A permanent underground high-voltage grid connection is proposed, as is a permanent anemometer mast not exceeding 80m hub height.



## Introduction

In general, an Environmental Impact Assessment should identify, describe and evaluate the likely significant environmental effects of implementing a proposed development (as well as any reasonable alternatives) taking into account the objectives and geographical scope of the development. The assessment should cover:

- (i) the relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely changes to this environment without implementation of the proposals;
- (ii) the environmental characteristics of areas likely to be affected
- (iii) any existing environmental problems or management plans which are relevant to the assessment
- (iv) the environmental protection objectives, established at international, national, regional or local level which are relevant to the assessment and the way those objectives and any other environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation;
- (v) the likely significant effects on the environment, including issues relating to fauna, flora, soil, water, air and climatic factors
- (vi) the measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible mitigate or compensate for any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the proposed development

## Planning Policy

The East Northamptonshire District Local Plan was adopted in 1996 and does not contain any specific policies relating to renewable energy (either wind farms or biomass facilities). As this is the case, general policy guidance will be sought from Planning Policy Statement 22 on Renewable Energy, and the companion guide to that document. Both documents were published by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (now replaced by the Department for Communities and Local Government) and can be reviewed at [www.odpm.gov.uk](http://www.odpm.gov.uk).

Paragraph 16 of PPS22 recognises that wind turbines are likely to have the greatest visual impact, however local authorities should recognise the impact of turbines on the landscape will vary according to the size and number. From assessing the scoping report it is proposed to erect approximately 17 turbines at a maximum height of 125m; this will need to be closely assessed at application stage in the context of the surrounding landscape to determine the proposal's visual impact. You will also need to consider the cumulative impact of your proposal together with other nearby proposed/approved turbine developments.

PPS22 sets out the key considerations in respect of planning policy as being visual impact and potential impact on nearby resident's amenity. As this is the case policy GEN1 of the Local Plan is relevant in that it only allows planning permission for development that would not have an adverse impact upon the district's landscape quality. The Council would require extensive evidence to justify these concerns. The companion guide to PPS22 sets out in significant detail the range of considerations which must be assessed in this type of planning application and therefore the criteria for assessment within PPS22 must form an integral part of your Environmental Impact Assessment.



A range of other national planning policy guidance is relevant to this proposal, including:

- (a) PPS1 refers to Delivering Sustainable Development and is relevant to this proposal.
- (b) PPG3 refers to Housing and is applicable to the residential elements of this proposal.
- (c) PPG4 refers to Industrial and Commercial Development and Small Firms and is applicable to this proposal.
- (d) PPS7 refers to Sustainable Development in Rural Areas and is applicable to this proposal.
- (e) PPG8 (paragraph 36) refers to Telecommunication and is applicable to this proposal.
- (f) PPS9 refers to Nature Conservation and is applicable to this proposal.
- (g) PPG10 refers to Planning and Waste Management and will be relevant to the biomass element of the proposal.
- (h) PPG15 (paragraph 2.26) refers to Planning and the Historic Environment and is applicable to this proposal.
- (i) PPG16 refers to Archaeology and Planning and is applicable to this proposal.
- (j) PPS23 refers to Planning and Pollution Control and is applicable to this proposal.
- (k) PPG24 refers to Planning and Noise and is applicable to this proposal.
- (l) PPG25 refers to Flood Risk and is applicable to this proposal.

#### Regional Spatial Strategy 8

The Regional Spatial Strategy for The East Midlands (RSS8) was published by the Government Office for the East Midlands in March 2005 and contains a number of high-level policies against which your formal planning application would need to be assessed. Of note are the following policies:

- (a) Policy 6: Regional Priorities for Development in Rural Areas
- (b) Policy 27: Protecting and Enhancing the Region's Natural and Cultural Assets
- (c) Policy 28: Priorities for Enhancing the Region's Biodiversity
- (d) Policy 30: Priorities for the Management and Enhancement of the Region's Landscape
- (e) Policy 31: Regional Priorities for the Historic Environment
- (f) Policy 38: Regional Waste Strategy
- (g) Policy 39: Regional Priorities for Waste Management
- (h) Policy 40: Regional Priorities for Energy Reduction and Efficiency
- (i) Policy 41: Regional Priorities for Renewable Energy
- (j) Policy 54: Development of a Regional Freight Strategy

#### The Northamptonshire County Structure Plan

This Plan was adopted in March 2001 contains a specific policy relating to renewable energy. As this plan forms part of the development plan for Northamptonshire, it will be a consideration in any proposals submitted. Policy EN1 of the Structure Plan recognises the general environmental benefits associated with renewable energy sources and makes provision for the development of renewable energy schemes. This policy requires propose development to have regard to the immediate and wider impacts on the environment and local amenity, and sets out that measures will need to be taken both in and after construction to minimise the impact of the development on the environment and local amenity. You would need to clearly set out what you consider the local and wider benefits that your proposal would bring.

Northamptonshire County Council's Minerals and Waste Local Plan will be relevant to the biomass element of the proposal.



## Topic areas for assessment

### 1. Life cycle analysis

A full life cycle analysis comparison should be undertaken for each proposed renewable energy source. The environmental benefits of the full-life of the site “from cradle to grave” should be assessed and compared to other methods. The Council requires this information to determine whether more appropriate renewable energy sources or locations should be used, which would have less impact. You should include within your Environmental Impact Assessment a full and detailed balance sheet of emissions emitted and saved, taking into account standby power arrangements. The Council will need to carefully balance your stated carbon emission reduction benefits against the range of other impacts and considerations set out within this Scoping Opinion; accordingly information should be included within the Assessment to consider

- (a) unit cost information and revenues
- (b) electricity output
- (c) proportion of output used and required by the National Grid
- (d) the requirement for standby generating capacity
- (e) CO<sub>2</sub> savings and their methods of calculation
- (f) evaluation of CO<sub>2</sub> output from construction and transport-related sources
- (g) a comparison of CO<sub>2</sub> output from other sources
- (h) wind speeds and their variability
- (i) average load capacity

### 2. Visual impact

The visual impact of the proposed turbines must be properly and accurately assessed. The proposed structures would be large and prominent; accordingly, their impact on the character of the landscape will need to be considered in detail within your Environmental Impact Assessment. As set out above, you will need to consider cumulative impact with other nearby proposals and existing turbines. Impact on the skyline should be assessed, as should the effect of the introduction of high-level movement into the landscape. Matters of scale and form of development (both proposed turbines and proposed biomass related buildings) should be considered and assessed.

The characterisation of the surrounding countryside should also make reference to Northamptonshire County Council's Landscape Character Assessment (LCA), which is near to completion. The Northamptonshire LCA has new baseline data sets and common methodology statements which should be considered within your Environmental Impact Assessment. The major landscape feature of the Yardley-Whittlewood Ridge (which runs in a roughly south-west to north-east direction along this edge of Northamptonshire) needs to be specifically taken into consideration. You will also need to assess the impact of the proposal on the visual qualities of the proposed Nene Valley Regional Park facility. The comparative height of existing landscape features and their relative prominence should form part of your visual impact assessment (including the existing military communications tower). Please contact Northamptonshire County Council, Sustainable Development department if further assistance or information on the LCA is required.

Photographic montages of the proposed development should be undertaken from positions agreed in advance. Montages should not show any objects in the immediate foreground that would alter perspective assessment, and should be free of subsequent changes.



You will need to ensure that the cumulative visual impact of multiple wind turbine developments is taken into account.

Your Environmental Impact Assessment should assess the nature, extent, siting and specification of any landscape planting which would be required to reduce the visual impact of the biomass element of the proposal and draw appropriate conclusions. The general specification of new landscape planting should be assessed within the document, based on native species which are ideally typical to the local area.

3. Residential amenities

The methodology set out in your submitted report would appear to be an appropriate way of assessing noise and odour issues. It will be important to consider the former RAF housing as the nearest sensitive receptors. Noise assessment of the impact of vehicle movements bringing waste to and from the site must be considered. The background wind noise measurements must take place during at least two seasons where the background noise may be at its lowest, with periods of not less than 14 days at each receptor site; your assessments should ideally take place over a full annual cycle, and if this is not the case you should justify why you do not consider this to be necessary. The biomass element of your proposal may introduce pollution by way of odour, particulates, dust and toxins; a full assessment of this should therefore be included within the Environmental Impact Assessment. The impact of vibration, strobe effects and blade flicker on nearby residents should be assessed with your document, with the Assessment clearly identifying blade shadow zones for different hours of the day (both for the summer and winter solstices). The potential for structures of the type and height proposed to pose an overbearing impact on surrounding residences will also need to be assessed.

4. Land contamination

Your Environmental Impact Assessment should take into account the former history of the site and the likelihood that contamination may be present which would affect the proposed development. Planning Policy Statement 23 advises that prior to an application being determined, the authority must be satisfied by the submission of "sufficient information" by the applicant "to determine the existence or otherwise of contamination, its nature and the risks it may pose and whether these can satisfactorily reduced to an acceptable level". A phased or tiered approach is recommended. Any potential source of contamination will therefore need to be identified and considered in a comprehensive environmental risk assessment.

5. Groundwater and surface water drainage

The scoping report correctly identifies the need to determine the groundwater level and flow patterns beneath the site prior to the construction of any foundations. This should be undertaken (and the results included in the environmental statement) to provide information for any decisions which may need to be made regarding future dewatering operations during construction, or the effect of placing impermeable barriers to flow below the water table. The site lies on the watershed of the Rivers Nene and Ouse; the impact of run-off on both river basins must be assessed.



Any Environmental Impact Assessment should consider the hydrogeology / hydrology of the area to ensure the continued protection of nearby potential receptors. Nearby receptors should be identified and the risk posed to them assessed. Groundwater level data for the site should be considered as part of your assessment. A water feature survey to include all relevant groundwater abstractions and surface water receptors that may be in the surrounding area would also be useful.

From BGS mapping of the site it is noted that the underlying geology comprises Oxford clay of unknown thickness. Areas of Cornbrash and Blisworth limestone outcrop West of Caldecott and Chelveston, some 2km from the site. The drift geology appears to be boulder clay over the majority of the site, with some deposits of sand and gravel, however, these appear to lie outside the development area. On this basis, the foundations would be unlikely to have a large hydrogeological impact, as both the Oxford clay and boulder clay are considered non-aquifers, with minimal groundwater movement.

The EIA should nonetheless include evidence that the site has been surveyed to ensure there are no pockets of sand and gravel, which might form minor perched aquifers. There do not appear to be any protected rights, surface water features or water dependant SSSIs on or near the site, but this should be checked and addressed by the EIA.

In accordance with Planning Policy Statement 23, the following should be carried out and submitted along with the Environmental Statement:

- 1) A desk study carried out in accordance with industry good practice. This should include the identification of previous site uses, potential contaminants that might reasonably be expected given those uses and other relevant information. Using this information a diagrammatical representation (conceptual model) for the site of all potential contaminant sources, pathways and receptors should be produced.
- 2) Should it be warranted by the desk study, a site investigation should be designed for the site using the information obtained from the desk study and conceptual model. This should be submitted to, and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to that investigation being undertaken. The investigation must be comprehensive enough to enable:
  - a) A risk assessment to be undertaken relating to the receptors associated with the proposed new use, those uses that will be retained (if any) and other receptors on and off the site that may be affected, and
  - b) refinement of the conceptual model, and
  - c) the development of a method statement detailing the remediation requirements.
- 3) The site investigation should be undertaken in accordance with details approved by the Local Planning Authority and a risk assessment undertaken.
- 4) A method statement detailing the remediation requirements using the information obtained from the site investigation should be submitted to the Local Planning Authority. This should be approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to that remediation being carried out on the site.



Site investigation works should be undertaken by a specialist consultant. Land contamination investigations must be carried out in accordance with BS 5930:1999 - Code of practice for site investigations and BS 10175:2001 - Investigation of potentially contaminated sites - Code of Practice. Soil and water analysis should be fully MCERTS accredited.

Further information on the requirements for land contamination reports submitted to the Environment Agency for review can be found on our website at the following address: [www.environment-agency.gov.uk/commodata/acrobat/devguidev1\\_1155225.pdf](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/commodata/acrobat/devguidev1_1155225.pdf)

In accordance with Paragraph 60 of Planning Policy Guidance note 25, the applicant should carry out an assessment of flood risk and the run-off implications of their proposals that is appropriate to the scale and nature of the development and the risks involved. The flood risk assessment can form part of the environmental statement or be a 'standalone' document; the applicant should be advised to contact the Environment Agency's Development Control team on 01536 385138 to discuss the required contents of the flood risk assessment.

Details of the foul and surface water systems for all elements of the development, including the new gatehouse dwellings, should be provided in the environmental statement.

#### 6. Water Resources

The Environmental Impact Assessment should demonstrate that the development will not affect any water features (including wells, boreholes, springs, streams or ponds) in the area, including licensed and unlicensed abstractions. The applicant should contact the Environment Agency for details of abstractions in the vicinity before works commence.

In general, water resources interests are adequately highlighted in the scoping report. However, it does not state how any water demands will be met. This will need to be discussed in the Environmental Impact Assessment, and it is assumed that the demand will be met using mains supply.

The applicant should note the following advice with regard to water resources implications and requirements of the proposed development:

- (a) The development lies within the area traditionally supplied by Anglian Water (although the developer may choose to take supply from another company, and the Agency would encourage consideration of minimising the environmental impact of providing a water supply). It is assumed that water will be supplied using existing sources and under existing abstraction licence permissions. The applicant should seek advice from the Anglian Water to find out whether this is the case, or whether a new source needs to be developed or a new abstraction licence is sought.
- (b) Under the terms of the Water Resources Act 1991 (as amended by the Water Act 2003), an abstraction licence may be required from the Environment Agency for the abstraction of water from any inland water or underground strata. This is dependent on water resource availability and may not be granted.



- (c) The applicant is entitled to abstract up to 20 cubic metres of water per day without the need for a water abstraction licence, provided he/she has a right of access to the source of supply. The applicant should note however that if an abstraction causes loss or damage to another person, that person will have the legal right to claim damages.

If dewatering activities are necessary during construction of the turbine foundations, it would be advisable to consult the EA to let them know that dewatering is taking place. At present, dewatering activities are exempt from licensing, under the Water Act 2003. However, depending on the timescales of this proposal and likely start dates, dewatering may become licensable. Similarly, any dewatering for the purpose of claiming materials for site track construction (as mentioned in the scoping document) or otherwise should be notified to the Agency as a licence may be required.

#### 7. Rights of Way

Scant attention appears to have been paid within your submitted document to the impact on recreational users of the area. Approximately 4 miles of rights of way pass within the application site; there are two bridleways passing through the site (MM17 and MM18) and footpath MM16 is on the edge of the proposed works. A further 7 miles of rights of way are adjacent to or give access to the site. There is specific guidance regarding the proximity of proposed turbine development to existing rights of way which appears not to have been followed in your initial submission document. Your Environmental Impact Assessment would need to acknowledge rights of way considerations and fully assess the detail of the proposed scheme against the various separation standards. You would also need to fully consider how the construction phase and ongoing traffic generated by the proposed biomass element would impact on leisure users. Public rights of way could be affected during the lifetime of the proposed biomass facility by way of odour, dust and noise; these impacts should be assessed specifically regarding existing rights of way.

Impact on bridleways must be fully considered, including information on the risk of blade failure incidents and ice problems. The potential for turbine movement to disturb horses must be assessed. The British Horse Society has, following extensive consultation, adopted a national policy which seeks to site turbines at least 200m from any bridleway; the Countryside Agency has also considered this issue and advises that, for safety reasons, turbines should be located at least four times the overall turbine height from National Trails. Your assessment must make specific reference to these guideline distances.



8. Archaeology and Cultural Heritage

The site lies in an area where widespread evidence for the historic environment survives in the form of buried archaeological remains and visible landscape remains. Your Environmental Impact Assessment should therefore include an assessment of the development's impact on known & as-yet unidentified archaeological remains. The impact of the proposals on the wider surviving historic landscape should also be assessed. It should be additionally noted that the former RAF base is included in the Sites and Monuments record, and therefore your assessment should not overlook the potential significance of buried and extant features and structures associated with the relatively recent military use of the site. In order to provide the information further research and assessment should be carried out by suitably experienced and qualified consultants. This research should include an initial desk-based study of the existing historic environment information and further site-based archaeological survey/trial investigation works to establish more precisely the baseline conditions as well as to inform assessment and mitigation proposals. The assessment should be prepared in line with standards and guidance for archaeological desk-based assessment and for field evaluation issued by the *Institute of Field Archaeologists*. Northamptonshire County Council, Built and Natural Environment department would be happy to prepare a brief outlining the scope of the works required, if this would assist the applicants in addressing this aspect of the EIA.

There are a number of listed buildings whose setting might be impacted by the proposed development and as such a full assessment of the impact of your proposal on local cultural and built heritage must be included within your Environmental Impact Assessment document.

9. Aircraft safety

Safeguarding criteria is clearly set out by National Air Traffic Services Ltd and you would need to ensure that your proposal is objectively assessed against this criteria. The impact of the proposed development on navigation aids, air-ground voice communication systems and RADAR operations must all be assessed in detail. Assessment of aircraft safety implications must be undertaken in accordance with the Department for Trade and Industry document "Wind Energy and Aviation Interests – Interim Guidelines". The guidance can be viewed online at [www.bwea.com/aviation/wind-energy-and-aviation-interim-guidelines.pdf](http://www.bwea.com/aviation/wind-energy-and-aviation-interim-guidelines.pdf)

Specific assessment and analysis of the impact of the proposal on the safety and amenity of gliders flying from Riseley should be included within your document.

10. Highway safety and capacity

The impact on the local highway network during the construction stage of the development should be fully considered for both the proposed turbines and the proposed biomass elements of the proposal. Ongoing traffic generation from the proposed biomass element of the proposal should be fully considered in a Traffic Impact Assessment, to include any proposed routing agreement relating to HGV traffic visiting the proposed biomass facility. Forecast daily and weekly traffic movements by vehicle type and weight should be included within the Transport Assessment, split by site entrance. A full and detailed traffic volume and flow analysis (by vehicle type and time of day) should be included and correlated with the proposed input and output volumes entering and departing from the site.



You will need to assess the likely demand of visitors wishing to view the wind turbines and set how this would impact on the existing levels of nuisance or danger to users of the surrounding public highway network. In addition, you should assess the level of provision within the application site to accommodate visitor parking to avoid indiscriminate parking within the highway to the detriment of free flowing traffic and highway safety.

Your Environmental Impact Assessment should assess the likely demand of visitors wishing to view the wind turbines, and whether or not this would cause undue nuisance or danger to users of the surrounding public highway network.

#### 11. Ornithology

It is noted that English Nature does not have any specific avian survey guidelines from windfarm proposals. A breeding bird survey of the site should be carried out using the “Common Birds Census” and/or “Survey Methods for use in Assessment of the Impacts of Onshore Wind Farms on Bird Communities” methodology (Scottish Natural Heritage, November 2005), with a minimum of three full surveys taking place in the period May-July. There is no explicit mention in your draft document of surveys of breeding birds beside waders and vantage-point surveys and your full Environmental Impact Assessment would need to address this. The development described in your Scoping Opinion Request would be considered by English Nature as being a “large” windfarm and accordingly the survey effort is likely to be scrutinised carefully. Your full assessment of the potential impact on birds would need to include matters such as disturbance leading to displacement/exclusion, collision risk/mortality, and loss/degradation of habitat. Other factors to take into account in undertaking this type of survey will include:

- (a) surveys covering a full calendar year are generally considered to be the minimum effort required;
- (b) surveys cover the full range of seasonal, diurnal and weather conditions to ensure some survey effort covers poor visibility conditions;
- (c) nocturnal surveys for owls and night-flying migrants if appropriate;
- (d) record flight behaviour (e.g. altitude and direction) and foraging areas used by different species;
- (e) the number, location and time spent at Vantage Points (VPs) should be suitable for the size, shape and topography of the site – no point within the application site should be greater than 2km away from a VP and all areas within the site should be viewable from at least one VP
- (f) consider that woodland, high hedgerows and existing buildings or topographical features might block the view between a VP and an area of the site;
- (g) a consideration of habitat outside the site boundary should be made to aid discussion of potential displacement of birds
- (h) the impact of the proposal on migration routes



An appropriate breeding bird survey should be undertaken and form part of your Environmental Impact Assessment, taking into account:

- (i) three visits between April and July are generally considered to be the minimum effort required, but still may not be sufficient for territorial mapping;
- (ii) territorial mapping methods are generally more appropriate than methods based on the BTO Breeding Survey (BBS);
- (iii) all habitats/areas should be covered up to 500m away from the site boundary where necessary;
- (iv) flying over species should be recorded (e.g. swallows, swifts, raptors) with the direction and approximate altitude recorded

You should be aware of the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), the proposed Special Protection Area (SPA). The SSSI was notified in November 2005 and English Nature now has ministerial approval to proceed with consultation on the SPA. The SSSI/SPA lies approximately four kilometres from the closest proposed turbine at its closest point; your Environmental Impact Assessment would therefore need to assess whether or not the proposal would be likely to have a significant impact on the SPA and accordingly whether or not an Appropriate Assessment would be required under the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994. In particular, due to the notifiable assemblage of non-breeding waterbirds at the Upper Nene Valley SSSI/SPA, sufficient wintering bird surveys should be carried out to meaningfully assess any potential impacts. Given the proximity of the application site to the SSSI/SPA it is unlikely to be appropriate to conduct a lower level of bird survey effort during the winter. In particular, a sufficient survey effort relating to wintering waterbirds (including foraging golden plover and lapwing) should be undertaken and the results assessed; this would allow a meaningful analysis to be made of the impact of the proposed development on non-breeding birds and migratory waterbirds. Consultation with English Nature regarding bird surveys should be undertaken prior to the survey period.

## 12. Designated and protected habitats

An analysis of the potential impacts of the proposal on all relevant statutory and non-statutory protected sites must be included within the Assessment, to include

- (a) Internationally designated sites such as SPAs (as referred to above); Special Areas of Conservation (SACs); and Ramsar Sites. Details of internationally designated sites are available from the Joint Nature Conservation Committee's website at [www.jncc.org.uk](http://www.jncc.org.uk)
- (b) Nationally designated sites such as SSSIs (as referred to above) and National Nature Reserves (NNRs). Details are available from the Multi-Agency Geographical Information for the Countryside website at [www.magic.gov.uk](http://www.magic.gov.uk) or from English Nature at [www.english-nature.org.uk](http://www.english-nature.org.uk)
- (c) Sites of local importance such as County Wildlife Sites (CWS) and Local Nature Reserves (to include CWS at Caldecott Verge, Stanwick Pastures, Beggar's Lane, Hargrave Verges ,and Old Meadow)
- (d) Geological/geomorphological sites (RIGS) and Sites of Local Importance for Earth Science (to include Chelveston Cliff in Stanwick, Stanwick Quarry, and Netherfield in Stanwick)
- (e) special attention and assessment of the parts of the site which contain elements of permanent pasture, which is likely to be of a neutral grassland habitat type.





Given the site's close proximity to protected habitats the survey methodology should be agreed in advance with English Nature.

The application site lies less than 1km from Yelden Meadows SSSI and as such an assessment of how the proposed development might impact on the special features of the site should be made. In particular, due to the nature of the botanical communities present, any impacts on the hydrological regime of Yelden Meadow SSSI should be fully investigated and detailed within the Assessment.

Appropriate and relevant species surveys should be undertaken within the maximum land-take of the proposal and these may also need to extend beyond the site's boundaries to a distance of up to 500m; this would apply for example if nesting birds' territories or birds' foraging areas extend beyond the site boundary or if a group of ponds used by a metapopulation of great crested newts is identified both within and beyond the site boundary. Species that are suggested for field and desk studies include (but are not restricted to):

- (i) species listed under the Bonn Convention (Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals);
- (ii) Species listed under the Berne Convention (Annex 1 and 2 of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats 1979);
- (iii) Red Data Book (RDB) species;
- (iv) Species listed in Schedules 1, 5 and 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended);
- (v) Species listed in national, regional and local Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs), including lower plants and invertebrates;
- (vi) amphibians and reptiles both within the site and within 500m
- (vii) other potentially under-recorded groups that might reasonably be present, based on the habitats identified in the phase one and two surveys (for example lower plants and invertebrates)

Surveys should use agreed standard techniques where available and applicable and be undertaken at suitable times of the year by qualified (and where appropriate licensed) ecologists. The methodology design and subsequent discussion of results should aim to identify the following information:

- (a) in there any known history of legally protected and other notable species on the site?
- (b) what species are present?
- (c) what population is present or would be affected by the proposal?
- (d) what can be done to mitigate for any impact?
- (e) what opportunities exist for enhancement?
- (f) is residual impact acceptable/necessary?
- (g) will a licence be required from English Nature or DEFRA?



A phase one habitat survey (annotated on maps of a suitable scale) should be undertaken which will identify habitats of nature conservation interest. Where recent information is not readily available from other sources (e.g. Local Biological Record Centres etc), identified habitats of nature conservation interest should be surveyed at a finer level using the appropriate phase 2 methodology (e.g. National Vegetation Classification [NVC]) so that the interest of these sites can be placed in context. Surveys should also record the vascular plants associated with these habitats and their relative abundance. The presence and specific locations of any rare and uncommon plant species should be recorded.

The importance of comprehensive baseline ecological surveys should be recognised within the Environmental Impact Assessment; the results and subsequent analysis should:

- (i) provide an assessment of the overall potential impact of the development on wildlife;
- (ii) advise on the number, design and siting of proposed turbines, along with lighting issues;
- (iii) guide mitigation, compensation and habitat enhancement proposals;
- (iv) provide “before” data to feed into possible “before-after-control-impact” (BACI) studies. These are comprehensive studies which include a comparison of the site before and after development and should be considered for inclusion within your Environmental Impact Assessment document.

Areas of the site which are currently permanent pasture should be surveyed with particular attention paid to their botanical and invertebrate content. Your assessment should include detailed proposals for their retention, recreation and future management (as appropriate) in order to maintain and enhance levels of local biodiversity. Specific reference should be made to the provision of “Green Infrastructure”; for further information please refer to the Wildlife Trust, Lings House, Northampton NN3 8BE.

#### 13. Telecommunications

Your Environmental Impact Assessment should include details of the impact of the proposed development on existing mobile telecommunication networks. You will need to assess whether any existing mobile code systems operators’ existing (or proposed) coverage area would be blocked by the proposed development, and if so what mitigation measures are proposed to address this.

#### 14. Electromagnetic interference

A full appraisal of the potential impact on radio and television reception should be contained within the Environmental Impact Assessment. Neither the BBC nor Ofcom assess the potential impact of wind turbines on terrestrial television reception, but has provided a internet-based assessment software which will enable you to carry out a proper assessment. The software is available at <http://windfarms.kw.bbc.co.uk> and a full assessment of this impact should be included within your Assessment. Your identification of local background conditions (notably blade flicker) should ideally take place over a full annual cycle in order to take into account natural changes; if your information is not provided on this basis then you should justify why you do not consider this to be necessary.



15. **Air quality**  
An Air Quality Impact Assessment must be included within your Environmental Impact Assessment, considering the impact of the proposed biomass plant both on its own and cumulatively with other existing nearby sources of air pollution (including commercial activities and transport-related pollution). You should ensure that comparator data is included from a similar plant already operational. Your Air Quality Impact Assessment should include (but not be limited to) considering the impact of the proposed biomass plant with regard to odour; particulates; dust; smoke; gases; and toxins. You will need to take into account prevailing wind directions and assess the impact on air quality at nearby sensitive receptors (particularly surrounding residences and villages). Your analysis of existing air quality conditions should take place over a full annual cycle in order that your air quality impact assessment can take into account changes in ambient air conditions caused by varying seasonal weather conditions. Community-based air quality monitoring should be undertaken (in addition to onsite monitoring) to enable a proper assessment of air quality impact on local communities. A specific assessment must be made of the impact of the proposed turbines on localised air patterns which may affect emission dispersion from the bio-mass element of the proposal.

Bioaerosol monitoring may be required dependent on the location of the nearest sensitive receptor. There will be a presumption against any new composting where the boundary of the facility is within 250 metres of a workplace or the boundary of a dwelling, unless the application is accompanied by a site-specific risk assessment, based on clear, independent scientific evidence which shows that the bioaerosol levels are and can be maintained at appropriate levels at the dwelling or workplace.

16. **External lighting**  
A full assessment of the potential for light pollution from the proposed development should be included within the Environmental Impact Assessment document, to include security lighting; operational access road lighting; and safety lighting (including warning lights to turbines if applicable). Light spillage information should be provided within the assessment based on the lighting specification which you propose to implement.
17. **Grid connection**  
Your Environmental Impact Assessment must include specific assessment of the impacts of the proposed connection of the site to the existing national grid. All topic areas and considerations set out above will need to be considered in your separate and full analysis of the proposed grid connection. Underground connections could adversely impact on archaeological or water table concerns, whilst the additional visual, ornithological and human health impacts of overhead pylon-carried wires would need to be assessed. A full assessment of the impact of the proposed connection to the National Grid will be crucial for the proper assessment of the overall impact of your proposal.
18. **Construction and decommissioning**  
Information should be provided and assessed regarding the use of appropriate methodologies to ensure minimal impact on the environment in relation to construction and decommissioning. The assessment should include proposals for the site once decommissioning and restoration are complete.



19. Biomass-specific information

East Northamptonshire Council will not be the determining authority for this element of your proposal and therefore you should seek a separate specific Scoping Opinion from Northamptonshire County Council with regard to this element of your Environmental Impact Assessment (if you have not already done so). East Northamptonshire Council will be consulted by the County Council with regard to this element of the scheme however and in this respect we would advise that we would expect the following broad range of information to be submitted and assessed in connection with the biomass element of the proposal:

- (a) details of the anaerobic process to be used including cycle length and operational temperatures
- (b) the weekly and cumulative annual volume of waste product envisaged
- (c) the maximum volume of waste proposed to be stored onsite at any one time and details of waste storage and product/chemical storage
- (d) how waste byproducts will be stored and removed from the site, and at what frequency
- (e) a full evaluation of, and measures proposed to control, odour, vermine, dust, emissions (including bioaerosols) and litter
- (f) a breakdown of the waste types proposed to be processed on the site (including details on household, toxic, commercial, medical, animal and other wastes)
- (g) full details of all processes to include power generation from methane; composting; waste preparation; weekly and cumulative annual volume of waste to be received; waste products to be disposed of off-site; products/chemicals to be used onsite
- (h) details of requirements and location of any methane flares or similar discharge control apparatus
- (i) a full evaluation of the sources and volumes of all site material inputs, finished materials, equipment, consumables (etc) should be provided to include a transport emission analysis

The Environmental Impact Assessment must demonstrate that wastes spread to the land area will be within any Nitrate Vulnerable Zone limit.

The Environmental Impact Assessment will need to detail the pollution prevention measures that will be incorporated into the development, with particular reference to containment and bunding for liquid wastes and fire prevention measures. The following comments and requirements should be taken into account in the preparation of this section of the ES:

- (i) It is recommended that all of the oil & fuels to be used in the proposed development are stored securely and must meet the regulatory standards set out in Pollution Prevention & Guidance Notes - PPG2 issued by the Agency.
- (ii) the site is within a Nitrogen Vulnerable Zone (NVZ). Care must therefore be taken when re-applying the liquid fertilizer not to exceed nitrogen application levels.
- (iii) all foul sewage or trade effluent, including cooling water containing chemical additives, or vehicle washing water, including steam cleaning effluent should be discharged to the foul sewer
- (iv) all cereals and co-products must be stored under cover and on an impermeable standing.



- (v) all effluent and leachate from such storage areas, as well as the composting facility, must drain to the foul sewer or be collected in a sealed system and disposed of in an environmentally safe manner.
- (vi) all wastes from the temporary site offices and toilet must be disposed of in an environmentally safe manner.
- (vii) vehicle loading or unloading bays and storage areas involving chemicals, refuse or other polluting matter must not be connected to the surface water drainage system.
- (viii) prior to being discharged into any watercourse, surface water sewer or soakaway system, all surface water drainage from lorry parks and/or parking areas for fifty car park spaces or more and hardstandings should be passed through an oil interceptor designed compatible with the site being drained. Roof water must not pass through the interceptor.
- (ix) only surface water from roofs and paved areas not accessible to vehicles, should be discharged to any soakaway, watercourse or surface water sewer.
- (x) any facilities, above ground, for the storage of oils, fuels or chemicals should be sited on impervious bases and surrounded by impervious bund walls. The volume of the bunded compound should be at least equivalent to the capacity of the tank plus 10%. All filling points, vents, gauges and sight glasses must be located within the bund. The drainage system of the bund should be sealed with no discharge to any watercourse, land or underground strata. Associated pipework should be located above ground and protected from accidental damage. All filling points and tank overflow pipe outlets should be detailed to discharge into the bund.
- (xi) all drums and small containers used for oil and other chemicals should be stored in bunded areas which do not drain to any watercourse, surface water sewer or soakaway.
- (xii) nothing other than uncontaminated excavated natural materials should be tipped on the site.
- (xiii) waste from the development must be reused, recycled or otherwise disposed of in accordance with waste management legislation and in particular the Duty of Care.
- (xiv) before any tank is removed or perforated, particularly during demolition works, all contents and residues must be removed by a competent operator for safe disposal. Pipes may contain significant quantities of oil or chemicals and should be capped or valves closed to prevent spillage.
- (xv) responsibility for the safe development and secure occupancy of this development rests with the developer.
- (xvi) any liquid fertilizer storage facilities must be sited in properly constructed bunded areas of sufficient capacity to avoid contamination of any watercourse, surface water drains or water source in the event of spillage, and shall comply with the Fertilizer Manufacturer's Association - Code of Practice for the Prevention of Pollution from the Storage and Handling of Fluid Fertilizers.
- (xvii) vehicle loading or unloading bays and storage areas involving chemicals, refuse or other polluting matter shall not be connected to the surface water drainage system.



- (xviii) any vehicle wash water including steam cleaning effluent should be contained in a sealed vessel and either recirculated or disposed of off-site. A dedicated area, graded to ensure that wash water is directed to the discharge point, should be provided.

The biomass energy recovery facility may require a permit from the Environment Agency under the Pollution Prevention and Control (England & Wales) Regulations 2000. A waste management licence / exemption is also likely to be required for the composting unit. If the proposal, as indicated, involves the incineration of waste, or fuel manufactured from waste, then a PPC permit would be required and the requirements of the Waste Incineration Directive would apply. If the proposal does not include the incineration of waste, or fuel manufactured from waste, then to determine whether a PPC permit is required, further information is required from the applicant, including the rated thermal input of the combustion process. The applicant is advised to contact Bob Perks (Regulatory Officer, PIR) on 01522 785928 to discuss this matter in more detail.

This Environmental Impact Scoping Opinion has been adopted in accordance with the Planning Scheme of Delegation forming Part 3 of the Council's Constitution as adopted on 21<sup>st</sup> July 2003. If you have any questions about this Scoping Opinion please forward them in writing to me at the above address.

Yours faithfully

James Croucher MTP MRTPI  
Development Control Manager