BURY METRO

ITEM NO.	

TITLE	:	**PROPOSAL TO CONSTRUCT 26 WIND TURBINES ON SCOUT MOOR, EDENFIELD**
TO / ON	:	**PLANNING CONTROL COMMITTEE 02 SEPTEMBER 2003**
FROM	:	**Borough Planning & Economical Development Officer**
STATUS	:	**FOR PUBLICATION**

1.0 TYPE OF DECISION

1.1 What type of decision is to be taken:-

EXECUTIVE DECISION				COUNCIL DECISION
Key		Non Key		YES

1.2 If a key decision, has it been included in the Forward Plan

Inclusion in Forward Plan	(*Yes or No*)	Date of Plan	Not Applicable

2.0 SUMMARY

United Utilities Green Energy Limited and Peel Investments (North) Limited have submitted an application to the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) for the construction of a wind farm on Scout Moor, Edenfield. Bury MBC is not a statutory consultee but can submit planning comments via Rossendale or Rochdale or direct to the DTI.

Although the wind farm is located beyond the Borough's boundary, the scale and prominent location of the proposed development will result in a significant impact on the visual amenity and landscape character of various parts of the Borough, including Ramsbottom, Tottington, Burrs, Bury, and Whitefield.

This report sets out the main issues as detailed in the applicant's Environmental Statement, the potential impact on visual amenity, a summary of issues raised by the Environment Forum Resources Issues Group and by members of the general public.

3.0 OPTIONS AND RECOMMENDED OPTIONS (with reasons)

Options

1. To object to the proposed development on the grounds that the construction of 26 wind turbines of the specified size will have a significant negative impact on the visual amenity of this Borough.

2. To encourage the generation of wind energy in off-shore locations, including the strategic location of the North West coastline in accordance with DTI statements of July 2003 (see paras 5.8-5.9 above).

3. To continue supporting reductions in energy consumption and improving energy efficiency, in accordance with the Council's Climate Change Strategy.

4. To support the proposed development as a contribution to the generation of renewable energy and a shift towards a low carbon society, with the premise that although the proposed development will have an impact on the visual amenity of the Borough this is not necessarily unacceptable.

5. To support the generation of wind energy on the Scout Moor site, but object to the size of the proposed turbines.

6. To abstain from sending comments; the Council is not a statutory consultee and is under no obligation to make any comments on the proposed application.

Recommendation

The Committee is recommended to agree to options 1, 2 and 3.

4.0 THIS REPORT HAS THE FOLLOWING IMPLICATIONS

Corporate Aims	Improving Transport and the Environment.
Policy Framework	Unitary Development Plan

Statement by Monitoring Officer	
Statement by Director of Finance & E-Government	
Human Resource IT/Land and Property Implications	
Wards/Area Boards affected	Potentially all Wards and Areas could be affected. The significance of the impact will depend on proximity to the wind farm, open aspects and topography. The main impact will be on Ramsbottom, Tottington, Burrs, Bury and Whitefield.
Scrutiny Panel's Interest	N/A
Consultations	None
Call-in	

Briefings			
Executive Members/ Chair		Chief Executive	

5.0 INTRODUCTION

5.1 **The Application** - An application has been submitted by United Utilities Green Energy Limited and Peel Investments (North) Limited to the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) for consent under section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 for the construction of a wind farm on land between Edenfield and Whitworth, near Rochdale. The proposal is described as the Scout Moor wind farm and is located 3.8km north east of Ramsbottom town centre. The application is accompanied by a formal Environmental Statement.

5.2 Individuals have 28 days to comment and the local planning authorities (Rossendale and Rochdale) have four months to submit comments to the DTI. Bury MBC is not a statutory consultee but can submit comments via Rossendale or Rochdale or direct to the DTI which will be making the decision on the application.

5.3 The Scout Moor wind farm application seeks consent for the installation of 26 wind turbines, each having a three bladed rotor of up to 80 metres (260 feet) in diameter supported on a tapered cylindrical tower to give a height of up to 60 metres (195 feet) to the rotor blade and a maximum 100 metres (325 feet) to the blade tip. It is estimated by the applicant that once built, the 26 turbines would in total generate enough electricity on an annual basis, sufficient for 51,108 homes.

5.4 Global Warming and Climate Change - About 70% of the electricity supply in the UK is generated by fossil fuel power stations i.e. coal, oil and natural gas with around 25% being generated from nuclear energy. The principal environmental impact from the burning of fossil fuels is the build up of 'greenhouse' gases. Of these gases, carbon dioxide, is by far the most significant in terms of its effects on the earth's surface since it traps the sun's heat in the atmosphere and causes a warming effect. This leads to the phenomena known as global warming and subsequent climate change, which in turn is starting to have far reaching effects on all aspects of the world's environment, economy, society and health. There is therefore a need to move away from fossil fuels and obtain sustainable supplies of energy from renewable sources such as wind, water and from the sun.

5.5 In February 2002 the Cabinet Office's Energy Review indicated that targets for renewables should be increased to 20% by 2020. The Energy White Paper 'Our Energy Future Creating a Low Carbon Economy' (February 2003) reaffirms the 2010 10% target for renewables, with an aspiration to double this by 2020. Currently only 3% of the UK's electricity needs are met by renewable energy sources. The strategy aims to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 60% by 2050 to tackle climate change.

5.6 With respect to increasing renewable energy generation in the Northwest, a target of 8.5% has been adopted within Regional Planning Guidance (RPG13), published in March 2003. This will raise the current level of renewable energy generation from only 1.3% at present and will require an additional installed capacity of some 192MW (77-wind turbines) in the North West.

5.7 In Bury, the Council has already undertaken a considerable amount of work in relation to climate change and published the Climate Change Strategy for Bury in 2002. In 2000 the Council made a successful bid to take part in a UK Pilot Programme called the 'Councils for Climate Protection Campaign' The Council is committed through this campaign to setting a target to achieve by the year 2005 a 30% reduction from 1990 levels of emissions of carbon dioxide due to energy and transport use in the authority's geographical area. (Although, being outside the Borough, Scout Moor would not contribute to Bury's own 2005 target).

5.8 **Off-shore Wind Farms** – In November 2002, the DTI issued a report about the potential of coastal and deep water wind farms. It concluded that there is a vast renewable energy resource available in the marine environment available to be tapped. Marine renewable energy is expected to have an important role in supplying the nation's future energy needs and in meeting renewable targets, in response to the Kyoto Protocol agreements. Sea depth is a major economic and technological constraint at the moment. Nevertheless, the renewables industry seized on the first round of offshore leases from the Crown Estate and a second round is imminent.

5.9 Most of the immediately available resources lie in relatively shallow waters of 5m to 30m depth, although only 15m is exploited currently. The North West coast has extensive areas of relatively shallow water and this opportunity is recognised in the North West Regional Planning process.

5.10 Three strategic areas have been identified which offer extensive shallow depth resources within territorial waters – the North West coast, Thames Estuary, and The Wash. Even allowing for exclusion zones to protect wildlife, the North West coast has the greatest potential in shallow water of any region. The table below shows the potential power generation in Megawatts within territorial waters (both shallow and deep).

WIND GENERATION POTENTIAL WITHIN TERRITORIAL WATERS

	Shallow Water 5-30m	**Deep Water 30-50m**
North West	32,900 MW	7,608 MW
Thames Estuary	24,800 MW	9,700 MW
Greater Wash	24,500 MW	2,400 MW
Other coastal sites	117,200 MW	220,500 MW
TOTAL	**199,500 MW**	**240,200 MW**

5.11 Outside territorial waters, there are further shallow depth and deep water sites suitable for wind farms. Given the open expanses of the sea, there are opportunities for very large structures and many turbines. These allow economies of scale which overcome distance from shore. The 2002 DTI report said that "it is therefore likely that the industry could consider potential sites well outside territorial waters, and perhaps as far as 100KM offshore".

5.12 The table below gives some indication of the wind power potential outside territorial waters that could be accessed within the next 20 years. Again, the North West has great potential.

WIND GENERATION POTENTIAL OUTSIDE TERRITORIAL WATERS

	Shallow Water 5-30m	**Deep Water 30-50m**
North West	7,160 MW	17,200 MW
Greater Wash	64,250 MW	8,900 MW
Thames Estuary	370 MW	430 MW
Other sites	55,900 MW	325,000 MW
TOTAL	**127,700 MW**	**351,400 MW**

5.13 In comparison with the above possibilities, the Scout Moor Wind Farm will generate just 65 MW.

6.0 MAIN ISSUES DETAILED IN THE APPLICANT'S ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT

6.1 Telecommunication Interference - Wind turbines are substantial vertical structures that can interfere with electromagnetic signals. Both the turbine towers, but more importantly the moving blades, can have an impact. Where TV reception is likely it be affected it is often possible to minimise and solve the problem by re-tuning or replacing analogue reception with digital or satellite, and in extreme cases where many are affected, by a repeater station. Should development consent be granted, the cost of investigating and rectifying any problems with television reception that may arise as a result of the construction of the wind farm will be met by the developers.

6.2 **Safety and Icing** - The wind turbines being considered for use at Scout Moor are designed and manufactured to withstand weather conditions at least as extreme as those which arise in the United Kingdom. Given that the wind turbines and equipment associated with them are designed to withstand extreme weather conditions, the blades have been designed to discourage any build up of ice. The wind turbines are equipped with safety systems, which will automatically shut down the machine on the occurrence of such events as excessive blade speed. When wind speeds exceed 25 metres per second, the blades cease to rotate – this is achieved by feathering of the blade and application of a mechanical brake. Nevertheless Planning Policy Guidance Note on Renewable Energy (PPG22) 1993 paragraph 33 does recognise that "fragments of ice might be released from the blades when the machine is started".

6.3 **Shadow Flicker -** Shadow flicker is the flickering or strobing effect that the moving shadows of rotating blades can cause when perceive by humans. The standard approach for calculating the potential extent of shadow flicker is to take a distance of 10 rotor diameters from the turbines and to identify the properties that lie within that compass. In this case, 10 rotor diameters is 800m with the nearest dwelling located some 600m distant. However the turbines lie on the elevated moorland to the rear of the properties. It is therefore considered that, based on the standard approach, shadow flicker problems will not arise in a way which will cause nuisance or annoyance to the occupants of residential properties in the area.

6.4 **Noise Levels** - The principle sources of noise are from the blades rotating in the air and from internal machinery, normally the gearbox and to a lesser extent, the generator. The blades are designed to minimise noise, whilst the nacelle at the top of the tower is insulated to minimise noise radiation from the gearbox, generator and other components which are also isolated from the tower and the blade assembly to prevent structure borne noise. The table below indicates the noise generated by wind turbines, compared with other every-day activities:

Source/Activity	Indicative Noise Level dB(A)
Threshold of hearing	0
Rural night-time background	20-40
Quiet bedroom	35
Wind farm at 350M	**35-45**
Busy road at 5km	35-45
Car at 65km/h at 100m	55
Busy general office	60
Conversation	60
Truck at 50km/h at 100m	65
City traffic	90
Pneumatic drill at 7m	95
Jet aircraft at 250 m	105
Threshold of pain	140

6.5 Planning Policy Guidance Note on Renewable Energy (PPG22) 1993 states that “experience from mainland Europe has shown that there is unlikely to be a significant noise problem for any residential property situated further than 350-400 metres from the nearest turbine.

6.6 **Ecology** - No part of the area physically affected by the proposed development lies within or adjacent to any areas designated for ecological protection at International or National Level. The proposed wind farm site is, however, of non-statutory nature conservation importance due to the significance of its habitats and breeding birds In view of the above, a range of ecological mitigation measures are put forward to limit the impact of the wind farm on ecological interests, and to enhance the ecological value of the moorland.

6.7 **Cultural Heritage** - Whilst there are no scheduled ancient monuments or listed buildings within the application site, the area does contain evidence of prehistoric activity and has a rich mining history. The known archaeological resource has been taken into account in the detailed design of the wind farm and the most sensitive area of the Cheesden Valley has been totally avoided. The assessment has concluded that the impact on the known archaeological resource will be minimal.

6.8 However, the unknown element of buried remains does not allow total confidence of avoiding any potential unknown archaeological resources. In recognition of the cultural heritage of the area, a programme of archaeological fieldwork is proposed during the construction works.

6.9 **Landscape** - The impact on landscape is the main issue for this Borough. Within the applicant's Environmental Statement an independent assessment has concluded that the direct effects on the landscape fabric of the site will be minimal in extent and reversible when the development is decommissioned. The Statement says that there will be "**significant effects on some parts of a number of local landscape character areas"** (such as Bury) **"but these will be limited in extent and will not significantly affect the character areas as a whole".** (the area as a whole meaning the wider sub-region of Nelson, Burnley, Blackburn with Darwen, Rossendale, Bury, Rochdale, Oldham Bolton, Salford and Manchester).

6.10 The wind farm is not located within any national landscape designation but it is located within the Countryside Character Areas and Green Belt local landscape designations. The Environment Statement which accompanies the application says that the countryside in this locality is well suited to accommodate and absorb this type of development and that the development is not considered to be inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

6.11 The Statement admits that, there will be some local effect on visual amenity for motorists, cyclists, walkers and horse riders, and some residents in individual properties may also experience a significant effect on their visual amenity. However, the Statement argues that significant effects are not necessarily adverse and if considered adverse, they are not necessarily unacceptable.

7.0 IMPACT OF THE DEVELOPMENT ON BURY'S LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

7.1 **Landscape Character** - Due to the location of the development outside the Borough, the Council needs to limit comments to matters deemed to have a direct impact on this Borough. The following comments concern the impact of the proposed development on the visual amenity and landscape character of this Borough.

7.2 Landscape character is described by the Countryside Agency as a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse. Landscape character gives an area a 'sense of place' and its own unique distinctiveness. The character approach attempts to treat different areas differently, respecting the character of individual places at a range of scales.

7.3 The protection of landscape character is recognised as a fundamental component of sustainable development. 'Planning for Sustainability: Towards Better Practice' (1998) published by the DETR, specifically recognises the importance of protecting landscape character and local distinctiveness as an element of developing in a sustainable way. In December 1999, DETR published 'A Better Quality of Life : A Strategy for Sustainable Development for the United Kingdom'. This strategy says that reducing the greenhouse gas emissions and the protection of landscape character are both important aspects of sustainable development. The Rural White Paper – 'Our Countryside: The Future' (2000) states that the Government's policy is that the countryside should be safeguarded for its own sake, and we will continue strict controls over development in the open countryside. We want local authorities to seek ways to enrich the countryside as a whole, not just in protected areas, and maintain its distinctive local features.

7.4 The Council's Unitary Development Plan contains various policies which seek to protect the landscape quality within the Borough, for instance EN1/1 – 'Visual Amenity', EN9/1 – 'Special Landscape Areas', OL1/2 – 'New Buildings in the Green Belt', EN4/1 – 'Renewable Energy' and OL7/2 – 'West Pennine Moors'. These policies relate to developments taking place within the administrative boundaries of the Borough and are therefore not applicable to the development of a wind farm beyond the Borough's boundary. Nevertheless proposed development beyond the Borough's boundary which will be visible within the Borough may have the potential to undermine the objectives of these policies. Appendix A details national, regional and local planning policy guidance related to landscape character.

7.5 The Planning service has made a start on a landscape character assessment of the Borough detailing the particular elements and features which gives rise to various different landscape types and areas. Unfortunately, the completion of this assessment is not due for at least 12 months.

8.0 VISIBILITY OF THE WINDFARM FROM BURY

8.1 The applicant's Environmental Statement gives information about the impact that the turbines will have on various view points within this Borough. A zone of visual influence (ZVI) is identified to give an idea of the extent over which the development, or part of it may be visible. The ZVI shows potential visibility from much of the Borough - parts of Ramsbottom, Bury, Whitefield, Tottington, and Ainsworth.

8.2 **Magnitude of Change** - The magnitude of change is described using a five-point scale of very substantial, substantial, moderate, slight or negligible, based on the interpretation of factors such as distance of the view point from the development and extent of other built development which is visible. A substantial change in the view would occur where several wind turbines are visible on the skyline, in the near distance, occupying the majority of the single view, and where the existing view contains very little built development or vertical elements.

8.3 **Implications for Ramsbottom** - The ZVI shows large extents of potential visibility of between 1 and 26 turbines from within the town. Where clear and open views are available, residents are expected to experience **a significant effect on their visual amenity** as a result of the proposed turbines. In addition, views from Peel Tower are open, wide and panoramic which means that the turbines would form a prominent feature in the view. A substantial/moderate magnitude of change is predicted, which would suggest a **significant effect on the visual amenity** of people near the Tower.

8.4 **Implications for Bury** - The ZVI shows that the turbines would potentially be visible from large parts of the town, where all the turbines may be visible. Depending of the orientation of properties, many people would have views of the turbines.

8.5 Burrs Country Park was one of the viewpoints examined in more detail. The generally open nature of the park would allow views out towards the site where approximately 13 of the turbines would be visible. For the Country Park, there would be a **moderate effect on visual amenity**.

Residents with views within the western side of Bury town will experience **a moderate effect on visual amenity**. Residents with more open views of the turbines within some parts of the eastern side of Bury town are expected to experience a substantial/moderate magnitude of change. The Environmental Statement suggests that any residents within Bury with open and clear views of the proposed turbines will experience **a significant effect on their visual amenity**. However, it should be noted that these views would be scattered within the town and dependant on intervening screening features.

8.6 **Implications for Whitefield** - The ZVI shows potential visibility of the turbines across most parts of Whitefield. However, this visibility of the turbines will be largely determined by surrounding built form and vegetation. Where open and clear views of all the turbines are available, a moderate magnitude of change is expected from properties located at distances of up to approximately 11km from the nearest turbine (Hollins), which would suggest **a significant effect on their visual amenity**. Where only partial views are available, a lower magnitude of change would be expected, which would not result in a significant effect on their visual amenity. Beyond 11km from the nearest turbine, the magnitude of change is expected to reduce to moderate/slight where all the turbines are visible, which would suggest a reduction in the effect on visual amenity.

8.7 **Implications for Tottington** - The ZVI shows potential visibility of up to 26 of the turbines. Views from parts of this settlement will be at least partially screened by foreground. These views will be the same as those from Affetside. A moderate magnitude of change would be expected for residents in Tottington with clear and uninterrupted views of the turbine. This would suggest **a significant effect on the visual amenity** of these residents, although where some of the turbines are screened from view, the magnitude of change and resulting significance may reduce.

8.8 **Implications for Ainsworth** - It is likely that that some residents within the northern edge of the village will have open and uninterrupted views of the proposed turbines, resulting in a moderate magnitude of change, which would suggest a **significant effect on visual amenity**. However, where views of the turbines are partially screened by foreground elements, a moderate/slight magnitude of change is likely, which would suggest a reduction in the effect on visual amenity.

8.9 **Implications for isolated properties** - Individual properties within the vicinity of the site will have some views of the proposed turbines. It is expected that the majority of these properties will have at least partial views which would likely to result in **a significant effect to the visual amenity** of these residents in the majority of cases.

9.0 COMMENTS RECEIVED

9.1 United Utilities presented the proposal to the Bury Environment Forum Resource Issues Group on the 9th July 2003 (full details are contained within Appendix B) where a number of questions and issues were raised by those attending the meeting. These included:

The land taken up by the turbines might only be 2% of the total area but the visual impact is much greater.

The visual impact of the wind farm would perhaps be greatest from the Holcombe side of Ramsbottom. Indeed the only two photographs in the summary document are taken from within Bury's boundary. It is therefore regrettable that Bury MBC is not a statutory consultee and that no exhibition has been arranged in Ramsbottom.

Many houses in the Ramsbottom area would have very prominent views of the wind farm, which would be visible from 3 miles away, and consideration should be given to moving some turbines further back from the west side of the moor.

It was suggested that the photomontage did not show the true impact of the proposed turbines.

There is a possibility that permission will be given to extend the existing quarry, leading to another major impact on the landscape.

Electricity generation is only one of many sources of carbon dioxide. More emphasis should be given to reducing energy consumption and improving energy efficiency. For example, air and road transport could be targeted.

Wind farms will always be additional to existing power sources, not a replacement for them, since other means of generating are needed on calm days.

The Ramblers Association has a policy of opposing all wind farms.

9.2 Bury Council has also received seven letters of objection from the general public. The objections are on issues such as the impact of the development on noise, visual impact, shadow flicker, safety, wildlife, and house prices. The common theme throughout is the detrimental impact of the proposal on the landscape of the area.

10.0 CONCLUSIONS

10.1 There will be differences of opinion about the extent of protection that should be afforded to the hills around Bury. Some would see them as vital and threatened assets which have an important role for recreation and tourism, and contribute greatly to the environmental quality of this Borough. Others would see climate change as the bigger issue and feel we need to promote renewable energy sources wherever possible. They may feel that the loss of visual amenity is a price worth paying. Still others might positively welcome on-shore wind farms and believe the countryside is a man-made artefact that needs to adapt to meet modern needs.

10.2 Given the huge potential of the North West for off-shore wind farms, it is unfortunate that on-shore proposals are being pursued in sensitive locations.

11.0 OPTIONS

11.1 There are a range of options open to the Council, including:

1. To object to the proposed development on the grounds that the construction of 26 wind turbines of the specified size will have a significant negative impact on the visual amenity of this Borough.

2. To encourage the generation of wind energy in off shore locations, including the strategic location of the North West coastline, in accordance with DTI statements of July 2003 (see paras 5.8-5.9 above).

3. To continue supporting reductions in energy consumption and improving energy efficiency, in accordance with the Council's Climate Change Strategy.

4. To support the proposed development as a contribution to the generation of renewable energy and a shift towards a low carbon society, with the premise that although the proposed development will have an impact on the visual amenity of the Borough this is not necessarily unacceptable.

5. To support the generation of wind energy on the Scout Moor site, but object to the size of the proposed turbines.

6. To abstain from sending comments; the Council is not a statutory consultee and is under no obligation to make any comments on the proposed application.

12.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

12.1 The Committee is recommended to agree to options 1, 2 and 3.

BRIAN DANIEL
BOROUGH PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

Background documents:

Bury MBC (1997) Bury Unitary Development Plan, Bury MBC.

Bury MBC (2002) Climate Change Strategy for Bury, Bury MBC.

Bury MBC (2002) Bury Unitary Development Plan Review – Strategy and Spatial Framework, Bury MBC.

Bury MBC (2002) Heritage Strategy, Bury MBC.

DETR (1998) Planning for Sustainable Development: Towards Better Practice, HMSO.

DETR (1999) A Better Quality of Life: A Strategy for Sustainable Development for the United Kingdom, HMSO

DETR (2000) Rural White Paper: Our Countryside – The future, HMSO.

DOE (1993) PPG 22 - Renewable Energy, HMSO.

DOE (1994) PPG9 – Nature Conservation, HMSO.

DOE (1995) PPG2 – Green Belts, HMSO.

DOE (1997) PPG1 – General Policy and Principles, HMSO.

DOE (1997) PPG 7 – The Countryside Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development, HMSO.

DTI (2003) http://www.dti.gov.uk/energy/renewables/technologies/offshore_wind.shtml

DTI (2003) Energy White Paper : Our Energy Future - Creating a Low Carbon Economy, HMSO.

North West Regional Assembly / GONW (2003) Regional Planning Guidance for the North West (RPG 13).

The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage (2002) Landscape Character Assessment : Guidance for England and Scotland, CA&SNH Publications.

United Utilities and Peel Investments (North) limited (2003) Scout Moor Wind Farm, Environmental Statement. UU&PI.

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APPENDIX A

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY GUIDANCE

PPG 1 (1997) General Policy and Principles recognises the important role of the planning system in providing a planning framework which conserves both the cultural heritage and natural resources, including wildlife, landscape, water, soil and air quality. Paragraph 31 states that "where development is proposed on land adjoining urban areas, its impact on its surroundings and nearby land uses should be considered carefully".

PPG 2 (1995) Green Belts (para. 1.6) states that "once Green Belts have been defined, the use of land in them has a positive role to play in fulfil the objective of retaining attractive landscapes, and enhance landscapes, near to where people live".

PPG 7 (1997) The Countryside – Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development notes in paragraph 1.3 that sustainable development is the cornerstone of both the Government's rural policies and its planning policies. "This means accommodating necessary change in rural areas while maintaining and, where possible the quality of the environment for local people and visitors". Para. 1.4 details that sustainable development means meeting objectives to maintain or enhance the character of the countryside and conserve its natural resources, including safeguarding the distinctiveness of its landscapes. Para. 2.2 further notes that the planning system helps to integrate development with the protection of the countryside for the sake of its beauty, diversity of its landscape and historic character. Paragraphs. 2.14 and 2.15 states that "the Government's policy is that the countryside should be safeguarded for its own sake and non-renewable and natural resources. Whilst the character approach detailed by the Countryside Commission (now Countryside Agency) English Nature and English Heritage should help in accommodating necessary change with out sacrificing local character. It can help ensure that development respect or enhances the distinctive character of the land and the built environment".

PPG 9 (1994) Nature Conservation (para. 14) recognises that our natural heritage is not confined to the various statutory designated sites but is found through out the countryside.

PPG 22 (1993) Renewable Energy notes (para. 30) that any development should not injure the visual amenity of the Green Belt.

REGIONAL PLANNING POLICY

Regional Planning Guidance for the North West (RPG13) for the North West (May, 2003) sets out the importance of landscape character in a number of policies:

ER1 Managing of the North West's Natural, Built and Historic Environment.

"Protect for its own sake, all important aspects of the landscape, including regionally and sub-regionally distinctiveness features and special sites and conserve and enhance, where ever possible, regional and local distinctiveness and variety, including the South and West Pennine landscapes, by re-assessing local landscape designations in light if the Countryside Agency's Countryside Character initiative supported by local landscape assessments. Local authorities should take a common approach to landscape and character issues which cross local planning authority boundaries".

ER2 Landscape Character

"It is also very important that the rich diversity of landscapes and their settings through out the North West be conserved and enhanced. Planning Authorities and other agencies in their plans, policies and proposals, will conserve and enhance landscapes and their settings which are of regional and sub-regional importance (highlighted by the Countryside Agency's Countryside Character and English Natures Natural Areas initiatives), but not covered by national designations, by: seeking to restore those, which have been degraded; ensuring that all-new development makes every effort to avoid damage to landscape, and where possible, enhances it; ensuring that, where mitigation is insufficient, equivalent compensatory landscape enhancement is provided elsewhere to ensure no net loss".

Policy ER5 Biodiversity and Nature Conservation

"Apply the principles of enhancing the quality of life set out in policy DP2 when considering all new development proposals, which will impact on biodiversity".

UR11 Urban Fringe

"Change in the urban fringe should be managed as follows……. emphasis on improving their visual attractiveness as urban setting /rural edge, and their recreational value and biodiversity and development plans and briefs should ensure that new developments on the edge of urban areas contribute significantly towards enhancing character, appearance and environmental capital of the urban fringe, improving the setting of towns and consolidating green space networks".

LOCAL PLANNING POLICY

The Council's Unitary Development Plan (Adopted 1997) contains various policies, which seek to protect the landscape quality within the Borough, for instance

EN1/1 – Visual Amenity

"Development will not be permitted where proposals would have a detrimental effect on:

a) public views of prominent or important buildings, especially those in areas of architectural or historic interest;

b) the visual amenity within, or viewed from, areas of environmental interest such as the Green Belt, Special Landscape Areas or the River Valleys".

EN4/1 – Renewable Energy

"The Council will encourage proposals for the provision of renewable energy sources, subject to compliance with other policies and proposals of the Plan. In particular, the Council will seek to ensure that proposals:

a) do not involve an unacceptable loss of amenity, for example through visual intrusion and noise;

b) would not have an unacceptable adverse impact on the setting of scheduled ancient monuments, Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings and archaeological remains;

c) would not have an unacceptable adverse impact on areas of Green Belt, Special Landscape Areas and areas of ecological importance;

d) would not result in a health or safety risk, or nuisance to the public;

e) where necessary, include an environmental assessment as part of the planning application;

f) would not have an unacceptable adverse impact on the Borough's natural environment".

EN9/1 – Special Landscape Areas

States that "in those areas identified on the Proposals as Special Landscape Areas, any development which is permitted will be strictly controlled and required to be sympathetic to it surroundings in terms of its visual impact. High standards of design, siting and landscaping will be expected. Unduly obtrusive development will not be permitted in such areas".

OL1/2 – New Buildings in the Green Belt

This policy refers to a number of developments, which is appropriate within the green belt. As wind turbines are not listed as one of eth appropriate criterion, the proposal is inappropriate development and is, by definition harmful to the Green Belt and will only be permitted in very special circumstances.

OL7/2 – West Pennine Moors.

"Throughout the area of the West Pennine Moors, as defined on the Proposals Map, the Council will control development and manage recreational activity and public access, so as to reduce any possible detrimental effects these may have on the important character of the area. In considering proposals for development particular regard will be had to the effect on the following:

a) agriculture and forestry;

b) water catchment;

c) settlements;

d) landscape character;

e) ecological and geological features;

f) archaeological and historic features".

The Council's own **Strategy and Spatial Framework (2002)** produced as part of the UDP review states in core topic policy OLGen that "the Council can achieve more sustainable patterns of development by only allowing development that conserves and enhances the landscape quality and character of the Borough". Whilst core topic policy ECGen – Strategy for Employment Development states that the "Council will create opportunities to attract new investment and quality local employment by promoting and facilitating the development of tourism in the Borough, in order to capitalise on this important sector of the local economy". In addition, the Strategy and Spatial Framework also proposes the promotion of the Irwell Valley as a Regional Park Resource on the doorstep. Protection and enhancement of landscape character is fundamental in protecting and enhancing the very assets, which help develop tourism within the Borough.

The Council's **Heritage Strategy (2002)** policy Hs/12 Historic Landscapes and Open Countryside detailed that "the Council will work with landowners, the local community and amenity organisations to both define the character of the Borough's historic landscape and open countryside and develop viable proposals for its preservation and enhancement. The main objective will be to improve the management and stewardship of open countryside and secure appropriate public access for recreational purposes and environmental enhancement".

APPENDIX B

BURY ENVIRONMENT FORUM

PROPOSED SCOUT MOOR WIND FARM

Notes on the Presentation by United Utilities to the Resource Issues Group 9th July 2003

Paul Hunt of United Utilities (UU), on behalf of Scout Moor Wind Farm outlined the proposals. There is an accepted need to cut carbon dioxide emissions to reduce the problems of global warming leading to climate change. The Government recognises that using fossil fuels in electricity power stations is a major source of carbon dioxide and has set a target of providing 10% of UK electricity from renewable sources by 2010. These renewable sources not only reduce carbon dioxide emissions but also preserve valuable fossil fuels. Using wind power is a proven technology and the UK has 40% of Europe's wind power potential.

The Scout Moor site on land between Rawtenstall and Rochdale was considered to be the best and had been selected following a scientific examination. The site has been monitored since November and has good wind speeds, good access using the existing quarry road, and easy connection into the electricity supply system. There would be 26 turbines giving a maximum total power output of 65 MW (megawatts), i.e. 2.5 MW per turbine. Each turbine would be 60 metres tall from ground level to the hub, with blades 40 metres long. It is expected that the average electricity output would be sufficient for 51,000 homes and the consequent reduction in carbon dioxide emissions from conventional power stations would be around 170,000 tonnes.

The Section 36 planning application has been submitted this week. Individuals have 28 days to comment and the local authorities (Rossendale and Rochdale) have four months to submit comments. Bury MBC is not a statutory consultee but can submit comments via Rossendale or Rochdale.

Further information about the proposals can be found at www.unitedutilities.co.uk or www.peel.co.uk.

There were many questions and the responses are summarised as follows:

§ A full set of the planning documents would be made available to Bury MBC.

§ There are no plans to extend the proposal to other parts of the moor.

§ Noise should not be a problem with modern wind turbines and in any event noise was in accordance with Government guidelines.

§ There will be no restrictions on access for walkers in the area of the wind farm.

§ The depth of the foundations will depend on the ground conditions. Each turbine would sit on a 15 metre wide concrete base, 3 metres deep. Disturbance to peat and water courses would be kept to a minimum. The access roads would be constructed using a "floating road" with aggregate on top of a geotextile mat.

- An assumption that the average output would be 39% of maximum had been used in the calculation of serving 51,000 homes.

- The overall construction period would last about 9 months, with a start not anticipated until 2005. Each turbine takes two days to erect.

- Commoners would be compensated with extra grazing land of a higher quality adjoining the site.

- It is UU's stated policy not to promote development within a nationally designated landscape area, such as a National Park or an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Visual impact is always taken into account when assessing a scheme.

- Sites such as Winter Hill north of Bolton are ruled out because of the transmission towers. Other sites are too close to RAF stations.

- There are no existing wind farms as big as this proposal, but there probably will be by the time Scout Moor is constructed.

- United Utilities are looking at other renewable sources for generating electricity but wind power is the best option.

- There are no Government grants to support the construction of on-shore wind farms but there is an obligation on electricity suppliers to provide 10% of their electricity from renewable sources by 2010. There is currently an excess capacity for generation by conventional means and a shortage of renewable capacity.

- The design life of the turbines is 25 years. After that time they could be dismantled if wind power was no longer economic or desirable.

- A Community Wind Farm Trust would be set up, with £1 million being allocated to environmental and educational projects.

- The colour of the turbines is proposed as grey, which is the best colour to blend in with the skyline.

- There were no anticipated problems due to flicker or strobe effect.

- There would probably be approximately 60 or 70 jobs during the construction period and 5 or 6 full time jobs at the wind farm after construction. However, the main benefit of the development would be clean renewable energy.

- The Secretary of State's decision on the application was not a "rubber stamp issue" because he would have to consider the environmental and economic benefits of the development.

The following points were raised by those attending the meeting:

- The land taken up by the turbines might only be 2% of the total area but the visual impact is much greater.

- The visual impact of the wind farm would perhaps be greatest from the Holcombe side of Ramsbottom. Indeed the only two photographs in the summary document are taken from within Bury's boundary. It is therefore regrettable that Bury MBC is not a statutory consultee and that no exhibition has been arranged in Ramsbottom.

- Many houses in the Ramsbottom area would have very prominent views of the wind farm which would be visible from 3 miles away and consideration should be given to moving some turbines further back from the west side of the moor.

- It was suggested that the photomontage did not show the true impact of the proposed turbines.

- There is a possibility that permission will be given to extend the existing quarry, leading to another major impact on the landscape.

- Electricity generation is only one of many sources of carbon dioxide. More emphasis should be given to reducing energy consumption and improving energy efficiency. For example air and road transport could be targeted.

- Wind farms will always be additional to existing power sources, not a replacement for them, since other means of generating are needed on calm days.

- The Ramblers Association has a policy of opposing all wind farms.