

26th September 2025
SMDC ref: SMD/2025/0390

Mr. Dominic Cooney
Ashtree Planning
Chatsworth Farm
Lask Edge
Leek
Staffordshire
ST13 8QJ

info@ashtreeplanning.com

Dear Mr. Cooney,

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990

EIA Request for Screening Opinion to ""Repower"" the existing wind turbine site by installing a single Endurance X-29 wind turbine on the land at Meadowside. Meadowside Calton Moor Staffordshire DE6 2BU

In response to your letter dated 26th August 2025 received by e-mail, an EIA screening assessment has been undertaken as requested. The assessment here relies on details submitted with the request and also takes into consideration the previously approved and implemented scheme ref. SMD/2012/0434 which would be removed.

The proposed development is of a type listed at Column 1, Section 3 (i) of Schedule 2 to the 2017 Regulations, namely: Installations for the harnessing of wind power for energy production (wind farms).

The proposal would involve the installation of a turbine of height **45.5m to the blade tip** with a hub height set at 31.0 metres. The proposal would therefore exceed (by 3.0 x) the applicable threshold of 15m given at Column 2 of Section 3 (i) of Schedule 2 to the 2017 Regulations.

The development would also be taking place in or near to a 'sensitive area' as defined as it would come to within c.175m of the Peak District National Park.

The proposal therefore needs to be screened by the Local Planning Authority (LPA) to determine whether significant effects on the environment are likely and hence whether an Environmental Impact Assessment is required. In preparing this screening opinion the LPA has had regard to the selection criteria in Schedule 3 of the 2017 Regulations and to the 'Indicative Thresholds and Criteria' as set out in the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).

The Government's published guidance advises that key issues to consider for this type of development are the scale of the development, its visual impact, and potential noise impacts.

The guidance also sets out certain indicative criteria and thresholds for commercial developments in which a scheme with five or more turbines, or more than 5 MW of new generating capacity may be expected to require EIA. This proposal involves just a single

turbine (the existing one being removed) and the turbine would have capacity to deliver an output, at any one point in time, of up to a maximum of **225kW** (just under one quarter of one megawatt).

The selection criteria for screening Schedule 2 development, as provided at Schedule 3 of the regulations, are considered in turn below.

Characteristics of the development

The characteristics of development must be considered with particular regard to 7 listed points (a) to (g). Of these it is considered that for this proposal at least the following need to be considered.

- (a) the size and design of the whole development;
- (b) cumulation with other existing development and/or approved development;
- (e) pollution and nuisances;

The key characteristics of the proposed development stem from its height and the scale and movement of the rotating blade span / circumference giving rise consequently to significant visual prominence. There may also be considerations of noise and shadow flicker that could cause nuisance to residents and visitors to the area.

The sail diameter of the blades would be 29m as against 19.2m for the current structure. The hub would be 5.0m higher than in the current structure and the overall structure would be 10.0m higher than is seen currently.

There is an existing nearby wind turbine at Forest Farm (SMD/2012/0893) some 900m to the south east and at least one smaller scale turbine in the vicinity of Stanton Dale Farm in the East Staffordshire Borough to the south. The Forest Farm turbine is of similar scale to the current Meadowside turbine.

Location of the development

Again, from the regulations, the location must be considered with particular regard to three listed points (a) to (c). The latter is headed 'the absorption capacity of the natural environment, paying particular attention to the following areas'. There are then a further eight itemised points including: 'mountain and forests'; 'nature reserves and parks'; '...areas classified or protected under national legislation'; and 'landscapes and sites of historical, cultural or archaeological significance'.

The location is an exposed farmland plateau. The Council's Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (2018) places the area in the 'limestone highland fringe' landscape character type (LCT). It is considered a 'high' quality landscape in a Staffordshire county-wide context (level four on a five point scale where 5 is highest) and one which has the 'highest sensitivity' to landscape change.

The busy A523 Ashbourne Road passes east west within 170m to the north of the site and marks the boundary with the Peak District National Park. This is a nationally protected area

in legislation (the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, 1949) and an area with significant historical and cultural associations. The Peak Park Conservation Area village of Calton lies 1.5km to the north west. The 'ploughed down' remains of a Bronze Age bowl barrow can be seen as a 'tumulus' 50m to the north east of the site. At about 3.5km to the west is the very large chimney and associated tall apparatus at Cauldon Cement Works, Waterhouses.

Otherwise the defining features of the immediate surroundings are individual farmsteads of relatively domestic scale; drystone walls, field gateways, grassland farming and livestock.

At 45.5m the proposed turbine would be considered a category B turbine in the Council's Wind Turbine Landscape Sensitivity Study (2015). This is above the mid-point of the category B size range of 31m to 50m. The study summarises the sensitivity of the location at p.83 as follows:

"The open, highly visible and mostly undeveloped nature of this landscape mean it will be highly sensitive to any turbines higher than Category B. More visually contained land around or within the Cauldon Low quarry site may be less sensitive to carefully sited Category C turbines. Some of the LCT's key characteristics and qualities might also be susceptible to change as a result of the development of Category A and B turbines – please refer closely to the guidance in the next section."

The study concludes that for the Limestone Highland Fringe LCT there is moderate sensitivity overall for category B wind turbines.

Types and Characteristics of the potential impact

The most obvious impact characteristics would be visual owing to the height, blade span and movement of the turbine. The development would be seen in the context of an exposed plateau-like upland landscape across and into which there are far-reaching views. The proposed turbine would appear noticeably larger than the existing turbine but not massively so. The existing cement works and quarrying activities at Cauldon / Waterhouses represent a degree of existing landscape degradation that set a context to the proposal.

There is at this stage a less known potential for adverse noise impacts and the nuisance of shadow flicker. Other possible impacts relate to ecology and biodiversity with potentially significant consequences in particular for bats and birds in flight.

By reason of the structural scale and purpose of the development there would be little or no possibility of effectively reducing the visual impacts or modifying the development form to make it better absorbed into the natural environment.

Although the development may be reversible, its period of use is likely to coincide with a significant proportion of a person's lifetime for anyone living in the area and it could not be considered 'temporary' in this sense. In addition to residential receptors there are numerous public footpaths nearby and in the wider immediate surroundings. The Peak District National Park is one of the most visited National Parks in Britain. The main A523 passing close by affords a short period of uninterrupted views of the site and as a busy principal road in and out of the Staffordshire Moorlands the number of receptors will be high.

Other matters

Various consultations were undertaken. Staffordshire County Council Highways commented by e-mail dd 23.09.2025 raising no overriding concerns but identifying information that would be required in the event of a planning application. In response to the recent previous larger turbine EIA screening SMD/2025/0337 SCC Highways noted that access would be via either the A52 or A523 both of which are main routes; that the existing turbine was constructed and operates without issue and that the proposal will not have a severe effect on the highway. Waterhouses Parish Council responded previously to say 'no objections' but did not offer a view as to the EIA question. They did not respond on this revised proposal.

Discussion and Conclusion

Existing base-line

Inevitably the existing approved and implemented turbine represents an important material context and reference point in the assessment. Whilst in the main the new proposal needs to be assessed afresh as a whole, it is relevant to consider to what extent the new impacts that would arise from the increased dimensions would result in environmentally significant effects over and above the existing.

The increased dimensions amount to a 30% increase in height (from 35m to 45.5m) and a 51% increase in the diameter of the rotating blade head. The increased rotor diameter would result in a 130% overall increase in described area of the blade rotations (from 290m² to 660m²). Whilst the expanse of the described area (swept area) would represent a significant increase, the height increase would be more moderate.

Likelihood of significant effects in EIA terms

For the purposes of defining EIA development, ie. whether there are likely to be environmentally significant effects in EIA terms, the factors to be considered, drawn from regulation 4(2), are:

- (a) the magnitude and spatial extent of the impact (for example geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected);
- (b) the nature of the impact;
- (c) the transboundary nature of the impact;
- (d) the intensity and complexity of the impact;
- (e) the probability of the impact;
- (f) the expected onset, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact;
- (g) the cumulation of the impact with the impact of other existing and/or approved development;
- (h) the possibility of effectively reducing the impact.

As a rural area the size of resident population affected would be small, primarily that of the nearby village of Calton and potentially Swinscoe 2km to the east and Stanton 3km to the south east. Passing population using the A523 would significantly add to the number. The nearest town is Ashbourne some 7km to the SE with a population of c.10,000. Due to intervening topography and separation distance it can reasonably be judged there would not

be significant visual impact there. The main geographic reach would tend to fall within a 3km to 5km radius taking into account the encircling land topography and areas of higher ground.

This may include for example the hill ridges north of Calton and other important visitor locations within the Peak Park such as the hills around Ilam. Areas of public access land and a dense network of countryside public rights of way in the surrounding area would all also give rise to potential receptor impacts. A greater reach in the visual and character impact can be envisaged in approaches from the north west from the direction of Bottom House to Waterhouses and along Morridge Top.

The nature of the impacts would be primarily visual and related to landscape character.

Transboundary effects (between nations or states) would not arise. There would be local transboundary effects for land nearby in the neighbouring district of East Staffordshire. This area is of relatively homogenous character with the immediate Staffordshire Moorlands surroundings. Consultation on any future application can readily be made with East Staffordshire Borough Council.

With primarily a single issue to assess, that of landscape character and visual impact, the complexity of the impacts would be limited; albeit that landscape visual impact assessment alone is or can be complex.

Visual and landscape character impacts are highly probable as evidenced by the Council's Wind Turbine Landscape Sensitivity Study (2015).

The impacts would be reversible by removal of the development but the timeframe of its existence is likely to be longterm.

There would be cumulative impacts to consider especially with regard to how the development would interact with the existing anomalous landscape structures at Caudon Cement Works.

Visual landscape impacts of this type of development are not readily reduced or mitigated.

Conclusion

Broadly the proposal would be one third (1.3 x) greater in size than the existing turbine. The impacts of the greater structure as now proposed would undoubtedly have greater reach. The recent positive screening for a similar but larger turbine in the same position was a structure 1.6x larger and a category C turbine in the Council's Wind Turbine Landscape Sensitivity Study (2015).

Any forthcoming planning application would need to give very thorough consideration to the visual and landscape character impacts and a comprehensive Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) would be required. Impacts on the nationally designated protected landscape of the Peak District National Park and its setting would require very particular consideration. Due to the presence of a Bronze Age burial barrow (in this case a non-designated heritage asset), within 50m of the development, an archaeological report and recommendations should be submitted.

In addition to the above, a noise impact assessment; shadow flicker assessment and ecological impact assessment would be expected to accompany any planning application.

There remain particular considerations with regard to the open exposed nature of the landscape at this location; proximity to the Peak District National Park protected landscape; the sensitivity of the landscape at this location to wind turbine development on this proposed scale (Category B) as assessed in the Council's Wind Turbine Landscape Sensitivity Study (2015); and the frequency with which the development would be seen or encountered by people enjoying or passing through the surrounding landscape. However, recognising that the existing turbine establishes a baseline against which this assessment must be made and noting the more moderate dimensions involved relative to the proposal recently screened EIA+ve under SMD/2025/0337 it is on balance concluded that EIA is **not** required in this case.

Yours sincerely,

X *B.J. Haywood*

Signed by: Ben Haywood
Head of Development Services