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Planning for Renewables on Farms

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PDNPA

Introduction

- Renewables in the National Park
- Do you need planning permission?
- Policy (boring but important!)
- Renewable energy sources on farms – advantages and disadvantages from a planning perspective
- Brief overview of the application process
- Conclusions

Types of renewable energy technologies we get planning applications for...

- Solar – thermal or photovoltaic
- Wind
- HEP
- Air source heat pumps
- Ground source heat pumps
- Biomass

Do you need planning permission?

- Unless the application relates to your (unlisted) house and its curtilage, you will always need permission.
- For your house, you may not need permission for solar panels, a ground source heat pump, a water source heat pump or a biomass flue BUT
- You should always check first as there are strict limitations on what can be done without permission.

How do we decide whether or not to grant planning permission?

- National policy – PPS 22: Renewable Energy
- Regional policy – RSS policy 39
- Local policy
 - Local Plan Policy LU4
 - Sub-regional Climate Change Strategy
 - Core Strategy (awaiting Inspector's decision)
 - Landscape Strategy
 - Renewables SPG 2003 (currently being updated)
 - Live & Work Rural factsheets

First Principles – The Energy Hierarchy

1. **Reduce the need for energy** in the building's design
2. Use **energy more efficiently** in the building
3. Supply energy from **renewable sources**



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Solar

Solar - Domestic

- On an unlisted house, solar panels may not need planning permission if the panels are mounted on the roof, project less than 200mm from the roof plane, and are arranged to minimise their visual impact.
- ONE solar panel may also be permitted in a garden as long as it is less than 4m high, would not be visible from a highway (in a Conservation Area), is more than 5m from the boundary and would be no more than 9 sq m in area
- For sensitive areas and buildings, heritage solar slates are being developed. Currently very expensive but likely to become more viable in future. Would need permission.
- Always ask before committing to an investment!

Solar – Farm Buildings

- Will always need planning permission
- Consider what your needs are
- Example 1 - to heat water for milking parlours, solar thermals may be better but don't generate electricity.
- Example 2 - to provide electricity to a calving shed, photovoltaics may be better

Solar – Farm Buildings

- Some modern agricultural buildings have large, south facing roof slopes which may be suitable for solar panels
 - Can the roof take the weight?
 - Where can the roof be seen from?
 - Would non-reflective panels minimise visual impact?
 - Would the panels affect the setting of a listed building e.g. a barn or farmhouse?

Solar – Farm Buildings

Advantages

- If sited carefully, visual impact could be minimal
- If located on a modern, portal framed building, a protected species survey won't usually be required

Disadvantages

- Efficiency? Times of peak generation
- Reflective panels can create glare, visible from high land for miles around.



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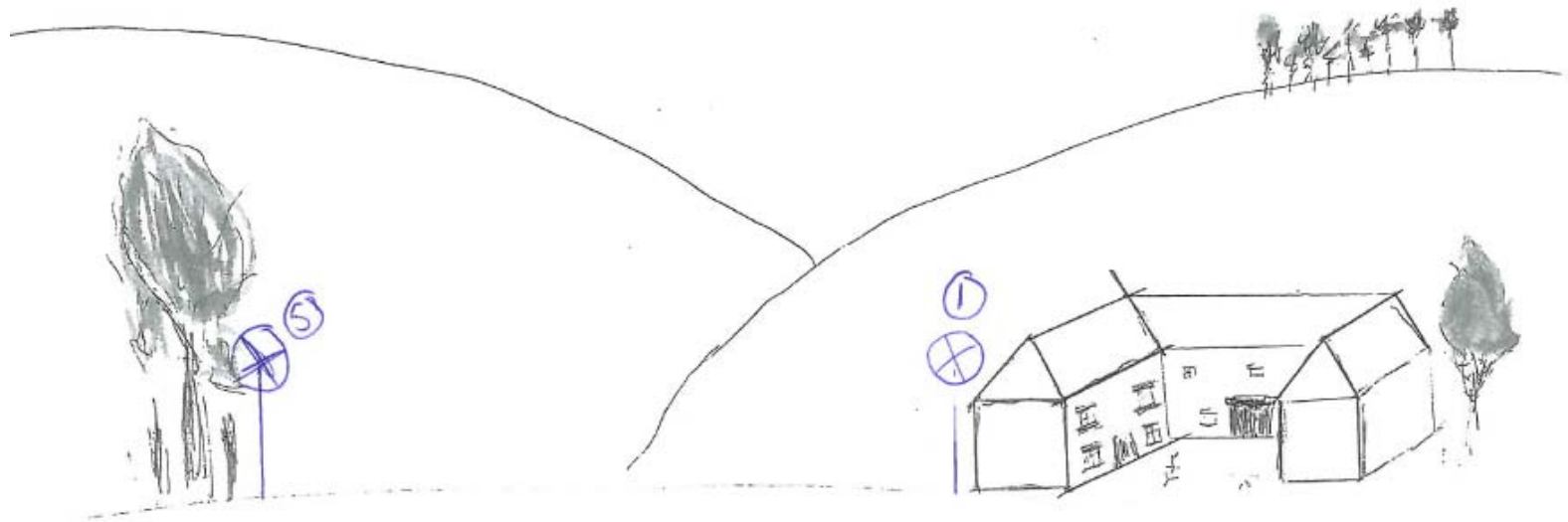
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Wind

Wind Turbines

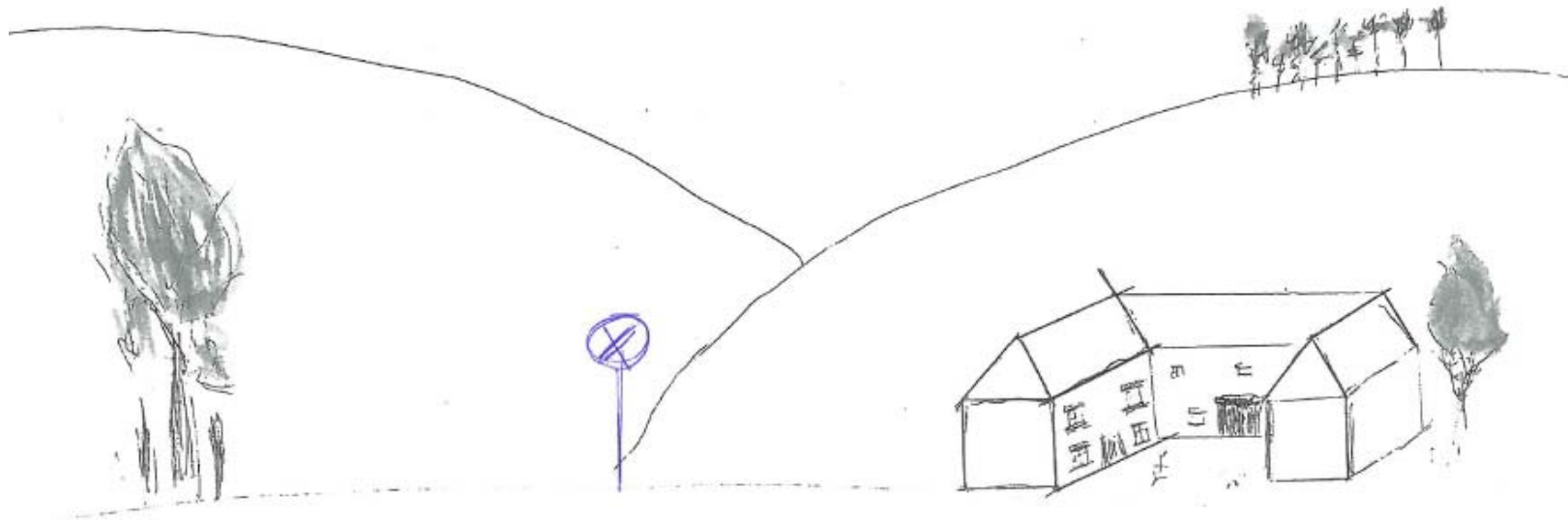
- Will always need planning permission
- Policy more sympathetic to 15m or less
- Landscape impact can be significant
- No 'wind farms' allowed
- Most efficient locations can be most damaging
- Require bird and bat surveys and visual impact assessments
- May require full EIA

Wind Turbines – Thinking about scale & location...



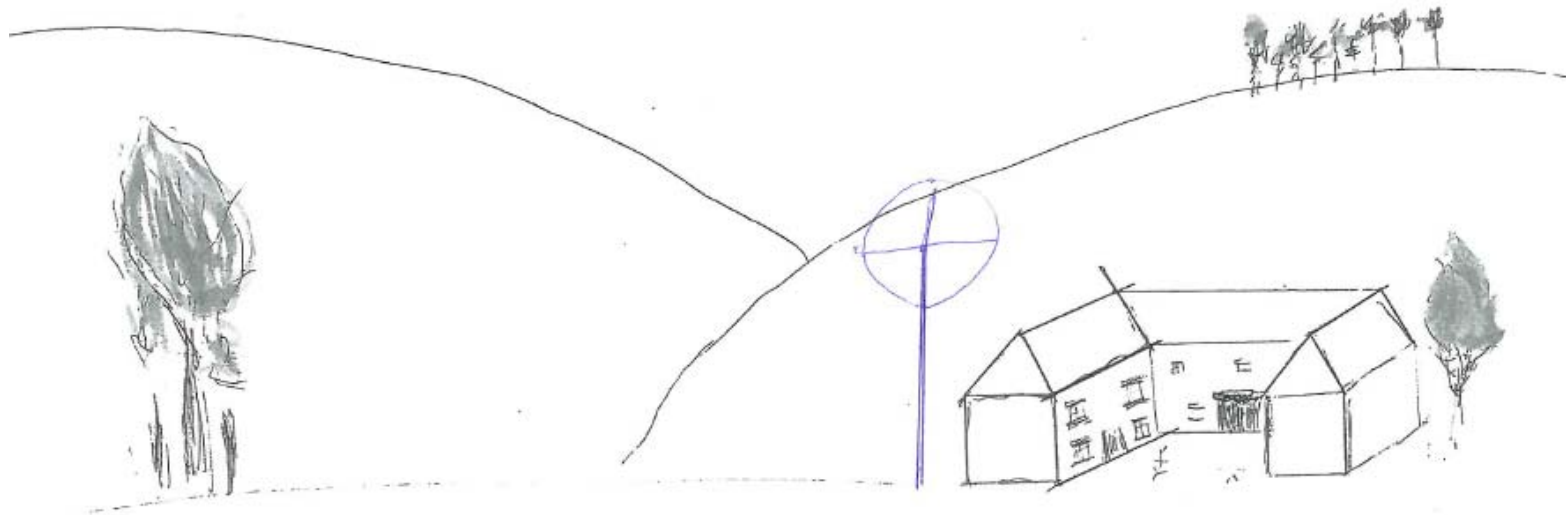
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Wind Turbines – Thinking about scale & location...



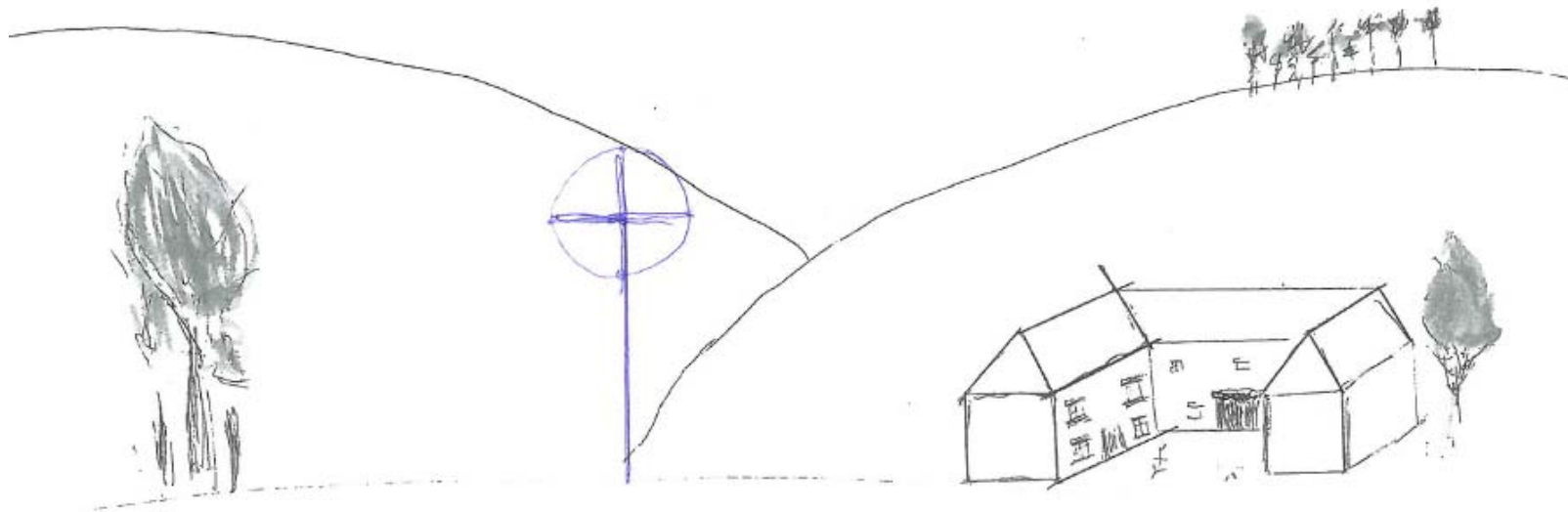
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Wind Turbines – Thinking about scale & location...



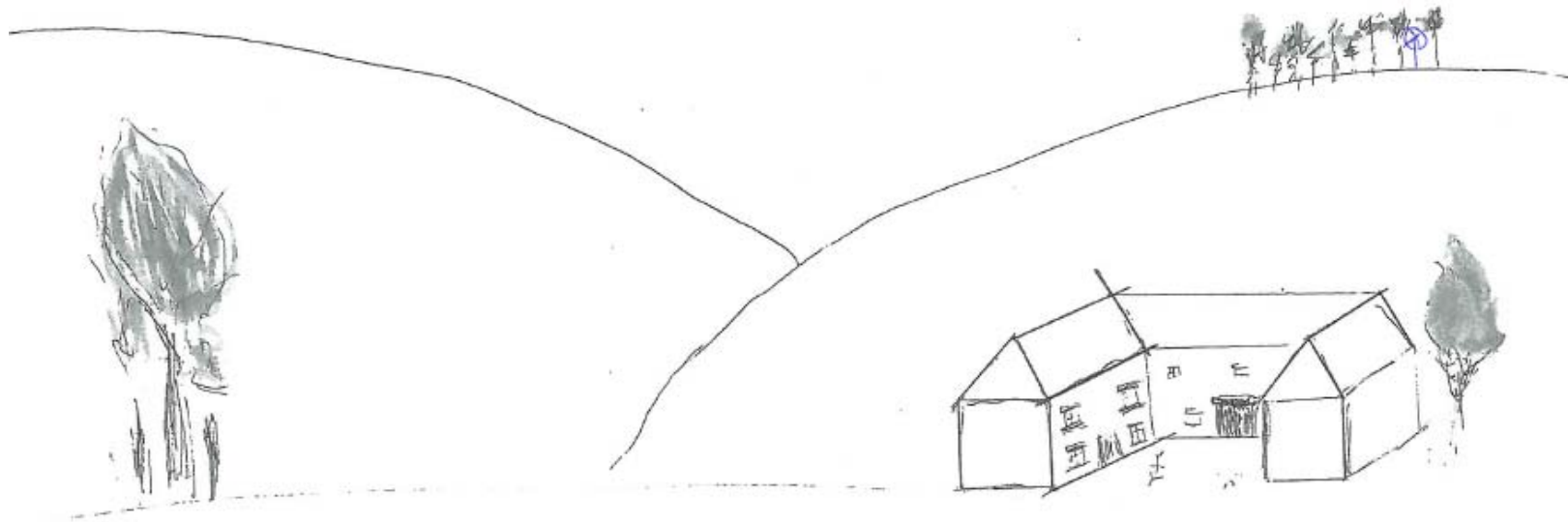
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Wind Turbines – Thinking about scale & location...



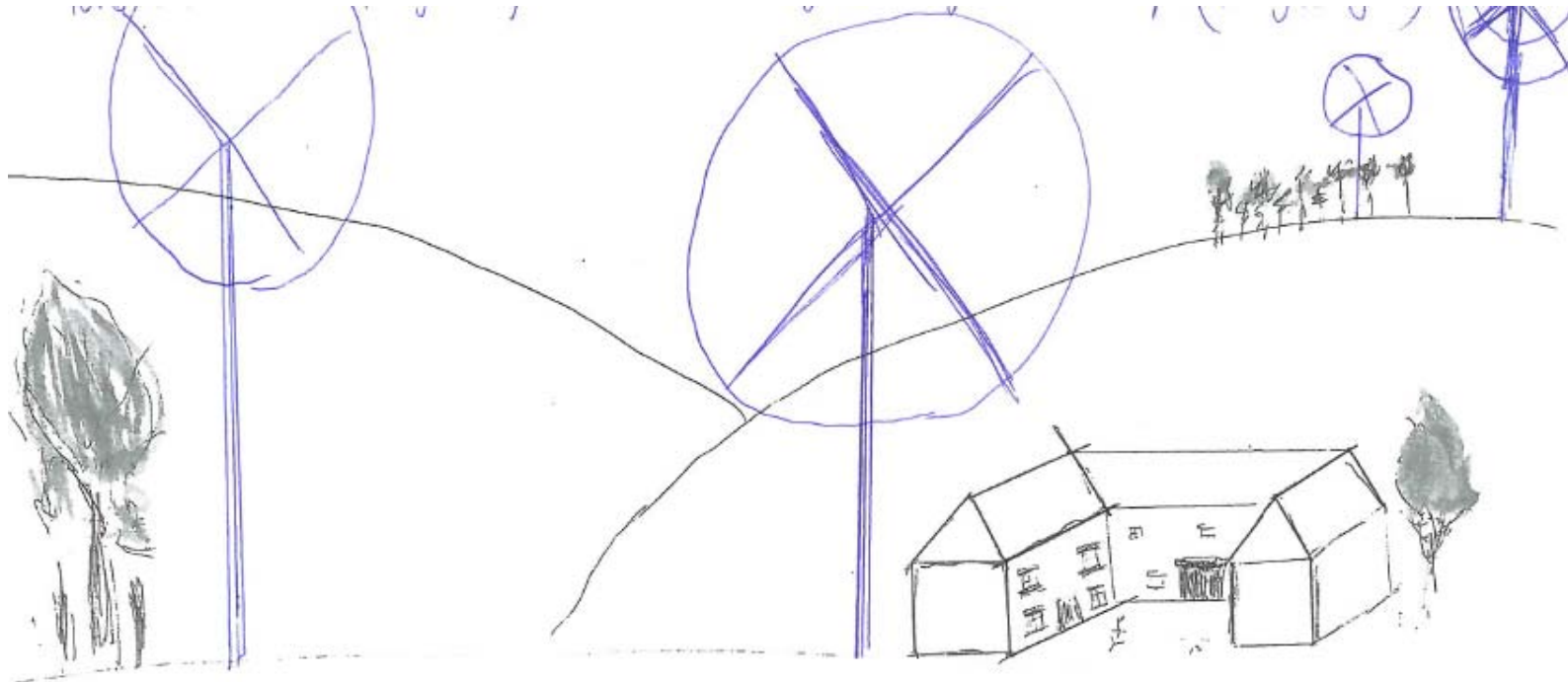
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Wind Turbines – Thinking about scale & location...



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Wind Turbines – Thinking about scale & location...



Wind Turbines

Advantages

- Efficient (if properly assessed)
- Relatively easy to install

Disadvantages

- Landscape impact in a National Park
- Amount of supporting information required
- Surveys have to be done at particular times
- >15m tricky to justify
- Potential 3rd party objections – emotive issue
- >15m need to go to committee



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Hydro

Small Scale Hydro-electric Power (HEP)

Advantages

- Virtually no landscape impact
- Can be very efficient and reliable
- General 'in principle' support from NPA and Friends of Peak District

Disadvantages

- Need a water course
- EA issues (abstraction licenses etc)
- Detailed ecological assessments required



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Air Source

Air Source Heat Pumps

Advantages

- Virtually no landscape impact if well sited
- Easy to install on a small scale

Disadvantages

- Always require planning permission (even on houses)
- Can be noisy
- Tend to be for domestic or small scale commercial uses only



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Ground Source

Ground Source Heat Pumps

Advantages

- Lots of open land usually available on farms
- Once the groundworks are finished, landscape impact should be zero
- Can be used in the ground but can also use water sources
- More consistently reliable than air source

Disadvantages

- Archaeological & ecological surveys may be required
- Need large area
- Produce heat, not electricity



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Biomass

Biomass (combustion)

Advantages

- Uses renewable fuel sources in plentiful supply in managed woodlands (which may be located on the farm itself)

Disadvantages

- Access to the fuel source if not 'on-site'. Large delivery vehicles and fuel storage spaces required
- May not be suitable in air quality monitoring zones (Sheffield borders)
- Produce smoke
- Flue stacks can be large and ugly

Biomass (Anaerobic Digestion)

Advantages

- Uses by-products of farming, therefore fuel source is 'free'
- Low visual impact on an individual farm basis

Disadvantages

- To be most efficient, or to feed larger schemes, other sources of waste may need to be added to the farm waste. Importation of waste is not allowed for in the National Park's planning policy
- Need to wait for the outcome of the Core Strategy examination to see whether larger than single farm schemes can be considered.

Making an Application

- Consider what is best for your site
- Get pre-application advice at an early stage
- Timing is everything
- Forms, plans, surveys, visual impact assessment, application fee
- Agricultural justification may help the case
- 8 week determination period following validation (16 weeks if EIA)
- May need to go to committee

Conclusions

- Renewable energy on farms will usually need planning permission, unless it's directly related to the farmhouse only
- Always come and see us for advice before signing up to anything. Duty Officers are available every morning or you can make an appointment to see a case officer
- There are alternatives to a wind turbine that may well be less contentious at planning stage: consider all options