

SWDP 27: Renewable and Low Carbon Energy

(60)



Incorporating Renewable and Low Carbon Energy into New Development

- A. To reduce carbon emissions and secure sustainable energy solutions, all new developments over 100 square metres gross or one or more dwellings should incorporate the generation of energy from renewable or low carbon sources equivalent to at least 10% of predicted energy requirements, unless it has been demonstrated that this would make the development unviable.**
- B. Large scale⁽⁶¹⁾ development proposals should examine the potential for a decentralised energy and heating network. If practical and viable, a decentralised energy and heating network should be provided as part of the development.**

Stand Alone Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Schemes

- C. With the exception of wind turbines (see D below) proposals for stand-alone renewable and other low carbon energy schemes are welcomed and will be considered favourably having regard to the provisions of other relevant policies in the Plan.**

60 This policy should be considered within the context of an “energy hierarchy”, whereby energy demand is reduced through energy efficiency and low energy design before meeting residual energy demand, first from renewable or low carbon sources and then from fossil fuels.

61 For the purposes of this policy only, the definition of large scale development is residential developments of 100 or more dwellings or non-residential developments of more than 10,000 square metres.

- D. Proposals for stand-alone wind turbines will only be considered favourably if:**
- i. The site is identified as suitable for wind energy development in a Neighbourhood Plan; and**
 - ii. Following consultation, it can be demonstrated that any significant planning impacts identified by the affected local community have been fully addressed and that the proposal has the local community's backing.**
- E. The South Worcestershire Councils (SWC) will set out associated advice and guidance on the implementation of this policy in a Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Supplementary Planning Document.**

Reasoned Justification

1. The European Union Renewable Energy Directive (Directive 2009/28/EC) sets an overall target for 20% of the energy consumed in the European Union to come from renewable sources by 2020. This overall target is divided by country, with the UK's target being 15% by 2020.
2. The Climate Change Act (2008) established a legal requirement for the UK to achieve an 80% cut in Carbon Dioxide emissions by 2050, with a 34% cut by 2020. The Planning and Energy Act (2008) allows local planning authorities' policies to impose reasonable requirements for a proportion of energy used in developments to be from renewable and low carbon sources in the locality of the development.
3. The Framework recognises the key role planning plays in supporting the delivery of renewable and low carbon energy. To help increase the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy, the Framework states (paragraph 97) that local planning authorities should:
 - a. Have a positive strategy to promote energy from renewable and low carbon sources.
 - b. Design policies to maximise renewable and low carbon energy development, while ensuring that adverse impacts are addressed satisfactorily, including cumulative landscape and visual impacts.
 - c. Identify opportunities where development can draw its energy supply from decentralised, renewable or low carbon energy supply systems and for co-locating potential heat customers and suppliers.
4. The development of renewable and low carbon energy is a key means of reducing south Worcestershire's carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions, promoting energy security for the future and reducing vulnerability to rising fuel costs.

5. Energy can also be recovered from waste management facilities such as Energy from Waste (EfW) and landfill gas. Planning applications relating to waste management facilities are “county matters” and are determined by Worcestershire County Council.
6. Worcestershire County Council’s technical research paper, Planning for Renewable Energy in Worcestershire (January 2009) and the West Midlands Renewable Energy Capacity Study (March 2011), provide the most detailed evidence of opportunities for the development of renewable and low carbon energy in south Worcestershire.
7. The West Midlands Renewable Energy Study identifies on-site micro-generation in new and existing developments as offering the largest opportunity for renewable energy generation in Worcester. On-site micro-generation also provides significant opportunities for Malvern Hills and Wychavon, particularly in proposed new developments.
8. Building Regulations set out minimum levels of carbon compliance to be achieved by all new residential dwellings. These compliance levels require a reduction in carbon dioxide emissions of 25% over 2006 Building Regulation standards. From 2013, this compliance level increased to 44% reduction and from 2016 a zero carbon standard will come into force, representing a 100% reduction from all sources of emissions. The Government has also indicated its desire to achieve zero carbon status in all non-residential buildings by 2019, with an indication that emission reductions should be sought from 2013 onwards, in a similar “stepping stone” approach to emission reduction targets in residential dwellings.
9. Whilst the SWC will rely on the national timetable for introducing standards in carbon dioxide emission reductions from residential and non-residential development, to secure sustainable energy solutions all new development (over 100 square metres or one or more dwellings) will be required to incorporate the generation of energy from renewable or low carbon sources equivalent to at least 10% of predicted energy requirements.
10. The use of on-site sources, off-site sources or a combination of both, can be considered in meeting this requirement. To demonstrate that the renewable and low carbon energy target will be met, planning applications must be accompanied by an energy assessment.
11. All developments to which SWDP27 A applies will be expected to meet the renewable and low carbon energy targets unless it can be demonstrated that:
 - a. a variety of renewable energy sources and generation methods have been assessed and costed; and
 - b. achievement of the target would make the proposal unviable (through submission of an independently assessed financial viability appraisal).
12. Based on existing patterns of heat demand, the West Midlands Renewable Energy Capacity Study also identified opportunities for district heating and CHP plants in Worcester, Pershore, Evesham, Droitwich Spa and Malvern. The development of decentralised heat networks will be encouraged and a decentralised heat network viability assessment should be submitted as part of the application process for large scale developments.

13. The retro-fitting of micro-generation technologies in existing developments will be encouraged, subject to consideration of potential impacts on local planning designations, the historic environment and the residential amenity of the local area.
14. Micro-generation and decentralised energy supplies in new developments will provide only part of the solution to reducing CO₂ emissions and promoting energy security. Both the Planning for Renewable Energy in Worcestershire and the West Midlands Renewable Energy Capacity studies indicate opportunities for the development of stand-alone renewable and low carbon energy schemes including:
 - a. Potential sites throughout south Worcestershire where there are sufficient average wind speeds to generate energy from wind turbines.
 - b. Significant potential for biomass energy from existing woodland and from energy crops.
 - c. Localised opportunities for hydroelectric power.
15. In June 2015, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government set out considerations to be applied to proposed wind energy developments. It made clear that planning permission should only be granted if the site has been identified as suitable for wind energy development in a Local Plan or Neighbourhood Plan and that the planning impacts identified by the affected local community have been fully addressed and the proposal has the local community's backing.
16. Whilst it is important that renewable and low carbon energy development is encouraged, it is also important that it is appropriately located and designed. The integration of large-scale renewable and low carbon energy proposals into south Worcestershire's varied landscapes requires careful consideration. Statutorily protected areas (e.g. AONB) in particular need to be protected from inappropriate development. The purposes of and reasons for such protective designations will vary considerably between sites and may not be in conflict with particular forms or scales of renewable and low carbon energy development. The key test in assessing proposals will be the extent to which they might affect the integrity of the designation.
17. Minimising any impacts caused by noise, odour, traffic and discharges to the air and watercourses will be important, particularly in relation to nearby residential areas and individual dwellings. Visual impacts on the landscape will also be a relevant issue when determining the acceptability of proposals for large-scale renewable and low carbon energy proposals.
18. The wider benefits of renewable and low carbon energy projects will also be material considerations when assessing planning applications. These benefits include a contribution to CO₂ reduction, the diversification of local rural economies, the creation of new jobs and support for the regeneration of urban areas, including industrial and brownfield sites.
19. Community involvement in developing proposals for renewable and low carbon energy schemes is encouraged.