

■ INTRODUCTION

- 15.1 The utility services include water supply, surface water and foul drainage, sewage treatment, electricity and gas supply and waste disposal. They are an essential part of modern living standards. PPG12 states that the capacity of existing infrastructure and the need for additional facilities should be taken into account in the preparation of development plans.
- 15.2 The availability and adequacy of water supply, sewerage and sewage treatment is an important factor in considering proposals for new development. The Council will ensure that development only takes place where adequate services exist or can be provided in time to serve the development.
- 15.3 Modern communications are also regarded as an essential element in the life of communities and in the national economy. New communications technology is spreading rapidly to meet the growing demand for better communications in business, the home and public services. Both this new technology and the maintenance and improvement of the existing network can entail development which can cause conflicts with landscape and conservation interests. The Council will seek to ensure that telecommunication and powerline development does not cause serious damage to the natural and built environment.
- 15.4 The Government has advised that wind generated energy and other forms of renewable energy are on the verge of widespread development. In general the Council welcomes the exploitation of renewable energy sources but believes that wind energy developments should only be permitted in locations where their environmental impact is acceptable.

OBJECTIVES

- 15.5 The Utility Services and Telecommunications Policies of the Plan have the following main objectives:
1. To ensure that new development takes place in locations where existing and planned services can accommodate additional growth.
 2. To ensure that telecommunication and powerline development respects the Plan's policies for the natural and built environment.
 3. To encourage the development of renewable energy resources in locations where their environmental impact is acceptable.

PUBLIC UTILITIES

POLICY UT1

OFF-SITE SERVICE INFRASTRUCTURE

Development which increases the demand for off-site service infrastructure, such as water supply, surface water and foul drainage and sewage treatment will be permitted where adequate capacity already exists or satisfactory improvements can be provided in time to serve the development, without detrimental effects on the environment. Where improvements in off-site infrastructure are programmed, the commencement of development will be co-ordinated with its provision.

JUSTIFICATION

- 15.6 Development can be proposed in locations where the necessary infrastructure is not available and pending its availability the consequences for the development and the environment would be unacceptable. New development will be restricted to locations where adequate infrastructure already exists or where additional provisions can be made in time to serve the development.
- 15.7 If the existing water and sewerage infrastructure is not adjacent to a development site, the developer may have to requisition a new off-site sewer or water main under the Water Industry Act 1991. Any costs associated with the requisition would be borne by the developer and appropriate conditions would be imposed to secure the works.
- 15.8 An area of particular concern is the provision of efficient foul treatment systems. In several parts of the District,
- sewage treatment works are becoming overloaded and the Water Companies, as part of their overall capital programmes, are having to upgrade them to meet new demands and tighter consent standards imposed by the Environment Agency. Where Water Company proposals for the timing and capacity of new infrastructure are not compatible with a developer's programme, they will be prepared to investigate with the developer, alternative arrangements, including financing arrangements, for the speedier implementation of the new infrastructure.
- 15.9 Where necessary off-site service infrastructure will be secured by legal agreement.

POLICY UT2**SURFACE WATER DRAINAGE**

Development will be permitted where it includes arrangements for the disposal of surface water which will not adversely affect other land or development. Soakaways will be permitted where detailed geo-technical investigations, carried out by the developer, show there will be no adverse effect on other land or property.

JUSTIFICATION

15.10 The Council is concerned that proposals for development should include acceptable arrangements for the disposal of surface water.

POLICY UT3**SEWAGE DISPOSAL**

New development will be permitted where foul sewers and sewage treatment works of adequate capacity and design are available or will be provided in time to serve the development. In areas not served by public sewers, the use of small private package sewage treatment plants will be discouraged, unless acceptable to the sewerage undertakers and the Environment Agency, and the use of septic tanks will only be acceptable where:

1. Mains drainage is not available; and
2. Ground conditions are satisfactory and the plot is of adequate size to provided a suitable sub-soil drainage system; and
3. There is no risk of pollution by septic tank effluent.

JUSTIFICATION

15.11 Many sewerage systems and sewage treatment works are becoming over-loaded. Unless additional infrastructure is provided, further demands may result in the pollution of watercourses. Consequently, development should only take place where existing infrastructure is adequate, or where new facilities will be provided to coincide with the new demand.

15.12 As a general principle, new development should be served by new or existing public foul sewerage systems and sewage treatment plants rather than by small private package sewage treatment plants or septic tanks. Private sewage plants require frequent maintenance in order to produce effluents which meet their discharge consents. Failure to reach the required standard can result in pollution due to inadequate dilution of effluents.

POLICY UT4**WATER AND SEWERAGE FACILITIES**

Development which will enable water and sewerage undertakers to meet their statutory obligations and to comply with the relevant environmental standards enacted in Government and EU legislation will be permitted provided that the development would have no adverse impact on residential amenity, landscape, nature conservation or historic interest of the area.

JUSTIFICATION

- 15.13 Duties and statutory obligations imposed upon water and sewerage undertakers are increasingly important in ensuring that polluting discharges are reduced to acceptable limits and drinking water of appropriate quality is supplied to customers. To ensure that undertakers are able to deliver services in the manner required by legislation, significant changes in respect of infrastructure are likely to be required during the Plan period.
- 15.14 The Council is keen to support the provision of infrastructure which secures pollution control and water treatment to the benefit of the environment and the public, provided that proper attention is given to the existing landscape, to the amenity of residents and to nature conservation and sites of historic importance. New facilities and infrastructure must be provided so as to be of minimal impact on the environment in terms of visual amenity and so as to have no significant harmful impact on residents who may live close to the proposed installations.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND POWERLINES

POLICY UT5**TELECOMMUNICATIONS**

Proposals for telecommunication developments, such as masts or other structures, will not be permitted within or in locations where they would have an adverse effect on AONBs, Special Landscape Areas, Parks and Gardens of Historic or Landscape Interest, historic battlefield sites, conservation areas, listed buildings, SSSIs or other statutory nature conservation sites unless no suitable alternative site in a less sensitive location is available.

Throughout the Plan area, proposals for telecommunication development will be permitted provided that all the following criteria are met whilst taking due account of technical and operational requirements:

1. There will be no serious adverse effect on the character or appearance of the area;
2. It can be demonstrated that existing masts or structures cannot be used for the purpose;
3. There would be no unacceptable adverse impact on residential amenity.

JUSTIFICATION

15.15 Technological changes in communications require the provision of a wide range of aeriels and masts. There can be a conflict between the need to site the equipment on exposed sites for operational reasons and the need to protect sensitive areas.

15.16 Government policy is to facilitate the growth of telecommunications and in PPG8 it advises that the planning system should encourage and avoid hindering development in this field. However, the Government is also fully committed to preserving the national heritage and it has emphasised that the growth of telecommunications should be balanced with the need to protect the environment.

15.17 It is accepted that some of these facilities for technical or operational reasons may have to be in prominent or sensitive

locations such as the AONBs, Special Landscape Areas and Parks and Gardens of Historic or Landscape Interest. However, facilities will only be permitted in such locations where no alternative sites exist in a less sensitive area and they are as far as possible, designed, sited and landscaped to minimise the impact on the environment.

15.18 To keep to a minimum the number of masts or other structures, the Council will encourage the sharing of existing masts and other structures in order to minimise the impact of telecommunications development on the environment.

POLICY UT6**OVERHEAD POWERLINES AND HIGH POWERED ELECTRICAL INSTALLATIONS**

The Council will seek to minimise the environmental effects of proposals for overhead powerlines of 132kV or over, suspended from steel lattice towers, and high powered electrical installations. The Council will not support such development within or in locations where the development would have a significant adverse impact upon the following areas:

1. AONBs, Special Landscape Areas or Parks and Gardens of Historic or Landscape Interest;
2. SSSIs or other statutory nature conservation sites;
3. Conservation areas and sites and buildings of historic or architectural interest, including listed buildings and scheduled monuments;
4. Existing or proposed residential development;
5. Sites used for informal or formal recreation including playing fields, playgrounds or public open space.

In exceptional circumstances, the Council will seek to have lines placed underground, where this is not damaging to sites of nature conservation value or archaeological importance.

Proposals for residential development will not be permitted in locations where amenity is significantly adversely affected by overhead powerlines of 132 kV or above.

JUSTIFICATION

- 5.19 Deemed planning permission for the siting of overhead powerlines is granted by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry following consultations with the local planning authority. When considering proposals for overhead powerlines of 132 kV and over and other high powered electrical installations (such as power stations and transformer sub-stations) the Council will seek to ensure that they are sited in locations where the visual impact of the proposal is minimised. The Council will not support the siting of such proposals in locations where they would have a seriously detrimental impact upon the sensitive areas listed.
- 5.20 The Council recognises that it may not be feasible to route lines so as to avoid impacting upon all sensitive areas or buildings, in which case, the Council will seek a route that results in the minimal environmental impact and, in so doing, will pay particular regard to the impact upon statutorily designated areas and buildings, and residential areas. In general, the Council considers that the maximum impact of overhead lines of 132 kV and over on the amenity of the occupiers of dwellings occurs when lines are located within 150m of housing. However, when considering the routing of such lines, the Council will have regard to local environmental factors, such as landscape features and ground morphology in assessing the potential impact of the lines and towers.

- 5.21 Where it is proved that there is no alternative to a route which would result in serious harm to a sensitive area, the Council will press for the line to be placed underground.
- 5.22 When considering proposals for housing near to high voltage overhead lines and proposals for high powered electrical installations, the Council will consult the National Radiological Protection Board concerning the impact of the lines upon the health of occupiers of buildings.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

POLICY UT7

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Proposals for the generation of energy from renewable sources will be permitted, subject to Policy UT8, where there would be no adverse impact on the special amenity, landscape, scientific or historic interest of the area.

JUSTIFICATION

- 5.23 The term 'renewable energy' covers resources which occur and recur naturally in the environment. Such resources include heat from the earth or the sun, power from wind or water, energy from plant material and from the recycling of domestic, industrial or agricultural waste.
- 5.24 Government policy is to encourage the development of renewable energy resources wherever they have the prospect of being both economically competitive and environmentally acceptable. PPG22 requires that Local Plans include policies for developing renewable energy sources and that these should weigh carefully the Government's encouragement of renewable energy with its continuing commitment to policies for protecting the environment.

POLICY UT8**WIND TURBINE GENERATORS**

Proposals for small individual wind turbines, not intended to supply power to the electricity grid, will be permitted subject to criteria 1 - 9 listed below.

Windfarms, groups of wind turbines or large individual wind turbines affecting AONBs, SSSIs, scheduled monuments, Parks and Gardens of Historic or Landscape Interest, the Green Belt, Special Landscape Areas and sites of nature conservation value will only be permitted if it can be shown that the proposal would not adversely detract from the special amenity, landscape, scientific or historic interest of these areas, they are incapable of being located outside these areas and criteria 1 - 9 are met.

Elsewhere, proposals for windfarms, groups of wind turbines or large individual wind turbines will be supported provided that they meet all the following criteria:

1. By itself or together with other such proposals or developments in the area it will not significantly affect the character or appearance of the countryside;
2. The wind turbines and any other structures or buildings are of a high standard of design and satisfactorily blend into the form and pattern of the landscape;
3. It will not have an adverse impact on the character or setting of settlements;
4. It will not lead to a significant nuisance to the public arising from noise, safety, shadow flicker, electro-magnetic interference or reflected light. Wind turbines will not normally be permitted within 400m of a dwelling unless it is part of a development supplied by that turbine;
5. It will not cause unacceptable highway safety problems and no permanent access roads are built to or across the site;
6. The powerlines required to link the wind turbines to the electricity grid or user buildings are provided underground where they would cross sensitive areas;
7. It does not adversely affect a listed building, a conservation area or a site of archaeological importance;
8. There is no adverse impact on public rights of way or the recreational enjoyment of the countryside;
9. Redundant turbines, plant, transmission lines and access roads will be removed and the sites restored.

JUSTIFICATION

15.25 Wind energy will contribute towards reducing the emission of greenhouse gases but it is not without adverse environmental effects itself. Whilst small wind turbines appropriately sited, may be relatively inconspicuous, larger structures, groups of turbines and windfarms can be at odds with policies to maintain and enhance the scenic quality of the landscape.

15.26 Large wind turbines, particularly when in a 'wind farm' are a very prominent form of development. The sites chosen are often highly visible because of the need to site the machines in open exposed locations. The turbines themselves can be large structures and the movement of the turbines blades increases their visibility. Ancillary development such as access and service roads, connections to the electricity

- grid, electricity transformers and buildings all add to their visual impact.
- 15.27 The Council appreciates the wider environmental benefits of clean renewable sources of energy and aims to encourage wind turbines where their impact is environmentally acceptable. Great care will be needed with locating windfarms in sensitive areas recognised for their natural beauty, wildlife or historic heritage to ensure that the special qualities of these areas are not injured. Generally sites outside sensitive areas will be preferred.
- 15.28 Windfarms, groups of wind turbines and large individual wind turbines will be permitted when their scale, siting or cumulative impact would not have a significant adverse effect on landscape quality, buildings or areas of historic or architectural interest, the recreational enjoyment of the countryside and public safety and amenity.
- 15.29 Whilst the scope for mitigating the visual impact of windfarms is limited, the Council will require that strenuous efforts are made. Developers should, as far as possible, match wind turbines with the scale and pattern of the landscape and make the best use of landform and cover.
- 15.30 In order to fully assess the possible environmental impact the Council will require detailed information including the location, height, design and colour of the proposed turbines. This should include descriptive and graphic material sufficient to show the visual impact of the proposed development on the landscape.
- 15.31 When a proposal by virtue of its nature, size or location would be likely to have significant environmental effects the Council will require an Environmental Statement. An Environmental Statement will always be required where proposals will significantly affect areas of high scenic value.

CHAPTER **15** UTILITY SERVICES AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS