

Greenside Extension

Client: GWEL Operating Company Ltd Reference: C5865-655 Version 1

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#### **Report Prepared for:**

GWEL Operating Company Ltd

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# 1 Planning Statement

## 1.1 Introduction

In terms of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, this chapter sets out the Planning and Legislative Context with a summary of the Proposed Development in its context, a summary of the Development Plan, carries out an appraisal of whether the Proposed Development is in compliance with the Development Plan, and whether other material considerations indicate otherwise. The chapter concludes with a summary of the material considerations effecting the planning balance in order to assist Aberdeenshire Council in their assessment of the application.

Throughout this Planning Statement, reference will be made to the various assessments within the EIA Report accompanying the Application. The EIA Report identifies and assesses the potential environmental effects of the Proposed Development, together with embedded and additional mitigation, and is relevant to the policy appraisal within this Planning Statement. Where relevant, the EIA Report should be read in conjunction with this Planning Statement.

#### 1.1.1 Summary of Proposed Development

Regulation 9 of The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations 2013<sup>1</sup> requires, amongst other information, a written description of the development to which the planning application relates. In this instance, the description of development is:

The erection of three wind turbines up to 100m to tip and up to 2.35MW generating capacity. Associated and ancillary infrastructure includes hard standing areas for each turbine location, on-site access tracks, an electrical substation and buried cables, borrow pit search area, temporary laydown areas and temporary construction compound.

Consent is sought for a temporary period of 40 years.

Given that the Proposed Development is for renewable energy generation and is less than 20MW, the planning application would be "Local" under the terms of the hierarchy of development.

A full description of the Proposed Development can be found in EIAR Chapter 3 – Project Description.

#### 1.1.2 The Site

A full description of the Site and its context can be found in **EIAR Chapter 3 – Project Description**.

## 1.2 Renewable Energy Policy Context

The Climate Change Secretary, on behalf of the Scottish Government declared a global climate emergency in May 2019<sup>2</sup> and followed with an amendment to the Climate Change Bill. The declaration describes the update to be "...the most stringent legislative targets anywhere in the world...".

Subsequent legislative, regulatory and policy updates from the Scottish Government have accelerated the push for tackling climate change. Two of the key elements to this are the targets within the Onshore Wind Policy Statement 2022 and policies within the National Planning Framework 4 (discussed in Sections 1.3.1 and Sections 1.4.1 below).



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations 2013 Accessed 25/10/2023

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> The Global Climate Emergency - Scotland's Response: Climate Change Secretary Roseanna Cunningham's statement Accessed 25/10/2023

After the publication of the National Planning Framework 4, Scottish Renewables, the industry body for the renewables industry in Scotland, is quoted in a speech by Minsters in Parliament<sup>3</sup> as saying Scotland has *"probably...one of the most supportive planning regimes for renewables in the whole of Europe"*.

This application is a direct response to that context.

### 1.3 The Development Plan

Section 25 of Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997<sup>4</sup> requires that when "…making any determination under the planning Acts, regard is to be had to the development plan, the determination is, unless material considerations indicate otherwise, to be made in accordance with that plan."

The Site is wholly within the Aberdeenshire Council area and therefore the Development Plan in this instance consists of the National Planning Policy Framework 4 (NPF4)<sup>5</sup>, adopted February 2023, and the Aberdeenshire Council Local Development Plan (SLDP)<sup>6</sup>, adopted January 2023.

#### 1.3.1 National Planning Framework 4

The fourth National Planning Framework was adopted by the Scottish Government on 13th February 2023. The NPF4 is in force at the time of the submission of this application and National Planning Framework 3 and Scottish Planning Policy are superseded.

NPF4 brings together the long-term spatial strategy with national planning policies as part of the statutory Development Plan. The framework contains six overarching spatial principles: just transition, conserving and recycling assets, local living, compact urban growth, rebalanced development and rural revitalisation. These principles will be key in achieving the goal of sustainable, livable and productive places.

Policy 1 of the report gives a clear direction by stating that significant weight should be given to tackling the climate and nature crises. This statement recognises the important role of the NPF4 in achieving the ambitious targets for climate change and sets out the significant shifts in policies that are required to achieve net-zero emissions by 2045. This is further developed by Policy 2 which promotes climate mitigation and adaptation.

The key policy for this development appears to be Policy 11 on Energy. Part 'e' of the policy notes a range of factors which should be taken into account when considering development proposals for energy developments and concludes by noting that, in material terms, significant weight should be placed on the contribution that the Proposed Development makes to energy generation targets and greenhouse gas emission reduction targets.

It is considered that NPF4 represents a sizeable shift in priorities and more weight will be given towards developments that will contribute towards carbon reduction targets within the planning system.

#### 1.3.2 Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023

The Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan (ALDP), adopted in 2023, is the established planning policy for the Aberdeenshire Council Area. The plan allows for ready identification of development proposals affecting individual settlements. ALDP's vision and outcomes are rooted in the NPF4 and existing plans used by Aberdeenshire Council for land use decision making such as the Local Housing Strategy, the Local Transport Strategy and the Economic Development Strategy as well as a variety of other important documents relating to Aberdeenshire. ALDP's vision and outcomes are used by Aberdeenshire Council to guide development where conflicting policies arise. The ALDP's outcomes are:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> <u>Fourth National Planning Framework: Planning Minister's speech - 11 January 2023</u> Accessed 25/10/2023

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 – Accessed 25/10/2023

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> National Planning Framework 4 Accessed 25/10/2023

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan Accessed 25//10/2023

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- To promote sustainable mixed communities with the highest standards of design;
- To take on the challenges of sustainable development and climate change;
- To protect and improve assets and resources;
- To increase and diversify the economy;
- To protect, enhance and promote green-blue networks within and between settlements;
- To make efficient use of the transport network, reduce the need to travel and promote walking, cycling, wheeling and public transport;

#### 1.3.3 Aberdeenshire Council: Assessing Wind Energy Developments- Planning advice PA2023-21

Assessing Wind Energy Developments (AWED) accompanies the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan and provides guidance to applicants and development management officers on the assessment of wind turbine applications. It contains no ALDP policies and functions only as guidance. This guidance has been used as a reference to inform the kind of assessments necessary to be included in the EIA Report.

#### 1.3.4 Appraisal of Compliance with the Development Plan

In order to determine whether the Proposed Development is in accordance with the Development Plan, the key policies, as identified in **Table 1.1 - Appraisal of Compliance with the Development Plan**, have been responded to individually on a site specific basis.

#### Table 1.1 - Appraisal of Compliance with the Development Plan

Policy	Appraisal	
National Planning Framework 4		
Policy 1: Tackling the climate and nature crises	This policy gives significant weight to the global climate and nature crises and requires Local Development Plans that would be produced under NPF4 to address the global climate emergency and nature crisis by ensuring that the spatial strategy reduces emissions and adapts to current and future risks of climate change. The Proposed Development directly contributes to climate change mitigation and is considered to gain significant material support from this policy.	
Policy 2: Climate mitigation and adaptation	The Proposed Development is a renewable energy source which directly reduces GHG emissions and material support from this policy is anticipated in terms of mitigating the effects of climate change. The Proposed Development has been designed with the current and future risks of Climate Change in mind.	
Policy 3: Biodiversity	The Planning Application submission includes <b>Chapter 14 Ecology and Chapter 15 Ornithology</b> which covers a wide range of topics.	
	The Proposed Development is coupled with a biodiversity enhancement and habitat management plan that is detailed in <b>Chapter 14 Ecology</b> , this plan includes both watercourse and terrestrial habitat enhancement.	
	It is considered therefore that there would be no potential adverse impacts, including cumulatively and that the Proposed Development is in compliance with Policy 3.	
Policy 4: Natural Places	The type of the Proposed Development is currently operational on the landholding of the Proposed Development, and the principle of the development is considered to be acceptable. The scale and cumulative impact of the Proposed Development is not considered to be of a magnitude of change which would deem it to be unacceptable.	
	<b>Chapter 14 Ecology and Chapter 15 Ornithology</b> outlines the walkover survey conducted, in line with the recommendations of NatureScot and Biodiversity which outlined no significant effects on protected species or sites.	
Policy 6: Forestry, woodland and trees	The Proposed Development will have no impact on any Ancient Woodland Inventory Forestry, native woodland, hedgerows, or individual trees of high biodiversity value as the only tree species present on site is plantation Conifers, and the Proposed Development is not anticipated to conflict with any hedgerows, detailed furth in <b>Chapter 14 Ecology</b> .	
	Some woodland removal will take place during the construction of the Proposed Development as detailed in <b>Chapter 14 Ecology.</b>	
	It is considered that appropriate controlling conditions could be applied to any forthcoming consent to detail and implement this. It is therefore deemed that the Proposed Development is in compliance with Policy 6.	
Policy 7: Historic assets and places	<b>Chapter 6 Cultural Heritage</b> considers potentially significant impacts on historic assets or places and considers national policy and guidance regarding managing change in the historic environment. Given the presence of the existing turbines at Greenside Farm, the potential magnitude of change for the setting or historical appreciation of historic assets is reduced and not adverse. No significant physical or setting effects are anticipated on any cultural heritage assets, as detailed in <b>Chapter 6 Cultural Heritage</b> .	
Policy 11: Energy	This policy is very supportive of renewable energy. The intention of the policy includes "to encourage, promote and facilitate all forms of renewable energy development onshore" with the desired outcome of "expansion of renewable technologies."	
	The policy covers a wide range of potential impacts as a result of energy schemes. Each of these aspects has been covered elsewhere in this Planning Statement and the EIA Report.	
	Subject to those other aspects, the Proposed Development is considered to gain material support from this policy.	
Policy 23: Health and safety	No significant adverse effects on human health are anticipated. Wind energy has an exemplary safety record and the policies, guidance, and procedures that have maintained this record will be implemented on-site as part of the construction and operational/maintenance activities on site. Detailed in <b>Chapter 12 Other Issues.</b>	

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Policy 29: Rural Development	The Proposed Development allows for the diversification of Greenside Farm to increase its economic activity while allowing land to, largely, continue to be used for grazing. The Proposed Development has been designed to be of a suitable scale for the local context including the existing wind energy development. The Proposed Development will improve business viability.	
Aberdeenshire Local Develop	ment Plan 2023	
Policy R3 Minerals	The site is not within any Areas Safeguarded or Identified as Areas of Search for Minerals Development as shown in Appendix 14 of the ALDP.	
Policy P4: Hazardous and Potentially Polluting Developments and Contaminated Land	The Proposed Development is within the Outer Zone of a Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Major Hazard Pipeline, at the closest instance located approximately 173m south west of the development. During the construction period the site will be workplace, HSE Development Type (DT) 1.1, which will be the site's highest level of sensitivity in terms. In this scenario, HSE does not advise against development. Post construction the site will mostly be unmanned and hence the risk to life is low. It is not anticipated that the Proposed Development will result in an adverse effect on residential	
	properties when compared to the existing noise levels, as detailed in <b>Chapter 7 Noise</b> .	
Policy E1: Natural Heritage	The Proposed Development is supported by an ecological assessment in Chapter 14 Ecology.	
	The site does not sit within any ecological designations. The nearest ecological designation to the site is located 2.5km north of the site. Loch of Strathbeg and its surrounding area is a designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Protection Areas (SPA), and a RAMSAR site. The separation distance between Loch of Strathbeg and the site is satisfactory so that the Proposed Development will not have a significant adverse effect, as detailed in <b>Chapter 15 Ornithology</b> .	
Policy E2: Landscape	The Proposed Development is accompanied by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), see <b>Chapter 5 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment.</b> The outcome of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment is that the Proposed Development may have some significant impacts in EIA terms when viewed in close proximity however, features in a landscape already characterised by turbines and the additional turbines are not within the remaining capacity of the landscape as set out in the Strategic Landscape Capacity Assessment for Wind Energy in Aberdeenshire. It is noted that however, that this assessment was published in 2014 and the national policy position on climate change and renewable energy has changed. Given the time elapsed since the assessment was published, it is considered that the material weight in the planning balance would be reduced proportionately. This is supported by the LVIA which determines that the Proposed Development can be accommodated in the in the landscape.	
	The LVIA concludes that the Proposed Development may have some moderate impacts when viewed in close proximity, however, these are not considered to be unacceptable. It is also concluded that the Proposed Development is anticipated to have only a minor indirect impact on the North East Aberdeenshire Coast SLA. <b>Chapter 5 Landscape and Visual Impact</b> for the full accompanying assessment.	
Policy E3: Forestry and Woodland	As part of the Proposed Development, some non-native trees will be felled to make space for T1 and its hardstandings. This will be compensated by the planting detailed in the biodiversity enhancement and habitat management, see <b>Chapter 14 Ecology</b> . It is considered that appropriate controlling conditions could be applied to any forthcoming consent to detail and implement this.	
Policy HE1: Protecting Listed Buildings, Scheduled	The Proposed Development will not have any direct impact on any listed buildings, scheduled monuments, or other archaeological sites.	
Monuments and Archaeological Sites (including other historic buildings)	The Proposed Development is supported by a Cultural and Archaeological Assessment, see <b>Chapter 6</b> <b>Cultural</b> , which concluded that the Proposed Development will not have any significant impacts on the setting, character or integrity of any listed buildings, scheduled monuments or other archaeological sites.	
Policy HE2: Protecting Historic, Cultural and Conservation Areas	The Proposed Development is not located within any Conservation Areas, Battlefields, or Inventory Gardens and Designed Landscapes and will have no physical effect on any of these designations. There are several built environment heritage assets within the study area, including Scheduled Monuments, Garden and Designed Landscapes, Conservation Areas, and Category A, B, and C Listed Buildings. It has been assessed that the Proposed Development will not have any significant effect on the setting, character, or integrity of these designations, see <b>Chapter 6 Cultural</b> .	
Policy PR1: Protecting Important Resources	The Proposed Development is situated in Class 3.2 agricultural land as designated by the Soil Survey for Scotland, Land Capability for Agriculture series, which is outwith the land protected in this policy. The	

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	Proposed Development is a time-limited development for renewable energy generation that will restore the ground to its original state once its approval period has elapsed.
Policy C2: Renewable Energy	The Proposed Development has taken into account the Strategic Landscape Capacity Assessment for Wind Energy in Aberdeenshire Final Report 2014 (LCA) as part of its LVIA, although it was noted that the LCA has lost relevance due to changing national policy, in the form of NPF4, which substantially raises the importance of the nature and climate crisis.
	The planning history of the site and neighbouring land to the north and east has proven it to be an acceptable site for wind development at the proposed height. As detailed in the accompanying LVIA the cumulative landscape and visual effects with the additional proposed turbine are thought to be notable but not significant in terms of density and spread, see <b>Chapter 5 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment.</b>
	In relation to both the wind and solar aspects of the Proposed Development, and following consultation with online resources, are not anticipated to have any impact on MOD or NATS ATC radar. The site is also situated in a MOD low-priority low-flying zone. It is not anticipated that mitigation will be required in relation to aviation and radar considerations, see <b>Chapter 12 Other Issues</b> .
	As detailed in the noise, shadow flicker and residential amenity assessment; see <b>Chapter 7 Noise, Chapter 11 Shadow Flicker</b> and <b>Chapter 5 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment</b> , no significant adverse effects are anticipated on residential properties.
Policy C4: Flooding	The Proposed Development is not located in an area of flood risk as observed on the SEPA Flood Map. Flooding is considered in detail in <b>Chapter 8 Hydrology and Hydrogeology</b> .

Further to the above, it is considered that the Proposed Development is in compliance with all relevant Development Plan policies and therefore should gain material support in the planning balance.

### 1.4 Other Material Considerations

Outside of the Development Plan, other material considerations exist which influence the outcome of planning application assessments. These generally take the form of national policy documents specific to the development under consideration, for example, the Onshore Wind Policy Statement.

#### 1.4.1 Site History

The planning history of a site can be material in the determination of the application.

- Various energy applications and related infrastructure:
- Erection of 4 No. Enercon E70 2.3MW Wind Turbines (Height to Tip of Blade 99.5m) Turbine 1:(N405,695) (E854,905) Turbine 2:(N406,035) (E854815) Turbine 3:(N406,365) (E(854,715)Turbine 4:(N406,705) (E854,615) (APP/2011/1024) Granted Planning Permission in March 2012
- Erection of Ground Mounted Solar Array (APP/2015/2949) Granted Planning Permission in October 2015
- Erection of 4 Enercon E70 2.3MW Wind Turbines (Height to Tip of Blade 99.5m) Turbine 1:(N405,695) (E854,905) Turbine 2:(N406,035) (E854815) Turbine 3:(N406,365) (E(854,715)Turbine 4:(N406,705) (E85) without compliance with condition 14 (Noise Levels) of approved planning permission reference APP/2011/1024 (APP/2016/2575) *Refused Planning Permission in December 2016*
- Erection of 4 Enercon E70 2.3Mw Wind Turbines without compliance with condition 14 (Extension to Interval Between Monitoring Periods) of approved planning permission reference APP/2011/1024 (APP/2017/1071) – Refused Planning Permission in June 2017
- Installation of 36.6MW Solar SV Park and Associated Infrastructure (APP/2019/0296) Granted Planning Permission in September 2019

This planning history context has informed the design process for the Proposed Development.



#### 1.4.2 Onshore Wind Policy Statement 2022<sup>6</sup>

The Scottish Government published an updated version of the Onshore Wind Energy Statement in December 2022.

The document highlights that Scotland has approximately 8.4GW of installed capacity of onshore wind. The new target for deployment by the year 2030, is for 12GW of additional onshore wind deployment.

The target for the rapid deployment of additional onshore wind developments provides further material weight in favour of planning applications for onshore wind development.

The statement is progressing towards publishing a 'sector deal' for onshore wind amongst other actions being taken by the Scottish Government to encourage deployment. In order to meet these ambitious targets, new proposals will need to shift towards utilising the larger turbine typologies that are emerging with the evolution of onshore wind technology. That Onshore Wind Sector Deal was published by the Scottish Government on 21 September 2023 and illustrates the Scottish Government's ambition for the deployment of onshore wind.

## 1.4.3 Update to the Climate Change Plan 2018 – 2032: Securing a Green Recovery on a Path to Net Zero<sup>7</sup>

The Scottish Government published the update to the Climate Change Plan on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2020, as a revision to the 2018 Climate Change Plan. The COVID-19 pandemic has had profound impacts across various sectors, creating social, public health, and economic challenges. In the wake of this, the Scottish Government have revised the Climate Change Plan Update (CCPu) to commit to a 'green recovery' from COVID-19, setting out a resurgence from the pandemic that will capture the considerable economic opportunities created in Scotland's path to net zero. The transition to a greener economy can create green jobs and upskilling within the renewable energy industry. This would rebuild a more sustainable economy that would support Scotland's recovery from a global pandemic, whilst tackling the ongoing climate change emergency.

In an update to the 2018 Climate Change Plan, the CCPu sets out more ambitious targets to reduce emissions by 75% by 2030 and to achieve net zero by 2045. Delivery of these targets will depend on the successful development of a coordinated approach across the entire energy system. Bringing different sectors of Scotland's energy system closer together will ensure that the strategy for the delivery of decarbonisation has fully considered the impacts and requirements of each sector.

The document identifies the importance of onshore wind in the green recovery, as one of the lowest cost forms of power generation available, indicating that the industry must focus on harnessing Scotland's potential and make the most of our vast wind resources. The CCPu states:

"We need to see adoption of electricity-based solutions, for example in heat and transport, taking advantage of the large potential for growth of onshore and offshore wind capacity in Scotland".

In support of onshore wind, the Scottish Government have promised to review the energy consenting process and quicken the determination process, which will benefit future wind energy proposals. The Plan states:

"We will continue to review our energy consenting processes, making further improvements and efficiencies where possible, and seeking to reduce determination timescales for complex electricity generation and network infrastructure applications. Faster determinations will enable any projects awarded consent to develop more quickly, which will benefit onshore wind in particular."

The Scottish Government are evidently encouraging of new wind energy proposals that can support the economy's green recovery and contribute towards achieving net zero, subject to the suitability of the proposed scheme.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Onshore Wind Policy Statement 2022 – Accessed 13/02/2024

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Update to the Climate Change Plan 2018 – 2032: Securing a Green Recovery on a Path to Net Zero – Accessed 13/02/2024



#### 1.4.4 Scottish Energy Strategy: The Future of Energy in Scotland<sup>8</sup>

The Scottish Energy Strategy, which was published in December 2017, sets out the Scottish Government's vision for the future energy system to 2050. It is noted that an update to this strategy is being prepared by the Scottish Government and a future version may supersede this. The updated document is anticipated to consider the Just Transition.

The 2017 Strategy outlines the commitment from the Scottish Government to the continued growth of the renewable energy sector in Scotland, identifying the sector as a key driver of economic growth and an essential feature of the future energy system. The vision of the strategy is guided by three core principles:

- A whole system view;
- An inclusive energy transition; and
- A smarter local energy model.

The vision for the future of energy in Scotland takes a whole system approach, setting a target of 50% of the energy for Scotland's heat, transport and electricity consumption to be supplied from renewable sources, as well as an increase in 30% in the productivity of energy use across the Scottish economy to be achieved by 2030.

With the drive to decarbonise the heat and transport sectors, electricity will have a major role to play as the country looks to electric/hybrid vehicles and innovative solutions to heat demand, removing the dependency on fossil fuel heating systems.

To achieve the 50% interim targets, the vision outlines the need for a considerably higher market penetration of renewable electricity than today – requiring in the region of 17 GW of installed capacity in 2030 (compared to 9.5 GW in June 2017)<sup>9</sup>.

The vision outlines the importance of onshore wind, indicating that the Scottish Government are supportive of new development. The vision states:

"Our energy and climate change goals mean that onshore wind must continue to play a vital role in Scotland's future – helping to decarbonise our electricity, heat and transport systems, boosting our economy, and meeting local and national demand."

It is clear that onshore wind will continue to play a vital role in the future energy mix and that the Scottish Government are supportive of new development, subject to appropriate assessment to demonstrate the suitability of the proposal.

## 1.5 Conclusion

This chapter sets out a summary of the Proposed Development in its context, a summary of the Development Plan, carries out an appraisal of whether the Proposed Development is in compliance with the Development Plan, and whether other material considerations indicate otherwise.

These other considerations cover a wide array of topics and the remainder of the planning application submission goes into detail on these. No unacceptable impacts have been identified which cannot be appropriately mitigated against through design or planning conditions.

The appraisals in this chapter conclude that the Proposed Development is in compliance with key Development Plan policies and with the Development Plan as a whole. Other material considerations add material weight to the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> <u>Scottish Energy Strategy: The future of energy in Scotland</u> – Accessed 13/02/2024

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Scottish Energy Strategy Page 37.



planning balance in favour of the Proposed Development. As such, subject to the imposition of appropriate controlling planning conditions, planning permission should be granted.



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