

# BENINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

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Ms Hazel Summerfield  
East Herts Development Control  
East Herts Council  
Wallfields, Pegs Lane  
Hertford  
Herts SG13 8EQ

25 August, 2008

Dear Ms Summerfield

**Ref: Planning Application 3/08/0889/FP**  
**Proposal: 3 no. wind turbines of 119m in height, a permanent meteorological mast, substation, access tracks and ancillary infrastructure.**  
**Location; Land east of Walkern Road and North and, West of High Elms Lane, Benington**

Benington Parish Council wish to object in the strongest possible terms to the above planning application. The impact of this application on Benington and its residents is significant. This letter seeks to outline our foremost concerns and major grounds for objection. We would also draw your attention to the results of a questionnaire issued to each household in Benington, asking everyone of voting age to express their views on this application. Two thirds of the forms were returned, with 80% of the people being against the proposal.

**The Parish Council's major concerns and objections are as follows:**

**Visual and Landscape Impact**

The visual and environmental impact in arguably one of the most attractive areas of Hertfordshire would be immense. Two of the turbines are in the Green Belt, where under policy GBC1 'permission will not be given for inappropriate development unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated that clearly outweigh the harm by reason of inappropriateness or any other harm'. The remaining turbine is in 'The Rural Area' beyond the Green Belt, where under policy GBC3 'inappropriate development will not be permitted'. We would suggest that the whole of this development is inappropriate.

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The three turbines will be 119 metres in height, plus the meteorological mast, and will be completely out of scale with the surrounding landscape and out of character with the historical setting. These turbines will have significant visual impact over 100 square miles across the whole of the Beane Valley and beyond.

East Herts Council's Landscape Character Assessment local plan second review states that this is an area of ancient countryside with small woods and winding green lanes. It considers Benington to be unusual in Hertfordshire for being so 'picture postcard' with an 'almost perfect' village green. The Assessment also states that: 'The overwhelming impression here is of remoteness, tranquillity and continuity, a sense nothing has changed much over the centuries'.

This application will undoubtedly change the character of this landscape. This is industrialisation of the landscape, affecting a very beautiful part of Hertfordshire, and areas that become industrialised risk further industrial development.

### **Proximity to family housing and impact on human health**

The turbines will be approximately 600 metres from the nearest dwellings, and all the expert reports recommend separation greater than 1.5 km. There are many varying reports concerning the impact on human health through noise, vibrations and flicker. Our residents are concerned that these problems could be theirs with no recompense.

### **Loss of amenity - walkers, cyclists and horse riders**

The turbines will be less than 200 metres from lanes, paths and bridleways that are used extensively by walkers, cyclists and horse riders. The moving shadows and sudden start up frightens some horses. We understand that The British Horse Society recommends turbines of this size should be at least 360 metres away from bridleways. **The proposed permissive bridleway would increase the danger on High Elms Lane.**

**The above are the Parish Council's major concerns. However, the following results of our village questionnaire, and the views raised at our extraordinary meeting on 25 June to discuss the proposed wind farm, are also of the utmost importance.**

### **Results of Questionnaire:**

Number of people on electoral roll	680
Number of people completing questionnaire	444 (66%)
Number in favour of turbines	80 (18%)
Number against turbines	352 (80%)
Number who don't know	12 (2%)

The above information reflects the views in the Parish Plan, shortly to be published, but collated from a survey carried out in 2005. This revealed that the majority of Benington residents were against further development of any kind, and in particular industrial.

## **Ecological Damage**

The local area is well known for its wildlife, including a large population of bats and barn owls. Red Kites have been reported at the turbine site. There is concern that the construction process, including the removal of hedges, and the subsequent danger of the moving blades could permanently damage the ecology of this area.

## **Construction Disruption**

The construction process will have a major impact on the local area and cause enormous disruption, particularly to Watton at Stone, by the sheer number and size of lorry movements. Many Benington residents drive daily through Watton at Stone to reach the doctors' surgery, schools, station etc., and are concerned that the construction process will affect their daily lives.

## **Road Accidents**

Many of the roads surrounding the area are narrow, dangerous and have a high level of accidents. The turbines would be visible from many of these roads and there is serious concern that their appearance could cause driver distraction resulting in further accidents. High Elms Lane is a case in point, very narrow and particularly dangerous at sunrise and sunset.

In conclusion, the Parish Council and the majority of Benington residents have serious concerns regarding R H Bott & Son's application for planning permission for the three wind turbines.

The Parish Council realises there is a need for alternative energy sources but planning guidelines PPS22 states:

“renewable energy developments should only be approved where the environmental, economic and social impacts can be addressed satisfactorily.”

**The siting of these turbines in Benington does not fulfil these guidelines.** This scheme is inappropriate because it is sited in the wrong place, and granting this application could create a precedent for the remainder of Sacombe ridge and the neighbouring ridge to the East.

**The Parish Council of Benington strongly urge you to reject this application.**

Yours sincerely

Lloyd Jones  
Chairman  
Benington Parish Council