

## Adopting Local Development Framework Policy on Renewable Energy and Sustainable Construction & Design

- **Local authority area:** Wakefield Metropolitan District Council
- **Stakeholders:** Spatial Policy Officers, Development Management Officers, Strategic Housing Officers, Regeneration Officers, developers.

### Summary

This case study details how an evidence base was used to develop renewable energy and sustainable construction policies for the Local Development Framework (LDF), which have subsequently been adopted, and are now being implemented.

### Key learning points

- The regional evidence base is a valuable starting point when developing policies on climate change, renewable energy and sustainable construction, but the Examination demonstrated that Inspectors would prefer to see sub-regional/ local evidence developed.
- Effective consultation can highlight points of contention to be addressed at the Examination stage.
- Policies must be consistent with the evidence base, justified and robust, but flexible enough to take account of viability considerations.
- Specialist support may be required to assist Development Management officers in implementing policies once adopted.
- Monitoring methods should be carefully considered and revised if necessary if they are not capturing the best data to demonstrate how the policies are performing.

### Background

- Prior to the adoption of the LDF Core Strategy and Development Policies documents the Council had no locally adopted targets or policies to facilitate the delivery of renewable energy or sustainable construction (apart from a Sustainable Development Supplementary Planning Guide 5). This made it difficult to secure such benefits from new developments.
- Through the Local Development Framework local policies and targets have now been adopted.

- Policies on renewable energy and sustainable construction were developed on the basis of the regional evidence base at the time and current national planning policy.
- These policies are now implemented through the Development Management process.
- The performance of the policies is monitored through the Annual Monitoring Report.

## Method

- The regional evidence base and national planning policy at the time were used as the basis for developing local policies on renewable energy and sustainable construction and design:
  - Sub-Regional Energy Assessment & Targets Study (2004)
  - Yorkshire & Humber Regional Spatial Strategy (2004/2008)
  - Planning Policy Statement 22 (PPS22) Renewable Energy (2004)
  - Planning for Renewable Energy: A Companion Guide to PPS22 (2004)
- An overarching policy on *Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change and Efficient Use of Resources (CS13)* was developed for the Core Strategy.
- Specific policies on *Renewable Energy Generation Technology (D27)* and *Sustainable Construction and Efficient Use of Resources (D28)* were developed for the Development Policies document.
- Consultation on the policies was carried out through the usual LDF consultation process as the documents progressed, with a mixed reaction:-
  - General support was given for the requirement for all larger developments to incorporate on-site renewable energy generation with the targets given particular support by some.
  - Some suggested that this approach was unnecessary and unreasonable and failed to take account of the specific nature of development proposals.
  - Others suggested that there was no evidence to justify the thresholds or targets for renewable energy generation requirements.
  - Some commented that sustainable construction should be left to Code for Sustainable Homes and Building Regulations and as such, the policy was surplus.
  - The policies were supported by the then Yorkshire & Humber Assembly.
- The following advice can be taken from the experience of the Examination of the policies:
  - The targets set out in policy must be consistent with the evidence base.
  - The wording of policies must be strong and robust enough to achieve the targets set out.
  - Thresholds for renewable energy generation technology within developments must be clearly defined and justified in policy terms.

- Policies must be flexible enough to take account of viability issues and suitable alternatives to on site technology.
- Policies should include the percentage target reduction in predicted carbon emissions over time.
- Policies should consider energy efficiency measures alongside renewable energy generation technology, but be clear that energy efficiency measures alone will not be accepted as a substitute for increased renewable capacity.
- Whilst Wakefield relied on the Regional Evidence base at the Examination, it became clear that Inspectors would prefer to see this taken forward into a sub-regional / local evidence base in the form of a Renewable Energy Potential Study.
- Policies were adopted in 2009 prior to the publication of the Y&H Renewable Energy and Low Carbon Potential Study (2011). As such this was not used as evidence to support these policies.
- Once adopted support may be required for Development Management officers to assist them in implementing these policies. At present Wakefield does not have any specialist renewable energy planning officers, which can be an issue for policy implementation.
- At present it is difficult to determine the overall effectiveness of the policies, due to the current constraints of the monitoring systems upon which the Annual Monitoring Report is based. For instance only grid-connected renewable capacity is being monitored, which does not account for on site renewable energy generation capacity being used directly by the developments in which they are installed, with no feed in to the Grid.
- Work began on the Core Strategy and Development Policies documents in 2004. They were adopted in 2009.

## **Result - Key outcomes and impact**

- The Council now has clear policies on climate change, renewable energy and sustainable construction. These provide certainty and a platform for negotiation for Development Management Officers, Strategic Housing Officers and Regeneration Officers with developers and other partner organisations.
- The Annual Monitoring Report demonstrates that the Council is currently meeting targets for Grid connected renewable energy generation capacity.
- A review of the monitoring processes would better demonstrate how the policies are performing now that the AMR process is established and the capabilities of the relevant recording technologies are better understood. The AMR has now been in place for the initial 3 year period and this review is planned before the next AMR period.
- The regional evidence base is a good place to start, but a sub-regional / local renewable energy potential study is recommended going forward. This may require commissioning specialist consultants if there is no in-house expertise in this area.

## Key contact

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## References / Links

The adopted documents, details of the evidence base and Examination, and the Annual Monitoring Report can be found on the Local Development Framework homepage:-

[http://www.wakefield.gov.uk/Planning/SpatialPolicy/pub\\_LDF/default.htm](http://www.wakefield.gov.uk/Planning/SpatialPolicy/pub_LDF/default.htm)