

Proposed Weaverthorpe Wind Turbine

Impact on Heritage Assets

1. Introduction

1.1 The site lies on the southern slope of the Great Wold Valley. Geologically it is situated on Middle Chalk of the Cretaceous system, and the area is characterised by rolling dry valleys.

1.2 At the bottom of the valley is a string of linear villages. The most relevant to this development are Weaverthorpe and Helperthorpe. A feature of this valley bottom is the Gypsy Race, an erratic, spring fed stream, which in this part of the valley is dry, or almost dry, for most of the year but flows occasionally in winter.



1.3 The turbine site is on the south side of a hill called Dikes Fields at approximately 130m above sea level. It is south of Weaverthorpe and south east of Helperthorpe, within the administrative parish of Luttons.

2. Historical context.

2.1 There is evidence of human activities in this part of the valley as far back as the Mesolithic period [before c4000BC] and Neolithic period [c4000BC-2500BC].

2.2 As a whole, the Yorkshire Wolds are particularly rich in prehistoric remains, especially from the Bronze Age, including barrows [burial monuments] and extensive boundary earthworks mostly dating from the period 2400-1500BC. Many have been ploughed out and cannot be identified at ground level but, in the case of barrows, the contents of grave pits may survive below ground. Through aerial photography it has been possible to reconstruct a dense pattern of fields, settlements and boundaries from this period through into the Iron Age and Roman period. The greatest concentration of surviving monuments in this area are

near to the top of the southern slope of the valley, close to High Street [the B1253] some 2km to the south and south east of the proposed turbine site.

2.3 Enclosures can be traced suggesting settlements from the late Iron Age or Romano-British period. Roman pottery has been found on the site of the mediaeval manor house east of the church, some 1.5km to the north east of the proposed turbine site.

2.4 The area may have been settled by the Danes in the 9th to 10th century. [‘Thorpe’ means a secondary settlement].

2.5 By the 11th century Weaverthorpe was at the centre of a very important manor belonging to the Archbishop of York, and substantial 12th and 13th century buildings have been excavated at the site of Weaverthorpe manor, immediately south and east of St Andrew’s church. These excavations are well documented and are interpreted on plaques in the churchyard. By the early Middle Ages Weaverthorpe was one of the most prominent and wealthiest settlements on the North Wolds. There was a windmill on Mill Hill, [off Ropery lane, just south of Weaverthorpe], by 1326.

	
<p>St Andrews Church, Weaverthorpe with its Norman tower, from the south west near to the lychgate.</p>	<p>The site of Weaverthorpe Manor in the field just beyond the churchyard wall, with Weaverthorpe village and the tyre processing plant in the background.</p>

2.6 The population declined from about the mid 14th to mid 18th century. The village became part of the Sledmere estate in 1739. Inclosure came late to this area in 1801-4. Most farmhouses stayed within the village, but some were built in the fields, generally protected from the wind by shelterbelts.

2.7 In the 19th century Weaverthorpe was a service village for the valley, with craftsmen, shops, a blacksmith and post office. The school was rebuilt in 1912 and the Village Hall built on the site of the old school in 1949. The village has recently lost the last of its shops, but

the school [which had 63 pupils in 2006] has survived together with two 19th century pubs, the Blue Bell [1823] and Star [1840].

2.8 Helperthorpe , ‘Hjalp’s village’, is believed to be an Anglo-Saxon settlement. It is thought to have changed little in size since the Middle Ages. In 1086 it was a dependency of the Archbishop of York’s manor. A windmill [probably a post mill], existed in 1314 near Mill Hill, north west of the village. Helperthorpe became part of the Sledmere estate in 1741 and was inclosed in 1801. The land was inherited by Harry W Cholmley in 1874, who also bought the Esh’s Estate in 1879 and built or rebuilt cottages, houses and farms. None of the surviving buildings in the village is earlier than mid 18th century. There were few craftsmen; it remained largely a farming village.

	
<p>St Peter’s Church Helperthorpe.</p>	<p>Views towards Helperthorpe village from the path to the church, with the turbine site in the background.</p>

2.9 The predominant building materials in both villages are brick with pantile roofs, or slate roofs for the larger farmhouses. Some early houses and farm buildings in both villages are built of a coursed chalk rubble with brick quoins.

The effect of the proposed Weaverthorpe Wind turbine development on Heritage Assets.

3. Archaeology

3.1 There are no recorded monuments or archaeological finds on the proposed site of the turbine, or its access track.

3.2 There are 32 monuments recorded in the Weaverthorpe parish and the Helperthorpe area of Luttons parish. Only 6 still exist as substantially visible features, most of which are to be found between Weaverthorpe Pasture and the B1253, at least 2Km from the site. From

this distance the proposed turbine will appear as a very small feature on the horizon. [View 25 in Fig 07].

3.3 The closest recorded monument to the proposed Weaverthorpe Wind turbine site is 'Esh's round barrow: a long barrow and later bowl barrow 400m north of Cross Thorns Barn' [Scheduled Monument List Entry number 1011576]. This is a Neolithic long barrow which, unusually, was later altered by the addition of an early Bronze Age bowl barrow, and was excavated in the 19th century. In 1993 it was recorded as still visible as a 0.5m high oblong mound measuring 50m east-west by 25m north-south. It is approximately 500m away from the proposed access track to the turbine and in a different field. There is no reason why this monument should be affected by the turbine development.

3.4 A similar Neolithic long barrow is further south, 650m south-east of Cross Thorns Barn [Scheduled Monument 1011575].

3.5 Neolithic axes and other finds are recorded as being unearthed in fields approx. 600m to the north of the site.

3.6 Aerial photographs are said to have revealed a series of ditches believed to be Iron Age, which 'curve northwards into a funnel shape in Dikes Field.' They are thought to be associated with large scale cattle ranching. These do not seem to be recorded as monuments.

3.7 In response to the information about monuments and finds of significance in the vicinity, it is proposed to maintain a 'watching brief' during construction of the foundations of the turbine and access track.

4. Listed Buildings

4.1 There are no Listed Buildings directly affected by the proposed turbine development. The nearest listed buildings to the site are located in the villages of Weaverthorpe and Helperthorpe.

4.2 The most important listed building in the vicinity is the church of St Andrew in Weaverthorpe [Grade 1], a Norman Church from the early 12th century. The church is situated just above the village on the north side of the valley. Although restored by G.E. Street for Sir Tatton Sykes II in 1870-72, this church has retained many earlier features including the unusually tall Norman tower. Also Listed within the churchyard are a stone effigy, probably 14th century, near to the porch, and the lychgate, attached churchyard walls and footgate to the south, all Grade 2. Currently the church is open to the public most days and is well visited. Plaques within the churchyard explain the history and significance of the church and churchyard.

4.3 The church tower is clearly intended to be seen from a distance. The only direction from which views of the tower might be interrupted by the turbine is from the south. However, from this distance the church tower, if visible at all, will be very small.

4.4 Views of the turbine from the church porch will be largely masked by trees within the churchyard [See view 16 looking SW in Fig 07]. Views from the south wall and gate of the churchyard will include partial views of the turbine behind a hill. However, such views also include a wide range of features of all ages, including a modern tyre processing plant. The turbine will not make a significant difference to this view.

4.5 In summary, the Weaverthorpe Wind turbine will not affect appreciation of the special architectural and historic interest of the church and other listed features in the churchyard.

4.6 Other Listed Buildings in Weaverthorpe are farm houses and their associated outbuildings and walls, all Grade 2 [Rarey Farmhouse and attached walls, Dotterel Cottage Farmhouse and Dale Farm]. The special interest of these buildings is best appreciated from close up; from such viewpoints the turbine will be either not visible or insignificant. In all cases, the special architectural and historic interest of these buildings will not be affected by the proposed development.

4.7 St Peter's church in Helperthorpe is Listed Grade 2 and was rebuilt in 1871-3 for Sir Tatton Sykes II. Designed by G.E. Street, in a reproduction 14th century style, it has a broach spire. The lychgate and churchyard wall are also by Street, who also designed the adjacent vicarage. Church, lychgate, churchyard wall, vicarage and outbuildings are all Listed Grade 2.

4.8 This church is also on the north slope of the valley but lower down the slope than St Andrews. The spire is clearly intended to be seen from a distance, and the only direction from which views of the spire might be interrupted by the sight of the turbine is from south-east of the turbine site. The spire, if visible at all, would be very small from this distance. The special architectural and historic interest of the church and other Listed Buildings will not be affected by the proposed turbine.

4.9 The setting of a heritage asset [such as a listed building or scheduled monument] is the surroundings in which it is experienced. [National Planning Policy Framework Annex 2]. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral. The proposed Weaverthorpe Wind development will make minimal change to the surroundings of heritage assets in the area and therefore it will have a neutral effect.

5. Village character

5.1 Weaverthorpe and Helperthorpe villages are not Conservation Areas. Nevertheless they do have a distinctive character, with a linear form following the road through the valley, which also follows the Gypsy Race. Farms within the villages, with long low outbuildings presenting a blank wall to the street, are also a characteristic feature. The villages could be considered 'non designated heritage assets' [NPPF para 135]. Although the turbine will be visible in places, glimpsed between buildings in the villages, it will not impinge on appreciation of the special character of the villages.

 A photograph showing a wooden building on the left, a metal railing in the foreground, and a green field extending to a horizon under a cloudy sky.	 A photograph showing a stone wall in the foreground, a green field, and a distant horizon with several wind turbines visible against a cloudy sky.
<p>View towards turbine site from Village Hall at west end of Weaverthorpe.</p>	<p>View from churchyard wall towards south east, with site of Weaverthorpe Manor in the foreground and existing turbines on the horizon.</p>

5.2 The Ryedale Rural Design Guide of 1995 references the surroundings of Weaverthorpe as "large, arable fields set in 'tree less' Wolds valley". In practice, this valley is less 'tree less' than is implied, and shelter belts of trees around farms are a distinctive feature of the landscape.

5.3 Assessments have been made of the effect of the proposed turbine on various views. Hills or hedgerows and trees would screen most of the views of the turbine from the main road through the valley [eg view 5 looking east from West Litton and View 12 looking west from the lane to Dotteril Cottage farm in Fig 07]. Views of the turbine would be more prominent from the road north out of Helperthorpe [views 9 and 10] where the higher viewpoint would enable the hub of the turbine to be seen over the brow of the hill. Assessments of closer viewpoints, [eg view 14] show that the hill would mask all but the tip of the blades.

6. Conclusions

6.2 The addition of the Weavertorpe Wind development will, together with other wind turbines existing and proposed, introduce a new element into this landscape, but the whole history of this valley has been one of change and the introduction by people of new elements into the landscape. None of this change detracts from the appreciation and understanding of the heritage assets of the valley.

References

- [1]** The East Riding of Yorkshire Landscape, K.J.Allison , Hodder and Stoughton 1976
- [2]** **The** Victoria History of the Counties of England. York: East Riding Vol 8 East Buckrose: Sledmere and the Northern Wolds, edited by David and Susan Neave, 2008.
- [3]** Statutory list of Scheduled Monuments
- [4]** Statutory list of Listed buildings.
- [5]** Interpretive plaques in churchyard of St Andrews, Weavertorpe.

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