



Case reference	NA-PAK-020
Application details	Erection of a wind turbine and ancillary equipment
Site address	Aviva Headquarters, Pitheavlis, Perth
Applicant	Purple Renewables
Determining Authority	Perth & Kinross Council
Local Authority Area	Perth & Kinross Council
Reason(s) for notification	Category 2 (Objection by Government Agency) (HES)
Representations	12 (plus another 3 to LRB from 3 <sup>rd</sup> parties)
Date notified to Ministers	7 November 2019
Date of recommendation	11 December 2019
Decision / recommendation	Call in

### Description of Proposal and Site:

- Planning permission is sought for the erection of a wind turbine at the Aviva UK insurance building in Pitheavlis, on the south west fringe of Perth. The building is the former General Accident Fire and Life Assurance Corporation Headquarters.
- The Aviva building is category A listed along with its landscaped concourse and two metal sculptures to the south, and granite sculpture to northwest.
- The late-Modernist building was designed and built between 1979 and 1983, and listed by HES in 2017.
- The application is for a 77 metre high wind turbine with a generation capacity of 900 kilowatts. Planning permission is sought for a 25 year operating period.
- The site is bounded by the M90 motorway running north-west / south-east, Craigie Hill golf club to the east and residential housing to the north west.

### EIA Development:

- The planning application was accompanied by an Environmental Report, which included chapters on: Landscape and Visual Impact; Cultural Heritage; Ecology; Ground and Water; Shadow Flicker; Noise; Infrastructure; and Tourism, Recreation and Socio-economics.
- The report includes visualisations for key heritage assets affected by the proposal.

## **Consultations and Representations:**

- Historic Environment Scotland (HES) objected to the application on basis of the impacts on the setting of an A-listed building. This outstanding objection triggered the notification of the application. HES consider that the size and scale of the proposed wind turbine would have a significant adverse impact on the setting of category A-listed Aviva building.
- Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) was a consultee and, whilst not objecting, advised that there are likely to be significant landscape and visual effects on the residents and visitors to Perth from within the city, its surroundings and from the major tourist routes running past the city. SNH agreed with the conclusions of the Environmental Statement, that the proposal does not affect protected sites or species. SNH did not offer further detailed advice or comment beyond those given on landscape impacts. In accordance with their Service Level Statement for Planning and Development, SNH were content that Perth and Kinross Council identify any natural heritage impacts and addresses these.
- Following notification of the application to Planning and Architecture Division, consultation was carried out with Culture and Historic Environment Division (CHED). Colleagues in CHED advise HES's decision has been made in line with national policy and is clear about the specific impacts it is considered the turbine would have on the A-listed building i.e. that it would disrupt views of the building, introduce a significant vertical element into the landscape and result in a partial loss of cultural significance. This position was accepted by the Council's planning officials in their original decision to refuse consent. The LRB panel's decision, as it relates to the historic environment point of objection, appears to come down to different opinions about how the building is, and should be, experienced and the impact of the proposed turbine on people's understanding and appreciation of that.

## **Assessment:**

1. Perth and Kinross Council is minded to grant planning permission for this proposal against the advice of HES and the application has been notified to Scottish Ministers as a result of that objection. The planning application was refused by Perth & Kinross Council Planning Officers under delegated powers. A request for review was submitted to the Perth and Kinross Local Review Body (PKLRB) of the Council. At the meeting of the PKLRB on 20 August 2019, Councillors' voted to approve the application –with Councillors on the LRB by majority decision (2-1) concluding the application should be approved, but for differing reasons. One councillor considered that the proposal should be granted on the basis that it conformed to the Development Plan and that given the climate emergency, it was critical that communities embraced a change from 'aesthetics first' approach towards demonstrating a willingness to consider all possibilities of sustainable energy production. The second councillor considered that the proposal should be approved as a departure from the Development Plan, and the third considered the officer decision for refusal should be upheld. Overall the majority decision of the LRB concluded that the extent to which the proposal would detract from the building was a matter of opinion; it would be most visible from the motorway; and that it would not impair the view of the building, which will continue to blend into the hillside.

2. HES object to the application because they consider that the location of the proposed wind turbine would have a significant adverse impact on the setting of category A-listed Aviva building. HES's view is that the proposal raises issues of national interest and is contrary to paragraph 141 of Scottish Planning Policy (SPP). The detailed reasons for HES' objection set out that the key issue is the impact that the proposed turbine would have on the experience and appreciation of the listed building from within the site. HES agree with the assessment in the EIA report that the turbine would distract from the building and compete with it, and consider that this is particularly problematic because it would work against the established strong horizontality and the carefully conceived building relationship with the surrounding topography. Viewpoints within the Environmental Report demonstrate the visual impact of the development from key locations.
3. HES consider the size and location of the wind turbine would potentially lead to it becoming the dominating element in the overall composition and redefine its focus. Given the significance of the Aviva building, HES do not consider this to be acceptable. HES consider that the worst of the impacts could potentially be addressed by relocating the turbine a relatively short distance from its currently proposed location – there is nothing within the online file to indicate consideration has been given to resiting, with the application having been refused under delegated powers, and then subject to Local Review.
4. The list description for the Aviva building notes that: *“The flexibility of office space was also given increased consideration to allow the buildings to adapt to technological and social change.* It is notable in the listing that the Aviva building was designed to emerge from the hillside setting as a series of stepped terraces with rooftop gardens. This “ground-scraping” is a key characteristic of the building, leading to its listing. There is significant potential that the proposed turbine, could dominate and affect the character and appearance of the listed building. Careful consideration of this potential impact is required.

**Recommendation:**

- Call-in. The potential adverse impacts of the development upon the setting and appreciation of the A listed building are such that this amounts to a national issue, requiring further consideration before a final decision can be made on the case. It is recommended that the application be called-in for further consideration.

# ANNEX 1 - Site Location

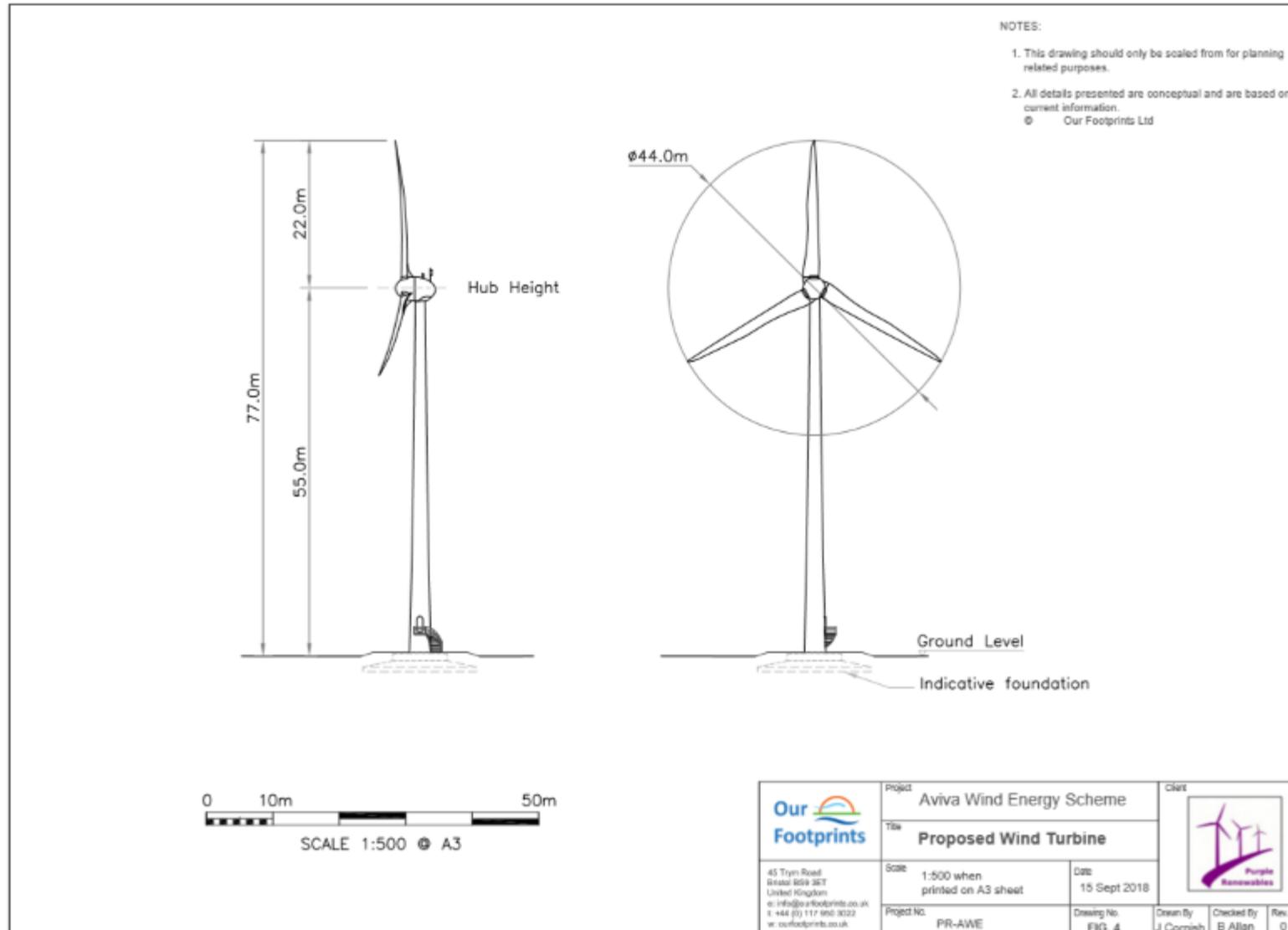
© Zoom Earth



Key	
	Turbine location
	Site boundary

## ANNEX 2 – Turbine Elevations

Drawing PR-AWE -FIG.4 Rev.0; © Our Footprints / Purple Renewables





VP 5 - Southwards from Oakbank Crescent near junction with Fraser Terrace © Pleydell Smithman



Photomontage

**Aviva Wind Turbine, Perth**

**Viewpoint 5**

View southwards from Oakbank Crescent near junction with Fraser Terrace

OS Grid Ref: 310126 722926

Ground Elevation: 69m aCD

Height above Ground Level: 1.7m

Distance to Wind Turbine: 812m

Viewing Distance: 812.3mm

Horizontal FOV: 27°

Camera: Canon EOS 80D

Lens Focal Length: 30mm

Sheet Dimensions: 400x300mm

Date: 11/02/2018

Time: 09:09

Weather & Visibility: Sunny & Clear

PleydellSmithyman

01753 827828

## **ANNEX 4: Note of Consultation Responses to Planning Application.**

### **External**

**Historic Environment Scotland:** Object to proposals.

**Ministry Of Defence:** No objection subject to conditions/informatives.

**National Air Traffic Services:** Does not conflict with safeguarding criteria.

**Perth And Kinross Heritage Trust:** No archaeological mitigation required.

**R S P B:** No comment within timescale.

**Scottish Environment Protection Agency:** No objection subject to conditions.

**Scottish Natural Heritage:** Concern with landscape impact.

**Scottish Water:** May impact on foul drainage infrastructure.

**Transport Scotland:** No objection subject to conditions.

### **Internal (Perth and Kinross Council)**

**Development Negotiations Officer:** No comments to make.

**Environmental Health (Noise Odour):** Require further information with regard to noise and shadow flicker and impact on amenity.

**Community Greenspace:** No comment within timescale.

**Structures And Flooding:** No objection. Note PKC Flooding and Flood Risk Guidance Document (June 2014).

**Transport Planning:** No objection.

**ANNEX 5: Ariel Image**

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