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01727 819344 or 819345



The District Council Offices textphone number is **01727 819570**. The service is for customers with a hearing impairment.

এই লিফলেটে যে তথ্য দেওয়া হয়েছে যদি আপনি
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St Albans
CITY AND DISTRICT

Planning Advisory Leaflet



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PLANNING AND RENEWABLE ENERGY

1. Introduction

The release of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere is now widely acknowledged to be a significant contributor to climate change. Carbon dioxide released by the combustion of fossil fuels for electricity generation, producing heat or as a fuel for transport is the major source of man-made greenhouse gases. There are two main ways of combating this, namely reducing energy demand through efficiency of use and using alternative low carbon or renewable energy supplies.

The UK is committed to meeting a significant proportion of our energy needs from renewable energy sources. Government targets are to generate 10% of the nation's electricity from renewables by 2010, 15% by 2015 and 20% by 2020. Nationally, in 2003 only 4% of our electricity was obtained from renewable sources.

On a regional level, in 2001 the East of England only produced 0.45% of its demand from renewable sources. All regions were asked by the Government to set targets for themselves up to 2010 and the East of England adopted the figure below, which was detailed in the Draft East of England Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), published in December 2004.

- ❑ To produce **14%** of the region's electricity from renewable sources by 2010 (including offshore wind, 10% if offshore wind is excluded).

This regional target was then dissected into county targets, and **153,000 Megawatt hours per year** were proposed for Hertfordshire. This figure equates to only **3%** of Hertfordshire's predicted energy consumption in 2010.

In an effort to find ways of meeting this target, Hertfordshire County Council and all 10 District Councils in the county commissioned specialist consultants to produce a report setting out what and where the potential was in Hertfordshire for renewable energy development.

The conclusions of this report were that Hertfordshire did have the potential to meet its target, but only if new and existing development started to implement renewable energy technologies as soon as possible. One key barrier to this happening was identified as the lack of positive planning policies encouraging renewable energy technologies.

Government guidance in Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 22 provides local authorities with the backing to encourage and require renewable energy technology in development through their Local Development Frameworks.

In October 2006, the Council's Planning Policy Advisory Panel agreed that a good practice planning guidance leaflet should be produced to initiate St Albans City and District Council's contribution to the county target, whilst also protecting our historic built environment. It was also considered necessary to provide planning guidance to homeowners wishing to install small-scale domestic schemes, which are becoming more popular and widely available.

2. What is renewable energy?

The definition of renewable energy covers those energy flows that occur naturally and repeatedly in the environment. These are the wind, the fall of water, the movement of the oceans, energy from the sun and also from biomass (the burning of crops to generate various fuel types). Below is a brief guide to the types of renewable energy that may be suitable for St Albans District.

Wind

The United Kingdom is the windiest part of Europe and there are currently 1,400 operational wind turbines providing electricity for over 700,000 homes, therefore reducing carbon dioxide emissions by three million tonnes per year. Whilst there is little potential within St Albans District for large scale wind turbines, there is a significant opportunity for small-scale domestic turbines to be integrated into both existing and new build development.

Biomass

Small-scale biomass heat facilities are a relatively straightforward process for domestic and commercial heat-only projects. The process involves the burning of a fuel crop (eg short rotation willow coppice) to provide heat. Many public buildings, for example schools and colleges, have utilised such technology, attracting good levels of grant funding. Unused materials from forestry operations (eg small branches and bark) can also be used as biomass fuel, along with some waste materials unsuitable for recycling (eg timber offcuts, sawdust, shredded confidential documents etc).

Solar Photovoltaic (PV)

Solar PV panels only require daylight, not direct sunlight, to generate electricity. They are a flexible technology that can either be connected to the National Grid or be stand-alone. As such, they can be suitable for both urban and rural locations.

Solar Water Heating

Solar hot water systems use heat from the sun to provide homes with hot water. There are two main types of system, either a flat panel collector or an evacuated tube where water is heated directly by the sun in a series of tubes attached to a frame.

Ground Source Heat Pumps (GSHP)

GSHPs transfer heat from the ground into a building to provide space heating and in some cases to pre-heat domestic hot water. The system is ideal for new build and there are no planning issues given the underground nature of the system.

Biofuels

Biofuels offer a potential alternative to conventional vehicle fuels although, in order to make a major contribution, they would require large areas of land. Biodiesel can be made from oil-seed rape; whilst bio-ethanol suitable for use in modified petrol engines can be produced from sugar beet or cereals.

3. What St Albans City and District Council is doing?

The Council is committed to playing an active role in helping to reduce carbon emissions and meet renewable energy targets. As a result, the Council is aiming to achieve a significant reduction in domestic carbon dioxide emissions across the District by 2010. A recent energy audit of the Council Offices highlighted the potential for a 20% reduction in energy consumption and measures are being put in place for this to be achieved.

The Council has also been involved in a number of renewable energy projects across the District. A solar hot water system has been installed at 'Inn on the Park' in Verulamium Park that provides hot water for washing and cleaning, whilst a 5 kilowatt solar Photovoltaic system has been installed at Jersey Farm Community Centre to generate electricity and reduce the centre's overall demand for energy.

A wide variety of energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies are showcased at the Council's popular 'Eco-house' in Sleafshyde (see opposite), and financial assistance is also available to District homeowners wishing to install their own solar hot water systems (see Section 8 – Grants).

The publication of this good practice planning guidance leaflet is intended to assist the Council and its residents in tackling climate change. This leaflet provides guidance covering three specific areas, namely energy efficiency, renewable energy in new development, and domestic installations. The Council will encourage all relevant applications from 1 December 2006 to meet the criteria detailed in each specific area.



SADC 'Eco-house' in Sleepshyde



4. Energy efficiency

The easiest way to conserve the diminishing fossil fuels is to use less energy in the first place, and that we use energy more efficiently. The Council attaches great importance to future development becoming more energy efficient, as this is central to the principles of sustainable development.

Part L of the Building Regulations that came into force in April 2006 covers some aspects of energy efficiency through design and layout.

When submitting planning applications, developers are encouraged to demonstrate how the scheme has been designed to help conserve energy. The good practice measures below should be applicable to all new development and also conversion schemes.

Energy efficiency

The Council will encourage all developments to:

- achieve a high standard of energy efficiency through the use of appropriate siting, design, orientation and layout;
- maximise the benefits of passive solar heating, cooling, lighting and natural ventilation;
- use materials from local sustainable sources, including the re-use of materials.

5. Renewable energy

PPS22 confirms the Government's commitment to embracing renewable energy by encouraging local planning authorities (LPAs) to incorporate relevant policies in their Local Development Frameworks (LDFs). The document states that LPAs should consider the opportunity for incorporating renewable energy projects in all new developments, and encouragement should be given in positively expressed policies. St Albans City and District Council will include policies on renewable energy in its Development Plan Documents (DPDs), which will form the main part of the LDF.

In December 2006, the Secretary of State published the Proposed Changes to the Draft East of England Plan. Policy ENG 1 (Carbon Dioxide and Energy Performance) in the Proposed Changes document includes the following guidance:

'Local Authorities should encourage the supply of energy from on-site renewable and/or decentralised renewable or low carbon energy sources and through DPDs set ambitious but viable proportions of the energy supply of substantial new development (as defined in the Planning Policy Statement on Planning and Climate Change) from these sources. In the interim as a minimum, 10% of the energy consumed in new development should come from such sources. To help realise higher levels of ambition, local authorities should encourage energy service companies (ESCOs) and similar energy saving initiatives.'

The East of England Plan is due to be finalised in early 2008 and it will then form part of the development plan.

In advance of the LDF, the guidance below introduces an encouragement for all major planning applications to provide on-site renewable energy technology to meet a proportion of predicted energy generation.

Renewable Energy

The Council will encourage all types of new development, either new build or conversion, above a threshold of 1,000 square metres (for non-residential development) or 10 dwellings (for residential development) to:

- incorporate equipment for on-site renewable energy generation that will meet at least 10% of the development's predicted energy requirements.

This proportion of energy production could include energy from wind, biomass, photovoltaic equipment, solar hot water heating or ground source heat pumps.

6. Domestic installations

The consultants' report that looked into the renewable energy potential in Hertfordshire identified domestic scale schemes as most appropriate for the county. St Albans City and District is characterised by its historic built environment, with a large number of listed buildings and conservation areas in existence. These designations serve to preserve and enhance the character of the buildings and surrounding area. Certain renewable energy schemes, for example solar panels, can have a significant visual impact on a building; therefore a more careful approach is necessary and in some cases such installations will not be permitted.

The good practice below offers clear guidance on how such technologies can best be implemented on domestic properties and in designated areas. As detailed in Section 7, not all installations require planning consent.

Domestic installations

The Council encourages the installation of residential renewable energy projects that are encouraged to follow the guidelines below:

- Green Belt – When located in the Green Belt, many renewable energy projects will comprise inappropriate development, which may adversely impact on the openness of the Green Belt. Careful consideration will therefore be given by the Council to the visual impact of projects, and applicants will need to demonstrate very special circumstances that clearly outweigh any harm if projects are to proceed. This may include the wider environmental benefits associated with increased production from renewable sources.
- Solar panels – Panels located on rear roof slopes or out of public view will be favoured. Those having a serious detrimental impact on the visual appearance of a property should be avoided. Panels installed flush within the roof plane will also be favoured.

- ❑ Micro Wind turbines – As with satellite dishes, micro wind turbines should be positioned in such a way to minimise the visual impact on the external appearance of the building. Locations behind a parapet or shielded by a chimneystack are likely to be less conspicuous than a position somewhere on the front of the building. Potential noise disruption to adjoining occupiers will also be a consideration.
- ❑ Within Conservation Areas – Inconspicuous positions for installations are encouraged. In particular, panels and turbines should not be erected on the front roof slope or façade of a property. Unsympathetic alterations that damage the historic street scene should be avoided.
- ❑ Within Article 4 areas and on Listed Buildings – Installations anywhere on the roofslope or the building itself should not have a detrimental visual impact. In such cases, preference will be given to panels or turbines sited elsewhere in the grounds, subject to there being no material adverse visual or physical intrusion into the character of the area or building.

7. Do I need planning permission?

Section 6 offers guidance to householders wishing to install renewable energy technologies on their property. The majority of houses in the District benefit from 'permitted development' rights. These rights give householders the opportunity to extend and alter their house to a certain extent and subject to certain provisos, without the need for planning permission. The Council has protected some particularly sensitive parts of Conservation Areas by withdrawing most permitted development rights using an 'Article 4' direction. In these areas there are very limited permitted development rights. Listed buildings are also subject to special controls over development and other alterations. If you wish to ascertain whether your property falls within one of these special categories, please contact the Conservation and Design Team on 01727 866100 x 2616.

It should be noted that the Government is proposing to alter the existing permitted development rights for householders to enable certain small-scale renewable energy technologies to be erected without the need for planning consent. Any changes are likely to come into force in 2007 and would supersede the guidance detailed above and below.

Even before these changes to permitted development rights are made, it may be that some small-scale renewable energy developments can be implemented under current permitted development rights. Given the lack of specific Government guidance, it is not possible to provide an answer for every property and every potential renewable scheme; however, below is a general guide as to what kind of domestic renewable energy developments the Council considers require planning permission.

Planning consent is not required for:

- ❑ any solar panels on the roof slope of domestic properties that do not project more than 100mm above the roof plane (unless the Council considers the appearance of a building has significantly changed);
- ❑ micro wind turbines under 90cm in diameter and below the ridge of the roof on domestic properties.

Planning consent is required for

- ❑ any solar panels protruding more than 100mm above the existing roof plane;
- ❑ micro wind turbines protruding above the highest point of the existing roof or over 90cm in diameter;
- ❑ any solar panels or micro wind turbines on properties within an Article 4 area or where permitted development rights have been removed;
- ❑ any solar panels or micro wind turbines on or adjacent to a listed building.

As a general rule, any scheme that is considered to significantly change the appearance of a building will require planning consent. An example would be the installation of solar panels across an entire roof slope, even if they did not protrude more than 100mm.

Classes B and C of the General Permitted Development Order 1995 cover the majority of domestic renewable energy developments. For further advice as to whether a specific proposal would require consent, please contact our Planning Development Control Team on 01727 819344 or 819345. It is always advisable to check with the Council before proceeding with any development.

8. Grants and other information

The Council is currently running the 'Life in the Green Lane' scheme, which will provide the opportunity for up to 100 private households to install a domestic solar hot water system at a substantially reduced cost. Grant funding has been obtained from the Energy Saving Trust and more details are available either on the Council's website at www.stalbans.gov.uk or from the Energy Officer, contact details below.

Central Government's Low Carbon Buildings Programme offers grants for a range of renewable energy technologies. The programme provides grants for microgeneration technologies to householders, community organisations, schools and the public. The grants are not available for the profit sector and private businesses. To find out more about the programme, the technologies it covers and how to apply, please visit www.lowcarbonbuildings.org.uk.

The Government department, Communities and Local Government, have published the 'Code for Sustainable Homes', a rating system that applies to new homes. The Code encourages home builders to go beyond Building Regulations in terms of energy efficiency and low carbon design, and ultimately supports the Government's aspiration for all new homes to be 'zero carbon' by 2016. Although the new code is currently voluntary, it is likely that will become mandatory in 2009. More information can be obtained from the department's website: www.communities.gov.uk.

9. Useful Contacts

Energy Officer, SADC
Tel: 01727 866100 x2380
Email: sustainability@stalbands.gov.uk

Planning Policy Officer, SADC
Tel: 01727 866100 x2736
Email: planningpolicy@stalbands.gov.uk

Conservation Officer, SADC
Tel: 01727 866100 x2616
Email: planning@stalbands.gov.uk

Energy Saving Trust
Tel: 0800512012
Website: www.est.org.uk

Further information

This advisory leaflet is intended to be a helpful and useful source of information and not binding on any party. The Council offers no guarantee or warranties concerning the accuracy of the information supplied.

For more information about the contents of this leaflet contact:

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