

ONSHORE WIND POLICY REPORT

THE IMPACT OF THE 2015 ONSHORE WIND POLICY CHANGE FOR LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITIES IN ENGLAND

Dr Rebecca Windemer
Centre for Sustainable Planning and Environments



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About this report

This document provides the 2023 update of this research. The research was led and undertaken by Dr Rebecca Windemer. Research support and the design of this report was undertaken by Cindy Zhang, as part of a UWE Green Skills research internship. Thank you to all those who took part in this research.

Executive Summary

This report provides the results of research exploring the impact of the 2015 policy change for onshore wind farms in England.

In 2015 the UK Government issued a Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) for onshore windfarms in England that has since been incorporated in to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The planning policy specifies that proposals for one or more wind turbines will only be considered acceptable if they meet two criteria. Firstly, the turbine(s) must be located in an area that has been identified as suitable for wind energy in a local or neighbourhood plan. Second, it must also be demonstrated that ‘the planning impacts identified by the affected local community have been fully addressed and the proposal has their backing’.

The impact of this policy change, combined with a removal of subsidies has been significant. Between 2016-2022 only 12 planning applications for new onshore wind farms were approved, comprising a total of 21 turbines with a combined maximum installed capacity of 47.85 MW.

This research was undertaken in order to explore how local authorities had responded to this policy change. It aimed to find out how many local planning authorities have, or are planning to, allocate areas for wind energy in their development plans. It also aimed to understand any challenges faced in implementing the national onshore wind policy at a local level. The research methods involved an online survey sent to local authorities followed by a policy review.

The findings of this research reveal the challenge that the current policy wording has created. Significantly it reveals that new wind farms cannot currently be granted planning permission in 90% of local authorities in England. This is impacting our ability to address the climate emergency and increase energy security. This report recommends that the current national planning policy for onshore wind is urgently changed in order to enable more onshore wind farm developments to come forward in England.

This report, published in February 2023, provides updated data correct at the time of publication.





1 Introduction

Between 2016-2022 only 12 planning applications for new onshore wind farms were approved in England. This research aimed to understand why so few applications had been approved through investigating the impact of the 2015 policy change.

This report sets out the results of survey research and a policy review investigating how many local authorities in England have been able to comply with the national policy and why.

1.1 The current policy context

In June 2015 the UK Government issued a Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) for onshore wind farms in England that has since been incorporated in to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The planning policy specifies

that proposals for one or more wind turbines will only be considered acceptable if they meet two criteria. Firstly, the turbine(s) must be located in an area that has been identified as suitable for wind energy in the development plan (this can include adopted neighbourhood plans). Secondly, it must also be demonstrated that ‘the planning impacts identified by the affected local community have been fully addressed and the proposal has their backing’. The WMS version used the language ‘therefore the proposal has their backing’, but its translation into planning removed the word ‘therefore’, and in doing so made this second policy requirement involve two judgements.

It is worth noting that applications for repowering (removing existing wind turbines and replacing with new turbines often of a different size and layout on an existing site) are not subject to this policy.

Current onshore wind policy in footnote 54 of the NPPF

‘ Except for applications for the repowering of existing wind turbines, a proposed wind energy development involving one or more turbines should not be considered acceptable unless it is in an area identified as suitable for wind energy development in the development plan; and, following consultation, it can be demonstrated that the planning impacts identified by the affected local community have been fully addressed and the proposal has their backing’

1.2 The decrease in wind farm approvals since the policy change

Local authorities have experienced a significant decrease in planning applications for new onshore wind farms since 2015 when policy changed and financial subsidies were removed (subsidies returned in 2021). Figures from the [UK Government Renewable Energy Planning Database](#) show that between Jan 2016-Dec 2022 14 planning applications were submitted* in England for new onshore wind farms, comprising 20 turbines in total. This is 1.5% of the number of turbines submitted* between Jan 2009-Dec 2014 (1232 turbines on 282 sites).

Between 2016-2022 **only 12 planning applications for new onshore wind farms were approved in England, comprising a total of 21 turbines** with a combined maximum installed capacity of 47.85 MW. This is 2.85% of the number of turbines granted permission between 2009-2014 (159 wind farms comprising 737 turbines and a total maximum installed capacity of 1624MW).

Section 3.4.1 of this report provides details of the wind farms granted planning permission between 2016-2022.

**Note: this does not include applications that were submitted and later withdrawn or repowering applications.*

The total maximum installed capacity of wind farms (in MW) granted planning permission between 2016-2022 is just 3% of those granted permission between 2009-2014

2 Research methods



The overall aim of this research was to explore the impact of the 2015 onshore wind policy change for local planning authorities.

Specifically the research aimed:

-To identify how many local authorities have been able to, or are or trying to, develop an onshore wind policy that complies with the current NPPF.

-To understand why local authorities may not be updating their onshore wind policy to comply with the NPPF.

-To identify how many adopted neighbourhood plans have identified suitable areas for onshore wind.

-To consider any challenges faced in implementing the national onshore wind policy change at a local level.

The research methods involved an online survey sent to local authorities followed by a policy review.

2.1 Online survey

In 2022 an online survey was administered via Qualtrics and sent to all local authorities in England via emails to the planning policy departments. The survey asked respondents about their adopted and emerging policy for onshore wind and the support that they provided to neighbourhood planning groups. A copy of the survey is available on request.

2.2 Policy review

Following the survey, the adopted and emerging plans of all remaining local authorities were checked in order to identify their onshore wind policy. This task was then repeated for every adopted neighbourhood plan in England in order to identify how many neighbourhood plans had identified areas for onshore wind. This data was updated in January 2023, including checking the policies of the local authorities that had responded to the survey.



3 Research findings



165 local authorities responded to the survey. The adopted and emerging policies of the remaining local authorities and all adopted neighbourhood plans were checked through the policy review. In 2023 the review was repeated including checking the policies of those that responded to the survey. Below the results are discussed by theme, drawing upon both the survey responses and the results of the policy review.

3.1 Local authorities with adopted plans for onshore wind

The online survey firstly asked if respondents had an adopted development plan policy which identifies suitable areas for the development of onshore wind projects. As shown in figure 1 below, of the 165 local authorities that responded to the survey, 140 (85%) do not have areas identified as suitable for wind energy development in their adopted plan. A review of all local authority policy documents revealed that **overall only 10 % of all local planning authorities in England have areas identified as suitable for wind energy development in their development plan or in an adopted neighbourhood plan**. Therefore in 90% of all local authorities applications for new onshore wind farms cannot currently be approved.

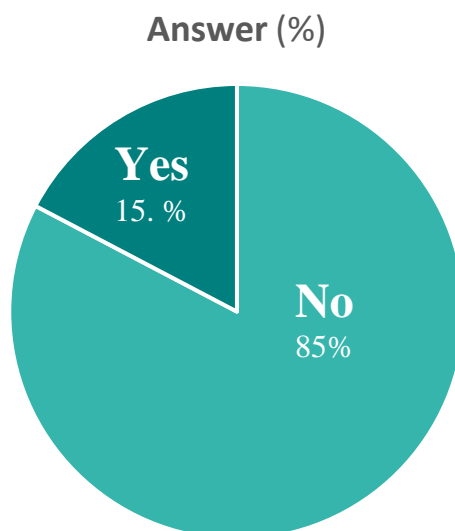


Figure 1
Survey responses to the question:

Does your local authority have an adopted development Plan policy which identifies suitable areas for the development of onshore wind projects?

Details of the 32 Local authorities who do have an adopted policy for allocating suitable areas for onshore wind are provided in figure 2 below.

Figure 2: English local authorities that have an adopted development plan which identifies suitable areas for the development of onshore wind projects

Local Authority	How sites are allocated
Allerdale	Areas suitable for wind energy are defined on a Policies Map
Barrow-in-Furness	Areas suitable for wind energy are defined on a Proposals Map
Bedford	Broad locations which may have potential for large scale wind energy development are identified in a map within the local plan
Burnley	Areas suitable for wind energy are defined on a Policies Map and set out within the policy wording
Cheshire East	Policies map identifies areas that are highly sensitive to wind energy development (i.e. identifies the areas that are not suitable)
Cheshire West and Chester	Proposals should be ‘located outside of those areas identified on the policies map as being highly sensitive to wind development; key settlement gaps and Areas of Special County Value and their settings’. ‘Where proposals involve larger turbines, either in single units or small groups of turbines, they must be located within an ‘area of least constraint’ for commercial scale wind energy as defined in the Low Carbon and Renewable Energy Study;’
County Durham	Areas suitable for wind energy are defined on a Policies Map
Darlington	The whole of Darlington Borough is identified as suitable for wind energy development
Doncaster	‘Area of Search for Wind Energy Developments’ shown on a Policies Map
East Lindsey	The area suitable for wind energy is shown on a Policies Map (the whole District is identified as suitable for wind energy development at a strategic level, with the exception of areas D1 and K10)
Eden	Areas suitable for wind energy are defined on a Policies Map
Exmoor National Park	Areas suitable for small scale wind turbines are defined on a Policies Map
Halton	Areas with potential for wind generation identified in a map within the local plan
Harborough	‘Wind energy development involving one or more turbines will not be permitted except as follows: a. in the High Leicestershire and Laughton Hills Landscape Character Areas, where the height does not exceed 30

	metres and no more than three turbines are proposed; b. in the Welland Valley Landscape Character Area, where the height does not exceed 65 metres and no more than three turbines are proposed; and c. in the Lutterworth Lowlands and Upper Soar Landscape Character Areas, where the height does not exceed 125 metres.'
Hartlepool	Areas suitable for wind turbine development are identified in policy wording and on the Policies Map.
Havering	Areas suitable for wind energy are defined on a Policies Map
Hull	Areas that are suitable for wind energy are defined on a Policies Map
Huntingdonshire	The area identified as suitable for wind energy development is the whole of the district with the exception of the Great Fen and its Landscape and Visual Setting (set out in policy text)
Lake District National Park	'The whole of the Lake District has been identified as suitable for small scale wind energy development subject to meeting the criteria set out in other policies in the Local Plan'
Lancaster	Areas suitable for wind energy identified on a Policies Map and in a figure within the local plan.
Liverpool	'Sites within the following types of location may have the potential for wind turbine(s) development, subject to a detailed project level assessment including Habitats Regulations Assessment: River Mersey frontage; Open and exposed areas within and on the periphery of the City's built-up area; and within the curtilage of established development'
Melton	Wind farm developments are required to be ' in an area identified as being of low or low-moderate sensitivity to wind turbine development in the Melton and Rushcliffe Landscape Sensitivity Study 2014. These areas and acceptable turbine requirements are set out in a table' in the local plan. The landscape character units are indicated on the Policies Map.
North East Lincolnshire	'Proposals for onshore wind energy development will be permitted if: the development site is located in one of the following identified broad areas: i. Flat Open Farmland - south of the settlements of Humberston, New Waltham and Waltham; ii. Wooded Open Farmland - east of the A18, and east and west of the A1173; iii. Open Farmland - along the A180 corridor; and, iv. Industrial Landscape - to the north west and south east of Immingham, and within the South Humber Bank employment zone'
North West Leicestershire	'Areas identified as potentially suitable for large or small scale turbines' are defined on a Policies Map
North York Moors National Park	Areas suitable for wind energy are defined in the North

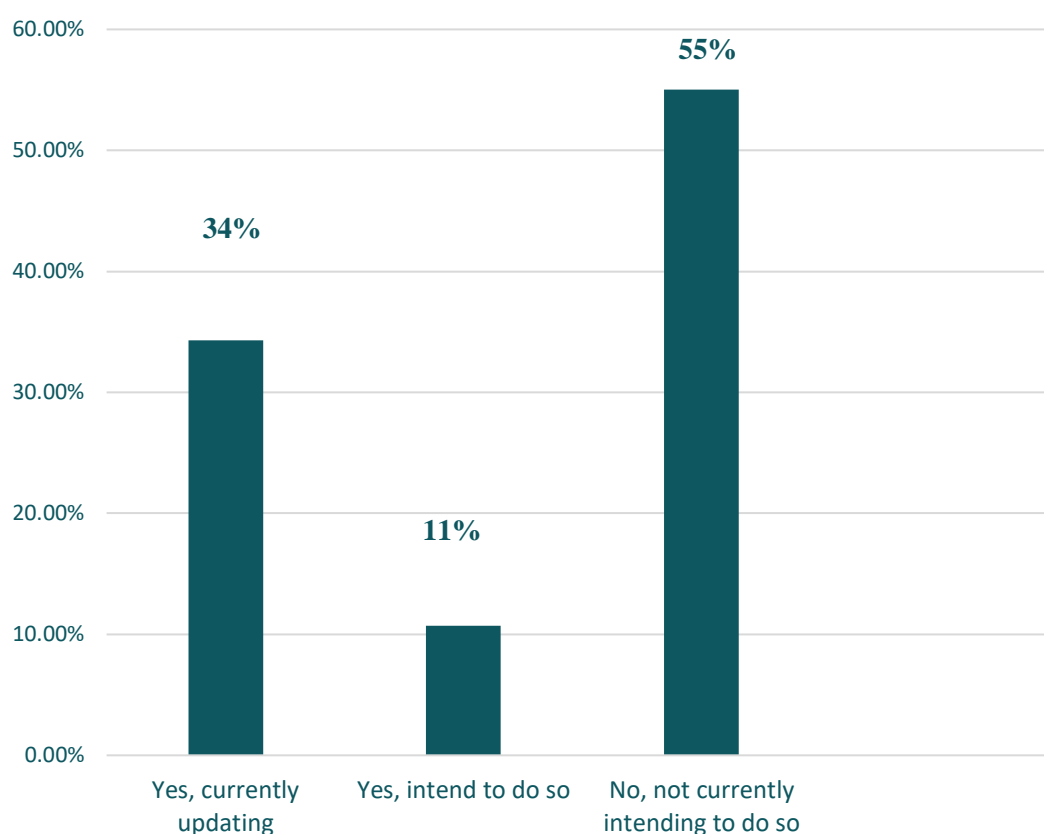
	York Moors Renewable Energy Supplementary Planning Document.
Redcar and Cleveland	Potentially suitable areas as identified on a Policies Map
Rossendale	Areas suitable for commercial Wind Turbines have been identified on a Policies Map
Rotherham	Areas of Search for Wind Energy Developments are shown on a Policies Map
Rushcliffe	‘Wind energy developments will be permitted provided the development site is in an area identified as being of low or low medium sensitivity to wind turbine development in Appendix C of the local plan’
Salford	‘Wind energy development involving one or more turbines is potentially suitable in all parts of Salford except for Chat Moss (with Chat Moss defined under Policy GI2/1 and shown on the Policies Map.’
Windsor and Maidenhead	Suitable areas allocated in ‘Wind Mapping Exercise Maps’
Wyre	The whole Borough is designated as an area of search suitable for wind energy development

As can be seen above, of the 32 local authorities with adopted onshore wind policies, 21 include a map within their policy identifying suitable areas for onshore wind development. The scale of area defined as suitable can be seen to differ and it is worth noting that one local authority (Exmoor National Park) only identifies suitable areas for small scale wind energy. Two local authorities have taken the approach of identifying areas that are not suitable. One local authority uses a Supplementary Planning Document to allocate suitable areas. Three local authorities have located the whole area as suitable. Four local authorities have developed criteria based policies without any mapping element to define suitable areas, this approach does not appear to be in accordance with the requirements of the WMS, it is thus not clear how applications would be assessed in these locations.

3.2 Local authorities updating their onshore wind policies or planning to do so in the future

Survey respondents who do not have an adopted policy for onshore wind were asked if they are currently updating their policy or if they are planning to do so in the future. As shown in figure 3 below 34% of survey respondents stated that they are currently updating their onshore wind policy, 11% that they are planning to do so, and 55% that they are not currently intending to update their onshore wind policy.

Figure 3: English Local authorities updating their onshore wind policy or planning to do so in the future



Respondents who stated that they are currently updating their onshore wind policy or are intending to do so were asked how they are planning to do this (see figure 4). It is significant to note that 40% of respondents identified that although they are currently or intending to update their policy they are undecided or still considering how to proceed.

Figure 4: How local authorities are intending to update their wind energy policies

Answer	%
We are updating our Local Plan policy to identify and map suitable areas, to allow onshore wind developments to be approved, or we intend to do so.	29 %
We are devolving the identification of suitable areas for onshore wind to neighbourhood planning groups or we intend to do so	8%
We are undecided or are still considering / consulting on how to proceed	40 %
Other (please specify)	23%



The comments left by those who selected other are provided below:

1. We are likely to have a policy that shows in principle support for wind farms, however it is unlikely we will go as far as to identify suitable areas and will instead consider applications on merit. There is not known to be significant demand for wind farms in the District at present.

2. Our evidence suggests we do not have the potential for sites for on shore wind. As we are a small authority and most of our district is either AONB or built up, but do not want to exclude any potential sites as technology develops and changes through the plan period.

3. We are drafting a policy that provides in principle support for various renewable energy development but on a criteria based approach taking into account a number of different locational factors including AONB, high grade agricultural land and important landscapes.

4. We are in the early stages of Local Plan preparation.

5. We are mapping areas potentially suitable for medium to large scale turbines (over 40m) and also propose to include a policy that establishes that the whole of the Central area is potentially suitable for small to medium sized wind turbines (to max 40m).

6. Whilst reviewing our local plan we identified suitable areas for solar pv and wind energy development on the proposals map of our regulation 18 consultation plan. The LPA received an objection from Historic England and Natural England on the grounds that nowhere in the area was suitable due to impacts.

8. Generic policy but no allocations.

7. We're currently producing evidence which includes the identification of areas that are potentially suitable however we haven't decided how the plan will address this.

9. Wording updates to current Local Plan policy to reflect the current evidence base and remove references to neighbourhood plans (currently draft and subject to change).

Our new Local Plan is almost through examination. The plan has a renewables policy but does not identify areas for wind turbines. The policy states that areas can be identified in neighbourhood plans.

10. From 2023 the authority will be part of a new unitary council. A key task will be to prepare a new local plan for the area that will include new policies on on-shore wind consistent with climate change priorities. It is unknown whether areas will be identified but early evidence base work is being prepared.

11. Initial data shows only 1% of the County to be suitable for onshore wind (outside of the AONBs) we do intend to map identify and map suitable areas across the districts if there are any. We will also be looking to encourage neighbourhood plans to identify opportunities for community-led initiatives.

12. The Local Plan is being updated. We will not be changing the policies on wind.

13. We have only just started the local plan review. The potential for renewable energy in the area (largely covered by AONB) will be considered. An up to date assessment of, in particular, potential landscape impact and settlement impact.

3.2.1 Local authorities with emerging plans for onshore wind

All emerging local plans (where the draft plan was available to access online in January 2023) were checked to see if they had a draft policy for onshore wind. From this review 13 local authorities were identified (although one only identifies suitable areas for turbines up to 20m). Figure 5 lists these local authorities and their approach to allocating sites for onshore wind. The policy wording in each location also covers criteria on a range of other potential impacts.

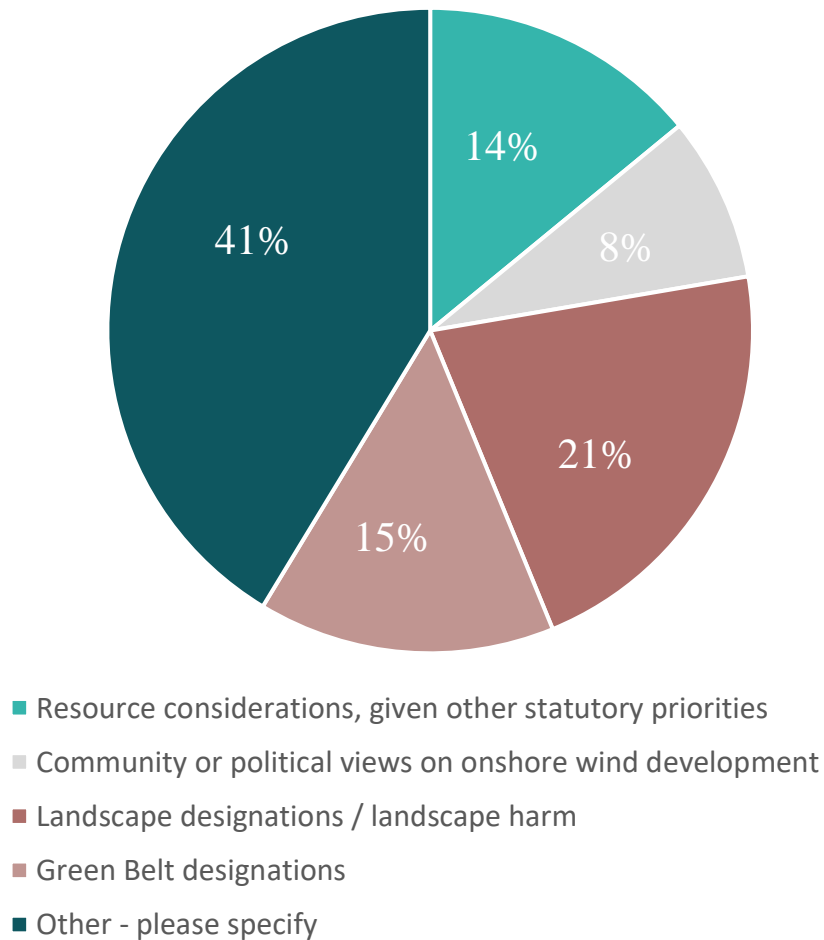
Figure 5: English local authorities with a draft local plan policy that identifies suitable areas for the development of onshore wind

Local authority	How suitable sites are identified
Blackburn with Darwen	Policies Map identifies areas that are potentially suitable for wind
Blackpool	‘The whole Borough is designated as an area of search suitable for small scale wind turbine development comprising up to 20m in height above ground level to blade tip’
Charnwood	Policies Map identifies areas that are suitable for wind energy
East Devon	Policies Map identifies areas that are suitable for wind energy
Fenland	Policies Map allocates two sites for medium to large scale wind turbine development
Leeds	Identifies suitable areas on a map within the draft local plan update document
Leicester	‘The north-west of the city and surrounding area has been identified as a potentially suitable location for wind energy development proposals’ (map within draft local plan document)
Mid Sussex	the development site is required to be ‘in an area identified as suitable for wind energy development in the 2014 Sustainable Energy Study, or as updated’
North Norfolk	Identifies suitable areas on a map within the draft local plan document
South Tyneside	Identifies suitable areas on a map within the draft local plan document
Stroud	Policies Map identifies areas that are suitable for wind energy
Sunderland	‘At this stage of plan making, potential locations have been identified (Appendix 2) for consultation purposes. Subject to this consultation, the council will then determine which areas should be designated in the next iteration of the Plan’
Teignbridge	Policies Map identifies sites that are suitable for wind energy. The draft local plan lists these sites (10 sites in total)

3.2.2 Reasons for not allocating areas for onshore wind

The survey respondents that stated that they did not intend to update their onshore wind policy were asked why. The reasons are outlined in figure 6 below with the ‘other’ comments summarised below.

Figure 6: Reasons why local authorities do not intend to update their onshore wind policy (respondents could select multiple answers)



The reasons listed under ‘other’ (with number of responses stating that reason) include:

- Perception that wind farms would not be suitable within the local area (without any evidence having been undertaken) x18
- Resource constraints or explanation that it is too early to be reviewing or updating the local plan x13
- Preference to focus on other forms of renewable energy e.g. solar x3
- Evidence that there would not be many suitable locations x3
- Older studies suggesting a lack of suitability for onshore wind x3
- Onshore wind not a local priority x2
- Preference for the neighbourhood plan allocation route x2

- Landscape concerns
- Other priorities e.g. housing
- Currently undertaking evidence collection
- Lack of available evidence
- Airport concerns

3.2.3 Local plan wording on deciding not to allocate areas for onshore wind

The policy review identified 33 adopted local plans that explain within the plan why they have chosen not to update their onshore wind policy in response to the 2015 national policy change. The majority of these explained that they did not anticipate there being an opportunity for onshore wind development in the local area or that the level of work involved was too high. Others explained that they had decided to leave the allocation to neighbourhood planning groups. Some local plans do not provide a reason but simply state that they have decided not to allocate areas.

A selection of these statements are provided below in order to provide examples of the types of explanations.

Ashford ‘No such areas are identified in this local plan and thus on-shore wind energy is not anticipated to be acceptable unless an area is identified in a Neighbourhood Plan.’

Bolsover ‘More recently government policy has been less favourable towards on-shore wind turbine development where communities oppose schemes on valid planning grounds, and changes to funding have made commercial wind turbines less attractive as investments. Therefore the plan does not identify suitable areas for wind turbine development.’

South East Lincolnshire ‘The ‘Suitable Area of Search’ for wind farm development, referred to in the Ministerial Statement of 18 June 2015, has not been identified owing to the evidence showing little potential beyond what has been developed.’

Breckland ‘The Local Plan has not identified suitable areas for wind energy and therefore these areas are only able to be identified in Neighbourhood Plans.’

Cambridge ‘The wind resource in Cambridge is highly constrained due to the relatively modest raw resource and the urban characteristics of the area. To this end, this local plan does not seek to allocate areas of land as being suitable for wind turbines. This approach will be reviewed as part of any subsequent review of the local plan.’

Cheltenham ‘Given the unlikelihood of wind energy proposals coming forward in the future, the Cheltenham Plan does not include a policy that relates to wind energy generation, nor does it seek to identify sites that may be suitable for harnessing the wind energy resource.’

Great Yarmouth ‘Policy CS12 stated that in preparing the Local Plan Part 2, potential areas suitable for wind energy will be considered and the plan will identify any suitable areas. The Council considers that given the need in the National Planning Policy Framework for proposals for wind energy to have the full backing of the local community it is considered that it would be more appropriate for such suitable areas to be identified in a Neighbourhood Plan where proposals are subject to a referendum. The Council has no specific evidence at present to suggest where suitable areas for wind turbines might exist but will help support Neighbourhood Plans in identifying them if requested.’

Harrogate ‘While most of the district would be unsuitable for large-scale wind turbine development, the impact of small-scale turbines would be less and may be acceptable, depending on the nature of the proposal. Given the high and moderately high landscape sensitivity of much of the district and the potential for other constraints, work to assess the suitability of all potential individual areas for wind energy development across the various scales is considered to be a disproportionate level of work that may result in little benefit in terms of securing increased generating capacity.’

Mid Devon ‘Following consideration of the evidence commissioned, the Council has concluded that it does not propose to identify such areas at a district level. This does not preclude suitable areas for wind energy development to come forward in Neighbourhood Plans.’

Rother ‘The Council’s recent Background Paper indicates the potential for wind turbines, based on prevailing wind speeds. Further consideration has been given to this potential. However, the High Weald’s historic and intricate landscape pattern, with particularly sensitive elevated ridges, make it very difficult to identify suitable locations other than through detailed assessment of a specific scheme. Areas outside the High Weald AONB, including the west/north-west of Bexhill and western edges of Hastings, have raised concerns about the impact of schemes on the rural setting of settlements and on the open and essentially undeveloped Strategic Gap between Bexhill and Hastings. Hence, no clearly suitable areas are identified.’

Scarborough borough ‘The desire to give local communities more say in this element of the planning process is acknowledged and supported. However, the requirement for all sites to be within an area that has been identified as being suitable for wind energy development is considered to be overly

restrictive, particularly in an area such as the area covered by this Local Plan where the potential wind energy resource is relatively limited.’

3.3 Onshore wind in Neighbourhood plans



All identifiable adopted neighbourhood plans in England (2,990 plans) were reviewed to identify their policies on onshore wind. The review involved searching for ‘wind’ ‘turbines’ and ‘onshore wind’. This search returned no neighbourhood plans with an adopted policy that is compliant with the NPPF requirement.

The majority of neighbourhood plans contained no mention of onshore wind and those that did expressed a lack of suitability for onshore wind in the local area. This is particularly significant as numerous local authorities have decided to defer the allocation of onshore wind sites to neighbourhood plans.

3.3.1 Local authority support for neighbourhood planning groups

Local authority survey respondents were asked what support (if any) they are providing to neighbourhood planning groups to help them identify suitable areas for onshore wind farms. Of the survey respondents, 97 local authorities stated that they have not provided any form of support to neighbourhood planning groups. 16 local authorities identified that they had provided support for neighbourhood planning groups to write the policy and 8 that they had provided support towards the production of technical constraints mapping and other background evidence.

37 comments were provided in response to this question to specify that either there were no neighbourhood planning groups in the local authority or that no groups had expressed an interest in allocating areas for onshore wind. Thus a key reason for the low number of local authorities providing support appears to be the lack of neighbourhood planning groups trying to allocate areas for onshore wind.

The 97 local authorities that reported that they currently provide no support to neighbourhood planning groups to help identify areas for onshore wind were asked if they are planning to provide support. 65% of respondents stated that they are not. Again, the majority of the comments added in response to this question highlighted the lack of interest from neighbourhood planning groups in allocating areas for onshore wind.

3.4 Local authority experiences of the current policy

The survey provided an opportunity for local authorities to add any comments regarding the current national policy for onshore wind. The question asked was ‘*please provide any comments on the current national policy for onshore wind in England*’ and the question was optional.

51 local authorities responded to this question to provide comments on the current policy 98% of these comments reflected a negative experience with the national policy. One comment was supportive of the current policy due to a personal preference for offshore wind. The key issues raised are summarised below, identifying how many comments reflected each issue (note – some comments raised more than one of the issues).

Figure 7: Summary of local authority comments regarding the current national planning policy for onshore wind

Category	Number of comments
Current policy being too restrictive or the ‘bar being set too high’	35
Desire for national policy change	21
Current policy not in line with climate emergency declarations or targets	14
Current policy delaying or preventing the delivery of onshore wind farms / reduction in number of planning applications for onshore wind farms since the policy change	13
Challenges surrounding the requirement for community backing	10
Challenge due to lack of guidance	9
Neighbourhood plans generally not allocating areas for wind farms.	2

A couple of quotes from local authorities are included below for illustrative purposes:

“ The current blanket policy approach is unhelpful and acting as a block against the cheapest renewable energy solution we have... Identifying suitable areas/allocating in plans is ideal, but many Councils have shield away from this in case it derails other aspects (e.g. meeting housing targets). ”

“ Will a wind farm ever have the backing of the people who are going to live near it? Most other aspects of planning legislation aren't worded like this. Should it be more of a planning balance, whether the benefits outweighing the harm? ”

3.4.1 Details of the approved planning applications

Between 2016-2022 only 12 planning applications for new onshore wind farms were approved in England, comprising a total of 21 turbines. The table below outlines the details of these sites. As shown in the table, all of these sites were very small developments, with most being for a singular turbine.

Figure 8: Onshore wind farms granted planning permission between 2016-2022

Site name and year planning permission granted	Number of turbines	Local authority and planning application reference	Notes from officer report / decision documents
Withernwick extension Granted: 2016	4	East Riding of Yorkshire 14/01919/ST PLFE	Granted at planning appeal. The inspectors report stated: ‘This scheme is subject to the transitional arrangements, which indicate that where the development plan does not identify suitable sites, the proposal can be found to be acceptable if, following consultation, the lpa is satisfied it has addressed the planning impacts identified by affected local communities and

			therefore has their backing. Neither the WMS nor PPG, in my view, tilts that weight in favour of local opinion rather it re-emphasises that the degree of weight to be attached to the material considerations is a matter for the decision maker.’
New Rides Wind Farm Granted:2017	4	Swale SW/13/1571	Granted at appeal (appeal was recovered for the Secretary of State's determination). This application was submitted before the publication of the WMS so the transitional arrangements applied. The report states that ‘whilst acknowledging that the LP does not identify suitable sites for wind energy development, the Secretary of State gives significant weight to the fact that the ELP endorses the proposal insofar as the appeal site is in an area identified on the Energy Opportunities Map as having a high potential for the installation of large scale wind energy. Furthermore, having reviewed the planning appeal documentation relating to the issues identified by the local community, including the cumulative noise impact, landscape and visual amenity, ecological impact and shadow flicker, the Secretary of State is satisfied that the appellant has adequately addressed the concerns raised by the community’.
Checkley Wood Farm Granted: 2017	1	Central Bedfordshire CB/16/0138 9/FULL	No decision details available at time of this research.
Hameldon Hill Wind Farm (extension 2) Granted:2017	3	Burnley APP/2016/0 263	Granted at planning appeal. The inspectors report stated: ‘The Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) is a material planning consideration which should be afforded weight. The WMS provides the most recent and up to date guidance from the Government as explained in this report. Its purpose is to allow local communities to have their say. The transitional provisions do not apply for applications submitted after the 18 June 2015 which would suggest that planning permission should not be granted for new wind turbines until suitable sites are identified in a local plan. The objectives of the WMS in engaging communities and considering the issues relating to community backing have been considered.

			However, the report has explained how the objectives of the WMS in engaging local communities and applying the test of ‘local backing’ would not be compromised by allowing this development. The benefits of increasing the supply of renewable energy and reducing carbon emissions set out in government targets is also a material consideration. Taking all these factors into account, the lack of strict compliance with the WMS would not be so harmful as to outweigh both the development plan and the other material considerations which have been shown to weigh in favour of the proposal.’
Accolade Wines Granted:2017	1	Bristol 17/02240/F	From the committee report: ‘Whilst there are no sites allocated for wind turbine developments within the current Bristol Local Plan, the planning merits of this scheme, as well as the fact that there is significant local support, mean that there is no reason to withhold planning consent.’
The Low Carbon Energy Generation Project at Keele University Granted:2019	2	Newcastle Under Lyme 18/00933/F UL	No relevant text identified.
Ambition Community Energy Severn Road Granted:2020	1	Bristol 20/01270/F	From the committee report: ‘Due to the existence of a Written Ministerial Statement (June 2015), the Local Planning Authority can only grant permission for wind turbines where they are on sites which have been specifically designated for wind farm development, and where they have the support of the local community. In the case of Bristol City Council, there are currently no such allocations, therefore any decision to grant approval for this development could be at risk of legal challenge.’ ‘The application has generated a significant level of local public interest in support of the plans. Despite the absence of a formal designation, it is considered that there is no reason to withhold planning permission. It is likely that Avonmouth could be considered an appropriate area for wind turbine development, in view of the fact that there are already a number of wind turbines in the locality, as well as the relative lack of sensitive receptors. The

			applicant's Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment also sets out that there would be no severe impact on key viewpoints.'
Land near Ventonteague (Resubmission) Granted: 2018	1	Cornwall PA18/08772	<p>This was a resubmission on a site where permission was originally granted for a wind turbine in 2015 (the application was in same location but for a different turbine).</p> <p>From the committee report:</p> <p>'Whilst the Cornwall Local Plan does not specifically seek to identify any specific 'areas suitable for wind energy development,' not only has it already been established for many years that this general area is suitable for wind energy development (hence the development and subsequent repowering of the Carland Cross Windfarm), but it should be noted that there is already an extant consent at the Ventonteague site for a turbine identical in height to that proposed in this application. ' 'It was demonstrated in 2015 that the planning impacts identified by consultees as well, as those who made representations at that time and the neighbouring Parish Council, were fully addressed.'</p>
Lower Longstones, St Mewan Wind Turbine Granted:2021	1	Cornwall PA20/09318	<p>From officers report:</p> <p>'In terms of the Ministerial Statement (MS) dated 18 June 2015, this noted that new considerations should be applied to proposed wind energy development, so that local people have the final say on wind farm applications. This policy statement is one of the several material considerations that is required to be taken into account in the overall planning balance It is also noted that in applying these considerations, whether a proposal has the backing of the affected local community is a planning judgement for the Local Planning Authority.'</p> <p>'The Council declared a climate emergency on the 22nd January and following this a Climate Action Plan was proposed in 2019 with the Cornwall Council Climate Emergency DPD scoping report undertaken in March 2020 and currently being produced.'</p> <p>'With other renewable and low carbon energy projects, the proposed wind turbine would help mitigate climate change and assist in meeting national targets and aspirations in respect of renewable energy. These important wider</p>

			environmental benefits of the scheme need to be weighed in the planning balance. The proposed wind turbine would also assist in increasing the security and diversity of electricity supply. The economic benefits of the scheme are also important considerations to weigh in the balance and environmental and economic benefits of the scheme carry considerable weight in the determination of this application.'
Deans Lane Wind Turbine Granted: 2021	1	West Lancashire 2020/0933/F UL	Small turbine measuring 31.5m to tip From officers report: 'Firstly it must be noted that that the Council's current Local Plan does not include any areas which have been identified as suitable for wind energy. The current Local Plan pre-dates the revised NPPF and the WMS so this is unsurprising and it would be unreasonable to suggest that this should equate to a blanket ban on wind development within the Borough' As stated in the NPPF, an application for renewable energy should only be approved if the impact is (or can be made) acceptable. The impacts of the proposal, as identified above and as outlined in the representations made by members of the public, have, in my view, been fully addressed.'
Wheal Martyn, Carthew Granted:2022	1	Cornwall PA21/07216	From officers report: 'The Council has declared a climate emergency in 2019. The Climate Change DPD consultation on the pre-submission draft has closed and the DPD has been submitted for examination. Policy RE1 sets out where renewable energy development will be supported' 'The site is located in the broad suitable area identified on the proposals map.' It is considered that the proposal is supported by local and national planning policy.

Skipsea Lane, Dunnington Granted:2022	1	East Riding of Yorkshire 22/00443/ST PLF	From officers report: ‘The scheme would not be located on an area allocated for wind turbine development as required by national policy, it is therefore considered to be a departure from national policy in this respect, however it is considered that the economic and environmental benefits of the scheme as well as the fact there would be no harm to the character of the surrounding area in this location, are material considerations which would outweigh the departure from national policy in this case.’
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Searching the UK Government Renewable Energy Planning database revealed additional results (listed below). However, as explained below these applications were not considered to be for new onshore wind farms. These sites include:

- Lower Tregeen, Davidstow, Cornwall (Application PA18/10990), this application was for a repowering of an existing site, not a new site.
- Wind turbines on the O2 Arena, Greenwich (Application 21/2229/F), this was not for ground mounted onshore wind turbines, but rather 1.1m high turbines that will sit on existing cylinder towers.
- Aygill Intake, Harrogate (Application 21/04033/CLOPUD). This was a lawful development certificate application for monitoring equipment which includes small wind turbines mounted on 10m tall poles.
- Duggleby Wold Farmhouse, Ryedale (Application 22/00807/FUL). This application was for replacement wind turbines on an existing site.
- Boythorpe Farm, Ryedale (Application 22/01092/FUL). This application was for replacement wind turbines on an existing site.

4 Conclusion and policy recommendations

The existing national policy means that new wind farms cannot currently be granted planning permission in 90% of local authorities in England. Even in those 10% of local authorities that have been able to allocate suitable areas for onshore wind there is then the second challenge of proving that ‘the planning impacts identified by the affected local community have been fully addressed and the proposal has their backing’, so there is no guarantee that applications will be approved.

The current policy has proved to be too restrictive. It is evident from local authority comments to this survey as well as the wording included in some adopted local plans that identifying suitable areas for onshore wind is not something that local authorities can easily achieve.

This restrictive national planning policy is impacting our ability to address the climate emergency and increase energy security through increasing onshore wind development. In response, a review of the requirements and wording of current national planning policy for onshore wind is needed. Policy suggestions are provided below.

4.1 Policy recommendations

4.1.1 Policy for new onshore wind farm sites

A revision of the current national planning policy for onshore wind is urgently needed. National planning policy should recognise the important role that onshore wind can play in achieving net zero ambitions. It is thus recommended that the current footnote 54 of the National Planning Policy Framework is removed. Rather than requiring site allocations, onshore wind farm proposals should be assessed on their own merits.

While community engagement and support of a proposal is very important, there is no feasible way to measure community support. Rather than requiring measurements of community support, there should be a focus on high quality community engagement. This should ensure that the developer has considered community views on the plans for the site and on the type of community benefit package that is delivered. As part of a policy update additional support should be provided for community owned wind turbines (community energy projects).

4.1.2 Repowering and life-extension¹

An update to the planning policy for onshore wind also needs to consider the potential for repowering (removing existing turbines and replacing with new, often larger turbines that generate more energy) and life-extension (increasing the duration of the planning consent for the existing turbines).

Most wind farms in England have been granted a time-limited planning consent of 25 years, requiring removal after this period. However, infrastructure is often capable of working for longer than 25-years. There should thus be a supportive policy approach to life-extension (extending the planning consent for up to 10 years), recognising that this can be achieved through a variation of a condition.

There is also a need for a clear policy approach to repowering including confirmation of the aspects that need to be given material consideration and detailed guidance on how local authorities should assess the change in visual impacts. This should involve a confirmation of the baseline upon which repowering applications should be assessed. A suggestion here is to adopt the approach set out in paragraph 174 of the Scottish Planning Policy (2014) which states that ‘Proposals to repower existing wind farms which are already in suitable sites where environmental and other impacts have been shown to be capable of mitigation can help to maintain or enhance installed capacity, underpinning renewable energy generation targets. The current use of the site as a wind farm will be a material consideration in any such proposals.’

A supportive policy for repowering needs to provide details regarding what should be considered as part of applications including greater environmental enhancements and the potential for improved community benefits. Developers should be encouraged to renegotiate community benefits and /or shared ownership arrangements, or introduce new discussions on these aspects, at an early stage of a repowering application.

4.1.3 Support for Local Planning Authorities

If following a policy change, onshore wind applications continue to be decided at the local authority level there needs to be increased resourcing for local planning authorities in order to avoid delays. As many local authorities have not assessed wind farm applications for a number of years, updated training may also be required.

¹ For more information on this please see: Windemer R (2021) 'End-of-life decision making for onshore wind and solar farms in Great Britain'



Please contact Dr Rebecca Windemer at:

rebecca.windemer@uwe.ac.uk if you would like to delve deeper into the research or discuss ideas for acting on these findings.

