

**PROPOSED WINDFARM AT SPRING FARM RIDGE, HELMDON/GREATWORTH, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
(SOUTH NORTHANTS COUNCIL PLANNING APPLICATION S/2010/1437/MAF)**

PUBLIC INQUIRY INTO APPEAL AGAINST REFUSAL OF PLANNING PERMISSION

APP/Z2830/A/11/2165035/NWF

STATEMENT BY ROB CROSS, ASTWELL MILL, HELMDON

I am the owner of three horses and three ponies and live at Astwell Mill, Helmdon. My family, friends and I regularly ride along the bridleway from Grange Lane, Helmdon to Stuchbury (AP15/AN32), and along the byway from Stuchbury to the B4525 (AN36) and on to Halse and Radstone. We also regularly ride along the Helmdon to Stuchbury road, and, sometimes, along the B4525 past the proposed wind turbine site.

All of these riding routes are frequently ridden by local riders, and also ridden by visitors to the area, whether exercising their horses or following one of the local Hunt's. It would therefore be appropriate that the proposed turbines should follow British Horse Society guidelines and should all be at least four times separation distance from the riding routes. None of the proposed turbine sites achieve this.

Horses are prey animals and wary of unfamiliar or unnatural shapes, movements and noises. Horses are highly likely to be frightened by the wind turbine impact factors which have been identified by the British Horse Society. These are as follows.

Firstly blade shadows – in sunny weather the blades of a wind turbine cast a shadow on the ground. On the Helmdon to Stuchbury bridleway, on the Stuchbury to B4525 byway and on the Helmdon to Stuchbury road, the proposed turbine sites fall to the East, West and South and so are likely to frighten horses with their shadows on sunny days.

Secondly blades starting to turn – at various points in the undulating countryside a horse could see, at their sight line, turbines suddenly start. This would likely frighten and startle a horse.

Thirdly noise – mechanism noise or noise from wind on the turbine blades could be an impact factor on more finely bred horses. 'Highly strung' point to point racehorses are regularly exercised from Sulgrave to Helmdon, and from a separate racing yard at Astwell, past Stuchbury towards Sulgrave. Performance horses for hunting are also frequently exercised across the routes impacted by the turbines – all these horses and the racehorses are given high energy hard feed which their workload demands but this also contributes to making them excitable and 'highly strung'. Also these horses often only remain in their job as racehorses or hunters for three or four years, so will be replaced by other excitable horses, which in turn will be totally unaccustomed to the frightening wind turbines.

Fourthly construction and maintenance of the turbines – the high volume of vehicles and large lorries required to build the wind turbines will pose a significant increase in risk to horse riders. Horses typically find large vehicles threatening and this increases the chances of accidents.

Horses are extremely popular in this part of South Northamptonshire. A recent survey of equines showed excess of 350 horses in the Sulgrave, Helmdon, Weedon Lois, Weston, Culworth, Greatworth and Wappenham area alone. Horses provide an important source of local employment and the £2000 - £3000 cost per horse or pony per year supports directly many local Northamptonshire businesses such as farriers, vets, farmers, feed merchants and tack suppliers. Many of the local horses are hunters, sports horses and racehorses. By their very nature these horses are highly strung. The wind turbines will create many potential risks of accidents to horse riders of these horses. To avoid the risks the riders will be forced to stop riding in the area of the wind turbines and be denied what is currently a safe off road cantering and riding area.

Rob Cross