

Householders Against Rushy Mead

<http://www.rushymeadharm.org/>

Lower Earley Most Affected by Wind Turbine Views



17th November 2010

HARM's research indicates that the visual issues raised by the proposed wind turbine site at Rushy Mead will most affect Lower Earley residents' views and lines of sight, as well as a risking shadow flicker for a significant number of houses.

Partnerships For Renewables' (PFR's) planning application states that the proposed wind farm development will have "limited landscape and visual effects" and that the "substantial urban / built up areas" will act to "contain or limit wider visual effects". HARM **does not** agree, and believes putting four 130m high wind turbines in this location would dominate the landscape, overshadow and blight all of the surrounding settlement areas and adversely impact the amenity of thousands of people in Lower Earley, Arborfield, Shinfield and surrounding areas.

Jan Heard Spokesperson for HARM states "Lower Earley represents the community most affected by the proposed wind farm at Rushy Mead, and yet ironically is one of the least represented communities in the PFR proposal...". In addition this development would be in a low wind location where our research indicates the main motivation of the developer, (and indirectly Reading University as landlord) is to access the significant subsidies available for wind turbines over a 25 year period. The cost/benefit equation does not stack up. Heard continues "... the proposed 130m high turbines will dominate the whole area and overshadow hundreds of homes in Lower Earley. Siting turbines so irresponsibly close to such a large number of houses can only be a bad idea. "

Impact on local residents. According to PFR's own documents a significant number of houses in Lower Earley and other areas would experience shadow flicker. This occurs when the turbine blades project repetitive shadows from the sun onto the windows of houses, akin to a light being turned on and off every few seconds.

In addition one of the 130m high turbines is only 180m away from a well used public right of way that has been frequented by horse riders (including disabled riders) and walkers for hundreds of years. The proximity of the turbine is a real safety concern given the unpredictable response from horses using the route – the British Horse Society recommends at least a 3x turbine height separation distance from bridleways, which in this case would be 390m.

All of these issues could be avoided by siting turbines of this size further away from large numbers of residential houses and busy public rights of way.

PFR's illustrations. PFR have sought to illustrate the projected visual impact of the proposed wind farm by producing their own photo-montages. These involve super-imposing turbines onto photographs to give an idea of how the development will appear if constructed.

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In HARM's view, PFR's photographs have been carefully selected to paint a very favourable picture for the developer, with viewpoints chosen that deliberately have screening objects in the foreground, and whited out skies to make the turbines harder to see.

Claims of "consultation" - Every time they come under scrutiny in the press over Rushy Mead, PFR always claim they have taken time to consult and reflect the views of local residents: *"We have been investigating the site for more than two years and have received valuable feedback from the local community...We have worked hard to incorporate the feedback into our plans and will be holding public exhibitions later this month so that members of the community can come along and discuss the details of the application with the project team."* Tony Duffin (PFR)

In good faith, and well in advance of the planning application being submitted, Parish Councils and local residents requested photo-montages from a range of viewpoints in Lower Earley and Arborfield. Unsurprisingly many of these requests were from Lower Earley given the proximity of the turbines to such a large number of houses. The list in the table summarises the photo-montage requests that have been ignored by PFR. Reasons given for rejection of locations included repetition, screening or the wonderful "this one proved helpful to the residential assessment" (but we chose not to take a photo!). In the planning documents PFR insist that "the suggestions have been reviewed and assessed to ensure that repetitive views are avoided and that a **representative landscape and visual assessment has been carried out**". We believe that the significant number of Parish Council and resident requested viewpoints that have been ignored demonstrate that this clearly isn't the case – the only thing PFR's photos represent is a very one sided view.

Viewpoints requested by Parish Councils and/or residents and rejected by PFR

- Ruined church at Hall Farm
- Heacham Close, Lower Earley
- Chatteris Way, Lower Earley
- Bradmore Way, Lower Earley
- Arborfield Church
- Public right of way near ASDA
- Earley Events Field
- Loddon Valley Police Station

HARM's photo-montages and public exhibitions. In response to PFR flatly refusing to publish photo-montages from these requested locations despite their constant spin about "consultation", HARM have commissioned their own montages of the proposed site from two of the viewpoints PFR rejected: Arborfield Church and Bradmore Way Lower Earley. We note with interest the predictable and defensive response from PFR via the Wokingham Times that HARM's images would "not be scrutinised for accuracy". Interestingly PFR aren't claiming that HARM's images are inaccurate, just that they would not be scrutinised. HARM has worked hard to ensure that the images are accurate, and they have been produced by a third party with many years of experience of wind farm visualisations. HARM will be shortly holding a number of public sessions (dates tbc) so that local residents can come along and judge the PFR and HARM montages side by side and form their own conclusions.

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