

DRAFT POLICIES (INCLUDING WIND ENERGY SPATIAL FRAMEWORK) AND SUPPORTING TEXT FOR MIDLOTHIAN LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (MLDP) PROPOSED PLAN

Section 6.2: Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Projects

The Council supports in principle the development of a wide variety of renewable energy and low carbon technologies to help meet and exceed national targets for developing energy and heat from renewable sources. It also encourages energy efficiency, heat recovery and efficient energy supply and storage in a manner appropriate to Midlothian. Accordingly, the MLDP provides a policy framework for the assessment of proposals which includes giving due regard to relevant environmental, community and cumulative impact considerations.

Depending on specific considerations identified in policies *NRG1 Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Projects* and *NRG2 Wind Energy*, the renewable energy resources available in Midlothian are likely to include wind, biomass/biofuels, energy from waste (Millerhill), geothermal/minewater (Shawfair), solar and possible hydro schemes on rivers such as the North and South Esk and the Tyne.

All wind energy proposals will be assessed against policy NRG2. All other proposals for renewable and low carbon energy projects will be assessed against the criteria identified in policy NRG1.

Where community benefit packages are proposed in association with a renewable energy development, the Council would not normally enter into negotiations until it has issued a planning consent for a proposal. It will be for the applicant to liaise with relevant third parties on this matter. For any such negotiations, the Council would encourage all parties to follow the *Scottish Government Good Practice for Community Benefits from Onshore Renewable Energy Developments*, or any equivalent successor.

Subject to the provisions of policy NRG1, and where relevant policy NRG2, the Council is keen to support and encourage appropriate community renewable energy development. It will assist interested parties by directing them to relevant information sources and bodies that may be able to help with the delivery of community renewable energy development.

POLICY NRG1

RENEWABLE AND LOW CARBON ENERGY PROJECTS

Renewable and low carbon energy projects, including, biomass, biofuels, energy from waste, geothermal, minewater, solar, hydro-electric, heat pumps, energy storage, microgeneration, community heating/cooling and other decentralised energy technology, will be permitted provided any proposal will not:

1. cause a significant adverse effect upon the historic environment including the following designations/features and, where relevant, their settings: Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes, Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings, Scheduled Ancient Monuments and other significant archaeological sites, or Historic Battlefields;
2. cause a significant adverse effect upon natural heritage including the nature conservation interests covered by policies xx-xx [*formerly MLP policies RP10-14*];
3. cause a significant adverse effect upon Green Belt, the Pentland Hills Regional Park or its setting, or the Special Landscape Areas;
4. cause a significant adverse effect on peat/ carbon rich soils* or prime agricultural farmland;
(*when available, reference should be made to the relevant Scottish Government "carbon calculator" in the development and assessment of proposals);
5. have an unacceptable effect on the amenity of nearby communities or residential properties including noise, and impact on telecommunications;
6. cause or increase pollution or flood risk, or have an unacceptable effect on the water environment or water catchment areas;
7. require infrastructure for access and/or power transmission which itself has a significantly unacceptable environmental impact;
8. have a significant adverse effect upon landscape or visual impact;
9. result in unacceptable cumulative impacts;
10. lead to the loss of public access routes and, if routes require diversion, alternatives acceptable to the Council must be provided;
11. compromise telecommunications and broadcasting installations, and transmission links;
12. lead to unacceptable impacts on the road network including traffic generation and road safety; and/or
13. demonstrably damage the local economy in terms of tourism or recreation.

Any proposal must:

- A. include a robust mechanism for decommissioning to ensure operators and/ or site owners achieve site restoration to a standard satisfactory to the Council, including the removal of all related equipment;

- B. accord with any other relevant Local Development Plan policies or proposals; and
- C. consider the potential to connect new projects to off-grid areas.

In assessing all renewable energy and low carbon technology proposals, the following will be important considerations: net economic impact, including at the local and community scale; the scale of contribution from the development to renewable energy generation targets; and the effect on greenhouse gas and carbon emissions. However, these considerations will not necessarily carry more weight where there may be likely significant environmental effects arising from a development. Where there are potentially significant environmental effects from a development, the Council will require full justification that the economic benefits, contribution to renewable energy targets and carbon reduction outweigh the environmental consequences.

The Council has produced a Midlothian spatial framework for wind farms based upon the approach set out in Table 1 of Scottish Planning Policy (2014). The minimum scale of development to which the framework applies is one turbine with a height to blade tip of 30 metres. However, all wind energy proposals will still require to be assessed against the requirements of policy NRG2 and demonstrate that they are acceptable. All proposals should also take account of the provisions of *Supplementary Guidance on Wind Energy Development in Midlothian*.

In response to the publication of Scottish Planning Policy in June 2014, and to inform the MLDP spatial framework for wind energy, the Council commissioned landscape capacity analysis to identify those locations where (and at what scale) the Midlothian landscape might successfully accommodate wind energy development. The resulting *Midlothian Landscape Wind Energy Capacity Study* (2014) is appended to the Supplementary Guidance which will be a material consideration in the assessment of all wind energy proposals. The findings of the above study provide information on where landscape, visual and cumulative impact issues may arise from wind energy development.

The Midlothian spatial framework for wind farms, as illustrated in Figure 1, sets out the areas of significant protection in Midlothian. It should be noted that interpretation of the spatial framework should take account of any updates to the designated areas (as defined by Scottish Government or their advisers) as listed in Table 1 of Scottish Planning Policy. The framework identifies the areas and scale of wind energy development that the Council considers have landscape capacity to successfully accommodate wind turbines of 30 metres and above. Although not included in the spatial framework, Figure 2 provides additional guidance on the potential or otherwise to accommodate wind turbines below 30 metres in height.

Further information on the spatial framework, its application, and the potential for smaller turbines, is provided in the *Supplementary Guidance on Wind Energy Development in Midlothian*, including:

- national planning policy on wind energy;
- the operation and application of the spatial framework, including mapped areas of significant protection and locations with possible landscape capacity for wind energy;
- the application of policies NRG1 and NRG2 to the development and assessment of proposals;
- the siting of wind turbines in Midlothian; and
- guidance and information on the cumulative effect of wind energy development in Midlothian.

POLICY NRG2**WIND ENERGY**

All wind energy proposals will be assessed against the requirements of policy NRG1 and, in addition to these requirements, will be permitted provided they will not:

1. significantly increase the risk of shadow flicker or driver distraction; or
2. adversely affect civil and defence aviation interests and seismological recording.

Proposals for turbines above 30 metres in height to blade tip should take account of the spatial framework for wind farms (Figure 1).

The *Supplementary Guidance on Wind Energy Development* should be consulted in the formulation and assessment of all wind energy proposals, regardless of scale.

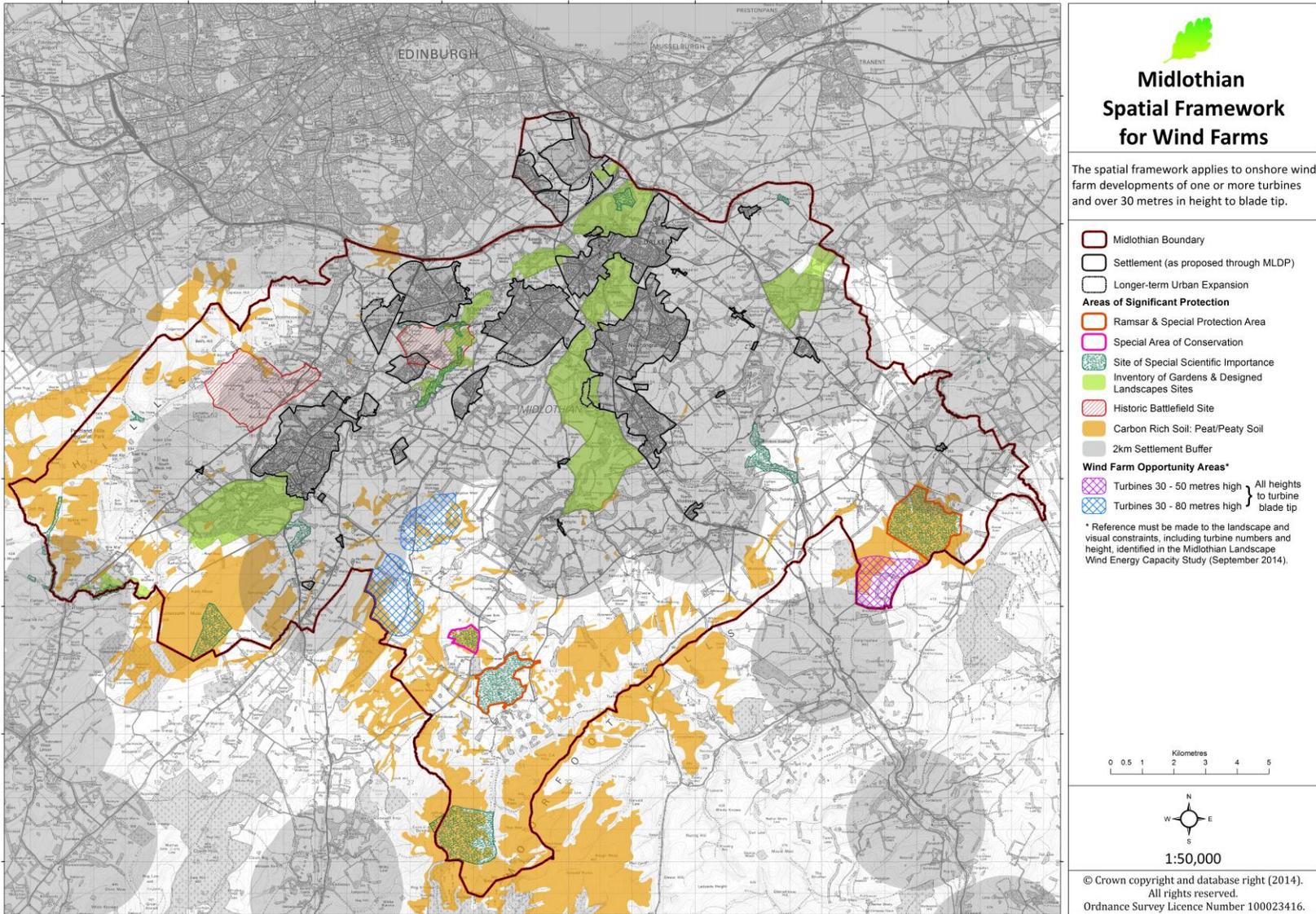


Figure 1

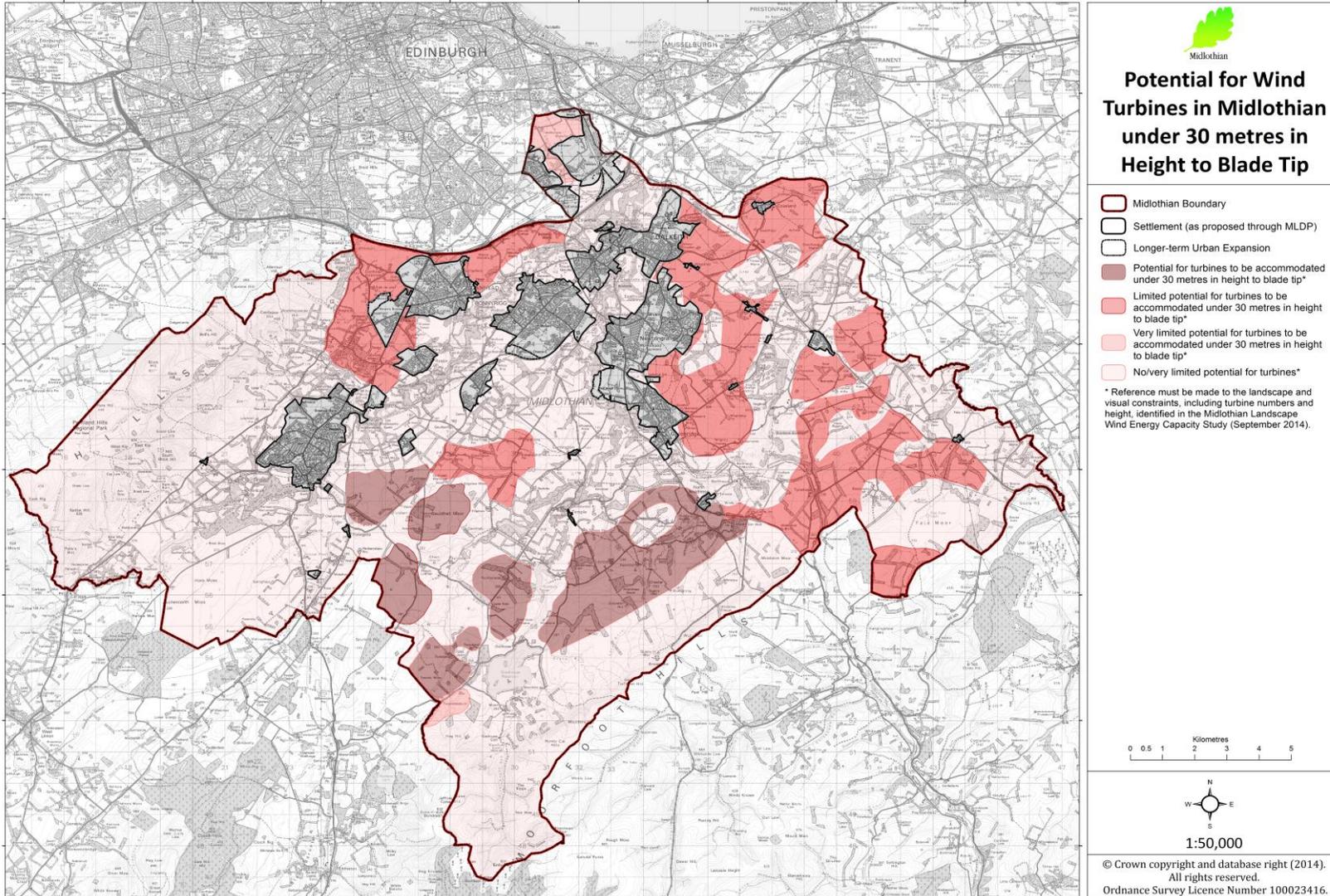


Figure 2