

**COMMUNITY ENERGY INITIAL SITE ASSESSMENT**

**TEMPLATE AND SERVICE SCOPE**

**APPLICANT INFORMATION FORM:**

**Please return the completed form to development\_management@bathnes.gov.uk**

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| --- |
| **Site Location(s)** |
| *Insert text here* |
| **Description of Proposal and information sought:** Please include as much detail as possible including plans, drawings, photographs and site-specific environmental considerations e.g. ecology, landscape.  |
| *Insert text here* |
| **Information request date** |
| *Insert text here* |
| **Requester Name and organisation** |
| *Insert text here* |
| **Description of how eligibility criteria for this service have been met** |
| *Insert text here* |

**PLANNING STEER**

|  |
| --- |
| Applicants leave blank |
| Officer Date |

**SERVICE SCOPE**

**Rationale**

1. **Climate Emergency:** Bath & North East Somerset’s Climate Emergency Resolution makes a commitment to providing the leadership for the district to become net zero carbon by 2030. This commitment is supported by Bath and North East Somerset Placemaking Plan’s Policy CP3 which sets a target of 275MW of renewable energy capacity to be installed.
2. **Improving people’s lives:** Placemaking Plan Policy SCR4[[1]](#footnote-1) states that the positive benefits of community energy schemes will be a material consideration in assessing renewable energy development proposals. This is because renewable energy delivery through a community-owned model, as defined below, supports several Council objectives beyond addressing the climate emergency. These include: retaining the revenues in the area through local share offers; providing a community fund for local projects; giving people a bigger say through the community energy membership voting structure; engagement in the project development process and supporting local jobs through greater use of local contractors.

**Purpose**

This assessment service augments the Council’s support for community owned renewables by providing an early steer on site suitability, identifying any clear barriers prior to progressing a scheme. This is not intended to replace the full pre-application process which would draw in views from a wider range of specialist consultees, but it is a precursor to a full pre-application to provide an initial steer. This assessment is geared around large scale schemes such as ground mounted solar which fall within the higher cost brackets for pre-application advice.

**Eligibility**

Community energy organisations are defined drawing on the criteria in Policy SCR4. To be eligible for this service, a project must meet all of the following criteria:

1. Fully owned by a local community group, social enterprise or Parish/ Town Council.
2. Local community members have a governance stake in the project or organisation e.g. with voting rights
3. The organisation is constituted as a not-for-profit with an asset lock or similar provision ensuring that the assets provide community benefit in perpetuity.
4. The organisation allocates a community fund for local projects

“Local” is defined as being based within the geographic community (e.g. town, ward, Parish) where the project is sited or operates substantially within the district of Bath & North East Somerset.

**Commitment from Planning Service:**

1. **Support the Climate Emergency priority** in as far as this does not contradict the development plan national policy/professional probity.
2. **Provide** a high level, written steer on key constraints where known. For example, in relation to national and local policy, the Habitats Directive, Flood Risk (sequential and exceptions tests), Contaminated Land, Heritage Impact, Protected Geological features, Avon Act.
3. **Provide** a high level, written steer on the suitability of nascent development proposals, where known and provide direction as to the acceptability, opportunities for and or constraints for the proposed use, massing based upon available information and current policy.
4. **Identify** potential high-level obstacles to development for example, restrictive policies such as the Green Belt, Transport constraints/highway safety where residual cumulative impact on road network might be severe. Substantial Harm or less than Substantial Harm to a Heritage Asset (World Heritage Site, Conservation Area, Listed buildings, other non-designated Heritage Assets) and the need to provide convincing public benefits where appropriate.
5. **Identify** where further information may be required. For example, Noise Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment, Heritage Impact Assessments, Transport Assessments, Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments, tree and green infrastructure impact assessment, ecological surveys, in particular protected species survey and assessment, bat and bird surveys.
6. **Advise** as to any particular special interest groups the LPA is aware of that may need to be consulted at an early stage.
7. **Advise** on potential way forward, e.g. Local Plan allocation, Pre-application/Development Team, a Planning Application, a Lawful Development Certificate, Prior Approval
8. **Seek** to respond to the initial inquiry within 20 working days
9. **Agree** the recommendations with the LPA Head of Service/ Deputy Head of Service/Team Manager
10. **Record** the assessment on the Planning Service data base,
11. **Seek** tomaintain continuity in the assignment of subsequent pre-application/applications

**Cost:**

There will be a charge for this service to cover the cost of officer time. As noted above, this assessment is intended to provide a lower cost route for larger scale schemes such as ground mounted solar, as opposed to smaller schemes e.g. roof mounted solar, where the pre-application cost is lower.

* Under a hectare - £165.00 plus VAT, unless the regular pre-application fee is less than this (e.g. on roof mounted schemes)
* Over a hectare - £550.00 plus VAT

These fees would then be deducted from the fee for the full pre-application process if this is pursued.

1. Policy SCR4 p68: https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2020-01/cs\_pmp\_vol\_1\_district-wide\_compressed.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-1)