

The Department for Communities and Local Government has provided the following answer to your written parliamentary question (39523):

Question:

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of establishing clear national planning guidelines for the (a) maximum density of shale gas well sites per square mile and (b) minimum distances of such sites from towns and villages. (39523)

Tabled on: 06 June 2016

Answer:

James Wharton:

The planning system currently requires shale well site density and distance to settlements to be considered where relevant in plan making and decisions on planning proposals, taking into account local context. Were limits to be set in national planning guidance, they may not provide appropriate protections in some contexts, or rule out otherwise acceptable development in others.

For minerals such as shale gas, local authority mineral plans should set out environmental criteria for the assessment of applications and take into account cumulative effect of multiple impacts from individual sites and/ or from a number of sites in a locality. Planning law requires that decisions must be taken in accordance with the development plan for the local authority, including any relevant mineral plan policies, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

In all cases, national planning policy must also be taken into account when applications are determined. This is clear that when a planning permission is granted for mineral development, including shale gas, there should be no unacceptable adverse impacts on the natural and historic environment, or on human health. It also ensures relevant cumulative effects are considered.

The answer was submitted on 14 Jun 2016 at 15:58.