

Email to planningdc@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Dear County Planning and Minerals Waste

Response to consultation reference CCC/23/110/FUL Streetly Hall Farm, Webbs Road, West Wickham, CB21 4PP for a farm based anaerobic digestion renewable energy facility, vehicle access road to A1307 and associated infrastructure and landscaping.

On behalf of the Ramblers Association Cambridge Group we object to this proposal.

There are a good number of footpaths in the area around Horseheath, Streetly, West Wickham, West Wrating, Balsham and along the Roman Road that are regularly walked by many different Ramblers Groups. It is a particularly valued area for walking. Our objections include:

1. The size of the development required for the anaerobic digester changing the character of the countryside to an industrial area especially when another anaerobic digester is proposed at Spring Grove Farm, Withersfield just 3.5 miles away. Both sites would be visible on the same walk along the Roman Road and Harcamlow Way. It would take many years for any trees or shrubs to screen these developments following the disruption of construction.
2. Concern for safety of walkers using the bridleway (PRoW 131/21): The proposed plan includes a new access road crossing this bridleway, which would carry a number of large vehicle movements being an average of 30 per day but in peak times June/July and September/October they could be as high as 80 per day. The majority of vehicle movements will be crossing the Roman Road/Harcamlow Way bridleway; what steps can be taken to alert drivers to this crossing point? Would there also be vehicle movements along the eastern part of this bridleway, ie heading to/from West Wickham Road in Horseheath? If so there needs to be sufficient width for the vehicles to pass the walkers and riders safely, and any change of surface must undergo the proper authorisation process (see also point 5).

One of the general principles in Cambridgeshire's Rights of Way Plan 2006 states that "Countryside access provision should be safe for users. Where significant potential conflict with motor traffic or railways can be demonstrated, then measures to reduce risk will be considered".

3. Walkers do also walk along Webbs Road, Dean Road and other local rural roads to in order to connect to the various footpaths. There is concern at the likely increase in number of vehicle movements along these minor roads with vehicles from both anaerobic digester plants taking maize and straw from neighbouring farm sites and potentially encountering and needing to pass each other. These country roads are not wide enough for walkers and large vehicles to pass each other safely. There is also concern about the increased volume of traffic from both aerobic digester plants feeding onto the A1307. Increased traffic along the A1307 would counteract the benefits of the improvements being made by Cambridgeshire County Council's Highways Department to this already busy road.
4. Noise from the vehicle traffic and the anaerobic digestion plant will disturb the peace and quiet of the countryside, one of the main pleasures for walkers. Another general principle on

the Rights of Way Plan is “The countryside access experience in Cambridgeshire should be straightforward, enjoyable and inspiring.”

5. There has been no prior consultation with the Ramblers, one of the statutory consultees, on the proposed change to the surface of a Public Right of Way. The new authorisation process applies to **all** landowners and scheme promoters, both internal and external to the County Council, where it would involve change to the surface of an existing right of way. Promoters are expected to consult statutory user groups and key stakeholders, and they are strongly encouraged to complete and submit the form **prior** to submitting planning applications, in order to avoid objections and to help to facilitate the smooth processing of applications.

The Ramblers Cambridge Group is not opposed to Anaerobic Digester Plants as there are clearly many long-term benefits for the environment. Our primary concern is the routing of the access road, the high number of vehicle movements over a bridleway, safety and the very close proximity to another Anaerobic Digester Plant.

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Planning and Countryside Officers (SCDC)

Ramblers Cambridge Group