

To: Andrew Rutter, Case Officer, Suffolk County Council

Application Number: SCC/0045/23SE

Construction and operation of an anaerobic digestion facility, associated infrastructure and new access road, connecting pipeline and covered digestate lagoons

Applicant: Acorn Bioenergy Limited/Thurlow Estate

25th October 2023

Dear Sir,

I wish to object to the proposed development of an anaerobic digester at Spring Grove Farm, Haverhill.

In principle, I object to this proposal on the grounds that the site proposed for this significant industrial, not agricultural, development is wholly inappropriate for many reasons. Without question, this development is not only one of the biggest proposed in the UK, but it is far closer to a high-density population than any other.

In addition, local residents are exposed to real risks to their health and safety. Without doubt, and regardless of what the developers care to claim, evidence exists that there will be bad odours, vermin, chemical release, an increased risk to road users travelling on the A1307 caused by slow moving and HGV traffic (including those travelling to and from schools outside of Haverhill), and the risk of flooding and discharge into the Stour Brook and flood park area.

The site is situated alongside the A1307 which is considered a high-risk route, and the location of several fatalities over the years. It's some 250 metres from the Spirit of Enterprise (toilet roll) roundabout; the site will need to be serviced throughout the year by farm vehicles and HGVs transporting waste, and gas tankers collecting and removing methane from the site. At the height of the summer, this traffic will increase. There will also be short-term and long-term traffic disruption and inconvenience as a result of this development. In the first instance, the construction period will be lengthy. Construction will involve dozens, if not hundreds, of HGV movements in and out of the site. Once completed, the plant will operate on a 24/7 basis. There will be HGVs and farm vehicles delivering to site throughout the day. Acorn have supposedly identified the number of movements but, as they are yet unaware of exactly where the waste will originate, they simply cannot say with certainty exactly what the increase in traffic will be, just that it will increase. Of course, they wish to downplay this very significant issue.

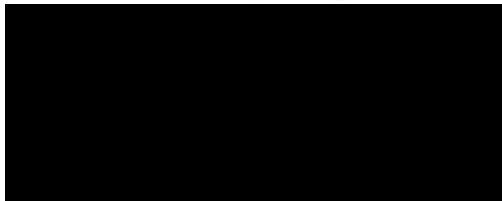
It is undeniable that this type of facility generates unpleasant smells. Acorn, the company wanting to develop the site in cooperation with the landowner, The Thurlow Estate, claim bad smells will be 'mitigated' and 'limited'. Anaerobic digester plants do and will create bad smells that will travel in the prevailing westerly wind direction towards Haverhill. The cause of the bad odours is rotting vegetation and poultry waste. These materials, by their nature, attract vermin and flies. Flies especially are attracted to this type of organic waste, but, unlike vermin, are also likely to travel away from the source. There is a high probability of infestations from both species within a 1km radius. There are approximately 1000 homes within a 1km radius of the site; there are more than 6000 homes within a 2km radius.

This plant has the potential to discharge hazardous chemical, especially methane, and even hydrogen sulphide. In a worse-case scenario, biogas in combination with air can form an explosive gas mixture which, in a confined space near an ignition source, can result in explosion, risking serious injuries and fatalities. Acorn Bioenergy have never before built or maintained an anaerobic digester. Their experience is limited, to say the least.

Local residents will have to endure an increase in light and noise pollution. The site is not time constrained; it's a 24/7 process so it will be operational at night. It will require floodlighting outside of daylight hours, causing light pollution. The normal business of the site will be conducted during daylight and the hours of darkness, meaning its usual operations, including gas tanker movements with reversing sirens, will continue at the time of day when sound travels further, affecting even more residents than usual.

Meldham Washland, often referred to as the flood park, is a flood storage reservoir situated at the confluence of Spring Grove Brook, Stour Brook and Hanchett End Brook. The Washland has been effective twice in recent history, and the reservoir came close to being full in 2001, and so protected the town of Haverhill to its East. Should this happen again, Spring Grove Farm, to the West, with no protection, will almost certainly flood. If the Acorn plant is there when that happens, having concreted over 31 acres of porous farmland, the risk of leakage of 'material' is very real, polluting the lake and surrounding water courses. The impact on local wildlife will be catastrophic. If anyone is in any doubt about this they should look at the many pictures published of flooding around the area of Spring Grove Farm. The risk of flooding should not be allowed to be easily dismissed. We are now experiencing heavy rainfall annually, particularly in the latter part of the year, and this has led to significant flooding in this area.

Yours Faithfully



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