

C.C. The Head of Planning, Growth, Highways
Infrastructure, Suffolk C.C., Ipswich.

Andrew Rutter, Case Officer,
Planning Department, Suffolk County Council

C.C.

23 October 2023

Dear Andrew Rutter

Application Number: SCC/0045/23SE

I am writing to object to the above application for the construction and operation of an anaerobic digestion facility, plus associated infrastructure, new access road, connecting pipeline and covered digestate lagoons.

My objections include the following:

Location: there is no evidence that the applicants have seriously considered alternative locations. The biodigester, if built, will be one of the largest in the country. The site will cover 23 acres at Spring Grove Farm on the A1307 to the west side of Haverhill. The site is owned by the Thurlow Estate who are major landowners in Suffolk. Perhaps a site in their own village of Thurlow would be preferable and so much more convenient for them since they are planning to use the waste product on their own land.

The proposed site is less than 500 metres from the EpiCentre, a relatively newly built enterprise at Haverhill Research Park which provides flexible office space and equipped scientific laboratories (and café) for R & D, for start-ups etc. It is an enterprising and important gateway commercial development for Haverhill: having a biodigester on its doorstep will blight opportunities for new businesses and innovators there. And by definition for Haverhill as a whole and its wider area. The site will be visible from the Epicentre as well as local houses and from the road, as Acorn themselves admit.

It is also less than 500 metres from the Arboretum which is 300 homes for people, along with the popular Flying Shuttle pub, the Montessori Nursery, both important local amenities. I can't imagine that they'll be able to walk their dogs or go for a family stroll across footpaths by land that houses a working biodigester. It will be erode the quality of life currently enjoyed by the community there. It is also close to the large Sainsbury's store and the substantial housing development at Hanchett End.

It is also close to the Flood Park, a large area stretching opposite Sainsbury's and beyond, which as well as preventing flooding in Haverhill is an important amenity itself for walkers, runners, dog walkers, anglers and good for wildlife – birds, plants and butterflies. It will impact negatively on this large area of public space and recreation.

The biodigester will be a bad neighbor to all these things. It will be a visual intrusion on the landscape of what is now currently fields. The 5 digestion tanks will be 17 metres in height (the size of 4 double decker buses) and 34 metres across (you can do the maths for comparison with buses [8]).

It will cause visual degradation of the landscape plus its building and operation will cause air pollution and noise, and an increase in traffic and general disturbance to local

residents.. The site is also a potential polluter of the Stour Brook when flooding occurs, such as caused by this week's rainfall.

Flooding risk: The area proposed is designated as Flood Zone 3 which means there is already a probability of flooding. This area and indeed the site of the existing flood park, is where drainage accumulates from the rising ground behind. The applicants have not, I understand, submitted a Flood Risk Assessment and should be required to do so.

Traffic: the applicants have stated that at peak time in June/July there will be an additional 148 lorry/tractor movements per day. We are at a time when reducing traffic is desirable both locally and in terms of the health of the planet in general. Any increase in traffic is not to be tolerated especially where there is no benefit to the public at large. These extra movements will impact particularly on the local residents and businesses, as well as adding significantly to the traffic that already exists. I do not think this is acceptable.

No Local benefit (except to the applicants): the site will employ only 5 people. This is hardly going to help Haverhill's employment situation. Although more people will be employed in the construction, a noisy, intrusive, thing in itself – remember there are houses nearby, the biodigester is a specialist waste installation requiring specialist contractors. (that in itself should tell you it has no place sited near homes and businesses) There are no benefits for Haverhill, the neighbouring village of Withersfield, or West Suffolk as a whole as the bio-methane produced will be transported to Milton Keynes by HGVs. Bio-methane is not a green gas, it still produces carbon dioxide, so not good for planet either. Apparently Acorn have advised that the plant will produce 17,400 tonnes biogas, 27,100 tonnes natural gas, 24,000 tonnes liquid petroleum gas – not desirable things to be transported on busy road. There must be safety concerns about all this potentially polluting product so near to a busy shop and town park, homes and businesses.

The waste products will be used on the Thurlow Estate and Vestey owned farms and their 160,000 acres. The farm waste, including chicken manure and some crops such as maize will be produced and grown specially. The smell of this en route to the biodigester will be horrible, especially in our increasingly hotter summers.

The biodigestion facility if allowed will be wrongly sited and with too many detrimental impacts on the existing homes, business and public space; is too near a busy road, and will be a visual eyesore. It is a quasi industrial/farming undertaking of 23 acres, an enormous site, which has no place in a rural/edge of town location. There are no benefits to the community at large and so should be refused on the grounds as stated above.

Yours sincerely
Juliet Barrows

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