

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

Dear Sir

I wish to object to the proposed development of an anaerobic digester at Spring Grove Farm, Haverhill. The site proposed is wholly inappropriate for many reasons, but not least that its operation will pollute the area with noise, unpleasant smells and unnecessary traffic.

This plant has the potential to discharge methane!

A study conducted over the last 8 years of 964 plants in the UK and Germany found that 85% of the plants were suffering from biogas leakage, described in litres per hour. A quarter of these leaks were deemed significant in terms of their leakage, 50% had minor leakages and the remainder were considered medium.

When calculating the methane discharge attributed to these leaks, this means 200 plants are emitting 1,000 litres of methane per hour! Methane is considered to be 34 times more potent than CO₂ as a greenhouse gas.

The combined impact of mal odours and methane will significantly reduce the air quality and will have a devastating effect on the surrounding area.

Biogas contains hydrogen sulphide. This is a toxic gas proven to be the cause of several deaths in the UK agricultural sector in relation to slurry tank management. Slurry is the second product of an anaerobic digester, after methane. Hydrogen sulphide is heavier than air so will fall to the ground, lying in wait for an unsuspecting person to disturb it.

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.

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. Firstly in 1987 when it half filled with water, and more recently in 2001 when the monthly average rainfall fell in 24 hours. The reservoir came close to being full, 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 the risk of 'material' polluting the lake and surrounding water courses is considerable. The impact on local wildlife will be catastrophic.

The flood park is an area hugely popular with the residents of Haverhill, being, as it is, one of the main green areas used for recreation. In the event of a successful application, its use will almost certainly be lost.

Evidence of recent flooding of the area can be viewed on the Muck Off Acorn website and Facebook page. It has published many photos of flooding around the area of Spring Grove Farm on its web site and Facebook page; the risk of flooding should not be allowed to be easily dismissed.

Local residents can expect to experience short-term and long-term disruption and inconvenience as a result of this development. In the first instance, the construction period will be lengthy. Heavy construction machinery will need to excavate the site in preparation for concreting over the 31 acres; construction will then 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. One of the main activities undertaken on-site will be to move the waste from delivery vehicles to the storage tanks, and from the storage tanks to the AD vessel. This will be done using JCBs, and will include scraping the digger shovel on the concrete surface and around the inside of the storage tanks at all times of the day and night (there will not be any operational time restrictions for this plant). The noise is horrendous (chalk on a blackboard).

As the site is not time constrained it will be operational at light, so will require floodlighting outside of daylight hours, causing light pollution. The normal business of the site will be conducted during 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.

Objections to the location can, but are not exclusively, focussed mainly on concerns for the health and safety of local residents caused by bad odours and chemical release, the increased risk to road users travelling on the A1307 caused by slow moving and HGV traffic (including those travelling to and from school), and the risk of flooding and discharge into the Stour Brook and flood park area.

Laura Anne Potter