

F.A.O Case Officer Andy Rutter RE Acorn Bioenergy plant proposal Ref: SCC/0045/23SE

Dear Andy, thank you for giving people the chance to voice their opinions with regards to the proposal of the Acorn Bioenergy plant in Withersfield/Haverhill, Suffolk. I would like to take this opportunity to raise my strong objections as follows.

Smell

I'm sure I am not alone in raising concerns over the smell which I think is the biggest negative factor here. I believe the plant will have a detrimental effect on the local community and economy. Let's not forget that people LIVE here, work here and wish to have access to recreational spaces, the peace & quiet of countryside etc. This site would without doubt cause a negative impact on the lives of the locals and cause a decline in house prices due to the smell of '92,000 tonnes of feedstock per year' - Gross! People will not wish to live in Haverhill any longer and will also be put off the surrounding villages too; especially what will then become 'Whiffersfield'! Prospective buyers will no doubt be put off as well as those looking for employment. Companies may even have employees leave because of it.

The smell of decomposing feedstock will mean that people feel they can no longer open doors/windows during warmer periods. It will also affect all local pubs, cafes and food outlets in and around Haverhill as well as other places such as wedding venues where people like to enjoy eating and drinking outdoors. What about people living with medical issues such as asthma and other respiratory problems?

The IFF factory in Haverhill already produces smells which do encase the whole town and surrounding villages. Now imagine that site but on a much larger scale with the volume of odours produced multiplied greatly, only instead of it being scents & fragrances it stinks of manure. Not to mention during warmer weather the nuisance flies it would attract.

The Biogen Bygrave plant in Baldock is physical proof of the negative impacts and that is a much smaller scale than what is being proposed here! There are plenty of people who will back up the fact that the odours produced at that site can be smelt from miles away which has been a problem for the last 7 years and very unlikely to change.

Location

I think that the A1307 is not an appropriate road for the volume of traffic and trucks approaching and leaving the site. It is already congested and not suitable for heavy goods vehicles at such a high volume during not only the construction phase but the ongoing operation of the site. Not to mention that it's on a high casualty route!

What will the hours of operation be? Even after 'closing' will the fermentation tanks run 24/7? Surely there will be a considerable amount of noise from constant operation/traffic. Will the sight be lit up all night? With the site being on such a large scale including plans for 5 fermentation, each one about 1M taller than the EpiCentre, the plant will already be a gigantic eyesore so if it's lit up too then then that's just the cherry on the cake!

Looking at the map of the proposed development site, access will not just be from the A1307, but also from a field entrance track off Silver Street/Horseheath Road coming into Withersfield, meaning that the narrow country lanes leading in and out of the village would also become congested by heavy traffic during construction and going forwards once works have been completed and the plant is fully operational.

With the A1307 being already highly congested and a high casualty route there is more chance of the traffic having to go through Withersfield from either direction and Church Street is totally unsuitable for such traffic. Haverhill and Withersfield simply do not have the road infrastructure to cope with this site.

It is my understanding that the gas will be transported elsewhere and fed into the national grid network so it won't even benefit locally which begs the question: Why put one of the UK's largest plants in Haverhill?!

Environment

Not only will the 34.59 acres of this planned site mean the loss of arable land which is a valuable resource, I understand that a certain type of crop will need to be grown for the sole purpose of feeding the plant. The plant will include a digestate lagoon, cause gas flares, add to nearby flooding issues and create potential risk of pollutants could enter Stour Brook.

The nearby woods and fields are home to many species of wildlife including protected species such as badgers, bats, hedgehogs and certain birds which would have their lives disrupted and could cause them to leave the area altogether. Trees, woodland, hedges will have to be destroyed during the construction process. This will then cause danger to nesting birds etc, even if the general nesting time of year is avoided. With climate change nesting times now vary from what they used to be. The soil can also become contamination from construction work.

Final Thoughts

Whilst I appreciate the site must meet certain criteria and regulations to minimise negative affects, the simple truth is that however 'minimised' those affects are, they will still be there where they were not before.

I do understand the benefits from the energy and fertiliser expected to be produced from the proposed site but there is a time and a place and this is absolutely not the time, nor the place for such a monstrous construction with undoubtedly a low processing to high construction and operational costs ratio. Any gains environmentally that this plant is expected to produce seems far outweighed by the issues it will produce in turn.

Acorn Bioenergy previously said in a planning statement that 'in comparison with standard UK grid emissions, the biomethane produced by the AD facility would have an equivalent saving of over 31,000 tonnes of CO2 each year, equivalent to taking almost 21,000 cars off the road'. However, they are only referring to the savings from the output of the plant here. The reality of the situation is that the input from trucks, animal husbandry, manufacturing/construction and power it takes to run and maintain such a site far outweighs any saving it could make.

Why is it even being considered here? It leads to the belief that planning permission can surely only be granted through corruption of the Council who simply do not find the negative impact on people's lives to be a good enough reason to decline. I sincerely hope this not to be the case.

In summary I think it's not all about positive environment impact, it all comes down to people with money and power making profit. The people who live and work nearby who's daily lives will be affected negatively are somewhat insignificant. So opposing factors must be about more than 'just' the impact on people's lives and happiness as sadly that doesn't seem to be enough of a reason to prevent this from happening.

Yours Faithfully, Sarah Cook