

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 Mr Rutter,

I am writing to object in the strongest possible terms to the proposed Anaerobic Digester and Lagoons complex at Spring Grove Farm, Withersfield.

The Green infrastructure (Haverhill Vision 2031) identifies the site of the proposed AD plant as being part of a Green Corridor which should be expanded to provide environmental, amenity and health benefits to the area. Key positive features of this Corridor include areas of peaceful rural farmland; Rural lanes and a network of public rights of way, distinctive undulating Suffolk views which provide a beautiful gateway to the important town of Haverhill. The Stour Brook, which feeds into the River Stour and Constable country in Suffolk, is a highly significant waterway providing for a unique ecological setting. The Meldham Washlands and West Town Park are places of beauty and calm, and are key recreational resources to local inhabitants. The proposed development increases the amount of vehicle movements in the area further reducing the tranquillity of the area. Other urbanising influences will be the light sources from the development, including use of a methane flare of 3m height. Both national and local policies state that any no development should adversely impact on such views and places.

The proposed development would introduce large scale-built features into the Green Corridor and rural landscape with 27 buildings and structures over 3m tall and up to 17m tall (over 4 double decker buses in height). This would be completely out of keeping with the existing features of the landscape. The proposed lagoons and associated hard standing would introduce large scale (the size of 8 Olympic swimming pools) and out of character development into the open countryside. The AD plant would compromise the separation between Withersfield and Haverhill. There is limited information about the form of the proposed lagoons The lagoon structures are approximately 135m long and 70m wide being significant in scale and are out of character in this open, agricultural landscape.

The proposal will:

- Introduces a large industrial waste development into open countryside beyond any settlement and it does not retain the pattern of limited settlement;
- The buildings are not of a traditional design but are large industrial structures alien to this rural location;
- It impacts unacceptably in rural views.

The proposal would introduce an intensive commercial type of development into this rural area which would have a significantly adverse harmful impact on views across this area of West Suffolk. And detrimental to the quiet enjoyment of the area by residents, workers, families using the nursery, users of the PRow including the historic Roman Road, because of site coverage with buildings, structures and lagoons, the height of buildings and structures, need for lighting and

security fencing, the increase in traffic accessing and departing the site including the proposed use of tracks and fields by vehicles to access the site.

There are also major concerns about the potential impact of odours from the site. The independent odour consultants' report by Michael Bull & Associates Ltd (MBAL), concludes that:

"The proposed development includes the delivery, storage and handling of material that can be highly odorous including chicken litter and farmyard manure. While the actual process of anaerobic digestion is enclosed and is likely to have low odour emissions, the storage and handling on site of this material will result in fugitive emissions of odour which have not been assessed."

This report was commissioned by the owners of the Epicentre, which is at 150m from the proposed plant. My house is 400m from the proposed plant. We would experience the same odours, we would be at high risk from pollutants, air quality deterioration, constant noise, artificial lighting, gas flaring, the flies, and other detriments. Also, the intolerable clogging of farm tracks and the Silver Street, a constant procession of HGVs along a road that manifestly is incapable of handling them.

There has been no risk assessment made by Acorn concerning odour. Nor has there been any risk assessment of particulates that will be generated by the plant with their potential to cause adverse health conditions to residents. There is no mention of flies, rats, or other such problems that will accompany this development. It is scandalous that Acorn can submit proposals without any of this being put in place.

According to Government guidance on "Risk assessments for your Environmental Permit" says that:

"If your site processes biowaste you must make sure that any people living or working near your site are not exposed to unacceptable levels of bioaerosols. The Environment Agency will not usually permit biowaste sites within 250 metres of places where people live or work."

Acorn has not been able to demonstrate a need for this facility. Constructing a site of this kind would set a dangerous precedent, leaving the way open for more greenfield spaces to be built on unnecessarily.

Many existing sites have had huge issues with air pollution to both humans and animals and there is no reason to believe this site would be any different.

Acres of Suffolk countryside would be destroyed and the air polluted if this plan goes ahead. Valuable crops would be destroyed and traffic congestion and pollution would markedly increase - all for a plant that provides no local benefit, but simply transports the gas to a facility in Milton Keynes, to be sold eventually onto the open market abroad.

The plant itself also only has a lifetime of 25 years and would only employ up to 5 people. This would be far outweighed by the loss of current businesses from the Epicentre and the strong likelihood of prospective businesses not going there. The knock-on effect to Haverhill's aim to be a high-tech innovation hub in Suffolk would be killed stone dead. Consider how many jobs will be lost in the Epicentre and other commercial premises if this were to go ahead, the inconvenience and sheer blight for thousands of people, all for the unverified figure of 5 jobs gained, and no energy or heating benefit for the area, no wealth creation for the area, no improvement in the infrastructure for the area, no visual enhancement in the area. The development owner is not even a local business that would benefit - profits would go directly to a Spanish private equity company, with very little accountability.

Siting an anaerobic digester at Spring Grove Farm would create a massive detriment to Haverhill, Withersfield, and the entire surrounding area, for no discernible benefit to the area whatsoever. As both National and Local policies emphasise, we should be protecting the landscape and the countryside from inappropriate industrial scale development. The proposal should be roundly rejected.

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