

-----Original Message-----

From: Sian Gilligan [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, October 25, 2023 7:10 PM
To: Andrew Rutter [REDACTED]
Subject: SCC/0045/23SE

EXTERNAL EMAIL: Do not click any links or open attachments unless you trust the sender and know the content is safe. Click [here](#)
<https://suffolk.freshservice.com/support/solutions/articles/50000031829-email-banners-external-emails> for more information or help from Suffolk IT

Dear Mr Rutter,

I vehemently object to the proposed application for an Anaerobic Digestion plant at Spring Grove Farm.

This application is in conflict with the National Planning Policy Appendices B sections C and J landscape and visual impact and noise, light and vibration.

The Haverhill 2031 Vision document refers to the area of Spring Grove Farm and the land that it borders along the Stour Brook as a Green Corridor. Therefore this should not be the site of an industrial plant.

The Suffolk Minerals and Waste local plan vision 2036 states “waste management sites will only be permitted in appropriate locations and will be required to be operated to high standards so that they do not cause a significantly adverse impact upon the environment, landscape character, historic environment or local amenity or endanger human health”

Environment

The land at Spring Grove Farm is designated as a flood zone 3. On Friday 20th October 2023 as a result of storm Babet the land flooded. The A1307 adjacent to the farm entrance also flooded. A red flood warning was issued for Haverhill. If 11 hectares of land are concreted over as proposed there is a really possibility that Haverhills current flood defences will be overwhelmed. Affecting not just Haverhill but all the communities downstream. This was the 5th time this land has flooded since December 2022.

The land at Spring Grove Farm is designated grade 2 agricultural land, prime agricultural land. It should not be lost forever by being concreted over for a relatively short term venture

lasting 20 years. It is not designated for industrial use.

The Stour Brook runs adjacent to both the proposed site and its digestate lagoons at Cadges Wood. Any digestate washed into the watercourses would have a detrimental consequences creating algae blooms with all its associated negative impacts.

Landscape Character

Five 16.5 metre high tanks will impact on the local landscape immeasurably. They will be situated 600 metres from peoples homes and the Epicentre, a children's nursery and the Flying Shuttle pub. To claim that the proposed plant will be screened from these, the A1307 and the neighbouring conservation village of Withersfield is disingenuous. The native deciduous trees the applicant refers to in their application will provide no screening for up to six months of the year. Any new trees planted will take up to 50 years to reach maturity so will provide no effective screening during the lifetime of this industrial plant.

Spring Hall Farm is approximately 1km from 2 sites of specific scientific interest. The 43.3 hectares of Lawn and Over woods. Any change in the local air quality could have huge repercussions for their fragile eco systems.

The noise and light pollution will be profound in an area of currently dark sky. The applicant conceded in their recent meeting with Haverhill Town Council that harvest for the different crops used by the biodigester would be for 6 months of the year. If that is the case it could run for 24 hours a day. This will create a constant noise of vehicle movements, reversing alarms etc to add to the constant background noise of the plant machine.

Historic Environment

Withersfield is a conservation village. Most of the Thurlow Estates land lies to the north and east of the village. In the application there is reference to an upgraded junction at Silver Street which would appear to be an application currently pending decision with West Suffolk council. This is next to the White Horse pub and would destroy an area of historic meadowland.

The application states that there will be an additional 146 traffic movements a day during harvest. That equates to one every 10 minutes over a 24 hour period. That in addition to the regular harvest traffic and the other anticipated 50 to 58 traffic moments a day. The noise and vibration from this number of vehicles using this entrance will have a profound effect on the quality of peoples lives. Most properties in Withersfield are old, many are listed and have little sound insulation and shallow foundations. Structural damage seems inevitable. The road network around Withersfield, Haverhill and the surrounding villages will be saturated putting peoples lives at risk. The reality of coming round a blind bend and meeting a large agricultural vehicle or HGV encroaching your side of the carriageway is already a frequent occurrence during the current harvest period.

The application proposes a pipeline to connect the plant with the storage lagoons at Cadges wood. It is unclear if the pipeline will be above or below ground although it will apparently be visible as it crosses Silver Street. How does this work? If its going to above the road as a sort of bridge it will have to be very tall. Causing a huge visual blemish in a conservation village. It would be vulnerable to damage. HGVs transporting tall loads of straw bails have brought down overhead electricity cables on more than one occasion in Withersfield.

Local amenity

Acorns proposal to build Britains biggest anaerobic digester at Spring Grove Farm will have 1000 homes within a 1km radius and 6000 within 2km. These plants smell. People will be unable to use their gardens, sit outside or even open their windows. The plant if built will be to the west of Haverhill. With the prevailing wind from the west 30,000 people will be subjected to a constant miasma that has been likened to sweet dog poo.

Haverhill is the fastest growing town in Suffolk. Why jeopardise this for a scheme that with no local economic benefit? This plant will create 5 full time jobs. It will directly or indirectly cause substantially more job losses if the two local pubs, childrens nurseries lively hoods are

effected. Business in the Epicentre have already said that they will relocate. Haverhill is the worst connected town in Suffolk. The methane produced by this plant will travel 60miles to Milton Keynes. The amount of methane produced will heat 7000 homes or power 250 HGVs nothing in comparison to the amount of diesel vehicle movements needed to feed this facility. Withersfield has no streetlights or pavements. Part of its rural charm but already very dangerous for people walking or cycling in the vicinity. Any substantial increase in road traffic will discourage this even more and push people into their cars.

Endanger Human Health

If built this will be the biggest anaerobic digester in Britain. The recent lightening strike and subsequent fire in Cassington Oxfordshire highlights why this site is really not suitable.

There is very limited but emerging evidence from the United States of the impact of living near anaerobic digesters on the respiratory function of people with underlying respiratory conditions and an increase in low birth weight in neonates.

The associated anxiety and stress that the spectre of this proposal has had on the local community for over 12 months should not be underestimated. The landowner has refused to engage with the community and the applicant is having a drop in information event in Withersfield a week after the consultation closes. Both have added to the stress.

For over 150 years government legislation has been put in place to improve the quality of the air we all breathe, the water we all drink, to protect our rivers and the natural environment around us. It's not perfect but why should the lives of the 30,000 residents of Haverhill and the surrounding villages be denied this for the sake of the financial gain of the Vestey family, and Acorn Bioenergy. This is after all 2023 not 1823.

Yours sincerely
Siân Gilligan
Guildhall,
Thurlow Road
Withersfield
CB9 7SA