

From: Timothy Hawkins [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, October 22, 2023 5:44 PM
To: Andrew Rutter <Andrew.Rutter@suffolk.gov.uk>
Subject: Planning Application SCC/0045/23SE - proposed Spring Grove Farm Development

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Dear Mr Rutter,

I am writing to you to express my objection to the proposed Biomass Digester Plant development, under the above application, near Haverhill and Withersfield in the strongest terms.

My objections are on Environmental, Economic, Transport and Safety grounds. The proposed development should not be contemplated near Haverhill nor any other significant town or settlement in the part of West Suffolk. My objections are:

* The proposed Biomass Digester Plant would only have access from the A1307 and Silver Lane in Withersfield. The A road is the only main access route to and from Haverhill. It is congested now, noted as a dangerous road and the proposal of putting a minimum of an additional 143 tankers or large tractor trailers a day onto this road will be a recipe for additional accidents and pollution.

* The proposal intends to use the existing Spirit of Enterprise roundabout as the major means of moving HGV traffic back from the proposed plant to Cambridgeshire and onto Milton Keynes. The additional flow of such vehicles will cause a traffic bottle neck and spillage hazard for all road users, preventing timely access for the vital bus route (the no. 13) to Linton, Addenbrookes Hospital and Cambridge.

* The A1307 is a commuter route; the working population of Haverhill who commute to Cambridge and beyond via A11 or M11, or to the nearest train stations, or indeed come into Haverhill to work on the retail parks, have to use this route. The proposed increase in slow heavy traffic will cause delays to commuting times. This will deter the growth in the area as proposed by Suffolk County Council and Haverhill town development plans.

* Haverhill is the fastest growing town in Suffolk regarding population with the worst transport links, few main roads, no rail or tram links. Any additional issues effecting transport will damage the town economically for decades and make much of the previous investment to encourage industry and housing growth in Haverhill irrelevant and a waste of money.

* Haverhill does not have its own Hospital or Ambulance station, relying on Addenbrookes and to a lesser extent Bury At Edmunds. Significant delays caused by the proposed additional HGV's at all times of the day on the A1307, will effect the Haverhill populations ability to get to hospital treatment or receive urgent life saving assistance..

* The proposed Biomass Digester Plant will operate on a minimum of a 10 hour day, with potentially in the planning application flexibility to operate 24 hours a day. Any blockages or closures of the A1307 from any cause would lead to HGV's diverting onto country lanes and minor local roads, causing more hazards, is using Silver Lane in Withersfield, an area of heritage properties, some over 600 years old, with connecting roads and lanes wholly unsuitable for significant commercial traffic.

* The proposed Biomass Digester will create Methane as a primary product, to be taken by road tanker to Milton Keynes power plants to generate electricity for the national grid. Prior to regular movement by tanker it would be stored in 5 , 16.5 by 34 metre holding tanks. Smaller similar storage tanks in Oxfordshire were struck by lightning in 2015 and 2023, causing the Methane tanks to explode, overwhelming the lightning rod defences. Both Oxfordshire plants were more remote than the proposed Haverhill site. Even so the official advice in the explosions was to create a 10km exclusion zone for public safety. Haverhill town centre is approx 5 km from the proposed plant site; a Nursery and Family housing are less than 650 metres away from the holding tanks and a major supermarket with a large petrol station is barely a couple hundred metres further away. In an explosive incident all would be very vulnerable.

* The UK government states manufacture and storage of Methane is a medium risk. Across the UK and Europe between 2005 and 2015 there have been stated 800 Biogas accidents (reported in trade journal Biogas World) involving many Biogas Digester plants built by established experienced Biogas plant builders and designers. The proposed Haverhill plant is to be built and run by Acorn Energy, who have not successfully built any such plants.

The proposed site is 32 acres of mostly class 2 soil farmland, suitable for crop growing and animal husbandry. There is no agricultural imperative to turn this into industrial land use. The Stour Brook and tributaries runs through it, and the site is adjacent to ancient woodland and designated natural 'green' areas. Any and all leaks, spillages and runoffs off concrete will pollute the river system and the land.

* The 'green' areas are part of the flood plain protecting Haverhill. The proposed plant, entrances, vehicle turnaround and concreted layout are in zone 3 flood risks not zone 1 as per the proposal documents submitted. Flooding will occur. The Environment Agency has stated climate change effecting UK, will mean serious flood risk will move from 1 in a 100 years to Every year in this area by 2050, well within the 'lifetime' of this proposed plant. In fact the Stour Brook river system has flooded 5 times in 2 years, due to increased storm activity.

* The proposed Biomass Digester Plant will smell atrocious. The byproduct of fermenting waste (grass and plant material using significant amounts of Chicken excrement as a catalyst for bacteria to breakdown materials to produce Methane) is well known to the farming community across the country , it can be so pungent as to cause hazard to breathing especially in the young and the elderly. With the best will in the world Acorn cannot guarantee that their plant, their settling tanks or the movement of processing materials will not release foul smells.

* Local established businesses at the EPI Centre, adjacent to the Spirit of Enterprise roundabout, who operate 'clean' environment labs for cutting edge bio-medical research, have stated they would have to relocate far from Haverhill due to smells and airborne particulate that would be generated by this proposed plant; Haverhill would lose vital jobs, with educated workforces having to move away.

* Lastly I would like to refer to the UK's National Planning for Waste directives, in particular Appendix B- Landscape and Visual Impacts and Appendix J - Noise,Light and Vibrations. The proposed construction and operation of this 32 acre site, with huge storage tanks, buildings and constant vehicle access and egress will be in contravention of these sections of National Planning.

I hope that I have made my objections clear and I would humbly ask you to reject the planning applications for a Biomass Digester in and around Haverhill. It is simply in entirely the wrong type of location and if built would be detrimental to the town and the local populations and land for generations.

Kind regards

Tim Hawkins, BA (Hons) , ACIB

Resident at 9 Notley Drive, Haverhill, CB9 7FP

