

To: Andrew Rutter, Suffolk County Council Planning Department

Dear Andrew,

SCC/0045/23SE Land to the north of Spring Grove Farm, Withersfield, Suffolk, CB9 7SW.

I write with reference to the above application in my role as County Councillor for Clare Division which includes Withersfield.

1. I would like to **OBJECT** to this application and set out my reasons below.
2. **Community Engagement and Consultation** I would like to register my disappointment that the applicant has not been able to host a public engagement session during the consultation period and has not been able to attend Withersfield Parish Council meeting to discuss the application within the planning period. I understand that both these events have been scheduled by the applicant for after the end of the consultation period and as such reserve my right to expand on this response at future date. It should be noted that the only public exhibition was held on 14th September 2022 during the National period of mourning. I have subsequently attended a meeting with Acorn to hear about this application at which other councillors and a planning officer was in attendance.
3. **Concurrent Planning Item** West Suffolk District Council has received planning application DC/23/0572 Spring Grove Farm. I have raised concerns via the West Suffolk Planning Application that DC/23/0572 relates to this application (SCC/0045/23SE) and I am not satisfied with the assurances that have been given that the two applications are unrelated. There are indications in the planning application, and have been made verbally, that the works being applied for in DC/23/0572 would be of benefit to SCC/0045/23SE and as such I consider that DC/23/0572 should form part of this application.
4. **National Planning Policy for Waste –Appendix B – Locational Criteria**
 - 4.1. **Protection of water quality and resources and flood risk management** - Recent weather events have demonstrated that this area is liable to flooding. The location of the site and its proximity to the Stour Brook which runs along the boundary of the site gives rise to significant local concern about the consequential issues and potential risks posed to the water quality of the River Stour from waste contamination.
 - 4.2. **Landscape and visual impacts** - The application refers to the established woodland which will screen the site. There is no acknowledgement of the fact that the trees are largely deciduous in nature and for many months of the year would not provide screening.
 - 4.3. **Traffic and access** - The site is located directly off the A 1307. This is a very busy road, used by those accessing Cambridge and the major highway network from Haverhill and South Suffolk. There is significant local concern that an additional access and egress at this point on the road will be interrupt the flow of the road and the additional HGV movements will cause considerable congestion around Haverhill and towards Cambridge. There is insufficient clarity surrounding the number and nature of vehicle movements relating to the proposal, not just on the A1307, but also on the rural roads through Withersfield and surrounding villages.
 - 4.4. **Odours** - The Air Quality report does not appear to take into account the development currently being built at The Arboretum, this being located between the Flying Shuttle and Three Counties Way would lie between 240m and 320m from the site. The residents of Withersfield have asked me to raise their

significant concerns relating to the odours that may come, not just from the site, but from the open top HGV's containing animal waste.

4.5. Noise, light and vibration - The applicant states the site will operate 24/7. There is concern that the impact of noise, light, light pollution and vibrations, not just from the operating of the site but also from goods vehicle traffic movements to and from the site will be detrimental to the nearby residents and local wildlife including bats and owls.

5. **Suffolk Minerals and Waste Local Plan Policy GP4: General environmental criteria** - In addition to the issues above relating to traffic, odours, noise, light and vibration, there are a number of **public rights of way** that run directly adjacent to the site, particularly the footpath that runs from Withersfield to Haverhill directly along the edge of the site. There is concern that this development will be detrimental to the recreational use of footpaths due to their proximity to the site. With regard to **Neighboring land-use**; The surrounding land use is a mixture of business and residential, including the home of Haverhill's Science and Tech community at the Epicentre, there is also a pre-school nursery and a pub within 250 m of the site. There are two large residential estates (one under construction) and amenity land including West Town Park and Howe Wood and surrounding farmland. It is the majority view locally that an anaerobic digester is not compatible with the existing land uses. There is also disappointment that the site chosen is immediately adjacent to the residential areas despite the landowner having considerable other options in terms of location.

6. **Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury Joint Development Management Policies Policy DM31: Farm Diversification**
This application is not in accordance with this policy because the scale and nature of the proposal is not appropriate within its rural location and proximity to local settlements. There would be significant detriment to the amenity of nearby residents, the surrounding landscape, biodiversity or geodiversity, and unacceptable risk on water quality or flooding on the Stour Brook. These new buildings are not sited in or adjacent to an existing group of buildings, and do not relate satisfactorily to the surrounding landscape and character. There are concerns that this proposal will compromise highway safety and the free flow of traffic.

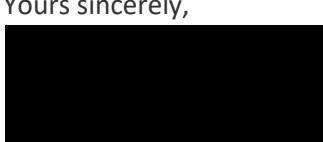
7. **National Planning Policy Framework - Paragraphs 119 – 125 Making Effective Use of Land** - Planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land. If, as the developer maintains, this site is suitable for development into an Anaerobic Digester, there is arguably a developmental use for it that would better meet the needs of Withersfield and Haverhill, being located as it is at the Gateway to Haverhill, opposite the Epi-Centre with sustainable transport links.

8. **Health and Safety** - At a public meeting, residents raised their concerns about the Health and Safety relating to the site, including a similar site experiencing an explosion following a lightning strike. Concerns were also raised about the remote management proposed and Avian Flu risks due to the movement of Chicken manure.

9. **Withersfield** is a parish that is not opposed to development. It has seen significant residential and business development in recent years, as a proactive parish, it has written its own neighbourhood plan, and has risen to the challenges of managing the two parts of the parish, one being historically rural, and the other being part of Haverhill for all intents and purposes. The **OBJECTION** to this application is the conviction that this is the wrong location for this proposal.

Please accept this letter as my **OBJECTION** to this application and please note that I would like to register to speak at the planning committee meeting in due course.

Yours sincerely,



Bobby Bennett
Cabinet Member for Equality and Communities
County Councillor for Clare Division