

Dear Andy,

Application Number: SCC/0045/23SE

Proposal: Construction and operation of an anaerobic digestion facility, associated infrastructure and new access road connecting pipeline and covered digestate lagoons.

Location: Land to the north of Spring Grove Farm, Withersfield, Suffolk, CB9 7SW

I have read the Ecology Chapter of the Environmental Statement (Acorn Ecology, September 2023), the Riparian Mammals Survey report (SLR Consulting, January 2023), and the Great Crested Newt survey report (SLR Consulting) submitted with the application, and with regard to the above proposal, I offer the following comments in line with BS42020:2013 section 8:

Information submitted:

The reports are comprehensive and appropriate for the proposal. The Ecology Chapter of the Environmental Statement included detailed mitigation measures and precautionary methods of working that should be strictly adhered to during operations at the site.

Likely ecological effects

The proposal was assessed with regard to the potential to impact on a number of protected species, which have been recorded on, or within the local area of the site:

Bats: The hedgerows and trees present on and adjacent to the site will be retained and any lighting required for the site will be directed away from these features and be sympathetic to avoid impacting on foraging/commuting bats. Post development, the areas of woodland and hedgerows will be enhanced with further planting. It is therefore highly unlikely that Bats will be impacted by the proposal.

Nesting Birds: Species such as [REDACTED] were recorded during the site survey. The loss of arable land to the development could impact on [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. Any impacts on the onsite hedgerows could negatively affect [REDACTED].

Provided all necessary site clearance works are undertaken outside of Bird Nesting Season (March 1st to August 31st) and the mitigation measures recommended in the Ecology Chapter are implemented, it is considered highly unlikely that nesting birds will be impacted by the proposal.

Great Crested Newt: The eDNA survey of the pond onsite returned a negative result. Much of the land is currently arable and unsuitable habitat for Great Crested Newt and therefore it is likely no impacts on this species will result from the proposal.

Badger: An active sett was recorded on [REDACTED] the proposed site of the development, and the distance between the site to the sett entrance means impacts resulting from the proposal can be ruled out. The development site is on arable land which is not generally used as foraging habitat by Badger. Other habitats onsite such as woodland and hedgerows will be unaffected by the proposed development. It is therefore unlikely that Badger will be impacted by the proposal.

Other Amphibians: The land where the development will be located is predominantly arable land and is therefore unsuitable for amphibians. It is highly unlikely that Other Amphibians will be impacted by the proposal.

Otter & Water Vole: The watercourses on and bordering the site were surveyed for evidence of both Otter & Water Vole. No signs of either Otter or Water Vole and it is considered that both species are absent from these watercourses. It is therefore unlikely that either Otter or Water Vole will be impacted by the proposal.

Subject to all works strictly adhering to any mitigation measures and precautionary methods of working included in the Ecology Chapter of the Environmental Statement, it is considered that no adverse ecological effects are likely to occur as the result of the proposal.

Mitigation measures

The mitigation measures listed in the Ecology Chapter of the Environmental Statement are comprehensive and appropriate for the proposal and any precautionary methods of working should be strictly adhered to, in order to avoid potential harm to protected species and habitats during operations at the site.

Conclusion

There should not be any long-term negative impacts on other important ecological features including Priority Habitats and legally protected species, subject to all works strictly adhering to any conditions listed in the Ecology Chapter of the Environmental Statement submitted with the planning application.

Yours sincerely

Seph Pochin
SCC Ecologist