

Haverhill Town Council

Minutes of a Meeting of Haverhill Town Council's

PLANNING WORKING PARTY

Held Monday 16th October 2023 at 7.00pm at Haverhill Arts Centre,
High Street, Haverhill



HAVERHILL
TOWN COUNCIL

Present: Councillor P Hanlon (Chairman)
Councillor R André
Councillor A Luccarini
Councillor D Smith

Apologies: Councillor A Brown (Vice Chairman)
Councillor J Crooks

Absent: Councillor Q Cox
Councillor M Martin

In Attendance: Councillor J Burns
Colin Poole, Clerk
Vicky Phillips, Deputy Clerk
Harry Gilham, Instictif Partners
Alister Veitch, Business Development Manager, Acorn Bioenergy
Charlie Lywood, Acorn Bioenergy

There were 2 members of the public present.

Welcome:

Councillor P Hanlon welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised that the meeting was being recorded. **To note that this Working Party has no delegated authority and may only make recommendations to Full Council. Urgent actions may be taken under delegated authority given to the Clerk and Chair.**

P23 Apologies for Absence

/173 The above apologies were noted.

P23 Declarations of Interest and requests for Dispensation

/174 Mayor David Smith declared that he visited the campaign group objecting to this application.

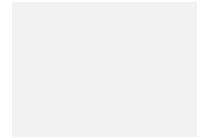
P23 Planning Applications determined by the Clerk and Chair under Delegated Powers (List A attached)

/175 Applications determined by the Clerk and Chair are shown on List B attached to the Minutes, see Appendix (i), presentation and question and answers appendix (ii)

P23 Date of next Meeting

/176 7th November 2023

P23 **Closure**
/177 The meeting was closed at 7.51pm



Signed
Chairman

Date.....

Appendix (i)

		PLAN NO.	PROPOSAL	LOCATION	TOWN COUNCIL DECISION

List B – To be considered at the Working Party Meeting

		PLAN NO.	PROPOSAL	LOCATION	TOWN COUNCIL DECISION
	1	SCC/0045/23SE	Construction and operation of an anaerobic digestion facility, associated infrastructure and new access road, connecting pipeline and covered digestate lagoons Acorn Bioenergy Limited	Land to North of Spring Grove Farm, Withersfield, CB9 7SW	Councillor Smith proposed to OBJECT to this application on Visual Impact, Environmental Impact, Loss of local amenity and traffic issues Seconded Councillor Luccarini (see below)

Comments submitted to Suffolk County Council:



- **Visual impact – overall size of plant, impact on gateway into town and nearby residents of the Arboretum estate and local businesses at the Epicentre.** The development is located at around 78-82m above sea level, with the nearby EpiCentre and Hanchett End residential area at 90m ASL, so the visual impact has not properly been addressed by the applicant within drawing *GGP-29351-003-F101-D-Thurlow-Site Plan and Visuals Proposed* as these sections demonstrate seemingly effective screening from viewpoints that in reality are below ground level, rather than visuals looking down on the site from the surrounding higher ground. The applicant should provide visual representations from

actual locations to demonstrate whether the overbearing impact of this on the gateway setting to Haverhill will really be mitigated. This should include views from the first floor of the EpiCentre to address concerns about the detracting from the setting of this building.

- **Traffic issues –**

The A1307 is a recognized high casualty route, therefore it is of absolute priority that the transport plan and design of the access point are to the highest possible standards.

Factors:

- Very large HGVs leaving the site up a slight elevation means joining the highway will be at unusually low speeds and with slow acceleration.
- The 80%ile speed of traffic on the highway is 50mph+
- The juxtaposition with the adjacent lay-by where other vehicles may be waiting to join the Highway.

The Town Council is concerned that the proposed access design will result in lorries joining the highway at very low speeds potentially causing other drivers to have to brake sharply to avoid collisions with HGVs. The traffic accident data presented by the applicant is misleading, as it is considering this section of road as it currently stands with barely any traffic emerging from this site, rather than consider another section of the A1307 which would be a better comparator to what is proposed, and indicator of what might happen if the lessons learned there are not applied here. The Dale Foods site on the A1307 at Linton or the Hildersham junction both have significant KSI incident histories and lessons should be drawn from those, rather than potentially recreate the same accident potential at this site.

The Town Council is also concerned that the application underplays anticipated traffic movements during 'harvest time'. In a rural county, it is not unreasonable for officers, Members and the public to assume that 'harvest time' refers to an uptick of farm vehicle movement in September. However, the applicant has conceded in their meeting with us on 16/10/2023 that the different crops they are harvesting are harvested from May to October, i.e. 'harvest time' is 6 months of the year. The Town Council regrets that this disingenuous tactic has been used to downplay the actual number of vehicle movements and supposedly also the normal operating levels of all the different aspects of the plant for 50% of the year, and clarity should be provided so that Highways and other consultees are given a clear understanding of the traffic associated with this site.

As of 19/10/2023 no Highways consultation responses have been lodged on the SCC Planning Portal. The Town Council requests that Cambridge and Suffolk Highways are asked to comment on these specific points.

- **Loss of local amenity** – The Town Council heard from other objectors with their concerns over the general impact of this proposal. This includes:
The diverting of high-grade land from food production to energy production and harm to the amenity for local residents through noise, smells, light pollution, and late night activities due to 24-hour operation.

The Town Council finds that overall, the location of this proposal presents too many negative issues to be considered sustainable and recommends refusal on the above grounds.

(Appendix ii)

Acorn Bioenergy and Harry Gilham from Instinctif gave a presentation on the proposed Anaerobic Digester. Alister briefed members on how the digester would work and the benefits of the digester, which creates biomethane which can be put into the grid or used by facilities for heat and power and also by vehicles. Green carbon dioxide can be used by sustainable industries, the bio product is a digestate which can be used as fertilizer which can then be used on crops. The site will employ 100 workers during the construction phase and will employ 4-5 employees on site. Acorn will offer educational trips for local schools. The digester at Spring Grove will produce enough product to heat 7,000 homes and the fertilizer is beneficial for crop rotation. It was explained that there have been some changes since Acorn's previous presentation to the Town Council, one significant change is the addition of a digestate pipe which runs up to the North of the site, reducing the digestate movements on the A1307. The site was chosen for ease of access to the A1307 and the relationship with local farmers.

Changes

Digestate pipeline will reduce traffic by 2,600 per year.

An addition planting a woodland block at the East of the site, to minimize the impact of the facility and increase biodiversity net gain.

Acorn have reached an agreement with the landowners that it is in their lease that meat waste is not be used on this site. Any future change to this would need a new planning application.

Transport movements

Gas will not be transported through Withersfield or Haverhill. There will be 50-58 movements per, which will increase in the harvest period, which runs from May to September/October, detailed in the transport plan. There will be a net contribution of 22 movements a day to the A1307.

Flood Risk Management

Will be mitigated by design.

Discussion took place over a recent lightning strike at another Biogas site. Acorn explained that their site will meet the BS EN62305 regulations.

There were questions asked by members of the committee and public.

Main concerns raised – answers in italics.

- HGV traffic mitigation on access/egress to the A1307.
access onto A1307 adheres to National Policy and will be mitigated by traffic management
- Visual impact on Arboretum estate and EpiCentre
- Farm access on Silver Street
This application is based purely on using the A1307 not Silver Street
- Safety Grounds
- Gas Flaring
Shielded gas flare which cannot be seen offsite, the flame is enclosed
- Light and noise pollution
Full study has been conducted which demonstrates a lack of impact and will be looked at by statutory bodies, all reports are in the application
- Bio Diversity – impact on bats and owls
A full ecology and biodiversity study has been carried out, which demonstrated no/lack of impact on wildlife.
- The need for more information in the proposal to deal with lightning strikes
There will be a conductor rod in place. Lightning strikes are incredibly rare and the gas is sealed within banded, floating lagoons, which are sealed with two seals. There will be controlled releasing of methane which is low risk
- Creation of smells
- Concern over increase in transport in Harvest Period, which is carried out over a six month period
- Where are the 7,000 homes which can be heated?
There are three injection hubs, the nearest one is in Milton Keynes. Local industrial facilities can make use of the product and there will be benefits to the local town; job creation in construction phase using local contractors, business rates to WSC and EC02 can be used in numerous industrial appliances, potentially on the Haverhill Industrial estate.