

# Haverhill Town Council

## Minutes of a Meeting of Haverhill Town Council's

### PLANNING COMMITTEE

Held at Haverhill Arts Centre on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2025 at 7.00pm



**HAVERHILL**  
TOWN COUNCIL

**Present:** Councillor P Hanlon (Chairman)  
Councillor T Brown (Vice Chairman)  
Councillor Q Cox  
Councillor M Martin  
Councillor D Smith

**Apologies:** Councillor R André  
Councillor A Luccarini

**In Attendance:** Colin Poole, Town Clerk  
Councillor J Burns  
Councillor J Mason  
Jane Lomas, Council Administrator

There were 2 members of the public present:  
Mr Edel Pinnock, Haverhill resident  
Mr Mark Bowman, representative from Muck Off Acorn

**Welcome:**  
Councillor P Hanlon welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised that the meeting was being recorded.

**P25 /023** **Apologies for Absence**  
The above apologies were noted.

**P25 /024** **Declarations of Interest and requests for Dispensation**  
Councillor T Brown declared a non-registrable interest on P25/030 Item 1, but did not want a dispensation as he would leave the room during discussions and voting.

Councillors P Hanlon and D Smith declared a non-registrable Interest in P25/030 Item 1, as having previously expressed support for Muck Off Acorn. They request a full dispensation to stay and to vote, as the matter was of great importance and interest to residents. The Clerk highlighted that the meeting would be inquorate for that item without dispensations.

Councillor J Mason declared a non-registrable interest in P25/030 Item 1, as, whilst he was not a committee members and therefore could not vote, he still wished to have a partial dispensation, to stay and speak in the debate.

It was proposed by Councillor D Smith, seconded by Councillor M Martin that the above dispensation requests be approved.

**RESOLVED**

**P25 Minutes of the Meeting 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2025**

**/025** It was proposed by Councillor M Martin, seconded by Councillor Q Cox, that the minutes of the meeting held 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2025 were approved as a true record by show of hands.

**RESOLVED**

**P25 Matters Arising from the Minutes**

**/026** There were no matters arising.

**P25 23/01994/FUL – The Woodland Hotel, Coupals Road, Sturmer, Essex CB9 7UW**

**/027** This application will be considered by the Braintree District Council Planning Committee on 18 February 2025 at 7.15pm.

**Noted**

**P25 Land West of Falconer Road, Haverhill**

**/028** An appeal has been made to the Secretary of State against the enforcement notice issued by Suffolk Council. Councillor Mason thanked Councillor D Roach for progressing this matter. It was proposed by Councillor A Brown, seconded by Councillor M Martin, that the Town Clerk write to the Planning Inspectorate and ask that that any Inquiry be held in Haverhill and not at Endeavour House.

**RESOLVED**

**P25 For members of the public to speak on Planning Matters other than applications before the Committee**

**/029**

a) Mr Bowman raised objections to Item 1 on List B on behalf of Muck Off Acorn. His key arguments were:

- Traffic – data collected by Acorn to show increased volume and number of accidents was limited. The A1307 is a fast-moving road and queuing vehicles waiting to turn into the site will be dangerous. Mr Bowman said the figure provided for numbers of trips to the site is misleading as it does not include vehicles leaving the site.
- Feedstock availability – Mr Bowman said data provided by Acorn identifies farms within a 10-mile radius but none of these farms have a contractual agreement with Acorn. A lack of feedstock would allow Acorn to reach into a much wider area. Mr Bowman thought there was also the possibility that Acorn may turn to food waste incineration.
- Flooding – Mr Bowman said the proposed site is prone to flooding.
- Visual impact – Mr Bowman said that all the existing landscape screening does not fall within the boundary of the site plan. He said it is disingenuous for Acorn to claim the site will be screened by trees and hedges which are not on their land.
- Economic benefits – Mr Bowman described Acorn's claim of job creation as misleading. He said specialist trades will need to be sought in the site's construction which are not likely to all be found in Haverhill. When operational, the site would employ just five full-time people. Further, Mr Bowman believed the site is likely to cause businesses to leave the EpiCentre, relocating somewhere other than Haverhill. As the proposed site lies at the western gateway to the town, businesses will be put off from coming to Haverhill.

b) Mr Pinnock reported potholes on Duddery Hill and Sturmer Road. Works have been ordered but Councillor Mason will investigate and speak to Suffolk Highways.

**Town  
Clerk**

**P25 /030 Planning Applications determined by the Clerk and Chair under Delegated Powers (List A attached)**

Applications determined by the Clerk and Chair are shown on List A attached to the Minutes, see Appendix (i)

**None**

**P25 /031 Planning Applications currently before West Suffolk District Council and received by publication of agenda (List B attached)**

Applications determined by the Committee are shown on List B attached to the Minutes, see Appendix (i). The Chairman invited members of the public who wished to address the Committee in relation to a planning application to speak ahead of the Committee.

**P25 /032 To consider Street Trading Licences**

Street License applications determined by the Committee are shown on List C attached to the Minutes, see appendix (i)

**None**

**P25 /033 Matters to Report**

- a) Councillor Smith reported that another planning application for the old St John Ambulance site has been submitted.
- b) Councillor Brown reported that tankers at Sturmer Road garage are refuelling at the old filling point rather than the new one, which was provided to ensure the garage entrance is kept clear. Councillor Brown has reported this to Planning Enforcement and is awaiting a reply.
- c) Councillor Brown reported that he is waiting to hear from West Suffolk Council whether planning permission is required to erect signs on roundabouts. The Town Clerk reported that the Deputy Town Clerk has received confirmation that planning permission is required.
- d) Councillor Mason reported that Persimmon have submitted their final set of planning documents which completes the Persimmon estate. The Town Clerk will arrange a meeting with Suffolk County Council regarding the building of a school and community room. KATO are the road construction company and are on site, building the relief road. It is anticipated that this will be complete by the summer. The naming of the relief road to Suffolk Regiment Way was discussed and a naming ceremony. Royal Anglian Regiment have been in contact. They need lots of notice for an official opening ceremony as they will march the road as part of the event.
- e) Councillor Hanlon reported West Suffolk Council has received an outline planning permission request from Redrow in relation to Spur Road. This will be coming to Planning over the next few months. Councillor Hanlon has submitted a comment about the two schools, asking for a drop-off point.
- f) Councillor Burns reported that road works have begun on Millfields Way but Highways have erected barriers preventing pedestrians from crossing the road.
- g) The Fox Pub – Whilst Members still wish to see a gastro-pub on the site, this is currently an eyesore which detracts from the image of the town. It was proposed by Councillor A Brown, seconded by Councillor Q Cox, that the Town Clerk will write to the owner on behalf of the Town Council to ask if they will consider demolishing the building.

**RESOLVED**

**P25 /034 Date of next Meeting**

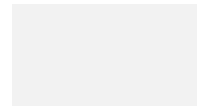
The next meeting of the Planning Committee will be held on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> March 2025.

**Town Clerk**

**Town Clerk**

**P25 Closure**

**/035** The meeting was closed at 8.34pm.



Signed .....  
**Chairman**

Date.....

## Appendix (i)

### List A – To be considered at the Committee Meeting

		PLAN NO.	PROPOSAL	LOCATION	TOWN COUNCIL DECISION
	1				

### List B– To be considered at the Committee Meeting

		PLAN NO.	PROPOSAL	LOCATION	TOWN COUNCIL DECISION
31/01/2025 Expires 30/03/2025	1	SCC/0045/23SE	<b>Re-Consultation</b> Construction and operation of an anaerobic digestion facility, associated infrastructure and new access road, connecting pipeline and covered digestate lagoons.  Acorn Bioenergy Ltd	Land to the north of Spring Grove Farm, Withersfield, Suffolk CB9 7SW	<b>OBJECT</b>

Haverhill Town Council OBJECTS to the proposal for an anaerobic digester at this site. Reasons for objection:

1. Whilst the applicant might argue this prominent countryside location on the boundary of Suffolk may be appropriate under Suffolk Minerals & Waste Local Plan (SMWLP) policy WP7, relying in turn of WP3 d) *within or adjacent to agricultural and forestry buildings*, policy WP3 clearly states that such site only “MAY” be acceptable if it also complies with policy GP4. This is not a site allocated in the SMWLP for this type of development so it must be judged as an exception site, clearly and unmistakably in accordance with all other policies relevant to the application. It is not. The proposal is not in accordance with policy WP3d, in that the size and scope of this proposal is industrial rather than an agricultural adjunct.
2. Whilst farms with on-site anaerobic digesters are commonplace, these are by their nature small-scale, away from larger settlements and do not draw in feed from beyond the perimeter of the farm, or perhaps just from neighbouring farms. Haverhill Town Council believes that this the intention of WP3d. Conversely, this application indicates that nearly 90% of the feedstock is being imported, so by no means can this be described as a farm scheme. It is an industrial-scale gas production facility, and all aspects of the proposal must be seen in that context. In particular, the following issues demonstrate non-compliance with a number of policy GP4 subsections:

a) pluvial, fluvial, tidal and groundwater flood risk;

The applicant has provided a report (Appendix D) which identifies that this site, of the three sites ‘tested’ by consultants, is the only one that actually does in part sit in a high flood risk, but justifies the selection on flimsy arguments unconnected to the flood risk. This flood risk means that not only does the Environment Agency require that elements of the proposed site need to be raised (impacting negatively on visibility of the site) but that the huge concrete apron (the size of 15 football pitches) that is to be constructed will be regularly washed clean of contaminating feedstock or digestate

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<p>spills by fluvial flood and enter the local river system – which is the River Stour system, an iconic world-famous river. Anyone who has visited a farm will have seen the spillages of manure, straw and mud across the concrete and it is inevitable that this site will be just the same. Rainwater will clearly also wash spilt feedstock and digestate into the local river system also, and it is doubtful that the SuDS proposal is capable of dealing with the quantities of run off during major events, which are happening with greater regularity than envisaged only recently. Indeed, overlaying fig 3.3 from Appendix D (EA Long-term Flood Risk) onto fig 3.1 (site location plan) appears to show that in a major flood the proposed contamination interceptors would be flooded. This not only presents a danger of accumulated contaminants being washed into the local river system, but begs the question of how can this SuDS system drain effectively if the single point of connection is already under floodwater?</p> <p>Excess run off <u>will</u> end up in the Stour Brook, which is an important local nature site in its own right, with species vulnerable to contamination: <a href="https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/leisure/Parks/east-town-park.cfm">https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/leisure/Parks/east-town-park.cfm</a> This is a main tributary to the River Stour itself. If the SuDs fails just once, the potentially significant adverse impact (Policy GP4.14) to the immediate river ecosystem and potentially further downstream to Clare, Nayland and Dedham, the Dedham Vale AONB and RAMSAR areas would be sudden and unimaginable. These areas are highlighted for protection in the SMLWP, so it follows that any development upstream capable of contaminating this river <u>must</u> be subject to the same limitations as if it was located directly in protected areas, otherwise that status offers no protection at all.</p> <p>b) vehicle movements, access and the wider highways network;  The site is accessed from the A1307, a well-known accident red-route and not a Suffolk Strategic Lorry Route. The applicant has drawn KSI accident data for the stretch of road directly adjacent to the site, rather than a better comparator where there is traffic turning off and onto the A1307. This is not the only misrepresentation that underplays the impact this proposal would have on the highway. The applicant admits that slow-moving HGV and farm tractors will on average move in and out of the site every 4 minutes for 10 hours a day. However, the Town Council strongly disagrees with the applicant's conclusion (appendix G para 2.12) that this is 'insignificant'. This figure is an average and in reality there will be times where HGVs and tractors will converge on the entrance simultaneously, leading to queuing on this dangerous road.  Furthermore, in appendix G para 3.6 the applicant has misrepresented the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges CD123 s2.12 by changing the 'or' for 'and', to give the impression a ghost lane is not required. In fact, the guidance is that a ghost lane is needed if the major road flow exceeds 13,000 vehicles 2-way AADT, regardless of the volume of traffic on the minor road. Therefore, a ghost lane would be needed.</p> <p>c) landscape character, visual impact, setting, and designated landscapes including Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Broads;  The location of the site is the gateway to Haverhill, Suffolk fourth-largest town. The NPPF para 135c requires development to be sympathetic to local character, <i>including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting</i>. The visual and olfactory impact of this proposed development on Haverhill would be appalling. The rolling clay farmlands of the area provide an important landscape setting ahead of reaching Haverhill. Local businesses invested in the iconic <i>Spirit Of Enterprise</i> sculpture on the A1307/A143 roundabout, which, along with the prestigious EpiCentre have been designed to showcase Haverhill's technological past and future manufacturing base. This development would hugely detract from this carefully curated gateway, which we believe is not in accordance with the NPPF as it would adversely impact the countryside and town.</p> <p>j) noise and vibration;  Concern has been raised as to the impact of the noise from the proposed flaring off of excess methane. Concern is also raised for the additional noise of HGV and farm tractor movements in the locality the applicant accepts will be generated. Whilst everyone living in rural areas accepts farms generate vehicle movement, this is not a farm, it is an industrial site generating large amounts of vehicle movement.</p>				

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<p>k) air quality including dust and odour;  Major concerns have been raised in respect of the odour from this site, which sits due west from the closest housing and therefore the prevailing wind directions (NW-SW) will blow any odour over the town. Immediate concern is raised for the children's nursery at the Haverhill Science Park, tenants and hi-tech business start-ups at the EpiCentre and the adverse impact on prospects for a second EpiCentre building on the Science Park. The health impacts of prolonged exposure to even low levels of odour, particularly from farm waste and particularly to children, is well documented, with asthma and potential neurological damage.  The nature of hi-tech business startups at the EpiCentre is that these are young entrepreneurs, often out of Cambridge University are looking for premium space and are highly mobile. They want to work in good quality surroundings and be able to welcome business guests with confidence. Why would they want to be based where there is a constant malodour? The trade-off between the potential creation of five jobs at the anaerobic digester against many more highly-paid jobs that could be lost does not favour this application.</p> <p>s) The use of alternative forms of transport including the use of rail freight shipping should be considered;  The proposed application is located far from any alternative forms of transport. It requires gas to be transported many miles for injection into the national grid. Taking into account the overall 'green' impact of this proposal, the number of HGV movements, including feedstock and tankers, tractor movements, plant movements on-site, flare-offs, and the huge amount of concrete needed in the construction process, the claim that this proposal will contribute to net zero appears marginal at most.</p> <p>Proposed Councillor D Smith, seconded Councillor Q Cox  <b>RESOLVED</b></p>					
06/02/2025 Expires 27/02/2025	<b>2</b>	DC/25/0156/LB	Internal alterations to create offices and meeting rooms.  Adams Harrison Solicitors	39 High Street	<b>NEUTRAL</b> Proposed Councillor Smith, seconded Councillor Martin <b>RESOLVED</b>
10/02/2025 Expires 03/03/2025	<b>3</b>	DC/25/0188/VAR	Variation of condition 2 of DC/24/0579/FUL	10 Homefield Road	<b>NEUTRAL</b> Proposed Councillor Martin, seconded Councillor Smith <b>RESOLVED</b>
07/02/2025 Expires 28/02/2025	<b>4</b>	DC/25/0187/HH	First floor side and rear extension  Mr and Mrs M Dye	79 Downs Crescent	<b>NEUTRAL</b> Proposed Councillor Cox, seconded Councillor Hanlon <b>RESOLVED</b>

**List C– To be considered at the Committee Meeting**

		NEW / RENEWAL/ VARIATION	PROPOSAL	LOCATION	TOWN COUNCIL DECISION
	1				