

# Longhirst Parish Council

Strategic Planning Committee  
Northumberland County Council  
County Hall  
MORPETH  
NE61 2EF

% 15 Welbeck Road  
Guide Post  
Choppington  
Northumberland  
NE62 5NH  
t: 01670 826803

e: [longhirstpc@gmail.com](mailto:longhirstpc@gmail.com)

w: <https://northumberlandparishes.uk/longhirst>

03 August 2020

Dear Sirs,

## Anaerobic Digester - 18/04533/FUL (ref SP/040820/80)

Longhirst Parish Council strongly objects to this proposal principally because (as the applicant accepts) the effect is to change the development from an agricultural site to an industrial one within the Green Belt, accompanied by substantial increases in heavy goods traffic.

The Planning Statement confirms this is a waste management facility (para 3.9) and not purely agricultural (para 4.10). As such we feel it is not appropriate in the Green Belt (as designated under policy S5 of the Northumberland Structure Plan, and the emerging Northumberland Local Plan). This site developed from a harvest-time activity for a dozen local farmers into a year-round resource expanded to 73 members; and will generate energy from waste materials brought in from as far afield as Scotland.

In order to justify the installation within the Green Belt in accordance with national planning guidelines, then Very Special Circumstances (VSCs) have to be shown. We do not believe those VSCs identified by the applicant outweigh the harms. Even the Case Officer clearly states that the proposal is inappropriate in the Green Belt.

The Northumberland Local Plan (Publication Draft, January 2019) Managing Natural Resources (13.63) states that whilst "On-farm locations will be most appropriate for ... anaerobic digestion" proposals should also fulfill other criteria that we do not feel are met, specifically: being compatible with its location, well related to the transport network, reducing the distance waste is transported, and not affecting the natural or historic environment. We feel this fails on all of those counts.

We disagree with the conclusion in paragraph 7.50 that the impact on the openness of the Green Belt would be limited. Even the applicant recognises this is a large industrial development. We contend that the proposal will cause substantial damage to the Green Belt and has the effect of creating a waste disposal facility which, although generating renewable energy by means of the digester, actually negates the benefits by significantly increasing the amount of material transported across the region.

The Northumberland Waste Local Plan advises that "planning permission for waste management facilities will not be granted where there would be a significant adverse effect on local communities and/or the environment".

We are also dismayed that the HDM report suggests that there will be no traffic implications. All parties recognise that the business has expanded in size, that the number and size of vehicles has increased markedly - many are amongst the largest of their type in modern use. In consequence the impact has multiplied over the years.

The minor roads in use are inadequate for the existing heavy traffic and already suffer from damage to kerbs, footways and road edges. The application states that the current number of HGV journeys each year is around 12,700, and their figures indicate this could rise to between 23,000 and 33,000 per year - with 80% of that going through the village ("Addendum Transport Statement" p24). Where is an acceptable traffic limit for a small village?

Both The Castle Morpeth District Local Plan Renewable Energy Policy RE2 and Policy EP21 refer to the suitability of existing road networks to accommodate traffic flows as well as the effect on highway safety and maintenance.

The Castle Morpeth District Local Plan Renewable Energy Policy RE2 states: that there should be "no long-term adverse impacts on established communities or settlements" and take into account "the ability of the local highway network to accommodate traffic flows both during construction and subsequently and the impact of such flows on the physical fabric of the highway network". There should be "no unacceptable impact on sites and locations which are sensitive such as conservation or high landscape value areas".

Policy EP21 "Where alternative methods are not possible account will be taken of the suitability of the road network to accommodate traffic; the routing of traffic to avoid settlements; and the effect on highway safety, highway maintenance and the environment."

As well as the objections submitted during the planning consultation process, we are aware of a petition by over 70 residents objecting to this expansion. We have photographic evidence of the damage caused by the vehicles from the site, and the safety problems of vehicles passing on the narrow roads and mounting the pavements.

We urge the Committee to consider these issues before making their decision.

Yours faithfully



**Cllr Catherine Farrell**  
Chair of Longhirst Parish Council