

SP/300620/68 Proposed AD Plant, Longhirst -Applicants Statement in Support.

Good afternoon members and thank you for the opportunity to address you in this unusual manner.

As agent for the application, I'm speaking on behalf of the farming co-operative behind the scheme, who also run the existing grain plant outside of Longhirst.

Anaerobic Digestion, or AD as its gets known by is the most sustainable and reliable of all the renewable energy sources. It works when there is no wind, it works when its overcast and gloomy and it even works at night! It's a 24/7 operation. You can see from this how useful and special it is as a renewable option.

Its benefits don't stop there. It produces electricity, heat and gas -all commodities used by the Grain operation and all otherwise obtained from the Grid and other non-renewable resources. The existing grain plant will use all three commodities, making it more efficient to run and significantly lowering its carbon footprint. As we emerge from Covid, trying to lower carbon footprints is set to become a key objective of all businesses -although not many get the opportunity to do so, so efficiently and effectively as North East Grain.

Its feedstock will involve the use of waste grain by-products and poor quality grains, as well as local farm wastes. One gets transported via the road network long distances and the other gets spread on the land in its raw form producing distinctive smells we would all rather do without.

By contrast AD is a virtually odourless operation, despite the objectors incorrect assumptions. It has been described as being actually the antidote to farmyard smells. All the breakdown of material in AD takes place in a sealed vessel -not a comment that can be made about traditional muck spreading. Feedstocks that decay, such as farmyard manure, aren't stockpiled in vast quantities -its maximum value in AD is when it's fresh and it needs to be put in the Digester Tanks as quickly as possible. When all the goodness has been extracted from it, it comes out of the tank as digestate.

Digestate by contrast is virtually odourless, -a little 'peaty' perhaps, when it is spread on land in lieu of muck spreading -not offensive at all.

The sustainability of AD goes still further -solid and liquid digestates produced are useful to the farming community. They are spread on land instead of artificial fertiliser. This means fewer trips on the network associated with the manufacture and delivery of artificial fertiliser, as well as less carbon used in the production of artificial fertiliser -which is a highly energy intensive operation otherwise.

The Grain Plant and the AD plant will work in harmony -the energy production of one helping to supplying the needs of the other in a symbiotic relationship. The waste of one is the raw feedstock of the other, with both operations helping to benefit a consortium of around 80 local farmers. It's a unique set of local circumstances.

Whilst it is true that AD can take place away from the countryside, in an industrial setting outside of the Greenbelt, it would not be such a green and sustainable concept. Such a plant wouldn't be as closely integrated with the farming community.

The operation of the plant has been carefully worked out around harvest deliveries to the site, and the Parish and other local objectors have misunderstood how the plants will operate together. The allegations in the petition about tripling traffic levels in the village are simply wrong and scaremongering. The Highway officers have a full understanding of how the two plants will operate together and its simply not the case that the plant will overwhelm the local network. At present, vehicles delivering grain to the site leave empty. Our goal is to ensure that as many as possible leave with some digestate to help grow next year's crops, reducing the fertiliser that would otherwise be delivered to the farms.

Members will appreciate that AD is a tried and tested concept -indeed you pioneered the way forward some years ago with the first UK test plant at Cockle Park. Its not inherently dangerous or unsafe -something that seems to not be appreciated by objectors who seem to view it as experimental.

Its also not an unsightly operation, being tucked away behind the existing grain storage buildings.

You have an unusual set of proposals before you that the policy frameworks didn't envisage -although as your officer report makes clear, the very special circumstances do allow you to support this more sustainable of developments.

Thankyou.