

Deal Farm AD Plant (2022/1108/F)

Development Management Committee Briefing



December 2022

As you will be aware, the Deal Farm Anaerobic Digestion (AD) Plant (Application reference number: 2022/1108/F) is on the agenda for consideration at South Norfolk District Council's 14 December 2022 Development Management (Planning) Committee meeting. Ahead of this meeting, we thought it would be helpful to provide an overview of the proposals and the reasons why we are passionate that this application should be approved.

As everyone is aware, the United Kingdom is currently in the grips of a spiralling cost of living crisis, primarily driven by the high cost of wholesale imported gas and electricity globally, which has been exacerbated by the ongoing war in Ukraine. Many more people are faced with the choice between heating or eating this winter, which should be unheard of in modern day Britain. Domestic renewable energy production, particularly domestic renewable gas production, is vital to ensuring we can keep energy prices affordable for every single household.

Additionally, the world is witnessing first-hand the impacts of climate change, with the UK seeing its hottest day on record this year, with 40.3°C recorded on 19 July 22. These unprecedented temperatures and the drought that followed can be linked directly to the use of fossil fuels. This proposal will not only support the transition to a clean, green economy through the production of renewable energy, but will also allow for the carbon capture of a further 4,835 tonnes of CO₂. This is equivalent to removing 9,500,000 road car miles every year.

The Deal Farm AD plant would allow for the production of 39,000 MWh of energy, which is enough renewable biogas to meet 100% of the gas needs for approximately 3,250 homes. Given the current reliance on imported gas, this type of development would contribute to boosting domestic energy production.

Not only would the delivery of this application contribute towards the UK's energy security, it would also be in line with both local and national policy. South Norfolk District Council's own Environmental Strategy includes working with "businesses to support energy generation", "using carbon sequestration", "moving to buy energy from green suppliers", and "assessing the potential for renewable energy production" within the area.

The Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), aims to triple the amount of biomethane in the grid by 2030, which is vital to the Government's Net Zero 2050 goal. This AD plant, along with the 600 existing plants, will play a vital part in meeting this goal. The time to act on climate change is now, and a project like this will ensure that South Norfolk District Council is at the forefront of that action.

The proposals, if approved, represent an innovative solution that not only unlocks the significant potential of biogas production in this part of the country, but will also:

- Invest £16m into the farm
- Inject £2m a year directly into the local economy
- Create enough renewable gas to power 3,250 homes
- Capture a further 4,835 tonnes of CO₂ through the addition of Carbon Capture Technology
- Create four new direct full time rural jobs
- Create numerous associated jobs
- Support farm diversification
- Reduce traffic movements through villages
- Reduce reliance on imported chemical fertilisers
- Reduce reliance on sugar beet as a crop
- Reduce diffuse air and water pollution through treating and storing farm waste in a purpose built facility, rather than in open fields as it is currently.
- Plant 1.5km of new hedgerow and tree line
- Make a demonstrable / quantified net gain to local ecology

Despite the many benefits the operational plant would bring, we are aware that there have been a number of concerns raised by the community about how developing on this site will impact the nearby highway network. Following detailed discussions with planning officers, several changes to the application were made, including changes to address these concerns.

The most recent Transport Statement, produced by transport consultants Royal HaskoningDHV, provides a full and robust overview of the transport movements and mitigations associated with the AD plant. This concludes that the proposals will not have a detrimental impact on the highway network. In fact, the vehicles associated with the plant would also be the same, or similar, to other vehicles used in modern day farming, such as tractors, trailers, and tankers. The number of movements associated with the plant as compared to the farming uses (which is currently unrestricted) would also be significantly less.

Finally, the feedstock that would be used in the production of biogas at the site will be sourced from locally farmed materials within a 5km radius of the site. The processing of pig manure on site would result in the reduction of 1,100 transport movements per annum on the site. This will not only limit the impact on the highway network but provide a valuable economic boost to the local area and may be secured through planning condition or section 106 agreement in the usual manner.

The application being brought forward by Deal Farm Biogas seeks to deliver an innovative AD plant in Bressingham. The delivery of an AD plant in this location has been an aspiration for a long time, with the original planning permission secured in 2013.

Deal Farm Biogas has undertaken extensive engagement with local representatives and Officers at South Norfolk District Council since resubmitting the revised planning application on 9 June 2022 and has sought to respond positively to all of the feedback received. This dialogue has resulted in a number of positive amendments to the proposals, including most notably the reduction of the feedstock volume processed at the plant from 46,750 tonnes to a total of 23,950 in line with the scale of proposals previously approved and granted planning permission, and vital changes to the plans in line with latest technology.

Community Engagement

In response to an increase in public interest in the project in 2021, Deal Farm Biogas has sought to understand the community's concerns and respond to any queries relating to the application. To support these efforts and engage with the community, Deal Farm Biogas has:

- Created a dedicated project website (www.dealfarmbiogas.co.uk)
- Set up a dedicated email address and phone number for the local community to speak directly with the project team (info@dealfarmbiogas.co.uk, 0800 368 7312)
- Sent a project leaflet, detailing application plans and project team contact details, to more than 2,000 addresses across the nearby villages of Bressingham, Fersfield, Shelfhanger, Roydon and Winfarthing
- Hosted site visits with key stakeholders, including local Parish Councillors and the local Ward Councillor for Bressingham
- Had a representative attend the Bressingham Village Hall meeting in January, and subsequently issued a detailed response to the issues raised by Bressingham Parish Council and local residents
- Actively engaged with local press to disseminate information and sought to tackle misinformation circulating in the local area

We hope that you have found this briefing helpful, and we hope that you will fully consider the benefits the AD plant at Deal Farm, Bressingham can provide when coming to a decision on the planning application at your meeting. Deal Farm Biogas is unfortunately unable to attend the meeting, so if you require any clarification on the application ahead of the meeting, please contact info@dealfarmbiogas.co.uk.

