

Burton Agnes Parish Council

Anaerobic digester

Dear Resident

Many thanks to those of you who attended the Parish Council meeting on 13 July.

As promised, Garry and I duly visited the anaerobic digester off the M180 not far from Finningley . This is a similar (slightly smaller) size to the one proposed by Burton Agnes Estates. The farm waste it processes is not exactly the same as that proposed at Burton Agnes. Crucially, no animal waste is processed. It processes maize, rye, grass, sugar beet and other vegetable matter. It has been operating for over 18 months – so is fully up to capacity.

Before visiting the actual site, we got out of the car to assess odour and gauge the noise and visual impact of the installation at distances of 400m upwind, and 400m downwind of the site, and again at the entrance to the site - about 50m from the digester and a lot closer to the clamps. We then entered the actual site and were able to walk close to the buildings, silage clamps, digestate heap and solid digestate outlet.

SITE LOCATION AND WEATHER CONDITIONS

The site is located on flat land, not on elevated ground as is proposed here. It lies close to a main road (at a distance of about 50m). The weather was good with moderate wind conditions.

VISUAL IMPACT

Whilst the actual digester domes, the generators and machinery were visually not particularly obtrusive – indeed as farm buildings go they are almost stylish - the silage clamps could only be described as a mess. Large areas of the silage were open to the elements and had been heaped up well beyond the wall level of the containing clamp. The attached photo gives some idea of the impact. Please note that the Burton Agnes installation would have one, not two domed digestate buildings.

We have been assured that the Burton Agnes site, particularly the silage clamps would not be allowed to get into this state – for 2 reasons:

- a) It looks a mess and this is unnecessary.
- b) It makes no commercial sense to leave material destined for anaerobic digestion open to the elements as the potential for energy generation is degraded.

NOISE

At the distances described above there was no noise discernible from the installation itself, although clearly tankers going in and out generated normal road noise. This was no worse than the noise generated by lorries on the A614. We were told that the operations taking place at the time of our visit were typical and on the actual site we witnessed at close range :tankers loading and unloading, the sound level from the electricity generator (the same capacity as the one proposed at Burton Agnes), the discharge of solid digestate and the loading of raw material into the system.

The actual digesters emitted no more than a quiet hum. The same was true of the generator. The noisiest activity was the pump transferring liquid digestate into a tanker and this could not be heard from the site entrance.

SMELL

From the site entrance (and, it follows, from the 400m distant sniffing points) there was absolutely no discernible odour. On the site itself, the only unpleasant odour emanated from a dirty water lagoon which, for some reason, was being constantly aerated. Aeration increases the surface area and churns up the whole soup, increasing the smell. Whilst the odour from this was distinctly unpleasant close to, within 20-30 paces it was not discernible. The lagoons on the Burton Agnes site will not be subject to aeration.

At the time of our visit, solid digestate was being expelled from the digester. Even in its still warm state immediately on being expelled, it did not smell. Even picking up a handful of the stuff and smelling it directly under my nose, I could discern nothing stronger than the sort of smell you get when opening a compost bag purchased from

the Garden Centre. A heap of cooled solid digestate carried little or no odour.

After the site visit we called in at a café situated 400m downwind of the site. We asked the staff and customers if there had been any problems with odour from the Digester site. Their response was 'what digester site?'

A quick enquiry to the Parish Council at Finningley revealed that they did have odour problems in the village – but the Anaerobic Digestion plant was not to blame. The culprit was a compost plant close to the village which had caused a number of complaints.

CONCLUSION

Our visit to this site would indicate that noise will not be an issue with this development. It cannot be denied that this installation will be visible to a greater or lesser extent depending where you approach the site from. A personal view is that the form and structure of the digestate tank with its domed top, although alien to the Wolds landscape, is a lot less obtrusive than some if not most other agricultural structures.

The only question we cannot answer from experience is whether the digestate resulting from animal waste is any stronger than that we smelled today. We have been assured that it is not – and it has to be said that everything else we have been told about this sort of plant has proved true.

We note that at no time will either pig slurry or liquid digestate be open to the atmosphere – it is all in a sealed system.

The chicken guano will be delivered to the site daily on a 'just in time' basis and will be covered other than when being fed into the hopper. On weekends and bank holidays it could be on site for up to 3 days – but will be covered. Pig manure will be similarly handled.

For what it is worth, Garry and I are reasonably content that the risk that the actual digester plant will cause a nuisance in terms of noise and odour to residents of the village is very low. The addition of a planning condition about the odour management should ensure that

in the event of any problems a clear plan exists to put them right.

NEXT STEPS

We hope that this information, together with that given at the recent presentations at the Hall and at the Parish Council meeting, will help you to come to an informed view about this proposal.

Burton Agnes Parish Council has to put an opinion forward to the Planners at Beverley – and we obviously want this to reflect the views of the Parish as a whole.

Could you please let me know by the end of Monday 20 July at the latest either by phone(490012) or e-mail (sue.burt@btinternet.com) whether or not you support this application, and if you do not, the reasons for your objection. Views will be noted by me and aggregated to allow the Parish Council to formulate its recommendation– they will not be attributed to individuals.

FINALLY

None of this removes your right as an individual resident to make your views known separately to the Planning Office in Beverley. These should be sent to Matthew Sunman, Planning Office, East Riding of Yorkshire Council, County Hall, Beverley HU17 9BA. You must quote the application number 15/01648/STPLF.

Regards

Sue Burt
Chair
Burton Agnes Parish Council

16 July 2015

