

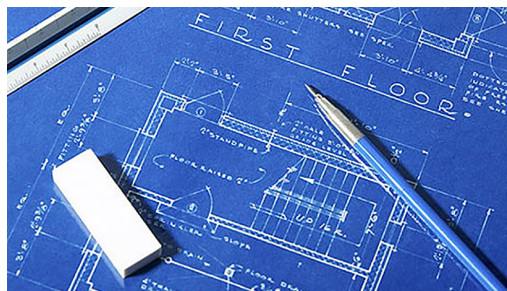
**Proposed Anaerobic Digestion Facility for a Biomethane Gas to Grid Plant. Works to include; demolition of 2No. existing buildings; erection of new unpacking building and new pasteuriser building; 3No. pre-storage tanks; 4No. digester tanks; use of existing buildings for ancillary offices and control room; creation of a lagoon; erection of a flare, water tank, weigh bridge, substation and heater and boiler unit; creation of new access and haul road from Hindlip Lane and ancillary works such as structural landscaping and SUD's**

**At**

**Court Farm, Hindlip Lane, Hindlip, Worcester,  
WR3 8SS**

**Version 3 - Updated October 2024**

## **Planning Statement**



Our ref. 21/360/Stenergy

**APS** Avon  
Planning  
Services

103 High Street, Evesham, Worcestershire WR11 4DN  
tel: 01386 423768 email: [neil@avonplanning.co.uk](mailto:neil@avonplanning.co.uk) web: [www.avonplanning.co.uk](http://www.avonplanning.co.uk)

## 1.0 Introduction and Background

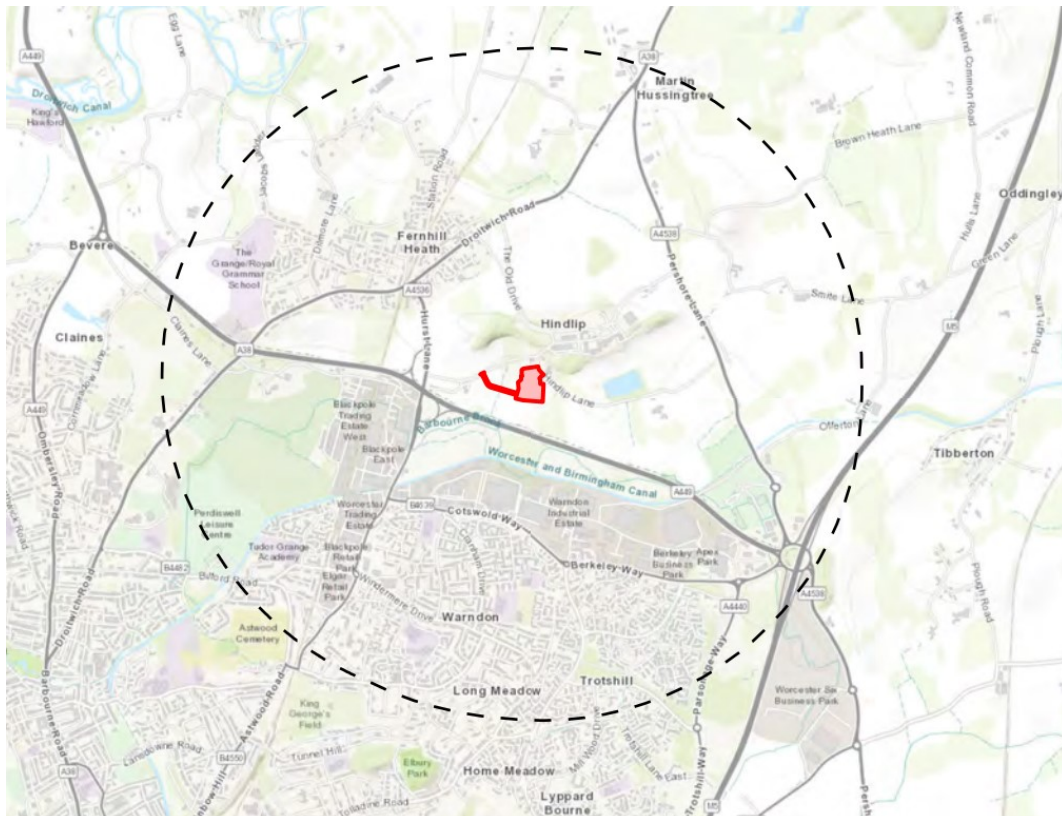
- 1.1 This detailed planning application is submitted on behalf of Stenergy (Worcester) Ltd (the Applicant) to Worcestershire County Council (the Council) for a development consisting of an anaerobic digestion facility for a biomethane gas to grid plant.
- 1.2 This statement has been prepared by Avon Planning Services Ltd for the purpose of assisting the Council as the planning authority in their assessment of the application and to help the public and consultees in understanding the application.
- 1.3 This statement deals with the relevant planning policies including commentary on the principle of the development.
- 1.4 The application is supported by the following reports many of which have been updated since the original submission:

Topic	Document, Reference and Date
<b>Air Quality</b> By Delta Simmons	Air Quality Impact Assessment by Mabbett - 315405 September 2024
<b>Arboriculture</b> By Middlemarch Environmental	Preliminary Arboricultural Assessment - RT-MME-1549420-01 December 2022
<b>Archaeology</b> By Historic Environment Consultancy	Archaeological Desk Based Assessment - 2024/1730 V2.7 Archaeological Desk Based Assessment - 2024/1733 V1 (business park) October 2024
<b>Ecology</b> By Brown Fisher Environmental	Preliminary Ecological Appraisal - 24-6374-PEA Rev 1 (Sept 2024) Badger Survey - 236374- Badger - Issue 1 (Aug 2023) Barn Owl Survey - 236374 - Barn Owl - Issue 1 (Aug 2023) Bat Emergence Survey - 236374 - Bat Emergence - Issue 1 (Aug 2023) Newt Survey - 236374 - Newt - Issue 1 (Aug 2023) Reptile Survey - 236374- Reptile - Issue 1 (Aug 2023) Bat Survey Report - 24-6374-BAT Rev 1 (Sept 2024) Bat Mitigation Plan - 24-6374-BATM Rev 1 (Sept 2024) Great Crested Newt Report - 24-6374-HSIBAT Rev 1 (Sept 2024) Reptile Survey Report - 24-6374-REP Rev 1 (Sept 2024)
<b>Flood Risk and Drainage</b> By Couch Civil Engineering	Flood Risk Assessment - 7945-FRA-01 Rev 06 September 2024
<b>Geotechnical</b> By Listers Geo & Georisk Management	Phase 1 (Desk Study) Investigation - 21.4.026 9 (May 2021) Phase 2 Ground Investigation by - 24130/1 (July 2024)
<b>Health</b> By Avon Planning Services	Health Impact Assessment - 21/360/Stenergy February 2023
<b>Heritage</b> By Historic Environment Consultancy	Heritage Statement Part 1 - 2024/1731 V2.7 Heritage Statement Part 1 - 2024/1734 V1 (business park) Heritage Statement Part 2 - 2024/1732 Heritage Statement Part 2 - 2024/1735 V1 (business park) October 2024
<b>Landscape</b> By Arcadis	Landscape and Visual Appraisal - 10048565 Final 01 September 2024
<b>Lighting</b> By The Engineering Practice	External Lighting Report - 2487/E3 March 2023

<b>Noise</b> By Sandy Brown	Planning Noise and Vibration Survey Report - 024001-R01-A August 2024
<b>Odour</b> By Delta Simons	Odour Assessment and Management Plan by Mabbett - 315405 September 2024 Odour Assessment: Odour Control Unit by Mabbett – 315405 September 2024
<b>Planning</b> By Avon Planning Services	Planning Statement - 21/360/Stenergy September 2024
<b>Transport</b> By WSP	Transport Statement - 70084581 / UK0037584.5180 V4 (October 2024) Road Safety Audit - UK0037584.5180-RSA1 (August 2024)
<b>Utilities</b> By Cornerstone Projects	Utilities Search Report April 2021
<b>CEMP</b> By Avon Planning Services	Construction Environmental Management Plan September 2024

## The Application Site

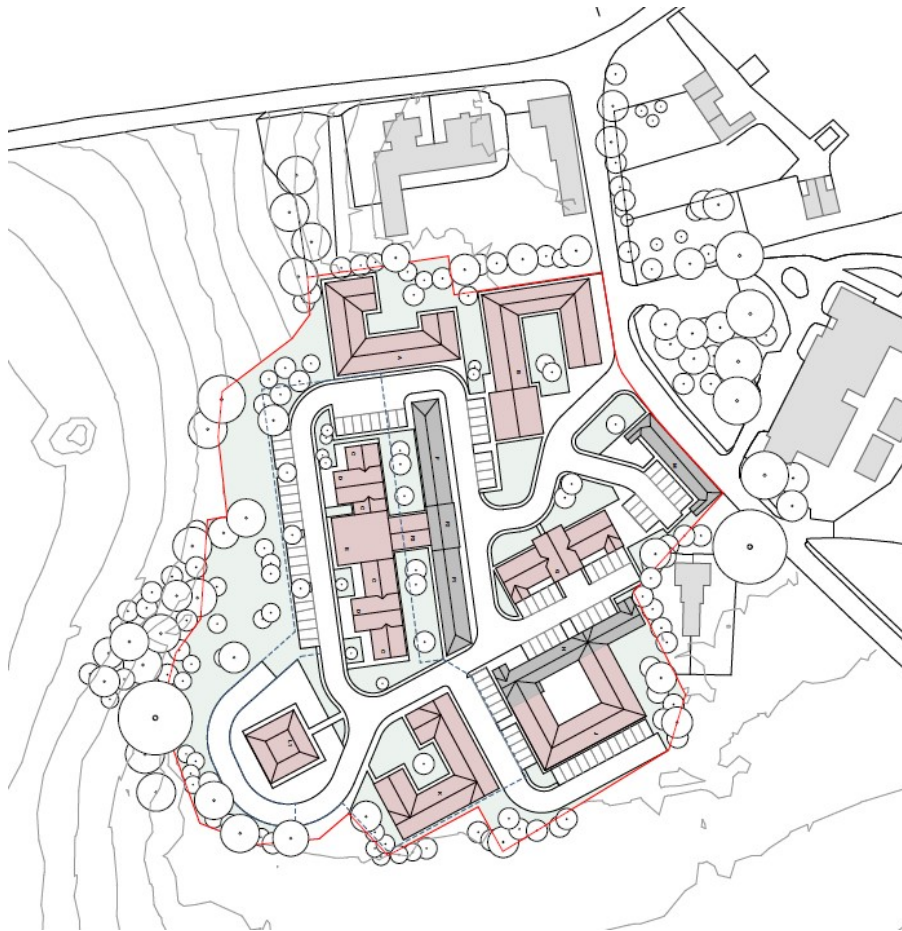
- 1.5 The application site is situated off Hindlip Lane, near to the existing West Mercia Police headquarters at Hindlip Hall which is a Grade II\* listed building.
- 1.6 The site is situated approximately 0.8km to the north of the city boundary of Worcester and approximately 1.6km south-east of the village of Fernhill Heath.
- 1.7 The site measures approximately 3.49ha in total.



- 1.8 Around the margins of the site to the west and south lies open countryside, with the western boundary in the form of a small embankment which is part-open and part-covered by a screen of mature trees. The boundary to the north is the division between Court Farm, which is a private residence. The former dairy which is attached to Court Farm is a grade II listed building.
- 1.9 There are two other residential properties adjacent to the site to the south-east and there are a number of other private residences in the vicinity of the site to the north and east.
- 1.10 Adjacent land to the south and west slopes down away from the proposed development site toward the A449.
- 1.11 The site is located in the West Midlands Green Belt but is not subject to any other national or local landscape or ecological designation.
- 1.12 Adequate piped water, main sewer, waste infrastructure, electricity and fibre optic broadband supply are all available to the site.
- 1.13 The site falls within Flood Zone 1 so is not liable to river (fluvial) flooding. The site also has a very low risk of surface water (pluvial) flooding.

### **Planning History**

- 1.14 The site was part of the former Pershore Agricultural College, and has remained vacant for at least 22 years since this use ceased. Most of the buildings have now been cleared following the grant of outline planning permission (Ref. 13/01593/PN) in December 2014 by Wychavon District Council and the subsequent reserved matters permission (Ref. 17/02458/RM) granted in May 2018.
- 1.15 Wychavon District Council confirmed in writing on 18 May 2018 that the above consents were deemed extant following the discharge of various pre-commencement planning conditions and a material start taking place on the site.
- 1.16 The extant planning permission, which has a realistic prospect of being implemented should this alternative proposal not be forthcoming, is a significant material planning consideration carrying great weight particularly in the context of Green Belt policy.



Approved Business Park

- 1.17 The current proposal would represent a significant reduction in built volume compared to the consented business park development. The current proposal would therefore increase the openness of this Green Belt site compared to the extant permission. This fallback position and the betterment the current proposal would bring to the openness of the Green Belt is clearly capable of constituting very special circumstances alongside the significant environmental benefits the scheme will bring in reducing our carbon footprint.

### **Pre-Application and EIA Screening**

- 1.18 A joint pre-planning meeting with the Council was undertaken at the end of September 2020. Initial observations were very well received and understood.
- 1.19 Stenergy's proposals have been significantly modified to accommodate those initial observations and the proposed Anaerobic Digestion Biomethane Plant (ADBMP) site is now located wholly within the brownfield site at Court Farm which comprises an existing extant planning approval for a commercial business park.

1.20 In January 2022 a formal request was made to the Council for further pre-application advice and formal EIA screening opinion.

1.21 On 6 April 2022 the Council concluded:

*“The County Planning Authority considers that the proposed development is not unusually complex, large or of greater than local significance and, therefore, would not create any significant effects on the environment by virtue of its nature, size and location. It is, therefore, considered that the proposal is not one for which an EIA is required.”*

1.22 The pre-application advice and screening opinion is included at Appendix 1.

1.23 In addition to approaching the Council, the Applicant has consulted with the following organisations who have positively responded to the proposals:

- Institute for Design, Economic Acceleration and Sustainability (Appendix 2)
- The Anaerobic Digestion and Bioresources Association (Appendix 3)
- Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (Appendix 4)
- Worcester Bosch (Appendix 5)

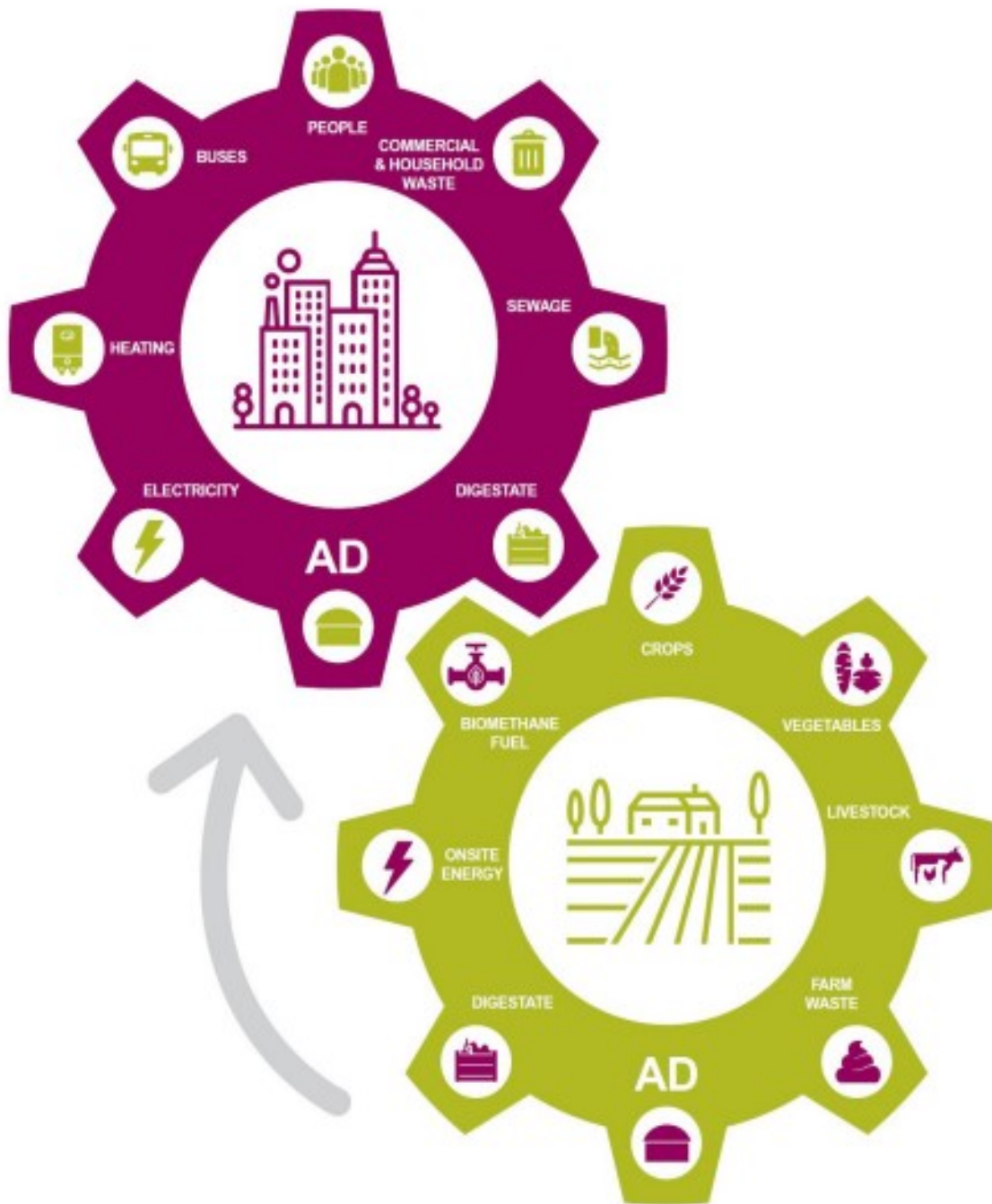


- Erection of 3No. pre-storage tanks (approximately 5m high and 9m in diameter);
  - Erection of 4No. digester tanks (approximately 8.8m high and 31.5m in diameter);
  - Use of existing buildings for ancillary offices and control room;
  - Creation of a lagoon measuring approximately 70m in length, 25m in width and 3m deep;
  - Erection of a flare approximately 10m high;
  - Water tank measuring approximately 6m in diameter and 6m high;
  - Weigh bridge;
  - Substation;
  - Installation of heater and boiler unit, mixer unit and associated ancillary equipment;
  - Creation of new access and haul road off Hindlip Lane; and
  - Extensive structural landscaping and SUD's features
- 2.3 The ADBP would process approximately 48,500 tonnes of commercial and household food waste (known as feedstock) converting it into 'green' Biomethane Gas (biogas) for use in the heating of homes and business in and around Worcester and potentially to run vehicles.
- 2.4 It is anticipated that the feedstock would comprise approximately 32,500 tonnes of food manufacturer waste products and approximately 16,000 tonnes of domestic food waste, although these are maximum figures.
- 2.5 As a bi-product, the ADBP would produce approximately 40,000 tonnes of digestate per annum. This would be in both liquid and cake form. There is also an option to dewater the digestate which would reduce the volume needing to be stored and the water would be recycled back into the AD system. The resulting digestate would be high nutrients and thus used as a bio-fertiliser and soil improver.
- 2.6 The ADBP would also produce its own power for use on site, with the proposed Combined Heat and Power (CHP) being fed by raw biogas and would feed both the site's electrical and heat requirements. The heat would be predominantly used to heat water to circulate around and maintain the optimum temperature within the AD digesters.

### **Justification for the Proposed Development**

- 2.7 Stenergy is committed to helping The UK Government, Local Authorities and Gas Distribution Networks achieve Net Zero Carbon by 2050 and their associated environmental targets.
- 2.8 The proposal takes a holistic approach to Green Gas production and utilization, with a proposed privately funded investment of circa £30M, delivering a cutting-edge Waste Food to (2.8 MWe) Biomethane Gas Plant.





- 2.9 The proposal addresses the socially responsible conversion of Worcestershire's and Wychavon's food waste to Biomethane Green Gas for injection into Cadent's Local Transmission System, providing Heat for Homes and Industry.
- 2.10 Stenergy envisage the proposed ADBP will process approximately 100-150 tonnes of food waste per day, 365 days per annum.
- 2.11 The plant is a sustainable alternative to food waste going to either landfill or incineration.

- 2.12 Stenergy's vision for greening Worcester City and its surrounding conurbations will realise the equivalent of >3,000 domestic dwellings using green gas for heat and there is a further potential for Worcester County Council to deliver a Transport Strategy based on a zero-carbon green solution for Worcester's fleet of buses, local authority HGV's and 'grey' vans.
- 2.13 Stenergy is keen to develop an outstanding working relationship with both Worcester City Council, Worcestershire County Council, Wychavon District Council and Malvern Hills District Council, their representatives and other key stakeholders.
- 2.14 Stenergy is seeking to proactively assist all authorities meet with their environmental requirements and to develop a strategic partnership with potential for a joint venture that will significantly enhance and deliver Worcestershire's green credentials.

### **Cadent Local Transmission System Connection Offer**

- 2.15 Stenergy have commissioned a detailed Design Study with the Gas Distribution Network Cadent to identify 'Capacity' to permit our requisite green gas injection rates (injection capacity is driven by demand) and identify any constraints thereof.
- 2.16 The Feasibility Studies for Connection to Cadent's Local Transmission System at 19 barg are now complete and Stenergy have progressed to Securing the Connection and achievable Injection Capacity with Cadent.

### **Climate Change Context**

- 2.17 The Climate Change Act 2008 forms the legal basis for the UK's approach to dealing with climate change. The Act also established the Committee on Climate Change (CCC) must ensure that emissions targets are evidence-based and independently assessed. Originally, the Act committed the UK government to greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reductions of at least 80% by 2050, compared to 1990 levels.
- 2.18 In May 2019, the CCC published its "Net-Zero" report in which it stated that the UK should "set and vigorously review an ambitious target to reduce GHGs to zero by 2050". The report identified that much of the policy foundations are in place to meet the new targets, but they need strengthening to deliver action and "delivery must progress with far greater urgency". A key point made in the report is that moving to net-zero emissions makes carbon capture and storage a necessity not an option, and that there is a significant role for hydrogen. Shortly after the release of the CCC report, on 27 June 2019, the UK became the first major economy to commit by law to reducing GHG emissions to net-zero by 2050.

- 2.19 Gas is fundamentally important to the current UK energy system, but it is a significant GHG emitter. A net zero emissions target leaves little or no role for unabated natural gas consumption in the future energy mix. However, if the country's highly developed gas network infrastructure can be repurposed to accept, transport and deliver low carbon and renewable gases such as biomethane and hydrogen, gas can make a valuable contribution to the decarbonisation of the UK energy supply.

### **Site Selection**

- 2.20 Stenergy has engaged with Cadent to identify whether any potential alternative sites are located within their networks with the available capacity to meet Stenergy's requisite injection rates. The studies undertaken by Cadent of their network flows and capacity have been extensive and concluded that all other potential locations should be discounted, primarily due to the other regional input feeds being 'saturated' by the Ross-on-Wye higher pressure feed. Analysis of the 'Single Leg' Feed supplying the East of Worcester upon which proposed connection is to be made has been identified as a very suitable location.
- 2.21 Importantly, there are three additional large industrial users with requirements for gas from this leg which are not currently considered by the Cadent Study. This additional demand further supports Stenergy's confidence to proceed with the scheme proposals.
- 2.22 The importance of the selected site has been identified within our proposal, providing Stenergy with the maximum opportunity to inject the requisite gas injection rates and associated revenue income, to achieve our business model.
- 2.23 The proposed ADBP location offers superb connectivity to ancillary utilities and transport. More importantly, the site is unique from a gas engineering perspective. Stenergy intend to make a Minimum Connection to Cadent's Intermediate Pressure Main (<19 barg).
- 2.24 Biomethane is weak in calorific value, having a calorific value of 36 mj/scmh and has traditionally required propane enrichment to meet with the Gas Safety (Management) Regulations 1996 requirements of (+/-0.5) 39 mj/scmh.
- 2.25 Cadent's gas pipeline characteristics afford Stenergy the requisite gas injection volumes of 2000–2500 scmh (due to the compressibility of Biomethane/natural gas) and a unique opportunity to introduce a Blending Tee at our injection point.

## 3.0 Relevant Planning Policy

### The Development Plan

- 3.1 The determination of a planning application is to be made pursuant to Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, which is to be read in conjunction with Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
- 3.2 Section 38(6) requires a determining body to determine planning applications in accordance with the development plan, unless there are material circumstances which 'indicate otherwise'. Section 70(2) provides that in determining applications the determining body "shall have regard to the provisions of the Development Plan, so far as material to the application and to any other material considerations."
- 3.3 The development plan consists of the South Worcestershire Development Plan which was adopted on 25 February 2016 and the Worcestershire Waste Core Strategy which was adopted in November 2012.
- 3.4 The area is not designated for the purposes of neighbourhood planning.

### South Worcestershire Development Plan (2016)

- 3.5 The following policies are of most relevance to this proposal:

SWDP1: Overarching Sustainable Development Principles  
SWDP2: Development Strategy and Settlement Hierarchy  
SWDP4: Moving Around South Worcestershire  
SWDP21: Design  
SWDP22: Biodiversity and Geodiversity  
SWDP25: Landscape Character  
SWDP27: Renewable and Low Carbon Energy  
SWDP28: Management of Flood Risk  
SWDP29: Sustainable Drainage Systems  
SWDP33: Waste

### Worcestershire Waste Core Strategy (2012)

- 3.6 The following policies are of most relevance to this proposal:

WCS 2: Enabling Waste Management Capacity  
WCS 4: Other Recovery  
WCS 6: Compatible Land Uses & Table 7: Compatible land uses Policy  
WCS 8: Site Infrastructure and Access  
WCS 9: Environmental Assets  
WCS 10: Flood Risk and Water Resources

WCS 11: Sustainable Design and Operation of Facilities

WCS 12: Local Characteristics

WCS 13: Green Belt

WCS 14: Amenity

WCS 15: Social and Economic Benefits

- 3.7 Conformity with the development plan is considered under Section 4 of this statement which looks at the assessment of the key issues resulting from the proposed development.

### **Other Material Planning Considerations**

#### National Planning Policy Framework (2023)

- 3.8 The Government first published the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) on 27 March 2012. It has since been subject to a number of revisions. This application has been assessed against the December 2023 version within this statement.
- 3.9 The following paragraphs and subject areas are considered of particular relevance to this application.

#### *Achieving sustainable development*

- 3.10 Paragraph 8 outlines the three overarching objectives to sustainable development:
- **An economic objective** – building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth innovation and improved productivity and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;
  - **A social objective** – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and
  - **An environmental objective** – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.
- 3.11 Paragraphs 9-10 provide guidance on the interpretation of the three objectives. They are not to be read in isolation but instead are mutually

dependent on each other. Seeking positive improvements to the quality of the built, natural and historic environment as well as quality of life is a key function of sustainable development.

3.12 Paragraph 11 clearly sets out that at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

3.13 For decision-taking this means:

- c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or
- d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:
  - i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or
  - ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.

3.14 Paragraph 12 provides important clarification on the interpretation of the presumption by confirming that the presumption does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making.

3.15 It goes on to confirm that where a planning application conflicts with an up-to-date development plan, permission should not usually be granted but makes it clear that applications can be granted where they depart from an up-to-date development plan if material considerations indicate that the plan should not be followed.

#### *Building a strong competitive economy*

3.16 Paragraph 85 makes it clear that planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.

3.17 Paragraph 87 states that planning policies and decisions should recognise and address the specific locational requirements of different sectors.

### *Promoting sustainable transport*

- 3.18 Paragraph 108-109 recognises that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary from urban to rural areas and that the transport system needs to be balanced in favour of sustainable transport modes, offering a genuine choice of transport modes.
- 3.19 Paragraph 114 requires development proposals to promote opportunities for sustainable transport modes given the type of development and its location, provide a safe and suitable means of access for all users and cost effectively mitigate any significant impacts on the transport network in terms of capacity and congestion.

### *Making effective use of land*

- 3.20 Paragraph 123 requires strategic policies to set out a clear strategy for accommodating objectively assessed needs, in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously-developed or 'brownfield' land.
- 3.21 Paragraph 124 promotes and supports the development of underutilised land and buildings.

### *Achieving well-designed places*

- 3.22 Section 12 of the NPPF is dedicated to design. The NPPF is explicit in the importance design makes towards achieving sustainable development and creating better places for people to live and work.
- 3.23 Paragraph 135 outlines 6 elements which assist in securing well designed places which should be taken into account during decision making:
- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
  - b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
  - c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);
  - d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;
  - e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and
  - f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity

for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.

*Meeting the challenge of climate change and flooding*

- 3.24 Section 14 of the NPPF sets out the Governments position on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, minimising pollution, supporting the delivery of renewable and low carbon energy, and reducing the risk of flooding.

*Conserving and enhancing the natural environment*

- 3.25 Paragraph 180-184 sets out the ways in which the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment. The reuse of previously developed land, protecting the best and most versatile agricultural land, conserving landscape and scenic beauty particularly in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and minimising impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity are all seen as important ways of achieving this.

- 3.26 Paragraph 186 sets out how applications should be considered against a number of principles for example by refusing them where there is a loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats and by encouraging opportunities to incorporate biodiversity improvements in and around developments.

*Conserving and enhancing the historic environment*

- 3.27 Section 16 sets out the Governments policy on heritage assets and recognises they are an irreplaceable resource.

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

- 3.28 The NPPG is an online guide covering a wide range of planning policy areas including:

- Climate Change
- Air Quality
- EIA
- The Historic Environment
- The Natural Environment
- Renewable and Low Carbon Energy; and
- Waste

- 3.29 The NPPG is regularly updated and assists decision makers in understating key areas of planning. The NPPG attracts significant weight in the decision-making process.



## 4.0 Assessment of Key Issues

### Principle of the Development

- 4.1 The application site is currently classed as an employment site with an extant planning permission for redevelopment as a large business park. This was consented in May 2018 by Wychavon District Council as a windfall employment site.
- 4.2 The extant planning permission is a fundamental material planning consideration carrying great weight. The assessment of this application must therefore be undertaken against the context of this realistic fallback/baseline position. However, following consultation with the County Planning Authority, it has been agreed that an alternative assessment is carried out with a baseline representing the current state of the application site.
- 4.3 The SWDP defines all areas outside the defined development boundaries as open countryside. Whilst the site lies outside a defined development boundary, the site is not characterised as open countryside.
- 4.4 Having regard to the extant planning permission, which is a realistic fallback position should permission for the ADBP plant not be granted, the location of the site beyond a development boundary is not a determinative factor in assessing this application.
- 4.5 The site is not “isolated” for the purposes of paragraph 80 of the NPPF because the application site is very close to existing development.
- 4.6 The SWDP requires proposals to be of an appropriate scale and type with regard to the size of the settlement, local landscape character, location and availability of infrastructure.
- 4.7 The scale of the development has been kept to the minimum required for operation purposes.
- 4.8 This type of development lends itself to locations such as the one proposed. It is on a large brownfield site, in close proximity to a large population which will reduce the need to transport food waste.
- 4.9 Importantly, it is in very close proximity to the existing Cadent infrastructure which makes the transfer of Biomethane Green Gas for injection into Cadent’s Local Transmission System viable.
- 4.10 Furthermore, being close to Worcester City means that there is a large population which will benefit from access to green energy sufficient to power c. 3,000 homes.

- 4.11 The proposed development represents a highly sustainable form of development creating renewable energy through the processing of food waste that would otherwise be put into landfill or incinerated. It will provide economic benefits through the creation of jobs during the construction process and during the running of the facility. It will also make a huge contribution in helping the Council's climate change emergency agenda.

### **Use of Brownfield Land**

- 4.12 The application site is classed as previously development land or brownfield land as defined in Annex 2 of the NPPF.
- 4.13 Criterion G of Policy SWDP2 encourages the redevelopment of brownfield sites.
- 4.14 Paragraph 125 of the NPPF directs planning authorities to take a proactive role in identifying and helping bring forward land that may be suitable for meeting development needs, including suitable sites on brownfield registers.
- 4.15 By effectively and efficiently redeveloping this derelict brownfield site, the proposal would safeguard the unspoilt and open countryside.
- 4.16 The proposal complies with Criterion G of Policy SWDP2 and paragraph 125 of the NPPF.

### **Green Belt**

- 4.17 The site lies within the West Midlands Green Belt. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.
- 4.18 Green Belts serve five purposes:
- a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
  - b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
  - c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
  - d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns;  
and
  - e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.
- 4.19 The NPPF states:
- “Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances”* (paragraph 152).

*“When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. ‘Very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations” (paragraph 153).*

*“A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt” (paragraph 154)*

4.20 Paragraph 154 of the NPPF states that the complete redevelopment of previously developed land would not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt if it has not greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development.

4.21 The extant planning permission for the new business park (13/01593/PN and 17/02458/RM) is a realistic fallback position should this proposal not be permitted.

4.22 The proposed development would represent less development than the extant permission in terms of footprint, building heights and building volumes and would therefore increase the openness of the Green Belt.

4.23 The volume of the extant development measures 35,474m<sup>3</sup>.

4.24 The volume of the proposed development measures:

- Unpacking Building 30940 (L) x 15405 (W), 6.8m high = 3,241m<sup>3</sup>
- Control Building 41520 (L) x 7010 / 11510 (W), 6.8m high = 1,877m<sup>3</sup>
- Office Building 20890 (L) x 5985 (W), 5.8m high = 725m<sup>3</sup>
- Pasteuriser Building is 30810 (L) x 11900 (W), 7m high = 2,566m<sup>3</sup>
- 2x pre-storage tanks are 9.31m in diameter, 5.04m high = 342m<sup>3</sup>
- 2x pre-storage tanks are 4.00m in diameter, 9.00m high = 100m<sup>3</sup>
- 3x Digester tanks are 31.478m diameter, 8.80m high = 6,850m<sup>3</sup>
- 1x Digester tank is 26.104m diameter, 8.80m high = 4,710m<sup>3</sup>

Total proposed volume = 20,411m<sup>3</sup>

4.25 The proposal represents a substantial reduction in built volume by 15,063m<sup>3</sup>. Additionally, none of the proposed structures will be taller than the consented development which includes a building 9.5m high.

4.26 Furthermore, the reuse of buildings provided the buildings are of a permanent and substantial construction is appropriate development in the Green Belt. There are two traditional brick build buildings on the site which were to be reused in the business park proposals.

4.27 The proposal seeks to retain and reuse these as part of the administration and educational operation of the site.

4.28 In a scenario whereby the extant planning permission is not assessed as the baseline for the proposed development, then clearly the proposal would create a significantly greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt through the erection of buildings and structures across the site.

4.29 Paragraph 156 of the NPPF states:

*“When located in the Green Belt, elements of many renewable energy projects will comprise inappropriate development. In such cases developers will need to demonstrate very special circumstances if projects are to proceed. Such very special circumstances may include the wider environmental benefits associated with increased production of energy from renewable sources.”*

4.30 Based on the existing state of the site it is considered that the proposed development would be considered inappropriate development in the Green Belt because it represents the redevelopment of previously developed site with a development which would have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt.

4.31 Should the Council consider that the proposed development constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt then it is necessary to demonstrate very special circumstances in order to outweigh any harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness (the definitional harm) and any other harm resulting from the proposal.

4.32 The application demonstrates the following very special circumstances:

- The reuse of a previously developed and derelict site which represents a longstanding eyesore and potential public health issue;
- Due to the requirement to connect to the Cadent infrastructure, the proposed development cannot be sited outside the Green Belt having regard to the need to be located adjacent to the high-pressure gas line and in close proximity to Worcester City for efficient energy transfer;
- The significant environmental benefits of the energy from waste process which will generate enough energy to power over 3,000 homes from green energy thereby reducing the need to utilise non-renewable forms of energy; and
- The significant economic and educational benefits to the County and District through direct and indirect job creation and opportunities for learning with links to local schools and colleges.

### **Employment and Education**

4.33 The proposed development would create short term specialist employment during the construction of the proposed development and

throughout its operational lifetime through ongoing maintenance, upkeep and repair.

- 4.34 The proposal would maintain a workforce of around 25 employees (full time equivalent) either directly or indirectly associated with the ongoing operation of the plant.
- 4.35 The proposal would also support the opportunity for local schools and colleges to visit the site and understand the anaerobic digestion process and see how the facility turns food waste to renewable energy.

### **Highway Matters**

- 4.36 Access to the ADBP for waste material deliveries is proposed to be achieved by means of a new simple priority 'T' junction from Hindlip Lane to the northwest of the site.
- 4.37 Visibility splays of 2.4m x 135m and 2.4 x 145m would be provided and are achievable within the adopted highway limits, and both of these are appropriate based on the observed speeds as DMRB CD109 'Highway Link Design' suggests a visibility of 120m is appropriate based on the observed speeds.
- 4.38 All delivery trips will leave the site in an eastbound direction therefore all movements will travel towards the M5 J6 interchange.
- 4.39 The existing point of access to the northeast of the site is also proposed to be retained and improved, however, this will only be used by vehicles associated with the running and clerical side of the operation rather than waste deliveries. It is anticipated that this will only result in an extremely modest quantum of very infrequent trips each day.
- 4.40 It is proposed that 15 car parking spaces are provided on site for staff of the office and control building including 2 disabled bays. Sufficient parking space has also been provided for HGVs on site, with the site managed to ensure only a specified number of delivery vehicles are on site at one time.
- 4.41 This application should be assessed against the fallback position which would involve the creation of 8,422sqm of commercial floorspace which would employ c.325 full time people. The number of trips associated with the extant permission is set out below:

**Table 5-1 – Extant Application Permitted Trip Generation**

	AM Peak			PM Peak		
	Arrival	Departure	Two-Way	Arrival	Departure	Two-way
Vehicles	163	22	185	16	140	156

- 4.42 By contrast the proposed development would result in significantly less trips than the extant permission.
- 4.43 Based on a worst-case scenario (where the equivalent tonnage of waste delivered is also removed), the number of two-way HGV trips will be less than 20 per day which assuming a 12-hour working day will result in less than 2 two-way trips per hour (utilising 28 tonne vehicles).

**Table 5-2 – Biomethane Plant – Anticipated Trip Generation**

Material per annum	2-way Trips Per Annum	Daily 2-way trips	Approx. trip per hour (assuming 12 hour working day)
48,500 tonnes Delivered	3464	~10	<1
48,500 Tonnes Removed	3464	~10	<1
97,000 tonnes total	6928	~20	1-2

- 4.44 In addition to the HGV movements, it is anticipated that there would be 15 arrivals in the AM Peak and 15 departures in the PM Peak. These arrivals and departures will be via the existing northern access rather than the proposed delivery access.
- 4.45 It is also worth noting that the overwhelming majority of the HGV trips generated by the proposed development are from the delivery of commercial and domestic food waste to the facility. These delivery vehicles are already on the local highway network so are not actually additional trips on the local highway network.
- 4.46 The site is located close to Worcester City where it is anticipated that the vast majority of the food waste which will be brought to the site will come from. Having a facility so close to the source of the waste is sustainable in itself and will reduce the length of time refuse vehicles are on the local highway network.
- 4.47 An (updated) Transport Assessment has been prepared by WSP Ltd and is submitted in support of this application.
- 4.48 No public rights of way are affected by the proposed development.

## The Historic Environment

- 4.49 Policy SWDP6 deals with the conservation and enhancement of heritage assets.
- 4.50 A comprehensive Heritage Assessment has been undertaken by The Historic Environment Consultancy which includes a detailed settings assessment, undertaken in line with sector guidance and planning policy, to determine whether the proposals would result in harm to the historic environment.
- 4.51 The most relevant heritage asset affected by the proposed development is a 19th century dairy building. The building is Grade II listed.

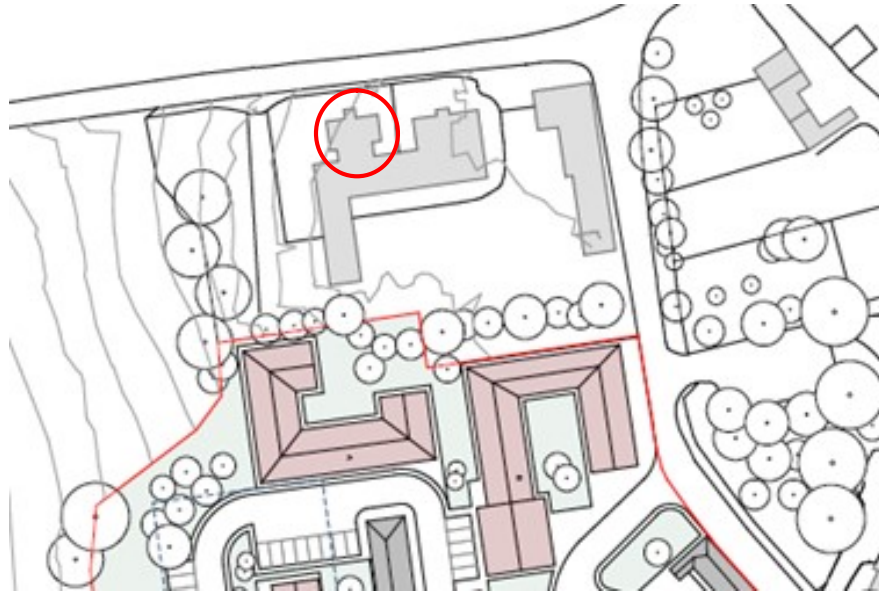


- 4.52 The listed dairy (outlined in red) is not visible from the application site because it is located to the front/north of Court Farmhouse. Court Farmhouse has been extensively extended on the southern elevation.

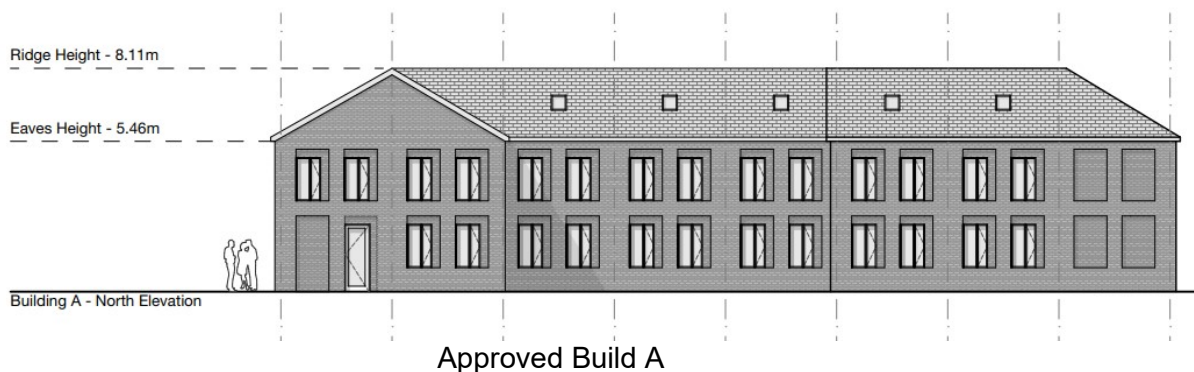


- 4.53 The proposed development is not located in or adjacent to a conservation area.
- 4.54 There are no nearby designated Registered Parks and Gardens, or Scheduled Monuments. No non-designated heritage assets are located in the vicinity of the proposed development.
- 4.55 There are seven listed buildings within a 2km radius with few of these buildings having a clear uninterrupted view of the proposed development.
- 4.56 Noise and smell are the only non-visual factors that the proposed plant may cause, however all but one listed building is located at a sufficient distance that these will not be inconvenient or problematic.
- 4.57 The effect of the proposed development on the listed dairy (circled in red below) must be judged against the effect of the extant planning permission.





Approved Business Park Layout



Approved Build A

- 4.58 A large two-storey office building measuring 8.11m to ridge has been permitted on the boundary with Court Farm and approximately 7m from the rear elevation of the property.
- 4.59 The red line application site of the proposed development has been moved approximately 20m away from the boundary with Court Farm compared with the red line for the office park.
- 4.60 Additionally, the proposed development shows a sunken lagoon on the northern boundary of the application site along with a structural landscaping strip.
- 4.61 The proposed development would clearly demonstrate a significant betterment for the occupiers of Court Farm and the setting of the listed dairy by moving development further away from this sensitive boundary.

## **Design and Layout**

- 4.62 The design and layout of the proposed development is constrained by operational requirements and restrictions. Each component of the proposed development is necessary in order to create a set of processes that function properly and efficiently.
- 4.63 The final palette of external materials/finishes will be subject to condition but it is anticipated that the unpacking and pasteuriser buildings will be brick and steel clad with profiled metal roof sheets of an appropriate colour.
- 4.64 The digesters will be coloured dark green to blend into the landscape which together with the increased landscaping will allow the development to assimilate into the rural setting of the site.
- 4.65 With the exception of the narrow flare, which is 10m high, the tallest structures are the digesters which measure 8.8m high, which is 0.7m lower than the tallest office building. To reduce the visual effect, the digesters have also been sunken into the ground by approximately 4m.
- 4.66 Two existing buildings are retained for reuse as part of the operational side of the development.
- 4.67 The proposed layout has been kept as compact as possible to minimise the spread across the site whilst at the same time providing functional space within the site.
- 4.68 The footprint of the proposed development is considerably more compact than the extant permission for the business park.
- 4.69 The proposal includes extensive space around the northern, western and southern boundaries and along the lower eastern boundary to allow for new structural landscaping which will assist in screening and softening the development from the local views.

## **Biodiversity**

- 4.70 The site is not affected by any national or local designations or habitats.
- 4.71 The Phase 1 Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) carried out by Brown Fisher Environmental concluded that the habitats on site are mainly of 'low ecological value', and the other habitats such as woodland on site are of 'moderate ecological value'. These are to be retained and are unaffected by the development.
- 4.72 Since the PEA was undertaken a number of other surveys have been carried out including badger, bat, newt, barn owl and reptile surveys.

These surveys found that none of the target species were present on site or potentially affected by the proposed development.

- 4.73 The features of highest ecological value within the application site are the trees and hedgerow. A tree protection area and root protection zone should be established to avoid damage during the construction phase around all retained trees and hedges.
- 4.74 There are no Statutory or Non-Statutory Designated Nature Conservation Sites within the site. The Biological Data Search recorded no protected species within the site. There is no evidence of badger use of the site, therefore no further surveys are required.
- 4.75 A range of further ecological surveys are required to determine if protected species are using the site and how. These include surveys for barn owl breeding, reptile presence: absence, bat emergence surveys of the two existing buildings and great crested newt presence: absence (unless the site is suitable for District Level licensing).
- 4.76 The trees within the survey site are suitable for bird nesting. Although the plans require the removal of a very small number of trees, any site clearance of woody materials should be undertaken outside of the bird breeding season (mid-March to mid-August) or undertaken under ecological supervision.
- 4.77 Whilst there is potential habitat on the site, there were no rare plants, protected species (bats, great crested newts, reptiles) present (badger tracks were recorded on the site but no setts). As a result, there are no obvious and immediate implications for this development with regard to the habitats present.
- 4.78 The site is covered by a blanket Tree Preservation Order (TPO) reference 001 2004. The TPO primarily covers an area of woodland within the grounds of Hindlip Hall which is outside the application site but it also includes the trees within the application site adjacent to the western boundary.
- 4.79 There are 5 small trees within the centre of the site which have been planted in the last 10 years (c.6 years after the TPO was confirmed) are to be removed to facilitate the proposed development. Additionally, two other trees are due to be removed.
- 4.80 To compensate there is an opportunity and commitment to plant a substantial number of new trees around the periphery of the site including within the group TPO on the western boundary to strengthen this important group.

## Landscape Character

4.81 A Landscape and Visual Appraisal has been carried out and is submitted with the application.

4.82 The site falls within the Principle Timbered Farmlands landscape type as outlined in the Worcestershire Landscape Character Assessment.

4.83 The landscape is described as follows:

*“A small to medium-scale wooded, agricultural landscape characterised by filtered views through densely scattered hedgerow trees. This is a complex, in places intimate, landscape of irregularly shaped woodlands, winding lanes and frequent wayside dwellings and farmsteads. It is a landscape of great interest and exception, yet also one of balance.”*

4.84 The most important attribute of the Principle Timbered Farmlands are the hedgerow boundaries to fields, ancient wooded character with notable pattern of hedgerow trees, predominantly oak and organic field enclosure patterns creating a small-scale landscape.

4.85 The key landscape guidelines are:

- maintain the tree cover character of hedgerow oaks, and enhance the age structure of the hedgerow oak population
- conserve all ancient woodland sites and restock with locally occurring native species
- seek to bring about coalescence of fragmented relic ancient woodlands
- encourage the planting of new woodlands, reflecting the scale, shape and composition of the existing ancient woodland character, favouring oak as the major species
- conserve and restore tree cover along water courses and streamlines
- seek opportunities to enhance tree cover along highways and other non-farmed locations
- conserve and restore the pattern and composition of the hedgerow structure through appropriate management, and replanting
- conserve the organic pattern and character of the lane networks; and
- maintain the historic dispersed settlement pattern

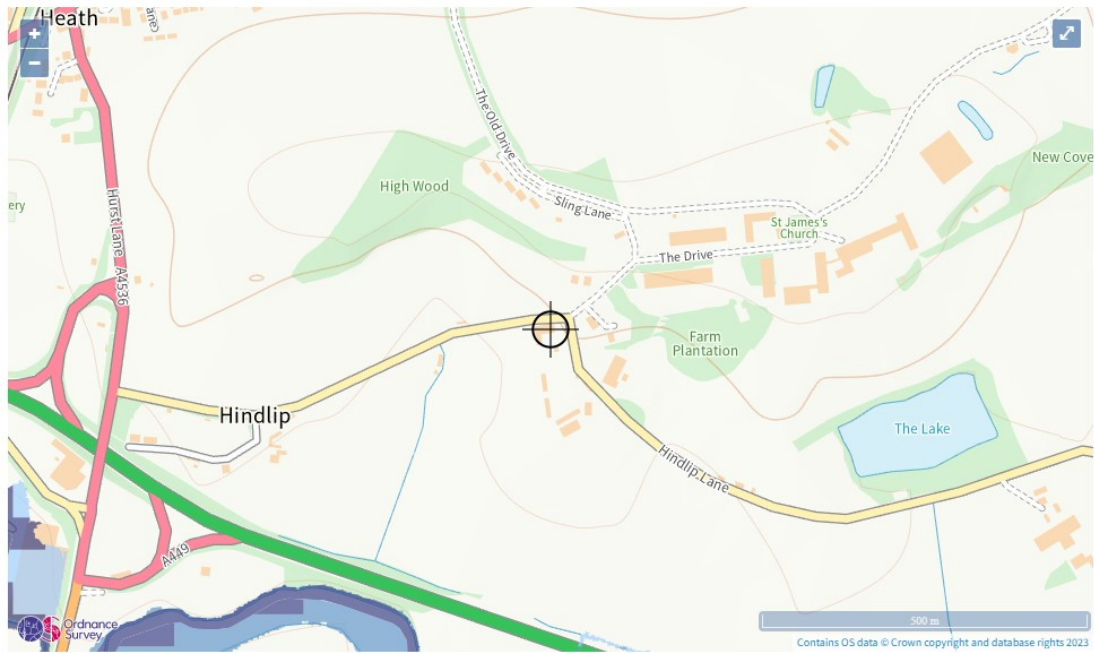
4.86 The existing hedgerow and trees on the western boundary will be retained and enhanced through supplementary planting and future management regimes.

4.87 There is very limited other landscaping within or around the site. The proposal will provide substantial areas for structural landscaping.

- 4.88 The LVIA submitted with the application makes the following conclusions:
- 4.89 The site is considered to be of medium landscape value due to its Green Belt status and semi-rural characteristics. A medium sensitivity and susceptibility to change has therefore been provided with a medium adverse magnitude of change anticipated on landscape character as a result of the potential development. However, with the implementation of the landscape mitigation on land within the site, effects could reduce from moderate to minor adverse in the long-term (after 15 years).
- 4.90 Medium to high magnitude of change on views are anticipated in the majority of views in the local area, with moderate adverse effects anticipated to those views in close proximity and with a clear view to the site.
- 4.91 The landscape scheme is currently at outline stage, but any proposed planting within the site would help reinforce the existing planting structure which would provide both improvements to the landscape character of the area as well as helping to integrate the scheme into its setting both from a landscape and visual perspective.
- 4.92 It is assessed that the proposed development would cause medium to high adverse effects, however a predominantly minor to moderate adverse overall judgement of effects, which could reduce to minor adverse in the long-term depending on the final detailed designs and landscape scheme.

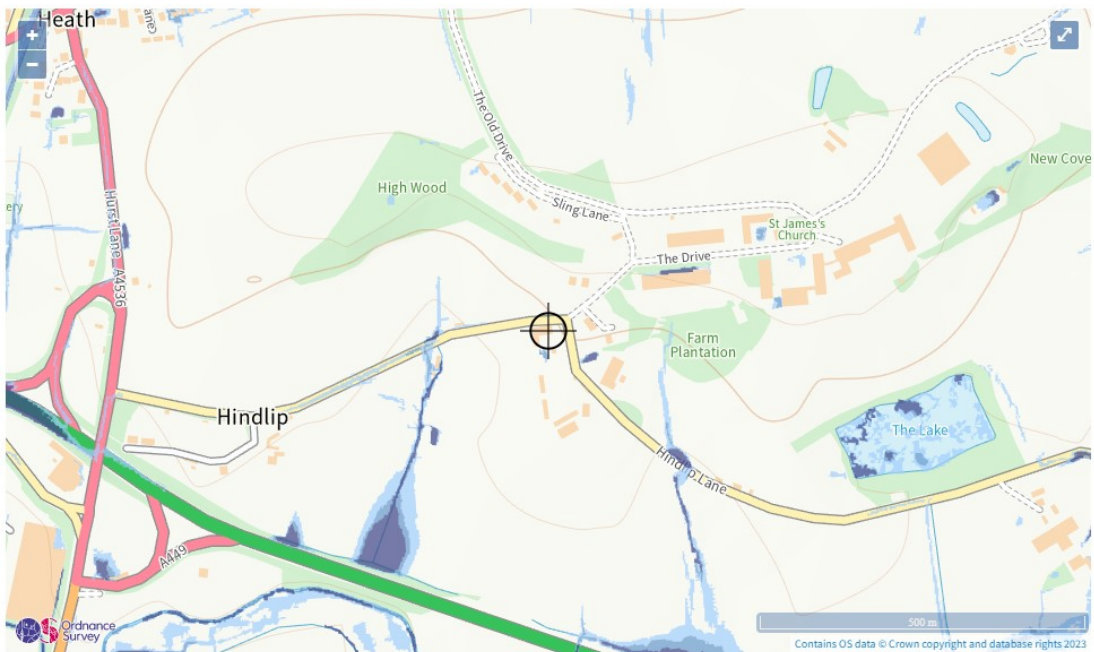
### **Flood Risk and Drainage**

- 4.93 The application is accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) by Couch Consulting Engineers. The FRA deals with flood risk and the proposed surface water drainage strategy for the proposed development.
- 4.94 The site falls within Flood Zone 1 for fluvial flooding and therefore is not at risk of any river flooding.
- 4.95 Additionally, the site has a 'very low' risk of surface water (pluvial) flooding with the exception of a very small area in the middle section of the site.



Extent of flooding from rivers or the sea

● High ● Medium ● Low ● Very low ⊕ Location you selected



Extent of flooding from surface water

● High ● Medium ● Low ○ Very low ⊕ Location you selected

4.96 It is proposed that surface water flows from the development will discharge at a restricted rate of 14.40 l/s (based on 5.0 l/s/ha) into an existing drainage ditch to the west of the development. Excess flows generated from all storm events up to and including the 1 in 100 year + 40% climate change will be stored and attenuated within an attenuation

pond located within the adjacent land between the site and the watercourse.

- 4.97 It is proposed that foul water flows generated from the development will discharge into an existing 150mm Severn Trent Water Sewer located within the site. A developer enquiry has not yet been submitted, however will be carried out during the detailed design stage to confirm sufficient capacity within the existing infrastructure.

### **Amenity**

- 4.98 Nearby residential properties include Court Farm and new build residential properties, which are located approximately 30 metres north of the application site. Court Farm Cottages Nos.1 and 2 adjoin the eastern boundary of the application site. A cluster of residential properties (1- 5 Woodside Cottages) are also located approximately 50 metres north-east of the application site.
- 4.99 To ensure that the amenity of these properties is properly considered and safeguarded, an independent Air Quality Assessment, Odour Assessment, Odour Management Plan and a Noise and Vibration Assessment have been carried out and submitted with the application.
- 4.100 With respect to the construction phase, the main air quality impacts that may arise are dust deposition resulting in the soiling of surfaces, visible dust plumes which are evidence of dust emissions, and elevated PM10 concentrations as a result of dust generating activities on site. A risk assessment following relevant guidance was undertaken which categorised the unmitigated risk as 'low' for demolition and 'medium' for earthworks, construction and trackout activities. As per good practice, mitigation measures were proposed in accordance with relevant assigned risk level. These measures should help reduce the residual effect to an acceptable level.
- 4.101 A review of potential odour sources was undertaken for the site in operation. The odour risk from the site's emission points is considered to be small. As such, the need for a detailed, quantitative odour impact assessment was screened out. With appropriate management safety practices in place, and suitably robust design/installation of key plant/equipment, it is considered that no additional odour mitigation measures are required.
- 4.102 Dispersion modelling of 98th percentile odour emissions from the OCU was undertaken using ADMS-6. The results and impacts on sensitive receptors were quantified and compared to EA odour benchmark (most offensive odours).
- 4.103 Modelled odour concentrations are below the EA benchmark at all modelled receptors and across the modelled grid for all years. A

maximum odour concentration of 0.34 ouE/m<sup>3</sup> is predicted at discrete receptor R5 which is below the benchmark by 1.16 ouE/m<sup>3</sup>.

- 4.104 Based on the outcomes of the dispersion modelling, potential odour emissions from the OCU are considered to be 'not significant'.
- 4.105 It is concluded, therefore, that the dust emissions associated with the operation of the bio-methane facility are not considered to result in significant loss of amenity and consequently the resulting risk of potential dust complaints is low.
- 4.106 A noise impact and vibration assessment have been undertaken based on the proposed biomethane facility. The representative background sound levels from the noise survey were LA<sub>90,15min</sub> 46 dB during the day, and LA<sub>90,15min</sub> 40 dB during the night.
- 4.107 Based on the requirements of the BS 4142:2014 + A1:2019 and on the results of the noise survey, all plant must be designed such that the cumulative noise level at 1 m from the worst affected windows of the nearby noise sensitive premises off Hindlip Lane does not exceed L<sub>A,r,15min</sub> 46 dB during the daytime, and L<sub>A,r,15min</sub> 40 dB during the night.
- 4.108 These limits are cumulative, and apply to all plant operating under normal conditions. If plant items or deliveries contain tonal or attention catching features, a penalty based on the type and impact of those features will be applied.
- 4.109 Based on the provided noise data for the outdoor proposed units on site, our assessment indicates that the total noise levels at the nearest receptor will exceed these limits by 15 dB.
- 4.110 Indicative guidance on further mitigation has been provided to reduce the noise impact on the nearest receptors to acceptable levels.
- 4.111 Where plant is to be installed within buildings, the buildings will need to be designed accordingly to control the noise levels to the nearest receptors. Once details of the design report are available, further assessment of these units will need to be carried out.
- 4.112 It has not been possible to obtain vibration data for proposed items of plant, notwithstanding, the proposals are not considered to generate significant levels of vibration. In addition, there are substantial distances between the proposed items of plant to receptors, therefore vibration from the proposals is anticipated to be within the vibration limits at receptors locations. It is, however, recommended that allowance is made for anti-vibration mounts to any item of plant that have the potential to generate significant levels of vibration, such as pumps and motors.



4.113 An appraisal of the impact of delivery noise has been undertaken, and recommendations have been provided for mitigating these sources, including barrier screening, good practice management measures, and conditioning of the times that deliveries can occur.

4.114 There would be no openings in the eastern elevations of the unpacking and pasteuriser buildings which are closest to Court Farm Cottages.

### **Waste Management**

4.115 Policy WCS 2 of the Waste Core Strategy states that proposal for waste management facilities, such as the one proposed, will be permitted where they contribute towards a number of delivery milestones to achieve equivalent self-sufficiency.

4.116 The Waste Core Strategy, in line with national policy, aims to drive waste up the waste hierarchy, to use it as a resource and to minimise the amount which is landfilled or disposed of.

4.117 The current milestone is 2025/26 where it is anticipated that there would be at least 782,000 tonnes per annum of additional re-use and recycling or 'other recovery' capacity comprising of:

- Re-use and recycling capacity to manage at least:

353,000 tonnes per annum for municipal and commercial and industrial waste;

105,000 tonnes per annum for construction and demolition waste; and

40,500 tonnes per annum for hazardous waste.

- Other recovery' capacity to manage the remainder:

277,000 tonnes per annum for municipal and commercial and industrial waste; and

6,500 tonnes per annum for hazardous waste.

4.118 The proposal will make a significant contribution (28,500 tonnes per annum) towards meeting the County Councils targets for the re-use of waste to create green energy rather than that waste going straight into landfill or being incinerated.

4.119 Policy WCS 4 of the Waste Core Strategy deals with other waste recovery proposals.

4.120 Policy WCS 6 directs waste management development to land with compatible uses, including industrial land, contaminated derelict or employment land and redundant agricultural or forestry buildings.

4.121 Policy WCS 6 includes a table of compatible land uses:

Table 7: Compatible land uses	Enclosed facilities <sup>80</sup>		Enclosed or unenclosed	Unenclosed facilities		
	Re-use and recycling <sup>81</sup>	'Other recovery' or disposal <sup>82</sup>	Waste water treatment facilities	Open windrow composting	Other unenclosed facilities	Landfill
Existing or allocated industrial land	✓	✓	✓	×	◆	×
Contaminated or derelict employment land <sup>83</sup>	✓	✓	✓	◆	◆	×
Redundant agricultural or forestry buildings or their curtilage	✓	◆	✓	✓	◆	×
Sites with current use rights for waste management Purposes	✓	✓	✓	✓	◆	×
Active mineral workings or landfill sites	■	■	■	■	■	■
Land within or adjoining a waste water treatment works	■	■	■	■	■	×
Co-location with producers, end users or other complementary activities	■	■	■	■	■	×
Greenfield land	×	×	◆	◆	×	◆

**Key** ✓ = A compatible land use      ◆ = Where strongly justified  
 × = Not a compatible land use      ■ = Where a clear operational relationship is demonstrated

4.122 Given that the application site is currently derelict and classed as brownfield and has an extant planning permission for commercial reuse, it lends itself perfectly for the proposed development.

4.123 The delivery, storage, sorting and recycling operations will all be enclosed within buildings.

### Litter and Pests

4.124 Litter generated by the proposed development will be minimal and associated with the office/clerical use and ancillary educational use of the site.

4.125 Grey waste and recycling bins will be provided within the development and collected by commercial waste contractors or the District Council.

4.126 Any food waste resulting from the operational side of the development will be used in the AD process.

4.127 The storage of food waste on the site may attract pests such as mice and rats. To proactively deal with pest control a 5 step plan will be put in place.

#### 1. Gaps

Eliminate any gaps around pipes and under sheds, doors and other openings as rats only need a gap of 15mm to gain entry to a structure. Potential entry points should be sealed up using wire wool embedded in quick-setting cement.

## 2. Nesting

Remove potential nesting sites by keeping yards and all other areas clean and tidy, cutting back overgrown areas and clearing any piles of wood or debris.

## 3. Drains

Ensure that drain inspection covers are in a good state of repair and any disused pipes are sealed off.

## 4. Bird Feed

Do not feed birds or other wildlife.

## 5. Cover waste

All food waste stored on the site will be under cover in sealed buildings. Humane traps will be positioned all around the site to catch any mice/rats for appropriate disposal.

4.128 Regular monitoring of litter and pests will take place as part of the operational side of the proposed development.

## 5.0 Summary and Conclusion

- 5.1 The Council is tasked with determining this planning application in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise (See Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).
- 5.2 In assessing the application, the benefits of the proposed development should be weighed against any perceived harm in what is known as the planning balance.

### Benefits of the Proposed Development

- 5.3 **Production of Renewal Energy:** The proposed development will produce and inject 'green gas' (approximately 2.8 megawatt electric MWe) into Cadent's Local Transmission System and by so doing, transform Worcester's Heat for Homes, Transport and Food Waste Management strategies.
- 5.4 The creation of green energy is a significant material planning consideration and benefit which weighs heavily in favour of the proposed development.
- 5.5 **Green Belt:** The proposed development should be considered appropriate development in the Green Belt because it represents the redevelopment of previously developed site with a development which would have a significantly lower impact on openness of the Green Belt.
- 5.6 The proposed development would represent a reduction in build volume of 15,063m<sup>3</sup>, which is considered significant in the context of Green Belt policy.
- 5.7 **Biodiversity:** The proposed development will retain all boundary trees, and hedges and will facilitate the provision of extensive new planting in structural landscape zone around the periphery of the site. Overall there will be a net gain in biodiversity which weighs in favour of the proposed development.

### Locational Sustainability

- 5.8 The site location is not economically or socially isolated. It is in a sustainable location for a facility of this nature and has exceptionally good links to the source material which will be brought to the site thereby reducing the journey time when the HGVs are on the local highway network.

## Development Sustainability

- 5.9 **The Economic Role:** The proposal would maintain a workforce of around 15 employees (full time equivalent) either directly or indirectly associated with the ongoing operation of the plant. The proposal would also support the opportunity for local schools and colleges to visit the site and understand the anaerobic digestion process and see how the facility turns food waste to renewable energy.
- 5.10 **The Social Role:** There are clear links between tackling climate change and health and wellbeing. The proposed development will make a significant contribution towards producing renewable energy through a process of turning waste into clean biomethane gas which will be used to power homes or vehicles.
- 5.11 **The Environmental role:** This scheme is predicated on the production of renewable and low carbon energy which will assist in meeting the challenge of climate change. Approximately 3,000 homes could be powered through the production of clean biomethane gas which will be connected to the existing Cadent transmission system.
- 5.12 The proposal will reduce the need for landfill or incineration by reusing food waste in digesters for conversion to green energy. The proposal will not have an adverse effect on flood risk or the surrounding landscape and will facilitate significant environmental improvements and enhanced biodiversity with substantial new landscaping and tree planting.
- 5.13 The proposed development would make an efficient use of the site with an appropriate density and land use.
- 5.14 The site is not within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Site of Special Scientific Interest, Local Green Space or National Park.
- 5.15 The setting of the listed dairy at Court Farm would be significantly improved with this alternative scheme which would reduce the amount of development adjacent to this sensitive boundary. No other heritage assets would be adversely affected.
- 5.16 No protected species or habitats will be adversely affected.
- 5.17 The development does not conflict with any statutory or non statutory designation.
- 5.18 A safe and suitable means of access will be provided for the development.
- 5.19 The amenity of adjoining properties will be preserved with a strict application of odour and noise management.

- 5.20 The proposed development meets the three roles of sustainable development.
- 5.21 All these factors outweigh any perceived harm and thus there are material planning considerations, which indicate that planning permission should be granted in this case.
- 5.22 Approval of this application would not detrimentally infringe the human rights of an individual or individuals.
- 5.23 Accordingly, the Council is respectfully requested to grant planning permission.

## **6.0 List of Appendices**

Appendix 1: Pre-application advice and screening opinion April 2022

Appendix 2: Letter of support from Institute for Design, Economic Acceleration and Sustainability

Appendix 3: Letter of support from The Anaerobic Digestion and Bioresources Association

Appendix 4: Letter of support from Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership

Appendix 5: Letter of support from Worcester Bosch