

Nick Timothy MP

Our Ref: BC2025/45275

Email: nick.timothy.mp@parliament.uk

Date: 29 December 2025

Dear Nick,

Potential planning appeal - Proposed Anaerobic Digestion Facility at Spring Grove Farm, Withersfield, West Suffolk. Planning Application SCC/0045/23SE

Thank you for your email of 2 December 2025 regarding the proposed Anaerobic Digestion Facility at Spring Grove Farm, Withersfield (planning application SCC/0045/23SE). I appreciate how important this is to you and your constituents. I would like to reassure you that we are working with Suffolk County Council (SCC) to ensure that they understand the issues and our objections to this application.

We have submitted three formal responses to SCC on this application. The first two responses raised objections on flood risk and pollution prevention grounds, pending the submission of additional information. The third response clarified an aspect of flood risk following discussions with the applicant but did not change our position so our objections remain, and further information is still required.

What I hear from my team is that, although planning permission was refused in June, our concerns were not cited as reasons for refusal in the decision notice. To address this, the local team has requested a meeting with the case officer at SCC to ensure our concerns are properly represented to the Planning Inspectorate, should the applicant appeal. Additional information is essential to meet national and local planning policies, fully assess flood risk, and mitigate pollution risks to the water environment.

Your letter raises several further important points, and we appreciate you taking the time to share them. Some fall outside our planning role, but as they are significant we will raise the following concerns with Suffolk County Council when we meet them.

Vulnerability of the development

Thank you for highlighting your concern about how the development's flood risk vulnerability has been classified. The Local Planning Authority is responsible for making this classification under national planning guidance, and we provide advice based on their decision. We will raise this with SCC to confirm whether the classification has been applied correctly.

Surface water drainage proposals

Surface water flood risk is a major part SCC's role in managing flood risk as the lead local flood authority. We understand the importance of this issue for you, and we will discuss it with SCC, but please also contact them directly at: floods@suffolk.gov.uk.

Sequential test

This is applied by the Local Planning Authority under national planning policy, and we provide advice based on their decisions. While we can't confirm whether it has been applied correctly in this case, we will share your concerns.

Access road and methane storage

You've highlighted a serious point about the risk of flooding to the access road and the potential impact on methane storage. While this falls outside our statutory planning role, we recognise why this matters and will raise SCC's awareness of this issue.

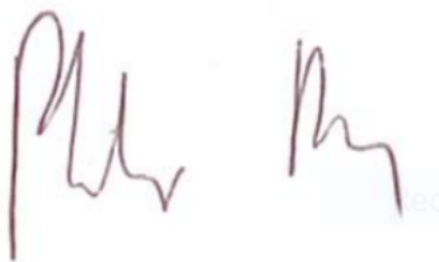
Flooding in Context

We agree with you that flood risk should not be considered in isolation. Development needs to be looked at in connection with the surrounding environment and SCC, as the Local Planning Authority, is responsible for weighing all relevant factors. We will share your comments with them when we meet.

I hope this reassures you that we are taking this matter seriously and are working hard to ensure that SCC understands our objections to this application.

I understand that you are due to meet your local Environment Agency Area Director on 27 January. She would be happy to discuss this matter with you further then. If you have any concerns or questions in the meantime, please do get in touch.

Yours sincerely



Philip Duffy
Chief Executive, Environment Agency