

Planning Application PL/2023/03359: Applicant's Response to Deliberations of Strategic Planning Committee on 21 April 2026

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Response has been prepared by Acorn Bioenergy, as Applicant, to reaffirm information provided within Application PL/2023/03359 and to correct the more serious misleading assertions made by objectors during the Strategic Planning Committee meeting on 21 April 2026.
- 1.2 From the outset however, it is important to note that there are no objections from any of the independent, qualified and expert statutory consultees to the Application with the single exception of landscape. This includes no objections after lengthy and detailed deliberations from Natural England and the Environment Agency, the statutory custodians of the Cotswold Lakes SSSI and pollution prevention regulator including on air quality and water quality matters.
- 1.3 On the matter of landscape, it is similarly important to note there is agreement between our Landscape consultant and the Council's Landscape Officer that the landscape harm is no larger than "localised". Equally, the Council's Landscape Officer does not recommend refusal of the Application, rather he correctly advises it is for the planning balance to consider whether the mutually acknowledged landscape harm is outweighed by the benefits of the Application.
- 1.4 The Committee Report identifies six important planning benefits, four of which carry significant weight, one carries more than moderate weight and one with moderate weight. The Committee Report recommends approval on the basis that these benefits outweigh the two identified harms, both of which carry moderate weight.
- 1.5 Lastly, and given our view that the Application benefits significantly outweigh the limited harm and noting the absence of objections from all statutory consultees except landscape and Officer recommendation of approval, we confirm that any refusal will be appealed with a request to recover costs. We do, of course, respectfully recognise the Committee's democratic right to form a different opinion to Officers, however planning law requires the Council to prove its case with evidenced and substantiated refusal reasons and to defend that decision under scrutiny. We are making our position clear **only** because Committee members sought advice from its Officers during the meeting on how the Application might best be refused and whether there was a risk of costs being claimed against the Council in such circumstances.
- 1.6 At the April Committee meeting, Officers recommended approval of the Application however its determination was deferred to enable consultation to be undertaken with Gloucestershire County Council as Highway Authority and Thames Water.
- 1.7 At the time of writing the consultation response from Gloucestershire Highway Authority is awaited. The response of Thames Water has been received, and we address this response and others received post the April Committee in this Response.

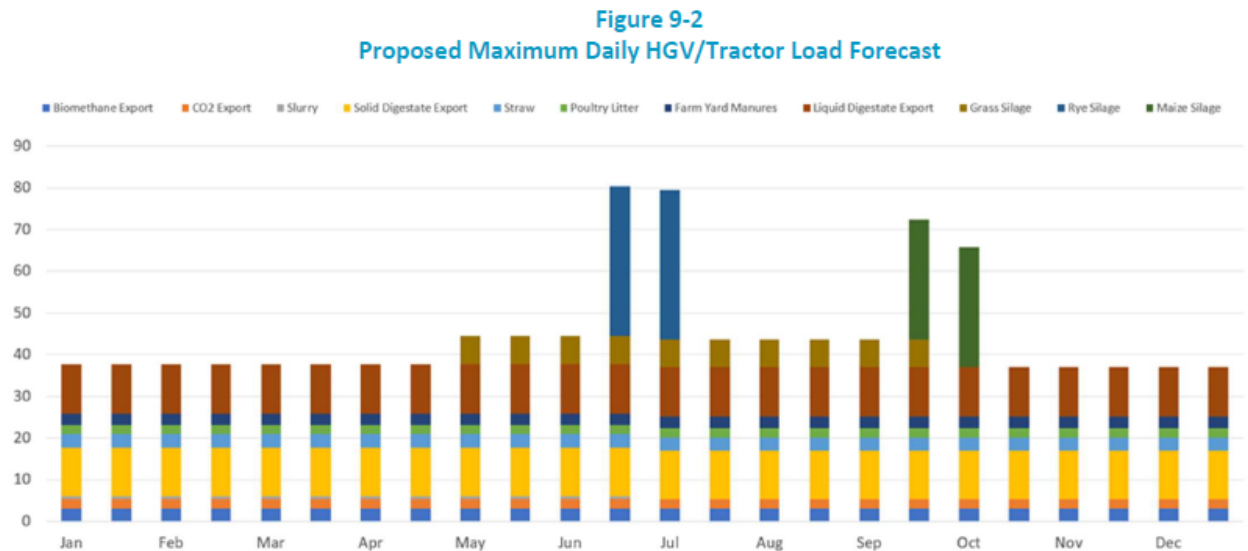
- 1.8 In particular this Response seeks to ensure that future decision-making on the Application is based on facts and the clearly evidenced and extensively examined technical assessment work relating to the following matters:
- Operational traffic impacts;
 - Highway Safety;
 - Landscape impacts
 - Site restoration;
 - The locational justification for the plant;
 - Agricultural land use;
 - Environmental permitting;
 - Advice on the Finch Case and Carbon Benefits;
 - Tourism; and
 - Post 21 April 2026 consultation response.

2. Operational Traffic Impacts

- 2.1 During the Committee meeting serious misunderstandings on the number and nature of the operational traffic movements were evident, including the following factually incorrect assertions:
- That 70% of the Plant's logistics occur in three months of harvest season and;
 - That the Plant would have 12,530 arrivals per year, 25,060 movements, with a 70% concentration creating nearly 200 movements every single day just from this development.
- 2.2 These assertions are incorrect by a serious order of magnitude. Careful examination by your Officers, including those of the Highway Authority, has concluded the proposals provide:
- A safe and suitable access;
 - An appropriate internal layout and parking;
 - Would not result in unacceptable impacts on highway safety or a severe residual cumulative impact on the transport network;
 - Traffic levels can be appropriately controlled through access design, the Construction Traffic Management Plan and the Operational Traffic Management Plan;
 - Traffic associated with the Proposed Development would not be routed through any villages or past road fronting residential properties (see the attached Proposed Routing Plan);
 - There is no sound highway or traffic-related reason to justify refusal of the Application.
- 2.3 Reference should be made to the extensive traffic impact assessment evidence submitted with the Application, examined by Wiltshire Council as Highway Authority who find it robust and raise no objections to the Application subject to the imposition of planning conditions on any planning permission.
- 2.4 Figure 9-2 extracted from Chapter 9 Traffic of the Application's Environmental Statement is replicated below. Whilst it is correct to say that the Plant is designed to operate around the farming calendar with associated harvest peaks, it is important to note that for the vast majority

of the year (10 months) the proposals would generate a total of 37-44 HGV/tractor trips per day, which equates to 74-88 movements. This is for over 80% of the year.

- 2.5 Clearly this is significantly below the 200 movements *every day* asserted by objectors in the Committee meeting.



- 2.6 Seasonal harvest peaks are also substantially below the 200 movements every day of the year claimed by objectors.
- 2.7 Total HGV/tractor movement harvest peaks are predicted to occur over an 8-week period each year, with the first harvest peak occurring in June-July with a maximum 80 HGV/tractor trips per day, equating to 160 HGV/tractor movements. This is outside of the main school summer holiday period. The second harvest peak is predicted to occur in September to October which is lower and estimated to generate up to 72 HGV/tractor trips per day, equating to 144 movements. This is outside the main October school half term holidays.
- 2.8 Overall, the impact assessment work demonstrates that the proposed traffic from the Plant is likely to result in a maximum increase of 1% on the total existing traffic flow on the B4696 and a maximum increase of 7.2% on the existing HGV traffic flow. These are well within the accepted guideline thresholds.
- 2.9 Furthermore, 47% of the proposed annual feedstock delivery loads is predominantly a redistribution of existing local agricultural traffic. Existing operations take place throughout the agricultural year. Acorn is redistributing these to allow farmers a more environmentally and economically sustainable future.
- 2.10 Ahead of the Committee meeting in April, and to provide further reassurance for local residents, we suggested additional operational traffic controls. Your Officer subsequently proposed the following additional conditions which we are in agreement with:

“CONTROL OF HOURS FOR FEEDSTOCK DELIVERY AND EXPORT OF DIGESTATE

Feedstock deliveries to the site and the export of digestate shall only take place between 07:00 and 18:00 hours Monday to Friday and between 07:00 and 13:00 hours on Saturdays, with no such movements on Sundays or Bank Holidays.

Notwithstanding the above, for a period not exceeding 8 weeks in any calendar year, feedstock deliveries which are directly associated with the harvesting of crops may take place between 07:00 and 22:00 hours Monday to Sunday.

A written record of the dates during which the extended hours are used shall be kept by the operator and made available to the Local Planning Authority upon request.

REASON: To control the timing of HGV movements associated with the development in order to protect residential amenity and highway safety.

SUBMISSION OF AN OPERATIONAL TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT PLAN

“Prior to the first operation of the development hereby permitted, an Operational Traffic Management Plan (OTMP) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, in consultation with the Local Highway Authority. The development shall not become operational until the approved OTMP has been implemented, and the development shall thereafter be operated in full accordance with the approved OTMP. The OTMP shall include:

- i. Site access arrangements and on-site traffic management measures;*
- ii. Defined HGV routing to and from the site;*
- iii. Measures for the scheduling and management of vehicle movements.*

Any material variation from the approved OTMP shall be subject to the prior written approval of the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: To ensure that traffic generated by the development is managed in a coordinated and safe manner to minimise impacts on the local highway network and nearby receptors”.

3. Highway Safety

- 3.1 During the Committee several objectors asserted that the Spine Road is an “accident black spot”. However, the Committee Report clearly advises “*Ashton Road already accommodates existing HGV traffic from agricultural and industrial uses, and accident data indicates no pattern of HGV-related collisions or underlying highway deficiencies. On this basis, and with the improved junction arrangement, the highway environment is suitable for the scale and type of vehicles proposed*”.

4. Landscape Impacts

- 4.1 During the Committee meeting objections to the Application were raised on landscape impact grounds. Whilst the Council’s Landscape Officer has maintained an objection to the Application, it is important to note that he does not recommend its refusal. Rather, the Landscape Officer correctly advises that whilst he considers the localised landscape and visual harm is contrary to Local Plan Policy CP51, this harm is required to be factored into the wider planning balance.

- 4.2 The Committee report clearly sets out the wider planning balance, with the arising benefits and harms summarised as follows:

Project Benefits	Effects	Weight in Planning Balance
1. Renewable Energy Generation	Generating c. 10 million m ³ of renewable biomethane annually, sufficient to meet the gas demand of around 9,300 homes.	Significant Weight
2. Decarbonisation	Delivering substantial carbon savings of c. 29,801 tCO ₂ e per year, making a meaningful contribution to decarbonisation and climate resilience	Significant Weight
3. Improvements to Energy Security	Providing UK generated energy, helping to protect against global energy volatility	Significant Weight
4. Economic Growth and Employment	Generating c. 100 FTE jobs during construction, 15 FTE operational jobs and c. 35 indirect and supply-chain roles.	Significant Weight
5. Support for Local Farming Economy and Circular Agricultural Practices	Recycling agricultural wastes and residues, supplying around 120,000 tonnes every year of natural digestate to improve soil health and crop yields, and offering long-term, stable income streams to farms through feedstock supply agreements. Together, these measures reduce reliance on imported artificial fertilisers, lower farm input costs, and help sustain farm businesses at a time of structural change and declining livestock numbers.	More than Moderate Weight
6. Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)	Delivering a habitat BNG of 20.33% and a hedgerow BNG of 72.18%, both substantially exceeding the statutory requirement of 10%.	Moderate Weight
Project Harms	Effects	Weight in Planning Balance
1. Landscape and visual impacts	Localised erosion of rural character and visual intrusion	Moderate Weight
2. Loss of agricultural land	Temporary loss of Grade 3 (potential Best and Most Versatile) agricultural land	Moderate Weight

- 4.3 The Committee Report concludes that the identified two moderate harms are insufficient to outweigh the substantial benefits of the proposal and permission ought to be granted subject to conditions and a legal agreement. No independent expert statutory consultee is objecting to the Application other than on landscape grounds.
- 4.4 Returning to the position of the Council's Landscape Officer, he has failed to provide a final and full consultation response, and it would be wrong for the Committee to assume that the rationale for the Council's landscape objection is complete, detailed or sufficient to withstand scrutiny at appeal, should the Application be refused.

- 4.5 We submitted a 15-page detailed rebuttal of the Council's Landscape Officer's consultation response over 7 months ago which, as of today, remains unaddressed. The advised key weaknesses of the Landscape Officer's position are summarised in Appendix 1.
- 4.6 We fully accept that landscape professionals can reach different judgements on the level of effects. However, the inherent flaws in the incomplete Landscape Officer's consultation response would not be, in our view, sustainable at appeal if our Application was refused.
- 4.7 It is accepted common ground between our respective landscape advisors that the Application would give rise to a degree of localised landscape and visual harm. However, as the Committee Report acknowledges this harm must be considered in its proper context which is:

"The Site does not lie within a nationally designated landscape; the assessed effects are localised; and the wider landscape is already influenced by mineral workings, infrastructure, leisure uses and utilitarian development. The proposal has undergone extensive design evolution, including reduced massing and a comprehensive landscape strategy, which would materially reduce visual effects over time. In addition, the development is expressly temporary, with decommissioning and restoration secured by condition".

5. Site Restoration

- 5.1 During Committee concerns were raised regarding the ability to restore the Site to its original agricultural use due, in part, to the cut and fill engineering works proposed to lower Site ground levels to assist in reducing landscape and visual impacts of the Application.
- 5.2 The Minerals Resource Assessment prepared by Savills and submitted with the Application confirms the following:
- Earthwork assessments have been undertaken by the Applicant which confirm that 96% of the stripped topsoil will remain on Site for re-use, and would be stored within the proposed screening bunds;
 - In addition, the bulk of the cut and fill materials will also be retained on-site (81%).
 - Retention of this material on-site will allow for its re-instatement and restoration back to agricultural use after 25 years when the plant ceases to operate.
- 5.3 Officers have recommended the imposition of a planning condition requiring the decommissioning of the Plant and restoration of the Site to agricultural use after 25 years. Officers further confirmed this is a standard planning condition capable of being monitored and enforced against if required.
- 5.4 To provide Members with additional assurance we have submitted a Decommissioning Framework (Appendix 2) that explains the structure of the Decommissioning Plan that will be detailed when the time comes to decommission and restore the Site. The purpose of the Decommissioning Plan is to ensure that the facility will be decommissioned without causing pollution, and the site is returned to a satisfactory condition and restored in accordance with planning condition.
- 5.5 Prior to decommissioning of the facility, the Decommissioning Plan will be prepared for approval by both the Council as Local Planning Authority and the Environment Agency as part of the Environmental Permit surrender process. The Environment Agency will be consulted both

before and during the decommissioning stage to meet the principal objectives of the Decommissioning Plan which will include amongst other things:

- A Site Condition Report of the existing Site prior to any development occurring;
- A Soils Storage and Restoration Plan detailing the stripping and storage of all soils and excavated materials, including their quantification, type and proposed storage and management over the lifetime of the development;
- The removal of all potentially polluting materials from the site;
- Ensure that towards the end of the plant's life, all material stocks are managed down to minimise the quantities of unused chemicals and waste feedstock;
- Defines a drain down and clean in place (CIP) strategy, focusing on environmentally acceptable practices;
- Defines a removal strategy for all plant and equipment on Site and ensures that all plant and equipment are appropriately decommissioned with all residual risks removed;
- Carries out a visual assessment of all identified potential pollution sources on Site to assess for the likelihood of any contamination;
- Defines an investigation strategy for all areas of site which are identified as having the potential for pollution.
- Once the decommissioning and closure process is complete the on-site stored cut and fill and top soils will be reprofiled to allow agricultural operations to resume.
- The established and extensive site boundary screen planting comprising native hedgerows and woodland planting will be retained, along with the established biodiversity net gain wildflower meadow.

6. Why the Plant is Located Here

- 6.1 During the Committee meeting, objectors questioned why the Plant is in its location, and that whilst they are supportive of biomethane generation in principle, this Application is located in the wrong place.
- 6.2 Extensive information has been submitted with the Application explaining the choice of Site for the Plant, including a detailed Locational Justification Report and an Agricultural Economic Report both prepared by Savills, planning and agricultural experts in these matters. Furthermore, its location in a semi-rural area is “the norm” for biomass plants as evidenced by the Government's Biomass Strategy 2023 which explains the vast majority are necessarily in rural areas.
- 6.3 The key operational and environmental locational requirements for the Application can be summarised as follows:
- A need to be **close to a source of locally abundant agricultural feedstock**, keeping transport distances down and making the supply chain commercially viable. As can be shown in the Savills report (Appendix 3) within a 15km radius of the site over 44,000 ha of

land is available easily meeting the requirement of 1,195ha of required silages with only a requirement of around 7% of the potential available straw;

- A need to be **close to local farms that use the produced natural digestate fertiliser** on their fields to improve soil quality (increasing organic matter and drought resilience) and boost crop yields;
- A need to be **in a landscape appropriate area**, which is not designated for its landscape or visual sensitivities, and which enables effective screening. The Site's location at the base and lower slope of the isolated hill of Ashton Downs effectively and immediately screens it from 180 degrees of the potential 360-degree view, and it is located within a semi-rural and already disturbed landscape containing mineral extraction, sewage treatment works, major road infrastructure, industrial uses and Plan allocated development areas. The Plant is not visible from any of the footpaths within the Cotswold Lakes recreational area;
- A need to be **close to the strategic road network**. The Site is well connected to the Spine Road and A419 dual carriageway, with traffic routes avoiding villages and residential properties;
- A need to be **sufficiently distant from sensitive receptors** to avoid adverse impacts arising from noise and odour. The Site will not have any adverse noise or air quality impacts on the Cotswold Lakes or nearby villages/homes as evidenced by the no objections raised by the Council's own Public Health Officers, the Environment Agency, Natural England and the Council's Ecological Officer;
- A need to be **close to the gas injection hub** at Banbury, located just 45 miles away which enables delivery of 2-3 renewably fuelled tankers of gas every 24 hours;
- A need to be **outside of a flood risk area**. The Site is located in an area not at risk of flooding (Flood Zone 1), with no objection raised on flood risk grounds (or any grounds) by the Lead Local Flood Authority or the Environment Agency;
- A need to **avoid harm to designated heritage assets** and archaeology. The Application has no objections from the Council's Senior Conservation Officer or the County Archaeologist; and;
- A need to **avoid harm to wildlife**. The Site is of low intrinsic ecological value with no direct hydrological connectivity between it and the Cotswold Lakes SSSI. Natural England and the Environment Agency have no objections to the Application, and they are the principal custodians responsible for the SSSI's protection.

7. Agricultural Land

- 7.1 During the Committee meeting, questions were raised about the relevant policy protection applying to best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land (Grades 1, 2 and 3a) and whether the loss of agricultural land arising from the Application would be temporary or permanent.

- 7.2 Up to date national planning policy on the protection of best and most versatile agricultural land (Grades 1, 2 and 3a) is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework December 2024 which states at footnote 65 that “Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of higher quality”.
- 7.3 Local policy pertaining to agricultural land is set out in Waste Development Control Policies Development Plan Document, Policy WDC2 which allows for loss of BMV land where outweighed by overriding sustainability considerations. Officers conclude that the renewable energy benefits, the waste recovery role, the support for local agriculture and its contribution to climate and energy objectives constitute such considerations.
- 7.4 The Committee Report and its Addendum explains that the Site is Grade 3, albeit data does not differentiate between Grade 3a (BMV) and 3b (not BMV). As such a precautionary approach has been taken by Officers in its assessment of the Application, assuming the Site is all BMV land. The impact would be temporary (not permanent) with a planning condition requiring its decommissioning and restoration to agricultural use after 25 years. Officers at Committee explained that such a condition is standard, enforceable and reasonable in all other respects. Officers conclude that the temporary loss of 7 hectares of Grade 3 agricultural land is considered acceptable and justifiable having regard to its scale, the local prevalence of land of similar quality and the benefits arising from the proposals listed as:
- Rural diversification;
 - Support for agricultural businesses;
 - Production of natural digestate for use on local farms as an alternative to imported and more expensive synthetic fertilisers;
 - Generation of low-carbon renewable gas; and
 - Contribution to wider sustainability and energy security objectives
- 7.5 Given the interest shown in this matter by the Committee and local objectors, we have instructed an Agricultural Land Classification Survey based on soil sampling taken from the Site. This will be submitted ahead of the return of the Application to the Committee to enable its consideration as part of the informed decision-making process. It should be noted however that grading of land shows the diversity of crops that can be grown on that land rather than the potential yields of that area of ground. It can be noted that these fields yield well below county and country averages.

8. Environmental Permitting Matters

- 8.1 Officers clarified at Committee that it is not the case that the Environment Agency have a policy which prohibits development within 500m of a SSSI, rather being within 500m of a SSSI requires a specific type of Environmental Permit to be applied for.
- 8.2 We can confirm that Officer’s advice in this respect is correct. In the event planning permission is granted for the Application, we will be applying for a Bespoke Environmental Permit.

9. Advice on the Finch Case and Carbon Benefits

- 9.1 Officers were questioned at Committee on the relevance of the Finch case to the Application. To further assist the Committee on this matter, we instructed our planning lawyers (Shepherd and Wedderburn) to advise on what is essentially a planning legal matter. Its response is set out below.
- 9.2 The Finch case related to an oil drilling development producing hydrocarbons (i.e., oil).
- 9.3 The legal errors in the Finch case concerned a failure by the applicant in their EIA assessment to consider emissions from the use of oil that would be extracted from the wells. The EIA had only considered the impacts of the works at the oil wells themselves. It had not considered emissions arising from the use of the oil, i.e. the release of hydrocarbons.
- 9.4 The legal errors arising from this approach were, (i) that the use of the oil was not a matter within the control of the applicant was not a reason to exclude it from the EIA and (ii) consideration of downstream effects should not be excluded from the EIA because they would be controlled through other regulatory regimes. Neither of these issues arise in the case of the Application.
- 9.5 The environmental impacts of the use of the biomethane have been considered and assessed as part of the Application. They have not been excluded as was done in the Finch case. The environmental impacts of the use of biomethane are assessed and reported in Carbon Calculation Report submitted as part of the Application documentation. This has considered the use of biomethane, calculated in accordance with the industry standard methodology (the REDI methodology). The assessment has been undertaken on a “cradle to grave basis”, considering impacts of construction, operation and decommissioning.
- 9.6 An important distinction between the facts in the Finch case and this Application, is that this Application deals with the use of biomethane, which is a renewable energy fuel. The biomethane will be used instead of natural gas, which is a fossil fuel. The displacement of natural gas means the use of biomethane will have overall beneficial effect. The submitted Carbon Calculation Report sets out that the use of biomethane produced by the Plant will result in a saving of 29,801 tCO₂e per year compared to the use of natural gas. That did not apply in the Finch case, which involved the production and subsequent use of hydrocarbon fuels. The issues that arose in the Finch case have been fully addressed in this Application.

10. Tourism Considerations

- 10.1 Wiltshire has an established leisure and visitor economy which comprises of both day visitors and staying visitors within both school summer holiday periods and in addition to the shoulder months provides an extended season for the area.
- 10.2 Whilst there is no recent data on the economic benefits of tourism to the area, the last reported economic analysis (dated January 2019), suggests that the Cotswold Waterparks have year round appeal with visitor stays peaking during July and August, with day visitor levels peaking between May and October annually. In the absence of any more recent publicly available data, it is assumed that these patterns remain consistent with current day and visitor levels in the area.

- 10.3 The setting of the Proposed Development is within the context of existing commercial and industrial activities and will not be visible from the recreational focuses of the waterparks areas. The Proposed Development will not affect the setting or enjoyment of any of the existing recreational areas and our Application documents demonstrate that the Proposed Development would not be to the detriment of existing residential or recreational resources in the immediate locality in terms of environmental and landscape impacts.

11. Additional Consultation Responses

- 11.1 The Committee deferred determination of the Application whilst it sought the consultation response of **Thames Water**. Thames Water responded on 23 April 2026 and raises no objection to the Application.
- 11.2 The Committee also deferred determination of the Application to enable consultation of **Gloucestershire County Council as Highway Authority**. At the time of writing this Response, no representation has yet been received.
- 11.3 Since 1 May 2024 a templated response has been uploaded by objectors to the scheme citing two concerns relating to potential impacts on the water quality of the Cotswold Lakes as a SSSI and recreational resource, and road safety. The Officer's report to Committee and its Addendum clearly addresses both these issues in depth and in summary the salient key responses are as follows:
- Detailed ecological, hydrological, air quality and highway impact assessments have been submitted with the Application and have been reviewed by independent statutory consultees expert in these areas.
 - Of key importance is the fact that there are no objections to the Application raised by those independent experts who have a legal remit to protect the Cotswold Lakes, the environment and local population in its widest sense and delivery highway safety including Natural England, the Environment Agency, the Council's Ecological Officer, the Lead Local Flood Authority, the Council's Environmental Protection Officer and Wiltshire Council as Highway Authority.
 - The Application will in fact provide a net gain to wildlife in the local area, well beyond the statutory minimum levels required, and will deliver urgently needed financial support to local farmers whilst delivering greater energy security and addressing climate change through the generation of renewable and low carbon energy.

Appendix 1: Rebuttal Summary of Landscape Officer Consultation

Response of April 2024

- The Landscape Officer's judgement is not supported by a structured rationale of why the Proposed Development is considered unacceptable. Our submitted Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) identifies localised adverse landscape and visual effects, and it is normally the role of the Landscape Officer to advise if they agree or not with the LVIA and if they disagree, why they disagree. There is no such reasoned analysis provided by the Landscape Officer;
- Whilst the Landscape Officer now agrees with us that the landscape and visual harm would be localised, there is no Officer analysis reflecting landscape best practice guidance (GLVIA 3) of the effects that the Proposed Development would have on the locality i.e. there is no response to the applicants Zone of Theoretical Visibility plan, or LVIA conclusions that the landform of the Site essentially restricts visibility from the surrounding landscape apart from the immediate locality of the Site. Material temporary affects, before landscape mitigation matures would be restricted to a short section of the Ashford Road opposite the Site and a localised section of a single public right of way that passes the western boundary of the Site.
- The Landscape Officer claims the Application is set within "a locally valued landscape context". However, the Site does not contain any evidence of physical features that are unusual, rare, or distinctive. Recent findings of Inspectors at various appeals have provided clearer definitions of what comprises a National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) valued landscape and this Site does not come close to meeting the criteria.
- The Landscape Officer statement that the Site is 'at the heart' of the Cotswolds Water Park is misleading as the Site lies near the northern boundary of the Park and is well separated from the 177 lakes. The lakes are designated as a SSSI for their wildlife and plant interest and are not designated for their landscape value, and the Application is located outside of the SSSI in any event.. Whilst it is accepted that some recreational users come to the park to see this wildlife, there would be no views of the Proposed Development from the lakes or public rights of way around the edges of the lakes. The EIA Ecology and Air Quality chapters address impacts on SSSIs (and find no unacceptable effects) and it is unclear why these designations are being specifically raised by the Landscape Officer, especially as the statutory custodians of the Cotswolds Lakes (Natural England, the Environment Agency and the Council's own Ecology Officer) raise no objection to the Proposed Development.
- The Proposed Development would be a temporary scheme of modern agricultural/energy buildings, that would positively contribute to tackling the climate change and ecological emergencies and would be set within a landscape that is recognised as dynamic and subject to large scale changes from mineral extraction. This does not suggest the inherent landscape incompatibility asserted by the Landscape Officer.
- We strongly disagree with the Landscape Officers opinion that the Proposed Development could be accurately described as visually discordant and would advise that committee members carefully review the submitted photomontages from various locations around the

Site. It is important to recognise that the purpose of both embedded and secondary mitigation is to minimise adverse effects, not completely eliminate them.

- We strongly disagree with the Landscape Officer's claim that the proposed native planting, similar to that in the locality, including around the SSSI lakes, could result in 'urbanising contamination'. It is a phrase that our Landscape Architect has never encountered in 25+ years' of working in this professional field and would not withstand scrutiny at appeal.

Appendix 2: Decommissioning Framework



Decommissioning Framework

Ashton Keynes

7th May 2026

Project No.: SOL_26_P066_ACO

Document Details	
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7th May 2026

Decommissioning Framework

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1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this Decommissioning Framework is to demonstrate that the proposed installation can be decommissioned and returned to a satisfactory condition whilst mitigating and avoiding any environmental pollution or human health risks. This Framework provides the structure of the Decommissioning Plan that will be detailed when the time comes to decommission the site. This document demonstrates Acorn Bioenergy's commitment to decommission the site safely and effectively.

Once complete, the Decommissioning Plan will be submitted to the Council and to the Environment Agency, as part of the permit surrender application process, for approval prior to the commencement of decommissioning activities on site.

Throughout the entire process of dismantling and decommissioning the AD plant, care will be taken to ensure that the work is done safely. Applicable legislation will be adhered to when handling any waste materials.

The Environment Agency will be consulted both prior to and during the decommissioning of the plant, with all decommissioning activities taking place in accordance with any relevant planning permission conditions.

Upon the completion of the site closure and decommissioning process, the site will be vacated by the Operator and the permit surrendered.

The principal objectives of the Decommissioning Plan are therefore:

- The removal of all potentially polluting materials from the site;
- To ensure that towards the end of the plant's life, all material stocks are managed down to minimise the quantities of unused chemicals and waste feedstock;
- To define a drain down and clean in place (CIP) strategy, focusing on environmentally acceptable practices;
- To define a removal strategy for all plant and equipment on site and to ensure that all plant and equipment are appropriately decommissioned with all residual risks removed;
- To carry out a visual assessment of all identified potential pollution sources on site to assess for the likelihood of contamination having occurred over the Environmental Permit lifetime; and
- To define an investigation strategy for all areas of site which are identified as having the potential for pollution.

Acorn Bioenergy is committed to fully complying with all relevant legislative instruments and regulatory guidance documents that may be in-place when site closure and decommissioning is undertaken.

Once the decommissioning and closure process is complete the soils will be reprofiled to allow agricultural operations to proceed.

2. PLANT DECOMMISSIONING

The following areas will be required to be decommissioned and the details of which will be addressed within the Decommissioning Plan:

- Slurry Tanks, Pre-Tanks, Dirty Water Tanks;
- Chicken Manure Reception Shed;
- Straw Building;
- 3 x Silage Clamps;
- 3 x Feeder Hoppers;
- 5 x Digester Tanks / Fermenters;
- 4 x Pasteurisation Tanks;
- Separator Building;
- 2 x Digestate Lagoons;
- Gas Flare;
- Biogas Upgrade Unit;
- CO₂ Upgrade Unit;
- 2 x Combined Heat and Power (CHP) Units;
- 2 x Compressors;
- 2 x Compressed Gas Storage;
- 1 x Propane Tank;
- Containment Bund;
- Pump Room Container;
- Rainwater Harvesting Lagoon;
- Weighbridge; and
- LNG Tank, Vaporiser and Tank.

Managing Materials

Prior to the cessation of activities at site, the Operator will manage the process inventory of hazardous materials (oils, fuels etc) to a practical minimum. Upon cessation of activities an audit of the site shall take place for the purposes of producing an inventory of all hazardous materials to be required for removal from site.

Wherever possible, any virgin process materials (oils, fuels, feedstocks etc) shall be returned to the original supplier for reuse. If not possible, the materials will be removed from the facility by a licensed company and will be sent to an appropriately permitted waste facility.

Site closure will commence with the cessation of waste deliveries and the progressive processing and removal of all wastes from site.

At the point at which the operator intends to cease operations and commence the closure and decommissioning of the site, all waste will be processed by the AD plant prior to decommissioning commencing. Any remaining wastes that cannot be processed in this manner shall be disposed of through dedicated waste management contractors. Liquid digestate will be removed from the tanks existing offtake system. The removal and spreading of the digestate will be undertaken as it would during normal operations.

Decommissioning and cleaning of all process areas will generate contaminated washings and purge waters. All such materials shall be removed through dedicated waste management contractors.

Structures and Equipment

Each of the key areas on site that are required to be decommissioned will be addressed in separate sections, detailing the key environmental risks associated with the decommissioning and providing the relevant information as required by the following table.

Table 2.1 – Decommissioning Example Summary Table

Plant Area	Equipment Reference	Description including Environmental Risks	Decommissioning Method	Disposal Method
This section will detail the plant area i.e silage clamps.	The specific equipment reference will be inputted in this column.	This column will provide a description of the equipment and any potential environmental risks from the decommissioning of the equipment.	This column will provide information on the decommissioning sequence i.e disconnection of ductwork / pipework, liquids drained, equipment removed etc and how the plant will be decommissioned.	This column will provide information on the disposal routes of any wastes related to the decommissioning of the plant area.

3. SITE INVESTIGATION STRATEGY

Acorn Bioenergy Ltd will carry out an intrusive investigation in all areas where a potential pollution pathway or known contamination has arisen over the operational lifetime of the facility.

This investigation will be scoped with full agreement from the Council and Environment Agency, following a detailed site inspection and walkover of all operational areas within the site boundary.

The inspection will be carried out by appropriately qualified third parties within all areas of the site.

The site inspection process will include the following key aspects:

- Detailed visual inspection of all hardstanding, floor slabs and containment structures on site with an identified pollution potential. This inspection will concentrate on integrity of floor slabs, any identified sumps and services such as ducts and pipework.
- Detailed visual inspection of all tanks, associated secondary containment areas and loading and unloading areas.
- Concrete core samples of all areas where there is a high likelihood of pollution having occurred. i.e. in areas where:
 - significant hydrocarbon staining is present;
 - degradation of concrete floors / cellars / ducts has occurred; and
 - breaching of floor / cellars / duct linings have occurred.
- Intrusive site investigation, sampling and analysis of soils and groundwaters in all areas where there is a likelihood of contamination arising, or insufficient data is available to be able to make a determination.
- Development of a remediation strategy for any areas where contamination is observed.

It should be noted that due to the nature of Acorn Bioenergy Ltd operations, the likelihood of there being any sub-surface contamination is considered to be low.

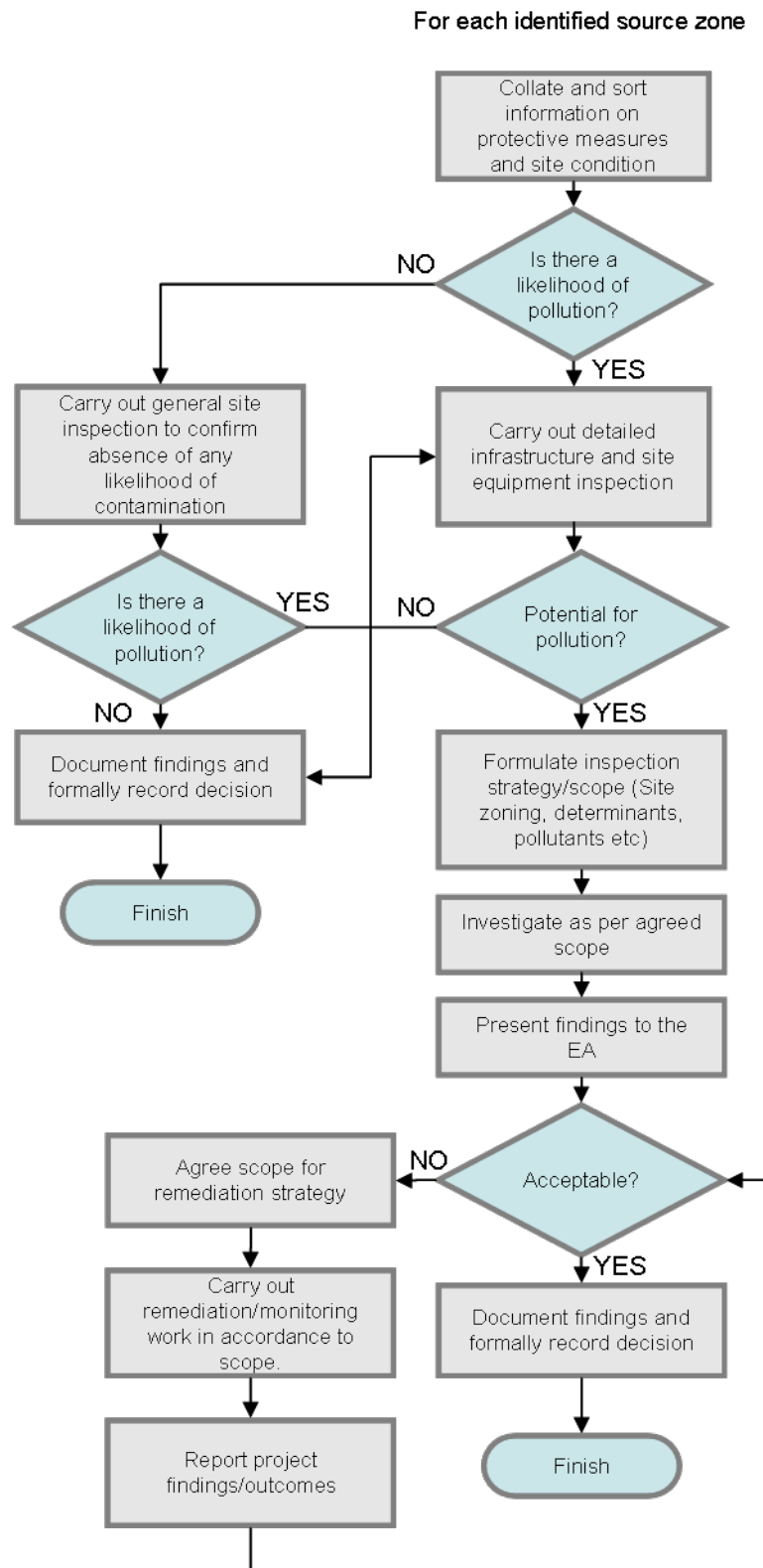


Figure 3.1 – Site Investigation Methodology

4. EMERGENCY CONTINGENCY

Throughout the decommissioning and closure process, Acorn Bioenergy Ltd will have on hand sufficient emergency response equipment to ensure that appropriate emergency measures, spillage response, fire control and first aid etc can be provided.

All contractors on site will be working under the responsibility of the appointed lead contractor who will be contractually obliged to ensure that safe systems of work and emergency control measures are provided for all personnel working on the project.

The Acorn Bioenergy Ltd engineering team will remain present throughout all stages of the site closure and decommissioning process and will oversee the correct deployment of this decommissioning programme.

5. ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING

Acorn Bioenergy will undertake ongoing environmental monitoring throughout the plant decommissioning and dismantling stages.

All activities involving the decommissioning of the site shall be carried during daytime operating hours (08:00 – 18:00).

All contractors will be required to employ odour, noise and dust mitigation measures during all stages of decommissioning and cleaning.

6. CONCLUSIONS

This Decommissioning Framework provides the structure of the Decommissioning Plan which will be produced when the time comes to decommission the site. This document demonstrates Acorn Bioenergy's commitment to decommission the site safely and effectively.

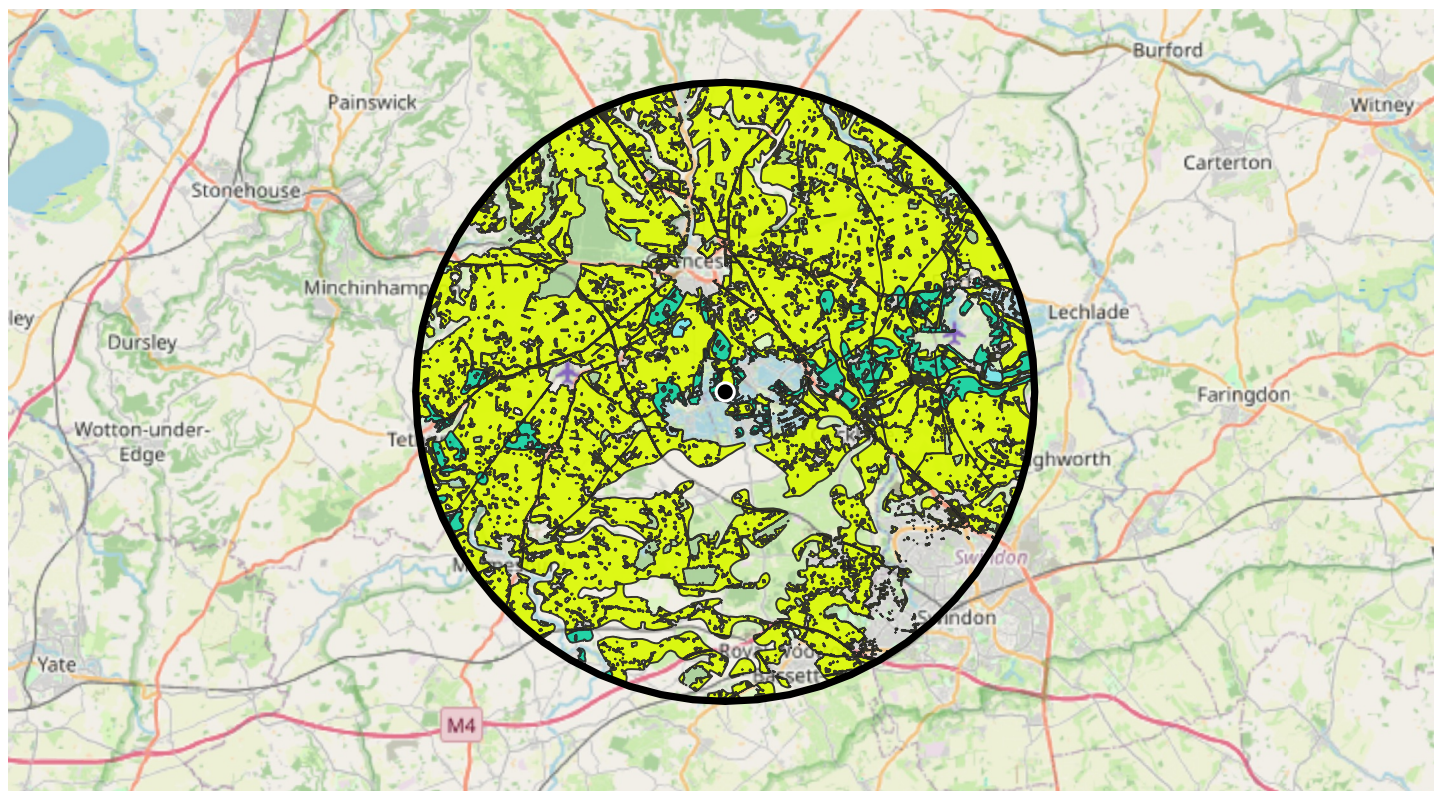
Throughout the entire process of dismantling and decommissioning of the site, care will be taken to ensure that the work is done safely. Applicable legislation will be adhered to at all times when handling any waste materials.

The Council and the Environment Agency will be consulted, both prior to and during the decommissioning of the plant.

Once the decommissioning and closure process is complete the soils will be reprofiled to allow agricultural operations to proceed.

Appendix 3: Feedstock Due Diligence

Figure 1: Overview



Legend:

15km Area

Proposed Development Site

Land Classification:

Grade 1

Grade 2

Grade 3

Table 1:

	Land Class (Grade) 1	Land Class (Grade) 2	Land Class (Grade) 3	Total Land Available	Total Land Required
Area (ha)	104	2,901	41,129	44,134	N/A
Whole Crop Cereals (tonnes) p.a	3,120	79,778	1,028,225	1,111,123	545 ha
Maize (tonnes) p.a	4,680	116,040	1,439,515	1,560,235	300 ha
Straw (tonnes) p.a	260	7,253	102,823	110,335	8,000 ha
Grass (tonnes) p.a	4,160	116,040	1,645,160	1,765,360	350 ha

From our experience in the sector, we have assumed a theoretical output (tonnes) per annum in the above table if the below specified crops are solely grown in the area according to the land grade:

Maize: Grade 1 = 45t/ha; Grade 2 = 40t/ha; Grade 3 = 35t/ha.

Whole Crop Cereals: Grade 1 = 30t/ha; Grade 2 = 27.5t/ha; Grade 3 = 25t/ha.

Straw: Grade 1, Grade 2 and Grade 3 = 2.5t/ha.

Grass: Grade 1, Grade 2 and Grade 3 = 40t/ha per annum. This assumes two to three cuts per season, totalling approximately 40t/ha per annum. If two cuts are achieved, this may comprise approximately 25t/ha for the first cut and 15t/ha for the second cut. If three cuts are achieved, this may comprise approximately 20t/ha for the first cut, 12t/ha for the second cut and 8t/ha for the third cut.

As soil type is only one factor in determining yield, we have assumed nutrient availability, sunlight hours/temperature and soil moisture to be optimal. Additionally, consideration is needed with regards to crop rotation and the figures provided are an approximation if all land is utilised for the specified feedstock.

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