

# North Lincolnshire Green Energy Park Project – Examination of Development Consent Order

Response to the EA's Second Questions on behalf of AB Agri Limited  
20 March 2023

Planning Inspectorate Ref: EN010116  
Interested Party Ref: 20032351



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# 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This post-hearing submission has been prepared on behalf of AB Agri Limited in response to the Examining Authority's Second Written Questions (EXQ2) in respect of the following:

- Q2.1.0.5: During the ASI when visiting the wharf and the AB Agri premises, it was apparent that the AB Agri site currently attracts large numbers of birds to the roof of its building. In light of this and that this would appear to be a risk AB Agri are willing to accept under current operating procedures. Can AB Agri explain what evidence there is that the new facility would materially increase the number of birds to the vicinity over the number already attracted to the area and AB Agri premises.
- Q2.15.0.2: Socio Economic Effects - AB Agri Deadline 4 submission [REP4-033] infers there is a possibility the premises may have to close in the event that the risk they consider would arise has not been appropriately addressed.

(iii) Can AB Agri provide information in respect of the socio-economic effect you consider would arise in the event the issues identified are not resolved

1.2 The submission also provides general commentary on AB Agri's position in terms of its negotiations with the appellant, by way of an update to the examining inspectors.

## 2 Q2.1.0.5 THE PRESENCE OF BIRDS AND THE BIOSECURITY RISK

2.1 As AB Agri explained at the Issue Specific Hearing 3 (ISH3), the presence of birds is an ongoing issue for animal feed production at this site, as it is a riverside location which attracts birds by nature. In this context, seagulls and other birds are part of the risks that AB Agri often faces at sites in similar locations. However, the risks to biosecurity due to the presence of birds are limited at present, as the birds are not exposed to waste material in close proximity.

2.2 Bringing a new development which handles waste on site and off site (through deliveries) represents a new biosecurity risk in close proximity to AB Agri's site. This is because, unlike at present, the birds have the high potential, even with the proposed management procedures, to be exposed to waste material from a facility processing a significant quantity of waste in immediate proximity to the AB Agri site. Put simply, the current presence of birds in the area is a natural occurrence, and is capable of being managed. On the other hand, the application proposals will substantially elevate the risk of those birds, and any additional population that might be attracted by the proposed waste handling facility becoming contaminated – this is an unacceptable biosecurity risk. As stated previously, likewise there is also a significantly increased risk from rodents transmitting salmonella or other diseases from the waste handling operation.

2.3 As AB Agri has consistently raised in all its representations, the proposed development raises a significant biosecurity risk to the animal feed mill, as salmonella contamination from waste containing organic or animal origin materials would result in the closure of the feed mill facility for a significant period of time or closure indefinitely. The current biosecurity measures implemented by AB Agri as set out in our Post-Hearing Submission dated 7 February 2023 are appropriate for the current level of risk. However, they are not sufficient to cope with the significantly increased amount of contaminants potentially transmitted from a facility handling waste of such substantial quantity adjacent to the site.

2.4 The proposed mitigation measures by the Applicant relative to the RDF delivery route (not using the First Avenue), the method of waste delivery and handling of the waste within the ERF do not provide satisfactory control measures to minimise biosecurity risks to an acceptable level. This is because the delivery of RDF by road will significantly increase the quantity and frequency of waste in the area and the Applicant's Operational Environmental Management Plan only goes so far as baled waste being delivered in curtain sided trucks. There is no binding commitment from the Applicant that waste will be delivered in sealed containers or fully wrapped, as we understand it cannot be commercially met by the Applicant or the prospective operator of the facility. The Applicant has also not committed to the regular wheel washing of delivery vehicles in the Operational Management Plan. Further, the measures proposed by the Applicant do not deal with the eventuality of potential tipping hall negative pressure failure, RDF delivered without being sealed or adequately wrapped, and vehicle sanitisation not taking place regularly.

2.5 As a consequence and as per the oral representations made by AB Agri at the ISH3, they are firmly of the view only AB Agri's own onsite mitigation measures will ensure the elevated biosecurity risks as a result of the proposal are minimised to an acceptable level.

2.6 AB Agri discussed these mitigation measures with the Applicant at the meeting on 27 February 2023, and is seeking to reach an acceptable solution with the Applicant. Such mitigation measures discussed include; increasing physical barriers by way of enclosing AB Agri's raw material intake and finished

product outloading, installing rat proof fencing, upgrading existing heat treatment, and rearranging workplace transport to move the weighbridge further from the proposed development. To date, AB Agri has not received a response from the Applicant following the meeting on 27 February 2023.

- 2.7 If salmonella contamination occurs, as a result of waste being delivered to and/or handled at the proposed site, it would cause substantial economic, social and environmental impacts which are demonstrated in our response to the ExQ2 Q2.15.0.2.

## Q2.15.0.2 SOCIO ECONOMIC EFFECTS

- 3.1 The socio economic and associated environmental effects of the proposal on AB Agri's plant, in the event that the identified biosecurity risk issues are not addressed to an acceptable level, is set out in the table below:

Category	Impacts
National Food Security	<p>The loss of an established animal feed mill (being one of the most modern and highly invested poultry feed mills in the UK), which is key infrastructure for UK's poultry industry, would substantially undermine national food security, resulting in a loss of feed equivalent to approximately 10% of the UK's chicken population.</p> <p>In the short term this would likely cause a major shock to the food chain. In the longer term, the market would start to correct, but as it would take years to replace the AB Agri plant, it would do so through imports from other countries, which is evidently completely contrary to the Government's food security strategy and has several other substantial planning disbenefits – see below.</p>
Economic impact - loss of local jobs (direct and indirect)	<p>Direct – any closure would involve the loss of the existing circa 60 skilled jobs at the plant. This loss would not be directly off-set by the jobs created by the application proposals, as any loss of AB Agri's plant would occur after the application proposals were operational, and as such the positions would in all likelihood already be taken. This would cause both economic and social dis-benefits.</p> <p>Indirect – AB Agri's plant is a key customer for local farms, which deliver from a 30 mile catchment around the site, as well as local hauliers and engineering businesses. The loss of AB Agri's plant would therefore result in a substantial loss of business for local farms and other local businesses, risking further job losses and associated economic and social dis-benefits.</p>
Economic impact – supply chain	<p>As confirmed above, the loss of the animal feed mill would cause a shock to the supply chain, in the short term likely leading to shortages in the supermarkets (in a similar manner to recent shortages in eggs and other supermarket goods), and a rise in prices in response to the reduction of goods on the market, further contributing to inflation and the cost of living crisis.</p> <p>Finding suitable sites, and securing planning permission, for new animal feed mills can be challenging, and the lost production could only be replaced in the UK on a very much longer term basis (if at all). In the interim, the demand would be met by increased imports from other countries, which evidently would bring far less economic benefit to the UK as a whole, and particularly to the local area which benefits so much from the existing presence of the animal feed mill.</p>
Social impact	<p>Put simply, in the shorter term the loss of AB Agri's mill would reduce the amount of food in the supermarkets, resulting in less choice for consumers and higher prices. Although this is an economic issue, given current inflationary conditions and the cost of living crisis, it is also a social one as the impact will be felt significantly more on lower income households which are less able to pay more for food, thereby increasing social deprivation.</p>
Environmental impact	<p>At present, the goods which supply the AB Agri mill are locally-sourced within a 30 mile radius, and the animal feed produced supplies farmers in the UK. As previously confirmed, the loss of AB Agri's facility would ultimately result in shortages in supply being addressed largely through food imports, which is substantially more unsustainable in environmental terms than the current arrangements, not least as:</p>

Category	Impacts
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food will obviously need to travel considerably longer distances to reach customers' plates, increasing carbon emissions as a result, and</li> <li>• Many of the likely sources of the imports have significantly lower standards in terms of sustainability and animal welfare than the very high standard regulatory framework of the UK.</li> </ul> <p>As such, the closure the AB Agri plant would also bring substantial disbenefits in environmental terms.</p>

3.2 In summary, the main socio-economic impact of the loss of the AB Agri plant would be to substantially disrupt the national food chain, in a manner similar (or potentially worse) to the recent disruptions in supermarket goods (not least the recent shortages of eggs and salad items). This would harm the UK agricultural industry, and lead to more imports from other countries, which is considerably less desirable than locally-sourced food in economic, social and environmental terms. However, there will be other negative consequences, not least the loss of the existing jobs at the site and a wider indirect economic impact on local farmers and other local businesses.

## 4 GENERAL COMMENTS

4.1 Whilst writing, we would bring the following to the Inspectors' attention, following a recent meeting between the applicant and AB Agri on 27 February 2023:

- The concerns that AB Agri have raised regarding temporary acquisition were noted by the applicant, and they have agreed to remove AB Agri's land from their proposals and therefore withdraw their application to temporarily acquire it.
- Our client is yet to receive any further information on this, and, as stated above, still awaits the Applicant's response for additional mitigation on AB Agri's site, as agreed at the meeting in order to urgently reach an acceptable solution.