

Frequently Asked Questions

What kind of plant are you proposing to build?

Navitas Environmental is putting together a planning application to develop a biomass facility at the site in Appspound Lane, Potters Crouch.

This renewable energy facility will use recovered wood and transform it into clean electricity for the National Grid. This modern, sustainable development will replace the existing woodchipping and composting operations currently on site. The development will reduce the amount of wood waste going to landfill and provide clean, 'green' electricity for the Grid.

What is Biomass?

Biomass is a generic term for any organic material. This can be used to produce heat, electricity or transport fuel. These organic materials can take many forms, including plants, wood, energy crops and agricultural residues.

Navitas is proposing to build a biomass plant to make use of wood waste, transforming it into 'green' energy. Unlike fossil fuels such as gas and oil, biomass is a renewable resource – one which absorbs CO₂ as it grows. The Environment Agency believes that the biomass power sector can play a key role in helping the UK meet its renewable energy and greenhouse gas commitments.

Why do we need a Biomass Facility here?

Not all wood is suitable for recycling, and much of this residual waste currently has to be sent to landfill, which is both costly in environmental terms and in financial terms (growing landfill taxes are costing councils more each year).

Hertfordshire needs greener alternatives to landfill, and the Appspound Lane site presents many advantages, aside from the fact that it is already being used as a waste recovery facility. The existing site can be turned into a modern, sustainable development while creating local jobs to help run the business.

Where will the recovered wood come from?

Most of the timber will come from Hertfordshire and the local area, helping local businesses and industries use their wood waste in an efficient and environmentally-friendly way, reducing their carbon footprint.

How does the biomass process work?

1. The wood is delivered to the biomass facility and stockpiled as currently permitted at the site. This wood is then processed to create a material of uniform size to feed into the plant.

2. When fed into the plant, the heat generated drives a turbine which in turn generates electricity.
3. The gases which also result from the process increase the generated heat, and this helps to minimise emissions to the air.
4. Once the material has oxidised it leaves ash which will be disposed of off-site by the operator.

What impact will the plant have on noise?

Potential noise impact will be considered as part of the planning process, and planning permission would be refused if the renewable energy operations are shown to result in significant noise intrusion. Noise generated during the construction of the facility will be offset by other waste operations on the site ceasing, and activities would be undertaken in accordance with a Construction Environmental Management Plan to ensure there will not be any unacceptable noise impact. During the plant's operation, the wood will be deposited in an area which is enclosed. Any mitigation recommended once the noise assessment has been completed will be incorporated and detailed within the planning application. During both construction and plant operation, vehicles will only visit the site during the currently permitted hours (i.e. 8am to 5pm weekdays, and 8am to 1pm Saturdays with no movements on Sundays or Bank Holidays).

What impact will there be on air quality and emissions?

Emissions from the site will be strictly monitored and regulated by the Environment Agency. Potential air quality impact will also be considered as part of the planning process, and planning permission could be refused if the Environment Agency or the Council's Environmental Health department believed there would be an unacceptable reduction in air quality.

Standardkessel has experience building plants like this and larger ones throughout Europe. The plant uses effective systems to control dust, odour and emissions which comply with the strictest environmental rules in the EU.

What impact will there be on dust?

Any potential dust emissions resulting from the initial construction work will be assessed as part of the planning process. Mitigation measures would be put in place to minimise these emissions.

What about landscape and visual impact?

A full landscape and visual impact assessment is currently being carried out. The site is largely visually screened from view to the north, east and south by motorway embankments and Longspring Wood, and to the west by lower mounds. There will be a glimpsed view from the M1 as it passes the site and from the A4147. The visual impact of the facility will be assessed as part of the planning application for the operation of the plant during the day and at night, and for the construction period. Potential differences between summer and winter effects will also be considered.

Navitas Environmental's technology partner, Standardkessel, has extensive experience in integrating its plants within their existing surroundings – whether in urbanised or rural areas.

Will there be any water or flood risks?

According to the Environment Agency flood map for the area, the site and surrounding area are not at risk of flooding. Nevertheless, the planning application will include measures to avoid any potential surface water flooding impacts.

Is any impact on transport to be expected?

Traffic to the site will be unchanged from that currently permitted so a transport assessment is not required. Material will be delivered to the site during the existing operating hours, which are between 8am and 5pm during the week and between 8am and 1pm on Saturdays. There are no deliveries on Sundays or Bank Holidays. In addition, during the construction phase, the site itself would cease operations, reducing the impact on the road network during this period.

What about odour?

Because wood waste degrades very slowly it does not normally generate unpleasant odours. Existing odour concerns arising from the current composting activities will no longer apply because this waste will no longer be delivered to the site.

Will habitats and species be affected?

As part of the planning process, an ecologist has undertaken a habitat survey in order to identify any potential risk to species on the site. So far part of the site has been found to have the potential to be used by common native reptiles but no sign of other protected species was found. Any necessary survey will however be undertaken to confirm this. Also, in order to avoid the nesting season, any tree and shrub removal will be undertaken between September and January.

What benefits will the community get from the construction of this plant?

The Appspod Lane Biomass Facility will:

- Assist local businesses and industries by taking 60,000 tonnes per year of their waste timber;
- Generate approximately 6MW of 'clean' electricity which will be exported via the National Grid, enough to supply energy to several thousand homes;
- Provide a sustainable development with green credentials, contributing to the local economy by using local contractors during construction and creating up to 16 permanent new jobs as well as up to 100 indirect local jobs;
- Complement Hertfordshire County Council's waste management, climate change and renewable energy objectives in line with the EU's landfill directive. By turning recovered wood in to electricity, Navitas Environmental can help reduce the amount of waste which is sent to landfill and provide local renewable energy.

How can I become involved?

Navitas Environmental Ltd will work to be a good neighbour and involve residents and community representatives in the planning process. As well as organising this exhibition, launching our website and distributing information leaflets, we intend to set up a Community

Liaison Panel. This Panel, made up of people who have an interest in this project, will meet on a regular basis to discuss all aspects of the operation, to ensure the local community is kept fully informed and address any issues to be raised. Anyone interested in joining the Community Liaison Panel should contact Navitas on 0845 526 7788 or email info@navitasenvironmental.co.uk .

What happens next?

Navitas Environmental expects to submit a planning application to Hertfordshire County Council in the autumn of 2009.

- Summer 2009: we are consulting members of the public and stakeholders about our plans.
- Autumn 2009: we will submit a planning application to Hertfordshire County Council.
- Winter 2009/2010: we will submit an Environmental Permit application to the Environment Agency.
- Summer 2010: subject to planning permission, construction work will begin.