

Pamela Brennan
Birmingham City Council

6 June 2013

Dear Pamela,

Planning Application Number 2013/03165/PA; Proposed Installation of Biomass Boiler - Longbridge Town Centre

We are writing in response to the above application and hope that our comments will be considered by the Planning Committee in making its decision. We also hope that the City Council Cabinet takes on board, during its current review into the use of Biomass some of the broader policy questions we mention below.

1. PUBLIC CONSULTATION AND INFORMATION

We are aware that there was significant public disquiet over a proposal to install a Biomass plant at Cofton Nurseries last year. Given that this application comes so soon after that one, we believe it is likely that some local residents hearing about Sainsbury's application will either confuse the two or believe they are connected in some way. They are also likely to have similar worries about the local impact of the Sainsbury Biomass boiler as they expressed about the proposed Cofton nursery one.

We therefore believe that as clear as possible information is made readily available to local residents about the Sainsbury's Biomass boiler and that a Frequently Asked Questions sheet is included with this.

2. AIR QUALITY

We have met with representatives both of the City Council's regulatory function in respect of air quality and of the Planning department in the past two weeks. We have been supplied with the attached Air Quality report and have been assured by Council Officers that the air quality projections are well within UK and EU guidance. We have also been told that the air quality safeguards on the proposed biomass boiler are superior to those on several other biomass boilers already in use across the City.

We welcome these assurances but ask that there is regular monitoring of both the maintenance of the boiler and of air quality in the area.

3. ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTANABILITY OF BIOMASS

We were told by Council officers that Sainsbury apparently intend to use wood pellets as fuel for this boiler. This worries us. There is no information about the origins of the wood pellets likely to be used or if they are from sustainable sources. In any event, there is increasing concern about wood and crop-based bio-fuels, both because of deforestation/CO2 issues and because of the impact which expanded production of these kinds of bio fuels can have on global food prices and on global food security. The latter concerns have featured in a report published in the past week by the House of Commons International Development Committee, on which Richard Burden MP sits.

See:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmintdev/176/176.pdf>

We hope that in line with the City Council's overall objectives and Sainsbury's stated concern for the environment, the company agrees to ensure that the Biomass boiler is fuelled from sustainable sources and that this is recorded in the Planning process.

We look forward to hearing further from you on these matters.

Yours sincerely

Richard Burden MP, Cllr Andy Cartwright, Cllr Ian Cruise, Cllr Jess Phillips