



# EIA Non-Technical Summary

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Argoed Poultry Unit

R J Hughes & Co

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APPLICANTS DETAILS

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PROJECT

Erection of additional broiler poultry units at Argoed Farm

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## 1. Introduction

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- 1.1 This document contains a description of the proposal to extend the existing poultry unit at Argoed Farm, Powys, together with a non-technical summary of the findings from the Environmental Statement.
- 1.2 The applicant, R J Hughes & Co, is a family farming business which consists of Roger and Jane Hughes and their daughter Molly and sons Harry and George. The main farmstead is at Argoed and is owned by the family with additional land being rented in. Cropping currently consists of 400 acres of maize, 290 acre of Rye, 160 acres of wheat and 55 acres of grassland. A proportion of the crops grown are used as feedstock in the on-farm anaerobic digester (AD) plant. There is a 32,000 bird egg production unit and a small suckler cow herd. The chicken manure from the egg production unit and the cattle muck is used as feedstock in the AD unit. The AD unit produces both heat electricity some of which is used on the farm with the majority of electricity exported to the grid.
- 1.3 To help ensure the viability of the farming business for future generations, and to help meet the high demand for chickens, it is proposed to locate four broiler poultry buildings and associated infrastructure on the farmland. Three of these units will be new build and the existing egg unit will be converted into a fourth broiler building. An application is to be made to Natural resources Wales (NRW) for Environmental Permit to run concurrently with the planning application.

## 2. Proposals

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- 2.1 The proposed broiler poultry unit will consist of three new poultry rearing buildings measuring 121.92m x 20.12m with ridge heights of 4.82m. The tops of the ventilation chimneys will be at 5.67m. Feed bins will be situated to the front of the buildings and have a height of 5.63m. There will be a yard area and access around the buildings. The buildings will be specifically designed and constructed for broiler rearing and be fully compliant with the latest welfare standards. The buildings will be fully ventilated.
- 2.2 The existing layer building will be converted to provide broiler accommodation. It will be fitted with the same ventilation system as the new buildings. There will be 2 feed bins situated to the front the new buildings and to the side of the existing building which will have a capacity of 30 tonnes and measure 5.63 metres in height.
- 2.3 The existing on-farm AD unit will be used to provide heat to the poultry buildings with back up gas heaters for emergencies. There is a benefit from having poultry units and AD units together as the poultry manure is used as feedstock for the AD process. The AD unit produces electricity and heat through a CHP unit with the heat being used to heat the poultry buildings. The cycle is complete as the resulting digestate from the AD process is used as soil improver on the land to produce feedstock for the AD unit or animal feed.

## 3. The Production Cycle

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- 3.1 The birds will be grown up to 36 days with at least a 10 day turn around period. The break between crops could be longer at certain times of the year such as Christmas or if clean-out is delayed, leading to around 7 crops per year.
- 3.2 The birds will be brought in as day-old chicks at a 50-50 mix of males and females. At the end of the growing period they will be collected and transported to a processing plant. A 36-day growth cycle (with a thinning at day 30) will result in the birds being around 2.0kg in weight by clearout.
- 3.3 The chicks will be brought in from a hatchery with the average crop cycle being 36 days plus the cleanout period. Before the chicks arrive, the bedding is put in the buildings, which consist of wood shavings to a depth of around 2cm. The houses are warmed to a temperature of around 34 degrees. The

temperature is reduced as the birds grow older and the ventilation rate conversely increases. Feed will be supplied by the processing company with additional grain grown on the farm. It will be mixed according to the bird's requirements at each stage of growth. The protein and phosphorous levels are reduced as the birds get larger. The water will be supplied by nipple drinkers which offer water on demand but minimise spillage.

- 3.4 The birds are checked regularly, and any mortalities removed on a daily basis. The dead birds will be stored in vermin proof containers to await collection by Animal Health Approved contractors.
- 3.5 At the end of the production cycle, the birds are removed and transported to the processing site. The buildings then go through a thorough clean-out phase which involves dry-cleaning to remove organic material, wash down and disinfecting. The manure from the buildings will be utilised in the on-farm AD facility.

## 4. The Site

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- 4.1 The proposed development site is located at Argoed Farm, the farmstead for which is positioned approximately 700 metres to the south east of the B4569 highway running between Trefeglwys 1.3 miles by road to the south west of the site, and Caersws 3 miles to the east. Access to the yard is gained using the unnamed road which adjoins the B4569 to the north. The farm occupies a rural location, centrally positioned in relation to the agricultural land owned and farmed by R J Hughes & Co.
- 4.2 The existing egg production building is located to the east of the main farmstead and consists of an egg laying unit and two feed bins. The site for the proposed new broiler units is immediately to the north of the existing egg unit which is to be converted. The site is currently down to grassland and is grazed by livestock and cut for hay/silage. There is existing access into the site which was improved as part of the development of the existing poultry unit. The total site area is around 3.20ha. The farm AD site is situated to the south of the existing egg unit.
- 4.3 The closest residential dwellings are the farmhouse at Argoed Farm which is occupied by the applicants and Tan-y-Graig which is occupied by the applicant's sister. There are several other individual properties within 400 metres of the site which have been considered in this ES. The village of Trefeglwys is approximately 1.3 miles by road to the south west of the site, and Caersws 3 miles to the east.

## 5. Policy Framework

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- 5.1 The proposals relate to an agricultural development and all potential environmental impacts have been fully considered. It is considered that the scheme complies with the relevant policies of the development plan and the broader policy objectives of the Planning Policy Wales document and more specifically Technical Advice Note 6.

## 6. Policy Framework

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- 6.1 This EIA has been based on advice previously received from Local Planning Authorities, and Berrys experience of what has been required for similar applications recently submitted. The following information will be included:

- An assessment of alternative sites
- Planning policy background
- Air quality, health and climate
- Landscape, visual and historic impact,
- Traffic, Access and Highway Safety
- Amenity (odour, dust, flies),
- Ecology,
- Noise and vibration,
- Water resources
- Socio-economic,
- Archaeology and heritage
- Ammonia deposition

## 7. Highway Impact

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- 7.1 A full highway assessment has been carried out. This sets out that the overall increase in movements in any one growing cycle predicted to rise from 38 to 80 two way trips. The development is in addition to the existing farm business and some trip savings are expected from the current farm operations.
- 7.2 As the applicants live at the farm and will operate the day-to-day running of the broiler business it is considered to be a sustainable development from a transport perspective.
- 7.3 The surrounding road network is considered to have sufficient capacity to accommodate the additional vehicle movements, without adversely impacting travel times or highway safety. Improvements were made to the farm access as part of the previous application for the laying unit.

## 8. Noise

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- 8.1 The sound climate around Argoed Farm consists of agricultural activities including from the existing poultry unit and natural sounds such as birdsong.

- 8.2 The proposed development will generate some noise mainly from the ventilation fans and also HGV traffic on the access track. A full Noise Assessment was prepared as part of the EIA which considered the different stages of ventilation through the cycle and HGV movements.
- 8.3 Overall conclusions in the NIA are that there are no significant issues relating to noise associated with the proposed facility that would be sufficient to deny the approval of planning permission on the grounds of noise. It is an agricultural operation in an agricultural setting.
- 8.4 Ventilation is controlled and takes place at a variable rate. The fans will very rarely, if at all operate to full capacity and minimum ventilation requirements will apply. A further source of noise is HGV traffic, however this is already one of the existing noise sources and has been assessed as being low impact.
- 8.5 The facility will operate under an Environmental Permit issued by NRW. This will require a Noise Management Plan to be prepared to include noise mitigation. This will also include a Noise Complaints Form to enable complaints to be logged and appropriately investigated.
- 8.6 There will be no significant impact as a result of noise generated by the proposed development.

## 9. Odour, Amenity, Ammonia

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- 9.1 An assessment of the potential for odour, dust, flies and pests to be produced by the proposed development was carried out. A full Odour Impact Assessment was submitted with the EIA in addition to the amenity risk assessment. The assessment concluded that no significant impacts are likely given the location of the proposals and the range of internal controls and mitigation measures to be applied.
- 9.2 A full ammonia assessment was carried out which concludes that the proposed broiler development will actually reduce the ammonia impact from the current situation as a result of the birds not ranging outside as currently. The proposed development is therefore regarded as a significant improvement in air quality terms at ecological receptor locations.

## 10. Landscape and Visual Impact

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- 10.1 The potential impacts of the development on the landscape and visual amenity have been examined and are considered to be not significant. The

proposed poultry buildings are on the site of the existing free range unit and will not introduce a totally new feature in the landscape. There are limited views of the site from surrounding visual receptors. The landscape is capable of accommodating the development and additional mitigation works will further lessen any visual impact. Overall, the landscape and visual assessment has established that the proposed poultry installation will not have a significant effect on the baseline conditions in terms of both landscape character and visual amenity.

## 11. Ecology and Trees

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- 11.1 A full Ecological Assessment and Phase 1 Ecological Survey has been carried out and it is considered that there will no impacts of major or intermediate significance on habitats or protected species. There will be no significant loss of habitat as a result of the development during the construction, operational or decommissioning phase. Planting to take place as part of the proposed landscaping works will provide an intermediate positive effect.
- 11.2 The proposals will affect an approximate 85m length of BAP habitat hedgerow, however, proposed tree planting and mitigation will compensate for this loss.
- 11.3 Overall the Ecology Report concludes that any potential negative impacts can be minimised through the proposed mitigation measures. Overall the ecological value of the site will be enhanced.

## 12. Archaeology and Historic Features

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- 12.1 A Heritage Impact Assessment found that the site itself has no designated historic assets within the red line boundary although there are several within the 1km study area. The HER does highlight several historic assets courtesy of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust nearby the site. There are historic assets within the village which were not taken forward for assessment due to their distance from the site.
- 12.2 Argoed Farm is an example of a traditional farmstead which has seen significant redevelopment and modernisation. It is still a thriving working farm which forms an important part of the landscape and cultural identity of the area. There are only two historic assets with potential to be affected, one a listed building, and both outside the site. The proposals will be of neutral impact to their agricultural, rural setting, reduced by a mitigation

strategy to ensure the development sits sensitively into the existing environment.

## 13. Water and Drainage

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- 13.1 There is an existing ditch located to the north of the access track leading up to the site. Water from the site presently runs down to this track and ultimately enters this ditch. The ditch leads to an ordinated watercourse at the bottom of the slope, crossing beneath the access track. The ordinary watercourse then runs off to the south and eventually joins the Afon Trannon, which is a tributary to the River Severn / Afon Hafren.
- 13.2 The site is likely to have variable degrees of permeability and when constructing the existing poultry shed heavy clay ground was encountered. An outline scheme of drainage has been developed which deals with the eventuality that some attenuation and a controlled discharge with a hydrobrake or similar device to an existing watercourse will be required.
- 13.3 The proposed system of surface water drainage will consist of various components to collect, convey and treat surface water. It is proposed that water from the building roofs will be collected via a combination of rainwater harvesting tanks and stone-filled filter drains. The yard areas of the development will require a system of positive drainage intercepted by gullies, with diverter valves fitted for times of washing down vehicles and residual muck deposited on the concrete surfaces following cleaning of the buildings between cycles. During washing down, the diverter valves will be engaged to direct water to the underground effluent tanks in order to prevent pollution of the surface water system.
- 13.4 An attenuation pond is proposed to be located to the east of the lower-level buildings within the loop of the track leading between the lower and upper yard areas. The attenuation pond will be designed as an integral landscaped feature of the site and will be utilised to maximise the biodiversity benefits of the development. Post development the water flow will broadly follow the same flow path as existing.

## 14. Conclusions

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- 14.1 To conclude the proposal has been fully assessed in accordance with the Town & Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2017. The environmental impacts arising from the proposed development are considered to not be significant. There are impacts arising

from some aspects of the scheme which are considered to be of minor significance however these will be addressed by appropriate mitigation and enhancement.

- 14.2 A full assessment and analysis of impacts are contained with the accompanying Environmental Statement.