



APPENDIX 5: NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

ENVIRONMENTAL PERMIT VARIATION
APPLICATION

On behalf of

RJ Hughes

BERRYS

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1. Introduction

This document contains a description of the proposal to extend the existing poultry unit at Argoed, Powys, together with a non-technical summary of the findings from the Environmental Statement.

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.

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.

2. Proposals

Three purpose designed broiler poultry buildings will be constructed with the existing layer building being converted into a fourth broiler building. The buildings will be of portal framed construction with insulated box profile metal sheeting to the walls and box metal profile sheet roofs. The buildings have been sited according to the ground levels as set out on the topographical survey and to best fit the site and surrounding area including the existing building. The internal flooring will be a smooth, easily washable concrete floor on a damp proof membrane. The walls will be on a poured concrete foundation.

There will be 8 feed bins situated between the buildings, which will have a capacity of 30 tonnes and measure 6.6 metres in height and 2.8 metres in diameter.

The buildings are heated via the existing AD Plant, located to the south of the poultry unit.

A yard area will be situated to the front of the sheds to allow for access and turning. The buildings will be accessed via the existing track which runs up to the existing poultry egg laying building.

3. The Production Cycle

The stocking of the buildings is dictated by the poultry company who can request heavy birds are produced rather than the standard weight birds. Standards are grown to a lower weight over a shorter period than heavier birds. The birds will be grown up to 36 days with a thin at 30 days. There will be at least a 10 day turn around period between cycles. 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.

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. For the comfort and productivity of the birds the temperature within the houses must be regulated. The fans will operate at a variable rate dependent upon the age of the birds and will only be switched off when the sheds are vacant. There is sufficient fan capacity (including back-up systems) to ensure that the comfort of the birds is maintained even in the event that the outside ambient temperature rises above 30°C.

The birds will be grown for a food processing company that supplies chicken to the retail trade. In order to supply the retail trade, all farmers must as a minimum, be members of the independently audited Red Tractor Farm Assured Chicken Scheme (formerly ACP). The scheme requires farmers to comply with strict management requirements such as stocking at a maximum of 38kg/m². Some retailers now require the supply of 'Higher Welfare Chicken' (HWC), which includes those endorsed by the RSPCA Freedom Foods Scheme stocked to a lower rate of 30kg/m².

The chicks will be brought in from a hatchery with the average crop cycle being 36 days plus the clean-out 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 buildings will be heated from the on-farm AD unit. 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 birds requirements at each stage of growth. The protein and phosphorous levels are 16 reduced as the birds get larger. The water will be supplied by nipple drinkers which offer water on demand but minimise spillage.

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. Collection at poultry units takes place more often than with other livestock enterprises and can be every second or third day. 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 normal turn around period is around 10 days before the buildings can be re-stocked and the cycle starts again. The break between crops could be longer at certain times

of the year such as Christmas or if clean-out is delayed. The manure from the buildings will be utilised in the on-farm AD facility.

4. The Site

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.

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.

5. Policy Framework

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. Key Issues

An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) has been produced as part of the planning application to Powys County Council. The 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 and visual impact,
- Traffic, Access and Highway Safety
- Amenity (odour, dust, flies),
- Ecology,
- Noise and vibration,
- Water resources (surface water, groundwater and flood risk) & soils,
- Socio-economic,
- Archaeology and heritage,
- Ammonia deposition

7. Highway Impact

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.

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.

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

The sound climate around Argoed consists of agricultural activities, road traffic noise and natural sounds such as birdsong.

A full Noise Assessment was prepared as part of the EIA and permit application. The proposed development will generate some noise, however, given the nature of the noise, the separation distances between potential receptors and the mitigation measures that will be implemented it is not anticipated that this will represent a nuisance to local residents or amenity users. There will be no significant impact as a result of noise generated by the proposed development.

9. Odour, Amenity, Ammonia

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 and permit application, 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.

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

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 egg laying unit and adjoining grassland and will not introduce a 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

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.

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

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.

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

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 ordinately 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.

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.

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.

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

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.

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