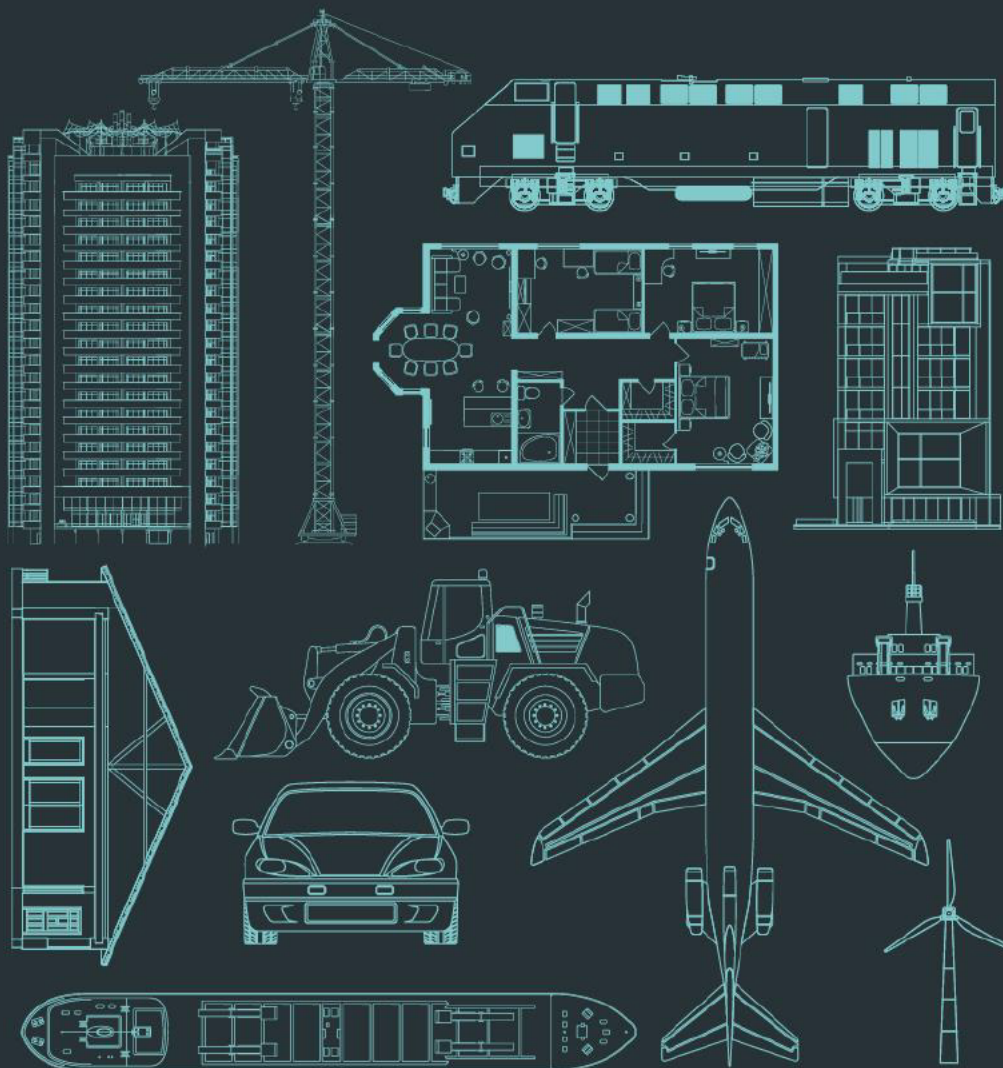


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Community Engagement Report

Maelor Foods Ltd, Cross Lanes, Wrexham

Variation of Condition Application

August 2022

1 Executive Summary

BECG has been appointed by Maelor Foods Ltd to undertake community and stakeholder engagement regarding proposals to increase production at the existing processing facility at Pickhill Lane from 1million to 2million birds a week.

The existing facility is currently limited via planning conditions to a maximum of 1million birds per week. As such, a S73 application has been submitted seeking permission from Wrexham County Borough Council to vary three synonymous planning conditions attached to three separate planning permissions at the Maelor Foods site off Pickhill Lane, South of the village of Cross Lanes, Wrexham.

Engagement with key stakeholders and neighbours of the site has been undertaken during 2022 to explain the rationale for the increased production, the socio-economic benefits this could bring to the Wrexham and North Wales economy and any actions that the business can take as it continues to be a good neighbour.

This document outlines in detail the scope of the community engagement efforts that have taken place and outlines what further steps Maelor Foods will be undertaking to keep local residents and other interested parties informed. It also details the responses which have been received from those who have participated in the engagement process and Maelor Foods' response.

The socio-economic benefits that Maelor Foods' existing operations provide to the local area are widely understood and supported by elected representatives and other stakeholders. Support was also expressed for the additional benefits provided by the increased production at the site given the ambitions of both Wrexham County Borough Council and the Welsh Government for the agricultural and food sectors.

BECG will continue to update relevant stakeholders and residents throughout the planning process, on behalf of Maelor Foods Ltd.

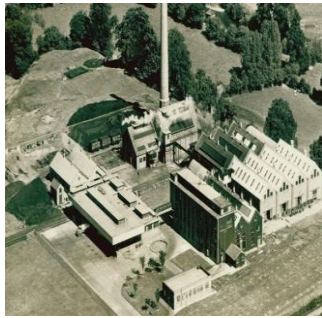


Aerial Image of the Maelor Foods Site at Pickhill Lane

2 Background

2.1 Proposal site

The site at Pickhill Lane has operated for over 80 years as an industrial / employment site withing the agriculture and food sectors. It was operated as a dairy factory prior to its purchase by Maelor Foods Ltd in 2014. By 2017, over £20m had been invested into the site to convert it into a poultry processing factory, with a major refurbishment project improving the image of the site and installing state of the art processing technology, to make one of the highest rated sites of its kind in Europe.



1952



1972



2002



2019

Aerial images of the proposal site over time

2.2 Proposal

Maelor Foods Ltd is proposing to submit a S73 application which will seek permission to vary existing planning condition that limits the number of birds being processed at the site, from one to two million birds a week.

This will see a significant increase in economic output and have a major positive impact on their supply chain, both upstream and downstream, with many of their suppliers also based in or near to Wrexham and Wales. These benefits include the prospect of 125 additional jobs on site and much greater increases in relation to the supporting business infrastructure within North Wales.

A new production line and associated on-site investments (Effluent Treatment Plant) to ensure compliance with the separate Environmental Permit, represents an £18 million investment in the facility itself and the expectation that there will be a £165 million uplift to the wider supply chain. This is further to the original investment of £20 million upon acquisition of the site for refurbishment / equipment.

If permission is granted, Maelor Foods Ltd will improve the existing Pickhill Lane / A525 highway junction via a S106 contribution to enable HGVs accessing the junction to turn left out of Pickhill Lane without crossing the carriageway.

3 Stakeholder & Community engagement

3.1 Pre-application consultation

Article 4 of Part 1A of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Wales) (Amendment) Order 2016 sets out the requirements for statutory pre-application consultation on projects comprising 'major development'.

This requirement does not apply to proposed applications made under Section 73 (determination of applications to develop land without compliance with conditions previously attached).

However, Maelor Foods Ltd is conscious about the level of interest previously expressed about its operations at Pickhill Lane and during 2022 has sought to undertake a process of community engagement with the site's nearest neighbours and relevant elected representatives prior to submission of the Section 73 application.

The programme of community engagement has included:

- Letters to the site's nearest neighbours, local ward councillor, community council, relevant local members of the Senedd, members of Wrexham County Borough Council's Executive Board and Planning Committee outlining the proposals and offering an opportunity to meet with Maelor Foods
- Meetings with elected representatives, statutory consultees, local residents and other interested parties to discuss Maelor Foods Ltd's ambitions for the site and how it intends to mitigate any additional impacts of the additional birds processed at the site

An example of the letters sent to stakeholders is available in the appendix of this report.

The community engagement process has identified strong support for the social economic benefits that Maelor Foods Ltd contributes to the Wrexham / North Wales economy. As part of the application process, Maelor Foods commissioned an in-depth economic study, to ascertain the benefits that a growth in production at the Pickhill Lane site would bring.

The report detailed significant economic benefits, including an additional 125 permanent on-site staff and a total off-site uplift of 185 jobs throughout the UK economy. These jobs will generate Gross Value Added (GVA) of £60million annually.

A new production line represents a major capital investment of at least £18 million. With the new production line in place Maelor will have made capital investment into the agricultural manufacturing and construction sector of over £40 million in a decade. This investment will also benefit the local and Welsh economy.

3.2 Stakeholder Engagement and Feedback

Meetings have been held with a number of stakeholders prior to submission of the Section 73 application. Stakeholders were identified following a mapping exercise and included all relevant elected representatives representing communities surrounding the Pickhill Lane site and other relevant parties.

Meetings were offered, including a tour of the existing facility, to the following stakeholders:

Category	Role
Wrexham County Borough Council Councillors	Leader of the Council Deputy Leader of the Council Lead Member for Economy & Regeneration Lead Member for Planning & Public Protection All members of the Planning Committee Ward member for Marchwiel
Wrexham County Borough Council Officers	Business Support Manager Head of Economic Development & Regeneration
Senedd Constituency Member	Member for Clwyd South Member for Wrexham
Senedd Regional Members	Regional Members for North Wales
Parliament	Member for Clwyd South
Community Council	Sesswick Community Council Clerk
Welsh Government	Senior Business Manager
National Farmers Union	Policy Officer

Following the invitation to visit the Pickhill Lane site, meetings were arranged with the following stakeholders. All were offered the opportunity to tour the facility and ask questions of the project team. Stakeholders listed with a * were briefed via MS Teams:

- Simon Baynes MP
- Llyr Gruffydd MS
- Mark Isherwood MS *
- Councillor Nigel Williams, Lead Member for Economy and Regeneration at Wrexham County Borough Council
- Rebecca Lowry, Head of Economic Development and Regeneration at Wrexham County Borough Council
- Marcus Hughson, Food & Drink Directorate, Welsh Government
- Dafydd Jarett, Policy Advisor, NFU

The following stakeholders declined the opportunity to meet with Maelor Foods either via a tour of the site or via MS Teams. Though Lesley Griffiths MS was not able to attend a meeting, the Welsh Government was represented by Marcus Hughson of the Food & Drink Directorate.

- Councillor John Pritchard, Wrexham County Borough Council member for Marchwiel
- Sesswick Community Council

All members of Wrexham Council's Planning Committee were invited to attend the site on 24 June 2022. Unfortunately, the invitation to do so was declined

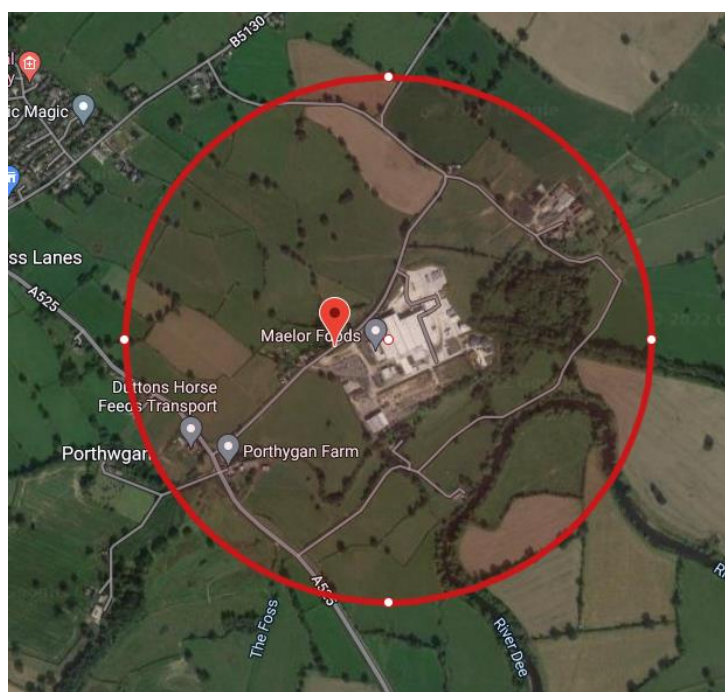
Feedback from these meetings has been highly constructive and has helped to inform the project team on the views of local stakeholders and political leaders, especially regarding the importance of business growth in Wrexham, with a view to the positive socio-economic benefits Maelor Foods Ltd's operations at Pickhill Lane provide to the local and regional economy.

Other topics raised during the meetings included:

- The potential environmental impacts of increased production on the site and how these would be managed
- The need for Maelor Foods to engage with its neighbours prior to the submission of a planning application to provide reassurance about potential impacts on those living closest to the site
- Support for planned improvements to the Pickhill Lane / A525 junction

3.3 Neighbour Engagement and Feedback

Letters were delivered to the site's nearest neighbours on 09 June 2022 explaining Maelor Foods Ltd's ambitions for the site and inviting residents to meet with the team at separate one-to-one meetings, held on-site on Friday 17 June 2022.



Distribution of one-to-one meeting letters to nearest neighbours

In response to the letters inviting residents to meet with Maelor Foods, two meetings took place on Friday 17 June 2022:

- Resident of Pickhill Old Hall
- Residents of Parkleigh House

The main concerns expressed during the one-to-one meetings with neighbours was the potential impact of increased HGVs accessing the site. Maelor Foods Ltd has instructed a specialist consultancy, Vectos, to undertake a traffic assessment to understand the impact that growth will have on the surrounding road network, specifically the junction on Pickhill Lane.

The traffic assessment concluded that the local road network operates with spare capacity and low traffic flows through the day. In addition, there have been no record accidents on the local road network in the most recent five-year period.

The help improve the local road network Maelor Foods Ltd is proposing to undertake improvements to realign the A525 / Pickhill Lane junction to facilitate improved movements of larger vehicles. A 2m wide footpath is also part of the plans, to ensure that pedestrians are given enough space to use the road.

Maelor Foods Ltd is proposing these adaptations as a way to improve safety on Pickhill Lane and the A525 for all road users and will be offering to fund the implementation of the junction improvements as part of the planning process.

The additional birds processed at the facility will increase the number of vehicles associated with the site. The potential impact is likely to increase by up-to 15 vehicle movements per hour, when compared to the existing operation. During the majority of daytime hours, the change in GV movements will be less than 9 additional movements per hour. This equates to an average of one extra vehicle every seven minutes. Movements will be coordinated within the inter-peak period to maximise operational efficiency but also minimise potential conflict on the surrounding network. Movements will also be coordinated to ensure that there is minimal activity during night-time (22:00 – 06:00) hours.

Overall, it is considered that although there will be an increase in trip movements associated with the development proposals, there are mechanisms in place to manage arrivals and departures and a significant highway safety improvement is proposed at the A525/Pickhill Lane junction. The phased increase up to 2 million birds will allow movements to be monitored and managed, and when combined with the mitigation proposed, it is considered that the development proposals could be accommodated on the local highway network.

Potential noise impacts were also raised, particularly during unsocial hours. Residents were complimentary about the steps that Maelor Foods has previously taken to reduce noise impacts and options were discussed to further reduce this. Maelor Foods Ltd will continue to undertake further engagement with the site's neighbours to provide further reassurance about how local amenity will be protected.

3.4 Media Coverage

To further promote the proposals a press release launching the consultation website and announcing the proposals was distributed to *Wrexham.com*, *The Leader* and *North Wales Live*.

The press release received the following pieces of coverage, all of which publicised the details of the scheme and how people could participate in the consultation:

- *Wrexham.com* (10.6.22): <https://www.leaderlive.co.uk/news/20201534.jobs-created-wrexham-thanks-maelor-foods/>
- *Wrexham.com* (27.6.22) <https://www.wrexham.com/news/clwyd-south-mp-visits-maelor-foods-219689.html>
- *North Wales Live* (10.6.22): <https://www.dailypost.co.uk/news/north-wales-news/north-wales-chicken-abattoir-could-24195065>

4 Conclusions & Next Steps

4.1 Pre-application Engagement Conclusions

The pre-application community engagement programme undertaken by Maelor Foods Ltd has sought to ensure that local residents and interested parties are aware of the business' ambitions for its operations at Pickhill Lane and are able to discuss them with the team.

It is clear that there is support for Maelor Foods Ltd's presence at Pickhill Lane due to the socio-economic benefits that the business provides to the Wrexham and North Wales economy.

Near neighbours who took part in the engagement process also acknowledged the efforts that the business has taken since it began operating at the site to improve its operational processes and engage with the local community.

Nevertheless, there was some concern about the potential impacts that the increase in production at the site would have on the amenity of local residents.

This is something that Maelor Foods Ltd recognises and the business will continue to work with its neighbours to address any concerns they have about its ongoing operations.

4.2 Liaison with Wrexham County Borough Council

Given the interest shown by residents and stakeholders, BECG will ensure information continually flows through existing channels to all interested parties throughout the determination period on behalf of Maelor Foods Ltd.

This will include a willingness from the project team to meet with neighbours to the site and elected representatives, such as Sesswick Community Council and the ward member for Marchwiel to ensure that they are kept informed.

We look forward to continuing to work positively with both officers and members of Wrexham County Borough Council to ensure an efficient path through the determination period.

This includes providing timely responses to requests for information from the planning department and providing relevant information to elected members when they consider the planning application.

5 Appendices

5.1 Copies of Meeting Invitation Letters



16th May 2022

Information line: 0800 298 7040

Dear

Maelor Foods has operated a state-of-the-art poultry processing facility in Wrexham since 2014, investing over £20m into our facility and creating 251 local jobs. Our facility is one of the most advanced of its kind in Europe that processes home-reared chicken of the highest grade for supply to national retailers and food service companies. Since 2014, production at our facility has steadily grown and in 2019, we received consent to increase the capacity from 400,000 to 1,000,000 birds a week.

We are proud to say that, as of April, we have been fully operating at this increased capacity. Reaching this milestone will mean economic growth of around £101m in and around the Wrexham area, at a time it is most vital. We would like to invite you to visit the site, or otherwise meet with you, to provide you with an update on the successful expansion of our business and the wider benefits this will bring to Wrexham.

The UK's departure from the EU has changed the way our food supply chain operates, with national retailers seeking to source more of their produce from UK farmers and growers.

Maelor Foods has directly benefited from this. The additional demand for home-reared chicken, combined with our BRC AA grade rating (the highest industry recognised certification) and Red Tractor certification, means that the Wrexham facility is a sought-after site due to our adherence to stringent production and animal welfare standards.

As a company at the forefront of our industry we are continuously looking for opportunities that would allow us to invest further into the Wrexham area; to create new jobs, grow our business (and that of our supply chain), and improve our sustainability. Part of the aim of the meeting would be to discuss these opportunities and understand how we could best implement these plans.

As a company, we are committed to engaging with the Wrexham community, sponsoring Marchwiel Villa, providing a minibus service for a local care home and raising funds for the Nightingale House Hospice. As such, we would like to meet with you in your capacity as a local stakeholder and explore avenues for even greater engagement with the community.

My colleague Kevin Whitmore will be in touch with you to see if a meeting or site visit is of interest to you.

Yours sincerely,

Maelor Foods

Maelor Foods Ltd
Pickhill Lane, Cross Lanes, Wrexham, LL13 0UE
Telephone No: 01978 802337
Registered Office: Salisbury House, Vulcan Road, Bilston, West Midlands, WV14 7HT
Company Registration No. 9156025 VAT Number. GB 236860785