

MAELOR FOODS, PICKHILL LANE

REMOVAL OF CONDITION - PLANNING SUBMISSION – NOVEMBER 2018

1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This note provides information to accompany the submission of planning applications to remove a condition which currently restricts the number of birds that can be processed each week at the Maelor Foods site on Pickhill Lane.
- 1.2 The condition currently restricts the number of birds that can be processed each week to 400,000 which, following changes in overall UK market demand, is now overly restrictive and does not provide Maelor Foods with sufficient flexibility to respond positively as a key local employer and business operator in Wrexham.
- 1.3 Planning applications were previously submitted to Wrexham County Borough Council (WCBC) in December 2017 seeking to remove the relevant conditions restricting operations. Having progressed through the planning system, they were reported to the Planning Committee meeting on the 1st October 2018 with no WCBC Highways objection and an overall recommendation for approval, subject to revised conditions rather than removed conditions. The revised conditions would permit an increase in operation at the Maelor Foods site from 400,000 birds per week to a figure in the region of 1,000,000 birds per week. There were also new conditions suggested by WCBC relating to improvements to visibility at the Maelor Foods site access and a highway improvement at the A525/Pickhill Lane junction.
- 1.4 The original applications were accompanied by a number of submissions which included a review of the operation of the local highway network (including traffic data), a description of the potential future operation of the Maelor Foods site should the condition be removed, quantification of the previous activity associated with the adjacent Lloyd Fraser site, a vehicle tracking assessment at the A525/Pickhill Lane junction and associated highway improvement, additional consideration of visibility splays at the site access, and a strategy for managing vehicle movements based on 'quiet delivery' principles. A copy of the previous submission documents are included in **Appendix 1**.
- 1.5 Despite having been previously reported to the Planning Committee with a recommendation for approval, and no objection from WCBC Highways, the application was refused. This document therefore seeks to provide additional information and clarity on the potential future operation of the Maelor Foods site such that the Planning Committee can make a more informed decision regarding the impact of development proposals at Maelor Foods.

2 MAELOR FOODS AND LLOYD FRASER OPERATIONS

2.1 Critical to the determination of the previous applications was the understanding of the heavy goods vehicle (HGV) movements that have been accommodated at the site access and on the local highway network. This has previously been a result of the operation of two separate businesses generating HGV movements; Maelor Foods (or previously First Milk, Dairy Crest, Cadbury's etc.) and Lloyd Fraser. Each are discussed in turn in this section.

Lloyd Fraser

- 2.2 Information was previously presented regarding the operation of the adjacent Lloyd Fraser site. It has been confirmed that the historic activity at the site associated with their dairy services business may have been in the region of 140-160 movements per day, 7 days a week, for their own HGVs, subcontractors and other deliveries. In addition, Lloyd Fraser indicated that they operated a heavy servicing facility which may have resulted in an additional 20-40 movements including assorted vans and other commercial vehicles (i.e. some HGVs).
- 2.3 Since the previous submissions, further information has now been provided by Lloyd Fraser which confirms the daily HGV activity that has been accommodated at the Lloyd Fraser site. A copy of a letter from Lloyd Fraser's Depot Manager, dated November 2018, is included in **Appendix 2**.
- 2.4 The activity at the Lloyd Fraser site would have been at a time when the Maelor Foods site (i.e. First Milk) was operating unrestricted, but with around 26 total HGV movements per day. Therefore, the combined activity on Pickhill Lane associated with both sites could potentially have been in the region of 166-186 HGV movements per day.
- 2.5 Historically, the Lloyd Fraser site has operated as a completely separate business. However, it should be noted that WCBC have, as of October 2018, approved a planning application for the change of use of the site from a transport logistics depot to use ancillary to the neighbouring Maelor Foods site. If implemented, this would reduce the number of potential business operators on Pickhill Lane and would ensure a single business (Maelor Foods) has control over the number of HGV movements accessing the site and using Pickhill Lane.
- 2.6 It should be noted that the implementation of the approved change of use application would only occur if the Maelor Foods site were able to increase their production. Without the implementation of this planning application, the site could, in planning terms, recommence activity as a separate business with HGV movements of a magnitude similar to those previously accommodated.
- 2.7 It is understood that, should Maelor Foods not increase their production, Lloyd Fraser have made initial inquiries about the possibility of recommencing activity at the site, as referenced in **Appendix 3**.

Maelor Foods

- 2.8 As part of the original Maelor Foods application, information was presented associated with the operation of 400,000 birds per week. The information highlighted that HGV activity on a weekday may increase when compared with the previous First Milk operations, but this was not a significant increase and therefore WCBC Highways had no objections. For clarity, the average weekday flows associated with the permitted 400,000 birds per week are presented in **Table 2.1**.

Maelor Foods	Weekday Arrivals	Weekday Departures	Total
HGV Movements	14	14	29

* figures rounded to nearest integer

Table 2.1: Average Weekday HGV Movements (permitted 400,000 birds per week)

- 2.9 It should be noted that the original poultry processing application focussed on average weekday HGV activity to and from the site. Whilst it was acknowledged that some activity has always, and would continue to be, accommodated on weekends with no restrictions, the weekday operation represented the majority of HGV activity at a time when flows on the local highway network would also be higher. This therefore represented a robust assessment when viewed in the context that activity at weekends would be lower and background traffic flows would also be lower. This was previously agreed with WCBC Highways.
- 2.10 As part of the most recent applications to remove the condition, information regarding the potential future operation of Maelor Foods was presented. This built upon the methodology that was previously agreed as part of the original poultry processing application with a focus on average weekday activity. A summary of the potential future weekday operation associated with 1,000,000 birds per week is presented in **Table 2.2**.

Maelor Foods	Weekday Arrivals	Weekday Departures	Total
HGV Movements	36	36	72

* figures rounded to nearest integer

Table 2.2: Average Weekday HGV Movements (potential 1,000,000 birds per week)

- 2.11 As previously noted, some movements would continue to occur at weekends but this would be less than the weekday operation, and weekend background traffic flows on the network would be low.

Net Trip Impact

- 2.12 Based on the information presented regarding activity at both the Maelor Foods site and Lloyd Fraser, an indicative summary of historic activity and potential future activity is presented in **Table 2.3**.

Scenario	Maelor Site	Lloyd Fraser Site	Total
First Milk Operation	26	140/160	166/186
Approved Maelor Foods Operation (400,000 birds) plus Lloyd Fraser	29	140/160	169/189
Potential Maelor Foods Operation (1,000,000 birds)	72	0	72
Difference	+43	-140/-160	-97/-117

* figures rounded to nearest integer

Table 2.3: Indicative Historic and Potential Future HGV Movements on Pickhill Lane

- 2.13 The indicative summary presented in **Table 2.3** demonstrates that although activity associated with production at Maelor Foods will increase compared to First Milk operations, the overall activity on Pickhill Lane may be lower than previous levels. The previously approved change of use planning application for the Lloyd Fraser site, if implemented, provides additional comfort that activity would not increase above levels previously accommodated at the site access and on Pickhill Lane.
- 2.14 In addition, the figures in **Table 2.3** do not account for activity at the Maelor site associated with operations before First Milk. Again, information has previously been presented by First Milk indicating that when the site was operated before them by Dairy Crest, their packing operation could well have been far greater and therefore HGV movements would also have been greater.
- 2.15 Overall, it is evident that the HGV activity associated with the potential operation of 1,000,000 birds per week, combined with the implementation of the change of use application for the Lloyd Fraser site, would be significantly less than the combined historic activity associated with both sites when operated independently. This has been acknowledged by WCBC who have previously confirmed that there are no overall objections.

3 MAELOR FOODS SITE ACCESS

- 3.1 As previously noted, the existing main access junction has been used at the Maelor Foods site for the majority of its time whilst operating as The Milk Marketing Board, Dairy Crest, First Milk and now Maelor Foods. It has since accommodated regular, daily HGV movements with minimal conflict given the very low flows on Pickhill Lane.
- 3.2 The site access was previously improved to maximise the visibility to the north-east as part of the original poultry processing application. Following the submission of traffic flow and speed data on Pickhill Lane, WCBC Highways have confirmed that the visibility to the north-east is in accordance with recorded vehicle speeds and is therefore appropriate.

- 3.3 The visibility splay to the south east has historically been restricted by a hedge to the south-west. Despite having previously accommodated a higher number of traffic movements, Maelor Foods explored options to improve the visibility splay to the south-west, as requested by WCBC Highways. Maelor Foods have subsequently secured the acquisition of land to the south-west such that the existing hedge can be repositioned to maximise the visibility splay.
- 3.4 **Drawing No. VN70805-D106** demonstrates the visibility splays that will be achievable at the site access. WCBC Highways have confirmed that the provision of the required splays, which are in line with recorded vehicle speeds on Pickhill Lane, would represent a significant improvement.

4 A525/PICKHILL LANE JUNCTION

- 4.1 As part of previous discussions with WCBC Highways, consideration was given to the movement of HGVs at the A525/Pickhill Lane junction. It was noted that the flows on both Pickhill Lane and the A525 are low throughout the day and visibility is currently provided in accordance with recorded vehicle speeds. In addition, the junction already accommodates large vehicle movements with no recorded accidents, and drivers are able to identify when to complete their manoeuvre and view movements at the junction accordingly.
- 4.2 Notwithstanding this information, it was agreed with WCBC Highways that some form of improvement to better accommodate large vehicle movements would be beneficial. **Drawing No. VN70805-D108** presents an improvement to the northern side of the junction with works delivered by Maelor Foods contained within the adopted highway (and subject to the appropriate highways agreements). This is a betterment over the existing operation and would be of benefit to all network users by facilitating the movement of large vehicles at this location.
- 4.3 As part of the junction improvement, it was previously considered that there are options to improve the overall road surfacing in the immediate vicinity (including surface treatments which have previously been provided at the junction), a refresh of white lining and on-carriageway 'SLOW' markings on the approaches, as well as any approach signage (including the existing 40mph gateway on the A525). WCBC Highways confirmed that this would be a complimentary measure to provide benefit to the local network and it was agreed that the detail could be dealt with by a suitably worded condition.
- 4.4 Since the previous applications were determined, additional consideration has been given to the improvements to the overall road surfacing, traffic signs and road markings. **Drawing No. VN70805-D110** presents an indicative layout which retains the improvement to the radius (as previously agreed) but provides additional detail as to what the complimentary measures might include. For clarity, this seeks to build on the principles that were previously implemented at the junction and have become worn over time. Whilst it is considered that the exact detail of the road surfacing, traffic signs and road markings can still be dealt with via a suitably worded condition, the provision of an indicative layout at this stage is considered to be beneficial.

5 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 This note provides additional information and clarity on a number of elements associated with the proposed removal of condition which currently restricts the number of birds that can be processed at the Maelor Foods site each week.
- 5.2 Following the presentation of information to WCBC, it has been agreed that HGV activity on Pickhill Lane may have been in the region of 166-186 HGV movements per day associated with operations at the Maelor Foods site and Lloyd Fraser. Given that Maelor Foods have secured planning permission to use the Lloyd Fraser site for purposes ancillary to their main operation, there is effectively only one operator (if implemented) generating HGV movements, and therefore the increased production at Maelor Foods is not predicted to increase the overall level of activity on Pickhill Lane or at the A525 junction compared to previous operations.
- 5.3 The Maelor Foods site access, with associated improvements to the visibility to the south-west, will provide a safe and suitable access to facilitate development of the site. The visibility provided at the site access will be in accordance with recorded vehicle speeds.
- 5.4 In terms of the A525/Pickhill Lane junction, WCBC Highways have confirmed that the modification to the radius and refresh of the signs and lines would be of significant benefit to both vehicles visiting the development site and for users of the highway generally. Additional information has been presented as part of this note to demonstrate what the overall highway improvement package would consist of.
- 5.5 In summary, the Maelor Foods applications will provide an improvement to the existing site access, an improvement to the A525/Pickhill Lane junction and will not result in an increase in daily HGV movements when considering the previous activity accommodated on Pickhill Lane associated with the Maelor Foods and Lloyd Fraser sites. It is considered that that the development proposals accord with Policy GDP1 of the Wrexham Unitary Development Plan in providing safe and convenient pedestrian and vehicular access to and from the site, and will ensure the safety and amenity of the public whilst safeguarding the environment from adverse effects arising from development.