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Reason for the planning application

Michton Ltd is a family run chocolate factory based in Unit 3 Kenfig Ind Estate. The business began in 1992 as a partnership between Tony Wadley and Michelle, which traded in Enfield, Middlesex. In 1998, the business was relocated to Swansea and Michton Ltd was incorporated.

To facilitate further expansion, the company relocated to its new site in Margam 2013. The site had been vacant for a number of years and a comprehensive refurbishment plan began to bring the site up to the requirements necessary for food production. One of the requirements necessary was to invest in equipment for space heating, along with process heating. Michton Ltd has a very ethical approach to running its operations and a decision was made to invest in biomass boilers because their fuel is renewable. This investment has proved both a financial success and an ethical success. Michton Ltd now uses zero natural gas, which saves a vast amount on greenhouse gases and is helping the UK achieve its EU targets.

Part of the challenge in using biomass boilers is the requirement to have a constant supply of the correct size wood chips at the correct moisture levels. If the wood chips are not a consistent size, the boilers will jam, and the boilers will turn off, which means no heat. Secondly, if the wood is too moist, then the boilers will not operate efficiently, and they may not make the correct level of heat, they will smoke etc. We require planning permission to stock pile round wood and wood chips in our yard and also to have shipping containers in our yard as a drying process. The containers will have biomass boilers and heat exchangers inside them which will be used to dry wood which is on a walking floor. The dry wood will then be used as a fuel source for the boilers which are used in the factory.

We feel that this development is an appropriate development in an industrial estate. We propose putting the round wood, chip and containers on the railway side of our factory. This side of our factory is not overlooked by anyone else and we do not think that this will have a visual impact on anyone. We do not envisage that the biomass operation will have any material impact on the amenity or highways network.

Currently Michton Ltd employs 45 staff, and the biomass plant is a vital investment for the entire company. The boilers have enabled us to reduce our energy costs and therefore giving us a competitive advantage as we have been able to keep our chocolate prices down. The investment has also assisted our chocolate sales as our customers are aware of their supplier's carbon footprints. We have promoted the fact that we are actively trying to use more renewable energy and are, wherever possible, investing in technology to protect our planet. We feel that, without the biomass boilers, then entire company will be at risk. Michton currently have 5 employees employed directly in running and maintaining our boilers and wood supply management.