

Planning Statement

Land at Hillside Farm
Willington
Malpas
SY14 7LY

Construction of a new slurry store

RJ & ZS Hockenhull

January 2025

Roger Parry & Partners LLP
www.rogerparry.net
planning@rogerparry.net
Tel: 01691 655334

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Author:	Gwyn Humphreys BSc (Hons) AssocRTPI
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Roger Parry & Partners LLP
Mercian House
9 Darwin Court
Oxon Business Park
Shrewsbury
SY3 5AL

Tel: 01691 655334
01743 791336

gwyn@rogerparry.net

www.rogerparry.net

Ref: 80088

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Planning Statement is prepared and submitted in connection with a full planning application made to Wrexham County Borough Council ("The Local Planning Authority") for the construction of a new slurry store at Hillside Farm, Willington, Malpas, SY14 7LY.

1.2 The proposed development would provide additional slurry storage for use by the long-established agricultural enterprise operating from Hillside Farm – RJ & ZS Hockenhull.

1.3 This Planning Statement should be read in conjunction with the other documentation submitted as part of the application, listed below:

- Completed Full Planning Application Form
- Green Infrastructure Statement
- Dwg No: 80088 / GH / 001 – Site Location Plan
- Dwg No: 80088 / GH / 002 – Existing Block Plan
- Dwg No: 80088 / GH / 003 – Proposed Block Plan
- Dwg No: 80088 / GH / 004 – Biodiversity Enhancement Plan
- Dwg No: 80088 / GH / 100 – Proposed Slurry Store Plan
- Dwg No: 80088 / GH / 101 – Proposed Slurry Store Elevations

1.4 A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) has also been commissioned, and the resulting report will be submitted in support of the application once finalised.

1.5 This Planning Statement provides a balanced overview of the planning issues associated with the proposed development and is designed to aid the Planning Officer in making their recommendation.

1.6 The information set-out within this statement confirms that the proposal can be delivered on-site without giving rise to any unacceptable or adverse impacts in planning-terms.

2.0 The Application Site & Background

2.1 The application site comprises land on the north-western edge of the existing farm complex of agricultural buildings and yards at Hillside Farm.

2.2 Hillside Farm hosts a dairy farming enterprise operated by RJ & ZS Hockenhull; extending to approximately 150 acres of owner-occupied land.

2.3 The current stock on the holding comprises:

- 100 dairy cows (with less than 6000 litres annual milk yield)

2.4 The cows are all housed during the winter months and graze outdoors during the remainder of the year.

2.5 At present, the farm benefits from insufficient slurry storage capacity; with the existing open slurry store only holding up to 180m3 of slurry, which is insufficient to meet the farm's needs given that five months' worth of slurry storage is now required by Natural Resources Wales (NRW).

2.6 The application site currently comprises an area of agricultural grassland, which owing to its location on the north-western edge of the farm complex, is used as an informal farm storage area for machinery and implements etc. It is sited adjacent to the farm's existing silage clamps.

2.7 The site is located within a rural location approximately 0.9km to the north-east of Horseman's Green and approximately 2km south-east of Tallarn Green. The area is primarily comprised of existing farmsteads of varying scales interspersed with isolated dwellings and the immediate area is dominated by the A525 public highway between Wrexham and Whitchurch.

2.8 The site is located outside of any defined settlement/development boundary and therefore is located within the open countryside in planning terms.

2.9 An aerial view of the application site is provided below within Figure 1, with application site being identified by the red star:

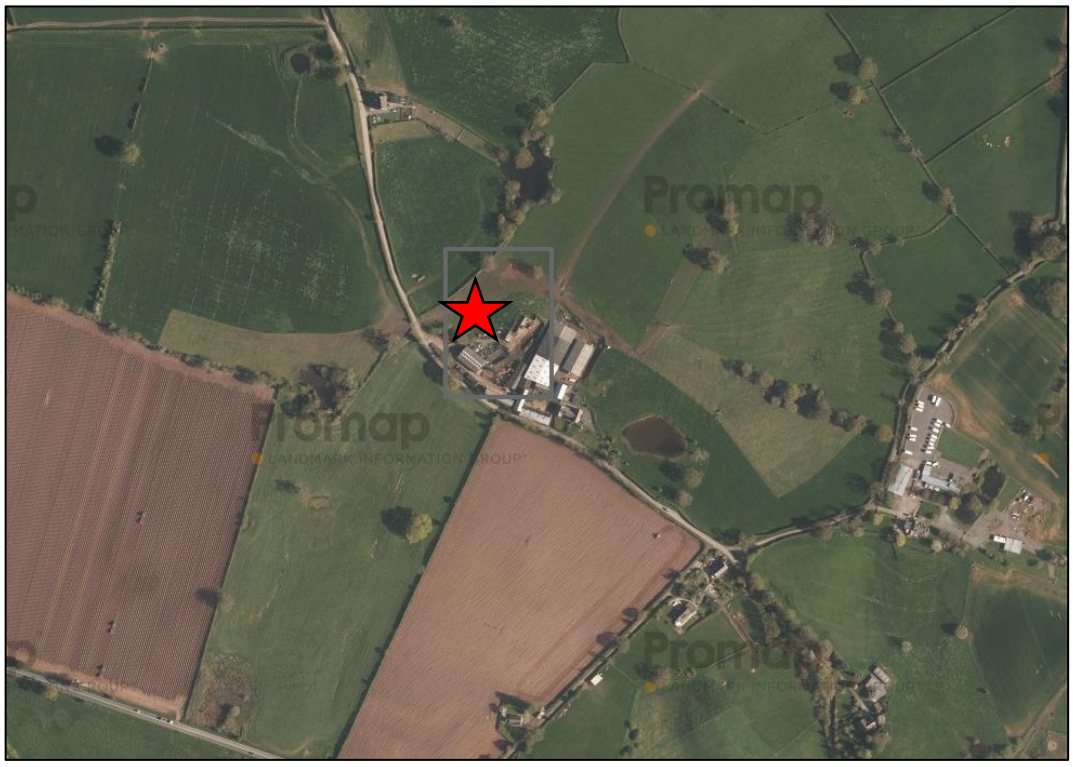


Figure 1: Aerial view of the application site

3.0 The Proposed Development

3.1 The application seeks full planning permission for the construction of a new slurry store, to provide additional slurry storage capacity on the dairy farm.

3.2 The proposed store would measure approximately 4.86m in height (including the required 300mm freeboard) and 22.616m in diameter; having a resultant storage capacity of 1831.83m3 (1,831,830 litres) taking into account the 300mm freeboard from the slurry surface to the top of the store.

3.3 The store's external elevations will be finished with Juniper Green metal and the store will be sited on an impermeable concrete base.

3.4 The slurry tower will be constructed to comply with SSAFO Regulations and The Water Resources (Control of Agricultural Pollution) (Wales) Regulations (2021), as well as BS 5502.

3.5 Stock numbers on the holding would not change as a consequence of the proposed development. Indeed, the proposal is designed merely to align the farm with the current and future regulations set out by NRW and the Welsh Government as defined within The Water Resources (Control of Agricultural Pollution) (Wales) Regulations (2021). As noted, the regulations require the farm to have at least 5 months' worth of slurry storage available.

3.6 The farm's existing open slurry store will be retained as a reception pit.

4.0 Planning Policy Context

4.1 Planning Policy Wales (Edition 12, 2024) advises at Paragraph 5.6.8 that ***"Planning authorities should adopt a constructive approach towards agricultural development proposals, especially those which are designed to meet the needs of changing farming practices or are necessary to achieve compliance with new environmental, hygiene or welfare legislation"***.

4.2 Technical Advice Note 6 (Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities) also sets out the Welsh Government's support for agricultural development proposals owing to the positive impact they can have upon the rural economy and rural communities.

4.3 There are no directly applicable policies contained within the adopted Wrexham Local Development Plan relating to proposals for new agricultural development. However, general support for new agricultural development and farm diversification proposals is expressed throughout the plan.

4.4 Of some relevance is LDP Policy EM4, which reads:

> ***"New employment development outside of settlement limits will only be permitted through:***
>
> ***ii. New development required in connection with a rural enterprise, including proposals for farm diversification where:***
>
> ***(a) The development is located within or forms a logical extension to the complex of buildings on an existing rural enterprise; or***
> ***(b) In the case of buildings located away from an established rural enterprise complex, where a clear need for the development has been demonstrated and where there is no reasonable alternative location for the development".***

5.0 Main Material Planning Considerations

Principle

5.1 The development relates to the provision of a new slurry store at Hillside Farm; an established dairy unit. The development would provide modern and fit-for-purpose slurry storage on the farm in line with the requirements of NRW's and the Welsh Government's latest requirements as outlined within The Water Resources (Control of Agricultural Pollution) (Wales) Regulations (2021).

5.2 The proposed slurry store would be sited adjacent to the existing farm complex of buildings and yards and on an area already used for the informal storage of farm machinery and implements. As such, the development as submitted would form an integral part of the farm complex on-site, and given the development is required in order to align the farm with the requirements of environmental legislation (the CoAPR 2021), the principle of development is acceptable in compliance with LDP Policy EM4, PPW and TAN 6.

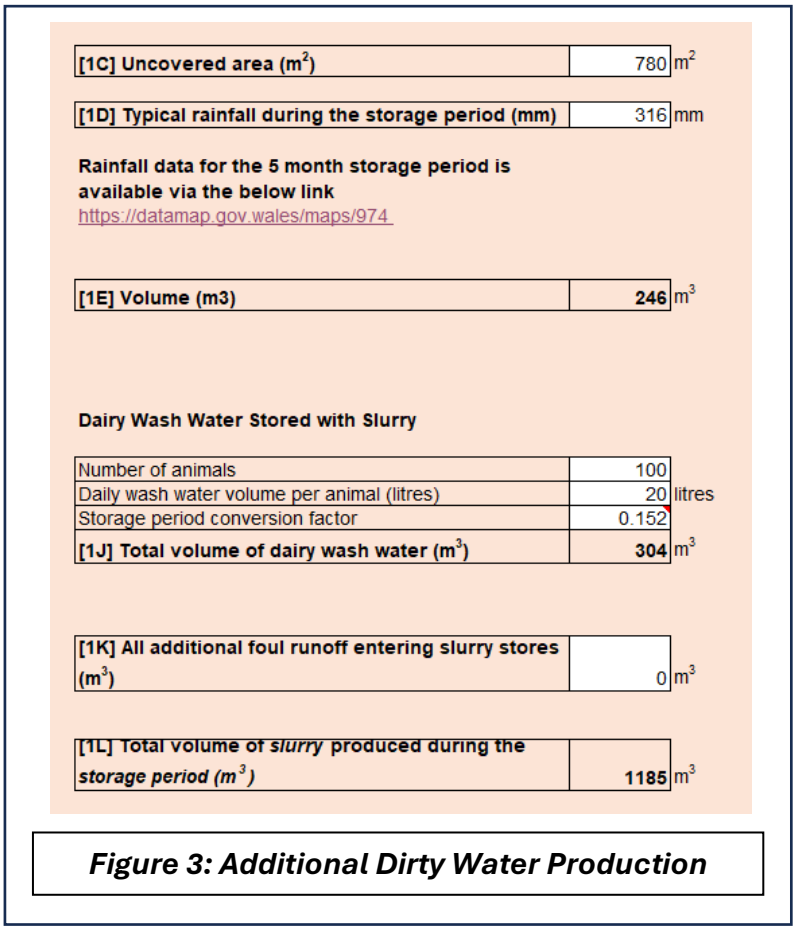
Stock Numbers & Slurry Storage

5.3 The following Figures contain data on existing stocking numbers, slurry/dirty water production on-farm, existing slurry storage capacity and the new slurry storage capacity for the farm with the proposed new slurry store included:

Type of Livestock		Number of stock	Daily excreta volume (litres)	Number of days slurry collected in storage period (see note)	Proportion collected as slurry (%)	Volume produced in storage period
Cattle*						
Calf (all categories including veal) up to 3 months			7	151		0
Dairy cow to first calf	From 3 months and less than 13 months		20	151		0
	From 13 months and up to first calf		40	151		0
Dairy cow after first calf reared	Annual milk yield over 9,000 litres		64	151		0
	Annual milk yield 6,000-9,000 litres		53	151		0
	Annual milk yield less than 6,000 litres	100	42	151	100%	634200
Beef cows or steers to 25	From 3 months and less than 13 months		20	151		0
	From 13 months and less than 25 months		26	151		0
Beef cows or steers from 25 months	Females or steers for slaughter		32	151		0
	Females for breeding weighing 500 kg or less		32	151		0
	Females for breeding weighing over 500 kg		45	151		0
Bulls	Non-breeding 3 months and over		26	151		0
	Breeding – from 3 months and less than 25 months		26	151		0
	Breeding – from 25 months		26	151		0
Total Cattle Slurry Production			**litres**			**634200**
			m^3			**634.2**
Sheep*						
From 6 months up to 9 months			1.8	151		0
From 9 months to first lambing, first tupping or slaughter			1.8	151		0
After lambing or tupping	Weighing less than 60 kg		3.3	151		0
	Weighing over 60 kg		5	151		0
Total Sheep Slurry Production			**litres**			**0**
			m^3			**0.0**
Goats, Deer, Horses*						
Goat			3.5	151		0
Deer	Breeding		5	151		0
	Other		3.5	151		0
Horse			24	151		0
Total Goats, Deer, Horses Slurry Production			**litres**			**0.0**
			m^3			**0**
Total volume of slurry from Cattle, Sheep, Goats, Deer, Horses in storage per			**[1A] litres**			**634200.0**
			[1B] m^3			**634.2**

Figure 2: Existing & Proposed Slurry Production

5.4 Figure 2 details the existing and proposed slurry production from the dairy herd at Hillside Farm – note that as stock numbers are not proposed to increase this figure is to remain the same.



[1C] Uncovered area (m^2)	780	m^2
[1D] Typical rainfall during the storage period (mm)	316	mm

Rainfall data for the 5 month storage period is available via the below link
https://datamap.gov.wales/maps/974

[1E] Volume (m3)	**246**	m^3

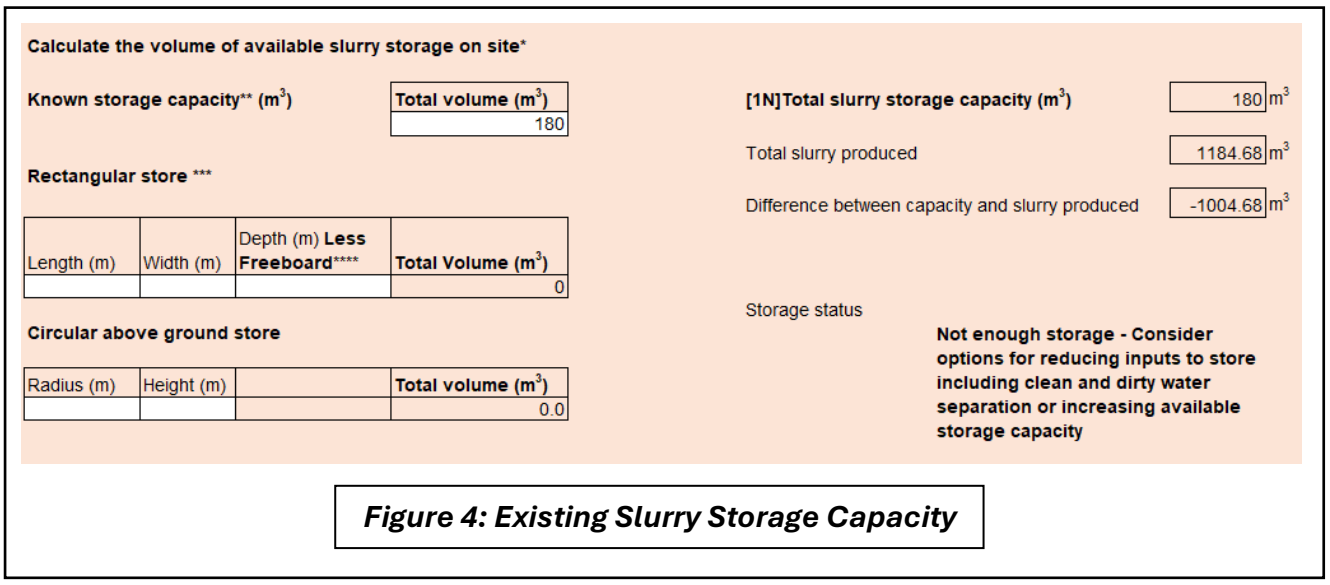
Dairy Wash Water Stored with Slurry

Number of animals	100	
Daily wash water volume per animal (litres)	20	litres
Storage period conversion factor	0.152	
[1J] Total volume of dairy wash water (m^3)	**304**	m^3

[1K] All additional foul runoff entering slurry stores (m^3)	0	m^3
[1L] Total volume of *slurry* produced during the *storage period* (m^3)	**1185**	m^3

Figure 3: Additional Dirty Water Production

5.5 Figure 3 details the additional dirty water production for the farm, which would also remain unchanged as a consequence of the development.



Calculate the volume of available slurry storage on site*

Known storage capacity (m^3)**

Total volume (m^3)
180

Rectangular store ***

Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m) **Less Freeboard****	**Total Volume (m^3)**
			0

Circular above ground store

Radius (m)	Height (m)		**Total volume (m^3)**
			0.0

[1N]Total slurry storage capacity (m^3)	180	m^3
Total slurry produced	1184.68	m^3
Difference between capacity and slurry produced	-1004.68	m^3

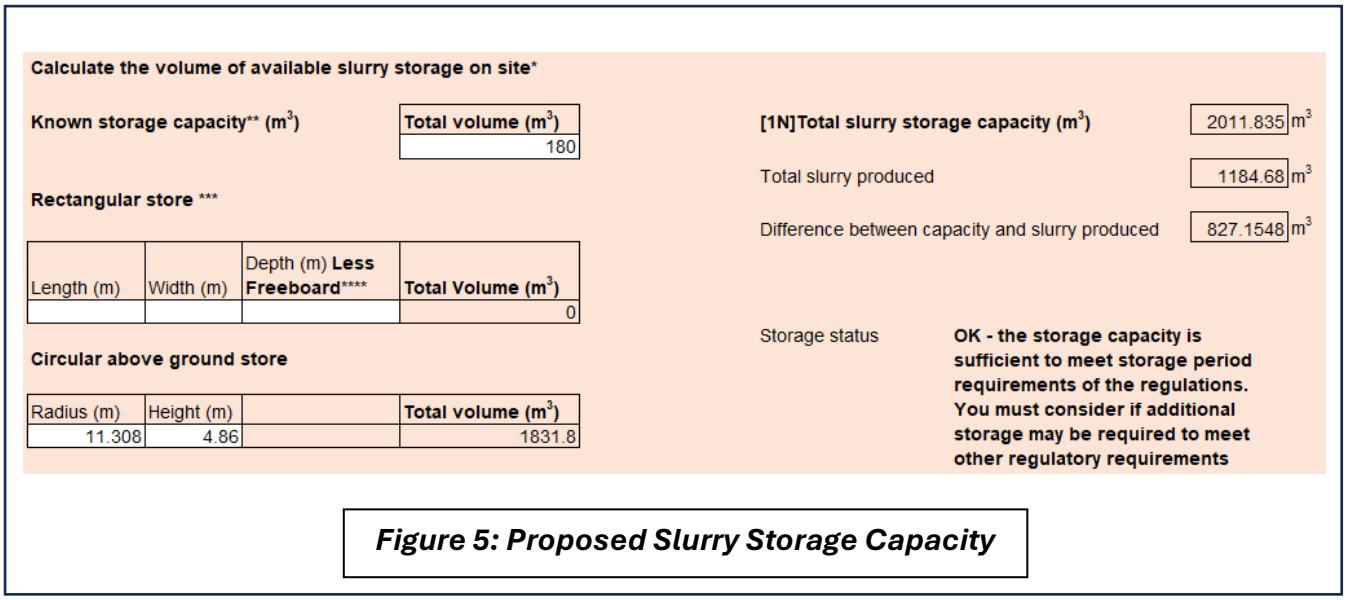
Storage status

Not enough storage - Consider options for reducing inputs to store including clean and dirty water separation or increasing available storage capacity

Figure 4: Existing Slurry Storage Capacity

5.6 Figure 4 details the existing slurry storage capacity at Hillside Farm. It confirms that there is currently a storage deficit of approximately 1004.68m3 on-farm.

This means the farm does not currently have the required 5 months' worth of storage capacity available.



Calculate the volume of available slurry storage on site*

Known storage capacity** (m^3)	Total volume (m^3)
	180

Rectangular store ***

Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m) **Less Freeboard****	Total Volume (m^3)
			0

Circular above ground store

Radius (m)	Height (m)		Total volume (m^3)
11.308	4.86		1831.8

[1N]Total slurry storage capacity (m^3)	2011.835 m^3
Total slurry produced	1184.68 m^3
Difference between capacity and slurry produced	827.1548 m^3

Storage status: **OK - the storage capacity is sufficient to meet storage period requirements of the regulations. You must consider if additional storage may be required to meet other regulatory requirements**

Figure 5: Proposed Slurry Storage Capacity

5.7 Figure 5 shows the farm's slurry storage capacity, with the proposed slurry store added in alongside the existing store, which is to be retained as a reception pit. It shows that the farm would now have a slurry storage capacity of approximately 2011.8m3, which is 827m3 over the volume of slurry produced on the holding.

5.8 As the proposed store is to be uncovered, it is noted the dirty water from rainfall also needs to be factored into the calculation.

5.9 Based upon rainfall data for the location taken from DataMap Wales during the housing period (October-February) of 316mm, this would create an additional 126.9m3 of 'dirty water'. The proposed lagoon would have the capacity to hold this within the controlled period. As such the water (whilst combined with slurry) will be re-used when spread in the open period to aid and benefit grass/crop growth on the farm.

5.10 Therefore, the proposed lagoon would be of sufficient capacity to meet the needs of the farm and would mean that in excess of 5 months' worth of storage could be held – meeting the requirements of the NVZ and CoAPR (2021) legislation.

Design & Visual/Landscape Impact

5.11 As noted, the proposed slurry store will be sited on the north-western edge of the existing farm complex, adjacent to the existing silage clamps.

5.12 In terms of LANDMAP, the application site is located within the 'English Maelor' aspect area. A visual and sensory evaluation of the aspect area confirms the land to be of moderate quality; with the visual and sensory description reading as follows:

"An attractive archetypal rolling farming landscape with elements of estate farming and a pleasant mix of small to medium field patterns and woodland blocks and copses. There is gentle variation in topography, with small, wooded valleys, and higher areas overlooking Dee valley. Subtle differences, shown by CPAT assessment of Maelor Saesneg (2003). Main land use is agriculture with the emphasis on dairy farming, some arable. Field boundaries are generally well defined with mature hedges and hedgerow trees (- often oaks) and small lanes. The area feels relatively settled and safe with a low proportion of out of scale or modern development. The area forms the southern and eastern border of the county and therefore the Welsh/English border. Visually and physically the area feels far more closely associated with the English landscape of North Shropshire and Cheshire then the "typical" or "archetypal" Welsh landscape, with the result that the area feels quite separate from the remainder of the county and country and is an uncommon landscape type for Wales. The aspect is the transition zone and border between England and Wales".

5.13 The proposed development is of an overall modest scale and would be viewed wholly within the context of the existing farm buildings and development at Hillside Farm. Given that the host landscape is almost wholly agricultural in nature, such developments are a common feature of the locality and should be expected to be seen within the landscape.

5.14 As such, whilst the proposed slurry store would be visible within the surrounding landscape, crucially, it will not have the potential to cause any adverse or unacceptable impact upon the landscape character of the area. It would also be finished externally in Juniper Green; a muted environmental colour which would help to reduce its prominence within the wider landscape.

5.15 As such, it is considered the proposed development would not cause any adverse landscape visual impact on this occasion, taking account of the proposal's suitable design, siting and scale.

Impact on Neighbouring Amenity

5.16 The closest non-associated residential dwelling to the application site is located in excess of 200m to the north. In light of this distance, and the fact the proposed development would not lead to any increase in the volume of slurry being produced on the holding, no adverse impacts upon neighbouring residential amenity would arise.

5.17 Therefore, the development would not result in any adverse impacts in terms of amenity on this occasion.

Ecology & Green Infrastructure

5.18 The application site currently comprises an area of agricultural grassland located on the edge of the farm complex and is currently used as an informal storage area for farm machinery and implements. Given its location in such close proximity to the farm complex and its current use, the land is considered to be unlikely to be in use by any protected species.

5.19 There are no SSSIs or SACs located within a 2km radius of the application site, nor are there any non-statutory ecological sites within close proximity.

5.20 The proposed development does not have the potential to cause any adverse ecological impact within the area owing to the fact the proposed slurry store would provide increased slurry storage for the farm (in-line with the requirements of NRW) and this would mean that slurry could be more appropriately stored on the holding and would avoid the need for year-round spreading to occur. Indeed, without the proposed slurry store,, there is potential for slurry needing to be spread during winter months (when potential for increased pollution is higher). The proposal will mean that the farm will have over 5 months' worth of slurry storage available and will therefore not need to spread over winter months, when the ground does not need it.

5.21 As noted, the proposal is ensuring that the existing farm business complies with the CoAPR legislation and therefore looking to reduce ammonia and nitrogen emissions on the farm by improving the farm's current containment of slurry. It is reiterated that the development as proposed would not lead to an increase in stock numbers on the holding.

5.22 It is acknowledged that the site does lie within the freshwater catchment of the Bala Lake and River Dee Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and therefore NRW's *Advice to planning authorities for planning applications affecting nutrient sensitive river Special Areas of Conservation (July 2024)* is of relevance. However, the development as proposed is unlikely to be a source of additional phosphorus or a pathway for additional impacts. The development can therefore be screened out as not likely to have cause significant effect upon the integrity of the River Wye SAC as it falls within the following criterion in the published advice:

- *Any development that does not increase the volume and phosphorus concentration of wastewater.*

5.23 In terms of green infrastructure and providing a net benefit for biodiversity (NBB), Dwg No: 80088 / GH / 004 shows the proposed erection of two Woodcrete bat boxes and one Woodcrete bird box on an existing mature tree within the Applicants' ownership. This would provide an NBB effect over and above the green infrastructure baseline. Please refer to the submitted Green Infrastructure Statement for further details.

5.24 In light of the above, the development would not cause any adverse ecological effects and would provide an NBB effect on-site in-line with the requirements of PPW (Chapter 6) and TAN 5.

Highways

5.25 The vehicular movements associated with the site will remain unchanged as a consequence of the proposal. Indeed, the proposed slurry store will only be used by the existing agricultural business operating from Hillside Farm and would not be used to store slurry for third parties. As such, the development as submitted would not cause any impacts upon highway safety within the application site's vicinity.

Historic Environment

5.26 The application site is located within the Maelor Registered Historic Landscape.

5.27 Notwithstanding this, as noted within the *Design & Visual/Landscape Impact* section of this statement, the development does not have the potential to cause any adverse landscape or visual impact owing to its suitable design and siting adjacent to the existing farm complex. As such, there would not be any harmful effects upon the character of the historic landscape.

5.28 It is also noted there are no archaeological implications for the proposed development in this location.

Flooding

5.29 The application site is located within Zone 1 of the Flood Map for Planning (for both fluvial and surface water flooding) and as such flood risk does not comprise a constraint in this instance in accordance with the provisions of Technical Advice Note (TAN) 15.

6.0 Conclusion

6.1 The proposed development is needed for legitimate agricultural purposes and to align Hillside Farm with the latest requirements of NRW and the Welsh Government in terms of slurry storage. The proposals are also of an overall modest scale, and would be of an acceptable appearance within the host rural landscape. The development would not cause any adverse impacts upon the natural environment, neighbouring residential amenity nor upon highway safety and flood risks.

6.2 Therefore, the proposal is fully compliant with both national and local planning policy requirements, and it is respectfully requested that full planning permission be granted for the development without delay.