

Planning Statement

Maelor Forest Nurseries
Fields Farm
Bronington
Wrexham
SY13 3HZ

Agricultural Prior Notification for the construction of 2x agricultural reservoirs and all associated works

Maelor Forest Nurseries Ltd

October 2026

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Planning Statement is prepared and submitted by Roger Parry & Partners LLP on behalf of Maelor Forest Nurseries Ltd ("the Applicant") in support of an Agricultural Prior Notification for the construction/excavation of two agricultural irrigation reservoirs and all associated works on Land at Maelor Forest Nurseries, Fields Farm, Bronington, Wrexham, SY13 3HZ ("the application site").

1.2 The proposals will help to safeguard the future of the existing large nursery operated by the Applicant from the application site by providing two new water storage reservoirs used to hold water for the irrigation of plants. The objective of the proposed scheme is to capture rainfall from roofs, hardstandings, polytunnels and impermeable irrigation beds on-site, then storing the captured water for subsequent irrigation use during the growing season to irrigate plug plants and pot and field-grown trees.

1.3 This Planning Statement should be read in conjunction with the other supporting documents submitted as part of this prior notification, including:

- Completed Agricultural Prior Notification Form
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
- Drawing No: 82969 / GH / 001 – Location Plan
- Drawing No: 82969 / GH / 002 – Existing Block Plan
- Drawing No: 82969 / GH / 003 – Proposed Block Plan
- Drawing No: 82969 / GH / 004 – Habitat Development Plan
- Drawing No: 82969 / GH / 100 – Proposed Section AA

1.4 The Applicant owns and occupies the land at Maelor Forest Nurseries, which forms part of the established, large nursery business. The holding extends to approximately 160 hectares and produces conifer and other forest planting stock, grown in greenhouses, polytunnels, outdoor irrigation beds and fields.

1.5 The proposed new reservoirs will provide a secure, long-term supply of irrigation water to support the nursery's operations. As a forest nursery, the business has a constant need for water, as young tree saplings and plug plants must be irrigated regularly throughout the growing season to survive.

1.6 At present, the nursery has only small water holding tanks and a small reservoir, which do not have sufficient capacity to meet its horticultural needs. During the recent summer drought of 2026, the business had to pump and tanker water onto the holding to ensure that none of the tree saplings growing on-site died. This is unsustainable for the long-term future of the business, and with summers becoming increasingly hot and dry, reservoirs of this size are required to allow the nursery to continue its ongoing established operations.

2.0 The Site

2.1 The site is located within the established nursery operated by the Applicant at Fields Farm, Bronington, to the south-west of Whitchurch, on land which is owned-occupied and which is currently in horticultural production. The application site extends to approximately 3.53 hectares and lies to the east of an existing farm track.

2.2 The reservoirs will be over 25 metres from any classified road. The site is bounded by native hedgerows, which will be retained other than where a short section crosses the site. The land falls gently away from approximately 98m to 96m AOD. The reservoirs have been positioned to follow the natural topography of the land. It is therefore considered there will be limited landscape impacts.

2.3 The site is located outside of any defined settlement boundary, and thus is located within the open countryside in planning policy terms.

2.4 An aerial view of the application site is provided below within Figure 1, with the site location denoted approximately by the red star:



Figure 1: Aerial view of application site and context

2.5 As demonstrated within Figure 1, the application site lies approximately 550m north-north-east of the main nursery complex of buildings, polytunnels and beds at Maelor Forest Nurseries.

2.6 Maelor Forest Nurseries produces conifer and forest planting stock using container growing systems within a covered nursery and outdoor irrigation beds. More mature plants are grown within fields that similarly require irrigation water.

2.7 The current source of irrigation water for the nursery is from a pumped canal source, mains water and water transported to site with tankers. The canal source is currently unsuitable for container-grown pots due to contamination issues, but this source is used for field irrigation. The nursery's current sources of irrigation water are unsustainable for the long-term future and development of the site's operation. A reliable source of irrigation water is required to enable the current and future needs of the operation on-site.

3.0 The Proposed Development

3.1 The proposed development is for the construction/excavation of two agricultural irrigation reservoirs, Reservoirs 1A and 1B as per Drawing No: 82969 / GH / 003, and all associated works.

3.2 Reservoir 1A will measure approximately 144m x 115m, with a capacity of up to approximately 70,000m^3. Reservoir 1B will adjoin it to the north, measuring approximately 146m x 97m, with a capacity of up to approximately 60,000m^3. Both reservoirs will have a maximum water depth of 5.5m, with a 500mm freeboard.

3.3 Proposed reservoir 1A (due to its scale) will be designed and constructed in accordance with the Reservoirs Act 1975 under the supervision of a Qualified Civil Engineer (QCE) as defined in the Act., and will be constructed in accordance with the Reservoirs Act 1975.

3.4 Reservoir 1A will have an impermeable lining either from any natural clay ground or from an impermeable HDPE lining membrane. Initial indications are that the external slopes will be 1:3 and internal slopes 1:3. All surplus excavated material will be retained on-site either as excess embankment filling or for other site uses. Its design and construction will be overseen by a Construction Engineer appointed under the Reservoirs Act 1975.

3.5 Reservoir 1B will be constructed as 'phase 2' of the proposed scheme on-site.

3.6 The reservoirs will be formed by excavation, with the excavated earth used to form low earth banks around the reservoirs' perimeters. A perimeter security fence will be erected around the top of the reservoirs' banks for safety reasons. An existing water storage tank on-site located adjacent to the access track will be removed as part of the works.

3.7 The reservoirs will fill through the collection and then recycling of rainwater from the nursery's buildings, hard standings, polytunnels and irrigation beds. No water will be abstracted from groundwater or watercourses to fill the proposed reservoirs.

3.8 The stored water will be used to irrigate the nursery stock during the drier months, ensuring the Applicant can continue to grow plants without the risk of drought affecting their quality and survival.

3.9 The proposed works comply with the provisions of Schedule 2, Part 6, Class A of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (as amended in Wales) and are therefore considered to constitute permitted agricultural development. In accordance with paragraph A.2(2), the developer is required to apply to the Local Planning Authority for a determination as to whether prior approval is required for the siting, design and external appearance of the development before any works commence.

3.10 The scheme will not create sporadic development in the countryside. The reservoirs will sit low within the landscape, with the earth banks rising only slightly above the existing, natural, ground level; creating the appearance of areas of open water with grassed embankments. No buildings or external lighting are proposed as part of this submission.

4.0 Appraisal

4.1 The proposal is assessed against the criteria contained within Schedule 2, Part 6, Class A of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (as amended for Wales), as follows:

Would the development be carried out on a separate parcel of land forming part of the unit which is less than 1 hectare in area?	No
Would it consist of, or include, the erection, extension or alteration of a dwelling?	No
Would it involve the provision of a building, structure or works not designed for agricultural purposes?	No – the proposed reservoirs are needed for

	agricultural irrigation.
Would the ground area covered by any works or structure (other than a fence) for accommodating livestock or any plant or machinery arising from engineering operations; or any building erected or extended or altered by virtue of Class A, exceed 465 square metres?	No. The proposed excavations will not accommodate livestock or plant and machinery. The ground will not be covered by any structure (other than a fence).
Is the building, structure or works within 3km of the perimeter of an aerodrome and over 3m in height?	No
Is any part of the building, structure or works over 12m in height?	No
Are any parts of the development within 25 metres of the metalled part of a trunk or classified road?	No
Would the building, structure or excavation used for the accommodation of livestock, of storage of slurry or sewage sludge be within 400m of the curtilage of a protected building?	No. The proposed reservoirs are not for the accommodation of livestock or for the storage of slurry or sewage sludge.
Would the development involve excavations or engineering operations on or over article 1(6) land which are connected with fish farming?	No
Would the works be within 90 metres of another building, structure, works, plant, machinery, ponds or tanks constructed in the last 2 years, and would the combined ground area covered by the works exceed 465sq. meters?	No
Would the development involve the extraction of any mineral from the land (including removal from any disused railway embankment) or the removal of any mineral from a mineral-working deposit?	No
Would the development involve waste materials being brought on to the land from elsewhere for deposit, except for use in works described in Class A(a)?	No
Have any part of the works already started?	No

4.2 Given the above, the proposed excavations are 'permitted development' in accordance with Schedule 2, Part 6, Class A of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (as amended for Wales). The principle of development is therefore accepted by virtue of national legislation, and is not for question.

4.3 Indeed, the proposals are clearly required for agricultural purposes, to ensure the established forest nursery has sufficient irrigation water available. Given the well-publicised drought and dry conditions in 2026, the Applicant has identified this as a business-critical element of the site and the nursery's future operations.

4.4 Therefore, it has been sufficiently demonstrated that the proposals are 'reasonably necessary' for the purposes of agriculture as is set-out within the GPDO.

4.5 It is noted the Local Planning Authority is required to give consideration to matters relating to the siting, design and external appearance of the proposed development. Thus, this statement appraises the proposed development in terms of its siting and design/visual impact.

Siting, Design & Visual Impact

4.6 As noted, the proposed reservoirs will be located approximately 500m north-north-east of the established nursery complex of buildings, polytunnels and beds at the site.

4.7 Given the nature of the proposal, careful consideration needs to be given to the siting of the proposal; principally at a location within the land holding where gravity can be used to transport irrigation water from its storage location to the points of need. The application site forms the highest point of the land holding in question, ensuring that gravity can be used to transport the water to the irrigation locations.

4.8 The proposed reservoirs will be low-lying structures with soil/grass bunds, and as such are not anticipated to cause any wide-ranging landscape visual impact. Furthermore, such reservoirs are already common sights within rural areas of England and Wales, where they are needed for agricultural irrigation purposes. Indeed, the proposals will not be seen as 'alien structures' within the application site's wider context.

4.9 Furthermore, as detailed on Drawing No: 82969 / GH / 004, additional habitat creation is proposed which will further help to assimilate the proposals into the host agricultural landscape.

4.10 As such, while the proposed development will be slightly detached from existing built development in this case, given the nature of the proposals it is considered this is fully justified and will not lead to any adverse impacts in visual terms owing to the low-lying design of the development.

4.11 The proposals are agriculturally-designed within an almost wholly agricultural area of the County Borough and as such will be viewed within this context.

Ecology

4.12 A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) has been undertaken and accompanies the prior notification. Please refer to the submitted appraisal report for full details.

4.13 It found the application site and its surroundings to be dominated by horticultural land of limited biodiversity value, with species-poor hedgerows, a small wetland area and a water storage structure. Badgers, reptiles, otter, dormouse, great crested newt and notable invertebrates are not a constraint to the proposal in this location. Further, it is confirmed that while a small length of existing hedgerow would be lost as a result of the proposals, no existing trees will be impacted given their separation distance to the proposed reservoirs.

4.14 In accordance with the PEA, the adjacent pond and two veteran trees will be retained, any hedgerow removed will be replaced with a new native species-rich hedgerow to compensate, hedgerow removal will take place outside the bird nesting season, and mammal escape ramps will be provided to excavations during construction. The implementation of these measures can be secured by way of appropriately worded planning conditions.

4.15 Further, a Habitat Development/Improvement Plan has been designed by the Ecologist and this is contained within Appendix 4 of the submitted PEA as well as Drawing No: 82969 / GH / 004. This will ensure the proposals compensate for any ecological losses while also providing suitable enhancements for biodiversity. Again, the implementation of the submitted plan can be secured with the use of a planning condition.

4.16 Given the above, and subject to the imposition of several ecological-related conditions, the proposed developments will not cause any unacceptable ecological and biodiversity effects.

Benefits

4.1 The proposals will bring several benefits, including:

- Ensuring the future of the established forest nursery on-site is safeguarded by providing a reliable and sustainable supply of irrigation water, reducing reliance on mains, canal and tankered-in water supplies;

- Providing storage of rainfall during the wetter months of the year for use during the growing season, with reduced abstraction from groundwater and watercourses – resulting in improved sustainability for the business and the local environment as a whole;

- Improved resilience of the business to drought and climate change. This will help to safeguard Maelor Forest Nurseries as a key employer of staff within the locality – protecting well-paying jobs for local people and boosting the local economy; and

- Providing new areas of open water, improving foraging for bats and breeding habitat for amphibians. The proposals, through the proposed Habitat Development/Improvement Plan, will also enhance key habitats on-site for both local and migrating wildlife.

5.0 Conclusion

5.1 There is a clear and growing need to secure reliable water supplies for horticultural production on-site. The proposed reservoirs will capture and store rainfall and recycle irrigation water for use during the growing season, supporting the long-term viability of the established nursery.

5.2 The proposed development is considered to comply with the provisions of Schedule 2, Part 6, Class A of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (as amended in Wales) and therefore comprises as permitted development.

5.3 The reservoirs will sit low within the landscape, following the natural topography of the land, and the siting, design and external appearance are considered to be acceptable. Therefore, it is respectfully requested that the Local Planning Authority confirms that prior approval is not required in this case.