

Water shortage risk drives Surrey farm plan for irrigation pond

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An east Surrey farm is seeking permission to build a new irrigation pond, as climate change has made water supply a “major operational risk”.

Reid Manor Farm Limited has put forward a prior notification application to Tandridge District Council for excavation works to install the pond in a field to the west of Lingfield.

The applicant noted that “mixed farming activities” are currently undertaken in the area, with hay production being the largest operation.

“There are a number of other farming activities the business is currently exploring and in the process of setting up to support the farming business,” the planning documents say.

Blackberry harvesting and jam making are expected to be included among these activities, the applicant states.

But they added that the proposals for a new irrigation pond represent a “critical business asset” in the cultivation of aquatic plants.

“While south east England is historically the driest part of the UK, climate change has worsened summer droughts and unpredictable rainfall patterns, making reliable water access a major operational risk,” the documents say.

They add: “A farm irrigation pond allows a farm to capture and store abundant winter rainfall, securing an independent, year-round water supply that protects the crop from summer water restrictions and heat stress.”

The applicant also pointed to a government statement published in its ‘Farming Roadmap 2050’, which states: “The scientific consensus is clear that the UK should expect wilder, stormier weather with significantly increased flooding as well as summer droughts.

“With 70 per cent of our land currently used for agricultural purposes, it will become increasingly important to hold more water on farmlands to help reduce the impact of flooding downriver and support farmers during drought periods.”

Access to the farm via Brickhouse Lane would not be changed as a result of this development, the documents claim.

They add: “The site currently has no mains water connection, and no water bore holes exist on site meaning the only current water source option is harvesting rainwater.”

James Moules Local Democracy Reporter

Image: Wheat stock image (Credit: Pixabay)