



**Foxes
Rural**

AGRICULTURAL JUSTIFICATION STATEMENT

Agricultural hardstanding for pumpkin crop

Watch House Farm

Wash Road

Basildon

SS15 4ER



CAAV



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PARTICULARS

Document Title	Agricultural Justification Statement
Proposal	Agricultural hardstanding for pumpkin and squash crop
Applicant Details	A R French and Son
Site Details	Watch House Farm Wash Road Basildon SS15 4ER
Prepared by	Melanie Bingham-Wallis Planning Director
Agent details	Foxes Rural Ltd Bullbanks Farm Halstead Road Eight Ash Green Colchester Essex CO6 3PT



INTRODUCTION

This prior notification application is submitted for the laying of hardstanding to support the pumpkin and squash crops at Watch House Farm, Wash Road, Basildon, SS15 4ER on behalf of the applicant A R French and Son.

The laying of hardstanding does not exceed 0.5 hectares and therefore in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 a prior notification is not required to be submitted to the Local Planning Authority (LPA). The applicants have however made this application to the LPA to inform the LPA of these excavation and hardstanding works prior to commencement.

ENCLOSURES

The following documents are enclosed with this application.

Reference	Description
Location plan	Scale 1:35,000
Site plan	Scale 1:1,250
Farm plan	Scale 1:10,000
Agricultural Justification Statement	
Prior Notification Forms	Submitted via Planning Portal

MY EXPERIENCE AND QUALIFICATIONS

This statement and application have been prepared by Melanie Bingham-Wallis. I am a farm planning director employed by Foxes Rural Limited which specialises in rural planning matters. The company regularly advises on agricultural related planning applications, justifications and proposals throughout Essex, Suffolk and Hertfordshire.

The company is registered with the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and the Central Association of Agricultural Valuers.

THE FARM BUSINESS

The farm business totals 39.81 hectares (98.38 acres) and is farmed by A R French and Son who own Watch House Farm.

The farm cropping comprises of predominantly arable cropping to include wheat, oilseed rape, barley, and beans. The farm also has a rotational crop of grass which is cut for hay. Diversification crops grown on the farm include pumpkins, maize and Christmas trees.

THE PROPOSAL

This prior notification is made in respect of excavations to construct an area of hardstanding to form an agricultural storage area for the curing and storage of pumpkins and squashes prior to sale. These hardstanding areas will be used following harvest of the crops from the fields on the farm and prior to them entering the farm buildings for storage.

This application sets out an area of hardstanding to support the storage of pumpkins and squashes. The hardstanding area measures 2606m.sq. or 0.26 hectares.



The crop is harvested in the wetter autumn months and all-weather surfacing is required for the storage and grading of the crops. Each year varies in terms of ripening of the crop based on rainfall and sunlight.

Pumpkin Curing area

The farm is renowned locally for the production of pumpkins having grown these on the farm since approximately 2010, and has since expanded the varieties including entering the squash growing marketplace. Although in the main, these pumpkins need to be stored undercover whilst waiting to be sold or distributed to prevent weathering and rotting by wet weather, there is a need to cure to pumpkins when they are green at the point of harvesting prior to sale.

Green pumpkins have a soft skin and would rot and mould in boxes if they are placed into store. Therefore, solid and ripe orange pumpkins with a thick skin are the only ones that can be placed into store. The wooden harvesting bins are widely spaced with slatting to allow natural sunlight in and around the entire extent of the boxes.

As an example, in 2021, the applicants experienced a dull and wet growing season for their pumpkins which meant that the skins were thin and unripe at the point of harvesting. Before being placed into boxes for sale, distribution and collection, the pumpkins were therefore ripened outside by spreading them out in the wooden 1 tonne harvesting boxes and cured in sunlight to turn orange. This takes up space as the pumpkins cannot be stacked to ensure maximum sunlight for ripening prior to retail. There is no market for unripe green or rotting pumpkins, so the curing is an important process. This process takes place in late September / October which is a wet and volatile month so therefore needs to be undertaken on an area of hardstanding to provide all weather access to the crop following harvesting.

The pumpkins can only be stacked once they have been suitably cured with sufficient sunlight.

Pumpkin Storage and Ripening Area Prior to Barn Storage

Pumpkins are stored in bins according to variety but also size. The yard will form part of the wider facilities in which to pumpkins can be sorted/graded (S, M, L, XL) into sizes and designated bins prior to undercover storage. By grading the pumpkins before storage, the business is able to offer set sizes during the ordering process and allows for efficient loading for delivery.

Boxes on the hardstanding curing area are turned at 45 degrees every 5 to 7 days for around a 2-4 week period depending on how green the skin finish is. The hardstanding areas have therefore been designed to create space for manoeuvrability and accessibility to the harvested pumpkin bins and movement of ripening of pumpkins and squashes around this area.



Fig 1 and 2 – Green and unripe pumpkins following harvesting from the fields.



Fig 3 – Green pumpkins being cured



Fig 4 – Pumpkins in the fields ready for harvest but unripe and in need of curing

DESIGN, SITING AND EXTERNAL APPEARANCE OF HARDSTANDING

Design

The hardstanding is of a design which is consistent as to what would be expected on a farm. The yard area totals 0.26ha

- 1) Topsoil stripped
- 2) Subbase of 200mm of 6F5 recycled crushed hardcore
- 3) Surfaced with 6-20mm of road plainings

Siting

The proposed hardstanding has been located to allow efficient movement of pumpkins and squashes off field and off site being close to the access point.

Appearance

The hardstanding area will be of a typical yard appearance – topsoil stripped with crushed hardcore base and topped with recycled road plainings.

LEGISLATION - Part 6 Class A - Agricultural development on units of 5 hectares or more.

Permitted Development

A. *The carrying out on agricultural land comprised in an agricultural unit of 5 hectares or more in area of:*

(a) works for the erection, extension or alteration of a building; or

(b) any excavation or engineering operations.

which are reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture within that unit.

Conditions

A.2— (1) *Development is permitted by Class A subject to the following conditions—*

(2) Subject to sub-paragraph (3), development consisting of—

(c) the carrying out of excavations or the deposit of waste material (where the relevant area, as defined in paragraph D.1(4) of this Part, exceeds 0.5 hectares).



A prior notification is only required to be submitted to the LPA where the area of the excavations exceeds 0.5ha. The area proposed measures 0.26ha and is therefore below this threshold.

Under the GPDO this proposal complies on the basis of the excavated area does not exceed 0.5 hectares as defined in paragraph A.2.2(c) and therefore a prior notification application is not required and the development is permitted, but the applicants have submitted this application to the LPA to inform them of these works.

Conclusion

The laying of hardstanding does not exceed 0.5 hectares and therefore in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 a prior notification is not required to be submitted to the Local Planning Authority (LPA). The applicants have however made this application to the LPA to inform the LPA of these excavation and hardstanding works prior to commencement.

The proposal complies with the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015.

Melanie Bingham-Wallis

**PLANNING DIRECTOR
FOR AND ON BEHALF OF FOXES RURAL LIMITED**

Date: 01.02.24