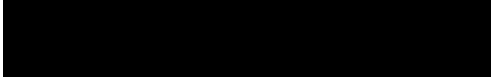


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**ASSESSMENT OF ESSENTIAL NEED FOR AN AGRICULTURAL SLURRY
LAGOON
AT
COURT FARM, GASTARD**

Prepared for:

B & MJ RICHARDS

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1. Introduction

This report has been prepared by Stephanie Emmerson of The Farm Consultancy Group, on behalf of B & MJ Richards to provide the agricultural justification for the installation of a proposed agricultural slurry lagoon on land at Court Farm, Gastard Lane, Gastard, Corsham.

The proposed development is intended to enhance the farm's slurry storage and management capacity, support sustainable nutrient management, improve environmental performance, and ensure ongoing compliance with current and future agricultural and environmental regulations. The lagoon forms an essential part of the farm's long-term strategy to operate responsibly, efficiently, and in accordance with best practice.

2. Background

Court Farm is a well-established and progressive dairy enterprise, currently milking approximately 490 cows. The family-run business, B & MJ Richards, operates across two farm sites: the main holding at Court Farm, Gastard, and a secondary site at Broughton Gifford. Together, the business farms almost 500 acres of predominantly grassland with some arable land, which is largely dedicated to forage production to support the dairy herd.

Approximately 300 acres are owned by the business, with the remainder farmed under a combination of Farm Business Tenancies and Grass Keep agreements. The proposed slurry lagoon is to be located on owned land, ensuring long-term control and management of the facility.

In total, the business manages an average of around 1,000 head of cattle across all age groups. Herd numbers have increased in recent years due to ongoing Bovine Tuberculosis restrictions, which limit the ability to sell youngstock through the open market. The herd has been closed for many years, with all replacements bred in-house to minimise disease risk and maintain high standards of herd health and welfare.

Milk is supplied to Cadbury's via the Selkley Vale Milk Group, and the business places a strong emphasis on animal welfare, environmental stewardship, and sustainable production.

3. Proposed Storage facility

The proposal is to construct an earth-banked slurry lagoon located within a field parcel central to the farmed land. The lagoon will measure approximately 55 m (length) x 55m (width) x 5 m (depth), providing a surface area of 3025m² and a total storage capacity of approximately 8144 m³ (once you take into consideration the slope and freeboard etc).

Key construction and operational features include:

- The use of imported clay, to be approved by the Environment Agency, ensuring the lagoon meets current regulatory standards for slurry containment.
- A location set away from the main farmstead, yet centrally situated within the landholding to optimise access, minimise vehicle movements, and maximise nutrient-use efficiency.
- Improved capacity enabling slurry to be stored safely during periods when land spreading is restricted, and allowing timely application aligned with crop nutrient requirements.
- The provision of approximately six months' slurry storage capacity across the farm.
- Installation of a 2-metre-high stock-proof safety fence around the lagoon perimeter to ensure health and safety, prevent unauthorised access, protect livestock, and reduce risk to farm staff and members of the public, in line with best practice and farm safety requirements.

This modern and compliant facility will enhance environmental protection, reduce the risk of nutrient losses, and support best-practice nutrient management planning.

4. Conclusion

To maintain Court Farm as a viable and productive dairy enterprise, investment in robust slurry-storage infrastructure is essential. The proposed lagoon will:

- Provide the necessary storage capacity to support year-round slurry production,
- Enable nutrient applications to be made during the optimal spring and summer periods,
- Reduce reliance on artificial fertilisers by enabling better utilisation of organic nutrients,
- Support compliance with environmental regulations and good agricultural practice, and
- Strengthen the long-term sustainability and resilience of the business.

For these reasons, the proposed slurry lagoon represents a necessary and proportionate agricultural development that will safeguard the future operation of Court Farm as an efficient and environmentally responsible dairy holding.