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Agricultural Dwelling Proposal
Trinity Hall Farm Walpole Highway

For

Arthur Markillie Ltd

By

Maxey Grounds & Co LLP

14th July 2021



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Instructions

Maxey Grounds & Co are instructed to prepare a functional need assessment in relation to the provision of a further Agricultural Dwelling for Arthur Markillie Ltd at Trinity Hall farm, Trinity Road, Walpole Highway, Wisbech.

Farm Overview

The farming business is agricultural production on 1200 ha (/650 Ha owned by the family and 550 Ha rented / contract farmed) in an area centred on the main farm base and yard at Trinity Hall and covering a radius of up to 15 miles. There is an intention to expand the operation by a further 200 ha within the next 2 years.

The business is principally run by Sam Markillie who lives at Trinity Hall, with a full time manager Jason Esser, who does not live on the farm (currently resides with parents on the western side of Wisbech and needs his own accommodation) and for whom the proposed additional dwelling is for.

The company produces a range of agricultural crops including cereals, sugar beet, potatoes and pulses. It is a forward thinking and growing business. In 2008 it farmed 487 Ha wholly cereals and pulses and with 2 employees. It has now expanded to 4 full time employees plus 8 other jobs on a part year basis covering seasonal work

The main farm yard includes storage building for 10000 T of cereals, and 2500 T of potatoes in environmentally controlled stores, and machinery and fertilizer storage.

The Business is a long established and financially sound operation seeking to continue to grow.

Functional Need

The scale of the business and amount of out of hours requirements and the length of day such requirements involve are too great for the business principle Sam Markillie to provide on his own on a 24/7 basis, and require Management level decision making. The farm manager's role involves a functional need to reside on site in connection with the following out of hours operations.

- The business are long holders of combinable products. Wheat storage requires manually turning fans on 11-12 o clock at night. Critically storing wheat requires below 6 Degrees for as long as you can over the winter period. This avoids the use of pesticides on produce in store, necessary to satisfy environmental and chemical residue requirements.



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- Fresh produce (potatoes) stored in refrigerated and environmentally controlled stores to ensure quality is maintained. These need constant monitoring and manually turning on and off at certain times of year.
- Our markets required us to load Lorries in a 18hrs a day window. It is not reasonable for one person to be available for that length of day 7 days per week
- Increased pressure on spraying pesticides at night and early mornings. The Business is taking their environmental responsibilities very seriously. There is less wind at night, less beneficials around (bees), less public exposure, increase in efficacy. Often an assessment of the conditions needs to be made before the spraying commences which requires qualified managerial input. The farm manager is BASIS qualified. Farming and especially spraying is a 7 day operation because correct conditions and timely application are essential
- Less road miles. Some days Mr Esser is currently having to make 3 to 4 round trips of 7.5 miles each way through Wisbech which takes 16 minutes each way with no traffic. Adding the potential 2 hrs to a 14-16hr working day. This length of working day is not sustainable, and if the employee is to be retained suitable accommodation on the farm for a Manager (as well as the business principal) needs to be provided.
- Security on farms is unfortunately a prime consideration these days with theft and trespass (eg hare coursing) and vandalism an increasing issue. With 35,000 L Fuel storage, 10,000T combinable storage, 2500T potato/veg storage. 150m³ Liquid Fert and 300T bagged fertilizer and Machinery £1,500,000 worth the farm requires an active presence from a security perspective
- Employee retention is an important factor in the ongoing business planning and succession planning for the holding. Mr Markillie has to ensure he has the right management in place for when he physically can not undertake the amount of work he currently does. His father is now retired and moved away from the farm and there are not family members likely to succeed him in the short or medium term, so having recruited a young keen and knowledgeable manager with local connections, it is essential for the business future that this manager can be retained, housed on the farm, and his working conditions in terms of time and availability for out of hours duties made tolerable such that he remains within the business.
- Health and Safety. Many tasks now require more than one person being on site. That is frequently not feasible if the manager is not resident.



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Existing Residential Accommodation

In addition to Trinity Hall (occupied by Mr Markillie and his wife) there are 4 other dwellings at Trinity Hall – 1-4 Trinity Cottages.

1 Trinity Cottages is owned by R S Markillie as a retirement investment and let to a long term residential tenant. The business does not control the occupation and this property is thus not available.

2 Trinity Cottages is let to long term residential occupiers who are model tenants and also rent the surrounding paddocks. Again this is owned by R S Markillie as a retirement investment and is not available to the business. The property is not of the size necessary for managers accommodation

3 Trinity Cottages occupied by a retired worker with 50years service on the farm who has protection to his tenancy under the Rent Agriculture Act 1976. Again its scale is not that required for a managers house, but in any case it is not available

4 Trinity Cottages houses a current employee of the farm but that employee's role does not include the managerial knowledge or responsibility to undertake the required functions listed above.

As such there is no available or suitable accommodation on the holding for the farm manager

Proposal

The intention would be to provide a new detached dwelling of scale approximately 200 sq m plus garage in the location and as illustrated on the attached aerial image, for occupation by the farm manager. The location is such that the dwelling is well related to the main farm yard, and screened by existing trees and other planting from the Highway and Trinity Hall. Both practically and functionally it will enable the occupant to fulfil the needs of the business

Policy

Policy DM6 of the SADMP Local Plan 2015 recognises the need to additional dwellings to support sound farming businesses where there is a demonstrated functional need. It is acknowledged that any consent approved would be subject to an agricultural occupancy restriction. It is considered that the foregoing demonstrates that need and functional requirement.

JRM 01/07/2021



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Proposed Dwelling Location (edged in purple) in relation to existing buildings and yard

Harvest 21
Scale: 1:2,394

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Gatekeeper for Arthur Markillie Ltd

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