

RURAL ENTERPRISE DWELLING APPRAISAL

**PROPOSED AGRICULTURAL WORKERS DWELLINGS AT
PROPOSED POULTRY UNIT, GIBBET FEN, FEN ROAD, DONINGTON**

APPLICANT: WRAY TRADING LTD

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report has been commissioned by Wray Trading Ltd.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to provide an objective appraisal of the proposed poultry unit to be operated at Gibbet Fen, in connection with a planning proposal for the erection of two agricultural workers dwellings on the holding to provide staff accommodation for the poultry unit.
- 1.3 This report has been prepared having regard to paragraph 80 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 which outlines the planning policy criteria for agricultural workers dwellings.
- 1.4 This report has been prepared by Ian Pick. Ian Pick is a specialist agricultural and rural planning consultant. He holds a Bachelor of Science with Honours Degree in Rural Enterprise and Land Management from Harper Adams Agricultural College, and is a Professional Member of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, being qualified in the Rural Practice Division of the Institution.
- 1.5 Ian Pick has 24 years experience specialising in agricultural and rural planning, whilst employed by MAFF, ADAS, Acorus and most recently, Ian Pick Associates Limited.

2. AGRICULTURAL BUSINESS DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 The applicants, Wray Trading Ltd, propose to erect a poultry farm at Gibbet Fen, Fen Road, Donington. The proposed poultry farm extends to 6 No. poultry houses, and will accommodate 330,000 birds per flock.

- 2.2 The farm will operate as an intensive broiler unit, rearing chicks from day old through to finished table weight.
- 2.3 The proposed poultry buildings on the site will be purpose-built broiler rearing units, constructed of steel frames, with the external cladding being profile sheeting. The buildings will be fitted with feeders, drinkers, gas heating and fan assisted ventilation systems. Each building includes a control room which houses a computer system to controls the systems operated in the buildings.
- 2.4 The control room includes a specialist computer system which is thermostatically controlled to maintain the desired temperature within the bird housing area, using the heating and ventilation systems. Feeding and lighting is also controlled by the computer system.
- 2.5 The use of the buildings is for the rearing of broilers from day old chicks through to finished table weight. The proposed broiler rearing cycle operates on an all-in all-out system, with each cycle taking 48 days. The birds are reared for approximately 38 days following which the buildings are cleaned out in preparation for the next batch of birds. The buildings are empty for cleaning and preparation for 10 days at the end of the growing cycle. The unit operates with 7.5 flocks per birds per annum.
- 2.6 The site is required to operate with a permit from the Environment Agency under the Environmental Permitting regime.

Farm Labour

- 2.7 Once fully operational, the poultry unit will provide full time employment for 2 full time workers.

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- 2.8 The standard labour calculation for the proposed broiler unit is shown below, based on standard published labour data in the Farm Management Pocketbook by John Nix, 52nd Edition 2022.

Enterprise	Labour Requirement per Head / Place (standard man days)	Total Enterprise Labour Requirement (standard man days)
2,475,000	0.002	4950
Total		4950

** It is generally accepted that 300 standard man days are provided by stockmen, therefore, the unit has a standard labour requirement of 16.5 full-time workers.*

- 2.10 The business has a standard labour requirement of 16.5 full-time workers based on standard data. The poultry business will be operated with 2 full time workers on the site, plus large gangs of specialist contractors during the peak periods.
- 2.11 The labour requirements on the poultry unit vary substantially during the different stages of the flock cycle, with peak requirements for labour during catching of birds and cleaning and washing of the buildings. Additional contract staff are brought in to provide additional labour during peak labour periods.

3. THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 3.1 The applicants propose erecting two agricultural dwellings adjacent to the poultry farm for occupation by the poultry workers. The proposal is for a large poultry farming operation, which extends to 330,000 birds. The business will be an intensive livestock unit, and will be reliant on automated ventilation, heating, feed and water systems. The vast numbers of the livestock are such that there is a requirement for a manager to reside on the site for the proper functioning of the enterprise and to maintain animal welfare.

4. NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 4.1 Paragraph 80 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2021) states that isolated new homes in the countryside should be avoided, unless certain circumstances apply. One of those circumstances is where there is an essential need for a rural worker to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside.

5. ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 The NPPF requires that any dwelling is essential for the proper functioning of the enterprise. Essential need is principally determined by the nature and scale of the enterprises operated and the operations which out of necessity have to be carried out to effectively manage and supervise those enterprises. In this case the business proposes to operate an intensive livestock unit extending to 330,000 broiler chickens.
- 5.2 The operation of the poultry unit is such that there is a high demand for out of hours labour. The out of hours labour includes monitoring and chicks, feed, water, ventilation and temperature throughout each growing cycle. The unit requires supervision on a round the clock basis. At certain times within the growing cycle there are greater demands for out of hours labour, such as during the first 4 days, 3 hourly stock and system checks are required. During thinning and clearing the site at the end of the cycle, labour is required for catching and supervision, 24 hours per day.
- 5.3 The unit is also heavily reliant on automated systems for ventilation and heating, feed and water. All of these systems must be monitored constantly as failure of the systems can cause serious welfare issues for the birds. Outside of the periods where out of hours demands on labour are high, it remains essential for workers to be immediately available to attend to emergencies. Emergencies can occur at any time, and timing of emergencies cannot be predicted, hence skilled workers need to be available at all times.

- 5.4 Ventilation within the poultry buildings is a thermostat controlled automatic system and is critically important for the welfare of the birds. Failure of the ventilation system can cause internal temperatures to rise very rapidly. Rising temperatures initially cause heat stress to the birds and followed by suffocation and death if not immediately rectified. Skilled workers must reside on the site in order to provide supervision of the ventilation system which requires immediate action in the event of failure. The unit will have an auto-start back up generator in the event of power failure, however, other mechanical causes of ventilation failure require manual intervention. It is also necessary for a worker to check that the backup generator has in fact started in the event of power failure.
- 5.5 The feed and water systems within the building are also automated. Failure of this system requires rectification immediately to avoid distress to the birds.
- 5.6 The lighting system within the poultry unit is controlled by a timeswitch. Birds are nervous by nature and disruption of the lighting system causes panic. Panic amongst large numbers of birds leads to smothering. A smothering incident requires immediate physical action by stockmen to mitigate losses.
- 5.7 There is a large requirement for out of hours labour associated with the poultry unit, and a continuous requirement for checking the stock, and monitoring the automatic systems. The demand on out of hours labour differs based on the period of the stock cycle, however, with the exception of the short cleanout period, there is an essential requirement for skilled stockmen to be immediately available at all times.
- 5.8 The functional needs of the business are site specific and workers need to reside on the site, within sight and sound of the poultry buildings. There are no existing dwellings in the locality which are capable of satisfying the extremely site-specific functional needs. The response to emergencies associated with an intensive livestock unit on this nature needs to be relatively instant, and a target of a response within 5 minutes is appropriate to avoid losses.

- 5.9 The functional needs are 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. It is not possible for a single resident worker to be on call 24/7 and it is necessary to split the supervision requirements of the unit between two workers and operate an on-call rota system. As a result, it is the development requires 2 No. agricultural workers dwellings.

6. CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The proposed poultry unit business operated at Gibbet Fen is a large intensive livestock enterprise. The business has a site-specific functional need for two full time livestock worker to reside within sight and sound of the livestock buildings. This is essential in order to provide for the essential supervision requirements of the poultry unit and the welfare of the large numbers of birds to be accommodated on the farm.

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