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REVISED AGRICULTURAL REPORT

To support the planning application for a dwelling at

**Home Farm
Little Sutton
Long Sutton
Spalding
Lincolnshire
PE12 9AJ**

Prepared on behalf of the Applicant

T & A Piccaver

29th May 2014

GAC/NW/P031

Prepared by

George Cook

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1. INTRODUCTION

I am instructed by the Partners of T & A Piccaver to prepare a report which sets out the agricultural need for a dwelling at Home Farm.

In preparing this report I have set out the information which addresses the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework. This replaces Planning Policy Statements with effect from the 1st April 2012. I am however aware that the requirements relating to sustainability (para.28).

I am also aware that paragraph 55 sets out specific requirements in relation to essential need for the dwelling.

Matters ascertaining to planning policy and the use of other buildings on the site are dealt with in more detail by the applicants planning consultant.

I am a Senior Business Consultant with The Andersons Centre based at Melton Mowbray in Leicestershire and have been with the firm 27 years, prior to that I spent 15 years of practical experience on farm and estates.

I am formally qualified with a HND in Agricultural Science and a diploma in Farm Business Management. I am a member of BIAC, Chairman of their Business Management Division and regularly attend seminars held by the Rural Planning Division at the same organisation.

In assessing the information provided to me I note that the majority of assumptions have been made based on Annex A PPS7. That annex along with all of the other PPSs have been replaced nationally by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The framework document is silent on the subject of temporary dwellings.

I note however, that in recent planning appeal outcomes the Inspectorate are still basing at least some of their findings on Annex A methodology. Specifically, that there is a need to establish evidence of financial viability as part of the overall assessment of sustainability.

On the topic of essential need, paragraph 55 of NPPF still requires that the Applicant establish a need to be established. Part of the paragraph states *“local authorities should avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless there are special circumstances such as: - The essential need for a rural worker to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside”*.

2. BACKGROUND

The Piccaver family have farmed Home Farm for four generations. They have retained ownership of all or part of that holding during that time. Since 2001 they have owned all the farm land which totals some 400 acres. The principal soil type is Grade 1 silt.

During the last 26 years this business has undergone a number of reorganisations and changes to cropping. The business is currently run as a family partnership trading as T & A Piccaver. The partnership includes Mr Tony Piccaver and Mrs Anne Piccaver and their son Joseph. The latter is taking the major and most significant role in the management of the farm, carrying out day to day activities and specifically management of controlled environment potato stores.

Tony Piccaver has now been actively involved in the farm for over 35 years. He has run the business since 1978 and moved into “Petersfield” at the same time.

Mr and Mrs Piccaver therefore lived there for over 33 years. Their son Joe is now responsible for most of the day to day running of the business and carries out the majority of field work.

Tony Piccaver has scaled down his involvement and work on the farm by way of a phased retirement. He is available to provide limited part-time support but understandably has not wish to move away from the family home and business. The planning appeal decision relating to messers Keen and Aylesbury District Council supports this view where there is an established functional need and the business is viable. Both of which are true in this case.

The report is prepared as part of the application for a 4-bedroomed house at Home Farm. The house is to allow Mr J Piccaver, his wife and two children to live on site. They currently live 5 miles away in Holbeach. In this report I will set out the following:

- The changes that have taken place in the business, by way of cropping and staffing in the last 30 years.
- The future plan of the family in relation to retirement etc.
- The available properties.
- The functional requirements of the farming business.
- Conclusions

Business Background

Mr Tony Piccaver took over the running of the farm in 1978 on the death of his father and at that stage the business was run with 2 employees.

Cropping was based on the growing of combinable crops. At that time it was necessary to make both redundant, which included the tractor driver John Coates. Mr & Mrs Coates currently occupy, under protected worker status, a 2-bedroomed cottage located in Shaws Lane. I will deal with this occupancy when dealing with dwellings later.

Following the death of his father, Tony and his wife Anne moved into the the dwelling adjacent to the farmyard known as Petersfield. This is where his father lived prior to his death. Permission for this dwelling was granted in April 1967 and it is subject to an agricultural tie.

Mr J Piccaver returned to the farm business in the mid 1990's and at that stage the decision was taken to start growing potatoes and intensify the farming business to enable the two families to be supported, where previously there has only been income for one family. The business began to specialise in the growing and storing of potatoes for chipping.

Initially the potatoes were stored off farm in rented stores. However, the Partners decided that this form of storage was becoming expensive, and not delivering the best financial returns to the business. They had no control over timing and marketing and end quality of their crops marketed from the stores.

In 2007 the decision was made by the business to invest in its own 1500 tonne controlled environment store. The Partners are now able to have complete control over the management of the crops right through the growing, storage, grading and marketing stages. The impact of these changes has meant that whilst the area of crop has remained constant the value of that crop as a percentage of total crop sales has increased from an average of 15 % to 45% of value. (In 2013 the figure was 64%)

The uplift in potato margins and subsequent increase in provision of local employment has only been achieved as a direct result of the new storage.

Since 2000 the area of potato crop has remained more or less constant at about 20% of the farmed area.

This investment in controlled environment storage has enabled sufficient profits to be generated to:

- Service and repay the loans financing the additional storage
- Provide adequate income to support two families, and provide additional employment for 2-3 FTE's.
- Leave a surplus for the servicing and repaying of any monies associates with the proposed dwelling.

To deliver these returns consistently every year it is necessary to pay very close attention to crop and environmental conditions within the store.

The Farm

The farm comprises of approximately 400 acres of grade 1 silt and all farming operations are based at Home farm. The Farm has a range of modern and more traditional farm buildings. These include:

- A new 1500 tonne controlled environment potato store
- A temporary grain store / potato grading machinery storage barn
- A further range of traditional farm buildings to include workshop and other storage areas

Cropping comprises of approximately:

- 75 - 80 acres potatoes; grown for chipping
- 84 acres of sugar beet
- 194 acres of winter wheat

The remaining farm area includes small areas of woodland, conservation areas and grassland around the farmyard.

The potato crop forms a significant part of the overall income of the business, and on average contributes approximately 45% of total income from crops. Virtually all the potato crop is sold in ex farm in bags for chipping. Each year this crop is marketed from late December though to early July the following year

3. FUNCTIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Labour

The cropping as described and using the Standard Man Days calculation indicates the following:

Crop	Standard Man Days/ha	Total
Wheat. 91.63 ha	1.15	105.37
Sugar Beet 34.43 ha	3.0	103.29
Potatoes 29.51 ha	9.25	273.0
Potatoes: casual, grading, bagging	1.5	44.26
Sub Total:		525.92
Maintenance @ 15%		78.88
Total Labour:		604.80

This is equivalent to 2.20 standard persons. This includes an allowance for grading and packing which is not covered by the standard labour allowance per hectare.

The majority of the labour is provided by Mr J Piccaver. Mr J Piccaver carries out the majority of field work and is solely responsible for the management and monitoring of the potato store. Casual pickers are brought in for the grading and bagging of potatoes. Mr Piccaver Senior, Mr T Piccaver, has scaled down his involvement and work on the farm significantly over the recent years by way of a “*phased retirement*”. Mr T Piccaver is considered as working on a “*needs must*” basis, and the work that is carried out by Mr T Piccaver is limited to house keeping tasks such as lawn mowing and some assistance at with potato bagging.

To be clear, Mr T Piccaver has had no involvement with the potato store whatsoever and he simply does not have the knowledge or technical ability to effectively manage the store, particularly in circumstances where Mr T Piccaver’s involvement in the farming business generally is coming to an end.

Mr J Piccaver is the only person who has the requisite knowledge of the running and mechanics of the potato store and equipment, in addition to the monitoring requirements and use of the computerised systems.

Notwithstanding the standard labour calculation the employment facts are as follows:

At the harvest / lifting 7 additional staff are employed. The main grading period generally runs from January to the end of June each year. For 3 days a week 3-4 additional casual staff are employed. This is probably equivalent to 2-3 full-time workers over a year. Without the store these jobs within the rural economy would not be available.

The functional/ essential need requirement for someone to be available at most times is justified by the specific storage requirements of the potato crop. The storing of potatoes for chipping requires very regular and close monitoring of the stores, from the time that the first potatoes are introduced in September to the point of final sales, which is early July (a 10 month period).

Management of the potato store and potato crop

The store requirements include:

- the drying of potato skins shortly after the point of harvest.
- The maintenance of a steady temperature within the store at precisely 10 °C.

The maintenance of this crop in storage is crucial to ensure that the correct balance between starch and sugar within the tuber to ensure the correct frying quality is maintained. The store is insulated and it is the potatoes themselves which generate the heat, but there is a requirement to closely control and monitor temperature the composition of air and humidity within the store.

The store is equipped with computerised systems to include humidity temperature probes all linked to a monitoring equipment. However such systems are generally only reactive and not fully reliable in terms of maintaining the temperature within a tight prescribed band required for the storage of this type of potato.

In more detail the storage requirements from harvest to sale are set out below.

Stage One

- Once the crops have been harvested the first requirement is to dry the skin (and any surface soil) as quickly as possible and cool the tubers to a temperature of 12 °C.
- At the point of lifting tuber temperatures are generally between 16 °C – 18 °C. To avoid excess condensation forming in the store the temperature can only be reduced by 0-2 °C per day. Due to prevailing daytime temperatures cooling and process monitoring have to be carried out overnight. This is almost impossible to be achieved satisfactorily by someone living off site.
- The cooling process takes between 4 and 6 weeks.

Stage Two

- This is crucial for the long term maintenance of the correct balance in the tuber between starch and sugar.
- The crops in store have to be held at 12 °C to allow the tubers to burn off excess sugar through respiration.
- Regular testing determines when the correct balance has occurred (normally requirement another 2-3 weeks). During that period ambient air has to be introduced to maintain temperature (heat is given off by the tuber during the process) and ensure carbon dioxide levels do not increase and ‘kill the tubers’.

Stage Three

- Once the sugars have been burnt off the temperature is slowly reduced to the long term storage temperature of 10 °C. (4 weeks)
- Throughout these stages and moving forward there is a need to ensure fresh air can be introduced at regular intervals (often several times per day)
- It is also critical that monitoring probes within the store are moved, including these located on top of the stacks of boxes (12 – 15m high). The placing of probes requires two people.
- Monitoring is also necessary to control when it is necessary to introduce sprout suppressant gasses into a sealed store. This is a critical process because the crop is destined for market sales and the level of active ingredient permitted is 50% less than for processing potatoes. This is followed by manual venting of the store.
- The next stage that requires careful monitoring comes when crop needs to be removed from the store for bagging and transport. There is a need to ensure that the correct temperature balance is maintained (10 °C) throughout or sugar production will increase again leading to poor fry colour.

However automated the store is, there are clear the limitations on the efficacy of these systems installed. Remote sensing of this sort is not sufficiently responsive to temperature change within the all or part of the store to ensure remedial action can be taken in time to maintain crop quality.

The challenge to the business has been to maintain the correct temperatures and gas mixes throughout the store. The Partners have sought to rely on automated systems during the first year of operating the store. However in the autumn of 2012 it was becoming evident that tuber quality was not being maintained at a high enough level for the chip market.

The evidence of quality problems was provided by feedback from customers and “on site” testing. Fry colours were not consistent for sale of chips.

As a result the Partners sought specialist advice on the matter from Simon Alexander of SA Consulting. He is a specialist on potato storage problems and provision of solutions. A copy of his report is appended. (App 1)

Key points from that report and his conclusions include *“Due to the extremes of temperature last winter management practices needed to alter in view of the problem, which consisted of constant manual monitoring and adjustment of control setting to optimise fresh air intake and minimise use of refrigeration system”*.

He further goes on to point out *“With the variability in ambient temperatures it is essential that the level of fresh air actually entering the building is monitored and if necessary the automated system is manually overridden at least twice a day to ensure that the CO₂ and Ethylene levels do not build up and affect fry quality”*.

In the recent email correspondence annexed to this report, Simon Alexander of S A Consulting confirms that the control of the fridges and its interaction with the ambient air requires manual input and cannot be controlled automatically. Manual operation of the fridges is required where the temperature outside is almost cool enough and when the temperatures are still not cool enough through the evenings, overnight and early morning.

Manual control of the fridges reduces the length of time the fridges are running. The longer the fridges are running, the greater the levels of weight loss in the potatoes. The fridges are good dehumidifiers. The increase use of the fridges also leads to the increase risk of CO₂ build up in the store which results in deterioration in fry quality.

Increased fridge use also has a negative impact on the carbon footprint and sustainability.

The second comment paragraph above underpins the need for consistent monitoring, irrelevant of time of day or frequency during the day. Such levels of monitoring can in my opinion only be achieved by someone living on site, where they are able to react to local site specific conditions.

It is clear from his comments the automated systems were not sufficiently responsive to temperature changes. The result was quality loss resulting in variable fry colours in the chips.

Mark Lawe of Crowland Fresh Produce Limited (a small company responsible for the purchase and resale of chipping potatoes) has also produced a letter in support of this proposal which is annexed to this report. (App 2)

Mr Lawe describes the farm business as *“a premium grower”*. Mr Lawe confirmed that successful potato storage is essential to maintain a desirable chipping potato; chipping potatoes being held to a much higher standard than potatoes for other uses.

Mr Lawe repeats the risk of failures in potato storage resulting in issues such as a worsening fry, heightened risk of infection and excessive weight loss which can have a significant impact on the profit of the farming business.

In Mr Lawe's experience trouble free long term storage can only be achieved where "*the farmer is in a position to monitor the stores on a regular basis*". Mr Lawe goes on to say that, in his opinion, the ability to monitor store "*at 24/7 is ultimately the best option*" to ensure a consistently high standard of potato.

Mr Lawe's view is mirrored by Jeremy Nunn of Thurlow Nunn Standen Limited who supplied the potato store in 2007. Mr Nunn emphasises (letter in App2) that good management of the store is as important to the store's success as the building itself and equipment installed. Mr Nunn confirms that "*regular visits to the store are critical*" and stresses the need for monitoring at all times, including weekends and early mornings, reflecting the advice of Simon Alexander and Mark Lawe in respect of the essential need for ongoing monitoring at all times.

Jeremy Nunn also highlights the issue of fault trips at the potato store. Should there be a fault trip overnight, the ability of the farmer, in this case Mr J Piccaver, to react and resolve the fault trip swiftly is essential and an urgent response is required to minimise the damage caused to the crop in the store as a result. Jeremy Nunn also expressed concerns that the store would be exposed completely during the weekend if there were no inspections particularly during extending warm or very cold ambient conditions when store conditions can change quickly and requires immediate intervention through the change settings or by bringing on back up heaters or crop walk. Mr Nunn has dealt with other farmers/operators who are in their stores 3-4 times a day starting early in the morning and ending last thing at night to ensure that everything is stable in store. By way of an example, Mr Nunn expresses the view that one fault or delayed reaction to a fault could lead to a loss of half a million pounds.

It is further noted that although the store has a high degree of monitoring and automation included within its construction, these monitoring devices are only reactive to a situation once it has evolved. By the time the systems have reacted and set about controlling or rectifying any potential problem, loss of quality and in the extreme loss of part of the crop or at least the initial stages of these processes will have already taken place.

To ensure adequate management of the storage conditions it is necessary to monitor at all heights within the store including the top of the box stacks (4 plus metres). The final emptying of the potato stores also takes place at one of the most intense work periods in June. The store emptying coincides

with the peak time for control of potato blight within the crops. This activity is another essential component in the production of a quality product and is time critical.

With the increasing variability of the UK weather throughout the peak growing period is often necessary to be spraying the crops every 5 days and at the very least at 7 day intervals. It is also a fact that in seasons like those recently experienced, it has been necessary to snatch the windows of opportunity whether they occur at 4am in the morning or 9pm in the evening. The crops require spraying every 5-6 days and picking an opportunity when it is possible, firstly to apply the fungicide safely and then to allow it time to be absorbed by the crop before the next rain.

These narrow working windows underpin the need for someone to be available on site often in relatively anti-social hours.

The guidance notes to Annex A to PPS7 states that the functional test, i.e. establishing that it is essential for the proper functioning of the enterprise for one or more workers to be readily available at most times, will be satisfied if workers are needed to be on hand day and night:-

- (i) in case of agricultural processes, require essential care at short notice; or
- (ii) to deal quickly with emergencies that could otherwise cause serious loss of crops or products, for example...by the failure of automatic systems.

With reference to the aforementioned guidance, it is unquestionable that the requirements of the potato store fall within the aforementioned examples and, as such, the functional test is satisfied.

The growth and expansion of the farming business has been achieved against the background of a recession under the management of Mr J Piccaver. The ongoing success of the potato store is dependent upon the removal of the current limitations and restraints caused by Mr J Piccaver's residence over 5 miles away and the detrimental effect that will have on response times.

Further it is in my opinion that it is no longer the case that only livestock businesses meet the essential need criteria. Mention has already been made about the fact that the majority of all farm yard and field based operations are now carried out by one person.

The quality and regulatory controls now in place for many of these operations (store management, crop spraying etc) leave farming businesses such as this with often limited opportunities to complete operations on time and at the right time. Such requirements can only be met by key personnel residing on site. That person is Mr. J. Piccaver.

I therefore consider that there is a clear functional need for him to be available at most times for the detailed supervision of potato storage and time critical field operations on the holding throughout the year.

Additional Monitoring and farming needs

In addition to the general monitoring requirement at the potato store and field critical operations, supervision and monitoring is also necessary for the following:-

- **Emergencies that could cause serious or total loss of crop**, e.g. fire and fault trips in the store which are real risks in this type of enterprise.
- **Security.** Notwithstanding the monitoring needs, there is an identified need to protect the holding from intruders, damage and theft. There have been numerous incidents relating to theft and criminal damage at the holding, the most recent in September 2013 whereby the buildings were damaged due to forcible and violent entry and theft of a considerable volume of valuable technical equipment equating to a loss of approximately £20,000.00. These occurrences have been reported to and logged with the local police force and have also been reported to the Piccaver's insurance provider, NFU Mutual. NFU Mutual's insurance adviser, Dianne Hunt, has produced a letter (annexed to this report. App 2) indicating a strong support for the current proposal as a deterrent for vandalism, theft and arson
- **Receipt of goods and early morning deliveries and loading of heavy goods vehicles.** In his letter of support, Mark Lawe of Crowland Fresh Produce Limited confirms it is the responsibility of the farmer (i.e. Mr J Piccaver) to load the Heavy Good Vehicles and that loading can occur late at night, early in the morning and over weekends. As is often the case, loading can be required at extremely short notice and whilst Mr J Piccaver is sympathetic to the demands of the haulier and makes every effort to respond to such short notice, due to the remoteness of his present location in Holbeach to the holding, Mr J Piccaver's response time is not sufficient to meet the needs of the haulier and business is lost as a result.

Accommodation

Mr J Piccaver, his wife and two young children currently reside in a residential dwelling in Holbeach which is located 5 miles away from the farm. The functional need set out in the preceding paragraphs cannot be met adequately or at all whilst Mr J Piccaver continues to reside 5 miles away from the farm.

Mr J Piccaver's current residence is too remote to permit an adequate response time to issues and it is not functional or proportionate for Mr J Piccaver to travel to and from the farm to carry out both standard monitoring and urgently responding to any faults or any other emergencies at the potato store especially at such unsociable hours.

Mr J Piccaver's current residence is also too remote to enable Mr J Piccaver to respond to the arrival of Heavy Goods Vehicles for loading at the farm in the early hours at short or little notice, leading to loss of profit and business and having a negative impact on business relationships.

The present housing situation is also insufficient to deter to or respond swiftly to burglary, arson and vandalism at the potato store which has led to a significant financial loss and disruption to the farming business.

Mr J Piccaver's current residential situation is not sustainable and is likely to have a detrimental impact to the farming business in the long term and would also lead to a poor work/life balance. Mr J Piccaver's continued residence in Holbeach is not an option and there is a clear essential need for the proposed dwelling on the holding.

Alternative housing - Existing Dwellings

Petersfield

Petersfield is occupied by Mr and Mrs Piccaver Senior. As detailed in the preceding paragraphs of this report, Mr T Piccaver has taken a back seat in the running of the farming business over previous years by way of a phased retirement. Mr T Piccaver's current involvement in the farming business is limited and he has absolutely no input in the management of the potato store. Mr T Piccaver is certainly in no position to perform the functional requirements as fully detailed in this report as presently undertaken by Mr J Piccaver. In the next year or so Mr T Piccaver will cease all farming involvement on a commercial scale. As their home for upwards of 45 years, Mr and Mrs Piccaver Senior have no intention to leave the property and it is unlikely to become available for occupation or placed on the market at full price, or, indeed, at all in the foreseeable future.

Furthermore, planning appeal history determines that where there is a functional need and the business is viable then that retired family member should not be required to move away to provide accommodation justified by the functional need.

Farm Cottage, Shaws Lane

The second dwelling located on the holding is the farm cottage at Shaws Lane. This is a two bedroom cottage and is occupied by Mr and Mrs Coates who have resided in the property for over 50 years. Mr Coates is a retired agricultural worker and has the statutory protection of the Rent (Agriculture) Act 1976 with the corresponding successions right. Mr and Mrs Coates are presently in good health and have no intention of leaving the cottage.

The protection that Mr and Mrs Coates are afforded by way of Rent (Agriculture) Act tenancy makes it extremely unlikely that a Court would ever grant an order for possession of the property whilst Mr

and Mrs Coates remain and intend to remain in occupation. In the circumstances, the cottage is not currently available for occupation nor is it likely to be within the foreseeable future. Even if that cottage did become available, to meet the functional need or otherwise, it is too small to accommodate Mr J Piccaver and his young family and is not conveniently situated to satisfy the functional need, nor would it solve the problems of theft and vandalism on the holding.

Former Farmhouse

As shown on the aerial view photograph annexed to this report (App 3), historically there were three residential dwellings located on the holding, one of which being a farmhouse that was occupied by the farm foremen and located within 50 yards of the site for the proposed dwelling. The foreman used to occupy the third dwelling at a time when the farming business was of a much smaller scale, much less profitable than it currently is and where there was certainly not the functional need for that third dwelling as there is now. After the foreman died in or around 1974, and having consideration to the smaller scale business operational at that time, it was considered that the building was not needed at that time (in 1974) and the building was subsequently demolished.

The proposed dwelling is in keeping with the character and the history of the farm and the plans for the size and design of the proposed dwelling is certainly in keeping with the farmhouse that was previously in existence on the holding before it was demolished.

Whilst not directly applicable in this matter, the recent introduction of new permitted development rights in relation to rural planning to allow the conversion of farm buildings for residential dwelling would appear to support this application for the erection of a new dwelling, particularly in circumstances where there used to be a dwelling for residential use located in almost exactly the same location. The new permitted development rights also allow for up to three dwellings on one holding which is the total number of dwellings that will be located on the holding, as there were historically, if planning permission is granted.

4. SUSTAINABILITY AND FINANCIAL VIABILITY

The business activities of growing chipping potatoes are long established and form an integral part of this long established and viable business. I have appended (App4) a copy of the professionally prepared management accounts for the year ended 31st March 2013. These also include the figures for the year ended 31st March 2012.

The profit and loss accounts are appended and show profits of about £76k for 2012 and £228k for 2013. It is therefore financially sustainable and firmly established with a sound asset base of owned land.

In both years the potato enterprise has contribute between 40% - 45% of business turnover. In 2013 the figure was about 64%. These financial results are only consistently achievable if the current quality of crop in store can be maintained. Poor storage could lead to a price reduction of between 50% - 80%, rendering the enterprise and its benefits unviable.

Without the potato enterprise the business will be unable to support the staffing levels it does of those working on the lifting, grading and bagging of the potato crop. I estimate the crop is able to support equivalent to between 3-4 full-time persons. In a rural economy this is important.

In environmental terms the careful monitoring of the store enables conditions within the store to be maintained using ambient air minimising power requirements for refrigeration and heating.

5. PLANNING POLICY ASSESSMENT PPS7, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL AREAS

The farming business meets the objectives of policy HS7 in the South Holland Local Plan, in addition to complying with policy HS12 and the national guidance set out in paragraph 55 to the National Planning Policy Framework in that the proposed dwelling is essential to meet the needs of agricultural workers.

Although now replaced by the NPPF, in recent planning appeal outcomes the Inspectorate are still basing their findings on some Annex A methodology as set out at PPS7.

Annex A of PPS7 (and to a similar extent, policy HS7 and HS12 of the South Holland local plan) set down criteria when agricultural dwellings can be allowed to support existing agricultural activities and our response to these is as follows:

1.1. There is a clearly defined existing functional need.

Response: Following the decision whereby the farming business to invest in its own 1500 tonne controlled environment store in 2007, the value of the crop as a potential of total crop sales an increase from 15% to 70% and has resulted in uplift in potato margins and an increase in a provision of local employment. The storage, needs, monitoring and supervision of the crop and the storage is set out under the heading “*Functional Requirements*” and demands that there be an onsite presence at all times which is essential to the efficient functioning of the unit. The need is further underpinned by the increasingly stringent requirements for timing of many field based operations associated with the growing of the potato crops on the farm.

1.2. The need relates to a full time worker or one who is employed in agriculture and does not relate to part time employment.

Response: Mr J Piccaver is committed full time to the running of the farm business. Mr T Piccaver has almost ceased all involvement in the farming business with a view to an imminent retirement. Due to the ongoing need for standard monitoring early in the morning and in the evening, the need to respond 24/7 and the response times to short notice HGV and loading responsibilities, Mr J Piccaver’s farm day commences at around 5am and continues well into the evening (and occasionally throughout the night) particularly around harvest and when outdoor temperatures are fluctuating significantly on an unpredictable basis.

- 1.3. The farming unit and agricultural activity have been established for at least three years and have been profitable for at least one of them, are currently financially sound and have a clear prospect of remaining so.

Response: With reference to the accounts annexed to this report, the farming business is sustainable financially and environmentally and has demonstrated adequate financial viability in all of the last three years and will continue to do so.

- 1.4. The functional need could not be met by another existing dwelling on the unit or any other existing accommodation in the area which is suitable for occupation by the workers concerned. There is also an identified need to protect the holding from intruders, damage, theft and arson.

Response: Neither Petersfield nor the cottage on Shaw's Lane are available to meet the functional need.

The functional need cannot be met by Mr J Piccaver remaining in accommodation some 5 miles away. This is far too remote. Mr J Piccaver is currently a disproportionate number of return journeys per day between the holding and his home and if sustained, will lead to more hours being lost commuting between the farm holding and his residence than can be justified. This is not sustainable and the impact on the farming business will be considerable, this will also lead to a poor work/life balance.

- 1.5. Other planning requirements that are in relation to access and impact on the countryside

Response: The proposed agricultural dwelling is sited so as to meet the identified functional need and is closely connected to the location, size and characteristics of the previous farmhouse that was in situ within 50 yards of the same site. The proposed dwelling is also of a size commensurate with the established functional requirement and is appropriate to the particular holding.

There should be little, if any, change to traffic movement to and from the holding if this application is granted and the proposed dwelling assimilates well with the countryside.

The proposed dwelling would allow Mr J Piccaver to provide greater manual input, specifically in relation to the running of the fridges at the potato store which can reduce the CO² build up and minimise the implication on the carbon footprint and sustainability, as well as on the standard of the crop.

6 CONCLUSIONS

I have met the Applicants and spent time assessing and assembling the detail of the activities on the holding. I have now drawn the following conclusions.

1. The management of potato storage at Home Farm requires close monitoring for the period from September one year to June the next year (9 months). There is a clear functional need for someone to be available at most times to achieve this. Further the reliance on one individual to carry out the majority of time sensitive crop spraying and management activities adds further weight to this need and for that to be met by that person residing “on site”.
2. Recommendations made in the report by S A Consulting confirm how crucial it is to monitor in store conditions to maintain quality. Top quality is essential for the viability of this enterprise.
3. The potato enterprise is vital to the long term sustainability of this business and to it being able to support the employment of between 3-4 full-time employees annually.
4. The functional need cannot be met by Mr Tony Piccaver who lives adjacent to the farm as he is reducing his role in the active management of the business and is close to retirement. The physical demands of monitoring are too much for him.
5. The potato enterprise would not continue without on-site supervision of the potato store.
6. Tony Piccaver’s phased retirement means the dwelling “Petersfield” is not available to meet the functional need. Nor is the cottage on Shaws Lane as it is occupied by retired workers with protected status.
7. Planning appeal history determines that where there is a functional need and the business is viable that retired family members should not be required to move away to provide accommodation justified by the functional need.
8. The functional need cannot be met by someone living 5 miles away. There is a minimum requirement for a person to inspect the stores early and late each day. It is evident from the

Agronomists report that for substantial periods during the period the store requires closer and more regular monitoring.

9. In addition the essential need is further underpinned by the need to carry out time critical crop spraying activities early and late in the day. Missing any application window can seriously threaten the yield and crop quality of the crops missed. Weather conditions can vary significantly over relatively small distances which further underpins the need to reside on site.
10. Automation devices are not sufficiently sensitive to ensure a pro-action rather than reactive response to changes with the store. The Partners have tried to rely on these systems and crop quality has been lost.
11. The business is sustainable financially and environmentally and has demonstrated adequate financial viability in all of the last 3 years. Accounts information is provided for the years ended 31st March 2012 and 2013 provide the necessary supporting financial data.
12. There is also the need to meet the customer requirements for loading of potato transport lorries. Requests often come at short notice and for loading early or late in the day throughout the selling period. It is difficult to reliably meet these demands living 5 miles away.

I conclude therefore that there is a clear functional need for a dwelling to be located at Home Farm and that the business meets the sustainability requirements as currently being assessed by the Planning Inspectorate.

APPENDIX 1 - S A Consulting Report on Potato Storage

APPENDIX 1

- SA Consulting Report
- SA Consulting Clarification email

APPENDIX 2

Letters from :

- M Lawe at Crowland Fresh Produce
- JeremyNunn
- NFU

APPENDIX 3 - Picture Farmyard showing former farm house

APPENDIX 4 - Summary Accounts for years ending 31/03/12 and 31/03/13