

Chestnuts Farm – Response from HiA Parish Council

We are writing in response to **three** planning applications currently before you regarding various activities and development at **Chestnuts Farm**, Eastcote Lane, Solihull, B92 0AS

We are conscious that the proposals involve building development on land that is outside our Parish. However, our adopted Neighbourhood Plan identified the view from behind the Fentham Hall as essential to protect, and these proposals continue a process over a number of years to turn what was once a modest farm, within a highly visible and much loved piece of Green Belt scenery, into what is little short, already, of an industrial complex. This is apparent in aerial photographs we have seen comparing 2013 with 2021.

We are sympathetic to the desire of the applicants to enhance the viability of their farm, but feel that the propositions contained here go beyond what is reasonable in terms of impact to the Green Belt and on the protected views from Hampton-in-Arden.

Most of this development has occurred so far without appropriate planning permission, and, if protection of rural views is to mean anything, we feel that these largely retrospective applications to complete and create a bigger and more industrialised development should be resisted, unless substantial evidence of mitigation through effective bunding, screening and emission minimisation can be demonstrated and guaranteed.

- 1. PL/2021/01631/PPFL: Completion and extension of part constructed general agricultural building for storing farm machinery, equipment and grain and use as temporary shelter for cattle.**

We have no objection in principle to the development of effective infrastructure to support the running of a farm in this area of Green Belt, but we feel the location of this particular development raises a need for additional safeguards. Some would argue that this view is one of the most scenic and beautiful in the West Midlands; our parishioners certainly think so, and we reflected this in our (now adopted) 2017 Neighbourhood Plan. We would therefore urge that this application, if approved, should be subject to the condition that effective natural screening is incorporated to ensure protection of this significant view.

However, we also have some real concerns over the building's actual use when completed. It will be located amongst other non-agricultural buildings which we **do believe** represent **inappropriate development** within the Green Belt. Consequently, we believe some assurance is required that this building will indeed be used for the agricultural purposes stated, prior to the application being decided.

The image below shows the view of the farm from Fentham Hall taken a few years ago (circa 2013). Chestnuts Farm was then a modest and unobtrusive development. We would like to

see sufficient and effective bunding and mature planting to ensure no detriment to this aspect.



2. PL/01632/PPFL : Continued use of existing agricultural building for offices and workshops for Dovetail Group with associated vehicle parking and storage in four containers and screen fencing. Continued use of existing yard and building for waste recycling and ancillary skip hire - C& R Lewis - part of Dovetail Group.

We are opposed to the granting of retrospective approval for the use of this facility as a storage and waste recycling centre. A requirement of NPPF Green Belt policy is any re-use of buildings or changes to the land should preserve the openness of the Green Belt. We believe the current development conflicts with that policy by virtue of the permanent siting of containers, the parking of numerous vehicles and skips, the recycling of waste and the erection of the 2-metre high fence.

It is our belief that this development conflicts with **Policy P10 (Protecting the Natural Environment)** and **Policy P17 (Protecting the Green Belt)** of the **Solihull Local Plan** and **Policy EN3 (Protecting Valued Views)** of the **Hampton-in-Arden Neighbourhood Plan**, adopted in 2017. (An extract from the Hampton-in-Arden Neighbourhood Plan is provided below.)

We also believe that this development is ruining a view identified as special in the **Hampton-in-Arden Conservation Area Appraisal** (Section 5.2) carried out by SMBC in 2015 which commented that:

*Views southwards from the car park of the Fentham Club and the southern end of Bellevue Terrace look across more of the valley within a **particularly unspoiled rural area.***

We believe that non-agricultural development under planning application PL/2021/01632/PPFL is **inappropriate development in the Green Belt**, and that its effects on Green Belt openness are, and will be, significant and, therefore, harmful to the character and appearance of the predominantly rural setting. We feel there may also be other problems arising from noise, dust, lighting, contamination and traffic impacts.

We would therefore urge the **rejection of this application** without further, significant mitigation, screening, guarantees and justification.

3. PL/01633/PPFL: *Retention of agricultural hardstanding and farm access tracks around farm yard area with associated bunds, fencing and landscaping.*

We feel that the application lacks sufficient detail relating to the nature, height of the bunds and fencing and any landscaping. However a major concern is that these works could be used to service non-agricultural storage and recycling activities on the site, which we believe to be **inappropriate development**. Therefore approval of this application without further clarification and guarantees could support activities which do impact on the openness of Green Belt and could therefore be in conflict with NPPF Green Belt Policy, as well as policies set out in the Solihull Local Plan and Hampton Neighbourhood Plan. We suggest the applicant needs to provide further evidence to support that 'very special circumstances' exist to allow the application to be approved.

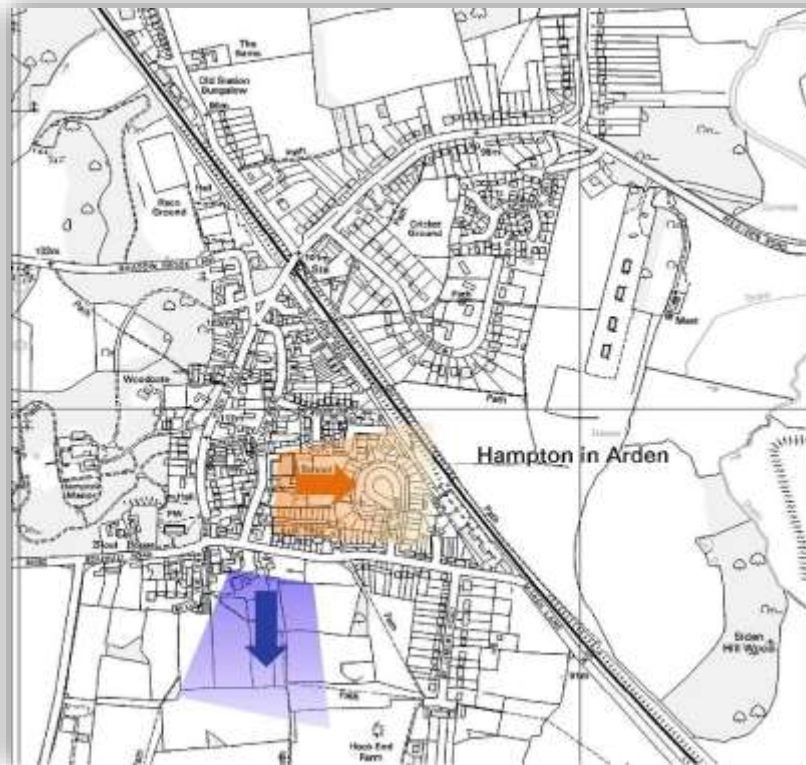
Extract from Hampton-in-Arden Neighbourhood Plan

Extracts Below from Hampton-in-Arden Neighbourhood Plan (Adopted 2017)

3.4.16. At many points within the village of Hampton-in-Arden there are good views of the surrounding patchwork farmland. The Consultation Survey demonstrated that the community places considerable value on the views out of the village and want to see these protected. Two views of particular note were identified in the survey and are shown on Figure 3.4 and include the view looking south towards Barston from Fentham Hall (View 1) and the view looking east from Fentham Road, near to the school (View 2). The *Conservation Area Appraisal* also identifies the importance of these two views within the setting of Hampton-in-Arden.

3.4.17. These views make an important contribution to the landscape quality and context of the village.

Figure 3.4



- Legend**
- View 1: View looking south towards Barston from Fentham Hall
 - View 2: View looking east from Fentham Road

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