

# Richard Cobb

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The Rt Hon. Sajid Javid MP  
Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government  
2 Marsham Street  
London SW1P 4DF

17 May 2017

### **URGENT**

Dear Secretary of State

**PL/2016/01378/PPFL**

**Demolition of existing garden centre and associated buildings, and the erection of a care facility (Use Class C2, comprising a 50 bed care home, 18 extra care two bedroom bungalows and 12 extra care two bedroom apartments, and associated works, including car parking, access, landscaping and related engineering works.**

**Site: Wyevale Garden Centre, Barston Lane, Eastcote, Barston, Solihull B92 0JJ**

**Applicant: Cinnamon Care Homes**

I am instructed by Barston Parish Council in Solihull.

The above planning application which was considered by the Solihull Planning Committee on 27 April. I am attaching a copy of the Officer's Report to that Committee which sets out further details of the application and changes to the originally submitted scheme. The application had been advertised by the Council as a major departure from the development plan.

You will note that the planning application was referred to Committee because the proposals amount to a major development with a significant impact outside of its immediate vicinity and the substantial weight of local concern from local residents including from the Parish Council.

The application site is a former garden centre in the small hamlet of Eastcote and the proposed development will more than double the size of that hamlet. The Parish Council have noted that most of the objections have come from Eastcote residents and those residents of nearby Eastcote Grange and the objections as a whole represent a large proportion of the residents of that hamlet around the site.

The Planning Committee resolved to follow the Officer's recommendation that the application be approved subject to conditions and referral to the National Planning Casework Unit (for reason of the amount of development proposed in this green belt location).

The Parish Council believe that the Planning Committee have misdirected themselves. They have not fully appreciated the considerable difference in scale from the present relatively minor buildings on

this former nursery site compared to what is proposed in this application which will have a significant impact on Green Belt openness.

Moreover the Officer's Report and the Planning Committee's consideration of the application failed properly to address the matter of Heritage Impact having regard to the proximity of listed buildings to the site.

The Parish Council have asked me to write to both the Secretary of State and NPCU to request that this planning application be called in by the Secretary of State for proper and thorough scrutiny by way of a local inquiry.

The Parish Council recognise the need for an increasing number of retirement and care home developments across the Borough but they do not consider that there is any very special circumstances why this development should be permitted in the Green Belt when other land not in the Green Belt can be found.

The reasons for requesting that this application be called in for determination by the Secretary of State are as follows -

1. This retirement/care village is not within the list of new development that would be appropriate in a Green Belt and is thus contrary to both Green Belt policies set out in the NPPF and in the Solihull Local Plan.
2. The application site comprises a large tented structure previously used a covered sales area attached to a garden centre, some open display area and a large tarmac car park. The retirement/care village proposals would significantly harm the openness of the Green Belt and be contrary to a number of the well-known purposes of the green Belt.
3. While it may be argued that this is previously developed land by the developer, the NPPF definition covers land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure. In no way does that definition allow for of a development of this scale.
4. The location does not meet the accepted criteria for sustainable development and is isolated from the range of facilities that would normally be available to support both residents and staff. As such it does not accord with the sustainability criteria set out in the NPPF.
5. While the Applicants argue that there is a need for this sort of accommodation in Solihull that does not amount to a very special circumstance that would justify the development of this site.
6. The Applicants have not submitted a rigorous and objective assessment of other alternative sites.
7. The Council is presently reviewing its Local Plan which is likely to allocate considerable areas of Green Belt land for residential and other major development. The application site was not submitted for consideration in the Council's 'Call for Sites' as part of that Review, and has not been subject to the rigorous examination that all the other submitted sites have been subjected to.
8. This proposed development is more appropriately located in one of those areas perhaps in Blythe Ward, south of Shirley, or around Knowle or Balsall Common. There is no locational reason why this proposal should be situated at Eastcote which is essentially a small hamlet.

9. The application proposals are likely to generate a significant amount of additional traffic on the local road network. While any highway safety issues might be overcome, the development will materially increase the comings and goings of vehicles in the area and have an adverse impact on the character and appearance of Eastcote.
10. No proper or robust assessment has been given to the possible impact of the proposals on nearby heritage assets.

The Parish Council hope that you are able to consider calling in this application which will have a major impact on this small community at Eastcote and also prejudice the Parish Council's work in taking forward a Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish.

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely



Richard Cobb

On behalf of Barston Parish Council

CC - National Planning Casework Unit  
Solihull MBC