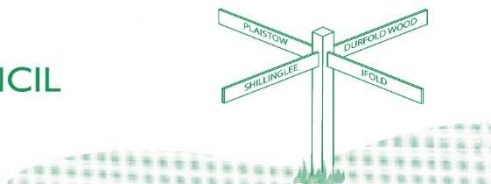


# PLAISTOW AND IFOLD PARISH COUNCIL



25th March 2021

Mr. Anthony Fairbanks Weston, Chairman  
Artemis Land & Agriculture  
Crouchland Farm,  
Rickman's Lane,  
Plaistow,  
Billingshurst,  
RH14 0LE

Dear Mr. Fairbanks Weston,

## **Re: Community Consultation regarding rural diversification of Crouchlands Farm**

Plaistow and Ifold Parish Council welcomes Artemis Land & Agriculture's endeavours to engage with the community regarding its plans for the site and trusts that Artemis will listen carefully to the community's views and afford them the significance and weight they deserve.

Likewise, the Parish Council is supportive of establishing a positive and constructive dialogue with Artemis to ensure that the final plans for the site are an asset to the whole community.

The Parish Council welcomes the recent resumption of agricultural activities at Crouchlands Farm and considers it entirely correct that the principal activity undertaken at the Farm is farming.

As you are aware the site has been, for many years, a Farm. Therefore, the Parish Council wishes to correct, at the earliest opportunity, an inaccuracy contained within the consultation document, namely reference to Crouchlands Farm as an industrial site. The Farm's recent 'industrialisation' relates to unlawful operations resulting in enforcement action by the Local Planning Authority. The financial cost to the community to remedy the unlawful use was significant; additionally, it cost the loss of the community's goodwill and trust. The Parish Council appreciates that Artemis is alive to this and affords due credit for its efforts to improve community relations. However, neither the Parish Council nor the community gives credit for the time and money spent on decommissioning the unlawful plant equipment. Artemis took the site on in the full knowledge of the Enforcement Notice and the cost of the required action to comply. Crouchlands Farm and the community should not be further harmed by inappropriate levels of development driven by a desire to recoup costs. The future of the Farm should not be determined by the financial losses of its past, incurred by unscrupulous actions.

The Parish Council acknowledges and recognises that complementary diversification can be beneficial in supporting the principal farming operations. However, such diversification needs to be proportionate and realistic when considering the site's location, the community, wider infrastructure, ecology, and general area.

The Parish's Neighbourhood Plan has many relevant policies which are applicable to Crouchlands Farm. Therefore, the Parish Council strongly encourages Artemis to take a proactive role in reflecting these in its plans for the site. The policies are borne out of extensive research and community engagement. The Neighbourhood Plan has completed its Regulation 16 public consultation stage and therefore carries additional weight. The Parish Council is confident that it will go to referendum in 2021, following positive initial feedback from the Examiner. For ease of reference, the Parish Council alerts you to the following policies within the Plan, which it suggests are most relevant:

- Policy EH1, Protection of the Parish heritage assets
- Policy EH2, Protection of the Parish natural environment
- Policy EH3, Protection of the Parish trees, woodland, and natural vegetation
- Policy EH5, Management of artificial light emissions in new development
- Policy EE2, Supporting appropriate levels of growth and diversification in the local economy
- Policy T1, Ensuring highway safety in the parish.

Having viewed the consultation documents the Parish Council is concerned that the proposals are excessive and surpass serving any local need. The intensity and scale of the plans give rise to concerns which include, but are not limited to the following: -

1. **The volume of additional traffic** that will be generated by all the proposed activities would be detrimental to the tranquil and relatively isolated location of the site. Accessibility to Crouchlands Farm is limited, being served by narrow country lanes with relatively poor infrastructure without pavements, or street lighting and away from the primary road network.

By way of one limited example, if 142 full-time jobs are created, there is a reasonable assumption that this would cause 284 commuter traffic movements per day of staff alone. The Parish Council welcomes the creation of local employment opportunities; however, the stated employment ambition goes beyond what can be met through local recruitment. The rural location of the site combined with exceptionally poor public transport connectivity in the area means that the inevitable volume of commuter traffic alone will be significant. Additionally, it is contrary to the aspirations of all tiers of Government and environmentally responsible businesses to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050.

2. **An increase in noise levels and light pollution** in an area that is otherwise quiet and tranquil countryside with intrinsically dark skies. This risks disturbance and loss of amenity to nearby residential properties as well as disruption to wildlife, including nocturnal species.
3. **Detrimental impact on historic buildings** both on the site and within the vicinity.
4. **Crouchlands Farm becoming a commercial and industrial centre.** The intensity and large scale of the proposed diversification developments would result in these becoming the principal activities, resulting in farming being relegated to a secondary activity.

The Parish Council recognises that some diversification is needed for modern farms to survive and thrive and therefore encourages this, particularly if it brings a degree of local employment. However, due to the above concerns, the Parish Council respectfully asks that consideration be given to a revision of the proposals to provide for smaller scale farm diversifications, which complements farming as the site's primary function and which is more appropriate to the rural location, road networks and transport links. The documents recognise and reference the "quiet and tranquil location", yet the proposals are at odds with this correct observation.

Small-scale farm diversification would avoid the requirement for construction of considerable new buildings in this countryside setting and allow for the existing agricultural and residential buildings to continue in their current use.

The Parish Council welcomes the opportunity to form a creative working partnership with Artemis, partly as a critical friend, to help shape the plans into something which can benefit the local area and safeguard our quiet and tranquil location, which is cherished by the whole community.

Yours sincerely



Catherine Nutting

Clerk & RFO to Plaistow and Ifold Parish Council

Clerk & RFO: Miss Catherine Nutting  
Tel: 01403 871652. Email: [clerk@plaistowandifold.org.uk](mailto:clerk@plaistowandifold.org.uk)  
[www.plaistowandifold.org.uk](http://www.plaistowandifold.org.uk)