

## STATEMENT FROM THE HOLLIDAY FAMILY 15/11/2020

We have recently been informed that the landlord/landowner of Westridge Farm, Robert Ball of Arnbro Ltd has written an 'open letter' to David Stewart the leader of the Isle of Wight Council as well as all Councillors, regarding the current West Acre Park planning application 20/01061/FUL. We have since been contacted by local press for a statement regarding the contents.

Therefore, to ensure total transparency, we are publishing this statement on the Save Westridge Farm Facebook page.

The letter out of context misrepresents our intentions and position regarding Westridge Farm our home and livelihood. Insinuating that we have been unreasonable in the negotiations with Robert Ball of Arnbro Ltd regards a commercial settlement for the land proposed for the West Acre Park 475 planning application.

We can confirm that no commercial settlement was ever legally signed and there has been no further communication on this matter since November 2019. The offers put forward were simply not fair or viable for us, they purely suited the needs of the landowner and based on the unreasonable terms we were not prepared to give up our dairy farming livelihood and the long-term security of our Agricultural Holdings Act (AHA) Tenancy. If planning is granted we will receive very little compensation but the fact we chose not to be bullied into a settlement shows our commitment to continuing to farm at Westridge Farm.

Agreeing to a commercial settlement would have essentially assisted the landowner and developers in the planning process by giving them vacant possession. Enabling the land we call home and have farmed and protected for over 50 years to go under concrete!

We were under immense pressure from June 2019 to November 2019 regards a commercial settlement to surrender our AHA Tenancy, to give Robert Ball of Arnbro Ltd vacant possession of Westridge Farm. This was to enable developers Captiva Homes, to move forward with the planning application of a further 475 homes at West Acre Park.

Offers were put forward to us, and negotiations took place during this time. Westridge Farm has been our family's home and livelihood since 1966. This is an extremely difficult time, knowing that everything our family has worked for is in jeopardy. Dairy farming is not a job, it is a way of life, and to walk away and leave it all behind is not a decision we could ever take lightly.

The remaining 50 acres of Westridge Farm land not included in the West Acre Park plans was put forward as part of the negotiations. However, without a home, suitable dairy and farm buildings to house our cattle as well as acreage, a multi user pathway across it as part of the West Acre Park plans, this was not a viable option for us to continue dairy farming.

A £800,000 offer was put forward by Robert Ball of Arnbro Ltd, meaning vacating Westridge Farm completely. We did consider this with the assistance of our land agent and solicitor and we did put forward a counter offer of £1m. This value was based on relocating to another dairy farm, which we would have had to invest in heavily.

On 25th November 2019 after months of stressful negotiations, we were prepared to accept the offer of £800,000 subject to contract and terms. However, the payment terms put forward by Robert Ball of Arnbro Ltd actually meant we would receive £0 on surrendering our AHA Tenancy, forcing us out of dairy farming and our home at Westridge Farm. Leaving us to hold out for a long term, unsecured stage payment structure over 4 years, with the first stage payment not actually being received until the date of leaving the farm. This would have forced us to close our dairy farm operation at Westridge Farm, potentially before planning permission was even granted and we would have had no farm to move to as the stage payment structure did not allow for us to relocate to another farm.

Robert Ball of Arnbro Ltd has stated that through the clause in our tenancy that they will seek to remove 5 acres every quarter as soon as planning permission is granted. The first 5 acres will include the farmhouse and farm buildings. This will mean the end to dairy farming at Westridge Farm, as we will simply be unable to continue without suitable farm buildings to house our cattle, a dairy and a home to live in.

We have a secure AHA Tenancy and without planning permission in place we have a legal right to farm here for the next 2 generations. To see it all go under concrete would be truly devastating, not just for us the farmers but also for the wider island community, many of whom feel strongly and oppose this development. Our hope is that planning will not be granted, so we can continue to dairy farm at Westridge Farm, protecting and safeguarding this land for the good of future generations.