**PATCHETTS GREEN RESIDENTS’ ASSOCIATION (PGRA)**

72 Hilfield Lane, Aldenham, Watford WD25 8AJ

**Objections To Planning Application 25/0124/FUL**

Over the years, the community has enjoyed a close and harmonious relationship with the Bhaktivedanta Manor. Recent events have damaged that relationship, with the Manor representatives acting disingenuously and in bad faith.

Recently, the Manor has had to submit FIVE (5) retrospective planning applications to Hertsmere for unauthorised building/adjustments to their site.

More recently, at one of the regular liaison meetings between the community and the Manor, no mention was made of the above application, nor a second one concurrently lodged (25/0138/FUL), despite the fact it subsequently was revealed the applications were submitted a couple of weeks before that meeting.

Clearly the Manor executives have decided that they are aggressively going to pursue expansionist plans, plans that do not meet the original permission for use of the site as a “residential and non-residential theological college and religious community together with use for public worship (including the observance of religious festival days) and a construction of a new driveway and access to Hilfield Lane, subject to conditions (APP/N1920/A/94/241083).”

This use extends only to the use of the original site. Subsequently the Manor acquired additional farm land, including this application site, adding over 70 acres to its estate, but this has no planning use for religious occasions. It is just a farm.

There has been a stated aim of the Manor in its applications of their desire to “enhance and expand the visitor experience”. To this end this application seeks to convert farm land to a visitor centre and accommodation area, whether for their farm workers across their whole estate, religious personnel and even could be used for (paying?) visitor stays for those who wish to enjoy the meditational environment and the yoga centre that this application seeks to convert the farmland into. Indeed, as a visible example of the Manor’s desire to extend their appeal to outside visitors beyond religious ceremonies, they recently leaflet dropped the community inviting people of all faiths to attend yoga classes at the Manor.

Their plans are obviously to attract considerably more visitors - as supported by their separate application to extend the size of their cafeteria.

Back in 1996, approval was given, following concerns raised by the Letchmore Heath residents that the original access to the site in their village be closed and a new access opened in Hilfield Lane. Consequently, Hilfield Lane has been the sole access for both visitor and commercial traffic visiting or servicing the site. Since 1996, Hilfield Lane has seen its own footprint extended, significantly with the addition of over 50 residential dwellings in The Ridings development.

The Lane itself already experiences an increase in traffic – and has to be closed in the Summer over the week end of the Manor’s main religious festival. Whilst not yet approved, there are planning submissions due for a major expansion of the Elstree Electric sub-station, involving a 5-year build and for a Battery Electric Storage System in land between the Manor and the substation, which will also involve a significant construction project and both projects require both the transportation and siting of heavy equipment. Our Lane could be suffering major disruption, without these Manor proposals adding to our inconvenience.

The application attempts, cynically, to downplay the scope of development as “repair and rebuilding”. However, the list of work proposed includes considerable new build and possible non-agricultural structures and use, agriculture being the only currently permitted use of the Holland Farm site, which will dramatically change the nature of the land and jeopardise the visual aspect – and we note that there has been no filing of a Design and Access Statement but it does appear that the accommodation block could well have other uses.

The plan to widen the access to the Holland Park site itself indicates that the Manor expects far more visiting traffic, including access for large vehicles not just cars.

There is a 2012 “Bhaktivedanta Manor Planning Brief Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)” adopted in December 2012. This laid out a mutually agreed plan (between the local community, the Borough and the International Society for Krishna Consciousness on behalf of Bhaktivedanta) of how policies will be used to control development and are a “material consideration” in the assessment of planning applications.

At that time the application site (Holland Farm) was reviewed and considered unsuitable for development. The document stated: “**Entire area west of goshala” (i.e. Holland Farm) “Visible from neighbouring properties and Footpath 28 and Footpath 29**: With the exception of some development at Holland Farm this is arable farmland and loss of grazing impacts on viability of the farm**. Impacts on openness of Green Belt:** Interrupts Goshala operation. Unsuitable location for pedestrian connections to Manor therefore access roads and car parking will be required.”

The above is an extract from the applicant’s Statement of Needs for SPD, ruling out this area for development. The SPD has 3 more years to run.

PGRA believes there are numerous reasons why at the very least all applications for the Manor be withdrawn and a revised SPD be produced so that we can see what additional development plans the Manor may have in mind.

We urge the Council to reject this application

**Malcolm Sevren**

**Chairman**

**Patchetts Green Residents’ Association**

**26 April 2025**