

NOTICE TO THE BROADHEMBURY PARISH COUNCIL MEETING (15 MARCH 2016)

I'd like to thank the PC for the opportunity to speak publically at this meeting. I do so as a representative of the Gundry family and also of the beneficiaries of our late Uncle John Gundry's estate of Grange Farm.

My aim is to present you with a brief overview of who we are and an outline of the family's aspirations as they relate to Grange Farm. Before I do so I'd like to emphasise that Grange Farm is held in Trust. The land is tenanted to a contract farmer and the house continues to be the home of Mrs Valerie Gundry.

Why is this important to understand? Firstly, it is the Trust, its representatives and not the Gundry family who are directly responsible for overseeing all aspects as they relate Grange Farm. The Trust therefore fulfils Mr Gundry's last wishes. Secondly, the Trust is also responsible to Mr Gundry's beneficiaries to preserve, as best they can, the property of Grange Farm.

So what? As with any business, the Trust needs funds to sustain itself day-to-day. However, the conditions under which the Trust was established means it is without the funds and the flexibility to much more than maintain the farm in its current form. It is this point I want to explain here today as it directly relates to the Gundry family's plans and the concept of building houses on the fringe of the village.

Before I do though, who are we the family and what are our aspirations for Grange Farm. I think it important to explain both and then allow the wider audience to apply its own judgement in slower time.

The Gundry family first came to Broadhembury in 1903 when my great-grandfather bought Grange. Following WW1, my great-grandmother gifted land for the building of this Memorial Hall as a reminder of the service and sacrifice made by her husband and many village members. The estate was larger back then, but over the years it reduced in size until the 1960s when, upon his death, my grand-father passed Grange Farm to our uncle the late Mr John Gundry. As some of you know, John Gundry's elder sister Joanna (my mother) lived in Broadhembury all of her life until 2014 when illness sadly forced her to move from Lane End where she and John Allen farmed and lived for many years.

As their sons, my brother Charles and I grew up in the village and attended the village school. My brother now lives in N Devon and I live in Somerset having settled there after a career in the British Army. Two other beneficiaries, Clare and Nicky, are daughters of Joanna's younger sister Susie. All of us are aware we no longer have a presence in the parish, but that doesn't mean we don't care about the family's legacy here, nor do we want to remove ourselves from its future.

So what do we the family want to do? We wish to retain Grange Farm and continue our presence here once the farm and its house becomes available. We want to develop the farm and to play an active part in the local community. Doing this requires a plan and we've considered the place Grange Farm could occupy in the locality over the years ahead. In this regard we wish to see Grange Farm progressively developed such that it creates local employment and is open for recreational use by the local community. Above all, we hope to support a general and sustainable development of the village, in whatever form that might take. For example, there is clear evidence of a need for more housing in rural communities.

Equally, I have long-held the view that an area suitable for a cricket pitch just here below the Hall would add much to the village and make the entrance to the village simply idyllic.

For us all in the Gundry family, we see our plans as progressive and positive for the local community, but we don't want to move on regardless of others. That said, I hope parishioners recognise we must do something for the village and not just for the sake of the farm's future resilience. Why? Well, I live in a small village in Somerset. There is no post office, no pub, no school and the church is only attended by 4 or 5 people once a month. Such is the state of many villages in England that we, as a family want to do something to sensitively support Broadhembury for the future.

However, the practical challenge we face is a simple matter of insufficient funds for the day-to-day needs of the Trust. It is for this reason that in 2013 we commenced discussions with the EDDC, the Broadhembury Parish Council, planners and a housing developer to consider a sensitive housing development in the village.

We fully understand the sensitivities regarding a potential housing development in the village. I would too. Broadhembury has its own uniqueness and is a joy to live in and around. That said, we see our ideas as a potential 'win-win' solution both for Grange Farm and the village in the longer-term and would like to proceed for the reasons I have already explained.

Since 2013 and the consideration of potential development sites by EDDC, we have wanted to proceed sensitively thereby allowing the PC and parishioners the time and space to understand and scrutinise the evidence for housing. Going forward, we can only hope our intentions are seen as honourable and demonstrate our sincere wishes to genuinely re-invest in the community.

I fully expect people to say, "He would say that wouldn't he". All I will say is this. I run my father-in-law's 50 year old family business in the SE of England. Running a successful family business requires a consensus for it to prosper. It is a continual dialogue underpinned by the presentation of a vision of what the business is for and who it serves. If people don't agree with the vision then it's impossible to gain a consensus. And without consensus there is no progress - for a business that can often be fatal.

Returning to Grange Farm, the family has a vision. We want to preserve Grange Farm and we have a plan to offset the potentially detrimental act of simply selling good farmland to sustain the Trust. So doing something for us is better than doing nothing. In our view, it is essential to the very survival of Grange Farm and could be of very great value to the village. The something we want to do is with the community and not against it.

Thank you. I'm very happy to take questions.

DAJ ALLEN