The Inland Waterways Association

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Tracy Darke,
Development Services & Policy Manager,
(Attn. Louise Forman),
Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council,
Argents Mead,
Hinckley,
Leicestershire, LE10 1BZ

Our Ref: CPHIN19E

12th August 2009

Dear Ms Darke,

REFERENCE: 09/00573/REM
DESCRIPTION: Erection of one agricultural dwelling (and garage)
LOCATION: Spinney Bank Farm, Higham Lane, Stoke Golding.

Thank you for consulting us on this planning application adjacent to the Ashby Canal. We have seen the plans and documents on your website.

We recently commented on the previous application 09/00458/FUL which we understand was withdrawn, but the present application appears to be identical, apart from its status, so our comments remain unchanged, as follows:

The Inland Waterways Association (IWA) is a national charity which campaigns for the conservation, use, maintenance, restoration and development of the inland waterways for public benefit. The Lichfield Branch of IWA has considered this application in relation to the environment of the canal and the interests of its users.

The Ashby Canal is a historic waterway and a valuable amenity and recreational corridor, providing leisure boating, walking, angling, cycling and nature conservation benefits to the area.

IWA has commented on several applications for this site over the past 5 years. We understand that the present application follows outline consent for an agricultural worker's dwelling granted on appeal in 2008.

In general terms, IWA considers that the countryside should be preserved for its own sake from unnecessary built development, including piecemeal incremental developments such as have taken place on this site, although we recognise that agricultural holdings may sometimes need additional buildings to sustain their business.

IWA wishes to ensure retention of the attractive open landscape visible from the Ashby Canal which is an important part of its heritage, amenity and visitor economy. The proposed new dwelling in open countryside would be visible from the Ashby Canal and would to some extent diminish the rural setting and the amenity value of its Conservation Area.

The present temporary 'mobile home' is single storey, of modest size, partly screened from the canal by the towpath hedge and is not unduly intrusive. However, it is now proposed to replace

this with a very large two storey, 4 bedroom house with double garage. Although the design is of acceptable appearance, it would have a much greater visual impact on the canal. This application is stretching the definition of an agricultural worker's dwelling well beyond what might have been justified by the economic case and seems very excessive for the size of the agricultural holding.

IWA therefore objects to these plans, but if they were to be approved then we would like to see any consent conditional on some additional tree and shrub planting immediately behind the towpath hedge to reinforce it where there currently are gaps, so as to minimise the impact of the new dwelling and the present buildings and activities on the environment of the canal.

We would appreciate being informed in due course of your Council's decision on this application.

Yours faithfully,

Philip G. Sharpe
Chairman and Planning Officer
Lichfield Branch of IWA

cc (email) Christine Hemming, British Waterways, Fazeley
Cyril Blackford, Ashby Canal Association