

**PROPOSED WINDFARM AT SPRING FARM RIDGE,  
HELMDON/GREATWORTH/SULGRAVE, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE (SOUTH NORTHANTS  
COUNCIL PLANNING APPLICATION S/2010/1437/MAF)**

**PUBLIC INQUIRY INTO APPEAL AGAINST REFUSAL OF PLANNING PERMISSION**

**STATEMENT BY NICHOLAS WARD, CHAIRMAN**

**ON BEHALF OF SULGRAVE MANOR BOARD**

The Sulgrave Manor Board is a charity which owns and operates Sulgrave Manor, a Grade 1 Listed Building in Sulgrave surrounded by a formally Registered Park and Garden. I am Chairman of the Managing Committee, the members of which are the equivalent of Trustees, and I appear at this inquiry to express the concerns of myself and my fellow Managing Committee members in respect of the proposed Wind Farm development at Spring Farm Ridge and the impact that this would have on the setting of Sulgrave Manor and the activities we conduct there.

In addition to being a Grade I Listed Building, Sulgrave Manor is a vitally important part of the cultural heritage and the rural economy of South Northamptonshire and the neighbouring parts of Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Warwickshire.

It may be helpful to you, Madam, to know more about Sulgrave Manor, its history and background and the activities we conduct from it.

The original core of the Manor was constructed in 1539-60 and it is a rare example of a small Tudor manor house. Compared to other surviving Tudor houses, open to the public, it is quite unusual in its modesty, which makes it particularly special.

The House has varied in size over the years and the building that currently exists comprises the original Tudor hall and a wing constructed in the following century, with a further extension built in the 1920s.

The 16<sup>th</sup> century rooms, the Great Hall, the Bedchamber, Inner Chamber and Porch Room are all fine examples of the period with a greater air of authenticity than many on public show as they are free from modern accretions, having been open to the public since 1921. The North Wing, built in the late 1680s, contains the Oak Parlour, the Kitchen – believed to be one of the best preserved in the country - and two bedrooms, all furnished in the style of the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century.

Immediately outside there is a Brew House adapted now to house an exhibition and space for school work but which retains many of its original features. In the late 1990s there was a development to the west of the House, in what is now known as the Courtyard, to increase the facilities available to support the work we do at the Manor, including a new Courtyard Hall, a Buttery, an entrance lobby and shop and office accommodation.

Externally, the gardens and orchard are laid out in accordance with a design by Sir Reginald Blomfield in the 1920s and are a rare surviving instance of a small-scale Blomfield garden. According to H. Clifford-Smith, in his authoritative study of "Sulgrave and the Washingtons" Sir Reginald was "a recognised authority on the planning of the English formal garden and gradually a rose garden, herb and flower borders, a grass terrace, lawn and bowling green,

*an orchard and thick hedges of close clipped yew came into being – the right and proper setting for a Tudor dwelling”.* The garden is to the south-east of the Manor, between the Manor and the proposed wind farm development.

In addition to the core house and garden, the Manor owns three Grade II listed houses, a farm yard and a total of 63 acres of land at the northern end of Sulgrave. It is part of our plan for the next few years that all three houses will be refurbished and let to provide endowment income to support the Manor's operations.

The Manor is an accredited museum which has proudly displayed the Enjoy England Visitor Quality Assurance badge for over five years and has in the last four years received a total of five county and three East Midland regional awards by Renaissance Heritage.

Each year we have something of the order of 20,000 visitors. Of these, approximately half are schoolchildren who come to us to learn about the history of Tudor Britain and to experience at first-hand the excitement of learning about daily life then while wearing Tudor clothing. We are in the process of increasing our capacity to handle our schools visitors, which is a good indicator of the success of our educational programmes.

Many of our visitors come from the United States and we also have visitors from a number of other countries. Not only do these overseas visitors pay good money to us, they also contribute substantially to the rural economy in the immediate area about us. In its own way, the Manor makes an important positive contribution to the UK balance of payments through the donations it receives and the money spent locally by our overseas visitors. The local hotels, inns, B&Bs and the village shop draw much business from the additional UK visitors brought to the area by the weddings and other celebrations held at the Manor.

In addition to its intrinsic merit as a rare example of a modest Tudor manor house, Sulgrave Manor is most noted for its links to the ancestral family of General George Washington, the first President of the United States of America.

The original Manor House was built by Lawrence Washington, the great-great-great-great-great grandfather of President George Washington, in 1539-40 and was occupied by Lawrence and the next three generations of Washingtons right up to 1659, when it was sold. By coincidence, on the other side of the Atlantic, John Washington, Lawrence's great grandson and George's great grandfather, was establishing himself with his first son born in Virginia in this very year.

This link of the ancestral home to four generations of the family of the First President is of particular importance to our American visitors and supporters.

This importance was highlighted in 1914 when Sulgrave Manor was acquired as part of the celebrations of the centenary of the 1814 Treaty of Ghent, the last peace treaty between the United States of America and the United Kingdom. We have never fought each other since.

The purchase and restoration of the Manor was funded by public subscription in the USA and the UK and was dedicated as a permanent and visible sign of the friendship between the peoples of the USA and UK.

We rely very heavily on the support we receive from our American donors and visitors. We have established close connections with the National Society of Colonial Dames of America, who have been funding the Manor since the 1920s and one of whose members is currently our Vice-Chairman. We also receive money from the US-based Friends of Sulgrave Manor, who are linked to the Dames. A significant proportion of our visitors come from America and this is a part of our activity that we are keen to develop.

We emphasise our links to the United States. We celebrate a number of American festivals, including Presidents day, in conjunction with personnel from the USAAF base at Croughton, and Independence Day. Weather permitting, we fly the flags of the United States of America and the United Kingdom outside the Manor throughout the year. We host an annual lecture – The Watson Chair Lecture – which focuses on specific aspects of Anglo-American history. A representative of the US Embassy in London is on our Advisory Council. We are in the process of launching an appeal to raise £3 million for urgent work on the Manor and its estate and to provide an endowment for the future, and we hope and expect that most of this will come from the United States or from Americans based in the United Kingdom.

Amongst the many famous visitors to the Manor there have been two former Presidents of the United States of America, Taft and Hoover. We will be endeavouring to attract further illustrious visitors to the Manor in future years, including especially in 2014 at the time of our joint centenary/bi-centenary celebrations.

Against this background, you will understand that the Trustees are very concerned that the proposed Spring Farm Ridge Wind Farm would greatly impair the appreciation of the Manor and its setting by the many visitors.

In support of their contention that the impact of the proposed turbines upon the Manor would be “minor and not significant”, Broadview produced two photo montages. The first featured extremely wide angle photographs taken from a point on a footpath leading from Sulgrave towards Weston, as follows:



The Manor can just be seen at the extreme right of the picture and one of the turbines towards the left. The picture was taken from the same level as the Manor in a location which, one would have to suggest, was not well chosen to illustrate the setting of the Manor in the conservation area and the local landscape. Had the photographer chosen a viewpoint to the north of the village and a little higher so as better to demonstrate the setting, the resulting photo montage would have been as shown below:



This photograph clearly illustrates the unspoilt landscape setting of the village and the Manor, which would be totally dominated by all five turbines appearing on the horizon. From whichever direction the visitor approached the village, the constantly moving blades of the turbines would be an irritating and incongruous element in an otherwise harmonious scene.

The second photo montage submitted by Broadview with the planning application was produced from photographs taken outside the front door of the Manor as shown below:



Broadview contend that this single montage “*shows that views (plural) would be fully screened by a combination of vegetation and built features in the direction of the wind farm*”. It is hard to see how a single example can be said to demonstrate that all views would be fully screened and it is only necessary to climb the steps to another part of the Blomfield Garden to gain a completely different impression, as shown below:



This view will be seen from the path along which we normally take all our tour groups to get them into the Manor via the main entrance from the Bloomfield Garden.

In places it can be shown that four out of the five turbines would be seen at any one time, as here in the Tudor Village Vegetable Garden:



Despite the intervening vegetation, the sheer scale and the constantly irritating movement of the turbines is such that the frequent perception of one or more of them in the view would be a distraction to those enjoying the timeless historic nature of the Manor gardens and the adjoining land holding.

The Manor is a key part of the Sulgrave Conservation Area, encompassing practically the whole of the village which, in turn, nestles harmoniously into its landscape setting and is inseparable from it. The enjoyment and appreciation of the Manor and the rest of the Conservation Area from many accessible and popular viewpoints is greatly enhanced by this landscape setting and we believe it should be preserved and enhanced in the same ways as the Manor and other buildings in the Conservation Area. For many of our visitors, the village and its unspoilt pastoral setting is as close as they may come to the historical environment in which many of their ancestors lived. Most of the surrounding fields were, in Tudor times, part of the Manor's estate and our visitors' attention is always drawn to the essential continuity of viewing today, as in Lawrence's time, sheep in those same fields.

It is important to understand that visitors to the Manor do not just come to look at the Manor itself. Many of them also visit the famous Washington Pew and stained glass windows at Sulgrave Church and stroll around the streets of this quintessentially English village which is the setting of the Manor.

Some of our visitors also go to Greatworth Church, which contains a memorial to the Pargeter family, one of whose members, Amy Pargeter, was Lawrence Washington's second wife, George's five-times great grandmother, and who helped him build Sulgrave Manor. The proposed Spring Farm Ridge Wind Farm will be particularly visible from Greatworth Churchyard.

My fellow Trustees and I believe that the Spring Farm Ridge Wind Farm proposal would have a serious adverse effect on Sulgrave Manor and its setting and would make it more difficult for us to attract visitors and funding from our American supporters. We are now planning our celebrations in 2014 of the centenary of the acquisition of the Manor and the bi-centenary of the Treaty of Ghent and we hope that these events and the enjoyment of Sulgrave Manor by visitors over the next century will not be marred by the presence on our skyline of the Broadview turbines.

Thank you, Madam, for this opportunity to explain our concerns.