

Residents of Yarlington and North  
Cadbury Parish. Care of:  
Lt Col (Retd) Malcolm Fox  
Middle Street  
Galhampton  
Somerset  
BA22 7AP

Sarah Dyke MP  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

23 August 2023

Dear Sarah

We the undersigned are a group of residents of Yarlington, North Cadbury and Galhampton in South Somerset. We would like to take this opportunity to bring your attention to a pressing issue of concern for our local community. We have no doubt that as a Somerset local you are aware of an organisation called the Emily Estate, that have reportedly acquired approximately 4,000 acres in Somerset, and their land now surrounds our villages. Part of the Emily Estate is the Newt in Somerset.

We are members of a growing number of concerned residents of the Parish who are worried about both the environmental and visual impact of the expansion of the building projects undertaken by the Emily Estate and the Newt. Tor View Farm, once a small farm on the skyline overlooking Galhampton, that was acquired by the Emily Estate and renamed Avalon Farm, is now a sprawling industrial complex that looms over the countryside. The surrounding fields are scarred by an ever-increasing web of roads; portrayed by Emily Estates as 'agricultural tracks', they currently serve diggers, concrete mixers and other construction plant. Despite significant local objection to further development at Avalon Farm, including by the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) and the Parish Council, the planning for this site was approved at South Somerset District Council (SSDC) level.

Emily Estate recently purchased Manor Farm, Yarlington, but propose to build a large new farming complex only 500m away from the current farm, on otherwise unspoilt and visually attractive farmland. Once the farm has been re-located, they propose re-developing the

existing farm site into more housing to let, as part of their expanding hotel and hospitality business. There is widespread concern about this project, on visual, environmental and community grounds. Although formal planning permission is yet to be submitted, it is believed that Emily Estate are in advanced pre-planning consultation with authorities.

In your Three Point Plan for Somerset, under “Protecting our rural way of life” you state that you will safeguard our environment. Quite apart from the visual horror of such a large new build complex in otherwise unspoilt fields, many people are concerned about the environmental impact of turning eight acres of farmland into a concrete site and laying further concrete roads to serve it. You will recall that just recently there was a tremendous rainfall on our parish that led to people’s homes being flooded. Laying concrete onto fields at a time like this is, in our opinion, and that of others locally, a profound and irresponsible folly. Recent plans of the Emily Estate proposal that we have seen, potentially earmarks a further seven acres adjacent to the main site for future development, a total of 15 acres of farmland in total.

We note from the election results that the Green Party achieved 10% of the vote in our constituency. According to the Radio 4 Today programme, this is the largest share that the Green Party have ever received in a parliamentary election. That fact, coupled with your own party’s environmental agenda and the success that you achieved as a result, is testament to the climate emergency concerns of the people of South Somerset. It appears from their actions and intentions, that the Emily Estate do not share these concerns.

A community working group has been set up to oppose this new building by the Emily Estate. It is called Black Eight Acres. The name comes from “*Black Eight Acres*”, the area of traditional farming land on which Emily Estate are proposing to develop this new agricultural complex. We have set up a website for passage of information on this matter which you can view at [black8.org.uk](http://black8.org.uk). I commend it to you.

Below is a quote from the North Cadbury and Yarlington Local Plan, overwhelmingly approved by the local community;

*“Whilst there are many fantastic views from the footpaths and lanes across the area, the views from along the (Yarlington) Sleights are perhaps the most cherished and admired”*

The new farm complex planned by the Emily Estate is at the foot of the Sleights and will, in our opinion and that of others, devastate this view.

We would urge you to take some time to come and visit us here and spend a short time listening to our views and seeing for yourself the extent of the current building incrementally carried out by Emily Estate; view the site that they now intend to develop and get a sense for yourself of the impact that it will have on local residents and the beautiful Somerset countryside. One of our number had previously written to our former Member of Parliament drawing his attention to the Avalon Farm project. The response from the MP was that planning is a matter for the local council. We would contend that an anxious and concerned community and the environmental and aesthetic ruination of our countryside is a matter for everyone.

We wish you good luck in your ensuing endeavours in Parliament on our behalf.

Yours sincerely