

FAMILY'S BID TO SAVE 'ECO-FARM'

The children of a once pioneering town eco-farmer have issued a desperate appeal to help save their dilapidated family business – before they are evicted.

Charlotte and Ben Hollins, son and daughter of Arthur Hollins whose claim to fame is introducing organic yoghurt to the UK market, are calling for public support to relaunch the 140-acre Fordhall Farm as a visitor centre.

But 88-year-old father Arthur and wife Connie have been told to leave the farm by March, putting an end to any dreams of reviving the glorydays of the organic farming business.

Now Charlotte and brother Ben who have both followed in their father's farming footsteps want to incorporate the once thriving eco-business into a tourist attraction.

"We've both completed Environmental Management and Agriculture courses and we're desperate to get the business going again," Charlotte told the Advertiser.

"Dad's 88 now and his health is suffering but in his hey-day he was a pioneering organic yoghurt producer and he was responsible for introducing an innovative eco-farming system where animals could graze all-year round."

Twelve acres of Fordhall Farm fall into the west site of the Tern Valley Business Park which was originally earmarked in the Local Plan to accommodate Muller's latest expansion plans.

But even though the dairy giant's last request to move north of the bypass would mean the deletion of the west site from the Plan, the Hollins still fear the farm will be bulldozed, the west site will be developed and Muller will buy up the land from their landlord.

Agent for landlord Tim Healey, Philip Godsall said: "Over several years the state of the farm has failed to comply with the terms of the tenancy agreement. The Hollins also failed to comply with the rental terms of that agreement. Following an arbitration hearing the family agreed to leave the farm in March."

He refused to comment on whether there were plans to sell the land to Muller or anyone else once the Hollins had left.

Charlotte added: "The next step is to secure funding for the farm, restore the dairy herd and re-launch Fordhall Farm Organic Yoghurt by 2006. If anyone can help us we'd be very grateful."

"Fordhall Farm has been in the family since my dad's grandad was alive. We just want to see the work started by our father at the age of 14 hasn't been completely wasted." Anyone wanting to help out can contact Mike Kay on 01630 656317.

Advertiser launches website

Everything you wanted to know about the Advertiser and more is now at hand at the touch of a button following the launch of our own website this week.

All the top stories along with the latest sports round-ups are now available on-line.

Readers can submit letters and news ideas, hunt for a house, email us directly or even vote on-line in our weekly poll based on one of the week's big stories.

The site is updated weekly and readers can get up to date every Friday from 12noon.

Visit the site at www.marketdraytonadvertiser.com

Charged with assault

A Market Drayton man has appeared before court charged with assaulting a woman.

Charlton Higgins, of Linden Way, Market Drayton, appeared before the town's magistrates on Wednesday.

The 29-year-old denied assaulting Stephanie Melvyn in Market Drayton on June 26 this year.

The case was adjourned for a pre-trial review and Higgins was given unconditional bail.