

COLNEY HEATH GROUP

Third Party Statement of Case Against Proposed Quarry

Submitted at the request of the Inspector to the Appeal reference APP/M1900/W/24/3346607, Land at former Hatfield Aerodrome.

Landscape Visual Impact

- 1 My name is Mike Rawlins, I am a qualified horticulturist specialising in Hardy Nursery Stock Production and Garden Centre Management. I was appointed general manager in 1972 and have remained in a senior position throughout my working life including area representative council member of the Horticultural Trades Association. In support of my employer's sales and marketing activities I was also responsible for undertaking a range of gardening and landscape design activities, clients ranged from multinational companies, UK companies to domestic gardeners. Some of the referrals were via the local LPA.
- 2 Since 2015 I have been involved with Colney Heath Parish Council as Neighbourhood Plan Project Officer (voluntary) in preparing a Neighbourhood Plan and supporting the council in wide range of planning related issues. One of tasks included the formal assessment of all undeveloped land within the parish.

Visual Impacts

- 3 The parish council's assessment has focused on the Country Park and the visual impacts resulting from quarrying, there being few alternative open spaces locally.
- 4 It is a former historic aerodrome so its broadly flat and level, the aerodrome closed in 1990s so a level of natural regeneration together with some landscape planting has taken place since its closure. The trees and shrubs which have grown naturally reflect those found elsewhere in the parish of Colney Heath.
- 5 The central area where natural seeding has taken place it is predominantly the species with smaller or lighter windblown seeds, the willows, poplars and Hawthorn rather than the heavier seeds such as Oak. The oaks have naturally self-seeded nearer to existing areas of mature trees predominantly around the edges. The level of waterlogging and management of the area also influence the plants growing in each area. This results in each area having its own unique character.
- 6 The Country Park is currently considered well screened from most external viewpoints due the surrounding mature trees and hedgerows, it is only when viewed from more central locations that the surrounding buildings become more visible, Hatfield Business Park, Smallford hamlet and University buildings.

- 7 Due to the site being broadly level and flat proposed construction of the bunds will have an adverse impact on the openness of the site throughout all stages of quarrying following their early construction. The proposed height of up to 5m is of particular concern. In the early stages while seeding on the bunds establishes in some locations there will be some limited screening from the existing trees and shrubs. Then as the trees and shrubs are removed the bunds will become more noticeable as the visual impact will not be offset by the grass sown on them due to the proposed height.

Area Assessments

- 8 From visual impact consideration the park can be divided into five areas, the northeastern (area 9) and western open areas (areas 1, 3), cattle grazing area including the Linear Park (areas 2,4,5,6), the northern coarse grass and shrubby (area 9) and Home Wood (area 8).



- 9 The northeastern area (area 9) is well outside the proposed quarry area so any visual impacts should be very limited.
- 10 The visual impacts on Linear Park and cattle grazing areas (areas 2,4,5,6) change as you travel in a westerly direction. At the east edge of this area, the Linear Park, the possible visual impacts are quite low but increase as you progress in a westly direction. The west edge of cattle field adjoins the lagoons and bunds so the visual impact become significantly adverse in early stages of construction then reducing as the mitigation measures establish but becoming again significantly adverse during restoration.
- 11 The central open area (areas 1,3) near Smallford will be significantly adversely impacted throughout most stages from the construction of bunds and lagoons until post final restoration. The visual impact will start from the

initial site construction, when roads, lagoons, processing site and bunds are constructed. The impact will be across the entire area due the bunds encircling the entire quarry site.

- 12 The visual impact will differ slightly by phase and viewing point selected during active quarrying but will remain at minimum of adverse throughout. During restoration the visual impacts will increase to significantly adverse reducing slowly as the landscape recovers.
- 13 The visual impact on the northern rough grass and shrubby (area 9), the proposed location of the processing area, will change during the life of the quarry depending upon the selected viewpoint. During the early stages the impact will be significantly adverse from all viewpoints, reducing from some viewpoints as the mitigation planting establishes. The visual impact will significantly increase when viewed from more central locations as the central hedge is removed for phase C. The visual impact will be significantly adverse from all viewpoints during and post restoration until the landscape plantings and grass establish.
- 14 Home Wood (area 8), there is a level of doubt on the visual impacts from this area if the existing hedge is retained the visual impacted will be reduced. If the hedge which is within the quarry site area is removed the visual impact from the wood would be significantly increased due the open nature of the wood along much of its length boarding the processing site.
- 15 The visual impact of the site entrance (A) will vary over the life of quarry from being significantly adverse post construction reducing as the roadside landscape recovers. The on-site impacts will also vary over the life of quarry from being significantly adverse, reducing to minor adverse as the mitigation measures become effective then increasing to significantly adverse during phase G and reinstatement.
- 16 See table in appendix for assessed visual impacts and their duration in each area.

Duration of visual harm

- 17 Three factors will influence this, the rate of quarrying, growing condition on site, and the landfill volumes.
- 18 The duration of the quarry is proposed at 32 years including reinstatement, this assessment is based on this time frame being achieved. However, the appellant has less well documented the other two factors.
- 19 Our calculations indicate that there is a significant shortfall in volumes of landfill proposed ref. CHPC Footpath Assessment (CD x.xx) which will either result in the application being in breach of the planning conditions which limits the number of vehicle and HGV movements this was also consulted upon, or the duration of the quarry will be longer than proposed which again will be in

breach of the planning conditions as the reinstatement is not be possible within the stated time frame.

- 20 The final factor is the adverse soil conditions on site, this is likely to result in slow and poor establishment of the landscape plantings. This is also due to locally native species being generally slower growing and the poor drainage on site from the existing soils, also from the adverse impacts resulting from the clay buttresses used around the phases used to manage the bromate plume Water Environment 6 (CD x.xx).
- 21 These factors either singly or combined are likely to delay the restoration of the site resulting in a prolonged period of visual harm on the Country Park, in my view the applicants stated time scales are unrealistic and are unlikely to be achieved.

Visual impact Assessment											
Area	Phase										
	Current	Construction	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	Reinstate	5yrs post
	0 year	2 years	6.5yrs	11yrs	15.5yrs	20yrs	24.5yrs	29yrs	33.5yrs	35.5yrs	40.5yrs
1 Wooded by A1057											
2 By sports field											
3 Smallford end open area											
4 Semi shrubland											
5 Grazing area											
6 Linear Park											
7 Northern area											
8 Home Wood		?	?							?	
9 Northeastern Open area											
A Site entrance											
B Popefield Farm											
C Jove Gardens											
D BT Trials site				??							??

Summary of Assessments

‘?’ The drawings do not provide a level of certainty as to the exact location of the path and if any shrubs required removal, the visual impact from Home Wood could be reduced if the dense shrubs growing along the boundary are retained.

‘??’ The visual impact would be significantly greater if the landowner of BT Trial site was to prevent access through their land so walkers would then have to use the formally designated route.

PLANNING INSPECTORATE REF: APP/M1900/W/24/3346607

CHG GROUP LANDSCAPE VISUAL IMPACT