14th March 2026

Application ref: PL/0232/21

Appeal Reference: APP/M1900/W/3346607

I write in relation to the upcoming inquiry relating to the plans proposed by Brett Aggregates to quarry on Ellenbrook Fields.

I use the site descriptor as Ellenbrook Fields intentionally, rather than the referred to 'Former Hatfield Aerodrome' to really describe the piece of land in reality as the very semantics adopted imply that this area of land is disused, ripe for development and is not an important part of the infrastructure of Hatfield and St Albans.

I have attended, contributed to and followed each application and subsequent inquiry that has revolved around this Country Park and am writing again, to try to convey the importance that having free access to this piece of land is for the local (and not local) residents.

I understand that the Inquiry has been reopened solely to address matters relating to public access within the planning application, and accordingly my comments will focus on that specific aspect. However, it should not be underestimated that there remains significant concern within the community regarding the applicants' failure to satisfactorily address wider issues, including Green Belt impact, heritage considerations, air quality implications, traffic, noise and the lack of meaningful mitigation in relation to the bromate contamination.

The amended Public Access Strategy presented by the applicants makes it abundantly clear to residents that the applicants have not undertaken sufficient research into how the Park is currently used. The proposals do not reflect the established patterns of movement, the community's reliance on existing routes, or the everyday practicalities of accessing and enjoying the Park, which raises further concerns about the robustness and credibility of the applicants' overall approach.

The Secretary of State has given the applicants yet another opportunity to refine their proposals, another bite at the cherry, specifically to address the issues that their public access strategy have. Yet despite this, the applicants have once again failed to deliver a strategy that protects or meaningfully supports local residents' ability to access the Country Park. Their revised approach shows little understanding of how residents currently use the Park, how vital these routes are to everyday movement, or how limited the remaining accessible areas already are. This continued failure to prioritise local public access only deepens concerns about the applicants' commitment to safeguarding the community's ability to enjoy what is left of the Country Park. It seems to me that if the Public Access strategy put forward by the applicants was not good enough, was not fit for purpose, as a key part of the application, and one that impacts

so significantly on the local residents, the Appeal should have been rejected, in line with the wishes of the Local Councillors, twice.

Here follow my main objections to the proposed plan:

Removal of accessible terrain

The surface of the Fields is, especially in times of inclement weather, somewhat of a boggy terrain, and in some places unpassable after heavy rainfall. The one area of the Country Park that is always passable is the old concrete taxiway, which provides a long, solid surface for bikes, wheelchairs and anyone less sure of foot. Regardless of the weather, this part of Ellenbrook fields is accessible, is close in proximity to Ellenbrook and due to the wide open space on either side, is a safe place for all to walk with a clear line of sight for anyone around. The applicants however propose to provide only access to less than half of this main route into the park, and alternative routes will be provided which are made up of gravel and or grass paths, some of which run alongside a main road.

If the applicants had spent any meaningful amount of time at the Fields, they would see that the terrain in the Winter months is, in many of the grass areas, too boggy and muddy to be useable to the public. The ground is soft, waterlogged in places and impassable after heavy rainfall. Happily, in its current state, visitors still have plenty of options in those Winter months, to avoid those areas. However, removing access to c60% of the runway, replacing with this type of track for residents, and removing the majority of the (historic) and solid underfoot path means significantly limiting visitors mobility and the useability of the park.

Safety and visual amenity

The quarry on Coopers Green Lane, which is in close proximity to the proposed new site is one I pass four times daily and offers a relevant comparator to the design now being proposed. That site includes tall bunds with a pedestrian route running immediately adjacent to a heavily trafficked road. From regular observation, the arrangement does not function well in practice. The tree line separating the path from the carriageway is sparse and intermittent, leaving multiple gaps through which children or dogs could easily slip. This creates a clear potential conflict between pedestrians and fast-moving vehicles and, in my view, does not accord with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requirement to ensure “safe and accessible environments” where the risk of accidents is minimised. The bunds in the applicants proposal, right next to the main road, infact provide small children and dogs with a ‘fun hill’ to run up and down, inviting disaster.

In addition to these safety concerns, the visual quality of the arrangement is also poor. The high bunds combined with limited planting provide no pleasant visual vistas or

sense of openness for pedestrians or road users. Instead, the path feels enclosed, visually harsh, and lacking in landscape integration. This runs contrary to NPPF guidance requiring developments to be visually attractive, well-designed, and sympathetic to their landscape setting.

The existing quarry therefore demonstrates the kind of safety, public realm, and visual amenity shortcomings that can arise when tall bunds and pedestrian routes are positioned directly alongside busy roads. It provides a real world example of why a similar design, as now proposed, would fail to deliver a safe, well-designed, or visually appropriate environment. Walking alongside bunds, alongside wire fencing and close to quarry workings does not provide residents or visitors with the opportunity to enjoy any kind of amenity. I would strongly suggest a visit to the Cooper's Green Lane site to show the speed of traffic running alongside the edge of the quarry to bring this to life.

Placement of the Lagoons

The proposed placement of two large lagoons at the centre of the site raises significant concerns relating not only to connectivity and year round accessibility but also to fundamental health and safety. The narrow path between the lagoons is highly likely to become impassable during the winter months due to increased water levels, surface saturation, and flooding. This would sever East to West movement across the park, preventing direct access from one side to the other and conflicting with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requirement for developments to provide permeable, legible, and well-connected routes for all users.

In addition, the lagoons appear to be deep water bodies yet are proposed with only minimal fencing. This presents a clear safety risk in a public park frequently used by families, children, dogs, and vulnerable individuals. A narrow route flanked by two deep water features, with limited barriers, poor escape gradients, and no meaningful separation, creates a foreseeable hazard of accidental entry into the water. This is inconsistent with good practice in public realm design and the NPPF's expectation that developments should create "safe and accessible environments" where risks are designed out so far as reasonably possible.

Compounding these issues is the fact that, according to the Environment Agency's own advice, there is no alternative location within the site that is suitable for these lagoons. This means that the fundamental design constraint cannot realistically be resolved. If the only viable position for the lagoons inherently obstructs movement across the site and introduces unavoidable safety risks, then no acceptable solution is likely within the current layout. Consequently, the proposal as submitted fails to demonstrate that it can deliver a safe, functional, or fully accessible park environment.

Proximity to quarry workings for Park Users

The proximity of the proposed public routes to the active quarry workings and associated traffic movements raises further significant safety and visual concerns. The plans indicate pedestrian paths running close to operational areas and HGV access routes, with several crossings required to navigate internal haul roads and site traffic. This creates avoidable conflict between vulnerable users, such as families, children, and dog-walkers, and heavy quarry vehicles. Such an arrangement does not align with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) objective to secure "safe and accessible environments" or to minimise conflict between pedestrians and vehicles. In practical terms, pedestrians would be required to negotiate paths and crossings immediately adjacent to industrial operations, dust, noise, and regular heavy-vehicle movements, which is wholly unsuitable for a park setting.

In addition to the safety implications, the visual environment in these areas would be poor. Footpaths positioned so close to active quarry workings, stockpiles, machinery, and haul routes would offer little in the way of pleasant visual amenity or landscape quality, contrary to the NPPF's expectations for developments to be visually attractive and well-integrated within their surroundings. Instead, users would experience an exposed, industrial-feeling environment with limited screening and little sense of tranquillity. Taken together, the combination of safety hazards and negative visual impacts strongly suggests that the proposed layout does not provide an appropriate or compliant public-realm design.

In conclusion, despite multiple rounds of consultation and several previous applications, I remain genuinely perplexed as to why the applicants have been offered yet another opportunity to refine their public access strategy. This is not the first time they have attempted to present a workable solution; the community has engaged repeatedly and consistently, and residents have made their priorities extremely clear over a number of years. These include safe, legible access, good visibility for women and vulnerable users, and routes that reflect how people actually use and experience the park on a daily basis. Yet the proposals continue to fall short of these fundamental expectations.

It is increasingly difficult to see how further iterations will lead to a different outcome. The applicant's submissions to date do not reflect a meaningful understanding of, or sensitivity to, the needs of local people or the character of this well-loved landscape. Instead, the public access elements appear to be treated as procedural hurdles rather than core components of a functioning, safe, and inclusive design. This pattern raises legitimate concerns about the applicant's ability or willingness to work constructively with the community over the long term.

This is particularly relevant given that trust and cooperation are essential if future conditions, mitigations, and responsibilities are to be upheld. Where an applicant repeatedly brings forward proposals that do not meet basic policy requirements, it does not inspire confidence that they would proactively address issues or conflicts that might arise during the lifetime of the development. The continued failure to deliver an acceptable access strategy, despite multiple attempts, suggests that the fundamental issues are not being grasped or sadly not prioritised.

For these reasons, it is reasonable to conclude that this aspect of the application has reached the point where further revisions are unlikely to resolve the core deficiencies. The public access strategy remains a key element of the proposal, and once again it has not met the required standard. It is therefore appropriate to say that enough is enough: the applicant has had ample opportunity to address the community's concerns, yet the essential problems persist.