

1. Introduction

- 1.1 I am the county councillor for the Colney Heath and Marshalswick division on Hertfordshire County Council. Most of the quarry site lies within that division. I was first elected to the council in May 2017, shortly after permission had been given for quarrying. That permission was never finalised and over the last eight years, at subsequent planning meetings and an appeal, permission has been repeatedly refused.
- 1.2 I have no doubt that the county council officers that recommended to the council's development control committee in October 2023 that this latest application be approved are competent professionals. As I assume is the consultant who assisted with the preparation and presentation of the report to the committee. However, their arguments and the presentations by the applicant, failed to convince 8 out of 10 councillors on that committee, including the Chair, to approve the application. That was because the site is not a suitable location for a quarry and the damage quarrying will do outweighs any potential long-term benefits. The officers made a mistake in recommending approval and the decision of the committee needs to be confirmed.
- 1.3 When the site was "land at the former Hatfield Aerodrome" at the turn of the century, it might have been suitable. However, the site is no longer a former industrial site, but is the Ellenbrook Country Park, a residential amenity and the change in the site over the last quarter of a century has been significant. The site is a public open space, not a piece of land with little or no public access.
- 1.4 For the following reasons, I consider the appeal should be refused. I only intend to summarise these reasons as I understand they will be considered in more detail during the inquiry with representations from residents and experts setting out the significant damage quarrying will do.

2. Biodiversity

- 2.1 As I have already noted, the site is no longer a former industrial site, it is a country park. As users know there is a rich and varied wildlife on the park and whilst provision is to be made for some aspects that will not protect the majority.
- 2.2 Yes, quarry sites can, if properly restored, become wildlife havens. However, that does not always happen and when it does, it does not happen quickly.
- 2.3 This site should not be destroyed now in the hope of a nature reserve in 40-50 years.

3. Residential Amenity

- 3.1 As well as a wildlife haven, the country park is also a haven for local residents, providing a space for enjoying the outdoors whether dog walking or exercising.
- 3.2 It serves as an alternate route to the A1057 for pedestrians and cyclists. The Inspector will be aware of the volume and speed of traffic on the A1057 and the lack of provision for pedestrians and cyclists. I have often cycled and walked across the park to get to locations in Hatfield rather than use the A1057. In fact when the last inquiry was held I cycled across the park on most of the days I attended.
- 3.3 Yes, provision is to be made for controlled access to the site over the coming years, but it will be a much-reduced amenity for residents to enjoy.

4. Health Impact

- 4.1 Quarrying is an industrial activity that pollutes the surrounding areas. Whilst measures will be in place to reduce that pollution it will still occur. This site is close to many residential properties, and it is also in a public park, so the risks are higher.
- 4.2 Residents are rightly concerned about the impact of silica dust, especially given the close proximity of sporting facilities (not only at the University of Hertfordshire, but also in Smallford). Residents are also concerned about pollutants from increased numbers of HGVs on the local roads and the risk to groundwater from contamination during quarrying.
- 4.3 I am aware that the local MP, Daisy Cooper, has written to the Inspector setting out her concerns on this.
- 4.4 Of specific concern is the potential impact of quarrying activity on the known bromate plume. The bromate plume was not identified until 2000, after the relevant Supplementary Planning Guidance was issued for this site. That guidance should have been revised to take into account the identification of the plume and its potential impact.
- 4.5 If the quarry does proceed, there should be frequent monitoring by the operator with regular reporting to the Environment Agency. Should the quarrying have any impact on the location of the plume, quarrying should immediately cease pending an independent investigation.

5. Popefield Farm

- 5.1 Popefield Farm is the nearest occupied site to the quarry and is a listed building. The owner is justifiably concerned about the impact the quarry will have. I know he will be addressing the inquiry and I trust his concerns are given significant weight.

6. Loss of Green Belt

- 6.1 Whilst quarrying is an acceptable development within the Green Belt the amount of related infrastructure that would be needed to mitigate the impact of the quarry is not. In particular, the infrastructure (bunds, roads and other facilities) will have a long-term impact on the openness of the Green Belt. There are no very special circumstances to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm. I consider that the proposal is therefore contrary to the NPPF.

7. Summary

- 7.1 This is not NIMBYISM, there are other quarries adjacent to this site that have been in operation for decades, this division probably has more quarrying than most divisions in the county. Residents are familiar with HGVs coming and going from quarry sites. This site is however the wrong site and the damage and disruption it will cause outweighs any immediate benefit from the provision of aggregate and any long-term possible benefits if and when the site is restored.
- 7.2 I ask that in his report the Inspector recommends in the strongest possible terms, refusal of this application to the Secretary of State. If he does, I hope that the county council then moves rapidly to take the site out of the draft Minerals Plan. If, the appeal is successful, then I trust the concerns of residents are recognised,

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Land at the former Hatfield Aerodrome
Statement from County Councillor John Hale

and robust, enforceable conditions are imposed to minimise the harm to the site and the surrounding area.

John Hale

18 November 2024