

I am speaking today about *Ellenbrook Fields*, a name I use deliberately, because it reflects how this land is actually experienced. The application and associated website repeatedly refers to it as the *Former Hatfield Aerodrome*, language that implies a site that has outlived its purpose and is ready for development. In reality, Ellenbrook Fields already has a purpose. It is a functioning Country Park, used every day by the local community as part of ordinary life.

Even the applicant's own website talks about "creating a country park" at the end of the process, without acknowledging that one already exists and that what is proposed would significantly reduce, for the next 32 years, what the community currently have.

Since moving to Ellenbrook, I have engaged with and participated in every application and inquiry relating to this site over several years. Public access has been examined repeatedly, and yet it remains unresolved. The fact that the Secretary of State has reopened this inquiry specifically on public access indicates that previous proposals failed to meet policy requirements. This is not the applicant's first opportunity to present a compliant and robust access strategy, and once again it falls short. That is significant.

The key question before you is not whether access exists in theory, but whether the proposed strategy genuinely allows people to continue using the park safely, inclusively, and in a way that reflects real world use. Based on the Public Access Strategy, it does not, and that brings it into direct conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework, particularly the requirement to create **safe and accessible environments**, to **promote social interaction**, and to ensure development is **inclusive and proportionate to its context**.

A central issue is the loss of the concrete taxiway. This is not simply one route among many. It is the backbone of the park and the only route that remains reliably accessible in all weather.

I use that route throughout the year. I taught both my children to ride their bikes on it. I walk the dog along it to access other parts of the park, or simply stay on it when the fields are wet. In winter, large areas of the site become unusable, yet the taxiway remains dry and passable. That is why wheelchair users, parents with buggies, older residents, cyclists, and people with reduced mobility naturally gravitate there.

Crucially, it is also wide open. It has long, uninterrupted lines of sight. I spoke about this at the previous inquiry because it matters. If you are a woman you will understand what I am saying without further clarification, but for full clarity, for many women, and other parts of society I am sure, that openness is fundamental to feeling safe. You can see who is ahead of you, who is behind you, and where your exits are. The removal of this clear, open sight line around differing areas of the park directly contravenes with the

NPPF expectation that developments should **design out crime and the fear of crime**, not inadvertently introduce it.

The proposal would retain access to less than half of this well used, much loved, historical and fully accessible route and replace the remainder with grass or gravel paths, many of them routed between bunds, fencing, busy roads, lagoons, or quarry workings. These are not equivalent alternatives. In winter they will be largely unusable, and regarding safety and experience, they are fundamentally different spaces.

Bunds block views. They create blind spots and dead ground where you cannot see who is approaching or what lies ahead. Fencing narrows paths creates a sense of confinement and restriction. Together, bunds and fences form corridors rather than paths, spaces that are visually constrained, psychologically oppressive, and behaviour changing.

Walking through such corridors feels longer and more exposed, not less. There is less room to step aside, fewer options to change direction, and no sense of overview. This directly undermines the NPPF requirement for development to create **places that are safe, inclusive, and accessible for all**, and to be **well designed for everyone**, including women, children, older people, and those with disabilities.

For women walking alone, this change is especially significant. Reduced visibility increases perceived vulnerability. Enclosed routes alongside industrial activity or busy roads are not places many women will choose to use independently. The realistic outcome is not cautious use, but avoidance.

Families with young children will also lose out. Bunds invite climbing and running. Fencing creates pinch points. Deep lagoons with minimal separation, routes near quarry traffic, and paths adjacent to fast-moving roads introduce hazards that require constant vigilance. Over time, parents stop coming, not because that access technically doesn't exist, but because the environment no longer feels appropriate for relaxed, everyday use.

The nearby quarry at Coopers Green Lane provides a real world comparator, and is happily close enough to go and have a look at on a break, just round the corner. There, you can see the reality of what is being proposed, and what would exist. Pedestrian routes placed between bunds and fast traffic which feels unsafe, visually hostile, and poorly integrated. That environment does not meet the NPPF aspiration for development to be visually attractive or to create positive public realm. There is not a chance that I would walk my bouncy labrador nor my two, relatively well behaved children down that path that has been created by the side of Coopers Green Lane, as I would be constantly worried about one of the three exploring too far and getting hit by a car. So, to offer the equivalent along the A1057, an already busy and fast road, let alone with the introduction of the Lorries this quarry would bring, as a key route for users of

Ellenbrook Fields is an example of the Public Access Strategy being a paper led exercise rather than a useable reality.

The proposed lagoons compound the accessibility problems. The narrow route between them is likely to become compromised during wetter months, of which we are seeing more than ever, severing east to west movement. Just because a path exists, it does not mean that it is useable. The presence of deep water in a park heavily used by children and dogs, or vulnerable adults, with just a fence as a barrier, introduces a foreseeable risk. The Environment Agency itself, not known for really worrying too much about impact on local communities, has advised that there is no alternative location for these lagoons, which strongly suggests this is a fundamental constraint rather than a detail that can be resolved through conditions.

Public routes are also proposed close to active quarry workings and haul roads, with penned in areas designed to manage crossings, exposing users to heavy vehicles, dust, noise, and an industrial setting. This runs counter to the NPPF objective of **minimising conflict between pedestrians and vehicles** and ensuring that public spaces are genuinely usable and pleasant.

Taken together, these design decisions will lead to a predictable and significant loss of users: people with limited mobility, women walking alone, families with young children, older residents, and those fitting short walks into busy lives. The park will narrow to those who are fit, confident, time-rich, and willing to tolerate risk, a profound change from what exists today.

This loss is not incidental. It flows directly from the layout and constraints of the scheme. After multiple applications and revisions, the same issues persist.

I cannot see how the applicant has demonstrated that a Public Access Strategy can be delivered here that complies with national policy or genuinely preserves how Ellenbrook Fields is currently used, including the open, visible, safe routes that allow people, particularly women, to feel secure using the park. This must be the end of the road for this application, for any further applications, and from the relentless pushing by this multimillion pound organisation to decimate a piece of land, temporarily or not. This is not a local community blocking sustainable development, or against quarrying as a practice. Look around, look at how many quarries have an AL postcode. There are justifiable, evidence based reasons why this quarry is not right for this piece of land, and it should be clear by now that the risks far outweigh the benefits. Identifying a more suitable site elsewhere, not one heavily used already by the local community, not one on top of residential properties, a sports ground, a primary school and day care, would have been a far better use of energy and money than the bulldozing that Brett have been doing here.

Inspector, for the second time, I ask you to pause and imagine what this means for those of us who live here. This is not a passive or disengaged community. Local groups have invested years of effort, research, and lived experience into understanding this land and articulating the impact of quarrying on it. That knowledge matters and deserves serious weight. Instead, the applicant has been granted repeated opportunities and has once again presented a Public Access Strategy that fails to meet NPPF requirements, fails to meet the needs of the local community, and fails to protect land that is already functioning as a valued Country Park. If approved, the result will be the slow and permanent loss of a place that this community relies on, not in theory, but in everyday life. That is a consequence that cannot be undone, and one that this inquiry has the opportunity to prevent.

Thank you for your time.