



Daisy Cooper MP

Member of Parliament for St Albans

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Alison Dyson
The Planning Inspectorate
Temple Quay House
2 The Square
Bristol
BS1 6PN

My Ref: DC21064

Your Ref: APP/M1900/W/24/3346607

15 November 2024

Dear Ms Dyson,

**Appeal by Brett Aggregates Limited
Land at former Hatfield Aerodrome, Hatfield, Hertfordshire, AL4 0JB**

Thank you for notifying me that the Planning Inspector is to hold an inquiry from 19 November, into the appeal against the decision to refuse development for a new quarry on the land occupied by Ellenbrook Country Park, also known as Smallford Pits.

As I hope the Inspector will understand, Parliament will be sitting during much of the time put aside for interested parties to give oral evidence, so I am unable to attend the evidence sessions in person. I am however grateful for the opportunity to provide this statement for consideration instead.

As I set out in my formal objection of 2 August, this is the latest in a long line of persistent and speculative applications to quarry on this site: a site which has been highly valued by the community as open recreation space since the land was retired as a landing strip and industrial site in the 1990s.

Since my last formal submission I understand that the Secretary of State has called-in this appeal, so while the Inspector will gather evidence and make recommendations, the final decision will be made directly by Ministers.

I welcome the government's intervention in this matter, which appears to have come about because of the failures of the Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) administration, on this important matter.

I understand that the Conservative administration at HCC have failed to put any case against the appeal, so have effectively withdrawn from the process. They have done so despite this proposal being overwhelmingly rejected by county councillors on a number of occasions. Local residents across the area have rightly been outraged that the responsible local authority has “dropped the ball” in this way.

As the Member of Parliament for St Albans I would be grateful if the Inspector could note my continuing strong OBJECTION to the appeal being granted for the following reasons:

1. Hazardous Air Pollution

The quarrying activity and subsequent transportation of aggregates from the site will generate concerning levels of silica dust, known to be hazardous to health. Exposure to unsafe levels silica dust can lead to the development of a number of conditions including silicosis, kidney disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and cancer. The site is close to homes at Smallford to the west and Ellenbrook to the south and east, and is adjacent to the University of Hertfordshire sports campus. In addition to the dust generated directly by the site, HGV vehicle movements will contribute further to deterioration of the air quality near the quarry. The application, if successful, would permit ongoing extraction – and therefore pollution – for a period of up to 32 years.

Since my original submission in November 2021, I have been pleased to support cross-party efforts in Parliament to legislate against quarry development in close proximity to settlements such as this, by way of co-sponsoring the Quarries (Planning) Bill. This would require the risks of proposed quarrying sites to health and the environment – including through silica dust – to be assessed as part of the planning process.

2. Increased HGV Traffic

Aside from the grave impact on air quality that would be experienced as a result of increased HGV movements at this time from both emissions and pollutants, the impacts of noise and dust on the local environment and residents would be unacceptable. The noise and vibrations caused by further heavy goods traffic would be detrimental to local residents.

Additionally, the A1057 already suffers from existing vehicle movements from the neighbouring Cemex quarry. My constituents and neighbouring villages should not be expected to tolerate further cumulative emissions, congestion and environmental damage from another site in the community.

The latest proposals from the applicant pay lip service to mitigation to prevent access to the congested A414 via Station Road, however the ban on HGVs using this route does not apply where local access is sought by the operator and so this inappropriate route will undoubtedly be used as a short cut by vehicles arriving and leaving a quarry on this site.

3. Loss of biodiversity

The country park which this quarry would replace has been important in restoring much needed biodiversity. For two decades, nature has been given the opportunity to restore flora and fauna here. This quarry would destroy that biodiversity for up to half a century – effectively permanently lost to many in our local communities who benefit from the ‘green lung’ benefits of the site.

4. Bromate Groundwater Pollution

The site remains in close proximity to the largest known bromate contamination plume in Europe. While the Environment Agency have been unable to determine whether the proposed quarrying activity will disturb the plume in its current guise, experts readily admit that they are unable to accurately model the movements of the plume within Hertfordshire in future. There is absolutely no guarantee that quarrying activity within 100 metres of the bromate contamination in the Lower Mineral Horizon would not result in devastating groundwater pollution during the planned course of operation of the quarry.

I urge the Inspector to recommend to the Secretary of State that this appeal is rejected.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Daisy". The signature is stylized with a large, looping 'D' and a trailing flourish.

Daisy Cooper MP

Member of Parliament for St Albans

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