Ellenbrook Fields has become inarguably one of the most important areas of Hatfield for the mental health of our community.

With a struggling health care system and limited access to services that aid in people's well being, our community Hatfield, Welwyn Garden City and St Albans are seeking methods of healthcare outside of the traditional NHS / medical routes.

Our community is seeking ways to self-serve their mental and physical well-being - and as part of that self-serving, Ellenbrook Fields has become an integral support.

I will offer one example from many who I support in our community.

Client A
A smart young male who is autistic with a 1st in data / computer programming.
When he came to me he was extremely anxious. In constant fight and flight. Unable to work, leave his house due to strong fears of people and unexpected event and over stimulation of his senses. He had feelings that ending his life would be the best option for all.
One part of client A's therapy was to connect with nature.

We took walks at Ellenbrook fields, I helped him to use his sense to listen to the bird song, to filter the sounds of nature away from the distant sound of a jarring motorbike. I guided him to really see and look at nature in its beauty. To connect with it, feel it, be in the company of nature.
I guided him into regulating his breathing when walking past people and over time his fears lessened. He learned to self-regulate when an unexpected dog came pouncing up to him and needless to say over time, Client A's connection with nature, with Ellenbook Fields has been quite literally been a saver of of his life.

Client A now knows how to self regulate his anxiousness when in public, he now leaves his house to take daily walks at the fields. The vast scape of nature softens his heightened senses and he is now keen to find work again and has started creative writing….the main characters in his writing are about animals running in the wild.

It's people's connectedness to nature, rather than little visits to 'nature', which is key for feelings that life is worthwhile.

I could share many more clients stories from Hatfield & the surrounding areas where part of their wellness prescription has been to spend time in Ellenbrook fields.

There are a plethora of studies that show evidence for associations between nature exposure and improved cognitive function, brain activity, blood pressure, mental health, physical activity, and sleep.

(2015. McMahan & Estes)
Spending time in green spaces is linked to improved life satisfaction, reduced anxiety and increased happiness

(2019. Lackey et al.)
Contact with nature generates an increase in positive emotions and feelings of vitality, and a decrease in negative emotions; and that it also provides relief of from mental tiredness, and an improvement in our attention span.

(2020, Birch et al.)
Showed the importance of nature in urban environments where young people from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic groups were interviewed (aged 17-27 years old). This study found that trees, water, open spaces and views in their urban environment offered benefits connected to mental health. Benefits included a stronger sense of self, feelings of "escape" and of connection with and care for the wider human and non-human worlds

Knepp
In 2021 a lowland rewilding project on a 3,500-acre estate in West Sussex began. Knepp was a degraded farmland which has now transformed into a rewilded thriving ecosystem.

In less than 20 years, the same amount of time as Ellenbrook Fields has been a country park for the residence, the Knepp estate through much hard work became a functioning ecosystem again. Wildlife populations increased dramatically. Rare species like turtle doves, nightingales, peregrine falcons, and purple emperor butterflies began breeding there.

Why is Knepp important to Ellenbrook fields?
We have in Hatfield a small scale Knepp. We have our own lowland rewilding project. Have you seen the Lupin field in summer? The Barn Owls Swooping in the low setting sun? Have you heard the dawn chorus in the bluebell wood in May? I certainly have, and so has client A which quite literally saved his life!

The people of Hatfield deserve to keep all of Ellenbrook Fields which was promised to us as a country park. I work on the ground with the people of Hatfield and I can tell you they are caring, sort of the earth, kind, generous human beings but they are exasperated and feel they are not listened to.

It was suggested by Bretts that removing the uncertainty around the "will it/won't it be a quarry" will result in a beneficial effect on mental health.
What a ludicrous suggestion. How do you think my client A will react to his life saving space being subjected to a quarry for the next 40 years with the noise from the A1057, operational plant, dumper trucks, and mineral extraction, dust from the plant site, haul roads, and gravel extraction, the smoke from tree and shrub clearance.

How will that benefit client A's mental health or anyone in our communities health?

But I also ask, do you actually care about the answer to that question? And the humans that live in this town who use that space. I hope so!

The tracks of insatiable consumption are everywhere and so many around the world have been bitten!

June 2010 - An explosion on a BP oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico flooding the gulf with oil

August 2020
Record wildfires in Brazil's Amazon Rainforest. Fires there are often intentionally set for agricultural purposes but sometimes escape their intended boundaries.

Insatiable consumption from companies like Brett are those companies eyeing our land for profit.

But we are all complicit!

We've allow the market to define what we value, so the redefined common good seems to depend on profit as a lifestyle that enriches the companies like Brett, while impoverishing the communities and people's wellbeing.

Fabricated demand and compulsive consumption in sanctioned greed. We can't continue to subscribe to and allow an economic system that proscribes infinite growth of the quarry, on a precious and finite community country park.

So how to go forward.
It is to change the perception of our open country park: Not seeing the country park as real-estate to own and exploit, but as a living thing that takes care of our community and requires our care and generosity in return.

We need to ground economics into ecological principles, the radical notion that we must sustain ecological capital if we are to maintain quality of life in Hatfield.

Our leaders continue to chose profit over people and it is becoming increasing obvious to us mear lay people who are the leaders that have strength for the greater good of people and those who are fake. The mark of great leader, the mark of a human is in how they are remembered by his community and those who knew them / loved them.
Either the person who refused to let corporate bullies tear part a thriving rewilded, biodiverse country park that will help not only ecologically and bio-socially thousands in their community long beyond any of our lifetimes.
Or the person who allowed a community country park to be pulled apart, the eco life slowly strangled and the our beautiful free Ellenbrook Fields that Hatfield deserves to keep, to be used for the profit of Bretts.