

## PROPOSED QUARRY AT FORMER HATFIELD AERODROME

Ref: APP/M1900/W/24/3346607

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### COLNEY HEATH GROUP CLOSING STATEMENT FOR RECONVENED INQUIRY

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WEDNESDAY 23 APRIL 2026

As has been agreed during this process, we are in a unique position of having a country park that it is proposed will be turned into a quarry. This is not what normally happens. In the majority of cases a quarry becomes a country park following its restoration phase. Fundamentally the local population has at the current time unfettered access and can wander across the park at will. The establishment of the quarry will undoubtedly restrict this access. As such this will have a negative impact.

This park was a condition to offset the development of Salisbury Village and Hatfield Business Park. The community has enjoyed and benefited from this country park for many years. Whatever is said the community will no longer be able to experience this amenity to the same degree for the next 40 years if the quarry goes ahead.

As has been said there are physical and mental benefits to communities for having easy and free access to green spaces, which the park currently provides.

The park also enhances social and community cohesion, which is a fundamental objective of the NPPF (Section 8, paragraph 96). In particular it states: Planning policies and decisions should aim to (a) achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which promote social interaction; (b) are safe and accessible; and (c) enable and support healthy lives.

Obviously we understand that there are major concerns about the public access strategy for this quarry. We do not see any substantial changes proposed in this reopened inquiry to the layout of the quarry to alleviate the public access issues as laid out in the Secretary of State letter dated the 11 November 2025. Indeed by Brett's own admission the changes described do not result in a substantively different scheme.

The letter from the Secretary of State has pointed out:

1. the need to strike a balance between maximising the use of mineral resource and protecting the amenity of residents and users of the park
2. that the Public Access Strategy did not deliver the convenient, continuous east–west access required by the 2000 Agreement and Minerals Local Plan Policy 18(x) during the life of the quarry; and
3. the proposal failed to integrate restored phases into the rest of the park in a timely manner, in part due to the positioning of the lagoons.

I now want to take each of these concerns in turn;

1. Striking a balance: We accept that there is a need for the mineral resource, but this should not be at the expense of the amenity of residents. And by residents we mean all users of the park, commuters, dog walkers and people exercising for their physical and mental health. There is no doubt that putting a quarry on this site is fundamentally detrimental to all users and does not strike a balance.

The quarry will result in loss of habitat that has been established over the last 30 years. As a consequence the park will not return to this position for decades, thus impacting the residents' amenity. As our User Study identified, many people use the park to access nature, where a variety of species and environments are available (Colney Heath Group Park User Study 2025-26 (CD17.18)).

2. Public Access Strategy: The revised Public Access Strategy put forward as a result of this reopened Inquiry offers three multi-user paths across the site. But these paths results in users walking along corridors which are encircled by 5 metre high bunds, quarry activities and quarrying infrastructure. These routes are much longer and also suffer from the lack of open and uninterrupted views (natural surveillance). The alternative grass paths will take time to establish, be unusable for certain periods of the year and will be affected by quarrying related infrastructure (bunds, buttresses, worked on areas).

We note that the appellant has stressed that there will be a heavy health and safety regime on the site, but this will inevitably restrict the enjoyment and convenience of the area by residents and users of the park.

3. Integration with the unaffected part of the country park: The proposed siting of the lagoons creates a lasting barrier to integration and negatively impacts the community amenity of the park as envisaged by the Hatfield Aerodrome SPG (CD3.03).

As the appellant has acknowledged in their Statement of Case (CD17.21-1) the position of the lagoons is not ideal. In particular they state:

*2.32. Whilst this feature limits any greater extent of physical integration, that is as a direct consequence of the hydrogeological circumstance to which the SPG refers...[and]*

*2.34. ...To the extent this is a disbenefit, it should not be determinative.*

But we as a community believe the siting of the lagoons is not only determinative but is fundamental to the east-west public access across the park, not only during the life of the quarry but also the life of the park in perpetuity.

During the life of the quarry the lagoons are a problem because:

- Enormous in size
- They span the gap between Home Covert and the University sport fields, thus limiting the choices of locations of path for east-west transit
- The bunds that surround them amplify their impact
- They are in the area of greatest use within the park (as shown in the Colney Heath Group Park User Study 2025-26 (CD17.18))

In perpetuity

- Maintains a permanent restriction on east-west access across the park.
- The loss of the temporary path between the lagoons further restricts east-west access

ONCE THE LAKE IS THERE, IT WILL ALWAYS BE THERE AS A PERMANENT BARRIER.

We also have major concerns about the transit across the park during the life of the quarry. We are concerned about the crossing of the haul and service roads, bunds, buttresses and swales and the ability of conditions to mitigate these issues.

In conclusion there have been no significant changes to the layout of the development presented in this reopened inquiry, **as the Appellant freely admits.**

Indeed:

- the lagoons will be a barrier to east-west transit in perpetuity
- a current tranquil and wildlife rich area will be destroyed to make way for the processing plant site
- the proposed multi-user routes along the periphery will be hemmed in by bunds, exposing users to the noise and unattractiveness of the quarry works

- the routes within the site will likewise be in proximity and visual range of the noisy, dusty and unattractive quarry workings, making the park unappealing to users

As such we do not believe this offers a fair balance between the extraction of mineral resources and the public amenity of residents and users of the park. We do not believe the minor changes proposed to phasing and design improve the public access sufficiently so that they overcome the failings identified in the Secretary of State's letter.

As such would ask that the Inspector recommend refusal to the Secretary of State.