

Colney Heath Parish Council (CHPC) opening statement

Our case will be jointly presented by Peter Cook and Mike Rawlins.

I have been a Parish Councillor since November 2014 being re-elected in 2015 and 2019. I chair the Council in 2021/22 and have done so in 2020/21 and for the three years 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19.

I am a chartered surveyor and over the last 15 years has acted as an interim consultant on temporary contracts for a variety of local authorities so am experienced in how public bodies work and the influence of leading politicians within them so that officers do their bidding. In these roles I have seen at first-hand how officers can choose to ignore the will of democratically elected politicians or elected decision-making members not following due process.

I also undertake consultancy work for local SMEs and chaired a property development special purpose vehicle.

I chair CHPC's Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (NPSG) and take a keen interest in Planning matters particularly Local Plans. The NPSG has endured the prevarication of St Albans Local Plan and being neighbours to Welwyn Hatfield, and Hertsmere follow these closely.

As can be seen from the CHPC Statement of Case I regularly ask questions of all three authorities and am experienced in the non-answers we normally receive – both from politicians and permanent officers – highlighted by the three local authorities' ability to complete the formation of Ellenbrook Trust from the 29 December 2000 section 106.

From this experience and others I have little confidence in the actions of County officers to be open and transparent. In addition, the Highway responses to 'Land at Bullens Green Lane' demonstrated, before and at the Inquiry, the level of competence of officers when combined with answers on Education.

I work closely with Mike Rawlins, CHPC's Neighbourhood Plan Project Officer (voluntary) NPPO, and with him CHPC's lead on representations on various subjects to the relevant bodies working on such as the County A 414 growth strategy (from Harlow to Hemel Hempstead via Hertford and Hatfield)

We have worked closely together on Inquiries at Smallford Works and at Land at Bullens Green Lane with the residents Association, 4ColneyHeath

Using that we worked with Smallford Residents Association (SRA) who have combined with Ellenbrook Residents (EARA) on this Appeal so that as the Inspector requested, we do not repeat ourselves. We apologise in advance if there are some overlaps.

To assist all the parties, including the watching public, the areas of focus of our objections, and thus evidence for CHPC and EARA on the four refusal grounds are as follows

Ground one - Green Belt CHPC

Ground two – Cumulative will be split with EARA on the 2016 scheme timescales and CHPC on the potentially 100 years

As well as the cumulative impact of Dust, Noise, traffic, lack of sustainability and the overall impact and risks to individuals' health generally and the bromate risk to the water supply of south west Hertfordshire and North London and the loss of the promised Country Park providing green open space

Ground three – Highways CHPC

Ground four – Hydrogeology including Bromate EARA.

As well as the contamination risk this will include: Ground Water Management Plan (GWMP); EA Remediation Plan and Borehole monitoring

As Rule 6 parties both CHPC and EARA retain the right to question all others.

Turning to the detail CHPC's focus on the proposed quarry impact on the Green Belt will be on prevention of coalescence of Hatfield and St Albans especially due to the proposals for Tarmac's quarry south of Coursers Road and it's non-compliance with current Minerals Policy 14 as well as site specific matters

Many of the officer's recommendations and support for this application are contrary to the policies set out the Hertfordshire Minerals Plan. In CHPC's view it should be difficult to give any weight to officer's comments or their recommendations regarding this application which the appellant relies on heavily.

CHPC will focus on the long term harm caused by quarrying in the Smallford area since the mid-1930s which is contrary to NPPF which if granted would result in more than 120 years of quarrying in the area.

CHPC highways objections to it not being a sustainable location and the Increased transport mileage due to the concentration of all Hertfordshire's sand and gravel being supplied from one small area when other sites are available, which does not support the County's A414 growth strategy. The Preferred sites appear to have been politically chosen rather than Policy driven

CHPC focus on the risks related to the Bromate plume due to increased water extraction in other areas and the unknown risks to the water supply volume to support the current demand together with the forecast 50,000 additional new homes to be built along the A414 corridor which is broadly similar to current and projected area covered by the bromate plume.

CHPC, as one of the two Davids, looks forward to arguing against the four Goliaths who on many parts of the Appeal submissions give the perception of acting as one with decisions being made without the appropriate public scrutiny of democratically elected politicians.

We are disappointed the four seem to ignore risk of contamination however slight which if proven in due course all four will have responsibility for and some difficult explaining to do to the general public of Hertfordshire.

I personally admire Brett's tactics on late submissions, clearly learning from Arlington, and attempting to bypass due democratic process for their own commercial gains

We are disappointed the Inquiry permits references to the 2021 application as comments on it close on 20 November.

This gives Brett two attempts at the 2021 application and deprives the public of the right to fair representation

We understand the decision will be announced around the 21st anniversary of the original section 106.

We trust the Appeal will be dismissed for the reasons we present and be a New Year present for the residents

Peter Cook
16 November 2021