

Dear Sir,

As a Smallford Resident I strongly object to the Planning Application for a quarry at Hatfield Aerodrome, which will have a significant negative impact on local residents.

I would like to have attended the inquiry in person, however due to the short notice I am unable to attend due to work constraints.

I live in an area directly adjacent to the proposed new quarry and also next to the existing Cemex quarry. If consent is given for the quarry it will have a huge negative impact on the physical health and wellbeing of the local community.

The quarry is too close to housing and environmentally it makes no sense at all to allow two quarry plants to operate concurrently. The plans are for an extended period of more than 30 years and the cumulative effects of quarrying in the local area should be considered.

**My objections are as follows:**

**Impact on Roads**

The A1057 is always congested during rush hour and is the main route between Hatfield and St Albans. There are often traffic jams stretching past the location of the proposed site entrance. The increased number of HGV trips at this site will render the road far more dangerous, as will the location of the entrance which is on a deceptive bend reducing vision.

As local residents, we see the large amounts of HGV vehicles from the existing Cemex plant and additionally from Glinwells Nursery. Every time we leave our house we are guaranteed to see a significant number of HGV's travelling along Oaklands Lane or along the A1057.

Oaklands Lane has no pavement and the pavement along the A1057 is very narrow. There are no designated cycle lanes and additional HGV's will increase the risks for cyclists. The additional traffic generated by the quarry is not conducive with pedestrian safety, at a time when encouraging increased walking and cycling is needed for health and environmental reasons.

Cleaning of the road, for removal of the inevitable dust and spillages from HGV's will create congestion and increase the risk of collisions as vehicles using the A1057 will be forced to overtake cleaning vehicles. The road layout will not facilitate regular cleaning.

The local infrastructure is not sufficient to support the additional number of HGV movements that would be generated by the new quarry and the cumulative impact of this additional traffic added to the local network will be unsustainable. As such the proposals raise significant cause for concern.

**Landscape and Visual**

The Landscape and Visual Impact will have a very negative and cumulative impact on us. To the side of our house we currently lookout to a vista of mature trees. Once the quarry is built we will be looking towards a perimeter bund with an acoustic fence on the top and will suffer from increased light pollution at night. We will have immediate sight of two quarries from our house, one in front and one to the side.

The proposed new entrance site on the A1057 will also have a huge detrimental visual impact on the local area making it appear industrialised. Mature trees and hedges will be removed and the resulting entrance will be totally out of keeping with the character of a small hamlet, especially as it will be close to the Three Horseshoes Public House and Popefield Farm.

## Ecology

In 2013, the wildlife Sites survey team of the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust carried out a survey of the airfield covering half of the Brett Airfield site and concluded that much of the site met the criteria for designation as a Local Wildlife Site.

Home Covert and Round Wood are categorised as ancient woodland or have ancient woodland species present. Government guidance for Ancient woodland, ancient trees and veteran trees: protecting them from development <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ancient-woodland-and-veteran-trees-protection-surveys-licences#use-of-buffer-zones>

states “You should give consideration to wood pasture identified as ancient in planning decisions in the same way as other ancient woodland.”

Brett’s plans show that the area included goes right thorough the edge of Home Covert, there does not appear to be a buffer zone to protect the woodland.

The Ecology document submitted as part of the application shows that area is very species rich and that there are a number of species and flora and fauna on site on the site that are protected.

The following are recorded as being on site:

Badger- Protection of badgers Act 1992

Barn Owl – Protected by the Wildlife and Country side act 1981

Common Lizard- Protected by the Wildlife and Country side act 1981

Cuckoo – Red List

Curlew – Red List

Field Fare – Red List

Grass Snake – Protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act

Grasshopper warbler – Red List

Great Crested Newts- European Protected Species

Grey Partridge- Red List

Hen Harrier – Red List

Lapwing – Red List

Linnet – Red list

Meadow Pipit – Amber List

Redshank - Amber List

Redstart – Amber List

Reed Bunting – Amber List

Short eared Owl – Amber list

Skylark - Red list

Song Thrush – Red List

Spotted Flycatcher – Red List

Stonechat - Green

Tawny Owl – Amber list

Turtle dove – Red List

Wheatear- green list

Whinchat Red List

Whitethroat – Green List

Woodcock – Red list

Yellow wagtail - Red List

This is not an exhaustive list and there are also rare species of insects and plants on site. Large areas of the site contain maturing native trees and there are valuable areas of hedgerow and grassland proving habitats supporting many species. Brett fail to show how they would mitigate or manage this habitat loss effectively during the quarrying operation.

They refer to providing alternative ponds for newts, however little detail is provided and they fail to explain how they will prevent mortality caused by the presence of roads within the site to transport quarried material. Again this will be the same for reptiles on site.

This is similar to the mitigation for Bats as well, the ecology report states that only 2 trees were identified as being suitable for roosting, however the number of bats recorded on site is at odds with this.

Removing 90% of the existing neutral grassland will remove the habitats of many of the species, for an extended period of over 35 years. This will have a huge negative ecological impact and Brett have not demonstrated how this will be mitigated while the quarry is operational. Bird and wildlife habitats and feeding grounds will be lost for an extended period with no compensatory equivalent provided, leading to species loss.

Barn Owls require grasslands to feed, it would be pointless to relocate nest boxes if habitats providing feeding sites are removed. Skylarks' nest in grass, it will be an unmitigated disaster for these species if permission is given for the quarry.

The suggestion that a new badger sett will be created at the side of the site is unrealistic, the site is almost exclusively surrounded by bunds and fences, and the quarry workings will not be conducive to badgers remaining on site. As previously stated, the plans of the quarry, completely surrounded by bunds and fencing and with internal haul roads will not support the existing wildlife.

A report published by the Natural History Museum in October 21 states that the UK with only 53% of its biodiversity left, is in the bottom 10% of the world's countries, last in the G7 band a long way behind China. The UK has been among the most nature depleted countries on earth for a long time.

Allowing the quarry to be built will contribute to this depletion, by removal of the grass areas and mature trees for an extended period of time.

The quarry plans as submitted do not minimise the impact on biodiversity and do not demonstrate any net gains. The design and duration of the quarrying means that the ecology of the whole area of the site will be affected by the quarry and the planning proposals such as the stockpiling of materials do not demonstrate that the development's primary aim is to conserve or enhance biodiversity.

In the 2021 application it is stated **11.328** : "Reduction of public visitor pressure would be reduced whilst quarry is operational by erection of a post and wire fence to restrict access"

The perimeter bunds and fencing will ensure the openness of the green belt is compromised and internal haul roads will prevent the public having access to the site, leading to a loss of amenity and wellbeing for the local community.

In a telephone conversation, Richard Ford, Senior Planning Manager from Brett told me that there would be public access on the site throughout the operations. He stated that there would be 10 mph speed limits on site and that large lorries would be clearly visible to the public so that they would not be in any danger and would be able to move out of the way and avoid being run over. This to me sounds unrealistic and I am sure that the public would not be allowed anywhere near internal roads. There is scant detail on public access for the duration for the quarry and the design of the proposed quarry does not enable public access to nature, which is at odds with the NPPF.

The NPPF also states that if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through location on an alternative site with less harmful impacts) adequately mitigated, or as a last result, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused.

## **Openness of Site**

The Welwyn Hatfield Green Belt 3 study produced by the LUC for Welwyn Hatfield Council in March 2019, describes the area between St Albans and Hatfield as one of the most essential areas of green belt.

Only 1.5km separates the nearest inset edges of St Albans, which has an arm of expansion between the A1057 and the railway line - and Hatfield (at Ellenbrook), and the perceived gap is weakened by washed-over development at Smallford and Sleepshyde. This gap is therefore considered to be fragile.

The bunds and perimeter fences will reduce the openness of the site as will the stockpiling of material and the quarry plant site. This will impact on the separation of the towns and act as coalescence between them.

## **Noise**

Local residents will inevitably be affected by noise which will impact negatively on wellbeing. Despite mitigation features, intrusive noise can be heard from the existing Cemex quarry and the cumulative impact of this with the proposed quarry will give rise to increased noise nuisance. I do not understand how machinery with decibel levels exceeding 100 and operating close to residential houses will not have a detrimental effect. The close proximity makes it difficult to understand how a 5m bund and acoustic fence will significantly reduce the decibel level. This is especially relevant for the new houses being constructed at Radio Place which will be very close to the site border. In the original application from Brett, Environmental Health recommended that planning permission be refused as the quarry would constitute a noise nuisance.

## **Dust**

Inevitably, despite mitigation features, the proposed quarry will generate dust. This will come from spillages, lorries arriving and leaving the site and over an extended period of time local residents will be subject to significant health issues. Again the cumulative impact of two quarries will increase the risk to public health from inhaling small particles over an extended period of years and there are genuine fears about the damage this may cause to human health. Employees at the quarry will be protected by H & S legislation relating to working procedures and will benefit from protective personal equipment. Local residents will be afforded none of this protection.

Richard Ford indicated that soil stripping will take place between March and September each year, this time period is when people wish to have access to their gardens and therefore will experience the maximum detrimental effect from both noise and dust.

Removal of the concrete batching plant does not mean that Brett will not later submit an application to have this included at a later date. I spoke to Richard Ford of Brett and asked him if at some point in the future a new application would be submitted to add a concrete batching plant, he told me that although there was not a batching plant included in this application, he did not know of any other quarry that did not have a batching plant.

## **Bromate**

The risks from the Bromate plume have been well documented and there is not enough technical data or expertise to confirm that there is no risk to local water supplies from quarrying in the area.

There have been many changes since the original Herts Minerals Local Plan Review 2002 – 2016 adopted in March 2007 was drawn up, not least the increased awareness of the bromate plume.

Key points included in the plan relevant to this application are the aims stated as

- Protecting the water environment
- Protecting and enhancing the quality of open space and right of way
- Hertfordshire is a densely populated county. Local amenity must be protected
- Reducing road congestion
- Preventing excessive environmental and cumulative impacts.

It does not seem that the Brett application is commensurate with achieving these statements.

MPS2 advise that “policies should take into account the level of existing activity and impacts, the duration and nature of proposals for new or further working and the extent of impacts which a particular site, locality community, environment or wider area of mineral working can be expected to tolerate over a particular or proposed period.”

The local community has endured quarrying in the vicinity for a number of years and the cumulative effects should not be under estimated.

Caroline Churchill