**Objection to Hertfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2040 Draft Plan**

**This submission is on behalf of the Ellenbrook Area Residents Association. EARA represents over 500 dwellings in the area bounded by St Albans Road West, Wilkins Green Lane, Ellenbrook Lane, Comet Way and Ashbury Close.**

We believe that the selection of sites in the Plan is not supported by robust evidence and has significant risks.   The combination of existing and proposed sites is not sustainable and would have a significant impact on the natural environment and the local communities.

We believe that it is contrary to NPPF policies para 150 and 210 f, g, and the following HCC Mineral Plan Policies:

Policy 1: Climate change

Policy 2: Meeting sand and gravel needs

Policy 3: Meeting waste management needs

Policy 13: Restoration, aftercare & after use

Policy 14: Green Belt

Policy 15: Biodiversity and geodiversity

Policy 16 (key policy): Landscape & Green Infrastructure

Policy 18: Historic environment

Policy 19 (key policy): Protection & Enhancement of Amenity

Policy 20 (key policy): Health & Wellbeing

Policy 21: Water management

Policy 23: Transport infrastructure sites

Policy 24: Transport

Policy 25 (key policy): Public rights of way

Policy 26 (vital policy): Cumulative impacts

EARA strongly object to the inclusion of MAS02 the former Hatfield Aerodrome site (Ellenbrook Fields) in the plan. MAS02 is effectively an urban quarry close to residential properties and a University, this site is not suitable for quarrying.

Ellenbrook Fields has been included in the mineral plan despite an application to quarry being rejected by the council planning committee and subsequently again rejected by an Inquiry. The reasons for rejection bring into question whether the council should be relying on this site for a significant supply of sand and gravel.

There is only one mention in the plan that a recent planning application for site MAS02 has been rejected at an Inquiry. Rejection at an Inquiry must hold significant weight in the decision to include this site in the plan. The reasons for rejection should be provided, assessed, and taken in account by the Environment Cabinet Panel.

EARA believe that site MAS02 should be removed from the plan and should explore alternative sites within the County that may be more suitable.

Our views are detailed below under each policy section and summarised as follows:

* The Plan fails to adequately reflect that two of the Mineral Allocation Sites (MAS) - MAS02 (Hatfield Aerodrome), and MAS03 (Land adjoining Coopers Green Lane), which has recently gained planning permission, and Cemex’s existing site in the area would effectively form one vast quarry through a single swathe of the St Albans/Welwyn Hatfield Green Belt (see our map at Policy 26). This area of Hertfordshire is being blighted by quarries and we believe that the plan does not fairly take in account the true cumulative effects.
* The Plan fails to adequately consider the risk of having all Mineral Allocation Sites in the same area.  HCC would effectively be relying on one extended quarry (albeit under two operators) and a single problem in the area could jeopardise most of the county’s supply. If the bromate plume were to be disturbed then the whole area could be affected, potentially rendering MAS2 and MAS03 no-go areas in terms of mineral extraction. This Green Belt area could be blighted for decades beyond the proposed 30 years if the MAS02 operator either ceases or slows extraction.  This grouping of sites introduces significant risks to the county’s supply and should be rejected.
* The Plan fails to recognise that Ellenbrook Fields is a unique, irreplaceable valuable resource for the community that promotes health and wellbeing for residents. It is part of Hatfield’s green belt with meadow and grazing land, owls, butterflies, crested newts, and wildflowers and is used extensively by dog walkers, cyclists and ramblers. The Covid 19 Pandemic showed how valuable this piece of land is for local residents. It became a safe haven of open, green space, where locals could get fresh air, go for walks, and not encounter crowds of people. These areas should be fiercely protected by the Council as there is no alternative for local residents or wildlife in the area if quarrying is permitted on this land.
* The Site Selection Report is flawed in its assessment of cumulative impact and in the setting and application of rankings.  There are inconsistencies in assessment, for example in relation to the bromate plume, proximity of sites, transport and pollution impacts and flooding.  The site selection report does not appear to have been updated since 2018 and therefore does not report that an application to extract minerals extraction on MAS02 was rejected at an Inquiry.
* The site is over an area of land contaminated with bromate. We believe that the risk associated with quarrying so close to the bromate should not be ignored or “managed” as when an issue occurs. The bromate pollution, a known carcinogen, is proving extremely difficult to eradicate and any activities that potentially impact the timescale for achieving eradication, ie quarrying on the site, should not be permitted. We believe that due to these complexities this site should be excluded from any quarrying until the Environment Agency have confirmed that the bromate is no longer an issue.
* MAS02 is in Green Belt land and building on this area will effectively join St Albans and Hatfield. We do not believe that any application to quarry on MAS02 will preserve its openness and that it does not demonstrates very special circumstances sufficient to clearly outweigh the harm to the green belt.
* This site has already had an application to quarry rejected on appeal at an Inquiry. We believe that the reasons for rejection are valid for the site not necessarily just for the specific application. Therefore, this site poses a high risk in terms of its viability to deliver the County sand and gravel yield.

**Mineral Plan Objectives**

EARA do not believe that the inclusion of sites MAS02 and MAS03 in the plan supports the following objectives:

*1. Ensure a steady and adequate supply of minerals to meet demand and protect mineral resources and infrastructure*

*2. Encourage the appropriate location of and safeguard waste management facilities, including wastewater*

*5. Ensure that mineral and waste management development addresses and minimises the impacts of and contributions towards climate change through appropriate mitigation and built-in resilience measures*

*6. Encourage the greater use of sustainable transport for the movement of minerals and waste, e.g. by road, rail and water*

*7. Protect and positively contribute towards human health and wellbeing*

*8. Protect and enhance the natural, built and historic environment*

*9. Protect against flooding and safeguard water quality and quantity*

**Ambitions**

EARA also fail to see how sites MAS02 and MAS03 support the five ambitions.

**Net zero by 2050** – Adding an additional 424 lorry movements per day in locations outside the vicinity of transport infrastructure sites does not support a carbon zero ambition.

**Ready for future climate** – Flood risk from MAS02s may impact on water resources if they are compromised due to changes in the hydrogeological flow regime with respect to bromate in the aquifer, digging, and filling with inert material.

**Improved Nature in the county** – 712 hectares of allocated quarries and unrestored land cannot support nature and wildlife.

**Clean air for all by 2030** – Quarry activity will not provide clean air. Destruction of the green belt will contribute to climate change now and in the future.

**Waste material use in the county by 2050** – Inert waste as a quarry infill will change the land structure and become a dumping ground for waste materials in our area, in an area that already takes most of the waste material for the County.

**Policy 1: Climate Change**

Two of the three MAS sites are in Hatfield, but neither are anywhere near to sustainable transportation. This means that all movements from the site are dependent on lorries to transport the minerals. In addition to this it is likely (based on recent applications) that lorry movements will be required on the MAS02 site. This does not minimise greenhouse gas emissions. There will be a significant increase in lorry movements along St Albans Road West of 174 lorry movements per day added to MAS03 allocation of 250 extra lorry movements, right next to residential properties. The increase in traffic on an already busy road with frequent traffic delays will be detrimental to the health of local residents. In addition to this internal dumper trucks inside the quarry will be operational every day, these vehicles are not expected to have the necessary emission controls.

Residents are also concerned about the potential for flooding given that part of MAS02 site is in flood zone 2. Climate change will bring excessive rainfall to the site. As the surface conductivity changes to soil stripping, surface water will flow down the site towards Ellenbrook area which is already partially in Flood Zone 3. The land slopes towards the SE with a drop of 8m.

Restoration and after use are also a potential flood risk as the whole structure and geology will have changed. Holes that were dug are now filled with non-porous inert material. Water that was once naturally absorbed will now flow across the surface to form run-offs and potentially flood low lying areas.

**We believe that the impact of climate change on MAS02 could have an effect on the local area surrounding MAS02 in terms of the potential for flooding following excessive rainfall and the increase in greenhouse gas emissions.**

**Policy 2: Meeting sand and gravel needs**

We believe that HCC have not considered the risks inherent in concentrating reliance on one area (Hatfield) by recommending that two of the three MAS sites are located next to each other and are next to a current quarry site. This introduces significant risk that the required tonnage will not be delivered.

There are several aspects:

* If there are issues in the St Albans/ Hatfield area, whether with extraction, infrastructure or other factors, a significant proportion of supply for the County would be jeopardised. This is particularly relevant given the bromate factor, where if the bromate is disturbed by any quarry activity, then the viability of delivering the required tonnage may be jeopardised. It should be noted that there are a number of Environment Agency conditions associated with quarrying on MAS02, which if any of them are breached then quarrying may be halted.
* In addition to the obvious bromate risk to the water supply, it was accepted during the recent Inspectors Inquiry for an application to quarry on MAS02 that due to the high level of risk it would only be safe to quarry during certain dry months of the year. This adds an additional element that the required tonnage would not be quarried in the expected time frame (30 years) and that the unacceptably long time frame would be further extended or the tonnage target potentially halved. It is believed that 50% of the required sand and gravel is located in the lower mineral horizon, if digging in the lower mineral horizon is abandoned then there would only be 4MT yield, far short of the expected yield for this site.
* The fact that a recent application to quarry on the MAS02 site was rejected at a public inquiry must introduce a level of risk that the site may not be a viable proposition.
* The MAS02 site also has a Section 106 pending for the last 22 YEARS. This is extraordinarily unacceptable position and does not give local residents any confidence that the promised country park on Ellenbrook Fields will ever materialise in its final state. The stretch of green belt from St Albans through to the University area could be blighted for the long term and the Country Park never delivered if, after initial set up of the quarry plant, extraction does not proceed at the rates assumed or even ceases and is abandoned.

**We believe that if there are issues in the St Albans/ Hatfield area, whether with extraction, infrastructure or other factors, there is a risk that the required yield would be jeopardised by concentrating MAS02 and MAS03 quarry sites so close to each other.**

**Policy 3: Meeting waste management needs**

The area centred around Colney Heath, West Hatfield and Smallford has more waste sites, waste processing sites and landfill sites than any other area in Hertfordshire. EARA believe that the policy requires amending to protect communities from the harm resulting from excess waste and mineral sites within a small area.

Current and proposed minerals and waste sites which do /will negatively impact on the area

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Mineral sites** | **Output tons/yr** |
| Hatfield Quarry – Furzefield | 400,000 |
| Hatfield Quarry – Coopers Green Lane | 400,000-600,000 |
| Hatfield Aerodrome (Ellenbrook Fields) | 250.000 |
| Total tons p/a | 1,050,000 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Waste & waste processing** | **Capacity (T/a)** |
| Hatfield Aerodrome (Ellenbrook Fields) – landfill | 250,000 |
| Pearce Recycling - Acre Wood | 116,656 |
| St Albans Service Centre | 70,000 |
| Blancomet Recycling U K | 16,200 |
| Site at junction of A414-M1(M) | unknown |
| Furzefield | 400,000 |
| Coopers Green Lane | 400,000-600,000 |
| Total tons | 1,136,870 |
| Total mineral & waste permitted to be transported through the area per year. | 2,186,870 |

All data is from Hertfordshire Mineral & Waste plans or planning applications made to HCC.

As shown by the table above, the area around Smallford and Ellenbrook has an unfair share of waste and minerals facilities. We believe that the policy requires amending to protect communities from the harm resulting from excess waste and mineral sites within a small area.

**Policy 4: Site safeguarding and consultation areas**

No comments

**Policy 5: Mineral safeguarding areas**

No comments

**Policy 6: Brick clay**

No comments

**Policy 7: Chalk**

No comments

**Policy 8: Borrow pits**

No comments

**Policy 9: Incidental mineral extraction**

No comments

**Policy 10: Secondary recycled materials**

No comments

**Policy 11: Sustainable design and resource efficiency**

No comments

**Policy 12: Landfill excavation**

Nocomments

**Policy 13: Restoration, aftercare and after-use**

Paragraph 5.91 states that “A fundamental principle of mineral extraction is that it is a temporary use of the land, although it is recognised that the operational duration of mineral extraction and subsequent restoration of the land can take many years”.

The Cambridge dictionary defines the meaning of the word temporary as “*not lasting or needed for very long”*

Full restoration and return to a park, on MAS02, will take place over 30 years. This is far too long to wait for our park. Residents continue to struggle that this meets the definition of temporary, whether or not the quarrying is done in phases.

In recent planning applications to quarry on Ellenbrook Fields (MAS02), despite recommending a phased approach to quarrying over a lengthy timescale, there did not appear to be any benefit to local residents. A large proportion of the quarry site would have be blighted by the plant operations and lorry movements for the entire 30 years; there would be very limited access and most of the park would effectively be a no-go area for over 3 decades.

**MAS02 is expected to take 30 years, MAS03 14 years. Neither of these timescales are temporary, restoration is decades away particularly on MAS02 and is too long to wait for the promised country park.**

**Policy 14: Green Belt**

The NPPF states “fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl”. The aim is broken by coalescing Hatfield and St Albans together with no green belt separator between them. MAS02 breaks all five purposes set out by the NPPF framework. We believe that MAS02 is inappropriate development within the green belt. It is expected that any quarry development on MAS02 is going to last for decades, this is NOT temporary.

MAS02 and MAS03 are both situated within the narrow green belt between St Albans and Hatfield. We fail to see how quarrying in these areas is an acceptable use of green belt and how quarrying meets the criteria for very special circumstances.

Paragraph 104 states that “*Taking account of the temporary nature of the winning and working of minerals, the NPPF deems mineral extraction to be ‘not inappropriate’ within the Green Belt, provided it preserves its openness and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. Minerals working can therefore be accommodated within the Green Belt provided that associated development, including any buildings and processing machinery, are designed and positioned appropriately to prevent conflict with the purposes of the Green Belt.”*

Recent planning applications for the MAS02 site have completely failed to preserve the openness of the areas throughout the lifetime of the development, nor have they demonstrated that the design and positioning of plant and machinery will prevent conflict with the purposes of the Green Belt.

The Inspectors Inquiry report on a recent application to quarry on MAS02 says that:

*“I consider that the harm to the Green Belt, along with the harm to the character, appearance and amenity of the area, and to pedestrian safety, is not clearly outweighed by the benefits of aggregate extraction and co-location of the CBP, along with the contribution the appeal scheme would make to employment provision, the economy, biodiversity and the PRoW network. In my judgement, the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is not clearly outweighed by other considerations, and the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development do not exist. I find that the appeal scheme would be contrary to national Green Belt policy set out in the NPPF.”*

Whilst this is specific to the planning application submitted, it nonetheless identifies that there is a significant chance that issues associated with building on the Green Belt will occur with any subsequent applications.

**We do not believe that any application to quarry on MAS02 will preserve its openness and that it does not demonstrates very special circumstances sufficient to clearly outweigh the harm to the green belt.**

**Policy 15: Biodiversity and geodiversity**

Policy 15 states that *“Development proposals affecting sites of Local Importance, including Local Wildlife Sites, Local Nature Reserves and Local Geological Sites, and their contribution to the wider ecological and geodiversity network, will only be supported where the benefits outweigh the harm, whilst maintaining the overall network.”*

It is difficult to understand how the destruction of MAS02 Ellenbrook Fields provides more benefits than harm to the environment and local area. This area of Hatfield and St Albans has been quarried consistently for the last 60 years. It is time now to stop this and support the biodiversity in the area rather than destroy it.

The land around MAS02 has naturally re-wilded over the last 22 years. Restoration in the future will never bring this condition back. We will lose this wild and valuable habitat to the detriment of many species, in particular protected species. Our own observation indicates that rare birds do exist on the site, these include barn owls and yellowhammer. Great crested newts are protected and are native to Ellenbrook Fields, together with rare butterflies and rare orchids. Secondary disturbance will impact on small mammals, swans, cormorants, herons, and those who exist in ancient woodlands and water habitats near to the quarry.

**We do not believe that the benefits of quarrying on MAS02 outweigh the harm.**

**Policy 16: Landscape and green infrastructure**

Paragraph states that “5.132*. “It is acknowledged that mineral extraction is likely to cause temporary negative effects. These negative effects should be balanced against the long-term benefits that mineral developments can provide, including improved leisure-use, vital for health and well-being.”*

As mentioned previously a 30 year mineral extraction plan for MAS02 is NOT temporary and will cause LONG TERM negative effects on local resident’s health and wellbeing.

Policy 16 states that *“Development proposals should conserve and enhance landscape character, quality, visual amenity and green infrastructure networks. Proposals will be supported where it can be demonstrated that throughout the lifetime of the development (including restoration where appropriate):*

*a) there are no unacceptable landscape and visual effects;*

*b) any unavoidable landscape and visual effects have been minimised through appropriate mitigation*;”

The plan fails to demonstrate that there will be no unacceptable landscape and visual effect by quarrying on MAS02 and that appropriate mitigation will be put in place.

The Plan fails to take into account elements from the Hertfordshire Strategic Green Infrastructure Plan 2011.

Ellenbrook Country Park is specifically cited in this plan as contributing to Nature Conservation

“Key opportunities for habitat improvements, restoration and enhancements in Hertfordshire, drawing from the analysis, as follows: Promotion of community forestry, expressing the aspirations of the WCCF Plan, such as at Watling Chase, Oaklands, Smallford Campus and Ellenbrook Country Park and also through links to the Heartwood Forest Project”.

This plan was drawn up 11 years ago and the Ellenbrook Country Park has developed and blossomed since then. The gravel extraction would effectively destroy the Country Park as it is.

**We do not believe that mineral extraction for 30 years on MAS02 is temporary and that any long term benefits are too far in the future.**

**Policy 17: Soils and agricultural land**

No comment

**Policy 18: Historic environment**

Policy 18 states *“Development proposals will be supported where it can be demonstrated that they will protect, conserve and, where appropriate, enhance the historic environment. Development proposals which affect a heritage asset (both designated and non-designated) and/or its setting must be accompanied by a Heritage Statement, which as a minimum should include:*

*a) a description of the significance of any heritage asset affected by the proposal;*

*b) details of any contribution made by its setting;*

*c) the integrity and distinctiveness of the asset; and*

*d) the level of impact on the character and value of the asset.*

This policy is clear that where there is a heritage asset ie a listed building, and it is affected by mineral extraction then serious consideration should be given to the impact on the asset.

There are three listed buildings adjacent to the mineral site MAS02 (Popefield Farm) which will be directly affected by mineral extraction. The impact on the listed buildings is significant and they will have to endure quarrying right up to their boundary for 30 years. It is difficult to see how quarrying next door to these heritage assets will protect, conserve and, where appropriate, enhance the historic environment.

The following are extracts from the Inspectors Inquiry report on a recent application to quarry on Ellenbrook Fields regarding the impact of quarrying next to Popefield Farm. We believe that these comments will apply to any application to quarry on MAS02 due to the proximity of Popefield Farm listed buildings to the site.

*“The likelihood of repeated noise disturbance, albeit intermittently, over such an extended period would result in the appeal scheme having an enduring adverse effect on the living conditions of the occupiers of Popefield Farm”*

*Heritage assets*

*The ES2016 concluded that there would be a minor adverse effect upon views of and from Popefield Farm during the operational phase. But that after restoration, which would include hedge planting to recreate the 1888 historic field pattern with the aim of reinstating the broader landscape setting of Popefield Farm, there would be a minor beneficial effect. However, I consider that this understates the likely impact of the operational phases of the appeal scheme on the setting of the listed building.*

*It was apparent from my site visit that the current open character of the land to the east, north and west of Popefield Farmhouse helps to create a sense of open countryside reminiscent of that which would have contained the historic buildings prior to the construction of the airfield. The current setting of Popefield Farmhouse therefore makes some contribution to the significance of the listed building. The proximity of bunds and activity associated with extraction/infill in Phases A, B, D and F would diminish appreciation of the farmhouse in its local context for a substantial period of time. The resultant harm would outweigh the eventual benefits to the setting of Popefield Farm of the proposed site restoration. I consider that the overall effect of the appeal scheme would result in less than substantial harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset.*

**We do not believe that quarrying on MAS02 will protect, conserve and, where appropriate, enhance the historic environment. Any quarrying on the site will have a significant impact on Popefield Farm for decades.**

**Policy 19: Protection and enhancement of amenity**

Policy 19 states *“Proposals for minerals and waste management development will only be permitted where it can be clearly demonstrated, though an assessment, that consideration has been given to the amenity of the users of neighbouring land and/or property\*. Such an assessment must consider potential impacts relating to:*

*a) the protection from light pollution;*

*b) air quality (including from dust, odours and other sources);*

*c) privacy;*

*d) noise and vibration;*

*e) increases in litter;*

*f) increases in vermin; and*

*g) factors affecting human health and/or safety.*

*Where the assessment identifies the potential for any negative impact relating to the above factors, it must clearly be demonstrated where appropriate mitigation measures have been incorporated to remove the impact, or ameliorate it to acceptable levels. The assessment should also show, where appropriate, how enhancements have been made to amenity.”*

Site MAS02 borders residential properties where residents are likely to be impacted by air quality, particularly the dust, noise from the quarry works and transport, and potentially release of bromate affecting human health and safety. It is disappointing that yet again there is very little mention of the bromate and high risk that will occur if quarrying to the lower mineral horizon takes place.

The Inspectors Inquiry report states that the recent planning application that went to appeal would have an adverse effect on the character and appearance of the area of moderate/substantial significance.

I quote from the Inspectors report

“*It seems to me that the appellant understates the likely impact of the operation on extensive areas over a long period of time within a locality that includes a Country Park.* *The appeal site lies within ‘Area 31 De Havilland Plain’ in the 2005 Welwyn Hatfield Landscape Character Assessment. This area is characterised as an extensive level plain. In this flat landscape structures rising above the existing ground level would be prominent features. Large, high or extensive structures could obstruct or shorten views across the wider landscape. The CBP, other plant, stockpiles and bunds associated with the appeal scheme would be seen as intrusive features in this flat landscape, especially in the context of the surrounding Country Park. This would have an impact on sensitive receptors visiting the Country Park to enjoy the open space and the contrast it provides to nearby urban areas and activities. MLP Policy 12 provides, amongst other things, that regard would be given to the visual impact of proposals on sensitive land uses, including areas of public access.*

*Measures could be imposed by planning condition to minimise any adverse effects of light spill from the operation. However, the proposed road widening and new access junction on the A1057, with its associated visibility splays, would require the removal of much roadside vegetation. This would open up a gap in a feature that contributes to the sense of countryside separating urban development in St Albans and Hatfield.*

*The appeal scheme, even with progressive restoration, would have an adverse effect on the character and appearance of the area for 32 years, which in landscape terms is considered a long-term impact. With appropriate planning conditions for restoration and aftercare the appeal site would eventually provide an enhanced landscape for this part of the former airfield in accordance Appeal Decision APP/M1900/W/21/3278097 https://www.gov.uk/planning-inspectorate 16 with MLP Policies 13 and 14. But it seems to me that this benefit would arise so far into the future that it would not compensate for the cumulative harm over the long operational period of the appeal scheme.*

*For the reasons set out above, I consider that the appeal scheme would have an adverse effect on the character and appearance of the area of moderate/substantial significance.*

The Inspectors report also refers to the noise impact on Popefield Farm.

*“The likelihood of repeated noise disturbance, albeit intermittently, over such an extended period would result in the appeal scheme having an enduring adverse effect on the living conditions of the occupiers of Popefield Farm.”*

There are a number of key points for consideration from the inspectors report relevant to the inclusion of the site MAS02 regardless of the planning application details.

* The impact of quarrying operation on extensive areas over a long period of time within a locality that includes a Country Park is understated – any quarry on this site is going to blight the Country Park and the local area for decades
* Any structures built on the land would be intrusive features in this flat landscape, especially in the context of the surrounding Country Park. This would have an impact on residents visiting the Country Park to enjoy the open space and the contrast it provides to nearby urban areas and activities.
* The proposed access to the MAS02 along St Albans Road West near to Notcutts including the road widening and new access junction would require the removal of much roadside and on-site trees and vegetation. This would open up a gap in a feature that contributes to the sense of countryside separating urban development in St Albans and Hatfield. One only has to look at the appalling entrance to the nearby Smallford Works as an example of how the countryside feel would be destroyed.
* Any benefit from restoration would arise so far into the future that it would not compensate for the cumulative harm over the long operational period of any quarry.
* There would be significant noise impact on Popefield Farm over a long period

**We believe that the Inspectors comments will apply to any application to quarry on Ellenbrook Fields and residents are likely to be impacted by air quality, particularly the dust, noise from the quarry works and transport, and potential release of bromate.**

**Policy 20: Health and wellbeing**

Policy 20 states that “*Proposals for minerals and waste management development will be supported where it can be clearly demonstrated:*

*a) that the potential health impacts have been assessed;*

*b) that mitigation measures have been incorporated where necessary;*

*c) how the proposals could, where appropriate, offer enhanced access to the natural environment; and*

*d) how the development (including restoration where appropriate) contributes to positive health and wellbeing outcomes.*

The plans for MAS02 are so long, three decades plus, that it is hard to see how this site supports the health and wellbeing of local residents and students at University of Hertfordshire.

There is a serious risk to health in the form of silica dust from quarrying on the site. This risk is that sand and gravel dust particles will be blown directly across the university playing fields and housing less than 250 m away.

Ellenbrook Fields is a unique, irreplaceable valuable resource for the community that promotes health and wellbeing for residents. It is part of Hatfield’s green belt with meadow and grazing land, owls, butterflies, crested newts, and wildflowers and is used extensively by dog walkers, cyclists and ramblers.

The Covid 19 Pandemic showed how valuable this piece of land is for local residents. It became a safe haven of open, green space, where locals could get fresh air, go for walks, and not encounter crowds of people. These areas should be fiercely protected by the Council as there is no alternative for local residents or wildlife in the area if quarrying is permitted on this land.

**We do not believe that the quarrying on MAS02 will contribute to positive health and wellbeing for local residents and students.**

**Policy 21: Water management**

Policy 21 states “Development proposals (including restoration and after-use) must take account of any potential impact on water supply, water quantity, water quality and flood risk. Proposals will be supported where it can be demonstrated that:

a) there are no unacceptable adverse impacts to water quality, nature conservation and the amenity value of water resources;

b) including reclamation of the site, they reduce flood risk, taking account of climate change allowances;

c) proposals do not cause adverse impacts on the flow and quality of surface waters and groundwater on the site and elsewhere;

d) development or operations on the site are directed away from areas of high risk of flooding;

e) developments meet the national and local principles/standards for Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) design to manage surface water run-off; and

f) proposals conserve and enhance the water environment.

**Bromate management**

This policy is very clear that any development proposals must take account of the impact on the water supply and yet bromate, a known carcinogen, is barely mentioned. Any quarrying that disturbs the bromate will have a catastrophic effect on the water supply, water quantity and water quality. It is hard to understand why HCC believes that this is a risk worth taking. The Environment Agency management plan to deal with the bromate currently already wastes 9 million litres of water per day. To put any further pressure on the water supply is an extremely risky strategy particularly when the Anglian region is the driest region in England and Wales and exhibits large areas where no further water is available during summer, and the Thames region also suffers from demand pressures, with summer surface water now fully committed and with licensing for further consumption highly constrained. If bromate is disturbed then this could threaten the two existing water pumping stations at Roestock and Tyttenhanger, thus putting enormous pressure on the water supply for this area. This comes at a time when there are already drought management plans in force and some areas close by have hosepipe bans.

The Inspectors report details some of the issues associated with the bromate plume, some of which are mentioned below to highlight the risk and complexity of managing the bromate. Some of these issues resulted in restrictions being imposed that the bromate has to be managed in a different way to that originally proposed and originally accepted by the EA as being appropriate. This is of great concern to residents that it is clear that nobody really understands the full implications of quarrying near to the plume and that to deal with issues as they occur is a risky strategy. Issues discussed included:

* Acceptance that quarrying in the lower mineral horizon should only take place when weather conditions are favourable ie dry, meaning that digging will only occur in a few months of the year. This potentially could result in a lower yield than estimated and /or the quarrying period extended beyond the original timescale of 30 years.
* Current remediation of the plume is only having a limited impact.

*“Current remediation of the plume involves interim scavenge pumping from a borehole at Bishops Rise to protect a number of abstractions operated by Affinity Water (AW) and Thames Water. The EA acknowledges that this ‘pump and treat’ scheme protects downstream sources to a degree, but does not address the full pollution issues as Bishops Rise does not intercept the full extent of the bromate plume. High concentrations of bromate/bromide observed within the plume-wide monitoring network, the large volumes already removed from the chalk aquifer and the rapid increase in concentrations to the east when Bishops Rise abstraction ceases, even for short periods, indicate a significant continuing source of both contaminants upstream of Bishops Rise.”*

The following is an extract from the Environment Agency 2019 report - A ST LEONARD’S COURT DECISION DOCUMENT PART 1 which states:

*“There has been little discussion to date about the overall timescale for remediation. The Agency is concerned that the current level of scavenge pumping is only reducing overall concentrations very slowly in the groundwater (see Report F1 and the appended monitoring database). Whilst actual timescales cannot be predicted with any certainty, the indications are that contaminant reduction will take a long time.”*

Clearly it is going to take a long time to eradicate the bromate plume as there is a continuing source of contaminants from the original pollution site at St Leonards.

The discussions at the Inquiry highlighted the complexity of managing the plume and ensuring that any conditions as imposed by the EA could / would be met as quarrying commenced.

“It was evident at the Inquiry that the dynamic interaction of several hydrogeological factors here results in considerable complexity, which make it problematic to predetermine the likely impact of dewatering the LMH, with the certainty required in this case, given the risk posed by the bromate plume.

Notwithstanding the extant licences, which impose no limit on the overall volume of groundwater abstracted, the expert evidence to the Inquiry points decisively to a compelling need to prohibit pumping from the LMH. It was clear at the close of the Inquiry that it would be necessary and reasonable to impose a planning condition to prevent pumping from the lower mineral aquifer.

*In addition, to reduce the risk of exacerbating bromate pollution to an acceptable level, it would be necessary to impose monitoring trigger levels for bromate concentrations that would necessitate intervention by means of action/response plans. However, I am not convinced that the suggested conditions would give proper effect to the EA’s initial requirement that any activities close to the plume must not interfere with the remediation of the bromate pollution. It seems to me that the monitoring locations for assessing compliance with these trigger levels would need to be the subject of further consideration and approval based on the best available evidence, including that provided by additional boreholes. It would not be appropriate to impose a condition specifying a setback for extraction in the LMH from borehole BH104 because it is not clear that this currently defines the southern limit of the bromate plume, and even if it did so, that it would remain the southern limit in the future.*

The Inspector has highlighted that the bromate plume will take considerable management (not just time) going forward.

**Flooding**

The risk of flooding in the local area has also been cited as a concern for residents and we have still not seen anything to allay our concerns. Residential areas, some of which are in Flood Zone 3, University of Hertfordshire, and St Albans Road West are eight metres lower than the quarry area at MAS02, so flooding at the quarry could spread across a wide area.

Part of the MAS02 Hatfield Aerodrome site is in Flood Zone 2 and it is difficult to understand how an area that is in Flood Risk 2 can be an acceptable option in the plan.

Restoration and after use are also a potential flood risk as the whole structure and geology will have changed. Holes that were dug are now filled with non-porous inert material. Water that was once naturally absorbed will now flow across the surface to form run-offs and potentially flood low lying areas.

**We believe that the risk associated with quarrying so close to bromate should not be ignored or “managed” as when an issue occurs. The bromate pollution is clearly proving extremely difficult to eradicate and any activities that potentially impact the timescale for achieving eradication, ie quarrying on the site, should not be permitted. We believe that due to these complexities this site should be excluded from any quarrying until the Environment Agency have confirmed that the bromate is no longer an issue.**

**Policy 22: Water recycling sites**

No comment

**Policy 23: Transport infrastructure sites**

It is noted that the proposed quarry sites MAS02 and MAS03 are nowhere near to the transport infrastructure sites, which apparently are “*essential for the sustainable transportation of minerals”.* All transport to and from MAS02 and MAS03 will be by road on an already congested road network.

The following extract from the A414 Corridor Strategy Technical Report September 2019 states that the A1057 is already intensively used and there is limited scope to provide additional capacity. And yet here we are adding additional HGV capacity to this road.

*“The A1057 Hatfield Road / St Albans Road West links Hatfield and St Albans. It is an intensively used corridor for shorter and longer distance trips by a variety of modes for different journey purposes including commuting, access to the University of Hertfordshire, shopping and logistics. There is limited scope to enhance the road to provide additional capacity and this may not be desirable from a place and movement perspective which should aim to give greater priority to the local functions of the road and to discourage the use of the road for through trips, including those travelling from western parts of St Albans (or beyond) to the A1(M) or areas along the A414 corridor east of Hatfield.”*

**We believe that as MAS02 is not located anywhere close to a transport infrastructure site that it should not be included in the plan. There are already too many quarry sites in this area.**

**Policy 24: Transport**

We believe that the traffic impact on the local area has not been properly assessed, in particular the cumulative traffic implications of the combination of sites, including existing sites Cemex and Furzefield) and new sites (MAS02 and MAS03). Whilst there is a proposal that Furzefield and Coopers Green Lane (MAS03) must occur consecutively this elongates the time that the local area network is subjected to the movement of large lorries on already congested roads, past residential areas. To conclude that consecutively quarrying on Furzefield and MAS02 mitigates the cumulative impact on the area is an inadequate assessment.

Transport by road requires a new road on the already busy A1057. This road cannot take the extra 174 HGVs and may certainly cause traffic chaos at the new entrance on A1057. In conjunction with MAS03 another 250 HGVs are allocated making an extra 424 HGVs. The primary route for both projected quarries is the A1 motorway and the A414 taking a route past residential properties.

MAS02 site (Hatfield Aerodrome) would have a new entrance near Notcutts on St Albans Rd West. The Cemex HGVs would have to pass this entrance, into which MAS02 HGVs would take a right turn across oncoming traffic. This is of real concern to local residents, given daily congestion in the area and a history of road traffic accidents (including fatal incidents) along this stretch of road.

**We believe that the local transport infrastructure is already congested and is unable to take the additional lorry movements that would be generated by MAS02 and MAS03.**

**Policy 25: Public rights of way**

It is difficult to see how public rights of way will be protected and not adversely affected by quarrying on Hatfield Aerodrome. Recent planning applications (initially approved by HCC) have failed to ensure that alternative provisions are made and that the promise to keep the Country Park accessible during the proposed 30 years of operation is upheld. This lack of protection for users of the Country Park was made clear in the Inspectors report.

The proposal for MAS02 will impact on the Right of Way between St Albans and Hatfield effectively cutting off the two towns. Permissive pathways currently exist but these will no longer exist during quarrying activity. The only link left will be by car along the A1057.

Ellenbrook Fields is a unique, irreplaceable valuable resource for the community that promotes health and wellbeing for residents. It is part of Hatfield’s green belt with meadow and grazing land, owls, butterflies, crested newts, and wildflowers and is used extensively by dog walkers, cyclists and ramblers.

The Covid 19 Pandemic showed how valuable this piece of land is for local residents. It became a safe haven of open, green space, where locals could get fresh air, go for walks, and not encounter crowds of people. These areas should be fiercely protected by the Council as there is no alternative for local residents or wildlife in the area if quarrying is permitted on this land. This area is effectively cut off from surrounding areas by the A1M and A414. The MAS02 site also has access restrictions through it due to the existing Cemex conveyor system, and it is not possible to safely walk around the north of the site due to fast moving traffic along the narrow Coopers Green Lane.

The Inspectors Inquiry report commented that any gains after 30-40 years should not count in the planning balance. Local residents need this open space now, not in 30+ years’ time.

The Minerals Plan identifies Welwyn Hatfield as having a deficit of green open space, this deficit should outweigh the need for minerals in this area of the County.

**We believe that access to a unique, valuable open space and public rights of way will be significantly adversely affected during quarrying on MAS02.**

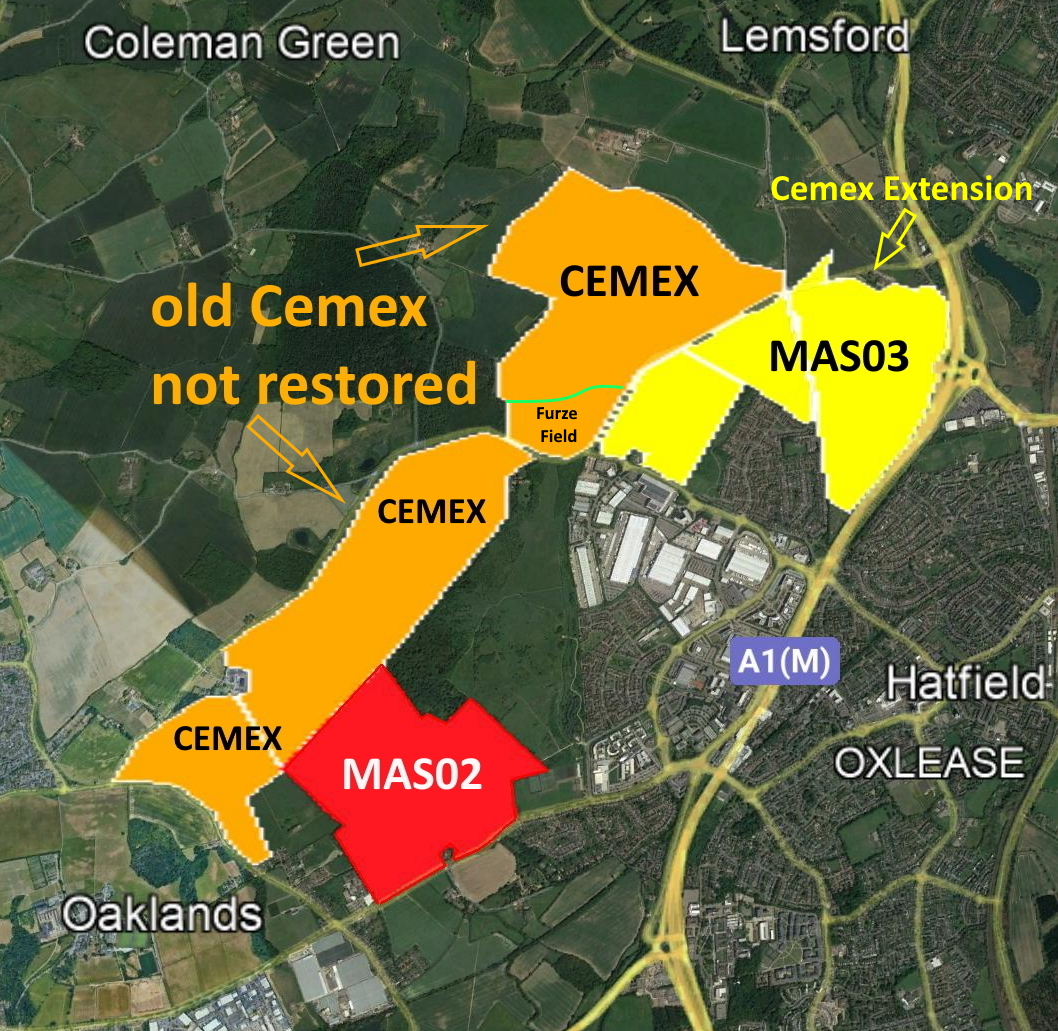
**Policy 26: Cumulative impacts**

We believe that the cumulative effect of the two selected areas MAS02 and MAS03 (in Hatfield) and existing quarry workings has not been properly assessed and breaches national policy and Policy 26 of the plan.

MAS02 and MAS03, alongside the Furzefield Site are all in the same swathe of Green Belt land, adjacent to current and recently active workings on the Cemex site in Smallford. The Plan fails to include any map to reflect the extent of these workings showing how past, existing and proposed quarries are congregated in one small area of Hertfordshire.

80% of all quarries and unquarried land in Hertfordshire are in our area. Cemex has been a quarry site for 60 years. Its extension MAS03 is likely to continue for another 14 years. The cumulative impact of these quarries will affect Hatfield and St Albans in terms of noise, extra traffic, loss of green belt, rights of way and cause a negative effect on the surrounding area.

The sites are shown on the map below and clearly show that the existing and proposed sites adjoin each other to form one vast area of workings, effectively one quarry, running across the Green Belt from St Albans towards Welwyn Garden City. In addition to this, there are other existing and historic quarry sites relatively close by at Tyttenhanger and Smallford Pits.



The mineral plan does not allow the reader to identify clearly the affected areas, and there is no consideration of the resulting cumulative effects on the local communities, natural environment and sustainability.

The land between St Albans and Hatfield becomes further restricted than it already is, effectively a no-go area, with complete loss of green belt for many decades to come.

The Mineral Plan includes the following statement:

“*Minerals and waste management development can have significant impacts upon the environment and on local communities. This can be magnified by sites being located in close proximity to each other, by simultaneous or successive development in close proximity, by individual sites which cause numerous significant effects, or for example by the extended working of mineral sites resulting in many years of activity in one location.*

*The multiple impacts that may arise from minerals and waste developments can accumulate to present overall negative effects on the surrounding areas.*

*National policy is clear that plans should take account of the cumulative effects of minerals and waste management development and should ensure that permitted operations do not have unacceptable adverse impacts on, amongst other things, the following considerations: …..”*

The proposals in the Mineral Plan clearly include *“simultaneous and/or successive extraction in close proximity”.* There have been workings in the area for decades, and the new sites are proposed for many decades more.

It is difficult to see how MAS02 and MAS03 DO NOT breach Policy 26 which concludes that development proposals will not be permitted where it can be demonstrated that the cumulative impact would result in unacceptable adverse effects on the environment of an area, or on the amenity or health of a local community.

MAS02 will significantly affect the:

* Natural Environment:

• Appearance, quality and character of the green belt landscape will be destroyed;

• Flood risk and flood alleviation;

• Quality of the water courses, groundwater and surface water; this site sits over an area contaminated with bromate, which despite the Environment Agency having a plan in place to manage the bromate it has failed to reduce the bromate levels over the last 10 years.

* Built Environment:

• HGV movements – this area has had to endure HGVs travelling to and from the existing quarries for decades. To increase this further results in an adverse impact for residents for decades.

* Historic Environment:

• Heritage assets, MAS02 has three listed buildings next to at Popefield Farm. Quarrying on this site will have a significant impact on this heritage asset as identified in the Inspectors Report.

* Human Health and General Amenity:

• Unavoidable noise, dust, odour and particle emissions – MAS02 will clearly generate noise, dust and particle emissions. It should be noted that quarrying is likely to take place very close to residential properties along St Albans Road West, Jove Gardens and Radio Place, and also right next to the University of Hertfordshire playing fields.

• Public Rights of Way – rights of way will be lost across Ellenbrook Fields once quarrying takes place. This was identified as an issue in the Inspectors Report on a recent application to quarry.

* Transport Networks:

• Primary Route Networks and Local Roads – the proposed entrance to the quarry on MAS02 will route additional traffic onto the already congested Smallford roundabout

• Safety and congestion – there are concerns about the entrance to MAS02 quarry area

Hatfield has been subjected to quarrying for decades. It is not acceptable to continue this for decades longer.

**We believe that there is a significant cumulative effect on the area surrounding existing and proposed quarry sites in St Albans / Hatfield and that the site selection for MAS02 and MAS03 combined does not satisfy Policy 26.**

**Policy 27: Aerodrome safeguarding areas**

No comments

**Conclusion**

We believe that MAS02 is a liability due to its proximity to local residential dwellings and educational facilities, cumulative impact on the local area, flood risk, noise disturbance, silica dust, greenhouse gas emissions and threat to water supplies caused by disturbance to the bromate plume.

We believe that the selection of MAS02 in the Plan is not supported by robust evidence and has serious significant risks. The combination and cumulative effect of existing and proposed sites in the stretch of Green belt separating St Albans from Welwyn Hatfield is not sustainable and would have a significant impact on the natural environment and the local communities.

MAS02 is not viable with too many negative issues existing and there is a risk that it may not support the mineral land bank for Hertfordshire in the future. Therefore, Hertfordshire County Council should remove it from their mineral plan.

Submitted on behalf of Ellenbrook Area Residents Association

October 2022