**Hertfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan – Draft Plan Consultation 2022**

Hertfordshire County Council has produced a minerals plan detailing their plans for how to manage a supply of sand and gravel until 2040.

This plan proposes two sites in Hatfield for mineral extraction.

* MAS02 Ellenbrook Fields (referred to in the plan as Hatfield Aerodrome)
* MAS03 Land off Coopers Green Lane (planning permission already granted)

We 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.

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

The main objections are:

The Plan fails to adequately reflect that two of the Mineral Allocation Sites (MAS) - MAS02 (Hatfield Aerodrome), and MAS03 (Land adjoining Coopers Green Lane), 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. 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.  (Policy 26: Cumulative impacts)

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 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. (Policy 2: Meeting sand and gravel needs)

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. (Policy 20: Health & Wellbeing)

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. (Policy 21: Water management)

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. (Policy 14: Green Belt)