

Aldborough Hatch Defence Association

Briefing – Sand and Gravel Extraction on Fairlop Plain

The following notes are based on my personal recollection, but I have also drawn on historical information and on issues of OPEN SPACE, the occasional newsletter of the Aldborough Hatch Defence Association.

I sent my first draft to John Coombes, Vanessa Cole and Chris Gannaway for comment and correction. All three have sent helpful comments. Rather than attempt to incorporate these into the text, I have set their comments out at the end.

Ron Jeffries

Background

Fairlop Plain came into existence in 1851 when 100,000 trees were cut down by the Crown from Hainault Forest. Over the next ten years or so new straight roads were laid out (Forest Road, Hainault Road), farms formed and farmhouses built, together with St. Peter's Church. Initially Crown Land, this was sold to the London County Council and later to Ilford and then Redbridge Council. Redbridge continue to own most of the land, leasing it out to tenants, although the Council has sold off a number of farmhouses (mostly to sitting tenants), with some land and other buildings.

The whole of Fairlop Waters is within the parish of St. Peter's Aldborough Hatch, the northern boundary of the parish running along Forest Road, with the Central Line on the west and Hainault Road on the east.

Used as an airfield in the First and Second World Wars, Fairlop Plain was earmarked in the 1930s and 1940s to be the new London Airport, but deemed unsuitable for expansion (probably due to the rising ground to the north and extensive housing in the south) – so Heathrow was born (great relief!)

Early sand and gravel extraction

Some sand and gravel extraction had been carried out in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries (for example, to build the embankment for the railway line running from Newbury Park to Barkingside and Fairlop). However, major extraction commenced in the 1950s – P T Read were the first contractors, followed by Steetley's and then Brett Lafarge (the latter have the contract at present).

The first area of extraction was to the north where the golf course is today. Household refuse was the infill of choice. At first this was not covered at the end of workings daily, so that when the wind blew from the north the trees and bushes in Aldborough Hatch were attractively covered in paper and plastic! At first complaints went unheeded – but finally the contractors were instructed to infill with soil every evening.

Later extractions had inert infill, often from demolition sites whilst today much of the current infill for Aldborough Hall Farm workings comes from the Crossrail excavations.

First planning application for Aldborough Hatch Farm

At first the sand and gravel extraction created little interest in Aldborough Hatch (until the wind blew, that is!) as most of this was taking place in the north. But in the early 1960s a planning application was submitted to extract on Aldborough Hatch Farm over the area stretching north from St. Peter's up to the present southern boundary of Fairlop Waters. I do not recall the extent of the buffer zone in the original planning application, but it was very close to the hedge that runs along Bridleway 93 on the north side of the churchyard, the Vicarage garden and St. Peter's Close.

The Revd Bill Barnes, Vicar of St. Peter's from 1966, formed the Aldborough Hatch Defence Association (AHDA) shortly after his induction to monitor and protect the environment of Aldborough Hatch and specifically to ensure that the proposed sand and gravel extractions did not affect the buildings of St. Peter's – the church being Grade II Listed (1862) and the church halls Locally Listed (1867).

The Revd Barnes was the first Chairman of the AHDA, Joan Sullivan was Vice-Chairman and Ron King Treasurer – Joan Sullivan, John Coombes, John DeBere and one or two others are surviving founder members (although there could be others). Early members included Vivien Bendall and Linda Perham, MPs for Ilford North, and myself. Later chairmen included Frank Sinclair, Ron King, Kip Pedge and Chris Gannaway. I had two bouts as chairman – the last occasion for the past 15 years or so.

The Revd Barnes led the campaign to ensure that there was a buffer zone of 300 yards from St. Peter's Church. The area eventually excavated started 300 yards from the church, opposite the Dick Turpin and Aldborough Hall Farm – the fence stands there today at the southern boundary of the workings. When the land was eventually returned to Aldborough Hatch Farm, the field remained fenced off and has been used for hay production since that time.

The Revd Barnes spoke forcefully at the Planning Committee in the Ilford Council Chamber. When Councillors started to debate the issue and appeared to be prepared to agree to the excavations running almost up to Bridleway 93 and the northern hedge of the churchyard, the Vicarage and St. Peter's Close, there was pandemonium in the public gallery. I sat between the Revd Barnes and Vivien Bendall MP – and we three led the booing! It was great fun, I recall – until the Mayor Councillor (later Alderman) Dalton had all three of us ejected physically! He then closed the meeting for a time – and allowed us back but warned that should we continue with this very naughty behaviour, the consequences would be more than dire – in fact, he almost threatened to have the three of us arrested and thrown into the bottom on the excavations if not lynched on the spot!

One amusing aspects this (and I apologise if I digress a little here!) occurred when the Council staged an exhibition in the 1960s at Little Heath on their present and future plans for excavation. The area where the golf course stands today was being restored after excavation. At the exhibition Councillor Dalton proclaimed that one day we would see cows grazing on the land where the golf course would be built. He even showed mock-up photographs of jersey cows grazing and chewing the cud

amidst tall trees bursting with life. Farmer and later Churchwarden Dick Lewis led the guffawing and laughter!

Later when the infill there was completed, trees were planted. Many died and were replaced – over and over and over again. The cost must have been horrendous! The infill had not only consisted of household rubbish, but complete vehicles and household appliances were buried – with the result that methane gas was produced. This continued for many years – and may well continue to happen today. Eventually trees and shrubs were planted on the golf course, but many died and had to be replaced. I believe top soil was imported finally to allow the trees and shrubs to thrive to a limited extent. Elsewhere trees grow in the Country Park area when inert infill was used.

My apologies for the digression!

After he had won the battle for a 300 yard buffer from St. Peter's, the Revd Barnes handed over the chair to others – having done a great job in setting things up and also assisting the then Scout Leader to organise a survey of traffic on the A12 after several serious accidents, which was used to finally convince the Ministry of Transport to install traffic lights at the junction of Aldborough Road with the A12.

After this the Vicars of St. Peter's have taken little active part in the AHDA, whilst retaining an interest – and that is no criticism whatsoever for the excavations moved away from St. Peter's and they had other things to do.

It is perhaps worth noting here that although they are not the subject of this briefing paper, the AHDA has scored a number of notable successes over the years. The footpath, bounded by bollards on the west side of Aldborough Road North between St. Peter's and the Dick Turpin, and onwards to the Aldborough Hall Equestrian Centre, is there following a serious (but, fortunately, not fatal) accident to a pedestrian as the result of pressure from the AHDA with the support of local councillors. The fact that Fairlop Plain in general and Fairlop Waters in particular remains Green Belt owes much to the fight by the AHDA, Barkingside 21, MPs and Councillors to prevent the London City All-weather Racecourse being built in the first decade of the 21st Century.

Stand-off buffer zones

When planning applications were submitted for later excavations – at Hainault Farm and Aldborough Hall Farm – the AHDA pressed for stand-off buffer zones of 300 yards – but we were successful in gaining 150 metres from houses in Billet Road and Applegarth Drive/Bawdsey Avenue.

A public exhibition was staged by the London Borough of Redbridge (LBR) on 25th and 26th February 2000 at St. Peter's Church Halls regarding proposed sand and gravel extraction at Aldborough Hall Farm. The AHDA made a robust response to this in writing.

When the planning application was filed for Aldborough Hall Farm, the late Peter Rudge, then tenant farmer at Aldborough Hall Farm, invited Councillors to walk across his land to the rear of the Dick Turpin and Applegarth Drive to view the

situation for themselves. The planning application indicated a buffer of 75 yards from the rear of houses – not even the rear of the gardens.

It was a wet and cold Saturday morning in the depths of winter in 2000 when the land was almost waterlogged. Those who arrived first had a choice of wellington boots – late arrivals were up to their knees in mud and one or two lost their shoes temporarily. We had alerted residents, many of whom stood in their gardens and told the Councillors in no uncertain fashion what they thought of the proposals! We later won a 150 metre stand-off buffer with several Councillors backing us – but we had to fight with the gloves off first!

A planning application was submitted to Redbridge Council in September 2000. This indicated a stand-off buffer zone of 75 metres from the rear of homes in Applegarth Drive and Bawdsey Avenue.

Open Meeting attended by over 180 residents

An Open Meeting was held by the AHDA on 27th October 2000 in St. Peter's Church Halls to allow residents to air their views and to hear the observations of Council Officers and Councillors on plans for Aldborough Hall Farm. Some 180 residents attended.

Accepting that Redbridge Council has a duty to maximise the revenue from gravel deposits on Fairlop Plain for the benefit of Council Tax payers, the AHDA called on Councillors to reject the planning application. A 75 metre stand-off from the backs of houses in Applegarth Drive and Bawdsey Avenue meant that the bunds – mounds of top spoil – will be built within 25 metres of the end of residents' gardens, bringing dust and noise far too close to family gardens and homes.

Councillor Morris Hickey, Deputy Leader of the Conservative Group, agreed to look again at the plans. Whilst gravel extraction is an important source of income to the Council, Councillor Hickey said: *"There may be a stage where working so close to homes is a price too high to pay."*

"The gravel extraction is far too close to houses," declared Councillor Richard Hoskins, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group. It was not unreasonable for residents to call for the area near homes to be removed from the planning application. Said Councillor Hoskins: *"It is a price the Borough can afford to pay."*

Leader of the Council and of the Labour Group, Councillor Mohammed Javed, was concerned at the 75 metre stand-off. Accepting that residents had understood this was from the end of their gardens and not from the backs of their houses, he gave a commitment to take their views back to the Council.

Vivian Bendall, Prospective Conservative Parliamentary Candidate for Ilford North, spoke of the battle residents had fought with the Council some years ago for stand-offs longer than 75 metres. *"A 75 metre stand-off is totally unacceptable,"* said Vivian Bendall. *"Councillors should listen seriously to what is being said tonight."*

The Association wrote to the Chief Planning Officer immediately following the Open Meeting on 30th October setting out in detail the views expressed at that meeting.

The main points covered were:

* The Association welcomed the consultation exhibition in February 2000 and noted that some modifications have been made in the Planning Application.

*We referred to precedents for longer stand-offs for sand and gravel extraction on Fairlop Plain – 300 metres at Aldborough Hatch Farm, opposite the Dick Turpin, and 150 metres at Hainault Farm, in Billet Road.

* The initial Scoping Report, published at the end of last year, indicated a stand-off of 100 metres. Following the Environmental Impact Assessment, this was reduced to 75 metres.

*We noted that, as a result of residents' comments at the consultation exhibition, the areas marked 1A and 1B on the Initial Works Drawing dated June 2000 (Ref 277-08) will be excavated first and restored over a period of 18 months, when the bunds will be moved back. However, the stand-off remains at 75 metres from the rear of houses in Applegarth Drive and Bawdsey Avenue.

*The stand-off of 75 metres needs to be reconsidered. Some gardens are 25 metres in length. The proposed bunds, of some 25 metres in width, would commence within 25 metres of the ends of residents' gardens. Many residents in Applegarth Drive and Bawdsey Avenue are elderly. Some residents suffer from asthma and other conditions with allergies to dust and noise. Others have young children. All use their gardens as a valued amenity. A bund within 25 metres of the ends of their gardens and gravel workings 25 metres beyond is totally unacceptable.

*The Association proposed that Areas 1A and 1B are deleted from the Planning Application. Whilst it accepted that gravel extraction is an important source of income to the Council, there comes a stage where working so close to homes is a price too high to pay. The gravel extraction is far too close to houses and the Association considers that it is not unreasonable for residents to call for the area in such near proximity to homes to be removed from the planning application.

Planning application at Council

A motion to delete Area 1A and part of Area 1B (areas near housing) from the planning application for Aldborough Hall Farm was debated by the Full Redbridge Council at the Town Hall on Thursday 18th January 2001. An amendment was carried deferring discussion to the Regulatory Committee when the full planning application is to be tabled.

In a press statement after the Council Meeting, the AHDA “welcomed the debate which gave all Councillors the opportunity to sense the great concern felt by residents whose homes will be within 75 metres of the proposed extraction. In addition, it highlighted the fact that Redbridge is both landlord of Aldborough Hall Farm and planning authority, and the need for separate consideration to be given to each role. Article Six of the ‘Human Rights Act 1998’ is an issue here.”

At the end of some 18 months of representation and negotiation, the Regulatory Committee of the London Borough of Redbridge agreed in July 2001 that the stand-off between the sand and gravel extraction at Aldborough Hall Farm and the rear of homes in Applegarth Drive and Bawdsey Avenue would be increased from the 75 metres originally planned to 150 metres.

The Revised Planning Application came before the Committee on 24th May 2001 when the Chairman of the AHDA reminded Councillors that “*of all the gravel*

extractions on Fairlop Plain over recent years, none have been as close to dense population as this application.

“The revised plans increase the depth of the buffer from 75 to 100 metres from the rear of houses in Applegarth Drive and Bawdsey Avenue. The effect on residents would be totally unacceptable.”

The Chairman stated that *“the Association recognises that the Council has a duty to maximise the valuable assets of gravel for the financial benefit of all residents. We estimate that moving the buffer back 300 metres would mean that the Borough would lose just over £500,000. In a Borough of some 230,000 residents, that works out at about £2 per head – spread over the five years that the extraction will take. This is a price the Borough can afford to pay. Not my words – but the word of leading Councillors at the Association’s Open Meeting last October.”*

Support for a stand-off of more than 100 metres came from former MP Vivian Bendall and Linda Perham MP, who both spoke at the meeting in the Council Chamber. Ward Councillor Vanessa Cole called anything less than 150 metres *“unjustified and inequitable – I can’t support it.”* Ward Councillor John Coombes wanted to know the implications of moving the stand-off back.

The upshot was that the Committee deferred a decision pending a further report from Council Officers.

This came before the Committee on 12th July 2001 when the stand-off was increased to 150 metres from the rear of residential properties in Applegarth Drive and Bawdsey Avenue.

After speaking for the Association at the meeting, where Councillors backed the revised planning application unanimously, the Association’s Chairman commented: *“This is good news for those whose homes overlook Aldborough Hall Farm. The original stand-off with screening bunds within 25 metres of the rear of gardens was too high a price to pay.*

“We know there will be further extraction near homes in Aldborough Hatch in the future and 150 metres from houses is now an established precedent for which the Association will continue to fight. We are confident that Councillors will support us in this in the years to come.

“Whilst we have had to accept that the screening bunds will not now be moved back until the end of the workings, we were encouraged to hear Councillors and Council Officers state that the timescale for work on Aldborough Hall Farm will now be reduced from the original five years to three and a half years. We will monitor this and all aspects of the extraction to ensure that work is completed on time and as soon as possible, enabling residents once again to enjoy the view of the countryside from their homes.”

Excavation at Aldborough Hall Farm went ahead. The sand and gravel excavated to the rear of the Dick Turpin was found to be polluted and had to be returned.

In 2007 a planning application to vary the restoration conditions following gravel extraction at Aldborough Hall Farm to restore the land predominantly to nature

conservation use was approved. Excavation came to an end in 2011 – taking much longer than originally envisaged, partly due to downturn in demand. Infill continues today.

Sadly, work that as first said to take five years, then three-and-a-half years is now in its 12th year. Further, many Ilford residents regret the passing of the pick-your-own facility that had been enjoyed for so many years.

Second area of Aldborough Hatch Farm for gravel extraction

In 2006 we were advised that Lafarge would be putting in a planning application to excavate on Aldborough Hatch Farm over the area bordering Aldborough Road North, St. Peter's Church, St. Peter's Close and Oaks Lane. The area would stretch north to the fenced off land opposite Aldborough Hall Farm and the Dick Turpin, and what was then the Council's nursery and Adolescent Resource Centre. The western boundary would end well before the Central Line – because (as stated earlier) gravel had been extracted from here in the late 1890s to make up the railway embankment – hence the dip in the fields there.

Since 2006 we have been told year by year that a planning application was imminent – but nothing happened. In 2009 we were informed that the exhibition which Lafarge planned to hold that year for residents had to be delayed until early 2010 due to the need for certain 'technical issues' to be resolved.

Exhibition in 2011

In 2011 Lafarge approached the AHDA with the proposal that they might hold an exhibition in the church halls in the early part of the year. Later that moved to the beginning of July. The first weekend in July was agreed for a Friday evening and Saturday morning in the Choir Vestry – for which a scale plan was requested. This was cancelled by Lafarge a couple of weeks prior to the event.

Finally, the exhibition took place in late July 2011 in a marquee on Aldborough Hatch Farm, just inside the gate from Aldborough Road North adjacent to the church. Interestingly, Lafarge decided against using the church halls, but asked for a key so that they could use the toilets! We agreed!

We learned that a roadway would need to be constructed from Bridleway 93 round the north of the Equestrian Centre to meet up with the conveyor belt in Painters Road to take the extracted materials to the plant in Hainault Road and that the only road traffic would be inert infill.

In the November 2011 issue of the AHDA newsletter OPEN SPACE we carried a banner headline: "*Gravel extraction planning application imminent*".

The text read: "*Following the exhibition staged by Brett Lafarge in July last, we are advised that a planning application for extraction of sand and gravel from Area E – bounded by Aldborough Road North, St. Peter's Close and Oaks Lane – is to be submitted to Redbridge Council in the very near future.*"

In Open Space dated June 2011 we said that the Exhibition would be on 1st/2nd July – this was postponed (to later in July) by Brett Lafarge, who hand-delivered notices in Aldborough Hatch at their expense to this effect.

Residents made a number of suggestions to Brett Lafarge at the Exhibition – for example that a footpath from Aldborough Road North to Painter’s Road across Aldborough Hall Farm when restoration is complete should not be immediately adjacent to the rear gardens in Applegarth Drive/Bawdsey Avenue, but 100 yards or so distant. Also that during excavation the Bridleway running from Aldborough Hatch Farm to Fairlop Waters and Barkingside Station is not enclosed with high fencing as people who walk, cycle or ride using the Bridleway prefer this to be open for safety reasons. We emphasised that a buffer stand-off of at least 150 metres would be fought for, based on the precedent set on Aldborough Hall Farm with homes in Applegarth and Bawdsey.

STOP PRESS: Our informant tells us that the Planning Application may be submitted this month – November 2011 – so watch out for further news!”

Some 150 residents attended the exhibition – which was a great shock to Lafarge who told me that they would expect a dozen or so residents to attend such an exhibition elsewhere in the country. Indeed one exhibition in a rural area attracted not one single visitor over two days!

I believe that the volume of interest (much of it well-informed, to the surprise of Lafarge) made Lafarge decide to do some rethinking, especially when at least two of the experts in attendance expressed serious doubts about some aspects of the plan.

They were independent consultants (mostly visiting the site for the first time) from outside companies employed on contract by Lafarge, who were prepared to speak about their concerns but would not put them in writing, nor would they reveal the companies they represented when asked to do so.

One consultant walked round the churchyard and told me that many of the grave stones that had toppled over had done so as the direct result of changes in the water table in the area due to the sand and gravel excavations, whilst others had fallen due to natural settlement found in graves.

A few months after the exhibition, Lafarge offered to give residents a tour of the current workings. A number took advantage of this.

St. Peter’s Church

It was pointed out to Lafarge at the exhibition that St. Peter’s was built without a damp course as we know it today. Since that time research has revealed that the Parochial Church Council Minutes for 9th December 1969 include the following statement: “A report from Protim Knapen Gallway to Messrs Stoneley & Co in regard to the rising dampness in the church, together with estimate, was received . . . the Vicar was asked to make application for a faculty.”

The report estimated the cost of the work at £69 to install a Knapen atmosphere siphon damp proof course externally to eradicate rising dampness in the walls – with a 20 year guarantee.

I have recently been advised that it is thought that this work was carried out only to the north wall of the church nave and chancel – but not to the other three walls. The 20 year guarantee expired in 1989 and there is no indication how effective the damp course has been – or continues to be.

The AHDA contacted the Revd Clare Nicholson in 2011 at the time of the exhibition, suggesting that the Diocese of Chelmsford be contacted to ascertain their position in advance of any planning application for extraction near the church. I believe this contact was made, but in spite of requests I was not advised of the outcome.

Planning application in 2013?

When preparing to publish the November 2012 issue of OPEN SPACE, we asked Lafarge for the latest position regarding extraction at Aldborough Hatch Farm

They said that they are *“aiming to submit an application for Aldborough Hatch Farm by Spring 2013”* and that we should be *“assured that a part of this period has been set aside for a further round of public consultation on the proposals following the exhibition held in the summer last year”*.

The AHDA has asked Lafarge to keep us informed when a planning application is to be submitted to Redbridge Council so that we may alert residents. If and when this happens we will call a meeting of the Committee and, in all probability, a public meeting to gauge the views of residents.

Personally, I am not holding my breath. It was in 2006 – six years ago – that the first indication was given by Lafarge that they would be submitting a planning application for this area.

I have been told – off the record – that were this in any other part of the country Lafarge would not bother as the amount of sand and gravel does not make it economically viable – especially as they would have to build a roadway from Bridleway 93 around the north of the Equestrian Centre to the conveyor belt in Painters Road to carry the excavations over Hainault Road to the processing plant opposite Hainault Farm.

If and when an application is ready for submission by Lafarge to Redbridge Council, we have been promised by Lafarge (*see above*) that *“part of this period has been set aside for a further round of public consultation”*.

We do not know what form such consultation would take. If during this consultation we learn that anything less than 150 metres of stand-off buffer zone is planned, we would need to take urgent and positive action. Such action would be based on the precedent set on Hainault Farm (with homes in Billet Road) and Aldborough Hall Farm (with homes in Applegarth Drive and Bawdsey Avenue). There can be no compromise on this whatsoever. It may be necessary to seek legal advice to ascertain what steps should be taken to ensure that the precedent of 150 metres is adhered to. Such advice would be costly. The AHDA has a limited fighting fund of less than £1,000. A public appeal may be required.

We would also need to examine any future application closely to ensure that the

minimum of interruption will be caused to residents whose homes are nearby, to local schools and businesses operating in close proximity, and to those using the facilities of St. Peter's church and community halls.

We need written reassurance before work commences that any changes in the water table or other work as the result of sand and gravel extraction that affects homes and buildings in the area will mean that Lafarge would compensate the owners appropriately.

At some stage – before, during or after any consultation by Lafarge – the AHDA will call a meeting of the Committee and, in all probability, a public meeting to gauge the views of residents and to co-ordinate any responses.

I have prepared this briefing paper largely for the benefit of the Revd Kate Lovesey, Priest-in-Charge, St. Peter's Church, who came to the parish in June 2012 and now wishes to be updated on the position regarding the past history and any future sand and gravel extraction which may impinge on St. Peter's.

It should be noted that Lafarge have supported St. Peter's over the years by providing sand when we have requested this for the Flower Festival displays and financially with the building of the Millennium Memorial Wall in the churchyard and the disabled toilet in the church halls. They have also supported other community projects, including the construction of the roundabout at the junction of Hainault Road and Forest Road.

The briefing paper also serves as a reminder to members of the AHDA of what may be ahead should the decision be made to proceed with a planning application for Aldborough Hatch Farm. I will, therefore, be sharing this with members.

Ron Jeffries
Chairman
Aldborough Hatch Defence Association
January 2013

Additional information

Councillor Mrs Vanessa Cole writes:

It would be worth including in the detail about the refuse infill that the contractor and Council installed methane boreholes so that the gas can filter off.

I am given to understand that there are approximately 60 such pipes which allow the methane to be expelled into the air; this causes no damage to the air quality but allows the potentially dangerous build-up of gases to be freed in a controlled way.

And there is a tale about those and pardon me for digressing. When the Planning Application was submitted for the London City Racecourse, Councillors were taken on a site visit prior to the application being heard. During the walkabout we spotted the methane boreholes and Councillor Harry Moth asked what would happen if a naked match was put over one? The reply from the Senior Planning Officer was: "Councillor, if you intend to do that could you please give us five minutes head start to run in the opposite direction!"

I have no idea how long the methane boreholes have to stay. I am given to understand that the level of methane has gone down over the years, but I suspect it is subject to variation as the refuse and whatever else is under there shifts and moves!

John Coombes (former Councillor and now Vice-Chairman, AHDA)

I came to live here in 1968, but I first saw this area in 1963 when P T Read were extracting sand and gravel from the area where the golf course stands today. The reason why trees died and leachate polluted Valentines Park lakes was due to seepage into the Cranbrook which runs to Valentines. Due to alleged corruption and lack of environmental laws within the then London Authority who were responsible and allegedly certain members of the Local authority who turned a blind eye, dangerous chemicals including acid, phenol, and oil in drums were dumped as landfill. Those who should have known better were never, of course, prosecuted but the results were far reaching as the leachate also seeped into the land east of the Aldborough Hall Equestrian Centre causing a total loss of gravel and costing many thousands of pounds to put in new Bentonite walls. At one time it was feared that the seepage could get into the land on Aldborough Hall Farm.

I was an original member of the AHDA and was at the inaugural meeting. I have been involved in the planning process since 1994. Councillor Peter Goody and I were well-known for being the ones to give solid planning reasons to stop or change applications, in particular the racecourse. Had we not been of the same mind at the time the officers and the chairman would have watered my reasons down and it is likely that the appeal would have gone the other way and we would now have a racecourse. As far as the present proposals are concerned, the best and deepest gravel is close to the church – geology and the Ice Age can be blamed for that plus meandering rivers.

Chris Gannaway (former Chairman, AHDA)

Commenting on the paragraph on page 3 commencing “Later when the infill there was completed”, Chris writes: *I believe this to infer that the methane was generated by vehicles and household appliances. They are largely inert, but may contain some chemical pollutants that add to the leachate produced by the water and methane production. Methane is only produced from organic material decomposing in the absence of oxygen (anaerobic conditions). To my knowledge all of Fairlop Waters Country Park was in-filled with domestic waste (hence the need for the Bentonite seal that extended along the fields bounding Painters Road). Any inert infill was by the way.*