

LETTERS AND COMMENT

■ GRAVEL EXTRACTION Planning fiasco in 'fairyland'

**Ron Jeffries JP,
chairman, Aldborough
Hatch Defence
Association, Spearpoint
Gardens, Aldborough
Road North, Aldborough
Hatch, writes:**

On December 3, 2014, Brett Lafarge, the sand and gravel extractors on Fairlop Plain, submitted a planning application to extend the restoration period at Aldborough Hall Farm by two years from December 31 to 2016, making some 14 years in total for workings which we were told originally would take six years.

It took Redbridge planning 14 days until December 17 to validate the application (whatever that means! Perhaps Planners were busy granting retrospective planning applications for illegal workings carried out contrary to other granted planning applications!).

Four working days later on December 22, Redbridge planning posted letters to interested folk, telling us we had 21 days until January 12 to comment. This was, of course, at Christmas when most of us are up to our ears in preparing for and celebrating the festive season. Perhaps they hoped the letter would be lost amongst the Christmas cards or buried midst the

Christmas pudding.

But an email told me that we could have until February 25 when the councillors on the regulatory committee will be forced by government legislation and encouraged by council officers to rubber stamp the application. That is some eight weeks after the current planning application expired so presumably any workings during that period are being carried out without planning permission – not that this causes concern! What a farce!

I spent 23 years as a magistrate at Redbridge Magistrates' Court, five as elected bench chairman. This scenario is a bit like a motorist writing to the court on December 3 to advise that on December 31 he would drink a bottle of whiskey and drive through Ilford Town Centre blind drunk and many times over the permitted alcohol limit. The magistrates would call him to court on December 17, thank him for letting them know in advance and ask him – politely, of course – to return to court on January 12 or February 25 (which ever was most convenient to him), when they would tell him what a good fellow he was for coming back, sentencing him to drink a bottle of whiskey every time he intended driving.

Cloud cuckoo land down among the fairies? Readers can make up their own minds!