



■ The bridleway on land in Aldborough Hatch.

Picture: RON JEFFRIES

Gravel extraction will put bridleway walkers at risk

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

Your readers will be aware that for the past eight years residents in Aldborough Hatch have been fighting to stop sand and gravel extraction on land adjoining St Peter's Church and Oaks Lane on Aldborough Hatch Farm.

Since Brett Tarmac's planning application last May, some 150 residents have sent their objections and a number of statutory bodies have objected or

required additional conditions to be inserted.

Initially, the Met Police objected to the diversion of Bridleway 94, which runs from Aldborough Hatch to Barkingside across Aldborough Hatch Farm. This would, in their view, "increase criminal opportunity and reduce potential for illegal activity to be witnessed." But following Brett Tarmac's revised diversion plan, surprisingly, the Met have rescinded their objections.

I say "surprisingly" because users of the diverted bridleway would have to climb up and down a number of ramps with a 1:10

gradient and climb over halfway up the three-metre-high bunds of soil. If attacked they would be unable to leave the bunds safely. This is a serious health and safety issue, for injury or worse would result. And with high hedges and long stretches without easy escape routes, there would certainly be "increased criminal opportunity" – to use the Met's own words

At the Aldborough Hatch Defence Association's annual meeting on Friday, members were reminded that Bridleway 94 has been the scene in recent years of a murder, three rapes and at least one serious sexual assault.

Members agreed unanimously that Redbridge Council be put on notice that if the planning application is approved, with the diverted bridleway as now proposed by Brett Tarmac, and a crime against the person is committed on the diverted bridleway, the association will hold Redbridge Council, councillors and officers to public account.

It will not hesitate to ensure that residents and people further afield are made fully aware that this diversion, with health and safety and criminality potential, was approved in spite of dire and serious warnings being given.