

Theydon Bois Action Group

PROTECTING THE VILLAGE OF THEYDON BOIS

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POTENTIAL SITE FOR FUTURE SAND AND GRAVEL EXTRACTION

Patch Park Farm Schedule A - Site A41

A) *Do you support this potential site for sand and gravel extraction?* **No.**

B) *Do you object to this potential site for sand and gravel extraction?* **Yes**, on the following grounds:-

Green Belt

A development of this kind would be inappropriate development within the Green Belt and harmful to the openness of the Green Belt.

This is exactly the sort of location which the Metropolitan Green Belt was designed to protect.

Environment

The site is a very tranquil rural area in the River Roding flood plain, which, because of its special habitat supports a wide variety of wildlife, particularly birds. The Roding Valley is designated as a 'Special Landscape Area'. Swans and Heron are to be found on the river and Lapwing are regular visitors to the flood plain. The presence of Otters has been recorded both upstream and downstream to this stretch of the Roding. An ancient hedgerow runs from north to south through the site and a species count indicates that it has been a feature for some 700 years.

A development of the nature and scale of the potential sand and gravel works, would have a devastating effect on the landscape, the river and wildlife, and would cause permanent damage to the natural flood plain, which has existed for centuries. The noise and pollution would ruin the tranquil setting.

Such a major disturbance to the flood plain could also have serious repercussions for vulnerable parts the village of Abridge, which is a Conservation Area and has several listed buildings close to the river. The 'de-watering' process, to allow dry working of the gravel, raises the question of where the water is eventually to be pumped. This must eventually be discharged into the river Roding and the whole process will almost certainly cause problems with silting, alterations to the natural river level and risk of contamination. This stretch of the Roding cannot be considered in isolation to the rest of the river. The entire river Roding is a vital green corridor. The Roding Valley Meadows Nature Reserve lies less than 3 miles downstream. It is a designated Local Nature Reserve and includes a Site of Special Scientific Interest. Any negative impact to the river Roding upstream, could have a serious effect on this unique nature reserve and the remainder of the river downstream, with its important green corridor, continuing through Wanstead Park and beyond.

The continual pumping of water requires a constant energy source and is unsustainable.

The on-site processing plant will cause even more noise and dust pollution and will require a further constant source of electricity/diesel.

Leisure/Recreation

Fishing - This stretch of the River has been used by a long established angling club for many years. A tranquil environment is essential for this peaceful pastime, which would be ruined by such a major development and any negative impact on the river would seriously affect the environment for all aquatic species, including fish.

Walking - Footpaths, which are regularly used, traverse the site, including a section of the circular Three Forests Way, which was established to commemorate Queen Elizabeth's Silver Jubilee, and is an important link with other long distance walking routes, including the Essex Way.

Transport/Access/Road Safety

The large number of HGVs which would be involved in an excavation of this scale and, over a proposed period of 7-10 years, would cause noise, pollution, damage to the road surface and be a serious traffic hazard. The A113 is a narrow road with a national speed limit. It is well used by commuters and favoured by motorbike groups. There are serious issues of road safety, when considering the volume of HGVs travelling along the A113 and using the access to the site at Arnolds Farm.

We already have the M25, the busiest motorway in the country, within half a mile of the proposed site, which is being widened to take even more traffic. This part of Essex has already lost much of its rural tranquillity, with the major intersection of the M11 and M25 nearby, and we cannot afford to lose more.

We do not believe that there is adequate road infrastructure to support the movement of such a large number of HGVs over a 7-10 year period.

Access to and from the A113 would have to be via:-

The A113, directly through Abridge village, which is a conservation area,
The A113 to Ongar, which is also a conservation area with a very narrow high street.

The A113/B175 to Stapleford Abbots, or

The B172 which has a 7.5 tonne weight restriction, to Theydon Bois, via a 7.5 tonne weight restricted 'weak' bridge over the Central Line railway, and via a listed bridge over the Roding at Abridge.

We have already had previous experience of large numbers of HGVs travelling along the A113/B172 to the 'unlawful' landfill site at Blunts Farm, causing extensive damage to the road surface, which necessitated costly repairs by ECC Highways.

Other

A high pressure gas main runs through the site.

Stapleford Aerodrome - The access to the site is close to the visitors' entrance for the airfield. It is likely that activities on the site could be a distraction to aircraft. Large numbers of seagulls always seem to be drawn to such excavation sites and there is real and serious risk of 'bird strikes' to aircraft using the airfield.

For the above reasons, we strongly object to site A41 being used for sand and gravel extraction.

*C) If b, are there any changes that could be made to this proposal that would make it acceptable to you? **No.***

D) Is the proposed after-use acceptable to you? If not, what do you consider to be appropriate to this location and why?

No. This area of rural green belt land should remain as a vital part of the Roding Valley green corridor, with river, floodplain and farmland, as it has done for hundreds of years.

For Theydon Bois Action Group
Protecting the Village of Theydon Bois
www.theydonbois-actiongroup.co.uk