



# UPDATE FROM STOP BENGEO QUARRY



## Bengeo Quarry stopped – thank you!

On 4 April 2019 the Secretary of State confirmed that he agreed with the Planning Inspector's recommendations and refused planning permission to quarry in Bengeo Field.

Thanks to the help and support of the local community and the case put forward by the Stop Bengo Quarry Group, the field can retain its natural landform and continue to be used as an amenity for generations to come. Your contributions to our campaign, whether through posters in windows, letters of objection, donations, or supporting us on Facebook made a real difference.

Many of the points put by the Stop Bengo Quarry group such as the need to protect our water supply, the uniqueness of the landform of Bengeo Field and its value to the local community as a piece of unspoiled agricultural land, were recognised by the inspector and mentioned in the report. With your support, we were able to bring in expert witnesses on air and water pollution. The lead taken by SBQ on the issue of pollution was a crucial factor in stopping the quarry. The main grounds for refusal were: the impact on landscape, hydrology, the impact on living conditions and amenity, and loss of agricultural land.

We have stopped both the 1.75 and 1.25 million tonnes scheme! Thanks a million for your help.

### What next?

The Rickneys quarry extension application (with the potential backdoor access to Bengeo Field) is currently on hold. We are clarifying with the HCC planning officers when this application will be considered by the Hertfordshire County Council Development Control Committee. The next potential dates are **27 June** or **24 July 2019** at County Hall, Hertford at 10am. Please check our website and local notice boards for the updates about the date.



# Bengeo Field Discovery Walk

Sunday 30th June, start 10am – 11am from Sacombe Road entrance to Bengeo Field (between the Wick and Buckwells Field), Hertford

Join us for a fun treasure trail for all! Participants will receive a map with the route options and challenge instructions for the Discovery Walk. Please bring a pencil/pen, your mobile/a camera, and a drink. You can also bring a ribbon/decoration for the lonely oak tree. All children will need to be under their parents' supervision. The walk will be approximately 45-60 minutes and will finish back at Sacombe Road entrance.

We have some great prizes for those who complete the walk including Love Bengeo drinking bottles sponsored by Morgan Alexander. Let's celebrate the Bengeo Field!



## Key points of the Planning Inspector's report which recognised the community's concerns

### HYDROGEOLOGY:

The Inspector concluded that the risk of ground water pollution is unacceptable:

- The Secretary of State agreed with the Inspector's analysis of the risks from the development to the hydrogeology, including groundwater pollution, harm to the aquifer and the public water supply.
- He agreed with the Inspector's conclusion that the risk of contaminating groundwater would give rise to an adverse effect of moderate significance, which should be given substantial weight because of the implications for the public water supply.
- He also agreed that the proposed development would pose an unacceptable risk to groundwater pollution, and would have an unacceptable adverse impact on the natural environment.

### LANDSCAPE:

The Inspector agreed with the Stop Bengeo Quarry Group and Hertfordshire County Council that the development would cause considerable harm to the beauty of the natural landscape

- The restored landform would *"sit uncomfortably with the existing slopes down this side of the valley... The restored landform would give the landscape an artificial crumpled appearance."*
- *"I have found that the proposal would have an adverse effect on the character and appearance of the area, which should be given substantial weight."*
- The openness of the field which results, in part, from its size would be compromised by any quarrying.
- The amenity value of the field would be compromised by ugly bunds which would last throughout the quarrying and this damage would persist for some time after the quarrying was finished. As the Inspector puts it: *"The harm to the amenity of the area should attract moderate weight."*

### AMENITY AND PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY:

The Inspector agreed with the comments of local people that the quarry scheme would damage use of the Public Rights of Way around the Bengeo Field both during operation and after restoration. He considered, however, that the promised addition of some extra

paths during the development would, on balance, provide a minor benefit to the Public Rights of Way network after restoration.

### AIR QUALITY:

The Inspector noted the widespread local concern about air pollution, and particularly the effect on vulnerable groups such as young children. He concluded that air pollution could be controlled by suitable dust suppression methods (if correctly implemented), but that *"the local fear and anxiety about short and long-term health risks from particulate matter and respirable crystalline silica are 'legitimate' and sufficient to be a planning consideration in their own right"*:

- Local fear and anxiety about air quality and resulting health effects is *"not irrational"*.
- Concerns are understandable given the robust conditions recommended by Public Health England and Environment Agency to prevent harm to health.
- Planning conditions properly implemented should contain larger airborne dust particles. However, real-world data on dispersion of smaller particulates for quarries is limited.
- The fears of local residents over the health impact of short-term decreases in air quality on vulnerable groups have not been allayed by submitted evidence.
- Lack of reliable data on respirable crystalline silica fuels the local communities' legitimate fears about long-term adverse effects.

### NOISE:

The Inspector concluded that noise was likely to be intrusive and *"is a consideration which weighs against granting planning permission"*:

- The Inspector shared the concerns expressed by the HCC's noise expert on the methods used by the developer's expert to measure existing background noise.
- Acceptable levels of extra, working noise could be exceeded and could be distinctive – especially if Bengeo Field was worked alongside Rickneys quarry.
- Any resulting complaints raised by local residents could take time to monitor and for mitigating measures to be put in place.