This report is based on a site visit on 21.11.11

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Damage and Dangers at Dale Farm
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Damage Caused and Dangers Created at Dale Farm

Google Earth historic map of Dale Farm from 2000, showing the extent of the land owned by Patrick Egan around the bungalow built in the 1970s. The map also clearly shows the intensive use of the site as a vehicle storage yard.

Site Inspection Summary

On 21 November 2011 the author was invited by Patrick Egan, the owner of the planning approved Bungalow at Dale Farm, to view the condition of his property and the wider site left by Basildon District Council after the forced eviction during October.

The author believes that Basildon District Council has shown a gross lack of control in managing their Bailiffs and Contractors in the breaking up of the concrete and tarmac hardstandings. The Bailiffs and Contractors have been allowed to excavate down to clay by removing subsoil to be sorted off site, and returning some of the material to fill the site with substantial but loose bunds of broken and excavated materials. The materials in the bunds are a loose and varied mix of topsoil, subsoils, rubble, hardcore, timber, scrap metal, and industrial debris from the former scrapyard site. There is also some domestic property lost in the excavations by the residents during the forced eviction.

These bunds are said to be “temporary”, but there appears no plan in place to remove the debris and to back-fill the excavated land to a graded site covered with topsoil.

The land around Patrick Egan’s bungalow should never have been excavated, and it appears that neither Basildon District Council nor their Bailiffs and Contractors have bothered to stop at the boundary to his property. By excavating his land they have damaged the septic tank system and destroyed the drains which stopped the land from flooding around his bungalow and garage. A property that with the mains electricity supply being cut off is now also being internally damaged by dampness and moisture.
The several manufactured homes on other plots have all been removed during the forced eviction, but there were three plots considered legal as caravan pitches. These plots have also been cleared of their hardstandings. However the excavated land has not been back-filled to a graded site covered with topsoil, and cannot be used by the owners.

The bunds make it physically impossible for Patrick Egan to access his land to repair and empty the septic tank to the South of his bungalow and garage. The bunds similarly make it impossible for the owners of the three legal plots to access their land if it were returned to a graded site. This appears to the author to be deliberate and punitive on the part of Basildon District Council and their Bailiffs and Contractors.

The bunds are loose, and have been arranged to form basins with clay subsoil. Basildon District Council and their Bailiffs and Contractors have erected signs recognising the danger to children on the site from the loose bunded materials. The basins are also filing with stagnant water, which presents an additional danger to the Health and Safety of residents and their children. The street lighting has been destroyed, and the bunds are not fenced off from children as would ordinarily be expected on a construction site.

The author could see rats running through the loose materials, and the mix of materials includes sharp and dangerous debris. The author is frankly amazed that site has been left in such a manner with no plan to complete the works. Basildon District Council had long boasted that they would return the former scrapyard of Dale Farm back to a condition that the public might imagine the Green Belt to be.

Basildon District Council has failed to fulfill their promise to back-fill the land to a graded site covered with topsoil, installing land drains as would be expected in any field, while providing vehicular and pedestrian access to Patrick Egan’s property and the three legal plots. The author is unsure of the legal status of the former industrial building to the South West of the site, and the small brick fronted dwelling further to the South of Patrick Egan’s bungalow. Presumably they too require a graded site and full access.

The author is appalled at the condition Dale Farm has been reduced to, when the Chalet homes looked like this, with sanitation, gravel and drainage installed by the residents.

One of the several Chalet style manufactured homes that used to stand on the concrete hardstanding of the former scrapyard that is known as Dale Farm

This report continues with a series of annotated images to try to show the condition:
Google Earth historic map of Dale Farm from 2008, showing the use of the land owned by Patrick Egan around the bungalow built in the 1970s

This report may be revised to show the location of the images if required on a larger scale map, identifying the plots

The weather was foggy on the morning of 21.11.11, but even in the daylight rats were evident running among the loose materials that are now piled on the site in the loose bunds. Clearly rats are present in the adjacent farmland but will colonise the “temporary” bunds if the site is not immediately cleared of debris, provided with new land drains, back-filled, and graded with topsoil
Dale Farm has many children, who are now unable to play safely on land they previously called home. The bunds are loose and dangerous, but are not fenced off from the rest of the Dale Farm site.
Basildon District Council are well aware of the risk the bunds pose to children and have erected warning signs. They have neither fenced off the land, nor advised the residents when the bunds will be removed to take away the risk to their children. This is private land that has been left in a hazardous condition.

The bunds should be removed and the land made safe for children to play on.

The exposed ground should be drained and back-filled with topsoil after walls that should have been retained undamaged are fully repaired.
Patrick Egan’s family has been dependent on a diesel generator for electricity since the mains were disconnected at Dale Farm.

The bungalow is cold and damp, and moisture is clearly starting to warp the timber flooring. The ground around the bungalow is saturated and easily floods when it rains. Land drainage laid around the bungalow is destroyed.
The land to the East and South of Patrick Egan’s bungalow has been excavated and the land drainage destroyed. It appears that Basildon District Council and their Bailiffs and Contractors though that Patrick Egan’s land was limited to the wall adjacent to the bungalow, when it extends further.

The bund down the centre of the road that runs from North to South along the Western side of Patrick Egan’s bungalow prevents him emptying the septic tank that appears to have been damaged during the excavation.
The septic tank to Patrick Egan’s bungalow is inaccessible because of the bund, and the land drainage has been destroyed.
With the land drainage destroyed the bungalow site is saturated and floods when it rains. Damaged drainage and smashed electrical fittings are evident across the site, though it is not clear whether the cabling is disconnected from the mains. The mains cannot be turned back on without checking all cables damaged and partially buried in the excavation are safely disconnected.
Water mains exposed during the excavations are partially buried beneath bunds. These makeshift arrangements should be replaced with correctly installed water mains to serve the residents remaining at Dale Farm.
The Eastern boundary to Dale Farm with farmland over the barbed wire and timber post fencing. The media image presented by Basildon District Council was that Dale Farm would be turned into a Green Belt farmland landscape.

Signage warning the neighbouring farmer and their children not to play on the loose bunds left over the fence.
Walls with their foundations undermined are potentially unstable, and others are damaged and partially buried by bunds built up against them. If Basildon District Council and their Bailiffs and Contractors knew these walls were to be retained intact then they should not have continued with the excavation. It seems cynical to excavate the site knowing the walls would not survive.
Walls and fences are buried in the bunds and are often undermined by the excavation works. When the bunds are removed they will be further damaged.
The bunds are a mix of deleterious materials that cannot be used to back-fill the site before grading with topsoil. It appears that Basildon District Council have allowed their Bailiffs and Contractors to vacate the site without properly disposing of the waste materials. Presumably they plan to come back.

The volume of deleterious bund materials is substantial, and will all have to be removed to a landfill site before suitable materials for back-filling and a sufficient depth of topsoil are brought onto the site and graded. This will not be easy with the walls and fences, which may need to be fully replaced.
The legal plots are inaccessible because of the bunds

Fences are undermined by the excavations and will not survive
One of the three legal plots excavated and bunded. The ground is saturated and ponding with the land drainage destroyed.
Damaged container and drain run to man hole on a partially excavated site. It is not clear why the excavation was incomplete, and it is not clear how the site will be back-filled and the drainage properly reinstated.
The blockwork industrial building has high bunding built around it and the hardstanding scraped back in front. This was part of the former scrapyard.

View to the North from the bund adjacent to the industrial building in the South West of the site towards Patrick Egan’s bungalow and garage in the distance, showing the obstructed road.
The small brick fronted dwelling that appears to have been protected from demolition has had some of the plot excavated. This had left ponding in front of the dwelling, and a large basin has been formed to the West.
View West from the plot adjacent to the North East corner of Patrick Egan’s land, looking back towards the damaged wall in the middle of his property.

There seems to have been no plan at work when deciding how close to Patrick Egan’s bungalow and garage the excavations could be extended, and the septic tank was partially exposed in the process. The excavation was partially back-filled, but access to the septic tank is blocked by the bunds.
A galvanised steel pallisade fence has been erected to screen the residents of Oak Lane from the sight of the bunding at Dale Farm. The media attention has declined, and while the public were widely exposed to images of the forced eviction the reality of the “temporary” bunds is largely unknown.
Fences have been undermined by the excavations, or damaged by the process of constructing the bunds.

 Depths of excavation varies, but nowhere is it obvious why topsoil and subsoil beneath the fences has been considered acceptable when the soils in the middle of the plots were excavated after hardstandings were broken up.

 It is not clear if the plan by Basildon District Council is to remove the fences and excavate below them, before reinstating a fence line.
Broken drainage helps to give a sense of scale to the depth of excavation and height of bunding, which mostly varies between 1.0 and 1.5m. Some basins are deeper as the subsoil has been excavated to heavy clay, which is now retaining stagnant water. Conditions will worsen over the Winter, and the site should not be left to pond and stagnate until the Spring.

Basildon District Council should complete the task that they have committed themselves to and remove all bunds from the Dale Farm land.