

PLANNING APPLICATION REFERENCE: 19/000053/CM

Proposed sand and gravel quarry at Land at Lea Castle Farm, Wolverley

RESPONSE FROM WOLVERLEY AND COOKLEY PARISH COUNCIL

RECOMMEND REFUSAL

Wolverley and Cookley Parish Council, after waiting almost two years for the formal planning application following the scoping opinion document (18/000023/SCO), and after listening for two years to resident's objections at Public Question Time, considered the full planning application and non-technical summary at their meeting 3rd March 2020 and resolved unanimously NOT to support the quarry application.

Whilst the Parish Council recognise the need for quarry's to extract minerals and indeed fully support the County Council's need for a properly adopted waste and minerals plan, the proposed location of the quarry is completely inappropriate development within the green belt and there are no very special circumstances to justify it and therefore it should not be supported.

The entire site lies within the heart of the green belt and the adverse effect on the openness of the green belt would be immense and not justifiable. There will be at least 600 houses on the former Lea Castle Hospital site, with the Progressive Alliance's plan proposing a further 800 houses, all removing green belt land from the Parish. There are a further 91 new houses at Weavers Chase now being occupied and 54 at the former Sion Hill School site, soon to be occupied. There are 5 schools, 2 Nurseries, Nursing Home, Caravan Park and Sports Ground within close proximity of the proposed Quarry. Also in the proposed Quarry boundary is a house and thriving equestrian business. This development will have a major impact on the green belt and this area of the Parish and the Parish Council feel that the Quarry will have a negative effect on the cumulative impact of the green belt and will have a significant environmental impact on the ecology of the area.

The Parish Council are exceptionally concerned regarding the substantial vehicle movements that the quarry would bring, 154 HGV's and 22 cars per day on the applicant's own assessment increasing nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) levels in an already recognised pollution hotspot area. The scoping opinion clearly showed a proposed entrance only to be used from an easterly direction, the full planning application shows a new proposed entrance which allows vehicle movement from both directions which leads to great concern that additional traffic will come through Wolverley Village. The Parish Council feel that this area of the network is already very busy at peak times, which will become busier as houses are developed on the Lea Castle Hospital site and therefore do not feel it could cope with the additional traffic a quarry would bring.

The Parish Council are also concerned about the noise and disruption to local residents of both Wolverley and Cookley as the site borders a number of residential properties, schools, recreation facilities and tourist attractions. The independent noise assessment undertaken by the applicant's themselves shows that the calculated noise level in many locations is very close to the suggested Site Noise Limit with several properties within 1db of the site noise level limits. No noise level assessment was undertaken at Heathfield School or First Steps Nursery, both directly opposite the site.

The Parish Council are extremely concerned about the Ecological Impact. The Ecological Impact Assessment included in the Planning Application states significant long term negative impact on Roosting Bats, Breeding Birds and Invertebrates and shorter term negative impact on other species. Also Significant negative impact on hedgerows and trees, including removal of TPOs T8, T9, T10, T22 and T26.

The Historical Wall bordering the proposed site is damaged in several areas and the Planning Application Photo sheet 13 states "in need of repair". The wall bows outwards towards the path and the bricks are deteriorating along the length of the wall. Adjacent the wall is a single footpath which is used by children to walk to school (encouraged by the government) this causes a serious health and safety concern for the children as any vibration may cause collapse and no assessment of this has been undertaken.

In addition, Wyre Forest District Council's own response to the Waste and Minerals Plan had concerns regarding the visual impact from various areas of the Parish and a detrimental impact on the setting of the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal Conservation Area for the duration of the period of extraction. They state that a planning application for mineral extraction at this site would need to demonstrate how the proposals either "preserve" or "enhance" the Conservation Area which is a fundamental requirement of the P(LBCA)A 1990, irrespective of any other NPPF or Local Plan guidance and failure to do this should result in the application being refused.

The Parish Council also have concerns regarding restoration. The Restoration Scheme shows 3 million tonnes extraction and only 0.6 million inert fill which will have a significant impact on the landscape.

Whilst of course, being mindful this is temporary, it will be for at least 10 years and whilst we can only consider this application, who knows if consent were to be granted whether a future application came in to extend its life and how rigorously conditions would be enforced.

Mrs B J Drew

Clerk To Wolverley & Cookley Parish Council