

Good afternoon and thank you for allowing me to speak.

My name is Mick Parker and my wife and I are residents of Cookley.

We are local authority foster carers specialising in caring for children & young adults with learning disabilities, we have been doing this for 18 years.

We also have an adult son with learning disabilities. I spent almost 30 years in local authority highway maintenance with both Wyre Forest District Council and Worcestershire County Council.

I wish to express my objections to the provision of a quarry sited too close to residential settlements including schools, businesses and leisure spaces, all of which have been discussed previously.

Since the prevailing wind is from the south and southwest direction with Cookley being situated on the north/northeast of the proposal. This will affect a large swathe of residential properties that are essentially upwind of the proposal. Therefore said properties will be under attack from noise, dust and other airborne particulates. Which will impact upon the health and wellbeing of local residents.

The plans show that phase 1 has partial sand/soil bund on both the east & west sides. This leaves a large gap between bund 11 and bund 7 on the north side without any form of bund/screen. This is the point from which residential properties will be most likely affected bearing in mind the direction of the prevailing wind. It also shows a larger gap between bund 11 and bund 8 on the west side. Why are these gaps present?

Conveyors will be running continually and noise pollution will undoubtedly cause a nuisance given the direction of the prevailing wind.

Whilst the application cites a decibel limit of 45-55db. There is no information as to what is the decibel level emitted by the proposed conveyors, processing plant and vehicle movements. The appellant should make this information freely available and the authority should not allow this to be investigated retrospectively. It should also be noted that conveyers will make varying levels of noise nuisance dependent upon how they are under load, be it full, part full, empty.

The plant site sections showing the route of the conveyor beneath PROW 62 6 (B) shows the highest discharge point of the processing plant to be level with the top of screening bund 3. This will render bund 3 completely ineffective as a buffer against noise/airborne particulates. The processed materials will free fall from that highest point to the ground below. Allowing particulates to enter the atmosphere unobstructed, which questions the efficacy of the bunds ability to reduce noise/dust.

There is no indication of any form of screening to the north and west sides of the field hopper why is this? The bunds to the south & east sides are purely for the purposes of screening from the public right of way. The appellant has overlooked the prevailing wind direction in relation to noise/dust emanating from the field hopper.

The proposal cites " drop heights from dump trucks to processing plant to be minimised". This statement is far too ambiguous and needs clarification as to how this will be controlled in order to avoid air/noise pollution. And how will this operation be monitored? Additionally it is human nature for dump truck or plant drivers to leave their vehicles idling whilst awaiting the next move, especially in winter when they will want to have a nice

warm cab to sit in. I do not see any indication that air pollution from these vehicles have been taken into account. It's all well to say an instruction will be issued to turn vehicles off, but in reality unless the site manager is constantly walking or driving around the site, it will go unnoticed. Causing additional air quality and noise issues to the local residents.

The original application cited working hours of 07.00 - 17.00 which has now been revised to 07.00 - 19.00. There is no sensible reason to extend beyond 17.00 other than to maximise profit at the expense of the wellbeing of the neighbouring residents. Especially as this also will increase light pollution during the winter months when surrounding trees have lost their foliage.

It is proposed that each excavated phase will be reinstated with inert landfill material. What is inert landfill material?

Examples of inert material are, broken concrete, asphaltic pavement/tarmac, brick, rock, gravel, sand and soil. Also, manufactured asbestos-containing products and non recyclable plastics are classified as inert.

More construction sites/projects are now recycling their inert materials through use of crushers to produce sub bases to be used within those sites. It not only negates the burden of costs of waste to landfill, but also reduces the cost of importing hardcore for the purposes of sub bases and the like within those sites.

Around 15 years ago WCC Highways and their partner contractor Ringway Highway Services converted their North and South depots into recycling depots. This means that all of the highway maintenance works involving excavation of inert materials, are transported to the depots and crushed, sorted, mixed etc and are transformed into acceptable forms of sub bases to be re-used in their own maintenance works. Likewise saving on landfill charges and importation of sub base products. Potentially WCC Highways could have been a significant customer to NRS in terms of the considerable amount of inert landfill that they produce. But instead WCC Highways have embraced modern technology rather than adopting old and outdated landfill solutions. 15 years of excavating inert material and reusing within the whole of Worcestershire is a significant amount of recycling rather than landfill.

Many construction sites that involve demolition or removal of existing structures or infrastructure have also adopted the same procedures. Mobile crushing units are brought in and remain on site until such time that they are no longer required. The end result once again means that they can reuse this material and reduce costs whilst not sending it to landfill.

This means that there is significant shortfall in the availability of inert backfill materials for quarry restoration. Which will result in NRS taking longer or being unable to fill the large holes they create. My understanding is that one phase will be completely reinstated before excavating the next. Quote "we will restore the land after each phase of extraction to minimise the amount of land being disturbed at any one time" NRS have put forward proposed timescales but bearing in mind what I have just said, it might appear that those projections are at best ambitious.

In calculating projected import of inert fill, (Reg 25 Response Appendix H. Major Projects, 1.2.9) the appellant cites development of "600 houses at Lea Castle". These are already in progress with many completed. The hospital buildings were demolished and cleared from site long before housing development commenced. There is very little inert material available.

It also goes on to cite that there are proposals for the Lea Castle site to rise to an extra 1400 houses and quote " large quantities of inert waste will arise". A throw away comment without any factual evidence. Those extra houses will be created in virgin land, no doubt with the topsoils being stored on site for reuse at the end of the construction phase.

The appellant also cites "20 different construction projects planned for the West Midlands region. (Major Projects 1.2.10) requiring the deposition of significant volumes of inert waste'. Again a throw away comment. In my view the projections are flawed and do not take into account modern recycling practices that are increasingly being adopted on construction sites throughout the UK.

What is the position of the local authority on the potential for the applicant to be unable to complete restoration? And is there a stipulation that each phase must be completely reinstated before the next phase can begin?

The appellant's estimated vehicle movements include those vehicles that will be entering the site for the purpose of bringing in inert waste material as confirmed by the appellant's witness Mr Hurlstone when I cross examined him. I would suggest that accurate estimates for the movement of incoming traffic are difficult for the reasons of unclear availability of inert material as I have already outlined.

Mr Hurlstone also referred to inert waste as contaminated waste, which in fact it is, but inert has a much less alarming ring to it.

I am further unsure how vehicles approaching the site for either inert waste disposal or returning from a delivery, will be stopped from approaching from a westerly direction which will result in said vehicles coming through/along Wolverley Road toward the quarry site. A route as we know is already classified as dangerous for pedestrians.

It is fine to state that vehicles exiting the quarry will turn left but there is nothing to stop the aforementioned. The appellant will be keen to accept as much infill as they can and so if a large site appears to the west, and that site needs somewhere to dispose of it's inert material, are we seriously expected to believe that they will be refused access by the appellant?

Soil Bunds.

There are varying bund heights across the site which are as low as 3 metres in the majority. The further away from the bunds that extraction activity is taking place the less effective these low bunds become.

The appellant's expert noise witness claims that the bunds will effectively absorb noise and vibration. And this may well be correct in part. But since soil bunds by their very nature are constructed with sloping sides and a relatively horizontal top, it stands to reason that both noise and airborne particles will " bounce off " the bunds allowing noise/dust to by-pass or flow over the bunds at differing rates dependant upon wind speeds. As already mentioned, if sand particles from another continent can make it here, it can also skip soil bunds?

Is it likely that the expert is calculating that noise/dust only travels in straight lines in parallel to the relative ground surface?

The Dust Impact Assessment, Doc ref R19.100059/AG dated Sept 2019 appears to concentrate, using maps & receptors, on areas to the south and southwest of the proposed quarry site. The village of Cookley sits to the north/north east of the proposed quarry. The prevailing wind direction is from the south/southwest. This puts the village directly in line of dust pollution from the quarry. And yet the document seems to conveniently ignore this.

The plans show that phase 1 has a partial sand/soil bund on both the east & west sides. This leaves a large gap on the north side without any form of bund/screen. This is the point from which residential properties will be most likely affected bearing in mind the direction of the prevailing wind. Will the authority stipulate that all phases are completely surrounded by bunds/screens at all times?

Phase 3 has a large gap on the north side between bunds 16 & 13. Once again within the prevailing winds.

Why does phase 4 not show any screening to the north side? Bund 17 is a large distance north of the extraction phase which will allow noise/soil particulates to bypass bund 17. Surely every phase should have effective measures in place to avoid air/noise pollution from every side and every direction?

For example the rear of my property faces south and looks toward the farm centre. The grazing land immediately beyond rises abruptly over a short distance to the point where it is as tall if not taller than my property. It then falls back as abruptly, in effect it is an extremely large but natural bund.

When farm machinery is operating beyond this area, over the other side of the so called natural bund, it can be heard very clearly and at different levels depending on the type machinery in operation. Likewise if the land is being disturbed as part of the farming activity, ploughing, scarifying etc, the resultant dust/soil particles are easily scattered over my property.

My point is that if this very large natural bund can't stop all noise/dust, how does the appellants expect smaller bunds to stop the same nuisance which unlike the farming activity will be continual.

Prevailing wind speeds/direction have been submitted (dust impact assessment 2.1.1 and 2.1.2) using data from 2008 - 2017 and 30km away in the south of the county. I would suggest that this data is not relevant to the proposed quarry site and is also outdated.

It's all very well for the appellants and their experts to provide evidence of acceptable levels of disruption in all aspects of the quarrying operation. Just because a level is acceptable it does not mean it will not contribute to issues of health in the future. Possibly even after the quarry has gone.

We have heard that NRS are a multi-faceted organisation of companies.

A cynic might conclude that if the quarry were to be given the green light, then the company registered as the operator might conveniently cease to exist once quarrying is completed, in order to be free of any future litigation arising from health issues relating to the operation of the quarry.

NRS describe themselves as being a good neighbour in their literature. But let's be honest, the overriding incentive for NRS is profit. Any considerate neighbour would not be

wanting to operate a quarry in the midst of so many residents. It is all about acceptable levels and profiteering.

Dust/noise

We have heard that the operatives working on the quarry site will have air conditioned cabins, and no doubt visors, masks, hard hats, ear defenders and all manner of protection. And it is right that they should. So if there is a necessity for all that PPE then surely it follows that it is because without protection that environment is hazardous to the health of those operatives? But is it not also just as much a hazard to the residents and business/schools etc?

The hazards associated with noise/dust do not suddenly disappear when one steps to the outside of the boundary fence.

Site access.

The proposed site entrance/exit is situated within a derestricted speed limit length of two-way single carriageway and will dissect a length of a high boundary wall. The approaches to the entrance have restricted visibility owing to the elevation and contour of the carriageway and when mixed with the derestricted speed limit, and fully laden heavy vehicles coming out of the site very slowly, this will significantly increase the risk of collision.

Slow moving, fully laden HGV's turning left out of the site may also sweep onto the opposite lane in order to clear the exit, and into the path of oncoming vehicles from the opposite direction traveling at speed in a derestricted length of carriageway.

I can see nothing that places a responsibility upon the appellant to avoid debris, mud and the like from causing a nuisance or hazard on the adjacent carriageway and footway, other than a wheel wash. There is no indication of additional measures such as rumble strips or jet washing facilities. And nothing explaining how the appellant intends to keep the highway free from detritus or instruct drivers how to avoid doing so. Even with the best will in the world, a wheel wash without additional facilities, in a quarrying operation is never enough especially during wet autumn/winter conditions.

Wellbeing.

If the recent Covid pandemic has taught us anything, it is that being able to enjoy the outdoors whether in ones own garden or otherwise, is proven to have a significant positive impact upon human wellbeing and mental health. Why should the local populous be denied such simple solutions toward their positive health simply because persons who have no local connectivity want to make a profit?

In summary this proposal is based on profitability whilst completely ignoring the impact upon the surroundings. There is no viable reason to continue with a quarry at this location. Mr Hurlstone, for the appellant, described this quarry as being small in comparison to most quarrying operations, and refusing this appeal sir, will not have any significant impact upon national mineral reserve strategies.