

## **ID.44 Transcript of Karen Anderson**

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From: Karen Anderson < >

Sent: 08 March 2023 11:30

To: Skinner, Helen <[HELEN.SKINNER@planninginspectorate.gov.uk](mailto:HELEN.SKINNER@planninginspectorate.gov.uk)>

Subject: Lea Castle Farm Quarry Public Enquiry submission document Tuesday 6th March 2023

Dear Ms Skinner,

Please see below my speech given to this inquiry on Tuesday 7th March 2023. Please can this be included in the submission documents.

Thank you

**COPY OF MY SPEECH  
TUESDAY 7TH MARCH 2023**

Good afternoon

My name is Karen Anderson. I've lived in Cookley with my Daughter for 23 years. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak.

So many people, with the same concerns as myself, spoke last Tuesday and covered all of the issues that I was going to talk about. To be honest, probably better than I could have done. So it would be pointless I think for me to try and repeat them all now.

Over the course of this Inquiry, I think it's been very obvious to see the strength of our opposition and the very real concerns we all share.

It is so difficult to know what else to say now, that could add to what has already been said. But I wanted the opportunity to express MY feelings and worries regarding this quarry. I have so many, but where do I begin.

Having had the benefit of listening to all the debates and legal arguments over the last week, has helped me to write down and summarise a lot of my concerns.

Firstly I just want to say that I endorse in the strongest possible way, EVERY SINGLE ONE of the objections raised by STQ group and WCC during the course of this Inquiry.

The most shocking to me however, out of all of them, relates to the close proximity this quarry will be to so many of our schools. The fact that a nursery school will be just 50m from the site entrance horrifies me, and is actually nothing short of shameful! It beggars belief that this site is even being considered as a viable option, before we even look at all the other concerns.

What sort of a world are we living in where the health, safety and well-being of children is so callously disregarded, almost treated as collateral damage.

I consider myself a reasonably intelligent woman. No expert, no law degree, but reasonably intelligent. I fully understand the need to quarry for sand and gravel. I know our construction industries need it to build houses. Homes that people need.

I also to some extent understand that the landbank of sand and gravel reserves in the county has a shortfall that needs to be addressed. But to try and justify the use of Lea Castle Farm Estate as a suitable site for this is a disgrace, on so many levels.

I just want to emphasise, again that we are NOT a small community concerned about ruining a picturesque chocolate box village (sad though that would be).

Our community is large, spanning Cookley, Caunsall, Wolverley, Franche, and others. Tens of thousands of homes.

We are a hard working community, we socialise together, we share our leisure and recreational facilities, we help each other in difficult times. whichever village we come from, we all pull together.

We have a wonderful community, consisting of thousands and we all share in the pride we feel in belonging to it.

The proposed site is at the HEART of this wonderful community. Smack bang in the middle. It is used and crisscrossed by hundreds of people. It is our access to shared amenities such as pubs, social clubs, village halls, children's playgrounds, tea rooms, cafes, sports fields and schools. It is a safe environment, where we don't need to use our cars, or risk life and limb walking on narrow pavements along dangerous busy roads.

It's a haven of peace and tranquility, a beautiful open space, home to a variety of wildlife. And contrary to the opinion of the Appellant, (who I believe has very little knowledge of the area, other than their strategically taken photographs, and the occasional visits to stick their noise level machines onto gate posts), there is NO comparable alternative to it within walking distance. To get to anywhere like it, in terms of size, beauty and open space requires a car journey. The roads are already very busy.

During this last week, I have heard a lot of debate and listened to the legalities around noise and air pollution, and the potential risks to residents in the area. I have been angered and deeply upset by some of the comments from the appellant who have painted a completely false image of the area I have lived in for 23 years.

They have generalised and tried to persuade us that the measures they propose to put in place to mitigate risk will be adequate. Using terms such as temporary and transient. There is nothing transient about the habits of our school children, elderly & vulnerable residents, or stay at home Parents.

No mention has been made by the Appellant either (that I have heard) that risks are subjective.

The risks to health associated with noise for example. These risks cannot be accurately determined by decibel levels alone. The CONSTANCY of people being subjected to the noise must surely be taken into account?

The risks to Mr Jones, who is out all day at work, will be vastly different for Mr Smith who is housebound and is subjected to it from morning to night 6 days a week. It is the CONSTANT hum of noise, whatever the decibel levels, that can be torturous for those who cannot turn it off or get away from it, and can severely add to stress levels and impair mental health.

Risks from breathing polluted air., is also surely subjective and should not be generalised. The levels of fine, invisible silica particles in quarry dust, however small, may not be a huge risk to some if they are away from it for long periods during the day.

But, (according to an article by the Health & Safety Executive, I read on the Government's web site,) people who are exposed to even low levels over a PROLONGED period of time are at high risk of developing lung cancer, silicosis, COPD and other serious lung conditions in the future.

I would say that 10 years (probably longer), constitutes a PROLONGED period of time, wouldn't you?

I struggle to understand how the words "temporary" and "transient" can be applied to the length of time that children will be exposed to it, many from infancy throughout most of their school life, with the very real possibility of them developing serious health conditions in adulthood.

To others, elderly and vulnerable residents with existing health conditions, the consequences could affect them for the rest of their lives and could potential shorten THEIR lives.

I believe the REALITY is that a high percentage of the local population would fall into the risk category described in the HSE article.

I would like also to talk about the costs involved if the quarry goes ahead. I'm not talking about monetary costs here.

I'm talking about the cost to individuals, the cost to our community and to Kidderminster as a whole.

- THE COST TO LOCAL BUSINESSES The damaging effect on local businesses close to the quarry could be significant. Caravan site, pubs, tea rooms, cafes, mini golf even Fat Eddie's food van (which is very popular).

These places are packed to bursting during the summer months! Not just by locals. People come from miles around. The Anchor Pub's crusty cobs are legendary and people come from as far away as Birmingham to enjoy them in a beautiful peaceful setting, away from the hustle and bustle of the towns, a relatively short drive away. Our other pubs are also well known outside of the local area.

The camping and caravan club site is always full during the summer months. I know this because I'm an avid camper and have tried to book a pitch last minute on several occasions (because I love camping and often can't afford to travel far) only to be told they are fully booked.

These visitors to our villages spend their money while they are here. In supermarkets, cafes and other shops in Kidderminster town itself. We have a large Go Outdoors store in town, very popular with the camp site visitors.

Visitors come to our area based on the belief, the perception, that they are spending their valuable leisure time in a country side setting, getting away from it all, breathing in clean fresh air, without the need to drive very far, without it costing them a fortune in fuel.

Will they still come and spend their leisure time and money, if these places are in close proximity to a quarry? Will the mitigation measures put in place by NRS reassure them?

Perhaps we could put up signs showing the results of noise level tests? Or a report from some expert downplaying the dangers of silica. Would they still come?? You can bet your life they will go elsewhere.

There is a well known line in the Kevin Costner film Field of Dreams - If you build it, they will come. The exact opposite will be the outcome if there is a quarry on our field of dreams, IF YOU BUILD IT, THEY WILL NOT COME!

Then there is the cost to the wider community, the local economy.

Kidderminster town is already in serious need of regeneration. The pandemic having finished off even more of the shops struggling to stay afloat in a changing market. We need to be attracting MORE people to this town, not PUTTING THEM OFF!

Again, IF YOU BUILD IT THEY WONT COME!

Finally, and I have nearly finished I promise.

What personal cost to individuals, to the human beings in our community.

What cost to The elderly lady I know and love who already has breathing difficulties. A pillar in our community, well known, liked and respected by many. Her property backs onto the perimeter of the proposed site. What risks to her health and quality of life? She will be terrified to open her windows or sit in her garden in the warm summer months.

What cost to the paramedic and nurse who live in Cookley who often work night shifts and who risked their health and lives for us during the pandemic? What effect on them when they are trying to sleep during the day before going back out to put in a long night shift of gruelling and stressful work?

What cost to the veteran who lives in our village who suffers with PTSD? He has already sacrificed enough serving his country. The close proximity of HIS home to the site will have a significant impact on his quality of life.

I could go on and on and point out the personal cost to so many more people I know. But who cares about them when there's money to be made? Are their needs not important?

Human beings, Sir, so so many whose lives will be badly affected by this quarry.

Human beings who are trying to rebuild their lives, trying to recover from the aftermath of a pandemic. So many more people than ever before struggling with poor physical and mental health desperately needing the services of our NHS, struggling as it is to get GP appointments, and needing support from a social care system that is at breaking point.

What extra burden will be put on all of our health care services in the future, when the true effects of living next door to a quarry become apparent? It might be years before it happens and the laws and policies in this country regarding these risks might, eventually reflect the truth, but it will be too late by then for these people, too late for our community. The damage will be done, lives will already have been ruined! Who cares?

My own personal cost? I have a 45 year old Daughter with autism, who also has a learning disability and suffers from anxiety and depression.

I don't have time to fully explain the effects on her if this quarry goes ahead.

Suffice it to say life has been incredibly hard on both of us with the loss of her long standing professional support network during the pandemic and on going. The crisis in the social care system means we are still struggling alone with no support.

Being able to access this site daily, with her dog, is a long standing routine for her and plays a major role in her well being.

It provides the peaceful environment she needs and she loves to visit the horses and chat to Mrs McDonald, who lives on the site. She has very little in the way of a social life and struggles with lack of confidence and low self esteem.

Lea Castle provides the opportunity for her to access the community, safely and independently. It gives her a sense of belonging, and is vital to her mental health. Life is difficult enough for her without losing this too. It would quite simply break her heart, and mine.

So, I would ask the Inspector, when deliberating your decision, to please weigh up the costs to this community against whatever benefits (if any) a quarry on this site would bring.

Lea Castle Farm Estate is a completely unsuitable place for a quarry to be sited. It is disgracefully close to too many homes, businesses and human life and the cost to this community would be great if it was to be allowed.

So I would implore you Sir to please uphold the planning decision reached last May and reject this appeal .

Thank you again, for allowing me to voice my concerns.

Karen Anderson  
Cookley resident

#### ADDED ON THE DAY

- I consider this community should be classed as a built up area by virtue of the fact that the combined number of villages and areas, including the new Lea Castle housing development, are an integral part of our community.

- It was mentioned this morning, by the appellant, that this community is not classed as being connected (physically) to the proposed site. In my opinion it should be considered as being connected to it by virtue of the constant use made of it by the whole community, including the new Lea Castle Estate.

- NRS claimed this morning that there will be no impact on local tourism. In my opinion this is completely untrue. The tourist attractions along the stretch of canal are very close to the proposed site. This claim clearly demonstrates a lack of knowledge by the appellant of the area and complete lack of understanding of the community and the large numbers of visitors from outside the area who visit our tourist attractions, people come from as far away as Birmingham.

Thank you

Karen Anderson  
Cookley Resident.