

## **ID.9 Jemma Powell-Tibbetts Statement**

**From:** Jemma Powell-Tibbetts < >

**Sent:** 28 February 2023 13:32

**To:** Skinner, Helen

**Subject:** Jemma Powell-Tibbetts - Speaking at inquiry - To be logged as an inquiry document please.

I stand here today, nervous, emotional and not quite believing we are even at this point, so hugely worried about what our family future holds and the future of our loved ones, friends and fellow residents.

I have lived in Caunsall and Cookley my entire life. Having been educated at Cookley Sebright Primary School, Christened in the Church, Married in the church with my two girls christened as young children.

This is home.

Myself and my husband have worked tirelessly to be able to afford a home in the village as it's all we've ever wanted, to give our children a childhood as we had, surrounded by beautiful countryside, in the village we love. Following the tragic death of my husband's father, we invested as his legacy to them, so our children too can live in the village, should they wish, when they're older.

I don't stand here today with notes full of facts and figures but I do stand here with my heart on my sleeve and emotion, whether it's deemed worth listening to or not. Wishing to appeal to you all to please allow our village and those surrounding us, to stay as we are. Not because I'm a village nimby, but because I care so deeply about my family, friends and everyone else who lives in this beautiful green belt area.

There are thousands of residents surrounding the proposed site, with even more people purchasing homes, just over the road, less than 500 metres as the crow flies, all hoping to start new and exciting lives in the peace and tranquility we are so lucky to have.

Whilst many are coming to learn of the proposals, it is hugely disconcerting to hear how few people are aware of the size and scale of the proposal and how this will not only blight our local environment and landscape, causing destruction and disruption but more importantly the health ramifications to us all, associated with such mineral extraction.

In addition to the vast housing in and around the site, there are five schools only a stone's throw away. It is wholly inevitable and without question that these tiny particulates will be carried through the air and enter the lungs of our children, as they play innocently, as only children should. These particulates potentially causing all manner of damage to our children and as parents we won't even be able to see or stop this from affecting them. I can't even begin to bear the utter feeling of helplessness we will all feel, wondering if our children will be the unfortunate ones and too, never wishing it on anyone else's either.

The question has to be asked, if when a sandstorm hits, we can have sand from the Sahara, lifted by strong winds, reaching high altitudes and being carried across the world, affecting air pollution and pollution levels in the UK, it is surely without question we will see and feel the effects of the pollution from a quarry only a few meters away from our homes and children's schools?

Having had the privilege of working at Cookley Primary School for a few years, shortly before the pandemic and thereafter, I was flabbergasted at the sheer number of children, spanning all the year groups, that required inhalers on a daily basis. So many children already struggling with their breathing, some with huge severity. How can we take this risk? Surely our children's lives are worth more than this?

When the pandemic hit, a moment in history we will all never forget, the moment a virus that attacked people's respiratory systems and their lungs, sadly killed so many loved ones. Why are we now, having come through all that, considering allowing a proposal to be passed, which will again attack the lungs of those around it? Have we learned nothing about just how important our health is and how we must look after our lungs, as they are so fragile.

As trained Forest School Leader, I have taught children of the beauty of the outdoors, with the ethos being, you can learn everything you can in the classroom in the safety and serenity of outside. From mud pits, to dragons lairs and everything in between, we celebrate the outdoors and all it has to offer. However, if this proposal goes ahead, every single minute the children are outside, we will all be wondering what and how much are they breathing in.

Having seen my husband bravely battle cancer twice in his young lifetime already, albeit not respiratory related but brain tumours. Having seen him at his lowest ebb and wondering if he would survive, I can hand on heart say I would not wish that journey of illness on anyone and I would never in a million years be involved in something that could in the future, cause ill health and damage to another human being or animal. No matter how much I had to gain from it financially or otherwise.

When you sit in that hospital being told the cancer you loved one has is something they've never encountered before and they don't know how to treat it, with the need to liaise with other consultants in other countries, it is beyond frightening. It makes you realise just how finite life is and how we must do all we can to look after ourselves and our loved ones. No matter what.

For a time my husband Chris couldn't walk, so I pushed him in a his wheelchair and when his cancer returned his scalp hurt from the radiotherapy and his hair falling out, so I cradled him as I shaved his head to make him more comfortable and we cried together.

Cancer is not to be taken lightly, not at all, it is a reality we have lived with for almost all the 20 years we have been together, after meeting in high school. We think about it every single day and worry how we would ever manage if we had to go through it again. My point is, we now know, the dangers of asbestos, and I believe silicosis is the asbestosis of the future and we must do all we can to protect our children, families, friends and others from this awful disease.

We now have two young Daughters, Daughters we were told we would never have, following Chris's treatment. I simply cannot stand by and see the health of my children be put at risk, I don't believe there would be any parent who could. Knowing what we know and the dangers this proposal poses. There has not been one person who can promise me these particulates will not enter the lungs of my children. These two beautiful girls who stand beside me today.

At one of the earlier consultations, when questioned about the potential health risks associated with the work, which will be carried out daily 7am-7pm Monday - Saturday (with Sundays optional by prior arrangement), we could not be provided with suitable or definitive answers. All we were notified was that National Guidelines (which we all know will never be stringent enough) will be followed.

However, the ground will only be dampened down when the dust levels reach a certain level. At which point, many of the particles floating around, prior to these levels being reached, will already be in the air and most likely lining the lungs of our beautiful children, innocently playing in the playgrounds of our local schools, back gardens or parks.

It came as no surprise at all that the company in question, does not routinely return to the geographical locations of former sites, to monitor and compile statistics of the health of individuals living close by 5, 10, 20, 30 or more years later. As such, they have absolutely no way of knowing if the work carried out previously has damaged the health of those living nearby or even if lives have been lost due to health related issues, linked to their quarrying. As such there is no quantifiable data to evidence it doesn't pose a risk and therefore knowing what we know about particulates being carried in the air, I can say with almost all certainty that our children will have deposits of these poisonous particulates in their lungs and I simply cannot bear the thought of it. Employees/operators however will be provided with full protective clothing and ventilated cabs on their vehicles, whilst our children have absolutely no protection whatsoever as they innocently play with their friends close by.

Moreover, we have a high proportion of elderly residents within our local area, many of whom already have respiratory and heart related illnesses, this is not only a ticking time bomb for our future generations but also a health risk, right here, right now.

Only last year we had two large fires in the local town of Kidderminster, albeit miles from our village. On both occasions all local schools, including Cookley and the others surrounding, were closed and we were advised to close our doors and windows, to protect ourselves from 'debris, toxins and fumes.' I feel the action to close schools has surely set a precedent, as the advice has on both occasions been to close all doors and windows to protect ourselves, and of course most importantly our children.

How on one hand, can we take such drastic action to protect people during these instances and in the next breath agree to a sand and gravel quarry right in the heart of a built up residential area, right next to five schools and risk known silica particulates found in these minerals to be released en masse into the air, for all to breathe in?

Will doors and windows be advised to remain closed during school term time? What will happen when our children play on the playground twice daily and then during their physical education lessons and forest school sessions? Will they need to wear masks?

Surely the aforementioned will be so challenging to manage for a 10-11 year quarrying period but the dangers of 'debris and toxins are just as high, if not higher due to the location and proximity to our children?

Furthermore, hugely challenging as during flu/covid peaks, advice is still to keep rooms/classrooms well ventilated to minimise risk of infection. What a vicious circle we have found ourselves in. Needing windows open to protect ourselves from an airborne virus, known to cause extreme illness and in some cases death. Now needing to close windows to protect ourselves from dangerous particulates outside? With silica dust seeping through every crack and crevice I feel sure this is just as dangerous as anything that's been floating in the air previously with the local fires.

I recently contracted covid myself (October 1st 2022) having evaded it whilst working as a key worker throughout the pandemic, ensuring my vaccinations were up to date, to protect others. I now find myself still coughing months later, with sore lungs and respiratory issues, having been for a chest x ray very recently. I'm a non-smoker/non-vaper (having never tried

either), I look after my body and do all I can to preserve my health to the best of my ability, however even after all the vaccinations and boosters, covid absolutely floored me.

Presently, as a devout animal lover, I volunteer for a local independent RSPCA branch and foster cats in my back garden. I have all manner of cats in my care and one most recently was so poorly following infection and subsequent bulla osteotomy he was being tube fed and having antibiotics administered by myself intravenously every 12 hours. I have at present 13 cats in care, all requiring my very best.

I do this all independently whilst raising my two young Daughters. As a branch we have invested thousands of pounds to enable me to have the facilities here to care for these cats and their varying rescue needs. If this quarry goes ahead I will be stuck with the most horrendous decision, to protect the health of my children whilst having to consider stopping my charitable work, as we will most likely have no choice but relocate out of the area, as so many others have said they will be forced to, if this goes ahead.

This village is our home, and I can't even begin to imagine not being here. However, having seen my Husband's battles, I simply cannot and will not risk my childrens present and/or future health.

In work, I presently devote my life to my role within the branch I serve, I work 7 days a week, 365 days a year and even had to camp in our garden for our family summer holiday last year, because I had a plethora of cats needing 12 hourly medication and sadly no-one else to assist due to the nature of this work.

The sheer number of wildlife that will have their environments shattered as a result of this quarry doesn't bear thinking about and so many lives will be lost as a consequence. For those that do survive, where will they relocate to? They will be so frightened.

I just want to finish by saying, the world isn't what we can make out of it, it is what we make of it and what we can give back for our future generations. This quarry will be taking for more than it will ever give back.

As the famous quote goes, "Only when the last tree has died, the last river has been poisoned and the last fish been caught, will we realise we cannot eat money."

Thank you for listening, Jemma.

Mother of two special, miracle, young Daughters currently with beautifully clear lungs... Please allow it to stay that way!

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