

Before I highlight the below, as spoken on the first day of the inquiry, I would like to notify the inspector, that since talking so openly at the inquiry last week, I have found out one of my immediate family members has cancer, a journey as discussed on the first day, we had hoped we'd never have to encounter as a family again. I found out this horrendous news at the weekend and having attended a hospital consultation with them on Tuesday, they were advised to rest and seek gentle walks to help aid their recovery after their planned surgery in a few weeks time, how can we possibly walk as a family in the openness of our village, risking further damage in the process. Taking away this land for so many years will be so detrimental on so many levels.

I please implore the inspector to read my first objection, which will be found in the notes following inquiry one.

Having also heard the story of Joanna, young mother a similar age to myself, also with two young daughters, I can't bear her sadness at knowing she will die of silicosis, most likely before her children have grown up. She too vehemently objects to this quarry and has labelled it as a death sentence for our children of this abhorrent quarry goes ahead.

I also made this point during the open floor discussion on the first day of the inquiry. I just wanted to address the perceived elephant in the room as aforementioned by the appellant before I read my planned statement. As a busy, self employed mother of two young children, I myself have struggled to keep up to date with the amendments and as such have not myself been able to actively engage with the proposed amendments. This isn't due to lack of care or indeed believing the proposal amendments are now any of benefit. In turn, I don't think a presumption can be made by the appellant that lack of engagement during the consultation period, is an indicative sign that more people feel the amendments are of benefit. I too, won't make presumption, although I can imagine, lack of engagement here is merely due to the fact, similarly to myself, so many of us find ourselves, in this day and age, time poor and simply unable to keep up.

Below is the wording I read out on the first day of the appeal.

I stand here today, as I did at the last enquiry, still nervous, still emotional and still not quite believing we are at this point...again. Similarly to so many in his room today, I have lived in Caunsall and Cookley my entire life. Although, duration of living here is totally irrelevant, whether you've been here 3 years or 30, for anyone who moves to our wonderful village, it swiftly becomes home. For us, a home we have worked tirelessly to afford, to provide our children with an upbringing, we were so fortunate to have ourselves.

I don't stand here today with notes full of facts and figures, I'll leave that to the experts, however I do stand here with my heart racing, and unsurprisingly for those who know me, full of emotion. I care so deeply about our village and everyone within it, I appeal to you to please allow our village to remain as it is and to protect this incredibly stunning greenbelt land which is so important to so many of us, not least the wildlife, who too, call it home.

The sheer number of wildlife that will have their homes 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? It is hard to comprehend their fright.

Right now, there are thousands of residents surrounding the proposed site, with hundreds if not thousands more, moving into new homes, just over the road, less than 250 metres away, from the extraction site. I have watched as many new families have joined the village, following the Lea Castle development with many new children joining the village school. I can imagine all of these families full of hope and excitement for their futures, in their new and beautiful homes. Unbeknownst to them, at their time of committing, they could be faced with living opposite a 6-7 day a week, fully functioning, dusty, noisy quarry.

Whilst many are learning of the quarry proposals, it is hugely disconcerting to hear, even now, how few people are aware of the size, scale and duration 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 mineral extraction such as this.

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 children either.

The question has to be asked, if when a sandstorm hits in the Sahara, sand from there can be lifted by strong winds, reaching high altitudes and be carried across the world, affecting air pollution and pollution levels in the UK, with its debris being seen on our cars and homes, right here in this village too. It is surely without reasonable doubt, 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? As we all know, minute, invisible dust particles are impossible to control.

Having had the privilege of working at Cookley Primary School for a few years, shortly before the pandemic and thereafter, I was utterly staggered at the sheer number of children, spanning all the year groups, that required inhalers frequently 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?

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.

I am hopefully going to be supporting with some curriculum based forest school sessions located in Wolverley in the near future, where children from urban schools, with limited access to landscape and woodland such as ours, are able to visit and learn. We should be so incredibly proud of what we have on our doorstep, providing a solace and enriching experience for children who don't have access to areas such as this in their own day-to-day life, yet here we are, still fighting years and years later for the right decision to be reached. Why is it so hard to protect such precious spaces?

Sadly, since the last inquiry, I have lost a dear friend and former colleague, to cancer no less. She taught as she lived, to care for our environment, to protect our animals and to learn everything we can from nature around us. Having too, seen my husband bravely battle cancer twice in his young lifetime already, without going into details as I did at the last inquiry, I can hand on heart say I would not wish that journey of illness on anyone and I can confirm I would never in a million years be involved in anything that could, in the future, cause ill health and damage to another human being or animal. No matter how much I could personally gain from it, financially or otherwise.

Cancer is not to be taken lightly, not at all, it is a reality we as a family have lived with for almost all the 21 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 strongly 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 significant danger this proposal poses.

There has not been one person, throughout this whole process, who can promise me these particulates will not enter the lungs of my children. Not one.

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.

In the last few years, 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, where thousands more homes are being built, 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 if the quarry does go ahead? 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? How will this be managed by the local schools during term time for a potential 10-11 year period?

Furthermore, keeping windows closed within schools will be hugely challenging as during norovirus/flu/covid peaks, as advice remains to keep rooms/classrooms well ventilated to minimise risk of infection. What a vicious circle we have found ourselves in. Needing to ventilate to minimise infection, yet not being able to ventilate due to quarry dust and debris particulates. I feel sure these particles are scientifically just as dangerous as anything that's previously been floating in the air following local fires.

I firmly believe in life, we can choose to be one of life's givers or one of life's takers and for me, there is simply no question. We must give all we can with the aim of leaving the world a better place than when we found it.

Following my friend's passing, I wanted to bring light into the darkness and along with the support of good friends, created Cookley's first charity lantern walk. In January this year, we raised over £2,000 for KEMP Hospice. Following the success of this, we are now making this a yearly, large scale charitable community event. Next year, we're aiming to

better our grand total, supporting both KEMP and another local charity, yet to be decided by our villagers.

Our village community is strong, we look out for each other, we care for each other and we support each other. We appreciate what we have and all we want to do is protect it, just as the generations before us have.

The houses we live in, the land we own, we are all merely custodians. If we continue to take at the rate we are, for generations to come, what could possibly be left? In memory of my late friend Sara, one of her favourite quotes, "The one who plants trees knowing that he or she will never sit in their shade, has at least started to understand the meaning of life." If only we could all be more Sara.

Thanks again for listening.

My thanks and warmest wishes for accepting my objection. I stand firm on this and always will. This quarry must not go ahead. The openness of the greenbelt will be lost and why restore what is already so incredibly beautiful and home to so many animals.

Thank you.

Jemma Powell-Tibbetts