

Hello, My name is Alex

Thankyou for the opportunity to speak today

As a Cookley resident and parent I feel compelled to speak again today, as I did at the last inquiry. I have to be clear about what the proposed sand and gravel quarry actually means. We are talking about transforming villages - including a new housing estate - into an industrial area for at least a decade.

Destroying acres of pristine greenbelt for profit, in direct contradiction of the government's **National Planning Policy Framework** which requires Sustainable Development, Housing & Economic Growth, Environmental Protection, Planning & Decision Making, and Design Quality, Infrastructure & Community needs (notes below)

- 1) **Sustainable Development:** Which is contradicted by complete & total destruction of pristine greenbelt, (9.7.6 of the ES that the site is located 'wholly within the West midlands Green Belt') habitat destruction, potential water table disruption, water pollution, CO2 emissions by traffic and Dozers/trucks to name a few.
- 2) **Housing and Economic Growth,** Homes England plans a sustainable and affordable Lea Castle Village (with another school a couple of hundred meters from ground zero) and now the people who were to benefit from this Housing policy would be lined up for a broadside against the site.
- 3) **Environmental Protection:** - DIRECT extract. Safeguarding areas of natural and cultural significance, including Green Belts, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and historic sites. The NPPF emphasizes minimizing environmental impact, protecting biodiversity, and promoting renewable energy. (From the ES all vehicles are to be diesel not EV) I don't think I need to add any more.
- 4) **Plan-Making and Decision-Taking:** 'Encouraging local authorities to develop local plans that reflect community needs.
- 5) **Design Quality:** The proposed site is simply too near to residential properties and just for good measure, 4 schools and a nursery.
The other day at the round table I could hear discussions of bund heights, plant footprint etc, but I think a nursery mere meters away is a more pressing concern.
- 6) **Infrastructure and Community Needs:** Just to be clear nobody who lives within a 1 km of ground zero of the quarry wants it. I may be speaking out of turn but I'm almost a 100% sure that nobody who benefits financially or otherwise from this proposal lives anywhere near it. Actions speak louder than favorable dust reports.

There's been some wonderful speakers so far who have done a great job of driving home scientific and environmental impacts of the proposal, however I'd like to concentrate on the deep concerns I have about the proposed quarry as a parent and resident, the first of which being the reduced air quality and risks of silica dust.

At the first inquiry I raised the plight of Joanna McNeil, a 38 year old administrator and mother of 2 from Australia, who has contracted silicosis after just 7 years working at an office 90m from Borstal quarry in Melbourne.

I feel the need to raise this again as I find it such a bonkers notion that a woman can contract silicosis after just 7 years of working in a office inside a brick building **90m** away from a quarry, and yet here we are proposing putting a quarry just **18m** away from the nursery at Heathfield Knoll school, which looks after babies as young as 3 months old. And we sit here discussing bund heights as though that's the most pressing issue at play!

As Mark Garnier stated in his speech, this proposal wouldn't even be considered in Canada due to the close proximity to a residential area, and Canada is a country that still mines and exports asbestos. In my day job, I have to complete risk assessments for extremely hazardous works and sites. If someone came to me and said to please compile paperwork to limit the hazards of a quarry located mere meters from a nursery I would assume it was a joke.

Also hugely concerning is the traffic plan.

I was here on the first day of the inquiry, where a statement was made saying "HGV quarry vehicles will not impact the local traffic" and was met with inappropriate but palpable laughter.

The A449 was crippled last month due to 2 sets of temporary traffic lights spaced over a mile apart. Journey times of 1 hour from Kidderminster to Cookley/Wolverley.

I was heading out to the post office and my wife stopped me and said 'Don't bother today' The A449 looks like a substantial road but has frequent accidents and it also does the heavy lifting of transport around the area.

It is frequently caught falling short of its current demands, let alone an additional daily 150 vehicle movements from a sand quarry and a new housing village.

There seems to be a sense that once the lorries are on local roads they're 'off and away' as if by magic.

Magic is what is required to believe the traffic assessment, as anyone who uses the roads regularly would be able to confirm.

From the ES

6.3.40 *All movements to / from the Site would be via Wolverley Road to the east of the access road.*

This is a B road at best and as the sole initial carrier of the 150 vehicle movements per day is completely unsuitable for this amount of traffic.

Also from the ES

6.3.42 *Of those HGVs traveling to / from the south 60% are predicted to travel via the A449 Chester Road North / to the east of Kidderminster and 40% via the A451 Stourbridge Road / Ring Road close to Kidderminster town center. The potential distribution of HGVs is shown in Figure x.*

To talk once again about the greenbelt, we see in 9.7.6 of the ES that the site is located 'wholly within the West Midlands Green Belt'. Quite accurately stating that the purpose of green belt is to prevent the coalescence of towns and preserve the openness of the countryside.

In a bizarre turn of events the collective people of the area are being asked in a roundabout way.

Why don't you want a sand quarry a couple of hundred meters from your houses and your children's school?

Why do you think 150 HGV movements a day is an issue?

Why are you so concerned about clean air and silica dust?

Why do you deserve access to the greenbelt?

We've reduced the noise of the dozers from 106 to 103db (jet flying over at 100ft equivalent)

As if we are somehow being unreasonable. We are not unreasonable; we live in a world that is primarily driven by fair exchange.

In the ES the reason for the 'not doing nothing option' is the creation of 11 (likely internal, specialist) jobs and the extraction of minerals readily available elsewhere in the area. Weigh this against the permanent greenbelt destruction, upheaval and health concerns involved in proceeding and we can see there is not a single measure of fair exchange.

To conclude, I've lived in Cookley for only a short time but have found it to be an extremely positive and inclusive place that me and my family now call home. As I'm sure you will have seen from the way our community has pulled together to protect the area it really is a special place. I'm not at all keen on public speaking but this community has been so kind and welcoming to us that I simply owe it my best efforts, and I urge you to please uphold the decision of the previous inspector and reject the proposal, thank you.