

Lea Castle Quarry objection representation – Maxine Huselbee

Representative parties, thank you for allowing the concerns of local residents to be heard. Alongside many others, once again I feel the need to make a few points regarding the proposed sand & gravel quarry at Lea Castle.

There are numerous people here who wish to make a passionate plea to you about opposing the quarry, and I worry that you will feel that our pleas are unfounded and even verging on Nimby. This is not the case, we are asking you to, again, consider all aspects of this application and feel that strongly despite during previous hearings, appeals and/or public consultations we will continue to put ourselves forward to be ridiculed, laughed at and dismissed out of hand.

My partner and I have lived and worked in Cookley for more than 20 years. It is not a picture postcard Cotswold village, but a working community with Steel Wheels very much an important part of its make-up. We have some factory noise when the wind blows in certain directions and we have some large vehicles moving through the village on a regular basis and so through its existence we have an understanding of noise and traffic. Highlighting this point is to show we are not a village of high tea and croquet that wants its rural idyll preserved, we are a community that embraces a company that offers significant employment to locals and is generally involved in the village dynamic without being to its detriment – something a quarry can't provide.

I am not naïve, I received my 1st class bachelor of science with honours and my Doctorate in geology and been involved in geo fieldwork including training of stratigraphic mapping for more than 10 years - because of my experience I understand the need for raw materials, but maintain that the identification of extraction sites should be sympathetic to the surrounding area and what seems to have been overlooked is that there were other sites proposed.

When a handful of sites were first proposed as possible locations for extraction of minerals we were all aware that, sadly, agricultural land would be lost and had to resign ourselves to that. Some of those sites would have had minimal impact on residential areas. Sadly, money talks and the Lea Castle site was identified as having the greatest yield and the site was earmarked with, it seems, little regard for its surroundings.

Since then, during consultations and planning meetings in favour of the quarry *we have been told:*

- There will not be health issues because they will not be mining silicates.

The Lea Castle Site will allow sand and gravel to be quarried from the Wildmoor Sandstone Formation and is widespread across England. This has, traditionally, been quarried for its high silicate content. By its very nature, quarrying the formation will release silicates into the atmosphere (directly linked to respiratory conditions/diseases) and if the quarry site is approved, will be releasing this material into a concentrated area of vulnerable people, as well as potentially affecting the health of those who are not currently classed as 'vulnerable'. At a previous meeting it was stated that whilst on site workers wear PPE to prevent the condition through concentrated exposure, Silicosis has not been recorded in the general population and so is not considered to be a significant risk. However, if this is not being looked for or has exacerbated pre-existing conditions in the vulnerable it won't be recorded. The operators have changed their information several times regarding whether or not silicates will be quarried and in the last meeting acknowledged silicate quarrying would be carried out over the site and then advised that they will be employing fine mist practices during working hours to keep dust particles down. Do the dust particles just disappear when outside working hours and are NRS really going to pretend that the surrounding area will not be contaminated by airborne particles and via road transportation?

Anyone local to the area will be familiar with Wildmoor Quarry on Sandy Lane which, as the name suggests, is removing the same sand and gravel as the proposed Lea Castle Site and run by the same parent company.

Wildmoor Quarry has been operating since the 1930's and planning permissions have been granted for mineral extraction at the site in 1952, 1971, 1993 and for an extension in 1999. A further application was granted in 2021 for restoration of the Chadwich Lane Quarry, located about 900 metres north of the quarry site and this will be transported to the Wildmoor Site.

Given the Wildmoor Quarry will be adhering to the same governance regarding operations to mitigate pollution, using water dampening/wheel washing, road cleaning, etc at the last hearing I provided pictures of this working example, showing the spread of sand along the access road - with significant deposits visible for at least half a mile in either direction. The images were taken after rain (so some deposits had been washed away), but the road, verges and street furniture were still coated and on dry days the sand actually whips up into clouds along the road, disturbed by general traffic and carries even further. Following

the hearing, with impeccable timing, the site entrance was tidied up and a new sign put up, however the state of the surrounding area has returned to its previous state and this is supposedly after the road is regularly cleaned. Therefore ignoring the regular movement of trucks, the contamination alone is hardly minimal impact on it's surroundings.

The proposed quarry site at Lea Castle is directly opposite a school, another 2 schools located in Wolverley are within a few minutes walking distance of the site entrance, and there is a primary school in Cookley. There is a large nursing home within 5-minutes walk of the proposed quarry entrance, another in Cookley, as well as a large residential complex for elderly people. Whilst water-based solutions have been proposed, again, by looking at Wildmoor quarry it can be easily demonstrated from the debris coating the vegetation, etc that this is not 100% effective and pollution at such a level in a populated area such as ours is not only unacceptable but completely irresponsible. In addition to health matters, particulate pollution will reduce the quality of life for residents, by reducing the cleanliness of the environment in which we live, from roads to windows and even to the washing on our lines. With re-assignment of greenbelt allowing the addition of at least another 800 houses to the 600 house development on the Lea Castle Village site on the opposite side of the A449 there will be an even higher residential use of land surrounding the quarry, with all of the extra traffic that brings, further strengthening the case for this being a unsuitable quarry site.

- There is little objection from locals – this is largely due to lack of knowledge not support for the quarry. For example, from personal experience of friends/family members and people we have met on the development looking to buy on the new Lea Castle Village site, up until 3 weeks ago the existence of the quarry was either being wholly denied by the sales execs or they have told people that the quarry site is no-where near the development – we can only assume that this is because admission of the quarry could impact on house sales for this site.
- There will be no risk to the local SSI - given the inconsistencies in the porosity and make-up of the Wildmoor Sandstone, without continuous borehole data generated over a wide belt from the site all the way to the Wet Woodland SSI at Hurcott within 3 miles to the southeast (which in itself couldn't detect local inconsistencies in the formations) in my humble opinion there is no way of knowing whether there will be the potential for

groundwater pollution either during the life of the quarry or after infill to irreversibly damage the site. The new Lea Castle housing estate was surveyed with boreholes prior to building but it appears that there are severe drainage issues that hadn't been anticipated, so how can the quarry site be exempt from issues?

- In the official representations to the council, the existence of the quarry was referred to as a 'temporary' measure. *This is not a set of roadworks that will be in place for a few days or weeks and cause minimal disruption;* the original licence period itself with all that it brings would exceed the formative years of at least 1 generation of children from the local villages and certainly be in place for the sunset years of many of the nursing home residents. Whilst we have no proof that longevity would be extended, if we take the Wildmoor Quarry as test case; that quarry has been running for longer than I have been alive and as you can see, I am no spring chicken. If this is applied to the NRS application if the site is approved, the quarry could be part of the area for a lifetime. Neither the original proposal or a potential extension could ever be considered a temporary measure.
- There would be minimal noise pollution – revised plans show new bund layouts and a reduce height processing plant to 'reduce noise'. Despite now quoting the existence of 'new tech' I think that speaks for itself. Anyone spending any time in the area knows how easily noise travels from that site based on when the motorcross users are on the field and so anything emanating from there will be a disturbance.
- We have been told that there is an acceptable risk regarding increased traffic due to lorry movements on the approach to the quarry, however there is currently no access up the B4189 for site traffic accessing a local building site. How can a temporary arrangement identify the risks for site traffic but a quarry planning application not?
- This will bring employment – the number of operatives on the site is minimal and given these will be specialist jobs are unlikely to come from the local community, however the potential loss of jobs due to the siting of the quarry opposite a private school and near a caravan park will far outweigh and new jobs.

We have been asked to consider the need for raw materials and the tax that will be paid by the quarry. As previously mentioned the deposits range across the region not just this site and we have just heard that the landbank quota is almost

met, and business tax will be received by the local authority if the site is located elsewhere within the catchment whilst avoiding losing business tax from those local businesses that can potentially no longer operate.

I don't have time to address my concerns over everything I would like to such as local road use, habitat removal, the lack of guarantees that truly inert material will be used as infill and based on the comments from a firm representative during a consultation I was advised that although the plan is inert material, in reality it will be infilled with whatever is available at the time and they hope they don't 'get caught'. Also the presumption that post-quarry private land will be reinstated as parkland and available for public use.

With the Labour councillor Mr Matt Western in January 2022 having proposed to the house, a motion regarding the siting of quarries in populated areas - a presumption in planning decision-making against approving such developments in an attempt to protect communities from potentially harmful emissions produced by mining activities, we believed that everyday folks were finally being represented.

More locally, (within 7 miles albeit within the neighbouring LA), within the last few days a development of a small pocket of land that had become overgrown and (citing the wildlife living there) has been protected from the building of 2 bungalows due to the development being 'unacceptably harmful to the character and appearance of the area'. If 2 bungalows is enough to refuse planning, surely the removal of approx. 3 million tonnes of material over 25.7 hectares but effectin over 46 hectares of greenbelt with all of the issues that will be raised today can be put into perspective.

*Mr Woolcock, for an area that is under pressure from all sides, securing our greenbelt and the future of our villages, be they old or new, is in **your** hands - and whilst you will be presented with many facts and figures assessing the viability of the quarry site on paper, we are the villages at ground zero, the people who will be directly affected and are, once again, the voices that want and need to be heard. Please close this application down once and for all.*

Thank you.