

Stop The Quarry Action Group
c/o Mr D Talbot
46 Gaymadeore Road
Cookley
Kidderminster
DY10 3TU

Development Control Manager
Worcestershire County Council
Directorate of Economy and Infrastructure
County Hall
Spetchley Road
Worcester
WR5 2NP

Dear Steve

**Land at Lea Castle Farm, Wolverley, Proposed sand and gravel quarry - 19/000053/
CM**

These are further objections from the **‘Stop The Quarry Action Group’** which represents residents of Wolverley and Cookley Parish and Kidderminster in objecting to the proposed quarry. The Group has 1410 Facebook members with 4274 signatures on the on-line petition. These objections follow our earlier submission in March 2020 and include comment addressing further submissions from the applicant following the Council’s Reg 25 request.

The points raised in the Reg 25 request do not address all of the failings in the applicant’s EIA some of which were highlighted in our previous objection letter. Failure to address these matters would mean the local planning authority making a decision without being in the full knowledge of the likely significant effects. Any positive decision would then be open for Judicial Review.

These objections address the headings in the applicants EIA in the context and requirements of Development Management (non-strategic policies) of the Worcestershire Minerals Local Plan - Fourth Stage Consultation as proposed to be modified. These draft policies require a level of technical assessment appropriate to the proposed development to demonstrate that the development does not harm the environment.

Residents object to the application due to the harm both individually and cumulatively to the local environment and the degradation of the countryside and Green Belt. The planning application does not adequately or reasonably address the likely environmental impacts of the proposal.

The likely harm to the environment in all forms and the the harm to the openness of the Green Belt are not outweighed by any matters, including over riding need for the minerals, so as to create exceptional circumstances. There is also no over riding need to circumvent the Development Plan led process and to bring this site forward in advance of all options for meeting the need for minerals in the County.

The aim of Environmental Impact Assessment is to protect the environment by ensuring that a local planning authority when deciding whether to grant planning permission for a project, which is likely to have significant effects on the environment, does so in the full knowledge of the likely significant effects, and takes this into account in the decision making process. By submitting an Environmental Impact assessment the applicants acknowledge the proposal is likely to have significant impact.

It is a reasonable requirement that the EIA includes the information for reaching a reasoned conclusion on the significant effects of the development on the environment, taking into account current knowledge and methods of assessment.

The submitted application and EIA does not meet the legal requirement of UK Law and Regulation. No local planning authority acting reasonably could grant planning permission for this proposal based on the information submitted. To do so will risk judicial review of the decision.

Regards

Chairman of Stop The Quarry Action Group

Further Comments of Stop The Quarry Action Group

Statement of Community Involvement

The community consultation took place 2-3 years ago and 18 months prior to the submission of a planning application. In that respect the development was considered theoretical to many in the local community and in no way reflects the feelings of the local community. There has clearly been a significant socio-economic change as a result of the Covid 19 Pandemic with permanent changes in population lifestyles in respect of place of work, use of outdoor space as well as rates of physical development. None of this was captured by the public consultation event several years ago.

Repeated requests for information to the consultation feedback platform have been ignored.

A fresh consultation event should have been organised by the applicants to capture the public concerns based on a much more informed local population.

EIA Proposal

We and our consultants have read through in detail the Planning Statement, the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Non-Technical Summary, the first 100 pages of the EIA and some of the technical supporting documents. Following this peer review, while there are many points with which we disagree, believe are, actually, incorrect or take exception to, our fundamental problem is that the EIA is not fit for purpose. We should not be expected to use our resources to further consider a poor and confusing document.

Having submitted an EIA the applicants concede that the project is likely to have significant effects on the environment. The Environmental Statement (ES) is somewhat of a paper chase with it referring to extraneous documents making it difficult to read and fully understand. This is contrary to guidance on EIA.

The aim of EIA is to protect the environment by ensuring that a local planning authority when deciding whether to grant planning permission for a project, which is likely to have significant effects on the environment, does so **in the full knowledge of the likely significant effects**. It should take this into account in the decision-making process. The regulations set out a procedure for identifying those projects which should be subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment and for assessing, consulting and coming to a decision on those projects which are likely to have significant environmental effects.

ES should be prepared objectively. It should not understate adverse effects or over-emphasise beneficial ones. ES should read as though prepared by a neutral observer and should neither support nor oppose the proposal, merely set out the evidence gathered on likely impacts if it were to go ahead. While there may be instances where subjective opinions are necessary, these should be identified. The key to a useful ES is the honest presentation of objective evidence.

The submitted EIA does not provide the local planning authority (the County Council) with the full knowledge of likely environmental effects of the project.

The EIA approaches each area of potential environmental effect within each chapter in the same way, to demonstrate there will be no impact.

In respect of impact on Landscape and Visual Impact, the ES states (para 7.3.6),

“There would be no significant impacts resulting from the operational phase upon existing landscape.”

The ES concludes (para 7.5.2 – 7.5.3),

“It has been concluded that whilst the proposals will result in some temporary disturbance to landscape character and views for visual receptors in the vicinity of the site, the development is not out of character with the local context and any effect are temporary alongside the life of mineral and restoration operations. In the long-term, once restoration has matured, the proposed development will not have any lasting adverse impact on landscape or visual receptors.”

In considering the potential for cumulative visual effects, the outline permitted residential development for some 600 new homes and up to 3,500 square metres of employment floorspace with a total of 1400 proposed in the local plan at the disused Lea Castle Hospital site had been considered. It is assessed that the cumulative effect of the Quarry and Hospital development upon visual amenity for both operational and restoration periods is assessed to be “neutral and not significant.”

The merit of the ES, from the main author of the ES who has been directly employed by mineral operating companies, can be judged on these statements to the effect that the open excavation quarry will not be out of character and any effect will be reversible. The after use leaves a 1.1 Million m³ crater in the ancient parkland. This characterisation is at minimum wrong and at worst untruthful. How can these conclusions be reached? How does this provide the decision maker with the full knowledge of the likely significant effects?

In respect of ecological impact, the ES says;

- Semi-improved neutral grassland - short-term negative impact on this habitat that is considered to be temporary, reversible and not-significant.
- Improved grassland - The development would have a short-term negative impact on this habitat that is considered to be temporary, reversible and not significant.
- Tall ruderal - short term negative impact on this habitat that is considered to be temporary, reversible and not significant.
- Arable - short term negative impact that is considered to be temporary, reversible and not significant.
- Defunct hedgerow - long-term negative impact that is considered to be temporary, reversible and not significant.
- Standard trees = A number are present in the centre of site where the quarry will be. The development would have a long term negative impact on scattered trees that is considered to be temporary, reversible and not significant.

And so it goes on for all types of flora, fauna, bats, birds, invertebrates - all temporary, reversible, not significant. This seems to be highly unlikely.

Chapters on noise, air quality, historic environment and the like are all the same, an extremely light touch, no consideration of impact without mitigation and no finding of any significant harm in any case.

Several issues have been raised in relation to the assessment of mineral dust impacts and the assessment of impacts of emissions from road traffic associated with the development. Taking account of all the issues raised, the assessment is considered to not accurately represent the air quality or dust impacts of the development.

Irrespective of the accuracy, the conclusions claimed are considered to be understated and will result in adverse impacts in the local area. In addition, the assessment does not take account of the impacts on the nearby air quality management area where the effects are likely to be most significant. Without a more accurate and fully considered assessment, the overall significance of the development should thus be considered significant.

We are sure The County Council will have noted the failings of some environmental chapters to assess the correct scheme, meaning they cannot possibly provide useable information on the impact of the scheme.

The EIA is a pointless exercise; it does not provide the local planning authority with any reasonable level of knowledge on the potential impacts of the development. No planning authority acting reasonably could rely on this document in order to reach a decision. Some negative impact is inevitable from a 3,000,000-tonne quarry, but the ES does not concede this at all.

The application is further flawed by fundamental issues it relies upon but cannot control. The development is assessed for impact over only 10 years. This time period cannot be guaranteed, it is dependent on the speed of extraction, weather conditions and on the rate of sale of product, and on whether further reserves are identified. The current Covid Pandemic has impacted on global economies including the UK construction industry. Not only has the Pandemic significantly slowed down the construction industry throughout the period of necessary social distancing. But the Pandemic has changed for ever the lifestyles and behaviours of the public and markets. This will impact on the need for construction materials in terms of volumes and take up rates,

Despite referring to “restoration” around 300 times in the first 100 pages of the ES, the landscape will not be restored in the general understanding of the word. 3,000,000 tonnes will be removed (1.7M m³), and 1,020,000 tonnes (600,000m³) replaced. This will leave a 1,100,000m³ crater where the parkland used to be. This is not restoring the landscape. The ordinary definition of “restore” is “Return (someone or something) to a former condition, place, or position”. The “restoration” is also outside the control of the applicant and is dependent on sourcing 1 million tonnes of inert waste (clay, sub soil, chalk, concrete, hardcore, rubble) which they admit is in short supply. In ten-years’ time it will be in even shorter supply due to diminishing brownfield sites to redevelop and improved recycling.

The ES does not look at impact on the longer term in any way. It does not consider short term, medium term or long term impact. The site could potentially be operational for 20 years if extraction takes longer and after care is slow.

The ES repeatedly justifies the impact due to the 11 jobs to be created but no account is taken of jobs lost as a consequence of the quarry, in agriculture, the equestrian centre, tourism, pubs, cafes, restaurants, schools, care homes etc. The 11 jobs are short term and are likely to be transferred from existing quarries. The job losses would be local and could be permanent. This

alone demonstrates the absolute absence of any balance in the ES; this is consistent within all chapters.

The ES repeatedly refers to and seeks justification from the Third Stage Consultation of the Worcestershire Minerals Local Plan. This plan has been abandoned by the County Council. The application seeks to pre-determine the emerging Minerals Plan and it is not needed in the context of an existing 7-year supply of sand and gravel. The applicant is seeking to pre-determine the Local Plan process in the knowledge that if the site is considered as part of a Sustainability Appraisal it will not score well against alternatives.

These are just a few examples of the unbalanced approach to the ES which results in a flawed application.

We do not believe a decision maker acting reasonably could come to a positive decision on the application based on the environmental evidence presented. We reserve the right to submit further comments when additional information is submitted or to make further comments if the local planning authority decide to determine the application based on the flawed information presented to the public at present.

If the local planning authority positively determine this application there is a clear case for seeking judicial review of that decision based on the inadequacies of the ES.

Alternatives.

The EIA Regulations require that a description of the reasonable alternatives (for example in terms of development design, technology, location, size and scale) studied by the developer, which are relevant to the proposed project and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for selecting the chosen option, including a comparison of the environmental effects.

The only alternatives considered are from existing alternative quarries. No alternative sites for new quarries are considered balancing the environmental impacts. The Minerals Local Plan and future Sites Plan will carry out this exercise as is appropriate in a plan led system. For the application to be considered ahead of the development plan then the application must prove categorically that no alternatives will come forward during the development plan process and early determination will not prejudice that development plan process.

Alternative sites and indeed the application site needs to be considered in respect of the need for the mineral which will arise during any potential mineral operation. Reliance on Lea Castle Hospital as a source of demand is naïve and ridiculous and shows how out of date the ES is. Lea Castle Hospital is under construction with marketing of properties underway and the quarry application has not yet been to committee.

Green Belt & Conservation Area

The Worcestershire Minerals Local Plan states (MLP18) that,

a) Mineral extraction within the Green Belt will be supported where a level of technical assessment appropriate to the proposed development demonstrates that, throughout its lifetime, the mineral extraction and/engineering operation will:

- preserve the openness of the Green Belt; and

- not conflict with the purposes of including land within the Green Belt.

And

b) Where any aspect of the proposed mineral development is inappropriate in the Green Belt - including mineral extraction and/or engineering operations that cannot satisfy the tests in part (a) above - it will only be supported where a level of technical assessment demonstrates that very special circumstances exist that mean the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

It is significant to note the proposed main modifications to the plan specifically included engineering operations within the test. In this respect the engineering operations to create the bunds need to be considered in respect of the openness of the Green Belt. It is noted the local planning authority has taken enforcement action regarding the creation of motocross jumps due to their impact on the openness of the Green Belt. To be consistent the bunds created around the quarry should be treated similarly.

The ES does not demonstrate any of these fundamental requirements. No very special circumstances have been demonstrated such that the harm is outweighed by other considerations. The circumstances must be that development can only occur in this location, the lack of supply is not an appropriate consideration to outweigh harm as the availability of supply is not site specific. This is why the consideration of alternatives; a fundamental requirement of ES is so important. For the site to be acceptable in Green Belt terms the applicants must demonstrate that no other site is available with lower environmental and other harm.

While mineral extraction is considered appropriate development in the Green Belt subject to these tests, ancillary development like bunds, plant etc are not similarly considered and must be justified separately. In the current proposal the proposed bunds to help hide the mineral operation are themselves inappropriate development and harmful to the Green Belt and environment.

Case law has established how openness can be adversely impacted and includes the development of basements, such that the removal of 1.1m cubic metres of material must be seen as having a significant harm to the openness of the Green belt.

Amenity

The Worcestershire Minerals Local Plan (MLP19) requires that the proposed mineral development, including associated transport, must not give rise to unacceptable adverse effects on amenity or health and well-being. To achieve this, a level of technical assessment appropriate to the proposed development will be required to demonstrate that, throughout its lifetime (either individually or cumulatively), the proposed development will not cause unacceptable harm to sensitive receptors from:

- dust;
- odour;
- noise and vibration;
- light;
- visual impacts; and/or
- contamination.

The planning application and ES has not demonstrated this either individually and nor cumulatively.

Noise

It tells a lot about the value of the ES that the EIA devotes only four pages to the assessment of noise. The noise surveys were carried out in June and July 2018. This is considered to be out of date. Evidence from local residents is that whilst the noise surveys were being carried out noise generating activities were being undertaken nearby.

As such the noise survey does not provide robust evidence on which to determine the impact of the proposal on the environment. The surveys were also not taken during the proposed site operational times and would not be representative of the existing environment.

The competences of the persons carrying out the assessment are noted and that they work almost exclusively for mineral extraction and waste companies. We would question the independence and ability to be unbiased from persons whose livelihoods are dependent on the favours of such companies. ES should be prepared objectively. It should not understate adverse effects or over-emphasise beneficial ones. ES should read as though prepared by a neutral observer and should neither support nor oppose the proposal, merely set out the evidence gathered on likely impacts if it were to go ahead. While there may be instances where subjective opinions are necessary, these should be identified. The key to a useful ES is the honest presentation of objective evidence.

Whilst NRS concur that all relevant legal criteria has been met pertaining to this survey, we do not feel it fit for purpose on the following grounds:

- The survey was carried out pre Covid-19 & thus all parameters relating to impact on human receptors are out of touch with the now “new normal” living / working from home environment. A far greater percentage of the community are now home during operating hours & thus will be affected by the increased noise level:
- Ambient noise will have changed with the ban on motocross, road noise and aircraft noise will be lower – due to Covid
- The noise survey fails to acknowledge the conveyor system below the PRow and bridleway.
- The impact of noise on users of the bridleway is not considered.
- The EIA Noise Chapter does not describe any operation or its noise characteristic.
- The proposed hours of operation of the development being assessed bear no resemblance to the hours surveyed.

In paragraph 10.3.1 it would be helpful for the EIA to have set out how close the noise sensitive receptors are from the various sources of noise.

In paragraph 10.3.2 the EIA acknowledges there will be off site noise from HGV movements, but no assessment is made of the impact from that additional HGV traffic.

Paragraph 10.3.7 of the EIA pre judges the findings of the study which totally discredits its assessment.

Paragraph 10.4.5 dismisses “temporary” noise events which could last upto 8 weeks or 56 days, a period four times longer than legislation considers acceptable for noisy temporary activities. These temporary events are acknowledged as being noisier than the mining operation itself and closer to noise sensitive receptors. No assessment is made of these events.

Whilst the noise level from the site will, according to the WBM report, remain within the +10 dba tolerance level, it does not cover how various frequencies will travel & therefore become a long term, persistent & invasive distraction to peoples' lives. A noise level increase of 5dba is accepted as being significant and noticeable. Noise levels increase exponentially so that 10dba is considerably louder than double the accepted significance level.

Local leisure businesses such as The Lock Public House & Wolverley Caravan & Camping Club site, will loose trade. Visitors will not want to come for restful vacations or to use the Canal Conservation Area in an area that has raised ambient noise. The value of the canal for informal recreation is very clear by the use of The Lock car park by visitors.

The psychological effect of long-term noise nuisance will have highly detrimental effects on the mental health of close by residents. Even small increases in unwanted ambient sound have significant effects. In 2011, for example, scientists studying people living near seven major European airports found that a 10-decibel increase in aircraft noise was associated with a 28 percent increase in anxiety medication use. Another study found that people living in areas with more road traffic noise were 25 percent more likely than those living in quieter neighbourhoods to have symptoms of depression. Furthermore, people exposed to noise pollution were found to be significantly more likely to have heart problems like atrial fibrillation compared to those unaffected by noise.

This can therefore be extrapolated to compare with the +10dba “tolerance level” cited by the WBM report.

Source - <https://www.brainfacts.org/thinking-sensing-and-behaving/diet-and-lifestyle/2018/noise-pollution-isnt-just-annoying-its-bad-for-your-health-062718>

Effects are also detailed briefly below (source – British Medical Bulletin, “Noise pollution: non-auditory effects on health) & can be found via the following link:

<https://academic.oup.com/bmb/article/68/1/243/421340>

Noise effects on health may be augmented by, or in turn may augment, the impact of other stressors on health. Stressors may act synergistically, antagonistically or not at all. Stressors may include physical, chemical, biological, social and work organisational factors. In a laboratory-based experiment, an interaction was found between having a cold and noise exposure on simple reaction time. There was little difference between healthy and cold subjects’ performance tested in quiet conditions, but for subjects tested in noisy conditions (70 dBA), performance was much slower for the cold subjects. Synergistic effects of exposure to noise and vibration have been demonstrated on diastolic blood pressure, whereas temperature and noise have been shown to affect morning adrenaline secretion.

There has been much emphasis on laboratory studies without considering that results of such studies may lack external validity. Past research on combined effects has not considered common conditions and levels of stressors across studies, direct and indirect effects, long durations of exposure and complex tasks. Field studies suggest that the effects of multiple stressors have greater combined effects than simply summing individual stressors⁵³. Few field studies have

examined the effects of multiple environmental stressors. This could be an important new area for the development of noise research.

(source – British Medical Bulletin, “Noise pollution: non-auditory affects on health) & can be found via the following link:

<https://academic.oup.com/bmb/article/68/1/243/421340>

This will have a deeper, longer lasting impact on the schools which are in close proximity, as well as residents living close by, of which there are a higher proportion than would be normally found in a quarry site located further into the countryside.

For the ES to say **“the development is considered to be capable of operating without significant increase in noise on identified sensitive receptors located off the site ”** Is clearly disingenuous. The noise experts describe the existing general background noise to be distant and local traffic, birdsong, breeze in trees and occasional aircraft noise (para 10.3.7). This is the only accurate assessment in the report, the ambient noise levels are of bird song and the breeze in the trees.

Studies have consistently found evidence that exposure to chronic environmental noise causes annoyance in children, even in young children. In Munich, noise-exposed children were found to be more annoyed by noise as indexed by a calibrated community measure. In London, child-adapted, standard self-report questions were used to assess annoyance and showed higher annoyance levels in noise-exposed children. In a follow-up 1 year later, the same result was found, suggesting that annoyance effects are not subject to habituation.

Furthermore, the following text not only supports the above points but also adds the consideration that adverse noise can affect social behaviour & attitudes. The quarry is considered by the vast majority of the local population to be an adverse factor on the locality & thus any noise emitting from it should be considered as such a factor.

The following extract identifies this:

Social and Behavioural Effects of Noise; Annoyance. Noise can produce a number of social and behavioural effects as well as annoyance. These effects are often complex, subtle and indirect and many effects are assumed to result from the interaction of a number of non-auditory variables. The effect of community noise on annoyance can be evaluated by questionnaires or by assessing the disturbance of specific activities. However, it should be recognised that equal levels of different traffic and industrial noises cause different magnitudes of annoyance. This is because annoyance in populations varies not only with the characteristics of the noise, including the noise source, but also depends to a large degree on many non-acoustical factors of a social, psychological, or economic nature. The correlation between noise exposure and general annoyance is much higher at group level than at individual level. Noise above 80 dB(A) may also reduce helping behaviour and increase aggressive behaviour. There is particular concern that high-level continuous noise exposures may increase the susceptibility of schoolchildren to feelings of helplessness.

Source - “Guidelines for community noise (Executive summary)”

<https://www.who.int/docstore/peh/noise/ComnoiseExec.htm>

Conclusions on Noise

The noise survey does not provide robust evidence on which to determine the impact of the proposal on the environment.

The noise experts describe the **existing general background noise to be distant and local traffic, birdsong, breeze in trees and occasional aircraft noise** (para 10.3.7). This is the only accurate assessment in the report, the ambient noise levels are of bird song and the breeze in the trees.

How, therefore, the EIA can then come to a conclusion that a mining operation within 10 metres of people's homes would be capable of operating without a significant increase in noise is impossible to believe.

Air Quality

A review has been carried out of the air quality evidence produced in connection with the proposed development of a sand and gravel quarry at Lea Castle Farm between Wolverley and Cookley.

Several issues have been raised in relation to the assessment of mineral dust impacts and the assessment of impacts of emissions from road traffic associated with the development. Taking account of all the issues raised, the assessment is considered to not accurately represent the air quality or dust impacts of the development. Irrespective of the accuracy, the conclusions claimed are considered to be understated and will result in adverse impacts in the local area. In addition, the assessment does not take account of the impacts on the nearby air quality management area where the effects are likely to be most significant. Without a more accurate and fully considered assessment, the overall significance of the development should thus be considered significant.

This report has reviewed the air quality evidence submitted in support of the planning application for the proposed development of a sand and gravel quarry at Lea Castle Farm. A number of concerns have been raised regarding the validity of the air quality and dust chapter of the ES.

The ES has downplayed the health effects of dust and the local air quality conditions. Recent evidence demonstrates that dust (PM10 and PM2.5) associated with mineral activities are also associated with adverse respiratory and cardiovascular effects on health. Local air quality conditions are poor in the local area with an AQMA declared nearby due to concentrations being measured well above the objective level.

For the dust risk assessment, issues have been raised regarding receptor choice, the potential emission magnitude, the pathway effectiveness and conclusions. The ES concludes that there will be slight/moderate adverse effects at two receptors if dust mitigation and control measures are not implemented. However, the assessment was based upon the measures being implemented, hence mitigation will not remove these adverse effects. These effects are considered to be understated and to be representative of 14 highly sensitive properties.

For the road traffic assessment, issues have been raised regarding chemistry, surface roughness, the modelled road network, the model verification and the conclusions. The approach used does not follow best practice and will result in incorrect results. The AQMA is hypersensitive to changes in air quality and any changes in vehicle movements, even below the EPUK & IAQM screening criteria, should have been assessed to ensure that no significant effects occur within the AQMA. Poor professional judgement has thus been relied upon, resulting in likely significant effects being omitted; the conclusions are therefore not valid.

The development will likely result in harm and the degree of harm would be significantly increased within the AQMA. Based on the information presented in the assessment (which has been demonstrated to likely underestimate the impacts), there will be slight adverse impacts at more than 43 highly sensitive properties, double the number of negligible impacts. Taking account that there will be many more adverse impacts than negligible at properties and there will be harm caused, the overall significance of the development, based upon the results presented, may be considered significant.

The dust risk assessment and road traffic assessment have used different meteorological data with no justification as to why inconsistent data has been used. If consistent data had been used, then the results of either the dust risk assessment or the road traffic assessment would be different than presented, and the conclusions may be different.

The ES does not address the effect of climate change on air quality or vice-versa. The development is required to demonstrate that it will not affect the UK's carbon budgets nor the compliance of the UK's net-zero emission target.

Given the poor professional judgement used in the assessment, the competence of the persons undertaking the assessment should be questioned. There is a clear focus of the authors being environmental consultants with little evidence of air quality experience. In particular, the road traffic assessment was prepared by Bryan Cassidy who has six years of environmental management experience. He does not appear to be a member of any professional institution, including the IAQM, which is the professional institution for air quality professionals.

Taking account of all the issues raised, the assessment is considered to not accurately represent the air quality or dust impacts of the development which will result in adverse impacts in the local area. In addition, the assessment does not take account of the impacts on the nearby AQMA where the effects are likely to be most significant. Overall, the assessment is too uncertain to be relied upon.

Conclusions on Air Quality

Several issues have been raised in relation to the assessment of mineral dust impacts and the assessment of impacts of emissions from road traffic associated with the development. Taking account of all the issues raised, the assessment is considered to not accurately represent the air quality or dust impacts of the development. Irrespective of the accuracy, the conclusions claimed are considered to be understated and will result in adverse impacts in the local area. In addition, the assessment does not take account of the impacts on the nearby air quality management area where the effects are likely to be most significant. Without a more accurate and fully considered assessment, the overall significance of the development should thus be considered significant.

Health Impact

Having read through the ES Technical Appendix K.1 - Health Impact Assessment and ES Technical Appendix K.2 - Matrix Health Assessment we wish to provide our own evidence that there is indeed a health risk to the local community in approving a sand and gravel quarry at Lea Castle Farm.

Increase in dust and/or deterioration in air quality and Preventative operational dust mitigation measures e.g. wheel wash, bowser sprays.

The ES has deemed this “high impact”, but made no reference to the nearby homes, businesses, and schools this will impact.

We are concerned about the possible direct health effects of silica dust on local residents, particularly children, the elderly and those with breathing problems. In our estimation:

- The closest residents/business will be an estimated 10m away from the proposed site boundary.
- Healthfield Knoll School and First Steps Day Nursey is approximately 30m from the site boundary
- St Oswalds C of E Primary School 400m,
- Wolverley CE Secondary School & Sixth Form
- Wolverley Sebright Primary School 800m
- Cookley Sebright Primary School 850m away.

There is incontrovertible evidence that small particles from dust quarry operations (blasting, crushing, screening and stacking quarry operations, as well as conveyor belts and transport vehicles) is related to increases in cardiopulmonary disease, asthma, bronchitis, emphysema, pneumoconiosis and premature death in those with pre-existing conditions. The elderly and the young will be most affected in the short term, but the effect on the health of the local community over a period of approximately 15 years is unquantifiable. Crystalline silica dust is common product from processing and is a known carcinogen, which is a real health risk.

At almost every single part of the extractive and downstream processing stages of a quarry operation some level of noise, and dust and pollution may be generated. The extractive sequences of overburden removal and storage, loading and transportation (by dump trucks or conveyor belts) of the quarried minerals to the processing plant will all generate both mobile and static noise sources. The normally static processing plant consisting of the primary crushing and secondary processing of the mineral products will also present a source of noise.

Large scale sand and gravel extractions can only be economical with the use of high-powered diesel earth moving machinery (such as drills, bulldozers, dumpers, shovels etc), which will create a potentially high level of noise that may be transmitted to the immediate surroundings causing nuisance to the local community.

Here we reference studies that show how the effect of the dust produced in sand and gravel quarrying, which is by no means insignificant – not to mention the detrimental effect of increased traffic upon air quality. What characterises the Lea Castle Farm quarry proposal as opposed to other similar proposed quarries in the area is its extremely close vicinity to Cookley, Wolverley, Sion Hill residents and Healthfield Knoll School and First Steps Day Nursery, St Oswalds Primary School, Cookley Primary School, Wolverley High School, and Wolverley Primary School.

Silica can impede breathing and cause respiratory irritation, cough, airway obstruction and poor lung function (Rego 2008). Chronic or long-term exposure¹ can lead to lung inflammation,

bronchitis and emphysema and produce a severe lung disease known as silicosis, a form of pulmonary fibrosis (Hnizdo 2003). <https://www.ewg.org/research/sandstorm/health-concerns-silica-outdoor-air>

It is not the same as the dust created by farming or other periodic natural events. The killer is the fine particles of dust you cannot see. The mining and crushing of gravel creates and releases fine particulate matter called Crystalline Silica into the air which will be carried by the wind towards homes and schools. These dangerous particles will permeate homes, neighbourhood parks, schools, and playgrounds.

<http://www.hugoneighborhood.org/ELUT%207A1b%29%281%29%20Silica%20Dust%20-%20Gravel%20Pit%20Flyer.pdf>

Companies who operate quarries where silica is likely to be present are required by law to provide their employees with protective equipment. There is no such protection for people who live near quarries. Older people, those with existing respiratory conditions such as asthma, and young children are particularly vulnerable to airborne silica entering their lungs. The risk of harm to health is higher where the prevailing winds carry dust from quarries towards residential settlements and schools.

Recently the Quarry Products Association produced a health surveillance guide (Quarry Products Association, Health Surveillance Guide, London, 2000). That listed a number of the key health hazards in the quarrying industry. As well as the 'common' hazards (such as noise, vibration, musculoskeletal hazards and dust) they also included welding fume, petroleum products, methylene chloride and ionizing radiation as being particular to the industry.

Dust is present in all quarrying and opencast mining operations. While it is often considered to be more of an environmental issue, dust is a potential health risk and it is the nature of the dust that determines the associated risk. For example, larger particles of dust can be an irritant to the eyes and throat, while smaller respirable dust particles (less than 5 microns) can be inhaled, deposited in the lung and cause respiratory problems. The highest risk is presented by crystalline silica particles as these are toxic to defensive cells in the lungs and can lead to silicosis. Crystalline silica, or quartz, is found in varying amounts in sand, clays, muds, shale and rocks such as granite³. Long-term exposure to high levels of respirable crystalline silica can also lead to an increased risk of developing lung cancer.

Silicosis is a long-term lung disease caused by inhaling large amounts of crystalline silica dust, usually over many years.

The symptoms of silicosis usually take many years to develop, and you may not notice any problems until after you've stopped working with silica dust.

Silicosis usually develops after being exposed to silica for 10-20 years, although it can sometimes develop after 5-10 years of exposure. Occasionally, it can occur after only a few months of very heavy exposure.<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/silicosis/>

Visual disturbance and stress caused by temporary change in landscape, Grass seeded and planted soil bunds and agricultural hay bales to screen temporary operations. Ref

The ES has deemed this high impact, but made no reference to the local community.

The built and natural environment can have a significant impact on the determinants of health and in turn an individual's health. For example the way we plan a new development and the way

houses within it are designed and configured (through Local Plans and the development management process) will influence a person's living, working and travel patterns, their opportunity to access locally grown produce, the shape of the local economy, and even their tendency to be physically active. It is reported that wooded environments are known to relieve stress and provide a spiritual value that supports improved mental health and wellbeing. Trees absorb airborne pollutants which result in cleaner air which benefits those suffering with asthma. REF

Increasing access to parks and open spaces could reduce NHS costs of treating obesity by more than £2 billion and reduce mental health admissions as well, resulting in savings for the NHS. However, research by the Woodland Trust shows that less than 17% of the population of England has access to local woodland within 500m of their home. In Worcestershire this figure is lower at 15%. Providing more accessible trees, woods and green space can provide a critical link to healthier lives in Worcestershire and can lead to savings for the NHS.

The current Covid Pandemic has made informal recreation and access to the open countryside even more vital. We have recorded an increase in the use of the footpaths from people discovering and enjoying the countryside.

Potential increase in background noise - Plant site to be located below ground level, peripheral noise attenuation bunds, buffers and standoff to properties

Lea Castle Farm itself is actually a very quiet area, other than wildlife and occasional farm machinery during planting and harvest the plot itself is incredibly quiet. The noise assessment says "bird song ... wind whistling in grass"

In normal circumstances it would be expected that a 24-hour noise monitoring exercise was conducted for 25 days at a proposed quarry site and surrounding settlements to obtain baseline noise levels. There is no evidence of this happening at the site.

In 2017 Planning officers at Gloucestershire County Council have recommended refusal for a sand and gravel quarry in Church End, near Twynning. The proposal failed to demonstrate that the noise from mineral extraction operations could be mitigated to an acceptable level so as not to interfere with local residents' use and enjoyment of their property contrary to Minerals Local Plan policies DC1 and E14, the Tewkesbury Borough Local Plan policy EVT3 and Paragraph 144 of the NPPF.

<http://straitgateactiongroup.blogspot.com/2017/01/refusal-recommended-for-tewkesbury-quarry-on-dust-noise-grounds.html>

This proposal would have an unacceptable, adverse impact on the environment arising from the impact of dust for those living, visiting and working in the vicinity of the site contrary to Minerals Local Plan Policy DC1 and Paragraph 144 of the NPPF.

Site safety concerns fear of risk/danger - Quarry would operate under strict Quarry Regulations including safety fencing, which will be checked on a daily basis, traffic management systems and staff training and signage.

Lea Castle Farm has a public footpath running through the middle of the proposed quarry site. This is well used by local residents including children as a route to school as it joins the villages of Wolverley Cookley and residents of Sion Hill, Kidderminster.

Two deaths have happened at local Shavers End Quarry in Stourport, which is positioned away from the community. Three lives were at risk at Gullet Quarry, Ledbury. There have been five deaths at the site in the past 14 years, Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service said, including two within just a few days of each other in 2013. Gullet Quarry and its pool are fenced off and signs warn both of the dangers and that accessing the site is illegal under local bye-laws.

We are not convinced that in this case a quarry this close to the community can be secured 24/7 365 days to protect the local community in particular inquisitive teenagers and children and even pets and other animals.

<https://www.kidderminstershuttle.co.uk/news/18651641.tributes-teen-drowned-stourport-quarry/#:~:text=TRIBUTES%20have%20been%20paid%20to,the%20Blue%20Lagoon%2C%20on%20Thursday.>

<https://www.expressandstar.com/news/2019/07/08/quarry-near-stourport-searched-as-man-goes-missing/>

<https://www.herefordtimes.com/news/18472406.triple-death-risk-gullet-quarry/>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-hereford-worcester-52850784#:~:text=There%20have%20been%20five%20deaths,illegal%20under%20local%20bye%20laws.>

A quarry so close to the local community including new housing estates at Park Gate (Lea Castle Hospital site) and Sion Hill (Sion Hill Middle School site) increases the number of residents even further. Signage at other quarries has not deterred visitors, nor has fencing, and these are not positioned in built up areas and criss crossed with public footpaths.

Change in publicly accessible routes disturbance/limitation, possible lack of access and enjoyment - Two sections of PROW will be temporarily diverted, one for 2 weeks, one for ~2 years. Alternative routes will be provided in advance and on completion of diversion the routes will be returned to their original alignment.

Public rights of way can only be moved or closed for one of the following reasons:

- it's necessary to allow development (if planning permission has been granted)
- the diversion benefits the landowner/occupier
- the diversion benefits the public
- the path is not used by the public (closure only) - these circumstances are rare and very difficult to achieve

When diverting or closing a public right of way, any alternative or new route/path should be just as convenient for the public as the existing path.

By diverting the PROW at Lea Castle Farm the alternative proposed new route/path advised on the plan is not convenient or as accessible as the existing path currently utilised by the local community, whom include disabled users and children.

Increased vehicle (HGV) of local road network, possible congestion, stress and vehicle emissions safety concerns

A huge increase in traffic with 70 + HGV lorries making 140 + lorry movements daily at the site increasing nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) levels in an already recognised pollution hotspot area.

“ONLY seven places in Worcestershire have breached air pollution levels according to figures from a campaign group – and four of them are in Kidderminster.”

Kidderminster home to more than half of Worcestershire pollution hotspots

<https://www.kidderminstershuttle.co.uk/news/17464054.kidderminster-home-half-worcestershire-pollution-hotspots/#:~:text=The%20junction%20of%20Chester%20Road,of%20them%20are%20in%20Kidderminster.>

The Wolverley Road cannot withstand the current level of traffic accessing it, there have been issues with potholes on the road for many years. This is without an increased amount of HGV's lorries from a quarry being added to that too.

<https://www.kidderminstershuttle.co.uk/news/letters/2028455.do-you-suffer-pothole-pain/>

<https://www.kidderminstershuttle.co.uk/news/letters/2047818.ever-increasing-potholes/>

Potential threat to local business employers and employees, loss of trade/customers- concern and anxiety - Two equestrian centres on/ adjacent to the Site will have owners and customers feeling uncertain of the environment they will ride/share their horse stabling and riding activities with. The applicant is in control of Keepers Cottage Equestrian Centre, the other being Lea Castle Farm Equestrian Centre.

We will focus on Lea Castle Equestrian Centre as Keepers Cottage is the applicant trying to get the quarry approved on the land he owns.

Lea Castle Equestrian Centre is a former riding school which has taught the majority of the equestrians in the area to ride over the past fifty years. Now the site is a livery yard. The horses and owners enjoy a peaceful quiet yard, where they are relaxed in their secure paddocks and settle quickly and are happy.

Horses evolved from small mammals whose survival depended on their ability to flee from predators. This basic survival mechanism still is ingrained in the modern horse. Although we have removed most of the predators from the life of the domestic horse, its first instinct when frightened is to run away from the frightening stimulus.<https://horses.extension.org/horse-flight-vs-flight-instinct/>

The horses will be subjected to quarrying noise from 7am daily, this will affect their behaviour, becoming anxious and stressed over long periods of time. There are horses at livery on Lea Castle Farm with existing health issues including COPD, Inflammatory Bowel Disease, Equine Metabolic Syndrome, and Subclinical Laminitis which are successfully managed. A severe change in the environment and Eco structure that the horses live in could seriously impact their health.

If the quarry was to be approved, the liveries would be forced to move their horses elsewhere, ensuring the business would be forced to close after fifty years.

There would be significant impact to Healthfield Knoll School and First Steps Day Nursery less than 30m for the proposed site. As an independent school they rely solely on the funding of

parents paying for their children's education. The nursery is the closest point to the quarry site, so I'd be incredibly concerned for the health of the very young children who are often there for long period of time with parents working full time.

Dr David Adam, an ecologist from Anglia Ruskin University in Cambridge, spoke against the application, telling councillors that particles from the quarry travel far further than its limits and posed a significant health risk.

He said:

"Crystalline silica particles are known carcinogens, for that reason they are very safely controlled as an environmental hazard by the Health and Safety Executive.

"They will put safety measures in place to make sure workers aren't exposed too much. These particles are known to be found within a few hundred metres. That would include the playground and the playing field for Bengoe Primary School.

<https://www.hertfordshiremercury.co.uk/news/hertfordshire-news/hertford-bengeo-quarry-application-rejected-1503387>

Mitigation of buffers/standoffs, bunding and planting will visually segregate receptors and users from quarry activities. The proposals will provide ~1.8km of new bridleway additional routes pre-quarry development. Post restoration additional 0.5km of new bridleway -total 2.3km

Open space, greenspace, play space, playing fields - Potential threat to health, fitness and wellbeing concerns and enjoyment - No public or private open, green or play space or playing fields will be physically lost. 2.3km of new PROW will be created, 5 pocket parks will be established.

Equality and social community - A badly designed scheme could be detrimental to the environment, isolating communities and/or neighbours causing stress and anxiety

In the health board's objection letter, consultant in public health medicine Dr Jackie Hyland outlined concerns about noise, dust, the quarry's proximity to houses and the psychological effects of living next to a quarry. She wrote:

"Perceived concerns impact significantly upon psychological wellbeing and we feel it is inappropriate to dismiss such concerns. Attempting to allay perceived concerns is, therefore, vital."

<http://www.coddingtonactiongroup.org/the-campaign/health/47-concerns-raised-about-psychological-impact-of-five-quarry-proposal>

Conclusion

The Health Impact Assessment document that Worcestershire County Council are required to prepare was not made available in the consultation, so it was impossible to make properly informed comments on this vital area.

We are very concerned about effects the effects of quarry MP20 on the mental & physical health of residents some of whom live within 10m of site and will have to endure this misery for 11 years. Of greatest concern are the direct health effects of silica dust especially on children (nearest school 30m away), the elderly (nearest nursing home 50m away) and those with breathing problems –There are a total of five schools within less than a mile of this proposed site.

Constant noise and light pollution ruining leisure and disrupting sleep are not just a nuisance - psychosomatic effects such as lowered disease resistance, and the risks of clinical depression are real and the consequences can be extremely serious. On the roads we know tiredness kills and everyone needs to be able to concentrate at work and at school.

Our peaceful homes & gardens (formerly a safe refuge) are now besieged by things beyond our control - we worry about the future e.g. more extraction, or restoration by waste landfill. For vulnerable or isolated people under pressure, perhaps feeling trapped here financially (tenants can't be relocated, or owner occupiers sell their houses), increased cases of depression are very likely.

Access and Recreation (Rights of Way, Leisure and Recreation)

The Worcestershire Minerals Local Plan (Policy MLP20) requires that the proposed mineral development will protect and enhance rights of way and public access provision. The Plan requires that throughout its lifetime, and taking into account the cumulative affects of multiple impacts from the site and/or a number of sites in the locality, proposed development will:

- not have an unacceptable adverse effect on the integrity and quality of publicly accessible green space;
 - not have an unacceptable adverse effect on the integrity and quality of the existing rights of way network or navigable waterways; and
 - closure of any rights of way must only occur where it is demonstrated that it is not practicable to retain rights of way in situ and no suitable temporary or permanent diversion is possible.
- Compensatory provision must be made.

The applicants are yet to make applications to divert, either temporarily or permanently, or stop up existing Public Rights of Way, Bridleways or other public access.

The publicly accessible green space will be irreparably damaged by the proposal. The public footpath network through the site will be compromised and the public enjoyment of those paths through the green space will be significantly harmed over at least a ten year period.

There rights of way significantly link the two settlements of the parish through the former Knight Estate which was founded on the iron forges in each settlement. The footpaths are

historically significant to the evolution of the settlements. The footpaths are used by children from the settlements to access schools as well as walkers.

During operations these public footpaths will run alongside and through working strip mines and afterwards will be elevated above the crater floor. The footpaths through the site create a popular circular walk taking in the canal towpath through the Conservation Area and this resource will be damaged if not lost forever.

The report is wholly subjective on the part of the author Robin Smithyman, the main criteria of the report is based upon a pseudo illogical grading system which has no statistical or scientific reason.

It is purely his assessment of the leisure and recreation amenity within a 3km radius of the quarry site and this assessment is solely based on four site visits that he made in 2019.

In the report he does not give detail of how he conducted his site visits, there are no dates or times given and there is no evidence that he has even spoken to the owners of the leisure/recreational resources that he details in the report.

The report is completely biased toward the quarry site landowner, in fact the nearest independent business and resident, Lea Castle Equestrian Centre who will have the quarry operating literally within a few metres of their front door and will also have their legal right of access disrupted during the operation of the quarry, have been graded;

“SENSITIVITY – medium, MAGNITUDE – during operation of quarry medium, SIGNIFICANCE of effect – Moderate adverse”

This quite clearly illustrates how flawed this assessment is, anybody with a modicum of common sense can appreciate that the quarry activity will have a devastating impact on the operation of the equestrian centre, how can you have quarrying and earthmoving equipment in such close proximity to horses and who in their right mind would want to put their horses in livery whilst the quarrying is going on, the whole area would be totally unusable for equestrian activities during the 10/11 year operation period.

This clearly illustrates how flawed the findings are, the EIA has portrayed this massive 3 million tonne quarrying operation as no more disruptive than the farmer ploughing his field nearby, it is a piece of false window dressing to portray the quarrying operation in a positive aspect.

The report also refers to extracts from the Worcestershire Green Infrastructure Strategy 2013-2018 which only refer to Mineral Development but there are other important elements to the strategy, detailed below.

In particular the **Access & Recreation** : *Enhance opportunities for informal recreation, provision of cycle or pedestrian routes to connect areas of community use and interest, provision of informal open spaces.*

*Also : **Historic Environment** : Use historic access routes and protect and promote historic assets and their settings*

These are part of the main tenets of the multifunctional green infrastructure policy, which have to be taken in context, the extracts Smithyman has used in his report and when the planning application is up for consideration.

Elements of multi-functional green infrastructure



The Lea Castle farm has been used as direct access between the villages of Wolverley, Cookley and the outskirts of Kidderminster for centuries, it is a vitally important connection between the communities and safe pedestrian, cycling and equine interconnectivity.

The access and open space is enjoyed by the local community, various walking and running groups, including the large number of tourist that enjoy visiting and exploring this area. We must also acknowledge the employment and revenue this creates in our communities, none of which is recognised within this report.

It must also be stated that the world has moved on since 2019, when the report was written, we are now living in a world of a pandemic virus and national/local lockdown. There has been a paradigm shift in the way communities appreciate and use their access to open spaces, countryside, and the positive effects on a persons physical and mental being is well documented and proven.

Many more people are working from home and therefore have more time to access the countryside as well.

Those of us that use and live near the site have witnessed the massive increase in usage of the area during lockdown and continuing afterwards, I would estimate a 100 fold increase.(no data has been collected or analysed to determine how many people actual access the land)

This area is a vital amenity in our area of North Worcestershire, the demand for access to open spaces and leisure amenities is only going to increase in the area, we have new housing developments at Hurcott, Sion Hill and the largest development at the old Lea Castle hospital site has just commenced construction, with potentially nearly 2000 homes being constructed over the next few years, which will result in a 5-7000 increase in the local population all swelling the demand for access to open spaces and local amenities.

“Green infrastructure (GI) is the planned and managed network of green spaces and natural elements that intersperse and connect our cities, towns and villages. GI comprises of many different elements including biodiversity, the landscape, the historic environment, the water environment (also known as blue infrastructure) and publicly accessible green spaces and informal recreation sites”

The quarry site is a vital part of this network of publicly accessible green spaces.

Links to documents that reflect the importance of access to greenspaces;

www.docs.hss.ed.ac.uk/education/outdoored/health_wellbeing.pdf

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/904439/Improving_access_to_greenpace_2020_review.pdf

The radius for activities identifying the receptors covers nearly half of Cookley playing fields, whilst the report has identified Brown Westhead playing fields it has not mentioned Cookley fields at all. Cookley playing fields are probably the most used recreation area within the area, used by the community 7 days a week. This is another point that highlights how it is based on his subjective approach to the whole report, if he is drawing a circle on a map to identify the receptors then he has to identify everyone that is deemed to be covered.

The document is supposed to represent a clear and logical analysis of the affected area, clearly it does not.

Also with prevailing winds a lot of dust/pollution will be blown towards Cookley playing fields, they are used by children, children's football teams, the school use themselves during the summer.

Public Rights of Way.

The existing path and bridleway flow centrally through the site in almost a straight line, this is the natural route that has evolved over hundreds of years.

The plan proposes that this path is redirected nearer the busy Wolverhampton and Wolverley roads during phased operation, with additional footpath/bridleway, this puts people much closer to the noise and pollution emitted from these busy roads and removes one of the main

environmental qualities people normally benefit from when walking through the site, during the period of operation and afterwards. Additionally the route then becomes a disjointed trek around the perimeter of the site making any walk and supposed new routes between Wolverley, Cookley and Sion Hill an awkward and unnatural trail sandwiched between the busy roads and a fully operational quarry, the quality of the amenity will be completely destroyed and use by the community will be considerably reduced during the lifetime of the quarry.

Furthermore the proposal to extend and upgrade the existing public footpath into a bridleway across the field and down to Lea Lane is completely flawed. This means that the riders would have to take their horses on a dog leg route around the houses that overlook Brown Westhead Park and negotiate very steep steps and exit on to a very dangerous blind bend in Lea Lane, this is completely impractical and has been proposed by someone who doesn't understand the local infrastructure, again nobody locally has been consulted about this and presumably additional planning approval would be required for this. It is also proposed that the bridleway is extended to the left which means horse and rider would exit out onto extremely busy Wolverley road B4189, this just not workable from a road safety aspect and would inevitably lead to accidents.

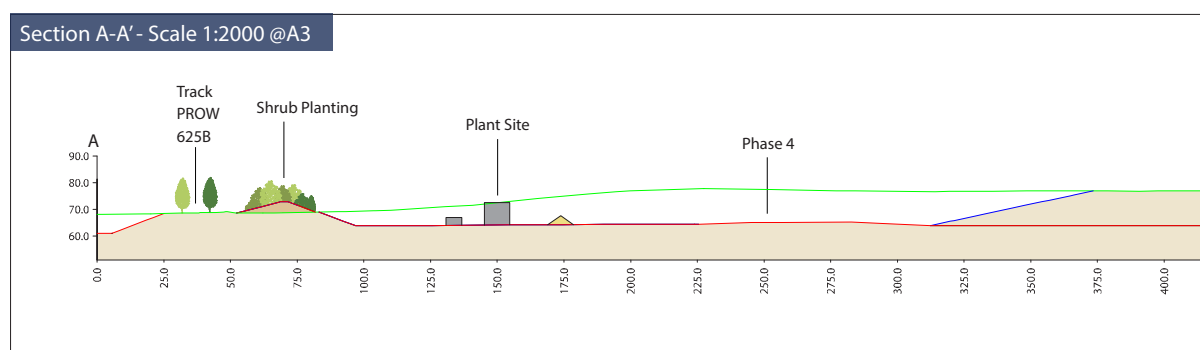
Concept Restoration

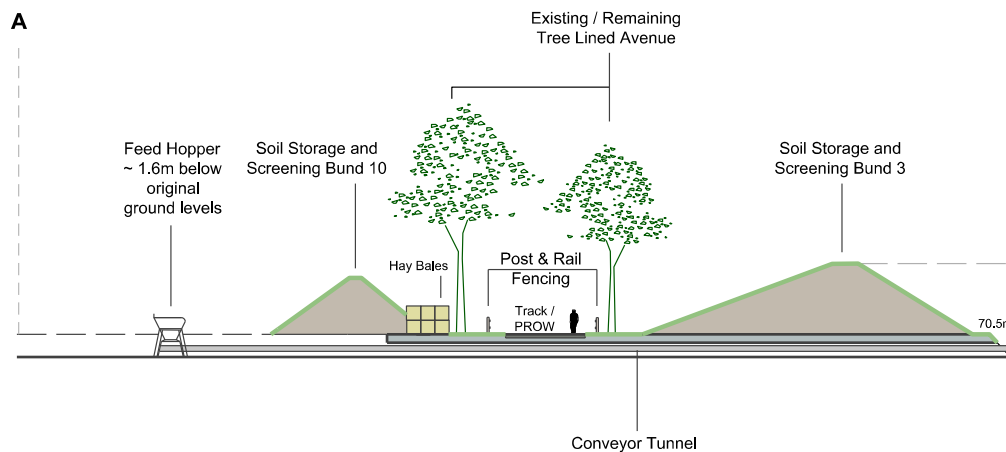
The whole project is being sold to the local community as a temporary hindrance to our use and enjoyment of the area, 10 years + possible extension, hardly, and with a lovingly restored landscape enhanced for the benefit of all.

It is only a concept proposal and is entirely dependant upon the landowner and is not guaranteed, also given the landowners previous track record with a previous quarry in Wolverley (the quarry was just left abandoned) will probably not happen.

The concept proposal is also an attempt to disguise the incredible change in the topography of the site after the quarrying has ceased, 1.1m cubic metres removed will result in a massive hole in the ground, from looking at the restoration section document KD.LCF.028 there will still be a 20/25 metre difference in ground level between before and after quarrying, I believe their calculation for this is incorrect, until the specification of the waste material and compaction procedure is known, 600,000 tonnes means nothing without correct data and agreed infill procedures.

The main tree lined drive/public footpath/bridleway (PRoW 625B) from Wolverley Road to the former Castle will be retained at existing grade to preserve the remaining protected trees. This will be elevated 7m above the new surrounding levels? Whereas the existing view from the footpath is the rolling parkland hills this will be replaced by an enclosed canyon above a conveyor beyond which is an alien level moonscape.





Section A-A' : Typical Section Along Conveyor Tunnel (1:500 @ A3)

The planting and pocket parks are only there to disguise the craters that are left.

The gently undulating incline of the site that makes it unique will be lost for ever and the openness and attractiveness of the area reduced to a level that will leave people disinclined to use the area as much prior to quarrying.

Conclusions

The public footpath network through the site is a valuable recreational resource providing access to the green spaces and there Conservation Area. Diverting the public footpath through an open cast mine and over conveyor belts will have a significant adverse effect on the integrity and quality of those rights of way and the green spaces they allow access to.

Biodiversity (Ecological, Agricultural and Trees)

The Worcestershire Minerals Local Plan (MLP21) requires that the proposed mineral development will conserve, enhance and deliver net gains for biodiversity. The Plan requires that throughout its lifetime, the proposed development taking into account cumulative effects will,

- conserve, restore and enhance priority habitats and ecological networks provide for the protection and recovery of priority species, and deliver measurable net gains for biodiversity, integrating other green infrastructure components where appropriate;
- minimise impacts on biodiversity and avoid, adequately mitigate, or (as a last resort) compensate for significant harm to biodiversity;
- protect and enhance sites of biodiversity value in accordance with the hierarchy of designations: not adversely affect the integrity of a European site, or clearly demonstrate that there are no alternative solutions and there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest

which justify the likely effects (where adverse effects are justified, appropriate compensatory measures will be required to ensure that the overall coherence of Natura 2000 is protected);

- not result in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats, including ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists;
- not result in significant harm to either a Local Wildlife Site, or to a priority habitat², unless the not be likely to have an adverse effect on a Site of Special Scientific Interest unless the benefits of the development clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest

The ecological surveys were carried out over two years ago between 2016 and 2019. These are therefore out of date and cannot be relied upon to assess the impact of the scheme on the environment.

Dormice

It is rather like the rider the late Eddie Van Halen applied in his concert contracts. His contract required a large bowl of coloured sweets but for there to be no green ones. If he found a green sweet he refused to play. Because if the promoter couldn't get that detail right then all the other details required were suspect. In this case we do not know what ecology is there and what may not have been assessed, however, we do know Dormice are nearby and haven't been assessed and so ask the question of what else is present and not assessed.

The ES says this about the ecological impact,

“6.46 No dormouse nest or characteristically chewed hazel nuts were recorded on the Site throughout the surveys, however only one of the surveys was completed during the optimum time for nut searches (between mid-August and December).

6.47 WBRC returned no records of dormouse from the data search. Due to the lack of suitable habitat on the site that will be impacted by the proposals, and the lack of connectivity to any habitat that will be impacted by the proposals, the site is assessed as being of Negligible importance for this species and is not considered further.”

It is inconceivable that the total destruction of the habitat, with the stripping of all soil across the site, loss of ancient trees, hedgerows, increase in dust and noise will only have minimal or negligible effect on the environment. The worth of the entire ES is highlighted by this ridiculous and inaccurate statement.

Conclusions

The opening comments of the ES state:

No significant negative effects are anticipated on the habitats present within the Site providing the restoration plan is delivered as specified.

The pertinent point here surely is that there of course will be negative effects to the environment for the period of the operation and during the period of the re-instatement. In that time the effect

on fauna will be permanent as the lost habitat will render the viability of species untenable. The diversity of the area will be lost and the ecosystems within will fail resulting in the neighbouring habitats also being degraded. It is beyond belief that the EIA suggest that no negative impact is anticipated on habitats when those habitats will be completely removed and destroyed.

What guarantee is in place that the proviso ‘the restoration plan is delivered as specified’ will be delivered?

It is ludicrous to suggest that this plan can wreak anything but devastation to the local area and all those that live in it regardless of size and number. We need to ensure that all species and their habitats are protected which in turn will attract further species and diversity.

We have all seen television programmes highlighting the knife edge that the natural world is currently balanced on. This is not just at the ice-caps and rain forests, it is also in Kidderminster.

Landscape and Geodiversity (Landscape Impact and Visual Impact and Lighting)

The Worcestershire Minerals Local Plan requires that the proposed mineral development will not harm, damage and detract from the character and distinctiveness of the landscape. The Plan requires that throughout its lifetime, the proposed development will not:

- a) destroy the inherent landscape character, segregating other green infrastructure components
- b) have an unacceptable adverse effect on the inherent landscape character. the proposed development is likely to:
 - i. result in significant change to the key characteristics of the landscape identified in the Worcestershire Landscape Character Assessment and Worcestershire Historic Landscape Characterisation; and
 - ii. introduce landscape features that conflict with, or dilute, the inherent landscape character of the area;
 - iii. significantly harm an area of local landscape value.

In respect of Geodiversity The Worcestershire Minerals Local Plan requires that the proposed mineral development will not harm, damage and degrade geodiversity. The Plan requires that throughout its lifetime, the proposed development will not:

- a) destroy the condition, legibility and understanding of geodiversity, segregating other green infrastructure components;
- b) cause unacceptable adverse effects on a geological and geomorphological sites and features.:

The ES says this about the landscape impact,

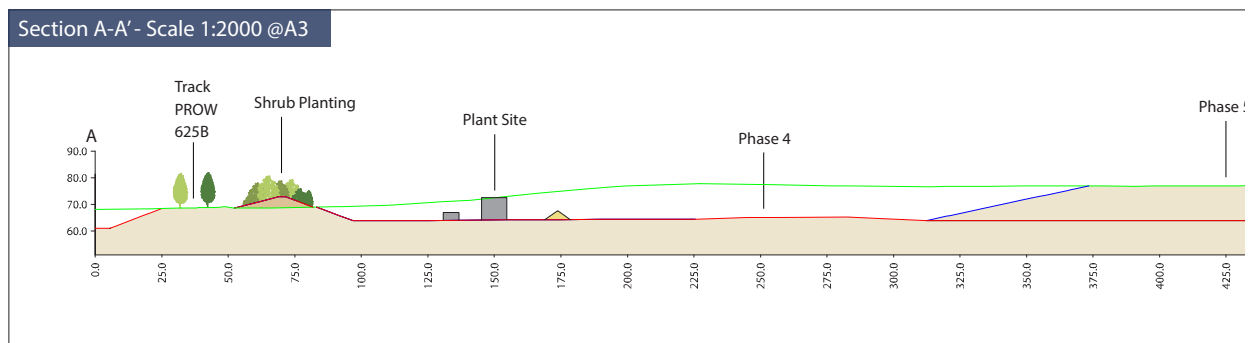
“the cumulative effect upon visual amenity for both operational and restoration periods is assessed to be neutral and not significant.”

“the proposals will result in some temporary disturbance to landscape character and visual receptors in the vicinity of the site, the development is not out of character with the local context and any effects are temporary”

It is inconceivable that the total destruction of the landscape, with the removal of 1.1 million cubic metres of material across the site, the lowering of ground levels, the recontouring of the

site, loss of ancient trees, hedgerows, will only have no effect on the landscape. The worth of the entire ES is highlighted by this ridiculous and inaccurate statement.

The image below is a partial section across the site, it shows raised bunds alongside public footpaths and a drop in ground level of over 7 metres. How can this possibly be described as **not out of character with the local context and any effects are temporary?**



Comments on Visual Impact Statement Provided by Applicant

We have considered the below summary report as well as the detailed Landscape and Visual Considerations Appendix amongst others. The basic tenants for consideration of landscape as described in the appendix are;

- Scenic quality
- Recreational value
- Perceptual aspects including tranquillity
- Cultural and historic associations

The appendix finds that at no point is there any visual impact of significance. This follows the theme of “no problem here” in the various technical reports we have reviewed. It seems ridiculous that a crater of this size can be created and yet experts claim no environmental impacts at all, at any stage of this process. The findings are untenable and unreasonable and clearly enormously biased.

This is an historic landscapes which has for centuries joined the villages of Wolverley and Cookley. To suggest that extracting minerals from the heart of these rural communities will not have visual impact on the parkland is plainly certifiable.

The mitigation is what is described as the “guarantee” of remodelling of the landscape. There are three issues with this guarantee.

- Even if the landscape is remodelled it will not be the same parkland that existed previously and an historic parkland will be lost forever,

- ii) There can be no guarantee in the true sense of the word. A guarantee provided by a commercial entity is only as good as the commercial entity. NRS is a small business with the last reported accounts showing a turnover of just £15M. In difficult times it does not have the financial resources to sustain such a guarantee. The landowner has a track record of not fulfilling obligations on a previous quarry on his land. He cannot guarantee that the same won't happen.
- iii) The quarry removes 3 times as much ground as will be replaced. It is not possible to "guarantee" the restoration of similar parkland in this circumstance. The topology just doesn't allow.

2. Comments against original application text.

10.2 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

10.2.1 The thrust of Development Plan policies encompasses the advice in NPPF to protect, maintain and enhance the landscape. The Development Plan and Emerging Plans set out that applications should consider the potential visual impact of their proposals and design accordingly; this may include appropriate design in keeping with the locality or prior landscaping and planting work. Assessment of any impacts should include consideration of the potential impacts or enhancement of the landscape both during and after working, the duration of any adverse impacts, and mitigation and/or compensatory measures to replace losses and the provision of any long-term asset enhancement through restoration proposals.

10.2.2 In terms of landscape considerations, as set out in the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (see ES Technical Appendix A), there would be No Significant impacts resulting from the Operation Phase upon existing landscape receptors. How can this be possible when mining an enormous crater. To find no visual impacts of significance is just not possible. This is a purely subjective case made by experts paid to get the application approved. The community has a very different view. There would be a Very Slight Adverse effect on vegetative elements, a Slight Adverse effect on soils/agricultural land use and a Moderate Adverse effect on landform and topography. Our view is that if the Applicant is prepared to admit moderate it will be significant. In addition trees with TPOs are affected so how is there only a slight adverse effect on vegetation? Mitigation and enhancement measures will be implemented both in advance of mineral extraction and during progressive phased working and restoration. These include increased public access, minimising the area of operational / disturbed ground at any one time period landscape planting and habitat creation.

10.2.3 At Post Restoration there will be a strengthening of appropriate landscape elements and features which respects and replicates the sites historic past There is admission here that the site has an historic past. The best way to preserve the historic past is to not destroy it. Any other course of action is a "very significant" compromise. How can an expert report claim no significant visual impact and then try the replicate and respect what it has opined should be destroyed. whilst providing new and increased diversity and net gain of individual landscape elements along with the promotion and integration of amenity and wellbeing opportunities. This is far from the opinion of the local community. The best way to preserve well being is to leave the historic site in place. This includes pocket parks based around a green infrastructure strategy. New habitats will also be created including 8.1 Ha of acidic grassland, woodland and blocks and parkland trees which will promote biodiversity. This would result in an overall Substantial

Beneficial effect which is Significant. How can recreating a parkland be better than preserving the parkland. This again is a ridiculous logical argument. In order to have an historic landscape you shouldn't first destroy it.

10.2.4 With regards visual considerations, the main visual elements and features which will be introduced as part of the proposed developments are a new vehicle access point the plant site (plant and stocks), soil stripping, mineral extraction and restoration works. We agree that there is a visual element to the proposed site. How can this be the main visual impact when there is also an enormous crater destroying an historic landscape.

10.2.5 Visual mitigation and enhancement measures integrated into the development proposals include, only extracting mineral from the identified more enclosed and contained visual landscape in the eastern and central/ eastern areas of the site and not the eastern section of Lea Castle Farm Planning Statement December 2019 63 the application boundary, placing the plant site a minimum of 7m below adjacent ground level, use of temporary soil storage/screening bund (seeded and maintained) to block potential views of quarrying activities along with agricultural straw bales, distance standoffs from residential property including the Bungalow and Castle Barns, tree and shrub planting to help both screen and integrate proposals. It is also proposed to limit the actual area of disturbed land /quarrying activities (access, extraction, plant site and restoration) through phased progressive extraction and restoration.

10.2.6 Based upon the proposals described and illustrated on Planning Application Drawing Nos. 8 to 13, it has been assessed that NO visual receptors will receive a Significant Adverse Effect during either the proposed development period or from the restored site and its agricultural and parkland activities. It is noted that two PROW's will require temporary diversion which will result in a temporary change of view to that which is currently experienced. Users of these PROW FP62 6(B) and 62 4(B) are assessed to receive Moderate Adverse effects during the diversion period where alternative routes will be provided. This again is subjective opinion of an expert paid to support an application. The local community has a very different opinion and considers the visual impacts enormous. We believe our expert opinion on where we live to be more valid than some outside 3rd party paid to platform a view to support an application.

10.2.7 In conclusion the landscape and visual effects resulting from the Proposed Development would be temporary, progressive and localised and Not Significant. Progressive restoration to the post restoration scheme provides opportunities for both enhanced landscape, visual and amenity wellbeing which will result in Beneficial effects. It is assessed that there will be no adverse cumulative landscape or visual Significant effects. 10.2.8 Overall, in terms of landscape and visuals considerations, the proposed development and operations are in accordance with the objectives of NPPF, the Development Plan, the emerging Worcestershire MLP, and other material policy considerations. This is all subjective and not factual.

Conclusion

In permitting this development the County Council would be permitting the destruction of an historic parkland joining the communities of Cookley and Wolverley.

The County Council can no more "guarantee" any reconstruction than the applicant or the landowner.

It would be negligent to allow this development on these grounds alone.

Transport (Traffic and Transport)

The Worcestershire Minerals Local Plan requires that the mineral development uses the most sustainable transport options and will not have an unacceptable adverse effect on transport safety or congestion. The Plan requires that throughout its lifetime, the proposed development:

- a) prioritises the use of alternatives to road transport for the movement of minerals and materials (including water, rail, conveyors and pipelines);
- b) provides safe and convenient access for employees and visitors which optimises the use of public transport, walking and cycling;
- c) connects to the strategic transport network without having an unacceptable adverse effect on safety or congestion of the local or strategic transport network;
- d) does not have an unacceptable adverse effect on the environment or amenity along transport routes; and
- e) optimises opportunities to create and integrate green infrastructure.

It has not been demonstrated that alternative modes are not practicable or are not environmentally preferable

The base traffic data relates to a **2016 survey** and is not relevant to 2019/2020 uses or to projections in excess of ten years.

Immediate Surroundings

Site Access, the TS is based on the proposition that there will be no right turns out of the site towards Wolverley or left turns into the site from Wolverley. These movements are physically prevented by a slightly raised curb which will not prevent HGV vehicles making this movement. The report also refers to CCTV monitoring of the access but does not explain how this will prevent the movements. Measures have not been put forward which would prevent these movements and as such the impact of right out left in movements must be accounted for.

Notwithstanding this lack of control at the entrance where such control possible this would not prevent HGV movements associated with the quarry using Wolverley Road. Wolverley Road and Franche Road are a very well used rat run to avoid travelling through Kidderminster. HGVs leaving the site could very easily turn by circling the Broadwaters Triangle to travel through Wolverley to avoid Kidderminster as many commercial vehicles do.

There would be significant impact on Wolverley Road, which is very narrow, lacks standard width footpaths and attracts large groups of school children who walk along the road following drop off at the Lock Public House. At the junction with Cookley Lane and the canal crossing, Wolverley Road suffers from narrow road width – emphasised by scarring on walls from cars and larger vehicles. The Lock car park attracts many vehicles giving both issues with entering and leaving the car park as well as serious safety concerns in respect of customers walking over the canal bridge to the Lock Public House and children walking on to the schools, crossing the busy road to access them

In respect of an earlier application for a golf course on the site the Planning Officer report raised concerns about the loss of footpath routes for school children this will be worse either just through the site or along the roads. The site connects the two parish villages of Wolverley and Cookley and the proposal will sever these inter parish non-car journeys.

Wider Road Network

The report fails to take into account that there are no major bypasses or highway relief measures around nearby conurbations – particularly Kidderminster. This means that all roads West and South have existing congestion issues particularly the B4189 Wolverley Road immediately to the West of the applicant site, the A451 Stourbridge Road as it links to A456 St Mary's Ringway and the A449 Chester Road North/Wolverhampton Road as it skirts Kidderminster through the built up area. The number of HGV's trebles (Clause 3.30 notes existing HGV movements between 66 and 88 per day which will rise by 154) but the report fails to account for these stopping to turn in and out of the site rather than passing through. The addition of 154 large Gravel Lorry movements per day (clause 5.13) (HGV by definition but VERY large and dirty HGV's) will significantly add to local congestion. There is significant nearby residential development including Sion Hill, Miller Homes Scheme on Stourbridge Road, the proposed Hurcott Urban Extension and the Homes England allocation and recent Vistry 600 house consent at Lea Castle Hospital which will exacerbate this. In real terms the roads around Kidderminster are already at over capacity.

Jacobs Ch2m are model consultants to Worcestershire County Council who have undertaken the basic Wyre Forest model in 2018. There is no "Jacobs Transport Model" incorporated within the

transport assessment undertaken by the Hurlestone Partnership a year after the Model was released.

The existing Jacobs Ch2m Wyre Forest Local Plan Review (2016 - 2036) – Transport Modelling dated 2018 shows significant additional congestion within the plan period WITHOUT taking the vehicle movements associated with the quarry proposal into account. Any transport report in Worcestershire without its own model by Jacobs consultants should be rejected by the County Council and there is no reference to this in either the transport assessment or the County's initial response. The County Council cannot make an informed decision on the environmental effect of the proposal in the absence of an assessment taking into account the Traffic Model. This is relevant since one of the major locations for growth in congestion is the junction of A449 Wolverhampton Road and B4189 Wolverley Road according to the general Jacobs report on the road network. We must assume this is omitted since all parties know that the proposals will fail ANY assessment undertaken in a professional manner.

The accident information is restricted to accidents associated with HGV's which disguises the fact that the Wolverley Road is an area of many accidents (a blackspot?) due to the splay vision issues at the Sion Hill junction and the narrow roadway at the Lea Lane junction and the Lock canal bridge. The transport statement implies the only issue is the link from the site entrance to the Wolverley Rd B4189, Wolverhampton Road A449 junction. However, this just isn't true since it ignores the wider congestion, dirt, health and safety and degradation issues. A realistic analysis of the highways capacity issues alone makes this site unsuitable for large scale extraction.

The transport report for the successful nearby **Lea Castle Hospital** application noted sixteen accidents over five years at the Wolverhampton Road Wolverley Road Junction.

B4189 Wolverley Road – *Wolverley Road links the A449 to Wolverley Village and continues to the A442 northwest of Kidderminster. The road within the vicinity of the site is an unlit single carriageway road and is part of an unofficial route around the east side of Kidderminster, avoiding the town centre. This road has a footpath along its northern side and the 60mph national speed limit applies.*

The quantity and proximity of services passing near the proposed site are limited at present. However, there are opportunities to connect the site to sustainable transport services which will be subject to consultation with WCC and the bus operators.

“Record of accidents between 2011 and 2016

Wolverhampton Road/Park Gate Road/Wolverley Road Junction: *Two serious and fourteen slight accidents were recorded at this junction. One of the serious accidents occurred when a cyclist lost control due to high speed and collided with kerb. The second serious accident occurred when a driver failed to look properly and collided with a slow-moving goods vehicle. There were also several different kinds of driver error resulting in slight accidents; such as failure to comply with traffic lights, careless driving and failure to look properly.*

The highway and transport consultant has not undertaken an adequate level of route analysis. Additional traffic generation is not considered beyond the immediate access to the Wolverhampton Road. However, from there, unless the HGV's travel North, they either enter areas of serious congestion or are unable to pass through the local road network. Roads are restricted or significantly over capacity. All this is ignored in Hurlestons initial highways report and section 25 responses

The transport assessment relies on the ability of preventing site traffic using the Wolverley Road. The applicant seeks to achieve that by attempting to prevent left in or right out movements from the site access.

This is in theory physically prevented by having raised kerbs at the entrance and secondly by having cctv monitoring of the access. There are very obvious shortcomings in these preventative measures.

Raised Kerbs – will not stop a HGV and there is no method of monitoring , enforcing or controlling which roads vehicles use to reach their destinations

CCTV – can only identify a breach that has already occurred.

These measures will not prevent HGV traffic exiting the site with a left turn and then circling around Podmore to return along the Wolverley Road or the reverse to enter. Traffic, including HGV traffic, between the conurbation and the west regularly uses Wolverley Road and Franche Road to bypass Kidderminster.

The inadequacy of the local highway network to accommodate additional HGV traffic is reflected by the high number of recorded personal injury accidents across the local highway network, including two fatalities along Wolverley Road (one in very close proximity to the proposed site access junction), a fatality at the junction of Park Gate Road with A451 Stourbridge Road, a fatality along A451 Stourbridge Road and many further personal injury accidents that were classified as serious in severity.

The carriageway is too narrow for HGV's and cars to pass comfortably, which will effectively compound the already poor accident record in the area. The Lock Bridge is a particularly dangerous location where peak time traffic competes with school opening and closing, the Lock carpark being used for pick up parking and accessed via a narrow single footpath at below standard width. A site inspection at 3.30pm on any weekday afternoon shows the dangers inherent in the poor road layout

Highway congestion is a major issue in and around Kidderminster. The situation will inevitably be exacerbated by immediate housing development and future strategic allocations. It is evident that the suitability, in highway capacity and safety terms, of the wider local highway network has not been considered. There is a direct policy clash between the proposal for quarrying and the

provision for new housing in a location with poor highway infrastructure already over capacity and dangerous for local residents.

Comments on Lea Castle Farm Regulation 25 Highways Applicant response and safety audit appendix

(page 12 onwards Section 25 response – 154 HGV vehicle movements every day for 10 years)

The increased use of Kidderminster will add to air pollution which is referenced in the air quality report. **Clarification of HGV assignment options.** The applicant is presenting an argument to justify being able to control HGV drivers so that they only enter the site from the East. This is unrealistic since any HGV approaching from the West has no opportunity to drive past and turn around safely within a significant distance (2 or 3 miles?) and can only find an alternative route by rerouting through the centre of Kidderminster adding to already congested roads there. The argument has no practical merit. Any consent will significantly add to congestion both in Kidderminster and in the surrounding area.

As previously raised, the highway and transport consultant has not undertaken an adequate level of route analysis. Whilst it has been identified that a right in and left out movement at the access junction will be enforced (albeit insufficient measures to physically enforce), extremely limited consideration has been given to the assignment of HGVs across the wider local highway network and its suitability to accommodate quarry associated HGVs.

Whilst it has been determined that the junction of Wolverley Road / A449 Wolverhampton Road and junctions further afield operate over capacity during certain periods of the day, the A449 to the north of the junction is of a suitable character to accommodate HGVs travelling to/from this direction. However, the significant issue remains that the local highway network is not of a suitable character to accommodate HGVs travelling to/from all other directions. Vehicles travelling in westerly, southerly, and easterly directions would need to travel along already congested roads, of which many are of residential character (relatively narrow, high pedestrian footfall, cyclists, etc.). Vehicles would inevitably need to travel along the A449 to the south and A456 to the east and west. HGVs would be required to travel along Chester Road North or continue along the A451, which WCC recognise is already heavily congested routes for which there is limited opportunity to mitigate.

Further to the above, whilst it is obvious that roads in and around Kidderminster town centre are unsuitable for HGVs, there are other local routes likely to be used by quarry associated HGVs that are also unsuitable. For example, travelling along the A451 Stourbridge Road in a north easterly direction provides no other route than to a constrained mini roundabout within a residential suburb of Stourbridge. Continuing along the A451, the route leads into the town centre.

Also, of particular concern is the potential utilisation of Stakenbridge Lane for HGVs to travel between the A451 and A456; the route is unsuitable for HGVs due to a low bridge, congestion and several existing highway safety issues that would be exacerbated by any increase in HGVs.

Based on the above, casting aside issues along Wolverley Road and at the proposed site access junction, it is evident that there is only one potentially suitable route to/from the proposed quarry. It is unrealistic to rely on all quarry associated HGVs traveling to/from the quarry along the section of A449 Wolverhampton Road north its junction with Wolverley Road.

The inadequacy of the local highway network to accommodate additional HGV traffic is reflected by the high number of recorded personal injury accidents across the local highway network, including two fatalities along Wolverley Road (one in very close proximity to the proposed site access junction), a fatality at the junction of Park Gate Road with A451 Stourbridge Road, a fatality along A451 Stourbridge Road and many further personal injury accidents that were classified as serious in severity.

Clarification if the gradient is accounted for. The applicant gives a technical argument as to why gradient should be ignored as it was omitted from the original report. The gradient up from Wolverhampton Road actually ends less than 100 metres from the proposed access. In old fashioned terms this means the “brow” of the hill is located very close to the proposed right hand turn entrance. This produces a “blind spot” as vehicles travelling East at speed (national speed limit) will suddenly see stationary HGV’s in the road in front of the 77 times a day sometimes with a queue of stationary vehicles behind.

It is apparent that the vertical alignment of Wolverley Road has not been considered in respect of junction visibility; evidence of both vertical and horizontal visibility should be demonstrated.

Safety Audit. These paragraphs purport to sum up the RoyalHaskoning DHV safety audit but they don’t. The safety audit should be read carefully. There is a divergence of opinion as to the suitability of a right hand turn for access into the site between Hurlestone and RoyalHaskoning. This is what the audit authors say they have no further comments on together with the Hurlestone solutions.

The safety audit also provides significant additional information on the number of road traffic accidents in the area. This is significantly more than contained in the main Highways submission and indicates that there are significant local highway safety issues.

General

All major applications in the area have been required to use the traffic model created for the County Council (the Jacobs Ch2m Wyre Forest Local Plan Review 2016 - 2036 – Transport Model) to demonstrate that an adverse highway impact will not be caused by development associated traffic flows. It is understood that the planning application for the quarry, which it has been identified would generate 154 HGV vehicle movements, has not been considered within the transport model.

Highway congestion is a major issue in and around Kidderminster. The situation will inevitably be exacerbated by immediate housing development and future strategic allocations. It is evident

that the suitability, in highway capacity and safety terms, of the wider local highway network has not been considered.

Conclusions

Effectively the Hurlestone transport report is not fit for purpose and its content and findings should be rejected. The reports ultimate conclusion that in accordance with the current national policy guidance, planning permission for the proposed development should not be prevented or refused on transport grounds was based on a change of traffic flow of 1.8% whereas the report itself shows HGV usage increasing from 66-80 movements a day to between 220 and 240 units a day with the majority of these stopping and turning in and out of the site. Any professional analysis of traffic movement associated with a quarry at this location would conclude that the use is totally unsuitable in the context of local highway infrastructure and the new housing proposals in the immediate area. The weakness of Hurlestone is reflected in the lack of quality in other reports which should lead the County to question the integrity of the entire application and the applicants associated with it.

It should be noted that Wyre Forest DC Local plan is currently under review. It's likely that there will be issues over lack of highway infrastructure and lack of housing provision. It is unlikely there will be funding available for even the limited Highway improvements allocated for the Kidderminster area and there is likely to be more housing required within the plan period. If the County Council refuses this proposal as it should do it will release some pressure from the local highway infrastructure caused by new housing being concentrated in the Lea Hall Hospital area and lack of funding for infrastructure projects. Further, the proposals on nearby sites for residential development highlight the need to maintain a greenbelt barrier between Wolverley Village and Cookley and the expanding Kidderminster boundary. The County and District Councils should be designating Lea Hall Farm as a "protected area" under future planning law changes.

Socio Economic (Mike)

Report on the Development, Growth and Economic Considerations submitted by NRS

1. About this report

This report has been compiled by Mike Lord BA Bus. Mike is a local business man who has run a number of successful companies. He has throughout his career created over 700 jobs

worldwide half of which were created in the UK. Mike has a Business degree and has served on a number of Boards both in Plc and private. He has a thorough understanding of local economic impacts and of managing and ensuring win-win with all stakeholders.

2. Introduction

This report has investigated and raises concerns with the local economic impact of the development of a quarry at Lea Castle Farm by NRS Aggregates. It looks at specific economic statements made and the possible economic side effects that have not been considered. For ease the report uses the numbered points made in the application submission.

Initial Summary View

In general, the application is very one sided. It would be expected that any application should consider not only the positive impacts of a development but also off set these with likely negative impacts. The application/EIA refers to no negative impacts.

In general, the application focuses on the need for aggregates and the positive economic impact of this need. It presumes that there is therefore a positive impact on the local economy to such need. Whilst it is accepted that there is a general positive impact on GDP of construction as a whole the existence of a quarry on this site will not necessarily provide as significant a positive impact on the local economy as suggested. This is mainly because the report seeks to claim the full impact of the use of any aggregates quarried not the actually quarrying itself.

NRS and the landowner are not based locally, in fact, it is understood that the landowner is based in a tax haven and will benefit from as much as 20% of the value of the aggregates removed and therefore a significant share of the profit will be held off shore.

The specific local economic impact relates only in the applicants' opinion to the creation of "11 jobs". The jobs are not detailed and so it is unclear of the skill level of the jobs. There is also no commitment to employ local workers for these jobs. It can be assumed that most reasonable companies would seek experienced staff for these jobs and likely move existing employees to this site from worked out quarries. It is likely therefore that the jobs include some displacement from existing applicant owned sites and therefore not new jobs, some labour from outside the area as well as possibly a few local jobs.

The application makes no mention of any negative impact on the local economy. This seems unrealistic given that the very local area relies on tourist and leisure as well as education very strongly. It is inevitable that there will be some negative impact on local jobs which in the view of this report may very well exceed those created for the specific reasons outlined below.

3. Comments on the application

Below has been set out factual inaccuracies, omissions and suppositions made by the application. The original wording of the application appears in black with the counter arguments and corrections made in red.

8.1 National Sales Trends for Aggregates

8.1.1 The minerals products industry is a vital enabling sector of the UK economy, which has a broad impact on overall economic activity. As the largest element of the construction supply

chain, a supplier of key materials to many other industries, and the largest material flow in the UK economy, a healthy domestic mineral products industry is essential for the UK. This supposes that there is not already a sustainable supply of aggregates which is not correct. The size of this quarry in terms of mineral output is also relatively insignificant in supply chain terms.

8.1.2 This is reflected in the NPPF issued in February 2019, paragraph 203, which states “It is essential that there is sufficient supply of minerals to provide the infrastructure, buildings, energy and goods that the country needs. Since minerals are a finite natural resource, and can only be worked where they are found, best use needs to be made of them to secure their long term conservation. Paragraph 205 of the NPPF states “When determining planning applications, great weight should be given to the benefits of mineral extraction, including to the economy”. There is no balanced view given that the effects on the local economy will only be positive. The headline numbers are based on the value of extraction not the benefits of the financials on this extraction on the local economy. There is no evidence of any positive impact on the local economy provided.

8.1.3 Aggregate sales have been depressed since the onset of the recession in 2008, reflecting the significant decline in construction markets, but have started to recover since mid-2013, increasing by 29% between 2013 and 2017 as construction activity picked up. There is no evidence in the MLP that this is the case. In fact mineral production in Worcestershire is well sustained and it was even a net exporter in 2009 and 2014. No account has been taken of the devastating effect of the Coronavirus Pandemic on local, national or world economies, on property markets and the development industry.

8.2 Development and Growth

8.2.1 At the national level, central Government has identified a number of road, rail, transport, flood defence and infrastructure projects that are due to commence over the emerging Local Plan period. There is no evidence that this impacts Worcestershire’s requirements for additional sand and gravel. The requirement under the MLP draft is for “Planning for the steady and adequate supply of sand and gravel” it does not require Worcestershire to be a net exporter of such supplies. This quarry is not required to maintain adequate supplies in the medium term.

8.2.2 Central Government’s agenda for growth and a nationwide shortfall of housing filters down to local level, with Wyre Forest District and Worcestershire no exception. Housing, with associated infrastructure is a significant user of the County’s aggregates. This is likely to continue over the next decade. As set out in the Wyre Forest District Housing Need Study (October 2018), the Government’s standard methodology establishes a minimum need for 276 dwellings each year in the district over the period 2018-2028 based on the latest (2016- based) ONS household projections and latest (2017) affordability ratios. Again, whilst this may be a requirement it doesn’t represent a significant shift in historical norms. There is no statistical comparison made here and no evidence produced to sustain the argument for aggregate supply. This does not justify further incremental requirements and again runs contrary to the draft MLP view of supply requirements over the medium term.

8.2.3 In respect of potential local demand for sand and gravel and solid sand predicted within and around Kidderminster, a planning application for up to 600 dwellings and a mix of

employment, retail and associated infrastructure was approved subject to the signing of a S106 agreement at the former Lea Castle Hospital (Ref: 17/0205/OUTL), which is directly to the east of this proposed development. The redevelopment of the former Lea Castle Hospital was approved at Planning Committee on 21st November 2017. The Wyre Forest District Local Plan Pre-Submission Publication (October 2018) also proposes to allocate the land immediately to the north, east and west of the former hospital site as part of a new Lea Castle Farm Planning Statement December 2019 54 sustainable community known as Lea Castle Village for around 800 additional dwellings with a mix of employment and retail provision. The close proximity of such a development makes little difference to the economic justification for this quarry. These houses would be largely complete before any useful quantities of sand could be extracted. To the contrary the economic impact of a quarry in close proximity to such a large scale development is likely to have negative impact on the local infrastructure and socioeconomics of the area. It may damage house values for the existing development which may reduce the number of houses a provider will build. The development of the Lea Castle Hospital site is well known locally to be marginal.

8.2.4 There are also several more local developments being proposed for allocation in and around Kidderminster including the Kidderminster Eastern Extension for over 1400 dwellings. There are according to the MLP sufficient permissions granted for sand and gravel extraction over the short term. The close proximity of this quarry to these developments has little impact Vs using other pre-existing quarries in Worcestershire. In fact the negative impact on these developments of the close proximity of a working quarry over the next 10 years is a more likely outcome. This is not an economic argument for a quarry, it is an economic argument for the housing development and should be disregarded with respect to the application.

The District Council raised objections to the proposed quarry due in part to the potential economic impact on the residential development of Lea Castle Hospital. Homes England's involvement underlines the viability issues that must exist.

8.3 Lea Castle Farm and Economic Considerations

8.3.1 Granting Planning Permission for the proposed development at Lea Castle Farm would create employment for 11 jobs for approximately ten years if the scheme is approved. Aside from the sand and gravel need (as set out above), the proposed development will help provide and secure jobs for people directly and indirectly employed as part of the quarry operations and which contribute to the local economy through wages, business rates, use of local suppliers, and at a national level; to the economy through aggregates levy and other taxation processes. The proposed quarry would provide a significant contribution to the local economy. It is estimated that this contribution would equate to approximately £750,000 to £1,000,000 per annum (based on the Applicant's other operations) on external suppliers and on goods and services over the life time of the development, as well as contributing to the national and local tax base. There are again no workings for these estimates. No account has apparently been taken of the possibility of negative impacts from this quarry. There is significant local tourism which could well be impacted far in excess of the 11 jobs created by the quarry. There are many times more jobs in the area driven by income from caravan parks, leisure facilities that may well be put at risk from quarrying activities. There are also 3 care homes whose business could be affected by quarrying activities, a sector which is also under financial pressure. In addition there is a substantial private school which net contributes to the local economy providing in excess of 40 above average wage jobs. Private schools are under significant pressure as a result of economic conditions and in this

highly competitive market the close proximity of a quarry could lead to a reduction of pupil numbers and possible subsequent job losses. The figure is completely unsubstantiated and fake

11 jobs at say £40,000pa salary = £440,000, minus tax £330,000 would leave what £150,000 in disposable income, if 50% lived locally £75,000 !!!

Local Employment

- Heathfield School
- Lock Pub
- CCC
- Pitch and Put
- The Queens Pub
- Gils

How many employed here ALL LOCAL and how many lost in these tourist industries with a quarry next door. The Lock, P&P rely on CCC for customers. All benefit from tourists using the canal what impact on this from a quarry? Not considered at all.

8.3.2 There are limited alternative employment opportunities in the immediate locality. Also, the extractive industries (i.e. mining and quarrying) are much more capital intensive than other sectors of the British economy and have very high levels of labour productivity (measured by Gross Value added per employee). Gross value added (GVA) is defined by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) AS “the contribution to the economy of each individual producer, industry or sector.” The GVA figure quoted is very misleading. This does not look at the local economy impact of the business concerned. In fact a higher GVA per employee actually means less employees per unit of output resulting is less employment opportunities and less impact on the local economy.

As set out above there are a number of local employers who could be affected by the addition of a quarry who employ many more people than the quarry will. The net impact could well be a reduction in local employment. There is no evidence that the quarry would be net additional to the local economy. Tourism has a much lower GVA per employee and as a result creates more jobs in GDP terms.

There is no evidence to support the statement that there are limited alternative employment opportunities in the local area. The private school opposite employs over 4 times as many people as the proposed development as do the local nursing homes. Local leisure and tourism also employ more people than the proposed quarry. Alternative employment is more likely damaged by the proposal than enhanced.

8.3.3 In the mining/ quarrying sector, workers generate over £110,000 of value added per year. This is more than 2.5 times the national average and higher than many sectors which are often described as high value activities (Source: ‘Capital Economics ‘The Foundation For a Strong Economy: October 2012’, available from www.mineralproductsorg.com). The GVA in the mining and quarrying sector represents very good value to the economy and contributes positively to economic growth. This is irrelevant to the local area and local economic impact.

8.3.4 In addition to high GVA, the mining/ quarrying industry produces high levels of immediate consumption in comparison to other industry sectors i.e. purchases of goods and services (with spending particularly high in the transport and construction sectors).

8.3.5 The above considerations are important as they provide an indication of the wider/ indirect effects of quarrying, including how the expenditure generated from this activity is likely to be distributed across other parts of the local economy, and hence whether jobs could be retained or generated in these sectors. Lea Castle Farm Planning Statement December 2019 55 This only evidences that quarrying at large has a positive economic effect. It does not mean that this particular quarry in close proximity to local amenities will have the same effect. Again no negative impact on pre-existing local industries is taken in to account.

8.3.6 The quarry depends on its suppliers to provide critical goods and services to act as inputs to maintain the production process. The absolute level of expenditure can be very variable, reflecting the ad hoc nature of capital investment in what is one of the most capital intensive industries. There is no benefit here to the local economy which does not produce capital equipment of this nature. In fact there are no such suppliers in Worcestershire at all. This is a rural economy dependent for jobs and prosperity on the already established local industries. This report believes that the risk to this industries and the jobs they provide is clear and present.

8.3.7 Some of the major suppliers provide a blend of equipment and services, from a range of local and non-local premises. These considerations, taken in combination with the year-on-year variations reported above, mean that accurate cost data is difficult to predict and should not be over-interpreted, particularly as regards the level of stimulus that is being provided to the very local economy. This is partly due to the fact that the economic effects arising from the site also affect remote locations such as the company/ suppliers regional and head offices where a number of employees might be based to provide the support services. Identifying the exact economic benefit is therefore somewhat difficult. However, what is clear is that without the site there will be a significant deficit in the local economy based on annual costs incurred at present. This argument is illogical. The applicant claims the local economy has a deficit currently as a result of something that isn't and shouldn't be approved. There are no annual costs incurred at present with respect to the quarry as it isn't there. Also the local economy thrives on the current local businesses which could well be displaced by the quarry.

8.4 Conclusions

8.4.1 NPPF paragraph 205 emphasises the need for local authorities to give great weight to the benefits of mineral extraction including to the economy when determining planning applications. NPPF Paragraph 38 requires planning authorities to work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area and they should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible. There is significant doubt as to the local economic benefit of the quarry given the points made above none of which were investigated in writing this application. Risk of displacement of existing business seems far higher than the estimated possible benefit of £750,000 to £1M forecasted. There is a definite risk from this proposed development for little gain. The reference to social and environmental gains are more definitely improbable.

8.4.2 As set out in section 5 of this statement, a positive determination of this planning application would provide a viable and high quality mineral supply to meet identified need, as required by both adopted and emerging Minerals Local Plan Policy. The additional need from the

MLP is not clearly defined in the planning horizon and there should be a desperate not unclear need for sites like this to be quarried where there is at best minimal economic gain for the local economy. This report strongly believes that there is a likely net job loss from this site and negative economic impact rather than the marginal gain argued by the applicant.

8.4.3 11 new jobs will be generated by the proposed development and it will aid employment to be maintained across a range of industries, many of which depend directly upon quarrying, for business. As well as the direct benefits to the Applicant and the employment effects which benefit their workforce, there will be a series of spin-off benefits. This is unproven as in this area of leisure businesses the negative fall out could well be higher. There has been no study of the negative economic consequences by the applicant which this report believes to be significant. As previously highlighted jobs are most likely displaced from other sites operated by the applicant, from outside the very local area. The gain in local is marginal before taking in to account the economic fall out on well established local jobs.

8.4.4 In addition to the direct and indirect benefits of the proposal, it will also induce benefits to the local and national economy through a multiplier effect. The overall contribution to the local economy from the site is significant. An estimated £1M impact on the local economy is at best negligible and fraught with displacement risk. The economic arguments are based mainly on national GDP macro economic effects of quarrying generally not on the micro effects on the local economy of placing a quarry at the heart of rural community supported by the leisure and hospitality businesses. These businesses employ many fold more people than the quarry is suggested to create. There has been no local economic study conducted to enable such a positive conclusion to economic impact of a quarry in this location. For a multiplier effect to exist on the very local economy it must be demonstrated that sourcing will be local and that expertise exists or will exist. The applicant argues strongly that this is a capital intensive business and as a result this would require capital equipment providers to exist locally which they do not. Unless the £1m figure can be substantiated any claims on multiplier and other benefits are completely groundless.

Above is a detailed blow by blow rebuttal of the economic basis for the application. The applicant has not in conducted either a thorough or complete review on the impact on the local economy.

A fundamental pillar of the application as disclosed by the applicant in the above arguments is that it must provide a positive economic impact. The applicant has skimmed the surface of the economic arguments. It has used macro economic data in an attempt to relate it to a local economic micro impact. It has not looked at any displacement of current industries and indeed dismissed the existence of alternative employment to quarrying. There is no recognition of any negative economic impacts and no engagement with local businesses.

In summary the recommendation of this report is that the applicant should be asked to do a much fuller investigation and report on the local economic impacts of their application. This should include impacts on other local businesses and industries, specific work on the local education economy, likely negative impacts on local employment, prospects for future uplift in employment from local alternatives compared with the proposed development and the impact on the development on these prospects, provide specific job data including skill and wage level and the sourcing of those jobs, what the specific multiplier effects they expect and the evidence for

this, additional costs likely to be absorbed by local government as a result of the quarry and specific tax benefits they expect for local government.

Cumulative

EIA Regulations require that the cumulation of effects with other existing and/or approved projects, taking into account any existing environmental problems relating to areas of particular environmental importance likely to be affected or the use of natural resources; the cumulative effects of all planned phases of Lea Castle Hospital should have been fully examined along with other planned development which would interact with the proposed quarry in terms of traffic, air pollution and degradation of the countryside. This was not adequately done.

Residents are concerned not only with the quarry itself but also in combination with the Hospital Site development and other development on this side of Kidderminster and the gradual erosion of the countryside and Green Belt.