

STOWEY QUARRY PUBLIC INQUIRY

TUESDAY 3RD SEPTEMBER 2013, FRY'S CENTRE, KEYNSHAM

Good afternoon, and thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

My name is Sarah Streatfeild-James, and I would like to make this statement today to let you how I feel as a mother of three young children, living in Bishop Sutton. I am also a qualified cancer nurse with 17 years in the profession, including working as Ward Sister on the Imperial Cancer Research Fund Trials Unit in Oxford and subsequently founding and running a Cancer Advice Centre at Charing Cross Hospital in London. I have treated, cared for and advised people with mesothelioma, and have seen them die from this dreadful disease that remains incurable today. There is no safe limit of exposure to asbestos fibres in the air, and this has always been my main concern about this application.

What I want to do is give you some insight into how it feels to be considering the possibility of bringing up our children so close to an asbestos dump, to live here without ever knowing whether they could be inhaling asbestos fibres and therefore bringing their lives to a premature end. This is not something that I am prepared to do, I am not alone, there are many other people around here who feel the same way. We shouldn't have to live with this fear. This is not acceptable, there is a precautionary principle here that must be adhered to.

The main point it seems to me, is that this site needs to be proved safe not just for this year or the next but for decades and centuries to come. Asbestos doesn't degrade, it's not going anywhere, the only place it might go is through the perimeter of the quarry when there is further landslip, releasing asbestos into the air and causing a disaster of unimaginable consequences. If it isn't possible to guarantee the safety of the site for the very long term, this appeal should be dismissed. You have heard a number of detailed technical points about the quarry but a few key points stand out for me:

- Stowey Quarry was removed from a list of possible sites by the Joint Waste Core Strategy in 2011 because it was considered unsuitable due to its location.
- The appellant's EIA refers to the risk of the escape of asbestos as "minimal". This application should not be accepted if there is any risk at all. The consequences for our children are simply too appalling to contemplate.
- There are many examples of malpractice in the waste industry where the wrong type of waste is disposed of in sites for which appropriate permission does not exist. How are we to know, when sealed bags are delivered to the site what is in them and the consequences of the escape of those chemicals from the site? (Evercreech and Houghton Le Spring are 2 examples)

These concerns are shared by the other parents and residents of the local community. I will not spend time considering the long-term effects on the economy and whether people like me with small children will choose to leave the area, and visitors will decide not to come because you may feel this is speculation. I can only say that the health and well-being of my family is my primary concern and I would have to think whether when they play with their friends in the garden the air they are inhaling is safe. If I concluded that it was not, or that there was a risk that it was not, my husband and I would have a difficult decision about whether we could stay in Bishop Sutton, and I'm sure the same decision would be considered by other parents.

It seems to me that the decision to be made at this Inquiry is between giving 3 men the chance to make some money, with the accompanying risk of a catastrophic medical, economic, social and environmental disaster in the Chew Valley, or refusing this appeal remembering the precautionary principle and placing the emphasis on keeping our children and grandchildren safe.

If the worst happens and there is a release of asbestos or other toxins into the environment it will be too late to remedy. Once the damage is done it is irreversible. I have seen people die from mesothelioma and it is truly awful and the thought of my children suffering in this way is unbearable. This is too great a gamble and I urge you with all my heart for the sake of the children of today and future generations to dismiss this appeal.