



The
countryside
charity

Worcestershire
From the chairman

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Lea Castle Quarry Appeal

Statement of Dr Peter King, chairman of the Worcestershire Branch of CPRE the countryside charity, whose initials stand for Campaign to Protect Rural England am also the Hagley Parish Council planning lead and a local historian

At a previous stage of this planning application, I provided a historical landscape analysis, which I am not repeating today.

On behalf of CPRE:

This appeal is being heard because the High Court quashed a previous decision. The defect in the decision as determined by the court consisted of the inclusion of four words in a condition as to biodiversity net gain that the applicant was “required to meet national policy and future legislative requirements”. It would suggest that there is a simple outcome to this appeal, which is for you to affirm the decision of the previous inspector with the deletion of the four words and future legislative requirements. However, that is perhaps too simplistic an approach, since the applicant is entitled to a full rehearing.

The first public speaker based her case on the Environment Act 2021. That is post application legislation and thus “future legislation”, the reason why the previous appeal decision was quashed. However many of its principles, including “polluter pays” were already part of planning policy and had been since the 1980s.

CPRE is concerned to preserve the Green Belt. There is a narrow corridor of this between Kidderminster and Cookley, which in our view should remain as agricultural land. The site is quite close to houses in Cookley and across a main road from the new Lea Castle village, which is downwind of the proposed quarry. This is allocated in the Wyre Forest Plan mainly for housing but also with a primary school. This bit of Green Belt is important for keeping the historic settlement of Cookley separate from Kidderminster. The judge rejected the applicant’s appeal on that ground and you, Sir, should adopt the same approach.

It will no doubt be argued that there is a local dearth of the minerals sought to be won. I would accept that to be correct as regards Wyre Forest district. However Mineral Planning is undertaken on a county basis because it is necessary to look more broadly than a single district. There are several quarries at Wildmoor that produce sand and gravel and extensive workings of river gravels south of Worcester.

