

**"Please - No more deaths from land of killer dust"**

**A Plea for “breathing space”...**

Daughters of a man who died of asbestos cancer are pleading with Halton Borough council not to allow over 100 houses and a hotel to be built on the asbestos factory land that they believe helped kill their father

Eric Findlow died of mesothelioma – a terminal cancer whose only known cause is exposure to asbestos. Daughters Helen Wilson and Catherine Martley are shocked at the development plans that are going to Halton Borough Council planning committee this Monday (11th January).

The planning applications have caused controversy with local residents. They say they have been “kept in the dark” and “stonewalled” about the planning process and the lack of public consultation. Angry and confused by the planning process and the attitude of Halton Borough Council, locals say their concerns have been ignored.

The former Turner & Newall / Evertite site on Derby Road, Widnes made asbestos products from the 1916 to the late 1990's. As a schoolboy in the 1950s, young Eric played on an asbestos waste dump on land next to his school. In later life he came into contact with asbestos products as a painter.

Although Eric endured a painful operation to remove the lining of his lungs, he died 13 months after his asbestos cancer diagnosis aged just 66.

Documents recently researched confirm there have been a considerable number of asbestos related illnesses and deaths as a result of asbestos production at the Derby Rd factory.

Asbestos cancer is Merseyside's biggest workplace killer. After breathing in microscopic asbestos fibres it can take decades before the deadly legacy of exposure can manifest itself as terminal disease. Even light exposure to asbestos can be a death sentence. The HSE “Asbestos - Hidden Killer” campaign has highlighted that today's victims were often tradesmen in the 1950s-1980s but local deaths have also occurred from domestic exposure such as washing overalls.

Eye witness accounts from former workers at the T&N/Evertite works and local residents state that there was considerable dumping of asbestos waste on or near the Derby Road site.

Critics also suggest that Halton Borough Council must be aware of the potential for contamination on the former asbestos factory as a council document from 2002 confirms that one small former part of the site was decontaminated by the council at a cost of £1.2 million but then sold for retail development for just £143,000. [paragraph 10.2- Halton UDP Topic Paper, Dec 2002].

Questions have been raised as to why the proposed developments have not required a legal process known as “Environmental Impact Assessment” to identify the potential for contamination and address safe options for the future of the site. No reasons have been given by Halton Borough council despite repeated requests freedom of information requests.

There has been no formal community consultation of the plans by developers that include national housebuilding company Bellway Homes. However at a meeting to view the plans attended by local councillors, some residents attended and say they heard the suggestion that a “safe” form of asbestos was mostly used on the site and that the products were so safe they “could be licked”. Local's say repeated requests for the name and credentials of this “expert” have been stonewalled by Halton Borough Council

Industrial and Environmental disease researcher Jason Addy from Manchester Metropolitan University has expressed extreme concern for the proposals, the lack of public information and the apparent speed at which the planning applications are being processed:

“This is a site that has harmed and killed countless people from asbestos disease. Eye witness accounts and company documents now emerging confirm a huge potential for asbestos contamination”.

“From the correspondence that I have seen, the attitude from Halton Borough council is remarkable- the public have a right to be properly consulted, advised and informed. The manner in which these plans are being rushed to Committee is shocking”.

The planning application for 123 houses with garden on the former asbestos site states that the proposed use would not be particularly vulnerable to the presence of contamination [section 15 of attached planning application 0900407/FUL]

The same official document also confirms that Halton Borough Council has an interest in the land. [Section 25 – Certificate of Ownership]

Jason Addy from the MMU School of Law concludes:

“This seems to be a rushed and secretive matter where the local authority appears to have a interest in the outcome”.

“The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government has been approached to “call in” these planning applications for public inquiry. The local community are doing this themselves. This is a real David and Goliath battle”.

“To bring this matter for a decision on January 11th is far too soon given the lack of information presented about this former asbestos factory. There needs to be some “breathing space” in the planning process. The local community- including those families who have lost loved ones to asbestos disease deserve all the facts about this site so that safe, accountable and common sense decisions can be made”.

STATEMENT ENDS

Photographs and further documents can be made available.

Contact details:

Jason Addy (PhD Researcher, MMU School of Law) - 07785 39 60 90  
jason\_addy@hotmail.com

Helen Wilson (daughter of the late Eric Findlow) - 07917 39 64 01  
helen.wilson@uuplc.co.uk

Local resident- Peter Brewin, Derby Rd Residents Association – 0151 423 3941  
hwittlebury@yahoo.co.uk

Further information:

Kevin Johnson, Solicitor  
John Pickering and Partners LLP  
19 Castle Street  
Liverpool L2 4SX

Telephone: 0151 227 1215  
E-mail: kj@johnpickering.co.uk  
Website: www.johnpickering.co.uk  
FREEPHONE: 0800 854201  
www.mesotheliomaadvice.co.uk

Notes

Mesothelioma is a type of cancer that affects the lining of certain bodily organs. It most commonly affects the lining of the lungs (the pleura) but it can affect other areas including organs in the abdominal cavity (the peritoneum).

John Pickering and Partners LLP- Specialist mesothelioma compensation solicitors

We are a specialist personal injury law firm. We have been handling claims for industrial disease for over 30 years. Most of our work involves acting for asbestos disease victims. We only act for the sufferers of asbestos diseases and never act for the organisations that caused the asbestos exposure or their insurers. We have an ethical approach and pledge to donate 10% of our net profits every year to good causes that help asbestos sufferers. [Click here](#) to find out about our donations to good causes. We have also been involved in most of the landmark judgments that shape this area of law. Find out more about us or find out about our reported cases.

We are on the panels of several asbestos support groups and are ranked highly by legal guides. [Click here](#) to find out more about what others have said about us.

John Pickering and Partners LLP is a niche legal practice that has represented Claimants in the leading asbestos "test cases" in the last ten years. The firm represented Sylvia Barker in *Barker v Corus (UK) Plc*, a case that highlighted the legal tactics of employers and insurers trying to cut back their compensation liabilities to mesothelioma sufferers, and which prompted the amendment of the Compensation Act 2006 to ensure full compensation for mesothelioma claims. The firm represented two of the three Claimants in the Fairchild appeal, in which the insurance industry tried unsuccessfully to block compensation altogether for mesothelioma sufferers unable to identify which of two or more sources of asbestos exposure had caused their illness.

The firm represented Alice Jefferson, a mesothelioma sufferer, whose illness and compensation claim against Cape Asbestos were featured in the important documentary "Alice: A Fight For Life." Shown by Yorkshire Television in July 1982, the programme was an important catalyst for legal change and public awareness of the plight of asbestos disease sufferers and a prompt for important reform.

If you need advice about an asbestos related illness, contact us now for information about making a claim for compensation.