

Proof of Evidence
of Mrs Sarah Butler
2nd February 2007

My name is Sarah Butler, and I moved to Ancaster Road in March 2002, with my husband and 2 children, a 3 year old and 1 year old. I was also 8 months pregnant with my third child when we moved.

Initially everything was fine, but late summer in 2002 I first noticed a problem with fumes and noise emanating from the diesel engines at Ipswich station. (These engines can be observed from the front of my property.)

The engines would idle from 30 minutes to a few hours and, on many occasions I would have to bring the children in from either the front, or rear garden, as it was difficult to breathe, and I was worried about the effect that the pollution was having on their developing lungs. The noise was also extremely loud making it difficult to sleep, particularly for a new-born baby.

I telephoned the Environmental Health Department at Ipswich Borough Council on numerous occasions, more than a few times in tears because, owing to the wind direction, the smoke was inside the house and it was so thick that you could actually taste it. When this happens it makes everyone in the house feel unwell. Symptoms range from coughing and headaches to itchy eyes.

The problem has increased over the last five years. All of my children now attend school, and we walk there and back most days. However, some days the fumes are so bad as we are leaving the house that we have to run, trying not to breathe in the disgusting smelling fumes,

Owing to the intensity of the fumes it is not unusual for them to enter the house; I am at my most distressed when there are fumes in my 4 year old's bedroom at night.

It is also unacceptable that on a hot summer's night we cannot have the windows open because of the noise and fumes. However, closing our windows does not totally solve the problem as the noise is still excessive and fumes come through the trickle vents.

It may sound like I am an over-protective and neurotic mother, but whilst I am concerned for the adults that live in close proximity to Ipswich station, my greatest fear is that the children will suffer problems, because their health has been put at too great a risk. This concern has been re-enforced with BBC news articles attributing reduced lung capacity in children to particles found in Diesel fumes. I am also worried after reading a report by the Health and Safety Executive which states that repeated exposure to diesel fumes may increase the risk of lung cancer.

Sleep Deprivation is also another factor; at times, we are either unable to get to sleep, or if we do, we are then woken up when the diesel engines are first started up or when temperatures dictate higher revving. When our sleep is interrupted, it is either by very loud, short blasts of engine noise at irregular intervals or a constant throbbing effect from engines idling. And generally it is both. These effects worsen in the winter, with Sunday nights and early mornings being the worst.

At times, during the day we cannot hold normal conversations outdoors with our friends and neighbours as we cannot hear, or make ourselves heard, over the noise of the locomotives.

Currently we do not appear to be leading a normal life – engine noise keeps us awake at night- the fumes force us out of our gardens in the daytime. At night when the fumes are bad we have nowhere to go.

Even something as trivial as hanging out my washing is an inconvenience, as my drying washing sometimes smells of diesel fumes. I have taken to using a tumble dryer- even in the summer. In fact, my whole family's way of life is currently being seriously affected, especially when I worry about the effects that diesel fumes have on health.

I can only presume that if the line is duelled, and freight traffic increases that the situation of my family, and the families around me, will worsen. .

- We are all very concerned that by increasing the amount of locomotives, the occasions where our sleep is interrupted through noise, will increase.
- Also the effect that at least another 6 locomotives will have on the air quality must surely increase our exposure to the harmful pollutants in diesel fumes.

Can I respectfully ask that the health of all children and residents who live in the vicinity of the fuel point is given your fullest consideration when making your decision?

Sarah Butler