

“My eyes sting and I have to gasp for breath.”

Michele Franks, 57, a former PA, and now running a small cat sanctuary, lives with her husband in the small village of Holbeach St John, near Spalding in Lincolnshire, 20-years-ago after falling in love with the landscape. She describes the area as “a land that time forgot,” due to its old-world charm.

When she first moved in there was a turkey farm about three-quarters of a mile away but 10 years ago the site switched to rearing chickens for meat and was the start of Michele’s problems. Here she shares her story.

“THE smell is horrendous, especially if the wind is blowing in an easterly direction towards my house.

“I’m asthmatic and I notice whenever the chicken sheds are being cleaned out it affects my breathing and my chest begins to tighten. It must be from the polluted air and the ammonia from the chicken waste. I have to always make sure all my windows are shut, I can’t hang my washing out and I can’t go out into the garden, even if it’s a lovely sunny day. It’s really unpleasant and lasts for about five days. I’ve just had to learn to cope with it.

“The Fens are so flat there’s no hills or anything to break the wind so it really hits me.

“I didn’t have any issues with my asthma when it was a turkey farm and the smell was bearable.

“Now it’s really noisy too. The sound travels across the field. The machines they use are so

Michele Franks (3rd from the right) with the Holbeach Intensive Poultry Farm Objection Group ©CAFF



loud and continues until 11pm or midnight. It starts with lots of banging, then like a washing machine sound. Imagine listening to that for five days.

“Things could also get a lot worse. Last March I discovered that a planning proposal ([Ref H23-0313-25](#)) had been submitted to South Holland District Council for another poultry farm about a mile away from my home. It is proposed to build 12 chicken sheds housing a total of 552,120 birds with an annual output of 3,865,000 chickens and seven crops a year.

“I couldn’t believe it when I found out. If this proposal goes through, it would mean my bungalow would be sandwiched between two poultry farms, each within a mile of my home. And because this one is so big, it also means it will take longer to clean. Proposals say 10 days.

“It means if one chicken farm is cleaned out for five days and the new one is cleaned out for 10, and they are not in sync, I’d be impacted for 15 days every month.



When the chicken sheds are cleaned out, the smell and the polluted air hits me straight away – my chest tightens, my eyes sting, and I have to shut every window in my house just to cope. I’m asthmatic, and for days I can’t even step into my own garden.

“Lincolnshire is already full of intensive poultry farms. There’s a third one at the end of my village. The smell doesn’t directly affect me but the ammonia and dust from there will be carried invisibly on the wind and add to the air pollution levels.

“The decision has been delayed until April 2026 due to significant protests and objections such as our local roads not being able to handle those big blue lorries that transport the chickens to slaughter and return back again with baby chicks. They’re also causing many of our potholes. A local airfield for light aircraft is concerned about the increase in dust from the chicken sheds. But there’s also particular concern about the increase in manure. Where will it be transported to and how will it be used?

“The spraying of manure is a real problem around here. We’re surrounded by crops which are sprayed with chicken manure and the smell is really awful. It makes my eyes sting and I have to gasp for breath. We’ve complained to the Environment Agency, but they didn’t want to know. There seems to be no enforcement.

“The smell is so intrusive that I gave up eating meat in 2016 and became pescatarian.

“The countryside can be noisy and smelly. But we shouldn’t have to put up with the smells from these big industrial poultry units and the quantity of chicken manure they then spread on crops. Lincolnshire is full of them and they add nothing to a sense of community.

“The older I get, I just can’t stay silent. I don’t have kids, but I’ve a great niece and nephews. What’s their world going to be like? I worry about my future and their future.”

Photos available to download [here](#).